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**Awakening the Actor's Emotional Expressivity:
A Psychophysical Approach**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Theatre and Performance Department
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London 2019

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own, and that this work has not been previously submitted in part or in whole for any other degree or professional qualification. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is indicated clearly and acknowledged. Due references have been provided on all supporting literatures and sources.

Afroditi Dimitra Evangelatou

Signed: _____ Date: 26 February 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature of performed emotion from the perspective of the actor trainer. The research begins from a simple yet significant question: how can the trainer encourage the student-actor's inner awakening? It proceeds to explore potential entry points to emotion and discusses key parameters that relate to its activation, such as the relational nature of acted emotion and the pleasure derived from experiencing it.

At the centre of this research lies actor training. However, current scientific discoveries have also been considered to further understand the nature of emotion on stage and in life. The approach is psychophysical, using the actor's body as a point of entry, inviting the inner through the outer, and in so doing, challenging the outdated perception of body and psyche as two discrete entities.

The theatre practitioners that have informed the vocabulary, the exercises, and the way of thinking for this practice-based research are: Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, Gardzienice, Song of the Goat, Odin Teatret, Tadashi Suzuki, and Theodoros Terzopoulos. Alba Emoting, a technique specifically developed to induce emotions has also been addressed. Specific aspects of the aforementioned techniques have been chosen and further explored in acting classes where emotion is placed at the core of the training. This has resulted in a pedagogical approach that seeks to awaken the actor's inner life, as well as encouraging them to access high levels of energy, concentration, and presence.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Research Question	12
The Major Debates	15
Should an actor experience or simply portray emotion?	15
Is emotion needed?	20
Is the emotion experienced the actor's or the character's?	24
Why Explore Acted Emotion?	30
Methodology	36
Chapter Breakdown	47
Chapter One	49
Selected Theories of Emotion	49
Charles Darwin:	52
Is Emotion Innate or Culturally determined?	52
William James	58
Antonio Damasio	65
Molecules of Emotion and the Psychophysical	70
Emotion theory and theatre practice	74
I am afraid because I run	74
The Psychophysical	76
Our virtues are habits as much as our vices	78
Pavlov and classical conditioning	80
Excitation transfer studies	85
Chapter Two	88
In search of the Triggers	88
Researcher's Relevant Training	90
A Review of Selected Practitioners' Approach to Emotion	94
Konstantin Stanislavski	94
Michael Chekhov	106
Lee Strasberg	116
Sanford Meisner	122
Jerzy Grotowski	128
Gardzienice	137
Song of the Goat Theatre (Teatr Pieśń Kozła)	142

Tadashi Suzuki and Theodoros Terzopoulos: Tapping into Reserve Energy.....	148
Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret: Energy, or Rather, Inner Movement.	162
Alba Emoting.....	175
Introduction to the Triggers	179
Chapter Three	181
Emotion in Practice 1: Greek Tragedy and Strong Emotion	181
The Triggers.....	182
Centre-Spine	182
Fatigue	195
Breath	200
First Experiment: Intense Emotion – Greek Tragedy.....	209
Emotion is a cocktail	214
The Journey from Sadness to Eroticism and Back.....	215
Sad Euphoria or Ecstatic Sadness?.....	234
Chapter Four	239
Emotion in Practice 2	239
The Workshop:.....	239
Exploring Contemporary Text and Subtle Emotion.....	239
Emotion as an Encounter and the Principle of Togetherness.....	242
In Practice	257
Resistance	268
In Practice:.....	270
Musicality	275
In Practice	281
Cindy Togetherness.....	288
Chapter Five	291
Pedagogies of Emotion.....	291
Pleasure and the Psychology of Flow.....	293
Non-judgmental environment	300
Fragile – Please Handle with Care	305
In Practice	309
The Suzuki Exercise.....	311

Surfing the Emotion	320
Working with the individual – Maieutics	325
Will it come back?.....	332
Conclusion.....	335
Appendices	346
Appendix A: Second Messenger Speech from Euripides Bacchae	347
Appendix B: Workshops Attended.....	355
Appendix C: Classes Taught.....	357
Appendix D: Questions of Performance Module Handbook.....	359
Bibliography	364

List of Images

Image 1. Duchenne and his assistant electrically stimulating the facial muscles of a participant.	51
Image 2. Cat terrified at a dog.....	53
Image 3. Ekman et al.'s table demonstrating differences in autonomic reactions accompanying basic emotions.	63
Image 4. Strack et al.'s method for facilitating or inhibiting muscle activity associated with smiling.....	64
Image 5. Levels of homeostatic regulation.....	67
Image 6. The sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions of the autonomic nervous system.	191
Image 7. Ganglion distribution.	192
Image 8. Pneumographic recordings demonstrating breathing patterns during stimulated (a) and natural (b) emotions (downwards: inspiration; upwards: expiration).....	217
Image 9. Movement of the pelvis.....	221
Image 10. Variations of Opening the Chest.....	222
Image 11. The Cobra.	222
Image 12. The Kneeling Walk.	224

List of Videos Supporting this Thesis

Chapter Three:

First Experiment.....226

Chapter Four:

Alba Tenderness.....258

First Exercise – Hands.....258

Second Exercise – Sounds.....258

Shaping Maria.....260

Shaping Lorna.....261

Shaping Jamie.....261

Resistance.....270

Lorna Resistance.....273

Jamie Sticks.....281

Maria Stick – Hand.....282

Gabi Rhythm.....283

Cindy Image Scoring.....286

Maria Image Scoring.....287

Cindy Togetherness.....289

Chapter Five:

Gabi Suzuki.....	311
Cindy – Maria Suzuki.....	311
Cindy Surfing.....	322
Gabi Surfing.....	322

Video Appendix:

Psychological Gesture.....	267
Physical Actions.....	267

PhD Playlist:

To watch the videos, the reader might choose to use the links on the footnotes, the DVDs attached to this thesis, or this playlist which provides easy access to all videos (recommended). Link to PhD Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL39RXKWPZnJyyG02dkYqMXRTnEAQcasIJ>

Introduction

Introduction to Research Question

I would like to tell four stories in order to introduce the research questions that guide this PhD.

The first is the story of the ancient Greek actor Polus, who, soon after his son had died, agreed to play Electra in Sophocles' eponymous tragedy. In the play, Electra is given an urn that supposedly contains her brother's ashes. Desperate to give a touching rendering of Electra's lament, Polus fills the urn Electra holds in the play with his own dead son's ashes. Overwhelmed with emotion, Polus fills the theatre with genuine grief triggered by a real rather than an imaginary cause. Centuries later, the ancient Greek actor is still remembered for what is perhaps the most controversial use of a 'personal object' on stage to stimulate emotions.¹

The second story is of a dialogue that supposedly took place between two well-known Greek actresses, one, experienced and well-established, and the other, younger and less experienced at the time, working together on a theatre production. (I will keep it anonymous, as it is uncertain whether the story is based in fact or not. There is value in it either way.) During early rehearsals, the younger actress struggles with a scene that requires a strong emotional reaction. The more experienced actress

¹ For an account of this well-known and well debated, possibly anecdotal story, please see among others Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "Polus and His Urn: A Case Study in the Theory of Acting, c. 300 B.C. – c. A.D. 2000," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11, no. 4 (2005): 499–523; Mark Ringer, *Electra and the Empty Urn: Metatheater and Role Playing in Sophocles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

remarks, pointing at a page on the script: ‘dear colleague, the writer says that you need to cry.’ The younger actress kindly responds that she will indeed attempt to cry in one of the following rehearsals, when she is ready. The same dialogue is repeated time and again until the younger actress decides one day to finally attempt to cry. The experienced actress responds: ‘dear colleague, is *this* how you are going to cry?’

The third story comes from a teacher of mine, a well-known Greek director. When one of my friends informed him that I am in London writing a PhD thesis on acted emotion, he apparently responded: ‘This is either very interesting or very dangerous.’ Knowing my teacher’s refined artistic taste, I am certain that the danger he refers to is not the danger of being taken over by emotions, or of revisiting traumatic events. He refers to an artistic danger, the aesthetic implications of succumbing to a psychological, sentimental and over-indulgent acting approach.

The fourth story is autobiographical. As a young actor, preparing to audition for drama schools, I had a strong desire, like Polus: I wanted to achieve a striking and touching performance. Working on Electra’s lament, the monologue that also challenged Polus many centuries ago, I felt helpless trying to prematurely access such strong emotional states without a technique to assist my attempts. A novice actor at the time, I was able to occasionally achieve emotional activation of great magnitude appropriate for the monologue, but I did not have the tools to do so *consistently*. In fact, it took me a long time—several years—to start discovering some tools that would help me access emotion consistently.

These stories, from an ancient predecessor, from an older generation of contemporary Greek actors, from one of my undergraduate teachers, and finally, from my own personal experience as a young actor, illustrate and summarise some of

the most important issues related to emotion in performance: the actor's desire to access emotion, the pressure from others, the controversial use of personal memories, the danger of attempting to approach acted emotion directly, and the search for ways to encourage the awakening of the actor's inner life. Polus' story brings up some ethical issues, as well as the question of control. His performance was not successful arguably due to the use of a strong personal memory that generated emotions which were too strong to control and therefore overwhelmed him. The actor must not only be able to activate emotion, they should also be able to quickly exit the induced state at will. Bringing personal memories into a role seems modern enough but the questions are still unresolved: Which emotions was Polus trying to generate: his own emotions or the character's? If the latter, why would he use personal memories? What kind of desperation would lead an actor to use his own son's death as a stimulus for a good performance? Clearly emotion is an acting problem that needs to be addressed. The recollection of my own very stressful experience as a young actor trying desperately to perform the very same monologue, some thousand years later, without any technique to activate emotions has motivated this research as well as my observation that Polus' problem has still not been resolved. In this thesis, I look for an answer to a question I have been asking myself for more than ten years: how can an actor access emotion of great intensity? By extension, how can an actor trainer help an actor in that search?

The Major Debates

In this section, dominant discourses on emotion as they appear in key theories of acting will be discussed: should the actor be experiencing the emotion or simply portraying it? If the former, is it the actor's or the character's emotion that is activated? Are emotions—whether experienced or portrayed—useful for performance or can they be distracting, even dangerous? What about the audience's emotions? While the main focus of this research is pedagogic (investigating how the actor can access emotion and how training can support the actor in doing so), the Introduction will offer an overview of the discourse on emotion in theatre and performance in order to contextualise the research and identify the gap in knowledge it seeks to address.

Let us now briefly examine each of these questions.

Should an actor experience or simply portray emotion?

Diderot is the first theorist to clearly articulate that an actor does not necessarily have to experience real emotions on stage, when claiming in *The Paradox of Acting* that the actor's "talent depends not, as you think, upon feeling, but upon rendering so exactly the outward signs of feeling, that you fall into the trap."² The French philosopher does not only advocate for a focus on the 'outward signs of feeling;' he

² Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting [Paradoxe Sur Le Comédien]*, trans. Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), 16.

also argues that the actor's emotional involvement should be avoided, as it results—he claims—in mediocre acting: “extreme sensibility makes middling actors; middling sensibility makes the ruck of bad actors; in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of a sublime actor.”³ As Roach puts it, Diderot's “firm negative [answer to the question: should the actors sincerely feel the passions they portray] had the power to revolutionize acting theory as surely as it scandalized actors.”⁴ The ensuing debate created two sides, often referred to as emotionalists and anti-emotionalists. As Archer puts it, such terms are “painfully clumsy; but the choice seemed to lie between them and still clumsier circumlocutions.”⁵ Although clumsy indeed, these terms give an accurate account of the possible positions of the debate, that focuses on polarities, taking no notice of the middle ground.

The emotionalists criticised Diderot for using ‘slender evidence’⁶ based mainly on personal observations and interviews of a very limited number of actors. They stressed Diderot's lack of practical knowledge and experience, as well as his rare visits to the theatre. Grimm argues that “for years before he [Diderot] formulated his theory he had gone but rarely to the theatre.”⁷ Diderot's practical understanding of acting might have indeed been very limited, however he managed to make an important contribution to the field. In his *Paradox*, he does not only discuss the

³ Diderot, 17.

⁴ Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 117.

⁵ William Archer, *Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888), 11.

⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

matter of experiencing as opposed to depicting, he also makes interesting observations related to other aspects of acted emotion:

all this is pure mimicry [...] which leaves him [the actor], luckily for the poet, the spectator, and himself, a full freedom of mind. Like other gymnastics, it taxes only his bodily strength. [...] All these emotions he has given to you. The actor is tired, you are unhappy; he has had exertion without feeling, you feeling without exertion.⁸

Here Diderot touches upon three important aspects of acted emotion: the actor – spectator relationship and the notion of a shared emotion (all these emotions he has given to you), the physical aspect of emotion (it taxes only his bodily strength), and the question of control (leaves him luckily a full freedom of mind).

The question of control is of high importance for this debate, as one of the anti-emotionalists' main criticisms for the actors who acted "from the heart"⁹ was the lack of control that can come with truthfully experienced emotion. For example, Francois Riccoboni, an anti-emotionalist, argued that actors experiencing real emotions on stage were incapable of controlling their voices to be properly heard, or to exit emotional states according to the needs of the scene.¹⁰ William Archer, who wrote *Masks or Faces* with the intention to challenge Diderot's *Paradox*, responds to Riccoboni's criticism: "the accomplished actor is he who, in the moment of performance, can freely utilise the subtle action of the imagination upon the organs of expression, without running the least risk of its overmastering him."¹¹ Archer

⁸ Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, 16.

⁹ Ibid, 8.

¹⁰ As Archer puts it "the anti-emotionalists [...] from François Riccoboni, onwards, assume that real emotion is inconsistent with self-control." See Archer, *Masks or Faces?*, 70.

¹¹ Archer, 70–71.

stresses that that the lack of control is not a result of engaging with the emotion but a result of “imperfect technical training and defective taste.”¹²

Diderot considered playing ‘from the heart’ or ‘from study of human nature’ to be two different approaches to acting, but are these really diametrically opposed? Can a combination of the two be conceived? Emotion is a psychophysical event so perhaps the body could be the starting point, yet one could allow feelings to also be involved, without forcing them. As Bella Merlin points out, acting cannot be divided into “‘inner/outer’ techniques (for example Method acting), and ‘outer/inner’ techniques (for example ‘character’ acting)”¹³ and likewise emotion should not be seen as either portrayed or experienced. The debate seems to be manufactured. As Nearman points out “perhaps because these various historical views appear polarized, the question of whether or how these opposing theories can be reconciled has customarily been set aside in favour of championing a particular view.”¹⁴

One way of reconciling these seemingly opposing views is by examining Diderot’s *Paradox* itself as a response, a reaction rather than a statement. Challenging the belief that emotion should necessarily be experienced, Diderot suggests that it might not. The emphasis Diderot places on the body of the actor can be interpreted as a starting point. The actor needs to focus on the ‘outward signs’ rather than the intangible ‘feeling.’ This is very important: with such statements, Diderot liberates

¹² Archer, 73.

¹³ Bella Merlin, *Beyond Stanislavsky: The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training* (New York; London: Routledge; Nick Hern Books, 2001), 27.

¹⁴ Mark J. Nearman, “Feeling in Relation to Acting: An Outline of Zeami’s Views,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 1, no. 1 (1984): 41.

actors from the requirement or necessity to experience emotions. He suggests that there might be another path.

However, an absolute rejection of inner experiencing is highly problematic. As I will discuss in the following chapter, current developments in the fields of psychology and neuroscience strongly indicate that if the reproduction of the physical aspect of emotion is accurate, real feelings can and will be activated. According to leading neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, emotion is the physiological arousal, which is visible to an observer, while feeling is the inner, ‘hidden,’ subjective experience that follows it.¹⁵ Therefore, if one reproduces accurately the physicality of an emotion using the ‘study of human nature,’ the subjective experience, or feeling, in Diderot’s terms ‘the heart’ will follow naturally. One cannot force emotions to come; one cannot force emotions *not* to come. In addition, such an effort to block the inner experience or feeling would inevitably have a bodily expression, possibly leading to blocked physicality or rigidity in movement. The suggestion to deliberately avoid any emotional engagement is therefore not possible. Taking this into consideration, Diderot could be seen as an advocate of a physiological approach to emotion rather than an anti-emotionalist one. Diderot’s interest in ‘human nature’ can thus be re-evaluated in line with the disciplines that study it: in this case, psychology and neuroscience.

Re-evaluating Diderot’s theory, his *Paradox* can be read in parallel with the theory developed by William James, the American psychologist who argued that ‘we don’t

¹⁵ Antonio R. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: Vintage, 2004), 28.

tremble because we are afraid,’ but are ‘afraid because we tremble.’¹⁶ One could therefore argue that the actor could rely on the bodily changes to generate the feeling, as this is the natural order in which the phenomenon occurs in life. Joseph Roach seems to have a similar reading of Diderot as an advocate of a physiological rather than an anti-emotionalist approach. He notes that Diderot’s interest in an emotion that is “embodied” rather than “inspired” came out of his “increasingly absorbing inquiries into physiology. In the actor, Diderot found a concrete instance of the keystone of his emerging philosophy of nature, the coupling of mind and matter, feeling and form.”¹⁷

Is emotion needed?

Bertolt Brecht is also known to have expressed reservations about the function of emotion in performance, as he heavily criticised the ‘hypnotic’ nature of passive empathy.¹⁸ The German playwright believed that a certain kind of emotional involvement could ‘hypnotise’ the audience and deprive them of their critical ability by forcing them into a non-judgmental identification with the character. Even so, emotion was not fully dismissed; in the following paragraphs, I will discuss how emotion was indeed explored and utilised in Brecht’s performances. As Barba puts it “this may seem a paradox, since many people, banalizing Brecht (especially those

¹⁶ William James, “What Is an Emotion?,” *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884): 190.

¹⁷ Roach, *The Player’s Passion*, 122.

¹⁸ The term ‘hypnotic’ comes up a few times in *Brecht on Theatre*. See for example p. 136 when Brecht stresses that both stage and auditorium must be “purged of everything ‘magical’ and that no ‘hypnotic tensions’ should be set up.” See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), 136.

who have not seen performances that he directed), maintain that the actor should not touch the spectators emotionally but stimulate them into detached reflection and judgment.’¹⁹ This is however, not entirely true; the German playwright was not against emotion either in theory or in practice.

Brecht knew the power of emotions, and although he rejected ‘‘fascism’s grotesque emphasizing of the emotions,’’²⁰ he did not reject them altogether. He focused on another kind of emotion: the one that motivates people to act, rather than the one that hypnotises them. He was interested in the emotions that he ‘‘regarded as socially productive—like anger and irritation at injustice.’’²¹ Brecht therefore ‘‘shifted the focus from empathy with the character to a novel emphasis on empathy with the socially critical actor.’’²²

Brecht emphasized reason as opposed to emotion in his early works, but very soon realised that reason and emotion are closely related: not only can they coexist, they can reinforce one another. Brecht observes: ‘‘there are many works of art where one can speak of a decline in emotional effectiveness due to their isolation from reason, or its revival thanks to a stronger rationalist message. This will surprise no one who has not got a completely conventional idea of the emotions.’’²³ The realization that

¹⁹ Eugenio Barba, ‘‘An Amulet Made of Memory: The Significance of Exercises in the Actor’s Dramaturgy,’’ in *Acting (Re)Considered: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli, 2nd ed. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 104.

²⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. John Willet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), 145.

²¹ Meg Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2009), 63.

²² *Ibid*, 65.

²³ Brecht, *On Theatre*, 145.

emotion and reason are not mutually exclusive possibly explains the removal of the feeling/reason dichotomy from Brecht's essay on Epic Theatre.²⁴ Mumford observes that although feeling and reason were used as characteristics of Dramatic and Epic theatre respectively in a 1935 publication, this formulation was removed from a following publication (1938).²⁵ As Jones points out: "reason and emotion, those seventeenth-century dramatic antinomies, are balanced contraries in Brecht's later theory [...] The model Brechtian actor, Weigel combined an actively critical scrutiny of the character she portrayed with a sympathetic presentation."²⁶

Although Brecht initially rejected the idea of empathy and identification with the character, he later stated that even sympathy can be sought occasionally, when the character deserves it:

Suppose a sister is mourning her brother's departure for the war; and it is the peasant war: he is a peasant, off to join the peasants. Are we to surrender to her sorrows completely? Or not at all? We must be able to surrender to her sorrow and at the same time not to. Our actual emotion will come from recognizing and feeling the incident's double aspect.²⁷

Brecht stresses that the audience should surrender and at the same time not surrender to empathy. In the previous section, we discussed the function of control in acting, concluding that the performer must control and allow at the same time, neither fully suppressing, nor fully surrendering to emotion. It seems like the problems of the actor have audience counterparts: the audience should surrender to empathy and at

²⁴ Brecht, *On Theatre*, 37. Willet's edition includes the feeling/reason dichotomy.

²⁵ Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, 80. The feeling/reason dichotomy has been omitted.

²⁶ David Richard Jones, *Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 130.

²⁷ Brecht, *On Theatre*, 271.

the same time control their urge to surrender completely. This is because a complete surrender would make the audience leave “their critical faculties in the cloakroom, along with their hats”²⁸ and that is something that Brecht discourages: the character should “remain under observation and be tested.”²⁹ At the same time, Brecht recognizes that empathy and emotions are necessary as the audience goes to the theatre to be entertained: “theatre remains theatre even when it is instructive theatre, and so far as it is good theatre it will amuse.”³⁰ Therefore surrendering to empathy to a certain extent is not only acceptable in Brecht’s theatre, it is necessary.

In a discussion about *Mother Courage and Her Children* Brecht explains:

Audiences were especially stirred by the drum scene. Some explained this by saying that it is the most dramatic scene in the play and that the public likes its theater dramatic rather than epic. In reality the epic theater, while capable of portraying other things than stirring incidents, clashes, conspiracies, psychological torments and so on, is also capable of portraying these. Spectators may identify themselves with Kattrin in this scene; empathy may give them the happy feeling that they too possess such strength.³¹

Here Brecht states clearly that he does not reject the use of empathy and other elements from dramatic theatre; Epic theatre can utilize such elements when it is beneficial for the message to be communicated. Such dramatic elements might also be used to create a finer piece of theatre, that is not merely didactic, but also entertaining. As Jones points out, in the later stages of Brecht’s work, during which his most important plays were written, the German playwright incorporated elements

²⁸ Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, 63.

²⁹ Brecht, *On Theatre*, 137.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 73.

³¹ Jones, *Great Directors at Work*, 135.

from dramatic theatre such as emotion and identification with his Epic theatre techniques such as criticism and detachment.³²

It could therefore be argued that Brecht was not an anti-emotionalist either. As Mumford puts it “far from removing emotion, *Verfremdung* sets in motion a complex friction that can generate considerable emotional heat.”³³ This provides yet another indication that thinking about emotion in terms of polarities and antitheses, such as portrayed as opposed to experienced, or emotion as opposed to reason, is highly problematic: these appear to be false dichotomies. It is also interesting to observe that those that seem to be on the anti-emotionalist or non-emotionalist camps offer plenty of wisdom on emotion.

Is the emotion experienced the actor’s or the character’s?

In *Acting Emotions, Shaping Emotions on Stage* Elly Konijn attempts to classify the theories of emotion in acting by identifying three approaches: *Involvement, Detachment and Self-Expression*. The first approach is mainly associated with Stanislavski and Strasberg, the second with Brecht and the third is represented by Grotowski, Brook, Schechner and Barba. Konijn named this third approach Self-Expression because, according to her, for these practitioners “the expression of the

³² Jones, *Great Directors at Work*, 121.

³³ Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, 64.

actor's own authentic emotions is key.'³⁴ Thus, according to the psychology Professor, the main difference between the Involvement and Self-Expression styles is that in the former, the actor's personal emotions are used to express the character's emotions, whereas in the latter, the actor's emotions are expressed, as the actor and the character often overlap.³⁵ This classification shifts the focus from the question should emotion be experienced or just bodily portrayed towards the question: whose emotion is it? The actor's or the character's?

However, this appears to be yet another false dichotomy. One could argue that the emotions generated cannot but be the actor's. The character is just a fictional creation embodied by the performer. If as we will discuss in the next chapter, it is the body that carries the emotions, then it cannot be but the actor's body that is generating them. Stanislavski in *An Actor Prepares* clearly states that emotions belong to the actor rather than the character:

We can borrow clothes or a watch, but you can't borrow feelings from another person or a role. [...] My feelings are an inseparable part of myself, as yours are of you. We can understand, feel a role, put ourselves in its place and start behaving as the character would. That evokes experiences which are similar to the role in us. But these feelings belong not to the character the author has written, but to the actor himself.³⁶

³⁴ Elly Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage*, trans. Barbara Leach and David Chambers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 41.

³⁵ Ibid, 36–43.

³⁶ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. Jean Benedetti (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008), 209.

Konijn herself acknowledges that it is the actor's emotion that 'feeds' the character in the Involvement approach.³⁷ What is it then that belongs to the character? Perhaps it is just the given circumstances, the *stimulus* of the emotional event that belong to the character; acted emotion is caused by an imagined rather than a real event. Unlike Polus, who, by filling Electra's urn with his son's ashes filled "the theatre with grief-stricken cries from a heart that was at once, sublimely, the one he had imagined and the one he had,"³⁸ actors should experience "real grief, created by an entirely unreal cause."³⁹ This is to ensure emotional hygiene and to establish a clear artistic distance between the performer's emotions in life and on stage.⁴⁰ An actor would inevitably be bringing personal memories with them into the stage or the rehearsal room on a subconscious level; however, deliberately using the death of a beloved one to stimulate feelings, is a very controversial and arguably problematic practice.

Stanislavski also discusses the example of an actor using personal loss as a trigger for acted emotion; the case of the actress Dymkova who, like Polus, used the memory of the death of her child. Stanislavski argues that Dymkova's performance

³⁷ Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, 37: "By feeding the character with the actor's personal emotions."

³⁸ Joseph R. Roach, "It," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 4 (2004): 567.

³⁹ The actress Fanny Kemble as quoted by Archer in Archer, *Masks or Faces?*, 151.

⁴⁰ See also Bullough's discussion on aesthetic distance in Edward Bullough, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle," *British Journal of Psychology* 5, no. 2 (1912): 87–118. See in particular p. 93–94, where Bullough argues that the jealous spectator—or actor in our case—of *Othello* "will indeed appreciate and enter into the play the more keenly, the greater the resemblance with his own experience—provided that he succeeds in keeping the Distance between the action of the play and his personal feelings [...] the goal is maximal involvement without excessive self-absorption."

was successful, not due to, but *despite* the fact that she used such a strong personal memory. This, he explains, is because she “used personal associations as a key to unlock emotional content, but never lost sight of the fact that she held empty swaddling clothes in her arms.”⁴¹ Therefore, according to Stanislavski the actor could use personal memories, as long as an “artistic distance between the actor and the event portrayed” is maintained.⁴²

Michael Chekhov’s notion of *double consciousness* further explicates the ‘artistic distance’ that is necessary when approaching acted emotion and offers an approach that, instead of polarising an actor’s and character’s emotion, points to what lies in between.⁴³ The actor is at the same time fully involved and distant, ‘filled’ with the character’s feelings, while simultaneously maintaining a distance that allows them to perform the score of actions with precision and to act without “violating” their “own personal feelings.”⁴⁴ An actor incapable of maintaining such artistic distance might “break the furniture, dislocate their fellow actor’s arm and suffocate their lovers while on stage.”⁴⁵ A full possession by the character—Chekhov stresses—is “not art but hysterics.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Stanislavski as quoted by Carnicke in Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 160.

⁴² Carnicke, 159.

⁴³ For a discussion on Chekhov’s notion of double or divided consciousness, see for example Michael Chekhov, *The Path of the Actor* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2005), 147.

⁴⁴ Chekhov, *The Path of the Actor*, 147.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Michael Chekhov and Deirdre Hurst Du Prey, *Lessons for the Professional Actor* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1985), 102.

The experienced emotion is therefore neither the actor's nor the character's and at the same time it belongs to both the actor and the character, as the truly skilled performer functions in double consciousness. It is worth noting that the blurred lines between an actor's and a character's emotion do not only appear in relation to the Involvement approach. Let us consider for example the following discussion on the use of memory by Thomas Richards, who as Grotowski's artistic heir, belongs in the Self-Expression camp according to Konijn's classification.⁴⁷

The teacher is looking to help an apprentice remember something forgotten, which is in some way how you might be, or how a very deep place inside you wishes that you are. [...] That is a very special kind of remembering. [...] And again, it can be different from remembering something that you have already lived, and yet, in experience, it can give the taste of the reawakening of an incredibly intimate memory.⁴⁸

Richards here discusses a memory that is at once personal and non-personal, simultaneously experienced and imagined. Grotowski makes a similar point when referring to the discovery within one's self of "an ancient corporality to which you are bound by a strong ancestral relation. Starting from details you can discover in you somebody other—your grandfather, your mother."⁴⁹ Michael Chekhov also refers to a similar principle: "When I cry, I am, of course, crying for my father, my mother, my dog, and all those things and people whom I have actually forgotten, but

⁴⁷ That Richards is Grotowski's artistic heir is widely known; it is mentioned among others by Schechner in Richard Schechner, "Grotowski and the Grotowskian," *The Drama Review* 52, no. 2 (2008): 7–13.

⁴⁸ Thomas Richards, *Heart of Practice: Within the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008), 102–3.

⁴⁹ Jerzy Grotowski, "Performer," in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 378.

they are crying through me.’⁵⁰ This tension between a personal memory that might also be the memory of an ancestor or simply someone we once interacted with, even if we have now forgotten said interaction, further points to the possibility that emotion is neither the actor’s nor the character’s. Emotion lies somewhere in between.

Concluding this revisiting of the major debates, it seems that Konijn’s attempt to classify emotions in terms of polarities such as involvement/detachment or involvement/self-expression, is equally based on false dichotomies. Emotion is a complex phenomenon, therefore dichotomies and simple classifications do not bring us closer to its nature.

Moving away from such polarities, in the following pages I discuss activation rather than portrayal, because as argued above an accurate portrayal is very likely to cause induction of feeling. I do not differentiate between an actor’s and a character’s emotion, as I have established that emotion lies somewhere in between. In addition, I focus on the ‘Actor’s Work on the Self,’⁵¹ therefore questions of character are not addressed. However, character could indeed potentially appear through the work with emotion proposed here, as a by-product. As Stanislavski puts it: “if emotion

⁵⁰ Chekhov and Du Prey, *Lessons for the Professional Actor*, 43.

⁵¹ As used by Stanislavski in the Russian edition of *An Actor Prepares*. In Stanislavski’s native Russian the book is titled *The Actor’s Work on Himself in the Creative Process of Experiencing*. For a relevant discussion, see Anatoly Smeliansky’s “Afterword” in Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work: A Student’s Diary*, trans. Jean Benedetti (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008), 638.

immediately responds to the call, that is an enormous piece of luck. Then everything falls into place spontaneously, in a natural way.’’⁵²

Why Explore Acted Emotion?

a. An Indirect Approach

Having briefly touched on the key points of the major debates to contextualise this thesis, I would like to draw the reader’s attention back to the main research question that drives it: How can acted emotion be accessed? By extension, how can an actor trainer facilitate the actor’s journey in that search?

The nature of acted emotion poses a challenge to the researcher searching for it: as Stanislavski correctly observed ‘‘our artistic emotions are, at first, as shy as wild animals and they hide in the depths of our souls. If they do not come to the surface spontaneously you cannot go after them and find them.’’⁵³ Grotowski has been even more critical of a direct search for emotion. In a conference in Santarcangelo in 1988, the Polish pioneer argued that the key to the actor’s craft is the understanding

⁵² Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work: A Student’s Diary*, trans. Jean Benedetti (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008), 280.

⁵³ Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1989), 191. Hapgood’s translation has been used on this occasion, although I quote from Benedetti’s translation on all other occasions. This is because Benedetti’s translation refers to ‘woodfowl’ instead of ‘wild animals’ and it could be argued that Hapgood’s ‘wild animal’ metaphor is—in its simplicity—more usable. The image of the wild animal as a metaphor for artistic emotion is indeed an image I often return to throughout the thesis.

that “emotions are independent of the will.”⁵⁴ To echo the two practitioners, if one cannot ‘go after’ emotions as they are ‘independent of the will,’ how can the trainer help an actor access them? Thomas Richards gives a key to overcome this challenge: “do not look directly for emotions, and do not try to force them to arrive in any way.”⁵⁵ The key—I argue—lies in the word *directly*. This PhD proposes an *indirect* approach. If, as Stanislavski points out, emotions behave like wild animals, we need to lure them, invite them in, rather than ‘go after’ them.⁵⁶

It is indeed possible to develop a technique for accessing emotions, as long as one is not forcing such an awakening, or hunting for it directly. Many practitioners sought such an indirect approach, some of whom will be addressed in the practice research presented here. In particular, I follow some post-Stanislavskian and post-Grotowskian threads, and will discuss these practitioners’ indirect approaches to emotion at length in Chapter Two.

b. The signifier and the signified.

In his PhD thesis entitled *The Lamenting Brain: Emotion, Action and the Journey of Feeling in the Actor’s Mournful Art*, Panagiotis Papageorgopoulos claims that

⁵⁴ Grotowski as quoted by Richards in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 59.

⁵⁵ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 102.

⁵⁶ The term ‘lure’ is also borrowed from Stanislavski. See for example Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 186.

emotion has been “theoretically discarded but practically sought.”⁵⁷ In the early stages of this research I had a similar understanding. This was because, like Papageorgopoulos, I have attended various classes and rehearsals during which the teacher or director seemed to dismiss emotion with statements such as ‘don’t play emotions, play actions!’ Yet, as Papageorgopoulos puts it “the moments that they thought were effective were those when, to my understanding, the actors were clearly managing to activate their emotions.”⁵⁸ The eyebrows raised when I was revealing to certain theatre practitioners or academics that I am writing a thesis on emotion in acting did not go unnoticed either. However, I once—to my horror—caught myself telling a student: “forget about emotions, don’t play emotions.”⁵⁹ This might have gone unnoticed if it was not captured on video, but alas, it was. I clearly wanted the student to access emotion; that was what my research was all about. Yet I, myself, said the dreaded words that confused me so much when I was a young actor: ‘Don’t. Play. Emotions!’ The only difference was that I was not asking them to play actions instead, I was asking them to focus on the exploration of resistance. Or breath. Or rhythm. This humorous episode captures what I understand as the *indirect* approach to emotion.

An examination of how key practitioners who inspired this project approach and discuss emotion reveals a historical shift from the words emotion or feeling, to terms

⁵⁷ Panagiotis Papageorgopoulos, “The Lamenting Brain: Emotion, Action and the Journey of Feeling in the Actor’s Mournful Art” (PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2009), 14.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Captured in *Lorna Resistance* 0:30–0:46. Link to Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXb5Nt8yz14&t=16s&index=4&list=PL39RXKWPZnJyyG02dkYqMXRTnEAQcasIJ>

such as inner life or inner action.⁶⁰ Indicatively, one can notice how carefully the word emotion has been edited out from Eugenio Barba's *The Paper Canoe*. Although Barba's own writing rarely makes reference to emotion, many of the quotes he uses do. He, for example, discusses *i-guse* which is a "dance with the heart" performed by *noh* actors.⁶¹ Barba's references to Western theatre practitioners, in particular the work of Stanislavski and Michael Chekhov are also relevant to emotional activation. The Odin Teatret director refers for example to *tempo-rhythm* and Psychological Gesture, elements of Stanislavski and Chekhov's practice that directly relate to the work with emotions.⁶² Barba acknowledges such links but prefers to use the term *scenic bios*, which is what "enlivens from the inside" the performer's technique.⁶³

Emotion has not really been discarded, neither in practice, nor in theory. That would after all be impossible, since emotion is a vital ingredient of most forms of theatre. As Nicholson puts it, "theatre is a very good place to spread emotions, as actors are intent on them passing on and audiences expect to be infected."⁶⁴ Emotion has however been renamed. It is often not called by its name by theatre practitioners, and there are valid reasons for this shift. One is clearly articulated by Barba: some

⁶⁰ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

⁶¹ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2005), 29–30. See also p. 55, where Barba quotes Zeami: "when you feel ten in your heart, express seven in your movements." Here the word 'heart' is arguably used to indicate emotional involvement.

⁶² Links between Stanislavski's *tempo-rhythm*, Chekhov's Psychological Gesture, and *emotion* are clearly drawn in Chapter Two of this thesis. For Barba's discussion see Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 59–60 for Stanislavski and pp. 72–78 for Chekhov.

⁶³ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 64.

⁶⁴ Helen Nicholson, "Emotion," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 23, no. 1 (2013): 21–22.

“words can be dangerous. Sometimes they asphyxiate what we would like them to give birth to.”⁶⁵ Although in this quote he refers to the word ‘soul’ it is possible to say that the same stands for emotion, hence the removal of the word from many practitioners’ rehearsal jargon.

However, many of the practices of the East that have to a great extent influenced Barba and Grotowski, are still using the words emotion and feeling freely.⁶⁶ How is it possible for these practices not to ‘asphyxiate’ emotion although they refer to it by its name? My assumption is that it is the concrete system for accessing emotion that can allow one to use the signifier, without ‘asphyxiating’ what it signifies. The

⁶⁵ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 50.

⁶⁶ To give a few such examples, Zeami states: “when an actor plans to express the emotion of anger, he must not fail to retain a tender heart.” See Zeami, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer and Masakazu Yamazaki (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984) 58. Elsewhere he states: “the melody is fixed in the chant, but the ‘inner music’ can only be captured by a gifted performer. In the dance as well, the various patterns can be learned, but the emotions engendered from them come from the performer.” (Zeami, 55).

According to Zeami, a performer reaches the “highest possible level of fulfilment” when he can “create for his audience an intensity of pure feeling.” (Zeami, 91). Nearman points out that Zeami is more concerned with the feelings of the audience: “the actor’s task is not to express his own emotions directly but to create a series of audience-involving moods.” See Nearman, “Feeling in Relation to Acting,” 44. Indeed, much of Zeami’s discussion focuses on the audience’s perception and experience, as this—he believes—determines the actor’s success. However, many of his references to emotion or feeling are ambiguous and it is not always clear whether he refers to the actor’s or the audience’s emotion. After all, the performer’s emotions are experienced “in mutuality” with the audience. (Zeami, 71)

For other Eastern approaches to emotion, see for example Nair’s discussion on Kudiyyattam (traditional Indian performing art) and the use of breath to access/manifest emotions such as ‘erotic’ and ‘furious’, in Sreenath Nair, *Restoration of Breath: Consciousness and Performance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 126–27.

practice discussed here attempts to achieve the same: to proudly reintroduce the word emotion into the rehearsal and training process, taking care not to asphyxiate the awakening of it. This is achieved through the indirect approach.

One could perhaps see such a re-introduction as a step backwards. If the practitioners I follow concluded that the term is not useful, why do I intend to reintroduce it? This is because I argue that it facilitates communication with the students. I don't have the luxury of time that most of the practitioners I study had to train their company members and to establish a shared vocabulary and understanding of certain terms. I only have short encounters with my students and I aim to prepare them for a wide range of performance genres and possible future collaborators. I therefore argue that the term emotion is the most appropriate choice, as I speak their language, rather than forcing them to prematurely speak my own. I fully understand that not everyone will agree with such a choice. However, as Freeman points out "a thesis that is not an *ipso facto* invitation for some form of argument and debate is not in fact a thesis; more likely it is a report: a valid form of documentation, but not what we would regard as a thesis."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ John Freeman, "Methodologies; Thesis Statements; Fallibilism; PhD Outcomes; Performance Studies," in *Blood Sweat and Theory: Research Through Practice in Performance*, ed. John Freeman (Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2010), 131.

Methodology

Through my practical and scholarly research, I aim to reach and disseminate a better understanding of what acted emotion is and how to approach it. In order to identify potential entry points to emotion, I studied various acting approaches, I attended workshops, and engaged with the relevant literature. The list of practitioners, companies and methods I studied is as follows: Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, Gardzienice, Song of the Goat, Theodoros Terzopoulos, Tadashi Suzuki, and Alba Emoting.⁶⁸ This is a diverse list, with disparate, and one could argue even contradictory, approaches. However, I choose not to focus on their differences. I am, on the contrary, looking for the similarities, as I strongly believe that there is richer knowledge to be discovered there: I review the above practitioners' approach to emotion and search for patterns or repeated elements that I can also utilise in my practice. This might be similar to what Grotowski called the 'objective laws;' as he puts it, 'we have not started from scratch but are operating in a defined and special atmosphere. When our investigation reveals and confirms someone else's flash of intuition, we are filled with humility. We realise that theatre has certain objective laws.'⁶⁹ My search for objectivity is focused on a search for a set of pathways (triggers) that can encourage the emotional awakening of the actor. I identify and practically explore six such triggers here: breath, musicality, resistance, fatigue, togetherness, and centre-spine.

⁶⁸ The reasons why these practitioners were selected will be discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶⁹ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (New York: Routledge, 2002), 24.

However, these ‘objective laws’ should be treated with caution. The triggers are not argued to be a definite, let alone the only approach to emotion. They are identified and explored as a possible set of pathways. Hopefully, they provide a starting point for further dialogue with other researchers, welcoming further suggestions and objections. The notion of ‘objective laws’ of theatre should be taken with a pinch of salt; after all, as Hunter points out “the signal difference between the laboratory of the scientist and that of the artist, is that the former aims to construct a method by which anyone in the world could duplicate the experiment.”⁷⁰ Practice-based research is by nature highly idiosyncratic and it is likely that another researcher would not get the same results even following the same pathways. However, every attempt has been made to turn such idiosyncratic nature from a potential shortcoming to an advantage. I argue that by identifying what is unique about a practitioner or a practice, one can paradoxically discover truths that can be applicable in a wider context. An effort has been made to identify how my work differs to that of the practitioners I follow. This comparative approach highlights originality, and most importantly helps me identify what might be sharable, what others might potentially find useable and useful. As Grotowski puts it, when we “compare our ideas with those of our predecessors [...] we are forced to resort to certain retrospective corrections which themselves enable us to see more clearly the possibilities opened

⁷⁰ Lynette Hunter, “Valuing Performance/Practice as Academic Knowledge,” in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*, ed. Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 204.

up before us.’’⁷¹ By comparing my work to that of others, I can better understand and articulate it.

Sadly, there is a limit to how much of the embodied knowledge acquired during the course of a practice-based PhD can be articulated: ‘‘much of what has been discovered and stored in the performer’s [or the actor trainer’s in our case] body is tacit rather than explicit knowledge.’’⁷² By its nature, some part of the embodied knowledge will get ‘‘lost in translation’’ as ‘‘performance knowledge [...] only exists in the doing.’’⁷³ Yet, I hope that a part of the embodied knowledge that I am not able to articulate might be disseminated through the documentation of the practice. Tacit, embodied knowledge is often communicated in tacit, embodied ways, and hopefully the videos accompanying this thesis can serve this purpose. I welcome the reader to draw their own conclusions about potential entry points to emotion, according to what they observe while watching the videos. The video documentation is an essential part of this PhD, an audio-visual thesis. The reflection on the practice and the analysis form the written part of the thesis. These two are in a constant dialogue.

Finally, I use the knowledge that comes from psychology and neurobiology to better understand the nature of emotion. Yet, I again follow Grotowski: ‘‘my formulations are not derived from humanistic disciplines, though I may use them for analysis.’’⁷⁴

⁷¹ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 24.

⁷² Ian Watson, ‘‘An Actor Prepares: Performance as Research (PAR) in the Theatre,’’ in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*, ed. Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 89.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 24.

Most important findings and conclusions have come from practice. However, insights from the fields of psychology and neurobiology have been used to shed light on and help me better articulate the findings of this research project.

Experiments

Quantitative research paradigms assisted me in understanding and articulating my practice-based methodology. In quantitative research, an experiment is conducted when an *independent variable* is introduced, altered or controlled, to observe its effect on a *dependent variable*. For example, if an experiment is to test the hypothesis that blowing air on a candle would extinguish it, the independent variable is the air and the dependent variable is the fire. Each of the videos that accompany this thesis indeed presents such experiments: various independent variables such as musicality, breath, fatigue or resistance are introduced at times in isolation and other times in combination. The hypothesis to be tested is that these independent variables, otherwise called triggers, points of entry or stimuli, can facilitate the accessing of an emotional state, the dependent variable.

In addition to dependent and independent variables, there is also what is termed a *confounding variable*: this is a possible factor that may affect the dependent variable(s). The validity of an experiment can be questioned if another researcher points out that the result of the experiment can be attributed to a confounding rather than the independent variable(s). In my research, for example, one can flag the use of repetition as a potential confounding variable and argue that the emergence of emotion is simply because the actor is practising, warming up by repeating. This is true beyond any shadow of a doubt, but to a limited extent. Mere repetition does not

change but runs the risk of instilling wrong or bad habits even more strongly. It is *how* the repetition is guided that makes all the difference. Besides, such an argument can be presented against most forms of practice-based theatre research, as repetition is inextricably embedded within a laboratory process.

Another confounding variable could perhaps be the way in which the exercises are introduced to the students and the way in which the performers are guided through the process. One could observe that it is not just the use of musicality, togetherness and the rest of the triggers that are encouraging the appearance of emotion, but also the *way* in which these triggers are being introduced. This is in fact one of the important findings of this research: that indeed there is a seventh trigger, the trigger of pedagogy. I argue that the way in which one approaches emotion in acting pedagogically is of high importance; this is discussed at length in Chapter Five. While the rest of the triggers were selected through my theoretical research on the practitioners and attendance at various relevant workshops and tested during the experiments, the trigger of pedagogy was discovered *during* the practice, observed and trialled in further experiments, and then theorised.

Actors/Students

During my practical experimentations, I worked with both actors and students, as I am interested in developing an approach that could be effective with students of any level as well as experienced actors. However, it should be acknowledged that there are certain pitfalls when one is working with undergraduate students. Merlin describes her own experience:

I have no doubt that my understanding of my own specialism [...] has been developed and explored through my undergraduate teaching and directing. However, I would also argue that my students—while deeply talented, intelligent and committed—are not equipped, on a non-vocational university drama course, with the appropriate skills-base for me to advance my practical enquiries to a point at which I would want them formally categorized, accepted, and assessed as practical research.⁷⁵

However, as my research addresses a question that is essentially about actor training, encounters with student-actors at early stages of training are necessary. After all, the less experienced or ‘equipped’ the students are, the more obstacles I, as a trainer will have to overcome. And this often translates into more findings. To ensure quality, the experiments described and analysed in this thesis are the ones I conducted working with professional actors. However, my work with undergraduate students has heavily informed and inspired these experiments.

⁷⁵ Bella Merlin, “Practice as Research in Performance: A Personal Response,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (2004): 40.

Evaluation

A topic strongly related to the subjective experience such as emotion poses a challenge to the researcher: how can one clearly show that emotion has been activated? How does the researcher evaluate the level of success of each experiment? It may be possible to prove emotional activation through measuring physiological arousal, e.g. brain activity or heart rate. However, such methods were excluded as incompatible to the nature of theatre. Audience or observer evaluations were also considered. However, I decided to completely exclude such quantitative elements from my research. I argue that the difference is so evident, that having to ask external observers to confirm it, does not strengthen, but in fact weakens the credibility of the project.

Through the exercises I propose and the exploration of the triggers, I am attempting to awaken an affective state in the actor's state of being. I argue that this activation can clearly be observed, and I invite the reader to look for it when watching the videos documenting the practice. Learning to watch in a way that recognises when that shift has occurred is part of the research. I do ask actors to observe and work with each other, so in each experiment I create a kind of feedback mechanism that somehow evaluates results but from within the premise of the work.

To make clearer what *emotion* is in the context of this research, and therefore what the reader should be expecting to witness in the practice, it is important to stress that emotion should not only be understood to be present in moments of high intensity. Although I have discussed scenes with extreme emotional demands, such as,

Electra's lament, I understand emotion as an all-encompassing term, synonymous to *inner life*, or *inner movement*. As Antonio Damasio puts it:

Feelings of pain or pleasure or some quality in between are the bedrock of our minds. We often fail to notice this simple reality because the mental images of the objects and events that surround us [...] use up so much of our overburdened attention. But there they are, feelings of myriad emotions and related states, the continuous musical line of our minds, the unstoppable humming of the most universal of melodies that only dies down when we go to sleep, a humming that turns into all-out singing when we are occupied by joy, or a mournful requiem when sorrow takes over.⁷⁶

This research addresses both the gentle humming and the 'all-out singing,' both the high notes at the climax of an aria and the whispered mumbles. It explores both intense (Chapter Three) and subtle emotion (Chapter Four).

Documentation

The practice discussed in this thesis has been video-documented. There are two distinct parts of the documentation: one is the video accompanying Chapter Three, entitled *First Experiment* which documents a single training session. This was filmed by Kristijonas Diršė in February 2014. The rest of the footage documents the Workshop discussed in Chapters Four and Five. This was filmed in September 2016 by Ricky Thomson. Diršė edited the *First Experiment*; the rest of the footage has been edited by the researcher.

⁷⁶ Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 3.

I consider the *First Experiment* to capture the experience fully, giving the viewer an excellent understanding of what happened in the studio. This is partly due to its limited scope: only the trainer and one actor are present in the room, and the video captures a single 3-hour session. However, the documentation of *The Workshop* presented more challenges. Firstly, there was a larger group of actors and a different number of attendees each day. Since the Workshop was filmed over the course of a week, with six hours training/shooting per day in addition to preparation for the following day, there was little time for me to watch a substantial amount of the footage between the training sessions to give feedback to the filmmaker. The videos therefore present some shortcomings: the camera usually focuses on the face of the actor whenever emotion is accessed. Although that is useful, it perhaps implies that emotion is more evident in the actor's face rather than the rest of the body. This is something I strongly disagree with; if there were funds and time available to repeat the documentation, I would have ensured the filmmaker focuses on both the body and the face of the actor throughout the process. Secondly, the camera focuses mainly on the actor exploring a monologue, not properly acknowledging the response of the other people present in the room. Similarly, in the exercises where I work in tandem with the actor (e.g. the Suzuki exercise), my contribution is not always as visible in the footage. Finally, the discussions have been filmed as an aside, with the camera not fully following the discussion.

It is important to stress that these shortcomings are not the filmmaker's fault, as he could not have known exactly what I was interested in capturing. They are mainly the result of my decision to film the workshop within a single week; this allowed no time to view the footage while filming, and adjust accordingly. The decision to film the whole workshop within a week was made to encourage actors to commit to all

training sessions, as it is more likely for working actors to commit to a project that lasts a limited time, and will therefore give them the opportunity to embark on a new creative (and paid) journey soon. It should be clarified that none of the actors were paid for participating in the workshop.

Another point worth mentioning is that most of the actors whose process the reader can witness through watching these videos are female. This is not intentional either; this is simply because more women attended the workshop, and it is identified as one of the limitations of this study. There is only one male actor appearing in some of the videos, Jamie. Jamie only attended two out of the five days because of other commitments, it was therefore not possible for him to explore all studied exercises. One could observe that in those videos that capture Jamie's process there are no big emotional outbursts like the ones that can be observed in at least one of the videos for each of the female actors. This might be—to an extent—gender related; societal norms make it perhaps more difficult for males to express intense emotion. These might also affect the selection of material (e.g. the monologue chosen by each actor).

However, I do argue that the methodology developed here is as useful for male as it is for female actors. After all, the practice looks for both the humming and the all-out singing, both strong and subtle emotion, as discussed above.

Finally, one could question whether the actors were affected by the presence of the camera. To avoid the self-consciousness that often comes with knowing that one is being filmed, the camera was always on during the documented sessions; there were therefore not distinct 'on camera' and 'off camera' moments. Both filmmakers were also very discreet in capturing the process and I believe that, as a result, the actors did not get negatively affected by the presence of the camera.

Researcher's background

As this is practice-based research, some information about my background will help contextualize and clarify my understanding of the question of performed emotion, as well as the examined practices. As a student-actor, I trained with many teachers in different techniques and institutions including Drama Centre London (M.A. in Acting), the Vakhtangov Institute in Moscow, Globe Education at Shakespeare's Globe, Delos Drama School in Athens, Greece (B.A. in Acting) and the Theatre department of the University of Peloponnese, Greece (B.A. in Theatre Studies). During my PhD, I also attended workshops in Poland (Grotowski Institute, Adam Mickiewicz University), Italy (The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards), Denmark (Odin Teatret) and Greece (Attis Theatre – Theodoros Terzopoulos). As an actor trainer, I worked at the University of Winchester for four years, and have been working at Goldsmiths College, as an Associate Lecturer since 2013. I mainly teach acting and related subjects to first and second year undergraduate students. I am also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PGCert for Teaching in Higher Education awarded by Goldsmiths in 2016), and committed to questions of Pedagogy.

Chapter Breakdown

Following the above discussion of theoretical discourses on emotion in theatre, such as Diderot's *Paradox* and Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, Chapter One provides a literature review of selected theories of emotion from the fields of psychology and neurobiology. The chapter offers a more detailed understanding of the nature of emotion and draws some links between these theories and some influential acting approaches.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of relevant practice: it examines the ways in which emotion has been practically explored by a number of highly influential theatre practitioners. The chapter focuses on the question of the actor's body as a point of entry to emotion, discusses the notion of the psychophysical, and identifies the triggers to be practically explored in the experiments conducted as part of this practice-based research which are in turn discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter Three introduces the practice, through the *First Experiment*. The triggers of breath, spine-centre, and fatigue are explored in relation to Greek tragedy, to encourage the appearance of *intense* emotion. The reflection on the practice is in a dialogical relationship with further theoretical research on the reasons why/how the chosen triggers might be of help to the actor working on emotion. The pleasure derived from the experiencing of acted emotion is also discussed.

A similar structure is followed in Chapter Four. This time, three different triggers relevant to the working material (contemporary text) and *subtle* emotion are being explored: togetherness, resistance, and musicality. The notion of emotion as a shared experience is investigated. It is argued that although one might tend to think of

emotion as a personal experience that requires focus on personal memories and sensations, it is in reality easier to access emotion through an other.

Chapter Five attempts to identify the crucial pedagogical issues that arise when working with acted emotion. It is argued that establishing a safe and non-judgmental learning environment will encourage the actor to access emotion more easily and safely. The role of teacher as an *enabler* of emotion is also highlighted. Finally, the question of *pleasure* is revisited: the chapter makes the case that the search for emotion should be pleasurable and suggests potential ways to achieve this.

Chapter One

Selected Theories of Emotion

The more an experience is characterised by the body as a whole, the more can it be said to be emotional.⁷⁷

James Hillman

Emotions were for a big part of history considered intangible and protean, therefore not worthy of scientific or academic research. A former U.S. senator, enraged because a researcher had received a \$84,000 grant to study romantic love, stated:

No one—not even the NSF [the National Science Foundation that granted the award]—could argue that romantic love lies in the realm of science. [...] I believe firmly that even if they spent \$84 million, or even \$84 billion, they wouldn't come up with anything the great majority of Americans would profit from. Or believe. Or want to hear about.⁷⁸

Researchers and funding bodies were reluctant to support or engage in the study of emotions partly because it was difficult to thoroughly investigate the nature of

⁷⁷ James Hillman, *Emotion: A Comprehensive Phenomenology of Theories and Their Meanings For Therapy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 116.

⁷⁸ William Proxmire as quoted by Cornelius in Randolph R. Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion: Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotions* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 8.

emotions before the development of modern technology that allowed us to research and better understand previously unknown functions of the brain and the viscera. This is highlighted by the fact that, as Elmgren points out, “no psychological phenomena are organised on such different levels of complexity as are the affective reactions.”⁷⁹

We have come a long way since and we now possess a much better understanding of the nature of emotion, albeit not without controversies. In *The Science of Emotion* Randolph Cornelius explains that emotion is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves an expressive reaction (such as smiling), a physiological reaction (i.e. increase in heart rate), instrumental or coping behaviour (the urge to act, run, etc.), cognition (thoughts such as ‘this is unjust’), and the subjective experience also referred to as feeling.⁸⁰ The complexity of the emotional phenomenon has contributed to the controversy, as different researchers have focused on different aspects of the emotional arousal, arguing about their importance, interdependence, and the chronological order in which they occur.

The first aspect to be scientifically examined was the expressive reaction. The French neurologist Duchenne de Boulogne (1806–1875) thoroughly investigated the facial expressions of emotions using anatomy, physiology, psychology and art analysis (painting and sculpture). During a series of experiments, Duchenne manipulated the facial muscles of research participants—referred to as ‘subjects’ in line with the terminology commonly used in Duchenne’s times—by means of electrical stimulation, and photographed the resulting facial expressions. He

⁷⁹ Elmgren as quoted by James Hillman in Hillman, *Emotion*, 7.

⁸⁰ Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 10.

subsequently recorded the muscle action for emotions such as sadness, joy, and fear (fright). Detailed descriptions of the function of these muscles accompanied by fascinating photographic documentation of Duchenne's experiments are included in his book entitled *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*.⁸¹



Image 1. Duchenne and his assistant electrically stimulating the facial muscles of a participant.⁸²

Duchenne is perhaps better known today for observing that although most facial muscles can be activated at will, a muscle on the sides of the eye mask area cannot be voluntarily controlled. This muscle, called orbicularis oculi, is the muscle responsible for the widening of the eye mask area during a genuine smile. Our inability to activate this muscle at will is—according to Duchenne—the cause for what could be identified as an insincere smile. Sincere smiles, involving activation of the orbicularis oculi, along with the zygomatic major, the muscle responsible for the

⁸¹ G.B. Duchenne de Boulogne, *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*, ed. and trans. Andrew Cuthbertson (Cambridge, New York; Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁸² Reproduced from Duchenne, 243b.

movement of the corners of the mouth, are thus often called Duchenne smiles in his honour.

Charles Darwin:

Is Emotion Innate or Culturally determined?

Duchenne's writings paved the way for what could be argued to be the first important publication for the science of emotion, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*,⁸³ written by Charles Darwin and published in 1872. In this publication, expanding on his evolution theory, Darwin discussed the universality of emotions in human beings and argued that emotions are not culturally learned but biologically determined. The English naturalist and biologist hypothesised that emotions share the same purpose in humans as they do in animals: they ensure the survival of the species as well as the individual. He proceeded in analysing the purpose of various muscle activations and other physical manifestations of emotions that naturally occur during an emotional event in both humans and animals. An example clearly illustrating this point is the cat's ears moving towards the back of the head when the animal is scared or angry and therefore likely to engage in a fight. Darwin attributes this movement to the protection of the animal's ears during fighting. He also claims that the accompanying erection of the hair in cats and other

⁸³ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.*, ed. Francis Darwin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

animals serves the purpose of allowing the animal to appear larger and therefore more frightful, to its opponent.⁸⁴



Image 2. Cat terrified at a dog.⁸⁵

Darwin similarly studied the physical manifestations of emotions in humans and speculated on the evolutionary advantages that such movements gave our distant ancestors. He attributes, for example, the wide opening of the eyes during fear to the provision of better peripheral vision that will in turn help an individual in distress to better detect and subsequently escape danger.⁸⁶ An individual in the state of anger or rage will experience increased heart rate, alteration of their breathing combined with dilated nostrils, increased muscular activation, and the urge to strike as their body is

⁸⁴ For a discussion on the drawing back of the ears, the erection of hair and the inflation of the body in cats and other animals, see Darwin, 100–121; 135–136.

⁸⁵ Reproduced from Darwin, 135.

⁸⁶ Darwin, 325.

preparing for a fight.⁸⁷ These ‘serviceable actions’ can still be useful to us on occasion.⁸⁸ However, Darwin points out that such physical manifestations accompany the emotions ‘through the force of habit or association’ even if they are not providing any advantages i.e. when one is angry but does not intend to physically engage in a fight, or when fear is not caused by a predator from which one needs to escape.⁸⁹

Darwin also argued that certain muscle activations, such as the raising of the lips to expose the teeth as if to bite, when in anger, provide evidence that the human species descended from some ‘lower animal’ as he puts it,⁹⁰ that in turn provides further support for his Evolution theory. However, Darwin’s insistence to explain every element of the physiological arousal that accompanies emotion in evolutionary terms occasionally resulted in oversimplifications and misattributions that were not left unnoticed by other researchers, especially those favouring the perception of emotion as culturally determined. Darwin admits struggling to find plausible explanations for the production of tears, the lowering of the corners of the mouth, and the raising of the inner corners of the eyebrows during sadness. He claims that these patterns were developed during infancy to protect the eyes while screaming, and were as such mere ‘rudimental vestiges of the screaming-fits, which are so frequent and prolonged during infancy.’⁹¹ He also often attributed any physiological arousal he could not

⁸⁷ Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions*, 250–51.

⁸⁸ ‘Serviceable actions’ is Darwin’s term. See *ibid*, 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 264.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 206.

otherwise explain to the excitement of the nervous system, or as he puts it an ‘overflow of nerve-force.’⁹²

In addition to studying emotional expression, and speculating on the adaptive purposes of the different elements comprising it, Darwin seeks to prove the universality of human emotion. To better study the origins of emotional expression, Darwin draws his attention to individuals and societies that have been less socially conditioned and whose behaviour should as a result presumably closely resemble that of our ancestors. In particular he observes infants and what he disturbingly calls the ‘savages’ (i.e. people living in tribes or societies with different cultures of living) and ‘the insane.’ Proving the universality of emotion was imperative in order to prove that emotions are subject to evolution by natural selection, and as such were developed to serve adaptive purposes: if emotions are evolutionary, inherited and therefore innate, they should also be shared across the species. In his search for further proof for his hypothesis, Darwin closely observes the behaviour of his own children, studies written reports by individuals working at psychiatric hospitals, and distributes questionnaires to missionaries and others with access to non-Western and isolated communities. The responses he receives indeed indicate that certain emotions appear to be shared among the species. This small list of emotions includes, as one would expect, emotions that closely relate to our survival such as the above-mentioned fear and anger.

Darwin’s study of emotions was ground-breaking, radical, and highly influential, but it was also flawed. It could be criticised for its methodology and validity by current

⁹² Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions*, 30.

scientific standards; it relied too heavily on the researcher's own observations and provided little, if any, evidence for some of the assumptions discussed above. However, Paul Ekman's more recent research on the universality of emotions further validated Darwin's theory, and provided strong evidence that a small amount of basic emotions is shared among the species. Although there is no definite agreement between researchers about the number of basic emotions, most include happiness, fear, anger, and sadness, whereas emotions such as disgust/contempt, surprise, interest and shame seem to be more controversial additions to the list, favoured by some but not all researchers. These emotions are identified as basic, because each of them "has a specific function in the survival of both the individual and the species and [because] all other emotions are more or less complex combinations or modifications of the primary set."⁹³

Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen published the findings of their research providing evidence for Darwin's theory in 1969.⁹⁴ After selecting a sample of photographs that represent basic emotions, the researchers showed the pictures to the members of two 'pre-literate cultures,'⁹⁵ in particular the Fore, inhabitants of New Guinea, "an isolated Neolithic material culture"⁹⁶ up to twelve years prior to their study, and the Sadong, native people of Borneo that at the time "still lived in their traditional long

⁹³ Ekman as quoted by Cornelius in Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 41.

⁹⁴ Paul Ekman, Richard Sorenson, and Wallace V. Friesen, "Pan-Cultural Elements in Facial Displays of Emotion," *Science* 164, no. 3875 (1969): 86–88.

⁹⁵ I am using Ekman et al.'s vocabulary, in lack of a better term. I acknowledge that such terms should be used with caution because of their colonialist connotations, and that neuroscience arguably has a Eurocentric bias at present for various reasons. However, it is outside the scope of this research to further engage with such discourses.

⁹⁶ Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen, "Pan-Cultural Elements," 87.

houses and maintained their traditional agrarian way of life.’’⁹⁷ The researchers also examined a sample of three literate cultures from three distinct parts of the world, namely the United States, Brazil, and Japan. There was high agreement regarding which emotion was portrayed on the photographs among the participants from literate cultures, and some agreement among the participants from preliterate cultures. However, Ekman et al. attribute the lower agreement rates among the participants from the preliterate cultures to the unfamiliarity with the tasks, as well as the communication barriers between researchers and participants, attributed to cultural differences and potential mistranslation.

Previous similar studies have concluded that emotions are culturally acquired rather than innate, as the agreement rates among participants—at times even within the same culture—were much lower.⁹⁸ However, Ekman et al. point out that the pictures used in such studies might have not represented the basic emotions examined accurately. It is possible that more than one emotion was present in each of the photographs, or that the pictures chosen were presenting expressions influenced by cultural norms regarding emotional expression that Ekman calls *display rules*. He defines them as: “socially learned, often culturally different, rules about the management of expression, about who can show which emotion to whom and when they can do so. [...] These rules may dictate that we diminish, exaggerate, hide completely, or mask the expression of emotion we are feeling.”⁹⁹ In order to

⁹⁷ Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen, 88.

⁹⁸ Ekman et al. mention Klineberg and cite Bruner and Taguiri as supporters of relevant theories. See Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen, 87.

⁹⁹ Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed. Recognising Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 4.

eliminate such threats to the validity of their study, Ekman and his colleagues carefully selected thirty out of three thousand pictures that satisfied their selection criteria.

The participants' ability to identify emotions in Ekman et al.'s experiment indicates that indeed emotions are innate, although cultural factors might affect what causes them, and which emotions are socially acceptable to be expressed in different circumstances. Emotions are therefore both biologically determined and culturally learned.

William James

Darwin's study of emotional expression paved the way for another ground-breaking theory, formulated by William James and published in the prestigious journal *Mind* in 1884. In the influential article entitled "What is an Emotion?" James claims that the correct order of the emotional reaction is in fact a reversal of what common sense dictates.¹⁰⁰ It would seem logical that an emotional stimulus triggers the 'mental affection called the emotion'¹⁰¹ which in turn activates the physiological arousal known to accompany it (e.g. tears or increased heart rate). According to James, the reverse is true: the stimulus activates directly the physiological arousal, and the subjective 'inner' experience follows. James argues that the emotional experience would otherwise be "purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of

¹⁰⁰ William James, "What is an Emotion?," *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884): 188–205.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 189.

emotional warmth.”¹⁰² Although experience indicates that we see a bear, we are afraid, and therefore run, James argues that we see a bear, we run, and therefore feel afraid; we feel sad because we cry, afraid because we tremble, and angry because we strike. To make the point clearer, James uses the following example:

If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind [...] and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains. [...] What kind of an emotion of fear would be left, if the feelings neither of quickened heart-beats nor of shallow breathing, neither of trembling lips nor of weakened limbs, neither of goose-flesh nor of visceral stirrings, were present, it is quite impossible to think.¹⁰³

Although James’ argument is quite persuasive, the American psychologist would need evidence to prove his theory. Concluding his article, he calls for contributions from other researchers that can potentially study the effect of paralysis on patients’ emotional experiences. In the years to come, a number of researchers indeed committed themselves to providing evidence for or against James’ theory.¹⁰⁴ These studies took one of two directions: studying the effect that spinal injuries have on emotional experience to test James’ hypothesis that “if I were to become corporally anaesthetic, I should be excluded from the life of the affections, harsh and tender alike, and drag out an existence of merely cognitive or intellectual form.”¹⁰⁵ Another group of researchers were instead studying whether chemically-induced

¹⁰² James, “What is an Emotion?,” 190.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 93–94.

¹⁰⁴ For a more detailed review of these studies, see Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 60–111.

¹⁰⁵ James, “What is an Emotion?,” 194.

physiological arousal—induced by giving participants an injection of epinephrine or adrenaline—indeed has the effect predicted by James theory: Would the injected experiment participants manifest behaviour that could be linked to the emotion that naturally evokes a similar physiological arousal? Would they report relevant subjective experiences? Although such studies produced contradictory results, at least some evidence in favour of James’ theory was granted. Most importantly, George Hohmann found a strong correlation between spinal-cord damage (and therefore limited visceral feedback) and intensity of emotional experience, as patients with spinal cord injuries reported experiencing less intense emotions than they used to prior to their injury.¹⁰⁶ However, a similar study conducted by Chwalisz, Diener, and Gallagher twenty years later had opposite results, with researchers concluding that feedback from the viscera can “amplify the emotional feelings even though it is not essential to emotional experience.”¹⁰⁷ Current developments in the field of neuroscience and the emergence of new methods to record and analyse brain activity have proven there is truth in James’ claim, as we shall see later on.

The stronger critique to the theory came from James’ own student, Walter Cannon, who pointed out that emotions have very similar physiological arousals, and subsequently argued that the small differences would not justify the wide range of

¹⁰⁶ George W. Hohmann, “Some Effects of Spinal Cord Lesions on Experienced Emotional Feelings,” *Psychophysiology* 3, no. 2 (2007): 143–56.

¹⁰⁷ K. Chwalisz, E. Diener, and D. Gallagher, “Autonomic Arousal Feedback and Emotional Experience: Evidence from the Spinal Cord Injured,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54, no. 5 (1988): 826.

subjective experiences (feelings) given by different emotions.¹⁰⁸ However, this criticism is only valid if one focuses one's attention only on the visceral changes present during an emotional reaction, rather than the wide spectrum of physiological arousal, which involves facial expression, bodily posture, and level of muscular tension. Cornelius, who offers an excellent critical review of the various emotion theories discussed here in his *Science of Emotion*, attributes Cannon's emphasis on the visceral aspect of the emotional event to Carl Lange's writings.¹⁰⁹ Lange was a Danish psychologist who developed a similar theory to that of James' independently around the same time. The theory of emotion discussed here is often thus referred to as the James-Lange theory, to acknowledge the important contributions of Lange.

Further evidence in favour of James' theory came from a series of experiments called *excitation transfer studies*, during which Dolf Zillmann and his collaborators found that a naturally induced physiological arousal caused by physical exercise could encourage participants to more easily experience emotions when prompted accordingly.¹¹⁰ In one of their studies, participants were divided into two groups one of which was asked to ride a stationary bicycle, while the other group was given a non-arousing task. After some time, the participants of both groups were given an emotional stimulus, to which the group that had been engaging in physical activity

¹⁰⁸ Walter B. Cannon, "The James-Lange Theory of Emotions: A Critical Examination and an Alternative Theory," *The American Journal of Psychology* 39 (1927): 109.

¹⁰⁹ When referring to the visceral aspect of the emotional event I use it with its literal meaning: that which relates to the internal organs, the autonomic nervous system. Examples of such visceral manifestations of emotion are changes in heart rate or blood flow.

¹¹⁰ Dolf Zillmann, "Attribution and Misattribution of Excitatory Reactions," in *New Directions in Attribution Research: Volume 2*, ed. John H. Harvey, William Ickes, and Robert F. Kidd (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1978), 335–68.

reacted considerably more intensely. In particular, they appeared to react more aggressively when confronted with an insulter. Zillmann's experiment therefore strongly indicates that physical exertion can encourage emotional activation and possibly emotional intensity.

However, the researchers also note that when unprompted, the participants of the two groups did not seem to be in a different emotional state. The indication here is that mere exertion does not cause emotion; emotional activation still needs a stimulus in order to appear. This is in accordance with the Schachter-Singer theory, according to which the physiological arousal on its own is not enough to prompt the emotion, and there is a need for a trigger, or some kind of cognitive justification, for the emotional experience to be complete. This theory came to be known as the two-factor theory, which, as Cornelius puts it “rests on the notion that emotions consist of two components: *physiological arousal*, which is another term for [...] autonomic feedback from the viscera or some other bodily source, and a *situationally-appropriate cognition*, which allows that arousal to be experienced as a particular emotion.”¹¹¹

Paul Ekman and his collaborators' contributions are also important with regards to this aspect of the debate; an experiment they conducted strongly indicates that the activity of the autonomic nervous system varies according to the experienced emotion, providing evidence against Cannon's argument discussed above.¹¹² To reach this conclusion, the researchers measured various aspects of the physiological

¹¹¹ Original emphasis. Cornelius on Schachter. See Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 79.

¹¹² P. Ekman, R. W. Levenson, and W. V. Friesen, “Autonomic Nervous System Activity Distinguishes Among Emotions,” *Science* 221, no. 4616 (1983): 1208–10.

arousal known to accompany the emotion-feeling state, such as heart rate and body temperature. The table below clearly illustrates such differences during the experiencing of six basic emotions.

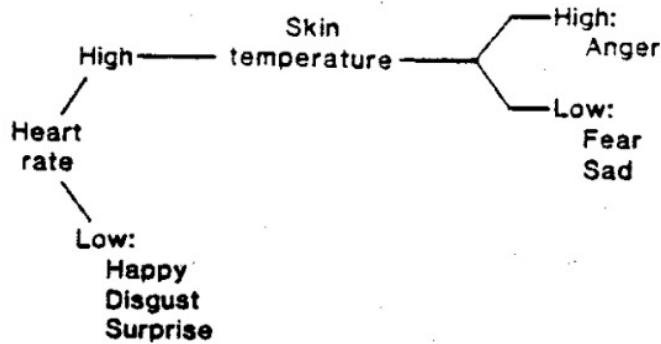


Image 3. Ekman et al.'s table demonstrating differences in autonomic reactions accompanying basic emotions.¹¹³

Further evidence in favour of James' theory came from studies examining how manipulating facial expression affects emotional response. Indicatively, Strack et al. conducted an experiment during which participants were instructed to hold a pen either with their lips or with their teeth, therefore inhibiting or encouraging muscle activity associated with smiling.¹¹⁴ A third option was also examined: some participants were asked to hold the pen with their non-dominant hand. In that case muscle activity associated with smiling was neither inhibited nor encouraged.

¹¹³ Reproduced from Ekman, Levenson, and Friesen, 1209.

¹¹⁴ Fritz Strack, Leonard L. Martin, and Sabine Stepper, "Inhibiting and Facilitating Conditions of the Human Smile: A Nonobtrusive Test of the Facial Feedback Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54, no. 5 (1988): 768–77.

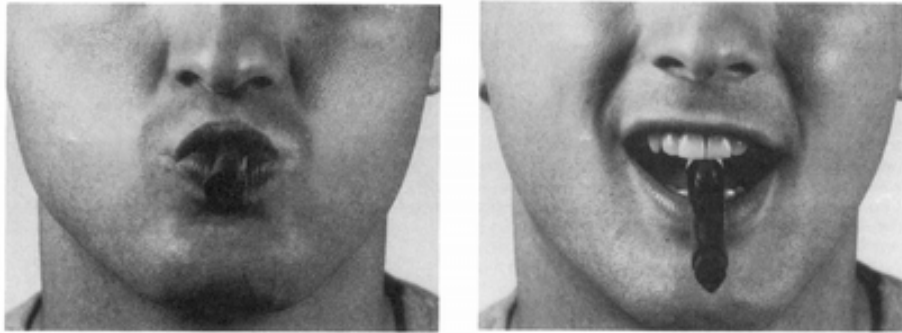


Image 4. Strack et al.'s method for facilitating or inhibiting muscle activity associated with smiling.¹¹⁵

Research participants were then asked to read and rate a series of cartoons in one of three conditions: holding the pen with their lips, teeth or non-dominant hand. As predicted according to the facial feedback hypothesis, the participants that were holding the pen with their teeth, and were therefore engaging facial muscles associated with smiling, found the cartoons funnier than those that were holding the pen with their lips, therefore inhibiting relevant muscle activity. The mean rating of those holding the pen with their hands, was in the middle of the range as expected. The data therefore indicated a strong correlation between engaging the smile muscles (teeth condition) and experiencing the corresponding feeling, in this case, amusement.

The findings of Strach et al. are in accordance with a number of previous experiments, that have also supported the facial feedback hypothesis. However, this study is particularly important as it addresses methodological issues and eliminates possible confounds, such as the possibility that participants speculate what is expected by the researchers and act accordingly: muscle activation was induced through the use of a pen rather than a set of instructions. This alternative methodology aimed to discourage the recognition of the targeted facial expression by

¹¹⁵ Reproduced from Strack, Martin, and Stepper, 771.

the participants. As participants were unaware of researchers' intentions, compliance with experimental demand or mood manipulation would have been impossible. Strach et al.'s alternative methodology provides thus evidence against theories attributing the activation of emotion to a cognitive response rather than direct feedback from the facial muscles.

Antonio Damasio

The work of the leading neuroscientist and neurologist Antonio Damasio will provide further evidence in favour of James' theory. Before discussing Damasio's important contributions, it would be beneficial to update the vocabulary. I have already been following Damasio in distinguishing emotion from feeling. Damasio defines emotion as the physical aspect of the emotional event, i.e. the physiological arousal, whereas feeling is the mental state that accompanies, or, as we shall see, follows it. Emotion is James' trembling or crying and numerous other physical manifestations of emotional reactions, along with less visible responses, such as the increase in heart rate and the alteration of breathing. Feeling is to a great extent dependent on the feedback received from the viscera (heart, lungs, gut, skin) and the other parts of the organism participating in the physiological arousal that occurs during emotional activation. However, feeling, unlike emotion, is not necessarily perceived by an external observer, as it is a subjective experience taking place within the individual's body-mind. As Damasio puts it, feelings "are always hidden, like all

mental images necessarily are, unseen to anyone other than their rightful owner, the most private property of the organism in whose brain they occur.’’¹¹⁶

While studying how brain damage in different brain lesions could affect emotion, Damasio discovered that patients who lost the ability to express certain emotions were also unable to experience the corresponding feelings. However, patients who lost the ability to experience certain feelings, could still express the corresponding emotions.¹¹⁷ This indicates that emotion is a prerequisite for the experience of feeling, as James had intuitively claimed. In addition, Damasio argued that emotion precedes feeling not only chronologically but also in evolutionary terms; or even more accurately, emotion precedes feeling chronologically *because* it preceded feeling evolutionarily. Bringing together Darwin and James in a single sentence, Damasio claimed that “we have emotions first and feelings after because evolution came up with emotions first and feelings later.”¹¹⁸

Damasio argues that “emotions and related reactions seem to precede feelings in the history of life” both of the individual and the species;¹¹⁹ emotions are the foundation on which nature will build feelings, or to use Damasio’s metaphor the branches of the tree on which the leaves of feelings can grow. The ‘emotion-feeling state’ is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, not only because various aspects of the state happen simultaneously or in close chronological proximity (expression, tendency to act, subjective experience, physiological arousal) but also because it is directly

¹¹⁶ Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 28; 80.

linked to other related phenomena, such as basic reflexes (e.g. the startle reflex), and drives such as hunger, thirst, curiosity, play, and sexual drive. All these mechanisms are in place to ensure the survival and well-being of the organism, in other words, to maintain the organism's homeostasis (from the Greek ὁμοιος [omoios] meaning similar and ἵστημι [istemi] meaning standing: to be in a similar state). Damasio further explains the nesting nature that characterises these mechanisms, as “parts of simpler reactions [are] incorporated as components of more elaborate ones.”¹²⁰

These are referred to as the *levels of homeostatic regulation*:

Each of the different regulatory reactions [...] is not a radically different process, built from scratch for a specific purpose. Rather, each reaction consists of tinkered rearrangements of bits and parts of the simpler processes [...] The image for the ensemble of these reactions is not that of a simple linear hierarchy. [...] A better image is that of a tall, messy tree with progressively higher and more elaborate branches coming off the main trunks and thus maintaining a two-way communication with their roots. The history of evolution is written all over that tree.¹²¹

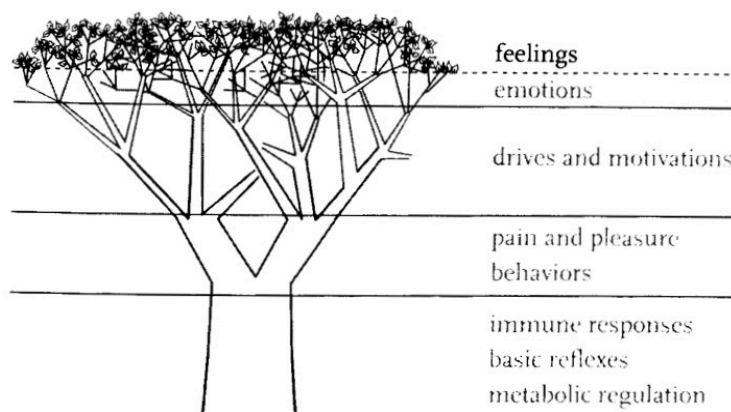


Image 5. Levels of homeostatic regulation.¹²²

¹²⁰ Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 37.

¹²¹ Ibid, 38.

¹²² Reproduced from Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 37.

On their most basic form, the mechanisms that ensure homeostasis will encourage the organism to search for food through the drives, or avoid harmful encounters through the withdrawal/approach behaviour which is related to pain and pleasure. On the higher branches of the tree, one can find more elaborate behaviours, such as pursuing happiness or integration within a community, for which emotions and feelings are necessary. These different levels of homeostatic regulation are interrelated; for example fear, sadness and disgust inhibit hunger and the sexual drive whereas happiness can potentially encourage these. The reverse can also be observed, as the satisfaction of drives can promote happiness.¹²³

In addition to studying the relationship between emotion and feeling, Damasio gives us insight into the mechanism of emotion itself. The emotional event starts with an *emotionally competent stimulus*. The stimulus can be an object or an event, occurring in the moment or recalled from memory, which can trigger an emotional reaction. Next, the regions of the brain responsible for stimulating an appropriate emotional reaction, the *emotion-triggering sites*, are activated. Among the brain regions known to be part of this mechanism are the amygdala and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. In turn, the *emotion-execution sites* are activated: these carry out the physiological arousal known as emotion. The brain regions identified as *emotion-execution sites* are, among others, the hypothalamus, the basal forebrain and the brain stem nuclei that control facial muscles. The hypothalamus, which is identified by Damasio as the master executor, synthesises and releases chemical molecules such as oxytocin into the blood stream. The hormones released into the bloodstream will in turn initiate changes in the function of the viscera and the central nervous

¹²³ Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 50.

system; this will also affect the musculoskeletal system. In addition, brain stem nuclei will activate the facial muscles that correspond to the experienced emotion.

This perfectly orchestrated series of neural and chemical responses is the mechanism behind the facial expressions, body postures, vocalisations, and specific patterns of behaviour known to accompany emotional responses.¹²⁴ Feeling follows, as the appropriate neural pathways will send information from the body (viscera, musculoskeletal system) back to the brain. As Damasio puts it “we are now back in the mental realm—back in the flow of thoughts where, in normal circumstances, the entire emotional detour began.”¹²⁵

Before moving to the next researcher that will shed further light on our understanding of emotion, I would like to note Antonio Damasio’s famous challenge of the emotion/reason dichotomy. In *Descartes’s Error*, Damasio follows the story of Phineas Gage, a 19th century construction worker who suffered a life changing injury when a part of the brain controlling emotion was damaged during a work accident. Gage regressed from “the most efficient and capable”¹²⁶ employee to losing his job within a short period of time. Gage lost his job because an extraordinary change of personality no longer allowed the post-accident-Gage to continue the life of his pre-accident self. Other aspects of his life also appeared to deteriorate by the day as “he no longer showed respect for social convention; ethics in the broad sense of the term were violated; the decisions he made did not take into account his best interest. [...]

¹²⁴ See Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 57–65.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 65.

¹²⁶ Damasio quoting J.M. Harlow, in Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (London: Vintage, 2006), 4.

There was no evidence of concern about his future, no sign of forethought.’’¹²⁷ The Phineas Cage story supports Damasio’s main argument ‘‘that emotions and feelings may not be intruders in the bastion of reason at all: they may be enmeshed in its networks, for worse *and* for better.’’¹²⁸ In *Descartes’ Error*, Damasio provides a wealth of further evidence for this argument, and thus puts the age-old emotion-reason dichotomy to rest for good.

Molecules of Emotion and the Psychophysical

Candace Pert, a pioneer of the field of research that came to be known as psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), became interested in the connection between psyche and soma after a horse accident led to her hospitalisation and the subsequent administration of morphine injections. The experience of a pain killer that is capable of also triggering the mental state of bliss and obliterating anxiety, this ‘‘intense overlap of physical and emotional experience, both originating from a single drug’’ initiated Pert’s interest in the study of the psychophysical.¹²⁹ Her first major scientific achievement was measuring and therefore proving the existence of the opiate receptor while still a PhD student,¹³⁰ a short time after the horse accident. It was to this receptor that the morphine and other drugs of the opiate family could bind and therefore trigger the state Pert experienced while hospitalised. The discovery of

¹²⁷ Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, 11.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, xxii.

¹²⁹ Candace B. Pert, *Molecules of Emotion: Why You Feel the Way You Feel* (London: Pocket Books, 1999), 33.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

the opiate receptor initiated a search for the body's own natural substance that occupied this receptor. A few years later the body's own opiate drug would be discovered: this 'endogenous morphine' is now known as endorphin.¹³¹

Endorphin belongs to a group of endogenous *informational substances*. Such substances, also called peptides, carry information across the body and initiate or inhibit a wide range of activities, "regulating practically all life processes."¹³² They thus coordinate physiology, behaviour, and emotion. Although peptides' chemical structures are fairly simple, "the responses they elicit can be maddeningly complex."¹³³ They have therefore been classified under a wide range of substance categories such as hormones and neurotransmitters.¹³⁴

The relationship between peptides and their receptors is traditionally perceived as a key-lock relationship, however Pert argues that a more accurate image is that of peptide and receptor "striking the same note and producing a vibration that rings a doorbell to open the doorway to the cell."¹³⁵ Receptors are found on the surface of cells throughout the body and in the brain. Similarly, peptides can be produced in many parts of the organism, including the brain.¹³⁶ However, there are parts of the body in which receptors and peptides appear in high concentration. Among the most important 'nodal points' or 'hot spots' in which informational substances can be found more densely is the limbic system, the part of the brain traditionally believed

¹³¹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 63.

¹³² *Ibid*, 25.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 71.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 70.

to be the ‘seat of the emotions,’ areas—such as the amygdala and the hippocampus—which have indeed been found to regulate emotional behaviour.¹³⁷ Pert and her colleagues studied the location of twenty-two peptides, and found that a “whopping 85 to 95 percent” is located in the limbic system.¹³⁸

High concentration is, however, not only observed within the brain, but also in certain body parts such as along the spinal cord,¹³⁹ and on the lining of the intestines.¹⁴⁰ Pert argues that these biochemical substances, the peptides and their receptors, are “the physiological substrates of emotion, the molecular underpinnings of what we experience as feelings, sensations, thoughts, drives, perhaps even spirit or soul.”¹⁴¹ They are the molecules of emotion. Emotion here is understood as a wider term that includes many levels of homeostatic regulation,¹⁴² the different types of branches in Damasio’s Tree of Homeostasis.¹⁴³ They include the higher branches (emotions and feelings) and the lower ones: drives such as thirst and hunger, and pain or pleasure behaviours. As discussed previously, these are interrelated: parts of the simpler mechanisms are incorporated into the more elaborate ones.¹⁴⁴

Pert gives an example of such links between drives and ‘higher’ emotions when discussing how the nucleus of Barrington, an area of the brain controlling micturition, is also linked to colonic distention and genital arousal. A short neuronal

¹³⁷ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 133.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 133.

¹³⁹ See *ibid*, 140–142.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 188.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 130.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 131.

¹⁴³ As discussed above.

¹⁴⁴ See Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 37.

pathway links the Barrington nucleus to the locus coeruleus, “the norepinephrine-containing source of the ‘pleasure pathway,’ which is also very high in opiate receptors. The pleasure pathway hooks up to the control area of these bathroom functions.”¹⁴⁵ Because of such strong interconnections, between higher emotions and lower functions and drives, Pert’s choice to study emotion as a broader term is sound.

Pert argues that these informational substances, the molecules of emotion, “share intimate connections with, and are indeed inseparable from, our physiology. It is the emotions [...] that link mind and body.”¹⁴⁶ Pert’s theory offers a scientific explanation for what we experience as the psychophysical. We have already seen that emotions belong to both the corporeal and incorporeal realm. Pert introduces a radical theory to expand rather than replace this view: emotions serve as the link that brings these two realms together. The molecules of emotion translate “information into physical reality, literally transforming mind into matter. Emotions are at the nexus between matter and mind, going back and forth between the two and influencing both.”¹⁴⁷ Pert—like Damasio—also challenges the emotion-reason dichotomy claiming that emotions are not irrational; on the contrary, they are intelligent. It is the peptides and their receptors, i.e. the physiological substances of emotion that “allow the organism to run smoothly, intelligently.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 141.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 18–19.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 189.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 27.

Emotion theory and theatre practice

The previous section focused on William James, as the American psychologist has greatly—directly or indirectly—influenced and informed theatre practice. James’ theory is highly transferable to theatre practice, not only because of the clarification of the order of events, but most importantly, because of the implied causal relationship between emotion and feeling. James states: “if our theory be true, a necessary corollary of it ought to be that any voluntary arousal of the so-called manifestations of a special emotion ought to give us the emotion itself.”¹⁴⁹ Updating the above quote with Damasio’s vocabulary, James argues that if one voluntarily activates part or whole of the physiological arousal known to accompany emotion, the corresponding feeling will also be elicited.

I am afraid because I run

Stanislavski would have arguably found James’ theory extremely intriguing as it provides a useful tool for his lifelong search: awakening the subconscious through conscious means. Carnicke discusses Stanislavski’s use of the word subconscious, which she emphasises is a ‘friendly’ and creative subconscious, dissimilar to Strasberg’s darker Freudian conception of the term.¹⁵⁰ The Stanislavski expert also points out that the means or ‘lures’ used by Stanislavski to awaken the unconscious and to consequently allow *experiencing*, are the same as those proposed by the

¹⁴⁹ James, “What is an Emotion,” 197.

¹⁵⁰ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 161.

Russian practitioner to access emotion.¹⁵¹ Emotion and the unconscious therefore appear to be interrelated in Stanislavskian thought, often referring to the same process, namely the awakening of the actor's inner life.

Director Katie Mitchell proposes that Stanislavski was influenced by James,¹⁵² however there is no evidence that the Russian had read James' writings.¹⁵³ Carnicke does not mention the American psychologist as one of Stanislavski's influences, while she thoroughly acknowledges other influences from the field of psychology.¹⁵⁴ However, Whyman points out that James' theories have indeed provided inspiration for Stanislavski's work indirectly,¹⁵⁵ through the writings of the French psychologist Theodule Ribot, whose work he encountered in 1908.¹⁵⁶ The influence of Ribot on the work of Stanislavski is well known; the Russian practitioner himself acknowledges it when introducing the notion of affective or emotion memory.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Carnicke, 160.

¹⁵² Katie Mitchell, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (Routledge: Abingdon; New York, 2009), 231–232.

¹⁵³ Rhonda Blair also suggests that Stanislavski read James; See Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008) xi. However, Whyman clearly states that there is no direct evidence that he did so. See Rose Whyman, "The Actor's Second Nature: Stanislavski and William James," *New Theatre Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2007): 118.

¹⁵⁴ See Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 148–166.

¹⁵⁵ Whyman, "The Actor's Second Nature," 118.

¹⁵⁶ See Benedetti's endnotes in Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 677.

¹⁵⁷ Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 197–198.

The Psychophysical

Ribot echoes James when arguing that “an emotion which does not vibrate through the whole body is nothing but a purely intellectual state.”¹⁵⁸ The emphasis on the physical resonated with Stanislavski’s search for tangible means or pathways to access the intangible. However, this is not a solely physical process; Stanislavski is evidently dissatisfied with his students when they only reproduce the physical aspect of an *étude* and fail to rediscover the inner life that accompanied it.¹⁵⁹ Stanislavski is interested in a *psychophysical* process, rather than a mechanical reproduction of the exterior. Even when he speaks of physical actions, he means above all—as Barba points out—a “succession of attitudes or movements possessed of their own inner life.”¹⁶⁰

The term psychophysical introduced into actor training primarily by Stanislavski was most probably inspired by Ribot’s writings. Ribot stresses the psychophysiological nature of emotion, crediting James and Lange for demonstrating “the capital importance of physiological factors in emotion.”¹⁶¹ He argues that a bodiless emotion is an abstraction; emotion can only be understood as a psychophysiological

¹⁵⁸ Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1897), 163.

¹⁵⁹ See for example the discussion on the repetition of the ‘madman’ exercise in Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 195–186: “If the external action, the mises-en-scene, the grouping are not substantiated from within, they are mere form, dry, and unnecessary for us on stage.”

¹⁶⁰ Barba, “An Amulet Made of Memory,” 99.

¹⁶¹ Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, 93.

event and stresses that “there is no manifestation of psychic life [...] which depends more immediately on biological condition” than emotion.¹⁶²

Ribot stresses that understanding the notions of soul and body as separate entities is outdated and uncomformable to the real nature of emotion and other so-called mental phenomena. He instead advocates a psychophysical understanding of emotion, rejecting old dualistic perceptions often associated with the French philosopher René Descartes, such as the reason/emotion and body/mind dichotomies: “no state of consciousness can be dissociated from its physical conditions: they constitute a natural whole, which must be studied as such. [...] It is a single occurrence expressed in two languages.”¹⁶³

This holistic approach to emotion heavily influenced the Russian practitioner. It is important, however, to also note that Stanislavski’s understanding of the psychophysical was enriched by the simultaneous research on yoga and Eastern thought. As Carnicke points out, yoga “offered him different and in ways more satisfying models for mind/body relationship than science alone could offer. These models he found not only theoretically but, more to the point, practically useful.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, 93.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 112.

¹⁶⁴ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 175.

Our virtues are habits as much as our vices

Rose Whyman argues that James has also informed another aspect of Stanislavski's work: the emphasis on the efficacy of repetition and the subsequent necessity for constant practice, applicable both to the training and the rehearsal process. As a fervent advocate of daily practice, Stanislavski often quoted Volkonsky's aphorism: "what is difficult becomes habitual, the habitual easy, and the easy beautiful."¹⁶⁵ The use of the word habit in a positive manner is in line with the Jamesian thought. In *Talks to Teachers On Psychology* James stresses that although there is a tendency to associate habit with negative patterns of behaviour, even addictions such as smoking and excessive drinking, "the fact is that our virtues are habits as much as our vices."¹⁶⁶ The American psychologist added that talking to students about the power of habit strongly encourages them to take responsibility and pursue the development of positive habits. Pupils should be encouraged to make their nervous system an ally, rather than an enemy, and remember that "every good that is worth possessing must be paid for in strokes of daily effort."¹⁶⁷

James also stresses that higher functions are encouraged when the simpler ones can effortlessly be conducted by habit or automatism: "the more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our

¹⁶⁵ Whyman, "The Actor's Second Nature," 117.

¹⁶⁶ William James, "The Laws of Habits" in *Talks to Teachers On Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1925) <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16287/16287-h/16287-h.htm> (accessed 15/05/18).

¹⁶⁷ James, *Talks to Teachers*.

higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work.”¹⁶⁸ Whyman points out that this resonates with Stanislavski’s prompt to make the system a ‘second nature’ so that actors can be liberated from the need to consciously think about the technique and can thus achieve *experiencing*. It also relates to the extensive rehearsal process, that will—through habit and ‘muscle memory’¹⁶⁹—allow the actor to focus on the experience of the role, rather than attempting to remember their lines or a sequence of actions. However, one has to be cautious not to reach the other extreme, which can result in a mechanical reproduction of lines and the *mise-en-scène* that inhibits *experiencing*.

Repetition of a certain task eventually makes the task easier and increases the quality of its performance. Repetition can also potentially encourage the appearance of other elements—that are highly desirable but less accessible—indirectly, through the power of association. Stanislavski’s understanding of this principle led to the development of the Method of Physical Actions. Katie Mitchell attributes the inspiration for this approach to James’ theory:

Here is a way of looking at emotions that separates off the physical response from consciousness and the mental processes that follow this moment of consciousness. It points to a way of working on emotions through recreating their physical shape or circumstances. I could see

¹⁶⁸ James, *Talks to Teachers*.

¹⁶⁹ Whyman points out that Stanislavski associates ‘muscle memory’ with mechanical acting. See Whyman, “The Actor’s Second Nature,” 120. However, I use the term with a positive quality, as synonymous to Grotowski’s notion of *body memory* that will be discussed in Chapter Two.

how James's observations might have affected Stanislavsky's work on physical actions in the 1890s.¹⁷⁰

However, it should be noted that James refers to *emotion-specific* physiological arousal, rather than any kind of movement. The Method of Physical Actions could have been inspired instead by Ribot's emphasis on the motor factors surrounding—rather than comprising—an emotional event and the role these play in the active remembering of the relevant emotion. Among other examples, Ribot quotes Fouillée discussing a potential pathway for recalling physical pain: “To this end we must employ an *indirect* method. This procedure consists in directly calling up the images and motor reactions which accompany or follow toothache. [...] Thus I also revive the motor reaction caused by the pain, the convulsion of the jaw, etc.”¹⁷¹ (Emphasis added, to stress the use of the word indirect.) This could have inspired Stanislavski's indirect approach to emotion. Elsewhere, Ribot focuses on visual, auditory, and ‘tactile-motor’¹⁷² stimuli, such as feeling the carpet under one's feet.¹⁷³ He argues these can also evoke emotion by association.

Pavlov and classical conditioning

It is also possible that Stanislavski was inspired by the *conditioned reflexes* discussion that was extremely popular in the years leading to the development of the Method of Physical Actions. This term was introduced in 1934, thirty years after Ivan Pavlov, mostly known for his study of conditioned reflexes, became the first

¹⁷⁰ Mitchell, *The Director's Craft*, 231.

¹⁷¹ Fouillée quoted in Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, 151.

¹⁷² Ribot, 157.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 155–156.

Russian Nobel laureate.¹⁷⁴ Although Carnicke stresses that Stanislavski was not particularly interested in Pavlov's work,¹⁷⁵ it is possible that the Russian theatre practitioner was influenced by Pavlov's discoveries indirectly through his pupil, Vsevolod Meyerhold. Roach and Pitches point out that Pavlov's findings have heavily informed Meyerhold's practice.¹⁷⁶ It is likely that Stanislavski's more pronounced focus on the physical aspect of the actor's process at later stages of his work might have been informed by the teachings of his three pupils Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, and Michael Chekhov.¹⁷⁷

In *Conditioned Reflexes and Psychiatry* Ivan Pavlov describes the experiments that led to the discovery of the principle that came to be called classical conditioning. During the first experiment, a mild acid solution was poured into a dog's mouth; the dog naturally ejected the solution and salivation occurred to wash away any remaining harmful substance. After this response was established, a second experiment was conducted: An external agent, in this case a sound, was repeatedly presented before the introduction of the solution. The dog eventually associated the external agent with the acid solution, and started salivating upon hearing the sound. The dog had thus been *conditioned* to respond to a previously *neutral stimulus*, that

¹⁷⁴ Whyman points out that the term was not used until 1934, although the ideas that led to it would have most probably be present in Stanislavski's practice and thought much earlier. See Whyman, "The Actor's Second Nature," 121.

¹⁷⁵ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 162.

¹⁷⁶ See Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 198–203. See also Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 54–55.

¹⁷⁷ Carnicke points out that Stanislavski eventually felt he had reached a 'dead end' with realism and sought new ways of working. As part of this search for 'new paths,' he expressed interest in Meyerhold's experimentations. See Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 171.

had transformed with time and repetition into a *conditioned stimulus*, capable of triggering a certain reaction by association.¹⁷⁸ The dog had showed evidence of learning. Classical conditioning has since been applied to theories of learning and teaching practices, although Pavlov himself was not particularly interested in making such links. He was generally more interested in “the perennial search for experimental facts as opposed to the writing down of his results” and thus postponed “the transfer of his activities from the laboratory to the desk till the age of 90.”¹⁷⁹

The applicability of conditioned reflexes to acting is apparent: conditioned reflexes are automatic responses, such as salivating, which cannot be activated at will, but can be ‘programmed’ through repetition and association. Once a response becomes conditioned, it can reliably reappear every time the conditioned stimulus is present, and there is no longer need for the presence of a ‘real’ unconditioned stimulus. Therefore, emotions can potentially be elicited when a sequence of physical actions is performed, as long as said actions are associated with an awakening of the inner life of the performer.

Stanislavski might have not read Pavlov, but he was aware of his findings. Whyman points out that the Russian practitioner “was encouraged to believe that Pavlov’s work would elucidate the theoretical basis of his system.”¹⁸⁰ Still, Carnicke stresses that such connections between Pavlovian behaviourism and the System have been overstressed and blown out of proportion following Stanislavski’s death, with

¹⁷⁸ For a description of these experiments, see among others Ivan Petrovitch Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes and Psychiatry*, ed. and trans. W. Horsley Gantt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1941), 168–169.

¹⁷⁹ W. Horsley Gantt, “Introduction” in Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes*, 11.

¹⁸⁰ Whyman, “The Actor’s Second Nature,” 118.

detrimental consequences for the understanding of the System.¹⁸¹ I do not wish to fall into a similar trap, even if indirect or direct Pavlovian influences are plausible, whether acknowledged by Stanislavski or not.

Other theatre practitioners have strongly acknowledged the impact of Pavlov's findings on their practice. Among the most fervent supporters has been Lee Strasberg, the well-known former director of the Actor's Studio. Strasberg developed The Method, an acting technique known for the pursuit of genuine emotional experience on stage, often achieved through the use of controversial *emotion recall* exercises. Strasberg exclaims: "That's how we're trained. Not from Freud, but from Pavlov."¹⁸² However, it is not certain whether Strasberg's understanding of the links between classical conditioning and actor training are the same as the ones outlined above. In his *Notes* he lists the holistic view of the psychophysical continuum as a Pavlovian influence, although as discussed above, such an understanding of the body-mind can more accurately be traced back to James and Ribot.¹⁸³ Elsewhere, he discusses the elimination of bad habits that are imposed by society and aim to block emotional responses. He instead suggests an actor needs to replace them with good habits that allow them to organically respond to stimuli. Strasberg acknowledges this as a Pavlovian influence, stating that "everything that was conditioned can be reconditioned."¹⁸⁴ Although the terminology suggests Pavlovian influences, the

¹⁸¹ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 163.

¹⁸² Strasberg as cited in Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 163.

¹⁸³ See Lee Strasberg, *The Lee Strasberg Notes*, ed. Lola Cohen (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

principle discussed, namely the pursuit of positive habits and elimination of negative ones, can also be linked back to James.

Meyerhold on the other hand, has an understanding of Pavlovian ideas similar to the one discussed above. A look at Meyerhold's *Programme of Biomechanics* should make the point clearer. Meyerhold is interested in: "the human organism as an auto motive mechanism. [...] Psychic phenomena, simple physico-chemical reactions in the form of tropisms, taxis, or purely physiological reflexes."¹⁸⁵ Elsewhere he stresses that the actor should have "the innate capacity for reflex excitability" and "physical competence."¹⁸⁶ His vocabulary has strong Pavlovian influences. By emphasising reflexes and 'auto motive mechanisms' Meyerhold does "not ignore the inner, emotional aspects of performance but [is] eager to find a way in which they could be controlled [and] understood, in physical and objective terms."¹⁸⁷ The Russian director does not simply reduce emotion to a reflex reaction either. On the contrary, he expects the actor to be in control of their 'reflex excitability.' He therefore coins the paradoxical term *volitional reflex*, which, in Pitches' words, is "an instinctive motor reaction subject to wilful control. Put another way, Meyerhold [wants] Pavlov's dog to decide whether or not to salivate!"¹⁸⁸

Meyerhold is in search of a methodology that relies on scientific evidence and is capable of optimising the actor's performance. Pitches points out that Pavlov's work provided an appropriate theoretical framework for Meyerhold's *Biomechanics*, both

¹⁸⁵ Meyerhold as quoted by Pitches, in Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 56.

¹⁸⁶ Pitches, 56.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 57.

because of the emphasis on the “material side of psychic research,” and because of the experimental nature of his research, that was in line with Meyerhold’s own theatrical experimentations taking place within the ‘theatre laboratories’ of GITIS (the State Institute for Theatrical Art) and GVYRM (the State Higher Directors’ Workshop).¹⁸⁹

Excitation transfer studies

The mention of theatre laboratory brings to mind another theatre pioneer who placed experimentation at the core of his practice. Jerzy Grotowski, whose theatre company was called the Laboratory Theatre conducted rigorous practical research on actor training and radical experimentations in staging and directing. Grotowski was not as interested in the applicability of scientific developments in theatre as such, although he had expressed interest in the ideas of Jung and Pavlov.¹⁹⁰ However, his research on the performer’s craft follows scientific principles: the search for objectivity, the “separation of elements” to better understand the whole,¹⁹¹ and the study of shared principles, or better a search for the “sources:” the “points that precede the differences.”¹⁹²

Although Grotowski might not have used the findings of psychology and science to improve his practice like his predecessors Stanislavski and Meyerhold, he inherited

¹⁸⁹ See Pitches, 52; 54.

¹⁹⁰ See Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Methuen Drama, 1985), 117.

¹⁹¹ Lisa Wolford, *Grotowski’s Objective Drama Research*, Performance Studies (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 9.

¹⁹² Jerzy Grotowski, “Theatre of Sources,” in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 261.

such links through incorporating elements from their practice. The influence of Stanislavski, especially in relation to the Method of Physical Actions is well-known.¹⁹³ Another element I would like to point out is an interesting link between the *excitation transfer* experiments discussed above and Grotowski's practice. It would be an overstretch to say that Grotowski was aware of these experiments. After all, these studies took place around 1974, five years after the end of the Theatre of Productions and well into Grotowski's Paratheatrical experimentations.¹⁹⁴ The Polish pioneer's interest in the exploration of intense physical activity (or else the exploration of fatigue that will be thoroughly discussed in Chapters Two and Three) and its effect on the performer/doer had already been developed by then.¹⁹⁵ However, the studies validate aspects of his practice, as they provide evidence that the excitation coming from rigorous physical activity can be channelled into an emotion, that can be experienced and perceived as an awakening of the performer's inner life. This is in line with the multiple observations made by actors participating in such

¹⁹³ See for example Thomas Richards, "Stanislavski and Grotowski: The Connection" in *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 3–8.

¹⁹⁴ The stages of Grotowski's practice have been laid out by Schechner and Wolford in *The Grotowski Sourcebook* and have largely been unchallenged. Theatre of Productions (1959–69) marks the early stages of Grotowski's practice, where the focus was on directing theatre productions. Among the most well-known such productions are *Akropolis* (1962), *The Constant Prince* (1965), and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1968). Theatre of Participation/Paratheatre (1969–78) includes Grotowski's experimentations after Theatre of Productions. Moving away from a clear theatrical form, this phase of Grotowski's practice made his experimentations accessible to a larger number of participants. The paratheatrical activities were open to participants from diverse backgrounds and led by more experienced work-leaders. One could only witness these experimentations through actively participating, as no spectators were allowed to observe these encounters between the participants.

¹⁹⁵ The term 'doer' is used here as it better resonates with later stages of Grotowski's practice that were not geared towards creating a theatrical performance.

rigorous performer training sessions. For example, Stephen Wangh describes his experience working with Grotowski as such: “the exhilaration of the bodily exertion itself seemed to spur my emotional courage.”¹⁹⁶ This is not surprising, as intense physical activity affects not only the actor’s skeletal muscles, but also the function of viscera and endocrine glands: heavy perspiration, increased heart rate, and the release of hormones are encouraged. Such physiological arousal is similar to what happens to one’s body during emotional arousal as discussed in the previous section.

However, one needs to be cautious not to oversimplify Grotowski’s sophisticated use of excitation to awaken the inner life of the performer. The *excitation transfer* experiments have shown that physical activity itself is not enough to activate emotion; there is a need for a stimulus. Similarly, in actor training the physical excitation alone does not trigger emotion. The actor must also receive impulses from the working material (e.g. song, text) and/or a partner. The term partner is broadly understood to include impulses coming from a non-human external source, such as music. Exertion alone is therefore not sufficient; without the right kind of openness to receive stimuli, the right kind of stimuli explored, and the right kind of physical activity chosen the performer might ‘just get tired’ as Thomas Richards puts it.¹⁹⁷

Moving away from the discoveries of psychology and neuroscience, the next chapter will focus on the depth and breadth of knowledge that comes from theatre practitioners, and especially the knowledge that relates to the nature of acted emotion, and the potential pathways to activate it.

¹⁹⁶ Stephen Wangh, *An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting Inspired by the Work of Jerzy Grotowski* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), xxii.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 68.

Chapter Two

In search of the Triggers

Having grasped a better understanding of what emotion is, and how some theatre practitioners' work can be examined in tandem with the findings of psychology and neurobiology, I will return to the question that drives my practice: how can the trainer help an actor access emotion? To address this question, this chapter will review how a group of selected key theatre practitioners of the 20th century have approached emotion. This list of practitioners examined is not exhaustive; the practices discussed here have been selected because they provide theoretical insights and/or exercises and principles for the practical aspect of the research. I have only considered practices of which I have some experiential understanding; thus this list is inevitably—to an extent—subjective. Yet, there is still an objective principle that guides this selection: the focus on the awakening of the inner life of the performer. I will follow some post-Stanislavskian and post-Grotowskian threads, and also examine Tadashi Suzuki and Theodoros Terzopoulos, whose practice was relevant particularly to the early focus of my research on Greek tragedy. I will also discuss Alba Emoting, a technique that has been developed specifically to help actors access emotions. This review of practice follows a roughly chronological order while also taking into account the relationship of the examined practitioners to their lineages and allowing this consideration to inform the order in which the practices are discussed.

Before proceeding to the review, it is important to clarify two points in relation to the vocabulary used in this chapter: as previously discussed, the word emotion—the preferred term for this research—is understood as an all-encompassing term, synonymous to an inner awakening of the actor that can be perceived by the observer. In the following pages, I will often follow each practitioner’s vocabulary, while also referring back to the preferred term for this research. Stanislavski and Chekhov, for example, mostly use the word feeling, whereas Richards refers to inner action and Barba to *bios*. I will address these terms, as well as keeping to my own vocabulary. Most of the practitioners examined here have written extensively about their practice. I therefore mainly focus on their own writings, attempting to read between the lines, to identify how emotion is approached even when it is given a different name. I also examine their practice (both training methods and performances, if possible) looking for elements that contribute to such an inner awakening that I can borrow and explore with my own students.

My second point is also a matter of vocabulary: I have chosen to use the term trigger to refer to those lures or decoys used by the practitioners to help actors access emotion, preparing the ground for the following discussion on my own practice. I do acknowledge that this term is not used by the practitioners themselves; trigger is rather the term I use for my own practice.

Finally, I would like to note that not all practitioners discussed in this section have provided exercises or principles for me to practically explore. Some are discussed because of the insights they have offered on the nature of acted emotion; insights that have indirectly influenced my experimentations with emotion. Practical influences will be discussed in detail and will be clearly indicated in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Researcher's Relevant Training

I would like to give a brief account of where my understanding of the theatre practitioners that informed my practice—all of whom will be discussed here—originates. I am not an expert in all the examined techniques; however, I have tried to get a good grasp of most of them, both by engaging with the relevant literature and audio-visual material available, and by training with the relevant practitioners themselves, or, if not possible, their followers.

Konstantin Stanislavski

I am trained as a classical actor and much of my training has been Stanislavski-based. During my B.A. in Theatre Studies (major Acting-Directing) I was taught by Lena Filippova, a Russian national who studied Stanislavski for four years at the Kyiv State Theatre Institute. The training lasted one year (2005–06) and the focus was on the Actor's Work on the Self phase, rather than on character. During the same degree (2005–07) I was also taught Directing based on Active Analysis, by Kostantinos Arvanitakis, the principle of a prestigious Greek drama school (Athens Conservatory), who trained at the National Theatre of Greece (BA Acting) as well as the New York University (Film Studies) and the University of California (MFA Theatre Directing.) Although Arvanitakis has trained in the States rather than Russia, what he taught us was pure Active Analysis, perhaps a little more 'systematised' than the way AA is approached by the Russians. We never touched upon Emotion Recall or any other Method practices, hence my references to Strasberg when discussing my own practice will be sparse.

During my B.A. in Acting (2007–2010) at the Delos Drama School in Athens, I trained for three years with students of Karolos Koun, considered to be one of the best Greek theatre directors and acting teachers of modern times. Koun named his school and company Art Theatre after Stanislavski's MXAT, as he shared the vision and followed the principles of the Russian pioneer.

In 2011, I studied for two months at the Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute in Moscow, also known in the U.K. as the Vakhtangov Institute. I have also been taught for a year by one of their graduates, Oleg Mirochnikov, while doing my MA in European Classical Acting at Drama Centre London (2010–11). Mirochnikov is considered one of the leading acting coaches and Russian Theatre experts in the U.K., combining the methodologies of Stanislavski, Meyerhold and Vakhtangov in his teachings.

Grotowski and post-Grotowskians:

In 2012 I attended the Summer Intensive workshop organised by the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. I trained with Thomas Richards' group (Focused Research Team in Art as Vehicle) for two weeks.

In 2013, I attended a month-long workshop led by Prof. Grzegorz Ziółkowski, the former programme director of the Grotowski Institute (2004–2009). Ziółkowski is a Professor at the Drama, Theatre and Performance Department of Adam Mickiewicz University. He is both a scholar and a practitioner who has studied the work of Grotowski extensively.

I have attended various short workshops led by Grzegorz Bral and Song of the Goat Theatre (2014–15).

I have also trained with less known practitioners influenced by Grotowski, such as Ryszard Nieoczym (2012), who states on his biography that he is “a former student and collaborator of Grotowski in both his theatrical and Para theatrical [*sic*] work,”¹⁹⁸ and Stamatis Efstathiou (2017) who has been wandering “around Europe following masters in Poland, in France, in Germany and in Serbia.”¹⁹⁹ Raul Iaiza, a long-time collaborator of Eugenio Barba, with whom I trained for a week in Brzezinka in 2014, is also influenced by Grotowski, and his work could be included in the wider group of post-Grotowskians.

Odin Teatret

Eugenio Barba is heavily influenced by Grotowski, and based his own methodology on what he had learned from his Polish mentor during his apprenticeship in Poland. In September 2014, I attended the Odin Festival, organised by the Grotowski Institute to celebrate Odin Teatret’s 50th anniversary. This was a week-long event (2–7 September) that included workshops, performances, work demonstrations, and discussions with Eugenio Barba. This festival was very similar to the Odin Week Festival that is organised every summer by Odin Teatret, and “offers the opportunity of a full immersion in Odin Teatret's diverse fields as a laboratory.”²⁰⁰ Following this I trained for a couple of weeks with the Odin actor Roberta Carreri, in Holstebro (*The Dance of Intentions*, summer 2015).

¹⁹⁸ See <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/soundings-europe-canada-2017-richard-nieoczym>, (accessed 15/07/17).

¹⁹⁹ See Efstathiou’s bio here <http://atroposttheatre.blogspot.co.uk/p/philosophy-history.html> (accessed 15/07/17).

²⁰⁰ See Odin Teatret website, <http://www.odinteatret.dk/workshops/odin-week-festival.aspx>, (accessed 15/07/17).

Theodoros Terzopoulos and Tadashi Suzuki

In the summer of 2015, I attended a month-long workshop with Theodoros Terzopoulos (The Method of Theodoros Terzopoulos). I also attended a day-long workshop with Lukas Angelini and Will Wheeler (Yoga and the Suzuki Actor training Method) in January 2016.

Alba Emoting

Finally, I have trained in Alba Emoting with Jessica Beck (May 2013 and August 2014) and Rocco Dal Vera (August 2014).

I will now proceed to review some key theatre practitioners' methodologies, in search of potential triggers for emotional activation.

A Review of Selected Practitioners' Approach to Emotion

Konstantin Stanislavski

As discussed in the Introduction, Stanislavski stressed that emotions are like wild animals and can only be lured, rather than accessed directly.²⁰¹ Like a whisperer, the actor should gently open ways for emotion to come, rather than going after it, forcing it, and therefore scaring it away. The process is delicate and the difference between a “stock-in-trade”²⁰² and a truthfully experienced artistically-induced emotion “can be both subtle and crucial.”²⁰³

Throughout his life, the Russian pioneer was looking for ways to activate the actor’s “creative subconscious by indirect, conscious means,”²⁰⁴ so that the actor could reach the state of *experiencing*, during which they are “completely taken over by the play [...] and everything comes out spontaneously.”²⁰⁵ Benedetti warns us that *experiencing* does not just mean emotional involvement, as the term is often

²⁰¹ Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 191.

²⁰² Term used by Stanislavski to describe the highly technical actor that does not experience the life of the character, but only demonstrates skilful representation. The term was used to differentiate this form of acting from Stanislavski’s search for “the stage as art” acting, synonymous to *experiencing*. For a discussion on ‘stock-in-trade’ acting see Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 28–36.

²⁰³ Declan Donnellan, “Introduction”, in Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, p. x.

²⁰⁴ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 17.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

mistakenly translated into English.²⁰⁶ He instead defines it as “the process by which an actor engages actively with the situation in each and every performance.”²⁰⁷ Yet, this active engagement often involves emotion; when an actor is *experiencing*, emotions are also present, and vice versa. Quoting the Italian actor Tommaso Salvini, Stanislavski’s alter ego, Tortsov, stresses that “every great actor should feel, really feel what he is portraying.”²⁰⁸

When the actor is engaged to that extent the audience is also “surrendered totally to what is happening, [...] stunned and fired by the same common emotion.”²⁰⁹ This is crucial to understanding Stanislavski’s insistence on emotional involvement from the part of the actor, not only during the rehearsal process but during every performance. The actor’s emotional involvement was necessary to move the audience and to create a shared experience for actors and spectators alike, during which “a thousand hearts are beating in unison with the actor’s heart” and therefore “a wonderful resonant acoustic is created.”²¹⁰ This beautiful musical metaphor used by Stanislavski foresees the emphasis he will later put on *tempo-rhythm* as a trigger for emotional activation.

Understanding the actor-audience relationship pursued by Stanislavski is vital, as it relates to emotional activation both for performers and the audience. Stanislavski described the ‘public solitude’ that one experiences when acting in front of an

²⁰⁶ Jean Benedetti, “Translator’s Foreword” in Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, xxi.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, xviii.

²⁰⁸ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 19.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 294.

audience as a “delightful feeling.”²¹¹ He maintained that acting without an audience is like “singing in a room filled with carpets and soft furnishings, that [deaden] the acoustic.”²¹² The actor’s emotions are channelled to the audience, only to be magnified and returned back to the actor: an “invisible current” is created as the emotionally stimulated audience “creates the performance with us.”²¹³ The fourth wall and public solitude can thus be seen under a very different light: the audience is not to be blocked out and ignored. As Carnicke points out, the belief that Stanislavski taught actors to ignore the audience is a “widespread misconception in the US” that needs to be corrected.²¹⁴ On the contrary, Stanislavski’s actor is conscious of the fact that they are creating an experience *for* and *with* the audience.

The ‘lures’ for emotional activation

Stanislavski emphasised that all elements of the System are interrelated. One could perhaps conclude that emotion should therefore not be studied separately. However, during his long search for organic, truthful, and connected acting, the Russian pioneer identified some elements of the System as triggers for emotional activation. The first ‘lures’ or ‘decoys’ for emotion revealed in *An Actor’s Work* are the actor’s full commitment to the given circumstances and the focus on specific “well-founded, apt and productive” actions.²¹⁵ A well-known example of an incident where emotional activation is brought about through the lures of action and given circumstances is the *brooch improvisation*. Stanislavski instructs Marya, one of his

²¹¹ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 294.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 157.

²¹⁵ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 42.

students, to search for a brooch pinned on a curtain. In the context of the improvisation, finding the brooch would mean that Marya can continue studying at the drama school by using the valuable brooch to pay for her fees; failing to find it would result in her being expelled.

On her first encounter with the *étude*, Marya is preoccupied with *showing* that she is in an emotional state, instead of truly looking for the brooch. Stanislavski comments on her insincere performance, pointing out that the student is *representing* rather than *experiencing* emotion: her hands are “conclusively clutched against her breast, which, evidently, was meant to express the tragic aspect of the situation.”²¹⁶ He adds that those watching “could scarcely contain” their laughter.²¹⁷

Following this unsuccessful attempt, Tortsov reminds the student that if she fails to find the brooch she will be “done for, [...] thrown out.”²¹⁸ At that moment the student’s sense of belief is triggered, which results in the activation of her imagination and a full commitment to the given circumstances. The student is no longer demonstrating; she genuinely starts looking for the brooch as if her future depends on finding it. The combination of high stakes (fear of being expelled), being in action (looking for the brooch), and the full commitment to the given circumstances, triggers a strong emotion. Her performance this time is condensed and quiet, yet much more powerful:

Marya’s face turned grave. She fixed her eyes upon the curtain and began to examine every fold of the material attentively,

²¹⁶ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 41.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

systematically. This time the search proceeded in a different incomparably slower tempo, and we could all believe that Marya was not wasting a moment, that she was sincerely worried and anxious. [...] We watched her with bated breath.²¹⁹

Stanislavski selects a set of given circumstances very close to Marya's own for this étude. One might then wonder: does the student truly believe she will be expelled? This could not be the case, as the inability to pay the school and the existence of the brooch are imaginary circumstances, that do not correspond to Marya's situation. The actress is still functioning on a double consciousness: she fully commits to her actions 'as if' she is under the danger of being expelled. However, Stanislavski's selection of given circumstances so close to Marya's own is probably not made at random. By making this small leap into believing that she has no money to pay for the school at this early stage of the training, the student-actor can later make bigger leaps into more complicated and distant given circumstances.

Another lure identified by Stanislavski is concentration. In a different exercise, Kostya, the fictional student narrating *An Actor's Work*, is asked to focus his attention on a light bulb. Stanislavski explains that in order to maintain concentration for a longer period the student-actor often has to be stimulated, so that the task becomes more engaging. In this instance, Stanislavski uses the aid of imagination to keep the student engaged: Kostya is asked to act 'as if' the light bulb was a monster's eye. The thought of the monster, actively stimulating the student's imagination, helps Kostya focus and eventually deeply concentrate on his task. Soon after, emotion appears. Focusing on something specific, no matter how small, "involves not merely

²¹⁹ Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 41–42.

the object, it sets the whole of an actor's creative apparatus to work.'²²⁰ Concentrating on an action (psychological or physical), a fellow actor, or anything else that is specific and tangible encourages the awakening of inner life. It might be worth noting that a psychological action also always has an external focus: to persuade, to seduce somebody, to reassure the partner, to open or hide oneself.

Stanislovski emphasises the need for a concrete and tangible point of entry to emotion again while discussing the stimulus of visualisation:

the things we see are more freely, more deeply engraved on our visual memory and are resurrected anew in our representations of them. [...] So let the more accessible, the more amenable mental images help us revive and pin down the less accessible, the less stable, innermost feelings.²²¹

Stanislovski points out that since visual memory is more concrete than emotion memory, one can rely on the former to access the latter. However, the images he is referring to are not only remembered but also imagined. He points out that even our dreams “despite their illusory character” are more “material” than the intangible feelings.²²² The focus on the specific, detailed, and tangible should not be overlooked in favour of an interpretation disproportionately highlighting the use of visual memory as a mere point of access to emotion memory. After all, it is stressed that visual memory is more accessible and therefore useful, because it relies on remembering or imagining something concrete and ‘material.’

²²⁰ Stanislovski, *An Actor's Work*, 111. It is important to note here that Stanislovski refers to a ‘transformed object’: a light bulb imagined to be a monster's eye.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 76.

²²² *Ibid*.

In the previous chapter, I touched upon Ribot's strong influence on Stanislavski. The notion of *affective or emotion memory*, borrowed from the French psychologist, was thoroughly explored during the early experimentations at the First Studio, as Stanislavski was looking for practical applications of Ribot's theory: ways to help the actor have access to concrete (embodied) rather than abstract (intellectual) recollections of emotion. During these attempts to practically utilise Ribot's theory, the Russian pioneer experimented with emotion recall exercises. Such exploration of past memories was heavily criticised by others, and was later discarded by Stanislavski himself. As Sonia Moore puts it: "Stanislavski's early experiments in emotional memory [...] brought the actors to the point of hysteria and affected their nervous systems. This stage of Stanislavski's work has been recognized in Russia as one of the most dangerous periods in the history of the Moscow Art Theatre."²²³

Emotion recall is, however, only one, and a very limited, way to understand how emotion memory could be used as a tool for the actor. As Stanislavski points out, the actor "naturally evokes memories of things he has experienced in life;"²²⁴ whenever actors truthfully experience an emotion on stage, they bring with them memories of previous relevant experiences.²²⁵ These recollections of emotions are now distilled

²²³ Sonia Moore as quoted by Bloch in Susana Bloch, "Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions," *Theatre Topics* 3, no. 2 (1993): 136.

²²⁴ Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 279.

²²⁵ Stanislavski here anticipates Grotowski and the notion of *body memory* which will be discussed later.

and crystallised as Stanislavski puts it,²²⁶ thus the actor maintains a safe artistic distance to the events that caused similar experiences in real life:

all these traces of similar experiences and feelings are distilled into a single, wider, deeper memory. [...] Time is a wonderful filter, a powerful purifier of memories, of feelings one has had. Moreover, time is a great artist. It not only purifies, it lends poetry to memory.²²⁷

This transition from real life experience to ‘poetry’ is further explained by Kostya. The student describes how seeing a tragic accident—a homeless man being killed by a trolley bus—makes him feel terrified at first, indignation a couple of days later, and finally, a week after the incident, he can already remember this horrible accident in a poetic way; the tragic event transforms from a real-life experience into material for artistic creation. This observation is paradoxical; however, other examples of art such as the *Massacre de Chios* by Delacroix or El Greco’s *Christ Carrying the Cross*, also demonstrate that tragic events can be transformed into beautiful works of art, and support Stanislavski’s point. A similar process of crystallisation and beautification occurs when one is experiencing artistically-induced emotions. If it were otherwise, artistic creations engaging with the so-called negative emotions, situations, or characters, would be repulsive.

Stanislavski also suggests empathy as a tool as he emphasises that actor-students do not have to necessarily look for inspiration in their personal experiences; they can draw material from the lives of others. He calls this feeling of empathy ‘fellow-

²²⁶ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 206: ‘‘the process of crystallisation that takes place in our emotion memory.’’

²²⁷ Ibid.

feeling;’ this does gradually, with time and rehearsals, transform into feeling.²²⁸ The actor, he stresses, must search for inspiration everywhere, not only in personal experiences. No potential decoy to emotion is invalid; anything could be used as a trigger, and “actors must learn to surrender [...] without reserve” to such lures.²²⁹ Actor-students must practice and experiment with various decoys, so that emotion memories become eventually more accessible to them. They also have to discover which of these decoys are the most effective for them personally: “you have to be the gardener, so to speak, of your own heart, one who knows what grows from which seeds. You must not reject any subject, any stimulus to your Emotion Memory.”²³⁰

Stanislavski later identifies a lure even stronger than emotion memory; the trigger of *tempo-rhythm*:

There is an indissoluble link between Tempo-rhythm and feeling, and conversely between feeling and Tempo-rhythm, they are interconnected, interdependent and interactive. [...] We are talking about the immediate, frequently automatic effect Tempo-rhythm has on wilful, arbitrary, disobedient and apprehensive feelings, which won’t take orders, which shy away at the least hint of being forced and hide away where they can’t be got at.²³¹

Although all elements discussed above are indeed powerful decoys for emotion, Stanislavski concluded that tempo-rhythm is the most powerful one: it “is our closest friend and companion because it is frequently the direct, immediate [...] almost automatic stimulus to Emotion Memory and, consequently to inner

²²⁸ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 224.

²²⁹ Ibid, 213.

²³⁰ Ibid, 226.

²³¹ Ibid, 502.

experiencing.’’²³² The emphasis Stanislavski placed on tempo-rhythm as the strongest entry point to emotion is of high importance. This has not been stressed sufficiently, as attention has been often focused on emotion memory. For example, the Stanislavski scholar Sharon Marie Carnicke only refers to tempo-rhythm in passing in her two chapters on Emotion in *Stanislavsky in Focus*: ‘‘through the varying tempos and rhythms of such physical motions the emotional content of performances can emerge.’’²³³

Stanislavski demonstrates the effect of tempo-rhythm on the students’ emotional state by simply asking them to clap in slow tempo. Gradually increasing the tempo and the complexity of the rhythmical structure the students transition from boredom to excitement. Stanislavski then points out:

I can not only control your muscles but your feelings, your mood as well. I can first lull you to sleep and then whip you up into a frenzy and make you sweat buckets. [...] But I am not a wizard. It’s Tempo-Rhythm that has the magic and affects your inner mood.²³⁴

The Russian experimented with the lure of tempo-rhythm in various ways: from asking his students to do certain tasks following one or more metronomes, to asking them to perform actions in different rhythms this time not by using a metronome, but by changing the given circumstances. A well-known example of this is the *train station étude*, during which the student-actors arrive at a station to catch a train that leaves in one, five or fifteen minutes, with the expected differences in urgency and

²³² Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 502.

²³³ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 151.

²³⁴ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 468.

therefore emotional experience of the students.²³⁵ Stanislavski also stresses the difference between inner and outer tempo: for example, a walk in the forest and a funeral procession might have the same outer tempo-rhythm, however the inner tempo is completely different.²³⁶ The actor must thus also explore contrasting inner and outer tempi.

Stanislavski finally acknowledges the importance of external stimuli, such as the lights, sound effects, and the details on the set. These are not used only to “dazzle the audience,”²³⁷ but also to help the actors: “the production team must help us with everything they have at their disposal. Their skills are hidden stimuli for our Emotion Memory and recurrent feelings.”²³⁸ In the Introduction to *An Actor's Work* Donnellan mentions that Stanislavski's obsession with details and sound effects eventually irritated Anton Chekhov, who threatened to “begin his next play with the line ‘Isn't it incredible, such a hot summer and you can't hear a cicada anywhere!’”²³⁹ Although the emphasis on such details can be associated with the style of psychological realism, such choices did not serve purely aesthetic purposes; they were rather used as another decoy for the actor's emotional activation.

In addition to identifying potential lures for inner awakening, Stanislavski offers wisdom on the nature of acted emotion. He differentiates between ‘spur-of-the-moment’ and recurrent feelings. He admits that the former are highly desirable and proclaims: “may they visit us more often and intensify the truth of our emotions,

²³⁵ See Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 472.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 473.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 216.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 213.

²³⁹ Declan Donnellan, “Introduction” in Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, xi.

which we prize more than anything in our performance.’²⁴⁰ However, these ‘spur-of-the-moment’ strong emotions are not easily accessible and they should not be forced to (re)appear. The actor should instead aim for what Stanislavski calls ‘recurrent feelings’ which are weaker but more accessible. Emotions should never be ‘faked, or replaced by something else, some convoluted actor’s trick.’²⁴¹ One should instead accept what is happening in that moment ‘no matter if it [the emotion] is weaker than yesterday’s. The good thing is that it is today’s.’²⁴² Stanislavski urges his students not to try to bring back an emotion that ‘has gone forever.’²⁴³ He stresses that one should focus on the *process* rather than the outcome: ‘Not think about the feeling itself but think about what made it grow, the conditions which led to the experience [...] Never start with the result. It will not come of itself.’²⁴⁴ One needs to focus on the lures and trust that they will encourage the appearance of emotion, rather than forcibly attempting to revive what was experienced previously, whether in real life or in rehearsal.

Thus, working on emotion memory is not necessarily about remembering a specific emotion that has been experienced in the past and trying to relive it; that would be like trying to revive a dead flower rather than planting new seeds. Working with emotion memory is about diving into a pool of countless crystallised memories and bringing some of that material back into the acting process, not as they were once lived, but as experienced in the present moment.

²⁴⁰ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 208.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 209.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 207.

²⁴³ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 218.

The following section will discuss the work of Michael Chekhov, one of Stanislavski's pupils who, as Simon Callow puts it, "swallowed" his "ideas whole and then spat them out again in a radically different form."²⁴⁵ Chekhov's approach to emotion is simultaneously similar and radically different as the following discussion will reveal.

Michael Chekhov

The actor has to burn inside with an outer ease.

Michael Chekhov

Chekhov's book, *To the Actor*, begins with the observation that some actors experience feelings in rehearsal or on stage but fail to communicate them to the audience. He believes this is because of a lack of 'transparency' that would allow the actor's inner life to be seen and felt by others: these "wonderful thoughts and emotions are somehow trapped within their underdeveloped bodies."²⁴⁶ He therefore suggests that the actor's first and foremost concern should be to train her/his body in a way that will eventually turn it into a "sensitive membrane, a kind of receiver and conveyor of the subtlest images, feelings, emotions and will impulses."²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ The other two members of this group being Meyerhold and Vakhtangov. Simon Callow, 'Foreword' in Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), xvi.

²⁴⁶ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

In order to overcome the challenge of the resisting body that has not reached a state of transparency yet, the actor has to undertake a special kind of physical training. Chekhov acknowledges that gymnastics, fencing, dancing, and acrobatics are undoubtedly useful to the actor, but what is even more useful and essential for the craft is a physical training that awakens the actor's inner life: a "special kind of development in accordance with the particular requirements" of the actor's work. These requirements are a "sensitivity of the body to the psychophysical creative impulses," the "richness of the psychology itself," and the "complete obedience of the body and psychology to the actor."²⁴⁸ Every element of Chekhov's method could be argued to serve this purpose. The purpose of the training is not only to turn the body into a transparent membrane that will allow the inner life to be seen. The actor's body will also become increasingly sensitive to impulses and sensations through the training, which will, in turn, encourage the awakening of a strong and rich inner life. Working on the tangible body will allow the intangible inner life to grow stronger and become easily accessible.

It has been established thus far that the actor's body is both the point of entry to inner life, and the means by which emotions can, once awakened, be shared with the audience: the actor's body should become 'sensitive' and 'transparent.' The question, however, remains: how exactly can the actor access emotions safely, consistently, and with ease? Echoing his teacher, Chekhov warns us that artistic feelings cannot be ordered to come; they should instead be "coaxed by some technical means."²⁴⁹ The most important and perhaps most direct pathway Chekhov has discovered is the work

²⁴⁸ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 2–5.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 58.

with qualities. A physical action performed with a certain quality awakens sensations that in turn bring forth feelings. Chekhov explains:

Lift your arm. Lower it. What have you done? You have fulfilled a simple physical *action*. You have made a gesture. And you have made it without any difficulty. Why? Because, like every *action*, it is completely within your will. Now make the same gesture, but this time colour it with a certain *quality*. Let this quality be *caution*. You will make your gesture, your movement *cautiously*. Have you not done it with the same ease? Do it again and again and see what happens. Your movement, made cautiously, is no longer a mere physical action; now it has acquired a certain *psychological nuance*.²⁵⁰

Chekhov points out that unlike emotional experiencing that is independent of the actor's will, moving with a certain quality is completely under their control. The actor must be careful not to try to force their emotions; they must trust that qualities awaken feelings 'easily and by themselves:' "sensation is [...] a kind of magnet which draws to it feelings and emotions akin to whatever quality you have chosen for your movement."²⁵¹ The work on the actor's body mentioned above, allowing the inner to be experienced and seen through the outer, is preparing the student-actor for this moment. Their bodies are now very responsive to the stimuli, impulses, and sensations awakened by the qualities and the physical actions.

However, there is one more element that needs to be added to this process, in order for it to be successful: the element of repetition. Chekhov stresses this with almost every exercise described in *To the Actor*: the more time one devotes to an exercise,

²⁵⁰ Original emphasis. Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 58–59.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 59.

the more responsive to it and therefore more receptive to its benefits one becomes. The body becomes increasingly transparent; the feelings become stronger and more nuanced.²⁵²

The question might arise: how does an actor choose the appropriate quality? Chekhov simply suggests trial and error: one can try different qualities one after the other, or simultaneously. When working simultaneously with more than one quality, the qualities explored merge into one sensation “like a dominant chord in music.”²⁵³ Chekhov adds that once the actor’s feelings have been awakened, the actor is carried away, and their “exercise, rehearsal, or performance [finds] true inspiration.”²⁵⁴ He seems to suggest that once the actor’s emotions are stimulated, everything else falls into place.

As previously discussed, emotions serve a very important purpose for Stanislavski: they are the strong if invisible link between the actor and the audience. For Chekhov it is Objective Atmospheres that serve this purpose. There is a strong link between atmospheres and individual feelings; however, Chekhov emphasises that these are not one and the same. Although individual feelings often contribute to the atmosphere of a scene, atmospheres are not comprised solely of emotions. Every place, event, or phenomenon has its own objective atmosphere: the famous example that Chekhov gives is the atmosphere of a road where a fatal accident just took place. Each member of the crowd present feels the “strong, depressing, tortuous,

²⁵² Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 69.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 60.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

frightening atmosphere of the scene.’’²⁵⁵ However, according to their individual personalities (compassionate, distant, cynical) and circumstances (relative, doctor, passer-by) they will have different subjective feelings. As Chamberlain puts it:

We don't see atmospheres any more than we see the air or the wind, but we feel them and they affect how we behave. We can notice the ways in which people are moved by specific atmospheres in the way that we can see leaves moved in the breeze and, as no two objects are affected in the same way by a gust of wind but respond according to their own natures, so different people are affected differently by the same atmosphere.²⁵⁶

If the director and the actors with the assistance of the members of the production team succeed in creating the right atmosphere, ‘‘the spectator will not be able to remain aloof from it.’’²⁵⁷ However, if the atmosphere is incorrect or lacking altogether, the audience fails to connect with the actors and to immerse in the world of the play; they therefore only acquire a dry, limited understanding of the play.²⁵⁸ Atmospheres can turn the cerebral into the visceral and an audience engaging only intellectually into an audience breathing and living with the characters on stage.

Atmospheres also affect the actor's inner life; they create a powerful field of energy that penetrates the actor and activates their individual feelings:

atmosphere exerts an extremely strong influence upon your acting. Have you ever noticed how, unwittingly, you change your movements, speech, behaviour, thoughts and feelings as soon as you

²⁵⁵ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 51.

²⁵⁶ Franc Chamberlain, *Michael Chekhov*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 53.

²⁵⁷ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 48.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 48–49.

create a strong, contagious atmosphere, and how it increases its influence upon you if you accept it and succumb to it willingly.²⁵⁹

The need for the actor to learn to surrender, also discussed in the previous section, is stressed again here: the more one succumbs to the atmosphere, the stronger its effect. Chekhov once again echoes his teacher, urging the reader to forget the “clichés of yesterday’s acting” and surrender to the power of the atmosphere that will bring forth new emotions;²⁶⁰ these will in turn encourage “self-sprung new details and nuances.”²⁶¹ This state of creativity brings pleasure to the actor who takes “great delight” in observing their own creation.²⁶² This is another reference to double consciousness: the actor can ‘suffer’ with his character, while simultaneously ‘taking great delight’ observing their own artistic creation.

Visualisation can also be used to awaken feelings: the actor imagines having a conversation with the character, asking them how they would perform a certain action, or how they would interact with another character. The performer watches the character’s ‘reply’ in their imagination.²⁶³ By seeing the character in action, the actor is not only able to see the external, but also the inner life of their character. These images will gradually have a strong influence on the actor and the fellow-feeling will turn into feeling as with Stanislavski. Imagination can thus give the actor much richer material for inspiration than their personal lives. Chekhov points out that

²⁵⁹ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 50.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ For a discussion on Chekhov’s use of visualisation and embodied imagination see Jerri Daboo, “Michael Chekhov and the Embodied Imagination: Higher Self and Non-Self,” *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 27, no. 3 (2007): 261–73.

Shakespeare's life was not at all as exciting as that of the characters he created. He expects a similar level of creativity from the actor: to keep exploring and asking questions until they are satisfied with the outcome.²⁶⁴ This is when emotions are activated:

The image changes under your questioning gaze, transforms itself again and again until gradually (or suddenly) you feel satisfied with it. Thereupon you will find your emotions aroused, and the desire to act flares up in you! [...] The time may come [...] when your image will become so powerful that you will be unable to resist the desire to incorporate it, to act it.²⁶⁵

Chekhov maintains that the characters created through the use of the imagination are more interesting than those created by dry reasoning, or those created by actors that tend to impose their own "personal and unvarying mannerisms"²⁶⁶ on their characters. The same stands for emotions. He proclaims that the source of inspiration for artistically-induced emotions should not be our personal experiences unaltered. This would have been a "dangerous" and "inartistic" mistake that some actors make leading to "unhealthy, hysterical phenomena."²⁶⁷ Going one step further from Stanislavski's concept of distilled and crystallised emotions, he talks about purified emotions:

The usual, everyday feelings are adulterated, permeated with egotism, narrowed to personal needs, inhibited, insignificant and often even anaesthetic and spoiled by untruths. They should not be used in art.

²⁶⁴ "Ask the same question as many times as you have to, until your image shows you what you want to 'see.'" Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 29.

²⁶⁵ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 24; 31.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 27.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 90.

Creative individuality rejects them. It has at its disposal another kind of feelings—those completely impersonal, purified, freed from egotism and therefore aesthetic, significant, and artistically true.²⁶⁸

These purified artistic feelings are both real (the actor is deeply affected by them) and unreal: the actor is not traumatised by negative emotions experienced on stage, as they would have been if these same emotions were experienced in life.²⁶⁹ As Lendley Black puts it, these artistic emotions “come and go with creative inspiration.”²⁷⁰ Another characteristic of these emotions is their compassionate nature. Chekhov explains that while performing the actor is able to observe their creation (the character) and empathise with them: “the true artist in you is able to suffer for Hamlet, cry with Juliet, laugh about the mischief-making of Falstaff.”²⁷¹ Once again we see here that emotion no longer lies within the actor but in between the actor and something or someone external, this time: the character.

Like his teacher, Michael Chekhov offers wisdom on the nature of acted emotion, in addition to identifying pathways to access it. He stresses that artistic emotions are different in nature to those experienced in daily life: “a closer inspection [...] will reveal that human feelings fall into two categories: those known to everybody and those known only to artists in moments of creative inspiration.”²⁷² Chekhov partly attributes this to the involvement of the higher creative self that purifies our personal emotions and turns them into art. As Chamberlain points out, “put simply, what

²⁶⁸ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 89.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 90.

²⁷⁰ Lendley C. Black, *Mikhail Chekhov as Actor, Director, and Teacher* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), 68.

²⁷¹ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 90.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 88.

Chekhov calls our higher ego is our ability to detach from our habitual self-centeredness and to see ourselves and the world in a more objective manner.’’²⁷³

Artistic emotions are also different because they always emanate from feelings of human love. Chekhov understands this love to be pure and “devoid of erotic elements; it is a love between one human being and another.’’²⁷⁴ These feelings of love also emanate from the higher self: “for it is from no other source but the higher self within us that our artistic, creative love derives.’’²⁷⁵

In one of his published lectures, entitled “Love is Our Theatre: Art or Profession?” Chekhov stresses that an actor should approach hatred or any other so-called negative emotion with love.²⁷⁶ If that were not the case, he argues, the actor would not enjoy playing villains or experiencing on stage any of the so-called negative emotions, such as anger, fear and sadness. Furthermore, the audience would not enjoy watching the actors portraying a negative character or experiencing a negative emotion if the whole creation was not based upon love:

Without this love, the hatred of the character would become so realistic, so ugly and repulsive, that we could not write or perform him in proper perspective. [...] And what would happen when the curtain went down? We and the audience would continue hating. Whom? Nobody in particular, not even the character that saturated us with this hatred. Nevertheless, the hatred would remain and infiltrate

²⁷³ Chamberlain, *Michael Chekhov*, 52.

²⁷⁴ Michael Chekhov, “Love in Our Theatre: Art or Profession?,” in *To the Director and Playwright*, by Michael Chekhov and Charles Leonard (New York: Limelight Editions, 1984), 19.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 14–26.

our workday lives [...]. That way lies failure for us as artists and irrationality as social beings.²⁷⁷

While lack of human love leads to artistic failure, learning to approach all emotions, characters and collaborators with love is extremely rewarding. Chekhov believed that “the small egos of our life” only bring contraction; on the contrary, artistic emotions infused with human love expand us: the actor’s talent flourishes the more they allow love to permeate their performance.²⁷⁸ By depersonalising, infusing with love, and therefore purifying our emotions, we move from the personal to the universal, from life to poetry, and from everyday experience to art.

²⁷⁷ Chekhov, “Love in Our Theatre,” 23.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 23–25.

Lee Strasberg

Strasberg was a fanatic on the subject of true emotion. Everything was secondary to it. He sought it with the patience of an inquisitor, he was outraged by trick substitutes, and when he had succeeded in stimulating it, he husbanded it, fed it, and protected it. Here was something new to most of the actors, something basic, something almost holy. It was revelation in the theatre; and Strasberg was its prophet.

Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years*.²⁷⁹

The emphasis Strasberg placed on the importance of the actor's emotional awakening is well known: he was after all a "fanatic on the subject of true emotion" as Clurman puts it.²⁸⁰ Although attention has mostly been placed on the controversial use of emotion memory I would like to focus on another aspect of his teaching practice, that better resonates with the aims of the training methodology developed here: the emphasis on the cultivation of the sensual sensitivity of the actor as a prerequisite for fostering their capability for emotional expressivity.

In the fourth chapter of his book *A Dream of Passion*, Strasberg discusses his experimentations with the Group Theatre, and places great emphasis on the exploration of *substitution*.²⁸¹ During that period, Strasberg often instructed actors to

²⁷⁹ Harold Clurman as quoted by Meisner in Sanford Meisner, *On Acting* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 9.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 83–93.

imagine a completely different set of given circumstances to those of the play, in order to help them access the “right kind of emotion.”²⁸² Stella Adler was, for example, asked to imagine she was on a boat to achieve the “ethereal quality” required for the character, and to experience contained feelings, fighting her usual tendency to “burn up the stage” with the intensity of her emotion.²⁸³ The debate regarding ‘the actor’s or the character’s emotion’ which was problematised in the Introduction can be traced back to this notion of *substitution*.

During the Group Theatre experimentations, Strasberg appears to still be much concerned with the problems of the director, rather than those of the actor trainer: he devises and invents tricks to help the actor achieve what is required for a particular moment or scene and discusses the ‘appropriateness’ of the experienced emotion. He admits that “most of the procedures were applied within the context of rehearsing for a particular production.”²⁸⁴ However, when discussing the discoveries at the Actors Studio, he is, on the contrary, encouraging the actor to follow a more organic journey and to be open to the process rather than concerned with the result. This is the phase of his work that is most relevant to this practice-based research.

Strasberg—like Michael Chekhov—observes that some actors could indeed experience but were unable to express emotion on stage.²⁸⁵ He attributes this to social conditioning that affects emotional experience and expression in life, but also

²⁸² Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 90.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 88.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 91.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 94.

to the actor's mannerisms that "obscure the truth of expression."²⁸⁶ He strongly believes that "the habits of expression are connected with the difficulties of expression."²⁸⁷ He therefore strives to liberate the actor from such difficulties, through a process of eliminating damaging habits and tensions, that, perhaps unexpectedly, seems to resonate with Grotowski's *via negativa*.²⁸⁸ The first step he takes to liberate actors from their mannerisms and habits is the work on relaxation,²⁸⁹ as he believes that an actor that isn't relaxed is like an instrument that isn't tuned; they might be giving all the right commands but the result will not be satisfactory.²⁹⁰ Strasberg argues that by working on relaxation one can encourage the accessing of emotion: as the student unblocks the accumulated tensions "a lot of sensations begin to pour through and begin to lead toward a fullness and vividness of expression."²⁹¹ He therefore devises a series of exercises to help the student-actor release psychophysical tensions, which —"quite unscientifically" as Strasberg admits—he considered to reside in specific areas of the body, such as the area around "the blue veins at the temples," the jaw, and the back of the neck.²⁹²

Strasberg then guides the actor through a series of exercises to train their sense memory: the students recreate imaginary objects by focusing on the textures, the weight, the temperature, the taste, and any other sensual information applicable to the examined object. Student-actors should not merely indicate the interaction with

²⁸⁶ Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 95.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 96.

²⁸⁸ *Via negativa* will be addressed in the following section discussing Grotowski's practice.

²⁸⁹ Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 96.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 125.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 139.

²⁹² See *ibid*, 127–129.

the object through appropriate muscular engagement; they must “recreate the sensory presence of the object.”²⁹³ More points of focus are gradually added, until the actor can recreate a full-body sensual experience, such as being exposed to the sun or visiting a sauna. Strasberg calls this the “overall sensation exercise.”²⁹⁴

The student-actors are then invited to explore *emotion memory* by recreating the sensory experiences that surround an emotional event from their personal life. The event selected for the emotion recall exercise should be linked to a strong emotional experience, that ideally occurred over seven years ago, as Strasberg believes that an experience that is still affecting an individual after seven years is likely to have a lasting effect on them for the rest of their lives.²⁹⁵ Strasberg stresses that the trainer does not need to know the actor’s story. This is a private recollection; the actor is only required to focus on and describe the sensations: “what he sees, hears, touches, tastes, smells and what he is experiencing kinetically.”²⁹⁶

Strasberg’s emphasis on the sense memory indicates that working on the sensual responsiveness of the actor is a necessary step before attempting to awaken their emotional expressivity. However, the development of the actor’s sense memory should not be perceived as a mere prerequisite for emotion recall. Through developing their ability to respond to imaginary and real sensual stimuli, the actor

²⁹³ Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 133.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 138.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 149.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

develops a *sensitivity* to psychophysical impulses, similar to that discussed previously by Michael Chekhov.²⁹⁷

The following step of the training also points in this direction. After mastering the ability to recreate the sensual experience of the object and the ‘overall sensation,’ the actor is instructed to add another layer: they are asked to work on a monologue or a song while focusing on the sensual experience that has been recreated. The student-actor should resist the tendency to sing the song the way they usually would, or follow the familiar verbal pattern of the monologue; they should instead allow their sensations to *colour* the delivery of the working material, i.e. text or song.²⁹⁸ The development of the ability to organically respond rather than to anticipate links back to Strasberg’s insistence that one should resist their habits of expression and verbal delivery,²⁹⁹ as these habits pose obstacles to one’s journey towards accessing emotion.

Strasberg later rediscovers and reintroduces a similar exercise, inspired by his work with singers and dancers. Performers with a significant background in dancing and singing have to resist different kinds of habits than those mentioned above; Strasberg argues that they habitually “follow a definite rhythmic and physical pattern that might confine them as actors.”³⁰⁰ He therefore devises the “song-and-dance exercise”³⁰¹ to help performers “achieve that connection between impulse and

²⁹⁷ See the above section discussing Michael Chekhov.

²⁹⁸ Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 141–143.

²⁹⁹ For the dangers of anticipating see *ibid*, 115.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 152.

³⁰¹ See *ibid*, 151–159.

expression, which leads to full and intense expressiveness.”³⁰² During the exercise the performer is asked first to “just stand relaxed”³⁰³ for some time facing the audience. They are then instructed to choose a song and sing it differently than their habitual delivery: they can, for example, separate each syllable or each word from the next one, while ensuring that the melody is still recognisable.³⁰⁴ Later, the performer is asked to explore movement that resembles dance moves as little as possible,³⁰⁵ to fight the tendency to anticipate and control the movement, and to instead commit to the “physical rhythms” that are naturally produced through this process.³⁰⁶

The ‘song and dance’ exercise points once more to the importance of cultivating the actor’s ability to follow impulses. Student-actors must not allow the working material to guide them to a pre-determined delivery of the lines: they should “fight against conventional verbal patterns” and should control their “involuntary habits of delivery.”³⁰⁷ The performer must allow the working material to be coloured by the sensations occurring during the exploration. Strasberg found in this process a key to “full and intense expressiveness.”³⁰⁸

Although the Method does not directly inform the practical aspect of this PhD, this principle greatly resonates with the approach developed here. By breaking habits of

³⁰² Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 151.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 152.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 153.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 155–156.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 156.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 142.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 151.

expression and resisting the urge to anticipate, while simultaneously cultivating a responsiveness to psychophysical stimuli, the actor enters a process of exploration which serves as yet another lure for emotion. The next practitioner to be discussed in this chapter, Sanford Meisner, also sought such a combination of neutrality and responsiveness through different means, as the following section will reveal.

Sanford Meisner

Sanford Meisner believed great acting to be synonymous with the ability to access emotion. Reflecting on occasions when he was deeply moved by an actor's performance, he recalls seeing the American actress Pauline Lord perform and observes: "by that time I was beginning to realize that acting which really dug at me was what I was looking for."³⁰⁹ He also mentions his astonishment at witnessing Eleonora Duse, the famous Italian actress, blushing 'on cue' during an emotionally loaded scene. Her ability to control such an involuntary function through the power of her imagination impressed Meisner.³¹⁰ Throughout his long career as an acting teacher, he sought ways to help his students have access to their emotions to encourage similarly strong performances; he searched for ways to help them live "truthfully under imaginary circumstances" which, as he explains, is his "definition of good acting."³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Meisner, *On Acting* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 6.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 13–15.

³¹¹ *Ibid*, 15.

Like Strasberg, Meisner also wanted the performer to be liberated from acting mannerisms that obstructed the journey to emotion. However, he took a different route to achieve this than Strasberg's described above. Actors training with Meisner would first have to learn never to settle for pretending or indicating by focusing on "the reality of doing."³¹² The training, as described in his book *On Acting* starts with the Word Repetition Game, which is perhaps the most well-known element of the Meisner technique. Working with a partner, the actor-students repeat each other's statements starting from simple observations which are not open to interpretation or intellectualised: "your hair is long" rather than "you are fresh and open."³¹³ The first observation is repeated several times between the partners until one of them feels the impulse to make a different statement. Meisner urges the student not to 'make readings'³¹⁴ in order to create variety, but to simply and 'mindlessly' repeat.³¹⁵ Through this process, actors learn to pick up not cues but impulses.³¹⁶ The repetition encourages connection between the partners: "it is the basis of what eventually becomes emotional dialogue."³¹⁷

Meisner explains that he devised the repetition exercise to eliminate intellectuality:

I wanted to eliminate all that 'head' work, to take away all the mental manipulation and get to where the impulses come from. And I began

³¹² The first chapter discussing Meisner's practice within the classroom is entitled 'Building a Foundation: The Reality of Doing.' The chapter discusses the repetition exercise, which is the cornerstone of Meisner technique. Meisner, *On Acting*, 16–26.

³¹³ Examples given in Meisner, *On Acting*, 21.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Meisner speaks of a 'mindless' repetition in Meisner, *On Acting*, 107.

³¹⁶ Ibid, 72.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

with the premise that if I repeat what I hear you saying, my head is not working. I'm listening, and there is an absolute elimination of the brain. If you say, 'Your glasses are dirty,' and I say, 'My glasses are dirty,' there is no intellectuality in that.³¹⁸

Meisner is after a visceral response that comes from the actors' 'instincts' as he puts it.³¹⁹ He stresses that "thinking has no part in this process."³²⁰ However, as briefly touched upon in Chapter One, colloquialisms such as 'head work' or 'attempting to eliminate thinking' can be problematic, as they can potentially reinforce false dichotomies such as emotion-reason. I argue that this process is less about eliminating thinking per se, and more about encouraging the students to respond to the stimuli, rather than attempting to control or anticipate, as we also saw in the previous section discussing Strasberg. The repetition exercise invites the student to focus on something outside themselves, thus discouraging self-consciousness and encouraging them to immerse in the 'reality of doing.' Meisner's student reports: "If you're really doing it, then you don't have time to watch yourself doing it. You only have the time and energy to do it."³²¹

In the chapter entitled 'The Pinch and the Ouch' Meisner establishes two rules students should follow:

1. *"Don't do anything unless something happens to make you do it"*
2. *"What you do doesn't depend on you; it depends on the other fellow."*³²²

³¹⁸ Meisner, *On Acting*, 37.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 31.

³²⁰ *Ibid*.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 24.

³²² *Ibid*, 34.

As the title perhaps gives away, Meisner then pinches one of his students, who responds to the pinch with an ‘ouch.’³²³ This literal example helps students understand that the basis of truthful acting is simple: do not do anything unless having the impulse to do it.³²⁴ The training is as much about learning what to do, as it is about learning what *not* to do. The student-actors’ familiarisation with silence and lack of outer action is an ally in the search for truthful acting. Meisner’s following discussion with one of his students is enlightening:

“The error here, which you will gradually overcome, is to think that you have to keep talking. What’s the opposite of that?”

“The opposite of talking?” Joseph asks. “Silence.”

“Silence. *Until something happens to make you do something!*”³²⁵

Actors training with Meisner learn not to force emotions, words or actions. They instead focus on their scene partner, from whom they receive impulses, “the source of all organic creativity.”³²⁶

Moving on to scene work, students are instructed to learn the text as neutrally as possible, without any interpretations. This is to encourage genuine organic expression that comes from the interaction with the partner, rather than a predetermined reading of the lines. Meisner explains: “Now, if you are neutral ...

³²³ The student is not actually saying the word ‘ouch.’ He was instead given some text prior to the pinch: ‘Mr. Meisner’. The student thus says the given words coloured by the ouch. See Meisner, *On Acting*, 34.

³²⁴ See *ibid*, 35–36.

³²⁵ Original emphasis. Meisner in dialogue with a student in Meisner, 42–43.

³²⁶ Meisner, *On Acting*, 37.

Neutral—what’s that mean? Open to any influence, right? If you are neutral, you will achieve a kind of emotional flexibility.’³²⁷

After learning the text neutrally, students start working on scenes. Meisner asks them to come to the stage already emotionally charged. He calls this ‘preparation’: when coming to the stage the actor needs to be already ‘prepared’ for the scene; they should not come in ‘empty.’³²⁸ Meisner proclaims: “That’s my method of acting: cry, then talk. Don’t talk and then expect to cry, because you won’t!”³²⁹ Students can ‘prepare’ in any way suitable to them; Meisner does not interfere with this process. As he puts it: “I want to see you at your most ecstatic. I don’t care if you get it from buckwheat cakes!”³³⁰ An example of ‘preparation’ mentioned in Meisner’s *On Acting* is attempting to shake a heavy ladder that is planted/embedded in concrete and therefore unmovable. Alternatively, one can get stimulated by “singing that schmaltzy theme from Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony.”³³¹ What is important is that each actor finds what stimulates and moves *them*.³³²

Emotional preparation should be achieved through any means, but Meisner stresses that it should never be faked: “you can’t fake emotion. It immediately exposes the fact that you ain’t got it.”³³³ On the contrary, when emotion is truthfully present it

³²⁷ Meisner, *On Acting*, 68–69.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, 80.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, 199–200.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, 92.

³³¹ *Ibid*, 80.

³³² *Ibid*.

³³³ *Ibid*, 87.

‘infects’ the actor and the audience.³³⁴ Meisner believes that *preparation* is an invaluable tool that can potentially lead to such an awakening of a strong and ‘infectious’ emotion. However, he points out that there is also a danger that comes with it: the actor’s tendency to *show* the emotion. Student-actors should resist that tendency. The American acting teacher also observes that the effect of preparation only lasts for a few minutes. The actor should be re-stimulated during the scene through the interaction with the partner. Meisner strongly believes that if an actor ‘prepares’ and then focuses on the partner, they will reliably access emotion: “If you prepare and then work moment by moment off her and with her, you’ll always be riding on a very stormy river.”³³⁵

As mentioned in the Introduction, Stanislavski observed that: “if emotion immediately responds to the call [...] everything falls into place spontaneously, in a natural way.”³³⁶ Meisner’s emphasis on the emotional awakening of the actor, especially his insistence that the actor should come to the stage ‘prepared’ i.e. emotionally engaged, points to the direction that he too made a similar observation: once emotion is awakened, everything falls into place. The practitioners discussed here are not interested in emotional involvement as an end in itself; they are in search of emotion because they have observed that outstanding acting is often the result of such emotional activation. What they are after is ‘good acting’ as Meisner puts it. Both Strasberg and Meisner seem to believe that this comes with emotion.

³³⁴ Meisner, *On Acting*, 87.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 199.

³³⁶ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 280.

Jerzy Grotowski

Writing about Grotowski's approach to emotion is challenging for three main reasons: first, the different phases of his practice with their distinct characteristics and points of focus must be taken into consideration. Throughout his forty-year-long period of experimentations, starting from becoming the artistic director of Theatre of Thirteen Rows in 1959 to his death in 1999, Grotowski went through five research phases: The Theatre of Productions (1959–69), Paratheatre (1969–78), Theatre of Sources (1976–82), Objective Drama (1983–6) and Art as Vehicle (1986–99).³³⁷ These are not completely distinct; as a close look at the dates reveals, they did occasionally overlap. This section focuses on the first and last phases of Grotowski's work, namely Theatre of Productions and Art as Vehicle.

The other two reasons relate to the nature of the practice: Grotowski emphasises that he is not concerned with teaching the actor certain skills, his approach is rather a *via negativa*, an 'opposite road:' a process during which the performer finds ways to unlearn whatever is not useful or necessary; a process during which any acquired acting—or other—habits that hinder rather than facilitate the actor's journey can be eliminated. Finally, the word emotion never sat comfortably with Grotowski himself and many of his followers. Many other expressions have been used instead, ranging from inner process, action or awakening,³³⁸ to stronger word choices, such as

³³⁷ There is an ongoing debate about some of these dates. I follow Slowiak and Cuesta's chronology. See James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2007), 9–41.

³³⁸ Inner awakening is less common. It can be found in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 136.

trance,³³⁹ to name the inner state that performers who worked extensively with Grotowski were able to reach perhaps more easily than others.

However, Grotowski's artistic heir Thomas Richards warns us not to confuse the meaning of inner action with emotion: "one might imagine that what I speak of is a very strong emotion. Well, emotions might be involved, but it's not just that."³⁴⁰ Richards refers to an inner awakening that goes beyond emotion, a spiritual experience that resists definition. This is linked to the well-discussed spiritual aspect of Grotowski's work that started emerging as early as 1965, during rehearsals for the *Constant Prince*.³⁴¹ In a letter to Eugenio Barba dated 26 April 1965, Grotowski reveals his interest in a research "on the frontier between tantra and theatre."³⁴² As Barba explains tantra are "ritual techniques of Hinduism, involving the transmutation of energy from a biological to a spiritual level."³⁴³ Grotowski continues: "I felt that this is the most significant artistic experience I have had up to now. And not just artistic."³⁴⁴ Franco Ruffini, following Barba, argues that what was found during that period affected Grotowski so strongly that he eventually

³³⁹ "This is a technique of the 'trance' and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily power which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being." Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 16.

³⁴⁰ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 20.

³⁴¹ *The Constant Prince* premiered in 1965, in the middle of the Theatre of Productions phase. Grotowski's last performance *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, was created in 1969, officially marking the end of Theatre of Productions. *Apocalypsis* was however performed for another ten years, overlapping with Grotowski's paratheatrical experimentations.

³⁴² Jerzy Grotowski "Letter 15" in Eugenio Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds: My Apprenticeship in Poland* (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999), 145.

³⁴³ Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, 117.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 145.

completely lost interest in directing and focused only on the process of the actor: “It was clear that there has been a shift in Grotowski’s priorities. In Opole his thoughts were concentrated on the construction of the performance [...] Now the central concern had become the actor’s ‘total act’³⁴⁵ and the process by which it was achieved.”³⁴⁶

In the following pages, I will attempt to identify some key ways in which the actor’s inner life was activated in Grotowski’s practice. The first tool for inner awakening was the work on physical actions. Physical actions were explored to help performers access an inner state without being trapped by their desire to feel or express emotions. Grotowski writes about Stanislavski, whose research he believed he was continuing:³⁴⁷

In order to free the actor from the enforced search for emotions, which he recognised to be inefficient, he used the term physical actions, even if for him these actions in reality included the interior monologue (i.e. what we think), points of contact with others, reactions to others, and the associations between what we do and what we remember, consciously or unconsciously. But now he conjoined all the whole, living ensemble into the expression physical

³⁴⁵ Total act is an “absolute disarmament by means of which the actor ‘reveals [...] and sacrifices the innermost part of himself.’” Grotowski as quoted by Laster in Dominika Laster, *Grotowski’s Bridge Made of Memory: Embodied Memory, Witnessing and Transmission in the Grotowski Work* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2016), 15.

³⁴⁶ Barba as quoted by Ruffini, in Franco Ruffini, “The Empty Room: Studying Jerzy Grotowski’s Towards a Poor Theatre,” in *Grotowski’s Empty Room*, ed. Paul Allain (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009), 94.

³⁴⁷ “Do you think that Stanislavski would have stopped there? No, he died. That is *why he stopped*. And I simply *continued his research*.” Grotowski as quoted by Richards in Richards, *At Work with Grotowski*, 105.

actions. He was convinced, and I share his conviction, that if—in the process of play—we discover what we did in life or what we might do in precise circumstances, the emotional life will follow all by itself, precisely because we are not trying to manipulate it.³⁴⁸

This is yet another mention of the necessity for an indirect approach to emotion. Grotowski suggests that once the actor stops being concerned with pumping an emotional state and shifts their attention to a concrete physical action, emotion comes organically; the Polish pioneer suggests that emotion can only be awakened when one ceases to try to manipulate it. As with Stanislavski, the emphasis on the physical does not aim to discard what is not of the corporeal domain but on the contrary, to encourage it. The starting point is a concrete action, the locus of which is the body. However, what is sought is a psychophysical awakening. Grotowski implies that the word physical was used to discourage the actor from attempting to access the inner directly. As discussed in the Introduction, emotion is renamed, to discourage actors from pumping or forcing it.

The actor's body is used as a pathway to access the inner in Grotowski's practice, not only because it provides a concrete and tangible starting point, but also because, as the Polish practitioner maintains, “the body does not have memory, the body *is* memory.”³⁴⁹ Richards explains:

³⁴⁸ Grotowski as quoted by Fumaroli, in Marc Fumaroli, “Grotowski, or the Border Ferryman,” in *Grotowski's Empty Room*, ed. Paul Allain (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009), 206.

³⁴⁹ Or in a different translation: “It is not that the body remembers. The body itself is memory.” Grotowski as quoted by Laster in Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 24.

I understand it as something that is very practical and literal. The body *is* memory. This is a very practical indication for an actor [...] Sometimes we can think of a memory as something conceptual, a kind of ephemeral series of images that exists somewhere in our heads, when, in fact, all of our experiences have been lived by our body.³⁵⁰

If the body is memory, if indeed the emotions we have experienced are stored in the body waiting to be awakened, then a vast number of potential triggers to emotion becomes available to the actor through their body. Grotowski identifies the centre of gravity located around the pelvis area as one of the most important loci, acknowledging that this is one of many body parts that can function as such sources of energy:

I believe that one must develop a special anatomy for the actor [...], [one must] find the body's various centres of concentration [...] seeking the areas of the body which the actor sometimes feels to be his sources of energy. The lumbar region, the abdomen and the area around the solar plexus often function as such a source.³⁵¹

As well as working with physical actions, Grotowski, with the assistance of Ryszard Cieślak, developed a series of physical exercises that served to prepare the actor's body for an act of 'self-sacrifice,' that would allow them to share with the audience their 'innermost truth,' in the hope that the spectator would also undergo a process of self-penetration through witnessing the journey of the actor.³⁵² The intense physical

³⁵⁰ Richards interviewed by Laster in Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 26.

³⁵¹ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 38.

³⁵² Grotowski discusses this thoroughly in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 34–39. It is worth noting the religious connotations of the word sacrifice, as well as the strong resonance with Polish Romantic ideals. The theme of sacrifice appears in *Forefathers' Eve*, the Polish romantic drama written by Adam Mickiewicz between 1820 and 1823, which was directed by

training developed by Grotowski and Cieślak also served to help actors eliminate physical blocks and to eventually minimise the temporal distance between impulse and action. This would enable organic, spontaneous acting.³⁵³ Grotowski believes that if such an elimination of physical blocks is not pursued, the actor can be distracted by the difficulties posed by their own body; their journey towards self-penetration and ultimately revelation is unsuccessful as a result. He believes that the body should be “freed from all resistance. It must virtually cease to exist.”³⁵⁴

The strong wording used here might appear to contradict the previous discussion where the body was perceived as the ultimate source of memory and the only path to inner awakening. Chekhov’s formulation discussed in the previous section provides a vocabulary that can be more usable in a wider context and can bridge the gap between the body as a source and the body as an obstacle to inner awakening. As previously discussed, Michael Chekhov believes that the actor’s body needs to become transparent so that the inner can be shared with and perceived by the

Grotowski in a controversial production performed in the Theatre of 13 Rows in 1961. The sacrificial transformation of the protagonist was a recurrent theme in Grotowski’s practice, and was most notably revisited in Grotowski’s iconic production of *The Constant Prince*, in 1965. As Tamara Trojanowska points out, Grotowski, moving away from the idea of the Polish martyrdom, “translates Mickiewicz’s idea of a nation’s self-purification through its act of self-sacrifice into an individual act of self-redemption through the internal work of the actor.” Trojanowska in Tamara Trojanowska, Joanna Niżyńska, and Przemysław Czapliński, eds., *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture Since 1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 201.

³⁵³ The training was developed during Theatre of Productions (1959–69) and was video-documented by Torgeir Wethal in Holstebro in 1971. The footage was later included in the documentary *The Body Speaks* (1975).

³⁵⁴ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 36.

spectator;³⁵⁵ it should become translucent to reveal the dynamic relationship between inner and outer. Chekhov also stresses that the body needs to become sensitive, reactive to stimuli. He argues that both transparency and sensitivity can be achieved through a psychophysical training developed specifically for the needs of the actor. Grotowski and his collaborators have developed such a training in various forms, from the early stages described in *Towards a Poor Theatre*,³⁵⁶ to the last phase (Art as Vehicle) discussed by Richards in *Heart of Practice*.³⁵⁷

In addition to the work with the physical actions and the physical training itself, there is one guiding principle that also contributes to the awakening of the inner through the outer. This time the outer is not the actor's own body, but 'the other:' the partner, the group leader or its members. Dominika Laster in *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory* argues that one of Grotowski's "most important preoccupations" during all phases of his research, from Theatre of Productions to Art as a Vehicle was "the work on the self with and through the other."³⁵⁸ This is discussed by Richards in *Heart of Practice*, where Grotowski's artistic heir explains how the inner action

³⁵⁵ See the section above discussing Michael Chekhov.

³⁵⁶ See especially the two "Actor's Training" chapters in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 133–204.

³⁵⁷ Thomas Richards, *Heart of Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). Art as Vehicle (1986–1999) is the name given to Grotowski's final phase of research. Invited by Roberto Bacci and Carla Pollastrelli, the Polish practitioner and three assistants moved to Pontedera (Tuscany, Italy) in 1986. There, Grotowski was given full freedom to resume his experimentations. The research focused on the exploration of art as a vehicle (means) for spiritual awakening, rather than an end in itself. Grotowski relocated to Italy after a short stay in the United States (1982–1986) as the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981 pushed him away from his native country in 1982. He remained in Pontedera until the end of his life (1999).

³⁵⁸ Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 1.

“can seem to be no longer existing just in one or in the other but in both and between.”³⁵⁹

The most important element that functioned as a “tool for inner work”³⁶⁰ during the Art as Vehicle phase was the work with the ancient songs of African and Afro-Caribbean descent with ‘vibratory qualities.’³⁶¹ Grotowski’s interest in such ancient songs grew out of his travels to various parts of the world and his encounters with people who practised ancient traditions that served ritual purposes, such as authentic voodoo rituals and the ecstatic worship rituals of the Bauls. Between 1979 and 1980 Grotowski visited Haiti, Mexico, India, Nigeria, and Eastern Poland.³⁶² These expeditions heavily influenced and shaped the following phases of his research. It is possible that Richards’ own heritage (his paternal grandparents came from the Caribbean) influenced Grotowski’s selection of Afro-Caribbean songs over other ancient vibratory songs for the practice at the Workcenter. However, Richards stresses that the work on these songs transcends one particular culture.³⁶³ Grotowski searches for that which is transcultural in these traditions, the “roots of humanity itself.”³⁶⁴

The ‘vibratory’ qualities of these songs that encourage the awakening of inner life come from sounds, rhythm, resonance, and pitch rather than meaning:

³⁵⁹ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 20.

³⁶⁰ Expression used by Lisa Wolford in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 45.

³⁶¹ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 5; 45–48.

³⁶² See Slowiak and Cuesta, 32–33.

³⁶³ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 39–40.

³⁶⁴ Slowiak and Cuesta, 30.

The exact meaning of the songs' words is unknown to the majority of the doers.³⁶⁵ [...] With these songs, the doer develops a relationship, over a long period of time and repetition, that is primarily based on sound, melody, rhythm, personal associations, and vibratory qualities, which together act as tools for a kind of inner awakening.³⁶⁶

Dominika Laster argues that Grotowski went from the work with personal memory (physical actions) to the work with collective memory through the exploration of the ancient vibratory songs.³⁶⁷ He also went from a body-focused process to an increased interest in the use of singing and musicality. The body never stopped having a central place in his work, although the focus shifted.

The next section discusses Gardzienice, a theatre company founded by Włodzimierz Staniewski, who worked with Grotowski closely in the early 70s during the paratheatrical phase.

³⁶⁵ The term 'doer' is often used by Richards when referring to the people practising at the Workcenter. The words actor and performer would sit uncomfortably with the last phases of Grotowski's work that were not geared towards public performance.

³⁶⁶ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 135–136.

³⁶⁷ Dominika Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 23.

Gardzienice

Following the Grotowskian lineage, it should not come as a surprise that the triggers discussed here are similar to the ones mentioned above. The similarities are mainly related to principles rather than specific exercises or processes: both practices seem to focus on musicality and the exploration and development of the self “through and with the other.”³⁶⁸ this is often referred to as working *in tandem* by Richards.³⁶⁹ Staniewski calls this *mutuality*.

However, there also are striking differences. Whereas the Workcenter focuses on Afro-Caribbean vibratory songs, Staniewski, the founder and director of Gardzienice, advocates the exploration of musicality in a wider sense.³⁷⁰ Staniewski understands musicality to be different than music in that the latter resembles a well-constructed argument whereas the former is more similar to the ‘flow of life,’³⁷¹ often unpredictable and rough like a rough diamond that needs to be “framed by the gold of the codified music.”³⁷² Staniewski is concerned with exploring the wider range of sounds that the human body can produce. He believes that human expression has been ‘reduced in sound,’³⁷³ and that it is possible to expand it again through the use

³⁶⁸ Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 1.

³⁶⁹ Richard's *in tandem* will be discussed in the following chapter.

³⁷⁰ Paul Allain defines Gardzienice's understanding of musicality as: “a sense of musical and rhythmical harmony and understanding.” In Paul Allain, *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 55.

³⁷¹ Włodzimierz Staniewski and Alison Hodge, *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice* (Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 65.

³⁷² Staniewski and Hodge, 65.

³⁷³ *Ibid*, 64–64.

of musicality and the search for unusual sounds, which would allow the actor to tap into their ‘hidden’ or forgotten inner life.

Gardzienice’s work with musicality is strongly related to the search for emotion. Staniewski argues that musicality offers an even more direct access to the actor’s inner life than that provided by music; he states: “‘music is a key which opens the heart and soul’ and musicality is a better key.”³⁷⁴ The reverse could also be argued: emotions are expressed in a musical way. Staniewski provides, among others, the following examples of musicality: hearing one’s mother crying, one’s family quarrelling or their neighbour in a state of despair.³⁷⁵ Such memories of sounds provide the inspiration for the Gardzienice actor to develop a sequence of vocal actions, or to use Staniewski’s term, a series of sound vignettes, that can be used in performance.³⁷⁶ The actor is encouraged to explore sounds beyond the ones usually used in theatre productions and daily life, as Staniewski wishes to “‘expand the actor’s instrumentarium towards musicality, not only shouts and cries but also all the phenomena which are sitting inside us.”³⁷⁷ The Gardzienice actors therefore search for emotions in sounds and sounds in emotions.³⁷⁸

Gardzienice also works with structured music. As with Thomas Richards and the Workcenter, the purpose of working with particular songs (often also coming from religious backgrounds—mainly Christian orthodox—or traditions and rituals, such as

³⁷⁴ Staniewski and Hodge, 64.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 66.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 65.

³⁷⁸ Staniewski asks the Gardzienice actors to “‘look for those sounds in their hidden emotions.’” See *ibid*, 66.

lamentation),³⁷⁹ is not to demonstrate the actor's skill in singing, or to focus on the beauty of the song itself, but to discover something else through the singing: the inner contents of the song, the potential for awakening the actor's inner life.³⁸⁰ The emphasis on a theatrical process destined to be seen by an audience, as opposed to the Workcenter's focus on the doer's experience itself, seems to have brought a shift towards songs that would perhaps evoke greater emotion in the audience, rather than the doer. Polyphony is heavily used by Staniewski as a result.

Musicality links to another important aspect of the training: mutuality. Staniewski stresses that Gardzienice actors do not only learn to produce but also to *connect* sounds, and Paul Allain observes that the group sings together not only to warm up their voices, but also to create “a harmony in the group, a common vibration.”³⁸¹

Mutuality, a central part of Gardzienice's practice, is defined by Alison Hodge as:

a way of perceiving, absorbing or dialoguing with a partner and, by extension, with the environment in which the actor works. The reading of the partner is not exclusively psychological but an attempt to absorb the wholeness of the person—to tune into a partner in any given moment.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Staniewski and Hodge, 67: “I take only those songs that are strongly connected to a given people, or a given tradition.”

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Paul Allain, *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 53.

³⁸² Alison Hodge, “Włodzimierz Staniewski. Gardzienice and the Naturalised Actor,” in *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, ed. Alison Hodge (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 233.

As with Grotowski, the work on the self through the other is of high importance for Gardzienice; among other benefits, tuning with, ‘reading’ or ‘absorbing’ the other provides an external focus to facilitate an inner process.

In *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice*, Staniewski recalls an encounter with a stranger during one of his visits to Italy: him and the stranger met in a field early in the morning and rather than avoiding each other in fear, they unexpectedly engaged in a “beautiful dance of effort, sweat, [and] breathing” practising karate.³⁸³ This experience was according to Staniewski the inspiration for the work on mutuality. However, it is likely that these ideas started formulating years earlier, when Staniewski was closely collaborating with Grotowski in the early 70s.³⁸⁴ As discussed in the previous section, the work with and through the other was as vital throughout Grotowski’s experimentations, albeit perhaps not as clearly formulated in the early stages of the work, as it would eventually be later on; these ideas were to be clearly articulated by Thomas Richards in his book *Heart of Practice*.³⁸⁵

Whereas the work with musicality is clearly linked to the activation of emotions by Staniewski himself, the same does not stand for mutuality. It is evident that mutuality helps with every aspect of the actor training and performance and its benefits are not limited to the awakening of the inner life of the actor. However, it could be maintained that this awakening is indeed strongly encouraged through the exploration of mutuality. Recalling the encounter with the stranger discussed above,

³⁸³ Staniewski and Hodge, *Hidden Territories*, 74.

³⁸⁴ For Staniewski’s collaboration with Grotowski, see among others: “Staniewski Włodzimierz / Encyklopedia / Grotowski.Net,” <http://www.grotowski.net/en/encyclopedia/staniewski-wlodzimierz> (accessed 24/11/17).

³⁸⁵ Richards, *Heart of Practice*.

Staniewski proclaims that “the most vibrating energy and magnetic power occurs when two people come to each other.”³⁸⁶ The choice of the words magnetic power and energy indicates that what is sought and encouraged through the use of mutuality is indeed a psychophysical reaction. Elsewhere, Staniewski states: “If I am trying to come into my partner’s singing through my own voice, intertwined with his voice, resonance, dynamic and rhythm, then it is as if my partner is creating life in my body. At that moment, mutuality is of the highest order.”³⁸⁷ This suggests that a psychosomatic response is in fact the ultimate goal: mutuality is at its ‘highest order’ when ‘life’ is created in one’s body through the interaction with the other.

Another trigger used by Gardzienice to evoke a psychophysical response is the breath. As Allain points out, Gardzienice’s use of breath “has many meeting points” with Artaud’s Affective Athleticism: “they both link emotion to breath, rooting expression and emotion by physical rather than psychological means.”³⁸⁸ This use of the breath as a potential pathway for awakening the performer’s inner life is confirmed by Staniewski who states that the Inuit’s use of “rhythmical breathing to playfully express love or excitement,”³⁸⁹ is similar to his own exploration of the breath.

³⁸⁶ Staniewski and Hodge, 74.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 77.

³⁸⁸ Allain, *Gardzienice*, 54.

³⁸⁹ Staniewski and Hodge, 72.

Song of the Goat Theatre (Teatr Pieśń Kozła)

Song of the Goat was founded by two former members of Gardzienice, Grzegorz Bral and Anna Zubrzycki, and the influence is, as expected, very strong. Musicality and a principle very similar in nature to Gardzienice's mutuality, *coordination*, are two of the most important aspects of the company's training as well as their rehearsal process.

As discussed above, Staniewski identifies an encounter with a stranger in Italy as the inspiration for the work with mutuality. Bral also identifies an encounter as the inspiration for his work on coordination, a relative of mutuality. He recalls asking the Tibetan lama Dr. Akong Tulku Pinpoche what would be the most beneficial tool for European performers, to which the lama responds “practice coordination.”³⁹⁰ Bral starts exploring this principle that was to become the cornerstone of his approach to actor training:

As I started developing the training it turned out that the coordination is a very subtle, very precise and very specific way of training actors. It basically means that all the tools that we actors have, such as voice, text, presence, magnetism, charisma, rhythm, song [...]; all these tools, all these elements we can combine and unite. We can create a

³⁹⁰ Bral shared this story with a group of students, during a Song of the Goat workshop attended by the researcher in 2015. A video of Bral acknowledging this early inspiration can be found here:

Grzegorz Bral, “London School of Performing Arts – Ethos,” YouTube video, 2:09, posted by “JohnWestonGroup,” 13 July 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=uO-zSHZb7fg (accessed 25/11/17).

unity amongst everything that we do. [...] So, Coordination basically means this: all the acting tools, are one. They are integrated.³⁹¹

This definition, and others similar to this, often given by Bral and Zubrzycki,³⁹² indicate that there has been a shift from the interconnectedness between the people, the space and everything that surrounds the actor, to a focus on the interconnectedness of the different acting tools. The emphasis seems to be shifting away from exploring attunement and its potential benefits towards a holistic approach to acting. Such descriptions, however, do not do justice to the work that is still very concerned with the interrelationships between the ensemble members. Ewan Dowie, a former member of the company, described the working relationship between the Song of the Goat performers as such: “developing trust at an almost atomic level between people’s bodies, souls, minds, and voices, so that we can support each other in as many ways as we can possibly find.”³⁹³ In this search for ways to support the fellow actor, one can see the links to the work on the self with and through the other, the principle that was knowingly or implicitly passed on from Grotowski to Staniewski, and through him to Bral and Zubrzycki.

The ultimate goal of the coordination principle is to bring the actor to a state of harmony with everything within and around them. Observing that people in everyday life tend to be disconnected from their impulses and their true feelings, Bral wants to

³⁹¹ Ibid, 0:47–2:09.

³⁹² To give another example, Zubrzycki defines coordination as the “interdependency and interrelatedness of all the tools that an actor has.” In Anna Zubrzycki and Grzegorz Bral, “Song of the Goat Theatre: Finding Flow and Connection,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 26, no. 03 (2010): 250.

³⁹³ Ewan Downie as quoted by Porubcansky in: Anna Porubcansky, “Song of the Goat Theatre: Artistic Practice as Life Practice,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 26, no. 03 (2010): 264.

train actors to be capable of the exact opposite: to reach a different level of honesty on stage through the use of text, movement, musicality and the quality of attuning.³⁹⁴

To achieve this, Bral and his company devise various exercises, most of which involve working with a partner. The first skill to be developed is the ability to listen. Zubrzycki explains that this is a vital aspect of the training, as the actor that is immersed in the experience of listening cannot but be in the present moment.³⁹⁵ After learning how to listen, one has to learn how to respond to the impulses given by their fellow actors “‘adequately’—not interpreting [...], not exaggerating the physical response, not filtering it through his/her own concept of what s/he thinks it should be.”³⁹⁶ Zubrzycki maintains that by learning to receive and to respond to impulses given by the partner, without imposing one’s interpretation or preconception of what a given moment should be about, one allows space for truthful emotion to emerge; this is because the actor is liberated from the demands they place on themselves to access a certain emotion, demands that can often encourage stereotypical or sentimental performances:

The performers’ engagement in listening to their own process as much as to others’ allows them to move from one situation to the next without getting bogged down in “psychological” acting that ultimately could imprison them in stereotypical reactions and sentimental performances. Each moment is true and when released immediately gives rise to the next true moment. [...] Laughter is true laughter, tears are truly there, anger is absolute and unforgiving—all

³⁹⁴ Bral discusses this in: Zubrzycki and Bral, “Song of the Goat Theatre,” 259.

³⁹⁵ Anna Zubrzycki, ‘Actor Training and Techniques in Pieśń Kozła Theatre’, *Mime Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 81.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

the gamut of human emotions may emerge and play like shooting stars in a summer night sky.³⁹⁷

This ability to access truthful and strong emotions is particularly important for the Song of the Goat performer; when watching their performances or reading about their work one can see that emotions are highly encouraged, or even, sought after. The desire to create a strongly emotional world for performers and audience is evident in the themes that Song of the Goat chooses for their performances (which I will discuss below), the traditions from which they borrow (such as, the ecstatic fire-walking ritual of Anastenaria and lament songs), or even their name, derived from the Greek word ‘tragedy,’ literally, song of the goat(s) from *tragos* (goat) and *ode* (song).³⁹⁸ The themes for the Song of the Goat performances are taken from sources such as Greek tragedy (their first performance also entitled *Song of the Goat* was based on Euripides’ *Bacchae*), and more recently by Shakespeare tragedies: *Macbeth*, *King Lear (Songs of Lear)*, and *Hamlet (Crazy God)*. Even when their chosen theme is not primarily based on a story with strong emotional content, Song of the Goat focuses on the part that bears the emotional weight. Discussing *Chronicles – A Lamentation*, Zubrzycki recalls: “We started looking at the whole of Gilgamesh legend and suddenly found ourselves working around just one episode, which was the death of Enkidu; and the whole performance then slowly started to become a lamentation.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Zubrzycki, 81.

³⁹⁸ A reference to the origins of drama and its relation to the god Dionysus and his half-man, half-goat followers.

³⁹⁹ Zubrzycki and Bral, “Song of the Goat Theatre,” 249.

The use of musicality plays an important role in *Song of the Goat*'s search for emotion: Bral believes that working on a song can “‘open something internally’”⁴⁰⁰ and that “‘the musicality of the text itself contains the emotion.’”⁴⁰¹ *Song of the Goat*, like *Gardzienice*, explore musicality in a wider sense, acknowledging its strong connections to emotion. Discussing the creative process that leads to a *Song of the Goat* performance, Bral explains how his first concern is not to understand the text intellectually, but to identify the ‘biggest dramatic tension’ in the play and to then ask a composer to write music that represents it.⁴⁰² The music written for their performances therefore often acts as a strong emotional stimulus, both for the performers and the audience. The audience’s experience is particularly important, as Bral believes that the audience comes to the theatre because they want to experience emotions, they want to be touched:

I am trying to make a performance that will give [the audience] a profound, a touching, a significant experience. [...] You must be aware that what you do is somehow representative for the audience’s feelings, experiences, emotions. [...] We understand that ultimately theatre, you do for audience. [...] We make theatre for audience to become more sensitive human beings [...] I think that people come to theatre [...] in order to feel more sensitive, more experienced, touched.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ Zubrzycki and Bral, 257.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 252.

⁴⁰² Grzegorz Bral, “BBC Interview with Grzegorz Bral Director of *Song of the Goat* Theatre and LSPAP,” YouTube Video, 26:45, posted by Maryam Davari, 11 August 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25O7ZAgUrq4> (accessed 01/12/17).

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 12:39–14:55.

The audience is affected by the music not only directly, by listening to it, but also indirectly, by witnessing the actors' listening to the music, which is a listening with the whole body, not just the ears, as the Song of the Goat actors have learned how "to suffuse the body with music, to subjugate it to rhythms and harmonies."⁴⁰⁴

Moving away from the post-Grotowskian lineage, the following section will discuss Terzopoulos and Suzuki, whose practice informs my experimentations with Greek tragedy and strong emotion.

⁴⁰⁴ This is a quote by Mieczyslaw Limanowski, founder of Teatr Reduta, the first laboratory theatre in Poland. Grotowski was arguably inspired by their principles. The Limanowski quote is taken from Mark Brown, 'The Aesthetics of Song of the Goat Theatre'. *New Theatre Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (February 2012): 94–97.

Tadashi Suzuki and Theodoros Terzopoulos: Tapping into Reserve Energy

*Energy is [...] the movement, the constant flow of the moving body that moves in space and time, but also the inner movement, the (e)motion. Energy is not an abstract idea to be imposed on the actor as an external order. It is to be understood through embodied experience and body memory.*⁴⁰⁵

Theodoros Terzopoulos

While reading this chapter, one can observe a shift from the use of the word emotion or feeling—terms often used by Stanislavski and Michael Chekhov—to the use of terms such as inner life or inner action. Terzopoulos and Suzuki will shift the focus once more, from what is happening within and experienced by the actor (the inner) to the energy that they generate. The two practitioners search for ways to help the actor access an energetic state that gives them a strong stage presence and allows the actor to engulf “the spectator in his overwhelmingly dynamic stage image.”⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Theodoros Terzopoulos, *I Epistropi tou Dionysou [The Return of Dionysus: The Method of Theodoros Terzopoulos]* (Athens: Attis Theatre Publications, 2015), 15. Translation mine. The Greek word used by Terzopoulos is συν(γ)κίνηση, which is perhaps closer to the English expression ‘to be moved.’ Etymologically, it comes from the prefix συν (con) and the word κίνηση (movement). I chose the word e-motion in order to translate Terzopoulos’ play on words linking inner life with movement, using a single noun.

⁴⁰⁶ Suzuki as quoted by Brandon, in James R. Brandon, “Training at the Waseda Little Theatre: The Suzuki Method,” *The Drama Review* 22, no. 4 (1978): 40.

Terzopoulos and Suzuki aim to de-psychologise and de-personalise the process of the actor, so that there is a shift from the personal to the universal.⁴⁰⁷

The two practitioners are studied together here, even though the training itself might externally appear to present significant differences. The reason for this choice is that the principles explored are very similar. During the first Theatre Olympics (1995), an international theatre festival founded by a group including both Terzopoulos and Suzuki, the two men discuss the affinities between their practices and each acknowledges the other as his ‘alter ego.’ Terzopoulos observes while addressing Suzuki:

Although I have never directly been taught the Suzuki method, when I saw your work, I felt your approach was entirely comprehensible. For in many aspects it corresponds to my own ideas. I had the feeling that I was literally watching my alter ego, and that there was a striking affinity with Suzuki, the artist, as well as the man.⁴⁰⁸

Suzuki draws inspiration from *noh* and Kabuki, whereas Terzopoulos acknowledges his influences in theatre practitioners such as Grotowski, Meyerhold, and Brecht. They are working in two different parts of the world: Suzuki in Japan, Terzopoulos in Greece. Yet when watching performances directed by the two theatre practitioners, one can notice several similarities: the emphasis on the use of the body, the use of geometry and stillness, the highly energetic states accessed by the actors,

⁴⁰⁷ Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1986), 12.

⁴⁰⁸ Theodoros Terzopoulos in *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre: History, Methodology and Comments*, trans. Alexandra Kapalis (Athens: Agra Publications, 2000), 85.

and the extra-daily, powerful, often abrupt and eruptive nature of movement and language.

Before discussing some of the shared principles responsible for the affinities between the two practitioners' work, it is worth noting that Suzuki prefers using the word discipline instead of exercise when referring to the training he developed. This is because he associates exercise with the physical aspect of the work, whereas discipline is understood as a broader term that involves the physical engagement with the exercise, as well as the emotional response to it. Suzuki explains:

any time an actor thinks he is merely exercising or training his muscles, he is cheating himself. These are *acting* disciplines. Every instant of every discipline, the actor must be expressing the emotion of some situation, according to his own bodily interpretations. That's why I don't call them exercises.⁴⁰⁹

One can notice here that Suzuki understands the body to be both the locus and the point of entry to emotion. This great interest in the investigation of the psychophysical is shared by the two practitioners. Let us now examine some of the ways in which this connection of the inner to the outer is practically explored.

⁴⁰⁹ Original emphasis. Suzuki as quoted by Brandon, in Brandon, "Training at the Waseda Little Theatre," 36.

Grammar of the Feet

Tadashi Suzuki puts great emphasis on the use of the feet and legs of the performer, and thus has often called his training method the Grammar of the Feet. The emphasis on the feet allows the performer to establish an ‘intimate’ relationship with the floor and acquire a better sense of grounding.⁴¹⁰ Suzuki observes that such relationship with the ground has links to ancient Japanese rituals that use “powerful foot stamping” in order to “magically ward off the evil.”⁴¹¹ These rituals allow the participants to reach a trance-like state that would generate high levels of energy while eradicating “the ordinary, everyday sense of the body.”⁴¹² Suzuki also points out that such rituals empower the participants by allowing them to feel connected to something beyond them, be it an ancestor, a god or a spirit:

The act of stamping and pounding not only signifies pushing down on the enemy, suppressing him or driving him away, but suggests as well the calling forth of the energy of an object of worship, the taking of that energy into oneself [...] When the spirit has entered [...] that person in turn becomes brave and finds himself ready for deeds of strength and valor.⁴¹³

Although it would be hard to substantiate that the participants of these rituals, or performers applying similar principles, would be possessed by a spirit, it can be argued that the repeated use of the stamping over a prolonged period of time may indeed initiate a series of bodily changes that can give the performer the subjective

⁴¹⁰ In the first chapter of *The Way of Acting* the word ‘intimate’ is used multiple times by Suzuki to describe what the actor’s relationship with the ground ought to be.

⁴¹¹ Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 11.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 14.

experience of an altered state of consciousness: greater levels of concentration are reached, self-consciousness in the form of self-judgment seems to disappear and an altered perception of space and time is often reported.

Analogous Greek rituals have been studied by Terzopoulos. Ekehart Schall, leading actor of the Berliner Ensemble, points out that unlike other theatre practitioners, Terzopoulos did not turn to ancient vases for inspiration for his Greek tragedy productions, but instead studied ancient rituals.⁴¹⁴ Terzopoulos acknowledges such influences, paying particular attention to a ritual that took place at the ancient Greek infirmary Amfiareio of Oropos. He describes:

When the sun set, the patients started walking in a circle. An hour later they accelerated the rhythm of their walk. Two hours later they accelerated even more. After three hours, they bent their knees, like in Kabuki theatre. Four hours later they also bent their elbows. [...] This would go on for eight hours, and thus the patients' physical pain would disappear. They would enter a state of Bacchic frenzy, not through wine consumption, but through the wine of their body: their blood. [...] When the blood circulates freely in all our veins, it brings happiness. In the following morning, the patients were in a state of ecstasy, relaxation, and bliss. They were ready to be operated on, and anaesthesia was performed just with the aid of an herb.⁴¹⁵

While Suzuki focuses on the use of the stamping itself, Terzopoulos emphasizes the benefits of repeated movement over a prolonged period of time. However, this movement also relates to the feet as it ultimately explores a way of walking.

⁴¹⁴ Ekehart Schall in Terzopoulos, *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre*, 34.

⁴¹⁵ Translation mine. Terzopoulos as quoted by Chatzidimitriou, in Pinelopi Chatzidimitriou, *Theodoros Terzopoulos: Apo to Prosopiko Sto Pankosmio [From Personal to Universal]* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2010), 63.

Fatigue-Exhaustion

The ritual described above inspired the development of Terzopoulos' training method, which seeks to break the barrier of tiredness and discover what lies beyond exhaustion. The Greek practitioner attempts to "mine the body for its secrets" as Marianne McDonald puts it.⁴¹⁶ Terzopoulos explains: "there is this natural, unlimited source of energy that originates in the body, that can be elicited, developed, and amplified."⁴¹⁷ Both Terzopoulos and Suzuki look for a way to help the actor access an energy reserve that is rarely used in daily life, which is vital for the theatre they envision: their method puts the performer into survival mode. As Tom Nelis, a founding member of SITI company puts it:⁴¹⁸ "the only experience

⁴¹⁶ Marianne McDonald, "Theodoros Terzopoulos, A Director for the Ages: Theatre of the Body, Mind, and Memory," in *Reise Mit Dionysos: Das Theater Des Theodoros Terzopoulos. Journey with Dionysos: The Theatre of Theodoros Terzopoulos*, ed. Frank M. Raddatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006), 9.

⁴¹⁷ Translation mine. Terzopoulos as quoted by Chatzidimitriou in Chatzidimitriou, *Theodoros Terzopoulos*, 65.

⁴¹⁸ SITI is a theatre company which was co-founded by Tadashi Suzuki and the American theatre director Anne Bogart in 1992. The company's mission statement expresses the desire to "redefine and revitalize contemporary theatre in the United States through an emphasis on international cultural exchange and collaboration." See the official SITI Company website, <http://siti.org/content/about-us> (accessed 07/01/19)

Bogart, currently one of SITI Company's Artistic Directors, is perhaps better known for her work with the compositional technique *Viewpoints*, based on Mary Overlie's Six Viewpoints. SITI's training approach utilises both the Suzuki method and *Viewpoints*, two disparate approaches which according to Bogart produce a "great alchemy." See Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 17.

equivalent to working with him [Suzuki] is being held at gunpoint. When you think your life is on the line your survival mechanism kicks in.’⁴¹⁹

Some contextualisation would be necessary at this point, to help us better understand what ‘survival mode’ is, as well as its link to reserve energy. William James, whose insights on emotion were thoroughly examined in Chapter One, also discusses the accessing of reserve energy:

Ordinarily we stop when we meet the first effective layer, so to call it, of fatigue. We have then walked, played, or worked ‘enough,’ and desist. That amount of fatigue is an efficacious obstruction, on this side of which our usual life is cast. But if an unusual necessity forces us to press onward, a surprising thing occurs. The fatigue gets worse up to a certain critical point, when gradually or suddenly it passes away, and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue-obstacle usually obeyed. [...] Mental activity shows the phenomenon as well as physical, and in exceptional cases we may find, [...] amounts of ease and power that we never dreamed ourselves to own, sources of strength habitually not taxed at all, because habitually we never push through the obstruction, never pass those early critical points.⁴²⁰

James observes that there are great benefits to the accessing of reserve energy: our abilities are expanded and sharpened. This is accompanied by a feeling of ease. The combination of these naturally bring boldness, the ‘valour’ mentioned previously by Suzuki. These qualities are extremely useful to the actor, and especially the actor in search of emotion; once this state has been reached, the actor can access any emotion without self-judgment. The emotions accessed under this condition are often extreme

⁴¹⁹ Tom Nelis as quoted by Allain in Paul Allain, *The Art of Stillness: The Theatre Practice of Tadashi Suzuki* (London: Methuen, 2002), 49.

⁴²⁰ William James, “The Energies of Men,” *The Philosophical Review* 16, no. 1 (1907): 4.

and experienced through the whole body. The use of appropriate working material such as Greek tragedy, which both Suzuki and Terzopoulos have worked on extensively, can amplify and reinforce the actor's experience and encourage such extreme emotions.

Paul Allain points out that when you are an actor performing Greek tragedy in a Suzuki production "you do not have to act or imagine the 'reversal' or anagnorisis, because you are physically experiencing a similar heightened state and emotional response to the demands being placed on the performer by the director, teacher or yourself."⁴²¹ Allain observes that fatigue can bring a real emotional reaction that can be used for the benefit of the scene. In addition, the demands placed by the director trainer or one's self will encourage the performer to persevere and eventually overcome the barrier of tiredness and access reserve energy. This is in line with James' observation that reserve energy can be accessed under two conditions: during emotional arousal (e.g. while running to avoid danger, or dancing in a state of joy) or when "some unusual idea of necessity induces us to make an extra effort of will."⁴²²

The physically demanding training in combination with the discipline required by both Suzuki and Terzopoulos becomes the 'necessity' that encourages the actor to make the 'extra effort.' It allows them to overcome the obstacle that stands in between daily and reserve energy: fatigue. The actor can thus bypass the need for the natural stimulus (the emotional arousal) and access the reserve energy directly, through "an extra effort of will."⁴²³ Emotion comes with it, not only as a by-

⁴²¹ Paul Allain, "Suzuki Training," *The Drama Review* 42, no. 1 (1998): 82–83.

⁴²² James, "The Energies of Men," 5.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

product, but as a treasured state. The emotion that comes through the accessing of reserve energy is not the “poor feelings of everyday life”⁴²⁴ but rather “a total experience throughout the body,”⁴²⁵ the body of the actor that is now ready to “‘bear’ the tragic material instead of psychologically interpreting it.”⁴²⁶ Thus fatigue is no longer the barrier to overcome, but instead a tool to access emotion.

The Centre

Another access point to the energy reserve and, through it, to emotion, is the centre of gravity located in the pelvic region. Both Suzuki and Terzopoulos place great emphasis on this area, from which energy can be ‘mined’ to be used for the benefit of the performance. As Allain points out, Suzuki is following the *noh* tradition, according to which “energy is synonymous with the word for hips (*koshi*), recognizing that the body’s centre is primarily responsible for the charged, heightened physical state of the *noh* performer.”⁴²⁷ Suzuki requests that his disciples should initiate movement from the centre, rather than the periphery. This might not necessarily mean that the first part of the body that an external observer sees moving is the centre; it means that the actor brings their attention to their centre, and the impulse to move comes from the hips.

⁴²⁴ Savvas Stoumpos, “An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre,” in *Reise Mit Dionysos: Das Theater Des Theodoros Terzopoulos. Journey with Dionysos: The Theatre of Theodoros Terzopoulos*, ed. Frank M. Raddatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006), 232.

⁴²⁵ McDonald, “Theodoros Terzopoulos,” 9.

⁴²⁶ Stoumpos, “An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre,” 231.

⁴²⁷ Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 118.

For Terzopoulos, the centre is a triangle formed by three of the energy centres: the first is in the rectum-sacrum area, the second in the genital area, and the third expands from the lower diaphragm to the navel. These bear similarities to the *chakras*;⁴²⁸ however, Terzopoulos bases his energy centre theory on Dionysian rituals, rather than traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.⁴²⁹ He argues that the three energy centres located in the pelvic area are the most important ones, because by activating the *triangle*, the actor “‘can release animal energy.’”⁴³⁰

Suzuki also stresses that the performer should not forget that humankind “‘is one of the animals.’”⁴³¹ Although modern society often encourages us to distance ourselves from such instincts, and modern urban life-style encourages us to indulge in the comfort of technological achievements that are further distancing us from our animal nature, Suzuki argues that animal energy should be the “‘primary ingredient’”⁴³² of theatre. This—on the most basic level—means that Suzuki wishes to increase the impact of a performance through the use of ‘animal energy,’ which stems from the

⁴²⁸ The *chakras* are energy centres located along the spine, starting from the base (*root chakra*) all the way up to the *crown chakra* located at the top of the head. These wheel-like focal points register both in the physical (the visible) and the subtle (the invisible: spiritual, emotional, psychological) body; it is thus believed that the activation of *chakras* allows for an energy exchange between inner and outer, tangible and intangible. For more detailed discussions on the chakras see among others Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 452–3 and C. W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras: An Authoritative Edition of the Groundbreaking Classic*, 2nd edition (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books/Theosophical Publishing House, 2013).

⁴²⁹ See Chatzidimitriou, *Theodoros Terzopoulos*, 61.

⁴³⁰ Terzopoulos, *The Return of Dionysos*, 24. Translation mine.

⁴³¹ Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 21.

⁴³² As put by Allain, in Allain, “Suzuki Training, 79.

performers' overwhelming physical and energetic state. He rejects the use of non-animal or 'inert energy' such as the use of a revolving stage or lighting as an alternative.⁴³³ More to the point, the search for animal energy guides the Suzuki performer through a training that will reveal "hidden patterns of behaviour, closer to intuitive or animal responses and reflexes rather than socially conditioned or self-conscious comportment."⁴³⁴ Animal energy can thus be understood as a return to a more primeval state; a state during which one might at once experience reconnecting with one's animalistic nature, while gazing towards the divine.

According to Terzopoulos, it is possible to access and release such animal energy by working on the energy centres, located in the pelvic area. He argues that by using diaphragmatic breathing, one can activate the area, and as a result, activate all three energetic triangles that are linked to the pelvic plexus:⁴³⁵

- sacrum – rectum – genitals – sacrum
- navel – genitals – rectum – navel
- head – rectum – genitals – head

⁴³³ Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 30.

⁴³⁴ Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 122.

⁴³⁵ Terzopoulos, *The Return of Dionysus*, 19.

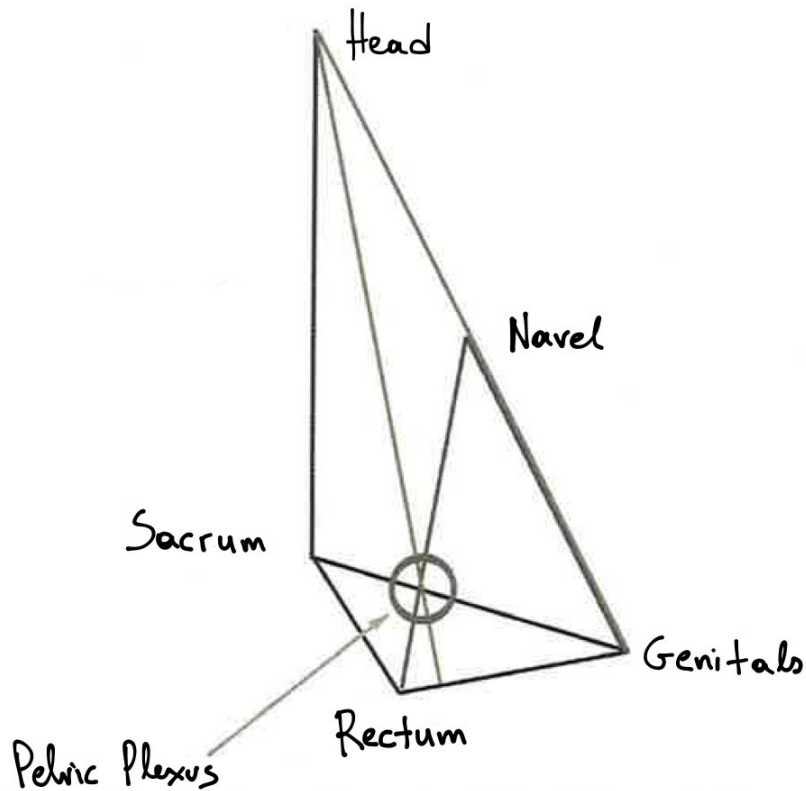


Image 1. Terzopoulos' Triangles.⁴³⁶

In the above diagram, one can notice that most of the points of interest are located in or around the pelvis. The head is the only exception, which serves to remind us that, although the centre is the point of focus, it should always be perceived as part of the whole body. The head, and in particular, the actor's eyes are to form one additional energetic triangle, with the other two points being the centre of the actor's body and the point beyond the last spectator.⁴³⁷ Thus, the performer is connecting with the spectator through their centre, and the energy within the actor can be radiated throughout the whole theatre to put "a spell [...] over the audience, comparable to what is experienced in Noh."⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Reproduced from Terzopoulos, *The Return of Dionysus*, 19. Translation mine.

⁴³⁷ See Stoumpos, "An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre," 232–233.

⁴³⁸ McDonald, "Theodoros Terzopoulos," 9.

The actor's centre can be activated through both movement and dynamic stillness. The cornerstone of Terzopoulos' method, the *deconstruction of the triangle*, explores the path of movement, through a back and forth movement of the pelvis.⁴³⁹ Suzuki explores a similar positioning of the pelvis. In "Training at the Waseda Little Theatre" Brandon reports that "the two basic postures used in the disciplines are: pelvis thrust out behind (*koshi o dasu*) and pelvis tucked forward (*koshi o ireru*)."⁴⁴⁰ Terzopoulos' deconstruction of the triangle explores the shifting from one of these positions to the other in quick repetitive successions. However, in Suzuki's practice the activation of the centre is mainly achieved through a different route: dynamic stillness. Rather than moving the centre in order to activate it, as is the case with Terzopoulos, Suzuki asks the actor to move their feet and at more developed stages of the training their arms as well, while retaining all energy produced through this movement into the pelvic region. This is achieved by keeping the pelvic region, as well as the torso, immobile.⁴⁴¹ In addition, the performer is focusing on the balance "between height and depth, sky and earth" by lightly bending their knees and being in constant contact with the ground through their feet, while the upper part of the body "moves as far as possible upwards."⁴⁴² This creates new 'tensions'⁴⁴³ into the

⁴³⁹ For a discussion on the *deconstruction of the triangle*, see Terzopoulos, *The Return of Dionysos*, 35–38. See also Wilma Theatre's promotional video "Cast of Antigone Undergoes Intense Training," YouTube video, 2:53, posted by "WHYY News," 27/10/15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gAJYxA-rCA> (accessed 01/09/18). For the *deconstruction of the triangle*, see 1:53–2:22.

⁴⁴⁰ James Brandon, "Training at the Waseda Little Theatre," 33.

⁴⁴¹ See Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 9.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, 10.

centre of the body, where these two opposing forces meet. As a result, “the source of strength emanates in all directions from the pelvic area, which radiates energy.”⁴⁴⁴

Both Terzopoulos and Suzuki work with stillness as a general principle, and external stillness is often accompanied by inner movement. Stillness is another key principle to approach the extra-daily, and emotion of great magnitude required by the working material the two practitioners often engage with, such as Greek tragedy. Terzopoulos maintains that stillness allows what is internal to develop and be amplified, whereas on the contrary “mobility quickly diffuses the energy and guides us towards [everyday] feeling,”⁴⁴⁵ not befitting to the magnitude of the tragedy. The next practitioner to be studied here, Eugenio Barba, argues: “when the visible, the external (the body), does not move, then the invisible, the internal (the mind) must be in movement. Like a swan on water: it glides impassively, but its feet, hidden from view, are always working. Motionless while moving, in stillness not still.”⁴⁴⁶ Although the use of the word ‘mind’ is somehow surprising and in disagreement with the argument presented here, according to which inner movement might not solely belong to but is strongly related to the realm of emotions, Barba’s point helps us understand why Terzopoulos and Suzuki heavily explore stillness: outer dynamic stillness encourages inner movement. The next section will discuss Eugenio Barba’s discoveries in relation to the performer’s inner life in more detail.

⁴⁴³ The word ‘tension’ is used here with a positive quality, following Eugenio Barba. In *The Paper Canoe*, Barba argues that the activation of the performer’s energy is encouraged by the creation of the right kind of ‘tensions.’ See for example Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 9; 18.

⁴⁴⁴ Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 10.

⁴⁴⁵ Translation mine. Terzopoulos quoted by Chatzidimitriou, in Chatzidimitriou, *Theodoros Terzopoulos*, 126.

⁴⁴⁶ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 54.

Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret: Energy, or Rather, Inner Movement.⁴⁴⁷

Eugenio Barba, like many practitioners examined in this chapter, would agree that emotion cannot be accessed directly and thus needs to be lured through indirect means. As discussed in the Introduction, Barba also aligns himself with practitioners who avoid using the word emotion when discussing the process of the actor. He warns us that by using certain words we often “asphyxiate what we would like to give birth to.”⁴⁴⁸ This makes it difficult to list with certainty the means used by Barba and the Odin actors to access emotion. What is certain is that Barba’s performances aim to “attack the spectator’s nervous system”⁴⁴⁹ as he puts it: “Above all the spectator should live the performance emotionally, recalling it with the same personal implications and the same degree of ambiguity with which they live the usual and dramatic events of daily life.”⁴⁵⁰

Although awakening the actor’s emotion is not the only way to achieve this, it certainly is one of them. Odin Teatret actor Roberta Carreri observes that certain exercises or principles can “strike a chord within” the actor “that reawakens feelings and emotions. The resonance of such chords can in turn affect and strike

⁴⁴⁷ A reference to Chapter Five from Barba’s book *The Paper Canoe*, which is entitled “Energy, or Rather, The Thought.” See Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 50.

⁴⁴⁸ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 50.

⁴⁴⁹ From a discussion with Eugenio Barba attended by the researcher, as part of the Odin Festival. The event was organised by the Grotowski Institute to celebrate the 50 years of Odin Teatret (Grotowski Institute, Wrocław, 2–7 September 2014).

⁴⁵⁰ Eugenio Barba, *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House*, trans. Judy Barba (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010), 25.

chords in spectators, moving them.”⁴⁵¹ The exercise described by Carreri when making this remark focuses on the exploration of different “leading points.”⁴⁵² She explains:

For instance, the head leading point evokes menace. The heart leading point while moving forward: openness and optimism. [...] While moving backwards: sadness. The hips while moving forward: sexuality. Forward-facing wrists: vulnerability. And so on. It is not that I think of something which evokes these feelings in me; it is the active position of the body that awakens them.⁴⁵³

The naming of specific emotions that correspond to a particular part of the body is beyond the scope of this research. It is also partly in collision with Eugenio Barba’s position that “emotion is a cocktail,”⁴⁵⁴ as one might be experiencing different and often contradicting emotions at the same time. Trying to identify and target a specific emotion for a particular moment can be valid at times, but it is often not the optimal way to tackle the challenge of acted emotion. What I would like to draw the reader’s attention to instead, is that the micro-movements that occur within the actor’s body while experimenting with this idea of initiating movement in different body parts, can awaken the actor’s inner life. This work with leading points can be pronounced and therefore clearly visible to the observer. However, it can also be much subtler, barely visible to an observer, but still providing very distinctive sensations to the actor, that can in turn activate emotion. The trainer can also use this knowledge to

⁴⁵¹ Roberta Carreri, *On Training and Performance: Traces of an Odin Teatret Actress*, ed. and trans. Frank Camilleri (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 201.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ From a discussion with Eugenio Barba attended by the researcher during Odin Festival (Grotowski Institute, Wrocław, 2–7 September 2014).

encourage inner movement, through subtly indicating initiation of movement from different ‘leading points.’

It is important to note here that there is a danger in reading the above-mentioned section from Carreri’s book in isolation. One might assume that the emphasis is placed only on the body parts mentioned. However, it is necessary to emphasise that the physiological changes that occur in the body parts in focus are accompanied by micro-movements in the actor’s trunk. Barba explains this principle:

If [movements of the hands and legs] originate only in the joints — shoulder, elbow, wrist, knee, ankle, etc. — do not involve the trunk and therefore do not change the body’s balance. They remain pure gesticulation. They become scenically alive only if they are a prolongation of an impulse or a micro-action which occurs in the spinal column.⁴⁵⁵

Carreri also puts great emphasis on the activation of the spine. She believes that the engagement of the spine can activate the actor’s *in-tension*. According to her, *in-tension* is what differentiates a simple movement from a physical action.⁴⁵⁶ The term has a double meaning: it is both the intention, the actor’s purposeful engagement with the working material (whether that is a physical action, an exercise, or some text to give a few examples), and the micro-movements (often called *tensions* by Barba) inside the actor’s body, and especially their trunk.

In *The Paper Canoe*, Barba discusses at length the importance of such micro-movements and claims that the performer’s *life* is a result of myriad tensions

⁴⁵⁵ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 28.

⁴⁵⁶ Researcher’s notes from the *Dance of Intentions* workshop led by Carreri in Holstebro, Denmark, 26/07/15–08/08/15.

between opposing forces.⁴⁵⁷ To make this point clearer, Barba gives the example of the *noh* actor Hideo Kanze, who learned how to control and amplify his energy by moving forward while being held back by the hips. Another *noh* school uses a different approach, yet the same principle: “the performer must imagine that above him is suspended a ring of iron which pulls him upwards and he must resist this pull in order to keep his feet on the ground.”⁴⁵⁸ Both schools use opposing forces to activate the micro-movements necessary for the generation of energy. Only the means to activate these opposing forces differ: in the former case the use of physical resistance, and in the latter the use of imagination and visualisation. Although certain theatre practices have codified and clearly articulated principles such as that of the opposing forces, Barba believes that such principles are shared between all theatre practices, whether the performers are conscious of them or not. He calls them *recurring principles*.

Another term that is worth noting is *life* or *bios*, often used by Barba. Unlike other practitioners discussed here, Barba avoids adding the adjective *inner* to this term. The actor’s *life* is not defined by its inner quality, perhaps to stress that the performer’s *life* can indeed be experienced and perceived by the external observer. It is manifested, and is thus as much related to the inner as it is related to the outer: the performer’s body is capable of *revealing* its life to the spectator.⁴⁵⁹ The omission of the ‘inner’ also highlights *bios*’ psychophysical nature.

⁴⁵⁷ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 24.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 23.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

The terms presence and energy are also used, sometimes interchangeably. Before an actor can work on character, emotion, or text, they need to develop their energy or stage presence. Barba calls this the pre-expressive:

These [recurring] principles, when applied to certain physiological factors—weight, balance, the use of the spinal column and the eyes—produce physical, pre-expressive tensions. These new tensions generate an extra-daily energy quality which renders the body theatrically ‘decided’, ‘alive’, ‘believable’, thereby enabling the performer’s ‘presence’ or scenic bios to attract the spectator’s attention *before* any message is transmitted. This is a logical, and not a chronological ‘before.’⁴⁶⁰

It is not argued that Barba’s terms *life* or *bios* are synonymous with emotion, that the terms can be used interchangeably, or that when Barba refers to life or energy, he in fact refers to emotion. That would be an oversimplification. However, I would like to put forth that there is a link between what Barba calls *life*, *bios*, or even, presence and energy, and the understanding of emotion developed in this thesis.

To make the point clearer, let us focus on Barba’s discussion of Energy, and in particular “The Return Home” section from *The Paper Canoe*. In this section, Barba discusses the affinities between his practice and that of Michael Chekhov. Interestingly, most of the aspects of Chekhov’s work he mentions are those related to emotion: the psychological gesture, the qualities of movement, the atmospheres, and the principle of radiating, where the imaginary body continues the movement when the physical body has reached its limit.⁴⁶¹ Many of the references to Stanislavski

⁴⁶⁰ Original emphasis. Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 9.

⁴⁶¹ See *ibid*, 72–80.

throughout the book are also related to the work with emotions. An example is the ‘waiting for the mouse’ exercise:

Around that corner is a mouse. Take a stick and lie in wait for it. [...] Watch more attentively. [...] Concentrate more. [...] Well then, do you see that now you are standing in a completely different rhythm than before? Do you feel the difference? To stand and watch for a mouse—that is one rhythm; to watch a tiger that is creeping up on you is quite another one.⁴⁶²

Barba acknowledges that this is linked to emotion, as he points out that it would be possible to replace the word rhythm with the word emotion in the quote above, without significantly altering the meaning. He also points the reader towards the importance of *sats* and its link to the state of ‘being decided.’ *Sats* is the Norwegian word for impulse and another crucial term for Odin Teatret. Barba defines it as “the impulse towards an action which is as yet unknown and which can go in any direction.”⁴⁶³ Elsewhere he explains further: “in the instance which precedes the action, when all the necessary force is ready to be released into space but as though suspended and still under control, the performer perceives her/his energy in the form of *sats*, of dynamic preparation.”⁴⁶⁴ Returning to the above extract from Stanislavski, Barba observes:

If we removed the word ‘rhythm’ from Konstantin Sergeyeitch Stanislavski’s words above and substituted for it the word ‘emotion’, the essential meaning of his instructions would not change. The most interesting fact for us, however, would remain concealed: that the effectiveness of the ‘magic if’ or the ‘emotional memory’ is

⁴⁶² Stanislavski as quoted by Barba in *The Paper Canoe*, 60.

⁴⁶³ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 6. For a more detailed discussion on *sats* see also *ibid*, 55–61.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 55.

stimulated from the outside, by working on the *sats*. By this means, the performer is freed from the fetters of having ‘to decide to act’. S/he reacts, *is decided*.’⁴⁶⁵

The state of ‘being decided’ is easily understood through this example provided by Barba: when watching Western films, one can observe that during the pistol duels, the first to reach for their gun, is usually the one to die. Barba explains that the Danish physicist Niels Bohr studied the phenomenon and how it corresponds to reality and discovered that there is indeed some truth in this Western film convention: “the first to draw is the slowest because he *decides* to shoot, and dies. The second to draw lives because he is faster, and he is faster because he doesn’t have to decide, *he is decided*.”⁴⁶⁶

This state of being open and reactive, ready to psychophysically respond to any stimulus, rather than making purely intellectual choices, is crucial for the work with emotion. Colloquial expressions such as to ‘switch off’ or ‘silence’ the actor’s brain or the desire to get an actor ‘out of their head’ are often used by theatre practitioners and actor trainers.⁴⁶⁷ Barba’s state of *being decided* is, however, more accurate, focusing less on the problematic reason-emotion or brain-heart division and more on the development of organicity and responsiveness. The ability to follow impulses helps the actor to be *decided*, whether these impulses come from a partner or from the actor’s own imagination, as with the mouse exercise mentioned above. The work on *sats* is of crucial importance for Odin Teatret, as Barba maintains that it “is the

⁴⁶⁵ Original emphasis. Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 60.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

⁴⁶⁷ Such expressions are commonly used; see for example Meisner, *On Acting*, 47: “But to ask your partner questions continuously, as you did, is using your head, and what I am trying to do is get you out of your head.”

means by which one penetrates into the cellular world of scenic behaviour. It serves to eliminate the separation between thought and physical action.’’⁴⁶⁸ We see here that thought should neither be excluded, nor allowed to dominate the actor’s process. It is an integral part of a holistic process.

Barba also discusses how perplexed Stanislavski’s pupils felt when they were instructed to stand in the ‘‘correct rhythm.’’⁴⁶⁹ The pupil could understand moving in rhythm, but *standing* in rhythm? Stanislavski was about to introduce the concept of inner tempo, which has already been discussed as crucially linked to emotion. Working on inner tempo can be understood as a mental exercise, where one just imagines one’s inner tempo changing in one way or another. It could, however, also be perceived as another form of inner movement. As Barba points out, the actor’s imagination has physical consequences.⁴⁷⁰ Perhaps the heart rate slows down or speeds up and other visceral and muscular structures are physically affected when imagining the inner tempo changing. These physiological changes might not be visible to the external observer but they can be perceived by the actor working with inner tempo as distinct sensations. This can, in turn, be revealed to the observer and perceived as inner life.

The question of inner movement, in one form or another, keeps arising in the discussion on the actor’s *life* in *The Paper Canoe*. Having already discussed inner tempo, oppositions, and leading points, there are two more relevant principles to

⁴⁶⁸ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 58.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 59.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 20.

briefly address before concluding this section: “movement stop, inside no stop”⁴⁷¹ and “seven-tenths – the energy of the absorbed action.”⁴⁷² The first principle refers to the continuation of movement in time, when it has stopped in space. A concept similar to Chekhov’s radiating: the imaginary body continues the movement when the physical body has reached its limit. Barba uses the sound of a bell resonating long after the bell has been struck as a reference.⁴⁷³

However, it is not necessary for the inner movement to only be the continuation of an outer movement. The movement in its entirety can also solely occur internally. Barba brings the example of a *noh* sequence, the *i-guse*, also called ‘the action of silence’ or a ‘dance with the heart.’ During this sequence, the main performer appears to be externally still; “the performer, however, is dancing. Inside himself.”⁴⁷⁴ This is one of the most important moments of the performance, and a moment during which the performer is able to demonstrate their extraordinary skills. This ‘dance with the heart’ is the awakening of the actor’s inner life, and its revelation to the audience, through imagining that one’s body is moving, when in fact the body stays externally still.

Barba places emphasis on the importance of thought during this and other similar processes, thus entitling the fifth chapter of the *Paper Canoe* “Energy, or Rather, The Thought.” However, what is argued here is that the thought in itself would not be sufficient, and it is in fact the inner movement that is necessary. To make this

⁴⁷¹ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 69.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 52.

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 59.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 30.

point clearer, I would like to invite the reader to consider the following exercise, an adaptation of a Michael Chekhov exercise that serves as an introduction to his notion of the *imaginary body*.⁴⁷⁵

Open your (physical) body as much as possible. The arms and legs are stretching to the diagonals as you find yourself in a standing starfish position. Now try the opposite: close your body as much as possible; this new shape resembles a ball. Notice the different sensations in these two positions: open and closed.

Now start the exercise again: This time try to explore the same movement with your imaginary body, while your physical body remains externally still: you visualise that your body is opening to its limits, while it externally appears to be immobile. An external observer would not be able to see you moving, but your body is in fact opening; myriads of micro-movements are occurring, as the physical body is responding to your embodied imagination. Now try the opposite: the imaginary body is closing as much as possible, while the physical body remains still. Notice the resulting sensations.

Now imagine that you are watching someone else opening their physical body in the same manner. Try to visualise this with the same level of detail. Only this time, it is someone else that is doing the movement. Now imagine they are closing. With the same level of detail. Do you experience similar sensations as before? Is there as much inner movement or inner 'tension' present when you imagine that it is someone else's body moving?

⁴⁷⁵ The *Opening and Closing with the Imaginary Body* exercise was introduced to me during a workshop I attended at RADA studios in November 2013: *Image, Body, Character: Michael Chekhov Workshop*. Led by Erik Andrews and Gretchen Egolf.

If the answer is no, this exercise indicates that thought itself is not sufficient to activate *in-tensions*. If it were, imagining someone else's body moving would trigger identical sensations. Yet, it does not. This is because the kind of embodied thinking that occurs when visualising one's own 'imaginary body' moving, is causing a real physiological change. Chekhov calls this the imaginary body, but the movement is real, not imaginary. As Carreri puts it, "the body is moving, we just can't see it."⁴⁷⁶

Chapter One proposed that emotion is not merely a mental state; it is experienced through and manifested in the body. Whether one externally appears to be still or mobile, the inner movement of emotion is present. When the actor works with inner movement or 'tension' as discussed here, there is a constant dance of oppositions or *in-tensions* to use the Odin vocabulary. The experience of such sensations is similar to those experienced during emotional arousal. Thus, it can be argued that emotion is not only metaphorically, but also literally, an inner movement.

The last principle to be discussed here is very closely related to the 'movement stop, inside no stop principle.' Only this time the external movement is not completely withheld or absent; it is absorbed, made smaller yet still visible. It is the *seven-tenths* principle: "the ability to keep energy in, to concentrate into an action limited in space the energy necessary for a much larger action."⁴⁷⁷ To make this principle clearer, Barba quotes Zeami:

When you feel ten in your heart, express seven in your movements.
[...] [The performer] will learn to move his arms to a lesser extent

⁴⁷⁶ Researcher's notes from the *Dance of Intentions workshop* led by Carreri. Odin Teatrer, Holstebro, 26 July–8 August 2015.

⁴⁷⁷ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 29.

than his emotions suggest. [...] In terms of general stage deportment, no matter how slight a bodily action, if the motion is more restrained than the emotion behind it, the emotion will become the Substance and the movements of the body its Function, thus moving the audience.⁴⁷⁸

It is worth noting that this quotation as found in *The Paper Canoe* is not entirely accurate. Zeami's treatise "A Mirror Held to the Flower" (from the same translation as the one used by Barba) reads: "if the motion is more restrained than the emotion behind it, the body will become the Substance and the emotion its Function, thus moving the audience."⁴⁷⁹ Substance and Function are multi-layered terms used by Zeami that cannot be easily described; however, Zeami uses a metaphor that is particularly helpful: Substance can be compared to a flower and Function to its odour.⁴⁸⁰ Flower is another term thoroughly discussed and frequently brought up by Zeami: it is the quality possessed—and developed—by a particularly gifted and skilful performer, a quality that makes an actor spellbinding and appealing to the audience.⁴⁸¹ However, in the case of the Substance/flower and Function/odour metaphor, flower is not capitalised, it can therefore be assumed that Zeami uses the word with its literal meaning here. Emotion therefore becomes the odour that comes out of the flower (in this case the absorbed movement) to reach the audience, thus moving them. The complexity of Zeami's terms might be the reason behind Barba's

⁴⁷⁸ Zeami as quoted by Barba in *The Paper Canoe*, 55.

⁴⁷⁹ Zeami, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer and Masakazu Yamazaki (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75.

⁴⁸⁰ See *ibid*, 71.

⁴⁸¹ Rimer and Yamazaki define Flower as a "central metaphor in Zeami's conceptions of the nō, used as a means to verbalize the development of true artistic accomplishment." See the "English-Japanese Glossary" in Zeami, 260.

misquoting; although it would be impossible to know whether it was intentional or not, it is possible that Barba switched the terms so that the point comes across without further explaining Zeami's terminology and breaking the flow of his narrative.

According to Zeami, the performer who has reached a level of mastery must learn to reserve some of "what is felt by the heart," so that "only seven-tenths of his art is visible."⁴⁸² The novice actor first learns to fully use both 'heart' and 'movement', and only later is taught the 'seven-tenths' principle. A premature use of the principle would result in a mere imitation of the external that lacks the necessary inner quality which enlivens from within the actor's movement, which is not merely a smaller physical action, but a physical action that retains the energy of a larger impulse. Thus, what moves the audience is the condensed inner action that is not fully physically released; as Barba puts it, it is the "energy of the absorbed action."⁴⁸³

This section discussed how inner movement can be activated by absorbing a score of physical actions, imagining or practising resistance, working on the spine, centre and the leading points, 'dancing with the heart' while in stillness, or imagining that each action is performed with the energy required for a much bigger movement. The resulting activation of the performer's *life* can be *revealed* to the spectator, moving them in turn. Barba and the Odin actors have mastered the art of inner movement, which allows them to make the invisible visible, and deliver powerful performances as a result. The following section will move away from pure theatre practice, to explore a technique that was created at the intersection of theatre and neuroscience.

⁴⁸² Zeami, 87.

⁴⁸³ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 52.

Alba Emoting

The last technique to be discussed in this chapter is Alba Emoting. This technique differs considerably from the ones that have been discussed previously, as its purpose is solely to help the actors access emotion. It comes from a scientific context, as opposed to a heritage of theatre-making. The discussion has so far been focused on the identification of the means or lures that different practitioners used to help actors access emotion. Here the focus will be on a description and analysis of the technique, as accessing emotion is its sole purpose.

Alba Emoting is a technique developed by neurobiologist Susana Bloch, theatre director Pedro Orthous and neurologist Guy Santibañez, strongly influenced by the findings of Paul Ekman and his collaborators. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ekman provided strong evidence for the *facial feedback hypothesis*, according to which deliberate manipulation of the facial muscles can evoke the corresponding feelings. However, Bloch notes that if the reproduction of emotion is limited to the facial expression the “resulting expressions may appear to the observer as artificial masks rather than re-created emotions whereas if more elements of the emotional system are activated, the emotional output is more vivid and closer to a natural emotion.”⁴⁸⁴ Therefore Bloch and her collaborators also examined breathing and body postures.

⁴⁸⁴ Susana Bloch, “Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions,” *Theatre Topics* 3, no. 2 (1993): 125.

During a series of experiments that started in Santiago de Chile in 1970,⁴⁸⁵ Bloch and her collaborators recorded the physiological and expressive activations observed in participants who were reliving or remembering strong emotional experiences.⁴⁸⁶ Drawing from the results of these experiments, the researchers synthesized combinations of breathing patterns, facial expressions, and body postures. These were named *emotional effector patterns*. Actors were then invited to explore these patterns, to see if the targeted emotion would indeed be induced as predicted by the researchers' hypothesis. A 'step out' pattern, a set of instructions that allows the participants to exit the induced emotional state at will, was also developed.

Each of the emotional effector patterns developed during these experiments can be used to generate one of the six emotions the researchers identified as basic: anger, tenderness (parental, filial, romantic love), eroticism (erotic pleasure, sexual love), fear, joy, and sadness. All other emotions can—according to Bloch—be induced by exploring combinations of the six basic ones. For example, pride and irony are different mixtures of joy and anger, whereas jealousy is a blending of anger, fear, and eroticism.⁴⁸⁷ The emotional effector patterns might occasionally have unexpected results, such as crying in the anger, fear or joy pattern. This could be a flushing out of old tensions trapped into the actor's body that might be cathartic. In that case, such unpredicted reactions may be useful. However, unexpected emotional reactions of that kind can also be attributed to *entanglement*, the unintentional

⁴⁸⁵ Bloch, "Alba Emoting," 124.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Susana Bloch, Pedro Orthous, and Guy Santibáñez-H., "Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions: A Psychophysiological Method for Training Actors," in *The Development of Alba Emoting*, ed. Hyrum Conrad (Idaho: Brigham Young University Publications, 2003), 26.

mixing of elements of other emotion(s) than the one being practised. Entanglement is often observed, not only the first time an actor is experiencing a pattern, but possibly throughout *robotic phase*; this is the first phase of learning the technique, during which the actor is repeatedly exploring the emotional effector patterns to their maximum intensity. The unintentional mixing gradually vanishes during the next phases.

The second phase is called *induction*; during this phase, actors can fully experience the targeted emotions. Sensations and feelings come right from the beginning, but the induction phase is, as Roxane Rix puts it, “the ‘magic’ moment when the individual’s genuine emotion emerges (often quite suddenly and intensely) from the practiced pattern.”⁴⁸⁸ In the last phase, called *integration*, the actor has perfect control over the patterns and the intensity level. In this phase, feelings “flow easily rather than bursting through unexpectedly (the most unsettling aspect of the induction phase).”⁴⁸⁹

One of the questions that might be raised concerning Alba is if there is any room for freedom of expression in such a restricting technique. Alba Emoting may guide actors through very specific and detailed instructions; however, there are still endless possibilities to experiment with mixes of emotions, intensities, and body postures. Although body postures are examined by Bloch, there is still a lot of room for exploration on how to achieve a fully embodied Alba; Bloch’s physical instructions

⁴⁸⁸ Roxane Rix, “Alba Emoting: A Revolution in Emotion for the Actor,” in *Performer Training: Developments across Cultures*, ed. Ian Watson (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001), 211.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 212.

are often limited to direction (for example, someone in fear has the tendency to move away from, whereas in tenderness the tendency is to move towards an object of attention) and minor adjustments such as tilting the head to the side (tenderness). Levels of tension are also explored: for example, fear and anger are tensed, whereas tenderness and eroticism are free and relaxed.

With all its limitations, Alba Emoting is particularly useful as it can provide a ‘safety net’ that actors can resort to when dealing with a moment that poses high emotional demands on them. Furthermore, the technique gives the actor a better practical understanding of what emotion is and how one’s own personal emotions are experienced and expressed through comparing them to the basic ‘universal’ patterns. Another positive aspect of this technique is that it is safe, as actors do not have to use their own experiences as with emotion recall and they train to ‘step out’ of the emotions they activate. To ‘step out’ the actor returns to neutral breathing (in through the nose and out through the mouth on an even count), they are relaxing the facial muscles using their hands, and ‘shaking off’ the emotion, by shaking their limbs and freely moving them to random directions. An additional benefit of the ‘step out’ pattern is that, as Roxanne Rix points out, it can also be used by actors who have used other acting approaches to access emotion. It can also help ‘step out’ of emotions in real life. However, Susana Bloch discourages this application in real life because “it is usually healthier, psychologically, not to attempt escape from genuine feelings.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁹⁰ Rix, “Alba Emoting,” 211.

Introduction to the Triggers

This review of the ‘lures’ used by some of the most important theatre practitioners of the last two centuries to help actors access emotion serves as the basis for my practical experimentation. There are several recurring triggers to emotion used by many of the examined practitioners. For example, musicality is explored by most of them in one form or another: from Stanislavski’s tempo-rhythm to Staniewski’s musicality. This can, to an extent, be attributed to the genealogical or geographical affinities between the practitioners. However, it also points to an objective importance of selected factors to awakening the inner life of the performer. Rather than attempting to explore in my practice all the lures discussed in this chapter—an impossible task within the context of a PhD—I select a smaller number of triggers, some of which synthesize or bring together different elements discussed under different practitioners here. This way, I can give each of them the appropriate time and weight.

It should be acknowledged that the selection emerges partly out of this review but is equally influenced by my training as outlined in the beginning of this chapter. As a student or workshop participant, I observed which elements of the training were those that helped me access emotion. In the hope that others might respond similarly to these triggers, I selected, adapted and devised exercises, so that I can explore the effectiveness of these lures again, this time as a workshop leader.

The triggers that will be practically explored and discussed in the following chapters are: breath, centre-spine, fatigue, togetherness, musicality, and resistance (based on the principle of opposing forces). The first three triggers will be discussed in Chapter

Three, and the rest will be discussed in Chapter Four. In the following chapters, I will thoroughly discuss why each of them can serve as an entry point to emotion.

Chapter Three

Emotion in Practice 1: Greek Tragedy and Strong Emotion



This chapter and the related practice test the hypothesis that a trainer can assist the actor in arriving at a state of great emotional intensity by introducing chosen triggers during a training session. In discussing my methodology in the Introduction, I made reference to a model of experimentation that is built on dependent and independent variables. Here, the dependent variable is the emotion; this is what we hope to achieve. The independent variables are the three triggers to be examined: fatigue, centre-spine, and breath. These are introduced simultaneously or one at a time as appropriate during the course of the training session that is the case study to be addressed here. Before discussing the practice and the *First Experiment*, I would like

to introduce each of the three triggers explored in this Chapter, and argue for their usefulness in the search for emotion.

The Triggers

Centre-Spine

This section will investigate the centre of gravity and the axis of the body, the spinal cord. These are examined together here as they are closely linked: it would be impossible to work on one of these triggers without activating the other, as anatomically they are interconnected. As Pitches puts it:

the spine is the ‘power centre of the body’, one ‘long limb’ connecting head to pelvis. As you descend the vertebral column the spine becomes thicker and weightier, before it (literally) tails off and loses flexibility; the final two sections comprise fused vertebrae located deep in the centre of the body.⁴⁹¹

The spinal column is thus literally rooted in the centre of the body. Stanislavski uses the metaphor of a screw: the spine “is like a spiral spring and needs to be firmly set on its base. It must be [...] well screwed in place at the lowest vertebra.”⁴⁹² The Russian practitioner argues that if this screw on the bottom of the spine is strong, then the upper part of the body is also supported.

⁴⁹¹ Jonathan Pitches, “Spinal Snaps Tracing a Back-Story of European Actor Training,” *Performance Research* 14, no. 2 (2009): 85.

⁴⁹² Stanislavski as quoted by Barba in Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 177.

Kumiega explains that Grotowski called the base of the spine and the surrounding area up to and including the abdomen ‘the cross’ where the “‘organic source point of the reactive impulse’” can be located.⁴⁹³ Kumiega points out that kundalini yoga also identifies this area as a source of energy, as seen in the image of the serpent coiled around the base of the spine.⁴⁹⁴ The serpent symbolises a concentration of energy, dormant and waiting to be awakened. However, Grotowski stresses that there is a risk in attempting to manipulate such centres of energy: “‘one begins to transform a natural process into a kind of engineering, which is a catastrophe. It becomes a form, a cliché.’”⁴⁹⁵ As with emotion, one should not try to manipulate the energy centres, but rather find ways to activate them indirectly. I Wayan Lendra suggests that such an indirect awakening can be encouraged through the use of appropriate physical and vocal exercises.⁴⁹⁶

Centre

Barba observes that every performing tradition locates ‘the centre’ in a slightly different part of the body.⁴⁹⁷ However, the point of focus is often around the pelvic area: Katsuko Azuma, a master of the traditional Japanese performing art Nihon

⁴⁹³ Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski*, 119. For a discussion on the ‘cross’ also see James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2007), 95.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 119.

⁴⁹⁵ Grotowski as quoted by Richards in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 36.

⁴⁹⁶ I Wayan Lendra, “Bali and Grotowski: Some Parallels in the Training Process,” in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 327.

⁴⁹⁷ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 75.

Buyo,⁴⁹⁸ locates the centre and source of her own energy in “the midpoint of an imaginary line between the navel and the coccyx.”⁴⁹⁹ Kabuki and *noh* performers locate it in the area of the hips, or *koshi*, while Grotowski argues that although there are many such centres of energy, one of the most important is the “lumbar region, the abdomen and the area around the solar plexus.”⁵⁰⁰ In the previous chapter, I thoroughly discussed the importance of the centre for Terzopoulos and Suzuki. The importance of the pelvic/abdominal area for performer training is arguably highlighted by many theatre practitioners. Here, I will attempt to identify why this part of the body might also be an important access point to emotion.

One such explanation can be provided by another serpentine image, this time a literal part of the body rather than a metaphor: the enteric system. Michael D. Gershon, Professor of Pathology at Columbia University, argues that the *enteric nervous system [ENS]* located around the pelvic area, is a ‘second brain’ that can “act independently, learn, remember, and, as the saying goes, produce gut feelings.”⁵⁰¹ As he puts it, “the ugly gut is more intellectual than the heart and may have a greater capacity for ‘feeling.’”⁵⁰² The experience of butterflies in the belly or that of a ‘churning’ or ‘kibitzing’ gut when in an anxious state,⁵⁰³ highlight the fact that “the

⁴⁹⁸ Carreri, *On Training and Performance*, 102.

⁴⁹⁹ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 34.

⁵⁰⁰ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 38.

⁵⁰¹ Sandra Blakeslee summarising Gershon’s book *The Second Brain*. Blakeslee as quoted by Schechner in Richard Schechner, “Rasaesthetics,” in *The Senses in Performance*, ed. Sally Banes and André Lepecki (New York; Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 18.

⁵⁰² Michael D. Gershon, *The Second Brain: A Groundbreaking New Understanding of Nervous Disorders of the Stomach and Intestine* (New York, NY: Harper, 1999), xiii.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid*, 59.

enteric consequences of strong emotions are [...] not esoteric or theoretical concepts,⁵⁰⁴ they have clear physical manifestations. Candace Pert also argues for a strong connection between the gut area and the experiencing of emotions. The American neuroscientist argues that the high concentration of neuropeptides and their receptors—the molecules of emotions as discussed in Chapter One—found in the gut, might explain why “we feel emotions in that part of our anatomy, often referring to them as ‘gut feelings.’”⁵⁰⁵ Pert explains that emotions such as anger and excitement increase mobility of the gut area, while contentment decreases it.

There is yet another important system in the pelvic area that the actor can use as a potential trigger for emotion: the reproductive system and the impulses that emanate from the respective organs. When discussing the potential dangers and benefits of exploring the various energy centres Grotowski points out:

The best known are the centers according to the yoga tradition, those called *chakras*. It is clear that one can in a precise way discover the presence of centers of energy in the body: from those that are most linked to biological survival, the sexual impulses, etc., to centers that are more and more complex (or, should one say, more subtle?). And if this is felt as a corporal topography, one can clearly draw up a map.⁵⁰⁶

Grotowski briefly mentions the link between certain ‘higher’ centres which host subtler energy, as opposed to the ‘lower’ centres that generate less subtle, perhaps stronger, animal energy. This quality is elicited because of the link such centres have to biological survival and sexual impulses. The exploration of the two lower *chakras* (root and sacral), both of which are located in the pelvic area, is therefore a more

⁵⁰⁴ Gershon, *The Second Brain*, 177.

⁵⁰⁵ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 188.

⁵⁰⁶ Grotowski as quoted by Richards in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 37.

appropriate choice for the strong energy sought in this chapter. The influences from Suzuki and Terzopoulos also guide this practice research towards this direction.

As discussed in the previous chapter, for Terzopoulos the centre is not just one point, but a *triangle* formed by three of these energy centres: “1st the anus-base of the spine, 2nd the genital area, 3rd the lower diaphragm.”⁵⁰⁷ This allocation of the centre is very useful as it is multidimensional and it connects the diaphragm area to the sacrum, the base of the spine. It therefore interconnects two very important sources of energy, the two triggers explored here: spine and centre. The use of the words anus and genitalia, avoided by other practitioners when referring to similar parts of the body, indicates Terzopoulos’s strong interest in mining the energy that can be generated from activating what could be perceived as sexual energy. The *triangle* is called the energetic or erotic triangle,⁵⁰⁸ to further stress such connections. It is not a coincidence that Terzopoulos developed his actor training method while rehearsing for a production of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. His discovery of the Dionysian, ecstatic, sexual energy as a powerful source of energy for the performer turned into the cornerstone of his method. As discussed above, the *deconstruction of the triangle*, one of the most important elements of the training, is based on an undulating movement of the pelvis from the front to the back in quick succession, that resembles the movement of the sexual act.

Terzopoulos is not alone in exploring the power of erotic or sexual energy. Thomas Richards, discussing the principle of working ‘in tandem’ that he and Biagini have developed, explains:

⁵⁰⁷ Stoumpos, “An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre,” 231.

⁵⁰⁸ Chatzidimitriou, *Theodoros Terzopoulos*, 63.

[T]he erotic or sensual side of that connection is part of [...] and even a root base of that energy. [...] We all know attraction. [...] But attraction can also be somehow the basis of what one might call prayer; [...] this power of the magnets of the attraction, which is creating a kind of boiling of energy, if one just accepts it, and accepts that it might have another use, than just the one we know. Something else can start to open [...] and a kind of magnetic field can live between the individuals, where there is a kind of shared flow [...] of a kind of rising and falling of these energies. From which both [...] partners attracted can be nourished.⁵⁰⁹

Although Richards puts the emphasis on the interaction between the performers, rather than the exploration of each individual's 'boiling energy' through the activation of the pelvic area, there is a clear acknowledgment of the use of such erotic or sensual energies. Richards explains that this is a different kind of erotic connection to the one usually experienced in daily life:⁵¹⁰ it is an attraction or a sensual energy that 'one might call prayer.' This perhaps unexpected use of a religious term to describe erotic, sensual energy, clearly echoes Grotowski's discussion on Cieślak's use of a sexual memory while rehearsing for *Constant Prince*:

[T]hat kind of love which [...] carries all its sensuality, all that which is carnal, but, at the same time, behind that, something totally different that is not carnal, or which is carnal in another way, and

⁵⁰⁹ Richards in "Thomas Richards on Working with Jerzy Grotowski," Digital Theatre Plus video, 56:48, n.d., <https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/education/collections/digital-theatre/thomas-richards-on-working-with-jerzy-grotowski> (accessed 18/07/18).

⁵¹⁰ It is acknowledged that different people experience eroticism and sexuality differently, and it is possible that even in personal, daily life, sexuality may be perceived as a spiritual experience. However, it is important to strongly differentiate the experience of such a connection in life to the one experienced in a creative environment.

which is more like a prayer [...] The moment of which I speak was, therefore, immune from every dark connotation, it was as if this remembered adolescent liberated himself with his body from the body itself, as if he liberated himself—step after step—from the heaviness of the body, from any painful aspect.⁵¹¹

Cieślak's remembering of a love-making experience from his adolescence, releases a kind of sensual energy that is both carnal and holy; it belongs both to the body and the soul. 'Immune from every dark connotation,' this liberating energy is capable of relieving the body of any pain. Grotowski and Cieślak used the path of memory to access this source of powerful energy; however, Terzopoulos' training method indicates that there is another, directly physical way to access it, through the activation of the centre. Perhaps Terzopoulos' use of the erotic energy is less 'holy,' yet it is equally 'extra-daily' and immune from pornographic references or 'dark connotations.'

⁵¹¹ Grotowski, "From the Theatre Company to Art as Vehicle," 123.

Spine

Let us now return to the spinal column. The activation of the spine has also been the focus of many theatre practitioners, as there is a widespread intuitive knowledge of its importance and links to a heightened energy and the awakening of inner life. Taranienko, discussing the work of the Polish theatre company Gardzienice, points out:

We know that the strength and the power of life are located there [on the spine]. We know that work with spine releases physical and mental energy. [...] It evokes a certain state. Without it the work of one actor with another doesn't work; there's no true partnership, only an imitation of it; only token signs of it.⁵¹²

Although many of the practitioners studied here have observed the importance of the spine and its ability to awaken the performer's inner life, not much attention has been focused on attempting to understand why the work on the spine has such an effect on the actor. This is what the following section will attempt; in order to explicate the links between the activation of the spine and the awakening of the performer's inner life, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the nervous system and its functions.

The nervous system is comprised of the *central nervous system* that includes the brain and the spinal cord and the *peripheral nervous system* that is further divided

⁵¹² Zbigniew Taranienko as quoted by Hodge in Hodge, "Gardzienice and the Naturalised Actor," 234.

into the *somatic system* and the *autonomic nervous system*.⁵¹³ The somatic nervous system controls the muscles and mostly operates under voluntary control, whereas the autonomic nervous system [ANS] mostly functions independently of our will, as its name suggests. The ANS carries impulses from the brain to the organs (*efferent* impulses), while also sending information from the sense organs, muscles, and viscera back to the central nervous system (*afferent* impulses). It is this system that greatly relates to emotion because of its effect on the state of the viscera and its strong connections to the sensory organs. The ANS is further divided into three nervous systems: the parasympathetic, the sympathetic and the enteric. The sympathetic nervous system mainly serves to excite the various organs (e.g. heart beating faster) and is therefore associated with emotional activation and the fight-or-flight response, whereas the parasympathetic can either inhibit or excite their function and is associated with a ‘rest and digest’ state; for example, it can slow down the heart following a sympathetic activation, or increase salivation to facilitate digestion.⁵¹⁴ The following image indicating some of the main functions of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems should give the reader a clearer idea.

⁵¹³ When outlining the functions of the nervous system, I follow Cornelius. See Randolph R. Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion: Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotions* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 220–224.

⁵¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion on the nervous system, see among others Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 220–224.

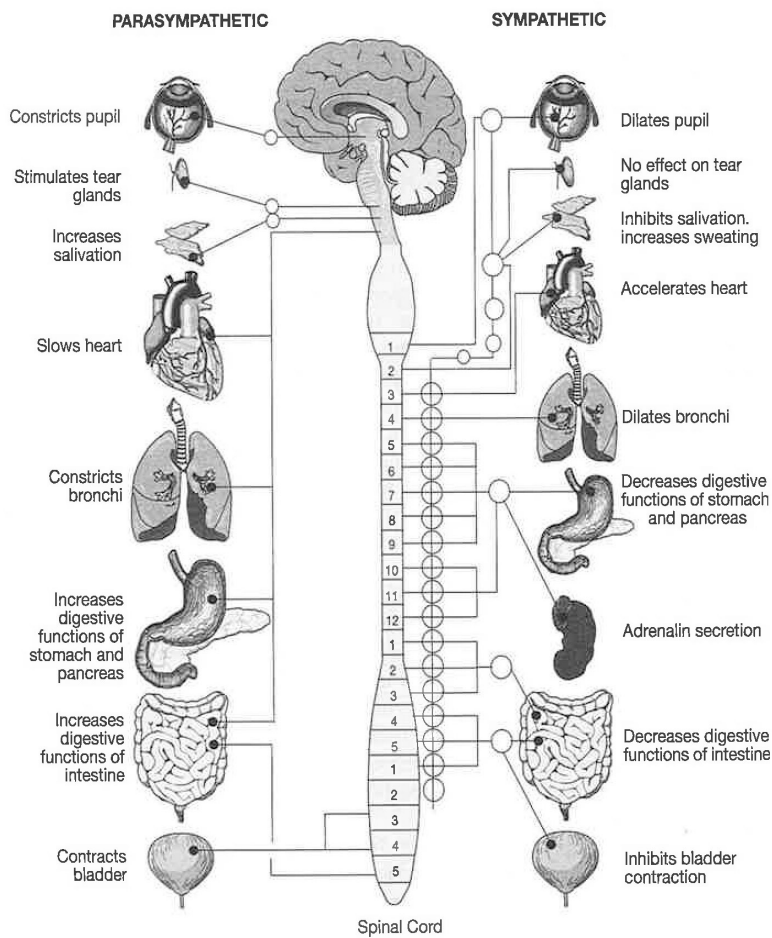


Image 6. The sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions of the autonomic nervous system.⁵¹⁵

Each circle on the above image roughly indicates a ganglion, which is “a regional aggregate of nerve cell bodies.”⁵¹⁶ This is where information from the first nerve cell (preganglionic) is passed on to the second nerve cell (postganglionic) that will, in turn, pass the information to the target organ.⁵¹⁷ The ganglion cells controlling the sympathetic nervous system form two long chains along the spinal cord

⁵¹⁵ Reproduced from Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 222.

⁵¹⁶ Gershon, *The Second Brain*, 11.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

(paravertebral) and a set of ganglia in the front of the vertebrae (prevertebral),⁵¹⁸ whereas the ganglion cells for the parasympathetic system are located within or near the target organs.⁵¹⁹

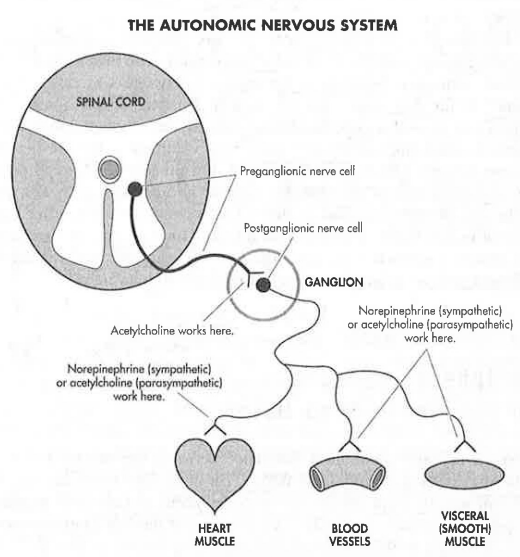


Image 7. Ganglion distribution.⁵²⁰

This detail sheds some light on the important role the spine plays in emotional activation: the physiological arousal that accompanies emotion as discussed in Chapter One, such as increased heart rate or adrenalin secretion, is partly triggered by a bundle of nerve cells located around the spine. Pert also points out that all peptides—the molecules of emotion—can be found on both sides of the spinal cord, all the way down from the neck to the coccyx.⁵²¹ She argues that these pathways of the autonomic nervous system are not only capable of initiating physiological arousal

⁵¹⁸ Gershon, *The Second Brain*, 12.

⁵¹⁹ Cornelius, *The Science of Emotion*, 223.

⁵²⁰ Reproduced from Gershon, *The Second Brain*, 10.

⁵²¹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 188.

and regulating functions necessary for maintaining life itself, but they are also capable of storing memories:

memories are stored not only in the brain, but in a psychosomatic network extending into the body, particularly in the ubiquitous receptors between nerves and bundles of cell bodies called ganglia, which are distributed not just in and near the spinal cord, but all the way out along pathways to internal organs and the very surface of your skin.⁵²²

Grotowski's concept of body memory appears to find some evidence in Pert's research. The spine, skin, and internal organs have memories, they therefore also store emotional content. The American neuroscientist explains that some of these memories can rise to consciousness, while others are "buried at a deeper level in the body."⁵²³ This, she argues, means that "memory processes are emotion-driven and unconscious, but, like other receptor-mediated processes, can sometimes be made conscious."⁵²⁴

Body memory has also been studied by post-traumatic stress researchers. Bessel Van der Kolk, Professor of Psychiatry at Boston University, argues that "the memory of trauma is encoded in the viscera."⁵²⁵ If traumatic memories are stored in the viscera, if the "body keeps the score" as Van der Kolk claims, it is possible that non-traumatic emotional events are also 'remembered' by the viscera.

⁵²² Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 143.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 86.

The *First Experiment* tests the hypothesis that working on the spine (through undulating and stretching) activates the muscles and stimulates the ganglia in the area, encouraging thus the activation of the ANS. In its turn, the activation of the ANS excites the various organs (viscera), along with their imprinted memories. Therefore, one can achieve simultaneous stimulation of the paravertebral ganglia and the relevant organs, strongly encouraging the accessing of emotional content stored in the actor's body memory.

In addition, distinct sensations are elicited through the activation of the spine through movement and as Van der Kolk informs us, “the sensations in [our] bodies [are] the basis of all emotions.”⁵²⁶ Whereas we don't consciously experience sensations on the paravertebral ganglia as strongly as we experience them on our internal organs (as in ‘gut-feelings’ or ‘heartbreak’), Pert observes that all incoming bodily sensations are in fact filtered in the area around the spinal cord.⁵²⁷ These observations by Pert and Van der Kolk strongly indicate that the exploration of the spine might be a highly effective trigger for the activation of emotion. Let us now move to the next trigger to be explored in this chapter.

⁵²⁶ Van der Kolk, 92.

⁵²⁷ Pert, 142.

Fatigue

As Odin actress Roberta Carreri puts it, fatigue or tiredness, can be a very ‘faithful companion’ to the actor. In her work demonstration *Traces in the Snow* she guides us through a beautiful journey to explain why:

One can decide that to be tired means that my body has got enough and that I have to stop. Or I can ask myself what lies behind tiredness. What lies behind my first limit? Maybe some among you have tried jogging. Then after about 10 minutes your body becomes terribly heavy. If you happen to be with a person that has been jogging for a long time and if it happens that you like this person, you will keep on running even if you are tired. And eventually after about five minutes you will experience that suddenly you start to become light, lighter again. What happened? It is not a miracle of love! On a scientific [sic] point of view your brain has started to produce endorphin. Endorphin is a chemical substance very close to morphine and also to adrenaline; [...] endorphin is something that our body produces when it has to face challenges that are bigger than the ones that we daily face: extra-ordinary situations. [...] Maybe some of you have had the experience of dancing for hours with other people. Really dancing for hours. Being exhausted at the end. Exhausted but not tired.⁵²⁸

This long quotation allows the reader to listen to Carreri’s whole argument as she touches upon the most important discourses on tiredness in a beautiful and simple manner. She explains how actors tend to resist tiredness. However, if one manages to overcome that initial obstacle of resistance, one can discover a whole new world of possibilities: that exhaustion is tiring and not tiring at the same time and that it gives a feeling of elation. The lightness that comes with time is because of the chemicals

⁵²⁸ Roberta Carreri, *Traces in the Snow: A Work Demonstration*, VHS, dir. Torgeir Wethal, (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1994).

released into the bloodstream—endorphin in particular—which can encourage such subjective experiences. I briefly mentioned the body’s endogenous opioid peptide in Chapter One, when discussing Pert’s theory of the molecules of emotion. I explained that endorphin is the natural substance that can occupy the opiate receptor; it can naturally eliminate pain, while triggering a feeling of bliss. Possible subjective experiences can include lightness, as described by Carreri, or an altered state of consciousness.⁵²⁹ There is indeed strong evidence that running and other types of similar physical activity are associated with an increase in endorphin levels.⁵³⁰

Fatigue has been explored and utilised by many theatre practitioners. I have already thoroughly discussed Terzopoulos’ and Suzuki’s use of fatigue in Chapter Two and will not repeat these observations here. However, Thomas Richards warns us that there is a danger when exploring fatigue; one might simply become tired:

Is physical exhaustion a possible strategy to overcome this difficulty? I am happy that you have asked this question, because concerning this point there is a deep misunderstanding about Grotowski’s work with us. I have seen theatre groups that apply so-called ‘Grotowskian’ techniques utilising physical exhaustion as a method: ‘If we apply physical exhaustion, we will arrive at true creativity!’ But who knows, maybe in this way they will simply become exhausted.⁵³¹

It is true that one might not arrive at a creative or emotional state, one might instead just tire oneself out if the work with fatigue does not have the necessary focus. In Chapter One, I touch upon a similar point in relation to *excitation transfer studies*: if an appropriate stimulus is not present, the physical arousal itself will not lead to

⁵²⁹ See Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 63.

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 104.

⁵³¹ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 68

emotional activation. There are two ways of working with tiredness: the first is a tiredness that comes from a body that is being precise and purposeful. This type of work can be very useful to the actor. The second type of tiredness is less effective: tiredness without a purpose, resulting in dissipating rather than accumulating energy. It is the first kind of tiredness that is discussed in this chapter and explored in the practical experiment. Fatigue forces the actor to be economical; it does not allow them to waste their energy in unnecessary thoughts or movements, such as the habitual movement of the eyebrows or hands to underline meaning. The voice finds its place and the muscles that do not need to be tensed relax; everything functions in the most effective way, in order not to waste energy.

In addition to entering an economical mode, during which there is room only for what is necessary, the first type of focused tiredness encourages the accessing of emotion because of the accompanying physiological changes, including, but not limited to, the release of endorphin as mentioned by Carreri. Fatigue triggers a physiological arousal that resembles an emotional state: e.g. changes in the breathing, the skin condition and the heart rate of the actor. As we saw with *excitation transfer studies*, it is then possible for the actor to channel this physiological arousal to emotional activation. This in fact happens independent of the actor's will, as long as the appropriate stimulus is employed.

The beneficial effects of fatigue can also be further understood through the study of the mechanisms of the autonomic nervous system. Fatigue can be achieved through aerobic exercise, difficult postures or a repetitive movement explored over a prolonged period of time. These types of exercise activate the sympathetic nervous system, also known as the ergotropic system (from the Greek *ergon*, to work) that is associated with energy expenditure and is characterised by increased heart rate,

sweat secretion and release of hormones into the bloodstream. Prolonged sympathetic or ergotropic activation will eventually also encourage simultaneous parasympathetic activation. This is also called trophotropic activation, from the Greek *trophe* meaning food, as parasympathetic activity is mostly associated with a 'rest and digest' state. As Victor Turner observes, the simultaneous activation of both systems can in turn trigger the experiencing of an altered state of consciousness, often identified as trance: "if excitation [of the ergotropic system] continues long enough the trophotropic system is triggered too, with mixed discharges from both sides, resulting often in ritual trance."⁵³²

When mentioning discharges from both sides, Turner refers to both sides of the brain. He is associating trophotropic activation with the right or non-dominant side of the brain and ergotropic activation with the left or dominant side, that "governs analytical verbal and causal thinking."⁵³³ Savvas Stoumpos, an actor that closely works with Terzopoulos, describes the beneficial effects of fatigue thus: "with time the body gets tired, the cortex of the brain switches off; the axles of the body relax and give birth to various physical multi-rhythmic motions. This is neither a linear, nor a metaphysical process."⁵³⁴ As opposed to what colloquialisms such as 'shutting down' or 'switching off' the brain suggest, it is argued here that fatigue is in fact achieving the opposite: a fully activated brain.

⁵³² Victor Turner, "Body, Brain and Culture," *Performing Arts Journal* 10, no. 2 (1986): 29.

⁵³³ *Ibid*, 28.

⁵³⁴ Stoumpos, "An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre," 230.

When Richards discusses his exploration of the ancient vibratory songs, he speaks of a similar recoiling of the brain. He more eloquently suggests that rather than switching off or shutting down, the brain simply ‘recedes a little bit:’

Your mental computer might not want to give up, especially if it has been in charge before that moment. Your heart will say yes, and your head will be saying no, no, no... yes/no, yes/no—ah, yes, change! The song connects the ‘heart,’ and the ‘head’ recedes a little bit, and the process begins that helps the ‘heart’ in a kind of opening. [...] So, yes/no, yes/no ... yes. The channel is open now and something of the vitality is agreeing to pass upwards.⁵³⁵

One can perceive the use of heart as a metaphor for emotion here, whereas the head signifies intellectual processing. This is a better articulation, but still seems to perceive heart and head as opposing forces. Such formulations can unintentionally misguide the actor into an understanding that favours the emotion-reason and mind-body dualisms, an understanding that I have already problematised in the Introduction. During my practical experimentations, I look for a strong stage presence and it could be argued that to access that state there is a need for presence of mind as well as body. I am looking for a state of mindfulness during which the brain, although present, does not make all decisions; it is not trying to dominate or be ‘in charge’ as Richards puts it and in so doing it allows space for emotion to come.

⁵³⁵ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 33.

Breath

We previously saw that the autonomic nervous system was named thus because of our inability to voluntarily control its activities. We can however have *some* control over it. As Gershon points out, some people are capable of voluntarily altering their heartbeat or blood pressure,⁵³⁶ although most of us are not able to, at least not without appropriate training and practice. We are all however capable of altering our breathing. We can speed up, slow down, or change the rhythmic structure of our breath altogether: this provides us with a valuable key to alter other functions of the nervous system, and subsequently, regulate emotion. As Hollis Huston puts it: “we do not feel it when neurons fire, and the beating of the heart is only a dim sensation. But we can feel breath. We can suspend breath and resume it, phrase and articulate it [...]. It is the most primitive vital process accessible to the will.”⁵³⁷

Humans use breath to regulate emotion in daily life both consciously and subconsciously. Such regulatory use of breathing is usually associated with neutralising or diminishing the intensity of a negative emotion. One might, for example, take “a deep breath to slow a racing heart before a long-anticipated date.”⁵³⁸ However, as Parrot points out, emotion regulation can be used to “increase, maintain, and decrease [both] negative and positive emotions.”⁵³⁹ The distinction between positive and negative or ‘bad’ and ‘good’ emotions will be problematized in

⁵³⁶ Gershon, *The Second Brain*, 9.

⁵³⁷ Hollis W. Huston, “The Gest of the Breath,” *Theatre Journal* 36, no. 2 (1984): 200.

⁵³⁸ James J. Gross, “Sharpening the Focus: Emotion Regulation, Arousal, and Social Competence,” *Psychological Inquiry* 9, no. 4 (1998): 288.

⁵³⁹ Parrot as paraphrased by Gross, in Gross, “Sharpening the Focus,” 288.

the following pages, as every emotion can be useful, even necessary, under the appropriate circumstances. What I would like to focus our attention on instead here is that emotion regulation can also have an augmenting or altering function; the beneficial effects of controlled breathing are not solely restricted to the diminishing of culturally ‘inappropriate’ or ‘unpleasant’ emotional experiences. Although less often employed in daily life, the use of controlled breathing to augment or trigger emotion, can be extremely beneficial to the actor.

In addition to its ability to regulate emotion, controlled breathing is also known to decrease the levels of physical pain. As Candace Pert explains, this is because of the release of endorphins, triggered by fast and deep breathing. The effects of altered rhythm and quality of respiration on pain levels have been observed and used since antiquity: “this is what previous generations of women, in the days before IV drips and synthetic painkillers, had relied on,” to lessen pain during labour.⁵⁴⁰ As discussed above, the release of endorphins also triggers a feeling of bliss, that can automatically place the actor in an emotional state. In addition, Pert informs us that a wealth of other peptides is released; these molecules of emotion “diffuse rapidly throughout the cerebrospinal fluid” and heavily affect the subjective experience of the person that is voluntarily altering their breathing pattern:

Conscious breathing, the technique employed by both the yogi and the woman in labor, is extremely powerful. There is a wealth of data showing that changes in the rate and depth of breathing produce changes in the quantity and kind of peptides that are released from the brain stem. And vice versa! By bringing this process into

⁵⁴⁰ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 167. For a further discussion on the release of endorphins through breathing see also Pert, 186–187.

consciousness and doing something to alter it—either holding your breath or breathing extra fast—you cause peptides to diffuse rapidly throughout the cerebrospinal fluid. [...] So it's no wonder that so many modalities, both ancient and New Age, have discovered the power of controlled breathing. The peptide-respiratory link is well documented: Virtually any peptide found anywhere else can be found in the respiratory centre. This peptide substrate may provide the scientific rationale for the powerful healing effects of consciously controlled breath patterns.⁵⁴¹

Pert observes that the powerful effects that conscious breathing can have on the emotional state or the state of consciousness of an individual have been noticed by many practices and civilisations. Tony Gardner makes a similar observation when discussing Artaud's concept of affective athleticism: “the Chinese concept of *qi* energy [...], the Japanese *ki*, the Sanskrit *prana*, the Greek *pneuma* and *psyche*, the Latin *anima* and *spiritus*, all of which are homologies of ‘breath’ with different inflections, ‘air’, ‘wind’, ‘respiration’, ‘spirit’, ‘mind’, ‘energy’, ‘vitality’, and so on.”⁵⁴² These links between breath and an awakening or altering of inner life and consciousness have been explored both theoretically and practically by many of these traditions.

One of the most influential such practices of breath is yoga. Yoga acknowledges that “since breath is deeply connected to the entire psychophysical system of the human organism, the methods of [...] controlling and manipulating respiration will eventually create remarkable alterations in the levels of emotion and

⁵⁴¹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, 186–187.

⁵⁴² Tony Gardner, “Breathing’s Hieroglyphics: Deciphering Artaud’s ‘Affective Athleticism,’” *Performance Research* 8, no. 2 (2003): 110–11.

consciousness.’’⁵⁴³ According to several schools of yoga, the body is divided into six sections, starting from the bottom of the spine and arriving to the crown of the head, all of which contain an energy centre. Once activated, these centres release enormous psychophysical power.⁵⁴⁴ These psychophysical energy centres, the *chakras*, can be awakened using breath (*pranayama*), as the air is ascending and descending along the spinal column activating the *chakras* while passing through them.⁵⁴⁵ Alternatively, these centres can be activated using movement (*asanas*), or vibrating sound (*mantra-sadhana*). It is worth stressing that air does not literally go along the spinal column but the diaphragm, ribs, spine and lungs are interconnected in such a way that breath as an event happens to the whole spine.

In recent years, yoga has drawn the attention of the medical community, because of the benefits of controlled breathing and the practice of mindfulness on the mental and physical state of an individual. These benefits are “in line with experiential observations of the ancient sages described in classical yoga texts.’’⁵⁴⁶ In particular, the practice of *pranayama* for a considerable amount of time has been shown to cause reduction in perceived stress.⁵⁴⁷ Other benefits such as mood enhancement

⁵⁴³ Sreenath Nair, *Restoration of Breath: Consciousness and Performance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 88.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 84; 107–108.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 85.

⁵⁴⁶ P. Raghuraj and Shirley Telles, “Effect of Yoga-Based and Forced Uninostril Breathing on the Autonomic Nervous System,” *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 96, no. 1 (2003): 79.

⁵⁴⁷ See for example Apar Avinash Saoji, B.R. Raghavendra, and N.K. Manjunath, “Effects of Yogic Breath Regulation: A Narrative Review of Scientific Evidence,” *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine* (2017): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaim.2017.07.008>.

during cigarette withdrawal and reduced pain perception have also been observed.⁵⁴⁸ Such positive effects of yogic practices are now accepted by many health professionals. Indicatively, the British NHS is stating on its web-site that there is “some evidence that regular yoga practice is beneficial for people with high blood pressure, heart disease, aches and pains—including lower back pain—depression and stress.”⁵⁴⁹ However, it is important to point out that although many studies indicate a link between the practice of yoga and various health benefits, more rigorous studies are warranted to further understand and explain such links.⁵⁵⁰

Returning to theatre practice, Artaud is one of the first Western theatre theorists and practitioners to stress the importance of breath for the awakening of the actor’s inner life. He envisions the actor as an ‘affective athlete,’ and advocates for a system of training that would allow even the ‘least gifted’ performer to “‘increase the internal density and volume of his feeling” through a physical approach that also utilises the power of controlled breathing.⁵⁵¹ He observes that European actors do not know “‘how to scream anymore [...] [they] no longer know how to cry out.”⁵⁵² This, he argues, is because Western actors “‘do nothing but talk and have forgotten they ever had a body in the theatre, they have naturally also forgotten the use of their windpipes.”⁵⁵³ It logically follows that an actor who uses the full body and breathing apparatus will be able to recover emotional intensity. Influenced by Eastern

⁵⁴⁸ A point made among others by Saoji et al. in Saoji, Raghavendra, and Manjunath, 8.

⁵⁴⁹ NHS website, <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/guide-to-yoga/> (accessed 25/06/18).

⁵⁵⁰ Saoji, Raghavendra, and Manjunath, “Effects of Yogic Breath Regulation,” 8.

⁵⁵¹ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 139.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

practices, Artaud advocates the study of different types of breathing and their corresponding inner states; however, he does so without providing a comprehensive list of such emotion-inducing breathing patterns.

Grotowski points out that Artaud's suggestions are of high theoretical importance; his writings are an "astounding prophecy."⁵⁵⁴ However, because these ideas did not arise through practical experimentation, they also do not provide a concrete practical set of guidelines for the actor, director or actor-trainer, they are therefore of "little methodological meaning."⁵⁵⁵ It could be argued that it was in fact Grotowski's early experimentations during the Theatre of Productions that fulfilled Artaud's 'prophecy,' and gave a concrete form to what the French dramatist envisioned and wrote about. Yet, Nair argues that although Stanislavski and Artaud both stressed the importance of breath as "the basic source of actor's energy that has direct implications for non-verbal emotional acting, Grotowski does not seem to be taking any insights from these views."⁵⁵⁶ This view is based on Grotowski's resistance to explore specific breathing patterns. However, this distancing from the use of specific patterns is in accordance with Grotowski's approach to any aspect of his work: he is interested in the insights that come from Eastern practices, but less interested in the form itself, which, he argues, is "inflexible, like an alphabet," and thus dissimilar to the organic and flexible exploration he pursues.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 24.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Nair, *Restoration of Breath*, 142.

⁵⁵⁷ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 24.

Grotowski is also uninterested in the manipulation of the actor's breath to produce a stronger, louder voice. He argues that an actor's attempt to impose on herself "the perfect, objective abdominal respiration," results in blocking a natural process.⁵⁵⁸ He believes that although abdominal breathing can be beneficial, it cannot be mastered by everyone. He criticises other theatre schools for taking such an approach,⁵⁵⁹ and stresses that if natural breathing is not causing difficulties to the actor, it should not be 'fixed.'⁵⁶⁰ The idea of absolute rules is not compatible with the Polish pioneer's thinking and practice. This includes the potential exploration of particular breathing patterns, similar to those explored by yoga. However, this should not be perceived as disregard for the importance of breath. In stating that "there is no perfect type of respiration valid for [...] all psychical and physical situations,"⁵⁶¹ Grotowski indirectly acknowledges the relationship between breath and inner state. It is more plausible that he was aware of the connections, yet chose to work with breath indirectly, through the exploration of physicality, text, and song. One could possibly also trace the importance of breath in Grotowski's work, through its echo on the practice of certain post-Grotowskians. Gardzienice's use of breath in particular, "has many meeting points" with Artaud's Affective Athleticism, as Allain observes.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 208.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 183. It is important to note here that such criticism does not refer to the contemporary vocal training as practised at drama schools around the world today, but rather the training that Grotowski was familiar with, practised in Russia and Poland where he trained in the 50s.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 183.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 208.

⁵⁶² Allain, *Gardzienice*, 54.

If the theory has not so far served to make the connection between breath and emotion clear, one example from practice, an exercise from Lecoq's *The Moving Body*, might better illustrate this relationship. Although Lecoq is not one of the practitioners examined here, this exercise has been selected for its simplicity. Unlike the complicated Alba Emoting patterns that I will discuss in the next section, this exercise is simply based on the notion that a simple movement can create completely different atmospheres and qualities of movement if a different breathing is employed. This can subsequently lead to different narratives to be communicated to the observer and different sensations to be experienced by the performer.

In a standing position, I raise my arm to the vertical to wave goodbye to someone. If this movement is made while breathing in as the arm is raised, and then breathing out as it falls back, the sense of positive farewell results. If you do the opposite, raising the arm on the outbreath, and letting it fall as you breathe in, the dramatic state becomes a negative: I don't want to say goodbye, but I am obliged to do so!⁵⁶³

Although Lecoq focuses on the actor's perspective here ('I don't want to say goodbye'), such use of breath will also have a clear impact on the audience. The spectator will also see and feel that the character is reluctantly waving goodbye when the arm is raised on the outbreath, and falls back on an in-breath. The use of respiration can therefore be of vital importance, not only to awaken the actor's inner life, but also to create a channel of communication between actor and spectator.

Yoshi Oida implies that empathy in theatre is achieved through the use of breathing, which like yawning, can be contagious:

⁵⁶³ Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre [Le Corps Poétique]*, trans. David Bradby (London; New York: Bloomsbury Methuam Drama, 2009), 81.

Naturally, when you alter your breathing [...] the impression the audience receives is also different. But this isn't simply a matter of the audience visually registering a physical change in the performer. They actually breathe along with the actor. And because they are breathing with you, they are also physically changed by your breath. [...] So if you have a moment of great drama, stop breathing and the audience will do the same.⁵⁶⁴

Breath is a simultaneously tangible and intangible thread that connects actor and spectator. The audience breathes with the actor without noticing, and therefore feels for and with the actor. Tadashi Suzuki argues that “breathing is not the respiration, but the pivot on which a word or a tension or a rhythm comes alive.”⁵⁶⁵ To this list, I add that breathing is the pivot on which emotion comes alive, a hypothesis which will be practically explored and discussed in the following section.

⁵⁶⁴ Yoshi Oida and Lorna Marshall, *An Actor's Tricks* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2010), 82.

⁵⁶⁵ Suzuki as quoted in Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 119.

First Experiment: Intense Emotion - Greek Tragedy

The reader will soon be invited to watch the video *First Experiment*. This is an edited version of the documentation of a three-hour training session led by the researcher, working with Stavriana Daouti. The researcher held seven workshops with the performer whose process we witness in the video (September–October 2013) prior to the filming of the *Experiment* (27th February 2014).

The *Experiment* draws from the first year and a half of my practice-based research (October 2012–February 2014). This included attendance at workshops and personal experimentation with the techniques explored here,⁵⁶⁶ as well as the experience of teaching seven three-hour workshops on Emotion at Goldsmiths, as part of the curriculum for second year undergraduate students.⁵⁶⁷

The Performer

Stavriana is a conservatoire-trained actor (G. Theodosiadis Drama School, Athens, Greece), who at the time of the filming was studying at Goldsmiths, University of London (M.A. Performance Making). She had some experience of working as an actor in between drama school and Goldsmiths, but not much; she was therefore neither a novice, nor a fully experienced actor. Her experience working with me was

⁵⁶⁶ For a detailed list of the workshops I attended while writing this thesis please see Appendix B.

⁵⁶⁷ The module runs during the Autumn term; my option (Emotion) run from 14th November to the 12th of December 2013 including assessment day, with two three-hour sessions per week. For more information on the module please see Appendix D.

not very extensive either. Prior to the *Experiment*, we had 7 training sessions, lasting between two and three hours from late September to late October 2013. All of them took place at Goldsmiths, outside the curriculum and independently from her studies. The sessions covered some basic Alba Emoting training, and all the exercises explored in the following chapters, except the ones that focus on the principle of resistance, which was introduced at a later stage of the practice. We thus explored five triggers during the training sessions: breath, spine-centre, fatigue, musicality, and togetherness. On the day the *Experiment* was filmed, she was already familiar with the concept and the practice of the triggers. However, the combination of the different elements as presented in the video and the work on the specific monologue had not been attempted prior to the filming of this video, except for a short workshop that took place the day before the filming to ensure the actor was confidently off-book. The short meeting with Stavriana the day before the filming of the *Experiment* also aimed to briefly familiarise the performer with the combination of the breathing patterns.

No auditions were held to select the actor, as the goal is to develop a technique that is flexible and adaptable to various teaching frameworks; a work method that is capable of responding to various training needs. Carefully selecting performers would thus defeat the purpose. Stavriana and I happened to live in the same Hall of Residence at the time when I was looking for a participant. When I found out that she was an actor, I asked her if she would be interested to participate in my research and she gladly accepted. She was fully informed about the aims of the project and was happy for her contribution to be filmed and presented here as part of my research. Although she was not ‘chosen,’ I could not be happier with her contribution, as the enthusiasm,

commitment, and openness she brought into the work were extremely useful and encouraging as I was taking my first steps as a practitioner and researcher.

The Practice

The practice explores Alba Emoting, specifically, breathing patterns and facial expressions, and elements related to the centre, the spine and fatigue that can be found in the work of Terzopoulos, Grotowski, and Suzuki. The practitioners have been chosen due to their relevance to the working material of intense emotion and Greek tragedy examined in this chapter. The *In Practice* sections below discuss the specific elements and exercises borrowed and synthesised from these practitioners in detail. The chapter concludes with a significant discovery: that the work towards emotion is less about *which* emotion is being activated and more about the presence of *emotion* in a broader sense. The chapter also highlights that the search for emotion needs to be pleasurable. To better contextualise the *Experiment*, the following section will briefly discuss why a monologue from a Greek tragedy was selected for the first practical encounter. This will be followed by a reflection on the *First Experiment*; an attempt to “stand back and judge” in order to draw conclusions “with embodied insights.”⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ Paul Allain, “The Nature and Culture of Performance,” in *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future, Evidence of the Past*, eds. Judie Christie, Richard Gough and Daniel Watt (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 24.

Why Greek Tragedy

The method developed here could be applicable in any context and any genre as it does not address any traditions of performance strictly related to Greek tragedy. However, two reasons, one subjective and the other objective, informed the selection of Greek tragedy as a testing ground for the first stage of this research. The subjective reason is my background and previous experience with Greek tragedy. As discussed in the Introduction, my desire to better understand performed emotion was fired by my encounter with Sophocles' *Electra*. This section therefore attempts to give some answers to that 18-year old girl, the younger me.

The objective reason which closely relates to this personal experience is that the performance of Greek tragedy requires emotions of great intensity. These are highly demanding and challenging for the inexperienced actor. As the Greek drama expert Jacqueline de Romilly points out, in Greek tragedy “emotions are simple and extreme. Rage, urge for revenge, pain, devastation and even more often desperation. [...] Everything depends on the emotions.”⁵⁶⁹ I will thus attempt to explore some triggers that are capable of helping the actor access such extreme and strong emotions.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ Jacqueline de Romilly, *Βάστα Καρδιά Μου! Η Ανάπτυξη Της Ψυχολογίας Στα Αρχαία Ελληνικά Γράμματα [Bear Patiently, My Heart: The Development of Psychology in Classic Greek Literature]*, trans. Babi Athanasiou (Athens: Asty Publications, 1997), 102.

⁵⁷⁰ I acknowledge that other genres or theatre practices also explore emotions of great intensity; however, the limited timeframe of PhD research requires a point of focus and my expertise and previous experience in Greek tragedy makes it a logical choice.

In particular, the monologue chosen for the *Experiment* is the second messenger speech from Euripides' *Bacchae*.⁵⁷¹ I chose the piece as it describes an atrocious act that can create a mixture of feelings (horror for the acts of the mother, sadness for the fate of the son, shock experienced by the messenger that has just witnessed such an atrocity) to highlight my argument that emotion is a multi-dimensional all-encompassing state, rather than a labelled one-dimensional one, such as sadness. This will be thoroughly discussed in the following pages. There is yet another reason for choosing a messenger speech: having seen numerous productions of Greek tragedy in the ancient theatre of Epidaurus, I have observed that it is always the messenger speech that gets the round of applause during the course of the performance. This is because these monologues are highly demanding—both emotionally and technically with the very long thoughts and the requirement to create images for the audience—but also give the actor the opportunity to demonstrate their virtuosity. I selected a piece that poses high emotional and technical demands on the actor, but also provides the opportunity to better showcase the effectiveness of the chosen tools. The richness of images embedded in the speech, also allows the use of the text as a 'mantra,' encouraging the actor to connect with the images and the words themselves, as they repeat the text multiple times.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Please see Appendix A for a translation of the monologue.

⁵⁷² For a more detailed discussion on the use of the text as a 'mantra', see subchapter 'Text' in Chapter Four.

Emotion is a cocktail

In a discussion that took place during the 2014 Odin Festival in Wroclaw, Eugenio Barba argued that “emotion is a cocktail.”⁵⁷³ To make the point clearer, Barba described his own emotional state at that given moment: he explained how he was somehow upset for being asked to give attendance certificates to the participants, and was therefore forced to spend precious time on paperwork, time he could have instead spent in conversation with the participants. However, he put on a beautiful smile and did the paperwork, without any of the Odin Festival attendants noticing his frustration. At the same time, he was feeling tired because it was getting late, but also excited as he knew he would soon be meeting someone he had not seen for a long time. In life, he concluded, so many feelings are experienced simultaneously, and trying to identify and concentrate on one emotion only, can be problematic, even unnecessary.

Although I agree with Barba’s point that emotion is a cocktail, I choose to focus on two specific emotions in this experiment: I explore erotic pleasure and sadness, both combined and in isolation. However, the actor is not expected to necessarily access either one of the two emotions in their pure form. The specific breathing patterns serve as a starting point, yet the aim is unknown: the emotion that will be eventually induced will depend on the actor’s organic response to the stimuli, rather than a pre-determined labelled desired result.

⁵⁷³ Researcher’s notes from the Odin Festival (Wroclaw, 2014) organized by the Grotowski Institute to celebrate Odin Teatret’s 50th anniversary.

The exploration of specific emotional effector patterns as a starting point is in accordance with the *excitation transfer studies* discussed in Chapter One. If physical excitation can encourage the appearance of emotion, then it is possible that emotional excitation can also possibly lead to an emotion different to the one that is being initially awakened, if the appropriate stimulus (the text in this case) is introduced. This, in extension, means that one could activate an emotion easily accessible to them and channel that energy into a different emotion. This hypothesis has been practically explored in the *Experiment*: Is it possible for an actor to approach the messenger speech through the simultaneous exploration of two disparate, arguably inappropriate, emotions for the examined monologue/scene?

The Journey from Sadness to Eroticism and Back

Most of the writing has been completed or at least heavily revised after the practice was documented, unwillingly making this practice-based research appear like a linear process, according to which a discovery made through reading the relevant theory was tested in practice. Yet practice-based research is rarely that linear; most often, it is responsive, intuitive, and messy. This chapter so far might have given the reader the impression that having read about *excitation transfer studies* and having heard about Richards' interest in the exploration of erotic attraction as a source of energy, I decided to go into the studio, mix sadness and erotic pleasure, and see what happens. The process was in reality very different: in fact I found these relevant discussions after having completed the experiment and while looking to understand it better and communicate it to others. However, there are sources of inspiration that I would like to acknowledge.

The seed for the *Experiment* was planted in the summer of 2012, when I attended the Summer Intensive workshop at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera, Italy. While closely observing the members of the Focused Research Team in Art as Vehicle which operates under the direction of Thomas Richards, I made an observation that would be utilised two years later. There was an actor in the team, Philip Salata, who accessed a state of being while performing that highly interested me. I was at the time largely blissfully ignorant of the theoretical framework of Grotowski's practice and would not identify that state as Grace or *trance* or any of the relevant terms used by Grotowski scholars. However, I did see something that I thought was special about this actor: a quality I identified as *erotic*. I concluded that this might have resulted in Salata's compelling stage presence. As I wrote in my notes: "there was a hidden eroticism in what Philip was doing that he might or might not have been aware of, that might have come from the pleasure he was experiencing while 'performing' or not."⁵⁷⁴

Eighteen months after witnessing Salata's performance, I was researching and writing about Alba Emoting, when this chart came to my attention:

⁵⁷⁴ It is acknowledged that words such as 'performance' and 'stage presence' should be treated with caution when discussing Thomas Richards' work. Nonetheless, the terms are used here, as they help the reader associate this with a wider range of performing practices, within which these words sit more comfortably.

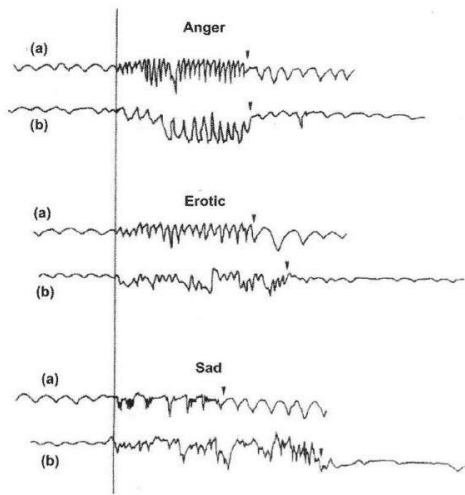


Image 8. Pneumographic recordings demonstrating breathing patterns during stimulated (a) and natural (b) emotions (downwards: inspiration; upwards: expiration).⁵⁷⁵

The chart demonstrates the breathing patterns of ‘stimulated’ (a) and ‘natural’ (b) emotions for anger, sadness, and erotic pleasure. I noticed that the breathing patterns for genuinely experienced (condition b) erotic pleasure and sadness are fairly similar. This is an unexpected finding, as these emotions are very different, one could argue even antithetical; one is generally perceived as pleasant, while the other is often classified as negative. Yet the similarity between the breathing patterns is striking.

In fact, sexual arousal paradoxically shares more than just the breathing pattern with so-called negative emotions. Daniel G. Dillon, assistant Professor of Psychiatry at

⁵⁷⁵ Reproduced from Susana Bloch, Pedro Orthous, and Guy Santibáñez-H., “Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions: A Psychophysiological Method for Training Actors,” in *The Development of Alba Emoting*, ed. Hyrum Conrad (Idaho: Brigham Young University Publications, 2003), 28.

the Harvard Medical School points out that “some similar neural circuits are involved in regulation of sexual arousal and a variety of unpleasant emotions.”⁵⁷⁶

A question started forming that was to become the starting point for the *First Experiment*: could the breathing pattern that corresponds to a pleasant emotion be used to access a so-called negative one? Could that make the actor’s journey more pleasurable and perhaps, by extension, easier? This question was practically explored in the *Experiment* presented here.

In Practice

As Bessel Van Der Kolk, the professor of Psychiatry known for his extensive research on post-traumatic stress explains in his book *The Body Keeps the Score*, “if you want to manage your emotions better, your brain gives you two options: You can regulate them from the top down or from the bottom up.”⁵⁷⁷ The top down approach involves “modulating messages from the medial prefrontal cortex”—a slower process focusing on intellectual processing—whereas the bottom up approach allows the regulation of emotion through “breathing, movement, and touch.”⁵⁷⁸ This is exactly what I will attempt in this experiment, focusing mainly on movement and breathing. The question remains: what *kind* of movement is more effective for emotional activation? In accordance with the above discussions, I focus on the spine

⁵⁷⁶ Daniel Gerard Dillon “Voluntary Emotion Regulation: Physiological Correlates and Mnemonic Consequences” (Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, 2006), 27.

⁵⁷⁷ Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 63.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

and the centre of the actor. More specifically, the *Experiment* will explore spinal undulations, stretches focusing on the upper part of the spinal column, as well as a circular movement of the pelvis that simultaneously activates both the centre and the spine. These movements aim to release the tension stored in these areas, to gently ‘massage’ through movement and activate the muscles along the spine so that the paravertebral ganglia chains might also be stimulated. As discussed above, Pert’s research strongly indicates that memories are stored in the paravertebral ganglia, as well as the internal organs linked to them. Physically engaging the actor-student’s spine and pelvis in the *First Experiment* aims to stimulate both internal organs and ganglia, encouraging thus access to emotional content through movement.

The following section examines the types of movement explored in more detail, and acknowledges sources of inspiration for each of the exercises.

First Trigger: Centre-Spine

Centre and spine are stimulated through Grotowski's Corporels which are, as Cieślak explains, exercises for the whole body, with the spine and balance as main points of focus.⁵⁷⁹ These exercises are borrowed and adapted from Hatha Yoga. The Corporels explored here have been chosen for their simplicity and accessibility, as the methodology developed is aimed at actor-students of any level and with various backgrounds.

a. The Cat

Influences:

Jerzy Grotowski, Ryszard Cieślak, Zygmunt Molik, and Stephen Wangh (An Acrobat of the Heart).

Description:

This Corporel is described in various sources, including Towards a Poor Theatre.⁵⁸⁰ A demonstration of the Cat by Cieślak has been captured and can be found in The

⁵⁷⁹ Ryszard Cieślak, *The Body Speaks: Exercises of the Theatre Laboratory of Wrocław*, interview by Margaret Croyden, Columbia Broadcasting System (Creative Arts Television, 1975).

https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C658021 (accessed 25/06/18).

For Cieślak's discussion on the *Corporels* see 33:52–34:45.

⁵⁸⁰ As recorded by Eugenio Barba and Franz Marijnen in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 135 and 186 respectively. See also Wangh, *An Acrobat of the Heart*, 50–60.

Body Speaks.⁵⁸¹ Here I will quote Slowiak and Cuesta, as their description is simultaneously succinct and detailed:

The exercise is based on the observation of a cat as it awakes and stretches itself. The subject lies stretched out face downwards, completely relaxed. The legs are apart and the arms at right angles to the body, palms toward the floor. The ‘cat’ wakes up and draws the hands in toward the chest, keeping the elbows upwards, so that the palms of the hands form a basis for support. Slowly reach up with the head, wiggling the spine from side to side. When you’ve stretched to your limit, raise the hips up stretching the spine with support of arms and legs. Describe big circles with the pelvis.⁵⁸²

The Experiment uses a simplified version of the Cat focusing on the transition from upward to downward facing dog. Stavriana is later instructed to also explore the sides, by making big circles with her pelvis. She thus increases and decreases the pelvis’ distance to the ground, either in a linear, or a circular movement.

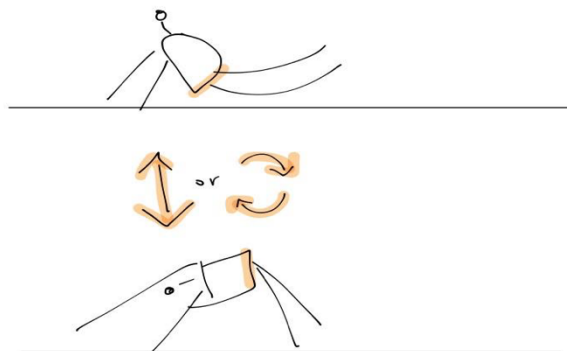


Image 9. Movement of the pelvis.

⁵⁸¹ Cieślak, *The Body Speaks*, 33:14–33:51.

⁵⁸² Slowiak and Cuesta, 95–96.

b. Opening the Chest

Influences:

*Stephan Wangh (An Acrobat of the Heart) and Zygmunt Molik's Body Alphabet.*⁵⁸³

Description:

We explored various body postures that would allow Stavriana to fully stretch and 'open' the area around the sternum. One of the variations explored was The Cobra.

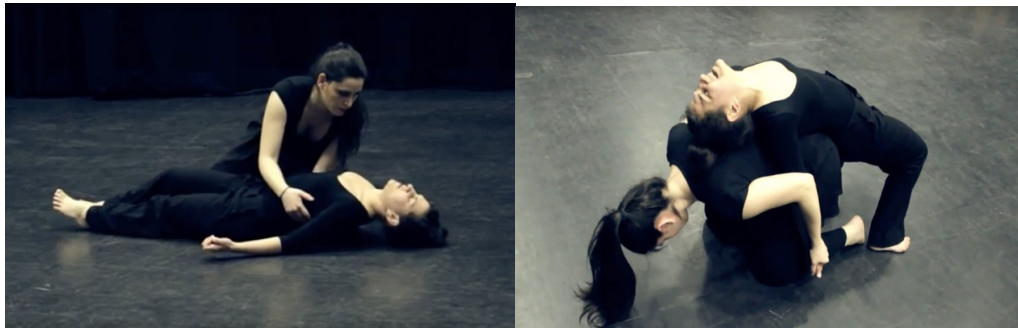


Image 10. Variations of Opening the Chest.



Image 11. The Cobra.

⁵⁸³ Giuliano Campo and Zygmunt Molik, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010). For the Opening the Chest 'letter' see Campo and Molik, 90.

Second Trigger: Fatigue

Influences:

Tadashi Suzuki, Theodoros Terzopoulos.

Discussion

The trigger of fatigue does not merely correspond to a particular exercise. It is an overarching principle that contributes to the work of the other triggers. Fatigue comes with time and repetition, or through the exploration of physically demanding exercises. There is, however, an exercise that contributed to the introduction of fatigue above others through its prolonged exploration and repetitive nature:

The Kneeling Walk

Influences:

Tadashi Suzuki.

Description:

To find the starting position for this walk, Stavriana is instructed to sit on her knees and slowly lift her pelvis. She is then asked to find a position for the arms to ensure that the muscles on the upper part of the torso stay activated. This encourages a fuller awakening of the spine. Stavriana is finally instructed to ‘walk’ in this position, by rhythmically sliding her knees to the front, one after the other.



Image 12. *The Kneeling Walk.*

Suzuki lists this posture under the ‘sitting on the floor’ variations;⁵⁸⁴ however, I explored a dynamic version of the posture by taking it into the space. The ‘kneeling walk’ was chosen as an alternative to Stamping Shakuhachi,⁵⁸⁵ which is explored in Chapter 5. I selected this variation for the Experiment, because it is possible for the actor to engage with the exercise for a longer time, while also exploring text. This eventually leads to fatigue, although it does so more slowly than Stamping Shakuhachi, and thus allows the actor to explore more subtle qualities. It is also more suitable for a long 3-hour one-to-one session. Finally, the kneeling walk was preferred because the lower centre of gravity and the engagement of the knees that are anatomically connected to the hip joints and encourage the activation of the centre and the lower part of the spine.

⁵⁸⁴ Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 18.

⁵⁸⁵ For a description of the exercise see Paul Allain, “Suzuki Training,” 72.

Third Trigger: Breath

Influences:

Two Alba Emoting breathing patterns are used in The Experiment: the patterns for sadness and erotic pleasure.

Description:

Breathing pattern for erotic pleasure: In-breath and out-breath through the mouth. Deep breathing engaging abdominal muscles. While the duration of in-breath and out-breath is relatively even in low intensity, it wildly fluctuates as intensity increases.

Breathing pattern for sadness: three quick in-breaths (sniffs) through the nose, followed by a long outbreath through the mouth. The breathing should be deep, engaging abdominal muscles. The outbreath is explored 'to the point beyond empty,' resembling a long sigh: when the actor feels that there is no more air to exhale, they continue letting air out. It is often at this 'beyond empty' phase of the breath, that emotion is triggered.

Discussion:

Before discussing the video, it is important to clarify: the actor is working in her native Greek, because I strongly believe that there is stronger connection, as well as a different level of confidence that comes with working in one's native language. Although I acknowledge that there are actors who feel as, or even more confident acting in a second language, I also know from experience that the connection with a native language is of a different quality. In addition, I believe that by being deprived

of the ability to understand the words, the non-Greek-speaking viewer can focus on non-verbal elements of Stavriana's performance, which are highly important for the work with emotions.

The reader is now invited to watch the Video First Experiment.⁵⁸⁶

The Experiment starts with Stavriana going through the monologue without engaging with the triggers; this helps the performer remember the text but also allows the viewer to notice the difference between the pre-trigger and post-trigger phases of the training session. One can for example observe the habitual movements of the neck to underline the beginning of each thought from 1:26 to 1:31, that completely disappear in the following minutes. The introduction of the triggers starts soon after, when Stavriana is instructed to explore the Alba Emoting (AE) effector pattern of Sadness. Although she is not instructed to alter or even think about her voice, the viewer can observe how the breathing in combination with the facial expression instantly affects her voice (2:04 onwards). I then attempt to introduce the work on the spine, in particular an Opening the Chest exercise. However, Stavriana seems to resist the physical instruction given to her. I initially attribute this to a misunderstanding of the instruction, I therefore gently indicate again that she should open her chest. I soon realise that some kind of physical tension or discomfort she experiences makes her resist the instruction. I therefore attempt to find another posture that will perhaps work better for her ("Go to Cobra" 3:15). One of the key moments leading towards the triggering of emotion soon follows, when the facial expression is introduced. Stavriana, being familiar with, but not an expert of the

⁵⁸⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr3CPhZ6SHo>

Alba Emoting (AE) facial expressions, points her eyebrows downwards, rather than upwards. I indicate with my finger-tip the correct direction of the eyebrows, and her face instantly changes to form the tragic mask; a set of other facial micro-muscles is also activated with the shift of the eyebrows (3:34–3:56). This has a strong impact on me as a viewer every time I watch the video: I feel that a chord inside me is being touched in that moment. It arguably also has an effect on Stavriana: once again, the quality of her voice changes. Although she is gazing downwards, and I as a trainer allow this, as the downward gaze is one of the elements of the AE sadness pattern, there is a moment when we catch a clearer glimpse of her gaze in 3:56 to 3:57, where one can see the effect the breath, facial expression, and the work on the spine have on her. In accordance with the AE Sadness pattern, she explores the text to the ‘point beyond empty.’ she continues speaking the line when appearing to run out of breath. This also has a strong effect on her voice and arguably her inner life.

When Sadness has been explored sufficiently, I ask the performer to explore Erotic Pleasure (4:31). The Cat is introduced at the same time, to help her explore a fully embodied AE pattern of Eroticism: the focus on the movement of the pelvis encourages the awakening of erotic, sensual sensations, in line with previous discussion. From 5:30 onwards, I once more attempt to encourage her to fully Open the Chest, including the neck area. Seeing that Stavriana once more resists the instruction, I decide to use my body to support hers; I attempt to eliminate any discomfort or tension and allow relaxation through using my body to support her exploration. This appears to be highly effective: Stavriana is now in the world of the tragedy, almost reaching a Bacchic state from 5:34 to 7:02: shock, sadness, and a subtle eroticism are present in the exploration.

This is followed by a short break and discussion. In the second part of the session, Stavriana is instructed to explore the Starfish Exercise (9:49–10:21), which aims to activate the centre of the body and strengthen the connection between periphery (limbs) and the actor's centre.⁵⁸⁷

Having explored the AE breathing patterns for sadness and erotic pleasure in their pure form in the first part of the session, the actor is instructed to mix the in-breath and the out-breath of the two patterns in the following way:

a) Combine the in-breath of erotic pleasure with the out-breath of sadness: short in-breath and long out-breath through the mouth.⁵⁸⁸

b) Combine the in-breath of sadness with the out-breath of erotic pleasure: three short in-breaths (sniffs) through the nose, followed by a short out-breath through the mouth.⁵⁸⁹

Emphasis is placed on the second variation, that appears to be more effective. Rhythm is also introduced at this stage; Rhythm will be extensively discussed in the following chapter, where musicality as a trigger for emotional activation will be explored. After briefly experimenting with rhythmical stamping (11:13–12:00), the Kneeling Walk is also introduced (12:17). From that point onwards, I allow the actor to explore the combination of the triggers (breath, rhythm, fatigue and the activation of the centre through the Kneeling Walk); I encourage her to surf the

⁵⁸⁷ I was introduced to the *Starfish Exercise* while attending a workshop led by the Greek actress Amalia Moutousi in March 2012. The workshop was held at the 'Desmi' Centre for Ancient Greek Drama – Research and Practical Applications (Athens, Greece).

⁵⁸⁸ *First Experiment*, 11:26–11:44 and 13:20–13:47.

⁵⁸⁹ *First Experiment*, 12:06–13:48.

emotional wave that is coming and going away a few times until emotion is fully established. I give subtle indications through the use of the drum and only one verbal instruction ('relax the eyebrows'). The triggers do the rest of the work. I use the drumming to stimulate her inner tempo (this will be discussed in the following chapter in more detail) and to indirectly encourage her to organically (rather than technically) continue exploring the examined breathing pattern through the gentle prompt of the drum.

The transition from high to low volume or from high to low intensity appear to be highly effective as the viewer can observe in 14:24, when the performer goes from loud volume to whispering. I believe this to be the moment when emotion starts re-appearing. I guide Stavriana through one more climax with the drumming, to slow down the rhythm and drastically lower the volume once more in 15:22. This is when emotion is fully triggered.

Further Observations:

In addition to its emotion-inducing quality, breath is also utilised in the Experiment to give something concrete to the actor to focus on. This is another principle borrowed from yoga, as visualisation and focus on the breath are often used to help one achieve mindfulness. As discussed in the Fatigue section, I search for a mindful state, during which the actor's mind is fully present, but not holding on to the reins tightly as in daily life, allowing instead the intelligence of the body-mind to take over.

It is also worth noting that the work with the breath does not cease when Stavriana is no longer instructed to explore the breathing patterns. The drumming keeps stimulating the actor's breath and their inner tempo. As Csepregi puts it, one can

actively focus on sound, the same way as one can actively smell a flower; one can 'breathe in' the sound:

Our auditory sensibility cannot be reduced to a unidirectional attunement. Certainly, sounds come to us, press upon us, and resonate in us. But, just as we like to approach flowers and smell their pleasant perfumes, so, in the same manner, we like to focus actively on some sounds and reinforce their effect. [...] With all our being, we are able to detect and 'breathe in' a particular sensory or moral atmosphere without, of course, taking, literally, a larger quantity of air into our lungs.⁵⁹⁰

However, it is also true that by the end of the training session, the actor does not use the accurate breathing pattern anymore. That is because breathing, like all other triggers explored in the Experiment, is utilised to help the actor access a state; the intention is to make her freer and not imprisoned in a set structure. The breathing pattern is used as a trigger, therefore once the required state has been accessed, the actor can let go of the form.

The following metaphor of the screwdriver might make the point clearer: a screwdriver is not needed throughout the act of unscrewing. It is needed in the beginning, but once the screw is loose, one can just take it out using hands. Not only because the tool is not necessary at the final stages, but because the use of the tool at that stage could make unscrewing more difficult. Likewise, when approaching emotions sometimes one has to stick to the technique and at other times one can let go of it; when the state has been triggered (to go back to the previous example when

⁵⁹⁰ Gabor Csepregi, "On Sound Atmospheres," in *Aural Cultures*, ed. Jim Drobnick (Toronto; Banff: YYZ Books ; Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2004), 173.

one has already loosened the screw) one can let go of the tool or exercise being explored.

Confounding Variables

Before concluding the chapter, it is important to briefly discuss the confounding variables that can be identified while watching the documentation of the Experiment. As previously noted, reflecting on my own practice, I was able to identify some key elements that contribute to the activation of emotion which were not set up as parameters in the planning of the experiment.

Clear Point of focus

*The first observation was the need for an external point of focus: this was achieved either through the relationship with me, the trainer, as the actor was following my instructions, or through the focus on an exercise or a trigger. I follow Barba, who argues that in order to access an extra-daily inner awakening, the actor ‘does not study psychology but creates a network of external stimuli to which s/he can react with physical actions.’⁵⁹¹ This also gives the actor something to ‘chew on’ as Carreri puts it. In her work demonstration *Traces in the Snow*, Roberta Carreri claims that the mind gets tired before the body; the actor therefore needs to give their mind something to ‘chew on’ in order to keep it focused in the process.⁵⁹² This can be a focus on the exploration of different speeds (fast, slow), qualities (gentle,*

⁵⁹¹ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 35.

⁵⁹² Roberta Carreri, *Traces in the Snow: A Work Demonstration*, VHS, dir. Torgeir Wethal, (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1994).

strong) and so on. In the Experiment, this was achieved through focusing on the breath, the text itself, and the different exercises. In that sense, our exploration was also similar to that of yoga. I previously addressed that yoga uses asanas (body movements/postures), pranayama (breath) and mantra-sadhana (sound) to achieve “alterations in the levels of emotion and consciousness.”⁵⁹³ The experiment used the Corporels instead of the asanas (which are indeed very similar), the Alba Emoting breathing patterns instead of pranayama, and text from ancient tragedy as an equivalent of mantra-sadhana.

Pleasure

When Stavriana is asked to describe her experience, the first thing she says is “it was a pleasure.”⁵⁹⁴ One might be suspicious of a participant’s comments as there is a complex dynamic with the trainer/researcher and the student/participant might demonstrate compliance. However, there is no obvious reason to question Stavriana’s honesty, especially because she did not know I was exploring pleasure.

This search for pleasure, that I initially encouraged intuitively rather than deliberately, turns into an essential aspect of my research in the following stages, and will be further discussed in the following chapters. For now, it is interesting to note that—as discussed above—at least two of the triggers explored link to pleasure: both fatigue and controlled breathing release endorphins. The exploration of sexuality also links back to the question of pleasure, bliss and Bacchic ecstasy.

⁵⁹³ Nair, *Restoration of Breath*, 88.

⁵⁹⁴ *First Experiment*, 7:28–7:46.

In tandem

An equally important finding/confounding variable was the importance of the relationship between me and Stavriana; between trainer and actor. One can observe by watching the video that emotion is somehow awakened in between the two of us, rather than simply within her. I, as a trainer, am emotionally involved in the process; this is of vital importance: I would like to argue that although emotion is often perceived as a personal experience, it is in fact a shared experience. Richards, discussing his relationship with Mario Biagini, makes a similar observation and identifies this state of co-experiencing and sharing as being in tandem:

By ‘tandem’ I refer here to a special contact that happens in moments in Action between Mario Biagini and me. [...] The two are in contact, and one of them guides and the other follows. [...] A relationship is established so that the ‘inner action’ can accomplish itself in each one, and also in between them, as if the process involved two beings as one.⁵⁹⁵

Stavriana and I developed a similar relationship in tandem, that was not merely a by-product or a ‘happy accident’ but a quality embedded in our exploration of emotion. As pointed out by Donald Ritchie, “Grotowski feels that the core of the theatre is an encounter between actor and spectator. [...] The man who makes the act of self-revelation—and this is the actor’s task—is making contact with himself through the audience.”⁵⁹⁶ Likewise, the approach to actor training I propose here is an encounter between actor and actor-trainer in which the actor makes a contact

⁵⁹⁵ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 93.

⁵⁹⁶ Donald Ritchie, “Asian Theatre and Grotowski,” in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 150–51.

with herself through the trainer. The next chapter will, by extension, examine the student-actor's encounter with their fellow students.

However, it is worth noting that unlike the practice discussed in the following two chapters, which has mostly been developed for teaching both within and outside Higher Education, the First Experiment presents a more intimate exploration that would perhaps be more appropriate for an in tandem exploration between company members of an ensemble, rather than a more hierarchical relationship that is to an extent unavoidable when teaching takes place within a conservatoire or a drama department.

Sad Euphoria or Ecstatic Sadness?

When watching the *Experiment*, one can observe how the use of a pleasant emotion (erotic pleasure) allowed access to an unpleasant one (sadness). However, the question remains: what is a pleasant or positive emotion, and what makes another state unpleasant or negative? I discussed earlier how humans tend to regulate 'negative' emotions in daily life. However, those usually classified as positive, such as love, might also need to be diminished under certain circumstances. As Campos et al. put it "bad emotions can be good in context, and [...] good emotions can be inappropriate [...] in other contexts."⁵⁹⁷ The classification of emotions as positive and negative can thus be challenged, as all emotions can be useful, even necessary, under certain circumstances.

⁵⁹⁷ Joseph J. Campos, Carl B. Frankel, and Linda Camras, "On the Nature of Emotion Regulation," *Child Development* 75, no. 2 (2004): 379.

If the classification of emotions in groups such as positive and negative is problematic, is it still valid to differentiate between pleasant and unpleasant emotions? We have already seen that emotions generally perceived as highly enjoyable, such as erotic pleasure, can have similar physiological arousal with so-called negative emotions. If the physiological experience itself is not that different, is it perhaps the judgment we make on each emotion that colours it?

Rocco Dal Vera, an Alba instructor, argues that it is highly important for the actor to find pleasure in experiencing any emotion.⁵⁹⁸ This is because he believes that if an actor does not feel pleasure when experiencing an emotion that is conventionally perceived as unpleasant, such as sadness, the actor will subconsciously deny access to that emotion. If this is the case, it follows that the more pleasant we can make this experience for the actor, the easier it will be for them to access the desired state.

The use of sexuality and pleasure, as presented in the examined experiment could be one of many ways to make the experience of performing sadness more accessible to the actor. Dal Vera suggests a different route: the notion of emotion as a ‘resource state.’ Actors are encouraged to identify the purpose of each emotion.⁵⁹⁹ This is about understanding the usefulness of each emotion in a Darwinian sense; highlighting that no emotion is ‘bad’ or ‘shameful.’ To give one such example, Sadness is useful and vital for our existence, as it is the emotion that makes human kind the social being it is: we want to be with other people because we feel sadness

⁵⁹⁸ From researcher’s notes while attending an Alba Emoting workshop led by Rocco Dal Vera in August 2014. The workshop was held at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, although it was organised independently.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

when we lose them. Fear and Anger are also strongly related to our survival, as we need these emotions to fight or flee in case of danger. Without these emotions, often perceived as negative, we would not be able to survive. When the student-actor understands that intellectually, as well as physically, noticing that the physical experience and sensations of the so-called negative emotions per se are not unpleasant, they will arguably be able to generate said emotions in a faster, easier, and safer manner.

Freud will offer yet another explanation on why the performance of negative emotions can be pleasurable. Children repeat in their play the experiences of everyday life. However, these experiences are more pleasurable when enacted. Even unpleasant incidents—such as an examination by a doctor or the mother leaving the house—would be experienced as pleasurable when the child revisits them during play. Freud believes that this is because during such encounters in real life one is passive, ‘overpowered by the experience.’⁶⁰⁰ However, when reliving such incidents in play, the child can have an active part; they are now in control of the experience. This, according to Freud, makes enactment of negative events pleasurable.

The actor also has power over their fictional creation. They can at any point step out of the emotion, especially when it has been approached the way suggested here: through the body, rather than through emotion recall, as emotions that link to previous negative experiences might not be as easily diminished once awakened. Like the child in play, the actor is simultaneously fully involved with the emotion and distant. According to Stanislavski, this distance is precisely what transforms

⁶⁰⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 10.

emotion into art;⁶⁰¹ I argue that it can also make the performance of negative emotions pleasurable.

Beyond the aspect of pleasure, I argue that eroticism in particular is an interesting choice to explore because as Bataille observes “the whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives.”⁶⁰² Gritzner, continuing Bataille’s thought, argues that “the fully expressed sexual and erotic desire causes a dissolution or loss of self [...] The erotic state can be a heightened form of consciousness in which the furthest possibilities and intensities of selfhood are explored.”⁶⁰³ The heightened form of consciousness or loss of self, the elimination of self-judgment and self-consciousness is beneficial to the actor. In addition, during the sexual act, one can truly experience and understand what psychophysical is: something physical gives psychological pleasure. In *The Memory of the Body*, Kott argues that “there are experiences where the alienation from the self is impossible. It is then that the soma and the anima are one.”⁶⁰⁴ Such an experience according to Kott is the sexual act. The use of eroticism in training can thus help the actor access a state in which the entire organism is active and free of judgment, while the connection of the body to the soul is more evident.

⁶⁰¹ See Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 159.

⁶⁰² Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), 17.

⁶⁰³ Karoline Gritzner, “Introduction” in *Eroticism and Death in Theatre and Performance*, ed. Karoline Gritzner (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), 6–7.

⁶⁰⁴ Jann Kott, *The Memory of the Body: Essays on Theater and Death* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 115.

Kott also argues that “sex is much less a taboo than death. Death is either embarrassing or terrifying, and while not many things in our civilization are still a taboo, death is.”⁶⁰⁵ The use of sexuality can therefore be a helpful ally when accessing so-called negative emotions, especially the ones related to death, such as grief and lamentation, which are often encountered in Greek tragedy. Let us now explore in the following chapter a different type of pleasure: the pleasure that comes through the interaction with the other.

⁶⁰⁵ Kott, *The Memory of the Body*, 113.

Chapter Four

Emotion in Practice 2



The Workshop:

Exploring Contemporary Text and Subtle Emotion

The purpose of this workshop was to focus on the three remaining triggers: togetherness, musicality, and resistance. The working material this time came from contemporary theatre, to give an appropriate testing ground for subtle emotion. Although in the previous chapter I discuss specific emotions, namely sadness and pleasure, my thinking had progressed at this stage of this research. From this point

onwards, I will discuss the activation of *emotion*, as a fluid state that cannot and should not be labelled; a state where the actor is free to move from one form of emotion to another seamlessly and with ease. The more open and responsive they become, the more capable they will be to explore a wider spectrum of emotions and intensities.

The workshop addressed here was held in September 2016 and lasted five days. The actors participating were: Maria Alexe, Cindy-Jane Armbruster, Gabriela Curpan, Jenni Hinkes, Jamie Laird, Pali Nall, Lorna Pearson-Hall, and Jon Prophet. We worked for roughly six hours per day and the overall duration was thirty hours. The workshop was advertised online (on Casting Call Pro and on Facebook) and was open to any interested actor. There was no audition or selection process. I knew some of the actors already (Gabi, Maria, and Lorna); however, I met the majority through the workshop (Cindy, Jamie, Jenni, Jon, and Pali).

In the previous chapter, I presented the exploration of the triggers through a way of working based on improvisation. In the related practice experiment, I had not pre-decided exactly what form the exercises would take. I only had in mind triggers I wished to explore. In this chapter, I describe and discuss set exercises that have been selected, adapted, and devised in a longer term process preceding the workshop itself, where I tested and developed each through teaching ten different groups of students in the three years prior to the documentation of the practice (September 2013 - September 2016). In these three years, I had varying numbers of sessions with each group of students and the teaching served different overall aims, but the question of emotion in performance was always in focus. During that period, I mainly taught two modules: “Questions of Performance: Emotion” at Goldsmiths College and “The Role of the Actor” at the University of Winchester. Both modules

are attended by second year B.A. students. “Questions of Performance” is a module that offers different options such as Emotion, Character, and Audience and students choose an option according to their own interests. My option explores the question of emotion and consists of seven three-hour sessions, very similar to the Workshop discussed here. The ‘Role of the Actor’ at the University of Winchester has a similar starting point. However, because of its wider scope, I also work on characterisation and explore various rehearsal and devising techniques, ranging from Active Analysis to Viewpoints. Due to a rotation system, I taught seven groups of students at the University of Winchester between January 2014 and September 2016. I worked with these groups for varying durations, some for three, and others for over twenty three-hour sessions. Most of the exercises described in Chapters Four and Five have been explored with all these students (three groups at Goldsmiths and seven at the University of Winchester), with the exception of the group I taught for 3 weeks only.⁶⁰⁶

The workshop presents a distilled version of three years of experimentation with emotion.

⁶⁰⁶ For more details, please see Appendix C.

Emotion as an Encounter and the Principle of Togetherness

And the learning process must be co-ordinated so that the actor learns as the other actors are learning and develops his character as they are developing theirs. For the smallest social unit is not the single person but two people. In life too we develop one another.

Bertolt Brecht.⁶⁰⁷

In the previous chapter, I examined how the exploration of the Alba Emoting emotional effector pattern of erotic pleasure can make the actor's search for so-called negative emotions pleasurable, making thus their journey easier and more fruitful. In this chapter, I will examine another principle that can also make the search for emotion easier, more fruitful, and more pleasant: the principle of togetherness.

Approaching emotions in acting, especially those identified as negative, is often seen as a difficult and uncomfortable process during which the actor should revisit unpleasant memories from their past. Lee Strasberg advises the actor to use memories that have conditioned them, the "highest and most moving experiences, [...] once in-a-lifetime exciting or traumatic moments."⁶⁰⁸ Strasberg encourages actors to relive both exciting and traumatic experiences, and although there is not an obvious ethical issue with prompting students to relive positive memories, the

⁶⁰⁷ Brecht, *On Theatre*, 197.

⁶⁰⁸ Lee Strasberg, *The Lee Strasberg Notes*, ed. Lola Cohen (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010), 29.

opposite could be argued for attempts to recall emotions linked to negative events. Michael Chekhov, having experienced the early stages of Stanislavski's experiments with emotion memory, felt the need to develop a different type of actor training that would focus on artistic emotions that stem from the actor's imagination, rather than the actor's experiences. As Kirillov points out, this was because Chekhov had found himself in "a state of deep psychological crisis" after these experiments that helped him "realize the inner limitations of his teacher's system and so forced him to search for his own method."⁶⁰⁹ The use of personal memories, as practised by both Strasberg and early Stanislavski, although proven to be extremely useful for many actors, is problematic as it can potentially make the search for emotion unhealthy and traumatic.

The only limitation of this approach is not the potential consequences of the attempt to relive negative experiences. Another issue is that Strasberg encourages actors to search for emotion in isolation: "the actor must close himself in, to be private enough, in order to forget the audience sufficiently."⁶¹⁰ He goes on to explain that the reason and the inspiration to develop the private moment exercise come from Stanislavski's quote "the problem of the actor is to learn to be private in public."⁶¹¹ This is a well-known challenge that actors face, especially at early stages of training, when they can be distracted by the presence of their fellow-students or teacher. The need to 'be good' and liked by the audience can make an actor self-conscious and ironically result in an inferior performance. In her book *The Philosophical Actor*,

⁶⁰⁹ Andrei Kirillov, "Introduction," in *The Path of the Actor*, by Michael Chekhov (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.

⁶¹⁰ Strasberg, *Notes*, 26.

⁶¹¹ Stanislavski as quoted by Strasberg in Strasberg, *Notes*, 24.

Donna Soto-Morettini, an actor trainer who has served as Head of Acting at Central School of Speech and Drama and taught at other prestigious U.K. conservatoires and universities, discusses an experiment that examined the participants' performance while engaging in a simple task—switching their attention between two objects—in two conditions: while being filmed or not being filmed. The difference in the performances is significant, as the participants appeared to be immersed in their action when not filmed, as opposed to 'concentrating on themselves' when being filmed.⁶¹² The need to liberate actors from the self-consciousness that comes with the knowledge that they are being watched becomes evident.

However, as we saw in Chapter Two, Stanislavski's 'public solitude' was not in fact a complete blocking out of the audience. We saw that, as Carnicke points out, this was a "widespread misconception in the US,"⁶¹³ that likely has its starting point in Strasberg's reading of Stanislavski. The training teaches the actor to defy human nature as described in the above experiment: the actor learns to be even more immersed in their action when being watched. Stanislavski's emphasis on concentration partly served this goal: the performer should be able to fully concentrate and commit to their actions *while* being aware that they are creating an experience *with* and *for* the audience.

Sanford Meisner also criticized the emphasis that Strasberg gave to working in isolation and pointed out the danger it entails, namely to make the actor introvert and their performance self-indulgent: "the other way [...] the way that Lee Strasberg and

⁶¹² Donna Soto-Morettini, *The Philosophical Actor: A Practical Meditation for Practicing Theatre Artists* (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2010), 148.

⁶¹³ Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 157.

the Actors Studio people use, seems to do the opposite. They make you go inside, and you can get stuck in there.”⁶¹⁴ Meisner goes even further into claiming that actors that trained with Strasberg were good, not because of, but in spite of, the training: “it seems to me that if what Strasberg did was, in effect, to introvert actors who were already introverted, to make them have private experiences on stage that aren’t expressed, then the people that came out of his classes and his technique and acted so beautifully must have done so *in spite* of the training.”⁶¹⁵

The act of observing affects the observed; this often poses a challenge to the actor. However, trying to imagine that one is not being observed by blocking out the human presence is only one potential pathway to overcome the challenge, an approach that—as discussed above—comes with its own limitations. Another way to resist such an urge to show and to please, could paradoxically be exactly the opposite: the use of other human beings, the fellow actor or the trainer, as a source of impulses, to gradually help one to silence the need to *show* to the observer, and to therefore leave space for one to *be*.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Meisner was as interested in the actor’s ability to achieve emotional depth, as was Lee Strasberg. He too, acknowledged that self-consciousness can obstruct the actor’s journey towards that goal. However, he suggested a different approach by aiming to provoke an emotional response through the interaction with the other, rather than the recollection of personal memories: “to take the heat off yourself [...] to transfer the point of concentration outside of

⁶¹⁴ Meisner, *On Acting*, 59.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, 182.

yourself, is a big battle won. [...] Acting is not talking. It is living off the other fellow.’⁶¹⁶

However, the use of togetherness is not simply about receiving impulses from the fellow actor or ‘living off the other fellow.’ It is equally about being able to *give* impulses and having the intention to help the process of others, as much as it is about accepting their help. The shift from a process that focuses on the individual to a process that focuses on what happens *in between* people becomes apparent. I will draw on a personal experience to clarify this point. When I was training at the Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute in Moscow, often referred to as the Vakhtangov Institute outside Russia, emotion recall was part of the curriculum. Although this experience was back in 2011, I can still vividly remember my partly-successful attempt to access a state of sadness during a group emotion recall exercise. The teacher asked us to sit on the floor, close our eyes and try to recall a sad memory. I remember trying to focus on my sensations, while I was hearing fellow students crying. That interaction with my fellow students brought unwanted and unhelpful thoughts to my mind: I either thought that they were already crying, whereas I was not, or I thought that their crying sounded superficial and I was annoyed by their insincerity. The presence of others therefore either created feelings of self-doubt or a judgmental attitude. Both these thoughts got in the way of my search for emotion. Although this is a reflection on a personal experience, it can be argued that other actors could have similar

⁶¹⁶ Meisner, 26; 42. Please note that these quotes are taken from different parts of the book; they are brought together to illustrate Meisner’s use of partner work that is evident throughout *On Acting*. This was necessary, as the book’s conversational nature, makes it difficult to find a point that will illustrate this without bringing together extracts from different sections of the book.

thoughts. It is acknowledged that I could have chosen to silence such thoughts, and focus on my own process, rather than being concerned with what others do. Still, I argue that such group exercises entail the danger of creating a judgmental or competitive learning environment, rather than encouraging students to be helpful and supportive to others. By allowing such unhelpful thoughts to disturb my process I was making a mistake. Yet, as a trainer I wish to create a learning environment against which students will not have to fight, but will be assisted in their search for emotion.

Training actors in a competitive and judgmental learning environment is highly problematic as it can create, in turn, an unfriendly atmosphere in which students cannot function to the best of their abilities, as further unwanted blocks intrude and disturb the actor's process. The actor is put into a situation in which they must block things out, instead of using everything that surrounds them for the benefit of their performance. The actor can thus not truly be *in the moment*. The search for emotion is a very delicate process, that requires assisting, rather than creating further obstacles, it therefore becomes apparent to me that a different kind of group work should be pursued.

This 'different kind of group work' is practised, among others, by Song of the Goat. As discussed in Chapter Two, Song of the Goat has based its training as well as its rehearsal process on the principle of coordination. Zubrzycki explains the principle: "everything in a performance is linked; [...] there is direct flow between how we think, speak, and act. [...] It involves [...] a particular attitude of awareness and

‘listening’ to the synchronicity of everything occurring in that moment.’⁶¹⁷ Through this process the actors achieve a deeper connection between their own thoughts, emotions and actions as well as with each other; they develop a “trust between people’s bodies, souls, minds, and voices, so that they can support each other in as many ways as they can possibly find.”⁶¹⁸ This support can be incredibly useful to the student actor, who no longer has to rely on their own limited abilities, but can seek and receive guidance from their fellow actors.

Receiving this kind of support from fellow actors can be liberating as, by stepping back and allowing one’s partner to take over control, one cannot anticipate the outcome anymore; one can therefore allow oneself to experience the process, without worrying about results. As discussed in Chapter Two, shifting one’s attention to one’s partner discourages self-observation and therefore eliminates the actor’s tendency to cling to pre-determined interpretations of the text or expectations of emotional states.⁶¹⁹ Such expectations are likely to bring ‘stereotypical reactions’ and external manifestation of emotion rather than an organic, truthful performance.⁶²⁰ The danger of anticipation is eliminated through the openness that comes with partner-work, the letting go of control by allowing the partner to guide us, and the shift of focus outside, rather than inside.

⁶¹⁷ Anna Zubrzycki, “Actor Training and Techniques in Pieśń Kozła Theatre,” *Mime Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 77.

⁶¹⁸ Ewan Downie, former member of Song of the Goat (2006–2012), interviewed by Porubcansky and cited in Anna Porubcansky, “Song of the Goat Theatre: Artistic Practice as Life Practice,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2010): 264.

⁶¹⁹ See subchapters ‘Sanford Meisner’ and ‘Song of the Goat’ in Chapter Two.

⁶²⁰ ‘Stereotypical reactions’ is the expression used by Zubrzycki in Zubrzycki, 81.

Thomas Richards makes similar observations: “contact with one’s partner is one of the keys to direct attention in a way that might be efficacious. How do I contact my partner? I need to see my partner, not myself.”⁶²¹ We see here, once more, the emphasis on the importance of eliminating self-observation and self-consciousness, by shifting the focus of attention to the other. Richards goes on to point out that to arrive at an inner state that is rich and alive, the actor needs to not be fixed to an idea about what this experience should be like, or how exactly it should be reached.⁶²² They should instead focus on the interaction with the partner and on what *is* happening in that moment, rather than what *should* be happening. The work with the other encourages us to be flexible: by guiding us through a different path each time, our partner encourages organic reactions.

Focused, fluid interaction with a partner can bring a great sense of freedom, as it takes away the responsibility and the demands actors can impose on themselves. Experiencing this sense of freedom and supportiveness also brings up the question of pleasure. Michael Woolson in his book *Emotion on Demand* seems to align himself with Lee Strasberg in encouraging actors to access unpleasant memories, and advises the actor to make a binding agreement with themselves to fully commit to the process even when the journey to mastering acted emotion is unpleasant.

I, _____, promise to [...] [work] towards my goal of becoming more emotionally open, committing to the process and not the result. I, _____, further understand that this course may bring up

⁶²¹ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 96.

⁶²² *Ibid*, 75.

uncomfortable or difficult memories from the past and/or strong emotions in me that might be unpleasant for me to deal with.⁶²³

The limitations of such an uncomfortable and unpleasant journey to emotion have already been discussed. This practice-based research aims to achieve the opposite: to invite the actor into a journey towards emotion that can and must be pleasurable. And togetherness is one way to achieve pleasure. To further understand why togetherness can make the search for emotion pleasurable, let us examine Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi observed and interviewed people who find an activity pleasant and therefore rewarding “in and of itself”⁶²⁴ (intrinsic motivation), rather than for the results likely to be achieved (extrinsic motivation). Rock climbers, chess players, athletes and artists were considered appropriate participants for his study, as people who willingly engage with such activities often describe them as pleasurable, and engaging to the point of complete immersion. All participants reported similar experiences and sensations while engaging with their preferred activities, and many specifically used the metaphor of “a current that carried them along effortlessly,”⁶²⁵ hence the use of the word *flow*. Participants also reported a loss of self-consciousness when experiencing *flow*: “the self-reflective processes that often intrude into

⁶²³ Michael Woolson, *Emotion on Demand. An Actor's Workbook for Mastering Emotional Triggers* (Los Angeles: Drama Publishers, 2010), 61.

⁶²⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology. The Collected works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (New York; London: Springer, 2014), 240.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid*, 230.

awareness and often cause attention to be diverted from what needs to be done are silenced, and the usual dualism between actor and action disappears.’’⁶²⁶

I discussed how self-consciousness can obstruct the actor’s journey above. I would like to follow by suggesting that in light of Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow, the trainer can discourage the student’s urge to self-observe and judge their own performance by helping them immerse in their action. Csikszentmihalyi identifies three parameters that contribute to and encourage the experience of flow: ‘‘a clear set of goals, [...] balance between perceived challenges and perceived skills [...] [and] the presence of clear and immediate feedback.’’⁶²⁷ By incorporating these elements in the training, the trainer can become the current that will help the student-actor get carried away effortlessly in their search for emotion.

In Practice:

A clear set of goals that can potentially encourage the experience of flow has been pursued in the practice discussed here. When referring to goals, I do not speak of the overall aim, in this case to access emotion. I speak of the simple tasks given for each exercise, such as ‘focus on the rhythm’ or ‘close your eyes and follow your partner’s sound into the space.’ The exercises have been selected for their simplicity and clear focus, after careful consideration to ensure that they will be accessible yet challenging (if the appropriate effort is put into them) to all levels.

Having established a clear set of goals, it is the element of clear, immediate, and constant feedback that needs to be added to make the experience pleasurable,

⁶²⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, 230.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, 231–32.

according to the Flow theory. In my practice, this is achieved through togetherness. Either the trainer or the fellow student gives constant feedback to their partner, helping them thus to access emotion. This instant feedback can be given in various ways, depending on the exercise, the individuals, and each precise moment of the practice. The various forms of feedback include but are not limited to physical impulses and verbal instructions.

The power and inspiration one can draw from an other is endless, whereas the power and inspiration one can draw from oneself is limited. Approaching emotion as something that can be created in between two human beings, rather than as something that only comes from an individual's soul or memories, depersonalises it, while simultaneously encouraging a deeper and more personal experience. Grotowski argues that one can only discover the essence of one's self through the other:

There is a point at which one discovers that it is possible to reduce oneself to the man as he is; not to his mask, not to the role he plays, not to his game, not to his evasions, not to his image of himself, not to his clothing—only to himself. This reduction to the essential man is possible only in relation to an existence other than himself.⁶²⁸

It is therefore not surprising that the principle of togetherness has been thoroughly explored by many theatre practitioners. I have already discussed how the principle is applied in the training and rehearsal process of *Song of the Goat*, the Gardzienice Theatre Association, and the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. Different names are used, such as mutuality, coordination, attunement, being in

⁶²⁸ Grotowski as quoted by Jennifer Kumiega in Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski*, 162.

tandem or relational acting. There are perhaps as many similarities between the aforementioned practitioners' use of the principle, as differences. However, for the purposes of this research, I focus on the similarities, and the elements that can be borrowed and applied into my own practice. I search for ways to encourage the actor to engage in a dialogue with the fellow actor, to be open, receptive and responsive but also generous and attentive to the process of others. I wish to cultivate a positive and caring learning environment, in which students can help each other develop.

Richards discusses his experience of being 'in tandem' when working with Mario Biagini:

[T]he two are in contact, and one of them guides and the other follows. We can say that one of them is basically active and the other passive, receptive. A relationship is established so that the 'inner action'⁶²⁹ can accomplish itself in each one, and also in between them, as if the process involved two beings as one. When I speak of one person as active and the other as passive, it's actually a simplification. [...] the one that is 'following' [...] is not really passive, but rather assisting and going with, and that going with also has a side of active engagement.⁶³⁰

Richards discusses two different aspects of the encounter between two different roles: one leads, the other follows, one suggests, the other supports, one asks, the other answers, one acts, the other reacts. However, they are both actively engaged. The use of the words passive and active is problematic, as Richards himself acknowledges. If I could bring my experience into the discussion, I would argue not

⁶²⁹ I have previously discussed the difference between 'inner action' and emotion. Richards warns us that inner action is not just related to the emotions, it is something beyond that. However, the actor's *emotion* is arguably also awakened through this process.

⁶³⁰ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 93.

only that the person following is not passive, but that they are in fact more active: they must be ready to follow any impulse that their partner gives them, and in doing so, they should be even more open and ready to react.

The partner giving the impulses, thus gently guiding the process, can be the trainer, as we saw in the *First Experiment*. This will be explored again here. However, in the workshop discussed here, the role of the enabler will also often be taken up by student-actors. In this chapter, togetherness as a trigger for emotional exploration will be explored both between actor and trainer and between fellow actors.

One needs to consider a potential shortcoming to this approach: not all actors can easily function as enablers; not everyone is capable of facilitating someone else's process. Partner work of this kind can require the ability to see or sense when someone's process is 'blocked' as Richards puts it,⁶³¹ and attempt to help them 'unblock'. Staniewski has worked extensively with mutuality, although he is critical of this idea of eliminating other people's blocks. He states: "unblocking [...] is a presumption of a director or trainer that they have the key to open different doors. I have seen so many dramas and misunderstandings with people who have no talent, no eye, no feeling to open anything whatsoever in another person."⁶³² Someone's total inability to open a 'door' in another person can perhaps be attributed to the lack of genuine interest: to facilitate someone else's process requires generosity of some kind. Another reason could be fear or anxiety about the interaction with the other: the facilitator might come into the process fighting with their own 'blocks.'

⁶³¹ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 103.

⁶³² Staniewski and Hodge, *Hidden Territories*, 78.

Creating a positive learning environment and encouraging feelings of respect and care between students could possibly address this challenge. Stanislavski observes that a higher level of creativity can be achieved when members of an ensemble only bring positive attitudes into the rehearsal space, and show respect and care for each other. The Russian pioneer urges his students not to be late and to always come prepared to the rehearsal so that they do not let their colleagues down. He exclaims: “It’s all for one and one for all. [...] There has to be a collective guarantee and anyone who breaks it is a traitor.”⁶³³ Stanislavski thus puts the seeds for Grotowski’s understanding of ensemble, which will require an “almost religious offering to the partner or the rest of the group.”⁶³⁴ This is difficult to achieve within a short time, but it is possible to work in that direction. Once such a positive ensemble spirit has been established, the rehearsal room can turn into a positive learning environment, that will, in turn, create a safe space for students to feel free to openly explore and express their emotions. Another way to address this challenge is to make sure that students work with different partners and that togetherness is not only explored in its dyadic form, but also within bigger groups of people.⁶³⁵

Before moving on to the practical experiment exploring the principle of togetherness, there is one more potential limitation that needs to be addressed. One could argue that there is another danger in putting too much emphasis on the group and the other: that actors might not be able to be as open and adventurous outside the safe

⁶³³ Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 564. For a more detailed discussion on this topic see chapter “Ethics and Discipline” in Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 552–578.

⁶³⁴ Allain, *Gardzienice*, 46.

⁶³⁵ See for example the video *Cindy Togetherness*. One can observe in this video that even if not all individuals contribute equally, the exercise is successful, as a collective exercise.

environment of the classroom or the ensemble. One could argue that student-actors might thus become too dependent. However, attachment theory suggests that the opposite is true. According to the dependency paradox: “the more effectively dependent people are on one another, the more independent and daring they become.”⁶³⁶ When it comes to romantic relationships, this means that the more secure partners feel about their relationship and the more attached they are to each other, the more confident they feel to face the world on their own.⁶³⁷ The guidance and support students take from each other would also make them stronger and give them more confidence when working on their own. Therefore, the use of togetherness will not make the ensemble members dependent; but, on the contrary, through the confidence it instills, it will prepare them to confidently work both within and outside the ensemble.

Working with Togetherness: Facilitating and Experiencing

Before discussing the Practice, I would like to briefly introduce two terms to facilitate discussion. When discussing partner-work I will use the words *facilitating* and *experiencing* to differentiate the two partners. The partner experiencing is usually the one working on the text; the one enjoying the benefits of the exercise most. The partner facilitating is the one helping the other in their search for emotion. Both partners explore, and they are both active, which is why the words facilitating

⁶³⁶ Amir Levine and Rachel Heller, *Attached* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2010), 21.

⁶³⁷ Although the attachment theory was initially formulated in relation to the parent-child relationship, I am using Levine and Heller’s discussion here because it refers to relationships established between adults, which more closely—yet not fully—resemble the relationships established within an ensemble of students-actors.

and experiencing have been preferred over active and passive, as chosen by Richards and other practitioners.⁶³⁸

In Practice

Togetherness was the first trigger to be explored at the workshop, as the basis of and the overarching principle guiding the practice, as well as a trigger. The exploration of resistance was employed second to help the actors work with neutrality; to let go of predetermined readings of their lines. This was not a result of resistance alone: while exploring the trigger, the workshop participants were also asked to ‘chant’ their monologues while gradually transitioning from low to high volume. This encouraged them to gradually let go of the habitual delivery of their lines. The actors were therefore more open to follow impulses, and ready to work with musicality, the third and final trigger to be explored. However, this order was not strictly followed for every exercise, as there were other factors to be taken into consideration; most importantly, some actors were unable to attend the whole week. The structure of the workshop therefore needed to be flexible, to allow me to get the most out of each of them and offer each the most. The chapter will therefore not strictly follow the chronological order of the workshop, but an order that facilitates discussion. The reader will be able to see in which day of the workshop each video was filmed on the relevant footnotes.

⁶³⁸ Richards’ use of the words ‘passive’ and ‘active’ is discussed in the above section.

Discussion:

*The workshop started with the Alba Emoting pattern of tenderness, preparing the group to work as an ensemble. I wanted this exploration to start with the cultivation of gentle caring feelings for each other, even if that would feel forced at that early stage. The actors went on to work with two very simple leading-following exercises:*⁶³⁹

Description:

a) Two partners face each other in close proximity (the distance between them should allow physical contact) and establish eye contact. They bring their hands together: the palms of the partner facilitating are facing up; the other partner's palms are facing down. The partner facilitating gently starts giving impulses to their partner through the point of contact: their hands.

b) those experiencing shut their eyes and follow a sound created by their partners.

Influences:

i) The first is a simple and broadly used leading-following exercise, the traces of which would be hard to track.

⁶³⁹ Please watch videos:

Alba Tenderness. Day One.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXLFblAkg7s>

First Exercise: Hands. Day One.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1Srn5eEKPA>

Second Exercise: Sounds. Day One.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SaQUJZA1Gg>

ii) *The second exercise was introduced to me when studying at the Vakhtangov Institute in Moscow in 2011.*

iii) *Song of the Goat Impulse exercise: one of the partners gives impulses to the other, by touching different parts of their body, using different qualities and tempos. The person receiving the impulses must react without ‘interpreting, not exaggerating the physical response, not filtering it through his/her own concept of what s/he thinks it should be.’⁶⁴⁰ Although I don’t use the exercise per se, the principle is similar.*

Discussion (continued):

Working on text while exploring the above leading-following exercises is my addition. This came out of a need to simplify the exercises to which I have been introduced while attending workshops with Grzegorz Bral (Song of the Goat). Although their Impulse exercise can be extremely fruitful and compelling to watch when performed by physically-trained actors, it is harder for students or actors that do not have such a background. Thoughts like ‘I don’t understand what I have to do’, ‘my body is not helping me’ or straightforward denial can get in the way of letting impulses through. I wished to simplify the exercise, so that it is accessible to everyone. I believe that the simplicity of these exercises also allows the actors to go back to the basics, to the core of human interaction: a simple sound, a simple touch.

This simplicity could be considered a shortcoming. Antonia Batzoglou, a practice-based researcher exploring the potential use of dramatherapy in mainstream actor training, reflects on her practice:

⁶⁴⁰ Zubrzycki, ‘Actor Training and Techniques in Pieśń Kozła Theatre,’ 79.

They [the actors] knew all the exercises that I used in the first part of the workshop (ball game, mirroring, and blind leading) and a feeling of boredom or again? was gently expressed non verbally. I should have chosen exercises that are more challenging for trained actors in order to engage them fully.⁶⁴¹

In contrast to Batzoglou's experience, I never had a similar feeling when working with actors, no matter how experienced they were. Maria, one of the actors participating in the workshop comments on the simplicity of the Shaping Exercise, not to be critical, but to express amazement in how effective 'such a simple thing' can be:

It is incredible what an animal the body is, and the stuff you can do with it. As soon as I did not have anyone messing with my body, I was going back into: 'OK. Thoughts, backstory, subtext. What are you thinking of? Who is this person? What is this to you?' And as soon as I had that, which is such a simple thing, but as soon as I had you guys twisting me about, all that stuff went away and emotion just appeared.⁶⁴²

I argue that once the goal of the exercise has been made clear—not necessarily verbally—and the actors are fully committed to the work with togetherness, following impulses and tuning into each other's process, they will find the exploration too fascinating to be bored by its simplicity.

⁶⁴¹ Antonia Batzoglou, "Towards a Theatre of Psychagogia: An Experimental Application of the Sesame Approach into Psychophysical Actor Training" (PhD Thesis, CSSD, 2012), 92.

⁶⁴² *Shaping Maria* 7:30–8:26. Day Five. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6E1xek7hLIE>

Shaping Exercise⁶⁴³

Influence and Description:

I first experienced a variation of this exercise when attending a Viewpoints workshop with Lucas Angelini: as an introduction to the Viewpoints improvisation, Angelini asked some members of the group to think of a sentence as a theme to guide the improvisation. They should be able to transmit the sentence non-verbally to the rest of the group. They did so by touching, scratching, caressing and moving us around, while the rest of us, with our eyes closed, allowed the interaction to affect us, preparing us for the improvisation. I simplified the exercise by allowing the actors experiencing to have their eyes open and I removed the element of caressing/scratching or any other physical interaction other than moulding the body. Although other forms of interaction might give various interesting sensations to the actor that could potentially awaken emotion, I wanted to eliminate them. This is because I would like emotion to be something initiated within and coming out of the actor's body with the assistance of the partner(s) rather than something being imposed on them, as could be the case with the much stronger stimuli of caressing, scratching and the rest. It is also safer, especially when working with younger students who have not necessarily developed the level of respect needed for the more intimate work that includes caressing and other forms of physical contact. The

⁶⁴³ Please watch Shaping Lorna and Shaping Jamie. [Day One](#). Links to videos:

Shaping Lorna:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDCVksww9Ws>

Shaping Jamie:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rRHfAGGpWM>

introduction of the text was also my addition. This is an important element, which I often add to the exercises. The text is in fact an additional 'hidden' trigger.

Text

While watching the videos documenting the practice, one can observe that text is heavily used. This is not because I believe that emotion can only exist or be expressed through language. In the context of this research, text is used as another partner, another source of inspiration, and as a point of focus to direct the actor's attention. It also helps students to work holistically and have an embodied understanding of the body-voice connection from the early stages of the training.

In *What a Body Can Do* Ben Spatz tells us the story of his father practising taiji or reciting poetry in his mind, while waiting at a very busy train station in New York City. Spatz believes that these activities were pleasurable to his father, because they gave him ‘‘mental clarity, focus and relaxation.’’⁶⁴⁴ The use of the text in the context of this practice-based research has a similar purpose. It is used as a mantra that has to be repeated without interpretation: in their first encounters with the exercises the actors just pronounce the words and sounds as clearly as possible. Interestingly, it is often observed that the less the actors try to give meaning and shape to the text and the more they allow the exercises to change the way they utter the words, the more meaningful the text becomes. The following section will attempt to provide an explanation for this paradoxical emerging of meaning through neutrality.

⁶⁴⁴ Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2015), 8.

Yoshi Oida discusses the text's ability to activate the actor's inner life: "If you place your body in a neutral position, then say "I am angry", somehow that language will transform your body. The emotion will come because words seem to be some form of magic, like an incantation."⁶⁴⁵ Words can 'magically' awaken emotions, especially through the use of repetition, another tool explored here. This is not searching for the relevant emotion to complement the text, but rather using text as another stimulus to emotion.

In the quote above, Oida also touches upon the question of neutrality. Neutrality should be sought not only in the body (when appropriate) but also in the text itself. As discussed in Chapter Two, Meisner advises his students to learn a text as neutrally as possible, "without meaning, without readings, without interpretation."⁶⁴⁶ This is because neutrality allows emotional flexibility, whereas a fixed reading discourages new discoveries and makes actors less responsive to the stimuli given by their fellow actors.⁶⁴⁷

In the section discussing Fatigue I explained how I search for a fully activated brain and a simultaneous activation of mind and body.⁶⁴⁸ The use of text supports this search as language is processed by the left side of the brain, while emotional responses are mostly associated with the right side of the brain. As Van der Kolk puts it "while the left half of the brain does all the talking, the right half of the brain

⁶⁴⁵ Yoshi Oida and Lorna Marshall, *An Actor's Tricks* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2010), 69.

⁶⁴⁶ Sanford Meisner, *On Acting* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 67.

⁶⁴⁷ This is explained in more detail in the section discussing Sanford Meisner in Chapter Two.

⁶⁴⁸ See subchapter 'Fatigue' in Chapter Three.

carries the music of experience. It communicates through facial expressions and body language and by making the sounds of love and sorrow: by singing, swearing, crying, dancing or mimicking.’⁶⁴⁹ By incorporating language in the actor’s search for emotion, a simultaneous activation of both the left and right side of the brain is encouraged, leading to simultaneous analytical, and emotional, intuitive understanding of the words. Rather than a ‘left-side’ analysis, a ‘both sides’ analysis of the text is encouraged.

Through the repetition of the text, a new understanding emerges. While the actor strives for neutrality, new meanings and emotions come out every time the text is spoken. This happens because the actor allows the exercises to affect the words, and the words to affect her/him. The new understanding of the text that emerges through this process is not the intellectual understanding that is often encouraged by traditional forms of text analysis. It is an emotional understanding, that relates to the actor’s own associations, emotion and body memory. Van der Kolk discusses a similar process:

The words gain depth and resonance as the voice changes in response to their [the actors’] associations. The idea is to inspire the actors to sense their reactions to the words. [...] [T]he emphasis is on ‘What do these words mean to *me*? What effect do *I* have on my fellow actors? And what happens to me when I hear the lines?’⁶⁵⁰

Rather than ‘what do these words mean’ the question becomes ‘what do these words mean to *me* in this moment, in relation to the given stimuli.’ The focus on the

⁶⁴⁹ Interestingly, the word ‘music’ is used here to indicate emotional involvement. Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 44.

⁶⁵⁰ Original emphasis. Van der Kolk, 343.

personal response to the working material resonates with Grotowski's exploration of the text during Theatre of Productions. As Slowiak and Cuesta put it, Grotowski used "text as a pretext for the actor's personal work. The playwright's words served as a runway for the actor to bring potent, personal images to life, authentically and with technical virtuosity."⁶⁵¹ Returning to the practice developed here, I also aim to encourage the appearance of personal associations through the use of the text; not through a conscious process of remembering or identifying similarities between the explored text and one's past experiences, but simply through allowing the 'magic powers' of the words—as identified by Oida—to stimulate the actor's associations, sensations, and body memory, through a simultaneous exploration of movement.

Van der Kolk's observation that the actor listens to the lines while speaking them ("what happens to me when I hear the lines?"⁶⁵²) also contributes to a better understanding of the function of the text work in the approach proposed here. By avoiding imposing a particular meaning to the words early on, the student-actor is encouraged to re-discover different nuances of the text each time by actively listening to it while speaking the lines. It is worth noting that this listening to one's own lines is not the self-conscious listening that I problematised earlier on; it is an active listening to one's own intuitive findings during the process, rather than a critical ear to one's own performance. It is listening to respond, rather than to assess. This outward focus resonates with Anne Bogart's observations on a process-focused rehearsal:

⁶⁵¹ James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2007), 12.

⁶⁵² See Van der Kolk's quote above.

Rehearsal is not about forcing things to happen; rather, rehearsal is about listening. The director listens to the actors. The actors listen to one another. You listen collectively to the text. [...] You do not gloss over moments as if they were understood. Nothing is understood. You bring your attention to the situation as it evolves. [...] I try to be present as fully as possible, listen with my whole body and then respond instinctively to what happens.⁶⁵³

This process is not incompatible with traditional text analysis; on the contrary, if combined with text analysis, it arguably brings more insights and encourages originality. In later stages of the work, the actor might have to make decisions, and will not be able to necessarily discover new meanings every time; however, the early intuitive discoveries will enrich these decisions. The ability to let go of predetermined interpretations is therefore highly beneficial in the early stages of rehearsal and training.

Finally, text is used to encourage emotional activation not only through the meaning of the language and its ‘magic’ quality to awaken emotions, but also through the emotional content accessible through and present in the sounds themselves: the musicality of the language. As discussed above, the right side carries the ‘music of the experience,’ and I am also interested in practically exploring precisely this, the way the right side communicates through language, not through its meaning but through the musicality embedded in (in the combination of consonants and vowels or the repetitions of sounds) or added to it (e.g. through chanting).

⁶⁵³ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 125–6.

In Practice

As discussed above, a 'fixed reading' of the text has been observed to often pose an obstacle to accessing emotion. In practice, to eliminate the use of predetermined interpretations, I introduce Chekhov's Psychological Gesture, and Odin-inspired work with Physical Actions.⁶⁵⁴ This serves as an excellent warm-up for the work with emotions, as actors explore various versions of the same line, an exploration which encourages emotional and intellectual flexibility. They also learn to allow the physical action or gesture, therefore, their body, to affect the language. As previously mentioned, I also often ask actors to work with chanting, which is particularly useful, especially for more experienced actors who at times struggle to let go of pre-determined interpretations and acting habits established over a long period. Chanting also eliminates the danger of a mechanical reading that some actors mistake for neutrality.

⁶⁵⁴ If interested in seeing this work, please go to 'Video Appendix' and watch videos *Psychological Gesture* and *Physical Actions*. Day Two. Links to videos:

Psychological Gesture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sHB6Ts10IU>

Physical Actions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H71gdievTZY>

Resistance

Resistance is achieved at the moment a force is running in one direction in the body and another force is holding that same movement back.

John Martin.⁶⁵⁵

I previously argued that the nature of acted emotion is different to the emotions experienced in daily life; to use Eugenio Barba's term, emotion in theatre is 'extra-daily.' To achieve this quality of the extra-daily, the actor must learn how to reach and sustain a high level of energy. Barba argues that the use of oppositions and resistance can be the "means *to remove* what is obviously the body's daily aspect, in order to avoid it being only a human body condemned [...] to present and represent only itself."⁶⁵⁶ He explains that "to imagine the precise source from which energy radiates means creating a resistance."⁶⁵⁷ This resonates with the activation of *tensions* through the exploration of opposing forces, thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two: the exploration of resistance encourages muscular engagement that, in turn, awakens the actor's inner life. Tadashi Suzuki also acknowledges the link between muscular engagement and the awakening of the inner life, which he calls 'psychological tension.' He points out that Kabuki actors work with a principle similar to resistance: the accumulation of energy through a cycle of suppression and

⁶⁵⁵ John Martin, *The Intercultural Performance Handbook* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 28.

⁶⁵⁶ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 31–32.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

release of action, which gives the performer an ‘overwhelmingly dynamic’ stage presence.⁶⁵⁸

As thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter, the area around the centre of gravity can be a powerful source of energy. The *noh* actor Hideo Kanze reflects on training with his father, a *noh* master: “My father never said, ‘use more *koshi* (energy).’ He taught me what it was about by making me walk while he held me by the hips.”⁶⁵⁹ This use of resistance, the holding of the partner’s hips while they move forward, will be practically explored here, as it reinforces the actor’s awareness of their centre and their ability to work with it. However, resistance does not necessarily have to be applied just to the centre. It can be applied to various parts of the body, and allow us thus to work on different centres of energy.

The British vocal coach Cicely Berry also uses resistance to help performers access emotions and express them through the voice. A relevant exercise is described in her book *The Actor and the Text*:

Set the actor a particular distance to travel within the space: a target he has to reach before the end of the speech. Let two or three of the rest hold him back, prevent him from reaching the point set. [...] You will hear how the words respond to the movement. You will hear something of the physical effort required to compass the thoughts. In other words you will hear the relationship between the physical and the emotional involvement—something of the energy involved within extreme feelings.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁸ Suzuki as quoted by Brandon, in Brandon, “Training at the Waseda Little Theatre,” 40.

⁶⁵⁹ Hideo Kanze as cited in Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 23.

⁶⁶⁰ Cicely Berry, *The Actor and the Text* (London: Virgin Books, 1993), 201.

Berry points out that the physical effort required to reach the target while being held back, brings emotional involvement. With the addition of the text, the actor is able to channel the energy that has been accumulated through the resistance into their voices. As previously discussed, the text works as an added trigger, suggesting that text, combined with the energy accumulated and released through the exploration of resistance, can encourage a strong emotional reaction.

In Practice:

Although the Berry approach (holding the actor back using their limbs as well as their torso) is highly effective and can help the actor access strong emotions, there is a danger that needs to be addressed: the actor, being forced to 'fight back,' is more likely to access a state that resembles anger. Sometimes extreme sadness or grief are also experienced. However, the spectrum can be limited. When practically exploring this exercise, I also observed that emotions felt pushed at times and actors' voices and bodies became strained, although mostly when the exercise was not properly executed. There is an approach that seems to be safer and more versatile: the approach practised by the Odin actors described in the following section.

Resistance Exercise:⁶⁶¹

Influences:

The resistance exercise was first introduced to me by Iben Nagel Rasmussen while attending the Odin Festival in Wroclaw in 2014. I had a second encounter with it

⁶⁶¹ Please watch video *Resistance. Day Two*. *Link to Video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN1LFy4bmDE>

when attending Roberta Carreri's workshop *The Dance of Intentions in Holstebro* in 2105.

Description:

Work with a partner. Both partners gently bend their knees. The partner facilitating uses a belt to create a force on the experiencing partner's pelvic area, pulling them backwards. Alternatively, the partner facilitating can use their hands instead of the belt. The partner experiencing creates an opposite force that allows them to move forwards. The two partners move in unison. The partner experiencing focuses their gaze on a point on the wall ahead. Next, text is introduced. The partner experiencing works on their monologue, exploring volume: from piano to forte and vice versa.

Discussion:

As Martin points out, when working with resistance ‘with the energy awakened [...] it is important to use it in a way that is not wasteful. If the energy is just thrown out of the body it is gone. If it is kept under control, retained in the body the performer has latent power, usable power.’⁶⁶² From experimenting with these different types of resistance (the approaches practised by Cicely Berry and the Odin Teatret actors) I have found that the Odin approach (borrowed from noh theatre) helps the actor gather power, rather than throwing energy in every direction: the energy is held within the actor and released in small quantities according to the needs of the text or scene. When the actor is held by the limbs (as in Berry's resistance exercise) they tend to lean forward to the point that they lose balance. If those holding back suddenly stop applying the opposite force, the actor being held is likely to collapse:

⁶⁶² Martin, *The Intercultural Performance Handbook*, 28.

the actor is off balance and therefore no longer in a position of power. On the contrary, with the noh approach the torso is only slightly bent forward and the knees are bent to help the actor stay in balance. Thus, if the person creating resistance eliminates the force applied to the torso, the actor will move forwards but will not collapse.

I use this exercise as it was introduced to me by Carreri (Iben uses the belt, Roberta prefers the use of hands), with one addition: once the actors are familiar with the movement, I ask them to start working on their monologue.⁶⁶³ I instruct them to explore volume (from whisper to loud voice) while simply pronouncing the words, leaving any interpretations aside. This way, actors start exploring variations of their monologue not by following the impulses a partner gives them, but by giving their mind 'something to chew on,'⁶⁶⁴ in this case experimenting with different volumes. Emphasis is also placed on the connection between voice and body, using the idea that the voice comes from the place experiencing the resistance, in this case, the centre of the body.

⁶⁶³ Although Rasmussen and Carreri did not ask us to work with text and resistance simultaneously during the workshops I attended, they might also work with a combination of the two in more advanced stages of the training.

⁶⁶⁴ Roberta Carreri, *Traces in the Snow: A Work Demonstration*, VHS, dir. Torgeir Wethal, (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1994).

Lorna Resistance⁶⁶⁵

At the next stage of this exercise, the actor is held by two partners. Partners providing resistance first try holding the arms, and then hold the centre once again. By this time, only one actor is working on their monologue at a time. Apart from the partners providing resistance, the rest of the actors observe the process. This allows the trainer to work individually with each of them and allows the rest of the actors to learn by watching the challenges and the discoveries of their peers.

At this stage, while working with each actor individually, I start to explain that although we work on emotion, it is best that they let go of the pre-decided emotions and try not to feel or demonstrate them. They should instead focus on the resistance, the centre, and the simple articulation of words and thoughts.⁶⁶⁶ They are also asked to eliminate facial expressions and other ways of underlining the text, such as micro-movements visible on the hands and the neck of the actor. This is because, I strongly believe that these habitual movements get in the way of emotion. As discussed in Chapter Two, theatre practitioners such as Lee Strasberg and Sanford Meisner have also identified that such habits of expression and acting mannerisms obstruct the actor's journey towards emotion. By watching the video Lorna Resistance, one can observe how Lorna tends to go back to these habits of expression once the resistance is not present anymore. When instructed to try eliminating facial muscle movement she reports that it feels 'mechanical', although such elimination of facial expression

⁶⁶⁵ Please watch *Lorna Resistance*. Day One. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXb5Nt8yz14>

⁶⁶⁶ *Lorna Resistance* 00:11–2:06.

occurred organically when she was exploring the principle of resistance.⁶⁶⁷ The 'mechanical' feeling tends to fade away the more actors get used to letting go of such habits of expression that often work as a safety net for them. Actors might feel they are more 'in action' or 'in the moment' when using physical or vocal ornaments to underline a text and displaying mannerisms they have developed. However, the observer often has a very different experience. Observing how eliminating these mannerisms works on other actors helps each of them trust the idea that they too can let go of their mannerisms. This will be the foundation for the next, more advanced stages of the work.

⁶⁶⁷ *Lorna Resistance* 3:22–5:48.

Musicality

To a certain extent - we surrender to music when we listen to it. [...] We let the music take us somewhere outside of ourselves.

Daniel J. Levitin.⁶⁶⁸

Barba and Savarese start the section on Rhythm in the *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* with a Plato quote: “Rhythm is an emotion released in ordered movements.”⁶⁶⁹ The quote indicates that the connection between emotion and musical elements—such as rhythm and melody—has been known and discussed since antiquity. The other conclusion one can draw is that Barba, as well as many other practitioners studied in this research, acknowledge that connection and often use it in their practice. In Chapter Two I discussed the use of musicality especially in the work of Gardzienice and *Song of the Goat*.

Rhythm is used in one way or another in almost every aspect of acting and actor training, it is therefore very important to note that Barba and Savarese chose the link to emotion to be the starting point for their chapter on rhythm over any other association. David Wiles unpacks the Plato quote further: “Rhythm is movement.

⁶⁶⁸ Daniel J. Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Dutton, 2006), 236.

⁶⁶⁹ Plato as quoted by Barba and Savarese in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 211.

Plato described rhythm as ‘ordered movement’ [...] Try to imagine yourself listening to a rhythm and standing quite motionless. Because rhythm is motion, it is always linked to e-motion or feeling.’⁶⁷⁰ This link between movement and rhythm that Wiles observes, only to connect it to ‘e-motion’ is very interesting. If we can’t help but move when listening to music, perhaps we also can’t help but be moved by it?

Researchers have indeed provided evidence that music has a strong impact on human emotions,⁶⁷¹ and further studies suggest that this effect continues for some time after the music stops.⁶⁷² The relationship between music and movement that Wiles brings up has also been studied: it has been observed that young humans tend to instinctively move to music without being instructed to do so.⁶⁷³ This indicates that both inner and outer movement can be stimulated by music.

Music does not only serve to give birth to impulses, associations, and emotions; it also serves to strengthen the relationships within an ensemble, as it enhances togetherness. Humans begin the journey of life as “innately musical/poetical being[s], moving and hearing with pulse and rhythm,”⁶⁷⁴ hence music becomes a way of communicating and understanding the world. In the very early stages of the

⁶⁷⁰ David Wiles, *Theatre and Time* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 15–16.

⁶⁷¹ See for example Jaak Pankseep and Colwyn Trevarthen, “The Neuroscience of Emotion in Music,” in *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*, ed. Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 130: “Music is highly effective for mood induction.”

⁶⁷² *Ibid.* The effects usually last for ten minutes after the end of the musical piece.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁶⁷⁴ Niki Powers and Colwyn Trevarthen, “Voices of Shared Emotion and Meaning: Young Infants and Their Mothers in Scotland and Japan,” in *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*, ed. Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 209.

infant-caregiver relationship, the only way to communicate is through musicality: the intonation and sounds of the language, the sound of the baby crying, the soothing sound of the lullaby. Even the way adults speak to babies is more musical than the way they speak to each other. As Jeanette Bicknell, author of *Why Music Moves Us*, points out adults speak to babies “more slowly, rhythmically and repetitively, with elevated pitch, simplified pitch contours and an expanded pitch range.”⁶⁷⁵

Relationships are formed and strengthened through the use of music, not only because it facilitates communication, but also because it enables emotional attunement: the mother sings a lullaby, the baby feels better; the baby cries, the mother is alert and experiences feelings of unease until the crying stops. Although communicating through music becomes less necessary as one grows up, relating to others emotionally through music is a function that continues throughout one’s lifespan. Examples of this are the use of music during courtship both in humans and in animals (Bicknell points out that “all primates known to sing also have a monogamous social structure”⁶⁷⁶) and the use of music to enhance bonding and sense of belonging within different community structures, such as amongst members of a religious group (through the use of hymns and religious songs) or the inhabitants of a country (through the use of national anthems).⁶⁷⁷ Music encourages individuals to identify with a certain group, as much as it helps them emotionally relate to each

⁶⁷⁵ Jeanette Bicknell, *Why Music Moves Us* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 96.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 98.

⁶⁷⁷ As Bicknell points out: “singing or listening together to a national anthem (or any song symbolic of a particular group identity) can make individuals identify with larger social entities. Surely such identification is part of what is going on when burly men at sporting events weep when they hear, say, the Welsh national anthem.” *Ibid*, 98.

other: “music’s communicative properties afford an involuntary sympathetic field of relatedness, or emotional resonance. Musical expression connects individual experiences at a deep implicit level.”⁶⁷⁸

The ‘involuntary relatedness’ and ‘emotional resonance’ encouraged by music play a significant role in the investigation of acted emotion suggested here. Musicality works along with the other trigger discussed in this chapter, togetherness, to help the actor discover a new path to emotion, through the interaction with the other. Music gives the actor a point of focus outside themselves, that can eventually help to silence their inner thoughts and give space to *emotion*. In the previous chapters, a certain type of self-observation that often comes with judgment of one’s own performance has been identified as an obstacle to the creative process of the actor in general and the accessing of emotion in particular.⁶⁷⁹ The work with musicality seems to serve this purpose of eliminating such counterproductive thoughts as when listening to music “internal speech is silenced and replaced by music. The work of self-management is temporarily set aside. When the music ceases and this work is picked up again, the benefits of such an intense external focus remain.”⁶⁸⁰ The fact that the effects of music last for some time after the stimulus ceases is very important; particularly in the context of this research, it means that the stimulus can

⁶⁷⁸ Jacqueline Robarts, “Supporting the Development of Mindfulness and Meaning: Clinical Pathways in Music Therapy with a Sexually Abused Child,” in *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*, ed. Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 378.

⁶⁷⁹ See subchapter “Fatigue” in Chapter Three, as well as the discussion on the state of *being decided* in the section discussing Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret in Chapter Two.

⁶⁸⁰ Bicknell, *Why Music Moves Us*, 115.

be introduced and then taken away, allowing the actor to explore without the constant presence of music.

The social nature of music does not only help the actor access emotion, it also makes the process more pleasurable. Bicknell argues that one of the reasons that listening to music is pleasurable is the feeling of connectedness with others, even when listening in solitude: by listening to music, we gain “access to the heart and mind of another.”⁶⁸¹ As Jerrold Levinson puts it “we are in effect imagining that we are sharing in the precise emotional experience of another human being, the man or woman responsible for the music we hear.”⁶⁸² This gives the listener a “sense of intimate contact with the mind and soul of another, the sense that one is manifestly not alone in the emotional universe.”⁶⁸³ The triggers of music and togetherness explored in this chapter therefore appear to be linked.

Bicknell also identifies other reasons that make the experience of music pleasurable:⁶⁸⁴ oxytocin and dopamine are released and other reward mechanisms are activated when listening to music.⁶⁸⁵ In addition, music awakens emotions and sensations of a special nature, as it penetrates our “emotional systems at many

⁶⁸¹ Bicknell, *Why Music Moves Us*, 113.

⁶⁸² Jerrold Levinson as cited in Bicknell, 112.

⁶⁸³ Bicknell, 112.

⁶⁸⁴ See *ibid*, 89–115.

⁶⁸⁵ For a discussion on dopamine and other reward mechanisms in relation to music see *ibid*, 103. For a discussion on oxytocin see *ibid*, 104–107.

See also Panksepp and Trevarthen, “The Neuroscience of Emotion in Music,” 105: “through unfathomed neurochemical responses in the brain, the sounds of music can bring joy and dull the jab of pain, as endogenous opioids and other effective chemistries are recruited in musically entrained minds.”

levels, from the auditory cortex (where basic auditory processing of all types is carried out) through to evolutionarily more primitive areas in the subcortex.”⁶⁸⁶ Music “goes to the bone” as she puts it, quoting the Rolling Stones guitarist, Keith Richards.⁶⁸⁷ Finally, a listener’s “complete or near-complete absorption in the music”⁶⁸⁸ often experienced as a sense of flow and/or loss of self is—in accordance with the Flow theory discussed above—in itself pleasurable.

In summary, music enhances togetherness and emotional attunement; furthermore, the use of music can potentially make the search for emotion more pleasurable. Another interesting aspect of the work with musicality is the *nature* of induced emotions. As discussed above, Bicknell maintains that listening to music activates many brain regions including those that are “evolutionarily more primitive;”⁶⁸⁹ Panksepp and Colwyn also refer to our “animal related heritage.”⁶⁹⁰ By activating these brain regions, music can bring forth heightened emotions that are dissimilar to those experienced in our daily lives. Using musicality as a trigger for emotional activation can thus encourage the actor to experience pleasurable, extra-daily emotions.

⁶⁸⁶ Bicknell, *Why Music Moves Us*, 100.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 100.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 107.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 100.

⁶⁹⁰ Panksepp and Trevarthen, “The Neuroscience of Emotion in Music,” 105.

In Practice

When discussing the therapeutic qualities of music, Roberto Assagioli, the Italian psychiatrist and founder of Psychosynthesis,⁶⁹¹ identifies five principal musical elements: rhythm, tone, melody, harmony, and timbre.⁶⁹² All these different elements can induce emotion, with the addition of another element, volume. The practice discussed below practically explores timbre through the musicality of the language (Jamie sticks), rhythm (Gabi-rhythm), and melody (Image Scoring).

The Stick exercise (main musical elements explored timbre and melody)⁶⁹³

Description:

The partner facilitating directs the partner experiencing using a stick. The experiencing partner, who is working on the text, follows these impulses. This exercise explores both togetherness and musicality, as the partner experiencing is in a sense musically conducted by the partner facilitating: when the stick goes up, the

⁶⁹¹ Psychosynthesis is a holistic approach to psychotherapy; it is based on psychoanalysis, also taking into consideration the spiritual aspect of the human soul. Questions such as the need for tenderness, friendship and love are also considered. For further information see the Psychosynthesis Trust website: <https://psychosynthesis-trust.org.uk/about-psychosynthesis-trust/what-is-psychosynthesis/> (accessed on 10/06/17)

⁶⁹² Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 239.

⁶⁹³ Please watch *Jamie sticks. Day One*. Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0OA7wely-Q>

actor following explores high volume or high pitch. When the stick goes down, they experiment with lower volume and pitch. They also explore everything in between, as well as experimenting with different tempi, according to the stick's movements: the stick might indicate a pause, slow or fast tempo.

Influences:

This exercise is practised by various theatre practitioners. I was first introduced to it while attending a workshop with Grzegorz Ziółkowski. I have kept this exercise in its pure form, as taught by Ziółkowski, because I did not feel that any adjustments would make the exercise better or more effective in terms of producing emotion. I do, however, also use an adapted version of it in which the partner leading uses their hands instead of a stick.⁶⁹⁴

Another addition is that before exploring this exercise, I ask students to only explore volume and pitch, directing the stick up and down, while staying on the spot, rather than using the space. This is an introduction which I felt was necessary after observing that some students do not explore their whole vocal spectrum. Focusing purely on volume and pitch encourages them to make bolder vocal choices, as they are less preoccupied with what their bodies do and can therefore focus on the vocal exploration. Because of this preparatory stage, students appear to be more confident and open to make bold and extreme choices when they engage with the more advanced stages of the exercise.

⁶⁹⁴ See *Maria Stick – Hand. Day Five*. Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNti_95DXRE

Grzegorz Bral extensively works with a similar exercise. However, Bral does not instruct actors to explore volume and pitch according to the partner's direction and thus allows them to interpret/react to the impulses more freely. This way, Bral's exercise is more of an impulse and leading-following exercise than it is an exercise about the musicality of the language. Another difference is that Bral uses two smaller bamboo sticks (one in each hand) rather than one longer stick held by both hands. This gives more flexibility to the performers, as well as encouraging subtler work. In the context of this research, as well as my teaching experience with undergraduate students, I prefer the clear direction given by the longer stick: it encourages physically less experienced performers to engage the lower part of the body, and therefore activates the centre. Longer sticks also make it easier to work with the musicality of the language, as they give clearer and more extreme indications in terms of high or low pitch and volume.

Gabi Rhythm (main musical element explored: rhythm)⁶⁹⁵

Influences:

Song of the Goat, Grzegorz Ziółkowski.

Description:

Actors in a circle beat a simple rhythm, while the actor in the middle of the circle improvises more complex rhythmic structures using breath, vocalisations, and their feet and hands. This warms them up and prepares them for the next stage of the

⁶⁹⁵ Please watch *Gabi Rhythm. Day Two*. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBMmxZXWwfk>

exercise in which they will explore their monologue in relation to the rhythm given by the ensemble. The leader of the exercise conducts the ensemble to give the actor in the middle what the leader feels is an appropriate tempo-rhythm for the monologue.

Discussion:

My addition to this exercise is combining it with Stanislavski's notion of tempo-rhythm. In order to do so, at a later stage in the exercise, I instruct the actor to leave the circle and explore the monologue using the rhythm they have just been working on as an inner tempo.

I consider the exercise with Gabi successful and valuable, as one can observe how initially she is trying to impose her own tempo-rhythm, but when eventually she allows the tempo given to her to become her inner tempo, the quality of her monologue completely changes: she becomes more focused and the words appear to be more organic. She appears to find pleasure in her exploration, without being indulgent: she shares the emotion with the ensemble, giving something back to the colleagues who support her.

Once she leaves the circle, she chooses to take one of the actors with her. Jenni and Gabi then work together, throughout the second phase of the improvisation. They explore togetherness, finding different ways to relate to each other: sometimes acceptance (a hug), sometimes rejection (I don't believe you). They work beautifully together, but by the end of the exercise Gabi seems to lose the connection with both the partner and the text. She starts reciting the text, at which moment I instruct her to

*go back to the rhythm.*⁶⁹⁶ *One can see how she quickly finds the connection again when focusing on the rhythm, until she and her partner are instructed to bring the improvisation to a close and find a resolution.*

When the improvisation finishes, Gabi gives everyone a big bright smile, although just a few minutes ago she was crying. This is a very important aspect of this research: the search for emotion must be pleasurable. When discussing my research with an actor who did not attend the workshop I was asked: 'how do you bring the actors back?' The answer is that I don't need to, as the actors don't need recovery. They, most of the time, feel very happy they had this experience (interestingly especially after experiencing crying),⁶⁹⁷ and not once have I felt that sadness stayed with them after the exercise when working with emotion through the body. Only once, when working with emotion recall, did I feel that the actor has been to an uncomfortable place. No matter how careful one is (I always instruct students to work with non-traumatic memories that do not affect them anymore and come from their distant past), unexpected reactions can come up when working with personal memories. My personal experience indicates that the physical approach to emotion is both safer and more pleasurable.

⁶⁹⁶ *Gabi Rhythm*, 13:38–14:30.

⁶⁹⁷ See also *Shaping Maria* 7:11–7:35 (smiling, laughing, broad smile, answering 'yes, it is very nice'). Day Five. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6E1xek7hLIE>

Cindy Togetherness 7:15–7:25 (smiling, laughing, saying 'that was fun'). Day Four. Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFF2VBpKRNo>

Image Scoring⁶⁹⁸ (main musical element explored: melody)

Influences: Gardzienice, Grzegorz Ziolkowski. Inspired by Gardzienice's use of images, Ziolkowski has developed an exercise that was introduced to me while attending a workshop in Poland in Summer 2014. The first steps of the exercise are taken from Ziolkowski (up to the creation of the physical score). My addition to the exercise is the work with the text and the repetition, as well as the use of various (rather than one) pieces of music, elements that however simple, transform the exercise.

Description:

(Preparation: Students have been asked to send me softcopies of pictures and songs of their choice that relate to their monologues. Before the session, I put these pictures into order (1-3 pictures from each student according to numbers), and listen to their songs to choose the one I think is most appropriate for this exercise, often in relation to their monologue.)

I show the pictures to the students and I ask them to find a posture for each picture. They are then asked to repeat these postures and work on transitions, until each of them has a physical score.

Once they have their scores (and here is where I start following a different path from Ziolkowski) I put different pieces of music on and ask them to use the same movements and the same lines, but in relation to different pieces of music. The songs

⁶⁹⁸ See *Cindy Image Scoring. Day Three*. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLT0ntZi16E>

are chosen to give different inner tempi and different atmospheres for the actors to work with: happy, sad, angry, playful, serious.⁶⁹⁹ This moment is extremely crucial: even if student-actors have not so far realised the unlimited possibilities that exist within their monologues, they often realise it with this exercise. The different songs and types of music encourage them to explore something different each time.

Next, each actor will be asked to work on their own, preferably, but not necessarily, using their own song. I make this choice for them. I also improvise with the music, following my own impulses: I experiment with volume, pausing and resuming the music, giving thus even more impulses to the student-actors.

Discussion:

The use of personal material is an important aspect of this exercise. Experiments exploring the links between music and emotion have shown that: “music is highly effective for mood induction, and more robust effects are achieved when one uses participant-selected rather than experimenter-selected music.”⁷⁰⁰ I therefore spend plenty of time going through students’ material to select songs and images; I do so because I believe that the use of personal material can have significant impact on their process.

There is a limitation that needs to be addressed: sometimes students rely too much on the music when they are asked to work on their own. This is not the goal of the

⁶⁹⁹ For the exploration of contrasting pieces of music in relation to the same monologue, see *Maria Image Scoring*, 0:00–4:37. [Day Three](#). Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dmqU8qdl1A>

⁷⁰⁰ Panksepp and Trevarthen, “The Neuroscience of Emotion in Music,” 130.

exercise, as ideally the music will eventually become the actor's inner tempo (or 'inner melody') and will not be needed externally anymore. The music can be used to strike emotional 'chords' in the audience as well, to use Carreri's metaphor. Music is often used thus both in film and in theatre. However, the student-actor should not rely on that; they should instead be able to use it as a stimulus for their 'inner melody.' It should be a tool to practise with and eventually let go of. If the exercise is successful, the actor will also be able to let go of the movement, maintaining the emotion that has been awoken.

Cindy Togetherness

Taking the exploration of togetherness one step further, I wanted to gradually let the ensemble experiment with accessing and enabling emotion without me intervening. The practice progressed from the early experiments with Stavriana, during which I was leading the whole process, to giving ensemble members more and more space to experience emotion without my assistance, as well as creating the experience for others. The last exercise to be discussed here, which I consider to be the climax of the workshop, is *Cindy Togetherness*. During this improvisation, ensemble members were asked to take 'my' role and help Cindy access emotion. They were free to use any of the triggers and exercises explored during the workshop. The only decision I made was who would be the member of the ensemble that would be 'experiencing' i.e. who would be the person whose process the rest of them would be facilitating.

The reader is now invited to watch Cindy Togetherness.⁷⁰¹ Cindy is a very open and responsive actor, and right from the beginning of the improvisation, she is in a process of exploration, with glimpses of inner life awakening evident throughout the exercise. However, there are some key moments that I would like to discuss. At 2:40 she lets her weight into the hands of the partner, and at that moment, I argue that emotion starts appearing, as Cindy goes beyond following impulses into letting go of any expectations; she just experiences how it is to leave the weight of the monologue metaphorically and literally into the hands of the partner. Gabi's push gets Cindy into a heightened state which she cannot sustain for long, as it is attempted prematurely. Cindy takes control again, and unprompted by the ensemble, she starts making her own decisions, she starts 'playing games' as she puts it. She, however, keeps the contact with the partner uninterrupted. Through this contact, a new impulse comes in the form of a thought: Gabi is 'the mum.' This thought, in combination with the use of resistance, both in the form of Gabi's line 'I don't believe you' and the physical resistance as they pull each other, leads to an outburst of emotion from 4:30 to 5:10. From that moment onwards, Cindy will not attempt to regain control, but will instead surf the emotional wave: she will smoothly transition from one emotion to another and explore a range of intensities seamlessly and with ease.

The exercise demonstrates the effectiveness of the triggers, as the ensemble is evidently capable of helping their fellow actor access emotion through simple interventions. It also points to the importance of togetherness; when unprompted,

⁷⁰¹ *Cindy Togetherness. Day Four.* Link to video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFF2VBpKRNo>

Cindy resorts to 'playing games' although she continues to explore elements of the practice, such as the image scoring. However, when emotion is fully awakened, the interventions are not required anymore. All members of the ensemble notice that and no one attempts to give any impulses at that stage. Cindy is in flow. Emotion is awakened.

Chapter Five

Pedagogies of Emotion

One of the most important discoveries of this practice-based research is that there is another factor that is as much, if not more, crucial than the triggers deployed to help actors access emotion and the relevant exercises: the way different tools are introduced and student-actors are encouraged to engage with them. This chapter focuses on the role of the pedagogue in actor training geared towards accessing emotion. In particular, I will address four key elements for encouraging the appearance of acted emotion: attention to the individual (as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach), the creation of a positive and non-judgmental learning environment, a process of helping the actor ‘give birth’ to emotion similar to Socrates Maieutics, and finally, the pedagogue’s striving to make the learning process pleasurable.

Let us start investigating the question of pedagogy by briefly considering Biggs’ three levels of teaching as identified in “What the Student Does: Teaching for Enhanced Learning.”⁷⁰² To paraphrase the educational psychologist, the three levels are as follows:⁷⁰³

⁷⁰² John Biggs, “What the Student Does: Teaching for Enhanced Learning,” *Higher Education Research & Development* 18, no. 1 (1999): 57–75.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

First level: The teacher is concerned with how the student is: good, bad, bright, talented, lazy. If learning is not successful, it is not because of the teacher but because of the student.

Second level: The focus is now shifted to what the teacher does: the teacher acknowledges responsibility and is concerned with teaching methods and ways to facilitate learning. However useful these methods and techniques might be, and however more effective a way to teach, the teacher is still not focusing on what the student learns, but on what the teacher does. They are therefore mostly managing rather than facilitating learning.

Third level: This level of teaching is student rather than teacher-focused and is concerned with what the student does, by drawing attention to the interactions between student and teacher. The teacher is now a facilitator rather than a knowledgeable manager of appropriate teaching activities.

The third level of teaching is the optimal; however, I argue that the second level is also useful when designing classes and developing exercises. I therefore propose a second level approach to design and preparation with a third level attitude towards the delivery of teaching activities. Focusing on actor training in general, and the accessing of emotion in particular, I will now proceed to discuss how designing classes that promote the experience of *flow* enhances students' learning.

Pleasure and the Psychology of Flow

The experience of flow or pleasure has been already argued as a valuable component for the approach to accessing emotion suggested here. This section will now address potential obstacles student-actors face during the training process and suggest possibilities for overcoming them through utilising Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's theory of Flow.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Grotowski does not perceive actor training as a process that leads to the accumulation of skills, but rather as a journey during which the actor works on their psychophysical blocks aiming to eventually eliminate them; a *via negativa*. In the context of this research, this 'opposite road' could be anything from encouraging an actor to release excessive physical tension, to helping them overcome the fear of accessing the so-called negative emotions. One of the benefits of *via negativa* is precisely the fact that the process can be highly personal and adapted to the needs of each individual performer; the trainer might be working with the actor on a wide range of challenges and exploring potential pathways to overcome them. However, to facilitate the discussion in this section, I will select a few shared challenges and obstacles that actors often face.

Stamatis Efstathiou, a Greek performer and director who has worked with practitioners from the post-Grotowskian lineage for many years in Poland, identifies four obstacles that a performer must overcome: distraction, laziness/fear of change, lack of patience (looking for quick results), and ambition: the desire to be good

stemming from the performer's ego.⁷⁰⁴ Acknowledging that these are indeed challenges that most, if not all actors face, one could consider ways to help the student-actors overcome them. Following Biggs, I propose to shift the focus from the actor to the trainer, and in so doing to move from the first level of teaching (what the student is), to the second level of teaching (what the teacher does). The question is not anymore if the student-actor is easily distracted, lazy, impatient or overly ambitious. It is about the trainer considering how they can acknowledge these human qualities and work *on* and *with* them.

Csikszentmihályi maintains that when one is experiencing *flow*, disruptions are eliminated. A chess player reports: “I don't seem to hear nothing—the world seems to be cut off from me and all there's to think about is my game... I am less aware of myself and my problems... at times, I see only the positions.”⁷⁰⁵ The first challenge of distraction will therefore be eliminated once a state of flow has been achieved. Efstathiou might be referring to distraction in a wider sense; for example, the temptation to go out with friends rather than going to class. The experience of

⁷⁰⁴ This was discussed during a workshop led by Efstathiou and attended by the researcher. Although Efstathiou is not an established post-Grotowskian, like the others discussed in this thesis, this list of obstacles can be argued to be in the spirit of the practices studied here. See for example Thomas Richards criticising laziness and the desire for quick results in *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*: “Through laziness or a desire for immediate results, such individuals or groups completely forget ...”, or “We were faced with our common human weakness: the descent due to inner laziness.” in Richards, *At Work with Grotowski*, 7; 88. See also the discussion on ‘Thomas’ crimes’ in Richards, *At Work with Grotowski*, 69–70. Thomas’ ‘crimes’ were not the same as the ones discussed here, but the emphasis on what one *should not do*, and the use of the word ‘crime’ itself, resonates with this discussion.

⁷⁰⁵ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York; London: Springer, 2014), 140.

pleasure is also likely to eliminate such distractions, as the flow experienced during classes is more likely to bring students back, not because they have to, but because they want to.

According to Csikszentmihályi's observations, the experience of flow can also eliminate the fourth challenge: ambition or the performer's ego.

Most writers who have described experiences similar to what here is called "flow," mention an element variously described as "loss of ego," "self-forgetfulness," "loss of self-consciousness," and even "transcendence of individuality" and "fusion with the world." When an activity involves the person completely with its demands for action, "selfish" considerations become irrelevant.⁷⁰⁶

It could be argued that the third challenge, laziness, and the experience of pleasure or flow are mutually exclusive. One could make the logical assumption, that even if the task is mentally or physically challenging and requires vast amounts of energy, the experience of pleasure itself can encourage the actor to continue working rather than succumb to laziness.

In her work demonstration *Traces in the Snow* the Odin actress Roberta Carreri reminds us of the experience of dancing all night and being "exhausted but not tired."⁷⁰⁷ Carreri suggests that tiredness is a mental rather than a physical state, which comes when an activity or experience is mentally or physically challenging but not pleasurable. Exhaustion on the other hand, comes when the activity is physically or mentally demanding, and pleasurable. By encouraging the actors to

⁷⁰⁶ Csikszentmihályi, 141.

⁷⁰⁷ Roberta Carreri, *Traces in the Snow: A Work Demonstration*, VHS, dir. Torgeir Wethal, (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1994).

experience flow, their tiredness will turn into exhaustion, or better, ‘sweet weariness’ as Euripides puts it in the *Bacchae*.⁷⁰⁸ They will therefore be more likely to pursue rather than avoid such demanding activities that inevitably form part of the training.

The last challenge the actor must overcome is a lack of patience and the desire for quick results; rather than merely focusing on the ‘clear set of goals’ of the explored exercise, the student-actor might be more concerned with later stages of the process and be eager to prematurely achieve certain results. This applies both to an individual task (wanting to quickly master a skill or an exercise) and an overall attitude (‘pushing’ the emotion to come here and now, showing an excessive desire to ‘do well’ that often hinders an actor’s performance). The cause of this obstacle is the focus on results or potential rewards, rather than the process itself. However, since accessing the state of *flow* is pleasurable, the actor should no longer be concerned with achieving a certain outcome beyond committing to the task itself; the process naturally becomes more important than the outcome as the student-actor finds the activity pleasurable *in and of itself*. Csikszentmihalyi explains: “a final characteristic of the flow experience is its ‘autotelic’ nature. In other words, it appears to need no goals or rewards external to itself. Practically every writer who has dealt with play has remarked on the autotelic nature of this activity.”⁷⁰⁹

Having established that the experience of flow can help the student-actor overcome the above-mentioned challenges, I will now proceed to examine how a pedagogue

⁷⁰⁸ Translated thus by Alexandra Kapsali, in Terzopoulos, *Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis Theatre*, 52.

⁷⁰⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, 145.

could potentially help the students experience flow, and therefore make the learning process more pleasurable.

In Practice

According to Csikszentmihalyi, to access the state of flow, one should centre their “attention on a limited stimulus field.”⁷¹⁰ Attending and responding to a specific stimulus, be it a song, a text, a physical action, or one of the triggers, gives the actor a limited focus, and therefore helps them reach a state of flow.

There are three more parameters:

- a. “a clear set of goals”
- b. “a balance between perceived challenges and perceived skills” and
- c. “the presence of clear and immediate feedback” that “leaves the individual with little doubt about what to do next.”⁷¹¹

These parameters were addressed in the previous chapter. However, I return to these parameters in this section with a different focus, discussing how the pedagogue can facilitate *flow*. Great effort has been made to keep the exercises and instructions given to actor-students as simple as possible, to give a ‘clear set of goals’ both to those exploring and to those helping others reach *emotion*. The striving for simplicity is also discussed in the previous chapter, where the focus is placed on ensuring accessibility.

⁷¹⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, 139.

⁷¹¹ Ibid, 231–232.

The balance between skills and challenges is another key factor: if an exercise is too easy, the actor can feel boredom. If it is too difficult and therefore not manageable, the actor might get frustrated or give up. Following Biggs' third level of teaching, the shortcomings of an approach that believes that only those who persevere will be the ones who reach their full potential become apparent. Aiming to make teaching more inclusive, one must encourage all students to do so. I have therefore simplified many of the exercises, stripping them to their core, in a way that can be easily manageable by actors with various backgrounds and abilities: younger, older, athletic or not, with or without previous physical training. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, instead of using Song of the Goat's Impulse exercise, I use a simplified version where impulses are only given through one point of contact. It is acknowledged that different body parts can awaken different sensations; however, these are explored through other exercises—such as *Shaping*—that are more accessible to students-actors that are not physically trained.⁷¹² Aiming to transfer elements from the vast pool of knowledge that comes from physical theatre into more conventional forms of acting,⁷¹³ the simplification of certain exercises is necessary. The aim is to help actors who might not have had extensive physical

⁷¹² For more information on the *Shaping Exercise*, see the *In Practice* section of subchapter: “Emotion as an Encounter and the Principle of Togetherness” (Chapter Four).

⁷¹³ Physical theatre is a form of theatre that utilises movement and the performer's body as the primary means for devising, story-telling, and training, with the text often playing a secondary part. Many of the theatre practitioners and companies studied in this thesis—in particular Grotowski, Song of the Goat, Gardzienice, Theodoros Terzopoulos, Tadashi Suzuki and Odin Teatret—belong in the wider ‘family’ of physical theatre practitioners. Other well-known practitioners associated with this genre include Jacques Lecoq, as well as theatre companies currently active in the U.K. such as Complicité, Frantic Assembly, and DV8.

training to understand and use their bodies better, rather than making them more self-conscious about their physical limitations.

Finally, as discussed in the previous chapter, the use of togetherness gives the immediate feedback necessary for the encouragement of flow: the feedback can be verbal and/or embodied, often given through physical contact or the use of sound. In any case, the constant gentle guiding that the student-actor exploring emotion receives from their partner or the trainer, serves as the constant feedback that indeed “leaves the individual with little doubt about what to do next.”⁷¹⁴

The simplicity of exercises combined with the use of togetherness that provides constant feedback can thus encourage the experience of *flow* and make the process of searching for emotion pleasurable. The question might arise: why is pleasure such an important part of this process? Csíkszentmihályi explains that in order “for an activity pattern to become established in a species’ repertoire, it has to be experienced as enjoyable by the individual.”⁷¹⁵ Despite the popularity of the word sacrifice in relation to the work of the actor, following “The Theatre’s New Testament” and other writings by or about Grotowski,⁷¹⁶ the actor is not shielded from the need to enjoy an activity before it can be established as part of their repertoire.

⁷¹⁴ Csíkszentmihályi, 232.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid, 229.

⁷¹⁶ See among others: “The actor who undertakes an act of self-penetration, who reveals himself and sacrifices the innermost part of himself—the most painful, that which is not intended for the eyes of the world—must be able to manifest the least impulse.” See also: “one must not take the word “holy” in a religious sense. It is rather a metaphor, defining a person who, through his art, climbs upon the stake and performs an art of self-sacrifice.” In Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 35; 43.

Terms such as sacrifice and suffering might have been used by Grotowski with a meaning different than the literal, they have, however, formed a widespread misconception that the deep and honest accessing of certain inner states can or should be painful. I strive to articulate and demonstrate, both in writing and through the video footage, that this process can be incredibly pleasant for the actor, and that the joy experienced is not counterproductive, but rather the opposite: it is the quickest and safest path that one can take to experience or encourage the appearance of *emotion*. However, this cannot be easily achieved without due consideration of another factor: the need to develop a positive and non-judgmental working environment.

Non-judgmental environment

Grotowski was interested in encouraging emotional generosity and sincerity within the working space and he knew that to stimulate these qualities a safe non-judgmental environment was necessary:

The essential problem is to give the actor the possibility of working “in security”. The work of the actor is in danger; it is submitted to continuous supervision and observation. An atmosphere must be created, a working system in which the actor feels that he can do absolutely anything, will be understood and accepted. It is often at the moment when the actor understands this that he reveals himself.⁷¹⁷

Grotowski points out that the process of opening up, the act of revealing oneself, is very delicate and requires the appropriate support. He perceives supervision and

⁷¹⁷ Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 211.

observation as potential obstacles to the creative process and wishes to ensure that the actor feels ‘secure’ and ‘accepted.’ Another word strongly associated with Grotowski’s practice, the word *witnessing*, perhaps stems from his desire to ensure that the actor’s work is not seen through a judgmental lens. Although this term was introduced when the work left the professional theatre, the underlying sentiment can be observed in the training and the rehearsal process from Grotowski’s earlier practice.

However, criticism does not only come from the observer; the actor can also be critical of themselves. In *Heart of Practice*, Richards discusses this matter:

The question of observation is a delicate one. Actually, we observe ourselves all the time. I don’t think we can completely liberate ourselves from self-observation. But certain types of observation during rehearsals or on stage are like a stick in the wheel of the bicycle: they only provoke problems and block natural reactions. [...] A great freedom for the actor [...] can arrive when the actor succeeds in putting the function of observation completely in the hands of the director. The actor can discover total doing, full, without self-judgment.⁷¹⁸

Richards explains that one of the paths that those working at the Workcenter have found to overcome this challenge of self-observation is the use of partner work, or to use the word chosen for this research, the use of togetherness.⁷¹⁹ Taking witnessing (rather than observing) even further, they explore assisting, facilitating the partner’s journey. Although Richards suggests relying on the ‘hands of the director,’ the

⁷¹⁸ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 96–97.

⁷¹⁹ “Contact with one’s partner is one of the keys to direct attention in a way that might be efficacious. [...] I need to see my partner, not myself.” Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 96.

principle of being liberated through giving the responsibility to someone else can be extended to other ensemble members or fellow students. The responsibility to facilitate the journey of others can be passed on from the trainer to the students; students therefore feel more confident in their own powers rather than having to rely exclusively on a director or a trainer. Thus, the psychological need for autonomy, vital for the pedagogical process, can also be satisfied.

Richards implies that it is less productive to think about what should be avoided (self-consciousness), than about what should be sought (the ability to let go of control and follow what is suggested by others). Similarly, shifting our focus from eliminating judgment to cultivating its opposite, feelings of acceptance and care, can be more productive. The question remains: how can such feelings be encouraged?

Michael Chekhov provides a possible answer. The need to cultivate positive feelings within an ensemble and the danger of a judgmental attitude are thoroughly discussed in his lectures “Love in our Profession” and “Ensemble Feeling.” Chekhov asserts: “Indifference is bad enough. Criticism is a crime.”⁷²⁰ Whether a judgment is based on others’ personality or their acting abilities, it does not belong to the creative space and should be eliminated. Chekhov goes on to suggest a way for the actor to overcome their tendency to judge their colleagues; he argues that it is possible to fight such tendencies, by focusing on positive rather than negative thoughts about colleagues:

As soon as you see something ugly around you, try to see at least a grain of something that is not ugly, not repulsive. In everything which

⁷²⁰ Chekhov quoted in Lendley C. Black, *Mikhail Chekhov as Actor, Director, and Teacher*, 52. Black quotes Chekhov’s lecture “Ensemble Feeling,” which was recorded in 1955.

is unpleasant it is possible to find something which is pleasant. This will send a signal to the essence of your human soul which will help to awaken what we call love.⁷²¹

Chekov urges his students to find beauty in ugliness and focus on positive rather than negative thoughts to avoid the unconstructive criticism that can pose a great danger to the creative process. He also argues that such an attitude will bring both personal and emotional growth to the individual, in addition to benefitting the ensemble.

In Practice:

A similar approach is suggested here: a shift from trying to eliminate negative feelings towards the creation of positive ones. As Stanislavski points out, emotions are like wild animals, that cannot be forced to come; they can only be lured.⁷²² This applies to the whole ensemble, as much as it applies to the individual. I therefore try to avoid instructing the students to be caring and non-judgmental but, instead, try to ‘lure’ them into experiencing such feelings organically. To encourage such positive attitudes, I start every workshop with the Alba emotional effector pattern of tenderness.⁷²³ This often encourages the actors to be positive towards each other and

⁷²¹ Chekhov quoted in Black, 52. Similar ideas are expressed in Chekhov, “Love in Our Theatre,” 14–26.

⁷²² Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, 191.

⁷²³ Description of the Alba Emoting pattern for tenderness:

Breath: (gently) in and out through the nose.

Facial expression: corners of the eyes are pulling outwards, as do the lips, forming a small smile.

express these feelings physically with the use of hugs and other physical manifestations of caring. Although this might feel forced at this early stage of the training and the formulation of the ensemble, it evidently has an effect on them.⁷²⁴

Although as an educator I—like many others—have been “cheerfully quoting the words of Samuel Beckett [...] ‘Fail again. Fail better,’”⁷²⁵ I have also been drawing students’ attention towards acceptance. Although welcoming failure already suggests a shift from a result-focused attitude to a process-focused journey, I attempt to go one step further into acceptance. From the early stages of the work, while warming up and playing ball games, I ask students to not apologise or laugh when they drop the ball, because such reactions reveal that they pass judgment on what happened. I ask them to silently acknowledge what happened, pick up the ball and continue the game as normal. By doing so, I encourage “a particular orientation towards one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterised by curiosity, openness and acceptance.”⁷²⁶

To avoid any misunderstandings of the approach suggested here, it is important to stress that accepting everything that happens as part of the process does not mean settling for less. On the contrary, the freer students feel to explore, without

Posture: head is slightly tilted to the side and the chin is tucked in towards the chest. The whole body is relaxed. Thinking of a softening on the spine is a helpful image for this pattern.

⁷²⁴ See for example the video *Alba Tenderness* discussed in the previous chapter.

⁷²⁵ Róisín O’Gorman and Margaret Werry, “On Failure (On Pedagogy): Editorial Introduction,” *Performance Research* 17, no. 1 (2012): 1.

⁷²⁶ Terry Hyland, *Mindfulness and Learning: Celebrating the Affective Dimension of Education*, Lifelong Learning Book Series 17 (Heidelberg, London; New York: Springer, 2011), 39.

unconstructive criticism looming within the rehearsal space, the bolder their exploration will be and the better the results. ‘Easy back patting’ is not suggested here.⁷²⁷ Although, as discussed in the beginning of this subchapter, Grotowski acknowledged the actor’s need to be freed from judgment, the Polish theatre practitioner also said on a different occasion: “it is not the time for honey, it is the time for work.”⁷²⁸ The following section will argue not only that work and ‘honey’ can co-exist, that acceptance and high artistic demands can be present simultaneously, but also that acceptance and ‘honey’ can encourage high artistic outcomes.

Fragile - Please Handle with Care

The findings of this practice-based research indicate that better outcomes are achieved when the trainer can aim further than eliminating judgmental attitudes, towards creating a loving and caring learning environment. However, it is important to stress that the trainer must be a part of this loving and caring environment. Before laying out what this means and how it can be achieved in practice, I would like to examine its opposite. Stephen Wangh, writer of *Acrobat of the Heart*, provides a good example:

I once worked with a group led by a very perceptive actress, a woman who could tell exactly what you were feeling. [...] Under her tutelage, actors often reached strong emotional truth, but they did so

⁷²⁷ Expression used by Richards in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 92.

⁷²⁸ Grotowski as quoted by Richards, in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 93.

with no self-confidence because they were afraid that at any moment the teacher might yell at them, ‘I don’t believe you! You are not angry, you’re terrified.’⁷²⁹

It is worth noting: Gabi’s ‘I don’t believe you’ in the video *Cindy Togetherness* might still resonate in the reader’s ears. However, this was said from within the process; these were the words of a ‘character’ to another ‘character,’ rather than a trainer’s judgment on an actor’s performance.⁷³⁰

The British director Katie Mitchell describes a similar approach to pedagogy: the forcing of emotions through attacking the actor, or as she puts it, breaking them. The encounter in question takes place between the Gardzienice director Włodzimierz Staniewski and an actress who briefly worked with the company for a year and a half, starting in 1989:

Helen started to cry: ‘If you are going to cry, then cry,’ Włodek said. ‘You are acting crying, don’t act.’ He paces around the room... They try the same duo harmony again and again, the others singing quietly a background harmony in an attempt to buoy up Helen’s and Jackie’s song. Helen shouts at Włodek. Włodek shouts back. You can hear the tears in her voice. Haltingly, falteringly, she continues. Again and again. Then suddenly her voice erupts out of her—strong, clear, deep... He had used a very aggressive, attacking energy to open Helen, knowing that the only way to prize someone open is to break them—take them past the tear barrier.⁷³¹

⁷²⁹ Wangh, *An Acrobat of the Heart*, 319.

⁷³⁰ See *Cindy togetherness*, 4:35–4:42

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFF2VBpKRNo&t=0s&index=17&list=PL39RXKWPZnJyyG02dkYqMXRTnEAQcasIJ>

⁷³¹ Katie Mitchell on Staniewski as quoted by Allain, in Allain, *Gardzienice*, 64.

It is perfectly understandable that things can be said in the heat of the rehearsal (even if this incident occurred during a workshop), and it is also understood that Staniewski is indeed trying to help the actor by pointing out that her emotional state is not genuine, but that she is demonstrating an emotion. He is trying to encourage the actor to focus on the task at hand, which is more likely to bring forth truthful emotion than her preoccupation with the desired emotional state. In other words, his intentions are in line with the objectives of the approach suggested here. However, the *way* he is choosing to engage with the actor, by aggressively pushing her to reach the required state, by shouting at her, is exactly what the approach to pedagogy put forth here argues against. It is absolutely not necessary to ‘break an actor’ in order to get a truthful emotional reaction. It can in fact be argued that the opposite is true: showing them respect for their process and accepting where they are at any given moment, but also gently encouraging them through showing that it is fully possible for them to access the desired state, can in fact have much better results. I have managed to get actors to have such breakthroughs without using an aggressive energy whatsoever; some of these moments have been documented and can be watched on the videos that accompany this thesis. The videos clearly show that through care, patience, and gentle pushing (rather than breaking), the actor can access emotion.

Such a caring and gentle approach has also been used by some other practitioners examined in this thesis. Richards talking about Cieślak, recalls: “I have no words to express the warmth I felt from him: it had such a strong human quality, [...] led me to feel an incredible trust in him. Cieślak was like that. If you were willing he would

push you very warmly straight to your limits.’⁷³² We see here again the use of words such as ‘pushing’ and ‘limits’, but this is done ‘warmly’ with trust, rather than forcing. Richards suggests that Cieślak’s warmth created a positive learning environment that encouraged him to explore his limits. There are times when a trainer will need to push the actor, but this push does not need to be aggressive. Aggressive energy can in fact be counter-productive if not hurtful, or even heart-breaking as Wangh points out: “if the subject is artistic, a good teacher can make you feel safe, creative, and self-confident, while a poor teacher can leave you heartbroken.”⁷³³

Both Richards and Wangh suggest that the best alternative to the aggressive forcing of the required artistic outcome is the creation of a safe and creative learning and working environment within which the actor’s confidence can grow. As previously discussed, the creation of a non-judgmental space is one of the factors that can contribute to the development of such a positive learning environment. The question, however, remains: how can qualities such as warmth and care be quantified and developed? How can these qualities be translated into something tangible that can be disseminated and used by others?

The first step towards such an approach to pedagogy is the trainer’s attitude. Once again, the example comes from Michael Chekhov. Mala Powers reflects on his relationship to students:

One of the most outstanding characteristics about Chekhov as a teacher, was that he viewed each artist as a unique creation with an

⁷³² Richards, *At Work with Grotowski*, 11.

⁷³³ Wangh, *An Acrobat of the Heart*, 319.

unknown, bottomless depth and capability slumbering within, which was constantly on the verge of awakening. Through working with Chekhov, one also came to feel this slumbering power within oneself—always ready to awaken.⁷³⁴

Chekhov saw the potential in every student and strived to help them reach it. Powers suggests that his belief in the student's capability to reach 'bottomless depth' greatly contributed to them succeeding it. Believing in the students' abilities can have a great positive impact on their work. Feelings cannot be forced, but attitudes can: a simple shift from assessing whether the student's performance is good or bad, to trying to discover ways to help them overcome whatever challenges they are facing at a given moment will encourage such an attitude.

In Practice

In addition to what has already been discussed (starting with tenderness, giving responsibility to students to help their peers, being accepting and focusing on process rather than outcome), there is one more important element that I have introduced into my practice to help create a caring learning environment. The aspect to which I would like to draw the reader's attention is the way I introduce the exercises and gently encourage students to commit fully to them: by engaging myself with physically demanding exercises for as long as possible. To give an example, I do not just ask the students to jump, I show them by jumping myself, and I continue jumping with them for as long as possible without disturbing the process.

⁷³⁴ Mala Powers as quoted in Black, *Mikhail Chekhov as Actor, Director, and Teacher*, 41.

Many of the exercises selected for this practice-based research, including the two to be discussed in this chapter, are physically demanding, because fatigue has been identified as one of the entry points to emotion, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In order to eliminate students' resistance to tiredness, I often do the exercises with them, for as long as possible. This is an unusual approach that I have never experienced myself as a student, at least not to that extent. Sometimes, it even goes against the studied practitioners' methodology.⁷³⁵ However, I strongly believe this is a crucial element of my practice. Students can read clearly the message this approach sends them: I am here with you and for you.

Let us discuss a particular exercise to make the point clearer.

⁷³⁵ See for example the following discussion on Suzuki.

The Suzuki Exercise⁷³⁶



Influences: This exercise is heavily based on Suzuki's Stamping Shakuhachi, and has been thus named *The Suzuki exercise*. To facilitate discussion, I have fragmented the exercise into four stages; however, it should be emphasised that these should be treated as one exercise when introduced to students. I usually give all the instructions beforehand, by both demonstrating and describing; but, I also remind them of some instructions during the process if needed, as well as making individual corrections. The first three stages form Suzuki's Stamping Shakuhachi, and the last stage is my

⁷³⁶ Please watch *Gabi Suzuki*. It is preferable that the reader also watches *Cindy – Maria Suzuki*, 08:03–10:00. Links to videos:

Gabi Suzuki <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CylnrQaywE>

Cindy – Maria Suzuki: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfIC3BeO6Uw>

addition to the exercise. For further descriptions of and discussions on Stamping Shaku-hachi, please see Suzuki,⁷³⁷ Allain,⁷³⁸ and Brandon.⁷³⁹

Description: The exercise is comprised of four stages: stamping, collapsing, walking towards the audience in slow motion, and adopting a physically demanding position while responding to instructions by the trainer. The last stage requires students to find a posture that will actively engage their muscles, by bending their knees: this will be hard to maintain for a long time, but it will encourage through fatigue the appearance of emotion. Let us now examine each stage separately.

First stage: Actors are instructed to rhythmically stomp for roughly three minutes, while listening to Ricardo Santos' arrangement of Shiannai-Nagashi.⁷⁴⁰ A low centre of gravity should be maintained throughout the exercise, and the head should be kept at the same height.

There is some space to customise the exercise: the lower the centre of gravity, the faster the pace, the stronger the stomp, and the higher point the knees reach when stomping, the more difficult the exercise becomes. Students can therefore customise according to their own physical condition. Suzuki suggests a specific fast pace for the exercise and requires the actors to stamp with all their strength,⁷⁴¹ but in my own practice, I allow for more flexibility.

⁷³⁷ Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 8.

⁷³⁸ Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 11.

⁷³⁹ Brandon, "Training at the Waseda Little Theatre," 31.

⁷⁴⁰ This is the music used by Suzuki. It can be accessed here, 3:26–6:14: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irJYnqizFwA> (accessed 15/12/17)

⁷⁴¹ Suzuki: "I ask that the actors strike the floor with all the energy possible," in Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, 9.

I advise students to challenge themselves, to work on their limits, but also to respect their bodies and their needs. It is important to remind the reader that it is not a training I develop for a specific group of actors that are physically trained, nor is it designed for a group that will work together for a long time. The triggers and relevant exercises are chosen because of their potential to give quick results and accessibility. Students are informed when they have around 30 seconds left, so that they can work harder if they wish, as this will be their last chance to allow the stamping to create fatigue and thus encourage the appearance of emotion.

Second stage: *When the song is over, actors collapse on the floor, like a puppet whose strings have suddenly been cut.⁷⁴² While falling, they should be careful not to completely let go of the energy that has been accumulated through the stamping. No sounds of relief are allowed the moment they land on the floor. This is often the tendency of students not familiar with intense physical training: students should explicitly be told before the start of the exercise that sighs and other sounds of relief are not allowed. This is because the sound will release some energy, that will still be needed for the next part of the exercise: as they lie on the floor, actors should be relaxed but contained.*

Third stage: *Students rise in slow motion. The movement must start from the pelvis. The tendency is to start the movement from the upper part of their body, so it is important to stress the focus on the centre. This focus should be kept throughout the slow walk downstage: a helpful image is that of a string attached to their pelvis*

⁷⁴² Image used by Suzuki. See Brandon, “Training at the Waseda Little Theatre,” 31.

slowly pulling them towards the front of the room,⁷⁴³ it is also useful to remind them of the work with resistance, discussed in the previous chapter. I also advise students to direct their gaze towards an imaginary audience as quickly as possible while rising: thus, the accumulated energy will be radiated towards the space, rather than just experienced inwardly. The movement should be constant rather than fragmented: the tendency is to take a step, pause, then take another step. Students can fight that tendency by focusing on their pelvis moving forwards, rather than their feet. The low centre of gravity should be maintained throughout the movement. As with the stamping, the head should be at the same height throughout. The gaze should be directed towards the front; a focus on a specific spot on the wall often helps with concentration and gives the actor a clear sense of direction. Students are also encouraged to find an active position for their arms, i.e. not just letting them rest on their side. This will in turn activate the upper part of the torso: chest and shoulders. This stage of the exercise can also be accompanied by music.

Fourth stage: *Once they have reached stage front, actors are instructed to find stillness in a position that keeps their arms active, fighting gravity, while their knees are bent, allowing their leg muscles to also be actively engaged. They are asked to stay in this position for a long time, but allowed to make small adjustments to give themselves a rest if needed by straightening their knees, or to explore their limits*

⁷⁴³ Another image that, as Allain informs us, is frequently used is “the notion that you move the whole space with you.” See Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 110.

Allain also recalls how he was instructed to “imagine being pulled across the space by a thick rope attached to our centre while simultaneously being tugged back by a lesser tension.” In Allain, “Suzuki Training,” 71.

even further by either bending their knees and lowering the centre of gravity, or by getting up on their toes. Choices depend on each actor's physical condition and prior physical training and allow the exercise to be adjusted to the needs of the individual.

This is the preparation for the most important part of the exercise. Finally, students are asked to go through their monologues, sometimes in unison and, at others, in isolation. With time, fatigue's effect on them becomes visible and audible. They are asked to work with stillness, as well as with fatigue. I often have to intervene to remind them that stillness should be applied on their facial muscles as well as on their bodies: I gently encourage them to stop moving their eyebrows by using touch, or to eliminate their tendency to underline the text through head or neck movements, by applying gentle pressure with my hands to keep their heads in place.

Verbal instructions are also given, mainly to do with dynamics of text (loud, soft, fast, slow), or posture: I can ask them to bend their knees further or go on their toes if I think that they are too comfortable, or ask them to straighten their knees, if I know I will be working with another student for some time, and it seems appropriate to allow them to rest.

I instruct students to start or to stop speaking, by clicking my fingers. This gives them a clear impulse, but it is less harsh than Suzuki's banging of the stick.⁷⁴⁴ The clicking can be used to move to a different student, or just work on the same one, allowing them to work with pausing and silence.

⁷⁴⁴ Suzuki often uses the banging of the stick to instruct the actors to move, or to speak. See Allain, "Suzuki Training," 74: "The command or banging of the stick makes a sound that creates an impulse, acting as an instruction to move."

This exercise needs to be treated with extreme caution, care, and respect for students' abilities and limits. I always make sure I mention that they can stop the exercise at any point if they feel uncomfortable.⁷⁴⁵ I also always make sure that their posture is correct, in order not to hurt their back, but to only work with the muscular pain from the legs and arms. If the reader wants to try this exercise with students but is not familiar with the work of the practitioners examined here, I would urge them to be extremely cautious and negotiate with students how far they can go. This does not necessarily have to be a verbal negotiation: the trainer needs to have an acute gaze that will be constantly scanning all students' reactions throughout the exercise.

Discussion:

The approach suggested here is in many ways different to Suzuki's working relationship with his company: I do the stamping with the students, I click my fingers instead of banging a stick, I give verbal instructions where needed, but I try to avoid shouting them as commands, I allow flexibility in the execution of the exercises, and allow the students to rest if needed. It is worth noting that students rarely, if ever, rest unless I instruct them to do so, although they know they are allowed to. The hierarchical relationship between trainer and pupil described by Allain and Brandon is not pursued either.⁷⁴⁶ This is not to say that the approach suggested here is better;

⁷⁴⁵ This also goes against Suzuki's teachings, according to which actors are not allowed to rest until they are told to do so. However, this work is suggested for a very different context, namely teaching in Higher Education. Some of the students will find this exercise extremely challenging, one therefore needs to make such adjustments to ensure inclusivity and safety.

⁷⁴⁶ Allain reflecting on Suzuki training: "whether your commanding figure is Lauren or Suzuki himself, you have to accept their authority with humility" In Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 101.

it is instead argued that it is more suitable to the work with emotion explored here. These alterations have been made to ensure inclusivity, as well as to encourage the creation of a nurturing space within the classroom.

However, there is an important point for consideration: Could this exercise that I have to a great extent altered to suit my own purposes still considered to be a ‘Suzuki exercise’? Surely it has been inspired by Suzuki, but all the elements that have been eliminated as discussed above are integral aspects of his practice. The sources of inspiration are acknowledged, but it should also be clarified that my practice is to a great extent removed from the original practices it borrows from, as well as their purposes. The training I discuss here is instead guided by the principles and points of entry I have identified as effective triggers for emotional activation. The practitioners studied, in this case Suzuki, offer inspiration (both in relation to the principles and the exercises explored), vocabulary, and insights that shaped the development of the training. However, my practice does not claim to be continuing or disseminating theirs.

There is another relevant matter that needs to be addressed. While I stress the importance of kindness and care and I advocate a gentle, warm encouraging of emotion and a non-hierarchical relationship between trainer and actor-student, I also

Brandon: “No one speaks a word except Suzuki. No one asks a question. No one makes a suggestion. [...] There is an electric alertness, a quiet tension, in the room. They accept shouted criticism, slaps on the head, calls of ‘damned fool.’” In Brandon, “Training at the Waseda Little Theatre,” 30.

However, both Allain and Brandon stress that outside the training room Suzuki is ‘warm and informal.’ See Brandon, “Training at the Waseda Little Theatre,” 31; Allain, *The Art of Stillness*, 26.

heavily draw material and inspiration mostly from highly demanding trainers/directors, known for their autocratic behaviour and occasional harsh treatment of actors.⁷⁴⁷ Although such a relationship between trainer and actor or ‘master’ and student might have been to an extent a product of their times, there are questions of ethics, and (over)use of power that relate to such a behaviour that need to be addressed;⁷⁴⁸ it is therefore important to stress that the tools these practitioners developed can also be effective (in their pure or altered form) when such elements have been removed.

The emphasis I place on this is part of broader recent discussions in the field that also aim to challenge the politics of rehearsal and the hierarchical relationship between actors and directors. Michelle Terry, currently the artistic director of Shakespeare’s Globe, has been working towards a non-hierarchical relationship between director and actors that culminates in ‘democratic casting’: the company members collectively agree on the casting—the assignment of roles is no longer merely imposed by the director. Terry discusses the working relationships at Shakespeare’s

⁷⁴⁷ See for example the above discussion on Suzuki and his demand for unconditional discipline. For the other practitioners examined here, see for example the discussion on Staniewski ‘not believing’ the actor (sub-chapter *Fragile – Please Handle with Care*), which is very similar to Grotowski’s approach during rehearsals for *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, as Slowiak and Cuesta inform us: “Rena Mirecka recalls being told [by Grotowski], time after time, ‘I don’t believe what you are doing.’ She returned to her room to dig deeper, to reveal more. More than 30 years later, tears still came to her eyes as she remembered the difficulty of this process.” Slowiak and Cuesta, 19.

⁷⁴⁸ For such ethical implications when acted emotion is encouraged through aggressive or inappropriate means, see for example Meisner slipping his hand into a female student’s blouse to trigger an emotional reaction. See Meisner, *On Acting*, 35. Such practices would now be considered unacceptable.

Globe: “It is unfair that everything gets dumped on the director’s shoulders, and actually it is a really collaborative process, especially for our theatre, which is one of the most democratic and egalitarian spaces that we’ve got.”⁷⁴⁹

Another such example is a panel discussion organised by the Chekhov Collective which took place on the 9th of June 2018.⁷⁵⁰ The panel members were directors Emma Baggott, Francesca Castelbuono and Rebecca Frecknall; the discussion was entitled *Directors as Collaborators: On Hierarchy, Empowerment and Kindness in the Rehearsal Process* and aimed to “debate how conventional hierarchies can be subverted, how creativity can be both empowered and harnessed, and to reflect on the role of kindness in the creative process.”⁷⁵¹ Such discussions strongly indicate that the conventional hierarchies are being challenged and start shifting as a result.⁷⁵²

⁷⁴⁹ Michelle Terry as quoted by Brown in Mark Brown, “Shakespeare’s Globe casts its own artistic Director as Hamlet,” *The Guardian*, 11/04/18.

⁷⁵⁰ The Chekhov Collective was established by Cass Fleming in 2013 aiming to bring together a group of artists and practitioner-researchers that use Michael Chekhov’s technique in their own practice, often blended with other approaches. The collective also wishes to celebrate “artistic community and the power of coming together to create.” For more information see the Chekhov Collective’s webpage at <https://www.cassfleming.com/chekhovcollective/> (accessed 29/01/19).

⁷⁵¹ From an e-mail sent to the SCUDD mailing list by Roanna Mitchell on behalf of the Chekhov Collective. E-mail received by the researcher on 21/05/18.

⁷⁵² It is interesting to note that all directors mentioned above (Terry, Baggott, Castelbuono and Frecknall) are female, as am I. One would wonder why most of these attempts to democratise the rehearsal and training space and to challenge the conventional hierarchies come from female theatre practitioners. This observation opens up interesting research pathways; although there is no space to discuss these further within the scope of this PhD, these are important questions that I wish to return to in the future.

Let us now return to the practice, and examine the last exercise to be discussed in this thesis.

Surfing the Emotion

Influences:

Ryszard Nieoczym: I took the idea of working simultaneously on a song and a monologue from a workshop I attended in Athens with Nieoczym in 2012. Nieoczym is heavily influenced by Grotowski, with whom he worked and studied. The early stage of the exercise where I ask the student to jump, roll, or run while speaking is also inspired by Nieoczym, as well as, by the Odin actress Julia Varley, who also starts her sessions with a similar warm-up.

Michael Marmarinos: Clicking one's fingers to ask an actor to pause or continue speaking is taken from the Greek director Michael Marmarinos, who was my teacher from 2004 to 2007 while I was an undergraduate student at the Theatre Studies Department of the University of Peloponnese (Greece). It is important that while pausing, the actor continues to be in the process, and that the flow of energy is not interrupted: an image that helps students that struggle with this is the thought that they are silently repeating the lines they have just said or preparing to say the ones that follow. It is similar to the principle of freezing while running: the energy should be kept at the same level; one keeps running, only this time they run in stillness.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵³ This is a concept similar to Michael Chekhov's imaginary body that keeps moving, while the physical body has stopped moving.

The use of pausing is an important element for many reasons. Firstly, it allows actors to embrace silence and let go of the need to overly rely on the words. However, its most important use for this research is the accumulation of energy while the actor's need to speak is colliding with my instruction to stop speaking; it is a principle similar to that of resistance. The student thus experiences a suspension of energy, a *sats*: “the impulse towards an action which is as yet unknown and which can go in any direction.”⁷⁵⁴ As this suspension expands in time, students have no control over its duration. I make the decision to click my fingers again and allow the suspension to be released. This can have a very powerful effect on the actor. The use of imposed pauses also gives me the opportunity to bring the student-actor back into the present moment whenever they lose their connection with the text and resort to mannerisms.

Grzegorz Ziółkowski: one of the sit ups (the third and most frequently used one) is taken from the movement vocabulary developed by Ziółkowski.

Annie Tyson: Annie Tyson, with whom I trained at Drama Centre London (2010-11), has developed a similar exercise in principle, during which she encourages actors to go from singing into speaking. This exercise explores the effect of singing on the actor, while also focusing on questions that Tyson asks the student to help them rediscover the meaning of the monologue. She also encourages some basic work with the body at an early stage of the exercise (asking the actor to lie on the floor and relax, and sometimes even suggests a few spine rolls while singing) but her

⁷⁵⁴ Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, 6.

For a more detailed discussion on *sats* see *ibid*, 55–61.

purpose seems to be to get the actor to relax rather than to work with fatigue,⁷⁵⁵ as suggested here. Tyson was not a conscious influence when I was developing the exercise, but it is more than likely that my experience of working with her has inspired me on a subconscious level. The reader is now invited to watch the video *Gabi Surfing*.⁷⁵⁶

Description:

I begin the exercise by asking the student to roll, jump, or run while going through their monologue or singing the song according to my instructions. When a certain level of engagement has been achieved I move to the second stage of the exercise. By this point, I have already taught students three different types of sit ups and ask them to go through them according to instruction (often given by doing the exercise with them, rather than through verbal communication). I instruct students to go from singing to speaking and back to singing by saying the words ‘song’ or ‘text’, as well as to pause and start again by clicking my fingers.

Triggers:

This exercise allows me to work with many triggers at the same time: fatigue (the sit-ups are physically demanding and the exercise lasts up to thirty minutes),

⁷⁵⁵ Tyson’s exercise seems to thus be similar in its intentions to Strasberg’s song-and-dance exercise, especially in relation to the emphasis on relaxation. For Strasberg’s exercise see Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 151–159.

⁷⁵⁶ Please watch *Cindy Surfing* and *Gabi Surfing*.

Links to videos:

Cindy Surfing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqYMO9GG6Oc>

Gabi Surfing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koJbvmK0yHA>

togetherness (between trainer and actor), musicality (the use of singing and pauses), centre and spine (exploration of sit-ups). The breath is not used directly as a point of entry; however, the work with fatigue and the difficult body postures, as well as the singing activate the diaphragm and alter students' breathing. Resistance is the only trigger that is not used directly, although I do consider the use of pauses to be an indirect form of resistance as discussed above. This exercise thus integrates most, if not all, triggers; it is therefore considered one of the most important exercises and is often the last to be introduced, as students will be better prepared to fully commit to it because of their previous training.

Discussion:

This exercise can be found in many places with variations (Nieoczym and Tyson as discussed above, as well as other practitioners such as Lee Strasberg);⁷⁵⁷ I have also made my own variations. For example, the specific structure I have given to this exercise through the use of sit ups gives students the opportunity to explore it again with their peers if they wish.

The reason why I would like to discuss it here, in the pedagogy chapter is that it allows me to draw attention to how I introduce and lead the exercise, in a way that keeps me physically engaged. Although both Nieoczym and Tyson give verbal instructions from the opposite side of the rehearsal space, the one that is intended for the audience, I share the same 'stage' space with the student sometimes for the whole duration of the exercise (that can take up to half an hour), and give them

⁷⁵⁷ See Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 151–159, as well as a brief discussion in the relevant section (Lee Strasberg) in Chapter Two of this thesis.

instructions utilising various forms of communication, including but not limited to verbal communication. I often 'suffer' with them, going through the physically demanding exercises with them, with no other motivation than to give them emotional support, comfort them, and encourage them. By committing myself fully, I encourage the student to act similarly. The difference is crucial; it does not only open a wide range of opportunities for me to physically and emotionally interact with the student but it also sends the message that as a trainer I make a sacrifice, in the Grotowskian sense of the word, so that they can develop and grow.

Grotowski advocates the need for an actor that will make a sacrifice of themselves, so that the audience's inner life can be stirred and awakened. I similarly advocate the need for a trainer that will perform a similar act of 'self-sacrifice' to help the actor's inner life to be stirred and awakened. As previously discussed, I understand Grotowski's sacrifice to have a positive quality, as this approach, although requiring at times a great amount of energy and effort on the part of the trainer, can be immensely rewarding. The students understand the trainer's intention, appreciate it, and attempt to be as generous in their own practice. This in turn encourages the creation of the caring learning environment necessary for the work with acted emotion.

Working with the individual – Maieutics

This *Surfing the Emotion* exercise is particularly important, because it gives me the opportunity to work with each student individually. It takes from fifteen minutes to half an hour, and allows me to develop a completely different approach with each student, so as to accommodate their personal needs. The very idea of giving attention to the individual also creates a nurturing and caring learning environment, as the personalised approach makes the student feel that their teacher cares for their personal progress enough to customise their teaching practice to the student's needs.

Although I do not ask students verbal questions as Tyson does, they often report that they reached a better understanding of the monologue after the Surfing exercise. I recently worked with a student who had a very strong emotional response to this exercise, and when asked to reflect on her experience, and perhaps try to identify what triggered the emotional reaction, she responded: “I really understood what I was saying.”⁷⁵⁸ This indicates that the student did not only reach a better emotional understanding of their monologue through this process, but they also reached a better intellectual understanding.

It is possible that students reach such an understanding because they are asked questions. Not necessarily the literal, verbal questions as is the case with Tyson's approach, but questions of a different kind, questions that are physical and visceral in nature. In *Hidden Territories*, Staniewski discusses a similar kind of questioning: “the good causer (actor) also poses very difficult questions. Not questions in words,

⁷⁵⁸ This experience was reported during my classes at Goldsmiths (October 2017).

but questions through acting. The more difficult the questions—to the partner, to the constellation, to the music, to the acting—the more they electrify and energise.”⁷⁵⁹

Socrates encouraged his students to arrive to knowledge through a process of questioning, known as Maieutics. As stated in the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* “the maieutic method is that of eliciting ideas by questioning; the image is that the ideas are already there in the pregnant subject’s mind, but require midwifery to be made manifest.”⁷⁶⁰ Attributing the inspiration for this approach to his midwife mother, Socrates saw the teacher as an enabler, rather than a transmitter of knowledge: “it is clear that they have never learned anything from me. The many admirable truths they bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within. But the delivery is heaven’s work and mine.”⁷⁶¹

A similar approach to teaching through a process of questioning is suggested here. However, my questions are—like the knowledge they attempt to elicit—embodied, tacit questions. Through the questioning, emotion can be born, as the ‘pregnant’ actor is guided through a process by the ‘midwife’ trainer. Trying to further unpack this process of questioning poses a great challenge to the researcher, as the questions asked are particular to the individual actor and only relevant to the specific moment when a question is asked or a specific instruction is given; a very complicated

⁷⁵⁹ Staniewski, in Staniewski and Hodge, 73.

⁷⁶⁰ Simon Blackburn, “Maieutic Method,” *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 228.

⁷⁶¹ Socrates as quoted in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 855.

process of decision-making unfolds, as the trainer tries to facilitate the ‘birth’ of emotion.

I will attempt to analyse this process further, by bringing into focus Richards’ account of a similar process of enabling, a gentle awakening of the actor’s inner life:

And as the doer is working on a song, the teacher can gently, in a precise and minute way, give indications to the body of the doer, in such a way that the ‘inner action’ might begin to be born. It’s as if the teacher were perceiving the doer’s process, sensing when it is blocked, when and where it is not blocked. Seeing how all this registers in the body, the teacher can give precise indications to the doer, to the doer’s body-as-channel. In doing so, the teacher is inviting the doer to discover something unknown.⁷⁶²

The use of the words birth and discovery indicate an intention similar to that of Socrates. However, the use of the word ‘unknown’ somehow contradicts Socrates’ perception of a discovery of something innate. Perhaps it is more useful to think instead of a discovery of something forgotten, or not easily accessible. The use of the words precise and minute, as well as the words perceiving, sensing, and seeing should also be noted. Before asking the question, or giving indications to the actor, it is important that we ‘perceive’ their process, we try to understand what is blocking them, in other words, to find what is the obstacle we try to eliminate. To achieve this, one needs to be attentive to the student’s process, so that they can perceive, sense, and see: Richards is referring to an intellectual, as well as an intuitive understanding of someone else’s process. The next step is to give directions that are not vague, but precise; directions that can be broken into small and achievable tasks (minute).

⁷⁶² Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 103.

My personal account of this experience is similar. I carefully observe and attune to the student's process, I notice the moment that feels less genuine and I keep intervening with small questions or small tasks until the student finds again the connection with the text and their *emotion*. I remain very attentive to the smallest nuances and respond to *their* process, as much as they are responding to my instructions. The establishment of trust and a caring teaching environment discussed previously is extremely rewarding at this stage, as it encourages the student to follow instructions without resisting. They are better prepared to yield, to give up control, and therefore allow me to attempt to draw out, to evoke, to elicit a reaction. As Staniewski points out “nothing can be forced from a partner. It can only be drawn out, evoked, as if calling the partner. This calling has to elicit an adequate answer. This is antiphony—a dialogue of call and response.”⁷⁶³

The trainer engages in a ‘dialogue of call and response’ with the student, asking questions until they ‘elicit an adequate answer.’ The question, however, remains: how can the trainer know what would be an appropriate question to ask? Richards discusses the moment when the trainer ‘follows something inside,’ clearly referring to what could be called an informed instinct or an educated guess: based on prior knowledge and experience, the trainer hypothesises that a certain instruction will help the actor to access emotion. Richards:

The teacher follows something internally that suggests to him when a certain adjustment should take place, when the song is slightly too fast, for example, when the song should flow with a little less

⁷⁶³ Staniewski and Hodge, *Hidden Territories*, 93

resistance, how the body of the apprentice should adjust to fully embrace the unfolding ‘inner action.’⁷⁶⁴

However, this explanation is only partly satisfactory. Although using an informed instinct provides some explanation as to why an individual such as Richards succeeds in his attempt, it does not offer much advice to others, therefore it would be hard to accept it as a form of knowledge that can be disseminated.

As theatre practitioners have not pursued relevant research to answer this question of how they know what to do, I searched for insights in other disciplines. The extensive research by mathematicians trying to understand the nature of problem solving, aiming to identify the best practices that would perhaps lead to the development of a methodology that can improve students’ problem-solving skills, might shed some light on this question. As problem-solving is a complicated process, the findings of such research are bound to be as complicated and multifaceted. In a relevant study published in the journal *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, researchers concluded that:

Learning to become an effective problem solver requires the development and coordination of a vast reservoir of reasoning patterns, knowledge, and behaviours, and the effective management of both resources and emotional responses that surface during the problem-solving process, as well as a great deal of practice and experience.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶⁴ Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 106.

⁷⁶⁵ Marilyn P. Carlson and Irene Bloom, “The Cyclic Nature of Problem Solving: An Emergent Multidimensional Problem-Solving Framework,” *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 58, no. 1 (2005): 70.

When mentioning emotional responses, the researchers refer to the observation that a solver who gets intrigued or intellectually stimulated rather than frustrated is more likely to commit fully and therefore solve the problem. However, they also place emphasis on three factors, in addition to the possession of knowledge, emotional responses, and improvement that comes with practice and experience. These factors are: constant reflection on the effectiveness of one's choices, amount of effort (relating to the level of commitment), and the attempt to solve the problem through a cyclic rather than linear process. Carlson and Bloom explain:

It is important to note that the mathematicians rarely solved the problem by working through it in linear fashion. These experienced problem solvers typically cycled through the plan-execute-check cycle many times when attempting one problem. [...] In addition to making decisions about their solution approaches, the mathematicians regularly engaged in metacognitive behaviours that involved reflecting on the effectiveness and efficiency of their decisions and actions.⁷⁶⁶

We can therefore conclude, that constant monitoring and adjusting can be as important as the choice of the appropriate tools, and that the engagement in a process of trial-and-error, is of vital importance. This is not to suggest that the choices taken in the first place are random, but to stress the importance of the ability to question through reflection whether they are as effective as anticipated. In other words, the willingness to abandon an approach that does not seem to be particularly successful, can be as important as the ability to choose the right course of actions.

All the above statements could be argued to equally apply to the search for emotion suggested here. Processes of monitoring and reflecting can be more important than

⁷⁶⁶ Carlson and Bloom, 63–64.

the decisions or the questions themselves. Full commitment to the process, both on the trainer's and the actor's part, is also of vital importance. Reflecting on my practice-based research, I would like to stress that the exercises and the principles identified and discussed in this thesis give me a strong basis to work from. It would have been impossible to achieve these results without a structure, even if all the above criteria (commitment, reflection, adjustment) were met. The answer might be found by rephrasing mathematicians' conclusions to include these insights and adjust them to actor training: learning to become an effective enabler of emotion requires the development and coordination of a vast reservoir of strategies and tools, a great level of commitment to ensure mental engagement throughout the process, the effective management of the identified triggers (i.e. togetherness, musicality, centre, fatigue, breath, resistance) and the emotional responses that surface during the process (both the trainer's and the actor's emotions need to be taken into consideration), as well as a great deal of practice and experience.

Throughout the six years of my practice-based PhD research, I have attempted to answer this question: Can I create a formula to help the actor access emotion, by employing the right kind of strategies (triggers), in an appropriate way (pedagogy)? A great effort has been made to answer this question through the 340 pages that comprise this thesis. In addition, it is my hope that the practice itself contributes to knowledge, and that the reader does not necessarily have to rely on my analysis to understand the suggested approach, but can also learn from solely watching the videos and draw their own conclusions. However, the micro-decisions I make within each moment of my practice depend on the individual and the particular moment, so the approach suggested here will not be systematised further. Such an attempt would

entail the danger of turning “a natural process into a kind of engineering.”⁷⁶⁷ Let us now examine one last question before concluding this thesis: the question of repeatability.

Will it come back?

One question that might have naturally started forming in the reader’s mind, is the question of repeatability. The results can indeed be recreated with different actors, as we have seen with Stavriana, Gabi, Cindy, among others. These actors’ encounters with the training have been documented; however, in the last six years I have also worked with more than one hundred students with similar results. These results can also be recreated when it is not the researcher leading the process, but students who have been introduced to these principles and exercises, as seen in *Cindy Togetherness*.⁷⁶⁸ Performers now have the tools to help others access emotion, as well as being able to access it themselves. However, the question remains: Can the actors repeat the results without the help of the others? Can they reach these states as confidently and effectively on their own, and without the need to go through the long exercises discussed here?

⁷⁶⁷ Grotowski as quoted by Richards in Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 37.

⁷⁶⁸ This is an exercise during which the group members were asked to use any of the tools studied to help Cindy in her search for emotion.

Cindy togetherness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFF2VBpKRNo>

The answer this research provides to that question is multi-faceted: Firstly, as Grotowski maintains, the body does not have memory, the body is memory.⁷⁶⁹ The more one explores these exercises, the easier accessing *emotion* can become. In relation to specific monologues, the text itself can work as a Pavlovian bell. The bell rings, the dog salivates; the actor starts articulating the words, the physical memories of all the inner places that have been previously touched are re-awakened. This is not a conscious attempt to remember. It happens organically. On a second level, the more the actor visits these ‘places,’ the easier the access to them becomes. The actor learns ‘the path.’ Metaphorically and literally: the relevant brain pathways become stronger, as the relevant synapses connect with each other more effortlessly; the access to the required state becomes thus easier with repetition. This is the basis of all learning:

When learning occurs, specific neurons connect and form a “junction box” at the synapse. When we say cells “connect” with other cells, we really mean that they are in such close proximity that the synapse is easily, almost effortlessly, “used” over and over again; the cells have changed their receptivity to messages based on previous stimulation and have “learned.” In short, learning happens at a micro level through the alteration of synaptic efficacy.⁷⁷⁰

Note that this does not only apply to a specific text or song, as was the case with the previous point, but to the overall ability of an actor to access *emotion* faster and effortlessly.

⁷⁶⁹ Laster, *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory*, 26.

⁷⁷⁰ Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005), 18.

Finally, the super-objective for the actor eventually becomes not to repeat an emotional breakthrough, but to reach the same level of truth. Body memory can then help the actor take the journey that is more likely to be successful, according to their prior experience. In *The Role of Emotion and Skilled Intuition in Learning* Immordino-Yang and Faeth explain:

As people learn about a new task, they accrue subtle emotional markers of success and failure—in effect, embodied implicit memories of “somatic markers.” These memories come to steer subsequent behaviour, making individuals avoid situations and choices that previously resulted in failure. Subconscious “hunches” at first, over time people can become explicitly aware of the rules governing the game.⁷⁷¹

Students indeed develop such ‘subconscious hunches’ with time, and learn how to take the paths that can potentially lead them to emotion. They do so knowing that the most important rule governing this game, is that one should not hunt for emotion directly, but focus on the exploration of the triggers, the process itself, and trust that emotion will indeed appear.

⁷⁷¹ Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and Matthias Faeth, “The Role of Emotion and Skilled Intuition in Learning,” in *Learning, and the Brain: Exploring the Educational Implications of Affective Neuroscience*, ed. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 93.

Conclusion

This section aims to revisit and reflect on key findings of this research with respect to the gap in knowledge it set out to fill. Embarking on this practice-based PhD research, I pursued a more accurate practical and theoretical understanding of acted emotion. Here, I will briefly outline how this aim has been achieved.

The Introduction discusses how the question of emotion in theatre studies has been dominated by false dichotomies: the emotion of the character as opposed to that of the performer, the genuinely experienced emotion as opposed to an accurate manifestation performed by a virtuoso, and finally emotion as an essential ingredient of theatre, as opposed to a potentially harmful element that ‘hypnotises’ the spectators and deprives them of their critical abilities. I problematise these dichotomies and argue that polarising such a holistic multi-dimensional phenomenon hinders the possibility of gaining an appropriate and precise understanding of emotion.

To remedy such polarities, I read Diderot’s *Paradox* as an invitation to focus on the tangible aspect of emotion: the actor’s body. I point the reader to James’ theory and relevant recent research conducted by pioneers such as Antonio Damasio, according to which an accurate representation of the external signs of emotion will in turn trigger sensations and subjective experiences corresponding to the portrayed state. Such research strongly indicates that emotion cannot be accurately portrayed without the subjective experience accompanying it. Inner experiencing can therefore not forcibly be excluded from the actor’s process. However, the actor’s body can indeed be a tangible starting point for the awakening of emotion.

Echoing Michael Chekhov and his notion of *double consciousness*, I propose that the performer exploring acted emotion is simultaneously fully immersed and distanced from the experience. Furthermore, emotion is simultaneously personal and shared: the actor cries for herself, but also for the friend, the neighbour, the grandmother, the distant ancestor. Acted emotion therefore belongs neither to the character, nor the actor; it lies somewhere in between character, performer, and spectator. I finally add my voice to those that stress that Brecht, although often placed in the anti-emotionalist camp, also pursued emotion. The German playwright acknowledged that theatre needs to be entertaining as well as didactic, and incorporated in his Epic theatre elements of the dramatic theatre, such as empathy.

Moving away from the theoretical debates summarised above, I, as a practitioner-researcher, seek to discover potential pathways that can help a student-actor access emotion. To identify such pathways, I review key theories of emotion from the fields of psychology and neuroscience, to better understand the complex emotional phenomenon, its activation and function. I then proceed to examine key theatre practitioners and their approach to emotion. My research indicates that the safest and most effective way to access emotion is through the body. From James and Damasio, I draw that emotion is not at all a purely 'inner' experience, but rather, a psychophysical event. Through a close reading of Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Richards, I conclude that performed emotion needs to be addressed indirectly and that feelings are like wild animals that need to be lured. Michael Chekhov adds that the nature of acted emotion is different to that experienced in life and that the theatre practitioner should approach acted emotion, even the so-called negative emotions, such as anger and hatred, with love.

These insights shape not only my understanding of emotion in theatre and in life, but also my practice. Following Stanislavski, I search for my own ‘lures’ for emotion which I call triggers. Reviewing the discoveries of key theatre practitioners, following post-Stanislavskian and post-Grotowskian threads, I identify the lures most appropriate for my own practice: centre-spine, fatigue, breath, togetherness, resistance, and musicality. I then embark on a series of experiments to test the efficacy of these chosen lures; will they indeed encourage emotion to appear, as hypothesised? The experiments in turn offer further insights; each of the three practical chapters discusses one of the key discoveries: that acted emotion is pleasurable (Chapter Three), that it is shared (Chapter Four), and that the role of the pedagogue as an enabler is significant (Chapter Five).

Chapter Three and the related practice explore intense emotion in relation to Greek tragedy, while I work in tandem with one student-actor. I focus on fatigue, which by prompting the actor to access reserve energy, also encourages the appearance of emotion. I also explore breath, which has been identified by practices, such as yoga, as a point of access to emotion and consciousness. Respiration is the only function controlled by the autonomic nervous system also easily accessible to humans at will. Controlled breathing is therefore used in daily life to regulate emotion, when for example, one can observe that ‘taking a deep breath’ has a calming effect. I use breath to achieve emotional regulation of a different nature: to enhance, or to access, rather than to neutralise or to diminish. The spine is also examined, as many of the practitioners I follow have observed that “the strength and the power of life” stem

from the spinal column.⁷⁷² This can be attributed once more to links to the autonomic nervous system, as aggregates of nerve cells that give and pass orders to target organs that participate in the physiological arousal that accompanies emotion are located along the spine. I finally work on the centre of gravity, the abdominal/pelvic area, where all impulses are born and received. This area, populated with important visceral structures such as the enteric nervous system and the sexual organs, is where our ‘gut feelings’ are born; it is the seat of sexual impulses, which are linked to our biological survival. I argue, it is also the locus of strong emotion.

After theoretically establishing why and how fatigue, breath, and centre-spine may serve as triggers that help the actor access emotion, I proceed to discuss the first practical encounter documented for this thesis. There, for the first time, I test the hypothesis that the introduction of the triggers during a training session can indeed encourage the appearance of emotion. Following Eugenio Barba who argues that ‘emotion is a cocktail’ and the findings of *excitation transfer studies*, I claim that awakening one inner state can allow easier access to another. The actor can start from an emotion easily accessible to them, and then transfer the energy accumulated into another emotion, more appropriate for the scene or monologue they are working on, but perhaps less readily available. I also argue that when the actor’s search for emotion is pleasurable, emotional activation becomes easier, safer, and more reliable. In Chapter Three, I explore the possibility of making the search pleasurable by approaching a so-called negative emotion, such as sadness, starting from a positive emotion such as erotic pleasure. I return to this question in the two remaining

⁷⁷² Zbigniew Taranienko quoted by Hodge in Hodge, “Gardzienice and the Naturalised Actor,” 234.

chapters (Four and Five) searching for pleasure in the interaction with the other (togetherness) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *flow*.

In Chapter Four, I discuss musicality as a trigger for emotional activation, which—as my theoretical research indicates—is used by humans to communicate and emotionally attune to others from birth. Exercises exploring different musical elements, such as timbre, rhythm, and melody, are presented and discussed. A cycle of suspension and release of energy through the exploration of physical resistance is also examined.⁷⁷³ I test the hypothesis that emotion is inner movement in practice focusing on the principle of resistance and test how the exploration of resistance, by activating inner movement (*in-tension*), also encourages the appearance of emotion. I finally explore the principle of togetherness, looking for emotion between actor and trainer, between fellow-actors, and within the ensemble. Although the tendency is to think of emotion as something that happens inside, I argue that it can more easily be activated in between the actor and an other. The outward focus discourages self-observation as well as the tendency to cling to a predetermined interpretation or stereotypical portrayal of emotion, and instead encourages full engagement in a process of exploration that can result in genuine *experiencing*. Once emotion has been awakened, the actor continues to keep their attention outwardly by focusing on

⁷⁷³ In Chapter Two, in the section discussing Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret, I argue that emotion is inner movement both metaphorically and literally. Following Barba's discussion on the micro-movements that occur within the performer's body and awaken their *bios* or inner life, I address the different means explored by the Odin actors to activate such micro-movements or *in-tensions*.

sharing the emotion rather than the experience itself: emotion is thus also present ‘in an ample way’ throughout the space,⁷⁷⁴ not merely within the actor.

Reflecting on my practice, I discover the existence of a ‘hidden’ trigger which I discuss in Chapter Five: the trigger of pedagogy. I argue that the role of the pedagogue is of crucial importance for the activation of emotion; not only to help the actor access *it*, but also to help them do so with pleasure and ease. I argue for the cultivation of a positive learning environment that encourages the student actor to be open not only to explore their own inner process, but also to facilitate that of others. I problematise an approach to actor training that seeks to elicit an emotional reaction through pushing excessively or ‘breaking’ the actor.⁷⁷⁵ I advocate instead for a warm and gentle encouraging of emotion. Like the Grotowskian actor who makes a *sacrifice* so that the spectator’s inner life can be stirred and awakened, the trainer makes a similar *sacrifice* to encourage the inner awakening of the actor-student. The word sacrifice is used here with a positive quality, to highlight the physical and mental commitment I strive towards in my practice and that I argue is required of the trainer wishing to enable emotion. This—at the same time—is not a ‘sacrifice’ at all, as there is something extremely rewarding and beautiful about creating such an experience for an other.

The shift of the research question from the Introduction’s “How can I help the student-actor access emotion?” to the more precise “Can I create a formula to help the actor access emotion, by employing the right kind of strategies (triggers), in an

⁷⁷⁴ Reference to Thomas Richards. See Richards, *Heart of Practice*, 20.

⁷⁷⁵ Expression used by Mitchell and discussed in Chapter Five. See subchapter: “Fragile – Please Handle with Care.”

appropriate way (pedagogy)?” found in the last Chapter, sheds light on the core findings of this PhD research. Through this thesis, I wish to share with the wider academic and artistic community some strategies I have identified as tools for the awakening of the performer’s inner life. I also wish to discuss the *way* in which such an awakening should be pursued. Let us re-examine strategies first.

I have developed a reservoir of strategies and tools which I employ during my encounters with students, when we—together—search for emotion. I refer to the triggers and the specific exercises linked to them, which I share with my students during my classes, and the wider community through this thesis and the accompanying videos. Students are free to explore the triggers I introduce in their own way, developing or adapting their own exercises, in addition to exploring the ones I suggest. They can also identify and explore new triggers; understanding that emotion needs to be addressed indirectly, they can search for their own lures.

Beyond the specific elements of the practice, I believe my students learn something more important: That accessing emotion is not necessarily about a specific state that can be ‘labelled’ as sadness or joy, to give a couple of examples. It is more about an inner awakening that can be channelled to any emotion; this liberates them from the expectation to reach a certain result, and encourages a state of openness to the unexpected. Damasio describes emotion as the “continuous musical line of our minds, the unstoppable humming of the most universal of melodies [...], a humming that turns into all-out singing when we are occupied by joy, or a mournful requiem when sorrow takes over.”⁷⁷⁶ I search for both the gentle humming and the “all-out

⁷⁷⁶ Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 3.

singing,’’ and a state in which perhaps even joy and the mournful requiem can co-exist.

The complexity of this state challenges the natural tendency of the researcher to define and to evaluate the success of each experiment. However, in that moment when *emotion* has been triggered, I observe that everyone in the studio has noticed. Everyone seems to be affected. Like atmospheres and energy, it is perhaps easier to feel than to describe. I argue that the audio-visual material accompanying the thesis has captured such moments. I invite the reader to look for *emotion* not only in the actor accessing the state, but also in the response of the others. Unfortunately, during the exercises, the camera often focuses on the actor *experiencing*, but one can notice the response of the others during the discussions. One such example is the discussion after *Cindy Togetherness*, when the other participants are looking at Cindy in ‘Alba tenderness,’ smiling, with their head slightly tilted to the side.⁷⁷⁷

The updated research question also touches on the importance of the *way* in which acted emotion is explored. This relates to the question of pedagogy thoroughly examined in Chapter Five, but also the identification of a certain *attitude* which my practice indicates is highly beneficial for the exploration of emotion. I argue that the person facilitating/enabling emotion should be doing so with care and generosity, while the person experiencing would also benefit from an attitude characterised by honesty, openness, and patience. The openness will allow the student-actor to respond to the stimuli, to explore and share their emotions. The ‘honesty’ will keep

⁷⁷⁷ For a discussion on *Alba Tenderness* and the importance of the pattern for my practice see Chapter 5. The moment discussed here has been captured in *Cindy Togetherness*, 7:15–8:24: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFE2VBpKRNo>

them away from ‘stock-in-trade’ portrayal of emotion and mannerisms.⁷⁷⁸ Finally, patience will discourage forcing results. To make the point clearer, let us examine a critical view, that suggests that encouraging emotional breakthroughs is counterproductive as it creates high expectations.

Hetzel, an actor working with a trainer who uses similar practices to those explored here argues:

The thing that concerns me is, yeah, you get these really cool things that happen, but they are so fleeting, because they happen with so much physical intensity and emotional intensity, my concern for the actor trying to find them again. Because you’re going to go away, and then come back again, and there’s been this moment, and everyone wants it, and go ‘Oh my God’, and you yourself might go ‘that was just an amazing breakthrough’, but now you’ve got to bring it back. And in performance, we’re never going to do that. [...] I just wonder if there’s a fear that comes from ‘can I get this again?’⁷⁷⁹

However, this could not be further from the truth. I strongly hold that paradoxically, the more one works with emotions, the more they learn to accept that *it* will not always appear; the student-actor learns to tell themselves: ‘it is not here today. Be patient.’ The breakthrough that Hetzel mentions is a fascinating experience, both for the person experiencing and those watching. However, for actors who practise the approach laid out here, it becomes apparent that these breakthroughs cannot happen every time. Nor is this the goal.

⁷⁷⁸ Expression used by Stanislavski. See for example the chapter “The Stage as Art and Stock-in-trade” in Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 16–36.

⁷⁷⁹ Hetzel as quoted by Beck, in Jessica Beck, “Directing Emotion: A Practice-led Investigation into the Challenge of Emotion in Western Performance” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Exeter, 2011), 119.

To reflect on my personal journey, the drive for undertaking this project was initially neither to share some wisdom with the academic community, nor to become an actor trainer. My selfish super-objective was to become a better actor. Or, to put it in a more Grotowskian way, to eliminate whatever was keeping me from becoming a better actor. I was not sure exactly why at the time, but I thought that the best way to do that, would be to understand emotions better. Six years later, I realise that what I wanted to achieve was not necessarily to know how to access *emotion*, but to be liberated from the fear of not accessing it and to shed the expectation to arrive at a certain result, which were impeding my acting. I therefore strongly believe that the key here is not to say ‘let’s forget about emotions, they are not accessible at will anyway.’ The key is to say ‘let’s work on emotion, but let us make it clear that we are not focusing on the result, the emotion itself, but on the process, during which we open as many doors as possible for the emotion to come’. And once the focus is shifted thus, my research has shown that more often than not, emotion will indeed appear.

Summing up, I argue that the project contributes to knowledge in the following ways:

- It places emphasis on the need for an *indirect* approach to emotion. Although this has indeed been pointed out by other practitioners, whom I quote in this thesis, my discussion, including the study of the triggers used by a wide range of theatre practitioners, provides a different perspective, and encourages the reconsideration of what acted emotion is and how it can be approached.
- It identifies potential *lures* to emotion that can also be explored by others.

- The thesis argues that searching for emotion *in between* actor and an other, rather than within the actor, can be an effective and pleasurable way to achieve inner awakening.
- It proposes a model of *comparative research*: a way for addressing practice-based research as a process of initially searching for ‘objective truths’ in the work of others followed by a reflection on the unique elements of one’s own work. This methodology sheds light on the contribution of one’s own practice to knowledge, makes the dissemination of tacit embodied knowledge possible, and encourages further insights.
- It emphasises the critical significance of *pedagogy* for enabling and accessing emotion.
- While problematising approaches that encourage the actor to ‘suffer’ for their art, it advocates for a *pleasurable* search for emotion.
- Finally it highlights the importance of a more beneficial *attitude* when working with emotion: a caring, generous trainer/enabler and an honest, open, and patient actor-student.

This research can be further developed in numerous ways, including exploring emotion as a starting point for approaching a character or for devising a performance. It would also be possible to explore more deeply how the methodology I have developed can be transferred from the studio into the rehearsal space and how this approach can be used in performance rather than training.

Appendices

Appendix A: Second Messenger Speech from Euripides Bacchae

Translation (into English): Aaron Poochigian

Translation (into modern Greek): K. Georgousopoulos

NB: I copy the whole monologue (in English) here for context. In the *First Experiment*, we only used a smaller passage. I also include the translation used by the actor (in modern Greek) to clearly indicate which section of the monologue was used in the training session. This is in blue letters to be easily distinguishable.

Pentheus set out, and I went behind him—

sightseers, with the Stranger as our guide.

When we had left the city of Thebes behind us

and crossed the river Asopus, we went up

and marched along a spur of Mount Cithaeron.

We settled first inside a grassy hollow

and kept our feet muted, our tongues in check,

so we could see and not ourselves be seen.

There was a rocky dale where springs were flowing,

and pines spread shade, that's where we found the Maenads—

they all just sat there busying their hands

with pleasant tasks. Some of them wound the threadbare
wreaths atop their fennel stalks with ivy;
others, like fillies loosed from fancy saddles,
were singing Bacchic songs to one another.
Since he could not make out the band of females
well enough, poor Pentheus fretted, “Stranger,
from where we are, my eyes can’t quite discern
those phony Bacchants. If I climbed the tallest
fir tree on that ridge, though, I could fully
investigate the Maenads’ shameful acts.”

That’s where I saw the Stranger work a wonder:
he grabbed the high tip of the pine in question
and bent it down, down to the level earth.

It bellied like a short bow, like a circle
drawn by the arcing motion of a compass.

That’s how the stranger bent the mountain pine
down to the earth—a labor no mere mortal
could have performed. Once Pentheus was set
among the topmost boughs, he let the trunk
and lower branches slide up through his fingers

until the whole tree stood upright again.

He did it gently, so as not to topple

Pentheus, and it rose straight up toward heaven,

my master on its back. The Maenads now

saw Pentheus better than he could see them.

When he was obvious atop his perch,

the Stranger up and vanished, and a sudden

voice, the voice, I think, of Dionysus,

roared from the upper air:

“Women, I’ve brought you

the man who has been mocking you and me

and all our holy rites. Avenge me now!”

While he spoke these words, a sacred fire

struck sky and earth. The upper sky was calm;

the wooded hollow hushed its sundry leaves;

and forest beasts were nowhere to be heard.

The Maenads hadn’t fully taken in

that order with their ears—they stood erect

and swung their eyes around. A second time

the bull-god roared his order. When the daughters

of Cadmus knew at last the god’s commandment,

swift as doves, they darted at the man,
and all the Bacchants darted in behind them.
Driven to madness by the breath of Bacchus,
they hurdled boulders as they bounded down
the rain-choked valley.

When they saw my master
sitting in the fir-tree, they ascended
a ridgeline opposite and started launching
rocks at him. Next they threw, like javelins,
the branches they had ripped from nearby pine trees.
Others hurled their fennel wands at him,
a most unlucky target, but they missed.

Though treed and helpless, Pentheus was far
too high for them, for all they strained to reach him.
So they started ripping up the roots
beneath the tree with crowbars not of iron
but oakwood. When this effort failed as well,
Agave shouted, “Make a circle round it,
Maenads; grip the trunk and we will snare

the beast beyond our clutches. Otherwise
he will divulge our secret sacred dances
to all the world.”

A hundred hand-grips seized

Με μύρια χέρια κύκλωσαν τον έλατο και τον

the fir-tree, ripped it straight out of the earth.

απέσπασαν από το χώμα με τις ρίζες.

Tumbling earthward from his lofty perch,

Από ψηλά που στέκονταν γκρεμίζεται

Pentheus hit the ground and shrieked and groaned.

και πέφτει ο Πενθεύς στη γη

βογκώντας και σπαράζοντας

His end was coming, and he knew it well.

Κατάλαβε πως βρίσκονταν σιμά

στο θάνατό του.

His mother, as priestess, led the sacrifice—

Ιέρεια του φόνου η μάνα του

she leapt at him. He wrenched his headdress off.

πάνω του πέφτει πρώτη.

Πετάει αυτός τη μίτρα από την κόμη

so that the cursed Agave would perceive

μήπως και τον γνωρίσει και δεν τον

he was her son and stop attacking him.

θανατώσει η δόλια Αγαυή.

He touched her cheek and pleaded,

Και της μιλεί χαιδεύοντας το μάγουλο

“Mother, look, it’s me,

“Μητέρα μου είμαι το τέκνο σου

your dear son Pentheus, the child

είμαι ο Πενθεύς που γέννησες στον

you bore in Echion’s palace. Pity me.

οίκο του Εχίονος. Μάνα λυπήσου με

Do not destroy me to avenge my errors!”

μη θανατώσεις τον υιό σου

κι ας έπεσε στην αμαρτία τη μεγάλη.”

had stripped the ribcage naked, and they all
were rearing bloody hands to catch and throw
morsels of flesh like they were playing ball.

The bulk of him was scattered, parts out under
the rugged cliffs, parts in the forest brush—

it won't be easy to collect it all.

As for the wretched head Agave claimed,
well, she has fixed the thing atop her staff
and carries it about on Mount Cithaeron
as if it were a prize, a lion's head.

Her sisters stayed behind among the Maenads.

Glorying now in her accursed hunt
and back inside of Thebes, she is invoking
the Bacchic god as mighty victory-giver,
sharer-in-the-quarry and fellow hunter
with whose assistance she has won her prize
of lamentation. I am leaving now
before Agave marches back into the palace.
I want to get away from the disaster.
Self-control and reverence toward the gods—

τα πλευρά και γύμωναν τα κόκαλα,

και ματωμένες σάρκες πέταγαν

η μια στην άλλη.

Σκόρπια κομμάτια κείται

στις μαύρες πέτρες,

στους θάμνους, στο δάσος το πυκνό

Δυσεύρετος κι αγύρευτος.

these are the best possessions for us mortals,
the wisest virtues we can cultivate.

Appendix B: Workshops Attended

Day-long workshop with Lukas Angelini and Will Wheeler (Yoga and the Suzuki Actor training Method), 2016 (London, U.K.).

The Dance of Intentions with Roberta Carreri, Odin Teatret, Holstebro, Denmark, two weeks, August 2015.

The Method of Theodoros Terzopoulos, Athens, Greece, month-long, July–August 2015.

Odin Festival organised by the Grotowski Institute to celebrate Odin Teatre's 50 years (Wroclaw, Poland), 2014.

Week-long Regula Contra Regulam workshop led by Raul Iaiza in Brzezinka, Poland (Grotowski Institute), 2014.

Coordination Technique workshops led by Grzegorz Bral, Song of the Goat Theatre (Teatr Pieśń Kozła), (London, U.K.), various dates 2014–2015.

Week-long workshop on Alba Emoting led by Rocco Dal Vera (London, 2014).

4 week acting workshop led by Grzegorz Ziółkowski at Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland), 2013.

Day-long workshop on Michael Chekhov technique, led by Erik Andrews and Gretchen Egolf, held at the RADA studios (London, U.K.), 2013.

Week-long workshop on Alba Emoting led by Jessica Beck (Alba Emoting Certification Level 1, 2013).

Summer Intensive Workshop (two weeks) led by Thomas Richards at The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards (Pontedera, Italy), 2012.

Workshop with Ryszard Nieoczym attended in Athens Greece (2012).

Workshop with Amalia Moutousi held at the 'Desmi' Centre for Ancient Greek Drama – Research and Practical Applications (Athens, Greece, 2012).

Relevant Degrees held:

PGCert in the Management of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.
Goldsmiths College, University of London, U.K, 2016.

M.A. in Acting. *Drama Centre London*, University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins, U.K., 2011.

B.A. in Acting. *Delos Drama School of Athens*, Greece, 2010.

B.A. in Theatre Studies. *University of Peloponnese*, Greece, 2009.

During my studies at Drama Centre I also attended:

8 weeks of training at the Vakhtangov Institute (Moscow, Russia), 2011.

6 weeks of training at Shakespeare's Globe (London, U.K.), 2011.

Appendix C: Classes Taught

Questions of Performance: Emotion. 7 sessions. Goldsmiths. (2nd year B.A.)

- November–December 2013.
- November–December 2014.
- November–December 2015.
- October–November 2016.
- October–November 2017.

The Role of the Actor (2nd year B.A.) : University of Winchester

- January–March 2014: 2 groups of students rotating with Sian Radinger.
- September 2014–March 2015: 3 groups of students, rotating with Sian Radinger and Nigel Luck.
- September 2015–March 2016: 2 groups of students rotating with Sian Radinger for the first half of the year and on my own for the second half, as Marianne Sharp was teaching the other group.
- September 2016–March 2017: One group of students. I worked with them throughout the year and convened the module. The first half was focused on emotion. We then started working on scenes and improvisations, from active analysis to help them work with Ibsen and Chekhov to Viewpoints explored in relation to Crimp's Attempts on her Life.

Additional courses taught at Goldsmiths College:

Processes of Performance (1st year B.A.)

- October–December 2017

Theatre Making 2 (2nd year B.A.)

- From January 2015 to May 2018. For this module I have taught a range of short sessions (2–3 hours): Rehearsal Strategies, Dramaturgical Workshops, Voice and Text masterclass, The Ensemble, and Asking the Research Question. During the academic year 2017–18 I gave feedback and tutorials for performers throughout the devising process.

Additional courses taught at University of Winchester:

- Between Speech and Song for Vocal and Choral Studies students (1st year B.A.) (September–December 2016)
- Between Speech and Song for Musical Theatre students (1st year B.A.) (January–March 2017)

Both these modules were co-taught with a singer who was providing feedback on the songs, while I was working with the students on their monologues.

Appendix D: Questions of Performance Module

Handbook

Questions of Performance: Emotion

Option Tutor: Aphrodite Evangelatou

Since antiquity actors have faced the challenge of generating emotions on stage. The ancient Greek actor Polus is known to have filled the urn with his own son's ashes, in a desperate attempt to access a strong emotion while performing Sophocles' Electra mourning the death of her brother, Orestes. A plethora of acting techniques has since been developed to help the actor with this task: techniques using thoughts, memories or the imagination as a starting point, approaches utilising scientific research to better understand how emotions can be generated, and others that do not concentrate on one specific emotion but rather help the actor access a state in which any emotion can be organically awakened.

Stanislavski famously said that emotions are like wild animals that cannot be forced to come; the performer must therefore find 'lures' to encourage the awakening of inner life, by approaching emotion indirectly. In this option, we will explore various such 'lures,' including breath, musicality, and fatigue.

During seven practical workshops, we will explore exercises and techniques derived from or inspired by the following theatre practitioners: Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Alba Emoting, Tadashi Suzuki, Theodoros Terzopoulos, and the post-Grotowskians Song of the Goat and Gardzienice.

Students will be asked to learn a short monologue (up to 1 min) and one song (preferably a traditional one). Students whose native language is not English can work in their native language if they wish. You should be off book by the third session. Students are allowed to work on a monologue that they have worked on

before, as long as it is something they relate to emotionally, or they feel it poses emotional demands on them.

Assessment: Group Practice

Students will work in small groups and choose one of the following options:

1. Devise a short performance (7–9 mins) using fragments from some of the working material (your monologues and/or songs) in relation to the acting tools introduced to you during the course. Focus on one or two of the explored triggers or exercises, rather than attempting to include them all.
2. Alternatively, you can devise a piece bringing together material around a certain theme that relates to emotion. (7–9 minutes)
3. Devise a short (9–10 mins) work demonstration, and show us snippets of your own practical experimentation with the triggers/exercises and your discoveries during the module and your own practice. Please note that if you select this option, you can incorporate the Statement of Purpose; the work demonstration can therefore be a little longer than the first two options.

In either case, you should be able to demonstrate a practical understanding of the exercises introduced to you during the module and the relevant theory. This does not necessarily mean that the particular exercises need to be explored during assessment. Please see below the learning outcomes, against which you will be marked.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this option students should be able to:

- demonstrate an embodied and critical understanding of key Twentieth Century and contemporary methodologies of training and performance;
- interrogate in practice key questions of contemporary performance;

- apply in practice an advanced awareness of a range of methodologies of training and performance practice and their guiding principles;
- formulate and investigate critical research questions through practice;
- reflect critically on alternative approaches to the means and ends of performance making as well as your own practice.

Please note: The work will be assessed not as a final product but as an articulation of a process of experimentation on the question of emotion. Students will be expected to use and further develop skills/tools/techniques studied on the module, completely and with understanding.

Statement of Purpose

Each ‘Group Practice’ must be accompanied by a 100-word written statement outlining the research question you have been exploring in your practice-based work and reflecting on methodologies/texts/critical ideas you have been working with. You should engage with the relevant literature to support these ideas and reflect on/support your practice-based exploration, making the appropriate references and providing bibliography. The written statement will be read out loud before or after each group presentation and hard copies should be submitted to the examiners as a memory aid.

Punctuality and attendance

Attendance and punctuality are extremely important on this course and any absence must be reported to the TAP office by phone or email and ALSO by email to both the tutor and the course convenor by 8:30 am on the morning of the absence. If any student has an absence due to serious medical issues or other significant mitigating circumstances they must contact the TAP senior tutor who will liaise with the course convenor.

Date/Time	Teaching Activity	Required Reading
Thursday 4 October 14:00–17:00 (+ 17:00–18:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 1 Alba Emoting	Gladwell, Malcolm. “The Naked Face”, <i>The New Yorker</i> (August 2002), 38-49.
Tuesday 9 October 9:00–12:00 (+12:00–13:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 2 Grotowski/Post- Grotowskians: Ryszard Nieoczym, Song of the Goat	Wolford, Lisa. “Grotowski’s Vision of the Actor: The Search for Contact.” In <i>Twentieth Century Actor Training</i>, edited by Alison Hodge. London; New York: Routledge, 2000: 191-208. Wang, Stephen. “Bodily Emotions” in <i>An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting Inspired by the Work of Jerzy Grotowski</i> . New York: Vintage Books, 2000: 125-135.
Thursday 11 October 14:00–17:00 (+ 17:00–18:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 3 Grotowski/Post- Grotowskians (continued): Gardzienice, Zygmunt Molik	Hodge, Alison. “Włodzimierz Staniewski: Gardzienice and the Naturalised Actor.” In <i>Twentieth Century Actor Training</i>, edited by Alison Hodge. London; New York: Routledge, 2000: 224-44. Campo, Giuliano and Zygmunt Molik. “Second Day. Techniques - ‘Sing your Life’ - Teachers and Masters - Grotowski and the Company.” In <i>Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski</i> . Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010: 11-28.
Tuesday 16 October 9:00–12:00 (+12:00–13:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 4 Tadashi Suzuki and Theodoros Terzopoulos	Allain, Paul. “Suzuki Training”, <i>The Drama Review</i> 42, no. 1 (1998) 66-89. Stoumpos, Savvas. “An Approach to the Working Method of the Attis Theatre.” In <i>Journey with Dionysos: The Theatre of Theodoros Terzopoulos</i> , edited by Frank Raddatz. Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006: 230-233.

Date/Time	Teaching Activity	Required Reading
Thursday 18 October 14:00–17:00 (+ 17:00–18:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 5 Konstantin Stanislavski and Michael Chekhov	Chekhov, Michael. “The Atmosphere and Individual Feelings.” In <i>To the Actor</i>. London; New York: Routledge, 2002: 47-62. Stanislavski, Constantin. “Emotion Memory.” In <i>An Actor Prepares</i> . Translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 1989: 163–192.
Tuesday 23 October 10:00–13:00 (+ 9:00–10:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 6 Sharing of work in progress / feedback and Alba Emoting continued	Rix, Roxane. “Alba Emoting: A Revolution in Emotion for the Actor.” In <i>Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures</i>, edited by Ian Watson. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001: 205-219. Bloch, Susana. “Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions.” <i>Theatre Topics</i> 3, no. 2 (1993): 121–38.
Thursday 25 October 14:00–17:00 (+ 17:00–18:00 self-led work)	Practice / Seminar 7 Revisiting practitioners and ‘request session’ according to chosen projects	N.B. Please make sure you have read all the above articles/book chapters in bold and have started working on your group statement by this date.
Tuesday 30 October 9:00–13:00		Independent Rehearsal
Wednesday 31 October 9:00–14:00	Each group will have an hour-long assessment slot, plus slots to watch their peers.	Assessments
Thursday 1 November 14:00–16:00	14:00–15:00 full cohort 15:00–16:00 in options	Critical Feedback / Peer Review

* Please note: the articles/book chapters **in bold** are the required reading (essential) whereas the articles/book chapters not in bold are recommended reading.

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