

**Towards a Programme for Training Actor-Students
to Perform on the Open (Globe) Stage**

Submitted by Ivan Zizek, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Practice/Drama, March, 2011.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to solve a problem found in contemporary actor training in Great Britain and the United States of America. Notable contemporary actor training institutions in these countries train the actor-students for representational performances in representational settings. In this study, methodologies are examined for training actors who will perform on open stages or in presentational settings. The subject matter of this study fits into the broader field of performance studies, with an emphasis on training and the body in performance, with a particular focus on performing on open stages such as the New Globe. This thesis is not intended to negate the benefits derived from the representational actor training available, but to create a methodology which can be infused or taught concurrently with readily available actor training curricula. The argument is made that often in contemporary actor training the examples taught and paradigms used are Shakespearean, although Shakespeare did not write his plays with the intention of representational performances. Whilst the primary focus of this study centres on presentational actor training for the New Globe stage, the findings are applicable to other open stages or presentational settings that present the same or similar challenges.

This qualitative research through practice utilizes two of the current models for actor training taught at the New Globe. These methodologies were documented, practiced, taught and examined. This thesis was aided by the historical research conducted on Shakespeare performances, their presentational performance settings, and contemporary presentational performance spaces available. Possible training methodologies that can address the unique demands of open stage work have also been surveyed. The two new models, *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira*, are introduced as applications to enhance the study's findings.

At the end, it is clearly understood that there is a need for others to build on this work, to accept some tenets, to challenge others, and to suggest innovations not previously considered. The training process is an ongoing dynamic that will benefit from scrutiny and improvement.

As a result of this written presentation, there should be clarity between those actor training programmes that prepare actor-students for the open stage and those that prepare them for the proscenium stage and settings. Without denigrating the value of the more common and highly regarded actor training programmes for the proscenium stage, a claim is made for the need to give greater attention to performances on the open stage and to the preparation necessary to adequately equip the actors who expect to perform there.

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Towards a Programme for Training Actor-Students to Perform on the Open (Globe) Stage

Introduction

The aim of this research writing is to examine two examples of actor-training methodologies that investigate the particular needs of performances on proscenium and open stages. An additional goal is to suggest two new methodologies that have the potential to offer new and unique benefits for consideration as part of a comprehensive actor-training program for those performing on open stages.

The background for this project comes from two years I spent as an observer-participant at the New Globe under the tutelage of two New Globe Masters, from opportunities afforded to teach, film, and examine their particular training exercises and explore new methodologies with students from the University of Exeter and Rutgers University, from previous studies in a Master of Fine Arts programme at the University of Exeter¹, and from literary research.

As the study evolved, a number of questions arose that have driven the investigation. These will reoccur frequently throughout the writing and each of the four methodologies examined will be critically considered as to how well they answered these questions:

- How can actor-students be trained to play Shakespeare on an open stage using contemporary methodologies?

¹ The Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Practice: Staging Shakespeare programme at Exeter University is a two year programme which offers a two-week practical work residency at the New Globe as well as collaborations with actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company. Most of the modules are seminar based and emphasize a research through practice approach to Shakespeare.

- How can actor-students be trained to address and incorporate the audience?
- Is there another presentational form of performance contemporary to Shakespeare that is in use today and of merit to consider for actor training?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?
- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, a form of stress commonly known as stage fright?
- How can actor-students be trained to physically clarify the text to the audience?
- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?
- How can a group of actor-students be trained to form a strong, intimate ensemble?

Background

It was a two-week course study at the New Globe in London, during my MFA studies at Exeter University that inspired this research. The two people in particular who aroused my interest in presentational acting were Dr. Lesley Wade and Professor Peter Thomson.

I was raised in Frankfurt, Germany where I started performing in theatrical productions in the first grade. By the time I was a teenager I was working with a professional youth theatre company called ‘Jugendtheater Nordweststadt’. I didn’t pursue a theatre degree until after I had moved to the United States where I earned a BA in Theatre Arts at Western Oregon University. The training at Western was based, as is common in many drama institutions in the United States, on a mixture of Stanislavsky’s

‘system’², and a mixture of ‘Method’ techniques taken from Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner:

Whilst they collaborated together in the Group Theatre during the 1930s, each emphasized different aspects of the method...Strasberg’s emphasis on the psychological, Adler’s on the sociological, and Meisner’s on the behavioural.³

It was when I explored the New Globe stage with my colleagues from Exeter that I realized the training I had received did not prepare me for an open stage or for presentational acting.

At this point I started to question the actor training received during my undergraduate programme. It was this exposure to the New Globe stage experience along with the encouragement of Professors Wade and Thomson that engaged my interest to re-examine the possibilities for preparing actors to perform on an open stage.

Methodology

For the purpose of this thesis, the following are concise definitions of some of the key terms which are employed according to how I use them throughout the thesis:

Open stage: a thrust stage also known as a platform stage or open stage. The audience surrounds the action on three sides.

Proscenium stage: a stage whose primary feature is a frame or arch, located near or at the front of the stage. It is often referred to as the proscenium arch. Proscenium is Latin meaning in front of the scenery.

Presentational acting: refers to an actor to audience relationship. The actor acknowledges the audience by addressing them directly, or indirectly through a general attitude or specific use of language, looks, gestures, or other signs that indicate that the character or actor is aware of the audience’s presence.

² Problems with using the term ‘Stanislavsky’s system’ will be discussed later in the Introduction.

³ David Krasner, ‘Strasberg, Adler and Meisner: Method Acting,’ as found in Alison Hodge (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 129.

Representational acting: refers to a relationship where the audience is studiously ignored by actors who remain in-character and absorbed in the dramatic action.

In the context of this research, the terms presentational and representational acting are terms that have been used in theatre aesthetics and criticism.

I propose a distinction between ‘presentation’ and ‘representation.’ Each of these theatrical practices draws upon a different register of imaginary appeal and “puissance” and each serves a different purpose of playing.⁴

In the most common sense these terms refer to a mode of performing, which both incorporate and acknowledge the audience, or a mode of performance, which for the most part requires the performers to ignore the audience. Presentational acting is:

a mode of acting which breaks through the play’s self-contained illusionistic frame to bridge the distance between actor and spectator.⁵

Contemporary actor training in notable actor training institutions in Britain such as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and RADA, as well as American institutions such as New York University’s Tisch College, the Herbert Berghof (HB) Studio, University of Washington (Seattle) Drama Department and The Actor’s Studio Drama School at Pace University focuses primarily on conditioning their actor-students in representational acting. In a recent study concerning actor training in the United Kingdom, which was conducted in 2008 and 2009 by Rose Bruford College Professor Kathy Dacre, she stated:

It is surprising that for teachers of acting and for those who teach the history of theatre in the UK Stanislavsky still remains at the forefront of important practitioners and has held the curriculum of so many acting schools in his thrall for such a time.⁶

⁴ Robert Weimann, *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre*, p. 11

⁵ Michael E. Mooney, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Transactions*, p. 35.

⁶ Kathy Dacre, ‘An Introduction,’ *Teaching Stanislavski*, p. 5. This report is available from the Stanislavski Center at Rose Buford College. It can also be found at:

In this training the actors are taught to perform with the convention of the fourth wall in mind. The actors are trained to be fully absorbed in the dramatic action whilst the members of the audience sit in their seats in a darkened auditorium:

The traditional role of the audience, which is to sit in one room, passively watching the drama enacted in another room through the ‘fourth wall’ of the proscenium arch.⁷

With the conventions of ‘realism’ came the reductions of physical movement and vocal expression:

Stanislavsky now reduced gesture and movement to a minimum. In the Turgenev promptbook, Stanislavsky describes not bodily movement but states of mind for nearly every line. Quoting one of Natalia’s lines, Stanislavsky writes that with this production he intended to expose the subtlest lacework of invisible, spiritual sensations amongst the characters. His work with the actors certainly aimed to do so.⁸

This ‘system’ was developed by Stanislavsky in Russia and later brought to the United States by Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya. It is important to point out that in the course of Stanislavsky’s life, his approaches kept evolving and changing directions. In addition some poor translations of his works helped the distortion of his ‘system’:

Stanislavsky moved in many different directions in his search for theatrical “truth” and the defining of his system, so there is an immediate problem in attempting to pin down one clear picture of his work.⁹

<http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/stanislavski.pdf> (last accessed March 2, 2011).

⁷ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 137.

⁸ Sharon Marie Carnicke, ‘Stanislavsky’s System: Pathways for the Actor,’ as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 31.

⁹ Jerri Daboo, *Theatre Survey*, p. 147.

However, it influenced other notable actor training methodologies such as those of Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg. Each of these teachers created their own branch of what is commonly known as the ‘Method.’

Following the lead of Strasberg, Adler and Meisner, many conservatory and university actor training programs in America narrowed their focus to these three aspects of what are commonly referred to as the “internal” processes of acting: emotion, imagination, and impulse. Emphasis on physical and vocal technique continued to fade and, over the years so did theatricality.¹⁰

While being instructed in the ‘Method’, actor-students are taught that physical and vocal expressions (inflections) are to be kept at a minimum, whilst characterization is to be internalized in order to achieve ‘realism.’ This introduced the notion of being, not showing:

The actor should never try to make anything clear to the audience.¹¹

There are many benefits that can be derived from such training, as pointed out in the research conducted by Dacre:

We train them to do television and radio and learn techniques for film acting. They have to be able to draw on a diversity of skills. Stanislavski is hugely relevant in the work.¹²

It is important to differentiate the training actor students receive at drama institutions in the United Kingdom as opposed to the United States. A combination of Stanislavsky’s ‘system’ and the ‘Method’ is the most commonly used actor training methodology in the United States today. There are a few classes in American and British institutions that teach presentational acting or physical theatre such as the *commedia*

¹⁰ Jean Dobie Giebel, ‘Significant Action: A Unifying Approach to the Art of Acting,’ as found in David Krasner, (ed.), *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, p. 161.

¹¹ Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, p. 250.

¹² Kathy Dacre, ‘Teaching Stanislavski in Higher Education: Conservatoire-based BA Acting Programmes,’ *Teaching Stanislavski*, p. 49. This report is available from the Stanislavski Center at Rose Buford College. It can also be found at: <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/stanislavski.pdf> (last accessed March 2, 2011).

dell'arte even though such classes are mostly at the periphery of typical actor-training curricula. Actor-students who seek to be trained in physical theatre can do so if they choose to enroll in specialized institutions such as in the United States: *Dell'Arte* in California or in the United Kingdom: LISPA (London International School of Performing Arts).

The psychological and the imaginative or as Stanislavsky calls it 'experiencing', is the most common approach to his 'system' taught in the United Kingdom:

Stanislavskian actors remain essentially dynamic and improvisatory during performance. Stanislavsky calls such acting (which 'is cultivated in our theatre [UK] and mastered here in our school') 'experiencing'. Stanislavsky relates 'experiencing' to states of mind that seem more familiar: 'inspiration', 'creative moods', the activation of the 'subconscious'. He compares it to the sensation of existing fully within the immediate moment – what he calls 'I am' and what Western actors generally call 'moment-to-moment' work.¹³

Stanislavsky was dealing with a character's internal life, the psyche, yet he did not neglect the physical. The misunderstanding may be better understood when realizing that his book, *An Actor's Work on Himself*, was initially planned as a single volume covering psychological and physical aspects of his teachings:

An Actor's Work on Himself was originally conceived as a single volume covering both the mental and physical aspects of an actor's training, but for technical reasons it had to be split into two parts. Stanislavsky was not happy about his decision, as he feared that if Part One appeared alone it would convey a false impression of 'ultra-naturalism', which has indeed been proven to be the case.¹⁴

In the United States for instance, Strasberg took Stanislavsky's 'universal' system apart and focused on one particular aspect of it:

It is interesting to observe how teachers and students extract what they need in order to validate their own particular biases. Lee Strasberg emphasized the psychological; it was his way of utilizing the Stanislavsky system, given his assessment of American acting. He focused on affective memory, emotional recall,

¹³ Sharon Marie Carnicke, 'Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the Actor,' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 17.

¹⁴ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski and the Actor*, p. xi.

and personal, even private exercises...some acting courses, classes and even workshops are terrifying, if not dangerous because the director or teacher bores into the actor's psyche in the name of art.¹⁵

Strasberg's colleague, Stella Adler, was fortunate to spend a month with Stanislavsky and work with him using his 'system'. Upon her return to the United States, she related the news that Stanislavsky had been misunderstood, which resulted in irreconcilable differences between her and Strasberg:

At this point in his work he (*Stanislavsky*) no longer emphasized affective memory. Instead, he concentrated on the given circumstances supplied by the playwright. He wanted to take the actor deeper into the play rather than into himself. And he stressed what was called the method of physical actions: how starting from the outside, from creating the outer line of a role, planning in terms of a series of actions, would take you inside a character's mind. He led me to use the physical stage, the physical circumstances.¹⁶

Although the 'Method' receives criticism, numbers of successful Hollywood actors who ascribe to the 'Method' show that it can be effective. It is not my intent to negate the benefits derived from training based on Stanislavsky's 'system' or the 'Method'. The actor-students are trained to perform in representational settings on proscenium stages and in front of the camera, for which the 'system' and the 'Method' may be ideally suited. However, this thesis concerns itself with the special challenges of performing Shakespeare and other works on presentational or open stages. Shakespeare did not write his plays for 'realistic' performances on proscenium stages or for television and film, but for presentational performances on open stages. This suggests at least one reason as to why a different approach is required as opined by Krasner:

¹⁵ Doug Moston, 'Standards and Practices,' as found in David Krasner, (ed.), *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, p. 136.

¹⁶ Stella Adler, 'On Native Grounds: Triumph,' as found in Foster Hirsch, *A Method to their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio*, p. 78.

If university acting programs see as their mission the training of flexible performers, they must teach techniques that apply to a variety of venues. For training to function practically, programs and departments must recognize that these various approaches need not be mutually exclusive. Not only can actors be exposed to a variety of different acting techniques, these techniques can be taught in conjunction.¹⁷

This thesis aims to stress the benefits any actor-student can gain from training in forms of physical theatre as a way to approach acting Shakespeare on an open stage. Most contemporary actor-students are looking to enroll in a programme based on the ‘Method’ or Stanislavsky’s ‘system.’ Very often the examples taught and the paradigms used in contemporary training are comprised of scenes and speeches taken from Shakespeare’s plays.

To provide historical perspective, a change in venues occurred during the Puritan rule in England. A new beginning dawned for English theatre once Charles II was placed on his throne in 1660. This segment offers a brief overview of the shifting of acting styles in relation to theatre spaces during the Restoration period:

Shakespeare’s sweeping, sprawling playwriting, the open-air, scenery-less playhouse and all-male company for which he wrote, and the variegated audience he appealed to are really not much like the standard professional theatre today. It is to the Restoration we owe, for better or for worse, relatively small, roofed theatres, scenery, artificial lighting, actresses, small-scale drama – usually comedy that concerns itself chiefly with private rather than public matters, and audiences that are selective though not necessarily aristocratic, and educated though not always smart.¹⁸

There is a period of eighteen years when theatres were shut down during Puritan rule (1642-1660). During that time the venues changed but the performance practices did not. The character/actor relationship to the audience changed very little, if at all:

¹⁷ Jean Dobie Giebel, ‘Significant Action: A Unifying Approach to the Art of Acting,’ as found in David Krasner, (ed.), *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, p. 161.

¹⁸ Susan J. Owen, *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, p.3.

The actors performed on the extensive apron stage in front of the proscenium, in a relationship with their audiences no less intimate and uncluttered than their forebears... Also, since both the auditorium and the stage were evenly lit (by candelabra) throughout the performance, the audience could see each other as well as they could see the actors. This would have added an extra dimension to the sense of theatre as a reflection on contemporary life, and hence also that 'crossing of boundary' between actor and character so clearly felt in many Restoration prologues and epilogues, where the player speaks simultaneously in character and in his own person... style would have been presentational rather than realistic.¹⁹

Theatre historians have questioned the assumption that says there was a major break between Caroline and Restoration/post Restoration stages. Indoor theatres such as Blackfriars, Whitefriars and Salisbury Court Theatre did exist during the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline periods. These theatres did introduce conventions such as artificial lighting and musical interludes, which can all be found in the Restoration theatre. Outdoor venues however did not make a comeback. The original Globe was torn down by the Puritans in 1644.²⁰

As mentioned above, the performance styles were similar, yet there was a significant change. During the Restoration period several things not utilized on most Elizabethan open stages were brought to England from the continent. These included the use of the proscenium arch, perspective, actresses, and scenery.

Shakespeare did not write his plays to be acted on proscenium stages or any representational stage setting with the assumptions of naturalistic drama. His plays were

¹⁹ Trevor R. Griffith, *A Drama Classic Collection: Restoration Comedy*, p xi.

²⁰For more information on Restoration Theatre please read: *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* by Susan J. Owen, *Restoration and Georgian England 1660-1788* by David Thomas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* by Deborah Payne Fisk (ed.), and *A Drama Classic Collection: Restoration Comedy* by Trevor R. Griffith.

intended for open stages such as the New Globe. Stanislavsky himself says in *My Life in Art*:

We have created a technique and methods for the artistic interpretation of Chekhov, but we do not possess a technique for the saying of the artistic truth in the plays of Shakespeare.²¹

Therefore, alternative ways to approach acting Shakespeare on open stages, such as the New Globe, need to be explored:

When the Elizabethan actor came across a particularly fine rhetorical passage he could throw off any sense of his surroundings, and advance to the front of his platform-stage, and speak straight to his audience – an audience, remember, which was not merely in front of him, but all about him, too – as man to men...such relations between a player and his audience exist no longer in serious drama. Each inhabits a separate sphere.²²

The question arises: ‘Does this training pertain only to the context of Shakespeare’s writings or does it include performing Shakespeare in specific venues, e.g. presentational stages/settings?’ This research makes the assumption that it is applicable both to Shakespeare’s texts, and to the unique challenges of performing the texts on any presentational or open stage.

This thesis does not offer a complete analysis of the fundamental requirements for actor training. A significant and necessary component for any comprehensive actor-training programme will focus on speaking the text. It is assumed that, in drama training institutions, basic training in vocal production will be provided.²³ During their internships from September until April, the students from Rutgers University are given

²¹ Konstantin Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art*, p. 350.

²² William Aubrey Darlington, *Through the Fourth Wall*, p. 14.

²³ For more information on vocal training or speaking Shakespeare see: *The Actor and the Text* by Cicely Berry, *Shakespeare Sounded Soundly: The Verse Structure and the Language*, by Delbert Spain, *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice* by Kristin Linklater, *The Alchemy of Voice: Transform and Enrich Your Life Through the Power of Your Voice* by Stewart Pearce.

voice and speech lessons from the New Globe Master of Speech, Stewart Pearce. Without question the need for training on diction and other aspects of vocal production are essential for any comprehensive actor-training curriculum especially when it comes to performing the plays of Shakespeare.

In this thesis the approach to actor training is based on physical performance. This may help in speaking Shakespeare's text in ways that learning techniques of vocal production may not. In this way the training described is used as a complementary adjunct to that which actor-students receive in vocal training classes.

There are brief mentions of text in all the chapters. However, this is more coincidental to the acting and how text is applied during performance. Examples of how to apply the text will be given in each instance.

There will be a brief mention of speech in Chapter Three with the discussion of *lazzi* of the *commedia dell' arte*. The students were working with short scenes from Shakespeare's texts during their training exercises.

The emphasis in this thesis speaks to the body's vocabulary, and how it is developed so that it may speak and react feely and broadly on the open stage in harmony with Shakespeare's words.

Open stages, such as the New Globe Theatre in London, are ideal for presentational performances. On an open stage or in an open performance setting, the performers are surrounded by the audience, a setting which invites interaction between performers and spectators:

There are three main types of open stage: (1) the open-end stage, in which there is no separating proscenium wall or front of curtain, but in which the audience still has a unified single view of the action, as in the proscenium theatre, though the barrier between actor and audience is removed, (2) the

thrust, promontory or peninsular stage, in which, properly speaking, the audience embraces the acting area on three sides, thus with a multi-sided view of the action – a form influenced by the Elizabethan platform stage; (3) THEATRE IN THE ROUND, also called ‘central staging’ or ‘arena theatre’, in which the audience entirely surrounds the action. Other forms of ‘open’ stage include traverse theatre, with the audience on two facing sides of the action; theatre in the corner, based on a diagonal axis; even PROMENADE THEATRE, in which actors and audience intermingle.²⁴

There are many different open stages in use today. A few examples include: The Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre, the Chichester Festival Theatre, the Cockpit Theatre in London, The Scoop Theatre in London, the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, the Festival Theatre in Stratford Ontario, the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York, the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York and the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.

The open stage has to be explained and understood first as different from the proscenium stage. The physical difference between these two settings requires different acting techniques, which in turn require different training and preparation:

The Elizabethan open stage invites the audience and the actor to share the moment; the proscenium arch, by confining the actors in a separate room, invites the audience to reflect upon the action in silence.²⁵

The essence of this thesis is what was explored (during the practical research) to be an effective training programme to prepare actors for the open stage. Research for this thesis has been conducted at the New Globe Theatre in London. However, this research is not only intended for the actor-student interested in performing at the New Globe. Other open stages also must face the kind of issues addressed here. Thus actors working in other presentational settings may also find the training described in this research helpful.

²⁴ Alfred Emmet as found in Colin Chambers, (ed.), *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*, p. 571.

²⁵ Christopher McCullough, *The Merchant of Venice: A Guide to the Text and its Theatrical Life*, p. 97.

On a proscenium stage the performers are separated from the spectators and a darkened auditorium does not lend itself to connect with the audience. Therefore representational acting is in reference to the mode of acting that employs realism or naturalism in its execution and does not require the performers to address or incorporate the audience. Film and television are included in this mode of performance.

Because of the difference between proscenium and open stages, I believe additional actor training is required for performance on open stages:

The study of Stanislavsky provides, to a greater or lesser extent, a relevant methodology for 21st-century theatre practice. However, they all referred also to essential links between television or film acting, naturalism and Stanislavsky.²⁶

The purpose of this research is to investigate alternative training methodologies and to develop additional forms of actor training suited to preparation for work on open stages and therefore in a presentational mode, which could be easily infused into already existing contemporary actor training programmes. The content discussed in this thesis fits into the field of performance studies, with an emphasis on training and the body in performance, with a particular focus on performing on open stages such as the New Globe. An interdisciplinary approach is utilized to address this through research, writing and practice which include performing on different stages and a range of performer training approaches as well as various ideas of pedagogy.

Approach

²⁶ Kathy Dacre, 'Teaching Stanislavski in Higher Education: University-based BA Degree Programmes,' *Teaching Stanislavski*, p. 42. This report is available from the Stanislavski Center at Rose Buford College. It can also be found at: <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/stanislavski.pdf> (last accessed March 2, 2011)..

The components that blend together to comprise this thesis are multi-faceted. This thesis explores four different practice projects. Two of these are based on existing training practices at the New Globe Theatre. The remaining two involve specific training exercises that I developed taken from *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira*. Thus this thesis offers both documentation of two existing practices which have not been analysed or documented in this context previously, as well as offering two new approaches to supplement these due to the identified gaps in the existing forms.

The opportunity to work with the New Globe Master of Combat Philip Stafford was offered and accepted in 2005. This experience, discussed in Chapter One as the first practical project, focused on the weapons and artistry of stage combat through observation and practice. A new dimension was added when I was granted a chance to research the trident/net fight and to perform that fight on several occasions at Shakespeare's Globe Exhibition Centre. This experience provided new research and insights into the main question of this thesis in terms of the types of training necessary for open stages.

For the second practice project, I had the opportunity to work with the New Globe Master of Movement Glynn MacDonald during the same time as I was working with Stafford. Chapter Two focuses on studies, observations and teachings provided in a two-year work experience with MacDonald. During this period I was given the opportunity to improvise and to experiment with new approaches in teaching interactions with students from Rutgers University which provided a 'learning by doing' approach thus making me into a participant-observer.

Chapter Three, the third practical project, introduces the components of *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira*, which I am proposing as an additional form of training for actors on presentational stages. Both of these had their genesis from the perceived need to enrich the performance and to physically equip the performer with specific tools and techniques that are relevant for performing on open stages.

A critical appraisal of the four forms will be offered in the conclusion. Ways will be suggested in which they can operate together as a training system to complement the training offered in contemporary actor training contexts in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The training methodologies used in several major drama institutions in the United States as well as in the United Kingdom were researched through their websites.²⁷ The examination of literature pertaining to actor training included varying approaches to acting. These investigations provided a base upon which to expand and to suggest additional components.²⁸

Another part of the research surveyed Elizabethan performance conventions utilized by Elizabethan actors that were dictated by the spaces they used. It was through this that I learned about similar spaces available for performance today.²⁹ As this thesis

²⁷ Websites include: Guildhall School of Music and Drama; RADA; New York Universities Tisch College; the Herbert Berghoff (HB) Studio; University of Washington Drama Department (Seattle); and The Actor's Studio Drama at Pace University.

²⁸ *Twentieth Century Actor Training* by Alison Hodge; *Acting (Re)Considered* by Phillip Zarrilli; *Acting: The Basics* by Bella Merlin; *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* by Dymphna Callery; *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* by Alma H. Law and Mel Gordon; and *An Actor Prepares* by Constantin Stanislavsky.

²⁹ *Shakespeare's Theatre* by Peter Thomson; *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* by Tiffany Stern; *Actor as Anti-Character: Dionysus, the Devil and the Boy Rosalind* by Lesley Soule-Wade; *Other Spaces: New Theatre and the RSC* by Colin Chambers;

focuses primarily on issues connected with contemporary actor training and performance, the historical research on this topic is not included.

There are a number of published works that discuss methodologies, which address the issues of physical performance that greatly influenced this research. Jaques Lecoq created an actor training methodology that engages the human body through physical movements and a vocabulary based on mime. Eugenio Barba, the Italian theatre director, based his actor training on theatrical anthropology, unified elements of physical, vocal and cultural influences in the actors' body. In his methodology, Jerzy Grotowski stripped his productions to only portray the work of the actors, void of elaborate scenery, lighting plots, or costly 'special effects'. Constantin Stanislavsky's objective and super-objective identified the theory of emotional memory that is still taught in many drama schools. One of Stanislavsky's Russian contemporaries and countrymen Vsevolod Meyerhold was in strong opposition to what became the popular trend of 'realism' on Russian stages and as a result created bio-mechanics in the early 20th century.³⁰

All of these (sometimes polar-opposite) methodologies share the common purpose of searching for new and more pragmatic ways to best train actors to hone their craft. The drawbacks arise from the recorded findings, particularly when some of the writings have not yet been translated, or the physical realizations of the different techniques, as well as descriptions, have been lost in the void of time. Further and most relevant to this work, none of the methodologies concern themselves with open stages

Eyewitness of Shakespeare: First Hand Accounts of Performances 1590-1890 by Salgado Gamini, (ed.); and *The Elizabethan Player* by David Mann.

³⁰ For more information please read the following books: *The Moving Body* by Jacques Lecoq, *Eugenio Barba* by Jane Turner, *Towards A Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski, *Building a Character* by Constantin Stanislavsky, and *Meyerhold On Theatre* by Edward Braun, (ed.).

specifically, which limits their practical benefit to the study of this particular issue. This research in the broader field of Performance Studies has an emphasis on training and the body in performance, with a particular focus on performing on open stages such as the New Globe. The field of Performance Studies draws on aspects of the Social Sciences (Sociology, Linguistics, Anthropology), humanities (Philosophy, History, English). Early pioneers in this field, such as Richard Schechner, Robert Benedetti, Eugenio Barba, Phillip Zarrilli, etc. based their work on practice and observations.³¹ I consider myself part of the extension for the next generation of these scholars who conduct the research through practice and are concerned specifically with the open stage from the perspective of the performer rather than the observer:

Practitioners practise first, and make their discoveries on the studio or rehearsal room floor in much the same way as the scientist conducts experiments in a laboratory. However, these are not as readily codifiable as a scientific experiment, where a mathematical equation may offer a solution to the problem. In theatre, experiments constitute a constant search, which will never reach a quantifiable conclusion. Experiments may, however, reach a qualitative conclusion: it works or it doesn't is the maxim, where the measuring stick is an informed artistic sensibility.³²

The New Globe Theatre in London

Upon first glance it might seem that the abilities this space demands are what would be expected from any representational stage. That is not completely true. Actors are

³¹ More information can be found when reading the following books: *Performance Studies: An Introduction* and *Performance Theory* both by Richard Schechner, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology* by Eugenio Barba, *The Actor At Work* by Robert Benedetti, *Acting (Re)Considered* by Phillip Zarrilli, *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret* by Ian Watson, *The Actor in You: Sixteen Simple Steps to Understanding the Art of Acting* by Robert Benedetti, *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* by Phillip Zarrilli.

³² Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p.13.

affected by the architecture of the space in which they are to perform and the architecture of the New Globe is unique:

The major factor affecting the actor's use of space is the architecture of the theatre. The actor, today, rarely plays long in any one theatre (quite apart from working in other media which make different demands upon him). He also, usually, rehearses in a totally different space from the one he will play in.³³

The presentational or open stage where this research was conducted was Shakespeare's Globe Theatre located on London's South Bank. For the purposes of this thesis Shakespeare's Globe Theatre will be referred to as the New Globe. The New Globe performance space is an open-air thrust stage. The stage is adorned with two pillars which are holding up the 'heavens'. The following description provides a sense of how individual the New Globe space is for performers and audience members alike.

The New Globe Theatre, a contemporary reconstruction designed on available scholarly evidence and architectural intuition, is as faithful a reconstruction of the original stage as possible. The foundation was laid in 1987 when building work on the site began.³⁴ On May 27, 1997, the first performance of the preview season started. The opening season featured productions of Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *The Winter Tale*.³⁵

The frame is a twenty-sided oak frame that is ninety-nine feet in diameter. The pit or the standing area in front and beside the stage is surrounded by three tiers of galleries with balconies that overlook the back of the stage:

³³ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 143.

³⁴ The Shakespeare Globe Trust, *Shakespeare's Globe background*. <http://www.shakespearesglobe.org/abouttheglobe/background/> (last accessed February 23, 2011.)

³⁵ Info Site, *William Shakespeare Globe Theatre History Timeline*, <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespeare-new-globe-theatre-history-timeline.htm> (last accessed February 23, 2011)

The New Globe seats 1,500, is polygonal and was built according to traditional methods. It is lime-washed, timbered, open to the sky and thatched- the first thatched building to be permitted in London since the Great Fire of 1666. It has an education centre and presents plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries as well as the staple diet of the Bard.³⁶

The stage itself is raised five feet off the ground. It is forty-four feet wide and twenty feet deep. The stage extends halfway into the pit.³⁷



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³⁶ Colin Chambers, (ed.), *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*, p. 323.

³⁷ The dimensions of the New Globe can be found at the following website: Alchin, L.K., *William Shakespeare info (the Complete Works online)*. 22 Sept. 2007. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/net-globe-theatre-structure-design-dimensions.html> (last accessed February 23, 2011)

³⁸ (Picture of the New Globe stage courtesy of: <http://www.nowpublic.com/culture/shakespeares-globe-theatre>, (last accessed November 12, 2010)

The rear wall of the stage is called the *frons scenae*, and has left, right, and central entrance/exit doors. All doors lead into the tiring house. The New Globe's stage is covered by the 'heavens.' The 'heavens' are supported by two pillars, which are consequently on the stage. In-house, though unknown to most of the audience, the pillar on stage right is called Hercules and the pillar on stage left is called Venus. This, according to New Globe Master, Glynn MacDonald, gives rise to their love child, Harmony: the performance that is born between them.³⁹

The design of the New Globe in itself is symbolic. It is designed in accordance with principles of the golden mean,⁴⁰ deriving from the Vitruvian man. Vitruvius thought the temple should be designed to the same proportions as the human body. The body is seen as a divine design of sacred proportions because it is made in God's image and is therefore truly beautiful. This is based in the mathematical and philosophical traditions of Pythagoras and described by Plato.

Cultural and socio-political implications in contemporary thought

For two centuries doubts have been expressed as to the source of William Shakespeare's writings. Is it possible that a young man, from a peasant farming and agricultural training background who received little formal education, could become a world dramatist?

For over 150 years this question – whether the actor who was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and died there in 1616 actually wrote the plays – has continued to perplex well-educated and intelligent people. Although often

³⁹ Statement made by MacDonald in recorded interview at River Court Place in 2005

⁴⁰ The formula for the golden mean is $(1+\sqrt{5})/2=1.618033989$. It can be found at: JJ O'Connore and E.F. Robertson; History topic: *Mathematics and Architecture*, <http://www.groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/PringHT.Architecture.html> (last accessed August 1, 2008)

dismissed by orthodox Stratfordian scholars (those who believe that Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the works attributed to him), it shows no sign of disappearing and, indeed, in recent years has returned with a vengeance as a subject of intense debate, especially in the United States.⁴¹

Over time a number of authorship candidates have been proposed, the best known of these are Edward de Vere (the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604) and Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626).⁴² Regardless of the position taken as to the identity and authorship of works penned under William Shakespeare's name, the affect lends itself to inspire in touring visitors and spectators alike a phenomenon described in theatre criticism as 'bardolatry': the excessive adulation of Shakespeare. Graham Holderness explains the term by recalling a rite performed in Texas in which a Globe replica (in Texas) was blessed with the soil from Shakespeare's home in Stratford upon Avon:

These rites, based on an attenuated form of relic-worship, are the liturgical properties of a religion: bardolatry, the worship of Shakespeare. Visitors to the Great Texas Fair in 1936, as they watched the pageant of Queen Elizabeth I and her Morris dancers, and were ushered into the replica Globe for a severely truncated performance of a Shakespeare play (the forty-five minutes traffic of that particular stage) were invited into communion with a ritual enacting an idealized English past: a past linked to the present in transnational and transcontinental continuity, by the power of these vatic, totemic images.⁴³

The New Globe's building complex itself, which houses a gift shop, a café, a restaurant and an exhibition centre, tends to make the New Globe a one-stop 'heritage' souvenir-mall:

⁴¹ Brenda James and William D. Rubenstein, *The Truth Will Out: Unmasking The Real Shakespeare*, p. 1.

⁴² For more information please read *The Truth Will Out: Unmasking the Real Shakespeare* by Brenda James and William D. Rubenstein, *Who Wrote Shakespeare* by John Michell, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare* by James Shapiro and *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom: The True History of Shakespeare and Elizabeth* by Charles Beauclerk.

⁴³ Graham Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare: Essays in the Shakespeare Myth*, p. 126.

...as a consequence of government pressure, high culture is being organized as the 'heritage' industry. This may be observed in the ever more urgent and streamlined packaging of Stratford-upon-Avon, and in the heroic but misguided attempt of the late Sam Wanamaker to raise millions of pounds for a mock-up of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in Southwark.⁴⁴

The exhibition centre, which is located in the basement, under the New Globe stage, is presented as a museum. On the website it is stated that an 'extensive exhibition about Shakespeare and the theatre of his day' is on display.⁴⁵ Video footage of the construction of the New Globe building, as well as footage from past productions, which glorify the previous artistic director Mark Rylance, is displayed on an oversized screen in the middle of the centre. The few display windows show a collection of contemporary hand-made costumes from main-stage performances and replica weapons, which were used for main-stage productions in the past. In the gift shop, mass produced copies of an Elizabethan ring (found during the excavation of the foundation of the Rose theatre in 1989), plague-rat-hand puppets, and other souvenirs are readily stocked and available for visitors and tourists alike. All of these things contribute to the cultural materialist view of 'the fetishistic role of Shakespeare as a conservative icon within British culture.'⁴⁶

The icon as defined by Peter Barry has been exploited for material gain. This is evident on the Southbank as a result of the New Globe construction. A less desirable area has been turned into a 'better business address', where chain-businesses such as Starbucks, Eat, and Pizza Express flourish:

⁴⁴ Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, (eds.), *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, p. 269.

⁴⁵The Shakespeare Globe Trust, *Shakespeare's Globe Background*, <http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/abouttheglobe/background/> (last accessed Nov. 6th, 2010.)

⁴⁶ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, p. 184.

A 1988 report from the Policy Studies Institute finds that the arts have similar economic dimensions in the UK to the motor industry, plastics and chemicals, and agriculture; they come high in the league table of foreign-currency earners; and they can act as a catalyst for urban renewal- apparently company executives believe that the arts ‘create the right atmosphere in which business can operate’ and ‘turn the region into a better business address’.⁴⁷

The New Globe is not granted an annual government subsidy. Therefore, the New Globe relies on sufficient net income from the exhibition, box office and donations for its survival.⁴⁸

The bardolatry at the New Globe and the ramifications of cultural materialism are relevant, but not the primary focus of this research.⁴⁹ The New Globe’s stage and its best use for performers are at the centre of this investigation.

Pedagogy

The question needs to be broached as to what constitutes qualitative research as this is significant within this thesis because many of the findings are based on my own personal response and the response of the participants in the practical projects, as well as on my observations of the usefulness of the techniques in my work and that of the students:

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters. A complex interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term *qualitative research*... There are many separate and detailed literatures on the many methods and approaches that fall under the

⁴⁷ Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, (eds.), *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, p. 269.

⁴⁸ For more information please see The Shakespeare Globe Trust, *Shakespeare’s Globe Background*, <http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/abouttheglobe/background/> (last accessed Nov. 7th, 2010.)

⁴⁹ For further information on Shakespeare and cultural materialism please refer to: *Cultural Shakespeare: Essays in the Shakespeare Myth* and *The Shakespeare Myth* by Graham Holderness, *The Shakespeare Wars Clashing Scholars, Public Fiascoes, Palace Coups* by Ron Rosenbaum, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, and *The Merchant of Venice: A Guide to the Text and its Theatrical Life* by Christopher McCullough.

category of qualitative research such as case study, politics and ethics, participatory inquiry, interviewing, participant observation, visual methods, and interpretive analysis.⁵⁰

The difficulty in qualitative research also lies within the objective. The researcher wants to secure his findings. Quantitative analysis provides measureable outcomes where levels of significance can be determined. The improvement in acting skills that resulted from the training exercises in the methodologies utilized in this research is not quantifiable and thus cannot be verified by statistical analysis.

It is possible for the researcher to get so preoccupied with the experiments that the needs of the participants may become secondary. Validation from observation, interviews and examinations can be tainted by a subjective bias on the part of the researcher. This can be prevented if the researcher is consciously aware of that risk. It became necessary to avoid preconceived or anticipated outcomes in order to assess each programme objectively.

It is my firm belief that the participants and their needs are to be given priority in any research. Throughout the entirety of the fieldwork, every participant (actor-student) and New Globe practitioner was informed of my research. Whether during interviews, filming, or teaching courses, the participants and New Globe practitioners were asked for permission to document their contributions beforehand. The consent was given verbally and in some cases in writing. The student-actors were given the option not to participate if they did not feel comfortable with me, my practices or the research. Everyone involved in this research wanted to take part.

When undertaking the pedagogical approach to research through practice, the understanding was that actual physical work was going to be conducted. The participants

⁵⁰ Norman K. Denzin Yvonna S. Lincoln, (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research: Third Edition*. p. 2.

were allowed breaks to recover, especially when undertaking rigorous physical exercises. Not only were the participants given regular breaks, they were also reminded that they could take extra breaks if they felt the need or the desire.

Another aspect of pedagogical research in performance practice is that the researcher will encounter different levels of physical dis/abilities and encultured bodies. An encultured body is referring to the body's adoption of behavioral patterns and movements from the surrounding culture:

For students, as for any individual, culture exists in terms of action possibilities that presuppose their intelligibility to and communicability with a generalized other. The body is crucial in enculturation because it concretely articulates possibilities in communication that exist in a generalized way at the collective level; it is through their bodies that people make available these possibilities to another as well as to oneself.⁵¹

It is of utmost importance that participants are not forced to perform exercises they cannot or do not want to do. To force a participant could be potentially physically, psychologically and/or emotionally harmful to the participant. For this reason alternatives to the exercises were provided. It would not be helpful for students to feel as though they were pushed against a wall:

Actors can be helped through this wall simply by urging them repeatedly to believe in their creativity, to understand that there is absolutely no limit to the forms of physical expression that the human body is capable of. What is more, they should be continually reminded that the learning process of a creative artist is a lifelong project that involves a great deal of hard – and not always exciting – work, as such it requires a great deal of patience and perseverance.⁵²

⁵¹ SungWon Hwang and Wolff-Michael Roth, 'Of Human Bodies in Scientific Communication and Enculturation', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, p. 353.

⁵² David Zinder, *Body Voice Imagination: A Training for Actors*, p. 148.

Exercises should only be attempted if the researcher can provide modifications to suit the individual participants' needs. All the exercises in this research were introduced on a basic level. Gradually the level of difficulty was increased.

[Evidence of my practice of modification can be found on the DVD in Chapter Three, Section 9, 'Negativa'.]

Based on this teaching experience I concluded that it could be harmful to overestimate the participants' abilities. For this reason, the students were not asked to meet expectations that exceeded their abilities, but rather to focus on working collectively and individually to attain achievable goals:

The effort to stay on focus and the uncertainty about outcome diminish obstructing attitudes, create mutual support, and generate organic involvement in the playing as it unfolds.⁵³

However, it can be just as problematic to underestimate them. The practitioner needs to be able to modify the exercises to the participant's needs, up or down on the difficulty scale, in order to keep the participants challenged and engaged:

So, on the one hand, you must have safety in order to do your work. But, on the other hand, safety cannot mean avoiding risks. If you take safety to mean 'don't even try,' you will never discover the excitement that arises from daring to risk something new. There is such a thing as playing it too safe...safety without risk can be boring, and risk without safety is self-defeating.⁵⁴

During the lessons I made it very clear to the participants that name-calling, bullying or any other disrespectful action against another participant or group of participants was not appropriate and would not be tolerated. In the classroom, derogatory labels relating to gender, race, sexuality, age, dis/ability, creed, and/or physical violence

⁵³ Viola Spolin, *Theater Games for Rehearsal*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Stephen Wangh, *An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting Inspired by the Work of Jerzy Grotowski*, p. 35 and 36.

toward one another was not acceptable. These guidelines extended to the relationship that I had with the students in addition to the way they treated one another:

The language and attitudes of authoritarianism must be constantly scourged if the total personality is to emerge as a working unit. All words which shut doors, have emotional content or implication, attack the student-actor's personality, or keep a student slavishly dependent on a teacher's judgment are to be avoided. Since most of us were brought up by the approval/disapproval method, constant self-surveillance is necessary on the part of the teacher-director to eradicate it in himself or herself so that it will not enter the teacher-student relationship.⁵⁵

I treated the students as equals to encourage an ensemble feeling in the classroom. This allowed them to collaborate freely with one another as well as with me. I diligently and continually expressed my interest in the process:

There is an importance of group response, in which players see themselves as an organic part of the whole, becoming one body through which all are directly involved in the outcome of the playing. Being part of the whole generates trust and frees the player for playing.⁵⁶

A pragmatic application

Below is a list of key components which comprise some of the specific significant abilities required of a performer working on an open stage. It should be recognized that these acquired skills are taught in many drama institutions and to some extent applicable for all stage acting. The difference lies in the fact that the requirements for the open stage are much greater than for the proscenium stage or for television and film:

- Physical and vocal expression
- Ensemble development, audience interaction and confidence
- Endurance
- Spontaneity and improvisation
- Focus and concentration
- Spatial awareness

⁵⁵ Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater*, p. liii.

Each of these aspects will be discussed in respect to their application on the open stage of the New Globe.

Physical and vocal expression

The New Globe is unlike the controlled conditions in a modern proscenium arch theatre, where the stage is lit, the house lights are dimmed, and the fourth wall is in place. The New Globe stage is an open-air thrust stage. It was impossible to control disturbance factors (external noise, audience movement, the weather, etc.) inherent to the architecture of the New Globe:

Today an audience's response is guided fairly precisely. The stage can be darkened to avoid laughter, a silence insisted upon so that the following words seem of overwhelming importance, a rhythmic uneasiness can be prepared so that a few clear, settled movements that follow are brought into unavoidable prominence.⁵⁷

Performances at the New Globe take place in open air. The audience surrounds the stage on three sides and in some cases the audience is viewing the action from behind. The conventions of minimal physical and vocal expressions and subtle nuances employed on representational stages and camera work get lost on the New Globe stage.

Internalizing the character as is taught by using Stanislavsky, or those who teach method acting, may work on camera or when the house lights are dimmed and the attention is drawn to the lit performers on the proscenium stage. This was not the case on the New Globe stage. The design of the architecture affected the performers in a way for which most contemporary actor training programmes did not prepare. John McEnery, an actor who has performed on the Globe for a number of seasons, had this to say in an interview in 1998:

⁵⁷ John Russell Brown, *Free Shakespeare*, p 55.

The big thing is that he (*John McEnery*) wanted us to use the whole stage. I haven't learned to do that, but that's what I am aiming at. I think the stage takes a broader kind of acting, more of a sweep of the stage.⁵⁸

The lighting for a performance on the New Globe stage does not accentuate or draw attention to any particular performer. It is essential for the performers to be physically and vocally expressive and fully present on the stage in order to command the attention of the audience. The architectural design of the New Globe space does not make this easy to do. Inherent in the space are the facts that the groundlings can move freely about the pit whether it is to find a better viewing spot or to find some refuge from the weather. Since the performances happen during daylight, the members of the audience are in view of each other. People watching other people can become a favourite past time. Add to these factors the noises emanating from the Thames riverboats and airplanes or helicopters flying overhead:

The open-air venue adds its own character to the occasion. It is not just a matter of the sun, wind, and rain making their contribution. Birds fly in and out. Performances and performers have to contend with the noise of London – police sirens, helicopters, airbuses en route to Heathrow... During one performance in the *Romeo and Juliet* weekend, the actors fought for half an hour against two helicopters circling overhead, as the Olympic torch arrived nearby.⁵⁹

On the proscenium stage the performers only need to project forward and upward. On the New Globe stage the performers needed to project in all directions since the groundlings and three tiers of galleries surround them. Microphones, as found on many modern stages, were not an option on the New Globe stage.

⁵⁸ Chrysanthy Maria Grieco, 'John McEnery Interview', *Shakespeare in Performance and Production at the New Globe Theatre*, pg 288.

⁵⁹ David Crystal, *Pronouncing Shakespeare: The Globe Experiment*, p. 6.

Specific vocal and physical abilities are required for performers on an open stage. Therefore the play is enhanced when the performers use interesting physical movements and employ vocal pitch changes to capture and hold the attention of the audience.

Ensemble development, audience interaction and confidence

Many actors found working on an open-stage, surrounded by the visible audience in daylight, to be particularly daunting. This context made the traditional challenge of eye contact between actor and the audience the more challenging:

The second key element in developing the stage-spectator relationships is eye contact with the audience. Looking at the audience is something from which many actors recoil. Some look above them, or worse at the floor. But eye contact is essential to creating an honest relationship with spectators. Real eye contact, not that pretend look out into the auditorium with glazed eyes.⁶⁰

One of the ways to lessen the stress on the performers was to become part of a tight ensemble. It would appear that Shakespeare's players were a very well fused entity. They had to be able to know and read each other to perform together especially given the little rehearsal time they were granted.

The same is true today. A well-formed ensemble will know each other very intimately and be able to read each other well, thus being better able to support one another:

Theatre is a collective art. The way one develops a performance in rehearsal is almost always manifested in production. When actors are artistically open and tuned in to each other, the total theatrical experience for artist and audience is heightened. Atmospheres become more powerful, the relationship between characters is stronger and more clearly defined, even the actor's "timing" and the rhythm of scenes becomes more fluid and alive. A sense of Ensemble also allows the actors to radiate a feeling of artistic control and to convey the power of the human spirit.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 107.

⁶¹ Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, pp. xlii and xliii.

This was of enormous importance particularly when forced to improvise. It was of tremendous value to the performer to know that he/she had full support from the rest of the ensemble especially when incorporating and addressing an audience during the performance. The audience needed to be acknowledged under these given circumstances. The actors are incapable of ignoring the clearly visible audience standing right in front of them:

Even in the new Theatre or the Curtain Playhouse, Elizabethan drama could never have been tempted by the deadening convention of the fourth wall.⁶²

This is unlike any condition encountered on a proscenium stage. It took confidence to incorporate, or to address, an audience directly, especially since it was very difficult to determine how the audience was going to respond. The confidence stems from the performer's faith in his/her own performance ability and from the close bond of the ensemble.

Endurance

Cardiovascular endurance is defined as the ability to move continuously for extended periods without tiring. More specifically:

Cardiovascular endurance is the ability of the heart, lungs and blood vessels to deliver oxygen to working muscles and tissues, as well as the ability of those muscles and tissues to utilize that oxygen... endurance may also refer to the ability of the muscle to do repeated work without fatigue.⁶³

This may not be as important on a proscenium stage where the wings await the performers to give them a moment's recovery. Even though performers on the New Globe

⁶² Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 59.

⁶³ Wellsphere, *Cardiovascular Endurance Definition: Fitness Exercise & Health Glossary*, <http://www.wellsphere.com/healthy-living-article/cardiovascular-endurance-definition-fitness-exercise-health-glossary/545818> (last accessed February 23, 2011).

stage get to enter and exit the stage during performances, the New Globe is a large space to fill. Movement, which must occur on this stage, takes its toll on the breath intake. The performers needed to have strong breathing and vocal abilities, especially during a very physical performance, in order to support their voices. The performers were also clearly visible to the audience throughout the performance when they were on stage. Therefore, high endurance was necessary for these performers to keep their energy levels maintained.

According to Eugenio Barba, another very useful side effect of physical discipline is that it exercises the performer's means of expression. Not only were new skills developed during physical exercise, but already learned ones were honed, and when done as a group, it created a strong ensemble. One of the interesting aspects for this research is that Barba believes that physical exercise encourages the performers to solve problems such as performing on a noisy street (vocal), how to solve an acrobatic issue, i.e. standing on your hands during performance and delivering a soliloquy, etc.⁶⁴ When performing on an open stage, no action is performed as it would be in daily life. Every syllable spoken and gesture performed on stage needs to be stronger and more expressive than that which is encountered under normal every day circumstances. Alison Hodge offers the following example of the work of Eugenio Barba and the Odin Theatre:

The Odin actors continually exercise their bodies and voices in order to prepare their physical and vocal instruments for performance. Barba maintains that this preparation is not only directed towards expression, because continual training also helps the actor tap the pre-expressive. This pre-expressive mode is based on mastery of the very principles that the actors use in their training. It is based on the use of alteration from one's normal daily balance and centre of gravity, for instance, or on control of opposing tensions in the body. It can also be based on what might best be

⁶⁴ Ian Watson, 'Training with Eugenio Barba: Acting Principles, the Pre-expressive and "Personal Temperature,"' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 219.

described as the deconstruction and reconstruction of the body in traditional Eastern performance training; that is, using training to break the normal patterns of behaviour in order to discover a cohesive physical and vocal grammar of performance that engages the body differently from our daily activities and speech.⁶⁵

This did not imply that the actor-student had to look fit or muscled. This research was not aimed at creating muscled performers. This training was for performers of any size, shape, sex, ability, etc. Physical fitness was indicated by the ability to sustain the appropriate level of physical and vocal strength necessary for the duration of the play without tiring. This was especially important for sustaining the rhythm of the play. Every play has a rhythm and every ensemble finds its own rhythm during the rehearsal period. This found rhythm needed to be maintained during the performance on stage:

Energy is related to performance rhythm. Actors need to be sensitive to each others energy and able to maintain collective energy on stage.⁶⁶

Spontaneity and Improvisation

In a more controlled environment, such as a contemporary proscenium stage theatre where the audiences are in their seats in the dark and, due to the convention of the fourth wall, cut off from the action or ignored; spontaneity and improvisation may be less important. On an open stage where the audience is acknowledged and in some cases incorporated, it became important to have the skills to spontaneously improvise or adapt the course of the action according to the needs of the play, the ensemble and the audience:

One understands by improvisation the ability to programme the back brain body/think to react instinctively and leave it to make the necessary adaptations to the other actors and to the environment.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ian Watson, 'Training with Eugenio Barba: Acting Principles, the Pre-expressive and "Personal Temperature,"' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 219.

⁶⁶ Sharon Marie Carnicke, 'Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the Actor,' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 31.

When performing on an open stage such as the New Globe, it is not possible to determine how the audience is going to react, or whether the audience is going to react at all. The previously mentioned issues concerning the New Globe, for example: the movement of the groundlings, weather conditions, and external noise interruptions must be considered and are moot in a more controlled environment such as a picture frame theatre. Therefore, it was of utmost importance that the performers were prepared to adjust to whatever conditions were presented whilst performing:

The aim is a body that is balanced, ‘gathered’ physiologically and spatially, the weight and energy related so that the actor can react to or follow an impulse in any direction, without noticeable pause.⁶⁸

Thus it became necessary for the open stage presentational performer to be able to improvise spontaneously when faced with unpredictable situations.

Focus and concentration

The modern performer is sometimes trained to studiously ignore the audience, resulting in a lack of understanding as to how to interact with them. The performers themselves need to stay in character and to be absorbed with the dramatic action. When performing on an open stage, however, the performer needs to be able to shift his/her focus from the dramatic action to the audience, to himself/herself and to the other performers:

Activating and sharpening the physical nature of perception is fundamental; it develops a consciousness linked to theatrical presence: being awake, alert, attentive, constantly being ‘in the moment’. To borrow Barba’s term, actors need ‘extra – daily’ awareness, having a kind of ‘third eye’ which monitors what is happening. Increased awareness improves physical sensibility. Observing the sensations of different movements, noticing how the body

⁶⁷ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 89.

⁶⁸ Mark Evans, *Movement Training for the Modern Actor*, p 95.

responds to each articulation and how these responses affect the inner being, promotes an understanding of fundamental basic sensations used in acting.⁶⁹

Conditions on the New Globe stage are dictated by: movement and reaction of the audience, the weather, and the external noise factors as well as by occurrences within the ensemble or the performers. Therefore, in order to be able to shift focus, it became necessary to train the performers to concentrate not only on themselves and the dramatic action in which they were involved, but also on what was happening in the space around them:

The Elizabethan theatre with its wooden 'O', in which the actors and audience inhabited the same room space, used very limited perspective, but asked of its actors and awareness of almost all possible directions of space. Its great strength was the close actor/audience contact that the single space and jutting stage invoked.⁷⁰

Spatial awareness

Development of the kinesthetic sense became particularly important when performers were on a raised platform surrounded by and in close proximity to the audience or, as is the case on the New Globe stage, the performers were presented with pillars that were obstructing the performance space. This was especially true when the performances were of a physical nature, for example: stage fighting, physical comedy, or other choreographed physical movement:

The kinesthetic sense can be likened to the weaving tentacles of an octopus. Information is relayed to the brain about the state or the body and its ongoing relationship with the outside world. This constant awareness of the current 'state of play' enables the brain to assess the situation and take the appropriate action, i.e. unity of mind and body (*gestalt*). The resulting behaviour is a universal movement language which can be interpreted by others and lead to a reaction on their part.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 144.

⁷¹ Jean Newlove, *Laban for Actors and Dancers*, p 63.

Being acutely aware of how much distance there was to the audience, to the fellow performers, to the pillars and to the edge of the stage, not only contributed to the safety of the audience and the performer; but also added to the performance because the movement was executed with more confidence. Adding to this confident execution was the performer's ability to modify the movement as dictated by spatial availability as well as the performer's ability to spontaneously improvise if and when needed. Therefore fine-tuning the kinesthetic sense of the performers enhanced the quality of the performance.

Conclusion to Introduction

The New Globe stage is a unique example of an open stage. However, this thesis is not only meant for actor-students attempting to work on this particular stage. Very few will. This research is intended to be used as a workable and adaptable methodology to answer the more general question of how to train actor-students for Shakespeare performances or, indeed, any works in other presentational performance settings in open theatres as well as in the New Globe.

It was not possible to go back to Elizabethan conditions. Therefore the approach I took was to work with readily available contemporary forms of training taught at the New Globe and to apply them in practice and to expand on them as necessary. To repeat, the questions that drive this research are:

- How can actor-students be trained to play Shakespeare on an open stage using contemporary methodologies?
- How can actor-students be trained to address and incorporate the audience?

- Is there another presentational form of performance contemporary to Shakespeare that is in use today and of merit to consider for actor training?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?
- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, a form of stress commonly known as stage fright?
- How can actor-students be trained to physically clarify the text to the audience?
- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?
- How can a group of actor-students be trained to form a strong, intimate ensemble?

The answers to these questions began to be approached through two current programmes taught at the New Globe as well as through two suggested new models. The two current programmes taught at the New Globe are Master Philip Stafford’s stage combat programme and Master Glynn MacDonald’s movement methodology. The two suggested new models are the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell’arte* and a Brazilian martial art called *capoeira*.

The work of Stafford and MacDonald had historic roots which provided a foundation for research. The limitation lay in the reality that no comparative studies were found with methodologies pertaining to actor training at the New Globe. The goals of actor preparedness may contain many common elements, yet the work created by both Stafford and MacDonald had some unique components. One of the benefits attainable from this thesis could be that it provided a basis for further studies by those who choose

to use this work as an intermediary step. Additionally, it suggests a new form of training method based on existing modes which can be utilized for training actor-student in drama schools and universities.

Chapter One

Variations on a current model with New Globe Master, Philip Stafford

I was introduced to Philip Stafford in the spring of 2005 whilst attending a two-week research seminar at the New Globe through the Staging Shakespeare MFA programme at the University of Exeter. I was drawn to Stafford's methodology because it was different from what I had previously been taught in stage combat lessons either in the United States or the United Kingdom.⁷²

After moving to London in September of 2005, I encountered Stafford on one of my visits with Glynn MacDonald and he invited me to view his team of combat performers. I was motivated to join the team. I worked with Stafford from that day onward until I left England in February of 2008.

Stafford taught and prepared me for my advanced stage-combat exam. I also assisted him in numerous workshops for student groups visiting the New Globe, performing stage combat extravaganzas for New Globe events such as the Frost-Fair, season openings, as well as corporate events held at the New Globe Exhibition Centre. One of these New Globe events led to my first piece of original practice project for this thesis which is described and discussed on the following pages as well as viewed on a DVD that has been submitted with this writing.

⁷² During my undergraduate studies, one of the adjunct faculty members was qualified to teach stage combat and gave a one-off stage combat introductory course for one semester. It was called a 'taster' course, since the semester wasn't long enough for specialization/certification. During my Master of Fine Arts studies at Exeter University I was also offered a one year stage combat class. This class was a specialty class for the beginner that led to a certificate of unarmed combat and fighting with the rapier and dagger. Both of these classes were taken and passed with distinction.

The purpose of this research-through-practice project was twofold:

- To research, choreograph, perform and document an example of a trident/net fight on an open stage. This has not been done previously and may have applications in future performances.
- To examine ways in which aspects of the training in practice of stage combat may be useful for student actors in performing on open stages

I took the role of participant-observer during the research, in order to both experience and critically analyse this particular type of training; to question its usefulness for training actors on open stages.

Stage combat is not always included in actor training. I believe this is an important over-sight inasmuch as it ignores the effectiveness of stage combat for teaching actor-students essential elements for performances on open stages, even performances in general. Most of the stage-combat training provided by many institutions, even the most highly respected, is rudimentary. Even where such stage combat training is provided as part of the basic certificate, it is usually taught within the first year of study so that the skills learned during those first few months, will have been forgotten by the time the students graduate.

Philip Stafford has been part of the New Globe since performances were staged beginning in the 1970's in the same spot where the New Globe now stands. Stafford has taught in various drama schools. His expertise and performance skills have been in demand in such notable institutions as the Royal Opera House. He has been working with the New Globe Education department for over twenty years and his methodology is based on the teachings of the old fencing masters: Achilles Marozzo, Giacomo di Grassi,

Vincentio Saviolo, Ridolfo Capoferro, Francisco Fero Alfieri and Girard Thibault, all of whom were contemporaries to Shakespeare.

Stafford is a stage combat teacher associated with the BADC (British Academy of Dramatic Combat). This is the first account of his teaching methodology in print and on audio-visual documentation and is therefore an original contribution to the field.

Stafford's methodology is considered controversial by his peers especially in his own organization, the British Academy for Dramatic Combat (BADC). The other stage combat organization, the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat (BASSC) is also in disagreement with his methods because he does not teach according to the conventional modes intended for the proscenium stage and screen. Rather, he has adapted his methodology to the demands placed upon stage combat performances, which are to be executed on an open stage such as the New Globe or other open stage settings:

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 1: Borrough Market]

The problem is actually one of relative difficulty: for us, the demands which stage combat makes of the actor, with its associated problems of costuming and wounds, contrive to render it one of the more difficult theatrical effects, particularly for the modern actor who is not necessarily adept at fencing, ...a realistic swordfight would (and does) look out of place in a declamatory production behind a proscenium arch, probably as preposterous as the fight at the beginning of *Don Giovanni* usually appears.⁷³

Live blades

In contrast to what some acting schools teach in stage combat, generally very light weight aluminium épées are used. Stafford's methodology includes the use of live blades or authentic weapons. Live blades refer to the nature of the weapons Stafford uses during

⁷³ Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, p. 4.

performances in training and during teaching workshops. He has designed and made the weapons himself. They are replicas of real weapons made of steel which he saw in the Tower of London, as well as weapons found in private collections and books.

Stafford's weapons are slightly heavier than the real swords that inspired him, due to the fact that he does not shave the edges off to sharpen the swords. Instead he keeps the edges thick and dull, so that they are safer and stronger for performances and rehearsals. Most weapons used in stage combat classes today are cheaply made aluminium foils or aluminium sabres:

It should be noted however that the quality, durability and authenticity of the weapons on offer can vary greatly. Theatrical weapons are usually supplied with steel or aluminium blades which give an authentic sound during live performance.⁷⁴

These aluminium swords are relatively inexpensive and therefore popular for actor-student training. However, they also reinforce the misconception that all swords are and were as light as these foils. Foils were used for a different style of combat (small sword), which became popular about two hundred years after Shakespeare:

Errol Flynn, Douglas Fairbanks, Cornell Wilde, Basil Rathbone, and many other “swashbuckling” stars of cinema (or their stunt doubles) were accomplished fencers. Their performances intrigued audiences, and through time, this fast and flashy sabre play transformed into the theatrical versions of broadsword, cross-hilt and rapier play. Since that time, the audience has come to think the swashbuckling of the silver screen to be real swordplay. This has been reinforced time and time again until that “romantic ideal” has become a reality to all but the true specialists and fanatics who cling to what is left of the ancient art.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Keith Ducklin and John Waller, *Sword Fighting: A Manual for Actors and Directors*, p. 29.

⁷⁵ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, pp. 126 and 127.

The Swashbucklers have reinforced the idea that rapiers are weapons that can be easily swung through the air and therefore can be used for defense and attack when in fact they were used mostly for offense due to their awkward length and weight:

The weight and length of the rapier made it quite difficult to parry with the sword itself. The awkward weapon restricted the fencer from blocking an attack with any advantage or speed.⁷⁶

Therefore a gloved left hand or daggers were used to parry the attacks from the opponent. This was true until the end of the sixteenth century when a smaller rapier was introduced.

The smaller rapier against the older, larger, heavier version of the rapier could also be likened to a soldier with a musket dueling with a soldier armed with a modern Uzi. Shakespeare may have intended that notion for the Tybalt versus Romeo fight in *Romeo and Juliet*, displaying the clash of the new versus the old, a theme that can be found throughout the play, i.e. feud between the families (old) vs. Romeo and Juliet's love (new).

[To view an example of what this might have looked like, see DVD Chapter One, Section Two – Live Blades.]

In my research I couldn't find anybody else talking about this particular advantage (small rapier), which might have given Romeo the edge to win against the far more accomplished dueler, Tybalt.

The smaller rapier was so much lighter and more maneuverable that it had a clear advantage over the old rapier. The old rapier in use at the time was much larger and

⁷⁶ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 125.

heavier, therefore less maneuverable than the much shorter and lighter new rapier introduced during that period.

This sort of combat evolution from an older heavier weapon to a new, lighter, more efficient combat weapon (older heavier rapier versus new smaller rapier) is virtually impossible to recreate when using aluminium foils. The foils are very light and equally maneuverable. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to perform a fight convincingly when the weapons are made of aluminium. Modern audiences probably wouldn't understand that rapiers cannot be swung around like a light épée or a small-sword. The ideas of swords being so very light stem from swashbuckler films such as those starring Errol Flynn, Douglas Fairbanks, and others. Therefore, if one would try to recreate a historically accurate scenario in a fight, it could quite possibly get lost on the modern audience who are most likely not familiar with the characteristics of the actual weapons.

Sight lines and verisimilitude

The actor-students are taught to aim a few inches away from the initial target in general stage combat training. This is taught in order to ensure the safety of the performers.

In stage combat, we want to project to the audience all this aggressive intent, but without the *gory* side-effects. To do that, we must simulate dangerous looking sword cuts but assure ourselves and our partners that the cut will never actually land. How can this be done? One of the best ways is to simply *displace* the target slightly from the referenced part of the body. That is, instead of aiming for the shoulder itself, aim a few inches to the side and past the shoulder area. (To your right, if it's your partner's left shoulder; to your left if it's your partner's right).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Richard Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step-by-Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 66.

This is not the case in Stafford's class. He teaches to aim for the target and explains that this practice of aiming for the real target is safer than aiming a few inches off target.

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 3: verisimilitude.]

Stafford's argument is twofold: first he argues that aiming at the target makes it safer for the opponent or partner in the fight. If the partner knows what the target is, but does not remember the choreography to counter the attack, he/she will be able to safely escape the cut or thrust by slightly moving out of the way. Whereas in the conventional method (aiming off target), should he/she forget the choreography in the middle of the fight and forget whether the opponent is aiming left or right of the target, he/she could easily get injured whilst trying to get out of the way. If the opponent turns in the wrong direction he/she might move toward the oncoming attack.

Stafford's second argument is based upon the sight lines inherent in the architecture of the New Globe Theatre. To aim directly at the target looks real from all angles, not just head-on or the two diagonals as is the case on a proscenium stage. Using Stafford's method of aiming for the actual target, as seen in the DVD film footage, makes the fight look real from the front, the sides, the back, all of the diagonals and from up above (the galleries). It was as though the New Globe space was created to display prize fights or combat:

In his comprehensive study of the development of the Elizabethan playhouse, Glynne Wickham cites ample evidence to support his contention that its association with fencing was particularly strong. He notes that "feats of activity" were 'frequently coupled with Elizabethan stage plays', and that 'of all "feats of

activity”...gymnastics, balletic, and pugilistic, none was more popular than fencing.⁷⁸

The Elizabethan playhouses were most likely constructed as multi-purpose buildings:

The fact that he (James Burbage) and John Brayne risked up to £683 on building their playhouse invites us to be cautious in applying too readily the arguments that the ‘typical Elizabethan playhouse’ - if such a thing can be clearly seen to have existed – was *like* an inn-yard, or *like* a baiting arena. On the other hand, we should be cautious about assuming that Burbage had the nerve to erect a building suitable for the staging of plays and for nothing else.⁷⁹

Fencing tournaments by fencing masters were displayed in the playhouses as well as other activities, such as gymnastics, and perhaps bear-baiting:

On 7 February, perhaps at the Globe, certainly on one of the Bankside theatres, there was a fencing match between two master-swordsmen, Turner and Dun. It came to a sudden end when Turner ran Dun ‘so far in the brain at the eye’ that he died instantly. Such accidents did not damage the income of the shareholders who rented out their playhouse.⁸⁰

Elizabethan audiences were exposed to a lot of fencing and were familiar with the terminology and movements of that martial art. Most likely they were able to recognize intricate fencing moves, which would explain specific fencing terms used in Shakespeare’s plays such as the mention of the ‘*passado*’ and ‘*punto reverso*’ in *Romeo and Juliet* in Act II, scene three:

Benvolio: Why, what is Tybalt?

Mercutio: More than Prince of cats. O he’s the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing pricksong: keeps time, distance, and proportion. He rests his minim rests: one, two, and the third in your bosom; the very butcher of a silk button. A duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very first house of the first and second cause. Ah,

⁷⁸ Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, p 5.

⁷⁹ Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare’s Theatre*, p 37.

⁸⁰ Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare’s Theatre*, p. 73.

*the immortal passado, the punto reverso, the hai.*⁸¹

That is not the case today. It brings up an interesting dilemma for the fight choreographer and director, as to whether to stage an archaeologically accurate production, i.e. using the weapons and techniques from Shakespeare's time (unfamiliar to most modern audience members), or whether to go for a more modern entertaining effect (big moves often seen in wrestling, which are easily understood by a modern audience). The scene should be choreographed to make it look as though the fighters are truly trying to kill one another with weapons and techniques that a modern audience easily recognizes. On the New Globe stage it would be advisable to use weapons other than the épée or small sword. The épée/small-sword is so small and fast that the action may disappear completely to the untrained eye, particularly for audience members situated in the galleries. Sabres and great-swords would be advisable as would be machetes or other visually bigger equivalents:

Exhibitions of swordplay were staged in Elizabethan open-air theatres, and there would have been vociferous criticism of clumsy swordsmanship in the Globe...A well-ordered duel was an image of harmony to its Elizabethan spectators.⁸²

Shakespeare's players needed to be 'good' swordsmen, as they had to portray 'great' swordsmen as can be seen in his *Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, in Act 5 scene two:

Osric: You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is –

*Hamlet: I dare not confess that, lest I should compare
With him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to
Know himself.*

Osric: I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation

⁸¹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 347.

⁸² Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 140.

Laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

Hamlet: What's his weapon?

*Osric: Rapier and dagger.*⁸³

The actors were performing in front of an audience who understood exactly what they were watching. The audience would have likely been largely made up of swordsmen themselves. Therefore verisimilitude would have been required.

Beside the playhouses there were also separate baiting rings, which competed with the playhouses:

Between 1546 and 1576 there were six baiting rings, most of them short-lived, on the Bankside.⁸⁴

As it was in Elizabethan times, spectacles such as professional wrestling and boxing matches which incorporate brutality, and in some instances even blood, are still very much in demand today.

Today stage combat, if it is executed well, can enrich any performance in its entertainment value and dramatic impact. What is a fight if not a physical expression that goes beyond the spoken word? Stafford, with his approach to stage combat, aimed to provide thrills and excitement for audiences through verisimilitude. Edelman says:

Does not the audience 'know' that *everything* it *sees* on the stage is not 'true', but is it not willing, in Coleridge's phrase, to suspend its disbelief? Assuredly, swordfights do look bad when we see that the actors are taking care not to hurt one another – just as bad as a love scene when we 'see' that the leading lady does not find the thought of kissing her co-star an attractive proposition. But as good actors can convince us that the characters they play are in love, a good Richard III and Richmond should also be able to convince us that they are out to kill one another, with Richmond succeeding in an exciting fashion.⁸⁵

⁸³ W.G. Clark and W. A. Wright, (eds.), *Shakespeare Select Plays: Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, p. 109.

⁸⁴ Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, p. 4.

Not only does stage-combat provide excitement on the stage, but it is a very useful tool to teach actor-students kinesthetic awareness, focus, balance, rhythm, and partner/ensemble work. Dale Girard says:

The business of a stage fight calls for concentration, diligence and particularly trust in one's partner. There is no room for someone trying to show how incredibly tough they are. It is certainly not an activity for show-offs or devil-may-cares. Nor is it a game, but rather a precision dance highlighted with acted aggression. The art of stage combat, when approached with professional care, precision and respect, when prepared and practiced with patience and enthusiasm, is a spectacle of stagecraft.⁸⁶

Concentration, diligence, trust in one's partner, precision, respect and patience are very important tools for actor training, especially on an open stage such as the New Globe, where relying on one's partner and their capabilities are constantly required. A very important aspect an actor-student may learn from stage combat and combat performances is the value of the crowd-pleasing spectacle. As Laurence Olivier stated:

I have always felt very strongly that a stage fight offered the actor a unique opportunity of winning the audience, as great almost as any scene, speech or action. That Shakespeare put it high in his estimation of stage effect is proclaimed by the amount of times he trustingly leaves it to this element to provide him with his dénouements.⁸⁷

Philip Stafford, with his years of experience in teaching, choreographing and performing real-looking stage fights, showcased his choreography on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sunday mornings and early afternoons at the New Globe Exhibition Centre. Like MacDonald did with her elements, Stafford, with the exhibiting

⁸⁶ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the Use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 2

⁸⁷ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the Use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 1.

of his own and his students' skills, was keeping with the traditions of the original Globe by displaying sword-fighting feats at the New Globe.

The safety issue in his methodology was frequently questioned and pointed out by his peers. The fact that Stafford taught to aim for the target rather than beside it was usually the basis of the dispute. The root of the problem is whenever something physical is practiced, whether it be football, tennis, gymnastics, dance, etc., the likelihood of sustaining injuries is far greater than if doing nothing. The key point to his practice, as is also true in the conventional methods, is to build trust with one's partner/s, to practice diligently to perfect the moves of the choreography and to learn to communicate physically. Stage combat is somewhat like a dance performance. A pair of ballroom dancers or a couple in a pas de deux need to practice diligently for a long time before they get their performances consistently right. The same is true for stage combat. After a while one is able to read one's partner well, and non-verbal communication, through the eyes and subtle physical suggestion, is able to take over and create a tight and smoothly flowing performance.

The trident/net project:

In this research-through-practice project, I explored the effectiveness of stage combat as a teaching tool to prepare actor-students for performances on open stages. The reason this project was included in this thesis was not to suggest that actor-students must re-create the trident/net fight described in Appendix A, but rather to encourage actor-students to create their own unique work/fights within the conventions of an open stage, such as the New Globe, in mind. If used in a curriculum setting, the trident/net exercise

could prove a valuable tool to the actor-students. In addition new skills could be acquired from the experience.

Some of Shakespeare's historical plays are set in ancient Rome. Amongst the important entertainments in ancient Rome were the gladiatorial games. The entertainment value of a fight, its spectacle, was something Shakespeare clearly understood. This was evident in the many scenes he wrote which contained battles and duels. The Elizabethan audiences were hungry for bloody spectacles, which was evident in the popularity of baiting-rings and fencing tournaments. Therefore Shakespeare and his fellow players were all too willing to feed that hunger and give the audiences what they wanted. This is described by Tiffany Stern as follows:

Yet the sport and the drama were, in many ways, rivals – competing for roughly the same audience at the same time of day. Plays had to offer an entertainment at least as compelling as the visceral, bloody, brutal sport of killing or maiming bears, dogs and bulls. This rivalry may even be behind some of the visual cruelty of Shakespearean and other drama of the time.⁸⁸

In January 2006 the head of the New Globe Exhibition Centre contacted Stafford to let him know that the upcoming season would be called 'The Roman Season'. Several of Shakespeare's Roman plays were to be performed on the main stage. As part of the April 22nd opening ceremony of the 'Roman Season', a request was made to perform a Roman extravaganza in the New Globe Exhibition Centre. Stafford was asked if he could organize some fighters to stage some gladiatorial combat fights. In the discussion that ensued, Stafford introduced a repertoire of fights that had the potential to be changed into gladiatorial fights.

⁸⁸ Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page*, p 19.

One of the plans was to have someone create a trident/net fight. I saw this as an opportunity to learn more through historical research and to increase my skills in performance through the discoveries found in the physical practice. Stafford encouraged me to undertake this challenge.

In the investigation, I was looking for the presence of the six performance abilities required of actors on an open stage that were listed in the Introduction to this thesis. It should be recognized that these abilities required for stage combat are applicable for all stage acting. The difference lies in the fact that the requirements for the open stage are much greater than for the proscenium stage or for television and film.

Methodology:

The research for this project was conducted by searching through reference books in public libraries, most particularly in the British Library, classic and new films containing gladiators, as well as on the Internet. This was undertaken to attain a historical understanding and perspective of the significance of the characters *Retiarius* and *Murmillo*, who were paired against each other in the Roman arenas and are the epitome of gladiatorial fights that according to Fik Meijer go back to 264 B.C.:

The first time gladiator fights are mentioned in Rome is in 264 BC, the year the First Punic War began. The two sons of the ex-consul Iunius Brutus Pera arranged for three pairs of gladiators to fight each other at his funeral in the cattle market near Tiberine Island.⁸⁹

According to Roger Dunkle, in the formative stages, gladiatorial games were not referred to as '*ludi*' (public games), but as '*munera*' (a duty):

Romans called a display of gladiatorial combat a '*munus*', that is, 'a duty' paid by descendants to a dead ancestor. The '*munus*' served the

⁸⁹ Fik Meijer, *The Gladiators: History's Most Deadly Sport*, p. 25.

purpose of keeping alive the memory of an important individual after death. 'Munera' were held some time after the funeral and were often repeated at five-year intervals. Gladiatorial fights were not incorporated into public games until the late first century.⁹⁰

The gladiators (men) appeared to come from three sources, two obligatory and the third source comprised of volunteers. John Percy Vyvian Dacre Balsdon said that criminals who had committed heinous crimes, prisoners of war, or men who were deserters, were often sent to the arena to fight:

They were considered to be unworthy, a lower class '*humiliores*', and thus already doomed. Their fate was to die by the sword '*damnati ad gladium*' or '*damnati ad mortem*'. In this group there was yet a lower rank, the '*damnati ad bestias*': those condemned to die from being torn apart by beasts.⁹¹

The slaves who were sold to gladiator trainers were a second source. Some of these perhaps had been prisoners of war who had been captured by highwaymen or pirates. The gladiatorial fight was an easy way to dispose of them and make some money at the same time. According to Balsdon also included in this group were those slaves who may have displeased their owners:

Under Hadrian the sale of slaves to gladiatorial schools was forbidden, except with the slave's consent, unless he had committed some offence. If a runaway slave sold himself to a gladiatorial establishment and his identity was subsequently discovered, he had, by a ruling of Antoninus Pius, to be returned to his master.⁹²

The third source for gladiators was the volunteer '*auctorati*'. These gladiators were Roman citizens who signed up of their own volition. Many chose this path in pursuit of possible fame and fortune. They aspired to build up a reputation as a revered fighter in the arena:

⁹⁰ Roger Dunkle, '*Types of Gladiators*', *Roman Gladiatorial Games*, <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/gladiatr/origins.htm> 25 Oct. 2006.

⁹¹ J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 19.

⁹² J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 23.

The more skilled and successful gladiators became celebrities attracting fans and inspiring graffiti such as this one at Pompeii: "Celadus, the Thracian, makes all the girls sigh". Many gladiators returned to fight again and again even when the emperor had granted them the wooden sword, which signified their release from service.⁹³

The *Retiarii* were easily the most recognizable of all gladiators, armed only with a shoulder guard, a dagger, a trident and a net. They were the least armored of all gladiators. The most common pairing for the *Retiarii* was with the heavily armored *Secutor* or *Murmillio*. Peter Connolly explains:

His traditional opponent, the *Retiarius*, was the lowest ranking gladiator. He was immediately recognizable because he used a net and a trident (his name, in fact, is derived from 'rete', the Latin word for 'net'). There are a number of representations showing the *Retiarius* holding his trident with two hands, the traditional stance being with the leading arm (usually the left one) thrust forward with the other arm held back, behind the body. Unfortunately, archaeologists have failed to find any examples of a complete trident or net, so we only have these contemporary illustrations to show us what they looked like.⁹⁴

It is believed that the trident was used to keep the *Secutor/Murmillio* (the opponent of the *Retiarius*) at a safe distance. One strategy was to use the net to ensnare the opponent and then to kill him with either the trident or the dagger. Another theory suggested that the net was sometimes laid out on the floor, and the opponent was forced on to the net. The *Retiarius* would give a quick pull that would cause his opponent to stumble and fall. Being heavily armed, the opponent would then be an easy target for the much more lightly armed and agile *Retiarius*. Another possibility is suggested by James Grout:

Yet another theory suggests that, due to the *Retiarii's* light armour, they ran around the arena and had the heavily armed opponent chase them until he was worn out. At that point the *Retiarius* would cast his net, and kill his opponent with

⁹³ J. F. Drinkwater, and Andrew Drummond, *The World of the Romans*, p. 89.

⁹⁴ Peter Connolly, *Colosseum: Rome's Arena of Death*, London: BBC Worldwide Ltd., 2003.

either trident or dagger.⁹⁵

Research

My research had limited results as there was no reference to be found on how to stage a trident/net fight in any of the materials. In my search, I could find nowhere, prior to this thesis, a process written down or recorded on video as to how to stage a trident/net fight, or how a trident and a net were to be used in real or staged combat. The only information found on such practices was mostly hypothetical, supported by mosaic images from Roman ruins and some written accounts surviving from that time. The way to use a trident and a net in combat for a staged fight needed to be learned from the beginning through trial and error.

Problems encountered

A number of problems had to be resolved before the trident/net fight could be performed.

[To view the fight in its entirety, See DVD, Chapter One, Section 5: fight.]

The net

Due to the fact that Stafford did not have a net in his arsenal, the practice was initially done with a postal bag. This turned out to be a hindrance rather than a help.

⁹⁵James Grout, 'Retiarius', in *Encyclopaedia Romana: Rome the Home of Empire and of All Perfection* http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/gladiators/retiarius.html 25Oct. 2006.

[For film footage of work with postal bag, see DVD, Chapter One, Section 6: problems.]

Two weeks prior to the actual performance, the director of the New Globe Exhibition Centre managed to borrow a net from Mark Griffin, a memorabilia collector who happened to have a net and a loincloth from the making of the movie, 'Gladiator'. Once we got the actual net that was used in the fight, other problems started.

[These issues are addressed on DVD, Chapter One, Section 6: problems.]

Handling the net was resolved through an elimination process of trial and error.

[The handling of the net is described on DVD, Chapter One, Section 7: solution.]

Trident

Learning to fight with the trident became a challenge in itself. Stafford made the trident, but he had to make several modifications which I discovered, after working with it, needed to be made. Before Stafford ventured out to make a trident, I used one of his quarterstaves to practice and rehearse. The trident was put together out of a metal pipe with a removable trident head. The pipe was hollow and therefore fairly light. However the trident head was rather heavy and needed to be shaved down three times in order to get to a weight that was manageable. A weight was added to the back end of the pipe in order to balance the trident and to make it easier to handle.

Gladius

The *gladius* was a sword used during Roman times in a trident/net fight. Typically, the opponent of the *Retiarius* would have been equipped with it. Stafford had two *gladii* in his arsenal of swords. However, when using the net in rehearsals, the net was repeatedly caught on the *gladius*. The problem was that the *gladii* that Stafford made for his collection of different swords to use in workshops, rehearsals and performances, had a cross guard on which the net got caught. When looking at *gladii*⁹⁶ used in Roman times, we discovered that the cross guard didn't come into use until the eleventh century. The cruciform shape the cross guard gave the sword symbolized the honour, valour, courage and strength of the knight who served his God and his king. Stafford took one of his *gladii* and filed down the crossguard so that the net wouldn't get caught on it.



Picture of a gladius: note the missing cross guard⁹⁷

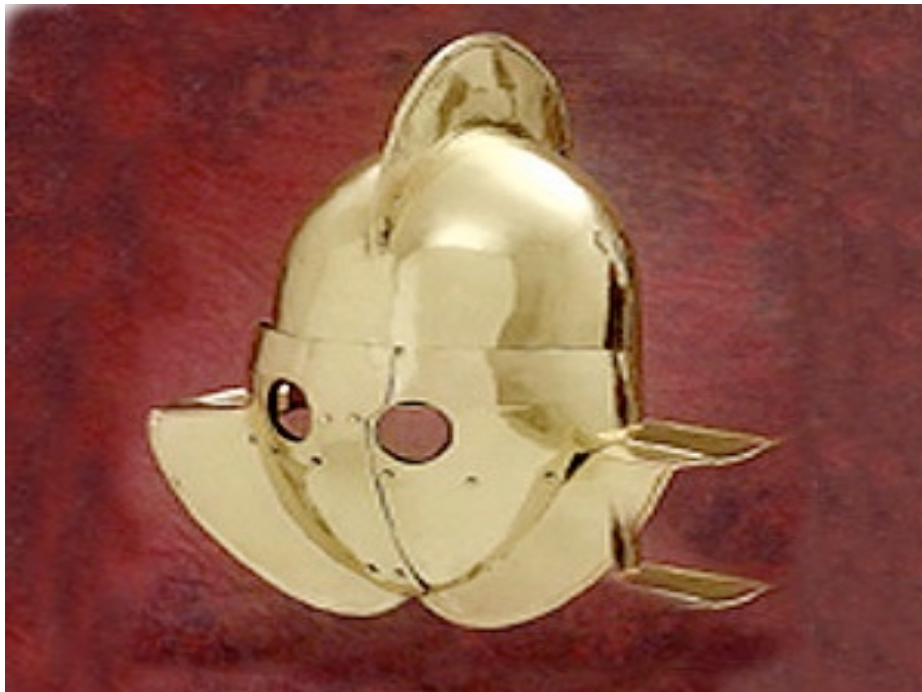
⁹⁶ Paula Regan, (senior ed.), *Weapon: a Visual History of Arms and Armor*, p. 47.

⁹⁷ Image obtained from the internet on September 30th, 2009 at:
<http://www.militarythroughtheages.com/Graphics/gladius.jpg>

Helmet

The *Murmillio* was also equipped with a rounded off helmet that didn't have any sharp edges so that the net couldn't get caught on it. The shape of the helmet resembles that of a goldfish.

James Thompson, my partner in the fight, was presented with such a helmet, and when looking at the footage of the fight on the DVD it can be clearly seen on *Murmillio's* head. However, the difficulty with the helmet was that Thompson lost his peripheral vision and depth perception. This was a built-in disadvantage for the heavily armed and armoured *Murmillio* when fighting against the scarcely clad *Retiarius*. In terms of the actual stage fight, this meant that Thompson (*Murmillio*) was heavily dependent on the guidance of my (*Retiarius's*) movement for orientation and for the action. A strong level of trust needed to exist in order to work together under such conditions.



Murmillio's or *Secutor's* helmet:⁹⁸ Note that the vision is greatly impaired.

⁹⁸ Image obtained from the internet on September 30th, 2009 at:
<http://www.imperiumancientarmory.com/6209.jpg>

The stage

The stage used for the performance was a freestanding platform stage, which was raised approximately three feet off the floor in the New Globe Exhibition Centre. This was not the main New Globe stage, but like the main stage it faced similar challenges. Similarity is found in that the action took place on a platform surrounded by the audience (360 degrees). The differences were: there were no pillars on the stage; the stage was smaller, and the stage was situated indoors. In one sense this strengthens the argument that the training exercises examined are befitting for other open stages, not just the New Globe stage itself. The problem found with the stage was that its colour blended in with the carpet on which it was erected. This was problematic for me and even more for my opponent, Thompson, who was performing without the use of his peripheral vision, because it was difficult to determine where the edge of the stage ended and the carpet began. We resolved the problem by using white tape around the edges, thus separating the stage from the carpet, and delineating for us the space within which we had to work.

Critical analysis

To what extent did the physical aspects of performing on a much smaller stage (not the stage of the New Globe) meet the six performance abilities of actors on an open stage?

- Physical and vocal expression
- Ensemble development, audience interaction and confidence
- Endurance
- Spontaneity and improvisation
- Focus and concentration
- Spatial awareness

Whilst vocal expression has not been discussed per se in this project, it was given some attention in stage combat lessons, whether it was vocalizing supposed pain, a scream released during an attack/defense, or acting out a dialogue in which stage combat had been interwoven. All of these are considered forms of communication: As Colleen Kelly says, communication can be expressed through different language forms:

Not only did Shakespeare possess a vocabulary of over twenty-five thousand words, through which communication is established and maintained with the audience. There is body language, sound language, rhythm language, color language, and costume language.⁹⁹

In order to pass a stage combat exam, the students need to learn to integrate text into a fight. They have to vary their fights as well as their vocal pitch and patterns. Students are judged both by their fighting skills and their acting skills in fight exams. Girard says:

The dramatic story is told through vocal intensities and patterns as well as with physical postures, placement and movement. Smaller and faster patterns of movement communicate different meanings to an audience just as various vocal patterns do.¹⁰⁰

Consider the Hamlet and Laertes fight as an example. I chose this fight for my advanced exam with the British Academy of Dramatic Combat (BADC). The original text was edited. Jon Edgley Bond and I were the only two performing. Here is what the edited text with inserted descriptions of the fight from Act V, scene two¹⁰¹ looked like:

[Hamlet (Zizek) steps up and speaks to Laertes (Bond).]

Hamlet: (to Laertes) Give me your pardon, sir.

⁹⁹ Colleen Kelly, 'Figuring the Fight: Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Swordplay,' as found in John W. Frick (ed.), *Theatre and Violence (Theatre Symposium Series)*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁰ Dale Anthony, Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p 223.

¹⁰¹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, pp. 686 and 687.

*I've done you wrong but pardon't as you are
a gentleman. This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punished
With sore distraction. What I have done
That might your nature, honour, and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Wasn't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged.
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in the audience
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother*

*Laertes: I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilment
Till by some elder master of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungor'd; but till that time
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it.*

*Hamlet: I do embrace it freely,
And will this brothers' wager frankly play.-
Give us the foils*

[Both actors now go to the rapiers and daggers that are on the floor and take their weapons.]

Come on, sir.

Laertes: Come, my lord.

[The actors move in a circular motion. In our choreography we now added some jabs to give the audience the idea of trying to intimidate one another. Finally Hamlet (Zizek) makes contact with Laertes (Bond).]

Hamlet: One.

Laertes: No.

Hamlet: (to Osric [Stafford]) Judgement.

Osric: A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laertes: Well, again.

Hamlet: Come.

[The actors move in a circle again, and again some jabs, and again Hamlet scores a point.]

Another hit, what say you?

Laertes: A touch, a touch, I do confess.

[Hamlet now confidently walks away from Laertes (with his back to him) after a safe distance turns around so that both actors are face to face with about eight feet of distance between them.]

Hamlet: Come for the third, Laertes, you but dally.

[The actors move in a circle again, this time Laertes is far more aggressive with his jabs which speeds up the action considerably. Hamlet manages to avoid the attacks with ease and speaks to Laertes in a mocking tone.]

*I pray you pass with your best violence.
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.*

Laertes: Say you so? Come on.

[Now Laertes makes an aggressive straight line toward Hamlet, he narrowly escapes!]

Osric: Nothing neither way.

Laertes: (to Hamlet) Have at you now.

[Here is the longest section of the fight. In actuality we had about three phases in here that were rather long and complicated. We used movements such as the *punto reverso* and others, which we knew the examiner would recognize. In this section the fight tempo also started to increase and came to a crescendo when Laertes finally slashes Hamlet. At which point Hamlet immediately retaliates (after he notices that Laertes' blade is sharp he wants it for himself) and

disarms Laertes and takes his rapier from him. Now Hamlet masks an act of retaliation as sportsmanship when he offers his own blade to Laertes.]

Hamlet: Nay, come again.

[Hamlet is now visibly affected by the poison (from the poisoned blade), again we combined about three phases, with each of which Hamlet gets weaker and weaker. Hamlet finally manages to pierce Laertes in the lower abdomen with the poisoned tip. Both fall to the ground. Laertes is mortally wounded and utters with great difficulty.]

*Laertes: It is here, Hamlet, thou art slain.
No med'cine in the world can do the good.
In thee there is not half an hour of life.
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice
Hath turned itself on me. I am justly killed with mine
Own treachery.*

[Laertes dies, and then Hamlet succumbs to his wounds.]

The greatest difficulty with this exercise was to maintain the timing. This meant that my partner, Bond, and I had to communicate non-verbally as well as verbally (the text) throughout the performance, without forgetting the text, without falling off the stage, or accidentally hurting one another or an audience member. The physicality of the fight really helped with the intentions of the lines. When I was supposed to mock Bond I did, and it came naturally since it derived from a physical action.

One of the side effects of stage combat training is that it requires skills relevant to ensemble development. Although the fight was created for only two performers (We also had Stafford incorporated with a line or two.), it helped with ensemble development in the sense that we had to learn to trust one another. We had to create a language of non-verbal communication between each other in order to be able to read one another in case of problems, such as forgetting the text or the choreography. We had to learn to work together, which also helped in developing confidence. All the same principle skills are

needed when working with a larger group. As stated in the Introduction, theatre is a collaborative art. The group has to tell the story as a unit.

One of the important principles of this research has been to argue that stage combat is just as much a part of storytelling and communicating with the audience as are spoken lines. This is supported by Dale Anthony Girard in his statement:

The objective of the techniques you are learning is to communicate a story to an audience. A stage fight is not a monologue or showcase for a particular character, it is a physical dialogue specifically designed to further plot and character in a production. Remember “actions speak louder than words,” but only if the audience can perceive them.¹⁰²

In order to have a solid production, it was important to create a strong feeling of ensemble amongst the performers. This can be done with the help of stage combat. Girard goes on to say:

As you are now aware, stage combat is a delicate blend of technique, teamwork, trust and timing. A fight is not a series of moves where any Combatant “A” can be paired to Combatant “B”, even when both combatants know the choreography. Whether principal or understudy, it takes hours of practice to develop the partnering necessary for a fight to mature into a safe and effective part of the dramatic production.¹⁰³

The confidence necessary to deliver a great stage fight, or any performance, came from the open communication of the performers on the stage and the collective understanding of their purpose or objective. Dymphna Callery says:

Ideally preparatory training should be a process of self-discovery as well as an opportunity to master skills. For the individual, it is time dedicated to developing and exploring performance potential. For a company, training is time spent working to a common purpose, a way of enriching the ensemble and accessing a common physical vocabulary, a route towards collective creative energy. Physical training is

¹⁰² Dale Anthony, Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 457.

a process leading to creative freedom rather than a prescriptive set of techniques. Its purpose is to enable actors to become more transformable and more expressive.¹⁰⁴

Endurance, or perhaps in this case better called stamina, is a useful by-product from stage combat training. Learning to handle heavy weapons builds strength in muscles that aren't used in a normal daily routine. Practicing the choreography is mildly aerobic. It creates body heat and raises the heart-rate. By doing so, it helps to build endurance during performance. Richard Lane comments:

Improved coordination, strength, stamina and appearance. Athletes, runners, and body builders who have studied stage combat report that a typical session with a rapier or broadsword (preceded by proper stretches and warm-ups), delivers the same physical and aerobic benefits as a workout with light weights or other body-toning equipment. As you shed weight, firm up, and build endurance for marathon performances, you'll also develop quicker reflexes and the keen motor coordination associated with trained dancers and martial artists. And where there is good physical conditioning, physical injury usually stays away.¹⁰⁵

Spontaneity and improvisation were not required for the practice of stage combat. The practice of staging a fight, whether unarmed or armed, needed to be completely choreographed in order to ensure the safety of the performers as well as the audience. Therefore spontaneous improvisation was something to avoid during a fight performance. The potential danger of an unprepared moment is described by Girard:

The mental blocks you may encounter in fight-call may also surface in performance. Your partner's eyes tell you immediately if they are lost or uncertain as to the next action in the choreography. That look of confused panic is unmistakable. If you are lost or your partner is giving you "the stare," do not improvise in order to get back on track.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step-by-Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 461.

Focus and concentration were an important part of learning stage combat. Whether performing in an unarmed or armed fight, learning to remember and execute sequences and targets required complete focus and concentration. Girard goes on to say:

Eye contact should be a natural part of your control point, it only needs to last a moment; then you should return your concentration to what you are doing. The attacker must focus on their target in order to be accurate, and the victim must focus on the movement of the blades to correctly time the prescribed reaction. Dramatically your point of focus also helps tell the audience what is important to the character.¹⁰⁷

Focus and concentration were needed to perform the tasks at hand. Verbal, as well as non-verbal communication with the other performers made for a stronger and more effortlessly flowing collaborative performance.

Since the stage used for the performance was a freestanding platform stage which was raised approximately three feet off the floor in the New Globe Exhibition Centre., spatial awareness was very important. In stage combat training, spatial awareness was a natural side effect stemming from the practice of having to work closely together whilst keeping a safe distance. This was supported by Keith Ducklin and John Waller:

For stage combat purposes, developing an instinctive awareness of movement allows combatants to work together with confidence, monitoring not just each others' movements, but also whatever else is happening around them.¹⁰⁸

This spatial awareness was an essential safety tool to protect the audience as well as the performers from possible injury.

A fight itself is a microcosm within a macrocosm: a play within a play. This fight (trident/net) for instance can mirror the interactions of characters from a play in the few

¹⁰⁷ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸ Keith Ducklin and John Waller, *Sword Fighting: A Manual for Actors and Directors*, pp 20 and 21.

minutes in which it is performed and bring the entire play to its climax, as in *King Lear*, for example, with the fight between Edgar and Edmund. If Edgar were to be *Retiarius* and Edmund was *Murmillo*, it is feasible to see in the first few phases how *Murmillo* (Edmund) dominates the fight especially since he is the one instigating the attacks. Within the fight performance *Retiarius* (Edgar) loses almost everything, i.e. the trident and the net. At the very end, he is disarmed down to his dagger, which makes him seem almost naked, particularly in comparison to *Murmillo* (Edmund). He does not seem to have a chance to win this fight. Here is an example of how it might work with *The Tragedy of King Lear*, Act V, scene three.¹⁰⁹ The possibilities are infinite since the fight as well as the text can be edited as needed:

*Herald: (reads) If any man of quality or degree within
The lists of the army will maintain upon Edmond,
Supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold
Traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet.
He is bold in his defence.*

(first trumpet)

Again

(second trumpet)

Again

(third trumpet)

(trumpet answers within. Enter Edgar, armed)

*Albany: (to the Herald) Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o'th trumpet.*

*Herald: (to Edgar[Retiarius]) Your name, your quality, and why you answer This
present summons?*

*Edgar(Retiarius): Know my name is lost, by treason's tooth bare-gnawn and
canker-bit.*

Yet I am noble as the adversary

I come to cope.

¹⁰⁹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 972.

Albany: Which is that adversary?

Edgar (Retiarius): What's he that speaks for Edmond (Murmillo), Earl of Gloucester?

Edmond (Murmillo): Himself. What says thou to him?

*Edgar (Retiarius) Draw thy sword,
That if my speech offend a noble heart
Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.*

[He swings his net and whips the floor in front of Edmond (Murmillo). They start moving in a circular motion as can be seen in phase one of the fight.]

*Behold is the privilege of mine honour,
My oath, and my profession. I protest,
Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,
Despite thy victor-sword and fire new fortune*

[Edgar (Retiarius) is swinging the net threateningly and they still circle.]

*Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,*

[Engage in Phase One.]

*And from the 'extremest upward of they head
To the descent and dust below thy foot
A most toad-spotted traitor.*

[Engage in Phase Two.]

*Say thou no,
This sword (trident), this arm, and my best spirits are bent
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
Thou liest.*

[Engage in Phase Three.]

*Edmond (Mermillo): In wisdom I should ask thy name,
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well demand
By rule of knighthood I disdain and spurn*

[Engage in Phase Four.]

*Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart*

[Engage in Phases Five and six.]

*Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,
This sword of mine shall give them instant way
Where they shall rest for ever.*

[Engage in Phases seven, eight and nine.]

Alarums, they fight. Edmond (Murmillo) is vanquished.

This is only one example of how the fight might be applied to the text, and the text interwoven into the fight. As stated before Edgar loses his clothes, his name, his father and everything he has ever had. At the end of the play, he is opposing his brother Edmund, who has gained status and support from Lear's eldest daughters and seems unconquerable. It's metaphorically speaking like the ant opposing the elephant. Yet, like *Retiarius*, Edgar wins.

Since a fight can be structured like many plays in that they can be comprised of exposition, conflict, climax and resolution, they are capable of standing on their own as a performance. If executed well, it can be a great, crowd-pleasing addition to any play. Creating a fight should be considered a very valuable tool for any actor-student, especially for the open stage. Stage combat is physically expressive and teaches the performers a lot about the space they occupy. Richard Lane makes this claim:

Most importantly, all actor-combatants become more knowledgeable about, and accepting of, themselves, their bodies, and the world around them.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Richard Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step-by-Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 268.

To encourage actor-students to create their own fights (once they have passed their basic exams in stage-combat) was potentially a positive creative training tool, which could teach actor students the importance of crowd-pleasing spectacle and objective in performance. This approach (stage combat) was not perfect and left some research questions unanswered; yet, in my opinion, it ought to be taken more seriously as a performer-training tool by established actor training institutions. Because of the important performance insights the actor-students can derive from fighting physically as in martial arts or with a trident/net as described in this chapter, stage combat training combined with other actor training methodologies is highly recommended for all performance training. Richard Nichols speaks to the value of this training in a book edited by Phillip Zarrilli:

The previous material focuses on the acting-specific concerns and problems that martial arts study may address...At least two life-directing aspects of the martial arts can influence, however indirectly, the life and craft of the actor: the relinquishment of personal ego to the art form and the inculcation of a firm, uncompromising commitment to excellence.¹¹¹

Unfortunately within the strength of this excellent combat training programme, there lies an unmistakable weakness. The skills of combat training as taught by Stafford have been forged through many years of pragmatic experience. Stafford, throughout his career as a Master of Combat at the New Globe, has defined what works for that stage and he uniquely owns the skills required to perform there.

So the questions need to be asked: To what extent can these skills be taught by other stage combat trainers? How many would be willing to accept Stafford's position on live blades, sight lines and verisimilitude? Does the need for this type of intensive training

¹¹¹ Richard Nichols, 'Asian Martial Arts as a "Way" for Actors,' as found in Phillip B. Zarrilli, (ed.), *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training*, p. 29.

warrant a place in the curricula of actor training? Will the enhanced utilization of special effects diminish the necessity of this type of special skill training?”

These questions do not require closure, but are worthy of ongoing investigation as others research the necessity and benefits for combat training as part of an actor-training programme. I would suggest that it does deserve a place for those who wish to specialize in their stage performances or for those who wish to develop a more comprehensive awareness of the complete repertoire of the trained actor. There has been a long history of the use of fencing in training actors in the West, according to Pavel Rummyantsev:

But the main point about fencing was, for Stanislavski, the fact that each duel was the best possible training for concentration of willpower and attention, for the development of an inner interrelationship with a partner, for the always necessary study of one's opponent.¹¹²

In many ways the experience with Stafford was a special opportunity that had individual benefits which cannot be replicated. In that sense it becomes more of a testimonial of what can be achieved when motivation and circumstances coincide. It is likely that some doubt will be raised as to whether this type of experience can be generalized.

Whilst this criticism is essential in consideration of the experience, it must also be noted that a number of the questions asked in the Introduction are answered and embraced in the stage combat training as taught by Stafford. These are specifically addressed in the Conclusion along with identified gaps and limitations. The other forms discussed in subsequent chapters will be considered in an attempt to construct a well-rounded training model for actor-students on open stages.

¹¹² C., Stanislavski and P., Rummyantsev, (trans. & ed.), *Stanislavski on Opera*, p.7.

Chapter Two

Master of Movement: Glynn MacDonald

Glynn MacDonald is the Master of Movement at the New Globe. She began her work at the New Globe before its first season in 1997. Her methodology is based on the Alexander Technique. She has been training actors in actor movement¹¹³ for more than thirty-five years. MacDonald has taught at LAMDA and other notable institutions. In addition to her work with actors and actor-students at the New Globe, MacDonald has a private practice where she helps other professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) to overcome bad movement habits.

I first met MacDonald in March of 2005 whilst attending a two-week series of workshops at the New Globe. This was during my first year of MFA studies in Staging Shakespeare at Exeter University. MacDonald's unique performer training approach intrigued me. I contacted her after the workshop to ask if she would allow me to research and document her methodology. This was done for three reasons:

1. to research, document and preserve a written as well as a filmed account of MacDonald's performer training methodology, which was created and is used by MacDonald at Shakespeare's New Globe, and
2. to observe, practice, teach and research MacDonald's methodology and document the findings, in order to utilize them for the creation of a performer training methodology for open stages such as the New Globe, which could be easily infused into contemporary actor training programmes.

¹¹³ Actor movement is designed for the actor specifically. It is constructed to give actors what they need from movement, as well as the inspiration that movement provides.

3. To analyze MacDonald's work in order to assess the suitability of her exercises for the purpose of training actors on an open stage and to ascertain what the weaknesses and limitations of her system might be.

My research with MacDonald began in October of 2005 and continued for two years. Permission was given to observe her methodology whilst she was teaching the students from Rutgers University, who are in residence at the New Globe from September to April every year. Further permission was granted to film her work and practice the lessons learned and to develop new experimental lessons with the Rutgers students. Therefore, as with the first practical project, I took on the role of participant-observer. This is the first time her methodology is presented in print in conjunction with actual video footage of her actor movement training practice and so, as with Stafford's work, is an original contribution to the field.

I was introduced to drama students in their junior year from Rutgers University as her assistant. From the start until the end of their two-semester programme, the students from Rutgers were told that I was working on a research project and that I would be in the classroom observing and later filming some of their work. At the beginning I practiced MacDonald's methodology along with the students. Later, during the programme, I was asked to teach some of the classes and to develop some of my own teaching material. Before bringing a video camera to film the lessons, I obtained permission from each of the students. At any time throughout the duration of the programme, the students could choose the option to be left out of the film footage. However, that option was not requested by any student a single time during the entirety of the research.

MacDonald's teaching practice at the New Globe is concerned with the actor's development of the kinesthetic sense, the awareness and interaction with himself/herself, the given space, with the ensemble and the audience. Another focal point in her work is to help the performers overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex which will be explained shortly.

Background:

The Alexander Technique takes its name from F. Matthias Alexander, who between 1890 and 1900 formulated its principles. It is an educational discipline closely tied to the field of alternative medicine. Its focus is on bodily coordination, including psychological principles of awareness, especially in the field of the performing arts. However, it is also applied for general self-improvement, affecting attention, poise and impulse control. Alexander developed the technique when breathing problems prevented him from pursuing a career as a Shakespearean actor. Alexander himself taught his technique for thirty years before creating a school to train other teachers to carry on his work. The Alexander Technique is presently used in several notable drama schools for example, RADA.¹¹⁴

It is my opinion that habitual use of improper reflex mechanism in sitting, standing, and walking introduces conflict in the nervous system, and that this conflict is the cause of fatigue and nervous strain, which bring many ills in their train. Mr. Alexander, by relieving this conflict between the total pattern, which is hereditary and innate, and the reflex mechanisms, which are individually cultivated, conserves the energies of the nervous system, and by so doing corrects

¹¹⁴ For further information: John Gray Ph.D., *The Alexander Technique: A complete Course in How to Hold and Use Your Body for Maximum Energy*, Glynn MacDonald, *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Alexander Technique: a Practical Approach to Health, Poise, and Fitness*, F. Matthias Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, F. Matthias Alexander, *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*, F. Matthias Alexander, *Articles and Lectures*, and F. Matthias Alexander, *The Universal Constant Living*.

not only postural difficulties but also many other pathological conditions that are not ordinarily recognized as postural. This is a corrective principle that the individual learns for himself and is the work of the self as a whole. It is not a system of physical culture, which involves only one system of organs for better or for worse of the economy of the whole organism. Mr. Alexander's method lays hold of the individual as a whole, as a self-vitalizing agent. He re-conditions and re-educates the reflex mechanisms, and brings their habits into normal relation with the functions of organisms as a whole.¹¹⁵

MacDonald's work is not blatantly apparent in main-stage productions. As the Master of Movement, she was not concerned with choreographed directed movement sequences. Her teaching was more directed to the physical reactions of the actor-students that determine the body's readiness and freedom to play and to express while telling the story. Therefore her methodology is mainly a training or rehearsal tool rather than something that is directly applied within the performances.

MacDonald starts her work by giving the actor-students an individual Alexander lesson in her Park Street office. In the private lesson the student would spend some time lying on his/her back on a table learning to be still. MacDonald then manipulates the student's body and encourages the spine to lengthen and the back to widen. During this lesson the student also learns to let the neck be free in order for the head to be able to move forwards and upwards. This was used for everyday activities such as lying down and getting up, sitting and standing, as well as walking.

In these individual lessons as well as in the group exercises MacDonald worked towards enhancing the awareness of the actor. According to MacDonald, the desire to move had to be present. According to Sherrington, a coordinated body movement entailed cooperation between conscious will and unconscious reflex:

¹¹⁵F. Matthias Alexander, *The Universal Constant in Living*, pp. xxv and xxvi.

This reflex factor is as important for the right performance of the movement and posture as is the tuning of a string for the harmonious use of it in music. This tuning is just part of the reflex robot operation of the body. We are not conscious of these reflex maintained and adjusted muscular lengths and tensions as such. They self-regulate themselves unconsciously. All we are aware of is their outcome in our act. With each movement of head or neck or limb, whether passive or active, the pattern of the unconscious proprioceptive reflex changes. We are aware only of the movement or posture, which is its accompaniment. Often even this latter is not within the field of our direct attention. Our attention is directed to the 'aim' of the act, not the 'how' of it; the 'how' often enough takes care of itself. Conscious effort would seem unable to put us in touch actually with the proprioceptive reflex itself. So elusive is this last, that for long our muscles were unrecognized as affording any sensual basis of our motor acts. When we bend a finger we can, without looking at the finger and without the finger touching anything, tell within a little how much or how little we bend it; no hint, however, is vouchsafed to us that muscles doing the act lie up the forearm, or of the tensions or lengths they assume in doing it.¹¹⁶

The 'startle pattern' reflex also plays an important part in all of MacDonald's movement work. This reflex exists to allow the human body to quickly summon resources when faced with immediate danger. It is followed by a fight or flight response: either to attack or to run away:

The 'startle pattern', the reflex-like response to sudden intense stimuli such as a pistol shot, provides an example. In this response, the eyes are forcefully closed, the eyebrows drawn together producing a frown, and the lips are compressed; in addition, the head bends forward, shoulders are hunched, and the knees are drawn up.¹¹⁷

The body may continue to maintain this reflex after the initial stimulus has stopped. This reflex affects how the person proceeds with any movement. If he/she begins being too tense, then the individual gives off signals that he/she neither wants to, intends to, nor needs to move. 'Startle pattern' reflex may be a term unfamiliar to many.

¹¹⁶ Charles S. Sherrington, *The Endeavour of Jean Fernel*, p. 87. (Sherrington was a French physiologist and pathologist, considered to be the most notable physician/philosopher of the early 16th Century in Paris.)

¹¹⁷ Frijda H. Nico, *The Emotions: Studies in emotion and social interaction*, p. 11.

However, it is a common experience. It is more frequently recognized as a form of stress known as stage fright:

Psychological symptoms include feelings of confusion, disorientation, powerlessness, and loneliness. A few performers report going briefly deaf or blind. Additional psychological symptoms include the desire to escape or hide feelings of impending doom or death, or feeling of unreality.¹¹⁸

Addressing stage fright was of particular importance on the New Globe stage. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is a daunting task for any actor to perform on a proscenium stage in front of a darkened auditorium. It has the potential to be even more frightening on the New Globe stage. The audience is positioned all around the stage and the audience is in clear view of the performers:

The terror of having to put oneself on the line and face rejection can cause mental distress varying from mild stage fright to total emotional and physical collapse.¹¹⁹

MacDonald made every effort to ensure that the performer's body was completely aligned and as a result most efficient when carrying out physical activities. She referred to herself as the tuner who attended to the instrument of the body: 'If they have too much tension in the body, they'll be sharp and if they're too floppy, they'll be flat'.¹²⁰

During their two semesters at the New Globe, the Rutgers students were given two more individual sessions with MacDonald as the lessons progressed.

MacDonald used a number of group exercises when teaching the students. I observed and filmed her teaching over a two year span. The particular exercises are

¹¹⁸ Dr. Eric Maisel Ph.D., *Performance Anxiety*, p. 47.

¹¹⁹ Fred Silver, *Auditioning for the Musical Theatre*, p 13.

¹²⁰ Two interviews have been recorded with Glynn MacDonald at River Court Place in 2005 and 2006. MacDonald was given a copy of the transcript and edited comments to clarify statements. This comment came from the interview in 2006.

discussed and pictured in Appendix B. There is also a DVD provided that shows the students performing the following exercises:

- The *elements*
- The *archetypes*
- The *eagle*
- The *arrow*
- *Gallop*

Methodology

The methodology had three dimensions: observation, practice and extension.

The observation part of the research describes the exercises as taught by MacDonald. This is supported with written description, pictures and video footage of the exercises taken over the course of time spent with MacDonald. It includes students from both Rutgers and Exeter University.

In the practice I examined the affect/effects these exercises had on the individual performer as well as the ensemble as a whole. Support for the use of these exercises was sought from material furnished by notable practitioners such as Constantin Stanislavsky, Jacques Lecoq, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski and Michael Chekhov.

The extension part of the research was found in two programmes that I developed: *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira*. These programmes were built on the foundation of Stafford and MacDonald's work and are discussed in the next chapter.

The *elements*

MacDonald's work with the *elements* seemed relevant because it worked on a sensory basis and was in her opinion attuned to the Elizabethan priorities. MacDonald uses the notions of the *elements* in a rather vague, universal sense. In MacDonald's work

there isn't a direct relationship as to how the whole system of cosmos, world and body in relation to humours and *elements* were used and understood in Elizabethan times. This is an instance where MacDonald uses language in a certain way that is not completely accurate.¹²¹ The Elizabethan priorities contained the *elements: earth, water, fire and air*. The primary *elements*, as they are also called, were associated with the four humours: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic.

It was thought that these humours gave off vapors to the brain and affected a person's temperament. The Elizabethans connected the physical health and balance to psychological health and balance. The perfect temperament resulted when no one of these humours/elements dominated. The Elizabethans were striving for the perfect balance of the four:

Now...in the same way that the Elements comprise the world, so too are they the fabric of the human body. And they are diffused and active throughout the body so that the body is held together, and at the same time they are spread throughout the world and work upon it. For fire, air, water and earth are in human beings, and human beings are made from them...When the elements are properly at work in the body, they preserve it and confer health; but when they are at odds in it they weaken and kill it.¹²²

In MacDonald's exercise of the *elements*, the practitioners moved from one posture to the next. She would call these out by name, i.e. *fire, air*, etc. without connecting them or explaining them as part of the Elizabethan humours. The physical process of doing the postures was somewhat similar to what can be experienced in a yoga class.

¹²¹ Other theatre practitioners have also used the four elements in their training programme, for example Michael Chekhov, though he drew these from his interest in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy.

¹²² Randy Rolfe, *The Four Temperaments: A Rediscovery of the Ancient Way of Understanding Health and Character*, p. 1.

In MacDonald's exercise of the *elements*, the practitioners moved from one posture to the next.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1: *elements*.]

Each *element* is represented by a physical posture. Again, the use of the *elements* is to be taken in a more universal sense.

When starting to do the exercise of the *elements*, the nervous system reacts and muscles begin to shake because the *elements* are postures not practiced in everyday life. Therefore the muscles were not trained to sustain them

The objective behind the exercise of exploring the *elements* is to invoke an awareness and connection within, as well as outside, the physical body. This was done by fine tuning the proprioceptors and the kinesthetic sense.

The proprioceptors send signals to the brain informing us of what the different body parts such as the arms, the fingers, the legs are doing. The actor-students were made conscious of how heavy their arms were and of how much of the space was taken up by the body:

Exploring the potential physical life associated with images related to earth elements is one way to expand your imagination. Through becoming the different elements, you learn to transform from one physical state to another.¹²³

When students were in the *earth* posture, they were to connect with and be aware of their skeletal structure (bones), their muscles and flesh and the weight of those body parts. These tangible parts of the body were representatives of the earth.

¹²³ Barbara Sellers-Young, *Breathing, Movement, Exploration*, p. 178.

When in *water*, the students were to connect with the bodily fluids such as the blood, saliva, phlegm, and tears.

In *fire* a connection was sought with the central nervous system: the nerve endings that inform us of internal as well as external physical changes, such as temperature, tension and touch.

In *air* the student was to connect with the breath and the consciousness of how breath moves the body; for example, the expansion and contraction of the rib cage or the lower abdomen:

It is surprising how much information the body is ready to share with us if we are willing to listen. And listen we must if we are to have any hope of appreciating subtle elements of expression such as Flow Effort. But a lifetime of neglect can leave us quite insensitive to kinesthetic feedback. As a result, Barba and other directors spend a great deal of time teaching performers how to cultivate impulse.¹²⁴

Fine-tuning the kinesthetic sense was deemed to be important on the New Globe stage. It provided information not only as to what was happening within the body, but also what was happening outside of the body:

The kinaesthetic sense, or *body think* is the process by which we subconsciously direct and adjust the movements of our bodies in space, either in response to external stimuli, or to intentions arising in the mind. It is the process by which physical purposes are carried out effectively for the greater part of our lives; it is the process by which we practise habitual physical skills naturally and unself-consciously; it is the process by which we constantly take in information from the external environment and react to it without reflection, and by which we comprehend and respond to information being sent to the brain by our own bodies. It is the process by which, in all these areas, we are aware of what we are doing and what is happening to us.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ David Petersen, *The Well-Tempered Body; Expressive Movement for Actors, Improvisers, and Performance Artists*, p. 185.

¹²⁵ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 29.

MacDonald uses these four *elements* in her classes when teaching her movement methodology at the New Globe. Whether the students are professional actors, teachers, students or young children six years and older, New Globe practitioners or university drama students, they all have to work with the *elements* whilst working with MacDonald.

When the student actors were facing one another and going through the *elements*, they were to do each posture simultaneously:

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1.5: *elements* partnering.]

The practice of spatial awareness came into play when both practitioners were in the *water* element and not able to see one another. To fine-tune their sense of space, their kinesthetic sense, and to attune to the person opposite them, they were encouraged to practice to feel when the other person was ready to move to the *fire element*.

The *elements* were particularly well suited for the discovery of the physical self and one's surroundings through the sharpening of the kinesthetic sense. When moving from strenuous postures (*earth* and *fire*), to the release postures (*water* and *air*), the student actors were encouraged to be mindful of where they felt the tension and the release from the tension within their own bodies. This was intended to create focus, and a hyper-awareness of their bodies within the given space. As Nicole Potter, in her discussion of movement for actors, states:

Physical awareness – the brain's ability to go to a specific part of the body and feel it internally (proprioceptive awareness). This skill will help you discover your habits. (If you can't feel them, you can't change them.) It should help you feel parts of your body, so that your thoughts and impulses can travel to more places than simply your hands and your face (which most of us can feel more easily than, say, our back ribs). We often assume that we can change things if we "know" about them. Then why do we keep repeating the same bad physical habits?

Without the ability to feel the body, one cannot source emotional information from it. This takes practice in physical awareness.¹²⁶

In the practice with the partners, the actor-students were encouraged to be aware of the actions of their fellow performers in the space around them. This became vital when working as an ensemble on a presentational stage such as the New Globe. Since the size of the New Globe stage is large, the performers needed to be conscious of where they were on the stage in relation to their fellow performers as well as to the audience.

This awareness of the audience may not be as pressing when facing them straight on as one would be expected to do on a proscenium stage. On an open stage, the ability to sense the audience beside and/or behind the performers can be crucial. The same applies to the rest of the ensemble cast on the open stage. They need to be aware of where they are on the stage and to be conscious of any permanent fixtures on the stage such as the pillars.

The *archetypes*

In Glynn's more general understanding of the notion of the *archetype*, it is a prototype of a personality trait or behaviour upon which others are modeled. Ideally this *archetype* is universally recognized by all. The idea of *archetypes* has been used in other approaches to actor training, such as by Clive Barker, Jerzy Grotowski and Michael Chekhov. Therefore this training exercise is not original.

When MacDonald has the actor-students walk as the *archetypes* through the room, or on the New Globe stage, she has them first focus on themselves and then extend

¹²⁶ Nicole Potter, *Movement for Actors*, p. 230.

the focus to what and who was around them. MacDonald used this exercise to work again on fine-tuning the kinesthetic sense.

As one of the first steps, MacDonald encouraged the actor-students to experience what it felt like to close off all external stimuli, to be indrawn and to experience the inner sensations of the *archetype* they embodied: the emotional and bodily sensations evoked by the physicality of the *archetype*.

MacDonald then directed the students to acknowledge the other students around them, which, while still being indrawn and conscious of their *archetypal* physical and emotional state, opened their consciousness to the other players and to obstacles in the space around them. This encouraged the students to employ their peripheral vision, which was used as a vehicle to open up the students' imaginations. As the actor-students were able to get this picture in their mind, they moved away from the more focused tunnel vision and expanded their view to see the world from a broader perspective. As Chris Johnstone explains:

If you focus on just one face in the audience, other faces lose their distinction. You can switch your gaze around but it remains very 'directed'. But if you use a soft focus and allow awareness of other faces on the edge to come into you, you're beginning to use your peripheral vision. Over-controlled, technical actors won't use this, because it means they might be surprised: acted *upon*. The use of peripheral vision is linked to vulnerability and feeling. Responding to signals from the edge is part of holistic awareness. In a way, peripheral vision is emblematic of awareness itself. It represents an ability to avoid narrow mindedness or a tunnel-vision view of life; instead it assists responsiveness and inner flexibility.¹²⁷

When performing on the New Globe stage, the students needed to have a conscious awareness of themselves, the space around them, the ensemble, and the audience.

¹²⁷ Chris Johnston, *House of Games*, p. 36.

One of the points MacDonald stressed was for the actor-students to notice the difference in the walk, in the way the body responds, in the feelings these postures evoke when changing from one *archetype* to the next. For Dymphna Callery:

Working on archetypes is an excellent way of extending the range of character acting: they generate the idea of character traits and personality types as physical and gestural. The distinction between archetypal and stereotypical behaviour also becomes apparent. And since archetypes so often project us into the world of myth, they are great catalysts of imaginative devised work.¹²⁸

MacDonald's work with the *archetypes* gains significance when it is tied to the necessary groundwork of characterization when playing Shakespeare. The *archetypes* can be seen as an important step towards characterization considering the use of *warriors*, *sovereigns*, *lovers* and *magicians/vices* in Shakespeare's texts.

An example text to use for the archetypes can be found in *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, in Act I, scene two, where Richard Gloucester woos Lady Anne.¹²⁹ Consider where the scene changes and Richard starts winning Lady Anne over. Throughout the scene the performer portraying Lady Anne would benefit from MacDonald's *sovereign*. If the essence of the *sovereign* blended with the portrayal of Lady Anne, it would help to clarify to the audience how significant an accomplishment it is for Richard to win her over. It would help the performer who plays Lady Anne to find qualities such as towering strength, distance, reserve, purpose, and dignity if the actor were to embody MacDonald's *sovereign*. Winning her over in her rage would seem impossible. Yet, that is exactly what the scene calls for from the very beginning. Richard's *archetype* is particularly strong in the following text:

Richard Gloucester: ...

¹²⁸Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 51.

¹²⁹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 183.

(He kneels and offers her his sword.)

*Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast
And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke
And humbly beg the death upon my knee.*

(He lay his breast open; she offers at it with his sword.)

*Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry;
But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.
Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabbed young
Edward;
But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on*

(She drops the sword.)

Take up the sword again or take up me.

Lady Anne: Arise dissembler.

(He rises.)

*Though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner.*

*Richard Gloucester:
Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.*

*Lady Anne:
I have already.*

*Richard Gloucester: That was in thy rage.
Speak it again, and even with the word
This hand – which for thy love did kill thy love –
Shall, for thy love, kill a far truer love.
To both their deaths shalt thou be accessory.*

Lady Anne: I wish I knew thy heart.

Richard Gloucester: 'Tis figured on my tongue.

Lady Anne: I fear me both are false.

Richard Gloucester: Then never man was true.

Lady Anne: Well, well put up your sword.

Richard Gloucester: Say then my peace is made.

Lady Anne: That shalt thou know hereafter.

Richard Gloucester: But shall I live in hope?

Lady Anne: All men, I hope, live so.

Richard Gloucester: Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

Lady Anne: To take is not to give.

Richard Gloucester: Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger;

Even so they breast encloseth my poor heart.

Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.

And if thy poor devoted servant may

But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,

Thou dost confirm his happiness forever.¹³⁰

The performer portraying Richard would greatly benefit from the *archetype* of the *magician*, especially in the above segment, where Richard could easily be portrayed as mesmerizing or enchanting/hypnotizing Lady Anne with his words, which ultimately leads him to win her over. Other benefits can also be derived from this exercise; the demeanor of the students changed according to the *archetype* they were embodying. The *sovereign*, for instance, affected the students' facial expressions. They became colder, more withdrawn. A more ethereal quality was inherent in their walk as they seemed to glide across the room. The air of authority coloured their demeanor due to the uprightness and lack of unnecessary frantic movement. This was the complete opposite of what they could expect to experience in the *magician* for instance.

¹³⁰ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p.188.

In the *magician*, the students' movement became less controlled, more frantic. Their faces were far more expressive. Their bodies were bent forward; they were spinning around and the students tended to get more expressive vocally since the tendency was to laugh or to cry out whilst spinning and feeling a loss of control due to dizziness. Because they were bent over and their face was tilted, looking over the left shoulder, they exuded an air of scheming: of being pranksters:

The *vice* – a strange gallimaufry of types and roles – appealed to a divided authority in signification. Through the performative thrust of his own lop-sided inclination, this farcical agent pointedly upset symmetries in the allegorical order of things.¹³¹

The polar opposition of physical traits was excellent for any actor-student who needed to learn about creating characters. This physical polar opposition became necessary for performers who were to perform on an open stage. The demands of the open stage required them to be physically and vocally strong and more expressive in their demeanor:

The platform stage is an unfamiliar venue for the modern actor. With its many levels, its colossal pillars, its expansive width, its little depth, the 'wooden O' is an acting challenge. How is the staging different in this theatre? The directors and actors agree that the physical aspects of the Globe make it imperative to abandon proscenium style acting. Here the stage requires more distinctive, bigger though not exaggerated gestures, and here the voice must neither shout nor screech, but rather project with clarity and resonance. A thin voice has difficulty being heard here. So unfamiliar were the techniques that the actors had to exercise each performance day with their movement and voice coaches. Without these lessons, their bodies looked awkward, their voices shrill.¹³²

¹³¹ Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance: Stage and Page in Elizabethan Theatre*, p. 26.

¹³² Chrysanthy Maria Grieco, *Shakespeare In Performance and Production at the New Globe Theatre*, p. 660.

The ability to be physically and consciously aware of how one physical extreme compared to the next in performance empowered the performer to find the physicality necessary for the character he/she wanted to create or portray. As Potter states:

For the actor, archetypes can be powerful tools to inspire a character prototype and its inner life, because such archetypes will spontaneously awaken sensation in the body. These sensations are what the body remembers and can repeat – feelings are less reliable and harder to create.¹³³

Gradually, as the actor-students progressed in this practice, MacDonald had the students infuse Shakespeare's texts into the exercises. As stated in the Introduction, this wasn't vocal training per se. These students were given diction and voice classes by the Master of Voice, Stewart Pearce. The approach to Shakespeare's text is used to make new discoveries during physical training. This may help to speak Shakespeare's text in ways that learning techniques of vocal production may not. This training is used as a complementary adjunct to that which students receive in vocal diction classes however. It is acknowledged that the text cannot be ignored when training actor-students for performing Shakespeare.

The text used was never longer than a line and was used throughout all the *archetypes*. This was intended to make the actor-students aware of how much the text could change coming from one person, when using the text from one *archetype* to the next:

If the physical form is correct, the basis of the part, the speech intonations and the emotions will be as well, because they are determined by the position of the body.¹³⁴

¹³³ Nicole Potter, *Movement for Actors*, p. 136.

¹³⁴ Robert Leach, 'Meyerhold and Biomechanics,' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 40.

Another useful side effect these *archetypes* provided was what I suggested calling a *Super-Objective*:

This is the purpose or goal toward which your character is striving. Each character has both an *Objective* and a *Super-Objective*. An example of a *Super-Objective* might be “I want to serve humanity”. An example of the *Objective* might be “I want to keep peace among these particular people”.¹³⁵

When the actor-students were embodying the *warrior*, a sense of duty and determination exuded from them. Their stern gaze and controlled walk was intended to give the performers a sense of purpose.

The same was true for the *lovers*, although their gaze was of an entirely different nature. As the *lover*, the student was to focus his/her gaze on one object/person as a recipient of his/her affections. They were to walk toward that point of focus and open their hearts when they felt compelled to do so.

The *archetypes* worked on the performers on many different levels. They gave the performer a sense of purpose: of who they were; of different vocal qualities; of differing physically expressive qualities; of a sense of where they came from; of what they wanted, and why they were doing what they were doing, whilst bringing awareness to themselves, their fellow players, the performance space, and other obstacles/people around them. For Michael Chekhov, who also used *archetypes* with his actors:

Every movement you make on the stage, every word you speak, is the result of the right life of your imagination. If you speak lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination. That time whether it be short or long, will be unreal, and you will be nothing more than a wound-up machine, an automation.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, p. 77.

¹³⁶ Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, p. xliii.

The *eagle*

MacDonald employed an exercise called the *eagle* to work on the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, better known as stage fright. The exercise was designed to help actor-students to imagine their fears and to overcome them. A detailed description of the exercise can be found in Appendix B as well as on the accompanying DVD.

When the actors were crouched down pretending to be in the egg, the posture was similar to the fear crouch posture experienced when living through the ‘startle pattern’ reflex. In the *eagle* exercise MacDonald moved the students from the crouch or fear posture (the egg) to the extreme opposite: standing upright with the hands up in the air and therefore exposing the vulnerable lower abdomen exuding confidence. Going from one extreme to the next was a physical way of confronting the feeling of fear, especially since in the exercise the fear-crouching position was closely followed by the confident posture which Keith Johnstone calls the ‘cherub posture’:

The body has reflexes that protect it from attack. We have a ‘fear-crouch’ position in which the shoulders lift to protect the jugular and the body curls forward to protect the underbelly. It’s more effective against carnivores than against policemen jabbing at your kidneys, but it evolved a long time ago. The opposite to this fear crouch is the ‘cherub posture’, which opens all the planes of the body: the head turns and tilts to offer the neck, the shoulders turn the other way to expose the chest, the spine arches slightly backwards and twists so that the pelvis is in opposition to the shoulders exposing the underbelly – and so on. This is the position I usually see cherubs carved in, and the opening of the body planes is a sign of vulnerability and tenderness, and has a powerful effect on the onlooker.¹³⁷

The practice of moving from the crouching position to the confident position was practiced so when the performers were faced with the crouching position (‘startle pattern’ reflex or stage fright) on the stage, they could, through the trained muscle memory, bring themselves into an upright position to ease their minds and bodies. This gave them

¹³⁷ Keith Johnstone, *Impro*, p. 59.

greater freedom to focus on the task at hand. The upright position also allowed breath to move freely through the body, a necessity when projecting and performing on any stage.

Motor memory refers to recalling specific motor skills. Proper motor skills are required for the muscles, brain, skeleton, joints and nervous system to work together efficiently toward accomplishing a task. Muscle memory is properly defined as the body's collective ability to memorize and perform well rehearsed muscular contractions.¹³⁸

The *eagle* exercise worked on another level as well. It was very similar to Lecoq's 'effort rose':

[it] can go in many different directions: forwards, to one side or the other, backwards, diagonally, etc. I call this the *effort rose*.

It comprises a multi-directional space which can be adapted to all human movements, whether physical or psychological, whether a simple movement of the arm or an all-consuming passion, a movement of the head or a profound desire, ... Vertical movement situates man between heaven and earth, zenith and nadir, in a tragic event.¹³⁹

This exploration of space allowed the actor-students to fine-tune their spatial awareness and their kinesthetic sense. Meyerhold was an avid believer in this. He called it 'scenic movement':

Therefore, the actor's training was, for Meyerhold, devoted largely to an understanding of the body in space, or as he called it, 'scenic movement'.¹⁴⁰

In the *eagle* exercise different levels were introduced from standing as tall as possible to as small as the actor-students dare. This change of levels could also be used for characterization since it could be interpreted in terms of status. Crouched low to the floor allowed the actor-student to visualize the lowest possible status; whereas, standing

¹³⁸ 'Training Muscle Memory and Motor Skills,' Posted July 16, 2007.

<http://www.warriorfx.com/2007/07/training-muscle-memory-and-motor-skills/>

¹³⁹ Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, pp. 81 and 83.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Leach, 'Meyerhold and Biomechanics,' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 41.

straight up could be mentally pictured as the highest. This made for a wonderful physical range for the students to explore, especially since so much in drama seems to depend on the portrayal of status.

Going through these polar opposite level changes in one exercise required a sense of balance and strength from the students. The different levels required more of the actor-students than just balance. The students learned to deal with changes of equilibrium as the body moved from upright to where they bent forward to where they balanced on one leg as in flight. These postures required the actor-students to build strength in certain muscles and to focus.

Whilst observing and practicing exercises such as the *eagle*, which is followed by the *arrow* discussed shortly, it is impossible to ignore how similar these two exercises are to Meyerhold's études:

Études aimed to develop consciousness of the centre of balance, to enable the actor to adapt the same movement patterns to different spaces, to help him manage transitions from large to small movements, to enable him to 'freeze' in any position and to leap from stillness into intense action.¹⁴¹

Although MacDonald may claim her exercises are her own creation, it is clear that she was influenced by Meyerhold. The études of Meyerhold are perhaps better suited for the open stage than MacDonald's simplified versions. Meyerhold's biomechanics are therefore something I intend to pursue further in my career.

The actor in Meyerhold's troupe had to be physically fit, agile and flexible, just as the actors of *commedia dell'arte* were in a previous era.¹⁴²

MacDonald's exercises are designed so that anyone can do them. The age range of students she teaches goes from young children in kindergarten to retired pensioners.

¹⁴¹ Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 61.

¹⁴² Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 117.

The exercises MacDonald teaches are suitable for an introductory level in beginning movement classes and for commercial workshops that are sold to tourists at the New Globe. For actors who perform on the New Globe stage, it would be beneficial to challenge them with more strenuous exercises that are based on skill, and that take time to perfect. The idea of teaching something difficult such as physical acrobatic movements becomes requisite in order to prepare for difficult situations such as daylight performances on open stages. The New Globe stage is out in the open air. The audience surrounds the performers and plays take place in broad daylight with the audience in clear view.

The *arrow*

The *arrow* much like the previously discussed *eagle* undeniably bore some resemblance to Meyerhold's biomechanics: the *arrow* in particular since one of Meyerhold's études is called 'shooting the bow'. The core of MacDonald's exercise was to address some of the same basic skills Meyerhold was developing with his études:

The basic skills developed here are precision, balance, coordination, efficiency, rhythm, expressiveness, responsiveness, discipline and playfulness.¹⁴³

The actor-students were asked to perform precise, minute movements, such as the turning of the foot by a forty-five degree angle at the very beginning of this exercise, or changing the flat hand into a grip whilst placing the arrow. This exercise was practiced repetitively in order to gain accuracy and conscious awareness of the movement. This was required for the fine-tuning of the kinesthetic sense; since as these minute physical changes happened, the students became fully conscious of them. This sort of awareness and control of movement was what was desired for performance on the open stage. The

¹⁴³ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* p. 126.

conscious control of the body and its movements gave the performer confidence. Pitches states:

You will soon see as you practise these movements that keeping your feet parallel is unnatural and that you need to work harder physically to maintain your balance...your weight is constantly being shifted from left to right and this tests your ability to keep balanced.¹⁴⁴

When practicing the *arrow*, the legs might do one thing, whilst the arms did something completely opposite and in the opposite direction. This helped the actor-students to learn coordination. Any type of physicality, such as gymnastics, running, or participation in sporting events requires the practitioner to have some level of coordination. The same is true for the performer. Coordination becomes a necessity in order for the effortless flow of the action to occur:

Never waste energy on stage. It's tiring for you and it's uncomfortable for an audience. You need all your physical resources at your command when you are performing...needles gestures or over-elaborate actions simply use up those resources unnecessarily. A novice in middle- or long-distance running understands this immediately, but an untrained actor may spend many months exhausting himself before he realizes this fact.¹⁴⁵

The *arrow* was designed to stress all the major muscle groups in the body and to condition the body for taxing performances on a vast stage such as the New Globe.

Physical and vocal expression combined as the performer communicated with the audience. On an open stage such as the New Globe, where a percentile of the audience may view some of the performance from behind or from other odd angles, physical expression can become as important as vocal. The New Globe stage demanded for the performers to be physically more exaggerated and stylized. Since the *arrow* exercise was

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 114.

exaggerated and stylized in its execution, it became a viable tool for actor-students to use to develop a vocabulary of expressive movement:

As an actor you need to be permanently ‘switched on’, or responsive, to what is happening before you...all stage actors, by definition, must be able to respond to the unpredictabilities of the live event.¹⁴⁶

Practicing the *arrow* as a group exercise seemed to bring all the performers together as a unified ensemble. The rhythm of the exercise was familiar to all of the participants and every one of them knew what was expected of them. This empowered the performers to help one another should something go wrong. This ability to know where to step in and get back on track was also very ensemble building because it created a harmony comparable to what is experienced in music. If the rhythm of the piece gets interrupted it is necessary to find a way back to the communal beat. This ability to fine-tune a performance that has gotten out of sync will be of value for any live performance on any type of stage:

From a group perspective your individual movements need to operate in harmony with the rest of the ensemble – you need to coordinate your work with the movements and actions of the rest of the cast and with the demands of the particular space.¹⁴⁷

Galloping

The last exercise to be discussed is *galloping*.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 5: *galloping*.]

My first great Shakespeare teacher, Michael MacOwan, who was the principal of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art when I was a student there, used to hop up and down with excitement, rattling the loose change in his pocket, as he

¹⁴⁶ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 116.

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 114.

launched us on the jubilant waves of the iambic pentameter. What I remember him saying was, “It’s like riding a racehorse. Sit relaxed in the saddle, grip with your knees, feel the energy under your seat and hold the reins firmly or the horse will run away with you.”¹⁴⁸

MacDonald employed the *galloping* exercise to give the actor-students a clear physical and therefore inner experience of the iambic pentameter that is inherent in all of Shakespeare’s verse. According to Michael Chekhov:

The actor cannot comprehend composition and rhythm if they are not experienced and felt inwardly. The internal experience is beyond any verbal, intellectual explanation. An exercise properly done can tell the actor more than pages and pages in books on composition and rhythm.¹⁴⁹

The discipline necessary to keep the rhythm of short long, short long was physically demanding. Once the exercise had been established and all the students were able to perform it satisfactorily, MacDonald introduced Shakespeare’s text into the exercise. This physical exercise became beneficial to any performer who desired to perform Shakespeare. Understanding the rhythm was required to understand what Shakespeare was trying to convey. The rhythm directed the students as to which words needed to be stressed. In order to make Shakespeare clear to an audience, it was important that the performers captured the meaning of what was being said:

The addition of the text makes the whole experience very exciting. They will choose a short piece of text, maybe only one or two lines and gallop. In focus, steadying the movement, they will get more of an internal muscle memory and allow the lines to come out of it.¹⁵⁰

This exercise was also aerobic and that built stamina for performance on the New Globe stage:

¹⁴⁸ Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, p. 134.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Glynn MacDonald at River Court Place in 2005.

There is considerable mileage in the idea of energizing the body through strenuous exercise on the principle that expenditure = investment, i.e. that energy begets energy. A valuable by-product of such work in the long term is physical stamina.¹⁵¹

Part of what makes a person fit is not the fact that they look fit, but the time it takes for an in-shape person's heart rate to recover. The level of fitness will be directly proportional to the recovery rate. If the performer has to perform a stage-combat fight for instance, or perform a period dance, or some physical comedy, it becomes imperative for his/her heart rate to recover quickly from the strenuous physical task. This is necessary to support his/her breath and consequently the voice to speak his/her lines. This does not apply only to the open stage but to all stages:

The most obvious aim of this daily discipline is to maintain the actors' performance conditioning. The Odin actors continually exercise their bodies and voices in order to prepare their physical and vocal instruments for performance.¹⁵²

The actor-students could do this exercise on their own. It appeared that *galloping*, as a group exercise, was very ensemble building. All the actor students were *galloping* to the same drumbeat. MacDonald even had them galloping in a formation of pairs. This brought the whole ensemble together on the same rhythm. When the ensemble wasn't on the same rhythm whilst performing, the whole ensemble, the performance and the spectators suffered:

The notion of keeping something going as a group whilst varying the rhythm and the pace is integral to collaborative ensemble work.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 28.

¹⁵² Ian Watson, 'Training with Eugenio Barba: Acting Principles, the Pre-expressive and "Personal Temperature,"' as found in Allison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 219.

¹⁵³ Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 94.

A tight ensemble seemed to provide confidence to the actor-students as they performed on the New Globe stage. It strengthened the relationship between the characters of the play and as such they were more clearly defined. The rhythm of the play became more fluid and it created a better atmosphere:

Exhilaration comes when sense and rhythm merge and one rides the rhythm, sitting firm as on a galloping horse, the bridle of comprehension keeping a rein on the rippling energy.¹⁵⁴

Although MacDonald's approach with her vocal commands and later on with the drum may have come across as authoritative, it was also true that her actor-students had fun. As is the case in any live performance, mishaps did occur and there were plenty of opportunities for a good laugh. This provided opportunities to build on occasional mistakes and to make new discoveries. The valuable lesson was for the actor-students to learn to be themselves, to be true to their own individual way of expression and playful within the confines of a strict margin. When they did this, they defined the parameters of the methodology.

MacDonald knew exactly what it was she was looking for in these exercises. Discipline in actor-training taught the performers to focus and gave them the ability to work toward a common goal. MacDonald's exercises are simplistic in their execution. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that her methodology is at best very limited. However, the experience has the potential to provide an invaluable lesson for the actor-students in the future when they might be working with directors.

¹⁵⁴ Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, p. 122.

Critical analysis

The primary criticism of MacDonald's work was in the lack of attention to the individual in the training exercises. The training programme was the same for all ages and all skill levels. There was an individual component in that MacDonald did work with each actor-student in several private sessions. However, the classes themselves were designed for participation by all members of the class. As such, the results of the training exercises did not necessarily match the intent. It could be argued in this type of setting that, to reach all class participants, the level of training needs to be lowered to meet the needs of the least capable student. That creates a problem in that those with more ability may not be challenged to attain their optimal skills. The obvious conclusion appears to be that on one end of the continuum or the other, or perhaps both, the potential of the actor-student is not recognized nor achieved.

MacDonald's exercises provided basic skill training, but it was not sufficient or complete. That is what motivated me to consider additional teaching options with the students and to incorporate the two training programs, *lazzi* of the *commedia dell' arte* and *capoeira* that are discussed in the next chapter.

What appeared to be excellent training initially lost its effectiveness when it was examined more closely. As in Stafford's work, MacDonald does have a uniqueness and charisma that is contagious and seemed to appeal to most of the students.

Specifically, the following limitations are noted:

- The training did not adequately prepare the actor-student for audience address.
- The programme does not encourage or promote individual differences.

- There is little opportunity for the actor-student to develop his/her unique abilities/characterizations.
- The programme does not teach story-telling.
- Whilst the training had many activities, it did not provide for creative options.
- The incorporation of training exercise with the text was very limited.
- The activities, once developed, tended to become routine. They did not allow for a variety of physical activities.
- The programme was limited in its ability to improvise.
- Whilst the training exercises did provide opportunity for physical freedom and awareness, these opportunities were found to be greater in the *lazzi* and *capoeira* training exercises.

MacDonald's approach to exercises such as the *archetypes* is very simplistic and generalized. Her work lacks clarity and specificity. For instance her attempt to try and tie her exercises of the *elements* to Shakespeare, even original Elizabethan practices, fails because she fails to connect the theory to the practice. The students are left to do the exercises as she demonstrates them, without any of the background knowledge, which is essential to comprehend the theory on which the *elements* were understood. On a physical level, the exercises are not overly challenging and they are theoretically underdeveloped.

It is questionable as to what extent her methodology is useful for professional actors. Her exercises may be suited for acting novices or tourists who come to the New Globe to seek a 'taster' experience in actor movement training. Exercises such as the *archetypes* are useful when beginning character work, and therefore they will be utilized

in my own methodology. The same is true for the *eagle* and the *arrow* exercises, which are a useful starting point when teaching kinesthetic and proprioceptive awareness.

Whilst these criticisms are essential in consideration of the experience, it must also be noted that a number of the questions asked in the Introduction are answered and embraced in the movement training programme as taught by MacDonald. These are specifically addressed in the Conclusion chapter.

Chapter Three

Suggesting new models

The two years spent working with Stafford and MacDonald at the New Globe Theatre in London was an invaluable experience for me. Whilst reviewing and practicing their methodologies, I was challenged by the notion that there might be more. Stafford's work has shown the merits of physical discipline which are useful to me in two ways: as a performer facing the more rigorous demands of the open stage and as a combatant in staged fights. It was that experience that motivated me to investigate and research the possibilities of a Brazilian martial art form known as *capoeira*. The actor-students from Rutgers and Exeter provided a willing ensemble for me to teach and explore the potential of this methodology.

The work on exercises with MacDonald, that made the actor-student more aware of his/her body and the audience, caused me to reflect on earlier studies in my Master of Fine Arts program directed by Dr. Lesley Wade. These two forces joined together to stimulate and expand my thinking. I questioned if there were additional programmes that might equip the actor even more. My accessibility to actor-students from both Rutgers and Exeter made it possible for me to teach and examine the potential that *lazzi* of the *Commedia dell' Arte* held for actor training.

Specifically, if these two training methods were to be incorporated into training programmes for actors, their implementation would need to be considered as an aid for actors who work on open stages such as the New Globe. As suggested throughout this thesis, the demands and stresses to which actors are exposed whilst performing on a large

open stage are different than on a proscenium stage. There is a freedom for actors on the open stage that is unlike what is possible on the proscenium stage:

Our theatre-buildings, like our production methods, actor-training and audience expectations, work against the free and explorative performances that the plays naturally require.¹⁵⁵

It is the intent of this chapter to address more fully four of the questions posed in the Introduction:

- How can actor-students be trained to address and incorporate the audience?
- Is there another presentational form of performance contemporary to Shakespeare that is in use today and of merit to consider for actor training?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?
- How can student-actors be trained to improvise spontaneously?

The approach I took in teaching the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira* was a playful one utilizing games. Late theatre practitioner Clive Barker, who was renowned for his development of the use of games for actors, explains:

In using children's games as an approach to training the actor in mobility, one gets completely away from the concept of teaching someone a set of skills he does not possess, and which produces an anxiety situation for him.¹⁵⁶

The games were intended to minimize any anxiety that might result from the desire on the part of the students to meet my expectations. It was my observation that some students in institutional settings learn to strive for an expected end product. Potentially, this could lead the student to manipulate the outcome or end product efficiently or properly rather than seeking only the full benefit of the learning experience.

¹⁵⁵ John-Russell Brown, *Free Shakespeare*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁶ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 64.

The *capoeira* exercise started with the basic movements and developed into more strenuous and complex movements as the classes continued. Each student was encouraged to work within the limits of their own physical abilities. As would perhaps be true in any learning environment, individual differences were observed.

Part One: *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*

At the same time as the Elizabethan stage was developing, another presentational performance art form was developing in Italy, the *commedia dell'arte*. One of the trademarks of *commedia*, which made it so extremely popular, was the brilliantly executed physicality of its stock characters. John Rudlin in his book *Commedia dell'Arte* has an account of a *commedia* performance in Bavaria from 1568:

In the evening was presented an Italian comedy, in the presence of all the ladies of high rank. Even though the most part of them could not understand what he was saying, Messer Orlando Lasso – the Venetian Magnifico with his *Zanni*, played so well and so agreeably that all their jaws ached from laughing.¹⁵⁷

This quotation suggests that the physicality of *commedia's* stock characters made it possible for people who did not speak Italian to follow and understand the plays performed. The words became secondary. Most of the communication happened physically through bodily gestures and facial expressions. The French writer Charles Sorel (c.1599-1674) had this to say about the *commedia* performers he saw:

Because they make a strong point of gesture and represent many things through action, even those who do not understand their language cannot fail to understand the subject of the piece, for which reason there are many people in Paris who take pleasure in their playing.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ John Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook*, p16.

¹⁵⁸ Charles Sorel as found in Pierre Louis Duchartre, (trans. by Randolph T. Weaver), *The Italian Comedy: The Improvisation Scenarios Live Attributes, Portraits and Masks of the Illustrious Characters of the Commedia dell'Arte*, p. 22.

Italian comedians were in fact so accomplished in the physical development of their stock characters that these reached beyond the boundaries of Italy and spread to other countries and languages in Europe. Pierre Louis Duchartre states:

We have tried to trace the life and characteristics of this celebrated family [*commedia dell'arte*], which, although having its origin in Italy, eventually held sway over all Europe, taking root in Spain, Holland, Germany, Austria, and especially France.¹⁵⁹

Commedia performers, not unlike Elizabethan performers, were driven by the imperative to adapt their art to please the crowd so as to garner the largest audiences and income. They travelled the countryside with a cart and performed wherever possible. Soon these Italian comedians and their plays spread throughout Europe.

Although there is no concrete evidence of the *commedia's* influence on the Elizabethan playwrights and players, there is evidence that the Italians did perform in England. Lawrence, in his book *Old Theatre Days & Ways*, describes one such visit:

A clever troupe of Italian mimes and acrobats came to London in 1574 and so far succeeded in amusing good Queen Bess that she took them with her on her summer progress.¹⁶⁰

The fact that the Elizabethans were at least aware of the Italian comedians is also evident when reading Thomas Nashe's defence of the English actors against Puritan censure in his 1592 *Defense of Plays*:

Our Players are not as the players beyond Sea – a sort of squirting baudie Comedians that haue whores and common Curtizens to playe womens partes, and forebeare no immodest speech or vnchast action that may procure laughter – but our Sceane is more statelie furnisht than euer it was in the time of Roscius, our representations honourable and foull of gallant resolution, not consisting, like

¹⁵⁹ Pierre Louis Duchartre, (trans. by Randolph T. Weaver), *The Italian Comedy: The Improvisation Scenarios Live Attributes, Portraits and Masks of the Illustrious Characters of the Commedia dell'Arte*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁰ W. J. Lawrence, *Old Theatre Days & Ways*, pp 63 and 64.

theirs, of a Pantaloun, a Whore, and a Zanie, but of Emperours, Kings, and Princes; whose Tragedies...they do vaunt.¹⁶¹

Another hint to the Elizabethan's awareness of the *commedia* and its practices can also be found amongst Edward Alleyn's papers, which were found at Dulwich College. Andrew Grewar, in his essay, *Shakespeare and the Actors of the Commedia dell'Arte*, looked through Alleyn's papers, and found this evidence pertaining to Burbage:

It is interesting to find him at about the age of about twenty acting in a play with distinct features of the *commedia dell'arte*...the name Burbage is also found in another of these stage plots, 'The Platt of the Secound Parte of the Seuen Deadlie Sinns'(?1592). In fact, this plot contains the names of most of the combined Admiral's – Strange's company: Thomas Pope, George Bryan, Richard Cowley, John Duke, Augustine Phillips, John Sincler, and William Slye, among others...These were the players who with Shakespeare and Burbage were to form the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594.¹⁶²

Since it would appear that *commedia* may have been a direct influence, I found evidence that the Tudor morality plays, particularly in episodes involving the *Vice* provided plenty of precedents for boisterous physical action that is comparable with the action of *lazzi* in the *commedia dell'arte*. During my MFA studies at Exeter University, we briefly touched upon *lazzi*¹⁶³ with Dr. Lesley Wade. The little time that was spent on *lazzi* during my MFA studies was sufficiently inspirational for me to attempt an unconventional approach to understanding and playing Shakespeare. That unconventional approach (*lazzi*) was utilized in this research. The *lazzi* are described by Robert Erenstein as:

the cherries on the Commedia Dell'Arte cake. They can be defined as the comic interruptions to the plot; they made no contribution to the progression of the

¹⁶¹ Thomas Nashe, excerpt from 'Pierce Penniless' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, pp. 1010-1013.

¹⁶² Andrew Grewar, 'Shakespeare and the actors of the *commedia dell'arte*', in David J. George, and Christopher J. Gossip, (eds.), *Studies In The Commedia Dell'Arte*, p.17.

¹⁶³ *Lazzo* (singular)

action. They retard the action rather than advance it. And yet these were the funniest moments and the audience awaited them expectantly.¹⁶⁴

It could be suggested that moments, which may be seen to have a similarity to *lazzi* occur in Shakespeare's plays. One such example is the *lazzo* of showing surprise, as described in Mel Gordon's book:

Released from the magic spell, several characters are told of their strange or destructive behavior when under the spell's influence. At first they deny their actions and then show extremely exaggerated manifestations of surprise and revelation.¹⁶⁵

This example of a *lazzo*-type moment can be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹⁶⁶

Titania: My Oberon! What visions have I seen!

Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

Oberon: There lies your love.

Titania: How came these things to pass?

O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Oberon: Silence awhile. Robin, take off his head.

Titania, music call; and strike more dead

Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Titania: Music, ho! Music such as charmeth sleep!

Puck: Now when thou wakest, with thine

Own fool's eyes peep.

Oberon: Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands...

Puck: Fairy king, attend, and mark...

Oberon: Then, my queen, in silence sad, ...

¹⁶⁴ Robert L. Erenstein, 'The Humour of Commedia Dell'Arte', in Christopher Cairns, (ed.), *The Commedia Dell'Arte: From Renaissance to Dario Fo*, pp.118-140.

¹⁶⁵ Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte*, p. 48.

¹⁶⁶ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* The *lazzo* begins at the end of Act 3, scene 1 and ends in Act 4, scene 1.

*Titania: Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.*¹⁶⁷

This is but one example of a *lazzo*-type moment in Shakespeare's texts. It is common for *lazzi* to go from one extreme to the next, which provides ample opportunities for the performers to play and delight the audience. Jacques Lecoq suggests that there are some perceived influences of *commedia* on a range of European playwrights.

Very few genuine *commedia* texts survive, with the exception of the scenarios and the *botta e risposta*.¹⁶⁸ Because of this we also explore the playwrights who made use of this territory: Molière, Ruzzante, Gozzi, Goldoni, but also Shakespeare and Goethe. It is impressive to see how many authors were influenced by the Italian players who traveled across Europe.¹⁶⁹

This may not be historically accurate. However it does point to the potential similarity in the performance approach between *commedia* and the playwrights mentioned which may be useful for the actor to explore.

Commedia dell'arte classes are offered in some contemporary acting programmes such as in RADA's short summer course, 'Youth Access Workshops'. These classes, however, are not utilized to teach *commedia* practices for Shakespearean performances. It is worth considering the need for greater emphasis to be placed on *commedia dell'arte*'s use of audience interaction and on how its approach to characterization may benefit contemporary stage performers for performing Shakespeare's plays.

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.) *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, in Act 4, Scene 1, p. 327.

¹⁶⁸ *Botta e risposta* is a traditional *commedia dell'arte* technique of quick-fire dialogue, often consisting of only a word or two per character.

¹⁶⁹ Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, p. 115.

My own experience with the *commedia dell'arte* dates back to my teenage years when I was a performer in Germany at the Frankfurt professional youth theatre called *Jugendtheater Nordweststadt*. During that time I attended three workshops taught by German *commedia* practitioners. The subject undertaken in the workshops was related to individual characterizations of *commedia* characters, for example the movements and physicality prescribed for the *Zanni*, the *Dottore* and *Pulcinella*. Here I learned about the importance of distinguishing characters, each with their own unique movements that set them apart and which indicated to the audience who they were physically without ever having to speak a word. Another discovery in these workshops was the importance of audience address and interaction and how useful this rapport can be for the performers, the audience and the performance.

In recent years I attended another workshop led by one of my colleagues whose research was based on the *commedia dell'arte* and who had studied in Venice with Antonio Fava. As mentioned previously, Dr. Lesley Wade then introduced the possible use of the *commedia dell'arte* for Shakespeare performance to me during my MFA studies at Exeter University. I found this experience to be liberating, since Shakespeare's verse had always been very difficult for me to comprehend and the physical expression of it had seemed stunted to me by other acting programmes which subscribed to the teachings of a realist approach to performance. Therefore, working with the *lazzi* helped me overcome my fear of the meter and the text and the fear of overacting. I began to understand the meaning of Shakespeare's plays on a playful and physical level.

The first attempts of working with the Rutgers students on Shakespeare's texts were not related to the *commedia dell'arte* or its *lazzi*. It is discussed now to illustrate why the *commedia* approach was chosen for this research.

Prior to working with *lazzi*, I distributed a cue script to the students and gave them thirty minutes preparation and rehearsal time from our one-hour class. This time was meant for the students to examine the sequence of events within the scene and how they wanted to perform it. I started with text as part of my research enquiry to examine how they would handle it. The outcome was disappointing. The students were extremely stiff physically and emotionally.

The action was contrived as was the delivery of the text. It became apparent that handing them the text confused them rather than helped them. Shakespeare's words intimidated the students to such a degree that they were incapable of just playing with the text:

I am sure that the greatest obstacle an actor has to overcome with Shakespeare's verse is simply fear. Fear that it is all too difficult and that he can never master it. This fear seems to me quite natural and understandable. Yet, as is the way with fear, it often leads to an actor becoming hostile or defensive...So how can this fear be eased? ...Hence the idea of exercise-work outside the pressures of rehearsal...¹⁷⁰

Whilst working with the Rutgers and Exeter University students, it became apparent that they were neither familiar nor comfortable with the convention of audience address.

The concept of easing the fear through exercise-work (games) as described by Clive Barker is the basis of my own research approach:

¹⁷⁰ John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, p. 104.

The elements of play, as defined by Caillois, are also the seeds of drama because they are expressive forms of human personal and social behaviour, and because drama is itself a game or play activity. The use of games is therefore not only a means of technical training and of exploring human behaviour and acting, but a springboard for exploring the nature of drama and theatre.¹⁷¹

In order to prepare the students for a more open performance style, I introduced the idea of audience address and interaction with the help of the ‘special skill’ exercise and the ‘joke’ exercise games.

The ‘special skill’ exercise:

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 1: ‘special skill’.]

I was introduced to the ‘special skill’ exercise during my MFA studies at Exeter University. The instructions were simple. The assumption was that as individuals, we all have at least one skill that our friends admire in us, which they cannot reproduce. Some may be able to bend their finger in a way that is unnatural, or perhaps one can tumble or do very difficult acrobatic tricks, or perhaps even sing or whistle in a different way. The task is to tell a short story, non-verbally, within two to three minutes using that special skill. The story had to have a beginning, middle and an end and to be incorporated within the story was the ‘special skill’. The students were asked to look at the audience and acknowledge/communicate with them and to make sure that the audience was grasping the story they were telling. Each student had to perform his/her ‘special skill’ in front of his/her peers. The ‘special skill’ exercise provided information about the actor-student that helped to determine what benefits, if any, these different performance skills had nurtured. The points below illustrate the usefulness of the exercise:

¹⁷¹ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 88.

- It showed what the student-actor thought a 'special skill' was:

The variety of what the students considered a 'special skill' was as colourful as the number of people who undertook it. A lot of the skills the students chose were sadly not physical per se in their nature. For performance purposes physical skills may be more useful simply because physical expression seems to be more crowd pleasing than for instance whistling.

- It taught the students to acknowledge the audience, i.e. playing to them, addressing them:

It is clear when watching the DVD that the students were not trained to address or incorporate the audience. When asked to do so, they seemed very shy and uncomfortable. However, after a few tries, the students became more comfortable with audience eye contact. Once the permission to address, acknowledge and incorporate the audience had been granted the actor students were able to let go of the acting rules prescribed when playing with a fourth wall. The students now seemed to enjoy their performance more and became more playful and animated.

- It taught the students to use their imagination and to incorporate their own special skills. This would make their work unique, i.e. infuse character:

This statement need not be in conflict with the call for an actor to subdue his or her own individuality. By making a character one's own, the performer was required to put his/her own individual stamp on it. The incorporation of a 'special skill' appeared to help in the process of creating unique characterizations by giving the students the permission to be themselves. This allowed individual character traits to appear in the characterizations, which in turn made the work more original and unique. This does not

imply for the actor to simply portray himself, but it does allow the actor to adopt some of his/her own traits to create a character.

- It taught clarity in non-verbal communication, i.e. physical expression:

The difficulty of conveying Elizabethan English to a modern audience can be overwhelming. Clear physical expression would greatly enhance the audience's understanding of what they were seeing. Gavin Levy best describes the advantages of practicing nonverbal communication skills:

The activity will also help the students to become more expressive through using their bodies. If their movements are not clear, other members of the group may misinterpret them. All of these elements fall under a larger heading of communication. Actors are always communicating; the audience needs to know what is being said, but the actors must also convey the message of the story.¹⁷²

After the student had learned about the discomfort of addressing/incorporating the audience through this game/exercise, the next game was used to address the issue more pragmatically. The game is called the 'joke' exercise. The students were asked to think of a joke they could tell in class. The importance here was to bring a narrative joke, not a joke question.

The 'joke' exercise:

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 2: 'joke' exercise.]

The intention was to create a situation not unlike what they would encounter on a regular Friday evening out, such as a group of people getting together having a drink and telling each other funny jokes and stories. In this exercise the students were asked to sit in a comfortable position in two parallel lines facing one another. This sort of seating was

¹⁷²Gavin Levy, *112 Acting Games: A Comprehensive Workbook Of Theatre Games for Developing Acting Skills*, p. 98.

similar to a runway or a catwalk. The students were asked one at a time to start at one end and tell their narrative stories to the seated audience whilst walking down the aisle. The only rule they were given was to start their joke at one end and to finish it at the other. In between they could do as they pleased as long as it helped with the progression of their joke/story and they addressed the joke/story to their audience. The benefits of this exercise were:

- It taught the students objective, i.e. focus and concentration:

Teaching the students to have a purpose while they are occupying the given space is essential for any performance. Stanislavski states:

Action-real, productive action with a purpose is the all-important factor in creativeness, and consequently in speech as well! To speak is to act. That action sets an objective for us: to instill into others what we see inside ourselves. It is not important that the other person will see or not the thing you have in mind. Nature and the subconscious may take care of that. Your job is to desire to instill your inner visions in others, and that desire breeds action.¹⁷³

- It sharpened the students' kinesthetic sense, i.e. spatial awareness:

The requirement of the students to start their story on one end of the runway and to finish their story at the opposite end whilst addressing the audience on either side sharpened their awareness of the space allotted to them. The requirement to deliver the story to either side of them (the audience) and to deliver the punch-line to both sides simultaneously sharpened their awareness of where the audience was situated in the given space. Further, it told where the performers themselves were situated whilst performing within the given space.

Robert Leach states:

¹⁷³Constantin Stanislavski, *Building A Character*, p. 123.

The 'exact eye' is the 'self-admiration', or self-awareness...the actor needs to be extremely sensitive to what his body, his gestures, his movements are connoting. He needs a kind of in-built mirror.¹⁷⁴

This 'in-built' mirror and the awareness of the surrounding space and of the audience gave the performers confidence and a certain sense of owning the space.

- It fine-tuned the art of story-telling:

Performers are storytellers. By having the students practice telling their own stories, their performance skills were sharpened through the use of their own characterizations, physical expressions, pitch, and facial expressions. These elements of storytelling appeared naturally as the students relaxed. The audience was drawn into the story when this skill was successfully employed.

- Learning to incorporate and to address the audience helped the student to overcome the startle pattern reflex:

This was done by teaching the students that the characters they portray can confide in the audience. They can learn to treat the audience as their best friend or another character in the play. This may seem easy to do in front of one's peers; yet, depending on the group dynamics, it can be more difficult than in front of complete strangers.

- It helped to develop an ensemble.

With the exercises conducted in the closed conditions of a rehearsal space, the actor-students relied on the support of each other and generally rose to that occasion. The ability to laugh at funny stories helped the overall feeling of having a good time together and was thus very bonding. At no point were the students allowed to be negative towards each other in the classroom.

¹⁷⁴Robert Leach, 'Meyerhold and Biomechanics,' as found in Alison Hodge, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, p. 43.

Introducing the *lazzi*

After the conclusion of the ‘special skill’ and the ‘joke’ exercises, it was time to introduce the students to *lazzi*. The previously mentioned skills that are employed whilst performing *lazzi* are:

- Playing to the audience
- Physical and vocal expression
- Objective
- Spatial awareness
- Ensemble work
- Focus and concentration
- Characterization
- Rhythm
- Overcoming the startle pattern reflex.

Silent *lazzi*:

The students were introduced to *lazzi* by my giving them a lecture presentation on the subject. I explained what *lazzi* are, where they come from, and then showed contemporary examples of *lazzo*-type moments/performances in films by such artists as The Marx Brothers, Laurel & Hardy, and Charlie Chaplin. Then I distributed a printed page with the very simple ‘*Lazzo of the Chair*’:

Arlecchino [or Pierrot] pulls the chair away from the Captain just before he is to sit down.¹⁷⁵

The rest of the class time was used to encourage the students to come up with different scenarios for the *lazzo* of the chair. At the end of the class, the students were introduced to Mel Gordon’s book, *Lazzi*. The book offers descriptions and examples of different *lazzi*. The students were then asked to work in pairs. Each pair chose a *lazzo* they would like to perform. The chosen *lazzo* was to be rehearsed outside of class time

¹⁷⁵ Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell’Arte*, p. 18.

and performed a week later during the next class. Contrary to popular belief, most of the *commedia dell'arte* was planned, not improvised:

Too often the *commedia dell'arte* is associated with the notion of improvisation. But in fact it was not improvised at all. Although variations were sometimes introduced, the performances were passed down from father to son in a highly structured fashion. The Italian actors had a repertoire of situations and *lazzi* which they inserted at the right moments.¹⁷⁶

The students' first *lazzi* were to be performed silently.

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 3: silent *lazzi*.]

This non-verbal approach was done to encourage the students to become more efficient physically and to expand their non-verbal vocabulary when expressing themselves:

By the simple use of a gesture one cannot convey either the inner spirit of a part or the main unbroken line of action that flows through its entirety. To accomplish this one must make use of movements which include physical action. They in turn convey the inner spirit of the part one is playing.¹⁷⁷

The *lazzo* helped the students to grasp the characters they were portraying. It helped develop and to create stage-business that furthered and clarified the plot to the performers as well as to their audience. It forced the students to check in with the audience visually by creating eye contact with the audience, in order to ensure that the audience was following the action.

Importantly, without a text present, the actor students were more playful, i.e. more enthusiastic about following the given circumstance of their scenarios and leaving self-consciousness behind. They weren't concerned with how they looked or whether they

¹⁷⁶Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁷Constantin Stanislavski, *Building A Character*, p. 74.

were doing something wrong. They were engrossed in the objectives of the characters they were portraying. This physical exercise forced the actor-students to express themselves with their bodies, which in turn led them to become more confident in their physiques and therefore more confident in their speaking voice. Dymphna Callery states:

Many young actors are highly 'voice-inhibited'. Without words, they can be extremely expressive, as soon as they open their mouths they either clam up or mutter or gabble. What is worse, they seem to shrink physically too...to a certain extent with physical work, actors cannot see how well or badly they are performing an action, yet when they speak their auditory feedback tells them immediately. If we are self-conscious about our bodies we are even more self-conscious about our voice.¹⁷⁸

Lazzi with text

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 4: *lazzi with text.*]

The students were allowed to edit the text in order to fit the text to their needs. The benefit derived from this exercise was for the students to understand and to learn that they were allowed, even encouraged, to edit Shakespeare's texts in order to fulfill the vision of their story and to make the story clearer for themselves and for a contemporary audience. MacDonald was so impressed with the student's *lazzi* that they were allowed to take their *lazzi* onto the New Globe stage and to perform them in front of the New Globe's visiting tours and tour-guides.

Some of the students struggled with the space. The struggle was created by the pillars on stage. The students were not accustomed to performing with these visual hindrances. A few of the *lazzi* pairs set their scenes in between the two pillars, which caused them to get lost on the stage. The *lazzi* pairs that set themselves up in front or

¹⁷⁸ Dymphna Callery, *Through The Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*, p. 139.

behind the pillars, however, did much better. They did not seem to disappear on the New Globe stage. Their voices carried much better; their actions were much easier to read; and they seemed much less restricted in the space they permitted themselves to use. The *lazzi* also helped the students with the text. The language sounded natural due to alternating rhythms and voice inflections.

Part Two: *capoeira*

The idea of an Afro-Brazilian martial art as actor training, especially for Shakespeare may seem incomprehensible at first glance. It is hoped that this written review of *capoeira* will make clear why *capoeira* can be an effective actor-training tool, especially for presentational performances on open stages. It is the intent of this research to provide evidence that *capoeira* not only promoted physical endurance, stamina, and physical spontaneity and improvisation, but that it addressed several other key performance elements that are considered to be valuable when training for performances on open stages. These elements include:

- Spatial awareness
- Overcoming the ‘startle pattern’ reflex or stage fright
- Physical and vocal expression
- Ensemble development
- Focus and concentration
- Audience incorporation
- Rhythm
- Objective

Learning and teaching *capoeira*

The Esporão School of *Capoeira* offers three lessons a week in London. The school was founded by mestre Marinaldo who now resides in Spain. His brothers, Topera and Viola, continued mestre Marinaldo’s work after his departure in late 2006. I started

taking *capoeira* lessons through the Esporão School in November of 2005. I attended class on an average of two to three times a week. This schedule was disrupted only when I was away on holiday. I kept taking lessons in London until my departure in February of 2008. Throughout the time I was training with mestre Marinaldo or his brothers, Topera and Viola, they were aware of my research, as were the other students in the *capoeira* class. The film footage gathered in the classes was undertaken with the full consent of everyone present during the filming.

When I first introduced *capoeira* to the Rutgers students at the New Globe, the different physical abilities among the actor-students became apparent. Because I had experience as a yoga teacher, I was able to break down and modify the movements in *capoeira* to their basic levels. This worked well for the students who weren't as physically capable as others. At any time the movements could be adjusted to increase the level of difficulty. The decision to make that change depended on the abilities of the individual student. The training was adjustable to all levels, which ensured that the actor-students always felt challenged and learned something new, as opposed to getting bored with the movements or feeling overwhelmed in class. An example of the modified movements is shown on the DVD film footage titled 'Negativa'.

In order to understand *capoeira* and its nature and to provide insight as to why I found it to be effective for performers training on open stages, it is necessary to look into the history of *capoeira* and how it developed.

The history

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art. There are two distinct styles practiced today, which are called *capoeira Angola* and *capoeira Regional*. *Capoeira Angola* is the

traditional older style of *capoeira*, which separates itself from *capoeira Regional* by the slower rhythm of its music. Subsequently its movements are slower and *capoeira Angola* is danced with the body closer to the floor. Most of the movements in this style were executed whilst staying very close to the ground.

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 6: *capoeira Angola*.]

The origin of *capoeira* is a topic that has generated much debate. It is suggested that *capoeira* originated sometime between the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

The word ‘capoeira,’ however, had been around at least since the seventeenth century in its Latinate, Portuguese derivation from *capão* (‘capon,’ a castrated cock), meaning ‘a cage for capons,’ and by extension a cage for chickens in general. Since the game of capoeira also resembles a cockfight.¹⁷⁹

The fact that it was brought to Brazil on slave-ships from Africa has been universally accepted:

The main reason for this is that capoeira has an undeniably African esthetic. In movement style, musical structure, and many other areas, the sport is fundamentally non-European.¹⁸⁰

In the nineteenth century, *capoeira* underwent political and cultural persecution. Until approximately 1814, African cultural expression was allowed amongst slaves and in some cases even encouraged. The common belief was that these forms of expression were allowed a people that were repressed, and gave the oppressing power some form of a safety gauge against the internal pressures slavery created. It is also believed that African cultural expression brought out differences between varying ethnic groups, and therefore kept them divided whilst conquered:

¹⁷⁹ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, p. 43.

¹⁸⁰ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, p. 2

But with the arrival in Brazil in 1808 of the Portuguese king Dom João VI and his court, who were fleeing Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Portugal, things changed: The newcomers understood the necessity of destroying a people's culture in order to dominate them, and *capoeira* began to be persecuted in a process which would culminate with its being outlawed in 1892.¹⁸¹

Persecution and the confrontation with the police finally extinguished *capoeira* in places such as Rio de Janeiro, and Recife. The place where *capoeira* survived was in the state of Bahia. The Bahian players and their *capoeira* dance exhibited all of the traits and characteristics of the game today. *Capoeira* was practiced and played in secret and, because of this; it managed to survive into the present.

Capoeira Regional, which is musically faster in its rhythm and therefore faster in its movement, was invented sometime in the early twentieth century. *Capoeira Regional* is easily separated from its traditional predecessor *capoeira Angola*, by the fact that the performers are executing their movements more quickly whilst in an almost upright position, more elevated from the ground.

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 7 'Capoeira Regional'.]

Capoeira Regional was in its present form popularized by a legendary *capoeira* master called *Mestre Bimba*, who managed to get the ban on *capoeira* lifted in the early twentieth century:

In 1927, *Mestre Bimba* (Manoel dos Reis Machado) founded the first formal academy for the teaching of *capoeira* as a martial art, called *Centro de Cultura Fisica e Capoeira Regional*. Though it wasn't officially licensed by the government until 1937, this marked the beginning of *capoeira* as a sport. In 1953, after witnessing a demonstration by *Mestre Bimba's* academy, the president of

¹⁸¹ Nestor Capoeira, *The Little Capoeira Book*, pp. 5 and 6.

Brazil, Getulio Vargas, declared that capoeira was “the only truly national sport”.¹⁸²

Mestre Bimba is generally acknowledged to be the creator of *capoeira Regional*, the faster, more aggressive form of *capoeira*. The more traditional form of *capoeira Angola* was almost lost. It might have vanished had it not been for Mestre Pastinha who kept with the tradition. *Capoeira Regional* was practiced everywhere and the traditional style of *capoeira Angola* was widely dismissed. Not until the 1970s did the interest in the more traditional form resurge. Now, when attending a *capoeira* class, it is common to be taught both: *capoeira Angola* and *capoeira Regional*.

The practice of capoeira

Capoeira is usually practiced in a *roda* or in the round. The spectators form a circle and the action takes place in the center of the circle. The spectators are by no means passive. They are to sing the songs, clap to the rhythm with their hands and to cheer for the players in the centre.

Capoeira, however, is not just a fight between two opponents. In actuality, it is a game. The object of the game is to make the opponent fall on his/her back:

In general it is prohibited to push an opponent, except as part of a *banda*¹⁸³, or to hit him with a closed fist. There are a couple of open-handed blows practiced, but these are usually employed as feints to distract an adversary. The classic way to knock the opponent over is to sweep his feet from under him. The easiest way to do this is when only one of the opponent's feet is on the ground, usually because the other is kicking. One can knock an opponent over using any of the kicks or by butting him with the head (*cabecada*). The *cabecada* is especially appropriate

¹⁸² J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, pp. 59 and 60.

¹⁸³ Literally flank or rear attack

when the opponent is on his hands, since it is considered bad form to kick an adversary when he is upside down.¹⁸⁴

This may sound vicious and harmful, when in fact it is not. The ideal move is to surprise the opponent and catch him/her off balance through excellent timing, cunning, and execution of the attacks. To batter one's opponent is considered bad form.

From the very beginning, *capoeira* had to struggle to survive, since all African cultural activity was repressed in the 1800s. Facing a stronger opponent who controlled the power and made the laws, *capoeira* had to learn to be flexible and avoid frontal confrontations, to go with the flow of things. *Capoeira* learned the guerrilla way of fighting when faced by a stronger and more established army. It learned the values of lies and deceit, of ambush, surprise and treason. One does not block a kick in *capoeira*; on the contrary, one goes along with it, thus avoiding the blow, and then counterattacking if possible. One does not confront a man face to face, but rather pretends to be a coward, to ask for mercy – and then to hit the opponent when he lowers his guard.¹⁸⁵

The antagonism inherent in *capoeira* is not unlike the antagonism inherent in Elizabethan drama, especially in Shakespeare's history plays and tragedies. Examples of this can be found in *The Tragedy of King Lear* in Act 5 scene 3, where after the third trumpet Edgar challenges Edmund; or in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* in Act 1 scene 2, where Richard woos Anne; or in *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* in Act 5 scene 2 the duel between Hamlet and Laertes. Therefore, *capoeira* is an excellent tool to teach the actor-students the physical choreography of the antagonism inherent within Elizabethan drama. Beyond this however, there are other similarities between Elizabethan drama and *capoeira* including:

- Audience participation
- Performed in the round
- Physically expressive
- Music, i.e. song and dance

¹⁸⁴ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁵ Nestor Capoeira, *The Little Capoeira Book*, pp. 36 and 37.

- Rhythm
- Acrobatics
- Spectacle

Lowell Lewis points to the potential similarities between the dynamics of the fight in *capoeira*, and that of verbal and dramatic ‘sparring’ in a theatrical context:

On the streets or in the fields, in academies or stage productions, adepts play to the audience and not just for each other. This means, as I have already suggested, that it is productive to view *capoeira* as a kind of drama, a theater of domination and liberation. This view is grounded on events within the ring, but it goes on to contextualize interactions on the periphery, in the circle of musicians, and among the spectators, ultimately including metacommentaries on the action before and after the games. At the most basic level, however, awareness of an audience influences how players interact, since the question of who has gotten the upper hand in a contest is often decided by the spectator.¹⁸⁶

The fact that *capoeira* is performed in the round, incorporating the audience, is acrobatic, physically expressive, improvised, rhythmic and antagonistic, is what made this seem relevant to the problems discussed in this thesis. *Capoeira* addresses the following questions asked in the introduction:

- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?
- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?
- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?

The *ginga*

The basic step in *capoeira* is the *ginga* (jinga), which literally translated means ‘swing’. This is the first move every novice is taught. It is a six-step movement that

¹⁸⁶ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, pp. 93 - 94.

essentially consists of swinging one's own body weight from left to right, in repeating continuous motion.

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 8 'Ginga'.]

The *ginga* is a rhythmical movement reminiscent of a dance step and ensures that the players are in synch and continuously moving. At this point of the game the players are in what Jacques Lecoq calls 'neutrality' or a 'neutral state':

The state prior to action or character creation, when the actor is in a state of perfect balance, presenting nothing but a neutral generic being. A character experiences conflict, has a history, a past, a context, passions. On the contrary, a neutral mask puts the actor in a state of perfect balance and economy of movement.¹⁸⁷

The importance of the *ginga* cannot be stressed enough, as described in Lecoq's 'effort rose':

It comprises a multi-directional space which can be adapted to all human movements, whether physical or psychological, whether a simple movement of the arm or an all-consuming passion, a movement of the head or a profound desire.¹⁸⁸

In the *ginga*, the players are in this 'neutral state' ready to move in any of the three main directions, vertically, horizontally or diagonally. In *capoeira* this translates into the player's readiness to attack, dodge, feint or hide.

Another benefit of the *ginga* can be seen when training actors. Whenever a movement is executed, where one player disturbs the rhythm of the other player; it is frowned upon for the player who had his/her rhythm disturbed to completely stop the action. Instead the player who has had the symmetry of his/her rhythm disturbed returns

¹⁸⁷Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, p. 38.

¹⁸⁸Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, pp. 81.

to the *ginga* and synchronizes with his/her opponent. If some mistake happens during performance and one actor gets away from the rhythm of the performance (due to having missed the cue, or some other mishap), it is imperative that the action does not stop and as a result disturb the symmetry of the whole ensemble. The *ginga* is a tool for learning to immediately get back into the set rhythm in order to carry on with the performance.

- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?

The aerobic stress produced on the player's body, when doing the *ginga*, provides the best answer to the question. The *ginga* is highly aerobic, yet also fun. It may be considered to be as taxing as a moderate run. However, regular practice will enhance the player's stamina and endurance, and condition the students for fast heart-rate recoveries.

Luke Beattie, one of the Exeter students spoke of his experience of undertaking the training with me:

The primary benefit that I gained from the capoeira sessions led by Ivan Zizek in our MFA programme was that it added a relatively broad fitness component to our programme that otherwise, unfortunately, almost entirely lacks a physical element. I am firmly of the belief that general physical fitness is critical for actors, so therefore I believe that it should be central to and constant in any programme claiming to have performance aspects. Therefore, I believe that any type of physical training is helpful, even if not precisely adapted to the specifics of the overall programme. Capoeira offered a range of exercises that increased the participants' stamina noticeably in all cases in the group – a benefit that was lost within a few months of stopping, in most cases.¹⁸⁹

- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex?

The startle pattern reflex was described and discussed in Chapter Two. The effectiveness of MacDonald's exercise, the *eagle*, which was created to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex was investigated. Although the *eagle* exercise was effective,

¹⁸⁹ Luke Beattie, Master of Fine Arts Staging Shakespeare Student at Exeter University, 2008/2009.

another more effective approach to overcoming the ‘startle pattern’ reflex needed to be found when training actors for open stages such as the New Globe. This more effective way of overcoming the ‘startle pattern’ reflex was discovered in the practice of *capoeira*, specifically in the *negativa*.

After the introduction of the *ginga* and after the students mastered the movement through practice, other movements were introduced. The next new movement introduced to the Exeter and Rutgers students was the *negativa*, a defensive move.

The *negativa*

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 9 ‘Negativa’.]

In this move the actor-student is taken out of his/her comfort zone. The shoulders were pulled back, the back arched and the right hand reached back towards the floor until the hand touched the floor and the torso was out of the way of the pretended kick.

Another distinguishing feature of capoeira with respect to most other martial arts is that the capoeirista is very adept at moving on the floor. Just as the *ginga* is the basic movement of the capoeirista when standing, the *negativa* is his basic form of movement on the floor.¹⁹⁰

When the students first attempted the *negativa*, they were allowed to look back at their hand to see where it was going to land. Once they had gained confidence in executing the movement, which generally took only a couple of tries, they were to practice doing it without looking back. The practice of movements such as the *negativa* helped to release psycho-physical inhibitions:

One major aspect of children’s games, and social games, is the release of energy to dispel psycho-physical tension. It is at the root of almost all children’s games, and many adult activities. In some games it is the predominant element. It is the

¹⁹⁰ Nestor Capoeira, *The Little Capoeira Book*, p. 65.

motive force by which the child overcomes difficulties and inhibitions and, unself-consciously, takes physical and emotional risks.¹⁹¹

Clive Barker goes on to explain that the psycho-physical tension stems from the inborn fear of falling. He gives a description of how the fear reveals itself in the posture:

The instinctive body position is taken up when active resistance to a situation is withdrawn and the person takes up a position of passive protection. The limbs are drawn nearer to the body to protect the loins, throat and stomach. The position necessitates pulling the head down and forward and/or bringing the hip joints abnormally forward, retarding the pelvis. The position is held through tension in the muscles.¹⁹²

This description is almost identical to the one describing the ‘startle pattern’ reflex in the introduction. Barker then proceeds to explain that *judo* is of value for the actor, since the actor is taught to fall with safety and thus to overcome his/her fear:

Moving on the floor makes the capoeirista familiar with the floor in such a way that he can quickly recover from a fall or even an attack, or take down his opponent from the floor.¹⁹³

An advanced exercise used to overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, was the *auí* (ah-oo), or in English, cartwheel. At first the students were allowed to look at the floor as they placed their hands on it. Then they practiced with a partner doing the *auí* whilst looking into each other’s eyes and cart wheeling the length of the room. This is also demonstrated on the DVD.

More advanced students worked on doing cartwheels slower and more controlled as in slow motion. This practice can eventually lead to handstands, walking in a handstand, kicking whilst in a handstand and even spinning whilst in a handstand. This progresses with time to the point where the capoeiristas do back flips, summersaults, etc.

¹⁹¹ Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, p. 91.

¹⁹² Clive Barker, *Theatre Games*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹³ Nestor Capoeira, *The Little Capoeira Book*, p. 65.

One of the Exeter students, Abby Rasette, provided this insight:

The capoeira training I received during my degree was extremely beneficial to me both in my academic career and for my physical health. I was able to gain knowledge about how to use my body as an actor that I had not been previously exposed to, which has led to an increased confidence in performance. The varying degrees of difficulty in the moves challenged me in such a way that I now feel very strongly about pushing myself out of my comfort zone in my acting. I have never pushed myself so hard in my life and because of this training I feel all areas of my life have been improved.¹⁹⁴

The finding that *capoeira* combats the fear of falling or getting hurt, which is what triggers the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, supported the claim that it was a great tool for training actors to overcome stage fright, especially for open stages such as the New Globe.

- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?

Spatial awareness has been addressed in the previous two chapters, and both Stafford’s stage combat and MacDonald’s methodology were found to be adequate to teach the actor students. However, *capoeira* may be an even better tool since performing physically daring stunts in very small spaces was a skill of which capoeiristas prided themselves.

[See DVD, Chapter Three, Section 10 ‘spatial awareness’.]

To be able to do the stunts seen on the DVD takes years of practice and *capoeiristas* become experts at performing in any given space due to their well-developed spatial sense and their ability to adapt their movements, i.e. physical freedom:

Often during capoeira play, especially when more congenial moods prevail, there are extended periods with little or no actual contact, as the two players

¹⁹⁴ Abby Rasette, Master of Fine Arts Staging Shakespeare Student at Exeter University, 2008/2009.

accommodate smoothly to each other's moves. This kind of accommodation is more apparent because of the limited, almost confining, space of the capoeira ring. The absolute limitation on the play space is an essential and acknowledged part of the esthetic of the game. The relatively small size of the ring forces certain proxemic closeness, which is then accentuated further by the 'choice', really a stylistic imperative, to move closer still. The best players take pride in playing as close to their partners as possible, and it is only beginners who tend to stay away from each other.¹⁹⁵

To teach the students spatial awareness they were gathered to form a ring (*roda*) at the end of each class. This was the time for them to practice the game. Here, through experience and practice, the students learned about their own limitations, and the limitations of their opponents. Physical and spatial limitations tended to be the first ones identified. This insight, gained through practice, allowed the students to work on modifying their moves in future classes and rodas. This was how capoeiristas learned to adapt their acrobatic feats and to express physical freedom, even in minute spaces:

The technical mastery of all these acrobatic movements, falls and jumps, has in reality a single aim: to give greater freedom to the player.¹⁹⁶

The spatial awareness became stronger as the students progressed. When they started playing with inverted moves, i.e. cartwheels, handstands, headstands etc., the progression to advanced spatial awareness became established. If it was difficult to pinpoint distances when standing upright, it was even more so when playing upside down. The ability to switch from upright to upside down created a strong focus and concentration. In *capoeira* the players were taught from the very beginning that they were never to lose sight of the opponent. This required tremendous focus, especially when looking at your opponent whilst performing a handstand.

¹⁹⁵ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, p. 81.

¹⁹⁶ Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, p.71.

Another benefit derived from playing the *capoeira* game mentioned above was the insight gained into one's own limitations and the limitations of the partner. Playing together and cheering each other on from the sidelines created a feeling of togetherness, and was therefore a very bonding experience. This was excellent for ensemble development, since during the practice and the game bonds were strengthened. Jeremy West, another MFA Exeter student, had this to contribute:

I found the capoeira training helpful to me as an actor in that it, on the basest level, keeps one fit (something needed for Shakespeareans who might need to have a sword fight) but it also teaches ensemble techniques as well. The 'play' of capoeira encourages all the aspects of good acting on stage: eye contact, improvisation, spatial awareness, 'yes-and' qualities, and a sense of working with someone to create a unified 'dance'. The physical activity can also act as a stress relief – which is, sometimes, desperately needed in theatre.¹⁹⁷

Inherent in the game of *capoeira* was the benefit of learning spatial awareness, physical freedom, concentration and focus. Therefore *capoeira* was shown to be a worthy method for teaching actor students for open stages.

- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?

In Chapter Two, MacDonald's methodology did not allow for either spontaneity or improvisation. Stage combat could be dangerous if spontaneity and improvisation were employed in a choreographed fight. In *capoeira* however, where the players may have to improvise at the spur of the moment, or adapt their movement due to the confines of the space, it is imperative they improvise. This allows them to create new and exciting moves:

A fundamental value in capoeira play is improvisation. In training one practices a repertoire of named movements and learns how to defend against given attacks, how to attack given defenses. But in the course of actual play it is up to a player

¹⁹⁷ Jeremy West, Master of Fine Arts Staging Shakespeare Student at Exeter University, 2008/2009.

to respond to each situation as he sees fit, even creating a new move on the spur of the moment if necessary. The emphasis on improvisation is related to the ethic of freedom and liberation central to the game.¹⁹⁸

Whilst in the circle, participating in the game, it was inevitable that the players had to spontaneously improvise. The spontaneous improvisation stemmed from the desire to fulfill the objective of the game, to make the opponent fall. Thus, objective was also taught whilst playing the game. *Capoeira* was shown to be an excellent tool for teaching objective, and to physically improvise whilst performing on a stage, which, for the purposes of this thesis, is an open stage.

Critical analysis

Some conventional actor-training programmes offer one-off seminars in the *commedia dell'arte*. *Lazzi* however usually are not part of those curricula. In a *commedia dell'arte* seminar in which I recently partook (in Washington, DC), *lazzi* were not on the agenda. The programme spanned over four weekends, and was taught by Matthew R. Wilson, the Founding Artistic Director of *Faction of Fools*, who studied extensively with Antonio Fava, and is a faculty member since 2004, at Fava's *Stage Internationale di Commedia dell'Arte* in Reggio-Emilia.¹⁹⁹ The courses focused on characterizations. When I asked about the *lazzi*, I was told that it may be in a future workshop but was not high on the list of priorities for *commedia dell'arte* workshops. Therefore had it not been emphasized by Dr. Leslie Wade in her classes at Exeter University, it would not have been considered for training actor-students in this research.

¹⁹⁸ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*, pp. 88 – 89.

¹⁹⁹ Faction of Fools Theatre Company celebrates Commedia dell'Arte in Washington, DC and around the world. <http://www.factionoffools.org/who/>.

The obscurity of *lazzi* may initially present a number of challenges. If we assume that the number of people familiar with *lazzi* is small or limited, the number of people who would apply it to teach Shakespeare may be even smaller. It is possible that scepticism would exist as to the effectiveness of a programme that has not been tested more thoroughly. The nature of *lazzi* promotes a ‘planned spontaneity’; yet, to develop a teaching module that had structure, but still allowed for creativity, would present a challenge.

The potential for what *lazzi* offer to a training programme for actor-students is challenging and exciting. The exercises and teaching in which I had opportunity to engage the students were only a starting point. *Lazzi* provides a means to interpret text in multiple ways, to generate feeling or mood into a scene, and to correlate meaning with significant non-verbal body movements or expressions. Beyond what the other three training methodologies examined in this research do, *lazzi* invites interaction with the audience.

Another exercise for working with the text could involve some rhetorical tools. It is expected that the students are learning a variety of rhetorical tools in diction and voice lessons. Yet, as stated before, *lazzi* are intended to be an adjunct to those vocal lessons.

To illustrate, consider what Kristin Linklater calls a ‘ladder’:

This is a device for building the intensity of feeling. The ladder starts with a statement or an image or a feeling which is capped by one that outdoes the first, and then another and another rising to the top climactic rung of the ladder.²⁰⁰

The text chosen to teach the ladder is found in Act V, scene one in *The Merchant of Venice*:

²⁰⁰ Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice: The Actor’s Guide to Talking the Text*, p. 95.

*Lorenzo: The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise – in such a night
Troilus methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
Where Cressid lay that night.*

*Jessica: In such a night
Did Thisbee fearfully o'ertrip the dew
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismayed away.*

*Lorenzo: In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.*

*Jessica: In such a night
Medea gathered the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Aeson*

*Lorenzo: In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice
As far as Belmont.*

*Jessica: In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.*

*Lorenzo: In such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave her.*

*Jessica: I would outnight you, did nobody come.
But hark, I hear the footing of a man.²⁰¹*

To make this *ladder* work physically I would ask the students to create a competitive *lazzo*. For example, they could verbally fight over who reached the loo first and therefore gets to go; over some kind of tug of war; or over who is more in love with

²⁰¹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 448.

the other person. Once the students have created the scene and are physically comfortable telling the story, they would then infuse the text. This would help them with a number of skills such as rhythm, active listening, and speaking the text. To repeat what Michael Chekhov said in Chapter Two:

The actor cannot comprehend composition and rhythm if they are not experienced and felt inwardly. The internal experience is beyond any verbal, intellectual explanation. An exercise properly done can tell the actor more than pages and pages in books on composition and rhythm.²⁰²

Capoeira, to my knowledge, has made its way into at least two actor -training programmes. One is at Bath Spa University and the other is at UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television. Whilst it is an excellent teaching tool for kinesthetic awareness, physical control, and spatial awareness, the rigor, strength and time it takes to become proficient in this martial art form could intimidate some actor-students.

Lazzi, capoeira and MacDonald's movement training exercises all help with overcoming the 'startle pattern' reflex or stage fright. However, from what I observed, *capoeira* appears to offer the greatest freedom from the fear of falling.

When approaching the topic of text and *capoeira*, it is important to remember that the students need to have a base proficiency before text can even be considered being brought into the training. After careful reflection on the training and the results, I would start *capoeira* with the text when teaching basic moves such as the *negativa* and *au*. At this early stage in the training I would work with one sentence only. An example would be the sentence that comes from Act I, scene four in King Lear:

Lear: How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is

²⁰² Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, p. 134.

*To have a thankless child.*²⁰³

There was no particular reason why this sentence was chosen. It is one that would work well with *capoeira* movements, but there are many others that would be just as suitable. Preferably the students could use a sentence by Shakespeare they really like and use it. The chosen sentence would be vocalized right before an action, whether it is the *negativa* (in defense), the *au* (the escape), or one of the offensive kicks. This would help the student to become aware of how the physical intent colors the vocalization of the line. The next step would be to speak the line immediately after the action. This would bring awareness as to how the line may differ after the action as compared to speaking the line during the action. This would help with things such as awareness, intent, and intonation.

Whilst this critical analysis is presented here, it should be noted additional information and a number of the questions about *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* and *capoeira* asked in the Introduction are addressed in the Conclusion chapter.

²⁰³ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 951.

Conclusion

This research began with two contemporary methodologies, both currently in use at the New Globe in London. The two current methodologies are Stafford's stage combat teachings and MacDonald's movement classes. Along with these current methodologies, I added two new models, one based on the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*, and the other one an Afro-Brazilian martial art called *capoeira*.

The four methodologies were observed, practiced and analyzed with considerations of the skills required for performances on open stages in mind. The findings support the claim that performances on an open stage, such as the New Globe, place different demands on actor training than film, television or acting on a proscenium stage. My aim in this conclusion is to suggest that a combination of these four systems of training can be utilized as part of an actor training programme in a university or drama school context to assist actors in their training to perform Shakespeare on an open stage.

My work began by setting forth a number of the skills required for actors. These acquired skills are taught in many drama institutions and to some extent applicable for all stage acting.

The difference lies in the proposition that there are particular requirements for the open stage that require specific training and development in different ways to proscenium stages, and film and television. These are notable in the areas of:

- Physical and vocal expression
- Ensemble development, audience interaction and confidence
- Endurance
- Spontaneity and physical improvisation
- Focus and concentration
- Spatial awareness

A dilemma arises when Shakespeare is taught in these various programmes, because Shakespeare's plays were written for open stages and presentational settings. The techniques commonly employed in actor training institutions, which involves both drama schools and universities, are meant to prepare modern actor students for proscenium stages and representational settings. As stated in the introduction, there is nothing wrong with representational techniques; they are useful for what they are intended: television, film, and proscenium stage performances employing the fourth wall. The shortcoming arises when graduates from such programmes find themselves performing on open stages or presentational settings. Therefore the goal of this thesis was to undertake research and establish new methods to teach actor students some presentational techniques, which could also be easily incorporated into pre-existing 'representational' training programmes.

Questions

Nine questions were asked in the Introduction. The questions are general and to some extent could be expected for any actor training programme. Since performances on an open stage, such as the New Globe, require a more developed skill level, it seemed reasonable to assume that training levels would also need to be elevated for open stage performances. Each of the four methodologies was investigated for the purpose of answering the following questions:

- How can actor-students be trained to play Shakespeare on an open stage using contemporary methodologies?
- How can actor-students be trained to address and incorporate the audience?

- Is there another ‘presentational’ form of performance contemporary to Shakespeare that is in use today and of merit to consider for actor training?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?
- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex?
- How can actor-students be trained to physically clarify the text to the audience?
- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?
- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?
- How can a group of actor-students be trained to form a strong, intimate ensemble?

To what extent did each of the four methodologies enhance the required skills and answer the questions posed here and in the Introduction? Do the answers suggest that the preparation for actor-students, who perform on an open stage, be raised to a level greater than that found in most drama training institutions?

- How can actor-students be trained to play Shakespeare on an open stage using contemporary methodologies?

This question is partially answered in stage combat. Stage combat training, especially the training provided with the open stage in mind, is well suited to teach actor-students the basic motor, physical as well as sensory skills necessary for performances on open stages. Fencing or unarmed fights are skills often required when performing Shakespeare’s plays. Shakespeare knew the crowd pleasing effect a good fight could have on an audience. Fights were often incorporated into Shakespeare’s plays in order to please the audience.

This question is partially answered in MacDonald's exercises. All of her exercises are intended to train actor-students the basic physical sensory skills necessary for open stages. Her exercises addressed the importance of rhythm, ensemble development, overcoming the 'startle pattern' reflex, kinesthetic awareness and speaking the text.

In the *lazzi* with text exercise the students were allowed to edit Shakespeare's text in order to fit the text to their needs. The benefit derived from this exercise was for the students to understand and to learn that they could edit Shakespeare's texts in order to fulfill the vision of their story and to make the story clearer for themselves and for a contemporary audience. The *lazzi* exercise helped the actor-students to work together and establish a common rhythm for their scenes. The physicality of the *lazzi* took the stress away from speaking the text, which made the delivery of the lines more natural. This helped the actor-students to connect to their audience.

As with the other three methodologies, *capoeira* partially answers this question. Through the incorporation of acrobatic movements, which were usually executed to a rhythm, the actor-students gained strength, stamina, and flexibility. Other side benefits included focus and concentration. These elements are valuable for performance on any stage.

- How can actor-students be trained to address and incorporate the audience?

The answer lies in the combination of the 'special skill,' 'the joke,' and the other *lazzi* exercises. These activities help to build the skills that are required for open and proscenium stages such as: physical and vocal expression, spatial awareness, ensemble work, focus and concentration, physical characterization, rhythm and confidence. In addition the actor-students got introduced to Shakespeare's text through these exercises.

Actor-students were taught to acknowledge the audience and to address and/or incorporate the onlookers into the performance.

- Is there another ‘presentational’ form of performance contemporary to Shakespeare that is in use today and of merit to consider for actor training?

Other forms of performance that were in use and are contemporaries to Shakespeare do exist and are still practiced today such as Kabuki and Noh. However, Asian performance sensibilities are different from and do not adhere to common Western experiences²⁰⁴ of theatrical performance. It is for this reason that the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell’arte* appears to be the best candidate for the answer to this question. The Elizabethans were exposed to and became familiar with the Italian *commedia dell’arte*. The benefits in training actor-students to perform on open stages, such as the New Globe, become relevant today.

- How can actor-students be trained for physical freedom and 360 degree awareness?

One of the collateral benefits of weapons and combat training is an awareness of oneself, the opponent or partner, and other things happening within the given space. MacDonald’s exercises of the elements, the archetypes and the *arrow* are geared toward the fine-tuning of the students’ sensory perception. The students are taught awareness: of themselves within the performance space, the space itself and of the other students around them.

²⁰⁴ I have been working with ‘western’ actors, and actors wanting to work with ‘western’ theatre primarily. This is the target audience. There may be opportunities to develop some of my methodologies for other types of encultured bodies and performance forms in the future.

In *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte* the actor-students learned the importance of spatial awareness. They became conscious of where they were in the performance space, the location of their fellow performers and where their audience was situated.

Of all the methodologies, *capoeira* holds the most potential to answer this question. At the heart of the exercise lies the ability to have a 360-degree awareness of the space occupied. The players learned spontaneous improvisation within such a performance space.

- How can actor-students be trained to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex?

MacDonald, based on her work with actors and actor-students, has been well aware of the enormous stress a pending performance on the New Globe stage can have on the performers. The *eagle* exercise was developed to mentally prepare the actors to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex.

The *lazzi* exercises were designed to help students to gain the confidence to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex through learning to address and to incorporate their audience.

One of the benefits of *capoeira* is that it instills confidence in the performer. This translates into the ability to focus on the activity and lessens the probability of stage fright.

- How can actor-students be trained to clarify physically the text to the audience?

Stage combat teaches the actor-students to express their character's emotions physically. It should be seen as a physical dialogue between two people and therefore qualifies as a training tool to expand the student's vocabulary for physical expression.

The *arrow*, as described, teaches the actor-students precision or form. In the *arrow*, physical expressiveness is taught by exaggerated and stylized movements. Special emphasis is placed on the awareness of the smallest twists, turns and changes of the

appendages. This exercise, if performed in front of an audience, does not need text. It is easily and universally understood.

In *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*, the actor-students learned the benefit of rhythm, i.e. the rhythm of the text, the physical action and how important it is to be in synchronisation with the ensemble in order to bring the audience onto the same rhythm. Physical expression was stressed and practiced as an accompaniment to the written text.

Capoeiristas address the audience non-verbally. The audience address sought for Shakespeare training pertains to the character's soliloquies and asides. However, accompanying Shakespeare's words with the accommodating gestures strengthens the performance and clarifies the text whilst performing on an open stage.

- How can actor-students be trained to improvise spontaneously?

Lazzi of the *commedia dell'arte* encouraged the actor-students to find their own interpretation of Shakespeare's text. This improvisation also promoted a freedom to interact with the audience.

Capoeira, while it has basic moves, holds the challenge for the performer to create and to personalize moves both on offense and defense. The ability to adapt and improvise was practice within the ever changing confines of space in which *capoeira was played*. The more sophisticated the actor-student becomes in this martial art form will determine his/her ability to improvise spontaneously.

- How can actor-students be trained for physical endurance and stamina?

Stage combat training improves coordination, strength and stamina. The benefits are comparable to those attained by runners, athletes and body builders.

All of MacDonald's exercises are intended to address the need to build the students' physical stamina, whether it is anaerobic as in the elements, the archetypes the *eagle* and *arrow*; or aerobic as in the *galloping* exercise.

Upper body strength, coordination and balance are fundamental elements of *capoeira*. This training appeared to be more effective for actor-students to build physical endurance, strength and stamina than any of the other methodologies mentioned in this thesis.

- How can a group of actor-students be trained to form a strong, intimate ensemble?

The very nature of stage combat draws the performers together. Trust is created during rehearsals, and the interdependency to ensure safety for each other and the audience strengthens the bond between performers. Group choreography is rare in stage combat. However, if the group trains together and partners are switched often, ensuring that everyone in the group has been partnered and worked through at least one project, this appears to strengthen the group as a whole and to improve the group dynamic.

In MacDonald's methodology, the elements, the *arrow* and the *galloping* are all intended to be ensemble building exercises. Exercises that rely on the interdependency of the performers qualify, as does any exercise that brings the ensemble together rhythmically on the same note.

The *lazzi* exercises point out both the weaknesses and strengths of the other performers. As the actor-students work together to form a cohesive unit, they empower one another to build on their strengths and to minimize any areas of weakness.

It becomes imperative for any actor-student who studies *capoeira* to become fully aware of his opponent. Failure to do so could easily result in bodily harm as moves are executed with the knowledge of how the opponent will respond.

The findings provide evidence that ongoing investigations on this topic are warranted. There was no intent to critique the actor training programmes currently in existence as to their merits. Schools that provide actor training are asked to recognize that the demands placed on actors who perform on an open stage, such as the New Globe, often exceed what is required for those who perform on other stages.

The four methodologies were observed, practiced and analyzed, with the considerations of the skills required for performances on open stages in mind. The outcome was different for each methodology. To make the outcome clearer they are going to be ordered in the same sequence as found in the main body of this thesis. Each methodology will have a pro and contra section, with an overall programme suggestion at the very end.

Chapter One: Phillip Stafford

Philip Stafford, the Master of Combat, has been part of the New Globe since performances were staged on the exact spot where the New Globe stage now stands in the 1970's. Stafford has been working with the New Globe education department for over twenty years, and has taught hundreds of students about his discoveries and experiences of creating and performing staged fights on open stages. His philosophy on stage combat differs from conventional stage combat teachings in three areas, which were discussed in Chapter One:

- Live blades
- Sight lines
- Verisimilitude

Stafford's philosophy was put into practice when I was granted permission to create and to perform a trident/net fight for the opening of the 2006 Roman season at the New Globe. The experiences gained and described in Chapter One are meant to encourage stage fight choreography once the actor-students have earned the basic stage combat certificate. The insights gained could be an invaluable asset to any actor-student who finds himself/herself face with the prospects of performing on an open stage.

The Pros

Stage combat forces the student-actor to work closely with a partner which created interdependency between the performers. Stage combat is an excellent tool for the development of a strong ensemble. Communication, which usually occurs non-verbally through eye contact and having to interpret the partner's body language, is extremely beneficial not only for an open stage performance, but for any performance involving an ensemble cast. Verbal, as well as non-verbal communication with the other performers makes for a stronger and more effortlessly flowing collaborative performance.

Focus and concentration become important by-products of stage combat training whether performing in an unarmed or armed fight. Remembering and executing choreography requires concentration; to aim for specific target areas and divert a full power impact right before contact occurs requires complete focus. This learning is valuable for actor-students who perform on open stages, especially ones that are open air. The focus and concentration learned in stage combat will help the performers stay on track when dealing with weather and audience related diversions.

Spatial awareness develops as the performers practice combat whilst maintaining a safe distance from each other. This spatial awareness is an essential safety tool to

protect the audience as well as the performers from possible injuries. On a stage such as the New Globe, which is raised five feet above the ground and obstructed by two pillars, spatial awareness is an absolute must.

Stage fights are commonly structured like a lot of plays, unfolding in phases, i.e. exposition, conflict, climax and resolution. Combat training is a helpful tool to teach actor-students about plays structure, and the benefits of spectacle. Therefore combat fights are also capable of standing on their own as a performance. The combat scene can be viewed as a microcosm within a macrocosm, a play within a play.

Stage combat teaches actor-students to express their characters' emotions physically. It ought to be seen as a physical dialogue between two or more people and therefore is an excellent tool for expanding the actor-students vocabulary for physical expression.

The training with heavy weapons and intricate movement, not only helps the actor-students with their coordination, but also helps them build their strength and endurance. Stage combat has been compared to a workout with lightweights and light to moderate cardio-vascular training, both of which are integral for physical performances on an open stage.

The most valuable aspect of Stafford's stage combat programme for me was the opportunity to create and perform the trident/net fight. The ability to create a fight is of great value to any director or theatre company especially one that specializes in classical theatre. Stafford's stage combat training in particular teaches skills such as precision, coordination, builds strength and stamina, verisimilitude, 360-degree awareness, and the importance of spectacle. These are important for those who perform on an open stage.

As actor-students develop a comfort level for performance in the round, they can take the next step and start to create their own fights, in which the audience, the fight partner, oneself, the choreography, text, the space, the sightlines and the spectacle all take on significance. Once the actor-students understand the principle of the sightlines for theatre in the round, they can create fights for other types of stages as well.

The Cons

Although stage combat is useful for training actor-students for performances on open stages, there are areas that are not addressed.

Since the fights are choreographed, the idea of improvisation can be potentially harmful to the performers and the audience alike. For this reason stage combat is not suited as a training tool to teach spontaneity and improvisation.

The lack of text work is worth noting. Although fights do generally have some text, the trident/net fight had none. The noises heard from the performers were grunts and other sounds unrelated to actual speech or text. Whilst this can be seen as a negative if stage combat is considered by itself, other exercises that incorporate texts such as *lazzi*, placed alongside the stage-combat training, can easily compensate for this.

Audience address and incorporation does not seem to be advisable when performing a staged fight. Since all the moves are choreographed, to invite the audience into the performance (strong improvisation factor) could be potentially disastrous. The audience may be addressed before or after, but seldom during, the fight. It may be tempting to address the audience to get a cheer, yet audience address and incorporation is generally not taught during stage combat lessons. The audience reaction to what they see is usually strong, so it cannot be said that the audience is completely ignored or dormant.

Confidence is raised when mastering new skills such as those required for stage combat. However, this isn't suitable for overcoming the 'startle pattern' reflex. Although the feeling of achievement is exhilarating, it does not address the inborn fear of falling.

Stage combat training for actor-students raises an ethical issue. Because of the dangers involved when working with weaponry, stage combat in a one-off workshop setting is almost impossible. The whole workshop would have to be spent teaching the novice students about safety when working with weaponry. The best-case scenario would be to only invite students with advanced skill-level certificates. But even then, creating a fight with an unknown weapon should not be attempted in one workshop or even in a week for that matter. To create the Retiarius fight took months. Because of the complexity of issues involved with stage-combat, it is best taught in a module setting.

Finally, my experience was not sufficient to allow me to endorse stage combat as taught by Phillip Stafford over other stage combat methodologies. I did not find evidence that the uniqueness in Stafford's teaching was better than or more effective than stage combat programmes taught in other actor-training institutions.

Skills mentioned in Chapter One:

The skills discussed in Chapter One include: timing, rhythm, footwork, eye-hand-foot coordination, safety distance, choreography, handling a weapon, physical expression, spatial awareness, peripheral vision, kinesthetic learning, handling props, physical intent, ensemble development, objective, confidence, strength and stamina.

Chapter Two: Glynn MacDonald

MacDonald's movement methodology has been in use at the New Globe for the main stage and in workshops since its first season in 1997. The exercises discussed and shown on video are:

- The elements
- The *archetypes*
- The *eagle*
- The *arrow*
- *Gallop*

The Pros

MacDonald's exercises are intended for beginner actor-students. The elements help the students to discover the physical self and the surrounding space through the sharpening of the kinesthetic sense. In the *archetypes*, MacDonald is laying the groundwork for characterization by teaching the students *Super-Objectives* with the help of her *archetypes*. With names such as: *sovereign*, *warrior*, *magician* and *lover*, these *archetypes* are potentially adaptable for the performance of Shakespeare's plays.

MacDonald composed her *eagle* exercise as an aid for the actors to overcome the 'startle pattern' reflex or stage fright. Actor-students are more likely to be vulnerable to stage fright on open stages such as the New Globe due to the closeness of the audience and the possibility of distractions. Because of the different levels explored in the *eagle* exercise, for some motivated actor-students it could be a tool for work on physical status. The status of a character and the reversal of a character's status are prominent subjects throughout Shakespeare's plays.

In the *arrow* exercise, MacDonald challenges the students to sharpen their focus, coordination, precision, balance, efficiency, expressiveness and responsiveness.

The rhythm of the play is taught in the *galloping* exercise. This gives the actor-students a physical, and therefore internal, experience of the iambic pentameter that is inherent in all of Shakespeare's verse. A side benefit of the *galloping* exercise is the cardiovascular stress exerted by the body whilst practicing. This helps to strengthen the endurance of the actor-students. It also has the added benefit of faster heart-rate recovery for performance purposes.

The Cons

MacDonald's methodology is based on a humoural theory that was viable in the days of Elizabethan theatre, but would be considered outdated today. To adequately prepare actor-students for performances on open stages such as the New Globe, the programme needs to be both modified and expanded.

One of the main differences between open and proscenium stage performances is the close proximity of the audience. If, as in the example of the New Globe stage, the audience is close and visible; the audience needs to be addressed and incorporated. The soliloquies and asides were written to address the audience.

In MacDonald's *archetypes*, she lays the groundwork for physical characterization. It could be more effective, if once the *archetypes* have been explored, work was undertaken to expand on them. Since the actor-students are taught the same physicality for all the *archetypes*, consider letting the students create their own version out of the *archetypes* introduced by MacDonald. That way the actor-students can bring some unique aspect and creativity from their own experiences and imaginations, and create a unique character. Creative work, based on the actor-students' own imaginations, is going to help them create more original and interesting work.

In the *eagle* exercise, MacDonald addresses the ‘startle pattern’ reflex. She is very aware of the stress a pending performance (in front of a visible audience) on the New Globe stage induces on the performers. Therefore, with the awareness of an extreme stressor, comes the need to develop an extreme approach to tackle the problem. Although her *eagle* exercise is designed for the stress, the actual psychophysical aspect of overcoming the fear of falling (i.e. failing) is not extreme enough in the *eagle* exercise. It is however, a stepping-stone in preparing new actor-students for more challenging exercises that lie ahead.

MacDonald’s exercises also have a strength and endurance building component. That is for the purpose of physical performances on open stages. One common component however is missing, cardio-vascular endurance. Cardio-vascular endurance will help the performers recover their breath after a more strenuous physical action, such as acrobatics, or stage combat. The only exercise in MacDonald’s repertoire, that has a strong cardio-vascular component, is the *galloping*. This, however, isn’t as strong nor practiced as regularly as needed to develop a desirable level of cardio-vascular benefits.

In the case of spontaneity and physical improvisation, which aren’t addressed at all, exercises would need to be created. Spontaneity and physical improvisation fall into the realm of skills that are of particular importance on the New Globe stage, or stages like it. Should anything go wrong, the performers need to be able to feel flexible enough to spontaneously adapt to the change and, if necessary, to improvise in order to carry on with the show.

Chapters One and Two have focused on the practice of two of the current forms of training taking place at the New Globe. Both Stafford and MacDonald have the title ‘Master’ in relation to their discipline. It has been the intent of this thesis from the beginning to document and to analyse what these current practices are.

Stafford’s work with stage combat makes a significant contribution to actor-training. This has been demonstrated by his training of actors at the New Globe. The skills taught are useful for performances on open stages.

MacDonald’s work is a step in the right direction toward successful actor training for the open stage. Her exercises are a useful introduction for the novice actor. The conclusion to this research project on MacDonald’s practice has shown that her approach to actor training has limitations when considering the full context of this thesis. I endorse MacDonald’s teaching of movement, but suggest some modifications to the existing programme. A number of additional skill training exercises could be implemented to better suit more advanced performers.

This does not negate the benefit of the experience. Since her teaching methodology has not previously been analysed, these findings are valuable and required in order to reach this conclusion.

Skills mentioned in Chapter Two:

The skills discussed in Chapter Two include: kinesthetic sense, overcoming the ‘startle pattern’ reflex, spatial awareness, super-objective, internalizing the iambic pentameter, status, precision, focus, concentration, strength, stamina, alignment, balance, consciousness, stability, characterization, minimal textual work, archetypes

Chapter Three: *lazzi*

The *lazzi*, as described and discussed in Chapter Three, are comic interruptions of the *commedia dell'arte* that delay the action rather than advance it.

In order to clarify Shakespeare's texts to the actor-students and, through them, to their audience, a more physical approach that was culturally similar (European) was needed.

Due to the discomfort observed in the students when asked to address the audience, I decided to make the introduction easier with game exercises. Therefore the chapter was broken down in four parts:

- 'Special skill' exercise
- 'Joke' exercise
- *Lazzi* without text
- *Lazzi* with text

Pros

With the exercises described and discussed in the *lazzi* section of Chapter Three the students learnt the benefits of audience address and incorporation. Once the actor-students felt comfortable enough to drop their guards and just play with the audience, it was plain to see that the performers fed off the audience, and the audience off the performers.

The students were much advanced in their physical expressions through these exercises. The clarity of their acquired non-verbal, as well as verbal communication skills through the exercises was astounding. They become more expressive physically. Physical communication is a must when working on an open stage. When playing Shakespeare, the difficulty of conveying Elizabethan English to modern audiences can be overwhelming. Clear physical expression will enhance the ability of the audience to

understand what they are seeing and hearing. Learning to be at ease and comfortable with addressing the audience helps the actor-students overcome the ‘startle pattern’ reflex.

Teaching the actor-students to see the audience as another character, or part of the show, makes the actual task of performing in broad daylight in front of strangers much easier.

The actor-students’ kinesthetic sense was sharpened during the ‘joke’ exercise. Confining their space and giving them a task (walking from one end to the other whilst telling their jokes to either side) gave them a sense of purpose and enhanced their performances.

The example text given in Chapter Three was from *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. Another sample text is a word play *Lazzo* which can be found in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act 1, scene 2:²⁰⁵

(Enter Petruchio and his man Grumio)

Petruchio:

*Verona, for a while I take my leave,
To see my friends in Padua, but of all
My best beloved and approved friend,
Hortnesio; and I trow this is his house.
Here, sirrah Grumio; knock, I say.*

Grumio:

*Knock, Sir! Whom should I knock? Is there man has
Refused your worship?*

Petruchio:

Villain, I say, knock me soundly.

Grumio:

²⁰⁵ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 32.

*Knock you here, sir! Why, sir, what am I, sir, that
I should knock you here, sir?*

Petruchio:

*Villain, I say, knock me at this gate
And rap me well, or I'll knock your knave's pate.*

Grumio:

*My master is grown quarrelsome. I should knock
You first,
And then I know after who comes by the worst.*

Petruchio:

*Will it not be?
Faith, sirrah, and you'll not knock, I'll ring it;
I'll try how you can sol, fa, and sing it.*

(He wrings him by the ears)

Grumio:

Help, masters, help! My master is mad.

Petruchio:

Now, knock when I bid you, sirrah villain!

In this *lazzo* the word play is on the word 'knock'. Petruchio wants his servant to knock on Hortensio's door. The servant suggests that Petruchio is asking for a beating.

Grumio's misunderstanding is made clear from his first line:

Knock, sir! Whom should I knock? Is there a man has refused your worship?

This kind of *lazzo* is what Mel Gordon calls set in a master's and servant's²⁰⁶ world. The *commedia* feeds upon the comic subjugation and the punishment of the

²⁰⁶ Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte*, p. 14.

defenseless and the innocent. Playing with *lazzi* and Shakespeare's texts helps the students to overcome the fear of the text and their performances come to life.

All four of the exercises were ensemble building. When working with a partner, or even alone, the audience would cheer the performers on and demonstrated a feeling of love and support amongst the group.

Cons

Some of the exercises were physically challenging. Others weren't aerobic enough to consider them beneficial in terms of gaining cardio-vascular endurance.

Although the *commedia dell'arte* is generally thought to be based on spontaneous improvisation, the work done with the *lazzi* was to the contrary. It was rehearsed. The only place that could possibly be considered as training for spontaneous physical improvisation was the 'joke' exercise.

A way of further expanding on this use of *lazzi* became apparent to me after finishing the practical project, and will be incorporated into my programme as the next step in the sequence. After the 'joke' exercise, the next step could have been for the actor-students to find a Shakespeare monologue they liked and perform it in the same way they had previously performed their jokes, i.e. two rows of audience, thus a runway, starting the monologue at one end and ending it at the other whilst telling their story to the audience on either side of them. This would add a component which directly addressed the use of text into the training programme.

An example text for this exercise can be found in *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third*, Act 1 scene 1:

[Student starts at one end of the runway]

*Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
To fright the fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.²⁰⁷*

[Student at the opposite end and exits the runway]

As in the joke exercise, I would expect the actor-students to engage in physical storytelling while doing this excerpt of the Duke of Gloucester's speech. A fun way of directing this class would be to have the students perform the monologue without using any words at all in the first round. That way all the students can see what everyone came up with physically and then in round two, they could infuse the text. There are many images to explore in this particular speech with many different levels, for example:

*And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried²⁰⁸*

Clouds, lour'd, is a good image to show physically, and it's high up in terms of level. Whereas deep, bosom, ocean buried is again a good images to perform, especially since the level is in complete opposition, (low) to the previous.

²⁰⁷ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 185.

²⁰⁸ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 185.

Skills mentioned in the *lazzi* section of Chapter Three:

The skills discussed in the *lazzi* section of Chapter Three include: audience address, audience incorporation, physical expression, vocal expression, pitch changes, storytelling, kinesthetic sense, spatial awareness, rhythm, focus, concentration, characterization, objective, spectacle, special skill incorporation, ensemble development and creating stage-business.

Chapter Three: *capoeira*

Capoeira is often described as an Afro-Brazilian martial art disguised as a dance. Although it seems very different from Shakespeare, *capoeira* met most of the skill requirements and research questions asked for in the introduction. The exercises used for the *capoeira* class were modified for the individuals' abilities and needs so that even the least coordinated person was able to participate.

Pros

In *capoeira*, the actor-students learned to improvise through the play of the game. In *capoeira* the players had to improvise at the spur of the moment, or adapt their movements due to the confines of the space in which they were playing. The spontaneous improvisation stemmed from the desire to fulfill the objective of the game. To be able to improvise or modify one's movement quickly can be valuable, especially when performing on a stage such as the Globe, which is adorned with the two obstacles (pillars) and a stage that is raised five feet off the ground.

The actor-students are conditioned for cardio-vascular endurance through the highly aerobic rhythmic movements of *capoeira*. The first beginning step, the *ginga*, ensures that the movements do not stop, but continuously flow. Through the

incorporation of acrobatic movements, which are usually executed to the rhythm, the students gain strength, stamina, and flexibility. Another side effect is focus and concentration. All of these elements are essential for performing on the New Globe stage or any stage.

With *capoeira*, the actor-students learn to fine-tune their kinesthetic sense and 360 degrees of spatial awareness. Whether the players are right side up, or upside down, the awareness of where the opponent and the audience are, is taught through practicing the game and learning to dodge, feint, attack or hide on a moment's notice.

Cons

The shortcomings of *capoeira* are related to the text or the lack thereof. *Capoeira* is a skill that takes a lot of practice and training. I would have liked to have been able to have my students train for more than just a few months. Ideally I would have liked to have introduced Shakespeare's text into the capoeira training by the second year. In year one the actor-students would get comfortable with the game. In the second year Shakespeare's text could be added to their training. In his book *Ring of Liberation*. John Lowell Lewis explains that *capoeira* is a physical conversation between (only) two players. One player acts and the other reacts. An example on how Shakespeare's text could be implemented will be explained. The text chosen as an example is from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Act two, scene 1.²⁰⁹

[Player A and Player B start with a *Jinga*, thus deciding on the tempo. Once the tempo is established, Player A plays Petruchio and starts the conversation, Player B is Katharina]

Petruchio (Player A):

²⁰⁹ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p.36.

Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear.

[Player B reacts]

Katharina (Player B):

*Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:
They call me Katharina that do talk of me*

[Player A reacts, and due to the length of the next piece there might be consecutive movements done by Player A, all of which Player B must react to physically (not verbally!)]

Petruchio (Player A):

*You lie, in faith; for you are call'd plain Kate,
And bonny Kate and sometimes Kate the curst;
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom
Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation;
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.*

[Player B is now possibly cornered. He answers with a series of attacks. I would place attacks on the words 'Moved', 'moved', 'remove', and 'moveable'.]

Katharina (Player B):

*Moved! In good time: let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence: I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.*

[Player A retaliates on moveable]

Petruchio (Player A):

Why, what's a moveable?

That is but one example on how one could add Shakespeare's text whilst playing *capoeira*. Of course I haven't completed the whole dialogue. The example was given to clarify the use of *capoeira* with the text. However, it would be difficult to introduce the text before the students have a working knowledge of playing *capoeira*.

Therefore it must be understood from the outset that *capoeira* alone is not well suited to teach actor-students to speak Shakespeare's texts or train actor-students how to perform them. Absent from the training of *capoeira* is vocal work. As discussed previously in the Introduction and in other places throughout this thesis, this programme was designed to be used as a complementary adjunct to already existing actor-training programmes. It is assumed that those programmes have courses in vocal training that include speaking Shakespeare's text. The emphasis throughout this research has been based on forms of physical performance. These may help in speaking Shakespeare's texts in additional ways that the skills taught in vocal production do not. Vocal production is not the primary focus, even though the importance of vocal training is recognized and acknowledged to be essential when it comes to performing Shakespeare. The problem could be solved if voice lessons, as is the norm, were offered concurrently to the actor-students.

Skills mentioned in the *capoeira* section of Chapter Three:

The skills discussed in the *capoeira* section of Chapter Three include: spatial awareness, overcoming the 'startle pattern reflex', physical expression, ensemble development, focus and concentration, audience incorporation, rhythm, objective, physical antagonism inherent in Shakespeare's plays, acrobatics, spectacle, cardiovascular endurance, strength, flexibility, stamina, balance, spontaneity, physical improvisation, movement modification, focus, concentration and eye contact.

Suggested models for training actor-students

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to explain why and how I believe current, traditional actor training might be modified using specific techniques suited to prepare actor-students for work on open stages like the New Globe and often associated

with, though by no means exclusive to, performance of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan plays. I have outlined specific significant abilities which are required of actors for such performances. Specific suggestions have been offered which include training exercises such as *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*, *capoeira* and modifications to existing training programmes such as for stage combat and MacDonald's methodology.

Based on the anticipation that others might choose to expand on the findings of this thesis, allow me to suggest ways that these programmes could be incorporated into current, traditional three or four-year undergraduate actor-training programmes both in drama schools and universities:

Module for open stage skill building

The first way could be to develop a module that could be inserted into existing actor training curricula in each of several semesters over the years of the undergraduate curriculum. The module would be structured in sequences, designed to be integrated throughout a three or four year undergraduate course of training. A 'one-off' module runs the risk of being quickly forgotten. As with all physical training, continuous practice and repetition is essential for improvement. For example:

First Year

Capoeira 101 - required
Meets three times a week
Basic movements

Capoeira 102 - required
Meets three times a week
Basic movements

Physical Movement for actors 101- required
Meets three times a week
Includes work on archetypes and elements

Lazzi 101- required
Meets three times a week
Includes physical storytelling,
vocalizing sounds

Second Year

Stage combat 101 - required
Meets three times a week
Emphasis on unarmed combat

Stage combat 102 -required
Meets three times a week
Rapier and dagger (leading to basic
basic certificate)

Capoeira 201 - elective
Meets three times a week
Introduction of instruments and music

Capoeira 202 - elective
Meets three times a week
Continuation of work in 1st semester

Third Year

Lazzi 201 - required
Meets three times a week
Taking text from Shakespeare to
contemporary times

Lazzi 202 - elective
Meets three times a week
Basic for outdoor performance/space
specific on and off campus

Advanced capoeira 301 - elective
Meets three times a week
Tie the application into the performance

Advanced capoeira 302 - elective
Meets three times a week
Incorporates text into performance

Advanced stage combat 201- elective
Meets three times a week
Sword, shield and other weapons

Advanced stage combat 202
Meets three times a week
Creating own fight performance
working for advanced' certification

Capoeira, the actual game, is not possible to learn in just one semester. The true grasp of the game does not set in (on a physical level) until at least six months to a year have been spent in rigorous training. In working with students from Exeter and Rutgers, I learned, that once offered a taste of how *capoeira* can and does benefit them in the development of their acting skills, several carried on with *capoeira* training in the cities in which they now reside. Because *capoeira* is fun, playful, free and improvised, it is gaining in popularity and is now available in most major cities around the world. This makes it available to students outside of their formal university training.

Specialized training for open stage skill building

Supplementary training programmes could be made available to actor-students in schools comparable to those now in existence for acting, singing, dance, mime and many other performance arts: schools such as The Actor's Centre in London, or the HB (Herbert Berghof) studio in New York. These schools or studios are available to actors at all levels and all stages of their careers. They do require teachers who are specifically trained to teach the programmes. The instructors should have the physical and practical skills, as well as the theoretical understanding, to conduct such training.

Most actor-training programs do offer some level of stage combat, though often only enough for actor-students to receive their basic certificates. For the basic certificate, generally only the unarmed and rapier/dagger fight technique are required. These skills can be safely acquired in the first year of instruction. More advanced training in stage combat could be offered either in modules that accompany actor training, or in a specialized training programme. In the advanced training there should be options for students to learn other weaponry after they have successfully passed their basic exams.

When offered as a separate, specialized training programme, this more advanced training could lead to an advanced stage combat certificate. In order to receive an advanced stage combat certificate, the actor-students would need to successfully complete and pass an additional exam, with demonstrated competency in the use of additional weapons. Depending on the student, this could be achieved in two years if classes were taught once a week. The stage combat teacher choreographs the fights during this time, thus teachers capable of such instruction would be required.

Once an advanced stage combat certificate has been acquired, I would suggest an exercise be introduced such as the trident net fight. Students could be challenged to create a brand new fight on their own, using a weapon they are not familiar with and one that is specifically selected for a theatre-in-the-round performance. Of course, the stage combat teacher should be present to offer guidance. However many of the discoveries are to be made by the actor-students.

The actor-students would benefit in three ways. First, they would gain all the benefits described in this thesis through such a programme. Second, once they graduate from drama school, they would know how to fight, and choreograph a fight, which should prove to be attractive additional credentials as they begin seeking roles in their professional careers. Third they would be qualified to instruct actor-students who wanted advanced stage combat training.

Workshops

Another supplemental training approach for actor-students, which could be offered to actor training institutions, would be workshops. These could be specially designed, specific skill-building workshops, geared towards performances on open stages. Especially for any open stages that need to train their actors who are not accustomed to perform on them. Each one-day workshop would come with a differing specific focal point in mind. For example, a one-day workshop for the New Globe could focus on overcoming the ‘startle pattern’ reflex; another on ensemble development, etc. Two-day workshops would be slightly more complex perhaps with an emphasis on audience address and incorporation at its focus. Longer workshops such as a two-weekend workshop could focus on these skills and/or something else such as a

concentration on a presentational approach to Shakespeare for the open stage. Another workshop option is to train students for the open stage without an open stage available. With the joke and the special skill exercise at its focus, a sense of the open stage could be related to those students. Methodologies utilized in these approaches could be drawn from MacDonald's methodology and the *lazzi* and *capoeira* chapter.

These suggestions for ongoing work are not rigid and in many ways provide a starting point. Whilst the conclusions reached in this thesis stem from research that lasted three years and was conducted with three different groups of students, adjustments will need to be made based on further research and experience with other groups of students. Quantitative analysis provides measureable outcomes. Since this research was not quantitative, the improvement in acting skills that resulted from the training exercises cannot be verified by statistical analysis. A longer period of training and observation would be needed in order to verify the results through quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis undertaken through my observation and students' responses has provided data as to the effectiveness of the trainings for the students. Others might choose to expand on the findings of this research which would be a way to compare findings. The only results available are my own experience as an observer-participant, and the feedback from the students. The results obtained suggest that a prolonged period of training that follows the recommendations of this thesis would be of benefit to actor-students both in terms of their performances on open stages and in terms of their health, fitness and overall well being. The experience along with the research convinces me that this sort of training would benefit actor-students in conventional actor training institutions. In the Introduction I offered a quotation from David Krasner. I believe that

the statement made by that writer, actor and director is an appropriate statement to sum up this thesis:

If university acting programs see as their mission the training of flexible performers, they must teach techniques that apply to a variety of venues. For training to function practically, programs and departments must recognize that these various approaches need not be mutually exclusive. Not only can actors be exposed to a variety of different acting techniques, these techniques can be taught in conjunction²¹⁰

Modifications will be required when adapting to a module that might be inserted throughout a three or four year undergraduate actor training programme. When given the opportunity I plan to pursue development of training modules, specialized training programmes and workshops, in an effort to continue to improve the way actor-students are prepared for the unique challenges of performance on open stages and in playing the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

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²¹⁰ Jean Dobie Giebel, 'Significant Action: A Unifying Approach to the Art of Acting,' David Krasner, (ed.), *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, p. 161.

Appendix A

The trident/net fight

Breakdown/performance

Stafford gave me free reign on the creation of the trident/net fight. This in itself was a major accomplishment to have earned his trust, and to have been given the responsibility to create a fight that was quintessentially gladiatorial and to be used for the opening of the New Globe season. I asked Stafford to be present in the rehearsals, to act as an outside eye, and to let me know whether my choreography worked or not. The fight evolved in phases, each phase building from the next. The key point for me was to be able to introduce a dramatic casting of the net, and to be able to win the fight at the end.

The reason why I wanted *Retiarius* to win, was because he seems so inferior to the *Murmillio* or *Secutor*:

To anyone unfamiliar with the conventions of gladiatorial combat, it would have looked like a rather uneven match: the elegant, lightly-clad *retiarius* against the hulking, enormously strong *secutor*. But the spectators knew better, for they had seen this type of battle many times. As the opponents squared up to face each other, thousands of bets were made all over the *cavea*, and by no means all were laid in favour of the *secutor*.²¹¹

Another reason was to make the fight available to be used in two of Shakespeare's plays. The first play in which this fight may possibly be used is *King Lear*. This fight could easily be used at the end as the Edgar versus Edmund duel. Edgar would represent the *Retiarius*, while Edmund, who had just fought in a battle against the forces of France, could easily be in *Murmillio's* armour. This matter is easily justified by the text due to Edgar being scarcely clad in his disguise as a peasant/fisherman when he challenges

²¹¹ Baker, Alan, *The Gladiator: The Secret History of Rome's Warrior Slaves*, Cambridge: Da Capo Press: 2002, p. 186.

Edmund after the sound of the third trumpet. The other possible application for the fight would be *Cymbeline*. In this play in Act V, scene 3, Posthumus gives a British Lord the account of an ‘ancient soldier’ who, with two strapping, lads defeats an army of three thousand. This ‘ancient soldier’ could easily represent the *Retiarius* whilst one man dressed as *Murmillio* represents the three-thousand-strong Roman army. During the time Posthumus is giving this account, the trident/net fight could possibly be performed on stage.

Phase 1

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 1’.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| net parry 3 | pass back | ← | thrust centre | pass forward |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | shield parry 1 | pass back |
| avoid | slip left | ← | cut to target 5 | pass forward |
| net strike to back | --- | → | --- | pass forward |

The intention for this phase was to serve as an introduction of the characters to the audience and to one another. The fighters *Retiarius* (myself) and *Murmillio* (James) are to try and intimidate one another. What can be seen in the DVD extract is that the fighters move in a circle around the stage. When observing a boxing match, it seems that moving in a circular motion seems to be the most natural course of the unfolding fight. The audience surrounded the platform stage; therefore fighting in a circular motion seemed the most natural course of action.

Using the net to parry was another discovery I made during the rehearsal process; timing in stage combat is of as much importance as it is in a verbal dialogue. If the timing is off, the dialogue or the fight will seem contrived and fail to convince the audience:

A fight is a physical dialogue where each actor is completely dependent on the timing and rhythm of the other. Each actor's movements cannot be thought of as individual, but must merge together to resemble an incredibly well-oiled machine, where the different cogs work together in unison.²¹²

The timing of the swinging of the net and the attack by *Murmillo* (James) needs close observation in this phase. The *Retiarius* (myself) is spinning the net around his left hand vertically. The attack from *Murmillo* (James) must occur between the time the net reaches from the highest point to the lowest. If the correct point of timing is missed, the net is useless and cannot be used to parry. Therefore in this particular section (the very beginning of the fight) timing is of utmost importance. In order to consistently execute this parry in the following phases and performances, the timing must be practiced rigorously. This relates to timing in performed scenes on any given stage. The execution of clear comedic action, dialogues or soliloquies, entrances and exits, and other stage business is dependent on good timing. If the timing is off, so will the performance. There is nothing more incomprehensible than a muddled badly timed scene:

If you think of a fight as a conversation with steel, you begin to see its internal rhythm. Theatrical timing requires a sort of pause of enunciation of movement for the audience to appreciate the action as it is happening; otherwise the action may happen too quickly for the audience to follow.²¹³

Phase 2

²¹² Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 189.

²¹³ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 189.

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 2’.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| trident parry 2 | pass back | ← | cut to target 1 | pass forward |
| trident parry 1 | pass back | ← | thrust centre | pass forward |
| trident parry 2 | pass back | ← | thrust centre | pass forward |
| bind over & net swipe to target 4 | pass front Left | → | shield parry 4 | slip back left |
| trident parry 3 | pass back | ← | cut to target 3 | pass forward |
| avoid | slip front left | ← | shield punch to target 5 | pass forward |
| net strike to back | pass back | → | --- | pass forward |

Phase number two is choreographically designed to give James, who plays *Murmillo*, his first incentive for a full attack. *Retiarius* played by myself, humiliated him at the end of the last phase by whipping him in front of the audience. In this phase, it can be observed how the safety distance between the two of us is kept. In the fight notation provided at the beginning of each phase, the movements of the feet are also provided. Our steps are choreographed, which is of great importance when keeping with the rhythm, and the safety distance rehearsed for the fight:

The perception of correct distance is one of the paramount responsibilities of a stage combatant and is the result of practice and the comprehension of complex interrelationships. Keeness of the eyes, readiness of observation, a sense of tempo, rhythm and space combined with controlled, regulated footwork, are all conditions for good distance perception. Differences in skill levels, and body structures of partners make sensing and striving for correct distance more difficult.²¹⁴

As can be seen by looking at either of us in the fight, whenever an attack is parried, the defender takes one step back. Whenever an attack is executed, the antagonist

²¹⁴ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 68.

steps one step forward. This has to be performed in unison, and actually makes the fight look and seem almost like a dance:

Good footwork is fundamental to the martial arts, and theatrical swashbuckling is no exception. Your feet carry you forward in attack and to safety in defense. In a real swordfight, your first slip might be your last, so perfecting hand-foot coordination was much more than a question of style. Today in performance, good footwork helps you and your partner keep the proper distance from each other. It can make a stage fight thrilling and safe, or it can put you, your partner, and the show at risk.²¹⁵

It takes a long time for a pair of fighters to find their rhythm. The rhythm and safe execution of a fight is very dependent on eye contact, which was virtually impossible due to James' visual restrictions whilst wearing the *Murmillo* helmet. Therefore the fortune of having worked with James for a number of months prior to the trident/net fight, was key to our smooth performance. It helped me read him more readily, being familiar with his physical demeanor, his vocabulary of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Phase 3

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: 'Phase 3'.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| net strike to target 5 | pass forward | → | shield parry 5 | pass back |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | shield parry 1 | slip back left |

In this third phase, I (*Retiarius*) am making my first aggressive attack attempts. What is intended for the audience, is for them to believe that I have deceptively let James (*Murmillo*) attack, and have whipped him with my net on numerous occasions. Now

²¹⁵ Richard, Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step by Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 132.

James (*Murmillo*) is aware of the painful (although not deadly) weapon the net can be, and that it not only serves as a whip, but also as a parrying device, which in the right hands can be the turning point for any fight. The swinging motion of the net is the movement that should be watched most closely here. Noteworthy is that the net is not getting caught on the prongs of the trident. This particular part of the fight introduces the importance of coordination in performance. This becomes obvious when faced with a task such as handling the trident and the net at the same time. This is made more difficult when physical movements such as stepping forward, or to the side (in the round) is part of the choreography. However, coordination is important when performing whether it is because of intricate choreography, the use of props, or other stage business. To be off balance and un-coordinated, and not secure in executing the stage business, will make yourself, and your fellow performers uneasy.

Phase 4

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 4’.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|---|---------------------------|--------|---|---------------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| trident parry 3 replacement net parry high target 1 & thrust centre | pass back pass forward | ← → | cut to target 3 sword parry 2 & shield parry 1 | pass forward pass back |
| trident parry 5 | pass back | ← | cut to target 5 | pass forward |
| croise & net strike to target 5 | pass forward | → | avoid | traverse left |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | sword parry 2 | slip left |
| --- | fall to knees | ← | open hand shield strike to back | pivot 180 & pass back |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------|
| trident parry 5 | pivot 180 & get on to one knee | ← | cut to target 5 | pass forward |
| croise & net strike to target 5 | stand up | → | avoid | pass back |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | sword parry 2 | cross front left |

This particular phase is one of the longer ones in the choreography. James, who performed as the *Murmillio*, has been attacked and humiliated by me on several occasions. This was to suggest to the audience that I, who played *Retiarius*, am the more cunning fighter. In this phase the table is turned. James, playing *Murmillio*, gave the impression during the previous phases that he had taken the time to observe the skill of the *Retiarius*, and this indicated to the audience that he had lulled the *Retiarius* into the belief that the *Murmillio* is easily beaten. James attacks, and I speed up the action. This is done to indicate to the audience that I intend to bring this fight to a quick end; only to find myself humiliated and knocked to the floor.

The importance of spatial awareness is a key observation in this phase. James' vision is impaired due to the helmet. He does not have either peripheral or depth perception. The whole weight of the safety of this portion of the fight is in the performer who plays *Retiarius*' hands. If I miscalculate, I could easily fall off the platform into the audience, possibly injuring audience members or myself. Therefore this particular sequence is excellent training for the fine-tuning of peripheral vision and spatial awareness:

This means the combatants' eyes are focused on their opponents' from the beginning to the end of the fight, simultaneously taking in the greatest possible

range of visual information from other areas. They are, in fact, developing their peripheral vision.²¹⁶

Phase 5

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 5’.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|------------------------|--------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Right Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| avoid | pass back | ← | shield beat left & slash forehand centre | pass forward |
| net strike to target 5 | pass forward | → | avoid | pass back |

We wanted to indicate to the audience that *Retiarius* felt humiliated and angry through the movements of the last phase. In this phase *Retiarius* approaches the *Murmillio* and is portraying to the audience that he is trying to lure him into a mistake. On the DVD I have slowed down the footage, so it may be observed how comfortable James and I are when working with each other. It is clearly visible in slow motion to see how much trust I have in James’ abilities. James is visually impaired with the helmet, yet it can be observed how close I let his blade get to my own body. The trust comes from the knowledge and faith in each others’ kinesthetic sense. Each of us knowing how far the blade extends from the others’ body, and being able to accurately determine the space needed to keep the blades at a safe distance:

To make stage combat a safe practice, it must be ingrained in the actor’s muscle memory through constant repetition. By slowly repeating mechanics, a thin layer of “potential habit” is placed in one’s physical and mental memory. The mind and the body begin to make the actions more natural; this is known as *kinesthetic*

²¹⁶ Keith, Ducklin and John, Waller, *Sword Fighting: A Manual for Actors and Directors*, p. 20.

learning. Each time the mechanics of a technique are repeated the layers of potential habit thicken. When a technique is practiced often enough, the action slowly becomes second nature. Eventually the pattern of movement becomes thoroughly ingrained, completely accurate and subject to instantaneous recall.²¹⁷

Note that the swipe is made in the height of the chest area. It is an unwritten law amongst combatants not to aim the blade above the shoulders.

Phase 6

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 6’.]

| Trident & Net | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| Feint to stomach, feint to target 5, feint to stomach | --- | → | React | --- |
| net parry 3 | pass back | ← | shield beat down & thrust centre | pass forward |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | shield parry 1 | pass back |
| trident parry 2 | pass back | ← | Thrust centre | pass forward |
| net strike to target 3 | pass forward | → | shield parry 4 | slip left |
| trident parry 1 | pass back | ← | thrust centre | pass forward |
| trident slash | --- | → | avoid | back off |
| backhand centre & prepare | | | | |
| net cast at target 5 | --- | → | shield parry 5 | pass back |
| thrust centre | pass forward | → | get rid of net & shield parry 1 | slip front left |
| avoid | traverse left | ← | slash backhand | pivot 90, spin & pass back |

Phase number six is the longest and one of the most dramatic phases in this fight.

²¹⁷ Dale Anthony Girard, *Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen*, p. 5.

Here the accuracy of the kinesthetic sense comes into play when casting the net, whilst trying not to get it caught on the trident. When casting the net, I am relying on my kinesthetic sense, that the body remembers how to cast the net. Other things are happening at the same time, such as eying the target (*Murmillio*), aiming about a foot above the target, and keeping the trident out of the net whilst shifting my weight and propelling myself towards the target in order to create enough momentum for the net to fly. It is essential for the net to open wide in order to achieve the intended dramatic effect. In a later section in this thesis the DVD footage of how the perfect net-cast is prepared will be shown.

Phase 7

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 7’.]

| Trident & Dagger | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Right Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| dagger parry 2 | pass back | ← | shield beat left & thrust centre | pass forward |
| dagger slash forehand centre | pass forward | → | avoid | pass back |

As the *Retiarius*, I have now lost my net after the cast in phase six. Now I pull my dagger and I am banging the trident and the dagger together. This is to indicate to the audience, that the *Retiarius* is fed up with the course of the fight and he is trying to egg *Murmillio* on in order to lure him into making a mistake. As the *Retiarius*, I am now much swifter without the hindrance of the net. This piece of choreography is a filler, and is meant to show the audience that the *Retiarius* is neither defenseless, nor lost without a net. Due to the fact that Stafford had taught me in rapier and dagger combat, I was able to

create a fight hybrid of Rapier/Dagger and just Dagger combination.

Phase 8

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: ‘Phase 8’.]

| Trident & Dagger | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| trident parry 5 | pass back | ← | cut to head | pass forward |
| dagger slash forehand centre | pass forward | → | avoid | pass back |
| trident thrust centre | pass forward | → | sword parry 2 | pass back |
| drop trident | --- | ← | shield beat disarm | --- |
| block with dagger pommel | pass back | ← | back fist shield punch to face | pass forward |
| avoid | slip front left | ← | cut to head | pass forward |

In this phase, the drama is brought to a crescendo. With the *Retiarius*’ disarmed of the trident, the audience is now meant to believe that I will lose the fight. Chased by the *Murmillo* as I try to retrieve my trident, *Retiarius*’ fate seems sealed:

Roles involving combat-conflict on the knife-edge between life and death-affect audiences most deeply.²¹⁸

When looking at the footage on the DVD, note that throughout stage combat training, portraying or showing intent physically and vocally is taught:

You already know that intent makes the biggest difference between real and stage combat. The former is competitive; the latter cooperative – a collaboration to

²¹⁸ Richard Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step by Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 20.

achieve an illusion. The biggest difference between the real and staged violence is found in the range of techniques available to the performer.²¹⁹

The particular movements that are meant to show the audience the intent, is the smash in the head with the shield, followed by *Murmillo*'s sword slashing at *Retiarius* with a beautiful follow-through. This slash is narrowly escaped by the *Retiarius*. This sequence is meant to show the audience that *Retiarius* is in serious trouble.

Phase 9

[See DVD, Chapter One, Section 4: 'Phase 9'.]

| Dagger (Left Hand) | | | Broadsword & Shield | |
|--|-------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward | | Neutral Guard | Left Foot Forward |
| Left hand dagger parry 3 | Pass back | ← | Cut to target 4 | Pass forward |
| Grab wrist with right hand, lift & stab centre | Pass forward | → | Attempt shield parry 1 & die | Pass back |

Phase nine marks the final sequence of this fight. Both fighters have shown the audience that they have humiliated each other throughout the fight. It now looks as though *Retiarius* is going to die. James, playing the *Murmillo* is now showing the audience that he is so sure of himself that he forgets about the speed with which *Retiarius* is historically known to operate. *Retiarius* manages to parry *Murmillo*'s cut to the head and stabs him with the dagger in the center.

²¹⁹ Richard Lane, *Swashbuckling: A Step by Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Sword Play*, p. 113.

Appendix B

Elements

Earth

In this posture the actor-student is to stand with his/her legs spread apart, feet flat on the ground, the knees bent and the arms stretched out to the sides. This is done whilst keeping the spine and head upright. The head is delicately balanced on the neck without strain, and the eyes are looking straight ahead.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1.1: *earth*.]



Earth element posture

This was how MacDonald described the *earth* element:

Earth is already inherent in me. It's the idea of weight, of structure, of density, of immovability in one way. So, the bones, the muscles, the ligaments, the tendons, the joints, the eyeballs, the teeth, the hair, anything that can be actually 'In fleshed', we consider as the *earth*. So when we go to this movement, the arms are outstretched and the legs bent, so that I am putting myself into an incredibly balanced, very stable, almost like the

beginning of some of the Japanese movements. I am giving the body a chance to really depend on its skeletal structure.²²⁰

Through the exercise of the primary *elements* the actors-students begin to realize that performers need to have a strong physical base:

To be expressive, the actor's body must be physically capable of reflecting or making actual movement. This will not be possible unless the actor develops his breath support, alignment, stamina, balance, and flexibility, which requires body-level training.²²¹

This wasn't meant to imply that all actors needed to be muscular and toned. Indeed, to a certain extent it was a distraction from the more important realization that physical fitness was not based on the physical shape, but on the strength and the endurance of the performer. This strength and endurance could be achieved by any physical type and not only by the muscled and the toned. The actor-students realized that they needed to train their muscles and to create strong muscle memory and dependable bodies.

In the *elements* the nervous system started to react and muscles began to shake because the *elements* were postures not practiced in everyday life, and therefore the muscles were not trained to sustain them:

The dilemma one faces with *earth* is that people aren't strong. They have frail skeletons and underdeveloped muscles. So when you are doing the exercises, it is very demanding.

There is red and white muscle. White muscle is used for weight bearing and lifting. If you take a body-builder they have quite a degree of white muscle; the white muscle is also connected with quite static movement. The red muscle is there for endurance and longevity. It gives us the ability to keep going. If you don't use the red muscle, over time it converts to white. If I am not really stretching and using and really filling my *earth-*

²²⁰ Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005.

²²¹ Nicole Potter, *Movement for Actors*, p. 81.

size, I'll turn into something like a series of little boulders. What I am really looking for in my *earth* are rolling hills like the Sinai.²²²

The *earth* posture was about the elongation and use of the red muscle-fibre. It was also about stability, balance, and the development of the kinesthetic sense²²³. Once there was command of the posture, e.g. ability to release into it and hold it for a prolonged period of time (almost effortlessly), the actor-students could bring that consciousness inside themselves and feel not only the lifting of the arm, but more importantly feel the weight of the arm. Once the actor-students bent, they could feel the thigh muscles work, and really experience the fact that the thigh muscles were the biggest muscle bulk in the body. The *element* exercise was for the students to learn about their own bodies (getting to know themselves), listening to the body's responses and using those responses for performance purposes.

Once *earth* had been established, Glynn moved the students into *water*.

Water

In the *water* posture everything moved forward. The feet were still planted solidly on the floor; the knees were still bent. Only the torso fell forward letting the arms and the head flow down.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1.2: *water*.]

Now in the *water* every ounce moves forward and everything falls. Immediately, if that's done properly, you will feel the release. All the kind of bits in you just ahh (sigh of relief), the eyes slightly water as the tear ducts prick.²²⁴

²²² Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005.

²²³ The kinesthetic sense is the awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles and the joints.

²²⁴ Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005



Water element posture

It just goes and because you don't have to maintain that posture everything has a chance to just flow a bit more. I suppose it's a little bit like when someone faints, you tell them to stick their head between their legs, and it's allowing the blood-flow back into the brain. As the blood flows back into the brain a lot of other things happen, so when we look at the water in nature itself we understand a bit. We can actually see the veins. We don't really listen to the sound of sloshing inside us unless it's something like our tummies gurgling; you know a little spine tic release. The water itself, as soon as you go into a hospital and someone puts a stethoscope on you or wires you up, there are incredible sloshing noises going on the whole time. We really don't understand the force of the water within us, unless of course we are involved in a deep emotional response like suddenly being sick, or suddenly crying, or suddenly being so frightened we accidentally shit ourselves. To understand how much water is just slurping around in the body, you only have to watch someone after they have had a bad oyster to see a projectile of vomit. The water within us is incredibly powerful, and it is contained within us.

When we think of sloshing, there is an extraordinary immediacy when one breaks out in a sweat, when one is frightened, particularly for an actor if they are suffering from stage fright.²²⁵

An emotional response was not uncommon when practicing the *water* element, after holding the strenuous *earth* element for a while, the sudden release in *water* could affect the actor-students emotionally:

Quite often people do cry in the *water*. Yet also you can sometimes get a sort of ahhh (sound of relief); just a sigh that they don't have to hold it together anymore, sometimes laughter.²²⁶

Once the actor students had explored this posture enough, i.e. the body had been able to rest and recuperate, and enough time had been given to gain awareness of the different body parts engaged; it was time to move to the next posture.

Fire

Fire was again a strenuous posture. From *water* the practitioner was to shoot up into a standing position with the arms stretched up and the palms touching.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1.3: *fire*.]



Fire element posture

²²⁵ Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005

²²⁶ Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005

The *fire* is my nervous system; the nervous system is defined by some neurologists as little mice running underneath my skin... I think when you get together in the *fire*, and you press your hands together and you are really demanding that you honor those nerve endings, and then I think you can get a response which is deeper than we dare to go to in daily life. We have great control over nerve endings... So when you get an actor who is thick, and by thick I mean blunted in his nervous appreciation both in himself as well as anything else that's going on, when he/she goes to the *fire* sometimes he/she will get very angry.²²⁷

Air

Air is the element we are so absolutely dependent upon. You only have to see an asthmatic to see the utter terror when he goes ah, ah, ah breathing in but he cannot get the breath out. It's terrifying when you watch someone with pneumonia or bronchitis or just in fear, in great fear. Absolutely terrifying, when you watch someone fainting then you know²²⁸

In this posture, the actor-student released the arms, turned the palms outwards with the back of the hands still touching, then slowly lowered them until the hands came to a rest beside the hips.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 1.4: *air*.]

Air keeps us alive. The first breath and the last breath in life are expirations. Babies clear their lungs with their first cry. I breathe out. Everyone is standing around the deathbed waiting. No breath comes in. They say, 'She's dead.' You are gone.²²⁹

²²⁷Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005

²²⁸Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005

²²⁹Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005



Air element posture



Air element posture

MacDonald used these four *elements* in her classes when teaching her movement methodology at the New Globe. Whether the students were professional actors, teachers, students from six years and older, New Globe practitioners or university drama students, they all had to work with the *elements* while working with MacDonald. What was really

extraordinary about these *elements* was the emotional response they were likely to evoke.

When asked about this, MacDonald had this to say:

I think the glorious thing about the elements is that you never know what you are going to get. The expectation perhaps in *earth* will be grounding, when I think of my muscles and ligaments I'll be grounded, and maybe not!

And when I get to the *water* that I will release, and maybe not!

It's so individual, that because it is done rigorously and unindulgently then wherever that person's body is they will respond to the elemental need as they go into it. If they need to be in *earth*, that's where the release will come. If they need to hit their *fire*, that's where the release will come. It does seem that the element that hasn't been recognized, perhaps I ought to put it this way: the element that has been unacknowledged in them, will be the one in which they find the emotional release. If we think of our neurosis as a beach ball, and I've been holding my beach ball under the water, and I have been pushing down anything that I don't want to address, then when I go to the physicalization of the element, suddenly the beach ball pops up and I can let go. It can be in any element at any time, and it can change.²³⁰

With a possible release of emotions as stated above, it was quite interesting to observe what happened when actor-students got into the postures and spoke. First, the desired alignment was taught and practiced in the training. Once the alignment was established and the body was fit enough to sustain the posture, MacDonald proceeded by having the actor-students add a word (any word that came to their minds) whilst holding the posture. The point was not to get into the posture and just speak, but to first of all experience the *element*, i.e. feel its effects before starting in on the text.

In a more advanced progression of this practice, MacDonald had the students working in pairs. This was done to sharpen their kinesthetic sense and their spatial awareness:

²³⁰ Interview with Glynn MacDonald in 2005

In a movement for actors class designed to teach an actor how to connect emotionally, one should be learning to feel one's own body; use impulses within one's body; connect through the senses, the room and others; and begin to simultaneously integrate thoughts and images.²³¹

When the student actors were facing one another and going through the *elements*, they were instructed to do so simultaneously.

The *archetypes*

Archetype is defined in the dictionary as 'prototype', the type from which all types derive. The same belief was held by Michael Chekhov, who in his book, *To The Actor*, describes the psychological gesture, which according to Chekhov will lead to the inner emotional impulse of the character. In this sense the body is used as a medium in order to connect the conscious with the unconscious through the *archetype*, or the *archetypal* movement Chekhov calls psychological gesture:²³²

There are two kinds of gestures. One we use both while acting on the stage and in everyday life – the natural and usual gesture. The other kind is what might be called the *archetypal* gesture, one which serves as an original model for all possible gestures of the same kind. The Psychological Gesture belongs to the second type. Everyday gestures are unable to stir our will because they are too limited, too weak and particularized. They do not occupy our whole body, psychology and soul, whereas the Psychological Gesture, as in archetype, takes possession of them entirely.²³³

MacDonald's objective with the *archetypes* was not unlike Chekhov's, as a subconscious model that was embedded into the collective unconscious that gives the idea of a character type as a whole. *Archetype* facilitation was the process of connecting

²³¹ Nicole Potter, *Movement for Actors*, p. 231.

²³² Chekhov was very much a believer of Rudolf Steiner's belief system called Anthroposophy, and the art of movement and speech called eurythmy (visible speech). It is supposed to refine non-verbal acting and help develop a harmonious body.

²³³ Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*, pp. 76 and 77.

with an *archetype* within oneself. This was a useful tool to create and inspire a library of character traits for performances on the stage.

When we have looked at the elements earlier, it was so that we could begin to analyze our elemental self and what we are made of. For me the next question was: here I know myself, and know who I am, but what are the roles which I play? The reason why archetypes are so important is because they give us a chance to explore behavioral patterns, which in our normal lives we don't get to do. The *sovereign* is very rarely used in the 21st century, and what often comes up in classes is that there are no real sovereigns anymore. There are no people who really rule with a sense of real divine authority.²³⁴

MacDonald in her methodology only used four *archetypes*: the *sovereign*, the *warrior*, the *magician* and the *lover*.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 2: *archetypes*.]

These four *archetypes* are practiced rigorously in class. Each of these *archetypes* has their own posture/physicality. This is not to imply that these postures are stationary, to the contrary, they are mobile postures and the students are asked to experience and explore.

The *sovereign*

As the student-actors explored the *sovereign*, they were asked to stand straight. The actor-students were then asked to take their hands, and to press each palm to the side of the head above the ears. This was to represent the crown.

So, we looked why the hands are being placed around the hollow crown, and it's like a band, like something coroneted. It's like a circle. It's like something around the whole skull as the hands press together. You really begin to feel the dimension of the skull. We call the top of the head the crown. We are moving into the area of understanding what it is to really stand at your full stature. Then at the same moment that you are rising up to the crown, you are also thinking about the shoulder blades gliding back and down behind you. In the esoteric understanding

²³⁴ Interview with Glynn MacDonald at River Court Place in 2006.

of it, it is the divine right of kings this long lineage that you have come from, so that when you begin to move within this postural reflex you begin to feel that antagonistic action of the head moving forward in space as the shoulder blades glide back down. There is a real antagonistic action and this seems to give – over the years one has watched it – a natural authority to the movement.²³⁵



The *sovereign* posture

The *warrior*

In the *warrior*, the actor-students were again asked to stand straight.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 2.2: *warrior*.]

This time they were to take their left hand and shield their hearts, while the right arm shoots straight up in the air representing a sword.

²³⁵ Interview with Glynn MacDonald at River Court Place in 2006.



The *warrior* posture

The *magician*

In the *magician* the actor-students were asked to cover their hearts with the left hand.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 2.3: *magician*.]

They were to bend the torso forward, to bend their knees, and to look over the left shoulder. The right arm was to trail behind the body, while the actor-students were to spin in the left direction.



The *magician* posture

The *lover*

In the *lover*, the actor-students were to stand upright again.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 2.4: *lover*.]

The hands were to cover the heart. Then the students were asked to move forwards, and when they felt compelled to share their feelings, they were to open up the arms to the side.



The *lover* posture



The *lover* posture

The *eagle*

This exercise was different from the elements or the *archetypes*. It started out with the actor-students standing straight.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 3: The *eagle*.]

Their arms were raised towards the heavens, and with the sound of MacDonald's drum they were to immediately reach up and out, and bend forward bringing the arms back up behind them almost in a full rotation. This beginning of the exercise was reminiscent of Vsevolod Meyerhold's 'dactyls', which were performed at the beginning and at the end of his actor training exercises, the études:

The dactyl begins and ends each étude. It gathers the performers attention together and sets a rhythmic tone.²³⁶



The *eagle* exercise

²³⁶ Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p. 141.



The *eagle* exercise

The *eagle* exercise is about finding a way out of the egg; the egg of fears really and then to stretch the wings and to look down into the void; then stepping into that void of our fears and conquering them while flying over it.²³⁷



The *eagle* exercise

The arrow

The *arrow* was an exercise done in ten steps.

²³⁷ Interview with Glynn MacDonald at River Court Place in 2005.

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 4: The *arrow*.]

MacDonald called out the commands and the students performed them. The ten steps were as follows:

1. Foot
2. Look
3. Indicate
4. Consider
5. Open Heart
6. Choose Arrow
7. Place Arrow
8. Change Grip
9. Pull Through
10. Fire

Once the sequence had been practiced enough for the actor-students to retain the succession of moves, the rhythm of the movement was no longer dictated by MacDonald's vocal commands, but by the beat of the drum.



The *arrow* step 1



The *arrow* step 5 (open heart)

Galloping

The students were asked to stand and to place their left hand on their left hip and to extend the right arm forward as if holding the reins of a horse:

[See DVD, Chapter Two, Section 5: *galloping*.]

Listen to your heartbeat when you have been exerting yourself, or listen to a baby's heartbeat – it goes “de-dum, de-dum, de-dum”; weak strong, weak strong, weak strong; - / - / - /.²³⁸

²³⁸ Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, p. 123.



Galloping exercise

Then, to the sound of the drum the students were to gallop around the space. MacDonald employed this exercise to give the actor-students a clear physical and therefore inner experience of the iambic pentameter that is inherent in Shakespeare's verse. The discipline of keeping the rhythm of short long, short long was a physically demanding exercise. Once the exercise had been established and all the students were able to perform it satisfactorily, MacDonald introduced Shakespeare's text into the exercise. This physical exercise was beneficial to any performer who was to play Shakespeare. Understanding the rhythm was essential to understanding what Shakespeare was trying to convey because the rhythm directed the students as to which words needed to be stressed. In order to make Shakespeare clear to an audience, it was important that the performers understood what they were saying.

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