Week 5
DAY 1: Mon. Mar. 5:

20th century theatricalizations:
Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Pushkin

Agenda:

- Stanislavsky’s theater and Meyerhold’s breaking out of it: “the system” / the actor’s “creative state of mind” versus “stylized theater” and “biomechanics.”

- Looking back at Pushkin: which of his thoughts about drama (1820, 1830) might be realized [or which complaints addressed] with techniques of the 20th century?

- Looking back at Pushkin’s Boris Godunov: which of its scenes might lend themselves to a realization on Meyerholdian principles (and why)?

READINGS:

- From Magarshack about Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage … pp. 90-97 R

- From Hoover, Meyerhold: The Art of Conscious Theater, “Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold (1874-1940): Chronological Table of his Life” … pp. 100-106 R

- From Edward Braun, Meyerhold on Theatre, “First Attempts at a Stylized Theatre” and “Biomechanics” (1905) … pp. 108-119 R

- Meyerhold, “The Set Roles of the Actor’s Art” and Biomechanics exercises (1922) … pp. 121-39 R

- Re-read Pushkin, “My Remarks on the Russian Theater” (1820), ignoring the names of stage stars and concentrating on what Pushkin cannot endure about their performance (“monotonous crooning, harsh shrieking, bombastic rant” etc.): which theatrical logic would have more likely appealed to Pushkin, Stanislavsky’s or Meyerhold’s? … pp. 82-84 R

- Re-read Pushkin, “On National-Popular Drama … ” with the same purpose: could either of these two schools realized the national drama that Pushkin considered necessary? … pp. 32-43 R

- Defend a scene (or scenes) of Boris Godunov realized according to any one of the dramatic and acting principles described in the readings above.

DAY 2: Wed. March 7:

Not just any play but a history play (thought experiments)

Critiques.

Same topics, but to the binary opposition of “Stanislavsky-ism” vs. “stylized theater,” add the challenge of a specifically history play — and one that prided itself on being accurate.

Keep re-reading the play, checking in to the footnotes, which are condensed bullets of information from Dunning’s Short History. You will notice that at times three or four lines of Pushkin’s dialogue refer to a pivotal story or crucial battle in history, for example:

- Sc. 19, “Novgorod-Seversk” (mercenary scene), Dec. 21, 1604, narrated in detail in ………………………………………………. in Dunning pp. 107-10

- Sc. 21, “Forest,” is after the disastrous defeat of the Pretender at Dobrynichi (Jan. 21, 1605) ……………………………………………… in Dunning pp. 115-19

- Tsar Boris in sc. 23: “Meanwhile, what are our heroes doing for us? — Tied down in Kromy by a band of Cossacks Mocking them from behind a crumbling wall.” ………. cf. the whole ghastly story in Dunning 99; 121-25

What stage aesthetic might best transmit the sense of authentic history in these scenes?

READINGS:


- Reconsider the Ronen Triangle. Can accurate, documented history be made to have such a divinely ordered shape?
Pushkin, Prokofiev, Meyerhold: "Boris Godunov on the 20th-century Stage"
Caryl Emerson (Spr07)