## Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards

**“Organic Behavior and Intentional Action”**

**Workshop in Athens**

**Led by: *Mario Biagini***

**Associate Director of the *Workcenter***

For the first time in Greece, Mario Biagini, Associate Director of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards and director of the Open Program team, will be offering an intensive five-day workshop hosted by Mad Dam Theatergroup. The workshop is designed for actors, directors, theater artists, or anyone wishing to investigate the elements of the actor’s craft. Participants of the workshop will have an opportunity to explore the nature of organic behavior and intentional action in practical terms over five days of work.

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

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

Led by Mario Biagini and his assistant Agnieszka Kazimierska , workshop participants will work with songs and materials currently explored by the Open Program team of the Workcenter: primarily, songs of tradition from the African Diaspora in the Americas, as well as some of the physical exercises developed at the Workcenter over the last 30 years. Part of the time will also be devoted to working on short acting propositions prepared by participants in advance.

Detailed information about the preparation of the short acting propositions and about appropriate clothing will be provided to prospective participants upon their acceptance at the workshop.Please send us a CV and a short letter of motivation at [mad-dam-theatergroup@hotmail.com](mailto:mad-dam-theatergroup@hotmail.com), **by 15 February.**

**Workshop Details*:***

**2-6 March 2016**

**Wednesday to Sunday**

**14:30 - 18:30 Wednesday-Friday**

**11:00 - 18:00 Saturday & Sunday (with a lunch break)**

**At the collaborative studio “Lathos Kinissi”**

**Address: square Eleftherias (also known as square Koumoundourou), 25 Eleftherias str., 6th floor**

**Cost: 280€**

**For more information, please contact us at:**

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**Brief history: the Workcenter and the Open Program**

Considered one of the most important and influential theatre practitioners of the 20th century, Jerzy Grotowski revolutionized contemporary theatre in multiple ways. Grotowski changed the way Western theatre practitioners and performance theorists conceive of the audience-actor relationship, theatre staging and the craft of acting. Perhaps best known for his notion of ‘poor theatre,’ Grotowski’s practice extends beyond the confines of conventional theatre assuming a long-term and systematic exploration of the possibilities of the human being in a performance context.

The Workcenter was founded in 1986 in Pontedera, Italy. It is here that for the last thirteen years of his life the acclaimed Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski, developed a line of performance research known as Art as vehicle, which he continued until his death in 1999. During these thirteen years of intense practical work, Grotowski transmitted to Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini the fruit of his lifetime research, what he referred to as “the inner aspect of the work". Since 1999, acting as the Workcenter’s Artistic Director and Associate Director, respectively, Richards and Biagini continue to develop the Workcenter’s line of performance research. Today, the Workcenter is comprised of 18 artists from 9 countries, working in two distinct creative teams: the Focused Research Team in Art as vehicle directed by Thomas Richards, and the Open Program directed by Mario Biagini.

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

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

**Mario Biagini**

Associate Director of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards, Mario Biagini has been a central contributor to practical research in the domain of Art as Vehicle at the Workcenter for almost thirty years. Working in the team led by Thomas Richards, Biagini quickly became a key member of the Workcenter’s practical research. He was a doer in Downstairs Action and a principal doer in Action, a performative opus created by Richards (under continuous development between 1994 and 2009). Very soon after joining the Workcenter, Biagini was entrusted by Grotowski with artisanal and pedagogical responsibilities that lead him in 1987 to direct a working team at the Workcenter in which he worked as principal actor and director. Biagini’s role as director/actor further articulated itself in the framework of Project The Bridge: Developing Theatre Arts (1999 – 2006), a branch of the Workcenter research for which Biagini exercised primary creative and pedagogical responsibilities. He was the primary director of *One Breath Left*, in which he also acted, and subsequently of *Dies Iræ: The Preposterous Theatrum Interioris Show*, for which he also created the textual montage and performed the lead male role. In 2007, he began to direct a new team at the Workcenter, the Open Program, which continues the investigative thrust of Project The Bridge in its exploration of publicly accessible performances that keep alive within themselves aspects of the subtle interior process characteristic of Art as Vehicle. To date, Biagini has directed six original performances with the Open Program: *I Am America*, *Electric Party Songs*, *Not History's Bones – A Poetry Concert*, *The Night Watch* and *The Hidden Sayings*. With the Open Program and international collaborators, Biagini has also began a practical investigation of a new performative event, the Open Choir, in Italy, New York, and elsewhere.

In addition to his artistic contributions to the Workcenter, Biagini refined his pedagogical skills and knowledge by assisting Jerzy Grotowski in the preparation of lectures and conferences for the Collège de France. He also frequently translated for Grotowski in public meetings and assisted Grotowski in the translation and revision of texts. As a well-recognized director and teacher, Biagini is regularly invited to speak about his work and the Workcenter’s research, and to lead workshops in prestigious schools and artistic institutions worldwide, while he continues to be involved in the translation and edition of Grotowski's written texts for publication.