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The Alchemy of the Acting Process: Transformation and embodiment, in, and beyond, the theatre space

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date: 28 February 2017

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Abstract

The Alchemy of the Acting Process: Transformation and embodiment, in, and beyond, the theatre space.

What makes it possible for actors to create impacting, transformative performance? This thesis refers to theories of acting, performance and devising in western traditions, and theories of consciousness, embodiment and neuroscience. A methodological bricolage approach to a devised theatre project was instigated to collect data during a three-week rehearsal. The thesis presents the empirical basis for a new theory to understand actors' creativity, and its transformative impact. The actors' felt-experiences and the creative processes and strategies they used were determined from video diaries and recorded discussions. The analysis highlighted the complexity at the heart of the actors' creative process and signified six component elements – a quiet mind; activated senses; perceptively minded-body; imaginative exploration; investment of time; transformative, vulnerable instrument. The research revealed that the interaction of the combined elements transformed the actors through an alchemy of the actor's process to achieve an authentic, impacting performance. These findings have implications for the enhancement of creative potential in other areas of life.

Chapter 1   Introduction

> I have found that an actor's work has life and interest only in its execution. It seems to wither away in discussion, and become emptily theoretical and insubstantial. It has no rules (except perhaps audibility). With every play and every playwright, the actor starts from scratch, as if he or she knows nothing and proceeds to learn afresh every time—growing with the relationships of the characters and the insights of the writer. When the play has finished its run he's empty until the next time. And it's the emptiness which is, I find, apparent in any discussion of theatre work. (Paul Scofield quoted in Eyre 2013, pp. 145-6)

'Acting, like riding a bicycle, is easier to do than explain'(Carnicke 2010b, p. 6). One of the challenges facing researchers of acting and performance lies in finding the words that best describe, in a meaningful way, what actors are doing in performance. Numerous acting techniques have developed distinctive terms to teach every aspect of the acting process, from the individual's preparation, character and script analysis through to the performance yet, as actor Paul Scofield expresses so simply above, actors frequently find it difficult to meaningfully describe what happens when they act. They often say they do not know how to describe what they do in performance – they just do it.

Would finding the words help actors? If it is worded in an accessible form, will the transformative aspects of the actor's art become more accessible to other creative activities and for living a more creative life in general? How might a researcher be able to help de-mystify the acting process and therefore shed light on this transformative moment? These musings, and more, are the motivators for this research.

Having taught actors over the last twenty years, I have been privileged to witness countless breakthrough moments which carry through to improvements in acting and visible shifts in the actor's instrument. Over time, these shifts lead to the emergence of their acting self also are evident in changes to the actor's personal demeanour and carriage. The transformative experiences create an embodied actor with the intangible quality called presence.

The quality of being present has variously been described as 'inner power being radiated outwards' (Goodall 2008, p. 8) and 'presence as constructed through skills and techniques that actors can acquire through training' (Hodge 2010, p. xxii). The first describes an intangible, felt quality of being, an expanding energy field so to speak, and the second suggests that this quality may be achieved as a result of certain activities undertaken during acting training, and yet neither explain what this 'thing' actually is.

Increasingly, researchers of performance draw upon findings from the fields of cognitive neuroscience, consciousness and embodiment theories to better understand the phenomena of acting. Theatre researchers who are also seeking new ways to understand creativity and acting (Blair 2008; Gruzelier 2011; Hodge 2010; McConachie & Hart 2006), are increasingly being informed by developments in cognitive neuroscience. This study therefore builds on that to understand how the acting experience might be translated into a richer understanding of creative learning through a deeper study of the alchemical process an actor goes through in order to 'turn on the switch' that allows for transformation. This research also refers to the fields of these relatively new sciences in an attempt to word the intangible, liminal experience of acting – making actors the perfect subjects for such an investigation.

Through a kind of alchemy, the actor's process creates a transformative embodiment in them as well as in the work they are creating for their audience. Like the alchemist transforming base metals to gold, the actor integrates a complex array of acquired skills, knowledge, techniques and imagination, as well as their environment and personal aesthetic – their individual artistic sensibility – to create a performance. The actor's craft is one of 'working on the self' and simultaneously engaging themselves in the art of the work. The embodied experience changes the actor in a way that other art and creative practices do not, because both the actor and the work are changed by the creation of performance. These changes have their genesis in the rehearsal period.

> The stage seems to be the place of transformation… I think that's probably the basic reason why the audience goes to the theatre—to witness transformation and to identify with that transformation, or try to invite it into their own lives. (Lepage in Eyre 2013, p. 5947/6127)

This study examines the process that actors use to develop their 'instrument', with a view to understanding its role in their creative practice and what value this has in enhancing creative confidence and practice in other fields.

1.1 Background to the research

Creativity is at the forefront of studies into ways of developing people, ideas and organisations. Since Paul Keating's launch of Australia's Creative Nation reform in 1994, creativity has become a catchword and increasingly recognised and valued by business, society and cities. A leading example is the City of Sydney's Creative City Sydney that invests in a creative culture. Creativity and design-thinking are at the core of business and future planning,

and individuals have access to a wide range creative pastimes. There is no doubt that creativity in its infinite manifestations is the currency of today.

Theatre and drama skills and processes are used as integral components of business and human resource development programs to enhance people's ability to meet a variety of outcomes. Businesses and corporations are engaging in arts-based training and experiences to develop teams, innovation, communication, leadership and engagement. Arts-based learning is increasingly integrated in education in fields including medicine, finance, entrepreneurship and business development. At the heart of these programs are the creative and explorative vehicle of acting and drama to provide value and enhance the outcomes for a wider audience. Developments in science may do the same. Current discourses in neuroscience, psychology and consciousness offer descriptive languages to articulate the human state in ways that actors understand: mindfulness, empathy, connection, centred-ness, being-states, sense memory, impulse, flow, trust, risk-taking, vulnerability, embodiment, emotional accessibility – are all terms frequently used within an acting studio and acting theories.

As a dual practitioner and researcher, I wanted to slow down my own process to look more deeply into it, and understand it with evidence-based research to take it back into my practice. In this qualitative study of a theatrical creative development I devised a trans-disciplinarity bricolage approach that drew on phenomenology, action research and practice-led research methodologies. This was an original approach to performative research and was paralleled in both the research undertaken and in the devising process. The approach formed a broad, flexible and rich format in order to capture the complexities of the creative process, that are more often constricted when being considered primarily through only one lens. By applying the bricolage, the findings were then understood in the context of acting and also in their broader manifestation of creative endeavour.

Complex data was gathered during a three-week creative development period in July 2015, by both actors and the researcher/director. The reflective practice lens was applied from two perspectives: my reflective practice; and the actions and reflections of the actors and therefore enabled deep understandings of the embodied mind/minded-body.

1.2 Significance of the field

In the nineteenth century art and science were seen as one shared body of knowledge, closely associated with a way of seeing the world and understanding humans and nature. As science became more technically specialised and its knowledge seen as verifiable truth, art as knowledge took a back-seat. These days there is a movement towards bringing the arts into learning and business as a way to improve communication, community and leadership, and to develop people's creative thinking. Acting and drama has the opportunity to be valued more highly as a rigorous art-form that holds its own truth.

Humans experience and make sense of the world around us, not solely through our thinking-brain, but through the body via the senses, which take in information faster and in a more complex way than our minds can speak or understand. We then associate this information with past experiences, both tangible and cultural and to feed the imagination. Trained actors – and the innately talented – have an implicit understanding of these processes, and this study goes some way towards making them more explicit.

Drawing on the words of Paul Scofield, the research work involved 'starting from scratch, as if he or she knows nothing' (Eyre 2013, p. 143/6127) to create an original theatre work, much as an artist working in any form of creative practice may begin with a blank page or canvas. Perhaps more than most other art forms, acting does not exist in a silo. It is collaborative: music, design, technology, art and writing all impact on the process, and become the 'concrete language of the stage' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 204/5141) therefore placing acting in a unique position as a rich research site.

1.3 Aims and research purpose

There were two key motivations for the research driven by a curiosity into how an actor activates their creative impulse. The first motivation was to identify parallels between the transformative experience of acting and relevant findings in cognitive neuroscience and embodiment research that may lead to the adoption of new descriptors in the actor's lingua franca, and to stimulate discussion among practitioners of performance. The second motivation was to discover how this knowledge, and wording, of the actor's preparation, process and embodied experience, may offer new insights into creativity in general. If the actor's process creates the embodiment of a stimulated, free and imaginative self, what value

might this process hold for other creatives and for anyone wanting to be fully embodied? Identifying what is integral to the actor's process might provide insights into a wider investigation of the creative impulse and thereby be useful to people more widely interested in becoming more creative in their lives.

This thesis, therefore, contributes to the growing field at the intersection of science, arts and theatre and develop the idea of the 'creative person', overlapping all fields of human behaviour and communication.

Questions that arise in my practice as an acting coach and creative facilitator lie at the heart of this research to explore the elements that lead to the actor's transformation and embodiment, with a view to adopting new descriptions and make this knowledge more widely accessible.

Therefore, there are two questions at the heart of my research:

- How might the actor's process and creative alchemy that develops embodied transformation be understood and re-worded through a new lens?
- What can we learn from a new understanding of transformative embodiment in relation to understanding the creative process as a whole?

This study aims to identify what a transformative moment looks and feels like when acting; its relationship to the actors' creative impulse; and how it affects the actors. Transformative moments are both liminal, in the sense of sitting either side of a threshold, and fleeting, and therefore presented challenges to the research. The language of acting and performance also has limits thus far to describe it in the felt –and observed –sense. As findings from the field of neuroscience provide knowledge about the brain's functions in relation to what a person is doing, these descriptors offer new understandings of the mystery of the mind-body-experience.

The collaborative development of a new theatre work is an optimal research vehicle for the study because devising is an entirely interactive, process-driven practice. Its 'non-linear' situation (Graham & Hoggett 2014, p. 6/232) also supports the possibility of new perspectives in understanding creativity and creative practice in general.

1.4 Key terms used

A number of terms are used within the thesis that need clarification and contextualisation for the reader. These include those in the title of the thesis: transformation; alchemy; and embodiment, used in the context of an acting process.

Alchemy and alchemical processes

The word alchemy stems from the Middle Ages and refers to the ancient art – and a forerunner of modern science – of the alchemist who sought the perfect mix of chemicals to transmute base metals into gold. The combination of the great craft skills of the ancient Egyptians, the interest of the Greeks in the composition of matter, and the mystical ideas of the Persians in astrology influenced the search for the perfect metal and the elusive Philosopher's Stone as an allegory for the search for perfection in the human soul (Ragai 1992).

Semantic changes have shifted the word's usage so that it is often used as a metaphor when concepts similar to metaphysics and transmutation are discussed. For instance, in this thesis, I apply the term to an actor's process that employs their technical skills and physical being in the pursuit of the perfect performance which changes them in some way. An actor transforming into a character in the eyes of their audience can therefore be likened to the alchemical process of transmutation, especially in the way the actor's process develops their self-knowledge and expressivity.

Actor's instrument and the actor's self

In referring to an actor's 'instrument', I mean the whole self, as it applies to a physical, technical, emotional and intellectual connection. These work together as one 'instrument' that is prepared, alert and energised, yet relaxed when acting.

Embodiment and embodied processes

Embodiment in an acting context, may be defined as a high level of integration of experiential learning and self-knowledge. An embodied experience is one in which a person is engaged by more than an intellectual thought, but also with deliberate attention given to various sensorial reactions of the experience.

Creativity and the creative person

I use the word creativity, and the term 'creative person' in the thesis to refer to the disciplined spontaneity (Grotowski 1975) that an actor develops and then inhabits and draws upon while acting.

1.5 Explanation of the structure of the thesis

There are six chapters in this thesis. This <u>introductory chapter</u> sets out the background, motivation, significance and aims of the research study. <u>Chapter 2</u> surveys the literature and contextual material relevant to acting, performance, and broader fields of study that offer new avenues of thinking about the actor's work. <u>Chapter 3</u> explains the logic for the selection of the research methodologies and ethical considerations. It also sets out the processes undertaken to develop the research tools, and what strategies were employed for the devising project as the research site. <u>Chapter 4</u> sets out what happened during the creative development work, and what the actor participants and I experienced. It highlights significant examples of the data collected that serve the discussions and the findings. <u>Chapter 5</u> discusses the research findings and how they might be understood in light of the literature and the research questions. <u>Chapter 6</u> sets out the conclusions drawn from the findings, and presents ideas for future investigation.

Chapter 2   Literature and Contextual Review

This chapter outlines the journey through the field of literature that is at the intersection of my research into acting and creativity. The two driving questions behind this enquiry position it within a growing body of cross-disciplinary research into performance. Literature related to acting and performance form the basis of the review to connect with other disciplines that offer different lenses to better understand some of the elements that affect, and are integral to, the actor's craft.

The literature from the performance discipline includes the theories and principles of acting, acting training, performance studies and history of performance, as well as biographical accounts of actors' and directors' lives and experiences. The review of the literature also includes the growing body of performative research that draws upon the neurosciences, theories of embodiment and consciousness studies that are increasingly relevant to 'making' theatre today. The chapter also includes a contextual review of the work of directors and theatre companies who use devising to create unique performances.

For my research, I deliberately bring some of these seemingly disparate ideas together. I chose the field of neuroscience as a starting place for this broader investigation as it is useful to inform cross-disciplinary research. As studies in neuroscience reveal a greater understanding of brain functions, they also provide substantive descriptors that help make sense of the acting process and its transformative phenomena. Drawing on new wording from neuroscience might add to the understanding and communication of the acting process and creativity for actors and directors to enhance their practice. It is possible that an improved knowledge of acting and its creative process will make it more accessible.

By way of the chapter's structure, Section 2.1 sets out the literature that directly relates to acting. It explains the development of acting techniques and the key theorists and their processes. It then examines the development of theatre-making, those major practitioners and their perspectives, processes and theories. Section 2.2 introduces a broader palette of literature in areas not directly connected to acting and performance, but that hold future relevance to the actor's practice. This literature has been set out in two parts. The first, 2.2.1, reviews the discourse in consciousness, embodiment and the impact of deep practice. The second part, 2.2.2, sets out relevant studies and theorists from neuroscience and includes how the mind and the body have been considered in the light of experience. Section 2.3

summarises the literature and identifies the space that my study fills and the body of knowledge to which it makes a contribution.

2.1 Literature to expand the actor's toolbox

> Every person who is really an artist desires to create inside of himself another, deeper, more interesting life than the one that actually surrounds him. (Stanislavsky 2003, p. 47)

The body of literature on acting is broad, spanning everything from anecdotes by actors discussing their craft and projects; teachers of acting setting out a system of acting training based on their discoveries and experiences; to philosophies of acting developed by actors and directors that serve their style of performance or theatre and screen works. The acting process has mystified, intrigued, stimulated and provoked artists and commentators for centuries, and since the beginning of the twentieth century, examination and observations of the actor's craft has been increasingly documented.

Historically, western theatre actors developed their skills on-the-job by joining a troupe of players, or theatre-makers. This form of 'apprenticeship' (Hodge 2010, p. xix) didn't change much until the Russian theatre actor and director, Konstantin Stanislavski, attempted to 'formally organise a practical acting system' in 1906 (Merlin 2003). His systematised approach and detailed documentation revolutionised acting. The ideas spread widely, and influenced other Russian and European theatre practitioners. The system spread to North America where it was adopted – and adapted – by many who had come in contact with Stanislavski's methods and with the company, the Moscow Art Theatre, which he co-founded and ran with director/playwright Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (Carnicke 2010b, pp. 2-3). It was here that acting training developed as a serious means to prepare actors for the theatre and, eventually, for the new medium of screen. Several leading American directors and actors explored the system, from which a number of acting 'schools' were founded. Each of these emphasised different aspects of Stanislavski's system, depending on when they came into contact with the work. Stanislavski was searching for answers to his own acting dilemma: 'how was he to move from external result to internal process' (Merlin 2003, p. 4) and so his process was constantly in development. Stanislavski's questioning of, and desire to understand and integrate, the internal/external and process/result of acting is also at the core of many of the approaches to acting that followed.

2.1.1 On acting techniques

The selection of acting theories and techniques reviewed in this section, are drawn primarily from the western theatre tradition, with which most working actors today are familiar and use as the basis of their own practice. The decision to limit the review of acting techniques has been made so as to ensure relevance of the research to the most common practices in the Australian context today. Other performance techniques that are not specifically reviewed individually include most pure somatically centred practices such as Kathakali, Bhuto, Suzuki, bodyweather and other systems drawn from the eastern philosophy and dance. These are systems that can inform performance – Kathakali was an influence on both Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba for instance – and yoga continues to be a useful tool and practice for actors' preparation.

Early in the twentieth century, Stanislavski was pre-occupied with finding a systematic method to create truth in performance, which led him to try to understand the neurology of what was occurring in performance. He called this 'experiencing' (Carnicke 2010b, p. 8)[1]. Stanislavski's holistic belief that 'mind, body and spirit represent a psychological continuum' (Carnicke 2010b, p. 7) rejected Cartesian philosophy and therefore agreed with Theodule Ribot, 'who believed that emotion never exists without physical consequence' (Carnicke 2010b, p. 7).

Another influential actor, Vsevolod Meyerhold, began his acting career in Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre troupe. The experience there formed the basis for many of his principles, however he nevertheless 'energetically rejected the Moscow Art Theatre's search for a life-like naturalism' (Leach 2010, p. 27). Stanislavski's system was developed largely in order that actors might create a 'life-like naturalism' on stage, whereas, once Meyerhold left the company, he instead explored the more grotesque styles of acting. His non-representational forms of theatre acting were able to respond to the symbolist movement in Russia at that time. Contemporaneously, Stanislavski 'was forced to concede the inadequacy of conventional representational methods when faced with the mystical abstractions of the 'new drama' (Braun 1998, p. 167/6856). As a result, he later invited Meyerhold to become the artistic director of a new experimental studio so as to further explore the two approaches. This studio was short-lived, and Meyerhold continued his work with a number of other companies, eventually developing his own system of physicalised actor training, Biomechanics. He had

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[1] In America, later proponents of Stanislavski's System, whose approaches are known as The Method, emphasised different aspects to reach what Stanislavski called 'living through the role'. For instance, whereas Strasberg placed emphasis on psychology, Adler focused on sociology and Meisner on spontaneous behaviour, to reach a truthful performance. This has led to method actors often being incorrectly thought of as 'becoming' the character. (Krasner 2010, p. 160)

found that actors trained in traditional theatre forms, such as was common, could not adapt to more abstract performances.

> A theatre built on psychological foundations is as certain to collapse as a house built on sand. On the other hand, a theatre which relies on 'physical elements' is at very least assured of clarity. (Braun 1998, p. 3333/6856)

Eventually the biomechanics system of practical exercise was widely accepted, which led to every Soviet drama school incorporating it in some form of physicalised training. The actor must be self-aware, 'through awareness of physical processes of which most people rarely are conscious, but which the performer must be able to experience, identify, manipulate and redirect or eliminate if necessary' (Carlin-Metz 2013, p. 39).

Similarly, Michael Chekhov, another student of Stanislavski, later developed 'the idea of the psychological gesture and made it an important aspect of his training as an intuitive, rather than analytical, approach to character' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67).

He was also as a talented actor, but conflict with Stanislavski arose due to Chekhov's individualised expression of his creativity as an actor in the interpretation of a role (Chamberlain 2010, p. 64). When Chekhov's personal life fell apart, his acting was also affected, which led him to study Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy as a means to heal himself. This then helped him to separate from his personal troubles, and focus on the higher ego, the 'more authentic and creative self' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 64), which had a significant effect on his theory of acting. Chekhov eventually came to combine Steiner's exploration in eurythmy[2], Chekhov's focus on the creativity of the actor, with the influence of Stanislavski's 'emotional memory', to develop his distinct system of acting training that incorporated the idea of the psychological gesture:

> But the actor, who must consider his body as an instrument for expressing creative ideas on the stage, *must* strive for the attainment of complete harmony between the two, body and psychology. (Chekhov 2002, p. 722/4041)

Chekhov also recognised the need for a performer to set limits when improvising so as to balance the dual tension between their creative expression and the demands of the play. He argued for the 'importance of a divided consciousness' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67)

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[2] Eurythmy is a study of movement and speech that explores speech as invisible gesture. It is based on the premise that sounds have physical qualities.

independently of Stanislavski, who similarly came to acknowledge the 'significance of the actor's dual consciousness' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67).

When Maria Knebel studied acting and directing with Stanislavski, Nemirovich-Danchenko and Chekhov at the Moscow Art Theatre, Stanislavski's latest rehearsal technique had evolved to Active Analysis, which incorporated his own approach to accepting actors' creativity. Knebel's synthesis of the best of these three approaches – Active Analysis, trusting actors' imaginative improvisation and applying rigorous reading of the dramatist's words to enhance actors imaginations – into one consolidated technique (Carnicke 2010a, p. 99), left a legacy of a consolidated acting training that is still being taught in the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts . The Knebel technique shows that 'Michael Chekhov did not so much depart from Stanislavsky, as build upon his teacher's holistic approach to theatre' (Carnicke 2010a, p. 114).

Jerzy Grotowski's work was another that was influenced by Stanislavski's which, he thought, provided 'a key that opens all doors of creativity' (Wolford 2010, p. 200). The acting principles Grotowski later came to teach shared a core element with Stanislavski's – to act truthfully on stage – but with a different view on the way that 'truth' might be expressed aesthetically. They also shared similarities to Meyerhold's methods of a codified physical training, but were differentiated by Grotowski's commitment to incorporating in his projects the subtle nuances of the inner life of a role. Known for his Theatre Laboratory and Poor Theatre – as well as his legacy of instilling actors with the importance of daily vocal and physical training – Grotowski also had a desire to 'demystify the creative process' (Wolford 2010, p. 203). His life work was a research process through the laboratory that he recorded in detail. He sought to define a methodology of performance training that would 'free the actor to accomplish his or her work without obstruction and also without waiting for random inspiration' (Wolford 2010, p. 203). He believed that the actor needed to find 'the body's various centres of concentration for different ways of acting' (Grotowski 1975, p. 38). To find these centres, an actor needed to accomplish an 'act of self-penetration' (Grotowski 1975, p. 38) to lead them to find various sound and gestural expressions, which would articulate and reveal the self to an audience.

His theatre works supported his actor-centred approach, with a strongly physical, yet fully connected, expression of the actor's rich inner life for works staged in a manner stripped bare of production elements (no additional music, sound, lights, furniture, sets) where the actors' performance alone created meaning for their audience. His theatrical work was concerned for the 'spectator' who would go to the theatre to 'search for the truth about himself and his mission in life' (Grotowski 1975, p. 40). He wanted his actors to challenge the audience with

'magical acts' that the audience themselves were incapable of producing (unlike what was seen in film and television – which he disdained) but which would lead them as if to 'a mirror' to feel and find something in themselves.

> Creativity, especially where acting is concerned, is boundless sincerity, yet disciplined: i.e. articulated through signs. [...] Spontaneity and discipline are the basic aspects of an actor's work and they require a methodical key. (Grotowski 1975, p. 217)

Grotowski's methods of vocal and physical training were not focused on what the actor had to 'do', rather on developing the 'actor' themselves. This is what Eugenio Barba describes as 'the pre-expressive level of the actor's work' (Wolford 2010, p. 206). Barba believed that 'routine and habits have to be established in order to surpass them' (Barba 2007, p. 104). Barba, who is the head of the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) and was the director of Odin Teatret, combined the creativity of an artist with the reflection of a researcher. Barba trained with Grotowski, where he was also his assistant, but has been heavily influenced by eastern performance styles. His research and theatrical training ideas have been in pursuit of understanding what it is that makes us unable to take our eyes off one performer on stage and not another – what we might call the x-factor or presence. His training methodologies including the separation of vocal skills and physical skills training to ensure one does not dominate. His experience with Grotowski's theatre 'touched a personal chord' (Watson 1993, p. 239), which inspired him eventually to form his own company. Both he and his young actors needed training and so this formed the basis of their initial work, where he drew from his experience with Grotowksi and his exposure to an Kathakali school in India. According to Barba, it is not the specific exercise that counts, 'but the individual's justification for his own work, a justification which although banal or difficult to explain through words, is physiological perceptible, evident to the observer' (1986, p. 50).

The ongoing evolution of a variety of acting systems that develop the actor continues today. Eric Morris, for instance, is a Los Angeles-based contemporary acting teacher whose philosophy is largely based on the Stanislavski system of acting preparation and an American iteration developed by Lee Strasberg. Morris has developed a process for teaching acting that assumes that a twenty-first-century student of acting firstly needs freeing from the habits of socialised behaviour. He recognises that it is a rare person who is able to just 'be', or as he calls it, be in a neutral state of 'being' ready to learn acting techniques, so he based all his original work on this premise (Morris, Hotchkis & Nicholson 1979). He explained that 'the emotional obstacles and blocks that people bring with them to the study of acting are the very things that

keep them from being able to use acting techniques' (Morris 2000b, p. 324/6202). Morris uses the phrase 'being and doing': 'being' allows the actor to 'do' what the character needs to do, and therefore act believably for their audience (Morris 1981). His exercises enable the actor to monitor and shift their 'being state' as required, which allows the actor to practise this as 'the work' of acting, and not needing to change their own persona. This is important to enable actors to go deep into the psyche of a character and still emerge after performance without having become lost in that character.

Stanislavski sought to draw upon the actor's 'affective memory', and method acting, which developed in the US in response to Stanislavski's system, places 'affective memory' at its core. Method acting calls it 'sense memory' or emotional recall, because it uses the actor's body-memory; the physical sensations that evoke and stimulate the felt experience of the memory. Bella Merlin, who studied in Moscow under teachers who had been trained by Stanislavski, built her acting system based on another aspect of Stanislavski's method of physical acting and Active Analysis, what she calls 'psycho-physical acting' (Merlin 2011, p. 445/4309).

> […] body and psyche, outer expression and inner sensation, are integrated and inter-dependent. The brain inspires the emotions, which then prompt the body into action and expression. Or the body arouses the imagination, which then activates the emotions. Or the emotions stir the brain to propel the body to work. All the components – body, mind, and emotions – are part of the psycho-physical mechanism which makes up the actor: psychology and physicality are part of one continuum. (Merlin 2001, p. 99/4309)

In identifying her approach as Active Analysis, Merlin also introduces the notion of 'spirit' as an ingredient in this mix. She argues that 'Active Analysis is an holistic system integrating body and mind, and most importantly *spirit*' (Merlin 2001, p. 113/4309).

British director, Peter Brook, also seeks to incorporate a kind of psycho-somatic integration which he calls 'transparency',

> […] as in certain kinds of possession in which consciousness does not disappear, actors become a site or conduit for the manifestation of the 'spirit' or 'life of words, song, dance'. (Brook, quoted in Marshall & Williams 2010, p. 189)

Many acting teachers have sought to develop the actor's energetic spirit, or intuitive responses, from as early as the first half of last century. Zarilli's (2007) meta-theory of acting posits that we consider it as the actor-as-human doer/enabler inside the performance of an acting score, according to which acting is dynamic 'energetics' rather than representation. The

achievement of a dynamic, energetic performance is a goal for most actors. While meaning and representation present themselves to the viewer of a performance, instead 'they are the result of the actor's immediate energetic engagement in the act of performance' (Zarrilli 2007, p. 647).

In summary, the review of the roots of the breadth of understanding the actors process pointed to the inter-relationship of the ideas these practitioners have championed. For example, it is universally accepted among acting theoreticians that Stanislavski's holistic psychological continuum; Chekhov's intuitive psychological gesture and the importance of the imaginative response; Meyerhold's biomechanics as a means to integrate physical clarity; Strasberg's method acting; Morris' emotional freedom to shift being-states; and Merlin's physical acting to reach integration and inter-dependence of body, psyche and the manifestation of spirit and life, all speak to the complexity of the alchemy occurring during acting and the necessity for the integration of the actor's whole being. The actor's process, then, embraces concepts of a holistic continuum, imaginative response, integration of body-psyche-spirit, freedom, inter-dependence, dual consciousness, and the importance of energy and impulse to support the actor's creativity and process so they flow into performance. Whist actors may have different components in their acting toolbox, it can be seen that the use of their acting tools and processes have shared aims.

2.1.2   The process of devising theatre

Actors perform a broad palette of works for stage and screen, in scripted plays and films, and also in works that are developed by them, such as improvised plays and devised works. The devising process relies on the contributions of all actors and the director to bring a work – which can take many forms – to life and is a way of working that 'supports intuition, spontaneity and an accumulation of ideas' (Oddey 1994, p. 1).

Canadian theatre-maker, Robert Lepage, says that theatre is infinitely greater than we are 'because everything is larger than us, we have to have a sense of humility and we have to let the story tell itself, appear by itself' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 591/5141). When creating theatre, he likes to explore his actors' 'peripheral consciousness, the ability of an actor to take all the surrounding elements of the environment into the performance as resources and to respond to multiple stimuli' including the audience (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 407/5141). To do this, he creates an 'environment for them to play, explore, and discover what lays hidden from their conscious minds' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 592/5141). This focus on process itself is vitally

important to the actor's art, in order to arrive at a finished product in which the events on stage appear to the audience as if occurring for the first time.

Acting teacher, John Harrop, says the relationship of body and mind to impulse is one which 'fundamental to all creativity is the concept that every act of creation starts from some kind of impulse' (Carlin-Metz 2013, p. 37). Lepage has a creative process that works from impulse and stimulus that includes 'chaos, accidental discovery, intuition, and invited disorder', which he sees as 'forces at the root of live, spontaneous theatrical events' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 67/5141). Lepage seeks to create transformation in his theatre works which are actor-centric, ever-changing and a cross between performance-art and theatre. 'They are part of this process of transition' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 508/5141).

Lepage's idea of theatricality is connected with the process of 'change, fluidity, and the reception of meaning and not with fixed structures' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 509/5141). His form of devised theatre fits with Jung's visionary mode of artistic creation, but instead of psychological analysis, it relies on the creation of 'imagery suggestive of the visionary mode' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 590/5141). There are other theatre-makers who also create image-based theatre, and some have a similar foundation in their work to Lepage. Lepage's work, however, is created on structure that affords a clear opportunity for study. His theatricality is fundamentally about the 'process of becoming, where in fact no one knows the final destination or how to get there' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 557/41).

Other significant contemporary theatre practitioners whose body of work is primarily group-devised include Ariane Mnouchkine of Theatre du Soleil, Simon McBurney of Complicite, and Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett of Frantic Assembly. Many of these artists and companies have a foundation of training from Jacques Lecoq whose expressive movement and gesture philosophy places the actors at the heart of the creation of a work. Lecoq believed humans shared something he called 'fonds poetique commun', which Bradby translated in the foreword as closely to a 'universal poetic sense' (Bradby (ed) in Lecoq 2006, p. xiii). He explained it further: 'that the ability to respond creatively , or poetically, depended on the laying down of a series of sediments through (the) universally shared experiences' (Bradby (ed) in Lecoq 2006, p. xiii). His training methods evolved through a practical exploration of the laws of movement that could only be explored in and through the body.

> Each emotive state leaves traces within us and these lay down 'physical circuits' which stay in our memory. That is where the impulses that will turn into gestures, belonging to one of these circuits, may call upon very different motivations. (Lecoq 2006, p. 6)

Lecoq's influential ideas and skills have continued to be sought by performers world-wide, but his teachings have very little documentation. He believed instead, that it is in the experiencing that a student learns. In the introduction, Bradby explained that Lecoq showed he was conscious of the limitations of language, and although he had a marvellous physical expressivity at his command, he felt constrained by the limitations of print (Lecoq 2006, pp. xi-xii).

The devising practice of UK theatre company, Frantic Assembly, has its own approach which celebrates 'the practice of plucking an existing script off the shelf' as an 'act of creative freedom'(Graham & Hoggett 2012, p. 6). They describe their rehearsal process as 'a haphazard cumulative event where clarity and creativity collectively form half the requisite qualities. The other half requires you to hold your nerve' (2014, p. 6).

There are a number of elements common to these different approaches that inform what an actor needs while devising. They will be asked to invest something, or a lot, of themselves; be responsive to each other and various stimuli; be playful; be ready to remain open and fluid for a long period of the rehearsal process; work off the creative impulse; and be receptive to meaning as it emerges through the work. There is no one method for an actor to manage these unique tensions that are inherent in, and exist throughout, the devising process. That is: finding truth and remaining imaginative, being impulsive and yet honouring the fixed obligations as rehearsed, staying in character whilst bringing oneself to the role.

Improvisation is a source of creativity and a way of opening imagination (Tufnell & Crickmay 1990) and is the basis of all devising. As a source, improvisation 'generates material which, in its complexity and unexpectedness, could never be planned or arrived at by logical means' (Tufnell & Crickmay 1990, p. 194). Improvisations are stimulated by a range of starting points, some clearly set, and others extremely open. Tim Etchells, a member of UK Forced Entertainment, described their devising process as one in which the actors:

> [...] had this unspoken agreement that no one would bring anything too completed to the
> process – a few scraps or fragments of text, an idea or two for action, costume, an idea about
> space, a sketched-out piece of music – everything unfinished, distinctly incomplete – so there'd
> be more spaces for other things to fill in … more dots to join. (Etchells 1999, p. 51)

Many of the artists and companies that have built their work through devising were driven by their desire to be the creators of the work they performed, as opposed to performing in

writers-theatre[3]. For instance, when the improvisation-based Australian Performing Group created political satire and other works in the 1970s they were devised due to a dissatisfaction with the status quo – white-male dominated theatre, British colonialism – and wanted a flexible immediacy to their work, often fuelled by protests. The genesis of their new works came about through experimentation to make an impact in street protests. From this, actors became more creatively empowered and recognised the need for strong improvisation skills as performers had 'a great notion of the transforming power of the play' (Heddon & Milling 2006, p. 46).

2.2 Literature that helps make sense of the actor's tools

After twenty-plus years observing and working with actors-in-training, it was clear to me that none of the main approaches to the teaching of acting had every solution for every individual, and that actors build upon a base of technique to incorporate new experiences and continually develop their individual process. Actors respond to the natural, human and developed world and so, therefore, engaging with new developments in other fields is also a natural progression. Some of the concepts inherent in acting – duality, presence, spontaneity, impulse, imagination – can also be understood by engaging with literature that interrogates the same concepts from different fields of study. This section therefore introduces a broader palette of literature that informs my study and understanding of the actor's practice and creative processes.

Stanislavski was preoccupied with the idea of the dual consciousness of acting, whereby an actor is aware of both being on stage in front of an audience and being in character in a set of imaginary 'given circumstances' (Stanislavsky 2003, p. 75). Bella Merlin notes that 'the balance between absorption-in-a-role and awareness-of-the-artificial-environment lies at the heart of an actor's art' (2013, p. 61). Chekhov also struggled with the dual conflicts to 'improvise within set limits' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67) and sought to develop his acting teaching to foster this ability in the actors.

The practice of acting in performance is what matters, rather than the amount of knowledge about acting an actor may have. So, maintaining engagement with the art form – rather than only knowledge of it – remains most important. 'Clearly acting is not an either/or state of cognition' (Carlin-Metz 2013, p. 35).

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[3] Writers-theatre refers to works performed using a text written by a playwright wherein the actors job is to bring the writer's words, intention and characters to life.

Privileging theory over practice, in the early days of rehearsal, means the actor is more likely to be mannered, thoughtful, predictable, and performing 'correctly' when acting. However, through the actor's deep practice, craft skills become available unconsciously and the theory becomes invisible. This is when the actor embodies the changes that have occurred in rehearsal and is acting from the 'ultimate consciousness' (Morris 2000a). The preparation they do enables them to not 'think' at the moment of performance and still be able to organically incorporate the essence of their being and their detailed preparations. The performance can appear as if it is happening for the very first time, regardless of the number of performances. It is therefore helpful to think of performance in relation to both theory and practice, to see what an actor is doing and how this informs the performance.

As an analytical framework, Practice Theory makes a substantial contribution to understanding diverse issues, including 'the nature of subjectivity, embodiment, rationality, meaning, and normativity' (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & von Savigny 2005, p. 10). David Bloor points to Wittgenstein's ideas about what is most privileged: theory over practice or practice over theory, saying that when we follow rules, we act blindly (Bloor 2005, p. 103). Wittgenstein proposes that neither one is the most important and, in some instances, practice and theory can be equal. Conflicts between 'traditional' philosophy, which privileges theory over practice, and 'conservative' philosophy, which privileges practice over theory, highlights the deep conflicts between each tradition (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & von Savigny 2005, p. 94).

In order to be present, spontaneous, natural and believable, actors try to 'not think' while they are acting. Thinking is considered to be the antithesis to being present, as thinking draws the actor either back into the past of memory (rehearsal, lines, personal history) or forward into the future (preparing for the next action, line, fear of forgetting what to do or say). If either of these backwards or forwards thoughts is present in performance, it is not spontaneous, and the actor is not in a 'being' state.

So, there is a tension, rather than a conflict, between working hard to remain playful. It is significant that the actor's process manages this tension in a way that develops the kind of 'dual consciousness' sought by Chekhov (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67). Damasio (2012, p. 69/370) also points to this duality in his examination of the construction of the conscious brain in humans through an understanding of the brain's mapping ability. From this examination of key aspects of acting, it is clear that actors are searching for access to an integration of all aspects of themselves in order to serve their work. The next section relates to studies in neuroscience,

consciousness and embodiment to provide insights that help to understand the actor's process.

2.2.1 On consciousness, embodiment and deep practice

> Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the very thing that makes you good.
> (Gladwell 2008, p. 445/3588)

Actors experiment with their physicality, emotions and expressivity to embody a character and their actions through 'deep practice'. In *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle draws on research to reveal how talent and ability can be created and nurtured. He adopted the term 'deep practice' and identifies its three rules: breaking an activity down into small pieces (chunks); repeating it in a concentrated way; and finally learning to feel it (2010, p. 207).

> Deep practice is built on a paradox: struggling in certain targeted ways – operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes – makes you smarter. Or to put it a slightly different way, experiences where you're forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them [….] end up making you swift and graceful without your realising it. (Coyle 2010, p. 17)

The actor's process mirrors this closely. Deep practice is not comfortable, it involves trying, failing, trying again and failing again. 'Through deep practice, we can actually change the structure of our brains in ways that can sustain and enrich our creative talents' (Eckard 2013, p. 54).

Importantly, actors are aware of the sense of feeling in the body and by learning to feel the changes as they occur, the actor develops mind-body connection, as 'aspects of one organic process', where 'meaning, thought and language are deeply sourced in our bodies' (Eckard 2013, p. 46).

An emphasis on reacting on impulse or 'kinaesthetic response', is vital to the improvisational and experimental stages of the creative process so that intuitive, spontaneous and committed responses are possible. Eckard claims that spontaneity discourages 'reacting to reactions', which is an 'unconscious reflex to respond and analyse the initial response' or, in other words, 'second dart reactions' (2013, p. 51). When spontaneity is uninterrupted, the actor's intuitive, instinctive, organic response is revealing, raw, and conveys truth with energy and impact.

With a 'second dart reaction', however, a set of thoughts, or habits, occurs in between the stimuli being received and the response, so that the intuitive response is interrupted and replaced with a referred 'managed' response that is less effective in performance. The second

dart reaction is likely to be the result of the individual actor's socialised behaviour, rather than what might be demanded of the character in that situation. Actors learn to recognise this 'second dart' phenomenon, but not act on it, to reach the 'sweet spot' (Coyle 2010, p. 19), which is 'the moment of creativity where participants lose a sense that they are consciously controlling the outcome' (Eckard 2013, p. 51). In acting terms this is what being 'present' and fully embodied looks, and feels, like.

So, with awareness of how deep practice can overcome this second-dart phenomenon and change the brain, the actor unlearns, or unlocks, learned behaviour patterns in order to be more spontaneous and creative. This requires time and, in neuro-scientific terms, 're-wiring' to develop knowledge through technique and practice. Spatz argues that 'embodied practice is epistemic. It is structured by and productive of knowledge' (Spatz 2014, p. 26/280). He clarifies:

> The nature of technique by suggesting that agency can be sedimented in and as embodiment, even when we are not consciously aware of it. We know from theorists of the 'practice turn' that knowledge is not fully available to consciousness. (Spatz 2014, p. 50/280)

The way we make meaning of our lives is also through our visceral experiences (Johnson 2007, p. 100/6777). Reason and imagination are grounded in our bodily experiences because the imagination is 'tied to our bodily processes and can also be creative and transformative of experience' (Johnson 2007, p. 13). Johnson argues for the use of cognitive neuroscience as a means to better understand the lived experience and the embodied mind to provide a richer view of meaning-making. Further, he suggests that aesthetics become the basis of any profound understanding of meaning and thought: 'Aesthetics is properly an investigation of everything that goes into human meaning-making', and the arts are 'exemplary cases of consummated meaning' (Johnson 2007, p. 96/6777).

Damasio uses the phrase 'stepping into the light' as a powerful metaphor for the arrival of consciousness, or 'the birth of the knowing mind' and the 'coming of the sense of self into the world of the mental' (Damasio 2000, p. 3). Neurological and neuropsychological evidence that 'consciousness and emotion are not separable' (Damasio 2000, p. 16) suggests that when consciousness arises at, or immediately after, moments when one moves past the known into the unknown, the felt- and mental-worlds may integrate.

> If it is true that core consciousness is the rite of passage into knowing, it is equally true that the levels of knowing which permit human creativity are those which only extended consciousness allow. (Damasio 2000, p. 17)

Recent work in the field of neuroscience describes the link between the mind and body in new ways. Damasio (2012) explains that the complex human brain makes maps of the structures that comprise the body. Unlike objects and events that are outside the body, the body remains in contact with the brain. The brain not only maps the structures – bones, organs, muscles – it also maps the perceptive sites – the senses. The signals from the outside world reach the brain through the senses and the changes made to the body by the external source are mapped in the brain. Damasio also shows that knowledge of this mapping, and the close relationship of the body and brain, brings us closer to 'understanding something else that is central to our lives: spontaneous bodily feelings, emotions and emotional feelings' (2012, p. 92). Hagman suggests self-psychology offers a model of the creative process that may also be applicable to other creative fields: 'One crucial area of the psychology of the artist that has continually challenged and eluded analytic theorists is the psychodynamics of the creative process itself' (2005, p. 61).

Gladwell describes the instantaneous decisions we take, that we often can't explain in words, as the result of 'thin-slicing' (2005, p. 23), where our unconscious finds patterns in situations and behaviours based on very narrow slices of experience. Intuitive thin-sliced experience is used when sports are played, actors act, and humans experience a 'gut feeling'.

The actor uses the two minds: the conscious that has researched the character, learned lines, rehearsed, learnt the stage rules; and the unconscious, which is responding in-the-moment to the actual stimuli being received. The more finely tuned the ability to integrate both 'minds', the more reliable the acting response. As Gladwell says, 'spontaneity is only possible when everyone first engages in hours of highly repetitive and structured practice' (2005, p. 144/254). The actor's ability to structure their practice and become spontaneous within the boundaries agreed for any performance, is a unique phenomenon.

2.2.2 On neuroscience, mind, body and experience

The field of neuroscience has branched into various disciplinary refinements, with the different foci of neuroscientific research including cognitive neuroscience, affective neuroscience and neuro-phenomenology. These last two offer some interesting ways of interpreting the human experience and a relationship between emotions, instincts and embodied conditioning. Developments in neuroscience have revealed measures and descriptors for how we think, feel, create, respond and behave, or in other words, what actors explore in their process. There is growing interest and research amongst artists to engage with their art and neuroscience.

Neuroscience has discounted Descarte's long-held view that the rational mind was supreme, as in 'I think therefore I am' (Carlin-Metz 2013, p. 34). It is possible that acting can offer some insights and a new paradigm for the study of a relationship between mind and emotions. 'One of the most important and most neglected topics in neuroscience is the attempt to understand how emotional feelings are generated' (Panksepp 2004b, p. 4). Damasio makes the distinction between emotion and feeling thus:

> While emotions are actions accompanied by ideas and certain modes of thinking, emotional feelings are mostly perceptions of what our bodies do during the emoting, along with perceptions of our state of mind during that same period of time. (Damasio 2012, p. 110).

As an actor becomes able to feel the changes in their body as they occur, they begin to integrate their learning and mind-body connection, so that a full understanding becomes deeply sourced in their bodies (Eckard 2013, p. 46) and when the imagination is also fully integrated in the body it can be 'transformative of experience' (Johnson 2007, p. 13). Descriptions of transformative experiences can be slippery, one of which might be 'the embodiment of consciousness' (Damasio 2000, p. 3) given the neurological and neuropsychological evidence that 'consciousness and emotion are not separable' (Damasio 2000, p. 16).

The experience of creativity is a cognitive-emotional-manipulative one in which low levels of neural arousal during creative ideation permit the scattered, multi-directionally distributed thinking necessary for innovative ideas (Gnezda 2011, pp. 47 - 8). Gnezda also explains that in the early stages of a creative process, a person's energy is low with defocussed attention governed by alpha waves in the brain that produce pleasant, wakeful rest, suggesting that thinking is inward looking to:

> Accumulate sensory and intellectual information and seeking associations. At some point, a significant coalescence of thought occurs and enters consciousness [...] revealed to the creator as an inspiration, 'flash of insight', 'illumination', 'envisioned impulse toward a certain goal. (Gnezda 2011, p. 49. Citing Lowell, Jung, Ghiselein, Wallas and Sessions.)

This coalescence produces a peak emotional experience that energises the person to move forward with the idea into a stage of implementation. This stage alternates between intense, inspiration-fuelled, energised concentration and in frustration as problems arise with the implementation (Gnezda 2011, p. 49). When the creation is going well, the person is in joy-

filled 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1996), but for most of the time, the joy gives way to doubt when new problems arise needing new solutions, skills and application. The frustration and doubt stems from the difficulty of realising what has been 'seen' as a visual, complex association of images that 'arrived' as inspiration. Although, once a creative project is complete, the person's mood may elevate, they often also feel a sense of disappointment as their product, 'executed by an imperfect person with imperfect abilities' (Gnezda-Smith 1994) doesn't meet their expectations. Since the peak emotional experience is during the inspiration stage, achieving the goal of the creation can be less gratifying than might be expected.

High	Anxiety	Arousal	Flow
Challenge level	Worry		Control
Low	Apathy	Boredom	Relaxation

| Low | Skill level | High |
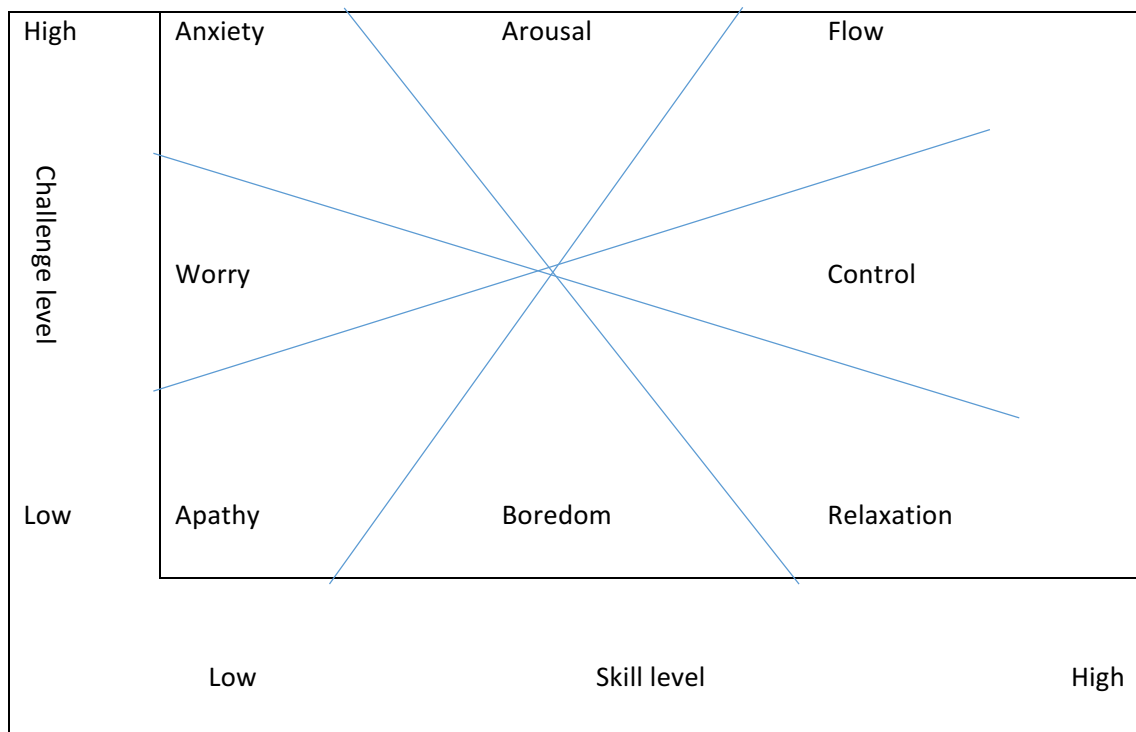
Figure 1 Mental state in terms of challenge and skill level based on Flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990)

In a recent study designed to gain information on creativity's underlying neuro-physiological process, Saggar et al. (2015b) found that higher creative results were associated with low activity in the executive function centre of the brain and with higher activation in the cerebellum (pp. 1-2). The human cerebellum – or primitive brain – has a robust connection to the motor cortex, the higher movement-control centre – and to other parts of the brain as well – and appears to do a lot more than coordination of movement. Saggar et al. (2015a, pp. 29-39) speculate that the cerebellum may model new types of behaviour as more frontally located cortical regions make initial attempts to acquire those behaviours. They suggest that as the cerebellum 'takes over' and subconsciously perfects the behaviour, it frees the cortical

areas for new challenges. They further speculate that it is likely that the cerebellum is the coordination centre for the rest of the brain allowing other regions to be more efficient.

Recent findings link our bodily movements, creativity and cognitive functions. If Saggar et al.'s claim is correct – 'that activation of the executive control centres[4] is negatively associated with task performance' (2015b, p. 3) then this research into the actors' process, and its focus on not-thinking, may encourage further research into acting with a particular focus on the measurement of actors' creativity, not by cognition – the executive control centre – but by whole-body processes.

Jaak Panksepp's early studies into social loss proposed that the field of neuroscience must remain open to both human and animal affective experiences (2003, p. 238). This was supported by his research that suggested that core emotional feelings may be explained as 'human experience arising from the instinctual emotional action systems of ancient regions of the mammalian brain' (2004a, p. 30). His particular interest was in developing a science of animal consciousness, and to do that he worked from a premise of 'dual-aspect monism' (2004a, p. 32), which says that affective consciousness 'emerges from large-scale neuro-dynamics of a variety of emotional systems that coordinate instinctual emotional actions'. Given that actors strive to access an instinctual response to stimuli, by structuring practice to develop their spontaneity, the concepts proposed by Panksepp could conceivably enhance the ability to access the neuro-dynamics of the emotions to develop instinctual impulses.

A cognitive approach can be employed to explore 'how learning is embodied, to discuss concepts of 'transformation' through performance, to analyse the experiences of the participant/spectator and the processes involved in the production of meaning' (Shaughnessy 2012, p. xvii). Some of the perceived difficulties of working in an integrated way with acting, performance theory and science grows out of common and mistaken 'artificial binaries such as science vs. art, thinking vs. feeling and reason vs. emotion' (Blair 2008, p. 5). Rhonda Blair focuses on the impact of mirror neurons and empathy to explore imagination and action with cognitive linguistics (2009a, p. 94).

Like McConachie and Blair, among a number of actors, theatre academics and directors, I am excited by the possibilities that some areas of neuroscience offer to explain and provide insights into acting. It also offers a plethora of rich wonderment for creative investigation as evidenced by theatre shows being developed. One theatre show in the Sydney Festival in

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[4] The parts that enable us to plan, organise and manage our activities

2 Literature and Contextual Review

2015, entitled 'I Guess if the Stage Exploded', was an inventive solo act involving a live owl, created by Bristol-based German performer, Silvia Rimat. She created the show by, firstly, working closely with a neuroscientist, after which she explored, in action, the notion of memory, and tested the neuroscientific explanations she had received interactively with the audience.

> I am aware that as a non-scientist, I am seduced by the opportunity to embed neuroscience into my own explanations, to 'encourage people to believe they have received a scientific explanation when they have not'. (Weisberg et al. 2007, p. 470)

Jill Bolte-Taylor is a neuro-anatomist who suffered a brain haemorrhage and stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain. She was, therefore, in a unique position to describe her experience as the left hemisphere of the brain shut down, and what she learned through recovery, about the differences between the right and left hemispheres of the brain (Bolte-Taylor 2006). In her book, My Stroke of Luck, she offers a detailed description of what the right hemisphere experiences, when the left hemisphere is inactive, as it did in her case: being without language, feeling part of an enormous energetic system without boundaries, and the enormous experience of being present in that moment connected to everyone and everything, without a past or future. Her experience shed light on, not only the workings of the brain but also into a fundamental acting principle. The inner peace and expansiveness described by Bolte-Taylor when operating only in the brain's right hemisphere – that she describes as consciousness – provides a rare clue about what is occurring in the brain when an actor is 'present'. It may also explain, to some extent, why it is so difficult to describe the experience, as that would require language from the left hemisphere.

The way we think about our lives reveals three cognitive traps: our reluctance to admit to complexity; a confusion between experience and memory; and the focusing illusion that leads to distortion (Kahneman 2010, p. 0:45). If we accept complexity and Kahneman's 'two selves' (the experiencing self and the remembering self), then reflecting immediately after an experience is more likely to capture the 'experiencing self' moment-to-moment, even though it is the 'remembering self' whose job it is to 'maintain the story of our life' (Kahneman 2010, p. 2:45). Frequent reflections in this study, therefore, were useful to detect the research and creative 'story', drawing on the experiencing self.

Malafouris's hypothesises that the intertwining of cognition with material culture supports the argument that the ties between materiality and memory are strong (2004, p. 58). He suggests that it is possible for the mind 'to operate without having to do so […] to think through things,

in action, without the need of mental representation' and that the synergy of brains, bodies and things, creates mind: 'the mind is more than the brain' (Malafouris 2016, p. 227).

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                        Embodied
                      The body in the mind


   Enacted                                          Distributed
   Mind as a living system                          Beyond the individual

                        COGNITION AS


   Extended                                         Mediated
   Beyond the skin                                  Socially embedded


                        Situated
                        In action
```
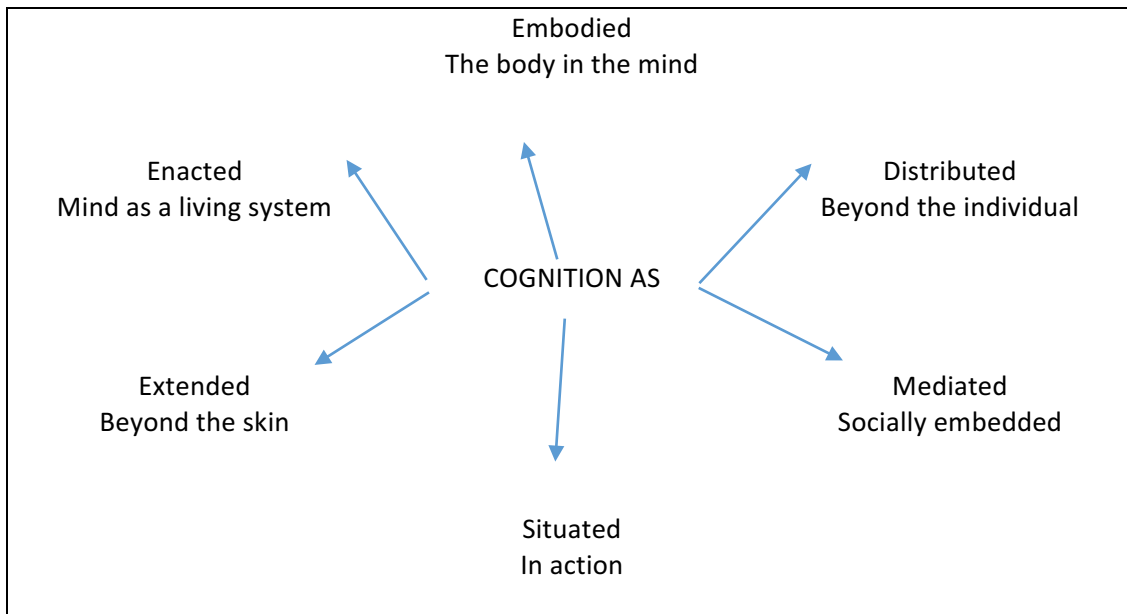
Figure 2 Many facets of cognition from 'Mind beyond cognition'. (Malafouris 2004, p. 57)

Over ten years, Manning and Masssumi (2014) analysed the experiential work of a number of artists across different forms of practice, to explore how art and philosophy can 'co-compose'.

> Philosophy's outside is a generative environment. Philosophy does not yet know how to speak. Its thinking is active, uneasy because always in the encounter. Giving words to the encounter is what we have attempted to do here. (Manning & Massumi 2014, pp. vii-x)

Unlike many neuroscientists, they were less excited by recent advances in brain imaging technology, which led to the wave of research to find neural 'correlates' of experiential events. They claimed these 'neural correlates', err in presupposing 'the dichotomy between the determinately physical and the fickly perceptual' (Manning & Massumi 2014, p. 19). Instead, they proposed a less reductive model, that they call neurodiversity, which is enhanced by 'coming alive in a world of texture'. From their research with artists, dancers, writers and other researchers, they developed a set of propositions that reveal what they call 'thought in the act' (2014).

From an acting and creative development point of view, this set of propositions is recognisable and similar to the actor's processes, containing variables, twists and turns. In an adaption of Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 204), Manning and Massumi remind us 'art is not chaos, it is a composition of chaos' (2014, p. 133).

2.3 Literature summary

Discourse in actor training from advocates of Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Chekhov, Brook, Morris, Merlin, Grotowski, Barba and other philosophies of acting training, are centred on methods to integrate body, mind and spirit/psyche. We see that these various approaches to acting methodology share a recognition of the inherent complexity of the minded, physical, conscious and embodied art of acting, and the search for integration of the actor's 'being' in order that the audience can gain meaning from a performance.

When an actor trains, rehearses and applies depth to their practice, they change the structure of their brains (Blair 2008; Bogart 2015; Coyle 2010; Eckard 2013). Actors employ a range of approaches that prepare them holistically for performance that shifts their patterned responses to stimuli therefore releasing an intuitive response that embodies the instant of extended consciousness in a creative state.

By exploring how the actor's learning is embodied, through a range of lenses, we come to understand the value of the non-rational, imaginative, feeling mind, and its potential to create transformative, embodied experiences, made possible by the 'plasticity and openness of acting as a discipline to embrace this inter-disciplinarity' (Blair 2008, p. xvii). Theatre-makers like Brook, Mnouchkine, Lepage and others enable environments in which actors may play, explore, and discover what 'lays hidden from their conscious minds' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 592/5141) to devise impactful theatre. Dual consciousness, or the dual senses of awareness that is inherent in acting, is key to the devising process to 'improvise within set limits' (Chamberlain 2010, p. 67).

Understanding these concepts is important to actors, theatre practitioners and practising academics in the community. To reach a new understanding of the actor's process and how inherently valuable the acting processes are to developing one's self knowledge and creativity, I looked beyond acting into fields that also are investigating the human condition. Increasingly, theatre and performance academics and practitioners are collaborating with neuroscientists to compare and develop their research findings (Blair & Cook 2016; Eckard 2013; Shaughnessy 2012). Literature in this area is increasing rapidly in volume, to further develop this interdisciplinary field including the most recent used in this review – a collection of articles around theatre, performance and cognition (Blair & Cook 2016).

A trans-disciplinary enquiry was a suitable approach for this research. It added value to the growing body of research in performance studies that connects neuroscience with an

understanding of acting and creativity. The literature reveals an opening to investigate how to better word the actor's process that leads to a transformative embodiment of their creative self. Cognitive neuroscience does not yet explain the complexity of the acting phenomena, and it is likely that the ostensive descriptive language commonly used by actors will continue to describe what is occurring neurologically. However, this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the growing field of investigation into performance through a neuroscience lens. It also suggests that by focusing on embodiment, there may be a further contribution made to the fields of learning, education and creative practice.

From these studies, we can see that acting is the result of a sort of alchemy and it offers valuable insights and new ways to think about the mind, brain and body. They indicate that further investigation in the field will add to the increasing body of knowledge at the intersection of acting, creative practice and cognitive and neuroscience. Research that uses practice, and art, to investigate philosophical notions of understanding is pertinent. Manning and Massumi, for instance, explore creative practice as a form of thinking and challenge philosophy to 'compose with concepts already on their way in another mode, in the mode of artistic practice, in the mode of event-formation, of activism, of dance, even of everyday perception' (2014, pp. vii-x).

The literature reviewed helped shape the approach this research took and showed that, in order to deeply investigate the research questions, there needed to be close involvement with the actor's process itself. The following chapter sets out the philosophical and methodological approach to the design, implementation and analysis of the research project.

Chapter 3   Methodology and Reflective Practice

> The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. (Einstein 1931)

3.1.   Introduction

The research was designed to investigate these questions:

- How might the actor's process and creative alchemy that develops embodied transformation be understood and re-worded through a new lens?
- What can we learn from a new understanding of transformative embodiment in relation to understanding the creative process as a whole?

From the review of the literature, and what is known about the creativity involved in devising a work for theatre, alchemical possibilities were signposted. Due to the inbuilt uncertainties and vulnerabilities of the actor's process and devising as a research site, the methodologies also needed to be flexible and responsive. A qualitative study of the actors' preparations, creative explorations and rehearsals during the devising process of a theatrical work, was chosen to provide a way of working that supports 'intuition, spontaneity and an accumulation of ideas' (Oddey 1994, p. 1). The study aimed to identify the elements that bring about transformation, to help make them visible, and to better understand the actor's embodiment. To achieve this, I used the mixed research strategy set out in the rest of the chapter.

By choosing to honour and situate the research within a theatrical devising process, there was no certainty of the outcomes of either the creative work or of the research's direction. Uncertainty can be seen as a potentially positive state and a 'source of possibilities' for the investigation. Embracing uncertainty may unlock the mystery that Eisenberg suggests aids creativity and 'how we think about our place in the world, our sense of identity' (2001, p. 534). A devised performance was the ideal site for study, due to its process-led 'collective creativity' stages (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 557/5141).

Through the process of making a piece of theatre, actors participate in an imaginative process of exploration, discovery and embodying their responses. Being part of a theatrical production in which the actors and director collaborate, is one wherein the actor invests and shares much of him or herself. The environment in which the work is rehearsed therefore demands respect, honesty, confidentiality, generosity and empathy, and when these are all present, the process

develops fluidly, enhancing each actor's experience and opportunity for breakthroughs and transformative moments.

In this chapter, Section 3.2 discusses the implications of researching actors' process and the considerations made to conceive the field work. Section 3.3 then introduces and explains the mixed-method framework selected for the research. Section 3.4 sets out the research plan designed to conduct the research and also describes the ethical considerations, recruitment strategy and data collection tools used. The implementation of the research is explained in Section 3.5 from the selection of actors, working with the uncertainties inherent in the creative process and with volunteer actors over a period of time, with notes limitations of the study. Finally, Section 3.6 summarises the chapter.

3.2.   Researching the actor's creative practice

At some point in their career and practice, most artists will have described their work as a form of research, research which is grounded in the practice itself and that informs their personal ongoing practice. Creative practice-as-research, however, has practice at the heart of the research and focuses on the development of ways of knowing from that practice in order to reach new understanding; this new understanding contributes original knowledge that can be distributed and be of use to others and to further the field. In Linda Candy's guide to practice-based research, she draws on Scrivener's point that the critical difference is that practiced-based research:

> [...] aims to generate culturally novel apprehensions that are not just novel to the creator or individual observers of an artefact; and it is this that distinguishes the researcher from the practitioner. (Candy 2006, p. 2)

Taking a creative approach to the investigation of the complexity of the actor's process mirrors the devising process itself. Creative practice, which in this instance is devising a performance, involves intrinsic research of a kind but is different to academic research in essential ways. Where academic research usually starts with a question, a hypothesis or un-tested theory, in creative practice the exploratory research drives the formation of questions and searches for heuristic solutions by drawing on intuition and developments for its direction. Finding – or refining – the questions and the articulation of the problem and solution occurs within, and during, the creative process itself. The creative process of this research adapted and changed along the way, in line with the creative development of a new work for theatre. I acquired new directions and additional or altered questions that were unknown prior to the start. I hoped to

identify, and clearly describe, what transformative, embodied experience looked like in significant creative moments, and also identify any effect on the direction a work might take as a result.

3.2.1. Current research

An increasing number of theatre practitioners and artists are wanting to incorporate an element of academic inquiry into their practice to gain a deeper understanding of their own practice, share the knowledge gained from their practice and access new knowledge. The field of performance research is becoming increasingly cutting edge, as reflective practitioner/researchers also engage with the ideas emerging from other disciplines. Studies in embodiment, consciousness and neuroscience investigate the blending of mind and body, imagination and substance, and imagination and stories, and help articulate the alchemy of the actor's art.

3.2.2. Focus on the process of live performance

Research in the field of live theatre performance, such as McAuley (2008), focused on the play text, approaches to stage the play, the rehearsal and preparations for the final production and the context of performance. However, more recent research into the actor's process to reach a performance focused on the various schools of thought in acting techniques and relevant rehearsal exercises, and approaches specific to the style or period of the play. In cases where devised work has been the context for study, it mostly has been focused on the ideas and processes of the director, and their vision for the piece.

This study, therefore, fills a gap by focusing on unpacking what the actor brings to the creative collaborative devising process, and how the director's process likewise unfolds towards the development of an original, unscripted work.

3.2.3. Considerations for the research of creative process

To effectively devise a work for theatre collaboratively, a number of factors need to be considered. The actors and the director must be experienced and skilled in improvisational process; the process boundaries must be broad enough to allow for experimentation, play and surprise; the vision for the work must convey meaning; and it must meet any fixed limits. These limits include the many practical realities of staging, budget and deadlines to promote the work and gain an audience within an appropriate time frame. The complexities of this process therefore provided a number of challenges for the research.

The research was interested in the alchemy of the actor's process, and as my role was both the researcher and the director, consideration needed to be given to the management of these dual roles and the challenges they presented.

3.3. Ethno-phenomenological, performative research and cooperative-action research as a mixed methodology

A number of qualitative methodologies provide valuable frameworks with which to design creative practice research. For this study, a mixed methodological framework was used, calling on the traditions of ethno-phenomenology and action research, to scaffold reflective practice-led research.

There is a recent move in performative research toward an examination of cognitive studies and neuroscience has entered current interpretations of theatre. In her 2012 study into applied theatre from the perspective of cognitive studies, Nicola Shaughnessy accepted Bruce McConachie's invitation to scholars to incorporate insights of cognitive science into their work and 'begin considering all of their research projects from the perspective of cognitive studies' (Shaughnessy 2012, p. xvii). Neuro-phenomenology is a term coined in the early 1990s for the re-interpretation of both cognitive and affective neuroscience to 'study experience from the perspective of the embodied condition of the human mind' (Gordon 2013, p. xii). So, knowing this, I will employ Etchell's idea of 'creative borrowing' (1999), to apply a cognitive approach to discuss concepts of transformation through performance.

3.3.1   Distinctions between practice-led and practice-based research

Where both traditional models of quantitative and qualitative research design stem from a foundation of a research question, practice-led researchers may instead be led by 'an enthusiasm of practice' (Haseman 2006, p. 100). They rely on being able to make claims of knowledge and research outputs to be in the form of their practice, rather than in the traditionally used words or tables of qualitative and quantitative methods respectively.

Qualitative research gained acceptance in the 1980s and 90s where new 'post-positivism' approaches to human enquiry, led by Guba, Denzin, Lincoln for example (Denzin & Lincoln 1999) were referred to as 'new paradigm research'. Carole Gray (2006) argued for practice-led research to take its rightful, legitimate place amongst the development of research methodologies. Haseman claimed that performative research – which has been fuelled by the practices of artist-researchers and is the most appropriate for them – will 'come to be

recognised and valued as one of the three major research paradigm' (2006, p. 106). Some traditional qualitative researchers are uncomfortable with the performance turn. Yet, it shares many features of qualitative research but with outputs in a different form whereby artefacts, objects and representations may form the research outputs, rather than in discourse. Practice-led research is increasingly accepted as a valid research methodology within academia for the creative arts.

A performance turn in research (Lincoln & Denzin 2003) is increasingly accepted in a number of institutions where creative practice forms the foundation of research inquiry. The growth in performance research is disrupting the acceptable distinguishers of qualitative and quantitative research, in much the same way that the development of qualitative research disrupted the constraints of quantitative research. The qualitative research method informs 'research-on-practice' and provides strategies and observation methods to position practice as an object of study (Haseman 2006, p. 99). Many terms have been developed for performative research – practice-as-research, research-on-practice, practitioner-research, practice-based research, practice-led research – all of which have practice at the heart of the research. In Australia, practice-led research and practice-based research are used most commonly, and the distinction between them is the subject of some disagreement between institutions[5]. For this research, I am a practitioner investigating process but not concerned with a final product, therefore the output is a thesis informed by practice and I use the University of Technology (UTS) nomenclature of practice-led research (Candy 2006) as set out below.

a. Practice-led research

Practice-led research is 'concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice' (Candy 2006, p. 1). At UTS practice-led research is described as a traditional thesis undertaken by a researcher, who may or may not be a practicing artist themselves, without the inclusion of creative work.

Practice-led research provided the most suitable approach for this study because the creation of the final product was not the focus of the research, instead, the processes and developments of the various exploratory and development phases of creativity within the process were of most importance. For this study into the actors' process, creative collaboration was also important, and the removal of the need for a final finished product took

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[5] For instance, at QUT research that leads to a creative work as output is referred to as practice-led research, and research that is undertaken into a creative artist, their work, the field or a combination of these, is referred to as practice-based research. At UTS the same two kinds of research are used, but referred to with the terms reversed.

pressure from the process for a quality artefact and allowed the focus to be given to the actors and creative process itself in the time that was available.

b.   Practice-based research

Practice-based research, on the other hand, is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. This research applies to an individual creative artist deeply immersed in, and reflective of, their own art form whilst they undertake the creation of an artefact. At UTS, practice-based research leads to the creation of an artefact by an artist supported by an exegesis.

3.3.2   Ethno-phenomenology

In the field of performance research there is increasing recognition of 'the value of ethnographic theory and practice in the emerging field of rehearsal study' (McAuley 2008, p. 276) which, like this study, is concerned with the individual in the collective process. Commonly, an ethnographer would participate, 'overtly or covertly', in people's daily lives for an extended period of time (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, p. 1). As a participant-observer in this research, and considering that the daily-life of an actor occurs most purely when amongst their 'tribe' while being active in their acting, consideration was given to ethnography as a methodology. It is useful to consider a group of actors as owners of a shared culture with a way of working and communicating that cannot be excluded from a study of their actions and processes. Therefore, an ethnographic theory and practice in rehearsal study is an appropriate methodology to understand actors, who are identifiable, and come into being, in their natural environment: a rehearsal room or performance space.

By sharing an understanding of acting techniques, improvisation and creative collaboration, a group of actors and a director can communicate their ideas and imaginings in many verbal and non-verbal ways. These are understood, and often developed, by them as they work together within their creative processes. They may use symbolic and other synthesised cues to hold the complexities in an abbreviated form, clearly understood by them all. An ethnographic study would therefore provide a way of understanding these processes. Taken further, ethnography also highlights a challenge for the study, in that there are 'difficulties involved in writing about the minutiae of actors' work processes' (McAuley 2008, p. 277) in part for these same reasons.

What was needed was the collection of deep, rich data, gathered over time, and in a context particular to the individual's, and the group's, actions, that could highlight the meaning and significance of their experience. In seeking a methodological approach that would be useful in

understanding the actor's embodied experience, I naturally turned to a phenomenological approach which goes deeper than what is simply seen and heard, and highlights 'the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our life-world' (Smith 2013, p. 1). In particular, an approach was needed that extended its focus from an 'exclusive concern with the everyday, to such non-everyday practices as acting' (Zarrilli 2004, p. 654). Zarilla proposed a post-Merleau-Ponty phenomenological model of the four closely related 'bodies' which the actor negotiates during performance (2004, pp. 655-65):

1. the 'ecstatic' surface body that receives sensorial information;
2. the 'recessive' visceral body, that experiences at corporeal depths;
3. the 'aesthetic inner-bodymind', which is the realm of 'extra-daily perception and experience associated with long-term, in-depth engagement'; and
4. the 'aesthetic outer body', that is the body offered to the gaze of the audience.

Phenomenology adds rich detail of the lived-embodied-experience of the actors' process and all elements that influence their actions and the experience they have of them. Like ethnography, it allows for research of the individual, the self, within their experience and their culture.

3.3.3   Participatory action research

Both creative practice and practice-led research is a 'journey of exploration' (Gray 2006, p. 6) that acknowledges the involvement and interaction of the researcher with the research materials and context, in a similar manner to the way action research acknowledges all participants, as both subject and object, within it.

Action research provides a deep understanding of the action that takes place within a creative development, from the perspective of the individual actors and the director/researcher. It considers how both perspectives affect the shaping of the creative work that emerges from those actions. Action research methodologies therefore also provided useful frameworks. This approach to data-gathering allowed the actors' experiences to be documented from their individual perspectives, my own individual experience as an artist/director, my perceptions whilst observing the actors, and, finally, the group's collective experiences. A form of action research, the participatory model (Heron & Reason 1997, p. 144), allowed the direction of the research to be influenced and changed by both the participants and the researcher during the process.

Action research is a self-reflective form of research, 'owned' by all, where collaborative forms of action inquiry are developed and owned by the group (Herr 1995, pp. 34-6). As an insider action-researcher (Herr 2015, p. 92), my research had commenced much earlier in my previous practice and had reached a point where it was useful to step back in order to reflect more deeply. The participatory inquiry paradigm of action research is a useful framework for the research design, in that data would be gathered collaboratively. To some degree this mirrors the 'norm' of professional practice in which actors and directors collaboratively devise a theatre work, gathering ideas as research for the collaborative creative process.

So, as well as being practice-led research, the interpretive lens was informed by participatory action research to explore the complexity of the practices and embodied experiences.

METHODOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

Practice-led

Actors   Director

Researcher Bricoleur

Phenomenology   Action Research Cooperative - Participatory
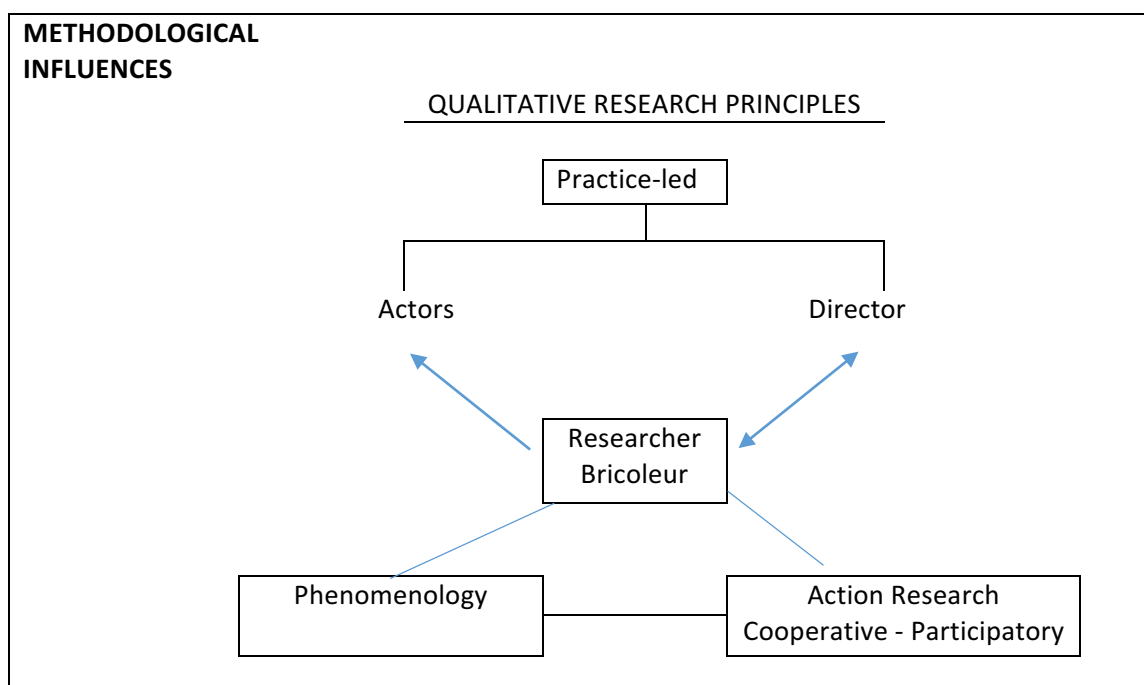
Figure 3 Qualitative research principles

3.3.4   Defining the bricolage approach

The use of a mixed methodology draws on the tradition of the bricoleur to research a complex, process-driven, art-form. Bricolage research is a multi-theory, multi-method approach to inquiry. Matt Rogers draws on Denzin and Lincoln's explanation that a 'methodological bricoleur respects the complexity of meaning-making process by allowing contextual contingencies to dictate which data-gathering and analytical methods to use' (Rogers 2012, p. 5). Hence, bricolage is well suited to cross-disciplinary fields as explained by Kincheloe:

> Ethnography, textual analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, historiography, discourse analysis combined with philosophical analysis, literary analysis,

aesthetic criticism, and theatrical and dramatic ways of observing and making meaning constitute the methodological bricolage. (Kincheloe 2005, p. 335)

The combination of approaches detailed so far in this section – cooperative-action research, ethno-phenomenology, practice-led research – provided a methodological bricolage that was adaptable, and responsive, to findings as the research developed. I therefore connected the research approach to the context of acting practices for gathering the data, whilst allowing the active engagement in the study. Figure 4 below is a depiction of the mixed methodology and research plan.
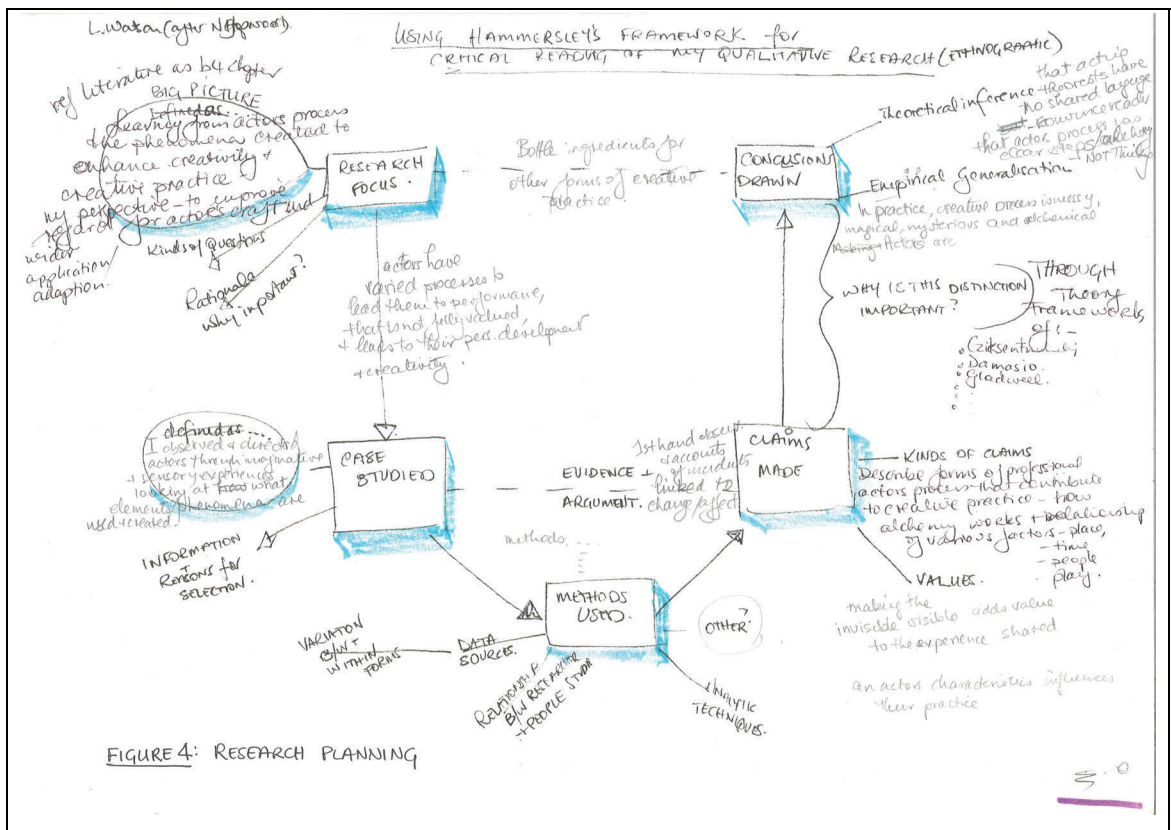
Figure 4 Research planning drawing on Nick Hopwood's adaptation of Hammersley's framework.

3.4   The research plan

Considering the research questions to be addressed, the design of the research needed to provide the optimal environment within which to work with the actors, and to observe and participate, in a process that was richly inventive, creative and open-ended. This enhanced the participants' opportunity to work with their craft in the most creative ways. It was also important to allow time for the process to fully unfold, in a suitable space, equipped with a range of research tools, and to choose entry-points into the creative work. Finally, working

with actors who were experienced, and skilled in improvisation and collaborative creative work meant that the work would develop quickly in the time available.

3.4.1 Research using collaborative devised theatre

While improvisation skills are valuable for any actor, devising performance needs more. Theatrical devising is advanced performance-based work that demands that actors are technically skilled, collaborative, capable of taking risks and skilled improvisers. They needed to experiment with ideas and story, be generous contributors to the collective process, and to freely and bravely explore creative options out of their 'comfort zone'. Working in this way demanded that the actors were comfortable with, and even excited by, the uncertainty of the direction of the work, so they actively contributed to its development. For all these reasons, and more, devising proved to be an ideal, challenging and complex research ground.

Improvisation or improvised theatre is usually one of three forms: long-form, short-form or scripted, that has been generated through improvisation. Devised theatre can be abstract, dramatic, physical, musical, illusionary, and so on, shaped by the special skills and actions of the company of actors, director and designer.

There are a number of devising models frequently used to create theatrical works, and which fall into the three broad categories of: adaptation of an existing story; thematic or issues-driven; and creating from an exploratory process with no fixed starting point. Each of these different models uses source materials to stimulate responses from the actors and director. The adaptation of an existing, usually non-theatrical, text for performance, relies on those creating the performance text to share a common knowledge of the source text, and develop a shared vision for its adaptation. Likewise, creating performance that highlights or investigates an issue or theme, arises from a given set of boundaries and facts known to, and shared by, the creators.

The third form – where there is no 'agreed' starting point – was used in this research. It used the empty space as starting point – no set text, theme, issue, or topic in mind. Instead, there was an invitation to the skilled actors to be inspired by play, use their imagination and each other, to explore ideas and actions, and to accept what emerges, that was shaped by them and the director, to create performance. This form drew influences from a range of theatre-making processes and techniques.

3.4.2   Designing the research tools and resources

Rogers explained that: 'the qualitative researcher as bricoleur, or maker of quilts, uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, developing whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand' (2012, p. 5). For this qualitative mixed-methodological study, a variety of research tools were employed. The primary tools were a mixture of observation media (video, voice recording) and reflective materials (discussions, journals, logs) and some open-ended questioning.

a.   Observation tools

The development process was filmed throughout to capture the embodied experience of the actors, to try and associate it with a felt, transformative experience. The rehearsal/devising process was filmed with cameras set from two vantage points. The first was in mid close-up and, where possible, the camera followed the action, zoomed in to close-up to capture deeper felt experiences. The second camera position was fixed, and set further back, and higher in the auditorium, to record the entire stage working area. Both cameras filmed for the entire rehearsal process, so that any moment could be reviewed at a later date.

I also guided conversations with the actors to gain their direct feedback on any interesting observations and their experience as they unfolded during the process. At times I stopped the rehearsal to do this at a point where I was interested in gaining an immediate response to what was occurring. At other times, an exploration or scene came to natural conclusion for discussion.

The devised collaborative work was developed to a 'work-in-progress showing' stage, and then performed in front of an invited audience on two occasions to test the material and collect their feedback and comments. Following the work-in-progress performance, the audience were able to remain and ask questions and discuss their experience with the actors and me. There were two performances, a night apart, so this process was recorded on the two occasions.

b.   Reflective tools

It was also possible to review the rehearsal footage with the company on occasion for collective discussion to redirect or shape the next phase. I decided, however, that the vulnerabilities of the actors, and the process, would have been compromised by this, so apart

from one occasion, towards the end of the process, where an actor who had missed a key part of a rehearsal, in which key actions were set, needed to 'catch-up'.

I asked a number of questions before, during, and after the research. Formal structured interviews were of little value, given that most actors find it hard to describe the experience of their acting. Guided conversations, however, with the actors, and later with the audience, as well as individual and collaborative reflection were key components of the process.

The actors also recorded regular video journal entries to record their feelings, concerns and responses throughout, and describe how they felt towards the collaborating process. In particular, I was looking for opportunities where an actor described having felt breakthrough or transformative moments so they could be identified and compared them with video footage of that moment. The video log entries at the end of each rehearsal were between three and ten minutes each with an average of three to five minutes. The video logs filmed at the conclusion of each rehearsal by all involved, proved to be key to the analysis.

Similar questions were asked of the whole group at regular intervals in the process. These questions included:

- How do you feel about the process today (or so far)?
- Have you been affected by the process? What triggered that?
- Have you experienced any breakthrough moments? If so, when and what did it feel like?
- Has your input to the creative work been changed because of that? In what way?
- What did you do in the rehearsal?
- Challenging aspects of the rehearsal?
- New ideas or felt experiences?
- Other things that are sensed?

At the conclusion of the research project, the actors also wrote a reflection of the process of approximately one page each.

3.4.3   Ethical considerations

This section provides a summary of the ethical issues in undertaking the research and relates how they were managed. The major considerations for the research included managing the professional relationships of the actors, the safety of the actors, the anonymity of participants,

including the audience, and considerations around ownership of ideas that originated from the creative development.[6]

The actors had all completed a professional tertiary-level acting course, and through my past professional contact with them, they volunteered to participate. There were no perceived or actual potential ethical conflicts due to any pre-existing relationships as these had been professional, not personal. As experienced, trained actors, they were therefore able to quickly accomplish the necessary depth in their work, and they had experience with group-devised work, although to a varying extent.

During the creative development, there was a possibility for injury during any physical exploration. This was minimised due to the training the actors had, and their self-management and mitigation of the risks of rehearsing in high-energy exploratory sessions. They also prepared themselves for rehearsal thoroughly by undertaking physical warm-up activities prior to each rehearsal and I led joint warm-up sessions at the start of each rehearsal. I ensured the venue was safe, free of obstructions for the work, and any likely dangers present were identified at the start and as the work progressed. The venue was also secure so that property was kept safe and uninvited people could not interrupt the process, or walk into the space provided doors were kept secure.

As the research was concerned with what embodiment looked like and how to associate it with a felt, transformative experience, I needed to be able to view filmed footage of the process throughout. Additionally, analysing the individual participant's videoed daily logs, and their contributions to group discussions was important. Each individual was recognisable by appearance in performance, however their identity was replaced with pseudonyms in the thesis. The participants agreed to be identifiable in the creative component, as the work was to be filmed as well as performed in front of an invited audience, so no faces needed to be obscured from the original footage as it was not for public viewing.

At regular intervals throughout the creative development process, there were group discussions and it was each participant's prerogative to reveal as much or as a little of themselves and their opinions, feelings and experience as they were comfortable. Given the professionalism and experience of the individuals and the forging of a strong ensemble, a great deal of trust was afforded the researcher in these discussions. It is industry standard to

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[6] Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of UTS approved the research plan on 15th April 2015.

maintain confidentiality during a creative process – 'what happens in rehearsal, stays in rehearsal' is a common adage. Normal industry practice allows actors to share, and keep confidential, personal revelations whilst respecting the privacy and collaborative devising process.

In the event that any of the collaborators wished to develop the work further beyond this study, the industry standard of authorship applies. Each contributor would be acknowledged as co-creators, and a written agreement would stipulate the ratio of ownership for each party. This was outlined in the participant information sheet for the study.

3.4.4   Recruitment strategy

The ideal number of actors for this project's success was six to ten. Volunteer actors were sourced through existing contacts and networks. A summary of the project fully describing all aspects of the recruitment, induction into the creative development and the research process is included in the project plan.

Appendix 2 Full list of the actors' expectations

The most interest from actors came from theatre practitioners with whom I'd previously worked in the five years preceding. It was important to have an optimal number of participants: too few and the individuals were exposed; too many, and the project, and the research, would become unmanageable. The actors volunteered a significant amount of their time. The original plan was to undertake the creative development over seven to ten consecutive days, in rehearsals of approximately six hours each day, with participants required for every rehearsal. However, due to the availability of the actors, and of a suitable rehearsal space, it was necessary to be more flexible.

3.4.5   Designing the data collection systems

Data was collected from a variety of perspectives: in real time throughout (video footage of the entire exploratory, devising process), periodically through the process (group discussions before and after a rehearsal – and at intervals during the process); and immediately after a period of rehearsal, through individual reflective recordings. Additional data was collected during and following the 'showing' of work-in-progress.

It was originally thought to film the rehearsal process to a high quality and eventually edit together a finished piece of work. However, as the devising would be process-based, the impact of a full shoot would be a hindrance to that sensitive process. Additionally, the need to

create a polished product by the end of the time we had available would take away from the creative process. I therefore decided on a more basic camera setup for the rehearsal, which was less intrusive for the actors and was easier to manage as it did not require full-time camera and sound operators.

3.5 Implementing the research

Of the ten actors who applied and advised their availabilities, one was not suitable due to insufficient actor training and experience, one could not be included because their availability was limited, and the remaining eight were invited to attend the briefing. Before the briefing another two withdrew due to other commitments impinging on their time for the whole process. I was familiar with the remaining six, all of whom met the requirements so there was no need for an audition or further screening.

Fortuitously, the Bon Marche Studio at UTS was available at the times that suited the actors' availabilities for the rehearsal space during the mid-semester break. It was large and accessible; fitted with a lighting rig, dimmer rack and board; had tiered seating; and was located immediately next to the technical store.

3.5.1   Confirming the actors

A four-hour briefing session was held five days before the first scheduled rehearsal in order that the actors could meet each other, hear more about the process to be undertaken in the creative development, and the research which formed the umbrella under which the development would take place. They had the opportunity to then to confirm their participation.

The session began with each person introducing themselves, and speaking about their acting experience and performance background, their interest in the project and what they hoped they might get from being involved in the project itself. An information sheet that contained relevant information and a consent form, was distributed and discussed, and all six actors agreed and consented to participate.

Finally, the actors were asked to prepare for the first rehearsal. They were asked to bring a personal resource as a starting point for the exploration. This was preferably something physical – an object – that they felt some 'energy' towards. There was discussion about the nature of this, that it didn't need to be sentimental, or even something they owned or had a pre-existing relationship with.

3.5.2   Scheduling for uncertainty

The six actors were not going to be available at all times, so the rehearsal schedule was created around the times when the majority of actors could attend. This affected the original planning for the process, which had assumed everyone would be present for every rehearsal.

In the spirit of the 'uncertainty' of creative development, the uncertainty of the schedule was embraced. It created a further complexity about how the work would evolve, as some actors would be present more often than others and therefore be in a position to contribute more to the through-line of the piece. Similarly, others would miss rehearsals, and have to pick it up at the stage it had reached when they were next present. These challenges were embraced and added more richness – and complexity – to the data collection, and to the inquiry.

3.5.3   Limitations of the study

Through my twenty years of experience, I had previous contact with the participants in some way. Whilst this was an advantage in accessing excellent participants, it also may have impacted on the actors' freedom, given those previous relationships although it is unknown whether any impact was positive or negative.

Also, as I was simultaneously in the role of researcher and 'subject' – the director/facilitator – there was some limitation put on the usual creative process, and my dual role may have taken something away from the alchemical phenomena. This engagement and research combination, however, also created an ideal opportunity to observe the process first-hand and intimately.

Other challenges lay in selecting the most appropriate framework for the analysis of the data, managing the size of the study within the structure of a Masters level, and organising the complexity of the data. Because of my professional experience, these challenges were managed in a number of ways, for example: the limited number of participant actors ensured maximum depth of meaningful data collected; the time frame for the field work project was limited to ensure that the necessary equipment, venue and resources could be secured; inbuilt feedback loops allowed for the scope of the project to remain manageable and responsive, in accord with the bricolage research mode.

3.6 Methodology summary

The bricolage methodology chosen for this research combined ethno-phenomenology, practice-led research and action research to create the most appropriate approach to the complexity of the site and the research questions. The research was a longitudinal study of the creative development phase of a rehearsal process for a devised theatre project from its genesis to the work-in-progress showing. A variety of research tools were developed and employed, including filmed footage of all rehearsals, individual daily video diaries, voice recording of discussions and audience comments, to ensure that sufficiently detailed and rich data was gathered. Additionally, being a practising director, I approached the research with the view of enriching my reflective process.

Chapter 4 The Creative Development of a Devised Work for Theatre

> Devised theatre can start from anything. It is determined and defined by a group of people who set up an initial framework or structure to explore and experiment with ideas, images, concepts, themes or specific stimuli that might include music, text, objects, paintings, or movement. (Oddey 1994, p. 1)

4.1 Introduction to the field work

The purpose of the creative development was to create a site where I could investigate notions of alchemy, embodiment and transformation through actors' creative practice. My goal was to explore how these manifest and impact the actors. This process also presented me with an opportunity to reflect on my own directing process by implementing and examining insights gleaned over twenty years working with and amongst actors and directors. The key objectives in the design of the field work were: What alchemy was occurring in the actor's process that transformed them in performance and beyond? What elements of these findings might be applicable to other creative pursuits?

The development of a new theatre work is a slow process. The initial stage of exploration, selecting, expanding and refining ideas and scenes, takes time. It is also the most exciting, challenging, rewarding, chaotic and creative stage of the process. This was when the actors would be working from a place of uncertainty, demanding creative contributions and moving through their explorations by drawing on everything they had available, including their acting skills and imagination. The fluidity and changeability that occurs in the early stages of a creative development, such as this, provided rich pickings for the collection of data that would best serve to investigate the research questions.

I therefore decided that it was not necessary for a complete – and polished – devised work for the theatre to be achieved, and so the research was limited to the first stage of the creative development.[7]

This chapter describes how the creative development process unfolded over a three-week period: what was done; what happened as a result; and what the actors and I felt in, and of, the experience. It examines the process as 'experienced' by each participant including me, as the facilitator and performance director. Six people together in a room, each participating in,

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[7] Creative development is a common industry term that best indicates a focus on process rather than form or content.

and contributing to, the same process; each experiencing the process at different speeds and with unique and common obstacles to work through; each arriving at a shared destination along our own paths. My intention was to recreate the complexity of the moved-felt-experienced creative-reflective process, and to uncover what lies at the core of the actor's creative process that they come to embody.

Much of this chapter's content is drawn directly from my, and the actors', individual video diaries supplemented by excerpts of recorded group discussions. The diaries were recorded at the end of each rehearsal and provide an accurate, valid and immediate depiction of the experiences throughout the project. Unless otherwise attributed, the words in quotation marks in each section were spoken by that actor[8] or myself in the video diary or during the rehearsal period, from which a large quantity of data was collected in the form of filmed rehearsals, recorded discussions and personal video diaries. The chapter also refers to sections of dialogue between the actors and me as director, to show how various participants were discussed and reflected on the creative process. Choices were made as to what to prioritise, what to include and what to set aside, in order to align this study's scope and focus.

As the director and dramaturg, I treated the actors as both subjects to be observed and as equal participants in cooperative-action research. At times I focused on an individual actor, and at other times on the actors as a group. I regard my experiences facilitating and directing the creative process as 'reflective practice', and my 'observations' of the creative process as those of an informed researcher who is a member of a creative community observing from a phenomenological perspective. The chapter, therefore, includes three research stories as depicted in figure 5 on the next page.

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[8] I have adopted pseudonyms for the actors in this and subsequent chapters.
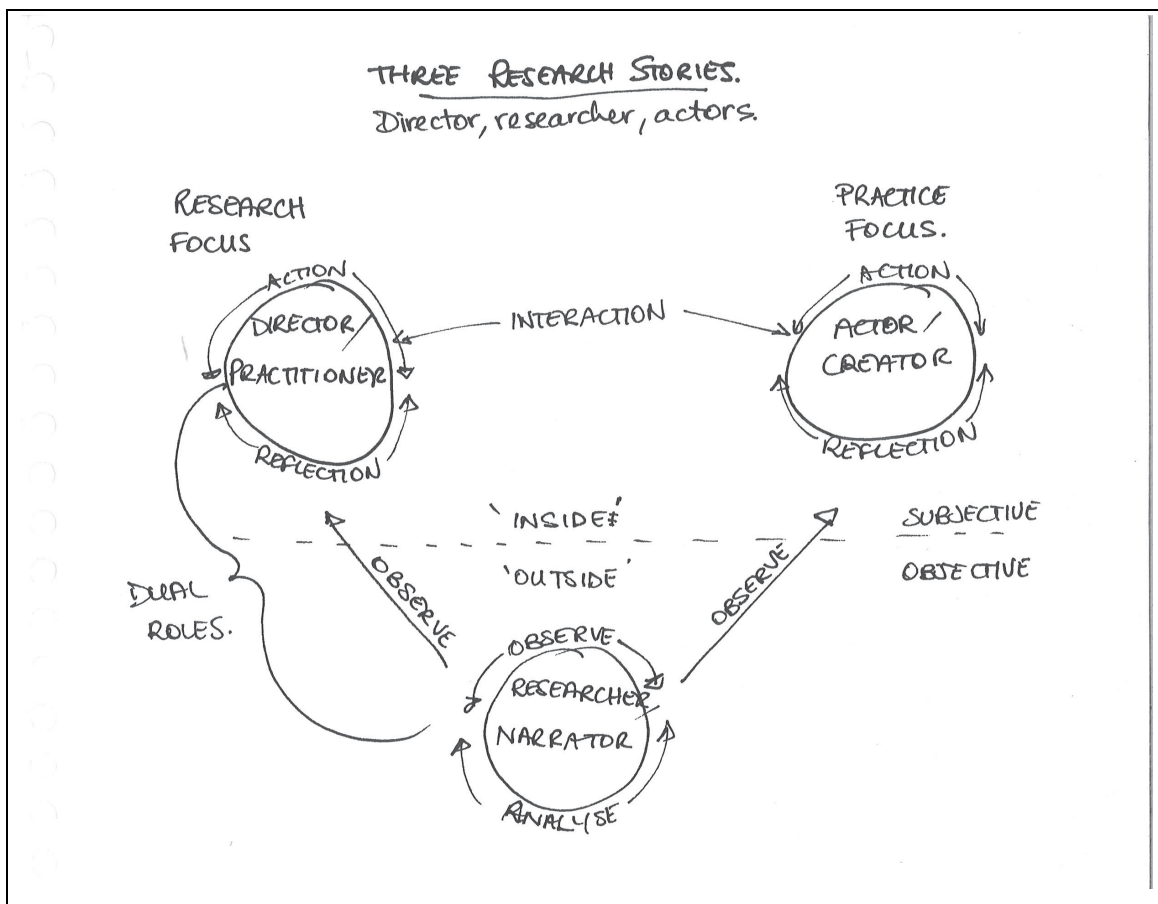
Figure 5 The three research stories in this chapter

After this introductory section, I present my research observations in boxes containing italicised text. These boxes highlight a research finding on which I elaborate in the next chapter. Section 4.2 sets out the contextual background of theatrical devising and examines different approaches to devising used by some leading contemporary companies. Section 4.3 describes the preparations made for the rehearsals. Section 4.4 sets out my direction and facilitation of the work, spanning both devising and performance. Sections 4.5 describes each of the actor's experiences in separate sub-sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.5. Section 4.6 examines insights shared by the audiences after each of the two performances. Finally, Section 4.7 draws out and summarises the key findings, laying the foundation for the following discussion chapter. This documentation and analysis contributes to the scholarship on the dramaturg's creative devising and facilitation process and the actor's individual and collaborative creative process.

4.2   Preparing to enter the field; approaches to devising for the theatre

As seen in a sampling of devising approaches examined in Chapter 2, devising has a basis in improvisation, and is usually shaped by the purpose of the devising output. The aim of this research was to investigate the creative process, the actors process, and moments of

transformation from the data with reference to the research questions, therefore, the choice of a devising approach was important.

4.2.1 The exploratory approach

There are many diverse approaches to creating a devised theatrical work. Some companies have, over time, developed a particular approach to suit their visions and their way of working. A few in particular have influenced my own ideas about the nature of devising for the theatre. These practitioners are familiar with working in varying degrees of chaos and uncertainty, often from a kind of 'empty space' allowing a work to emerge through process. Some individuals and companies have found a set process to use, or a formula, but for others no pattern at all exists to the manner in which they approach a development. Each are distinguished by their processes, artistic milieu and styles of presentation. Whilst any of these could have been the basis for the research, Canadian artist Robert Lepage – director of Ex-Machina – was the inspiration of the methodological basis of my approach. He has likened his work to archaeology, as 'layers of meaning are excavated'.

> None of us when we meet come in with a clear vision of what the show is going to be. We give ourselves a playground – […] – and then we start digging. (Lepage interviewed by Morgan 2008, p. 2)

The major companies of interest and their differing philosophies included: Theatre du Soleil for their democracy and scale of work; Peter Brooks for his vision; Frantic Assembly for their innovative physical interpretations; Kneehigh Theatre for their boldness; Complicite for their simplicity with depth; and Ex-Machina for their extraordinary realisations and imagery. Theatre du Soleil in 1964 had become 'one of the most celebrated companies in Europe, and Ariane Mnouchkine one of Europe's best known directors' – a leader of her time making theatrical works that are renowned for their process and spirit of democratic creation (Williams 2005, p. 2/7934). That company's aim was to move beyond the situation where the director has the greatest degree of power, 'by creating a form of theatre where it will be possible for everyone to collaborate without there being directors, technicians, and so on, in the old sense' (Williams 2005, p. 391/7934).

British theatre director, Peter Brooks, questions what theatre could be:

> I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. (Brook 1972, p. 11)

Brooks set up a base in France in the 1970s, establishing his International Centre for Theatre Research where he explored new conventions for theatre-making. At the core of his work was the pursuit of what he called the 'eternal truth' (Brook 1972) or the inherent emotions in any human to create 'something honest: a human connection. And from that connection, the audience's inner emotions are called forth – they are moved' (Theriault 2009, p. 2).

Another contemporary theatre company, Frantic Assembly in the UK was set up by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett. They begin creating a work by having a particular structure in place, however 'despite never going into a rehearsal room without some solid form of intention, a significant part of devising is to not-know (Graham & Hoggett 2014, p. 323/4484).

Emma Rice, former Artistic Director of UK's Kneehigh Theatre, a ground-breaking devising company, claims,

> There is no formula to the way we make theatre… It starts with an itch, a need, an instinct… We gaze at books and films, sketch and begin to form a concept; an environment in which the story can live, in which the actors can play. This physical world holds meaning and narrative, it is as much a story telling tool as the written word. (Rice 2007, p. 2/6)

Simon McBurney is the artistic director of Complicite, a company which was founded in 1983 by a group of actors who had all trained in Paris with Jacque Lecoq. As quoted on Complicite's website: 'There is no Complicite method — what is essential is collaboration, and a turbulent forward momentum...' (McBurney 2016). Complicite's productions emerge out of extensive research and development periods that involve equally the collaboration of performers, designers, artists, and specialist artists that reflect similarities to those of Lepage.

Ex Machina, the Canadian company founded by Robert Lepage, departs however from McBurney in that they have a clearly developed approach to creating new work using a four-part structure. Lepage's process of theatre-making demands that the actors are capable of taking risks and exploring options that take them to the edges of their comfort zone (Dundjerovic 2007). Lepage most often begins his explorations in an absolute openness to chaos, discovery and explorations by asking his collaborators — actors, musicians and designers — to bring in objects, music, words, images with which to play. He then remains open throughout the process to what starts to emerge, and is comfortable being uncertain about the direction it will take until that direction 'appears'. This showed that, to undertake a close examination of the creativity of devising, a synthesis of a range of ways of working could be used, I was, however, particularly drawn to Lepage's approach as the best fit for purpose.

His work has been a strong influence on, and inspiration, for me. It has a few simple key tenets:

- starting with random items for creative stimulus;
- physically exploring ideas emerging from the stimulus;
- presenting early short segments to be included or discarded; and
- continuing to develop a work in response to what arises and to the audience response.

These tenets lend themselves to drawing out the creativity from within all collaborators and accommodates a high degree of uncertainty and creative collaborative play. The process was ideal for the research.

4.2.2 Setting the research scene – devising as research

In many ways, devising for theatre is inherently research. Devising is a 'journey of exploration' (Gray 2006, p. 6) and an intuitive art – or as Gray writes, referring to Schön's proposition, a 'knowing-in-action' (2006, p. 4). As a practice-led, reflective practitioner however, I benefitted from an extra set of skills to draw upon than had I been creating a new work with no research agenda. So, although the practice seemingly unfolded naturally, I made deliberate critical decisions along the way to maintain that fluidity and the integrity of the research.
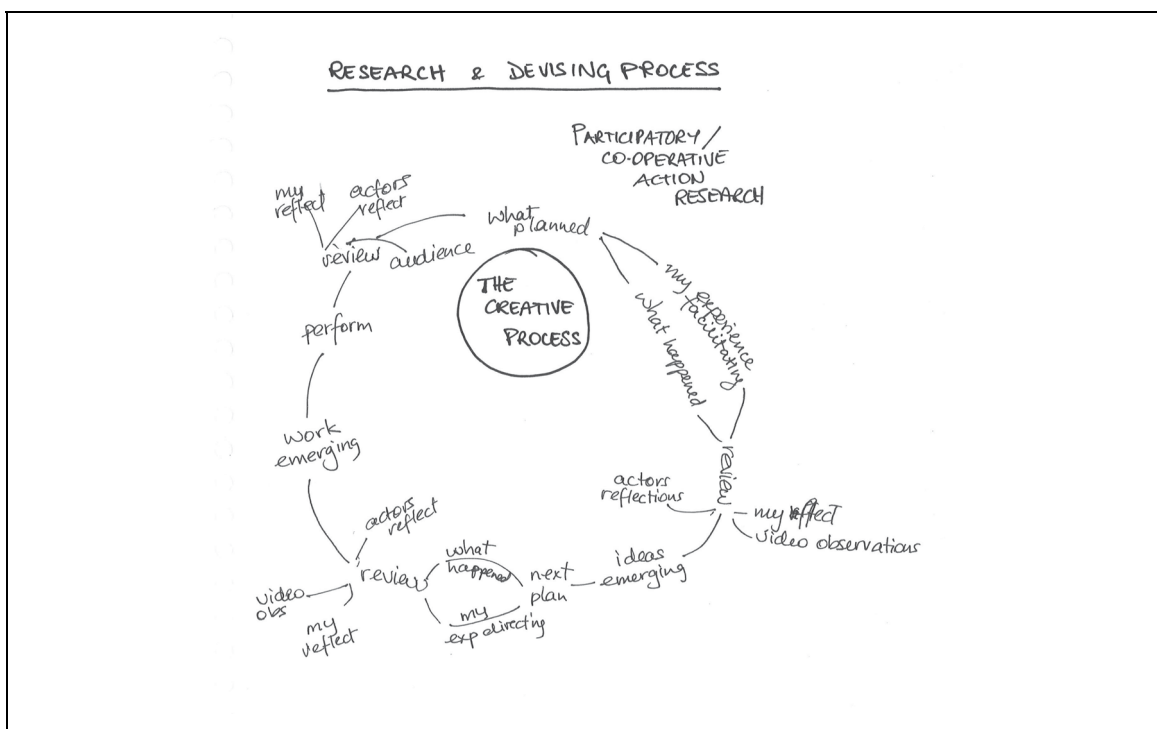
Figure 6 Integrated research and devising process.

A key challenge I faced was to ensure the focus of the field research was not lost whilst being immersed in the creative practice. It proved essential that appropriate data-gathering techniques maintain integrity during collection, whilst also being relatively non-intrusive during the devising process. The choice of approaches allowed the work to be framed, analysed, and communicated in ways that demonstrate its inherent complexity.

4.3 Preparations prior to rehearsals 'proper'

This section describes the devising process that was undertaken; from the choice of actors and the initial briefing session, through rehearsals and the two performances, to the consequent discussions with both audiences.

4.3.1 Identifying the actors' and my expectations

At our first group meeting I explained the origins of my enquiry and outlined the vision for the kind of research I wanted to undertake by sharing insights I'd gleaned from both practical and scholarly literature. Crucially, I explained that the purpose of the devising project was primarily data acquisition. I took the group through a prepared information sheet and satisfied any queries that arose. All those present consented to participate by signing a consent form. We then agreed on a rehearsal schedule. After making adjustments for people's availability I was able to schedule when the actors were available.

The initial discussion about the actors' expectations confirmed I had chosen an engaged group of five actors, which set the bar high for me both as a director and a researcher. The actors had a range of expectations, some were similar and others were personal and particular. They included: developing new skills; gaining experience in new creative approaches; extending improvisation skills; gaining more academic and practical links in the work; being freshly stimulated; moving out of comfort zones; working with a new group of experienced professionals.

Appendix 3 Actors' and director's expectations

Their responses displayed: an openness to exploration and new approaches; an acceptance of the devising process I had chosen; a desire to be stimulated and stretched both creatively and intellectually; and an overall excitement, not only to develop themselves, but to work together with a new ensemble. My expectations were to explore the process closely; test my ability to facilitate the dynamics of this creative process; manage to shape a piece for performance that

was engaging and had potential for future development; and discover the transformative aspects of the actor's process.

As a researcher, I was pleased to have willing and self-reflective participants. Their expectations acted as benchmarks throughout the process and during my analysis. On the other hand, knowledge of this also brought with it anxieties concerning my ability to provide them with an experience that would stretch them creatively and add to their own skills and experience. In many ways we were all stepping into a shared venture with uncertain outcomes using a fluid process that was, to varying degrees, new to us all, and it was up to me to manage it successfully to meet and even to exceed our expectations.

4.3.2   Data collection and rehearsal – an uneasy collaboration

Data collection for the project required careful planning and communication. The rehearsal room needed to be a 'safe' space within which focus, confidentiality and trust were achieved. In professional practice, the recording of a creative exploration would be minimal and subtle, and only used at key times to capture a particular stage of a work for review. So I needed to set up equipment to be as unobtrusive as possible, and address any expressed concerns. The actors accepted the purpose and final use of the filmed material, and the plans for strict confidentiality and data security, as approved by the university's ethics committee. They understood that any showing of a recording of the work would be for the purposes of the research.

One notable aspect of data collection was the practice of self-reflection by all project participants. As a reflective practitioner, and as an acting teacher, I have learned the value of regular reflection. I frequently record my thoughts, feeling and ideas as they emerge in practice, and knew the actors' reflections would also be vital for each of us in understanding the creative process. The actors were all willing to contribute their ideas and immediate reflections to group discussions and, in particular, to the more private video logs following each session. Data collection involved:

- Digital filming of rehearsals with two cameras.
- Microphones on stands set at the front of the stage area linked to the digital video cameras and set to enhance the audio on stage.
- Audio recording using a DAT recorder used with a hand-held microphone during group discussions whenever they occurred.

- Directors notes, discussion notes and rehearsal plans, plus any additional written material created as a result of the research.

- An ipad in the dressing room to provide a private space for each actor to record a reflective video diary immediately after each rehearsal.

By the end of the three-week rehearsal, a large amount of data was gathered, comprising:

- eighty-one hours of video footage taken of the rehearsal from the two camera positions;

- two hours of individual video diaries that were self-recorded by the actors after each rehearsal;

- thirteen hours of audio recordings of group discussions interspersed throughout the rehearsals;

- written statements by each of the participants of their expectations prior to the start of the rehearsal;

- the discussions recorded from the audience members at the Q and A sessions following each performance;

- a written reflection following the completion of the whole process from all but one of the participating actors; and

- my personal post-rehearsal video diary for each session, which documented the plans for the rehearsals, progress made with the work and a reflection following the project.

Appendix 4 Sample database records

4.3.3   Setting the creative scene – introducing Lepage's process

The foundational concept introduced was Lepage's view of the creative process and the devising process in which we would be engaging. As a stimulus to actors' thinking, I also played a part of Rhonda Blair's lecture on theatre and neuroscience (2009b) to background our discussions and as evidence of the currency of the interest within theatre of what neuroscience can offer artists.[9] Three of the five actors were already familiar with Lepage's work; they had been in the audience when his work toured to Australia or had seen productions overseas. I also showed an excerpt of an interview with Lepage on his creative

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[9] Interestingly, one actor was already considering undertaking doctoral practice-based research to investigate similar notions in the realm of dance and body. The link to Rhonda Blair's conference presentation (Blair 2009b) was emailed to the actors after the session concluded, as were digital copies of the documentation.

process related to the re-staging in Canada of his show, *Needles and Opium* (Lepage 2014) to highlight key points about his process.

4.3.4   The rehearsal structures – creative rules

Before the session concluded I requested each actor bring a personal reference to the first rehearsal. I directed the actors, when choosing the starting resource, to consider the following:

> 'it can be an object, a piece of music, a word, for example, so long as you feel some kind of energy from it. It needn't be, nor should it be, something particularly sentimental to you, but something that in-the-moment of choosing you are attracted to in some way, and that generates your curiosity and interest'.

This avoided being specific which, from experience with actors, specificity creates a type of filter through which choices are made that may limit the creative possibilities. I ended the session with an explanation of standard security, after hours' access and emergency procedures.

4.3.5   Reflecting on the group and the briefing

The first rehearsal was four days later by which time the technical equipment was installed, and my directing plan was finalised to serve the group's specific skills and needs. The rehearsal plan provided a reasonably lengthy exploratory period and a shorter period towards the end for the work to be refined ready for performance. These indicative milestones allowed adjustments to be made, yet still effectively manage the time available.

4.4   Directing the creative development

> My role as director is to render a world that is understandable and to make sure that everyone in the room is telling the same story. (Bogart 2015, p. 2)

As the director, my actions and decisions directly affect the rehearsal process, the actors' experiences, the dramaturgy, and the overall production. My aim when directing is to be an 'invisible' element in the final creation. I don't bring a fixed idea, structure or theme to a project. I prefer to empower the actors to be free to generate ideas, to play with concepts and to collaborate. I provide the outside eye to reflect what I'm seeing and help shape the direction we take. Consistent with my general approach, the director on a devised project is to be the outside eye during the rehearsal process; to guide the focus of each rehearsal so the actors can fully contribute; to identify and select what has value and discard that which is not

working. However, I was trialling a new process that I knew theoretically, rather than from a deep practice. My recent work had centred on facilitating other people's creative projects and I had not directed a devised work for some years. So to supplement my knowledge and skills base, I drew on insights gained when closely involved in other directors' devising projects that used the devising process of Robert Lepage. This process would prove foundational.

4.4.1   The devising process used for the field work

The rehearsals and performances of this research follow the four-part structure of the Repere (or RSVP) Cycle used by Robert Lepage. These are:

1. Resources – the objects that create a personal response to become the actors' personal material. Lepage describes it as 'a trigger, it's something that you feel is rich and you know that if you say that word or bring that object that people will connect' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 659/5141).

2. Score – the second phase 'opens the performers' consciousness' and 'liberates the themes of the performance' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 661/5141) wherein there are two parts. The first to freely explore the resources wherever it takes them, and the second is to critically assess, and decide which elements to keep and develop from the 'universe that starts to emerge from the initial chaos' (Caux & Gilbert 2009, p. 28).

3. Value-action (or e-valuation) – can also be the second phase of the Score (above): 'Synthesis is the process of defining the creative impulse, critically viewing the unformed material, and consciously creating an artistic entity, a form, on the basis of experimental subconscious self-expression' (Dundjerovic 2007, p. 661/5141).

4. Performance – this is the phase where the director is the 'outside eye' to facilitate the composition of the final piece. In collective creation, it is vital for someone to take this role, and respond to the group's creation, not to an imposed vision by the director. This phase can often result in the commencement of another cycle.

My research completed one full cycle that, due to the time limits available, led to a 'showing' for an audience rather than a fully-fledged performance, which would require more time and at least another cycle of the Repere.

4.4.2   Directing the resource phase – exploring creative impulses from objects

The resource phase provides the base from which ideas, images, themes, movements and collaborative structures emerge, allowing the work to develop. My role as director in this phase was to guide the actors' explorations and ensure a safe and challenging environment.

Four aspects of the process significantly influenced the creative development: the warm-up exercises; the actors' various attachment to their objects; the changing mix of actors attending the rehearsal; and the actors' varied rates of exploration.

The warm-ups were essential to guiding and developing the ensemble's work. Each day I began by establishing a safe place for the actors – a place of trust and endeavour. My aim was to create space in which actors accepted each other's creative offers and fully explored every offer's potential. To achieve this, I needed to understand each actor's technique, experience, communication needs and preferred working style. I built my understanding gradually through observing the actors during gentle warm-up activities. One warm-up used regularly – walk as one – required the actors to move separately through the rehearsal space, developing a sense of the size, textures and scope of the room, and connecting with each other. The connections started small with eye contact and led eventually to full body contact. I facilitated this development to ensure a level of trust was established gradually and safely. During the process, I observed the way each actor moved, how freely they accepted and interpreted a direction, how easily they came to trust being supported, and how much care they took with the other.

Every rehearsal began with this warm-up through which I introduced a new element needed for the work to evolve. For instance, from the first focus of trust, I added layers of intuition, the senses, impulse, sound and movement. Occasionally I observed an actor misunderstand a simple instruction, indicating to me they were not fully listening or were unfocused, or needed something more, or less, challenging. These insights helped me shape what was needed in the subsequent warm-ups to great effect. Before a rehearsal I also checked with the actors to determine any injuries, illness or situations of which I needed to know. As the director, I knew the warm-ups were essential to guide and develop the ensemble's work. I drew upon my own intuition and past experiences to 'sense' what would be useful at any one rehearsal. The decisions I made influenced the actors and the ensemble to empower and support their creative explorations.

> *The decision-making process as director, is not easily identified or explained from a research perspective. I will return to this in chapter 5 to discuss the exercises that were peripheral to the creative work, and the value of these in bridging levels of skills and in developing a shared performance language. They did however, provide a way to track changes in the actors' bodies, movements and their reactions as each new warm-up element was introduced.*

The five actors were asked to each bring an object to the first rehearsal that would be explored creatively. They were:

- A branch taken from a tree – 'I decided to kill nature';
- A small diary – 'I can't bring myself to write in the notes section';
- A childhood toy and a tennis ball – 'quite cool, playful and for colour and movement';
- A Swiss cow bell – 'it's not something I look at often'; and
- A dog collar and poo bag – 'shitty delight'.[10]

The diversity of the objects provided for richly creative explorations. The objects were chosen randomly, and in most cases the actor had no fixed or sentimental relationship to them. The dog collar, however, was chosen because it belonged to, and represented, the actor's dog and his strong feelings towards his dog, and I detected early on that the actor struggled to move past seeing the object as anything other than his dog's collar.

> *High sentimental attachment to an object that had been brought to the process appeared to hamper one actor's creative development and it took him much longer to find other, more abstract creative interpretations. His association with the object was a literal one.*

From the first day I was frustrated that not all of the actors could be present for all of the rehearsals. In fact, it was not until the day of the first performance that all five actors were present for a full rehearsal. For the rest of the rehearsals there were two, three or four actors, not always in the same combinations, and sometimes with changes during the same day. Although this meant that my rehearsal plans were constantly changing and required re-thinking – sometimes even on the same day – I embraced it as another challenging, variable and unpredictable element that would also shape the way the creative work would develop.

> *The constantly changing mix of actors attending the rehearsal also created difficulties for the way I planned the research analysis and it demanded a flexible and individual approach to determine what could be understood in relationship to the research questions. This is one reason for the layout of this chapter, by person rather than referencing the group as a whole.*

As this first resource phase continued over a few rehearsals, the process was not as fluid as it might have been, partly because of the actors' availabilities, and partly because the actors moved through the explorations at different rates. This challenge meant that some of the

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[10] Quoted remarks are those made by each actor as they introduced their object to the group to explain the choice they made or feelings they have towards it.

ideas and scenes emerging would falter at the next rehearsal and not be able to be extended or easily deepened, unless it was picked up again in a later rehearsal. By the end of this score phase it was clear to me that two of the actors benefitted from more direction and that, as a result, there were occasions when others' work was held back from its natural progression. Ideally, I needed to find ways to help develop their scene ideas further. This is a common challenge for directors, in all mediums, as demonstrated in this excerpt from Sally Potter's description of her experiences directing actors on film:

> At this moment you have to learn to look at actors with an understanding of their experience of vulnerability inherent in this level of exposure and scrutiny. And you have to use your eyes to look beyond how they are performing in that moment to see what they can become. You have to try to visualise their potential, see what they're reaching for, the limits they want to overcome, the performance of a lifetime that they want to discover. In short, you have to look at their innate genius and not at their inevitable stumbles along the way. (2014, pp. 767-8/5967)

During the score phase the actors performed a short solo piece of five to ten-minutes duration that they had been asked to develop in their own time, provoked by the exploration of their objects so far. Although each solo piece was fundamentally different, as a group we found some common themes. The group chose two of these themes that had most inspired them – desensitisation and opposites – for further development in the next stage.

The actors started to shift into the development and extension of ideas and concepts from this point, and the group transitioned into the second part of the score phase. This process was improvisation-based, and took the actors into the territory of creating scenarios and building relationships between each other's ideas. Even though each actor had their own creative 'pace' they were collaborating more, and those most ready to move forward shaped the trajectory of the process.

During this phase I communicated my observations and encouraged the actors to make bold creative offers to test any ideas physically and in action with each other. Two of the actors were more experienced in this, capable of making big 'leaps' and were consequently already brave and vulnerable in their process. One morning, due to the serendipitous mix of available actors that day, I had the opportunity to work solely with the other three actors. I chose to facilitate exercises in archetypal gestures to help them break new ground, both in their process and in the work they were struggling to realise on the floor. This paid off quickly, building the actors' confidence and strengthening their collaborative offers and responses.

> *I was able to select this intervention due to my own background as a teacher and a facilitator of creative work. My measure of the success of this intervention was supported later by the other actors who saw that much stronger physical offers were being made by the three actors. I now had a new 'language' to communicate with them as a short cut for the embodied experience they had taken from the detailed exercises. This affirmed my intuitive decision to select this kind of work to give them. At times, I struggled to trust my 'intuition'. As a researcher, however it is difficult to measure the understandings that arise from intuition, but the actions that resulted were observable and remarked upon.*

Some of the disparate ideas that were explored involved all of the actors and this resulted in some good work, but other ideas did not work as well. One idea that did not work creatively, but was important for my research, was when a particular rhythmic response was introduced to a scene that had organically occurred in improvisation. This had been exciting to watch and showed promise. The rhythm was an idea offered up by an actor, and in theory, could be imagined to heighten the drama of the action. However, in action it interrupted the spontaneity of the work. The actors found it extremely difficult to maintain the movement and dialogue they developed, and count at the same time. It was like watching someone try to do two completely opposite activities simultaneously, both of which were possible individually, but together were almost impossible.

> *This is an example where an idea is allowed to be fully explored in areas that may be uncomfortable and predictable. Where some ideas work well, the process was exciting and the basis of a scene developed that was thematically linked with other works. Adding a new idea, that didn't originate from the actors working inside the scene, but in fact was made by an actor who was watching, stopped the freedom of the actors. I could see them struggling trying to 'think' as they needed to count to keep in rhythm. This significant event was useful for the later analysis and discussion.*

4.4.3   Directing the value-action phase

The value-action phase involved evaluating, discarding and selecting ideas and improvisations to further develop. This process spanned most of the remaining rehearsals, and took the work from a loose collection of random ideas and scenes into a more thematically linked flow of ideas and scenes.

I found this stage of the rehearsal process fulfilling. The actors had discovered a number of promising scenes. My role as the director was to envision what might come from them and facilitate them. I reviewed and identified what we had, what was most interesting and worked best, and what themes overall they evoked. Several themes were clearly emerging:

- Desensitisation: of people, of the planet, of our ways of life, of relationships.
- Disconnect: that desensitised things and people disconnect.
- Becoming: the notion of change and emergence, of change and of searching.
- What else? If we were once sensitive then become desensitised and, assuming we are evolving and in a process of change, what lies ahead beyond the desensitisation? Do we re-sensitise, transform? Where do we go next?

While this was an exciting time, it was also a difficult stage to manage. The process had created some disparate ideas; some were clearly worth continuing, but others, while interesting, were indistinct and confusing. Contrary to my earlier facilitative approach, I believed this point in the devising process demanded that I be a proactive decision maker to handle the chaos. Yet I found it difficult to discard work that was not working in favour of what was. I held hope for all of it. The confidence I had in a creative vision lessened and I wondered if my judgement was actually very good or useful. At first I favoured not making hard decisions but as the actors continued to develop the pieces it was increasingly clear to me that they needed more clarity and 'direction' from me.

> *On reflection it is possible to see this stage as a key turning point in my own understanding of the role of the director on a creative collaboration. I decided to not intervene as either director or researcher which created more doubt and uncertainty.*

Tensions started to build as the actors continued their explorations. The actors demanded to find the direction to take with a piece, or to be told what the goal was.

> *Having noticed the stress that uncertainty caused in a few actors, I realised that perhaps all of the actors, at some point, experienced discomfort with ambiguity. While on the one hand it made sense (in terms of leading towards a performance) to cut the explorations, give clear directions and start really deepening the work, I was also mindful that this process was for research. As it was a short, intense reduction of what would normally occur over a much longer period before performing for an audience, I was interested to see where the discomfort might lead.*

I allowed the uncertainty of direction and, therefore the actors' discomfort to continue longer, and it forced some actors to contribute their own directing ideas, with my consent, adding their own contributions and ideas for other actors. Some of these actor-directions were well received and some not so well. A true collaboration allows for this, but we had yet to become an ensemble built on this level of acceptance of each other's creative visions.

As our date with the audience drew near, it bred further anxiety in the actors. They wanted to both serve the research and also be able to put something on the stage that was worthwhile

for their audience. The latter resulted in the actors being more inclined to try and 'get it right' than extend or deepen it further. I therefore decided, quite late, that the performance needed to become an 'open rehearsal' or a 'showing' of a 'work-in-progress' rather than a fully-fledged performance. I determined that we did not have enough time to do the devising process justice in performance. This decision partially helped to relieve the actors of the nerves and anxiety that is always present nearing a performance. With this decision came a period in which the actors extended the pieces further, as I'd hoped they would.

4.4.4   Directing the performance

The directing-the-performance phase begins when the scenes become more 'fixed' in the sense that decisions are made about entrances and exits, the running order and the stage business (moving boxes, leaving or removing previous props and furniture). The cast become clear about their roles, both on and off the stage.

My role as director in this phase changed from encouraging play and uncertainty, to be decisive and provide clear directives to the actors, including interrupting a scene to re-do it. There was no more time for large-scale creative explorations. The actors and I agreed on the creative parameters – what we believed the piece being performed meant – and therefore the rehearsals focused on clarity in performance. My role in the final rehearsal, prior to the showing, was in time management and communicating what the work looked like from the outside, and consequentially what needed to change or be retained. For instance, there was a need to sharpen certain acting moments in the performances for clarity and impact. The pressure of this final stage demanded fast and efficient decisions be made, and this led to creative solutions to staging problems that would be tested in front of the audience.

It was interesting to see the level of energy and frustration fuel the focus and efficiency of the final rehearsals, creating a singular focus from all the actors as the time for the audience to arrive came close. The pressure applied led the actors to accept decision, make decisions and fulfil the performance requirements.

I planned two performances one day apart, with an additional rehearsal in between so that further refinements could be made. The first performance followed a hectic and long rehearsal day in which the scenes were set, and the stage 'business' locked in[11]. Because we were showing a work-in-progress, I decided that day to include the actors' warm-up in the show

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[11] Stage business included entrances, exists, moving of stage furniture and props, and the timing between scenes among other details. These ensured there was agreement regarding these various tasks and so the scenes transitioned smoothly.

before the rehearsed scenes to help the actors 'own' the space even though there were others present. This commenced as soon as the audience were settled.

The performances were in the same space where we had rehearsed. Yet, without the usual long technical rehearsal and precision of a production, we had 'audience' observing the incomplete work. I felt it valuable to do everything possible to give the space back to the actors. The audience were informed in my short introduction that what they were about to see was like a rehearsal. I explained that we would therefore leave the house lights up, that the staging was simple, the actors were wearing rehearsal clothes not costumes, and that we'd welcome a discussion afterwards if they would like to stay.

The 'show' we'd prepared was comprised of four separate scenes, and ran for approximately 30 minutes in total, including the warm-ups before the scenes. The program's working titles were:

- Move as One (Warm-up)
- Ritual
- Card Game
- Airport
- I'm Leaving.

Scene 1: 'Move as One' was a warm-up exercise in which all actors are on stage, and begin walking slowly in any direction within the stage area, gradually one will increase speed and the aim is that each actor similarly and at exactly the same time will do the same, with the same synchronicity occurring when someone begins to slow down. Any one person may make the change, and it may be quite sudden or be gradual, but each person always taking responsibility for the whole ensemble. Eventually the group moves as one body, but separate and in different directions, with the energy palpable between them as they listen closely with their bodies to each other. It can be mesmerising to watch, and it will end only when the group ends it, once again as one, gradually coming to a stop and holding it there for as long as it takes to again break apart simultaneously and move to their places for the show to begin.

> *What was fascinating for the actors and me afterwards was the impact that this exercise had on the audiences on both nights. A number of comments were made about the 'first scene' and what it meant and what ideas it communicated to the audience and how they understood them within the context of the whole show. Once we'd worked out which 'scene' they were talking about, and when they were told that it wasn't actually a scene that had any relationship to the scenes we'd developed for*

<u>Scene 2: Ritual</u> was a solo scene that had only been found the day before, and was therefore still fragile. It came into being as we searched for a scene that would represent an 'interior' world, and to balance the stage time for the actors. It began simply with available materials, the actor's lunch of Vita-Weats, butter, Vegemite and a knife. Although offered so as to provoke a group or two-handed scene, the solo work was intriguing and needed no one else, as it had a delicate energy that balanced out some of the more frantic moments of other scenes in the program.

<u>Scene 3: Card Game</u> was a three-handed scene exploring themes of disconnection from news, from current affairs, and was set within a domestic environment, that developed with unpleasantness and the portent of violent undertones.

<u>Scene 4: Airport</u> was a whole-group scene set in a place which held possibilities for comings and goings and in which the actors were generally busy going nowhere but searching for somewhere.

<u>Scene 5: I'm Leaving</u> was a two hander, set in an abstract place with recognisable daily 'habits' and communication between a couple, but with a tragic, longing, desperation for one to escape … to become a tree… to leave… to go, 'elsewhere'.

Newspapers were a common element that appeared in every scene, and, as the scenes continued, more and more newspaper littered the stage leaving a lasting image as it was strewn across the stage, where it held the residue of what had occurred on stage – of news and disaster, of trees and environmental degradation, of a game of one-upmanship, of the destruction of the planet, and a map to 'elsewhere' – the residue of all of the themes that had arisen from our explorations and infiltrated the scenes.

An actor brought a newspaper to rehearsal for their prepared scene and over time and it began to hold resonances of the broken branch, tree pulp, the reporting of bad news, and contributing to de-afforestation. So it was not 'just' a newspaper, by its presence in the room and other actors drawing on it, it also became other things – placemats, it held the headlines of our lives in news, it became words to be used as weapons, a map, and finally returned to be a tree. None of these were predetermined however all of them became connected.

4.4.5 Directing discoveries

Directing this group of actors through the creative devising process was inspiring, humbling, challenging and at times effortless – at others bewildering. It demanded my focused attention, a sensibility with regard to each actor's needs and a sharpness to pay attention to the complex, sometimes chaotic moments of fleeting 'brilliance' and 'magic' arising in rehearsal. I was aware of my role as an active-observer, to be sensitive to the actors' vulnerability as they searched creatively for ideas and scenes, in the formulation and delivery of my comments and directions. I was both active-observer and a participant in the creative process until the moment the performance commenced. At that point the actors were performing for the audience and my dual role – director and researcher – switched to researcher only. Barba also described this experience of giving over to the actors and their audience:

> We are ten: nine actors and myself amongst the spectators, the director's place once the work is finished. Now it is for the actors alone to reach out towards that unknown world waiting on the surrounding benches. At times I see them, the one and the other, actor and spectator, on tiptoe, one being the wall for the other. I feel that my actors are carrying me too in the midst of that tension where two solitudes, two foreign bodies – actor and spectator – can just for a moment discover a secret and involuntary bond. This is theatre. (Barba 1999, p. 23)

I discovered that my strength in facilitating a creative process was to be able to allow the actors space to find their creative voice. I could also identify when to intervene to support and develop new skills when needed. I felt my communication of a clear vision was weak, which otherwise would have enabled the actors a structure in which to continue and deepen their improvisations. In researching my own process alongside the actors, I learned to trust them and that they could have benefitted earlier from more structure to be more productive with idea generation. However, in the discussion with the first audience, I explained it this way:

> Rather than imposing something on it we try to we put in some things and we finding it but we are trying to retain some purity of honouring some of those early discoveries as well [...] so it feels like that to me and it we haven't gotten to the shape of it.

To this, one actor exclaimed that 'there's not enough argument!' which would usually occur when shaping a vision collaboratively, however another felt that was 'because we are arguing with it ourselves – before we're willing to talk over each other, we're already questioning ourselves'.

The lengthy creative exploration process we engaged in meant that I was only just starting to see a shape in the work the actors were doing that could frame the whole. 'It's only in the last two days that we've started to say no, no!'.

4.5   The actor's process

This section provides information about each of the actors with a description of their key experiences during the creative development. For each actor, a short introduction is included to their skill-set, motivation to participate and past training and experience. This precedes a description of their experiences whilst devising that is divided into the four stages of the process we used. The descriptions are based on the first-hand data of their video diaries and researcher comments continue in italics and are framed in pop-out boxes.

4.5.1   Introducing Gabi

Gabi is a proactive theatre-maker with a background of acting training in Australia, where she formed her own theatre company and developed new works for the stage. She discovered her love of the body as an expressive instrument and undertook a further two years of training at L'Ecole Internationalle de Theatre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. She had just returned from Paris and was keen to use her newly developed skills and 'performance language'. This 'language' was the shared vocabulary and performance techniques of the Lecoq school. Gabi was interested to find out how it might have value with a new ensemble in Sydney. The creative development period also gave her the chance to adjust back into the Sydney life and cultural scene. Gabi's recent training provided her with a gestural and physical approach to performance, that built on her earlier experience. She was keen to find ways to integrate this new process into working with text.

a.   Gabi's resource phase – exploring creative impulses from objects

Gabi entered the first phase of the development with joy and relish, and had no hesitation or questions of anything asked of her. She moved easily and was playful, considerate and calm as she listened and responded to directions, other actors, and when exploring the tree branch brought as her resource.

The branch initially stimulated her senses strongly, and provoked in her a physicalised movement representing the branch. For Gabi, working with the object purely as an object in itself was a new experience and she examined it closely, using all senses to explore it thoroughly. In a group discussion she said she was loving 'pushing myself into surprise'. She

immediately felt that the process satisfied an interest in gaining new skills and tools for her creative process. The Lecoq training discouraged the actors to 'feel' and instilled the notion that it is for the audience to feel, and the actor's job is to be precise and clear in action. Unlike Lecoq, I encouraged the actors to be affected by the resource, and Gabi expressed her sadness and pain for the branch, that she had 'killed' to bring to the rehearsal. During the rehearsal feelings of nostalgia and regret as the branch started to dry out, die and change in structure forced her to have to 'let go', which was difficult as she'd become attached to it. It provoked in her impressions of climate change, environmental destruction and a sense of hopelessness and complicity in her own destructive actions with the branch in the first place.

It was early in the process that Gabi expressed an impulse to make sounds or speak during the explorations, but resisted the urge thinking that one of the instructions had been to work quietly (all actors were also silently exploring), which therefore had to be 'obeyed'. This, in fact, was not the case, and realising it was a self-imposed 'rule'[12] of silence that she was responding to. This was a revelation and gave her insight into a misplaced constraint on her own explorations and her desire to 'serve the research'.

As the exploratory rehearsals unfolded, Gabi had mixed impressions, enjoying the new dynamics as the rest of the actors joined the rehearsals, making sounds and verbalising, and being able to gradually shift from being attached to the branch to surrendering to the way it broke down as it dried out. But she found that having 'no concrete elements' to guide her explorations was increasingly challenging without outside direction, and that being left to her own creative devices was exhausting and, as a result, her efforts were floundering.

> *Perhaps more than the other actors, Gabi's own directing experience gave her insights into the need for feedback. It was also a foreign process to try and be creative without a set 'provocation'[13] or theme to explore as she was used to. It highlighted at an early stage how even a highly experienced creative practitioner can only rely on the direction of their own inner impulses for an amount of time before seeking structure, and shape, to help make sense of, and re-energise the creative process. A collaborative process especially needs an outside eye at appropriate times that actors can rely upon to shape their work.*

By the third rehearsal day, and still in a holding pattern, of sorts, with the explorations continuing, Gabi could start to see some composition of ideas and common threads interactions emerging. She was re-energised by the thought of the possibilities that could now

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[12] In the group discussion, Gabi explained that she was trying to honour the direction I gave, and obey a 'rule' to work in silence. When she was asked whose rule it was, she said in surprise: 'it was mine, it was self-imposed!'
[13] Provocation is a term used in the Lecoq for the stimulus or point of reference to create performance

lie ahead. She was 'excited to subvert and not pre-plan'. Yet at the same time she was frustrated by 'too much unnecessary text' happening that was not useful in the shared improvising that was occurring on the floor. Gabi expressed her desire for the group to have more 'physical listening' to productively advance the beginnings of the scenes that were developing.

> *Including this level of detail for Gabi's experience is useful to set the stage for the other actors' experiences that follow, and highlights how individuals within the same process experience their process at different pace, from personal vantage points, and with various skills, techniques, obstacles and insights. For example, at the same time as Gabi was experiencing frustration at the lack of structures, another actor, Aisha, was feeling extremely excited and fulfilled by her progress.*

b.   Gabi's score phase

Gabi was moving into the scoring stage earlier than the others, heightened by her ability and experience as a director to identify scenes and compositions that she could see emerging from the group explorations. She expressed 'feeling a bit disconnected to group', finding it 'hard to understand what is being offered', and struggling to find a language with which to make her own ideas clear to others. This led to a visible frustration as she tried to clarify what she wanted, finding it very difficult and wanting to step out of the work and direct it, which she admitted was a habit of hers. Nevertheless, she was enjoying the movement aspects of her process and, even though it was moving slowly, she could see some good work being done as she watched the other actors freeing up and listening more, and knew it was starting to come together. Behind this frustration, Gabi wanted something to be developed from the rehearsals that 'they could all be proud of'.

> *Gabi was a valuable member of the ensemble, and freely expressed her frustrations, vulnerabilities and challenges regularly in her video diaries and in the group discussions. Her openness to share her thoughts and feelings, her technical discipline and generosity within the explorations with the others and on her own, combined with a passion for the work, was inspiring for all of us and provided a richness to the study.*

c.   Gabi's value-action phase

Two rehearsals before the performance was to take place, Gabi was strongly feeling the need for structure, and becoming anxious about showing the work. At this point she expressed her 'need to know' what they were working towards, and saying she felt that they were 'floating' instead of 'deepening a concept'. She wanted clarity from my feedback, at the same time as

admitting to not knowing what she was trying to say, 'Just, I can't articulate it' and needing to think about it some more.

By the next rehearsal, Gabi was still finding it difficult to articulate what was missing for her, but was very satisfied that there was finally 'a piece' and excited to soon hear the response from the audience. What especially pleased her was having a 'gesture' embedded in it that she had found right at the start of the explorations. She had kept pushing that gesture in her explorations, deepening her connection to it, even though she'd expressed a 'strain working so abstractly'. She wished that more work on gesture had been done earlier instead of working so long with the original object. In saying that however, she loved 'learning so much about process… when to drop, pick up, make decisions'.

> *On a side-note, there was no definitive moment when the devising phase shifted from the resource, to the score, or the value-action stage, and the description here has been placed under each heading according to particular rehearsals determined by the director's planned approach. In creative practice however, the whole process would take much longer and the shifts between phases would occur in an organic way, whereby the director would start to identify that the work itself was starting to emerge and take shape. The value in the imposed structure of this research documentation highlights how the actors were often at different levels of readiness for each phase at a given rehearsal. The study was not focused on testing the devising model chosen, and instead provided insights into individual and collaborative creative process within an intense period of rehearsal.*

d. Gabi's performance phase

Gabi reflected that the performances had validated all the work that had been done in rehearsal, making her proud of everyone involved and she recognised how enriched she felt to 'own one's artistry' for herself and for the ensemble. Her sense of pleasure with her scenes and the works of the others, she felt, was a validation of the collaborative creative process. She later described it thus:

> I haven't actually done this where I've worked with no theme no concept like just with [...] an object and then trying to find a narrative a very difficult process actually [...] I just used the tools that I know. It's been interesting to me that after working with an object we were asked to see what resonated or what was left out of that object [...] the most beautiful discoveries have been under pressure and chaos and things emerge and [that's] what I've enjoyed about this process.

> *Gabi displayed genuine pleasure and a generous spirit at the completion of the performances. Her engagement with the process was evident when she took the opportunity between the two performances to reinvest herself and her ideas in her main scene, 'I'm Leaving', and make substantial changes to way the stage was set up, to test how that affected the performance and the second audience's reading of it. By staying 'in-process', she continued to be open to creative discoveries in the face of an audience, which takes both courage and confidence. Rather than using the time available between the shows to rehearse and 'lock-in' what she had discovered so far, she allowed the work to grow and build while she could.*

4.5.2   Introducing Aisha

Aisha is a working actor in Sydney who has experience both backstage and onstage. Aisha had to take time out of acting and performance due to an accident earlier in the year where she injured her back and has had regular rehabilitation since then. She was cleared to perform again but felt a little rusty. She was keen to be part of an ensemble, to share ideas and to create a work 'from scratch' with no preconceived ideas or framework. She had an interest in Robert Lepage's work, after seeing a production of his show 'Lipsynch'. Aisha was excited about the opportunity to test and push herself creatively, physically and mentally after having time away and was fascinated with the link between creative and academic work.

> *Aisha's rehabilitated injury was not the only past or recent injury being carried by the members of the group. The research process and my task as director was to ensure that these injuries were declared and managed and that further risk or injury was avoided. As all the participants were very experienced actors, the situation was well managed, and each person took responsibility successfully for themselves and for each other.*

Most of Aisha's acting experience has been in scripted plays and stage or site-specific works adapted from other texts. Improvisation and devising were not unfamiliar concepts, but she had little experience with them apart from improvisation in the process of a rehearsal.

a.   Aisha's resource phase

Right from the start, Aisha identified that she was getting caught up in her thoughts and that they intruded on, and limited, her ability to just 'be' with, and explore, the objects. She had brought two objects from home as her source material: a favourite toy from her childhood and a tennis ball. Although she recognised that too much thinking was a problem for her, she experienced times in her explorations that were also fun and freeing. By the end of the first rehearsal, she found that she had become quite affected when she focused on the objects, and that memories from her childhood in England provoked a range of emotions. She had a

growing urge to connect with the others in the room, to which she responded and started to interact and share discoveries.

As the rehearsals unfolded, Aisha was increasingly able to focus and connect her senses with the object, and the process became organic and spontaneous as she found 'lovely moments'. She needed to leave one rehearsal early and felt she'd 'lost connection on return', both with the others and with the creative state that she'd reached beforehand. On another day she was unwell and had low energy, and felt 'stuck', struggling as she tried to 'let go' and use the imagery she'd previously found. She judged her rehearsal that day as weak, felt that her brain was 'mush' and wanted a structure in place to help her along even though she could also see the process was starting to fit together.

> The actors often said that they had a 'need to know' what to do. They thought that having a clear structure would appease the mind's suffering and help them understand what the body's sensorial experience was trying to say and what to do with it. The actors felt uncomfortable in the uncertainty of the explorations, even though they'd enjoyed it and could feel its benefits by way of the imaginative concepts emerging.

b. Aisha's score phase

As the rehearsals moved into the next phase, Aisha felt a lot better about her work. The use of 'gesture, power, and precise communication' was a new and empowering tool for her. She was more engaged, felt 'part of the team, excited' and recognised that participating in exercises on gestures one day helped her feel that she was working towards a solid goal. The next rehearsal day was 'productive', although exhausting, and she recognised that they were all working well together. Having 'drifted away' she was now fully back and engaged again. Now Aisha could see a work developing, even though it was 'fragile' and that her 'physicality needs to be stronger and more obvious'.

> Aisha's insight into what she needed at this point shows a shift away from wanting something that is outside herself (structure). Being able to self-identify what is needed, is evidence that her skills and artistic self-reliance was developing. She could identify in her own body what was lacking once she knew that she wasn't expressing herself clearly. The inability to articulate the intuitive sense that 'something is in the way' at the time is commonly heard. It was only after thinking about it overnight that she found words to express the experience.

c. Aisha's value-action phase

Now that Aisha understood what she needed and that her processes were leading towards something tangible, she had greater purpose in her actions. It also became clear to her that as

there was not 'enough time' for the development to be fully realised, and that there was still confusion regarding the uncertain ending, she could direct her approach accordingly. She was also aware that while her impulses were quite good, she could still feel 'something in the way' and was initially unable to articulate what that 'something' was. The next day she clarified her confusion with some specificity, and explained that she took my direction of 'keep it as is', to mean to repeat exactly which she had done, however when other actors continued to further develop the improvisation, she became at odds within the scene.

> *Aisha described a deeper understanding of what taking a direction might mean at any one time. This showed how an actor is often juggling multiple understandings of the immediate processes they are in, and that a director will sometimes steer clear of very direct instructions to ensure the actors are free to continue their moment-to-moment work. Hence her literal interpretation of 'keep as it is' limited her continuing to keep her listening and responding process alive. Her focus shifted instead to repeating what she could recall had occurred, which was difficult to retrieve and not what was expected of her.*

Near the end of this stage of the process, as the separate scenes were being worked up on the floor, Aisha had a chance to sit out of a scene in which she was not involved to watch the others, and see their process. Rather than working on the floor herself, with this perspective, she became more 'excited that work is coming together' for an audience to see.

d. Aisha's performance phase

The performances confirmed for Aisha that she was 'aware of using my body effectively' and she was reassured by the audience's level of understanding of the creative aims of the works and her own role in them. As a result, she accepted, and came to understand, that it was 'ok to throw away what was not working'. Aisha had the least devising experience in the group of actors, and found the process was refreshing. In her final reflection, she described it this way:

> Because you had had such free reign, and exploring and doing different things, then suddenly it was like – it was like almost the end, with putting some structures in it... it represented a lot of freedom and play.

4.5.3 Introducing Malinda

Malinda is a movement teacher and Pilates instructor, with a background in contemporary dance. She has been re-designing her creative career for a while by exploring and teaching physical theatre to actors and was keen to stretch herself into areas of theatre devising and

acting performance herself. She was inspired by the performance and academic combination involved in this research and had an interest in undertaking research in the future herself.

Malinda approached her creative work through the body and movement, and her courageous way of working complemented and extended the ensemble. She liked to feel that her 'brain has been stimulated and stretched by being challenged to think and create in new ways', and wanted to be able to become vulnerable by 'encouraging myself to move out of my comfort zone'. The timing of the project was good for her and she was keen to exchange ideas in a 'new creative headspace'. She felt she had been doing too much teaching and that as she was 'actually a creative artist', wanted to 'push into more uncomfortable positions'.

a. Malinda's resource phase

Malinda missed the first day of rehearsal, but was able to fit into the exploratory process smoothly on the second. The object she brought for her resource was a Swiss cow bell collected on a past overseas trip. She found there was a lot to explore with it, was inspired by many ideas, and was 'surprised by that'. She felt she ran out of time in her explorations and wanted to be able to continue for longer because it had provoked memories noting that she 'became internal, less aware of others' as her senses were strongly stimulated by its weight, its movement, and the sounds it made. These all gave her a 'strong impulse to move and inhabit' those impulses. She expressed two main challenges to the rehearsals in the early days, the first related to working with some actors she had previously taught and the second was a challenge she set herself to 'try and work with voice or text'.

> *Malinda had confidence and expert skill to use her body to articulate and generate meaning and expression. Creating works through physical improvisation was a familiar approach for her, albeit in a different form this time. She had a lack of confidence and experience, though, in the use of the spoken word and text in performance, which contrasted with the familiarity and skill that other actors in the room had in these areas. Being 'in the body' was much more of a challenge for the actors who mainly worked with a script. The opposite was true for Malinda.*

b. Malinda's score phase

Malinda's work commitments kept her away from another rehearsal during this phase, and again she had to catch up with the progress that had been made by others. Nevertheless, she 'had images arising after the first day of rehearsal' although she found that she was 'not as articulate as the ideas are emerging into being'. Now that the ensemble was working together

in group explorations, she noticed 'challenges as her body is changing'[14] and because the group as a whole was not at her level of physicality. She expressed her concern that she couldn't 'trust physically' in her improvisations for these two reasons and was therefore being safer in her creative choices, so there was less risk for her and others. She found this a little frustrating.

> *An example of this came when the group was playing together with a table on wheels. They were moving it around the room, spinning it while it balanced on one of its legs. At the same time Malinda applied body weight to it. As the table slipped over unexpectedly, Malinda did not hesitate to use that advantageously to continue explore her movement on top of the now fallen table's edge. As the others were not also dancers with that level of trust and strength, she recognised both her own and their limitations. The interesting point here is that Malinda did not start cautiously and build her physical confidence as she went, as the others were doing, but she moved with awareness, confidence and skill, and proceeded to test herself in challenging, physical explorations to find her boundaries without fear. As a consequence, she also discovered the other actors' boundaries.*

During this phase, Malinda also had the chance to be the 'outside eye' at another rehearsal and could see 'physical improvement in others from the gesture work' they had done earlier. This affirmed my choice of physical gesture warm-up that morning. Malinda continued to enjoy the flow of the rehearsals and the 'freeing of ideas and exploring, even though they [...] change direction and not be included', noting that it was 'funny that very random (things) come together'.

c. Malinda's value-action phase

It was only now that Malinda felt the 'beginnings of unfamiliar ways of working'. She 'knew' how this 'improv works intellectually, but I can't do it'. She was expressing that she was 'still to embody it' – which is a familiar experience – and that she was experiencing 'trouble even in-the-moment' which, for her, was very frustrating.

> *Malinda had created a small vignette in an improvisation on her own, with the notion that it would become a scene with other actors. However, the whole company found it entrancing- no-one joined in. I kept it to a solo piece that was eventually included in the performance. In this instance, Malinda was experiencing the creating of work in a mode that was completely new for her. She had started the improvisation to offer an idea, not through physical movement, but from her responses to objects. In this case, the objects were the crackers and spread she happened to have in her lunch that day. Once again,*

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[14] Being an ex-dancer, her body was no longer able to do everything it once could.

> *an actor commented on the way of 'knowing' being two things, an intellectual knowing that was not the same as a creative expressive 'felt' knowing.*

d. Malinda's performance phase

Malinda's solo piece was presented at the two evening performances. She was also in a scene with the whole ensemble. The solo piece drew a lot of discussion from both audiences. The first audience saw different things unfold in her piece than she wanted and this provoked her to continue the explorations further before the second night. The work continued to evolve over both performances as Malinda struggled to find a way to communicate her 'internal dialogue' to the audience. Her improvisation was provoked by memory of a dance work she'd seen over twenty-five years ago that impacted her strongly. It informed the actions she used and, as she said, 'you emulate that' spontaneously, which led the crackers to be used as playing cards. She found the setting in which she imagined her scene taking place did not communicate clearly to the audience. This was very 'thought provoking' for her and drove her process strongly to integrate and adjust her performance as a result of the 'fascinating' feedback at the final rehearsal to get closer to her intention. In her final reflection post-show, she said:

> Also because we are trying to find something and not being directed to do it a particular way so you can just do it whichever way. So when the whole world is open to you, it's very hard to know what to stand on – so that's hard. It's quite hard to have that yet to hang on to – so we can say 'that's it'.

> *Malinda was expressing complex problems that actors and creative artists in general face as they work on their process and their art to realise what their impulses and explorations reveal to them in images, imaginings, and thoughts. Malinda's solo piece was only recently created, and so it was in a very fragile exploratory state at the time it was shown to the audience.*

4.5.4 Introducing Will

Will is a part-time primary school teacher, and part-time film and stage actor who also wrote and developed his own projects. His performance training was a blend of stage and screen acting and he was keen to develop his improvising and devising skills more with a group of like-minded people. He was also very curious about the research process.

Will liked a mix of academic and creative inputs and values the intrinsic qualities of the performer. He had a devising experience earlier that year and 'loves physical theatre – but is not good at it'. So he was attracted to the project for the opportunity to participate in

improvisation with an ensemble, and devise a work collaboratively to extend his more traditional acting experience. He wanted this project to help him develop not only his performance and ensemble skills, but the improvisation process of preparing for a role.

a. Will's resource phase

Right from day one Will had personal 'breakthroughs' as he found himself struggling and 'fighting' to stop his mind 'over-thinking' so as to find a way to trust in the process. Throughout this first stage, he 'loved being pushed to discomfort' and kept 'trying hard to be still, out of my head, into body, and to take offers'. He was 'thinking hard to improve' and overall found the process 'rewarding'. By the third day of rehearsals, however, he felt he had 'regressed'. He was using his 'head less but was out of his depth', but he also felt 'inadequate' and was 'surprised by it' happening so far into the process, which left him feeling 'uncreative'.

> *Interestingly, Will had a lot of confidence in his skill and experience when he commenced the process, but as he started to push into new 'uncomfortable' areas, his confidence dropped and he felt less creative. The process we used differed significantly from his usual approach to performance that served him well at other times. Instead he needed new ways of thinking, or in his words 'not-thinking' and responding that required new learning. His feelings of inadequacy were fuelled by comparing his fledgling ability in this area to what he saw others doing who were more experienced improvisers and devisers.*

b. Will's score phase

As the work progressed into the creation of scenes Will said he was 'more comfortable now that structures are in place'. He acknowledged that this kind of work 'takes time and is challenging' and that it changed him. He started to see that he was 'slowly gaining impulsivity and physicality', and was 'less confused, and more contented with his achievements'. Although Will was still 'challenged to try to think everything through', he was very happy to 'find abstract ways of expressing' himself and his ideas.

c. Will's value-action phase

The value-action stage challenged Will again. He felt there were now 'too many ideas and too many creatives' making decisions about the message in the work, and he felt the 'narrative was not good'. He continued to be 'challenged by the process to act impulsively' although he could tell that there was an 'improvement' in his 'not-thinking' and he was increasingly responding to 'what the body wants'. He also was 'conscious of having an audience soon', and was therefore worried that the work would not be ready in time. By the end of the process,

however, and shortly before meeting the audience, Will had a 'monumental' rehearsal, in which he was 'offering and accepting'[15] , and was 'better at listening'. He felt that he was finally able to offer creative contributions to the ensemble that were integrated into what would be shown on stage. He'd found 'a bit of structure beneficial', and was now freer and wanted 'to be more physical, to engage the audience'. He felt that he could now 'understand the purpose of action-on impulse'. For him it was a 'monumental' breakthrough.

> *Of the actors, Will seemed to have the most turbulent rehearsal, experiencing breakthroughs, struggles, feelings of inadequacy, challenges and new understandings and skills. He described a process of change and personal growth as he moved from confidence and technique into unfamiliar, uncomfortable ways of working creatively. That this embodied new learning, through 'action-on impulse' he reached new levels of understanding.*

d. Will's performance phase

Will felt that his creative contributions were accepted and became an integral part of a performance that was a 'positive experience' with 'lots of challenges'. He could see that his performance was also a part of a 'steep learning curve' that he felt was a 'huge success'. The notion of remaining in-process for a relatively long time was foreign to his experience, and so, as he put, it was 'delightfully frustrating'.

> That's why we ask that question of process – it's delightfully frustrating. I think each time we do a run, we always – our creative brains go whoa, how does this feel? So it's constantly 'peaks and troughs'[…] Lesley kept saying it's work-in-progress, it's not opening night [that] certainly plays with my head.

4.5.5   Introducing Lenore

Lenore graduated from her three-year professional acting training course only six months earlier, and had developed her process during her training with little other experience since. She was the youngest of the group and excited to work with a 'cool' group of professionals and to develop her own devising skills. She wanted the chance to work with a new ensemble, and liked that she would not be 'cast' in a role and would instead contribute to the creation. She wanted to experience what it was like to devise a work with 'professionals outside her already established circle' and to 'experiment to get her creative side growing more' and 'creative juices flowing again'.

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[15] Offering and then accepting what was offered is a core tenet of improvisation.

The techniques she had been taught had given her a detailed process with an emphasis on developing her senses and to use sense-memory, which is an acting tool that focuses on the integration of the physical and the emotional body. She had experience in the broad context of stage and screen works, and was ready to apply what she had already learned and explore new processes.

a. Lenore's resource phase

Like Malinda, Lenore also had work commitments, so she was not present at every rehearsal, including the first. She brought a diary as her resource object to the second rehearsal and described her first explorations with it as 'intriguing', and that the object 'stimulated my senses, and provoked images'. She became 'aware of the residue from object exploration' as she began to move further into improvisations. What she meant was that even though she thought she had, in her words, 'exhausted it', the 'residue re-stimulated' her when she began collaborating. She also 'felt a level of consciousness and paying attention', so that her 'energy was maintained this time' and that she was 'able to reinvest much more' than with her initial solo explorations.

> *In the context of the research, this notion of 'residue' is worth noting and will be discussed again in Chapter 5. In the language of an actor well used to working through the senses, Lenore identified 'residue' relatively early in the process as being of benefit and providing her with an ongoing stimulus ('re-stimulate') even after the source object was not in use or present. She equated having energy (creative energy) with a stimulus, that left a 'residue' following the initial explorations with the object.*

As the rehearsals progressed, Lenore started to feel 'desensitised' and wondered if 'the object had been exhausted' creatively. She saw that all the actors 'got stuck after a while' and became 'disappointed in herself'. For Lenore, that feeling of being 'desensitised' became a source of curiosity, and she wanted 'to explore the idea creatively. What happens beyond being desensitised?'. Overall this phase was fun and interesting for her as she identified a range of 'topic themes emerging' that could be developed much further.

> *In the research, this signalled that Lenore was naturally moving into the scoring phase of the creative process. Her own discoveries and process were aligned with the transition of phases set by the research.*

b. Lenore's score phase

Lenore was worried at this point that 'we would get attached to an idea and get stuck on it, but it didn't happen that way'. She could see a 'motif that could flow through' the emerging

work and was happy that she was in a 'creative process, working well-from chaos to something else'. She identified that they all 'got stuck with some action', but 'once we got it, was ok'. She also realised the 'difference between offer and statement' and how that affected her creative offers, and how she responded to others creatively.

As the work started to focus on content – 'story, themes, scenes' – she became 'interested in them and working through them' and 'started to make choices about their shape'. She was excited to bring 'de-sensitising' into the creative themes and developed more scenes around that to 'see what happens'. She wanted to build in a 'warm-up structure' to 'get in [the] right head space'.

> *Lenore was referring to more than the warm-up activity that took place as an ensemble before a rehearsal commenced. She was speaking of her own process, recognising what she needed at this point in the rehearsal that would help her 'get in the right head space' to make strong creative offers and be ready to accept and advance those offered to her during the improvisations. The research identified this ability to self-diagnose or self-assess what was needed occurred frequently.*

c. Lenore's value-action phase

Lenore observed that a lot of time was spent on detail, which was a 'change to the previous flow and energised actions' and she realised that 'although that felt good, on reflection not much was taken up and developed'. Gabi also referred to this time when she spoke of the fact that there was 'too much unnecessary text'. Now that the project was getting 'anchored', Lenore wanted to also focus on 'drama and structure' and identified that detailed work done too soon, was not productive. Overall, however she felt that this process stage of attempting to realise an idea 'really worked' and expressed the desire to maintain the 'same pace but with heightened energy, to get the residue into other scenes'.

> *Lenore now associated 'residue' with energy, and wanted 'heightened' energy to be available as a force to get the residue to also reside in, and imbue, other scenes. The way she associated the energy with creativity power is an example of an artist involved in practice research to further both her skills and her creativity.*

d. Lenore's performance phase

The performances gave Lenore an 'appreciation for process', not just the product of performance, and she found deeper meaning in not 'settling' and instead 'just being there for the audience'.

Like all this stuff was from our one-minute performance – we threw it together in an afternoon and a night and showed everyone the next day. And there was actually all this golden stuff inside of it we didn't realise that can be very useful [...] everything I think came from something that we did early on [...] mostly based on our objects and then extracted little bits that worked [...] With me and [Will] we actually ended up having similar ideas when we got told to do whatever we wanted – quite interesting in that way.

The openness with which Lenore engaged in the creative process, was valuable to the research as she had the natural mind-set of a learner possibly due to having recently graduated from drama school. Her frame of understanding of her process included the effect of creative 'residue' on the work's shape and on her personal process.

4.6   The audience response

Immediately following each the two performances, the audience members were invited to stay for a discussion of the work they'd seen performed and to question me and the actors about what they saw. The audience comprised a mixture of scholars, academics, creative practitioners and friends. On each night they generously remained, and agreed to have the discussion recorded. I have included a number of direct quotes from the audience in this section. They are included because the actors' processes are driven by creating impacting performance for an audience and therefore the success of a process is also evidenced by the audience's understanding and response to it. The effect of our performance on the audience provided another measure of the transformative power of the actors' process.

Many of the comments from the audience demonstrated how the work resonated for them in varying ways. Because the process we undertook was very open, and without a clear 'agenda' for a story or theme, the actors and I were unsure how the scenes would be received, or whether the scenes would make sense to an audience at this early stage in their development. The audience's descriptions of how they made sense of the scenes, therefore, is a fascinating glimpse into the way the actors and performance was received in a very personal way. In their attempt to work out what we meant, the audience made it meaningful for themselves. As one member of the first audience commented:

Yes, it was interesting the relationship between audience and performer and relationship between the performers at times [...] and with time [...] being able to touch it [...] and tangible that firm relationship between audience and at different points of time, yeah I can see that, a strong linear line when you practically are able to touch the intangible.

Because we were not telling a specific story, which would have had discrete characters, plot, location, or relationships, we freed the audience to overlay the experience with their own points of reference. As another member of the same audience said:

> It was interesting – two things I had to process – being inspired by true lives, chaos and motion of you all, (or that discomfort actually causes less ideas because you are forced to change when there is chaos) and, whatever chaos brings you it could be just your likes, [...] so if you're reading the news every day comfortable on the laptop while you're sitting in bed or at your desk at work, it's routine so your environment is not being changed so getting all this information doesn't really register all the bad stories.

One audience member on the second night pieced together for themselves a narrative that tied the four scenes together as in one 'super narrative'.

> Um yeah yeah I definitely started to see a narrative. A narrative of um a sense that we all have different interests and so forth but in fact we are all aligned. There is actually much more um much more similarity than there is heterogeneity, although we see it the other way. We are all actually walking in the same paths but we imagine that we've all got different places to go and um and – we all imagine our lives to be very very purposeful but you know when seen from outside it seems to be very purposeless. That's the sort of narrative structures that I started to see.

And one very young audience member had a good time, without needing to make it mean anything at all, 'Um I didn't really get the play but I still thought it was great.' Overall, the audiences were very interested in our creative process, which we shared with them. For one person, listening to the actors' explanations of the overall process journey, came this:

> So what I'm really hearing [is] the conversation you are having and, um, what the discussion is. You were mentioning a lot about two polarities and pulling apart the expectation too of reality to hyper reality, unreality or abstraction or something like that, um and that's what I'm seeing in the performance and that's what you're doing.

And another expressed it in a more metaphysical way.

> You guys were not given any boundaries which is beautiful [...] so at the end of the day it's endless the way that we can act our scenarios whether we're confined by the physical world that we put ourselves in and what we listen to and where we inform ourselves – that's the only confinement we have but the possibilities are endless and that is the beauty of it.

There were other kinds of resonances including this person at the second performance, who said:

> This process, is what happens in an entrepreneurial incubator. There's a whole bunch of people coming together – there's a huge canvas to do whatever you want. Stuff they are bringing in, it's a huge canvas. And they have the threads of what they want to do interacting out of […] sort of out of […] play and ideas.

Many in the audience were mesmerised by the actor's warm-up exercise, which as explained earlier in this chapter was my way of bringing the actors into the pace and creating connections between them in order to perform with 'presence'. As one person on the second night put it:

> I think that the response – you're saying that you responded to an object – were you just at the very beginning – just responding to each other when you froze and stopped in that kind of [...] what I got was that the ultimate object is the human. And that you were connecting and stopping to connect with that and the surprise of that was really lovely. Very simple.

When told it was a warm-up only, that person, and others commented that it was a very good piece to start with as they could get the sense from it of what was to follow. Such as:

> Like the disconnect between the people also […] and the disconnection continued but it was, but there were moments when you connected in that exercise and that was powerful, sort of setting – a preface to the disconnection theme.

Having two performances with an afternoon of rehearsal in between allowed for comments from the first audience to inform the rehearsal before the final performance. Interestingly, as well as giving attention to the warm-up, many in both audiences also commented on the opening scene that followed it. This was Malinda's solo piece, 'Ritual'. The audience feedback, particularly in one instance on the first night, contributed to Malinda's further explorations before the second show, and generated both subtle and structural differences in it. As one person described it:

> She had our attention, I think there was a very intimate relationship between what she was doing as compared to the rest. We were concentrating on everything that she was doing, and obviously the objects between us and [Malinda], which was very nice.

And another was even more detailed:

> I found the narrative of loneliness and the creativity particularly very well reflected in the biscuits and the vegemite. How they went from being one thing, they shifted into being a game of cards. So in a way that loneliness we have in the city, because that was clear, but also what the things we find to uh, to yearn and to long and amuse ourselves.

Newspapers were used throughout the scenes that created an environment and link for the actors and it also created a context for the audience with which they viewed the scenes. On the first night, one audience member commented:

> It's interesting because I felt that just with the significance of like the newspapers being the thematic sort of concept and that so much of the world is driven by the headlines, [...] it just sort comes at you.

The use of the newspapers in all scenes had not been a deliberate statement in most scenes, instead they were initially in the rehearsal room because they were a prop in Gabi's solo presentation, their presence however had stimulated all the actors to improvise and play with them, thus changing them to: a map, placemats, current news among other things.

The actors fielded one question from the audience about 'how the academic dimension of this work affected the experience', which Lenore answered with:

> I would say probably selfishly I kind of forgot [laugh] which is typical, um but I saw it as our research in creative not Lesley's research academically; that was the vibe I was getting every time in the room – was that our research of finding things what's working what's not what are we keeping what are we throwing away it's our research I didn't think about pen and paper.

The final comment from an audience member after the first performance confirmed that the approach I had taken with the devising, and the work of the actors in their process, had been a highly creative one that had depth and substance even in its abstraction. The extract below are chosen from that as a way of expressing the creative outcomes of the research.

> Yes, it was interesting the relationship between audience and performer and (the) relationship between the performers at times [...] a strong linear line when you (are) practically being able to touch the intangible [...] It was just there, with that duality, that chaos, and then bang: triangulation [...] it seems to me that there are a lot of lines, being developed. I'd love to see it develop further [...] I can see the makings of a great show.

4.7 Creative development summary

This chapter described the evolution of a devised theatre work from a research perspective to distil the actors and director's key experiences. The devised theatre work was possible because the actors gave generously of themselves, their time and their creative contributions. As the director of the creative work, and at the same time being the researcher of the process, I balanced the dual roles of a practitioner participating in the devising project, and as the observer of the whole process. This close involvement afforded me the privilege to both

witness the process and gather data, to better understand both my approach to directing as well as the actors' process.

Factors that were considered essential to the preparations for the research included: selection of a suitable devising model and data collection tools; recruitment of experienced actors; the location, availability and appropriateness of the rehearsal space; and structure of a rehearsal plan that would enable the management and freedom of the complexities inherent in devising. During the devising, it was necessary to balance the dual roles of researcher with creative practitioner in such a way as to facilitate the devising, support and extend the actors, and to ensure the collection of data did not interfere with the creative flow, yet be responsive to the direction of the work itself.

These experiences are further explored in the next chapter where I provide an analysis of the data and discuss the research findings. The following chapter discusses how this data was analysed and the key insights that were gained.

Chapter 5   Discussion

OR (What Was Interesting and Unexpected and How I went about Analysing it)

> Every practice is a mode of thought, already in the act. To dance: a thinking in movement. To
> paint: a thinking through color. To perceive in the everyday: a thinking of the world's varied
> ways of affording itself. […] a mode of thought creatively in the act. (Manning & Massumi 2014,
> p. vii)

5.1   Analytical framework

In this chapter, the research is discussed using a bricolage approach to address the 'plurality
and complex' (Rogers 2012) dimensions for the interpretation. The mixed methodological
approach gathered complex data from the creative process for analysis and interpretation to
answer the questions at the heart of the research, namely into the alchemy of the actors'
process and embodiment, and how this might be useful in other creative pursuits.

The bricolage methodology chosen for this research provided multiple analytical tools to
approach the complexity of the large amount of data collected. I applied an ethnographic filter
to the analysis (McAuley 2012) in the sense that, as an 'insider' researcher the actors and I
drew upon deep, shared understandings and insights during the creative development and we
were able to communicate as director to actor and vice versa. As the research was a
longitudinal study of a full rehearsal process from the start through to the performance, the
notes, video, audio and reflections collected provide a richness to deeply engage with through
a phenomenological lens (Zarrilli 2004). The interactions with the participant actors during
exercises, discussions and video diaries were a form of participatory action research (Heron &
Reason 1997). Additionally, being a practising director, I was also engaged in my own practice-
led research to enrich my reflective process. The bricolage approach was designed to capture
the breadth and complexity of the creative process, so in this discussion, no single method is
privileged over another.

5.1.1   Structure of the chapter

In this chapter I do two things as a result of the actors and director's experiences. Firstly,
Section 5.1 describes the analytical framework used. Secondly, in Section 5.2 I identify and
discuss the complexity that emerged from the research, pertinent to the devising process, the
actors process of preparation and some considerations for creating theatre collaboratively.
Then, in Section 5.3 I identify and offer an interpretation of specific elements of the actors'

process that were brought to light during the research. Finally, the summary in Section 5.4 draws a deeper understanding of how these elements created an 'alchemical activity' that enabled various acting states. It also suggests a possible new way to word the actors' creativity as an 'embodied alchemy'. Further, it supports and leads to the drawing of conclusions in the final chapter.

5.1.2   Introduction to the analysis

I used the actors' and my own daily video diaries as the starting point for analysis to detect when and how they each noted an experience of a particular event or a significant 'shift' of some kind. This was repeated for each person's set of video diaries and after close reading of the material, a summary of the key words and descriptions was compiled. By setting these key words down in order of the process stages, a comparison between actors and with my own observations and reflections of the same day was made. It was then possible to see where each person's focus of an experience lay and identify similarities and differences. Having identified these 'shifts' I mapped the transcripts of the daily rehearsal video diaries against each of the four stages of the devising process.

Appendix 5 Data collation and Analysis

Once each individual's journey was mapped through the diaries, it was then possible to refer to the filmed footage that recorded each day's rehearsals. Whereas the video diaries record the subjective experience of each person, the film of the rehearsals provide an objective record of the whole process. Therefore, to understand the felt experiences noted in the video diaries, the rehearsal films were viewed in detail to highlight what to investigate further. By focusing on the self-perceptions of the actors and my own directing focus, the breadth of the material was narrowed to deeply analyse specific experiences from a number of points of view. The discussion in the rest of this chapter is based on this source and is also informed by my professional experience, the current discourse in the field of acting, and positions it relevant to the body of literature.

5.2   The devising process: Complexity, collaboration and pre-expressivity

The creative development highlighted many underlying factors that influenced, and were integral to, the actor's individual processes as they worked through each stage of the process. These were important considerations for me as I facilitated the devised theatre work and helped me identify that a complex 'alchemy' occurred during the actors' creative process. This

alchemy shaped their, and my own, creative understandings, at times influencing the directing decisions I made and challenging the actors throughout.

The devising process was complex and sometimes chaotic, with a great degree of uncertainty about what we were trying to do, what we were creating, how to say what we wanted to say, and how we would 'discover' and then build the 'show'. Prolific ideas flowed, very few of which were developed to the point where we could show them, and most did not go any further than an initial idea or a 'brilliant' moment. Many interesting ideas came relatively early in the process and were explored and developed over time, for instance the notion of being 'disconnected'. Other ideas came late, and were only in an embryonic stage when shown, for instance the solo scene, 'Card Game', which came to be performed after only two rehearsals of the original idea.

The actors were, at various times, challenged, elated, frustrated, happy and confused with the process. Initially, the degree of uncertainty was challenging for all, some more than others, and the way they each responded to this highlighted their individual habits of thinking and levels of ease with uncertainty.

Separate to the creative process but of equal importance, was how each individual's natural tendencies – to imagine, to think, to move – became evident as well as which of these habits were useful or which were a hindrance or caused frustration. As I observed the actors at work, I identified behaviours that were impeding some or all of them, and so adapted the daily warm-up exercises to guide them into new ways of managing these.

One example of this occurred when, by coincidence one morning, the three actors who I had observed struggling with their expressivity, were the only ones present. Knowing the day before that this would be the case, I seized the opportunity to introduce them to exercises in Physical Gesture[16]. These were based on archetypes so they could experience, in their bodies, what large expressive gestures felt like. Whilst these explorations were not directly building on the creative work, the experience allowed them each to embody a greater degree of expressivity than any previous exercises or discussion had done so far. Another actor, Malinda, recognised the difference this made when she was next at rehearsal, 'I do think that I could see a greater embodiment of ideas or more extension of the body. So that was really inspiring for me to see.'

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[16] This involved a quick introduction to the major archetypes followed by guided exercises in large, physical gestures that might be typical of these archetypes.

By selecting a devising process for the research as opposed to using a text-based rehearsal, I placed the actors in a position that exposed and challenged them and their skills and allowed for the most creative opportunities to emerge. It also revealed those individual and process-driven factors that needed to be understood more deeply to answer the research questions.

5.2.1 The complexity of engaging in a creative devising process

The complexity of acting and creativity frame this discussion, given what the literature has shown us about the richness of the field of possibilities that intersect with, and influence, acting and creative practice. Chapter 2 discussed the work of Tufnell and Crickmay and that improvisation can generate material that is complex and unexpected, which 'could never be planned or arrived at by logical means' (1990, p. 194). As the director of a devised work, the complexity of managing the creative process and the research, and being able to understand and respond to it as a complex system, was important.

Human beings are complex systems, and actors' creative processes can also be considered according to the features of complexity. Van Ruth (2016) suggests the following features are common to complex systems:

- multiple interacting elements;
- all elements have the same level of autonomy (none are dominant);
- elements interact simultaneously;
- all elements can affect each other;
- elements interact in non-linear ways; and
- emergent properties appear at the higher system levels.

These emergent properties arose from the patterns formed spontaneously when the elements interacted in these systems, to create the 'mystery, power and unpredictability' (2016) that fuelled the actors creative explorations and devising process. As higher-level systems, when the actors applied a range of processes and techniques that supported the maintenance of complexity in their creative endeavours, the emerging ideas and means of communicating them were highly imaginative and a 'brilliance' came through. The complexity of how these processes affected the actor, and what happened between actors on stage, led to the overall creativity of this form of practice and enabled a deeper discussion of the mysteries of performance.

Everything that an actor does helps develop their complex connections – physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual – in such a way that their 'instrument' (Morris 2011), which is their whole self, is better able to be both mindful and fully engaged in the moment-to-moment explorations.

In this thesis, I use the term 'alchemy'[17] to describe how the complexity of the actor's process creates transformative embodiment, and the 'mysterious' act of creativity itself (Massumi 2002; Ridge 2007). I chose the analogy of an alchemist who transformed base materials into something more valuable that aligns with the actor's process which transforms a person into an 'instrument' for expressive art. Similarly, I use the term 'alchemical elements' to identify the elements I identified that combined, interacted, intermingled and blended in each creative act.

The actor's alchemy makes for an imprecise result. As each actor expressed throughout the devising process, there was a constant searching for the exact or perfect 'recipe' that would satisfy their ideas and support the work that was being created at any given time. Some actors felt the search more urgent, as if getting it 'right' sooner might be the answer to perfecting it. Others found the searching itself was revealing more and more interesting findings, and that was what mattered most to them.

5.2.2   Considerations for creating collaboratively

In creative collaborations – and the theatrical devising undertaken was highly collaborative – these challenges and different individual needs further complicated and enriched the process. The creative responsibility was shared and the work being generated started to take on a life of its own. Barba described it this way:

> At this point a phenomenon occurs which seems strange when we speak of it, but is a sign that the work is on the right course. It is as though the work no longer belongs to us but starts to speak with its own autonomous voice and language, which we have to decipher. Something similar happens with the work of the individual actors when their physical scores are interwoven with the scores of their fellow actors, with the words of the text, and with the demands of the dramaturgy. (2000, p. 65)

By sharing and gaining each other's immediate responses, the actors came to understand how their own ideas were 'reading' to others. This feedback helped with the direction taken in an exploration, and the actor knew when the work moved away from where their own

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[17] See 1.4 for fuller explanation

explorations wanted to go. They then had a choice to continue to hold on to their idea, or go where the collective idea took them all. Evidence of this occurred when in the process was seen in the actors' video diaries, for example in this extract of Will's.

> I found it quite interesting. I lacked confidence comparing myself and felt as if that I was
> inadequate in terms of my creativity and what I had to offer, particularly in the improv. So I've
> enjoyed the process nonetheless, but just – yeah, just feeling: What can I offer an ensemble
> creatively for this project?

The source objects the actors had used to stimulate and open up their initial ideas developed individual and also shared meaning when they were explored individually and then collaboratively. Ideas without context are not easily transformed into performance, and the creative idea generation also needed an overall vision and direction to shape, develop and realise it. In a more traditional rehearsal, the actors explore, and work to bring to fruition, what the director imparts as their vision. The actors are then able to start to direct even their initial explorations and develop the work according to what the director has seen, and wants to see next. When devising scenes with the ensemble, my vision of the work was shaped by what the actors were exploring and creating, and I provided guidance to develop even further what was working. So for this study, the actors were working 'blind', without a clear 'vision' to guide them from the start, which brought about other challenges. This was clearly evident in Gabi's final reflection of the process.

> I was lost quite a lot and I also felt 'responsible' for the ensemble when they were lost as I
> usually take on the role of 'rescuer'/ 'director'[...] this was challenging – to let the process guide
> me [...] guide us [...] but we grow like this so I can see how I have benefitted from it.

Gabi was challenged by the experience yet recognised how the challenge enabled them to 'grow' due to being lost (in uncertainty). Stevens (2016) suggests that the performer's responses connect the body to the mind. It is conceivable from evidence in my research that creative cognition systems resulted from the act of improvising, made it meaningful and 'forged new neural connections' (Stevens 2016, p. 110).

5.2.3   The actors' preparations: pre-expressivity

Before we started, each actor had expressed a desire to learn new things and be challenged, so they were in a receptive mode rather than in an acting or expressive mode (Blair 2009a, p. 99). Their motivation and willingness supported the creative explorations and meant the actors were ready to go deeper. Gradually, over a few rehearsals, the actors appeared to

soften and relax, as they came to trust me, the process and each other. As they reached a relaxed state, they also appeared more energised, and their responses increasingly showed they were tuned-in to what they were doing both as individuals and as an ensemble. This energy was not highly evident in active demonstration, but it was strongly implicit in their actions, however subtle, and was detectable as a vigorous potency, even when the actor was in stillness.

By spending time undertaking acting, sensory and movement exercises at the start of rehearsals, the actors developed their 'pre-expressive' state; a state of being that was both relaxed yet energised. In the pre-expressive state the actors reached 'dilation' (Barba 1985) in that the sensory channels were heightened and could receive and respond authentically to stimuli. The actors were increasingly in a fully open 'body-mind' continuum (Creely 2011). This level of openness frees up and heightens the sensory channels of receptivity created when a stimulus, like an object, is explored. It is the external-internal balance and flow of the body's communications at work. Practical mastery of a sensory modality and awareness, which is what Noe calls 'perceptual content' (2004), that helped the actors maintain a connection with the present moment and provided a richness of original material from which to draw while devising. The perceptual content was therefore 'available to experience' (Zarrilli 2007) and helped drive the originality and depth of the ideas and the work being created.

The processes of pre-expressivity and performativity were continually being re-visited by the actors, and were self-generated. When the actor reached a state of preparedness and was improvising or performing they identified what was working or not, and re-visited a process to enhance their pre-expressivity. The complexity of this process underpins the analysis of the data.

5.3   The actors' creative process: Towards an alchemy of the elements

> '…gradually the big shwobble of ideas gets clearer the more we work on it.' (Lepage interview with Connolly 2012)

In trying to make explicit what I did as both a researcher and as a devisor, I needed to arrive at a format to discuss how to represent intellectually what the process has revealed from the data collated. I also needed to understand the concept of the devising process from a holistic point of view that brought together the many aspects of the creative development. Figure 7 depicts a mind-map that attempts to visualise how to understand and my approach to the analysis.
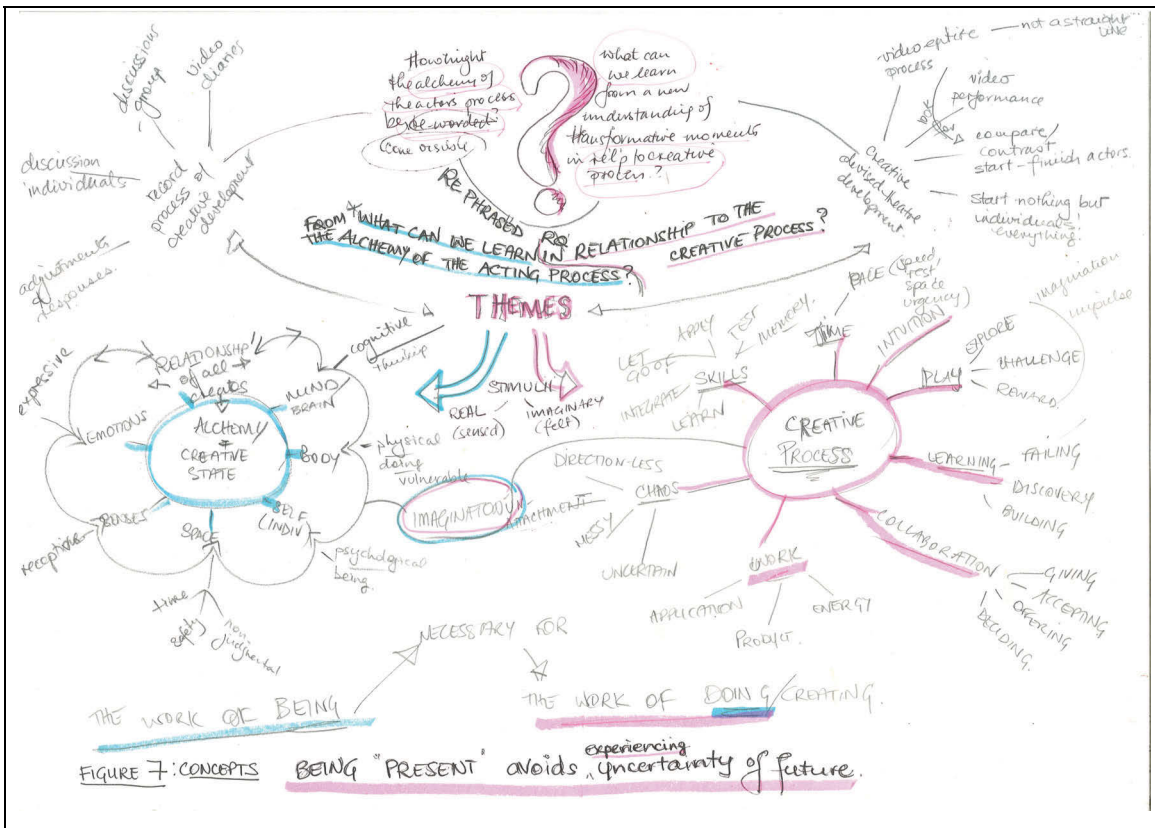
Figure 7 Conceptualising the creative development research.

The further I delved into the rehearsal and performance data, these factors of complexity, collaboration and pre-expressivity, were reflected by a continual and evolving flux. They were not only being managed by me, as director, but also by the actors – directly or indirectly – at each and every rehearsal. When analysing the data, it became clear that we all were engaged in a complex process, with a myriad of challenges or obstacles faced or solved by drawing upon whatever tools of technique, knowledge or insight were available to us. As result of engaging with this complexity and challenge, the actors achieved a new quality in their acting state that they applied to their performance. From this new vantage point in performance, came an awareness of new challenges and complexity that meant this process was a continual cycle, each cycle further developing the actors' 'qualities of being' or pre-expressivity, and their performances or expression.

I describe this evolving cycle as the one that contains the following continuum:

- complex **challenges**;
- **tools** to draw upon or develop (to deal with the challenge);
- a '**quality**' of being' that results from handling the challenge; and

- **actions** which flow from the new 'quality of being'.

This cycle of the relationship of the challenges, tools, qualities and actions is represented in the following diagram. The key words in bold are used.

Figure 8 The actors process tools to transform a challenge

This cycle of challenges, tools, qualities, actions followed by new challenges gradually transformed the actors over the course of the process. With this in mind, I examined each actor's process one stage of the devising project at a time, to identify what their experience revealed of the components of their journey. This led to understanding the alchemy of their creative process. Having arrived at this four-stage framework, the data was collated, and the analysis became manageable and more meaningful.

During the analysis I was able, therefore, to increasingly make sense of what Lepage so eloquently called 'the shwobble' of data. The importance of key words, variety and frequency of expressions, screen images, creative explorations and the performances were then identified as elements within the frame of the four process factors of: challenges, tools, qualities and actions. They do not however occur in a tidy, linear fashion and would more accurately be depicted in a three dimensional, fluid shape to show the various connections and

inter-relationships that layered the various processes. Figure 9 below depicts a spiral to show the flow of the actors' complex processes, each time with new challenges met with additional tools that further transformed the actors and quality of their following actions, and so on.

Figure 9 The flow of the actors' complex processes

Having identified this model for analysing the data from the actors and the devising process, the same terms – challenges, tools, qualities, actions – were able to map not only each actors' process, and later to map the four stages of the devising process – resource, score, value-action, performance – and in which the actors' process could be identified. The analysis model then became the primary tool with which to capture what occurred at an individual (micro) or a collaborative (macro) level.

The initial collation of evidence was undertaken for each actor, drawing on their video diary entries, contribution to recorded discussions, and my notes from the filmed footage of the creative process. Due to the immense amount of data collected and because of the value of the first-hand records of the video diaries, they became the basis of the material selected,

supported by data from the other sources. A selection of the most frequent and prominent phrases, terms, revealing descriptions, brilliant-moments are examples of what stood out in the data to work with. These were plotted against the relevant process factor. For instance, Figure 10 depicts an early example of mapping some of the key features found against the appropriate factor.

ACTORS

	Uncertainty, quietening mind, focus
CHALLENGES	Over-thinking, habits/tendencies
	Connectivity, letting go, complexity
	Time, integration, specificity
	Senses, memory, instincts
TOOLS- to draw	Imagination, trigger, deep practice
upon/develop	Perception, reflection
	Technique, instrument, transference
	Inquisitive, focused
QUALITY OF 'BEING'	Motivated, creative, abundance
	Generosity, responsive, rigorous
	Presence, conscious, vulnerable
	Curiosity, playful, trusting
INTO **ACTIONS**	Exploring, extending, expressive
	Adjust, add/discard, refine
	Affect, communicate, transform

Figure 10 Beginning to collate the actors documented experiences to the process factor

This early collation of data brought together evidence of the actor's awareness of their challenges, and what they did to solve them. They also described how they then felt, and what new qualities they could bring to their actions. The collation of data also showed clearly when an actor had reached a transition between a devising stage – for instance from the resource stage – into the next devising stage. It became clear that the actors did not all reach a transition point simultaneously. Therefore, it was necessary to make an informed decision about how to combine these individual key experiences when they differed in speeds of process.

Table 1 below begins to build the picture of how the four process factors relate to the devising stages. The table format is a useful way to categorise the information for the purpose of the thesis. At the risk of over-simplifying the complexity of the 'live' research, the table nevertheless provides an ideal structure with which to scaffold an explanation of the analysis and helps make sense of the important data. The analysis tool became highly valuable at this point to map these experiences into the process factors, as charted in the table below. It enabled the challenges, tools, qualities felt and actions to be combined regardless of how much time an actor spent in each.

Process Stage	Process factors
Resource	Challenge
	Tool
	Qualities
	Actions
Score	Challenge
	Tool
	Qualities
	Actions
Value-action	Challenge
	Tool
	Qualities
	Actions
Performance	Challenge
	Tool
	Qualities
	Actions

Table 1 Building the process picture to collate all actors' key experiences

The table depicts how the actors journeyed through the collaborative devising process, and reveals that when the actors approached a challenge by drawing upon their available tools, their actions led to a change in their personal quality that was then applied to their actions and subsequently developed the performance. From this new performance vantage point, awareness of new challenges arose that required additional or different tools and so on. The actors were attempting to uncover what Barba referred to as their own 'personal temperature' (Watson 2010, p. 247) to bring to the improvisations and develop the scenes.

5.3.1   Analysing the actors' process

Cieslak's description of his performance beautifully evokes how the same live performance varies every time it is performed:

> The score is like the glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid, it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner

process each night. The flame is what illuminates the score, what the spectators see through the score. (Ryszard Cieslak in interview with Schechner 1977, p. 19)[18]

Analysing the actors' process was complex. I set out to unpack what the actors' creative processes were and establish findings to discuss how we might understand that process in view of demystifying the alchemy of the performer's art.

The diary, discussion and rehearsal transcripts were analysed in a number of ways. Nvivo (qualitative analysis software) was used to search through the material for patterns in the language used and detailed repetitive reading and viewing of the video footage to discern patterns, unusual incidents and various challenges, breakthroughs and processes used by the actors. The actors showed many signs in rehearsals – and articulated in the video diaries – to evidence what they were processing, drawing upon, experiencing and doing in their individual process.

From this process of working with the data, I perceived a number of recurring and most significant aspects that were present throughout. They were key elements of the process that took dominance for one or more actors at various stages of the rehearsal. Although they are set out and discussed here as distinct, they were also in various combinations at times. Each of the elements capture a complex aspect of the process yet do not exist independently of one another, or sequentially, nor only one at a time. They did, however, all occur at various stages of each actor's process in varying degrees, and impacted them in some way. The actors were therefore simultaneously in a 'deep order' of fluid 'turbulence' (Barba 2000) in a reactive 'live' state thus creating the impression of an alchemical reaction. This section, therefore distils six significant elements of the actors' process drawn from this research. Together over time, they had an alchemical effect on the individual actor to transform their 'being state' (Morris 2011) to an actor 'acting' and 'living through the role' (Carnicke 2010b).

The actors had many and varied ways to 'tune' their complex instrument, all of which prepared them to enter into the rehearsal and eventually to perform. The techniques at their disposal, gained from training or experience – or usually a mixture of the two – worked similarly to the musician practicing scales. Techniques built over time through training and practice created agility and responsiveness that freed the actors to be creative and perform with emotion, subtlety and power, to effectively impact their audience. This 'scales' practice, or 'instrumental

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[18] Cieslak was Grotowski's leading actor. The score he refers to is the text, structure or composition of the work performed, it does not refer to the RSVP stage, which precedes the final composition.

preparation', helped build the performers' readiness to perform, adding to their 'pre-expressive state'.

> According to Barba, this extra-daily technique[19] is a major source of actor presence during performance, since it establishes a pre-expressive mode in which the actor's energies are engaged prior to personal expression. (Watson 2010, p. 243)

The trained actors' grasps of solid acting techniques, with their range of technical skills and experience, developed 'sedimentation' (Creely 2011). The training prepared them to access a wider 'range' of playing options. The actors in the research then applied their creativity, freed through their grasp of technique to work quickly and deeply. They created an alchemy that seemed to occur naturally, albeit fleetingly at times, and were buoyed by experience. These experiences and how they influenced the way in which the creative process was experienced by the actors and director, preface the discussion that follows.

Whilst the experiences did not operate in isolation – and are not exhaustive – the table below has been populated with those experiences that emerged as most prominent from the data and are set alongside the process factor within which it occurred.

Process Stage	Process Factors	Elements of the Actors Key Experience	Elements of the Director's Experience
Resource	Challenge	Quiet mind, uncertainty	Patience, intervene
	Tool	Senses, stimulus	Observation, plan
	Qualities	Inquisitive, focused	Openness, guiding
	Actions	Playful, trusting, curious	All-seeing, manage uncertainty
Score	Challenge	Over-thinking, spontaneity	Trust actors and process
	Tool	Imagination, intuition, impulse, emotion	Instincts, ideas emerging
	Qualities	Motivated, creative, abundant	Discerning, embracing
	Actions	Explore, extend, express	Sensitivity, manage complexity
Value-action	Challenge	Connectivity, letting go, complexity	Balance, choices
	Tool	Perception, reflectivity, deep practice, sedimentation	Language, discretion, empathy
	Qualities	Generosity, responsive, rigorous	Assertiveness, clarity
	Actions	Adjusting, refining	Structure, direction
Performance	Challenge	Time, integration, specificity	Judgement, efficiency
	Tool	Technique, transference, instrument	Finessing, time management
	Qualities	Present, conscious, vulnerable	Confidence, humility
	Actions	Affect, embodiment, transform	Supportive, surrender

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[19] Barba employed Eastern traditional theatre forms in the actors' training, to distort the body and movement 'which establishes a pattern of behaviour which is different from daily behaviour'.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Table 2 Building the Process picture: the significant elements drawn from data

The various experiences selected had changed the individual actor in some way; their creativity was enhanced and the experience enabled their whole self – 'their instrument' – to be activated to serve an acting performance. The discussion that follows builds the picture of the actors' creative process using the key elements drawn from the data as depicted above in Table 2.

5.3.2 Finding the elements of the actors' process

Once the data had been categorised this way, it reflected how the relationships between the actors –and through the stages of devising –touched on a number of elements. For instance, some elements were present in more than one stage of the devising process. Some were evident and perceived in different ways: as challenges, or tools, or a quality achieved. Some affected the actors differently and at different stages of their work.

From the table, the actors and director's elements are distilled into the following six categories:

a)   Mind: over-thinking, comfort in uncertainty, language

b)   Senses: stimulus, impulse, affect

c)   Body: responsive, connected, expressive

d)   Time: reflectivity, deep practice, rigour and sedimentation

e)   Imagination: complexity, abundance, play, intuition

f)   Transformation: embodiment, vulnerability, consciousness

The first three of these elements – mind, senses, body – directly relate to the actor's embodied self and their 'instrument'. The next two elements of time and imagination enabled the creative ideas to be developed imaginatively and for the actor's instrument to adjust and be applied to the expressive needs of the work. The final element, transformation, relates to the bringing together of the self and the instrument to reach a state of 'living through the role'. All of this complexity added richness to the appreciation of these experiences which are discussed and addressed as separate elements below. Some sections, particularly the first sections, are longer than other later sections and are to be read as if they build on each other and are added to subsequently. They are not discrete, rather they inform and build upon each other in an alchemical manner.

a. The mind: over-thinking, not-knowing and language

All actors and directors will have said 'stop thinking' to themselves or to another actor at some point. This theme of minimising the effects of too much thinking on the creative devising process came through clearly in a number of ways. Saying 'stop thinking', however, is much easier than doing it, and the actors drew on their own and the collective processes to help them reach a state in which they were not so caught up in thoughts, and were able to 'not-know' what ideas, feelings and expressions might emerge.

i. Over-thinking

In discussions in the early rehearsals, the actors often expressed their struggle to 'stop thinking' or not over-think the process they were in. From the first rehearsal, Will, who did not have a lot of improvising experience, described a number of breakthroughs when he went on 'a journey of self-exploration' and 'broke free', referring to his challenge to let the experience affect him. He responded on impulse when he was moved to do so and not be locked in thought or holding back the impulse. Letting go of what feels secure, which in Will's case was a narrative or story, took courage, helped by being in a safe environment with supportive people. The freedom he expressed on day one and his struggle – and clear desire – to take on a new way of working, even though it made him feel uncomfortable, but gave him pleasure, was a regular theme of his daily reflections. By the end of the first day he was elated that he had reacted spontaneously 'when my body was actually providing the stimulus or the idea rather than my head'. This indicated a tentative shift away from the need to 'know' and an increase in tolerance of ambiguity. His experience of this felt like a breakthrough.

> Probably the biggest battle I've had is exactly what I just said earlier was that I found myself in moments where I was constantly fighting the process and thinking I shouldn't be doing this or I should be doing a narrative or so forth. Act more impulsively from the stimulus provided. (Will feeling frustrated after an early rehearsal.)

There were variations on this theme described by the other actors, variously saying such things as 'not-thinking', 'stop thinking', 'use my head less', 'get out of my head', 'over-thinking'. However, Aisha, who also did not have a lot of improvising experience, was aware when she was over-thinking, knew that it was not useful, and was able to feel freer while exploring her objects. She 'saw' the images that were provoked in her imagination and memory. She was able to notice the over-thinking and experience the sensations at the same time, indicating a tolerance of ambiguity.

The struggle to overcome the power of a mind that is trained to operate in a logical, analytical manner, is paramount to the person who detects how it limits them creatively. The habits of thinking of the mind and the limitations produced by such habits, are not always obvious. Therefore, constantly interfering with logic, creating turbulence and chaos, and building stronger sensorial associations gradually released the grip that the actors' analytical mind had on what was happening in each moment.

As the director I was witness to the actors' struggles with over-thinking – evident in their actions and physicality – that made it difficult to be fully engaged with their object or be spontaneous as a result of their engagement. For example, as Will put it on day one: 'again it was in my head, all in my head rather than the feeling at that stage'.

To help focus the actors, I used a number of tools that have a similar function to meditation. These included to undertake a strong physical, and slightly repetitive activity, for example the 'walk as one' exercise, in order to not 'have to think'. At other times, the objects, images and ideas stimulated by it, provoked the actors to draw from their sphere of experience and the memories that were evoked.

ii. The uncertainty of not-knowing

The uncertainty of the process and the related degree of comfort affected each actor differently, particularly through their levels of self-awareness. In the early rehearsals, the actors expressed widely varying levels of ease when there was a great deal of uncertainty about the direction of the work, the newness of the approach we were taking, where it might lead them, and what they needed to do. It was variously: exciting, thrilling, fun and worrying. This was most evident in the individual actor's willingness to remain in an exploratory process for a longer or a shorter period of time. In the same way, I also grew aware of my own comfort levels with the uncertainty, both as director and as a creator.

I felt very comfortable in the uncertainty of the devising process, responding to what was being offered by the actors. I was less comfortable with the need to make decisions about the work, what to include and what to leave out, shape the work for performance. As the work was still in a rapidly changing state, and new ideas where being shown every day, I was reluctant to 'shut' it off from possibilities, in order to firmly focus on less ideas. As the researcher, I was also fascinated with the way the actors continually experimented with their bodies, the timing, the movements across the stage, and in relationship to each other. There seemed no end to the possibilities, which was very exciting.

I had been communicating with the actors using impressions and images – rather than commenting on a structured narrative – to successfully guide continuing explorations. When the actors wanted more clarity, I still wanted to provide them with freedom to continue to develop the work given that there was not sufficient time to fully polish it.

> Then when I asked how? I am left to my own devices to play with it. For me this experience was invaluable because it allowed me to work for a solution through self-discovery and play.' (Will describing value of deep practice.)

The actors' level of willingness to sit in uncertainty translated into two ways of being. For instance, Gabi and Malinda, who both had experience with physical improvisation, displayed their joy and playfulness with their objects, trying a wide range of actions and exploring different ways to interact with them extensively. They explored in a detailed way – seemingly with no preconceived ideas about the direction they might take – and responding purely to what was occurring in that moment. Their way of being with the object was to be present with it, and they appeared to be 'serving' their object, responded to the impulses that arose as they explored it.

Others seemed to have less patience to stay in this mode for as long. Will, for example, had ideas of his interactions with his object – with a dog collar – which meant he stayed with that idea for a long time, exploring the many ways that he had already thought about and approached the explorations with them in mind. The collar represented a dog, for example, and he was attempting to make the collar 'serve' the story – coming up with interesting ideas rather than allowing random discoveries to arrive.

In this first example, Malinda and Gabi were more like the dilated and open empty vessels ready to be stimulated, whereas in the second example, Will, who was also prepared for action, was, however, in a more pre-planned, or thought-through process.

Will entered a new and unfamiliar process, his thinking was challenged when the rules, knowledge and set of skills he had, were not well suited. He then grew less confident as he moved towards the edge of his comfort zone. 'Being on the edge' was experienced differently for each individual. Those with a high degree of comfort in uncertainty felt excitement and anticipation and were able to move past that edge and into the 'unknown'. But those with a lower degree of comfort in uncertainty, felt threatened or at risk near their 'edge' and retreated to their security. Their perception of the risk was a 'felt sense' and not conscious. If it were conscious, different choices would have been made.

One's boundaries or edges-of-comfort are relatively easy to recognise in physical pursuits like sport, where the physical 'edges' can be measured. With performance, however, this cannot be measured, so I needed to be sensitive to determine the actors' level of comfort and decide how to push or guide an actor so as to guide creative exploration. This was important. There is a tendency towards 'safety' in everyday life, but this is opposed to the actors' need to create a sense of risk, surprise and danger in their performance for the audience. Therefore, actors seek to explore new territory.

I also observed different levels of tolerance for uncertainty from the actors' while they were exploring objects as a resource by how receptive they were to its stimulus. Low tolerance was revealed by Will, who sought clarity by both asking questions and sharing his experiences to seek clarification of direction. The outcomes of my process with the actors support Kornilova's (2010) suggestion in that a tolerance for uncertainty may positively predict creativity, and the value of cognitive ability and intelligence in a person's 'reservoir' in predicting creativity is comparable with that of traits of tolerance/intolerance with uncertainty. This points to McKenzie's (1998) view that with increased uncertainty comes a greater chance that alternatives that may have previously been ignored or devalued, will be explored.

Uncertainty goes hand in hand with creativity and originality. Creative arts practitioners rely on their intuition to shape their work (Cremin 2006; Dundjerovic 2007; Oddey 1994; Wallerstein 1998). While directing the actors, I frequently drew upon my intuitive sense of what I was perceiving in the work, and trusted my intuition to lead the actors, and the work, forward.

The mind is trying to take control so that what is being done is logical according to its understandings of the self and of the world. According to Hart et al., people do not have access to the many unconscious thought processes that intervene between sensation and judgement that influence our perception, so we often see things 'as they are' (2015). This 'naïve realism' (Hart et al. 2015, p. 1) plays a role in confidence and close-mindedness, whereas experiences that alter perception create doubt and improve open-mindedness, with their perception of the objects shifted from being 'as they were' to being more symbolic and triggers for a diversity of ideas to which the actors were open to explore further.

It is the director's responsibility to provide agency to the actors' individual talents, and for them to flourish, so it is vital to find the balance between control and surrender (Bogart 2015). Balancing control and surrender was one of the most challenging aspects for me throughout the directing process. I balanced a control of the environment and my approach to the rehearsal, which allowed me to surrender to the actors' search and discoveries.

For reasoning and decision-making, a person mostly draws upon their existing knowledge and experience of a situation, to see options for actions and possible consequences of those actions (Damasio 1994, p. 2838). This kind of thinking, however, limited the actors' creative thought and was a block in their creative energy and 'flow' of explorations, where not predicting the consequences was vital to making discoveries. Actors often use the term 'energy' to refer to the force they feel, or don't feel, flowing through them, between them and with their audience. For example, Lenore expressed a desire to maintain the 'same pace but with heightened energy, to get the residue into other scenes'.

By asking the actors to place their focus on an object, rather than relying on the mind to create the object as a known thing, allowed the senses to be greatly activated. The object was a tool to boost the actors' imaginations and encouraged them to pay attention to the stimuli around them. Paying attention is fundamental to shift a mental state from analysing to noticing and brings us into contact with 'authentic truth' (Van Ruth 2016, p. 7).

As I facilitated the creative development, I became aware of each person's natural ease and predispositions while they were involved in various activities. In particular, their habits of acting behaviour started to be revealed in the warm-up exercises and as they explored their objects and developed scenes. For instance, I identified habits of acting behaviour as they were repeated in Will's energetic explorations that led to similar actions each time. Aisha frequently had a more internal experience that was difficult to 'read' from my position observing her, however, when she discussed the experience, it was clear that her explorations were rich in the provocations and effect they had on her at a deeper emotional level. From these two examples, it was evident that for Will to extend his creative findings, he would benefit with more stillness and body-listening to be more attuned to his impulses at a deeper level. Aisha was affected but less physically expressive, so bringing the deeper impulses that were fuelling her emotionally to an external expression and gesture, would extend her creative options.

These were two different needs. As director, I needed to be mindful of the individual actor's natural states and to provide them each with what was useful, and understandable. I also did not want them to feel they were being pushed so far from their comfort zones, that they would not be receptive to learning new ways of working and expand their tolerance for discomfort. As the director I needed to manage these factors: the complexity of the process (and the actors); the way we all worked in uncertainty; the actors' (and my) preparations that

would best serve us and the process; and be able to work with and, if needed, shift individual's natural habits and tendencies to best serve the work.

iii.   Language

Another aspect of creating the performance, was the performance-language we would use (style, motif, movement), and how it would be communicated. There was often a disparity between what an actor experienced as they responded to both internal and external stimuli, and what was seen, felt and understood from the outside observer's point of view. It was important for the actor to develop a greater agility with their expression, in manipulating their experience of their own performance, behaviour, and expression so that the experience the audience, director and other actors received was aligned with their intention.

> What is it about – what is the language? So what is it about – is it space? Is it a gesture? Is it style? *(*Gabi –a few days before the performance.)

Malinda had an experience when showing her solo piece, which, for her, was a new form of work, and one for which she had not yet developed a language to create and communicate her ideas. When the audience 'saw' something happening on stage other than what she had intended, she struggled to describe what she was doing, and this inspired her to re-work the piece to try to better align with the ideas she was imagining. Aisha had a different problem that took her two attempts of daily video diary entries to express how she experienced one of my directions. She misunderstood the direction on a whole group scene, and had difficulty incorporating it into the action.

Interestingly, we all struggled to describe what we were experiencing in-the-moment, or immediately after the moment of experience. Trying to translate 'felt' experience and physical sensations into words was frustrating. For instance, when Aisha struggled to describe the confusion about my direction in the example just provided, she was recoding the video diary very soon after the experience and before leaving for the day. Overnight, she thought it over, and was able to explain it the next morning. By then she had analysed what she felt, what had happened, what she'd heard and so on. It was a thought-through explanation, that was acceptable to her, allowed her to demonstrate how she had understood the words, and justified why she did not act on them the way I had intended.

Herein lies an argument for the development of embodied language for creating – away from the 'thinking-brain'– a better, more useful, embodied language is that of the felt-experience through senses and physical sensations, and how that can be perceived. The video diaries that

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were made immediately after a rehearsal helped capture the complexity and difficulty of finding suitable words, by being recorded as soon as possible after the rehearsal experience.

Shotter (2011) draws attention to that fact 'that there is a much more immediate and unreflective, bodily way of being related to our surroundings than the ways that become conspicuous to us in our more cognitive reflections'. He suggests that this becomes known to us through the 'unfolding dynamics of our engaged bodily movements within them and that we can come to embody the recurrent patterns of movement that we experience' (Shotter 2011, p. 15) in what Johnson calls 'image schema' or 'corporeal concepts' (1987, 2007).

When the actors departed from their embodied expectations developed through their experiences that over time tend to be able to project next actions (Shotter 2011, p. 16), they were able to act in-the-moment. These 'departure experiences' demanded a kind of 'poised resourcefulness' (Shotter 2011) that was achieved by their bodily way of being, within the context of the rehearsal rather than by a reflection of past experiences.

I found, at times, I was distracted by research 'gear'– changing a digital card in a camera, setting up a microphone, taking notes to try and capture something in word or image so that I could recall it later in discussion or further explorations. When this occurred, it interfered with my immediate connection to the work the actors were doing, and made it difficult to integrate all that was happening.

When I remained focused on the work, however, I experienced it as an insider, with empathy for the actors, and balanced that with an outsider eye, to direct the shape of the work. I was forming 'perceptual images' (Damasio 1994, p. 83), and to relay them to the actors I used phrases such as 'there was a sense of […]', and 'it felt like […]'. I was drawing upon the images that were first collected in my brain from the outside stimulus – the eye, ear and the feeling body – plus an emotional response to what I saw. These built a series of images connecting my personal experience with the current experience. Therefore, to relay to the actors what I was seeing, required a way of speaking and communicating that was not too prescriptive. I chose to describe what I was affected by, and how I could imagine it developing, which was deliberately ambiguous, without direct instruction, to allow for the actors' interpretation and personalisation.

b. The senses: stimulus, impulse and affect

The actors' senses were stimulated by the resource objects generating an impulse that affected them. 'The colours, the smell can then be at play to movement in space and time'

(Gabi after an early rehearsal). They were stimulated by physical encounter – touch, taste, sight, smell or hearing – and also stimulated by imagination. This built Gabi's dual consciousness – inner and outer connection – of body and mind: '[…] so I tried to put all that in my body and physicalise that' (Gabi, later in a post-show discussion).

The originality of the actors' ideas, actions and the images they evoked, were enhanced after having done some body sensorial work. The senses linked the body's connections to their external environment and then the physical responses to them.

i.   Stimulus

> Intellectual ideas provide a mediated experience whereas a resource is a stimulus offering an
> authentic, a more direct and immediate, experience, one evoking a response. (Dundjerovic
> 2007, p. 2073)

Initially the actors used the objects as their 'real' stimulus (Morris 2011). I encouraged each of them to use all of their senses to explore their object's dimensions, surface, smell, taste and sounds in as many ways as they could. In so doing, they discovered many diverse, surprising and evocative impulses, which led them to experience the objects as vehicles for memories, abstraction and imagery. They were building new connections to a memory from an unrelated object, and connecting with both inner and external stimuli (Morris 2011). The ideas that flowed from these explorations also activated their imaginations so they could access inner or imaginary-stimuli, even when the object was no longer present. For example: Aisha was captured by the images of her childhood home, Gabi's sense of environmental devastation was drawn from her action of taking a branch and 'killing a tree', and Malinda's spiritual journey found within the weight and movement of a ringing bell.

The images that arose from the stimuli resonated at a deep level, and infected the ideas being developed to play with further concepts that emerged. As the actors shared these with each other, what were distinctly separate ideas started to blend and triggered the adoption of new ideas that were thematically linked and integrated into new concepts.

> What was really nice though, was that as time went on with the activities was that Lesley to
> somehow get me to be more spontaneous in the sense that – using the stimulus to take me
> into areas outside of the norm so to speak. (Will: video diary mid-way through rehearsals.)

One theme that linked, and evolved, from the separate pieces, and which resonated for all of the actors, was 'desensitisation'. Multiple stimuli – separate objects, memories and imaginations – layered the scenes with depth and personal and shared meanings, including the

idea of desensitisation, longing and elsewhere. The stimuli had energised interesting, creative and abundant creative impulses.

> Just very organically and very randomly and we all seemed to be in sync with each other and we were creating these absolutely beautiful scenes and without thinking about it, it just happened and we were just all on the same level. It was just really, really, really, really lovely to do. (Aisha describing the experiencing of being connected and responding to stimuli.)

The actors juggled being both self-aware and unselfconscious in order to go to places in their work that might not be comfortable, pleasant or socially acceptable. They self-managed their process and experiences so that the audience could perceive of a 'truth' and authenticity in their performance.

ii.   Impulse and affect

Adler and Obstfeld (2007) highlighted the role of affect in exploratory search as 'crucial to individual creativity and collective creative projects' (p. 39). Their research was inspired by Dewey and his use of the term 'impulse', which he described as 'the pivots upon which the re-organisation of activities turn, they are agencies of deviation, for giving new directions to old habits and changing their quality' (1922, p. 57). Dewey (1922) considered that impulse was one of the three components of human conduct – habit, intelligence and impulse.

Exploratory search sits at the heart of the devising process and relies on the impulses of those who are devising to feed into improvisations and play-building. The actors were playfully responding on impulse when improvising with energy, imagination and a spontaneous flow of action. They developed an abundance of ideas and were fully engaged. I frequently allowed the improvisations to continue until they either came to a natural conclusion, or the actors became still, or repetitive, heralding an exhaustion of impulses. At this point, the transition indicated a need to be re-stimulated, or to be given direction. Without a clear goal, or problem to solve, such as a particular story to tell or theme to illuminate, the improvisations eventually lost meaning.

> But I found once you interacted with the object and then played with the person, it was a spill-over effect obviously because the way it made you feel had to have some residue on what was going to happen in the space. (Lenore: during a rehearsal.)

The creative impulse needed to be re-stimulated to generate more energy. Rewards took the form of feedback to recognise when an improvisation was working, and when it was not. Also, identifying the ideas that were interesting and pertinent to advance the 'story' being

developed, also re-engaged the original power of the sensorial energy source. As discussed in 2.1, artists understand the importance of acknowledging impulse as an essential component of their work. Impulse is seen by many artists as 'fundamental to all creativity'(Carlin-Metz 2013). Lepage sees impulse as the 'forces at the root of live, spontaneous theatrical events' (Dundjerovic 2007), Lecoq focuses on work where 'Impulses will turn into gestures' (2006), Eckard acknowledges that reacting on impulse is a 'kinaesthetic response' (2013), and Gnezda (2011) says that inspiration is a result of a 'coalition of thought' and 'sensory information' as an 'envisioned impulse'. Similarly, in the context of the actors in my fieldwork, I observed them responding to the various stimuli throughout the rehearsal and performance. When they were also able to respond impulsively as the stimuli occurred, their performance was seen as organic and believable and more likely to move the audience. This level of believability was observable during the research by slowing the process through the use of video, self-reflection and discussion. The actors found it meaningful to pause, reflect and describe what was happening in-the-moment – what Gladwell calls a 'blink' (2005) – which meant their immediate, self-aware sense of the experience was recorded. This moment-to-moment documentation provided the opportunity to slow down my thinking and deeply analyse the actiors' process. Through this deep analysis, I gained insights into the actors' expressivity that revealed the role and significance of stimulus and affect.

The actor's body is the vehicle for expression and therefore any impediment to their energised physical connection to thought, impulse and feeling interrupts the actor's effectiveness in performance and reduces the impact on the audience.

> What I mean by that is my ideas are taking me somewhere that my body won't let me go. (Malinda after the third rehearsal.)

While directing, I was looking out for two things: scenes and ideas of interest with which to build a work, and how I might guide its further development when an actor or actors were 'on' and when and how they were being affected by the work they were doing.

c. The body: respond and connect, and expression

The body is integral to the actor's craft and a primary tool for expression. The actors regularly spoke of the body and its relationship to all of what they were doing, feeling and thinking. They were physically aware and working towards developing themselves by focusing on their responsiveness, connectivity, expressivity, bodily and collective trust, and physical technique to be more fully physically articulate.

i.   Responsiveness and connectedness

The quality of the actors' bodily responsiveness grew over the course of the rehearsals. When these elements were discrete, the physicalisation of the explorations appeared to be reactionary or deliberate, or in some instances not connected to the creative explorations, instead of appearing effortful in order to manipulate an outcome rather than make a discovery. To my experienced eye, it was evident when an actor was not connecting the physical and sensorial experiences of their actions to their response, which was therefore not imbued in some way with the residue of that experience. At these times, there was also evidence in the actors' video diaries that they were aware that they were not quite 'there' or not connecting fully. Gradually, however, or in a few cases more quickly, organic and 'connected' gestures, actions and movements were occurring.

When the response was connected to what they were doing and experiencing, the actors then began to describe how they were trusting what they were feeling – physically, sensorially and emotionally – to affect them in some way, from which they responded 'organically' rather than with deliberation. When the actors were responding this way they were not so much in a reactive mode, but with a holistic, unmediated, creative response to a stimulus that also served the 'given circumstances' of a work.

At first some of the actors were less spontaneous, and were 'reacting to reactions' with 'second dart reactions' (Eckard 2013, p. 51). This presented itself in various ways as the actors expressed themselves in their video diaries, but also in their performance. For example, Will was 'slowly gaining impulsivity and physicality', when he was 'less confused, and more contented with his achievements'. His confusion arose by trying to understand what he was doing rather than allowing his actions to flow directly from his instincts and the stimulus. The changes he experienced over time, however, could be seen in the growing clarity of his expression, arrived at with less 'effort', and more 'organic' intuitive responses. His generative process was then less reliant on his cognitive processes, and more on his physical and imaginative connection to the impulses stimulated by the senses.

ii.   Expressivity

As the actors' impulsive connections became more 'organic', their expressivity became nuanced. This connection then enhanced the clarity of their performance and their evolving responsive, connected physical presence. The actors were increasingly able to align and balance their felt explorations and discoveries with their imagined and deliberate actions. The

greater the alignment of the discovery and the intention, the clearer the expression and the more in flow the actor felt.

> I actually liked the flow of today even though the results of it might be that we're considering changing tack as far as delving deeper into ideas that you find more interesting or the ones worth keeping. But I did actually enjoy the way everyone worked together today and the flow of ideas and this sort of freeing of ideas and just going with things without trying to make sense of them. (Malinda – mid-way through rehearsals)

As the actors' performance deepened as their inner thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas integrated seamlessly with their external actions, the other actors, the work and the creative environment.

d. Time: reflectivity, deep practice, rigour and sedimentation

> I think I have been too keen to hold on to things just because I'd put a lot of time, love and energy into creating them – I realise it's ok to acknowledge something's not working and throw it away. (Aisha in a final reflection after the second performance.)

Time was mentioned throughout the video diaries, in discussions and in reflections. The actors' dilemma with time has to do with the recognition of the value of immersion over time to find, develop and present a performance work. It also takes a significant amount time to deepen acting practice and to create and develop ideas: 'Poignant results take time, and they have to cross monotonous and familiar landscapes. Routine and habits have to be established in order to surpass them' (Barba 2007, p. 104).

i. Reflectivity

Throughout this study, the actors regularly reflected on their process, which provided them an immediacy and reinforcement of the experiences. At times, it highlighted how an actor struggled to find a description of the experience, and occasionally this struggle led them to a more rational explanation at a later time. The process of reflecting is a complex one for an actor, sometimes creating a tension between the need to find the immediacy of the 'moment' in performance, with needing to recreate that immediacy on repeated occasions. The reflection helped strengthen the connections between an understanding of an experience and the experience itself.

When Barba speaks of 'extracting the difficult from the difficult' as 'the attitude that defines artistic practice' (2000, p. 56) he is referring to the tension, duality and storm of the

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conflicting, but necessary, qualities of creation, describing them as: 'Storm and meticulousness, disorientation and confusion, turbulence and chance - which is not fortuitous' (Barba 2000, p. 66), and that 'To extract error from confusion, and then *our* own truth from the error, could be a somewhat philosophical way of saying: extract the difficult from the difficult' (Barba 2000, p. 64). This was the case in the creative development or instance, as Gabi said:

> [...] the most beautiful discoveries have been under pressure and chaos and things emerge and [that's] what I've enjoyed about this process. (Gabi when asked by an audience member where a repeated phrase in her performance came from.)

The pressure of needing to have a performance ready to share with an audience added an element of tension to the actors' lengthy devising process. It takes time to devise a play for performance, and the complexity of the ideas and the power of the starting place help dictate how much time is needed. Theatrical devising companies (Frantic Assembly, Ex Machina and others) invest more time in the development of the devising process. This study did not allow for a lengthy period in which to refine the work to a high standard, and the actors and I felt insecure about the work when it came to the performance. It was clear to me that the actors did not fully have the work 'in their bodies' and therefore I was uncertain that the work, and the ideas within it, would translate effectively to the audience. The performance elements of the work had not yet become 'second nature' and therefore didn't allow the actors to consistently and fluidly embody the changes they were undergoing.

In their video diaries, the actors attempted to recall and describe the rehearsal experience that had just occurred, trying to identify the cause of something, and the effect of that something on them. Actors are the cause of their actions and they experience the effects of their actions, and so the reflective activity help them identify the felt effect and therefore reinforced the body-memory in a reflexive manner.

    ii.   Deep practice

Actors undertake a recurring deep process of personal practice through experimentation and technique. Throughout the creative development, the actors' preparations affected each of them differently as they developed a greater self-awareness of their habits of mind and natural acting tendencies. For instance, Aisha was cautiously focused on protecting herself post-injury at first, and gradually relaxed as she became more physically confident and learned to be more openly expressive. Her physicality changed and she appeared to grow stronger and

moved with more energy and confidence. The preparation exercises, warm-ups and the gradual acquisition of skills developed her self-awareness, and she also became more 'centred' in a state that could better respond to stimuli. Her pre-expressive state was improving. She was feeling changes in her body as they occurred, that integrated her mind-body connection and her understanding was 'deeply sourced in her body' (Eckard 2013).

The many complex aspects of the creative process affected all the actors during the rehearsals. The actors who already had an independent process of their own, with which they prepared themselves for acting, responded quickly to directions and their own autonomous explorations, without question, and were able to quickly achieve a creative state. From this creative state, they found more options with which to experiment, and therefore developed an abundance of ideas. Other actors, who were unfamiliar with the nature of my process of preparation, or who were not as well grounded in their instrument, took longer to move away from their initial ideas, or to expand them and discover more choices. With practice, however, they started to develop a deeper connection with their felt-experience, which became the vehicle for change.

It is possible that when an actor rehearses and applies depth to their practice, they change the structure of their brains, although this cannot be tested without brain imaging or PET scan and so far, no scanning equipment has been developed that could work during live performance. However, what this research evidenced from the video diaries and observation of their creative investigation, is that the actors were feeling changes to their thinking and expressivity over time. In group discussions and video diary recordings, the actors described these changes on a number of occasions such as 'I believe I will be able to perform on a much richer and genuine level' (Will). They developed a mind-body connection, including and stimulated by the senses. As they made these connections, their responses to stimuli moved beyond the 'second dart reaction' (Eckard 2013) to enable more intuitive responses. At these times, the actor did not feel they are consciously controlling the outcome. Rather than being out of control though, they were embodying the instant of extended consciousness in a creative state. The implications of this mind-body connected practice and creative responses are outlined in Chapter 6.

Recent findings into creativity's underlying neuro-physiological process arrived at a fortuitous time for my study (Malafouris 2016; Noice & Tony 2006; Saggar et al. 2015b; Zaidel 2010), as they helped to explain a concept that many actors and directors understand both cognitively and intuitively. Actors' understand that thinking too much is counter-productive to the

creative process in the rehearsal room. In this study, although we agreed and understood that thinking was counter-creative, when the actors put a lot of effort into not-thinking, there was limited change in the level of 'thinking' and reduced creative output. When they used less effort however to 'not think' and were 'taken over' in some way by their explorations, they were surprised by their many creative ideas and options.

iii. Rigour

The actors applied rigour to their devising process, evidenced by their committed approach to creative exploration. It was clear they knew that having a single creative idea alone did not make a devised theatre work and that the first idea was only the first idea, and not always the best idea. They embraced the challenges of moving beyond inspiration into a deeper, meaningful and more complex set of ideas to find ways to bring them to life. It took a lengthy, rigorous approach to develop an idea, a readiness – and an occasional reluctance – to discard it if it was not working, and to search for more ways to solve their creative problems. Their rigorous approach was associated with their deep practice which led them to develop and refine new skills. Multiple layers of performance energy – sometimes reflective and inward focusing, and at other times outwardly expressive – and clarity of expression were needed to realise their ideas so that their audience could find meaning and be affected.

The actors' rigour presented itself in the way they detailed their performance, collectively and individually, to build their work moment-by-moment thus deepening their practice and clarifying their expressivity. The regular discussion and reflection activities were invaluable to support this rigorous process and encouraged them to reinvest of themselves and to re-stimulate the creative process itself furthering their approach. As Barba puts it, 'from the outside it looks like rigour, but it is a test of one's intentions' (Barba 2007, p. 104). 'Show me how you work, demonstrate your determination and smartness, your naivety and cynicism, but through vocal and physical actions which 'say' something to me' (2007, p. 104).

iv. Sedimentation

As the actors developed their instrument to be more connected and immersed in what they were doing and less distracted by unwanted thoughts and habitual behaviours, they were laying a new foundation from which to access their imagination and skills. Over time, they became freer from past hindrances and habits, as they lay down deeper, new experiences. They had an evolving process from which there was a residue after each creative pursuit, what Creely (2011) called 'sedimentation'. This was influenced by their bodily affective style, which

Maiese explained in this way: '[…] over time, subjects [the actors], develop a particular "style" of experiencing the world, and their associations, habits of perception, and patterns of attention are sedimented in the body' (2015, p. 4).

The actors' affective experiences sedimented in their bodies, creating body-memory that thereby became available through their bodily responses to infuse future experiences and inform creative collaborative explorations. Whilst sedimentation has been often used to describe historical socialised behaviours acquired by an individual (Gordon 2013; Shamay-Tsoory et al. 2011; Shotter 2011), from this study it appeared as an accumulation of experiences drawn from deliberate and deep practice, strengthened by reflective practices.

e. Imagination: complexity, abundance and spontaneity

Janesick states that intuition and creativity are core components for a qualitative researcher, 'Intuition is a way of knowing the world through insight and exercising one's imagination' (2001, p. 532).

i. Complexity

The actors embraced the complexity of the devising process and avoided Kahneman's cognitive traps (2010). By allowing the complexity, they embraced and integrated disparate ideas, actions and directions as the creative work evolved. Whilst the sensitising explorations that started with their objects evoked memories for them, the actors generally did not confuse the experiences they were having with the memories evoked. They separated their experiencing self from their remembering self, which meant they could develop the experiences into creative, imagined works, underpinned with a deeper personal connection. The remembering-self reflected on the experiences immediately afterwards, whether in group discussion or the video diaries, they developed their 'experiencing self' moment-to-moment. At the same time, they came to a way of speaking of these experiences that was meaningful for them that could be shared with and understood by the others.

Finally, by allowing sufficient time in open explorations, and encouraging a deep engagement in creative searching, the actors avoided the cognitive trap of the focusing illusion that leads to distortion (Kahneman 2010). Instead, by remaining sensorally open to the deep focus on minutiae in the early stages of the rehearsal, the actors unmediated responses were 'true' to their immediate experience and emerging memories, and not cognitively re-framed. This fed their imaginations and enriched the work that was evolving.

ii.   Abundance – (choices)

As the actors continued their explorations and played more and more with the ideas emerging, their creative energy seemed to be increasingly fuelled by the 'experiencing self' and less obstructed by the 'remembering self'. The abundance of ideas, actions, themes and possibilities grew, and by the mid-stages of the rehearsals they were constantly changing at a rapid pace. The actors' energy in the room during this stage was vibrant, feeding the diverse and plentiful ideas that were being explored in the improvisations.

> I became quite internally focused. I became less aware of the sounds I was making. First it felt like I was disrupting everybody and then I totally forgot about it and just really went with the expression of the sound. I found that really, really interesting. I had no idea I could bring a cow bell to life or that it could inspire quite as many ideas as it did including developing different types of character that came out of the weight of the bell on my body. So it started to create ideas of a physicality for a character. (Malinda – after her first rehearsal.)

iii.   Play – (spontaneity)

> To play needs much work. But when we experience the work as play, then it is not work any more. A play is play. (Brook 1972, p. 157)

There was a tension between – and an unspoken agreement about – the play of the work and the work of the play. The creative exploration was serious play, that drew on particular structures and systems for its execution that, at times, appeared to be chaotic and turbulent. Barba says that 'turbulence appears to be a violation of order; in fact it is order in motion' (2000, p. 61). The play required a motivating factor to provide rewards. One motivation was a perceived problem that needed to be solved. Then, as solutions started to appear, the rewards (in Lenore's word, the 'bop') provided clarity. When the reward was not aligned with the problem, it was not juicy or a measure of success, and a kind of boredom set in. This was when the play ended or a new problem arose to be solved, fortuitously, through play. 'We could say that in the creative process we must forge our own fortuitousness' (Barba 2000, p. 59).

Barba (2000) suggests that nothing should be discarded that is not of a high quality, meaning nothing should be explored creatively with anything less than the full attention and process that would be given to a final performance. The role of the rehearsal was to prepare for performance, and like all exploratory work, some of what was achieved was discarded. The rehearsal was a place of discovery and, then, fine tuning. Knowing that much of the exploratory work would be discarded, the logical mind might not be interested in the first

place. Time was precious, so motivations other than an end result was needed. Therefore, pleasure, fun, and play were important and valued in the creative process.

The actors were seeking something extra-ordinary, and unique in their view, that would surprise them and shed light onto a 'problem' to reflect their understandings. A feeling of dissatisfaction, and recognition of errors or failure, helped drive the need for clarity. It is easier to see and feel what is not working, and what is, especially while in the midst of the 'storm' of creating. 'Just as a storm feeds another storm one person's creative practice can feed another's creativity' (Leski 2015, p. 2/186). Often the exploration of the material in the rehearsal opened up previously unimagined connections, and in-the-moment discoveries were often in contradiction to our point of departure. These different paths created a 'network of difficulties' from which we returned to be confronted by new questions and unexpected perspectives (Barba 2000). In her final reflection, Lenore recognised the importance of play to her process, and its role on developing quality work: 'Rehearsal is a time for pushing the boundaries and making new discoveries, the work, discovery and play shouldn't stop until the fat lady sings'. The actors' interactions and play was genuine, driven by curiosity and a need to find something; to tease something out of what was before them. In this case, Lenore's 'tuned instrument' had a 'felt sense' of connection and recognition that helped drive her forward. The time spent on her explorations brought her a step closer to being able to see, create and express what was emerging.

To explore imaginatively, the actors needed freedom as well as my 'outside-eye' to guide them and to shape their explorations. Getting the balance and timing right for when to remain in imaginative play, and when to intervene, was as important as the generation of ideas. Acting impulsively is not the whole of creating, it is one part of the creative process that helps build new technique. Creating imaginatively through play, then discarding what doesn't work includes letting go and reinvesting. One example that recognised the value of play came from a member of the audience who said, '[…] in first scene where you had the play with the card game, the element of surprise was the hyper reality there, but the play with time, I found for me um really quite interesting how you play with that'.

f. Transformation: embodiment, vulnerability and consciousness

The impact of the elements – mind, senses, body and imagination – over a period of time developed greater connectivity of ideas, feelings, expression and emotions, that were the beginnings of transformation.

> […] for Lepage the idea of theatricality is connected with the process of change, fluidity, and the reception of meaning and not with fixed structures. The most significant aspect of Lepage's theatricality is that it is transformative. (Dundjerovic 2007)

Neuroscientists now understand more about the workings of the mind, and that the brain is capable of change and forming new neural pathways (Blair & Cook 2016; Zarrilli 2007). From this and my own field work, it is evident that changes of thinking and patterning occur during the acting process. Research has has led a number of academic performance-practitioners to investigate what this knowledge affords performers in appreciating and developing their abilities. In this study, the actors' process showed that they were seeking the integration of their whole-selves, in ways that afforded the research to identify moments of transformation as their embodied, vulnerable, conscious states came into being. This section, therefore, is the culmination of the previous five, and brings them together to focus on the visible – and felt – aspects of the actors' alchemy. Thus, the end of the alchemical cycle, when it works, is transformation which has these three components: embodiment, consciousness and vulnerability.

i. Embodiment

As the actors learned to feel changes in their body, they were developing their mind-body connections as one organic process (Eckard 2013). They were physically engaged throughout the devising process when highly mobile and also at other times, when motionless. Even at these times of stillness, when they were in a heightened being-state, they appeared fully present and engaged. The actors described these moments as being connected, feeling centred, not-thinking, and feeling 'internal' within their imaginary place, but, at the same time, fully aware of what the other actors were doing in performance. When the elements came together like this, the sense of connection is the manifestation of their embodiment, and they are fully responsive to internal and external stimuli.

> So I can hear that it should shift. I should take an offer and not block it. I know all the rules. But I need to embody it or practice taking offers, verbal offers, and giving verbal offers. This is now our challenge. (Malinda: the day before the first show.)

The feeling of being embodied, or in the actors' lingo being in-the-body and connected, once experienced, became an implicit goal of the actors during their process. They knew when they weren't connected, by feeling it, and they could reflect on feelings of other connected moments and learned to trust those feelings to guide them towards embodiment.

> The process has made me more aware of my body and how I can use it more effectively. I loved the gestural work, not something I'd delved into too deeply before. And trusting myself to let go and just be. The overall experience was frustrating, exhilarating, tiring, inspiring. (Aisha in a final reflection of the process.)

As the actors continued to work towards reaching an embodied state, the evolution of the creative ideas and 'world' being discovered in the scenes, also became integrated into their personal process. This, therefore, deepened the personal meaning of the ideas that had emerged, and strengthened the connect with their physicalisation. As Damasio explains, 'the brain can only be informed by the body' (Damasio 2012, p. 90) so when the actors continued their physical and sensorial explorations seeking to develop awareness and find ways of 'being' in their body, they were informing the brain. 'The body's gestures sculpt neural pathways and thought patterns' (Blair & Cook 2016, p. 28). I observed the actors working to retrieve inspired performance moments they had first achieved spontaneously so as to make them accessible and repeatable. Aisha described these explorative processes as 'frustrating, exhilarating, tiring, inspiring' and Gabi said she 'resisted the urge to be creative … and just be with it … hard, but.' Consequently, it is possible that new neural pathways were being created, enabling the connectedness of the physical and the personal to be embodied.

These new associations thus linked the complexity of the body's felt experience with the mind's growing understanding of it. The more the actors embodied their explorations, their actions became much clearer to 'read', by which is meant that what the actor intended to be understood by the audience was what the audience understood from the performance. This was evidenced when audience members spoke about themes they identified in the work that had only been explored in rehearsal and were informing, but not explicit in, the performance. It is conceivable that the combination of the alchemical elements was embodied as the actors rehearsed, as these are the process components that they use to develop – and maintain – their instrument.

The more embodied the actor's process and experiences, the more spontaneous and interesting were the improvisations and the moment-to-moment occurrences onstage. As the deep practice of the actors' process is situated in open, unchartered territory, one single skill or technique is not the focus, but, instead, the whole self is freed to reach a pre-conditioned state, much as that of a child at play. The actors' processes affect them on many levels, and once embodied, the actors' defences are down, which aligns with Saggar's suggestion that the

executive control centres of the brain are switched off, and the cerebellum is more activated and 'has a facilitative effect on spontaneous improvisation' (Saggar et al. 2015b, p. 1).

ii.   Vulnerability

Brene Brown (2012) proposes that to be vulnerable a person needs to be courageous and to reach vulnerability we need to be 'engaged' in life. Actors understand that vulnerability is the holy grail of acting, and that being vulnerable strengthens their performance and that when they act from a vulnerable place, they are connected and affectable, that has an impact on their audience.

> [...] also feel like I was able to make myself vulnerable by encouraging myself to move out of my comfort zones. To feel like I overcame some fear. (Malinda – on what she had hoped to find through the rehearsal process.)

As Malinda indicated above, she understood that to be vulnerable would require effort –she had to encourage herself, and be uncomfortable. It seemed easier to not be vulnerable, and as humans are conditioned to not be vulnerable, effort is needed to be made. Therefore, the actors process is challenging physically, emotionally and socially. The discomfort of surrendering to become, as it were, more naïve, can feel threatening of all that it is to be an individual. Yet the opposite of that individual is to be one-with-all. Therefore, for an actor to be able to connect the essence of who they are as a human being, to a character or imagined situation, they must be courageous and find that level of one-ness.

The actors faced many fears in order to perform: being judged, performing badly, making mistakes, not being good enough, and many more. To face these fears, demanded they move beyond their 'comfort zone' and to be in uncertainty, vulnerable to the vagaries of live performance. At the same time, however, they needed to remain in control and to manage the complexities of what was agreed in rehearsal and what was occurring in the immediacy of performance, and to do it from a vulnerable place so as to affect their audience.

> [...] presence, cause (of) its smell, liberating. I'm resisting the urge to be creative` with it and just be with it, as opposite to trying to be interesting, hard but. (Gabi during a rehearsal describing a link between her sense – smell – and presence.)

Gabi described the effort needed to remain in a 'beginner's mind'. Actors value vulnerability. It is a feature of strength for them and a quality developed from a place of uncertainty, requiring trust – in the process, themselves and each other – and a sense of openness, or courage. Zen

master Suzuki described it this way: 'It is empty of expectations and demands, and accepts what is' (cited in Leski 2015).

iii. Consciousness

The scientific study of consciousness from an internal and an external standpoint is flawed (Damasio 2012, p. 82), as human consciousness is a personal affair. There are, however, tell-tale signs of its manifestation. Damasio identified a three-way link among certain external manifestations, corresponding internal manifestations, and the internal manifestations that we, as observers, experience when in equivalent circumstances (2012, p. 83).

> Something I really enjoyed was when – I just had like a level of consciousness happening and I – a lot of the time, I couldn't see other people's images, what they were creating. It was like the group improv. I didn't really – I was really paying attention to my theme. But when I did, I liked when it was like tension, tension, tension and then kind of just like 'bop'! And it didn't like explode but it was from the objects. We made this tension and then it like got to its peak and then it was just like ha! But energy wasn't dropped. I think, what I think may be the reason for the energy not dropping is we always get something to reinvest in again. (Lenore – sharing an insight mid-way through the rehearsals.)

Damasio claimed that 'the drama of the human condition comes solely from consciousness' (2012, p. 316) and its revelations. As we gain insight into our existence, we pay the price of knowing – of pain, risk, danger – and the price of knowing when it is missing. As the actors became increasingly conscious of themselves and their sensations during their creative process, they discovered more insights that changed them to better continue their explorations. 'There is a circle of influence – existence, consciousness, creativity—and the circle closes' (Damasio 2012, p. 316). The actors had a dual consciousness that was developed through their process of deep acting practice that embodied the internal and external life in a way that maintained awareness and inter-actability in their real and imagined environment.

At the risk of over-simplification of the alchemy discussed so far, the findings lead me to propose that there is a link between embodiment, vulnerability and consciousness that leads to an actor's transformation. These qualities arise from the actors' process of employing a range of tools to create an alchemy that develops their creativity and performance and transforms them over time.
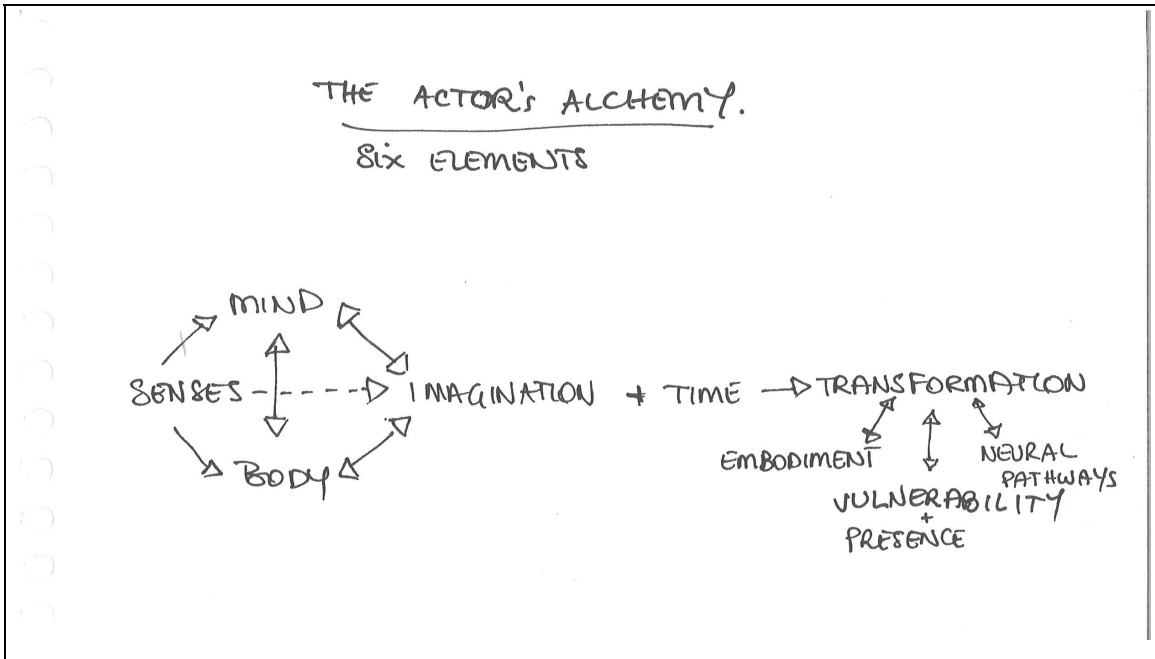
Figure 11 The relationship between the six elements

5.4 Summary of the discussion

The 'blank canvas' of the chosen theatrical devising process chosen for this study demanded that the actors drew upon their creative, technical and personal resources to find ideas, develop relationship and create performance. The complexity of the creative process and the nature of creative collaboration informed the research as well as the discussion. By analysing the first-person data records of the creative experience from the actors and my own perspective, and referring to a broad body of literature from the arts, science and acting, I identified six elements present for the actors' creative development to evolve, that form a circle of transformative process.

These elements were identified through the articulation of what a transformative moment felt like and how it was observed. In the next chapter I return to the elements found during the research and support my claim that when the six elements identified in this chapter are all present, quality actors transform and impactful theatre is produced.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

> 'Art is never finished, only abandoned'. Leonardo da Vinci

6.1   Overview of the research

My motivation to embark on this research was two-fold, stemming from my work developing actors' creative impulses and my desire to unpack a process that supports actors in this process. I was also keen to describe this process in an accessible way so that it is of value in a broader context. Therefore, I embarked on this project to see what the transformative elements of the actors' creative process in theatre were, and how these might apply to other creative disciplines to enhance people's creativity in general.

To examine the creative process for actors and directors, I facilitated a devised theatre piece involving five actors, rehearsals over three weeks, and culminating in two work-in-progress performances. My devising method was founded on Lepage's exploratory approach, but with less emphasis on providing strong directorial decisions, and more on developing the individual actor's creative autonomy. I chose to make the change from Lepage's emphasis so that I could create a fruitful environment for research into the actor's creative process and further develop my skill in the management of a very open, complex creative collaboration. All twelve rehearsals, the performances and post-show audience discussions were recorded, as were the daily reflections made by each actor and myself as director.

6.2   Key findings

In the previous chapter I argued that six key elements were evident during the creative process, and that enabling the balanced co-existence of these six elements produced original, impactful and engaging theatre. These elements are:

1. a quiet mind – the mental habit of paying attention;
2. activated senses – alertness to sensory input;
3. a perceptive minded-body – attuned physical intuitive responsiveness with sustained embodiment;
4. investing time – allowing enough time for self-reflectiveness and the other elements to become second nature by developing neural pathways;

5. an imaginative instrument – the habit of searching for and exploring a broad range of expansive options with the ability to make subtle adjustments so one's intention is communicated effectively; and

6. a transformative, vulnerable instrument – having control of all the complex abilities of the body, mind and imagination.

Each of these elements was apparent at some or all points during the process. The actors noted periods during the early rehearsals when their own minds were 'quiet' and their senses became more active (1 and 2). All commented that their energy was focused and they were attentive to their memories and imagination as they engaged with their object. An example of the attuned responsiveness (3) occurred later when the group were improvising a scene around a table, throwing words out in response to what they heard each other say, saw, doing and were doing themselves, in a way they thought organic and was highly imaginative. The actors and I recorded that we grew our ability to control our 'instrument' during the project, through the daily reflective practice and discussions (4 and 5). Although the research period was reasonably short, enough time elapsed within the process for the integration of new habits evidenced through changes in the actors expressed thinking, automatic physical responses and actions (4). By the end of the rehearsal period, the actors were sustaining an energised, engaging performance whilst appearing to be in the 'present moment' (6). Audience discussions confirmed that the complex abstract ideas generated during rehearsals were received by them, including adjustments between the first and second performance, demonstrating the effectiveness of the actors' ability to communicate with perceptivity and simplicity (6).

These six elements offer a new process framework and an accessible diagnostic tool for directors to work more effectively with actors, and for actors to better self-diagnose and adapt their process.

6.3   Positioning the findings

My findings add to the body of literature and significant theories of acting with a new framework with which to reach embodied transformation. Whereas others describe a process for the inter-relationship of the body with another facet of the self, my findings suggest a multi-faceted model that engages the whole self. Key examples of literature include: Peter Brook, who seeks a state of 'transparency' in actors, through psycho-somatic integration so that an actor becomes a kind of conduit of the 'spirit' of the work (Brook 1972); Eugenio Barba,

who seeks the pre-expressive level in actors in order to reach dilation (Barba 1985); Bella Merlin, who seeks the integration of body and psyche through a physical process (Merlin 2001); Elizabeth Carlin-Metz, who claims an actor must be self-aware of physical processes to 'experience, identify, manipulate and redirect or eliminate if necessary' (Carlin-Metz 2013, p. 39); Eric Morris, who focusses on removing the emotional obstacles that prevent an actor from reaching a state of being in order to do-the-work of acting (Morris, Hotchkis & Nicholson 1979); and Robert Lepage, who articulates peripheral consciousness as the actor's key to take in surrounding elements, and respond to multiple stimuli to discover what is hidden (Dundjerovic 2007).

Different theatrical devising models share common features that focus on the actor's skills and qualities – that they invest of themselves, are responsive to creative impulse, playful, open, and receptive to meaning (Barba 2000; Caux & Gilbert 2009; Dundjerovic 2007; Graham & Hoggett 2014; Lepage 2014; Rice 2007; Theriault 2009; Williams 2005). My findings explicitly describe the elements that, when in balance, support and extend these common factors.

In acting practice, as seen in the literature, there is little mention of the role of analytical thinking – and the location of the mind, thereby ignoring a fundamental human function. Chekhov, as an example, valued individual expressiveness, and regarded the actor's intuition as most important to combine with, and improve upon, the actor's technique (Chamberlain 2010; Chekhov 2002). Other acting technique descriptors – such as Stanislavski's affective or sense memory (Carnicke 2010b), Chekhov's divided or dual consciousness (Chamberlain 2010), and Grotowski's centres of concentration (Grotowski 1975) – all point to an awareness that the analytical or 'thinking'-mind is not the key to the actor's creative art.

By 'thinking-mind' I mean the ability to think things through and act on this knowledge so that a certain logical outcome is achieved, and is not altered by a changed situation or others' actions, for instance. This kind of programmed or systematic thinking in performance cannot effectively integrate the sensations and stimuli from the unfolding action.

Instead, acting practice uses practical activity and sensorial information to strengthen spontaneity, impulse, self-awareness and play to avoid 'over-thinking' in an alchemical process. This helps avoid a performance being predictable and logical, which are anathema to good acting. The many processes, techniques and practices employ a range of approaches, all of which lead to successful performance. This demonstrates that practitioners have long been searching for ways to describe the importance of the whole self in acting – and in particular bodily engagement.

The ability to convey complex ideas through embodied performance aligns with the view that 'meaning, thought and language are deeply sourced in our bodies' (Eckard 2013, p. 46). The findings also show the importance of a divided consciousness for the actor's craft to balance the spontaneity of the imaginary world being played with the technical structure of the work and the staging. It was also important so as to balance my dual roles of practitioner and researcher. They also suggest the privileging of the felt-senses over, and in association with, the logical mind. Saggar's recent findings (Saggar et al. 2015a) – that greater creativity results from low activity in the executive function centre of the brain, and high activation in the cerebellum—may prove to radically change the perceptions of place of the mind and creativity.

With hindsight and armed with the knowledge of the six elements, I can say, however, that they were not simultaneously present at all times. Following the table scene mentioned above, for instance, the group unsuccessfully attempted to repeat the actions they had created in improvisation. The actors commented after that event that, rather than remain responsive – receiving stimuli and responding intuitively in-the-moment – they had tried to recall and replicate the previous actions remembered from the earlier improvisation. Frequently, but less so over time, actors expressed frustration when they found themselves caught up in their thinking, rather than in their bodies. At these times, I detected a number of subtle changes took place including, for instance: an actor interrupting the flow of a scene with the introduction of a new, and unrelated, idea; and an actor dropping-out[20] for a moment or a longer period and then struggle to regain their presence. My observations were confirmed in the actors' video diaries, which acknowledged that these self-confessed thoughts were interfering with the energetic flow of a scene.

When the work stalled, ideas were not original, the performance lacked impact, or what was being expressed both physically and verbally was confusing. A significant example of this occurred in the final days of rehearsal, when the actors and I sought to finalise a group scene in order to perform it. To do that, we wanted to establish what aspects were working, and what aspects needed to be discarded or further developed. Significantly, the time pressure affected the actors in different ways, and to varying degrees their actions defaulted to what they were most comfortable with. Two actors had expansive new ideas to solve the creative problem, another did not want to invest the time to detail the work, preferring to rely on

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[20] Dropping-out is an acting term used to describe that moment when the actor experiences being, or a director sees the actor has, disengaged from their immersion in the imaginary world or scene- sometimes an actor will even lose their lines, character, miss cues or become overly-conscious of audience or outside interference.

presenting to the audience an approximation of what had already been found during rehearsal, and all wanted my outside-eye to provide them guidance with more certainty.

As a consequence of my analysis of my practice and the actors' experience, I identified and saw how these six elements interacted and shaped the way I directed the ensemble and that I had attempted to support the co-existence of elements at certain times. I guided the actors through an activity when I saw that an element was missing or less predominant than other elements, for one or all of the actors. For instance, some actors had limited physical expression so I introduced activities to encourage those actors to generate large archetypical gestures, after which they accessed greater control of their body's expressivity ('the instrument'). Also, on occasion, I would allow some time to pass before I would stop an exploration or scene and discuss it, to attune and deepen the actors' levels of awareness (consciousness).

I now see that, on several occasions, all six elements simultaneously co-existed. This occurred when I sensed what the actors' needed and therefore I could direct them accordingly. The direction seemed to happen organically. The benefit of this 'sense' of direction, and of being more embodied and intuitive, was to organically respond, and for the actors to receive what was useful. A key instance of this was in the final run-through of the scenes before the first performance. I knew all elements were present in these moments – the actors were present, energised, creative, playful, interested, sensitive, vulnerable, generous, supportive, unselfconscious, productive and expressive, and they described the experience as 'fun, frustrating, exhilarating, tiring, inspiring'. These experiences were expressed in their diaries and in group discussions, and I could observe some of these aspects then and after the event.

When the elements were all together, it was palpable. In those moments we created original, impactful and engaging theatre. A clear example of this was on each performance night during the first scene of the program—Walk as One. The actors were moving through the space intuitively, listening and responding to each other, in a seemingly random way, when they were in fact working together to create 'presence' and to simultaneously intuit and adapt to shifts in speed, rhythm, direction as if they were one person. On both performance nights, a number of audience members expressed how 'awesome' that 'scene' was, they took meaning from it, were impacted by it and were totally engaged and somewhat mesmerised. The documented comments from the audience confirm the strength of the processes used in our devised theatre.

The project's findings do not therefore support Malafouris' depiction of cognition as the 'body in the mind' (Malafouris 2004)[21]. Instead they suggest the contrary; that, for an actor, it should be considered 'the mind is in the body' inferring that cognition is embodied as depicted in figure 14 below, adapted from Malafouris.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ THE MIND IN THE BODY                                              │
│                          Minded                                   │
│                     The mind in the body                          │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│   Enacted                                          Distributed mind│
│   Body as a living mind                            Within the individual│
│                                                                   │
│                          EMBODIMENT AS                            │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
│   Connected                                        Mediated       │
│   Beyond the skin                                  Socially embedded│
│                                                                   │
│                          Situated                                 │
│                     In action and feeling                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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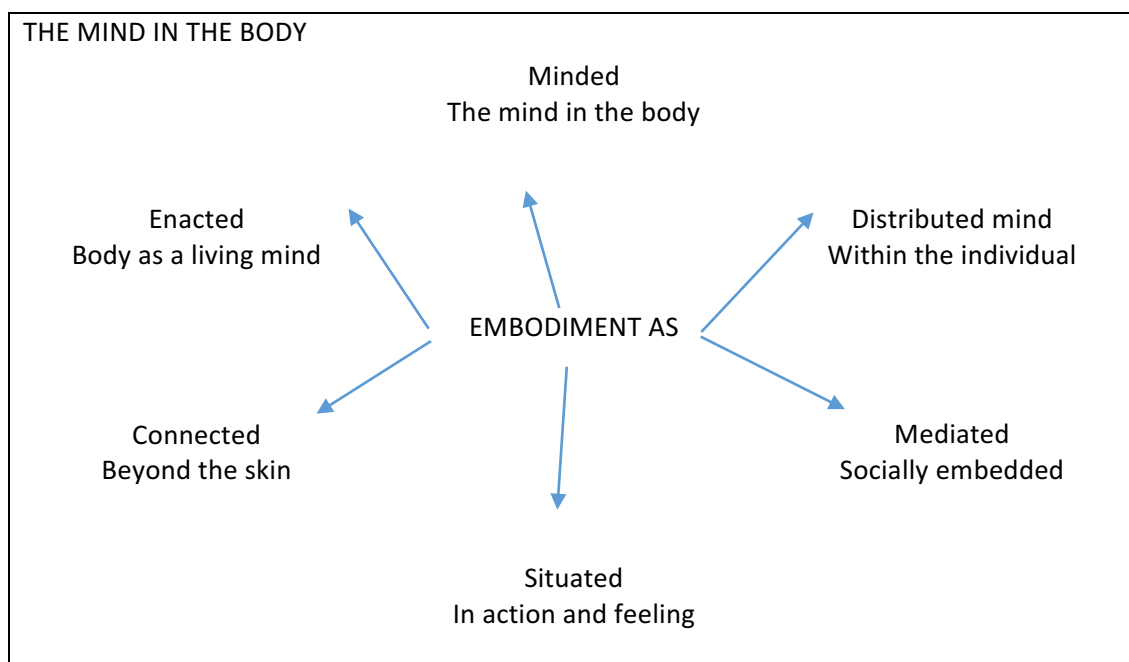
Figure 12 Embodiment of the mind. After Malafouris

6.4   Claims

My chief claim – that when the six elements are all present, quality actors transform and impactful theatre is produced – articulates explicitly what the literature implies and extends the actor's existing tools with particular insight into the place of the mind in acting. My argument therefore addresses the elephant-in-the-room and suggests that when the six elements are all present for the actor, the body itself holds –or is –the mind and becomes the thinking, feeling, intuitive and responsive expressive vehicle of the actor. Key practitioners use a variety of words to describe the qualities they are seeking to find or develop in actors (Barba 1985; Brook 1972; Merlin 2001; Morris 2011et al). The director feels when these qualities are present or not in the actor's performance, and therefore the director seeks ways to develop them. This new diagnostic tool, developed with reference to descriptors from a range of disciplines, will be a useful and accessible addition into the toolboxes of actors and directors.

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[21] See Figure 2: Many facets of cognition

My claims are supported by the recorded first-hand evidence from a group of experienced, qualified actors and performance practitioners, that was collected during a professional-standard creative devising project in a theatre environment over a substantial length of time. My lengthy career in the performing arts – largely focused on observing and developing approaches to train and build actors' skills and success – equipped me with a credible background that intersected with my research work, informed a unique depth of understanding of the data and therefore enabled me to generate the insights shared here.

These findings were made possible because of the careful design of the research and the approach I used in its conduct – a bricolage of practice-led, ethno-phenomenology, cooperative-action research combined with mindful data collection. The methodology allowed for the complexity of a creative process to be slowed down in order to be identified and understood. This mixed methodology has not been explicitly employed elsewhere in the performance field and proved to be worthy of adopting for future research. Until now it has been difficult to put process into words, and, in particular, it was valuable to use video diaries to capture the immediate, unmediated and verbal-visual descriptions of process. Experimentation with these methods alongside a creative devising process in a deliberate way informed the actors and my own directing focus.

The cycle of process factors identified in this research – challenges, tools, qualities, actions – built the actors' self-knowledge and ability to self-diagnose their process and performance for its short-comings and its successes. The process factors and growing self-knowledge combined to drive the actors reinvestment of themselves into the work. Over time, they evolved and they became less analytical and their processes more embodied. Strengthened intuitive powers and creative responses to sensory, imaginative and physical input transformed the whole person and the body became minded. Therefore, my findings support the privileging of the minded-body and make a contribution to the actors' technical repertoire of skills and to the field of acting.

The conduct of the research and the findings answered my two research questions. The first question – how might the actor's process and creative alchemy that develops embodied transformation be understood and re-worded through a new lens – has been answered with a clear, accessible model of the six alchemical elements necessary to embodied transformation. The second question – what can we learn from a new understanding of transformative embodiment in relation to understanding the creative process as a whole – has also found

answers within the same model. Further, as the actor's learning is embodied, it suggests that there is value in the engagement of bodily experiences to enhance creativity in others.

6.5   Implications

There is no single method available for an actor to manage the unique tensions inherent in and throughout a devising process. The findings suggest a new model for an actor's process within a devising process that is not tied to one particular acting technique. Instead, my process cycle of challenges, tools, qualities and actions, provides an umbrella for understanding creative process regardless of technique. Further, the six alchemical elements provide a diagnostic tool for the individual actor and director. This model has been identified within a devising process, the individual aspects of each element can, however, be identified within a range of acting literature. This suggests that when a balance of the elements is present in other areas of performance, the actor's embodied transformation will be produced.

The approach taken to unpacking the acting, directing and devising process – drawing upon fields within, as well as beyond, the performative – provides the opportunity to better communicate the so-called 'mysteries' of acting to a wider audience, including students of acting and directing. Drawing upon findings from studies in neuroscience, consciousness and embodiment, the data of the observed and felt experiences from the creative process could be explained and better supported.

The findings also suggest that, in response to my second question, the alchemical elements offer insights into, and an approach to, the development of greater embodiment and creativity for anyone. The creative impulse can be present in any line of work, in business and in personal life, so having a tool and model to work with could impact on professional development, training programs, health and community. Actors respond to the natural human condition and the developed world, and by engaging with new developments from other fields, acting processes can continue to remain responsive to influences from within and outside of performance. As John Harrop notes, the link between body and mind is fundamental to all creativity (Carlin-Metz 2013).

6.6   Limitations

One of the consequences for me of balancing the role of researcher and devisor, and therefore needing to be more minded, was that my direction of the creative work suffered. Had I been

aware of them, the six elements would have informed my direction and in all likelihood the creative outcomes would thereby have been enhanced.

I was also regularly torn between these dual roles. However, because the whole process was being recorded for the research, I was able to accommodate them with the knowledge that the recordings would provide instant recollection when needed and or later analysis. The focus required to co-mingle and maintain both roles was a strength I managed to bring to the research and it developed my intuitive directing abilities. The actors and my own daily video diaries were extremely useful to me as an artist and as a researcher, however the actors' video diaries impacted on what I found. They were verbal journals recorded immediately following every rehearsal, and were therefore limited to what the actors were experiencing at that time. It is worth noting however, that the actors expressed how valuable they found recording their impressions in that way, and as a researcher they were an invaluable data resource with which to gain first-hand evidence.

Knowledge of our past experiences and acting – whether gained in training or in practice – made us more minded. Actors may feel that this model does not fully represent their process, however, like all acting systems and philosophies before it, I expect the model to offer a new framework for actors, directors and creators to apply their own techniques and develop this even further.

Not being a neuroscientist limited my depth of understanding of the science of those studies, however, like others before me, their findings were often accessible and relatable to my acting knowledge. Someone outside of the theatre field might view these findings quite differently and therefore lead to future directions with non-actors.

6.7   Future directions

The project revealed that the state of 'being embodied' enhanced the creative process through the presence of the actors' alchemical elements. Over time the actors and I learnt to trust and follow our felt experiences, rather than our thoughts. This state of being 'embodied' enhanced the creative process as we responded to stimulus more instinctively, which further enhanced the embodiment. Also, the actors and I experienced the state of being 'embodied' as pleasurable, which fuelled our motivation to deepen the felt experience of embodiment, multiplying the benefits for the creative process.

From this, I am interested in exploring how this experience and the findings may translate into another form of creative practice. The use of acting tools to connect senses, body, imagination and mind, to open all of the receptors to explore creative connections, could conceivably enhance and transform the creative confidence and level of creativity for artists in other art forms.

Additionally, as creativity is at the forefront of discussions and studies into ways of developing people, ideas and organisations, I am interested to conduct a further investigation into how the creative and explorative vehicle of acting might contribute to this discussion and have value for a wider audience. It seems that we can learn from the alchemy of acting about creativity and innovation more broadly. These questions, and more, will fuel my future research in the area.

The findings suggest that if a person engages in the processes used by actors and sufficient time is invested in creative explorations, their imagination and creative impulses will be enhanced. Conscious engagement of the six elements might also inform education in general to help learners in any discipline to be at their creative best. How might this experience be translated into a richer understanding of creative learning? Because acting is concerned with the human world 'as it is lived', actors strive to replicate humanity in all its extremes, imaginatively and with authenticity, and their processes provide insight into the alchemy of creativity, humanity, artistic expression and practice. Further research may conceivably show that when the six elements are all present in other contexts, people other than actors will enhance the development of their creativity. A detailed account of the exercises and training regimes employed in this research will be evaluated, adapted if necessary and tested with a group of non-actors to investigate how they might condition people's somatic awareness and imaginative application to develop creative potential.

This research into acting found four key factors of their process containing various elements that when employed in combination improved their somatic and imaginative awareness and led to embodied transformation. The implications from these findings could connect to potentialising creativity and expressivity in other areas of working life.

--End –

Appendix 1   Ethical Research Pack

Research ethics pack includes:

a) Ethics approval

b) Call for expression of interest

c) Information sheet

d) Consent form

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

HREC Approval Granted

Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

Wed 15/04/2015 4:58 PM

To:Theresa.Anderson@uts.edu.au <Theresa.Anderson@uts.edu.au>; Lesley Watson
<Lesley.A.Watson@student.uts.edu.au>;Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au <Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au>;

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your response to the Committee's comments for your project titled, "The alchemy of the acting process: transformation and embodiment in, and beyond, the theatre space". Your response satisfactorily addresses the concerns and questions raised by the Committee who agreed that the application now meets the requirements of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). I am pleased to inform you that ethics approval is now granted.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO.2014000537 Your approval is valid five years from the date of this email.

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

You should consider this your official letter of approval. If you require a hardcopy please contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au. To access this application, please follow the URLs below:

if accessing within the UTS network: http://rmprod.itd.uts.edu.au/RMENet/HOM001N.aspx

if accessing outside of UTS network: https://remote.uts.edu.au , and click on "RMENet - ResearchMaster Enterprise" after logging in.

We value your feedback on the online ethics process. If you would like to provide feedback please go to:

http://surveys.uts.edu.au/surveys/onlineethics/index.cfm

If you have any queries about your ethics approval, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Marion Haas Chairperson

UTS Human Research Ethics Committee C/- Research & Innovation Office

University of Technology, Sydney

E: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

I: http://www.research.uts.edu.au/policies/restricted/ethics.html

P: PO Box 123, BROADWAY NSW 2007

[Level 14, Building 1, Broadway Campus] CB01.14.08.04

Ref: E13

Call for expression of interest

![University of Technology Sydney logo]

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The alchemy of the acting process: transformation and embodiment in, and beyond, the theatre space (UTS 2014000537)

I am keen to hear from actors with their training behind them who are able to commit to rehearsals over a week to ten days for approximately 6 hours a day and to a showing of a new work at the conclusion. Duration and rehearsal times will take into account people's availabilities where possible.

You are an actor who ….

- Wants to be part of the development of an original devised theatre work
- Is interested to explore some devising techniques of Robert Lepage's ex-machina, Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham's Frantic Assembly or Peter Brooks
- Is keen to help a research project into the relationship between acting, embodiment and creativity
- Has time to rehearse in May-June

The devised work as research …

The work is the creative component of my Masters in Research at UTS, and I will be filming it at various intervals and asking you to keep a video log after each rehearsal. The value of this is to attempt to identify what a transformative moment looks and feels like and what may help bring it about. Why the creative work? Well by working as it were from nothing, we will be in a most creative, challenging, fun, and exploratory stage of process-driven work.

I acknowledge that you will be committing a considerable amount of your time and thank you in advance however this devised work need not end once the research stage is complete. That will be up for discussion once we see what we have created together. As a member of the collective devising group, you will own a share in the work should we decide to take it further.

Who am I?

I am undertaking a Masters of Arts (research) at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). As the founding director and previous Head of the Actors College of Theatre and Television (ACTT) from 1992 to 2013 I have long had an interest in the power of the actor's process to create transformation. I have always believed that it is important that an actor develops their own creative voice. The courses I developed and colleagues I have chosen to work with have all shared these values. As a founding member and now director of Sydney Fringe I am able to continue to support artists on a broader stage. My own work with actors has developed the Actor as Artist, a way of working that releases our creative blocks and 'held' fears through focusing on a broad range of stimuli and personal passions to create impacting, evocative and empowering creative works.

This research extends my interest into a more formal setting where the results of this devised work will mean that the actor's process gains even greater substance and value.

Interested?

Then please get in touch and I will send you more detailed information and an invitation to an initial workshop. This will be conducted along the lines of a co-op where no payment is available. (the research is not funded).

Contact me. Lesley Watson via phone ( ) or email (Lesley.A.Watson@student.uts.edu.au) as soon as possible.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

INFORMATION SHEET

The alchemy of the acting process: transformation and embodiment in, and beyond, the theatre space (UTS- 2014000537)

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

Lesley Watson, Masters of Arts (research) student at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

I am exploring creativity through observing and working with a small group of actors whilst devising a collaborative work for theatre.

This research is to find out about the elements that create a transformation in the actor and how that is embodied. It will be analysed with a view to adopting new descriptions that may make this knowledge more widely accessible to other fields of endeavour and creativity in general. At this stage of the inquiry, there are two key, open-ended aims for the research. The first is to identify parallels between the transformative experience of acting and relevant findings in science and embodiment studies that may lead to the adoption of new descriptors for acting. The second aim is to discover how this knowledge of the actor's embodied experience and its relationship to the creative impulse may offer new insights into creativity in general.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

I will ask you to participate in the creative development of a devised theatre work with me, in which I will be both researcher and director/facilitator. It will require your input of time and skills over seven to ten days of intensive rehearsals planned for late May to June 2015. The schedule has yet to be confirmed, and will take your availabilities into consideration and will be decided prior to you saying yes.

For the creative process of the development, I will be drawing primarily on the collaborative approaches of Robert Lepage, to bring ideas, objects, resource material into the rehearsal space from which to stimulate the creative development and the improvisational process leading to a deeper exploration of themes, ideas and issues as the work emerges and theatrical solutions to creating the performance are developed. You will be an integral participant in the entire process that culminates in a showing to a select invited audience of the work-in-progress. The devising process will develop with little interference from 'research' activities.

Throughout this process, I will also take on the researcher role from time to time to collect information which will come from guided conversations, individual participant's and the group's feedback and will be filming the rehearsal process and performance. Your role in this will include taking a few minutes at the end of each rehearsal to record a personal video "journal" of your experience of the rehearsal. Time will be allowed at the end of each session for this.

The questions in the research can be separated into two types. The first is a set of open-ended questions that each participant will be asked to privately respond to after each rehearsal as video journal entries to record their feelings, concerns and responses throughout and describe how they feel towards the collaborating process. Similar questions will be asked of the whole group together at regular intervals in the process. The creative development will be filmed at regular intervals throughout the rehearsal process and from time to time footage of the rehearsals will be replayed to the 'company' for discussion which will also be recorded. You will notice a research assistant who will be video recording the rehearsal process and all group discussions.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that:

As in any rehearsal, you may experience a physical injury especially during any high energy activities or through a simple accident.
In the process of the long engagement with the intensive rehearsal setting you may disclose something either during the process, in a group discussion or even a private video log that you wish was not recorded and /or are concerned may be revealed to others outside the rehearsal group causing you concern, embarrassment or worse.
There is a slight chance that your personal property may be lost or damaged at the rehearsal venue.

However the risks are manageable as the research has been designed to reduce the risk of harm to you. There is a slight risk for each of these events occurring, loss of property would be inconvenient, the sharing of unwarranted or private disclosures would cause discomfort, and the occurrence of any injury could be painful. However as all participants are familiar with the circumstances involved in a rehearsal and creative development they will practice industry standards of professional behaviour.

Therefore I have taken precautions to mitigate any potential harm. These include:
All the participants will be trained and experienced actors, familiar with the activities involved and able to improvise safely as normal industry practice.
The first part of every rehearsal will be a led warm-up process and focussing exercise as is normal industry practice to minimise physical injury.
The venue will be a safe working rehearsal space, suitably set up for the activity.
At the beginning of the rehearsal process, the need for confidentiality and respect in the rehearsal process will be reinforced through discussion, agreement and a deep understanding of the industry practices involved. By only working with trained actors who understand the risk of abusing this privacy, allows the participants to freely share and respect the need to keep confidential personal revelations and ensure that what happens in a rehearsal stays there.
Where any disclosures are digitally captured and recorded, the footage is protected by the confidentiality of the research process which is not to be released.
Should any personal revelations be made that need to be withdrawn and not included in the study, the participant may request that be done.
The venue will be safety checked and free of obstructions. Proper security precautions will be undertaken to ensure the space is secure and personal property stored safely to the best of our abilities.
Pseudonyms will replace your name so that your identity will remain private and not be revealed in the write up of the research.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?
Because you are an actor who has undertaken professional training and had experience of devising for theatre, you are able to participate in the creative development which will help me gain the information I need to find out about aspects of the creative process that an actor undertakes that creates changes in them and in their work.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?
You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?
Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again. You can also opt out of the individual research component at any time and stay in the creative work.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me via telephone on (⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛) or by email (Lesley.A.Watson@student.uts.edu.au). My supervisor is Dr Theresa Anderson who can be reached via telephone (9514 1499) or email (Theresa.Anderson@uts.edu.au).

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9772, and quote this number (UTS- 2014000537).

Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I_____ agree to participate in the research project titled: "The alchemy of the acting process: transformation and embodiment in, and beyond, the theatre space" (UTS-2014000537) being conducted by Lesley Watson of the University of Technology, Sydney for the degree of Master of Arts (Research). No funding has been provided for this research.

I understand that am committing a considerable amount of time to the project.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to find out about the elements that create a transformation in the actor and how that is embodied by exploring creativity through observing and working with a small group of actors whilst devising a collaborative work for theatre.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because I am a trained actor and have experience in devising performance. My participation will involve a number of activities:
- Participation in the creative development which will be undertaken over seven to ten days full time, with rehearsals of approximately 6 hours each
- That I will be required at each rehearsal unless agreed beforehand
- Recording a regular video log at the end of each rehearsal of approximately three to ten minutes each
- No payment is to be offered.

I understand that there are certain risks involved by participating in this project, principally in three aspects of the research: the risk of physical injuries or loss of personal property at rehearsals, unwanted identification of the participants and disclosure of vulnerabilities in and beyond the study. Steps are in place to minimise these risks as detailed in the information sheet.

I am aware that I can contact Lesley Watson or her supervisor Theresa Anderson if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Lesley Watson has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____   ____/____/____ Signature (participant)

_____   ____/____/____ Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 2   Research Project Pack

The research project pack includes:

a. The daily structure and notes

b. Rehearsal schedule

c. Excerpt and summary of directors notes

d. Venue image

The daily rehearsal structure and notes

Monday 6 July 2015 to Saturday 25th July 2015

DAY ONE   Monday 6 July 2015   Information and First session   1pm to 4pm
Present: Fay, Gabi, Malinda, Aisha, Will. (Note Fay withdrew after this day due to other commitments)

- Meet and Introductions all round

- Explanation of my research process to date

- Explanation of the purpose of the creative development as research data gathering

- Issue and go through the information sheet in detail

- Issue consent forms, and collect them signed once all questions (if any) answered.

- Issue revised rehearsal schedule and discuss

- Led Q & A:

    o   What attracted you to the project?
    o   What do you hope to get from participating in the project?
    o   What performances truly inspire you?
    o   Questions?
- The Research process:

- The equipment set up and its purpose, how it will be used throughout

- Detail data gathering:

- Filming process and showing

- Audio recording discussions

- Notes taken

- Photos occasionally

- Reflection video logs

- Showing: recorded for part of final Masters work

- Reflective activities- important:

- At end of each rehearsal to self-record a private video reflection using ipad – average length 3 minutes each. Issue a set of open ended questions to help stimulate the thinking and gather responses

- Regular group discussions at key stages of development- audio recorded

- Post-showing reflection from each

- Group discussion –what is it about your current practice that you will bring uniquely to this process, that forms your own framework of working?

- Outline the basis of the process to be explored in this creative development- based on that of Robert Lepage- the RSVP.

- Why RSVP process chosen to be used in this exploration

- Brief discussion of the growing interest in research based on both neuroscience and theatre

- Show Rhonda Blair clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba-5SF3EHYc

- Show Lepage clip (start 1:24 in English) and jump to 4:10 for teaser- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngvhqEvbchQ

- Discuss relevant information about Lepage and process-

  - He is attracted to transformation in theatre
  - Liberates performers
  - Disregards tradition of textual supremacy and linear cause and effect
  - Starts from anything "real"- ie music, text, object, paintings etc
  - Focuses on the process of "becoming"
  - Fills space with unrelated objects- and just because they are in the same place, a secret logic exists and emerges
  - Believes that theatre is greater than we are- because everything is larger than than us, we need humility to let the story tell itself
  - Vital to create an environment to play, explore and discover what lay hidden from conscious minds
  - Structure of the "becoming" process based on RSVP cycles- Resource, Score, Valuation, Perform

- Show diagram of the Cycle:

"Let the Production Guide us there..." Robert Lepage

RESOURCES:
Actors –internal –feelings, emotions
External Resources-
interactions, performers, space, circumstances

SCORE:
Open to external signals
1- exploration
2 synthesis
-defining creative impulse
-critically viewing unformed material

EVALUATION:
Selecting/ directing for forming material

PERFORMING:
Outside eye- director/audience
Responsibility for choices

- Preparation for First Rehearsal:

    o Bring a personal reference point to the starting resource,
    o It will be something you feel energy from (word, object etc)
    o Paper, pens etc –whatever you feel useful to your own process.

- The Space: Rules of the space-

    o UTS Rules- explain
    o Our Process rules- confidentiality, non-judgement, willingness, etc

Monday 6 July 2015   Information and First session   6pm to 7pm
Present: Lenore
Repeat as above (in less time)

DAY TWO   Friday 10 July 2015   Rehearsal #1   11am to 4pm
Present: Gabi, Aisha, Will
11am to 1pm
- Health/injury check
- Trust space
- Starting place- no preconception/ideas
    o Hunches and intuition are good
    o Aim to make the invisible visible
    o Access the zone beyond the conscious/unconscious to where the energy lies
    o Interested in playing not "acting"
- Trust ex 1- Push hands and gentle guide- (or part 1 of Take Down)
- Resources: share impressions, feelings, dreams, ideas
- Allow narrative of this to be explored- through any fragments

    1pm to 2pm Lunch

    2pm to 4 pm

- Trust ex 2- Part 1 (or 2) of Take Down
    o Back neck gentle, close eyes, tap open, go seek
    o Lie victim down (on mat) rescuer turns victim over, victim leaves and continues
- Explore imagined secret logic of resource
- Imagery based, visionary
- Remember theatre larger than we are so need humility to serve and let the story tell itself
- Share a short image of the exploration to others
- Reflect on session

DAY THREE   Saturday 11 July 2015   Rehearsal #1   10am to 5pm

Present: Gabi, Aisha (until about 2.30), Will, Lenore (plus Malinda from 1.30pm)

10am to 1pm

- Trust- pairs and break away
- Review/repeat- sensitising trust walk
- Work more with object- allow what it reveals- sensitising
- What action does it provoke?
- Use the body in the space- starts to take a group shape

11.30- coffee break

11.45- 1.00pm

- The concepts emerging-
  - Experiment with the image of a fragment/ concept
  - What else relates to the concept?
  - What is not related to the concept?
  - How do the two inter-relate with each other
  - Connecting a concept to a journey

1.00pm to 1.45pm Lunch

1.45- 5.00pm

- Arrival of Malinda- share object to catchup
- Rhythm clapping warm-up (working with each other)
  - Basic rhythm'
  - Resonance and vibration- Extend rhythm to explore the space with sound- close- near/far to walls, floor, objects
- Try and find sounds that relate to the concept
- Create a personae to witness and enquire of your emerging concept
- Find one or two moments each and explore in depth
- Seek out the stimulus/response and put energy into it
- Share discoveries
- Brainstorm what others have evoked
- What worked- externally/internally
- Refection- private
- At home- work up a short 5 to 10 mins piece working with the object where reached today to show next rehearsal

DAY FOUR   Wednesday 15 July 2015   Rehearsal   6- 10pm
Present: Gabi, Will, Lenore
6.00pm to 10.00pm
- Been exploring presence by balancing the senses
- Warm-up aim to tone up intuition:

    o Stalking- in pairs, one back turnd-opp sides of room. 1 stalks, once near hand
      close partners back move hand slowly up, hover above crown before gently
      pat top head. Other try to sense exact moment of top of head and turn just
      before can only turn once. Point of exercise is to combine effort – give
      enough time for partner to intuit, while not giving any signals
    o Who's calling? One back to others –looks at positions and imagines calling one
      of them. Others wait till one moves when feels called
    o Move as one- better to follow what is perceived as the group moves on
      impulse (start running etc and time) Used this one as only three present
- Show pieces developed at home – one by one
- Brainstorm what worked, discuss impressions
- Choose two at least to work on/ bring together making one idea dominant, possibly
  the opposite- the 'Dance of opposition'
- Lenore: comedy- the funny in the mundane- Note lady- switching voice- mundane vs
  excited
- Gabi: newspaper articles- "john" leaving.
- Will: me as my dog, Gabi. Actually evoked domestic violence for Will
- Links explored in concepts/themes- desensitised/contrasts in space together
- See Director's notes #1 for summary of what observed
- Discussion identified key scenes that were interesting and to be developed further.
  With the excitement of things starting to come into some shape, I forgot to switch on
  the voice recorder for the discussion.
- Individual reflections

DAY FIVE   Thursday 16 July 2015   Rehearsal   1.00 to 6.00pm
Present: Gabi, Will, Aisha, Malinda (from 2pm)
- Focus- Adding in sound
- Warm-ups:
    o Follow leader in pairs, freeze when leader not in periphery, move again when
      back in
    o Walk as one- add eye acknowledgment, repeat a sound
    o Walk as one plus on clap freeze, melt into floor using sound- react (led to
      Pluto!) Will started to be more impulsive, then slipped back into "thinking"
      mode
- Aisha and Malinda show pieces developed (absent prev rehearsal)
- Discuss building on a metaphor- this **IS** that
- Discuss prices

- Share prev rehearsal (Lenore absent)
- Focus: the zone beyond being desensitised- what lies there?
    - What do we take to that zone?
    - Memories?
    - Notions that there is meaning/importance /value?
    - Natural impulses/urges being replaced with heightened but unusual responses
- Desensitised- made less sensitive
    - Less likely to feel shock/distress through over-exposure
    - Freed from a phobia or neurosis by gradually exposure to the thing that is feared
    - Psych: diminished emotional responsiveness to a negative or averse stimulus after repeated exposure to it, eg young children desensitised to danger of porn etc
- Allergies: analogy for auto-response
    - Adding /increasing doses of allergen extracts over period of years
    - Leads to- desensitisation- not a cure though
    - The Body still allergic but has changed the way it reacts to –switching off the allergy –need regular injections
- Children to violence
    - More exposure at young age- considered more normal and will behave same way to others
    - Through changes in normative beliefs
- Trees- (environment?) consumed for bad news and politicking
- WAITING -   SOMEWHERE
- MEANWHILE -   ELSEWHERE
- Malinda- bell as object- swiss (fields) but reminiscent of images coming of tibetan/ritualistic- could hear Thai bells- French song- holding chin- Moral compass
Working as a company to explore- "becoming"
- Space objects- whiteboard, table/ Physicalizing the impulse through interaction with each other driven by large objects
- Table- flip onto edge, and bodies interacting with it... when fell worked with the result and impulse, whiteboard tilt and spin and respond. Beautiful team work- extend and support

DAY SIX   Saturday 18 July 2015   Rehearsal   10.00 to 5.00pm
Present: Lenore, Will, Aisha, Malinda (from 2pm) –(Gabi absent- called in at end)
10.00am to 1.00pm – Lenore, Will and Aisha

- Confirm next rehearsal times
- Lenore to view clip of prev days rehearsal to catch up
- Share sampling of scenes to work
- Focus to continue to explore structure of what is emerging: time- place – people
- The anti-hero's journey

- Child as corrupted innocent, meets a moral dilemma- or an external force (Pluto?)
- Warm Up: archetypal gesture (AG)-(chosen for these three less experienced-
    - AG is purest and biggest manifestation of a quality expressed in ONE gesture
        - To open
        - To close
        - To lift
        - To throw
        - To push
        - To pull
        - To tear
        - To penetrate
        - To wring
        - To embrace
        - To smash
    - ONE gesture, repeat- purify- vocalise
    - Starting position to be direct opposite of the final position (to open, start closed)
    - Creative movement of an AG is mined after -full of intention
    - Show archetype- (evernote chart) 12 major arcanas- PLUS Jung's 4 variations
- Explore AG on the floor begin with walks- call out gestures
- Explore "another world" building on prev concepts- desensitise- other world- beyond desensitisation- and working with large objects in space
- See Director notes- re improv- including word ping-pong
- Establish availabilities for remaining rehearsals to help set up improv scenes

Groupings so far:
    1   Gabi and Malinda
    2   Gabi, Aisha, and Lenore
    3   Aisha, Gabi and Will
    4   Malinda, Gabi, Aisha and Will
    5   all
    6   Malinda, Aisha, Will and Lenore
    7   Gabi and Lenore
    8   Aisha and Lenore

Attendance to date:
    Gabi- 5 rehearsals
    Malinda- 4
    Aisha- 4
    Will- 4
    Lenore- 3

Planning notes- to do:
- Re-write feedback questions
- Confirm times for audiences
- Confirm times for filming
- Invite audience Fri and /or Sat
- Decide number of cameras/mics etc
- Check research alignment with questions
- Catch up on own reflections (Sat and Tues)
- Develop impro scenarios
- Camera and light assistants

Improv scenarios:

- A day unlike any other
- Yes, and….
- History- eg time like we ….
- (if this is true, what else is true? Eg if evolving with fantasy, ask if this is [...] then other things are equally true….
- Be very specific -with details
- Start 2 people common history- characterising actions
- Enter/exit with a purpose, attitude, emotion
- Try line for line- base next on last – go for "rhyming" not repeting
- Maintain character's POV
- Play opposite emotion
- Raise the stakes

Structured Improv
- Story to tell

DAY SEVEN   Tues 21 July 2015   Rehearsal   2.00pm to 10.00pm
Structure-
  o   Plot
  o   Relationships
  o   Scene length
  o   Stage design
  o   Blocking/movement
- Beauty- improvise within the rules of "the game"- allows for beauty/flow/spontaneity
- Longer improvisations- and stop. start

2.00-5.00pm Present: Gabi, Malinda
- Warm up
- Explore improv (as above?)
- Story yet to reveal itself
- Starting childlike in garden
- Or
- Starting prev. paper /legs image

6.00-10.00pm Present: Gabi , Aisha, Lenore, Will
- Starting railway platform
- Train- fans?

DAY NINE   Wed 22 July 2015   Rehearsal   6.00pm to 10.00pm
Aim: is to render a world that is understandable and to make sure that everyone in the room is telling the same story
Present: Lenore, Gabi, Will (late)

- The game- who/what/when
- Other places-
    - Airport- customs, lounge/gate check-in, bar, duty free
    - Home
    - Police station
    - School
    - Protest
    - Support group meeting

- Becoming new
- Looking for elsewhere
- "I'm leaving- disconnect- dis-sensed – desensitised, then wake-up?
- What to retain?
- Airport- business- desk- automaton
    - Desk   workers
    - Newspaper   flight attend
    - Windows   group tour mngr
    - Gates   passenger
    - Bar   mother and child
    - Travelator   security
    - Time alters- PLUTO
- I'm leaving
- Home-
    - Mundane- patterns – Cook   paper   todays events
    - Game- one-up manship- exaggeration
    - Im leaving
    - Power
- Art gallery
    - Meeting after 15 years
    - Reconnect/ replay
    - Shared dance
    - Knuckle greet
        - I'm leaving?
- Opposition- paper/words
- Image- waiting- not what it seems
- For next rehearsal- explore movement
- To desk/ the person hat starts normal
- Escalates to desensitised
- Dinner
- Elsewhere

For Thursday-
        need a scene /s in middle
        Time, place action, relationship
        Gestures
        Beginning, middle and end

DAY TEN   Thurs 23 July 2015   Rehearsal   10.00am to 6.00pm

Present- 10.00am to 1.00pm: Aisha, Gabi, Will

Scenes:

1 Private world

- Looked at scene with Gabi and Will- Aisha out
- Improv- see directors notes #3
- "john, John"- daily tele
- Box- Empty- statement
- Can we be sure she's a tree?
- After tree- eat pages- what does this invoke?

Present -2.00pm to 6.00pm: Aisha, Gabi, Will, Malinda

2 Kitchen Looking for scene with Malinda and Aisha

- became food- vitaweats- vegemite/knife, newspaper- mats
- Absent partner
- Set table
- What's working? Set the table.

3 Work place –

- Phone call
- Across table- escalating people
- Escalating – dissolving- didn't really work?

4 Card Game

- With words
- Explore notes headlines
- Indian girl- raped- 2 mil
- Being bashed- $100,000
- Push and pull

By end of Thursday for Friday:

Scenes

1. Airport- all involved- approx. 20 mins

- Becoming , begoing

2 Game of Cards- Will, Lenore, Aisha 5 mins

- ping pong words

3 Vitaweats- Malinda 5 mins

- Breakfast

4 I'm Leaving – Will, Gabi

- Newspaper, trees

5 Becoming –Gabi, Malinda
- Headless- behind,
- Bottomless- black pants over

DAY ELEVEN Fri 24 July 2015   Rehearsal   10.00am to 5.00pm
                                        Performance   6.00pm to 7.00pm
Present- all day: all- Aisha, Gabi, Will, Malinda, Lenore
See prep prev day
- Focus:
    o   Exploring Rituals (solitude/ isolation)
    o   Desensitised (card game)
    o   Becoming/be-going (Airport)
    o   Disconnect (I'm leaving- I'm a tree)
    o   Detaching (headless- legless)
- 11am – Card Game- Aisha, Will, Lenore
- 12pm – Airport- all
- Lunch
- 2pm – I'm leaving- Gabi, Will
- 3pm – Solitaire- Malinda
- No time- Images- Headless- plus first mage- 5 bodies- projection- no time
- 5pm Final Tech
    o   Order- changed to: Ritual, Card game, Airport, I'm leaving
    o   Set-ups
    o   Clear space
    o   Camera moves

6pm performance
6.45pm feedback/discussion session
NOTES:
Exploring themes /concepts around:
The private   ego
The public   Subconscious
Elsewhere   collective consciousness
Vulnerable
Desensitised
Beyond/ future/ states
See directors notes #4 afternoon
Directors notes # 5 performance

6pm: Performance

Address prepared for pre-show Friday:
Welcome to our open rehearsal and thankyou for coming

We've been exploring the process of creating performance. Our starting points have been objects as personal resources and the process so far has been kept a very open exploratory one.

Through this, images and concepts have emerged. What you'll see are semi-structured improvisations of these concepts and the beginnings of our emerging theatrical language. There are five scenes each emerging from -and building on- threads, some going back to early discoveries. The actors have volunteered their time and generously engaged in this process. Thankyou.

At the end of our performance, I invite you to remain for a Q & A. Id welcome any impressions. This will be recorded as part of my research and so if you'd rather not be recorded you are welcome to leave after the performance and before the discussion commences.

Program:

1. Move as one (Warm-up)
2. Ritual
3. Card Game
4. Airport
5. I'm Leaving.

DAY TWELVE Sat 25 July 2015   Rehearsal   12.00pm to 5.00pm
                                              Performance   6.00pm to 7.00pm
Present- 12 to 5pm: Aisha, Gabi, Malinda, Lenore (no Will)
Present- 5pm to 8pm: all- Aisha, Gabi, Will, Malinda, Lenore
Reviewed directors notes from prev evening performance (Unfortunately Malinda locked out till after 1.30)
See directors notes #5
Reworked each scene, focus to still keep "alive" and fresh
Changes explored in staging, timing, new additions- chorus for airport

-END-

Rehearsal schedule

Location: BMS- Bon Marche Studio - Building 3 UTS, Harris St, Sydney

Day	Date	Venue	Actors Times		Camera crew	Filming	Notes
Monday	6-Jul		1 to 4pm	Intro			
Friday	10-Jul		11 to 4pm	Rehearsal	9.30 to 2.30	basic set up from 9 and light check	Tested set up
Saturday	11-Jul		10am to 6pm	Rehearsal		basic set up	check if gear bump out needed
Tuesday	14-Jul	Stand by	6pm to 10pm	Rehearsal		tbc- basic	not used
Wednesday	15-Jul		6pm to 10pm	Rehearsal		tbc- basic	reset if prev bumped out
Thursday	16-Jul		1pm to 6pm	Rehearsal		basic set up	leave set up tbc
Saturday	18-Jul		10am to 6pm	Rehearsal	1 to 5pm	basic setup- 2 or 3pm film a run	morning basic set up. Rene 1 to 4 or 5pm: Change set up at lunch 1-2, film closer moments of progress run. Bump out if needed
Tuesday	21-Jul		2pm to 10pm	Rehearsal		basic set up	
Wednesday	22-Jul		6pm to 10pm	Rehearsal		Basic set up	reset gear if bumped out
Thursday	23-Jul		10am to 6pm	Rehearsal		basic set up- 3pm	reset if needed
Friday	24-Jul		10am to 6pm	Tech/rehearse	3 to 10pm	basic set up till 3, then view run, set up cameras for evening performance	morning basic set up. Change set up at 3 Rene: this is the run to view to make decisions about camera st up for final recording.
			6pm to 10pm	Perform #1		film performance	film this performance with final setup for editing purposes. Camera set up late afternoon, pre-show.
Saturday	25-Jul		12 to 6pm	rehearse		basic set up tbc	
			6pm to 10pm	Perform #2	5 to 10pm	film performance	film this final performance with final setup for editing purposes
Monday	27-Jul			Bump out			10am Lesley return gear, pick up any returns etc

Phase	Plan and Focus	The Process	Notes: Actors and Director reflections
	Mon 6 July	Briefing: Introductions, research	Over-planned, wanted it to be worthwhile for the actors

Excerpt and summary of directors notes

Director's Plans, Notes and Reflection – An Overview

		Briefing	focus, Research design, Lepage's devising process, Participation confirmation, Consent forms	
Resource	Fri 10 July Building the ensemble	Trust exercises Explore objects	Prepared set of warm-up exercises for 6, only 3 actors. Objects led to interesting explorations. Camera setups fixed	
	Sat 11 July Sensitising, Presence	Extend exploration of object Sharing and connecting	New actors, different times, one ill, hard to build on prev. day's work, frustrating. Some lovely work, starting to see creative habits, those useful and not. Plans to be adjusted	
	Wed 15 July Intuition	Showing individual pieces developed Discuss ideas	Only 4 actors, creative solo pieces shared with group. Interesting similarities and some shared nuances.	
Score	Thurs 16 July Building a metaphor	The zone beyond desensitised Themes emerging	Fifth solo piece. Impulse into movement. Trusting directing instincts, fun improvs and objects moving- table fell	
	Sat 18 July Exploring themes	Archetypal gesture preparation Structured Improvisation	Only 3 in morn- changed plan, did archetype gesture training with them. Had to teach- V helpful moved their work new level. Gave better structure, clarity, stronger impulses. Got stuck when regular rhythm introduced	
Value-action	Tues 21 July Exploring scenes	Reviewing scenes so far and extending them Finding the world Seeking time and place.	Separate groups, 2 then more later. Underprepared, needed more offers. seeking keys each actor needs to take off. Desensitised, vulnerable	
	Wed 22 July Developing the scenes	Looking for the "world" of the scenes Deciding the scenes	Watching what unfolds, tension re showing, need to be clearer, direct specificity. Need to start driving. Moving slowly. Research tasks intruding in directing focus, affects work.	
	Thurs 23 July Moving the scenes	Still setting scenes Finding the final scenes	Revisit early scenes, led to beautiful work, and build more. Most finding moments, agreeing on stage business, 3 then 4 actors. new scene, solo, looking for private/public worlds. Trying to honour all offers, and must discard some, clarify, direct	
Performance	Fri 24 July Blocking the scenes	The order and flow of the scenes Fine tuning	First day all actors. Work through separate scenes, set order, tech rehearse. Still shifts and changes in scenes in moment.	
	Performance # 1	Sharing the work with audience # 1	Responsive audience, excellent feedback, performances mixed, some better than rehearsed, some not.	

	Sat 25 July Adjusting the performance	Reviewing the performance Making adjustment to integrate findings	Compare feedback and work to find bit more clarity for audience and deeper for actors. All scenes re-worked, some settings changed. Only 4 actors till late.
	Performance # 2	Final showing and discussion	Audience responsive again, very articulate and saw slight different things in same scenes. Some

Venue images

Rehearsal venue

Rehearsal venue image

Appendix 3 Actors and Director's Expectations

Appendix 3   Actors and Director's Expectations

Includes:

a. Reasons the actors wanted to be involved

b. What the actors took away from the process

c. The director's research journal notes

Reasons the actors wanted to be involved

Excerpts of transcription.
These are some excerpts from all of the actors prior to commencing the project. They were collected at the information session.

- 'Exploring tools to work with, approach a creative process from another point of view/starting point…achieve a common vocabulary within the ensemble,'

- 'I like a mix of academic and creative- I'm also a teacher […] and value the intrinsic qualities of the performer. Want to work on improvisation when devising'

- 'Creating a work with no preconceived ideas or framework; I'm fascinated with the link between creative and academic '

- 'I would like to takeaway from this, the feeling that my brain has been stimulated and stretched by being challenged to think and create in new ways. To also feel like I was able to make myself vulnerable by encouraging myself to move out of my comfort zones. To feel like I overcame some fear.'

- '[I] want the chance to work with a new group - liked the idea of not being 'cast', and want to experience what it's like to devise work with professionals and experiment to get [my] creative side growing more and explore a possibly different process'

- 'Love devising/collaborative work and idea of actor as an artist. [I'm] currently questioning what it is to be an artist.'

- Essentially, I am interested in exploring new ways/tools to work with, approach a creative process from another point of view and starting point.

- Opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the process of preparing for a role and/or performance; develop my performance and ensemble skills.

What the actors took away from the process

Individual thoughts on take-away

Will:

Yes! This creative experience did meet my expectations in its own unique way. First and foremost it provided me with ensemble work and improvisation work which was one of my wishes. What it did do however is challenge me in terms of accepting new innovative ways of performing creatively especially when the process was so open ended. Whilst I had done improvisation work before I hadn't participated in this type impro quite so open ended. I particular found it challenging balancing between my inner voice/head talking to me, the critical feedback of peers and the facilitator. At first I was intimidated and reluctant to really let go and take risks but with time I became comfortable with the process. The clear lack of direction and open ended tasks were at first somewhat challenging because I was looking for answers that I had to discover myself. I loved the fact that I could play with my creative experiences but really struggled with changing my actions by self discovery rather than being given specific solutions to try.

Having critical feedback from other actors was challenging for me at times and I found myself adjusting to this experience. No disrespect at all to the ensemble but on a professional film set it's the director or assistant director that you listen to not the other actors and this took me by surprise at first. Just when I was getting use to it, the project came to an end, what a shame. The talent within the ensemble was amazing.

My experiences were overall positive despite some challenging moments. Unlike previous productions I have worked on in theatre and film both in a professional and amateur role, I found the open task nature hard to adopt in terms of focusing on an objective eg. Director says to me too hard lighten the mood as opposed to you're thinking too much be open to ideas. Then when I asked how? I am left to my own devices to play with it. For me this experience was invaluable because it allowed me to work for a solution through self discovery and play. The only dilemma I had with this was the time factor. Clearly I needed more time to work on this kind of experience where as some members of the ensemble were far more experienced at this than me. So did this experience change me? Absolutely, at first I felt intimidated and reluctant to share my ideas with the ensemble for fear of in competence. Each rehearsal I set myself a challenge to provide constructive ideas that the ensemble and facilitator would value as creditable. Finally, at the end of the three weeks, I managed to have two successful suggestions from a total of 10. So all in all a 20% success rate was to me a huge success because in the early stages I was very reluctant to say anything or suggest anything.

Overall I found this experience a huge learning curve. I feel I am a better performer from it and I am excited about future work at developing my craft as an actor.

If was to give feedback in terms of changing the experience, I would suggest maybe having a larger cohort of actors with s greater gender balance and group them according to experience with physical theatre creativity.

In addition to this for the less experienced performers some viewing of video records or more you tube clips would be great to see.Other than more time to play and a warmer theatre to rehearse in I wouldn't change anything. The use of the video diary entries was excellent and I thoroughly enjoyed this aspect of the whole creative experience.

By far the greatest aspect of this whole project has been the personal benefits in terms of developing a better understanding of physical gesture based on feeling and impulse rather than thinking about it and walking into a scene with a pre-conceived thought. With this is mind I honestly believe that I will be able to perform on a much richer and genuine level.

Aisha:

I got to test myself physically in a safe environment. And I got to create!

Starting from nothing [was challenging]! While I understood the idea, there were times I felt a bit of guidance was needed (especially near the end). The meetings of different minds(!) - took a while for us to all be on the same wavelength creatively I found.

The process has made me more aware of my body and how I can use it more effectively. I loved the gestural work, not something I'd delved into too deeply before. And trusting myself to let go and just be. The overall experience was frustrating, exhilarating, tiring, inspiring.

The performance reminded me how subjective this type of performance is, and can mean something different to each member of the audience. Which is perfectly ok I think, I love that they all had such great imaginations!

I think I have been too keen to hold on to things just because I'd put a lot of time, love and energy into creating them - I realise it's ok to acknowledge something's not working and throw it away.

Gabi:

I didn't know what to expect to be honest, I wanted to be at service for you and the research. I was well aware that it was going to be a research project without the pressure of a fully cooked show. I am very satisfied with the creative findings and they are well positioned or framed in what i am interested in artistically.

Without wanting to contradict myself, I found challenging working without clear expectation or a desired vision, as I had no idea what I was working towards, I was lost quite a lot and I also felt 'responsible' for the ensemble when they were lost as I usually take on the role of 'rescuer'/ 'director'.. this was challenging.. to let the process guide me... guide us.. ouch.. but we grow like this so I can see how I have benefited from it.

It was my first time applying new found 'Lecoq' skills in Sydney and within an Australian actor/ ensemble and this was interesting. As I had developed a new vocab and way of seeing art and

life. I asked myself how can I share this experience with them, how can I communicate what is inside me? I could see puzzled faces and it was useful for me to take a step back sometime and watch an actor struggle, as they try to engage physically. this research motivates me to share my knowledge and help others.

The need to help and facilitate was strong, I really felt connected to the work and the search. These were not new experiences but they elevated my reason for being.

One thing that I lack is confidence… as a performer, communicator, all-rounder.. everything. This experience assured me that there is deep need for my skills and I am changed in the way that I felt a desire to help actors. I also felt that I wanted to perform, and be on stage a lot. I can see how I have changed over the last 2 years, and this experience allowed me to see this change in a new context. I am thankful.

Positive [experience], I'd be interested in pursuing the themes and work with object as gesture. The performance validated the work, I was proud of everyone and mostly happy for everyone else.. how enriching it is to own your artistry.

I am interested in opening up ways to explore work in this way, I am curious to facilitate sessions like this where object can transform and create scene and character. For the creative process... I think actors need boundaries but also freedom, and the question is timing and structuring that boundary so it doesn't impede on creativity but also guides along... a vision for me is important and a creative process I feel is much more powerful with one because everyone can invest in it.

Anything else you'd like to say?

No, I think you did a marvellous job with us and leading the project and I really hope it has been rewarding and research enriching for you.

Lenore:

I feel like I got from the process what I wanted which was, for the most part, to create work and learn/experience a more raw and less structured was of working. Also to share the space with professionals out of my circle, which I definitely did.

I feel as though I developed a deeper appreciation for process. I used the analogy of the red dot on the white canvas in the MCA that will sell for millions of dollars. Typically people say "I could have done that" however the end result is not the purpose or even the most interesting part of the whole piece, instead the concept of creation and the devising process is what makes the painting worth so much. The way the piece is created and the underlying motifs are what give it life, I suppose?

Learning this and grappling with not settling for "it'll do" was a challenge. Rehearsal is a time for pushing the boundaries and making new discoveries, the work, discovery and play shouldn't stop until the fat lady sings! (there's a lot of people waiting for her to sing, looking forward to the tour dates.)

For the most part, I tried to put the idea of a "performance" out of my head and try to step on "stage" as if it was just another rehearsal. I suspect a subconscious performance energy present though. It was a cool way to look at the stage though because essentially, a stage isn't a stage; its a home, a garden, a beach, a park, a jail- its real life and so what's goes onto it should be too. Basically what I mentioned earlier about appreciating process and the deeper

meaning is the main thing I've taken from it And loving the work even if its hard its work and work is awesooommemeeee!

Malinda:
Was unable to complete a reflection after the process.

The director's research journal notes

Monday 6[th] July 2015
The first information session
In attendance-   1 to 4pm.: Aisha, Will, Malinda, Gabi, one other
                          6 to 7pm Lenore.
I was nervous and had over-planned what to do say, I was also still feeling unwell from the recent bout of flue. Almost like a class rather than a briefing for a creative development which probably said more about my own comfort zone and the desire to explain everything, I was nervous people would be disheartened otherwise and not proceed.
It was clear that the other person was the baby of the group and some of her questions showed me that I would need to pay special attention to her. Also that Aisha was stiff and out of practice, having been injured for some time and currently fluey.
Left on a high, and relieved that the session went well

Friday 10[th] July
I write this on Monday 13th
Only three in attendance on Friday, which was unexpected and disappointing
During the first session I was very pleased with the process
I had prepared a rough design of how we'd go forward o Friday and beyond
I left the actual preparation till quite late and I had only an idea of a warm up
Found out that all three has some kind of semi-recent injury including Aisha crushed vertebrae, Gabi torn tendons, Will his neck so easy warm up only done to sensitise the room and to each other
The use of the object led to some interesting explorations also the actions driven by that.
Filmmakers there to help set up and film so I could relax and focus on what I was doing with the actors
Found that the projection screen was down and locked in place so we had to work around it, Actually that added to a very interesting image occasionally as someone worked behind it seemingly beheaded.

Video diary : OK. I'm just recording this on Friday night, the 10th of July, some hours after the first rehearsal with the actors. I was quite pleased with the way the day went, considering there were problems. I heard from the other person who withdrew from the project. I heard that about 8 o'clock in the morning and 9 o'clock while we were waiting for her to arrive, I had a call from Malinda to say that she's at the doctor's and needed to go on to another appointment.
As a result of that may or may not being an all-day, she caught me at lunch and said she would be back tomorrow. So we dropped from the five I expected to three. What was interesting immediately was the different approaches that each of the actors are bringing to the project. Gabi was straight back only last Sunday from Lecoq in Paris having finished two years fulltime training and creative work in that method. So she's both travel-shocked, grieving for Paris and that process, trying to make adjustments to Sydney time, the weather, looking for work, whatever, and yet is able to remain playful and open. She has a sense of presence that she was willing to bring and an openness in sharing.
Will very quickly was interested – automatically went to story, busy-ness, managing his space. Quite – took control of certain things, introduced some playfulness where it was originally a solo piece started to play with the others. Caused some changes in what was happening in the room, which is quite interesting. It took some time and some – not too explicit. I don't want to be too explicit but I needed to say certain things to encourage him to not be so thought-driven and to slow down and to stay attached and affected by his own work. There were some loving moments that came from that. He has not yet allowed that process fully through his body. So

where something started, he went to a place and he was feeling things deeply but he was also working hard to create and stay in a space rather than allowing it to come through him, particularly when he went to the bed as a homeless man and was upset.

Aisha, not really in her body. Quite – holds a lot of tension throughout her body, neck, arms, right through to her hands. Found it very difficult in the trust exercise. It took her quite a while to relax and to allow herself to be led safely and to – with some movement, some movement forward. Yet also was able to access – there were some memories and some sense-driven work when she was playing with the tennis ball in Wimbledon, et cetera.

For the day, I had a plan. I changed that when the numbers were less and therefore the dynamic was different and just the warm-up, I changed that slightly so that it was less – easier to do with three people.

I found I was fairly relaxed, engaged with what was going on and interested to let – rather than step in, which is a tendency to fix or change things, I allowed it to unfold, which I was pleased about. It seemed to work and having the cameras running with Rene and Lucas, it was fantastic to know that was happening. But at the same time, I could see it was having an effect on the actors. They were either playing to the actor – to the camera as in Will case. Avoiding the camera with Aisha. Conscious but not distracted with Gabi and I felt – I could tell - that I was just trusting that the next thing would come to me.

The response was that it went fairly well. I'm just preparing for tomorrow, which is a full day with five of them, the whole five, and I need to think about not only catching up the two who weren't there today but also how I'm going to move the sensorial working to the concept and beyond that. So I'm going to go back to that now. OK.

Saturday 11th July

Ok writing this about Saturday, but a few days late on Tuesday.

Day 2 rehearsal was hard. I didn't feel very well prepared and after a successful day one, to go straight into a long day Rehearsal to build on what had happened the afternoon before was important.

A combination of still not feeling well and trying to hold us back to slow down the process, and not to move forward too quickly, plus dealing with one new actor in the morning, a second one new in the afternoon, plus Will became sick at lunch and sat out meant that there was a lot of going back over old ground for each of their sakes.

At least everyone has now started!

Because I felt a little underprepared (I probably wasn't) and under energised when I wanted to introduce a more active warmup like a clapping rhythm or vocal session, I hesitated and it didn't have as much impact as I would have liked.

Nevertheless some lovely work happened especially just before lunch before Malinda joined.

It's been a little frustrating that only three of the five are really able to be in the moment. Will and Aisha have difficulties with improv and imaginative work. I see similar choices from Will who struggles to accept an offer, instead blocks a lot of offers. Aisha has an inward energy and doesn't contribute a lot to the forward movement of a scene.

Lenore is a delight and it's good to have her in the mix now.

Gabi is terrific, honest open and generous. Malinda is pro, her challenges come more from exploring her inner life and in emotional and vocal territory.

Also on Saturday Aisha had to go off for a long lunch due to a farewell for an old friend.

It's quite frustrating not have everyone at all rehearsals, and I don't think I will have everyone together much at all till quite late in the piece.

Wednesday 15th July-

Changed the warm-up to stalking and in pairs, plus who's calling, then move-as-one to finish.

The actors showed their pieces one by one. Malinda wasn't there. Aisha had a lot of trouble with hers, so we worked it up. Gabi, Lenore and Will all had pieces to show, really interesting.

Ides flowing had to do with: desensitised, contrasts, dot points, elsewhere, card games boar people refugees, news headlines, allegiances, scrambling right and wrong.

So much to think about for directing, I'll see what Malinda brings in tomorrow to add to this, and start thinking about selecting those to be developed.

We developed a few basic ideas in the second half on the evening but so much freedom, makes it hard for me to work out what's happening, so I'll see again tomorrow then we'll discuss what to work on most.

Thursday 16th July- video diary

There's one more reflection from Thursday when we had our rehearsal day. I had to pick up at night. That's right and that Thursday, I was working – some of our warm-ups have gone from objects through presence, to spontaneity through gesture. I can't quite remember exactly what I did on Thursday.

I would have had Gabi, Aisha, Will, until the afternoon and then Malinda came in. So we just did some warm-ups and we started to plan. Maybe that was the day – was that the day we worked with tables and things? No. Yeah, maybe in the afternoon. It's when the table fell over. So we were starting to work with movement. How do you work off the impulse and bring it into movement? So in some strange way, I hadn't mapped it out this way. I can see how we're building a process and I'm really, really trusting my instincts to build something and it seems to be starting to work.

So this has actually been a process even though I wouldn't have been able to articulate what process it was and take things through from the start. That Thursday, I started to – there were some really fun things happening on stage and maybe we can bring – if we stay in the airport, we could bring a bit more movement back in. We did it with one try. But there are also other things that move, that could have been introduced which I think might have been fun to play with. So we might have a look at some of that actually tomorrow – tonight. And how we're bringing back some objects, really having another look at those objects. OK. That's it for me.

Saturday 18th July- video diary

Now this feedback is – relates to Saturday. I did a full day on Saturday. I had the whole Friday to prepare. For some reason, it took me most of the day just to get by and I was tired and I had to download cards and do all of that.

I left it – until Saturday morning to really come up with some structures I think. I don't know why I'm delaying. It's like I'm trying to resist – I'm resisting or yeah, I'm either resisting giving clear direction and shape to the piece because I want to see what else is there, which is one way of looking at it. But also have a sense that because I don't know what I'm doing sometimes and distracted by the research, I feel like I'm a bit lost and I'm waiting for something to happen for me to get back on track or for me to see which road we're travelling down.

I think this is what happened on Saturday. I have to go back over the tapes because – ah, that's right. Gabi wasn't there actually. So in the morning, I only had Lenore, Aisha and Will. Lenore and Will in particular and Lenore to lesser degree I felt weren't – they're internalising a lot and – or over-thinking. Not bringing that into their bodies and gestures

So the night before, I created an exercise based on – well, one of the physical approaches which is combining Michael Chekhov's psychological gesture with archetypes or some types of archetype gesture. I think it really helped. It really started to help free those two in particular. Lenore took it on. Perhaps I needed to debrief afterwards more clearly because I realised yesterday Will brought it up and talking about how he's going to use 'his' archetype. I asked him about it, but that because he's – I think - he was working in that way. So I have to be careful with that and simply talk about 'impulsive gesture' and then I loved what Gabi said later about how you might make it bigger.

What she meant was once there's a gesture on impulse, take it to its extreme. Follow that through, which is really nice. OK. So that was Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon, Malinda came in and we started to get stuck and I think Malinda is quite – because she has got a director's eye as well and we were exploring the notion of elsewhere even though that was driven by Gabi who was not present. It had been taken up by the others.

Yeah. I wanted to see what would happen. As a scene in its own right and some good – really good stuff started to happen with the words when we put it back and put it back to a word, into a game. Then Malinda had the impulse to introduce rhythm so we went with that and explored that. But immediately it stopped the actors, the other three working off impulse, because as I said, later having found that a different part of Malinda brain was at work. As soon as that counting started (rhythm) and trying to work with that way, that – the other connections were gone. So that was really interesting.

OK. And then Gabi came in at the end. I got – I was talking it through and then Malinda said, "Why don't we just act it out?" But what happened of course with that preparation was the whole thing just – it was just fast and it had few interesting moments. A lot of the moments were lost and it was really focused on some rhythms and was very unclear.

Tuesday 21ˢᵗ July 2015
Well today was interesting, Tuesday 21ˢᵗ July
Rehearsal in the afternoon with Malinda and Gabi- Yet again I felt underprepared, kept trying to trust my instincts which sometimes let me down. Seems that my creativity lies in seeing something and then responding to that, still finding it hard to put my ideas into words, um and whilst I can be free and open getting structure is quite difficult for me. I respond to offers really well but providing a leadership role, brining form into direction and having to explain. I think Gabi is one step ahead of me sometimes and articulates things that are still formulating in my head, and in my being, nice team work though.

So yesterday afternoon, on Tuesday afternoon because Malinda doesn't have any nights available, I caught an extra rehearsal. It was going to be from 2:00 to 5:30. **Gabi** [0:00:17] [Phonetic] got in by 2:00. Malinda, 2:30 and then **[Inaudible]**. They didn't say that straight away. So we didn't use the time really well.

But because of the two of them working **[Inaudible]** strongly physically, Malinda did the choreograph while – and **Gabi** [Phonetic] coming more of impulse. We were able to move through a couple of things fairly well and they direct each other. I think Malinda is the one that really has a block around dialogue and spoken words. So using sound on an impulse was helpful but imaginatively it's interesting to see the differences in those two. I'm not sure – I think when used, they were working off the newspaper and the disconnect of the top and the bottom.

If we can provide a place, if we can think of a place for that, that would be really helpful. So not a lot to say about that. It was good to have a really nice conversation with Malinda. There's some good – with **Gabi** before Malinda got into some of the good stuff on the voice ...

I'm enjoying that though. Aisha is still very much um dark space on stage, although she's got lightness, and quirkiness – I haven't found a key to unlock her further. Will is much more playful now, he's much more comfortable playing in a world - that's been really good to see. Lenore has really surprised me, with me um while she has quite a bit going on, she is not generating very much particularly, and Gabi is wonderful, delightful. Malinda is very challenged vocally –has a great fear around that. I'd like to find a way to unlock that for her because there's so much more going on that's interesting and available. Mm it's worrying and I'm going to sleep.

Will came in a bit late, so that's 6:30 and the other 4:00, no Malinda. And I started – we did a pretty good warm-up which I think is a good idea but it went on and on because I thought Will was going to arrive.

I had a bit of a chat about what had happened during the day and we're starting to look for a time and place. In an attempt to give some structure to some of the improv and to talk, I wanted to talk – it's an elusive thing I'm trying to catch up and explore that is of interest to me. I talked about it last night -that I'm interested in how – what is starting to emerge and waiting more for the process to reveal a story, which is – I don't think is there yet at all. But there is some really clear in my mind and in the minds of the actors from time to time.

Themes and concerns and problems to solve around – particularly around this notion that we're living in a world where we go about our everyday business in a little bit of that habitual way kind of. But not really taking in what's going on and that we've reached that point through the process, through living in this world over a number of years. I'm wondering how we might reveal and explore or show what happens after that.

So having gone from being vulnerable child, awake, alert, everything kind of affects us. Somewhere we respond naturally. We start to shut down through society, blah, blah, and then we get to a certain point where we're becoming robots. So we've become desensitised. We're going through the motions.

But if we're on a cycle of change and that is what life is about, then what happens next? What's the next change? Is there a spark of life enough in us to stimulate us, to want to seek some grain of meaning or to reconnect in some way? We've de-connected from that environment. We've de-connected from all kinds of places.

In fact we've set up the world. What was interesting in the process was that I – looking for a place, chose a – brought out my platform because that's a place where people come and go whereas actually when we moved on from there to the suggestion of the airport, it was so much better because I was so grateful for that offer, because the airport is a whole world in itself. It's a liaison of feedback. Basically anything could – would fit any scenario. Anything that goes on could fit in that world very well.

So I think that that was working and it obviously gave the actors some real structure because suddenly things came to life. So I could see the importance of having, knowing where – the world in which one is playing and that it's going to help also obviously in painting that picture for the audience. So the audience will start to se

We start to get something. I think we're often clear for the audience. So the challenge now will be thinking about what do we need to work on next. We've got to know this Wednesday night. We've got Thursday morning, Thursday afternoon, Friday morning, Friday afternoon, and then we show something.

So Gabi has been very – it has been good because she's wrangling with some of the same issues that I am but from her perspective as an actor, she's – I would really like to be able to provide her and the others with a really clear directorial vision and structure and move through things more quickly and give some better feedback. So in keeping with the research side where I'm exploring the process, what else can I bring to the rest of – maybe tonight that might launch us into the next phase? That will be my challenge for today.

Wednesday 22 July 2015- video diary
OK, this is – eleven o'clock at night Wednesday. Final week of our process and I'm feeling a bit lost in the moment of providing a stimulus and sitting back and watching what unfolds. It's fine. We've done lots of exploratory work. We know we're near done with that process.

But because I've set up this false end date I've put a time limit on what we're doing, it has created some real tension around moving the process along fairly quickly. I'm trying to hold back but – and on the whole, the actors are really generous in moving forward.

What's happening for Gabi who has a good process of her own has had quite a bit of experience with this and has just come back from working on her own, working at Lecoq , training at Lecoq and experiencing things in a certain way.

She's very clear about what she needs and what she would like – she keeps asking questions. It's funny because I know Gabi and we've worked together before at a different capacity. Her approach often is, "I will serve you if you're just really clear." Personally I know I've always suffered from not being clear and I'm – it's interesting. It's not a time for that now.

Right now I need to be quite clear of the sort of things that are preventing me from doing that. One, not really wanting to come across feeling as if I am really dismissive. So I've got this natural thing that I fight against in this situation to not be too kind. It's like – no, so sometimes – what's that? Sometimes I'm – I get very waffly, like I'm waffling now and in attempting to find clarity, I will waffle and hope that the words will find their way out and string together in a sentence that means something.

But because of that, I'm often not very clear and I don't always remember what I've actually said. So I'm aware – and if I play back the tapes, I think there has been a lot of generalisation, while I'm asking for specificity from the actors. I'm not being very specific myself.

I'm also feeling a bit blocked creatively. So managing the cameras, thinking about the research, worrying on behalf of the actors because it's research and not product, to give them a good experience. I'm in this place of responding to what's there, which is one part of what I need. The other part is missing which is being the director, saying, "OK, this is not working. Hold that. Keep that. Go back over there. Add this. Take it to this place."

The way I will do that I feel is if I already have in my mind a much clearer world that I'm exploring or if I treat it as separate improvs, allows something really interesting to emerge. I realise just while I've been talking now and earlier with Gabi that I'm trying to honour every aspect of this emerging world of some kind and that's not working.

So by being very general and trying to find this overarching dystopian disconnect, it doesn't give me anything specific. I have to come up with some scenarios within which they can improvise that is about what – built on what has been offered because we've got tomorrow 11:00 until 6:00, seven hours, six hours, two lots of three. Then on Friday, two lots of three and then we're going to show. So we got four rehearsals like – so we're moving very slowly. So if it were like last night and tonight, it will be like we're already halfway through. That's four sessions. So I'm a bit worried. I'm quite worried about me and my role and whether I'm up to it and yeah, so that's what's going on for me.

Thursday 23rd July 2015- video diary

OK. It's filming on Thursday evening, straight after rehearsal in the theatre around 6:00 PM. Interesting day, full day from 11:00 until 6:00. We started a little bit late because not everyone could start.

Thanks to a couple of offers that came through particularly Gabi asking about it. We're going to revisit the "I'm leaving" scene and I'm a tree stimulated by resetting out the initial objects. Led to a really – some beautiful work and some very interesting establishments of notions and I found out they're quite busy to work with because there were lots of offers. There's the opportunity for build and development. Will was finding some really lovely things and it was easier to see what was working and what wasn't and there was a readiness to try new things.

But also to set up some established agreed – what would you call them? Not themes or ideas but business, stage business, which could then be translated so that there's a way of reading that because of the truth within the stage business. I think that's what was going on.

That worked really well. We spent about two hours on that, 11:15 or 11:20 through until 1:20. Short lunch until – saw the gang by 2:00 and at that point, Malinda had arrived which was nice and we then had four actors. So the morning was Gabi, Will and Aisha. No Lenore today. It's Thursday. She's at work. She will be in tomorrow and with that came the opportunity to start to – I was looking at how we might bring Malinda in. I didn't want to work with the airports. I

just want to do that one more and we need Lenore here. So that will be tomorrow. It will be the second half tomorrow.

I can't quite remember the discussion that I was looking for another place to establish something from the private – from a discussion in the morning where we realised we were exploring private and public and the other, whatever that is, or some deconstructive place.

This morning was private. It was the home. It was somewhere – newspaper box, thick place. After that, lunch. After lunch, looking for another place. We started to talk about other private, public places or domestic scenes. We were discussing about sofa, the whole idea about the lounge room whether bathroom, toilet, et cetera, and then settled back on the – I mentioned kitchen and then sort of – we've done that and then we hadn't because we didn't explore the kitchen at all.

So Malinda started with some movements. She had this strong impulse around – she had a jar of Vegemite and some Vita-Wheat. So they came into play. Beautiful setting and it's an office of where she was. She found herself in a small room attic. Not so much a kitchen but a dining place, setting up a table, setting up a space for someone who wasn't present.

And then creating some rhythms and gestures around that was quite beautiful, some lovely work. As a little tableau and something about the loneliness and how the Vita-Wheat became and the knife – the knife was kind of threatening too in this other area and the sounds that were coming from the knife and the scraping and the movements that follow. It left us quite touched. So we're going to keep that as a solo piece.

From there, we had a quick break and then again leaving aside the airport. We really struggled. We couldn't redo – I wanted to have another look at the game, the card game of the words from the newspaper. But we need Lenore for that. We're going to do that in the morning and – but in exploring where is another place, there are lots of offers of buses that Malinda just hadn't experienced coming on a bus and watching some things unravel.

I haven't seen a lot of violence or that underlying theme that keeps coming up for people, but we haven't really seen it. So at some point, there was establishment. Gabi very generously decided to get up and stop talking and made some offers with Aisha who we're looking at building into another scene.

It started to grow quite nicely and there was some lovely stuff and some interesting stuff and some interesting ideas but none of it was fully developed. So we basically come to the end of the night and we've decided it's not working. So we left. We're not going to go back to that. That's where we're at.

So I had a discussion at the end about where we're at, what's going to happen over the next couple of days and the acknowledgement of what scenes we're working on, what we have, where and when, what we need, how today and tomorrow might run. Gabi might be a few minutes late. She has got an appointment and following that, we decided we would start with Will, Aisha and Lenore in the game and the baking and so on. We will start with that. I have to work out the times and we will mark that up.

Then we go to airport and then we will revisit the other two after that. So we will have four sections. I think the airport would go for max 20 minutes and the others will be between 5 and 8 minutes, so it's 24 – so it would be about 45 minutes I think all – we need to get that through until about 3:00 or 4:00. When Malinda come at 3:00 to have a look and to be in – thinking about the filming and people arrive for the six o'clock performance probably around 5:30. So that's today. OK, very happy. Bye.

Friday 24th July 2015 –
No video diary

Saturday 25th July 2015

No video diary

Appendix 3 Actors and Director's Expectations

Appendix 4   Sample Records of Databases

Includes:

a. Sample database - Rehearsal videos

b. Sample database - Voice recording

c. Sample database - Video diaries

d. Sample database - diary transcripts

Sample database - Rehearsal videos

NOTE CAMERA A Clock is 1 hr late (4pm is actually 3pm)

tape #	Clip ID	Camera	Card	time end	date	length	activity/ notes
1	403_0579_01	A	1	12.41	10/07/2015		
2	403_0580_01	A	1	12.47	10/07/2015		
3	403_0581_01	A	1	1.00	10/07/2015		
4	403_0582_01	A	1	1.02	10/07/2015	1.26	

lead with touch, to ground, then be rescued, stop, anchor to ground. Last 4 mins discuss sense of Trust, awareness physical
injury others, 5 403_0583_01   A   1   1.25   10/07/2015 23.15 careful. Boundaries. Limits not needed to pass
seated circle. Introduce objects, then instruct to engage with object. Looking for space waiting to be filled, unconscious, Gabi- 2 branches- 1st thing on waking. Aisha- childhood toy playfulness and tennis ball- colour and movmnet. Will Shitty delight- poo bag and Gabi, both

          6 403_0584_01   A   1   1.54   10/07/2015   24.54 love. Short check-in- dir to disrupt normal?
Will sad, lie down, more explr'n, Gabi be tree, Aisha play, Will not on impulse then move away dog, thinking.. Half way, ask start to pay

7	403_0584_02	A	1	2.19	10/07/2015	24.54 attn to stories object revealing
8	403_0584_03	A	1	2.30	10/07/2015	11.01 debrief- Will low, lack of love, , nostalgia, story, feeling, annoyed, rules
9	403_0585_01	A	2	3.51	10/07/2015	24.54 resource holds answers, strong visual image, work with, impulse to play- together,

continue prev., Gabi and Aisha connecting to object and image, will creating narrative, disrupting others, offers not connected,
half way 10 403_0585_02   A   2   4.01   10/07/2015   9.18 take note of where are- Gabi behind screen
continue prev., Gabi small focused movements, Aisha, Will still then activity- trolley etc, 7 mins in share, . Strongest Will- dog stretch- bliss, in park, Ali starting to let go- not worry- was over-thinking- in garden as teen, Gabi loved gesture, artistic masturbation, trying transpose object into body, then psychological gesture, playing with limitations, green, try go inside, sorry tree, environment, climate change, de-afforestation, not about Gabi about the world, in rainforest, Last 10 mins-asked all about journeying- here to somewhere else-

          11 403_0586_01   A   2   4.26   10/07/2015   24.54 Gabi changing eg storm, idea of breaking Aisha, expansion Will,
follow new direction, journeying- expanding changing breaking, Gabi attempts to be a tree, move like a tree, Will like a dog- stepped on finger, Aisha stretching, dual consciousness, hard to not define things that work for storytelling- meaning making, idea to find more interesting ideas if not focusing on story, Gabi urge to work more with others, try articulate process, Aisha, try break, smashing fun. concepts emerging, headless image strong-will do more, but shorter, concepts work to share and build, Will, concept of moving body more- flying, what is flying like- on floor, against a wall, Prep next day- Malinda and Lenore in so repeat some, shorter and re-explore. offer new resource or stay with this, energy from resource provides momentum to explore, discuss if uncomfortable to stay with it longer, usually little stuff more

          12 403_0586_02   A   2   4.51   10/07/2015   24.54 interesting- we already know big stuff, explain video diary how to..

Sample database - Voice recording

Voice recording

Track #	Date	Times	Duration	Actors	Activity/Notes
1001	10/07/2015	11.36	23.52	Aisha, Will, Gabi	set up rules, intro welcome
1002		12.15	9.13	Aisha, Will, Gabi	introduce object, debrief 1st exercise
1003		1.13	17.37	Aisha, Will, Gabi	disc after explore object, intro to objects
1004		3.42	29.15	Aisha, Will, Gabi	final disc day, reflect on morning
1005	11/07/2015	9.58	15		
1006		10.47	14.36	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	after re-exploring space, find an action
1007		11.43	33.31	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	exploring- dialogue starts 13"-wrap first day
1008	11/07/2015	12.31	13.21	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	discuss Robert le page, Discussion re objects, Lenore's first rehearsal

1009		1.21	10.07	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	disc explore, discuss end of object exercise
1010		2.21	7.58	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	Intro Malinda object, discuss externalising objects
1011		3.2	17.3	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	review explore
1012		4.03	23.55	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	vocal explore
1013	15/07/2015	7.39	60.26	Will, Gabi, Lenore	
1014		9.49	46.11	Will, Gabi, Lenore	
1015	16/07/2015	12.15	10		
1016		2.53	34.03	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Malinda	review prev rehearsal
1017		6.05	7.19	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Malinda	LW prep next
1018	18/07/2015	10.48	29.05	Aisha, Will, Lenore	dialogue 4 mins in
1019		6.06	13.09	Aisha, Will, Lenore, Malinda	Day review
1020	21/07/2015		3		
1021		2.51	29.11	Malinda, Gabi	discuss re mars and neuroscience etc
1022		6.59	19.53	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	planning disc
1023		10.22	19.53	Aisha, Will, Gabi, Lenore	lw Review eve and plan
1024	22/07/2015	9.01	2.36	Aisha, Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	DISC AIRPORT ETC AND THINGS TO KEEP
1025		9.48	33.01	Gabi, Lenore, Malinda, Will	
1026	23/07/2015	1.08	1.51	Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	
1027		3.46	1.48	Gabi, Lenore, Malinda, Will	
1028		4.42	55.23	Gabi, Lenore, Malinda, Will	disc process actors using
1029		6.03	41.34	Gabi, Lenore, Malinda	review what scenes avail
1030	24/07/2015	11.03	35.14	Aisha, Gabi, Lenore, Malinda, Will	agree what to do today- order
1031		7.22	46	post show 1 discussion	
1032		1.09	43.01	review prev nights show	
1033		8.16	37.18	post show 2 discussion	
			780.71	total minutes (under true length)	
			13.01	total hours	

Sample database - Video diaries

Transcript	File name	Clip ID-raw	day	date	time	Length	actor	rehearsal #	time start	time end
1	15.7.10_vlog_AG_1	58	Fri	10/07/2015	3.48pm	5:15	Gabi	1	10.00am	4.pm
2	15.7.10_vlog_AA.1	59			3.52pm	2:18	Aisha	1		
3	15.7.10_vlog_BW.1	60			3.56pm	2:59	Will	1		
4	15.7.10_vlog_LW.1	61			8.55pm	5:46	Lesley	1		
5	15.7.11_vlog_FM.1	62	Sat	11/07/2015	5.24pm	3:33	Malinda	2	1.00pm	6.00pm

#	File	No.	Day	Date	Time	Dur	Person	Wk	Start	End
6	15.7.11_vlog_AL.1	63			5.30pm	4:17	Lenore	2	10.00am	6pm
7	15.7.11_vlog_AA.1	64			5.33pm	1:55	Aisha	2	10.00am	6.00pm
8	15.7.11_vlog_AG.1	65			5.38pm	2:50	Gabi	2	10.00am	6.00pm
9	15.7.15_vlog_AG.1	68	Tues	14/07/2015	9.52pm	2:19	Gabi	3	6.00pm	10.00pm
10	15.7.15_vlog_AL.1	66			10.00pm	3:09	Lenore	3	6.00pm	10.00pm
11	15.7.15_vlog_BW.1	67			10.02pm	1:52	Will	3	6.00pm	10.00pm
12	15.7.16_vlog_AG.1	69	Thurs	16/07/2015	6.00pm	3:21	Gabi	4	10.00am	6.00pm
13	15.7.16_vlog_AA.1	70			6.06pm	1:51	Aisha	4	10.00am	6.00pm
14	15.7.16_vlog_FM.1	71			6.12pm	3:31	Malinda	4	10.00am	6.00pm
15	15.7.16_vlog_BW.1	72			6.15pm	2:24	Will	4	10.00am	6.00pm
16	15.7.16_vlog_LW.1	85			8.30am	2:05	Lesley	4	10.00am	6.00pm
17	15.7.18_vlog_BW.1	73	Sat	18/07/2015	5.53pm	2:20	Will	5	11.00am	6.00pm
18	15.7.18_vlog_AL.1	74			5.59pm	3:23	Lenore	5	11.00am	6.00pm
19	15.7.18_vlog_AA.1	75			6.04pm	1:57	Aisha	5	11.00am	6.00pm
20	15.7.18_vlog_FM.1	76			6.11pm	2:18	Malinda	5	1.00pm	6.00pm
21	15.7.18_vlog_LW.1	84			8.28am	4:02	Lesley	5	11.00am	6.00pm
	15.7.21_vlog_BW.1	77	Tues	21/07/2015	archive		Will	6		
22	15.7.21_vlog_BW.2	78			10.04pm	2:32	Will	6	6.30pm	10.00pm
23	15.7.21_vlog_AL.1	79			10.09pm	3:24	Lenore	6	6.00pm	10.00pm
24	15.7.21_vlog_AG.1	80			10.13pm	2:35	Gabi	6	6.00pm	10.00pm
25	15.7.21_vlog_AA.1	81			10.17pm	1:39	Aisha	6	6.00pm	10.00pm
26	15.7.21_vlog_LW.1	82			8.22am	6:07	Lesley	6	6.00pm	10.00pm
27	15.7.21_vlog_LW.2	83			8.24am	1:34	Lesley	6	2.00pm	4.00pm
	15.7.22_vlog_AL.1	86	Wed	22/07/2015	archive		Lenore	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
	15.7.22_vlog_AL.2	87			archive	0:33	Lenore	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
28	15.7.22_vlog_AL.3	88			9.46pm	2:55	Lenore	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
29	15.7.22_vlog_AA.1	89			9.51pm	2:18	Aisha	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
30	15.7.22_vlog_AG.1	90			9.57pm	4:48	Gabi	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
31	15.7.22_vlog_BW.1	92			10.00pm	2:47	Will	7	6.00pm	10.00pm
		92							6.00pm	10.00pm
32	15.7.22_vlog_LW.1	93			11.00pm	5:17	Lesley	8	6.00pm	10.00pm
33	15.7.22_vlog_AA.1	94	Thurs	23/07/2015	11.03am	1:03	Aisha	8	6.00pm	10.00pm
34	15.7.23_vlog_BW.1	95			6.00pm	2:13	Will	8	11.00am	6.00pm
35	15.7.23_vlog_AG.1	96			6.05pm	2:36	Gabi	8	11.00am	6.00pm
36	15.7.23_vlog_AA.2	97			6.07pm	1:06	Aisha	8	11.00am	6.00pm
37	15.7.23_vlog_FM.1	98			6.14pm	2:08	Malinda	8	11.00am	6.00pm
38	15.7.23_vlog_LW.1	99			6.35pm	6:48	Lesley	8	11.00am	6.00pm
			Total		115 mins					
					1.95 hrs					

Appendix 4 Sample Records of Databases

Sample database - diary transcripts

Number	date	Pseudo/Name	Filename	description
1		Aisha	15.7.10_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
2		Gabi	15.7.10_vlog_AG_1.doc	video diary transcript
3		Will	15.7.10_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
4		Lesley	15.7.10_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
5		Aisha	15.7.11_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
6		Gabi	15.7.11_vlog_AG_1.doc	video diary transcript
7		Lenore	15.7.11_vlog_AL.1.doc	video diary transcript
8		Malinda	15.7.11_vlog_FM.1.doc	video diary transcript
9		Gabi	15.7.15_vlog_AG.1.doc	video diary transcript
10		Lenore	15.7.15_vlog_AL.1.doc	video diary transcript
11		Will	15.7.15_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
12		Aisha	15.7.16_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
13		Gabi	15.7.16_vlog_AG.1.doc	video diary transcript
14		Will	15.7.16_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
15		Malinda	15.7.16_vlog_FM.1.doc	video diary transcript
16		Lesley	15.7.16_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
17		Aisha	15.7.18_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
18		Lenore	15.7.18_vlog_AL.1.doc	video diary transcript
19		Will	15.7.18_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
20		Malinda	15.7.18_vlog_FM.1.doc	video diary transcript
21		Lesley	15.7.18_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
22		Aisha	15.7.21_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
23		Gabi	15.7.21_vlog_AG.1.doc	video diary transcript
24		Lenore	15.7.21_vlog_AL.1.doc	video diary transcript
25		Will	15.7.21_vlog_BW.2.doc	video diary transcript
26		Lesley	15.7.21_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
27		Lesley	15.7.21_vlog_LW.2.doc	video diary transcript
28		Aisha	15.7.22_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
29		Gabi	15.7.22_vlog_AG.1.doc	video diary transcript
30		Lenore	15.7.22_vlog_AL.3.doc	video diary transcript
31		Will	15.7.22_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
32		Lesley	15.7.22_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
33		Aisha	15.7.23_vlog_AA.1.doc	video diary transcript
34		Aisha	15.7.23_vlog_AA.2.doc	video diary transcript
35		Gabi	15.7.23_vlog_AG.1.doc	video diary transcript
36		Will	15.7.23_vlog_BW.1.doc	video diary transcript
37		Malinda	15.7.23_vlog_FM.1.doc	video diary transcript
38		Lesley	15.7.23_vlog_LW.1.doc	video diary transcript
39		Audience	24.07.2015_Voice.1031.docx	Audience discussion transcript
40		group	25.07.2015_Voice.1032.docx	Post show #1 discussion transcript
41		audience	25.07.2015_Voice.1033.docx	Audience discussion transcript

Appendix 5 Data Collation and Analysis

Appendix 5   Data Collation and Analysis

Includes:

a. Example of an Nvivo query result- frequent word- thinking

b. Table of key phrases used in actors' reflections

c. Example of an early data mapping exercise

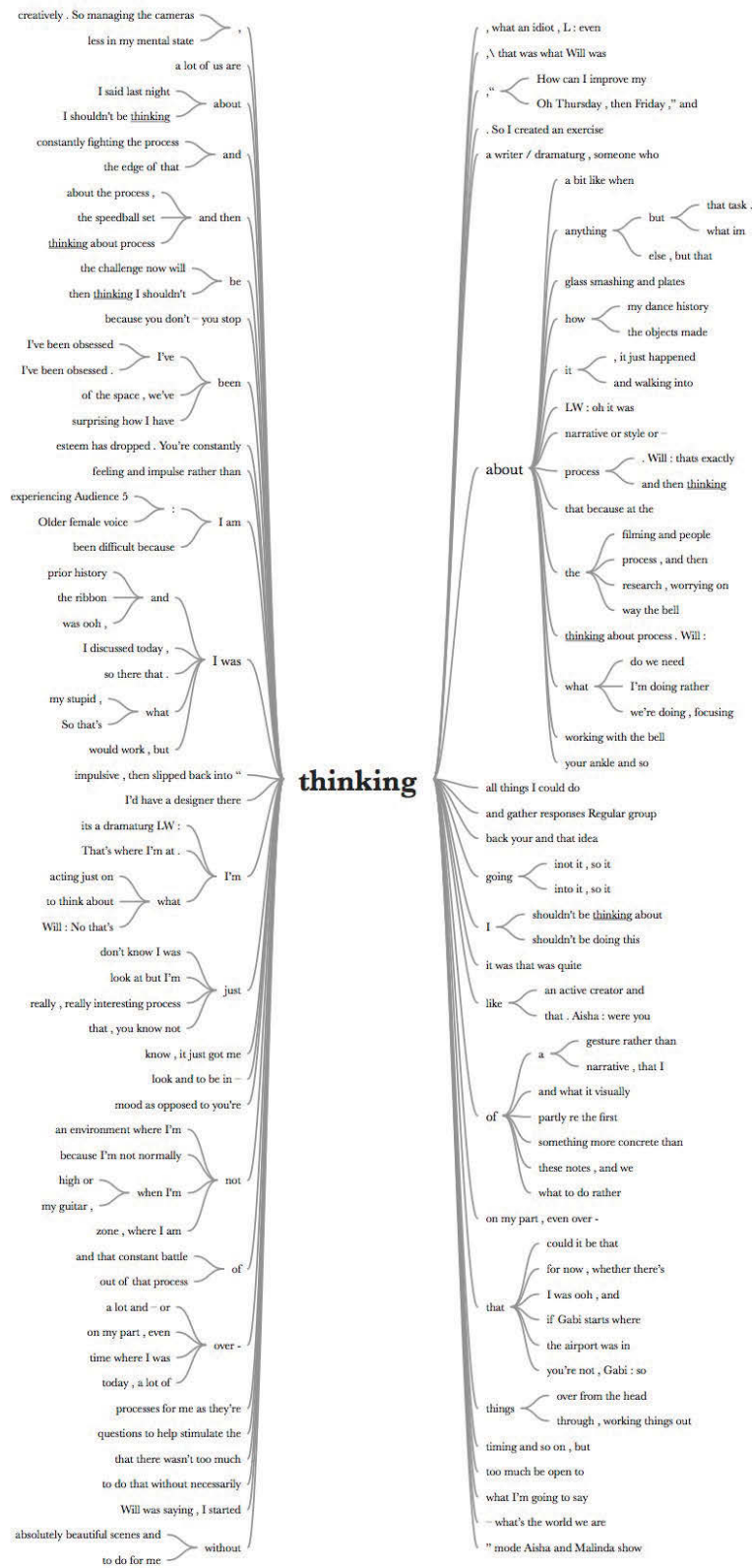## Example of an Nvivo query result- frequent word- thinking

Appendix 5 Data Collation and Analysis

Table of key phrases used in actors' reflections

| Name	Resource stage	Score stage	Value-action stage	Performing stage
Will	Day 1: Breakthrough Struggle, fighting Trust Over-thinking	Day 4: More comfortable now structures in place, It takes time, challenging but leads to make changes	Day 6: too many ideas and creatives Decisions about message and not narrative good Challenged by process to act impulsively Improvement not thinking and responding to what body wants. Conscious of audience soon, worried	Contributions accepted Learning curve steep Positive experience Lots of challenges Huge success
	Day 2: Loved being pushed to discomfort Trying hard to be:- still, out of head, into body, take offers Thinking hard to improve Rewarding	Day 5: Slowly gaining impulsivity and physicality Less confused, contented with achievement Still challenged try to think through Happy to find abstract ways of expressing	Day 7: monumental Offering and accepting, better at listening Bit of structure beneficial Wanting to be more physical, to engage audience Understand purpose of action- on impulse	
	Day 3: regressed Using head less and on impulse but out of depth, inadequate, and surprised by it so far in, felt uncreative			
Aisha	Day 1: Thinking Freeing, fun Urge to connect Affected by object	Day 4: A lot better, use of gesture, power, precise communication Felt part of team, excited Receiving input helped Feel working toward a goal, solid	Day 6: In uncertainty but working towards something Know why here Not enough time, some confusion, not sure of ending, Impulses quite good Something in the way Lost train of thought PS: clarified confusion- took direction to mean keep it as is, and no one else did, worked to keep it , others kept	More aware of using body effectively Loved audience level of understanding of creative aims Ok to throw away what not working

				developing	
	Day 2: Lovely moments Focus and connect senses with object Organic random, took a break and lost connection on return	Day 5: Productive Tired and delirious Worked well together Had drifted away, now back although work fragile Physicality not being perceived, need to be stronger and obvious	Day 7: Enjoyed Not on floor much but had chance to watch others, and see their process. Excited that work coming together for an audience to see.		
	Day 3: Bit sick, not good day, low energy Stuck, struggling, trying to let go and use imagery Weak, wanted more structure Starting to fit together Brain mush				
Malinda	Missed day 1	Day 4: (Missed day 3) Catchup with where others at. Have had images arising after first day Not as articulate as ideas emerging into being Noticing challenges as body changing (ex-dancer) and group not at same level- can't trust physically - be safe less risk	Day 6: beginnings of unfamiliar ways of working 'Know' how this improv works intellectually, but can't do it Still to embody it Having trouble even in the moment frustrating	Very thought provoking audience 'read' much more than was there fascinating	
	Day 2: interesting, found lots to explore, ran out of time, senses stimulated, impulse to move strong and inhabit Lots of memories-became internal less aware of others Inspired many ideas, and surprised by that. Challenge to work with others who have taught and with trying to work with voice or text.	Day 5: (came late) saw physical improvement in others from gesture work Enjoyed being outside eye Liked flow of the day, freeing of ideas and exploring, even though might change direction and not be included Enjoyed way things came together funny that very random comes together		No feedback	
Lenore	Day 1: Missed	Day 4: worried that would get attached to an idea and get stuck on it, but didn't happen that way Saw motif that could flow through Felt got stuck with some action, but once go it, ok. Realise difference	Day 6: felt a lot of time spent on details, change to previous flow end energised actions Realised that although that felt good, on reflection not much was taken up and developed Now getting	Appreciation for process Found deeper meaning in not settling and in for the audience	

		between offer and statement- A creative process, working well-from chaos to something else	anchored, focus on drama ad structure Really worked Wants same pace but heightened energy, to get reside into other scenes	
	Day 2: Intriguing, object stimulated senses, provoked images, aware of residue from object exploration Thought had exhausted it, then residue re-stimulated when collaborating, felt a level of consciousness and paying attention, (internal/external) energy maintained this time, able to re-invest much more	Day 5: focus on content Story, themes, scenes Interested in them and working through them Building in a warm-up structure to 'get in right head space' Started to make choices about shape Bringing sensitising into the themes Keen to develop more scenes and see what happens		
	Day 3: Fun, topic themes emerging interesting Felt desensitised- had the object been exhausted? All got stuck after a while, disappointed in self Want to explore idea creatively, what happens beyond being desensitised?			
Gabi	Day 1: enjoyable, fun, happy to be working physically Interesting object process, new ways Stimulated senses strongly, and stimulated physicalised movement Feelings nostalgia, letting go. Self imposed rule of silence, resisted urge to make sounds Loved pushing self into surprise Gained a new 'tool'	Day 4: a bit disconnected to group, hard to understand what being offered, or how to make own clear to them, Enjoying the movement understanding the space, moving slowly, coming together.	Day 6: really needing structure- anxious about showing. Need to know what working towards. Felt floating instead of deepening concept. Want clarity from feedback- specificity 'who my god. I don't know what I'm trying to say. Just I can't articulate it. I need to think about this'.	Validated the work Proud of everyone Enriched to own ones artistry
	Day 2: mixed impressions Thinks too much, good to make sounds	Day 5: talk too much! Frustrating- trying to clarify what wanted, difficult. Want to step	Day 7: still difficult to articulate what is missing. Very satisfying to have a	

	New dynamics with other people and object Was attached now letting go with object Challenged by no concrete elements, Exhausting without, needs outside feedback to progress	out and direct –habit. Struggling with need to know. Some good stuff- others freeing up and more listening, want something to be proud of	piece. Pleased as embedded a gesture found at start. Kept pushing that. Strain working so abstractly. Wish worked more on gesture. Instead of staying with object. Love learning so much about process from in it. When to drop, pick up, make decisions. Excited to hear from audience	
	Day 3: interesting day, start to see composition, from personal and ensemble research. Seeing a common thread emerging, excited to subvert next or not pre-plan. Want more physical listening work, too much unnecessary 'text' happening not useful Open to exploring			

Example of an early data mapping exercise

Very early attempt to plot the key data
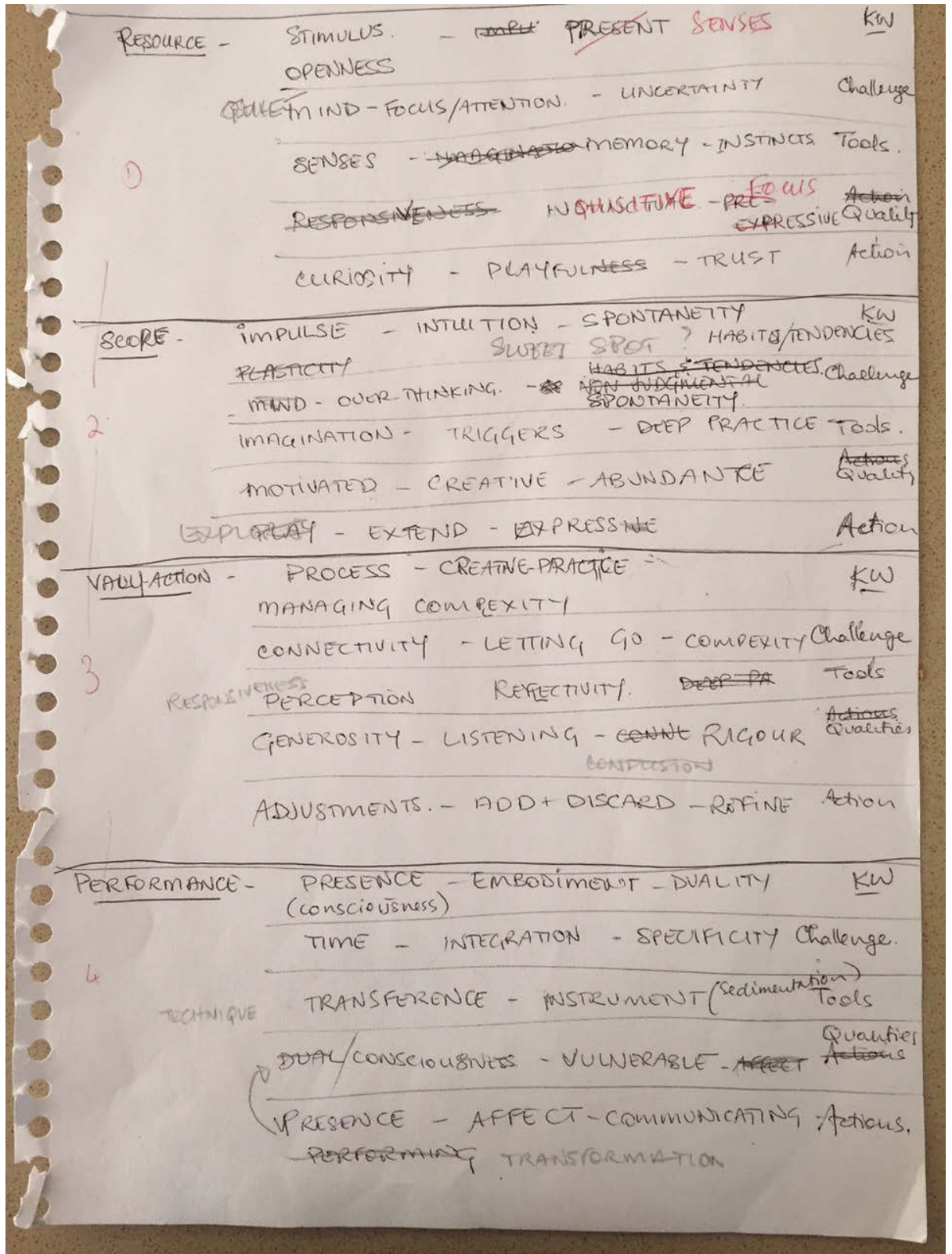
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