

*Abstract*

Aurora Egidio, *Michail Ščepkin ovvero la difficile costruzione della memoria attorica. La figura del principe Meščerskij*

The essay moves from the sixth chapter of unfinished memoirs by Michail Shchepkin, devoted to Prince Meshchersky, and analyzes the status of Russian theatre between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Shchepkin describes a scene still strongly influenced by classical canons and recounts his firm decision to adopt and spread the principles of "naturalness" and "simplicity" after seeing Meshchersky acting in a new style.

Nevertheless, through a careful analysis of Shchepkin's report, the essay demonstrates that the account is unreliable, as he does not mention the changes that are already taking place in Russian theatre.

In particular, the figure of Ivan Dmitrevsky, defined as the prototype of the old declamatory school, appears to be an actor sensitive to the new mood, also thanks to the contacts he had in 1765 and 1767 with the French and English theatres.

Shchepkin's account, however, is deliberately biased because the actor is actually drafting his aesthetic manifesto, attributing to himself the profound reform within the Russian scene in regards to the ideas of "naturalness" and "simplicity".

In conclusion, the essay shows that Shchepkin's reform in the first half of the 19th century does not consist in adopting a new style, but in proposing a new approach to the character and attributing a different function to acting.

Acting is no longer repeating codified gestures and pronouncing unnatural sounds, it is a creative act, aimed at depicting a character, far less distant from human experience.