

**Meditation in motion to mindfulness in performance:  
a psychophysical approach to actor training  
for Thai undergraduate drama programmes**

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**to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Practice (Drama)  
in April 2012**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the ways in which an actor training scheme can be constructed to allow the participants to directly apply the principles of training to their work in the moment of performing. Subsequently, my aim is to employ this actor training approach alongside or as an alternative to the current acting courses in undergraduate drama programmes in Thai universities.

Three practical projects were carried out as part of the research. In the first project, I attempted to identify essential areas of enquiry in a psychophysical actor training approach, and the tasks that needed to be tackled by an actor in rehearsal and performance that allow what may be considered the quality of an actor's presence to emerge. In the second practical project, I examined the function of meditation in motion as an actor training tool that enables the participants to tackle their performance tasks. In the third practical project, I explored the ways in which meditation in motion can be employed in a university actor training course in Thailand to enhance the students' mindfulness in performance.

This thesis argues that Buddhist concepts of meditation and mindfulness are beneficial to the course facilitator in terms of the structuring of an actor training course, and to the students when approaching performance tasks. The main result of this research is a psychophysical approach to actor training, focusing on the practice of meditation in motion and the Buddhist concept of mindfulness of the present, designed specifically for Thai undergraduate drama programmes.

Moreover, this thesis demonstrates a move away from the East-West binary towards a more localised and customised approach to actor training in Thailand and the utilisation of resources within the Thai or the broader Asian culture. It also opens up other possibilities of applying Thai or Asian philosophies to performance training, without relying on the Western perspectives on theatre and performance.

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## List of accompanying materials

### DVD: Video clips, referenced in the text

- 1 An example of *Khon* performer training: classes of three character types: *ling* (monkey), *yak* (demon), and *phra* (male lead), recorded by Grisana Punpeng on 27 August 2010, at the College of Dramatic Arts (*Witthayalai Natasin*), Bangkok, Thailand

### Clips from the second practical project

- 2 An example of the slow-motion walk exercise
- 3 The comparison between Becca's ways of walking in the slow-motion walk exercise on 7 February and 15 March 2011 (shown in four-times fast forward)
- 4 Niharika's slow-motion walk on 22 March 2011
- 5 Takehiro's work on his improvisation task in rehearsal and his work on the performance score
- 6 Becca and Niharika's image work on the play, *Push Up*: 100 percent on the outside/100 percent on the inside, with added key lines

### Clips from the third practical project

- 7 A variation of the slow-motion walk, incorporating the images of wind, fire, earth, and, in this specific example, the image of soap bubbles
- 8 An example of Phillip Zarrilli's yoga sequence, employed in the training
- 9 An example of Katsura Kan's Wind (I) sequence, employed in the training
- 10 An example of the exercise Lane Work (Viewpoints), employed in the training
- 11 A comparison between the slow-motion walk (grid pattern) and the exercise Grid Work (Viewpoints)

**Another DVD, containing clips of the performances in the first, second and third practical projects, is included in Appendix A**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jane Milling, whose wide knowledge and inspirational guidance have been of great value. I could not have completed this thesis without her understanding and generous support.

I would like to thank my former supervisor, Dr Rebecca Loukes, who helped me shape the research during the first steps into the study. Her academic support and encouragement are greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank Professor Phillip Zarrilli for his insightful suggestions, and for being such an inspiring teacher. My warm thanks also go to my examiners, Dr Martin Welton and Dr David Roesner, and my second supervisor, Dorinda Hulton, for their helpful advice and detailed responses to my thesis. I also thank Professor Graham Ley for his continual support and an opportunity to assist him in one of his modules.

I am grateful to all participants within my practical projects, namely Becca Savory, Niharika Negi, Takehiro Kawase, and the students at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, for their dedication and enthusiasm throughout the projects.

Big thanks are due to my colleagues and friends who have supported me throughout the journey: Sukanya Sompiboon, Sawita Diteeyont, Pimprae Buddhichiwin, Paveena Chamchoy, Kingkan Ketsiri, Pun Chen, Tzu Hu, I-Lien Ho, Yi-Chen Wu, Sunhee Kim, Eunjoo Han, Maria Papadaki, Ioannis Souris, Effrosyni Mastrokalou, and my classmates in the Intercultural Performer Training module.

Thanks also go to the staff at the Drama Department, especially Jon Primrose, Gayatri Simons, and Michelle Yeates, and the students throughout my three years as a teaching assistant.

Above all, I would like to thank four special people in my life: my parents, Piyaphan and Tarudee Punpeng, and my brother, Pagasit Punpeng, for their endless support, patience, and unconditional love; and Yu, Pongsiri Tejavibulya, for always being there for me. This thesis is dedicated to them.

## Introduction

As a theatre practitioner in Thailand, I have always been interested in exploring the techniques and approaches an actor may employ in a wide range of theatrical performances available today in Thailand. As a university drama teacher, however, I find that the scope of actor training methods on offer at university level in Thailand is rather limited. In the first few years of my teaching, I was assigned to teach ‘acting’ according to the descriptions in the curriculum, and based on the method that is widely practised and considered ‘correct’ by many Thai drama teachers today. The problem for me was I did not find what I taught useful in my own theatre practice; the acting approach focusing on textual analysis and realistic representation did not allow me to fully tackle performance tasks in the immediate moment of performance. To put it simply, this thesis is a response to that problem. My first research question is ‘how can an actor training scheme be constructed to allow the participants to directly apply the principles of training to their work in the moment of performing?’. Subsequently, my aim is to employ this actor training approach alongside or as an alternative to the current acting courses in undergraduate drama programmes in Thai universities. This actor training, which will be useful in performance practice for me, as a teacher/director, and my students, needs to be relevant to both the Thai culture and contemporary theatre and performing arts in Thailand. What is presented in this thesis, however, is not a fully formed actor training method, or a manual that can be used by any drama teacher, but a set of principles, discoveries, and analyses, essential to the development of the training.

Before engaging in the main discussion of the training scheme, I shall provide an introduction to several issues relevant to this PhD research. First, I will attempt to describe the common approach to actor training among the Thai university drama programmes, and the current problems related to it, before moving on to explain how my actor training scheme could provide solutions to those problems, which will be of great benefit to the Thai students, as well as to the field of actor training in the Thai and global contexts.

## **1. Acting pedagogies in Thailand's university drama programmes**

Towards the beginning of my research (August-September 2009), I conducted a survey on the current acting courses offered in contemporary drama and theatre programmes in a selection of Thai universities. Because these courses are situated in the wider context of drama and theatre programmes, I intend to start with a discussion of the programmes before moving on to the acting courses situated within them. I will refer specifically to six university drama programmes to provide a range of examples, based on my five-year experience working as a university teacher and as a theatre practitioner in Bangkok. Although the acting courses are located in various faculties and departments (for example, some are located within the faculties of fine and applied arts, some are in the faculties of communication arts), and their characteristics differ in many areas, the selected programmes can be grouped into two categories: 1) the programmes with the highest reputation and recognition and 2) recently founded programmes which are currently active in making contributions to the field of performing arts in Thailand. Category 1 includes programmes at Chulalongkorn University (CU), Thammasat University (TU), Srinakharinwirot University (SWU), and Bangkok University (BU), while in category 2, programmes at Dhurakij Pundit University (DPU) and Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (SSRU) were selected.

### **Programme objectives**

The programme objectives represent the expected outcome of the programme as a whole, and the direction of the relevant courses, including the actor training courses. Based on the official curriculum documents obtained in September 2009 from the six universities, each programme usually contains a set of three to four curriculum objectives, one of which is specifically related to a commitment to the delivering of competent graduates. Examples of this are as follows:

- To produce graduates who are well equipped with knowledge and capability in dramatic arts, theoretically and practically (*Bachelor of Arts in Dramatic Arts Curriculum, Chulalongkorn University, 2008, my translation*)
- To create graduates with knowledge and skills required as foundation for drama, which could be applied in the entertainment industry and social



development (*Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama Curriculum, Thammasat University, 2009, my translation*)

- To produce graduates in performing arts with skills, knowledge and experience in the integration of Thai and international performing arts, with moral and ethical qualities, responsibility for the profession, able to work professionally as an actor, performing arts manager and creator, with theoretical and analytical skills (*Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts in Performing Arts Curriculum, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University 2009, my translation*)

The objectives above seem to suggest that students who graduate from these programmes are expected to be competent drama practitioners, capable of performing required tasks in a professional performing arts setting. Based on this information, I would expect the students in one of these programmes to be exposed to a variety of acting pedagogies, all of which aim to equip them with an ability to adapt to various styles of performing arts offered today in Thailand. However, this is not the case, and I shall argue that there is a discrepancy between the programme objectives, what is being taught and what is available in terms of career prospects.

### **Career prospects**

At several institutions, there has been a growing concern about the career prospects of graduates from contemporary drama programmes, as more graduates find it difficult to secure positions directly related to their studies. At DPU, for example, based on my interviews with recent graduates and faculty members, although the programme is named ‘Applied Performing Arts’, the courses do not represent the majority of performing arts available in Thailand. Therefore, in a meeting concerning the revision of the performing arts curriculum at DPU, the Dean of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Dr Sulak Sriburi, expressed her interest in including a greater variety of approaches in performing arts within the curriculum, which will also allow the graduates to find more job opportunities within the wider field of performing arts (Sriburi, personal communication, 1 September 2009). In addition, DPU’s first cohort of drama graduates commented that being taught using only the Western contemporary style of theatrical arts limits their career opportunities (personal communication, 10 November 2008). A few of them were recruited in the Thai television and film industries; some have found opportunities in special events management, while many

others have moved on to an entirely different industry. Only three out of 18 graduates from the class of 2008 have secured jobs in the performing arts related professions, none of which involves contemporary, western-style theatre practice (DPU Applied Performing Arts graduates, personal communication, 10 November 2008).

This problem clearly reflects the lack of compatibility between the programme objectives and the outcomes. While this may pose no threat to the drama programmes in institutions with higher reputations (CU, TU, SWU, and BU, in particular), the issue concerning today's career prospects needs to be taken into consideration, especially when these drama curricula are revised, usually every five years.

### **Actor training courses**

Within the Thai drama and theatre programmes, the main form of actor training is offered in courses commonly entitled 'Acting'. The notion of acting as a distinct modern Western practice was first introduced in Thailand's university education in 1971 in the Department of Dramatic Arts, Faculty of Arts, CU (Department of Dramatic Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2009, p. 6). Since then many other major universities, both public and private, which have offered modern, western-style drama and theatre programmes at undergraduate level, following CU's curriculum, would give their series of actor training courses the title 'Acting'. While the word is broadly defined in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* as 'the art of performing in theatre, especially using the actor's voice and body' (Allain and Harvie, 2006, p. 127), the series of acting courses developed then at the Department of Dramatic Arts, and since then at various universities in Thailand, seem to follow a particular method of actor training: a naturalistic, psychological, realist paradigm, to be precise.

All courses entitled Acting are structured into a three-to-four-level sequence: whereas the first and second levels (named *Acting I* and *II*) are compulsory core courses, the third and fourth (*Acting III* and *IV* or *Advanced Acting* in some institutions)

are usually elective or specialised courses.<sup>1</sup> This sequence suggests that, in order to master acting, students must pass all four levels sequentially, and as this sequence is the main actor training route, this is the only pathway on offer to fully understand acting and complete a degree in drama or theatre. Moreover, this also gives the impression that, if the students complete all levels of acting courses, then they have become an expert in acting, whatever the word implies.

Looking at the list of acting courses offered by the programmes selected for my survey, it can be noted that the words included in the descriptions are closely linked to the style of naturalistic, psychological, realist paradigm. These words, some of which could be identified as the chapter titles of the book *An Actor Prepares*, by Konstantin Stanislavski and translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (1936), are imagination, concentration, relaxation, textual/script analysis, objective, action, role interpretation, character analysis, belief, truth, sincerity, contextual research, naturalism, naturalistic acting, Stanislavski, and psychology. Based on this evidence, it is clear that the psychological realism approach to acting is the main, if not only, pedagogy of actor training in the selected examples, and perhaps, in most Thai university drama programmes.

At one of the oldest and most respected universities in Thailand, TU, students enrolled in the drama programme at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts are expected to learn ‘basic acting, role interpretation, script vocalising, imagination of mood, feeling and emotion in accordance with the scenes and the roles’ in the first compulsory actor training course (*Acting 1*). In *Acting 2*, students are taught ‘advanced acting, role interpretation’, while other styles of drama apart from realistic plays will also be studied (*Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts in Drama Curriculum, Thammasat University 2009*, my translation). Similarly, at another renowned drama programme in Thailand, at SWU, many of whose graduates have found success in the Thai television, music and commercial theatre industries, ‘script analysis and naturalistic acting’, ‘character analysis and contextual research’ are emphasised at the early stage of the programme’s

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<sup>1</sup> Core Courses must be taken in order to finish the programme, whereas in elective courses, students are free to choose elective courses based on their personal interest (also depends on the availability of courses offered in each semester). For specialised courses: after students have chosen their choice of pathway (e.g. acting and directing), they must take these courses, which may be core or elective courses, accordingly.

actor training (*Acting 2*) (*Bachelor of Fine Arts in Performing Arts Curriculum, Srinakharinwirot University 2006*).

However, not only in the institutions with long standing reputation for their graduate success record, but also in two recently founded drama programmes in Thailand, at SSRU and DPU, ‘Naturalist acting’ is stressed throughout the whole series of acting courses in the Performing Arts Curriculum (*Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts in Performing Arts Curriculum, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University 2006* and *Bachelor of Fine Arts in Applied Performing Arts Curriculum, Dhurakij Pundit University 2005*).

Among the university drama programmes in Thailand, the most noticeable evidence of the psychological realism approach to acting can be found in the Department of Performing Arts at BU, which was the first private-run university to offer a Bachelor’s degree in performing arts in Thailand, and is well-known for its famous graduates who are now working in the entertainment industry, and for its commercially successful stage performances. The descriptions of its actor training courses are as follows:

**Fundamental Acting I (Core Course/Sequential/Compulsory)**

The study of acting theories, focusing on the correct understanding of acting, by emphasising truth and sincerity in performance; basic practical exercises, which are physical expressions, relaxation, breath, movements, correct way of using voice in performance and sensory awareness.

**Fundamental Acting II (Core Course/Sequential/Compulsory)**

The study of truth in acting, focusing on the feelings, senses and experiences, which can be used as resources for an actor’s creative works; solo performance drawn from an actor’s experiences or events that the actor can comprehend and engage in the most, which will lead to a truthful performance and a discovery of truth in performance.

**Advanced Acting (Elective Course/Sequential)**

Practice of high level acting, with an emphasis on individual actor’s acting solutions and development (*Bachelor of Communication Arts in Performing Arts Curriculum, Bangkok University 2009, my translation*)

What these descriptions seem to suggest is that ‘truth and sincerity in performance’ is the ‘correct understanding’ of acting, which will be taught at the first stage of actor training at the Department of Performing Arts, BU. The notion of truth in acting is explored and elaborated further in the second course, namely *Fundamental Acting II*, in which the students will be guided to use past experiences as their resources

to project a truthful performance. In *Advanced Acting*, the final course in the actor training series, the course instructor teaches ‘high level’ acting, while developing each student’s acting abilities and her/his capacity to solve problems in performance. No further explanation is given for this course, but it is reasonable to assume that the actor training approach provided is the same as in the previous two courses; however, more attention is given to individual students, ensuring that they can thoroughly apply in various performances the acting techniques learnt previously.

Although no specific style or approach is mentioned in the course descriptions, it is evident from several keywords that the psychological realism approach to acting is employed in this series of courses at BU. To be more specific, the course descriptions above match well with the following description of Method acting:

An emphasis on *truthful behaviour* [...] The actor works from his or her passions and emotions [...] [he] *personalises* the role, i.e. draws from the self, from his or her emotional, psychological or imaginative reality, bringing into view aspects of one’s memories, life experiences and observations that correlate with the role. (Krasner, 2010, p. 146, original emphasis)

By not mentioning that this series of three-level acting courses follows the Method acting and the psychological realism approaches, it seems to give the impression to readers and to the students enrolled in the programme that there is only one way to approach acting and the method employed in this series of acting courses will allow the students to achieve the ‘correct understanding’ of acting.

Sawita Diteeyont, one of the faculty members at the Department of Performing Arts, BU, explained that the department’s curriculum was designed by several teachers at the Department of Dramatic Arts, CU, so most of the courses were created, based on the same principles as those presented in the acting courses offered at CU. However, although the core approach to acting, directing, and script writing is psychological realism and textually based analysis, all instructors employ their own methods in class, and the final projects that the fourth year students have to undertake in order to graduate from the programme vary in styles and presentation (personal communication, 3 December 2009). Based on my observation, a majority of lecturers teaching acting and other drama subjects at the Department of Performing Arts, BU are graduates of either Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, or Bangkok Universities’ drama programmes. Looking at the faculty staff list, this is also the case in recently founded drama programmes, such as

those at SSRU and DPU, which implies that the acting paradigm on which the three leading programmes are based would also form the basis for the other recent ones as well.

The other type of actor training offered in the drama and theatre programmes is entitled 'Movement', which is usually an elective course. At the Department of Dramatic Arts, CU, the course *Movement for Stage* is described as follows:

Physical preparation for the actor with emphasis on relaxation, balance and basic techniques of movement for stage' (*Bachelor of Dramatic Arts Curriculum, Bangkok University 2008*).

Bangkok University's *Stage Movement* course is explained as thus:

Theory and practice of using muscles and body parts to move effectively; use of body as a medium of meaningful expression and feelings; use of space and movements on stage; exercises in muscle relaxation; physical preparation; and anatomical correction for actor's movements (*Bachelor of Communication Arts in Performing Arts Curriculum, Bangkok University 2009, my translation*).

Based on these descriptions of the movement courses and those of the acting courses previously discussed, it is evident that, in one type of actor training, namely *Acting*, students are trained psychologically, whereas in a separate course, namely *Movement*, they are trained physically. However, these two sets of training are not seen as equally important. While acting courses are divided into various levels, and are considered mandatory, movement training can be completed in a single course and is usually elective. Moreover, because the movement course is kept totally separate from the acting courses (and seems to lead to a different genre of performance, for example, dance or physical theatre), it implies that using the body as a medium of expression is not part of acting, in which the mind is considered superior to the body.

To summarise what has been discussed so far, the Thai universities' acting courses, which are situated in the drama programmes that aim to produce graduates capable of applying their knowledge in the vast field of performing arts, involve only one main approach, namely a psychological realist paradigm, which could contribute to the current issues regarding career prospects faced by many drama graduates. The principles of this actor training approach are closely related to Method acting, which was brought to Thailand when the first drama department was founded 40 years ago, and has since become a heritage that was passed down from generation to generation of

teachers until the present day. The sources of the training principles and techniques are not usually mentioned, however. The word acting seems to be used in a way that suggests there is only one correct approach to acting, and that it is separated from the other less important branch of training, namely movement, which focuses purely on the physical aspect of performance.

This separation between acting and movement, mind and body, in these university actor training courses contributes to the general confusion surrounding the term ‘acting’ within the field of performing arts in Thailand, and it is this issue which propelled me to start my exploration into the psychophysical approaches to actor training, and will most likely be one of the main challenges for my actor training scheme.

## **2. Confusion surrounding the notion of acting in Thailand**

I would like to elaborate on several issues surrounding the notion of acting in Thailand which are pertinent to my development of an alternative approach to actor training for Thai university drama education. They are the adoption of the English term ‘acting’, the separation between traditional and modern forms of theatre and the lack of research and theoretical development in the field of actor training in Thailand.

*Kan-lakorn-samai-mai* (literally, modern drama/theatre) began in Thailand during the 1960s, within English departments at several Thai universities, as part of the curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity.<sup>2</sup> It gained considerable recognition, and shortly after, many drama departments were founded, and began offering undergraduate degrees in drama and theatre arts. Mattani Moj dara Rutnin asserts that the growth in popularity at that time was due to the fact that advocates and intellectuals preferred the styles and themes in Western plays to Thai melodrama and traditional theatre which ‘[were] thought to be irrelevant to contemporary society’ (Rutnin, 1996, p. 199-200).

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<sup>2</sup> Western theatre was first introduced in Thailand during the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, 1910-1925), by the king himself, who studied at Oxford University. He is regarded as ‘a very versatile dramatist who tried his hand in almost all forms of theatre [including Thai classical forms]’ (Rutnin, 1996, p. 157). He translated and adapted mostly English and French comedies (such as those by Shakespeare, Molière, and Gilbert and Sullivan), as well as composed many Western-style plays and revised scripts for traditional theatre so that they were related to contemporary social context (Rutnin, 1996, p. 157-160).

Apart from Western plays, particularly those in the style of Naturalism, modern theatre brought with it new concepts of directing and acting.

The English term ‘acting’ (transliterated as แอคติ้ง) in particular was adopted and employed specifically for the realisation of these plays. While Richard Schechner’s description of acting, as ‘consist[ing] of focused, clearly marked and framed behaviours specifically designed for showing’ (Schechner, 2002, p. 174), and Michael Kirby’s proposed continuum of acting (ranging from nonmatrixed performing to complex acting) would include the work of a performer in other forms of theatre, such as Thai traditional and folk theatre, the transliterated term, acting, is used almost exclusively in Thailand for Western-style performances.<sup>3</sup> What it implies is that acting is only related to ‘western-style’ and/or ‘modern’ forms of performing, and that the concept of acting, taught in university drama programmes, cannot be applied to Thai traditional theatre.

The gap between the training of acting in modern theatre and the training in traditional forms, that began in the 1960s (Rutnin, 1996, p. 202), worsened due to the fact that traditional theatre forms are categorised as ‘dance-drama’ (a form of Thai dance-drama will be given as an example in Chapter 1), and in a university context, the training is often placed alongside ballet and modern dance, separated from modern drama and theatre. Similar to the situation between movement and acting courses in the previous section, being associated more to dance than to drama implies that the training in traditional theatre merely focuses on the physical skills, rather than the intellectual and analytical skills that lead to a ‘truthful’ and ‘sincere’ performance in the training of acting in modern theatre – highlighted in the well-respected, widely-used Thai textbook on acting written by Associate Professor Sodsai Pantoomkomol (1999), the founder of Chulalongkorn University’s Dramatic Arts programme.

This brings me to the issue that contributes to the absence of other acting paradigms in the acting courses in Thai universities: a lack of research and development in the area of actor training. This issue is particularly evident in the reading lists of most acting courses; it is common to see only two Thai book titles on acting, *the Art of*

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<sup>3</sup> An example of nonmatrixed performing (in Kirby’s continuum of acting) can be found in the work of a stage attendant who does not ‘do anything to reinforce the information or identification’ (Kirby, 2002, p. 41). At the other end of the spectrum, complex acting is related to performance styles that involves ‘highly specialised complex vocabulary’ (Kirby, 2002, p. 46) in which the performer is required to physically and mentally perform many tasks at the same time (Kirby, 2002, p. 40-52).



*Performing (Modern Drama)*, by Associate Professor Sodsai Pantoomkomol (1999) and *More than Acting*, by Tridao Abhaiwongse (2003). Claiming to be about ‘acting in modern drama’, both of these books are concerned, primarily but implicitly, with the theory and practice of Method acting and Stanislavski’s psychological textually-based acting. The first title, first published almost twenty years ago is merely about a hundred pages in length, while the second, written by her student and former lecturer in the programme, is rather non-academic, and is only 151 pages long. One of the major causes of this lack of research is rather paradoxical. I believe that the notion of acting has achieved a status similar to those of traditional forms: as a discourse on training that has been passed on from the masters of past generations. There is a clear sense of reverence towards the Thai masters of ‘the art of acting’, as teachers today strictly adhere to the principles of acting bequeathed to them – as evident in the curricula of recently founded drama programmes and their course descriptions. As a result of the lack of research and development, the suitability of the acting method in the contemporary Thai context seems to be overlooked, and other approaches to performance (including Thai traditional forms, movement, physical theatre and mime, which are offered as elective courses in some universities) are regarded as irrelevant to the notion of ‘acting’.

### **3. Towards the proposition of a new intercultural actor training approach**

\_\_\_\_\_When I embarked on my PhD research, my intention was not to eliminate the confusion or correct the misrepresentation of the training of acting in Thailand, but to seek an alternative approach to acting that could be applied to contemporary performance contexts in Thailand. By providing another actor training approach, which does not focus on a particular style or genre but on the act of ‘performing’, I believe it would allow the students to tackle all types of contemporary performance available in Thailand today, and apply their understanding of acting in a wider context in their future careers.

Even though the training scheme developed through my PhD study is specific to the Thai students, situated in university undergraduate drama programmes, it is necessary that this exploration, which could be considered part of ‘research and

development' much needed in the Thai actor training, involves and embraces theories and movements in contemporary, intercultural theatre training. As this thesis will reveal, it may seem that the sources of my exercises, theories, and methods are drawn primarily from my personal acquaintance with non-Thai (particularly Western) performer training; and it could be argued that the training scheme I am developing is similar to the current, main acting pedagogy in Thailand in that it has been developed in the 'West', but employed in the Thai ('Eastern') context. However, the difference is that I have taken into account the cultural context of my participants during the development of the training scheme, which has resulted in the focus on a Buddhist concept common in everyday life of the Thai people, namely mindfulness of the present, which will be explained in more detail later in my thesis. In preparation for the discussion of the development of the actor training scheme within this research, I will attempt to clarify its position, in relation to discussions and critiques of intercultural performer training, in the following section.

### **From interculturalism to Asia as method**

To begin this discussion, perhaps the most important question that needs to be addressed first is 'why do I need to undertake this PhD research in the United Kingdom, and explore various actor training methods available in the West, if what I am looking for (the Buddhist concept of mindfulness) can be found in the Thai culture?' The answer is that this journey, which I wish to refer to as 'intercultural' is, in many ways, inevitable. In the field of theatre, the generic term 'intercultural', is described by Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe, following Patrice Pavis' terminology, as 'all theatre which clearly draws on, makes use of, refers, alludes to or aims at an exchange with at least one other different culture' (2001, p. 143). This kind of exchange is not new, however. Gary Jay Williams asserts that cross-cultural exchanges in theatre and performing arts have taken place since the development of Greek theatre and what we may now call 'traditional' performing arts in England, France, Japan, and India are the results of several exchanges between various cultures (Williams, 2010, p. 551-552). Furthermore, Richard Schechner argues that intercultural activities are not only common in performing arts, but common to humans; he states:

For as far back as we can look in human history peoples have been deeply, continuously, unashamedly intercultural. Borrowing is natural to our species. The swift adoption of Western technology by non-Western peoples is only a recent example of very ancient patterns of acculturation. (Schechner, 1989, p. 157)

I argue that, for my research, I never aimed to produce an ‘intercultural’ actor training scheme, but it was necessary for the development process to involve exploring various performance traditions, their principles, and techniques. The research is intended to be ‘intercultural’, not because there are insufficient resources in the Thai culture alone, but, as a result of globalisation, there are many more resources that I could access, explore, and make use of, in the world today, which could lead to a better understanding of performer training theories and approaches.<sup>4</sup> It is impossible, however, to cover all kinds of training within a PhD study, so the scope of my exploration is defined by my own interests in specific actor training traditions and my choice of location for research. The accessibility of resources is associated with ‘interculturalism’, which, unlike cross-cultural exchanges in general, is a recently developed concept. Daryl Chin commented on interculturalism as follows:

Interculturalism has a purpose in allowing for an opening of resources in the arts. The problem arises when interculturalism is cited as an excuse for work which closes options, curtails perspectives, and cuts off exploration in favor of imposing meaning, rather than allowing meaning to arise from the material (Chin, 1991, p. 95)

Chin’s criticism of ‘interculturalism’ as an excuse, as well as other critical writings on this topic, is aimed especially at certain theatrical works and theories that could be seen as the dominant culture’s exploitation and distortion of other cultures. Examples of these are Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata*, Ariane Mnouchkine’s *L’Indiade*, and theories of performance proposed by Richard Schechner, Jerzy Grotowski, and Eugenio Barba. Although I have no intention of referring to my work in terms of ‘interculturalism’, there is a danger of it being criticised in the same way as those listed above. Therefore, it is important to discuss what this term means, and how it is related to this thesis.

Bonnie Marranca asserts that ‘interculturalism is linked to world view, practice, and theory/criticism – that is, the mental attitude that precedes performance, the performance process, and the theoretical writing that accompanies performance. [It is] a

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Rebellato, 2009, for a detailed discussion of theatre and globalisation.

state of mind, as much as a way of working' (Marranca, 1991, p. 11). While Pavis, in the introduction to his book *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996), asserts that this new territory of theatre still has not 'managed to find its own identity' (Pavis, 1996, p. 1), Erika Fischer-Lichte is certain that it 'will gradually lead to the creation of a world culture in which different cultures not only take part, but also respect the unique characteristics of each culture and allow each culture its authority' (Fischer-Lichte, 1996, p. 38). At the present time, however, interculturalism is often criticised for being Western-oriented, and for 'deform[ing] other cultures by making them speak in the language of the dominant culture' (Chin, 1991, 95). Critical debates on this topic are often related to cultural imperialism, postmodernism, and globalisation (see Chin, 1991, Peters, 1995, Bharucha, 2000, Lo and Gilbert, 2002), which all highlight the inequity of cultural power in the world, especially the Western dominance over the 'other' cultures. Of all the critics, Rustom Bharucha is the most outspoken in his criticism of the exploitation of the Indian theatre (and other less-powerful cultures), by Western practitioners (Schechner, Grotowski, Barba, and Brook, in particular), in his book *Theatre and the World* (1993). While these do not directly concern my proposed actor training, because it is a project created by a Thai practitioner, for a specific group of Thai students, employing a Buddhist concept and discipline (mindfulness and meditation in motion), which are situated in the Thai culture, influences were drawn from such Western figures mentioned above. In the following section, I will elaborate on my position with regard to interculturalism, particularly the theory presented by Pavis.

As I mentioned earlier, Pavis argues that it is too soon to perceive 'intercultural theatre' as a new genre. Based on various attempts, by Pavis, Schechner, and Barba, to define and contextualise this concept, it is clear that more development is needed, if it is to evolve into the idea of 'a world culture' that Fischer-Lichte suggests. Starting with the meaning of 'intercultural theatre', Pavis suggests that precise definitions of 'culture' must be clearly identified, in order to understand the 'intercultural'. In one of his four definitions of 'culture', he positions it as the opposite of 'nature', referring to arguments made by Camille Camilleri and Lévi-Strauss (Pavis, 1996, p. 3). Lévi-Strauss, in particular, states that:

All that is universal in humankind arises from the order of *nature* and is characterised by spontaneity, all that is held to a norm belongs to *culture* and possesses the attributes of the relative and the particular (Lévi-Strauss, 1949, p. 10, quoted in Pavis, 1996, p. 3, my emphasis)

Pavis's use of the quotation above, which contains the word 'universal', appears to contradict his subsequent explanations of two sub-categories of 'intercultural': the 'transcultural' and the 'precultural'. The first, he states, 'transcends particular cultures on behalf of a universality of the human condition' (Pavis, 1996, p. 6). Referring back to Lévi-Strauss's quotation, this seems to suggest that an intercultural activity can lead back to 'the order of nature' and can be 'characterised by spontaneity'. His example of transcultural directors is Peter Brook, who 'search[es] for a universal theatre language' (Pavis, 1996, p. 6). While it is already questionable that a theatrical performance could be associated more to the notion of nature, than that of culture, Bharucha (who dedicates one chapter of his book to his criticism of Brook's *Mahabharata*) points out that if the Indian epic, chosen to illustrate Brook's concept of 'a universal theatre language', is universal, 'then his representation should not exclude or trivialise Indian culture' (Bharucha, 1993, p. 70). Apart from Brook, the concept of 'universal language of theatre' is often associated with practitioners, such as Grotowski, Barba, Schechner, and Robert Wilson (see Marranca, 1991, Bharucha, 1993, Fischer-Lichte, 1996, Schechner, 1996). Pavis also refers to Barba and his concept of 'pre-expressivity' (which will be discussed later), when he talks about another sub-category of interculturalism, the precultural, which is described as follows:

[It] points out what is common today to Eastern and Western theatre practitioners before they become individualised or 'acculturated' in particular traditions or techniques of performance. (Pavis, 1996, p. 7)

It is difficult to understand the difference between the transcultural and the precultural from Pavis's descriptions, as both of them seem to signify the search for the 'universal language'. Furthermore, his use of Barba's pre-expressivity as an example is problematic, as Graham Ley, in his book *From Mimesis to Interculturalism* (1999), points out, Barba, in his writings, refers to the phrase 'transcultural dimension' (Ley, 1999, p. 285), and never mentions the word 'precultural'. It is Pavis who relates 'pre-expressivity' to the 'precultural', simply because they contain the same prefix (Ley, 1999, p. 285). Although Pavis's terminology has been well-received (see Meyer-

Dinkgräfe, 2001, Lo and Gilbert, 2002), no clear examples are given to differentiate between the transcultural and the precultural.

If I were to refer to Pavis's terminology of intercultural theatre, the concept of mindfulness could be described as both transcultural and precultural. However, it would be, firstly, unconvincing to claim that mindfulness (in Buddhist philosophy) is universal; and secondly, contradictory, if one needs to commit oneself to a constant repetition of certain practices in order to learn 'what is common today to Eastern and Western theatre practitioners before they become individualised or *'acculturated' in particular traditions or techniques of performance*' (Pavis, 1996, p. 7, my emphasis).

My argument here is that it is irrelevant to put my training scheme, or its principles in the category of 'intercultural theatre' or 'interculturalism', because the underlying idea of this intercultural movement in theatre only reflects the perspective of Western practitioners. Bonnie Marranca asserts that this movement is a reaction against the 'Western theatre convention and the more formalist, literary impulses of modernism' (Marranca, 1991, p. 14). It is 'a search for the 'authentic', real experience elsewhere than in Western culture' (Marranca, 1991, p. 15). If it is a reaction against the 'Western theatre convention', clearly the direction of this movement cannot be from the East to the West; the phrase 'elsewhere than in Western culture' further emphasises the one-way movement, originating in the West towards the non-West. The concept of the 'universal' language, in particular, as Julie Stone Peters argues, 'is a disguised form of orientalism' (Peters, 1995, p. 205), which refers to the common accusation of 'colonial appropriation of techniques and/or misrepresentation of another culture' (Zarrilli, 2002, p. 91), that was first prompted by Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism* (1978). Peters further explains as follows:

Claims to universal rules of performance tend to classify disparate global forms under categories that the 'West' has identified as universal. Eurocentric categories have coerced individual 'non-Western' cultures into acquiescing to them. Such classification is merely an extension of the earlier imperialist claim that Western forms represent the high point of culture because they have 'universal value'. (Peters, 1995, p. 205)

Even though many theorists react strongly against the Western concept of the universal theatre language, and question the validity of interculturalism and intercultural theatre as a new genre – Ley, in particular, offers a detailed discussion in his book *From*

*Mimesis to Interculturalism* (1999) – I still draw from such Western practitioners' theories and methods that reflect their understanding of the Asian philosophy of performing arts. Regardless of the issue of authentic representation of the source cultures (which I will explain in more detail in a separate section that follows), this is because the essences of performer training proposed by Grotowski, Barba, and Phillip Zarrilli, to name a few, have been extracted, shaped, and made ready and relevant for the students of theatre today. Moreover, the efforts made by these practitioners also represent a move away from the kind of training that is specific to certain representations towards another that is based on the common principles, which could be applied to performance in a wider context. In this thesis, the location of the practices or the nationality of the intercultural practitioners will be intentionally ignored, but the locations of the source traditions and principles and the location of the participants could demonstrate another social movement today, that is not offered through the Western eye.

The intercultural investigation carried out in this research could be perceived as a movement towards 'Asia as method', a concept, suggested by Takeuchi Yoshimi in the 1960s, and recently developed and proposed by Kuan-Hsing Chen, in his book, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (2010). He asserts that:

The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other's points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. On this basis, the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia may be mobilised to provide alternative horizons and perspectives. (Chen, 2010, p. 212)

Because the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, employed as the main principle in the training, is relatively 'Asian' (considering that it is part of the Buddhist discourse, embedded in Asian cultures, where Buddhism is widely practised), and the practices, both employed and referred to in this research, are either Asian or can be related to Asian and Buddhist philosophy, this training scheme could be regarded as an example of 'a move toward Asia as a possible way of shifting points of reference and breaking away from the East-West binary structure' (Chen, 2010, p. 216). The final outcome of this thesis, which contains a culturally-located Buddhist principle and practices derived from Asian traditions, suggests that knowledge production in Asia, especially in performing arts, could be independent of Western engagement. Here, I use the word

‘Asia’ for the sake of simplicity, to denote a ‘geographical location’ and a ‘cultural concept’, in which Thailand is located, although it could be argued that this word is ‘loaded with interconnected issues [...] [involving] not only the question of Eurocentricism, but also the question of hegemony within the East’ (Sun, 2000a, p. 13);<sup>5</sup> the concept of Asia as method is concerned more with decolonisation and deimperialisation movements taking place in East Asia countries, particularly Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and China. Nonetheless, I am not claiming that this thesis demonstrates ‘Asia as method’, but only an initiative in the direction towards this complex notion.

### **The issue of source traditions**

In this section, I would like to address the issue of source traditions that came up during the process, and has become one of the main factors that set my training scheme apart from others of a similar nature. Although I already argued against the application of interculturalism to the proposed training scheme, the incompatibility of this Western concept is even more evident when looking at the process of producing the training. Pavis’s hourglass model (Pavis, 1992, p. 4), in which elements of the source culture flow through a narrow neck into the lower bowl belonging to the target culture, only emphasises a one-way flow from the source culture to the target culture, whereas Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert attempt to eliminate the hierarchy of privilege in Pavis’s model, and propose an updated model in which there are two cultural sources at two ends, and the final product offered to the target culture is located somewhere along the continuum between them (2002, p. 44-46). Both of these models may be applicable to certain theatrical activities, however, in the case of my training scheme, there would be countless source cultures involved in the process, some of which are difficult to identify precisely, and I would also argue that it is not necessary to identify them in my product of intercultural hybridity.

Contemporary theatre practitioners, particularly in the West, who have been influenced by their encounters with non-Western, and most commonly, Asian

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<sup>5</sup> For more discussion of the meaning of ‘Asia’, refer to Sun, 2000a, Sun, 2000b.



philosophy and performing arts traditions, often make references to those most prominent forms belonging to Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and less frequently, Balinese cultures (see Zarrilli, 2002, p. 90-93, for a comprehensive list of practitioners associated with these Asian forms). Zarrilli, in particular, presents an in-depth investigation into the source traditions of his training regime that is composed of forms and philosophies drawn from the Indian and East Asian traditions (Zarrilli, 2009). For his target group, which is mostly Anglo-American, this accompanying information is crucial to the execution of his training, as he asserts that ‘Asian perspectives on mind, body, and emotions can [...] be quite useful in reconsidering how we think about mind, body, emotion, and their relationship, especially when engaged in an embodied practice’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 76). His elaborate discussion of the original sources could also be seen as concrete evidence against the common accusation of the Western exploitation of other cultures. As I am Asian, i.e. coming from the same broad culture that most of the forms I lead and the Buddhist concepts that I relate to originated, I am less likely to be accused of appropriation or misrepresentation. In addition, the fact that my training scheme focuses on the ‘essence’ of an actor’s work, rather than a specific style or method of representation, means that I was not liable for authentic representation of cultures. However, a different kind of issue emerged within the project I conducted at Chulalongkorn University. Jerri Daboo, who is in a similar position as I am, namely being Asian and teaching Asian forms in a university context, states that she ‘only teach[es] what [she] feel[s] [she] really know[s], in terms of having spent a long time experiencing through training and practice’ (Daboo, 2009, p. 128). Taking yoga as an example (which I employed in my third practical project, presented in Chapter 3), I do not have as many years of experience, or as much background knowledge on the type of yoga I use as she has, but I still feel that I am capable of teaching them. This is because I know how to employ this specific sequence of yoga that I learnt from Zarrilli within the framework of meditation in motion training that aims to cultivate mindfulness of the present. I chose Zarrilli’s yoga sequence, not because of convenience; as I have been practising yoga at several studios in Bangkok for many years, I have learnt many types of yoga and many sequences that I could employ (and have done so in the past) within my training. However, I feel that Zarrilli’s distilled form of *Hatha* yoga clearly focuses on the concept of mindfulness, and could be learnt

within a few weeks of training. Besides, in studio practice, I would like to clearly distinguish the yoga form that I use, which is considered meditation in motion, from others that are readily available in many yoga studios, and are generally marketed as weight-loss exercises. Furthermore, it is my belief that the Thai university students would be more receptive to the forms that are current and accessible, not the ones that seem ancient and mystical. Also because of this last point, I have chosen the slow-motion walk as one of the main daily exercises, and had decided not to discuss the background of this exercise in details with the Thai students.

In her article, *To Learn through the Body: Teaching Asian Forms of Training and Performance in Higher Education* (2009), Daboo stresses that, in a university context, the cultural background of the forms should be offered to ‘aid in a deeper level of learning’ (Daboo, 2009, p. 129).<sup>6</sup> I would like to argue that, in a Thai university context, particular in the actor training course that I led in the third practical project, the lack of cultural background did not lead to a ‘surface approach’ of learning, and offering the students the knowledge of the original contexts of the forms would not only be unnecessary, but also, to some extent, impossible. Because the repetition of meditation in motion forms, of yoga, the slow-motion walk, or Kan’s the Wind was always accompanied by the facilitator’s instructions and prompt words, especially in the early stages, the students were constantly reminded to work on their awareness, making connection to the space around them and engaging in the task in the present moment, rather than merely repeating the external movements, which Daboo refers to as the surface approach. Offering background information on those forms, which, in their original contexts, may not be explicitly linked to the concept of mindfulness, would not help them to understand its application in performance tasks which is what the students would expect from the course.

Furthermore, as the forms that I used, such as the slow-motion walk exercise, were not considered traditional, and have already gone through many intercultural exchanges, it is almost impossible to identify their specific cultural contexts. The slow-motion walk that I employed in the training was derived from the workshop, led by the Japanese *butoh* practitioner Katsura Kan, but the form is not his own. It can be referred

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<sup>6</sup> See Daboo, 2009 for the detailed comparison between deep approach and surface approach.

to as *Hokohtai* (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, p. 151), which is the name of this exercise in *butoh* traditions that can be translated as ‘the walking body’ (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, p. 151). There is also a very similar exercise in Suzuki training called ‘slow *ten tekka ten*’ (Carruthers and Takahashi, 2004, p. 79, Allain, 2009, p. 110), which, as Paul Allain observes, was influenced by training in *Noh* theatre and other traditional performing arts (Allain, 2002, p. 97, Allain, 2009, p. 110). *Noh* theatre was first created, based on many religious concepts in Zen Buddhism, and there is a slow walking meditation in Zen rituals called ‘*kinhin*’, which could be traced back to an ancient practice in China and India (Heine and Wright, 2008, p. 223-259). Evidently, these practices are all connected, not simply because they belong to the Japanese culture, but because they contain the same Buddhist essence, which is ‘mindfulness of the present’. Therefore, instead of tracing back to the origins of the slow-motion walk, which may seem distant from the Thai students’ everyday life – being related to an entirely different culture – I pointed out its similarity to the practice of walking meditation and the discourse on mindfulness in *Theravada* Buddhism that the students are familiar with (see Nyanaponika-Thera, 1962, p. 96-99, Silananda, 1995). From that relation, the students could practically approach the exercise with clearer understanding and confidence.

After I have clarified the ways in which this thesis and the actor training scheme differ from the Western concepts of interculturalism and intercultural theatre, for the rest of this section, I would like to explain the unique development process of the proposed actor training, focusing on my own experience as a practitioner.

### **The search for a psychophysical approach to actor training for Thai students**

My exploration of the intercultural actor training began with Phillip Zarrilli’s psychophysical approach which, I believed at the time, would offer me an approach that bridge the gap between the notion of acting and movement, modern theatre training and traditional one – the training for the mind and the training for the body – in Thailand. However, I discovered that Zarrilli’s psychophysical training is not simply an exploration of ‘the “physical” and the “psychic” or the “outer” and “inner”’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 21), which is already evident in the current acting pedagogies in Thai

universities. For example, exercise topics such as ‘body relaxation’, ‘senses’, ‘action and re-action’ are placed alongside ‘belief and sense of truth’ and ‘objective and super-objective’ in the outline of an acting course (2009) at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, CU, which seems to have been adapted from the contents of *An Actor Prepares* (Stanislavski, 1936). Moreover, theatre practitioners in Thailand who often work across genres and media have already integrated techniques employed in physical-oriented performances in their acting classes, such as those led by Sineenadh Keitprapai, and Sonoko Prow. Keitprapai is the current head of Crescent Moon Theatre in Thailand, which has a long history dating back to 1975 (*Crescent Moon Theatre Website*),<sup>7</sup> while Prow who is a graduate of Dramatic Arts programme at CU, is the head of Khandha Arts’n Theatre Company, and has been working in the field of theatre and actor training in Thailand for over ten years. Like many contemporary theatre practitioners in Thailand, both of them have created a wide range of work across various genres and styles, for example, *butoh*, physical theatre, children’s theatre, and puppetry (Keitprapai). As a result, various techniques drawn from their own experiences are often integrated into their teaching in university acting courses. Prow, in particular, have included seated meditation and the slow-motion walk (a *butoh* exercise, which will be discussed later) in her Acting classes at DPU (my observation, 16 June 2009), which, on the surface, may seem similar to what came to be my actor training approach. However, because these exercises were contained within the structure of a course that is psychologically-driven, they merely belong in subcategories, such as ‘warm up’, and ‘concentration’.

Through my exploration, including the participation in Zarrilli’s performer training at the University of Exeter, I have learnt that the integration of mind and body exercises, is neither adequate as an alternative approach to actor training, nor suitable within the context of the university course in Thailand. With a limitation of time assigned to a single university drama course (three to four hours per week for thirteen to fifteen weeks), it has become the norm that an acting course is divided into weekly topics (such as concentration and imagination), each of which contains several exercises that are usually carried out only once. I believe that this would not be what Stanislavski

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<sup>7</sup> *Crescent Moon Theatre Website* [online]. <http://crescentmoontheatre.blogspot.com/> [Accessed 1 March 2012].

or Lee Strasberg of Method acting wanted an actor training course to be. Stanislavski's process of developing a 'theatrical *sense of self* by learning to control the skills of *concentration, imagination* and *communication* (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 9, original emphasis), for example, would not be completed in three sessions; and Strasberg's sense-memory exercise would not fulfil the aim to develop 'the actor[']s greater visceral awareness and experience [...and the ability to] find the psychological motivation underlying the experience' (Krasner, 2010, p. 148), if the students only had one chance to experience the exercise.

Furthermore, actor training paradigms that are organised in the same manner (exercises grouped under particular topics, and carried out in succession) would not be effectively utilised within this university system. These include a range of contemporary approaches that contain an integration of physical awareness into an actor's complete work towards performance, such as those developed by Litz Pisk (*The Actor and His Body*, 1975), Anne Bogart (*The Viewpoints Book*, 2005), Lorna Marshall (*The Body Speaks*, 2001), Barbara Sellers-Young (*Breathing, Movement, Exploration*, 2001), David Zinder (*Body-Voice-Imagination*, 2002), John Martin (*The Intercultural Performance Handbook*, 2004), and Annie Loui (*The Physical Actor*, 2009). This is simply due to the high level of continuous commitment and the amount of time required in these paradigms, which were most likely designed for a year-long (or more) ongoing training in drama schools or theatre company in the Euro-American traditions that do not fit the Thai university context.

Subsequently, my focus was shifted towards the structuring of the training within the actor training course. From my experience within Zarrilli's training, I believe that repetition (of set forms) is a key element of the process of 'attunement and sensitisation of awareness' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 84). It is also one of the characteristics of traditional theatre training in Thailand that the Thai students could easily relate to (though not necessarily willing to accept). While I realised, through my teaching experience, that students enjoy participating in a variety of exercises, the repetition of a few selected set forms, apart from reinforcing a sense of discipline, has the benefit of transforming exercises into a process of self-discovery. There are many explanations for this discovery: it could be a discovery of 'the many layers of sensitivity within his own

body' (Suzuki, 1986, p. 12), or 'how to think with the entire body-mind [which leads to] the capacity for improvisation' (Barba, 2002, p. 101). In any case, Yoshi Oida asserts that,

Through doing these movements, you start to understand something that cannot be explained in logical terms. This is a kind of understanding that you don't find in a book, or through conversation: only through the body. Perhaps it is the understanding of what you are as a basic human being. (Oida and Marshall, 1997, p. 46)

The Thai students, upon encountering the repetition of set forms in my psychophysical training for the first time, may associate this practice with the training of Thai dance and dance-drama, in which a performer learns specific movement patterns in order to recreate them in a performance score.<sup>8</sup> Although there is no question that certain discoveries mentioned above could be made by individual performers practising traditional theatre forms, it is more beneficial to relate the training to practices in which the practitioner's experience within the training can be transposed into other contexts. What I am referring to, in particular, are those practices that may be described as 'self-cultivation' methods (Yuasa, 1987, Nagatomo, 1992, Yuasa, 1993). The Japanese philosopher, Yasuo Yuasa, defines these methods as the process of 'strengthening the mind (spirit) and enhancing the personality, as a human being, by training the body' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 10). Yoga, *taijiquan* and Buddhist meditation practices are examples of this which will be discussed in more detail later.<sup>9</sup>

What I want to stress here (and to the Thai students in my training scheme) is that the repetition of set forms is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Yoga, *taijiquan* and Buddhist meditation are characterised by their strict physical discipline that requires a high level of commitment in the moment of training. However, it is not only about the practitioner's body-mind experience within it, but the direct influence of this experience in other aspects of life. For example, one may practise seated meditation on breathing to feel calm and relaxed; but after experiencing that state of calmness, s/he can apply the same method (focusing the mind on the in- and out-breath) in other

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<sup>8</sup> My understanding of 'a performance score' is an amalgamation of Eugenio Barba and Phillip Zarrilli's definitions: 'a complex set of psychophysiological states of being/doing sequentially embodied and animated via the direction of the actor's energy and attention' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 79). The set of psychophysiological states of being/doing is marked by 'the orchestration of the relationships between the different parts of the body (hands, arms, legs, feet, eyes, voice, facial expression)' (Barba, 1995, p. 122).

<sup>9</sup> For the history of *taijiquan* in Western contemporary theatre training please refer to Scott, 1993, and Mroz, 2008.

situations in daily life, as well as apply its principle of mindfulness to other objects in other circumstances. Furthermore, after a certain period of ongoing practice, one could feel that s/he has become more calm and mindful of her/his own actions and speech in all circumstances; and if s/he encounters a difficult situation, s/he knows how to deal with it with mindfulness and clear understanding (Gavesako, 2008).

The realisation of the benefit of repetition, as well as the individual discovery within the practice and its application in other contexts discussed above, contributes to the shaping of the discourse surrounding the practice in my actor training scheme. In the Thai university context, in which there may be only a maximum of three practical sessions per week,<sup>10</sup> this discourse represents not only the contextualisation of the repetition of set forms (or self-cultivation methods), but also the guidelines for each individual's discovery within the course of training. What I mean by 'the guidelines' is that the principles of training should not be considered as my teachings or facts, but only as my discoveries that I share with the students. The discourse, by which I mean the discussions on the principles of training and how they are applied in performance contexts presented in this thesis, provides the student with a chance to reflect on her/his own experience. Zarrilli asserts that in his psychophysical training, 'the work is 98% "doing"; however, the 2% of reflexive discussion/thought is as important to the process [...] as the 98%' (Zarrilli, 1995, p. 115).

The significance of reflection is also emphasised by Zarrilli's former students, Rebecca Loukes and Martin Welton, as evident in their accounts of the psychophysical training. Based on Zarrilli's concept of long-term theatre practice, Loukes summarises the kinds of knowledge related to practice as follows:

1. My experiences of training, and my own psychophysical development
2. My reflections on that training (verbal and written)
3. The contexts/languages/discourses surrounding the training (i.e. other materials, interviews, archives etc.) (Loukes, 2003, p. 58)

There are many ways to think about the relationships between these three kinds of knowledge which are rather non-sequential and intertwining. For example, the discourse

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<sup>10</sup> In my third practical project, in which I conducted a full actor training course in a Thai university, I expanded a three-hour-per-week session into three two-to-three-hour sessions per week. It was a special case, and a difficult circumstance for some students who had many classes (in various places on campus) during those days.

about self-cultivation methods (mentioned above) could lead the student to reflect on, and try to make sense of the experience in her/his previous meditation practice; and the same discourse would also have a great influence on how the student experiences the meditation practice in the future, or it could be that the student's sensory experience in the meditation begins to translate to verbal and written words when s/he learns about the concept of self-cultivation. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the discourses surrounding the training play an important part in the shaping of one's discoveries and understanding about her/his own practice. In Welton's accounts of his own experience in the Indian martial arts *kalaripayattu*, he argues that the information on the source traditions of the practice may lead the contemporary (non-Indian) practitioner to 'overlook the importance of the quality of the experience of *doing* the practice' (Welton, 2006, p. 156, original emphasis). For him, the practice 'makes sense' in the moment of doing (Loukes's first kind of knowledge), without the context surrounding the practice (Loukes's third kind of knowledge). However, it is evident in his writing that he has come to this knowing about his experience through his reflection on the moment of practice (Loukes's second kind of knowledge). Moreover, in his attempt to translate his experience into written words in a journal article, he needed to relate to various other discourses ('a sense of self' and 'lived experience', for example), that are situated in his personal context, so that this knowing translates to something that makes sense to the readers.

My decision to relate the training to Buddhist concepts of meditation and mindfulness (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), is similar to Welton's account above. It is a way of making sense of what I experience in the moment of practice, and at the same time, it is what I believe would make sense to the students that will undertake the training. There is no guarantee, however, that all students would perceive the principles of the training scheme in the same way. While Zarrilli's accounts of his psychophysical approach may be clear to many readers, especially those who have participated in his training, they can be difficult to comprehend for those who do not share the same set of discourses. Donna Soto-Morettini, for example, misunderstands Zarrilli's intention, when she asserts that in his book, *Psychophysical Acting* (2009), his writing is 'about the superiority of [the] *Kathakali*-based psychophysical approach' (Soto-Morettini, 2010, p. 50). While misunderstanding is inevitable, no matter how clearly articulate I



am about the principles of the training, I hope that, in any case, the discourse presented would lead the students to reflect on their own individual experience and attempt to make sense of it in their own personal contexts.

Apart from the discourse on the Buddhist meditation practice that is relevant to the Thai context, the shaping of my actor training scheme is informed by other discourses drawn from both literary research and direct contacts with several traditional and contemporary theatre practices. The former category includes, but is not limited to, written works by and about the following practitioners: Zarrilli (in particular Zarrilli, 2002, Zarrilli, 2009, Creely, 2010), Vsevolod Meyerhold (Gordon, 2002, Leach, 2010), Jerzy Grotowski (Grotowski and Price, 1989, Kapsali, 2010, Wolford, 2010), Eugenio Barba (Barba, 1995, Barba, 2002, Stewart, 2002, Barba and Savarese, 2005), Tadashi Suzuki (Sant, 2003, Suzuki *et al.*, 2003, Allain, 2009), Yoshi Oida (Oida, 1992, Oida and Marshall, 1997), and Anne Bogart (Bogart and Landau, 2005, Climenhaga, 2010), all of which have been influenced by non-Western performance traditions (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 8), and whose works often involve ongoing commitment to the repetition of set forms. The second category of discourses concerning my previous (and current) training experiences includes the practice of meditation, my participations in Zarrilli's actor training, Katsura Kan and Frances Barbe's *butoh* training, and the Traditional Theatre Training programme (*Noh* theatre) in Kyoto, Japan in 2010.

To sum up this section, I would like to present an adapted version of Jennifer A. Moon's cycle of experiential and reflective learning (Moon, 2004, p. 126-127) (figure 1). In this cycle, it begins when the student of my training scheme experiences the repetition of set forms. The visceral understanding of the practice is then shaped by the discourses related to the Buddhist notion of meditation, as well as those discoveries made by me, as the facilitator (whose knowing has been shaped by the theories and discourses of various theatre practitioners). At this point the student's experience in practice could be translated into verbal descriptions and written words – the process of conceptualisation and contextualisation. This process is also highly influenced by the student's previous experiences and knowledge that make up her/his personal context. As the student keeps on repeating the forms, there is a constant state of reflection that allows her/him to develop an ever-deepening connection to the practice. Consequently,

the training experience and the developed connection to the practice produce ‘effective learning results’ (Moon, 2004, p. 127) when the student encounters new situations, i.e. performance tasks.

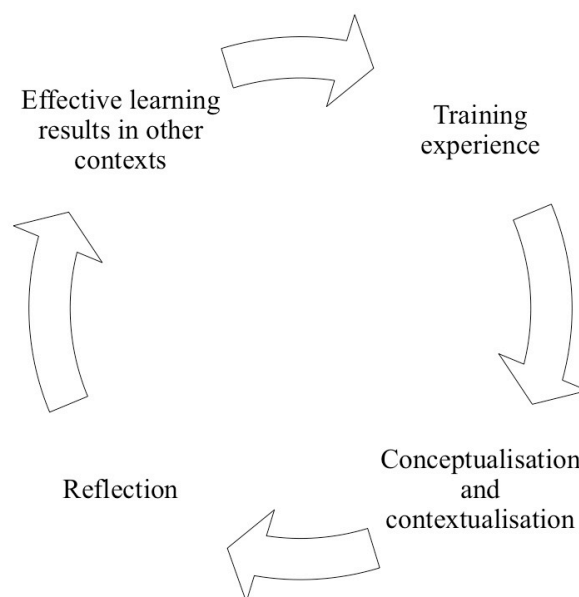


Figure 1. The cycle of experiential learning in a psychophysical training scheme, adapted from Jennifer A. Moon’s cycle of experiential learning (Moon, 2004, p. 126-127)

#### **4. The quest for the presence of the actor**

What I consider to be ‘effective learning results’ in Moon’s cycle of learning have a specific location ‘in the presence of the actor’, in the moment of performance, and in front of an audience. I am going to elaborate on my understanding of the presence of the actor, at the beginning of my PhD exploration, by referring to two main sets of discourses that allowed me to ‘make sense’ of an actor’s presence in performance. The first one is rooted in the Thai culture, while the second belongs to the West (which, to some extent, has been influenced by Eastern philosophy and practices).

In ancient Thai beliefs (and also evident in other indigenous cultures within the Indochinese peninsula), a human being is composed of two main parts: a tangible substance, that is the body, and intangible ones, including *jai* (the mind-heart, that is attached to the body, and ceases to exist when one dies), *winyaan* (life-force/ consciousness/discernment, derived from the Buddhist Pali term, *viññāṇa* that continues

to exist, even when one is no longer living, and is related to the complex concept of rebirth in Buddhism), and *kwan* (which could also be found in animals, and nonliving objects made from natural materials) (Satiekoses, 1963). According to Thai beliefs, there are 32 *kwans* residing in the body of a human, attached to various organs and substances in the body (for example, hair, bones, heart, blood, sweat, tears, and mucus). *Kwan*, despite having no power, has a life of its own, and can travel to and from the physical body. When all 32 *kwans* are present, one is well and happy, but if *kwan* leaves the body, for example, when one is in a state of shock, the body will deteriorate and s/he will encounter difficulties in life (Satiekoses, 1963, Attasit *et al.*, 2005). This belief of *kwan* has led to many traditions and ceremonies performed to secure *kwans* in one's body, especially at certain stages in life, for example, during childhood, when a man enters monkhood, and when one gets married (Satiekoses, 1963, Attasit *et al.*, 2005).

Although the concept of *kwan* above, as well as *winyaan* and *jai*, is not directly related to actor training traditions, this set of discourses – and another one surrounding the notion of artistic energy in Thai theatre training that I will discuss in Chapter 1 – has shaped my understanding of the actor's distinctive attribute that establishes the actor's presence in performance as something that is not necessarily based on the English term 'presence', which derives from a combination of '*prae* (before) and *sens* (past participle of *sum*, "I am")', suggesting "before I am", or that which is "in front" of me or "in view" of me' (Giannachi and Kaye, 2011, p. 4). Instead, it is a perceivable quality that, like *kwan*, when present in the actor's body, allows her/him to work effectively in performance, and the actor needs to go through a certain form of practice in order to be able to secure this quality within her/him. Apart from the Thai concept of *kwan*, which can also be found in other countries in Southeast Asia, this 'presence' quality that is bodily located corresponds to the concepts of *qi* (Chinese), *ki* (Japanese), and *prana* (Indian), and their variations in other parts of Asia (see Fromm, 2003, Koichi, 2001 and Nirajananda, 2009, for these concepts, respectively). These concepts are closely connected to the breath, and according to Barba, can be compared to the Latin terms *anima* and *animus* (Goodall, 2008, p. 19). However, in the West, the quality of presence that is bodily located is generally referred to as 'energy', which can be radiated, similar to the kind of energy related to 'electricity and magnetism' (Goodall, 2008, p. 19). These understandings of the concept of presence, as a special kind of energy locating in

the body, provide an opportunity for an actor to develop a connection between an intricate non-scientific image of the body and perceptual awarenesses, which, as I will discuss further later, is significant to the understanding of the actor training approach that I am developing as a whole.

As I began searching for ways of ‘making sense’ of what the lessons in the training of set forms have taught me (and also of what I want the training to offer to the students) in Western theatrical discourse, I found Cormac Power’s term ‘auratic presence’ (Power, 2008) most compatible with my experiences both in the moments of training and performing, and as a spectator witnessing a performance. Power asserts that:

Aura is a term with mysterious connotations, referring to a presence which is above the ordinary, an abstract quality that can be attached to people, names, objects or places which have more significance than appearance might suggest. (Power, 2008, p. 47)

Although Power states that this term ‘doesn’t immediately refer to the presence of anything in particular’ (Power, 2008, p. 47, original emphasis), combining it with the Thai discourses on the intangible forms of energy inside one’s body, and the comparable concepts of energy that is linked to the breath (*ki*, *prana*, and *anima*, for example), the lack of specificity in the presence of something can engage one’s sense of enquiry and sensitivity to the interior of the body.

As a practitioner who has been educated in the West, my understanding of the concept of presence within the field of actor training has been directly and indirectly informed by theories and discourses of many twentieth century Western theatre practitioners. This research, after all, focuses on ‘my’ discoveries and ‘my’ exploration of contemporary actor training; and as ‘presence of the actor’ is a rather complicated concept that can be interpreted in many ways, my specific understanding of it in contemporary actor training needs to be introduced first. As I have argued previously, even though I may not agree with the theories of interculturalism and intercultural theatre proposed by the practitioners that I will refer to, and although my actor training scheme could be related more to the concept of Asia as method, the exploration process involved looking at what these practitioners regard as crucial essences of the art of performing. Their discovery of these qualities in Asian traditional performing arts

allowed me to notice what I never realised before in my own culture, and enabled me to relate to the concept of mindfulness of the present in Buddhism. While the Western perspectives of the presence of the actor became increasingly irrelevant towards the end of this investigation, I would like to specifically refer to a particular Western concept of presence that has largely influenced the development of the proposed intercultural actor training scheme.

In the twentieth century, the notion of an actor's presence can be traced back to Antonin Artaud, the French actor, director, and theoretician, whose writings are usually associated with the concept of presence (Goodall, 2008, p. 3), and, more specifically, auratic presence (Power, 2008, p. 52). His most famous collection of essays, *The Theatre and Its Double* (1936), was inspired by a Balinese performance he witnessed at the Paris Colonial Exposition in 1931 (Savarese, 2001). On the surface, it seems that Artaud was merely impressed by the performers' masterful use of the physical body, which he considers superior to the Western theatre conventions that are based on words, as evident in the following statement:

[The Balinese] triumphantly demonstrate the absolute superiority of the producer whose creative ability *does away with words* [...] That mechanical eye-rolling, those pouting lips, the use of twitching muscles producing studiously calculated effects which prevent any resorting to spontaneous improvisation, those heads moving horizontally seeming to slide from one shoulder to the other as if on rollers, all that corresponds to direct psychological needs as well as to a kind of mental construction made up of gestures, mime, the evocative power of rhythm, the musical quality of physical movement, the comparable, wonderfully fused harmony of a note. (Artaud, 1970, p. 36-38, original emphasis).

However, he goes on to say that:

In Oriental theatre with its metaphysical tendencies, as compared with Western theatre with its psychological tendencies, forms assume their meaning and significance on all possible levels. [...] And because of their manifold aspects, their disruptive strength and charm constantly stimulate the mind. Because Oriental theatre accepts the external appearance of things on several levels, because it does not restrict itself solely to the limitations or the impact of these aspects on the senses, but instead examines the degree of mental potential from which they have emerged, it shares in the intense poetry of nature and preserves its magical relationship with all the objective stages of universal mesmerism. (Artaud, 1970, p. 54)

Although Artaud's knowledge of 'Oriental theatre' is rather limited (Savarese, 2001, p. 53), and he seems to use 'Balinese or Oriental theatre' merely to illustrate the idea about theatre that he had during the time (Savarese, 2001, p. 51) (so his statements are not

quoted here to represent my preference for the forms of Asian theatre), it is evident that it was not only the physicality of the actor that attracted him as an audience; it is the ‘metaphysical’ qualities, that are not limited to ‘the impact on the senses’. His reflections on the performance, as well as his visions on theatre, according to Jane Goodall, represent, ‘a reaction against modernism, not just for its technologies, but for the quality of consciousness it fosters’ (2008, p. 4). His essays in the collection illustrate a ‘craving for the revival of an ancient inspiring [*sic*] force in theatre’ (Goodall, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, taking inspiration from the Balinese performance, he proposes the Theatre of Cruelty that contains what he describes as the metaphysical concept of expression. With this concept, he implies that the actor in his ideal theatre needs to possess some form of extra-daily inner force:

It liberates a new lyricism of gestures which because it is distilled and spatially amplified, ends by surpassing the lyricism of words. Finally it breaks away from language’s intellectual subjugation by conveying the sense of a new, deeper intellectualism hidden under these gestures and signs and raised to the dignity of special exorcisms. (Artaud, 1970, p. 70)

Returning to the topic of actor training, because Artaud’s focus is on the revolution of theatre as a whole, he does not clearly explain how actors may be able to cultivate this ‘sense of intellectualism hidden under the gestures’. On the other hand, several other theatre practitioners in the twentieth century, developed training approaches based on the notion of an actor’s presence that could be related to Artaud’s accounts of the effects of his ‘pure theatre’ (Artaud, 1970, p. 29). However, if I were to discuss the concept of presence by referring to it as an ability to ‘[know] how to captivate the audience, being endowed with an indefinable quality that immediately arouses the spectators’ *identification*, giving them the impression of being elsewhere, in an eternal present’ (Pavis, 1998, p. 285), a definition for the term presence provided by Patrice Pavis, then, it could be referred to the goal set by most actor training paradigms, all over the world. In Western discourse, as Alison Hodge asserts in the introduction of her book, *Actor Training* (2010, previously entitled *Twentieth Century Actor Training* in the first edition), the concept of presence can be interpreted in many different ways, ranging from Stanislavski’s use of the word ‘experiencing’ to Peter Brook’s exploration of ‘openness and immediacy’ (Hodge, 2010a, p. xxii-xxiii). To discuss the notion of the actor’s presence within the context of my exploration in this thesis, I will first introduce the theories proposed by three practitioners, whose practices relate to the exploration of

traditional techniques drawn from the East, particularly the repetition of set forms, namely, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, and Tadashi Suzuki, with an addition of Joseph Chaikin, whose concept of presence can be associated with the notion of aura previously discussed (Power, 2008, p. 80).

Referring to the Balinese performance that Artaud witnessed as ‘formal projections of energy’ (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 7), Grotowski was to some degree inspired by the concept of energy surrounding performative techniques of ‘the Orient’ (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 8), when he developed exercises for actors at the Laboratory Theatre – he also regards Stanislavski and Meyerhold as influential in the development of his own training (Milling and Ley, 2001, p. 130, Wolford, 2010, p. 208). However, through his investigation into several physical disciplines – some of which were adapted from yoga postures – the concept of energy took shape as ‘impulse’ which ‘refers to a seed of living action born inside the actor’s body which extends itself outward to the periphery, making itself visible as physical action’ (Wolford, 2010, p. 207). Lisa Wolford asserts that the series of codified movements in his ‘corporal exercises’ and ‘*plastiques*’ were ‘intended to enhance the actor’s receptivity to impulse and to eradicate blockages [*via negativa*], both physical and psychophysical’ (Wolford, 2010, p. 207). In Grotowski’s words, his training leads to:

[...] freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. (Grotowski, 2002, p. 16)

John Matthews states that Grotowski’s belief in ‘an underlying self [that needs] to be revealed underneath various layers of inhibition’ (Matthews, 2011, p. 198), was adopted by Eugenio Barba, who developed the concepts of ‘extra-daily body’ and ‘pre-expressivity’ (Matthews, 2011, p. 198), through his experiential research at the Odin Teatret and International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), which he founded in 1964 and 1979, respectively. Barba clarifies these two concepts essential to his practice in his book, *The Paper Canoe* (1993), as follows:

In an organised performance the performer’s physical and vocal presence is modelled according to principles which are different from those of daily life. This extra-daily use of the body-mind is called ‘technique’. The performer’s various techniques can be conscious and codified or unconscious but implicit in the use and repetition of a theatre practice. Transcultural analysis shows that it is possible to single out recurring principles from among these techniques.

These principles, when applied to certain physiological factors [...] produce physical pre-expressive tensions. These new tensions generate an extra-daily energy quality which renders the body theatrically ‘decided’, ‘alive’, ‘believable’, thereby enabling the performer’s ‘presence’ or scenic *bios* to attract the spectator’s attention *before* any message is transmitted. (Barba, 1995, p. 9, original emphasis)

The ‘recurring principles’ resulting from Barba’s analysis of intercultural performance traditions are summarised by Nigel Stewart as ‘altered balance, dynamic opposition, substitution (or equivalence), reduction (or absorption), and consistent inconsistency (or coherent incoherence)’ (Stewart, 2002, p. 47-48).<sup>11</sup> These principles are all concerned with the physical body of the practitioner, particularly ‘weight, balance, the use of the spinal column and the eyes’ (Barba, 1995, p. 9). What Barba provides to this continuum of the exploration of an actor’s presence in performance – that in this introduction started with Artaud’s accounts of the Balinese performance – is the practical and tangible method of cultivation of presence for performers. However, Goodall argues that the principles pointed out by Barba are ‘subtle and their application requires fine intuition’ (Goodall, 2008, p. 38). It could be that without direct experience in his training, or the traditional disciplines that Barba was influenced by, it is difficult to understand how the pre-expressive training can be transposed into performance contexts. For example, when he talks about the significance of exercises in an article entitled *An Amulet Made of Memory* (Barba, 1997), referring to his own practice, as well as those by Stanislavski and Meyerhold, he mentions that an actor’s inner life, which can be perceived by the spectator, is experienced when the actor establishes a connection between ‘the visible’ and ‘the invisible’ (Barba, 1997, p. 129-130). While the visible refers to the score of a performance – ‘the orchestration of the relationships between the different parts of the body (hands, arms, legs, feet, eyes, voice, facial expression)’ (Barba, 1995, p. 122) – the invisible, or the subscore, is concerned with ‘a resonance, a motion, an impulse, a level of cellular organisation that supports still further levels of organisation [...] [It] may consist of a rhythm, a song, a certain way of breathing, or an action that is not carried out in its original dimensions’ (Barba, 1997, p. 127). In the article, while it is evident that ‘the work on oneself’ in the structured exercises allows the actor to tackle the performance score, it is unclear how the actor may be led to discover ‘the invisible’ within the training: are there instructions given to

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<sup>11</sup> See Stewart, 2002, and Barba and Savarese, 2005, for clarification of these terms.



the actor that guide them through the process? how long does it take in the training for one to be aware of the relationship between the visible and the invisible? and should the actor be 'aware' of the invisible during the moment of performance?

For Tadashi Suzuki, the creator of the Suzuki Method of Actor Training and the founder and director of the Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT), awareness is central to his actor training, which is characterised by its strict codified patterns of movements that are concerned with the body's relation to the earth through the feet:

The exercises are intended as a means to discover a self-consciousness of the interior of the body, and the actor's success in doing them confirms his ability to make that discovery. The actor learns to become conscious of the many layers of sensitivity within his own body. (Suzuki, 1986, p. 12)

'To become conscious of the many layers of sensitivity' is crucial because Suzuki's aim is to 'restore the wholeness of the human body in the theatrical context [...] [and] to regain the perceptive and expressive abilities and powers of the human body' (Suzuki, 1995, p. 164), which were unique to traditional performances, such as *Noh* and *Kabuki*. Consequently, because the focus is placed mainly on the actor's sensitivity, performers who employ psychological approaches may find Suzuki training irrelevant to their work on performance in the conventional sense. However, Paul Allain asserts that 'the [Suzuki] training has little to do with performance but everything to do with performing' (Allain, 1998, p. 78), and he believes that what the actors learn from the training can be applied to all kinds of performance (Allain, 1998, p. 86). Suzuki himself has integrated his training into the realisation of many Greek tragedies as well as European texts written by, for example, Shakespeare, Beckett and Chekhov (Suzuki *et al.*, 2003, p. 150-151). His way of applying the principles of training to dramaturgical work may be simply done through vocalising parts of the texts while practising the set forms, and replacing the set forms with actions in the performance score (Sant, 2003, p. 150-151). This is because his training is not concerned with building creativity or improvisation skills (although it could certainly allow these to develop). He prioritises the consciousness of 'the many layers of sensitivity' (Suzuki, 1986, p. 12), which could be seen as a strong foundation for the presence of the actor in every performance. While it is often stated that Suzuki training is about 'internal body awareness and inner concentration' (Allain, 1998, p. 75), it allows the practitioner to establish relationships to external stimuli as well, whether they are the facilitator's instructions, the presence of

the other actors (as the training is usually conducted in a group setting), or the space she/he inhabits – especially through contact with the ground.

While in Suzuki training, the actor uses the repetition of codified patterns of movement to establish an awareness of himself, as well as her/his relationship to the surroundings in the present moment, Joseph Chaikin (at the Open Theatre, New York City, which he co-founded) explores this actor's quality through various exercises that are not based on any particular method, but the actors' collaborative explorations (Hulton, 2010, p. 169, 180). In *The Presence of the Actor* (1972), Chaikin states that:

The basic starting point for the actor is that his body is sensitive to the immediate landscape where he is performing. The full attention of the mind and body should be awake in that very space and in that very time (not an idea of time) and with the very people who are also in that time and space. (Chaikin, 1991, p. 65)

The statement above implies that for Chaikin, the actor's presence is developed in the relationship between the actor and her/his environment in the present moment – the opposite of the 'internal body awareness and inner concentration' in Suzuki Training. However, Dorinda Hulton elaborates on this topic, referring to an exercise called *the sound and movement*, as follows:

There are [...] two interrelated dialogues which occur within the 'sound and movement exercise': the first between the 'inside' and the 'outside', and the second between the body and the mind. Both these dialogues inform the content and the structure of the training as a whole. (Hulton, 2010, p. 173)

The 'inside' in this case refers to 'the impulse' which 'starts a *motion-toward*', 'inner promptings', 'associations' (Chaikin, 1991, p. 8-9), which, in practice, are often described as 'images' (Hulton, 2010, p. 171-172), while the 'outside' refers to the 'external form in sound and movement' (Hulton, 2010, p. 172). In this case, the actor's perceptible quality of presence, thus, has to do with 'the actor in operation with imagery rather than uniquely with the actor's "self"' (Hulton, 2010, p. 172).

My exploration of the concept of an actor's presence, presented here through the Thai discourse on the inner energy and the accounts of the five practitioners (Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, Suzuki and Chaikin), demonstrates the ongoing continuum of my inquiry into how the sense of presence may be developed through actor training. The five practitioners were selected to illustrate the scope of understanding of this complex notion that ranges from the metaphysical quality in Artaud's accounts to a more

pragmatic, perceivable description in Chaikin's exercises. Moreover, the inclusion of Suzuki and Chaikin is significant to my research, as the former represents my position as a practitioner from Asia, drawing on concepts and methods from Asian traditions, and applying them in what may be described as intercultural performer training, whereas the latter demonstrates the training as a process of explorations that rely on direct interactions with each particular group of participants, which is what occurred in my second and third practical projects, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. As the rest of this thesis will reveal, the shaping of my actor training scheme is also influenced by my direct experience in, and the discourses surrounding, the training of Phillip Zarrilli, the *Theravada* Buddhist concepts of meditation and mindfulness, and especially my discoveries within the three practical projects conducted as part of this PhD study. Towards the end of the research, my understanding of presence has transformed into the concept of mindfulness of the present that is similar to Chaikin's concept of presence (which is concerned with being attentive to both the surroundings and imagery in the immediate moment), and in terms of training, many references could be made to Barba's concepts, especially the principle of reduction and the concept of pre-expressivity. However, there are also certain attributes resulting from long-term practices of set forms, which cannot be taught, or consciously generated, but can only be 'felt', both by the performer and the audience, much like Artaud's accounts on the Balinese performance, and Grotowski's and Suzuki's theories of actor training.

## **5. The practical projects**

To specifically describe the approach I have taken with this research, the term 'practice-led', as defined by John Freeman, could be adopted, as it refers to the type of research that 'is likely to lead primarily to new and/or advanced understandings about practice' (Freeman, 2010, p. 63), as opposed to 'practice-based' research, in which practical performance 'forms the core of the contribution to knowledge' (Freeman, 2010, p. 62-63). Within the course of my research, although there are three performances (and presentations) that marked three stages in the development of my training scheme, the 'core contribution' was born in the moment of reflection during the working process and after the projects have ended. 'Reflective practice', which forms a

big part of research methodology in this study, consists of three strands, according to Donald Schön (quoted in Neelands, 2006, p. 19): ‘knowing-in-action’ – the ways in which knowledge gained from various discourses and theories inform my practice, ‘reflection-on-action’ – the examination of my knowing-in-action, which leads to changes being made to the training scheme (so that it can be more effective), and ‘reflection-in-action’ – the immediate evaluation during the practice that leads to changes being made in the moment of practice (Neelands, 2006, p. 19). Consequently, as evident in the chronological order of the three chapters, each new discovery made in these three interrelated concepts led to new questions that I sought to address in the project(s) that followed.

The process of my practice-led research is, to some extent, similar to the explorations of the craft of actor training made by Stanislavski, and the five practitioners discussed above. This kind of research ‘is rooted in the personal, in the findings of individual actors and/or researchers in particular circumstances which are, in turn, applied in future situations’ (Watson, 2009, p. 85). However, while the results of their research are often the products of life-long investigations, this thesis reflects my thoughts on actor training which are the outcomes of a three-year investigation, within the eight-year period of involvement in the Thai drama education. Furthermore, unlike the methods or theories developed by such figures, my training scheme is created specifically to be placed within a university course, aimed specifically at Thai drama undergraduate students.

Within this thesis, several issues regarding an actor training approach for the Thai students are addressed, in chronological order, from my exploration in the first practical project to the second, and third, in a direction that clearly demonstrates the move away from the East-West cultural exchange to focusing on a Thai Buddhist discourse as the main principle of training. In Chapter 1, the principles of my proposed actor training scheme are discussed and presented as the product of my initial research into psychophysical approaches to acting and the first practical project, in which I took on a role of a performer. Within the project, I attempted to identify essential areas of enquiry in a psychophysical actor training approach, and the tasks that needed to be tackled by an actor in rehearsal and performance that allow what may be considered the

quality of an actor's presence to emerge. Even though in this chapter I rely on sources mostly belonging to Western discourse, they represent an exploration into Eastern philosophy, and lead me to reflect on the Buddhist concepts and the Thai traditional performer training. In Chapter 2, my research takes me back to a concept that is located in my own culture, the concept of mindfulness of the present, which I consider an essential characteristic of an actor's presence in performance. In this chapter, I reflect upon my experience as a facilitator in the second practical project, conducted at the Drama Department, University of Exeter, with a group of three international participants. In Chapter 3, an examination of my final practical project is presented. In this project, the psychophysical training scheme, focusing on the form of meditation in motion and the principle of mindfulness, was finally put into the context of Thailand's university drama education – it was conducted as a one-semester-long course at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Although at the end of the thesis, a conclusion is made based on my discoveries throughout the research process, I regard my investigation as still 'in progress'. Subsequently, I shall carry on this research, exploring new territories, identifying new principles, and applying new thoughts in future 'practical projects', and it is my hope that my ongoing investigation into the art of acting and actor training will be beneficial to further development in Thailand's university drama education, as well as in the field of theatre and performing arts in Thailand and beyond, whether it is in the direction towards Asia as method, or the concept of a world culture, which is the underlying concept of intercultural theatre today.

## Chapter 1

### **Psychophysical training scheme: principles and potential in Thailand's university drama programmes**

#### **Introduction**

As a reconsideration of the acting pedagogies in Thailand's undergraduate drama programmes, I am proposing an actor training paradigm that would respond to the full range of contemporary dramaturgies available in Thailand. While the conventional, psychological realist paradigm currently on offer may allow the Thai drama students to deliver realistic representations of characters in realist plays. There are other types of performance that the students would encounter during the course of their study, as well as after graduation. As already discussed in the introduction, most of the Thai drama programmes aim to produce graduates who are either 'well-equipped with knowledge and capability in dramatic arts' (BA in Dramatic Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2008), or experienced 'in the integration of Thai and international performing arts' (BFA in Performing Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 2009), or supplied with 'knowledge and skills required as foundation for drama, which could be applied in the entertainment industry and social development' (BFA in Drama, Thammasat University, 2009). Psychological realism only represents one part of the Thai 'dramatic arts', 'performing arts', or 'entertainment industry', which cover a wide range of genres and various styles of contemporary theatre, including those that could be specifically referred to as 'Postdramatic Theatre', a term proposed by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006). In Thai theatre nowadays, Experimental scripted and devised performances, considered part of the postmodern movement in art (Kaye, 1994, p. 5-23), are gaining more recognition, and are clear examples to which the existing 'acting' pedagogy cannot be effectively applied. Compared to realist plays, they are concerned more with 'presence than representation, [...] shared than communicated experience, [...] process than product, [...] energetic impulse than information' (Lehmann, 2006, p. 85); there is no longer 'the absolute dominance of the text' (Lehmann, 1997, p. 60), as 'the physical presence of the body [becomes the primary interest]' (Lehmann, 1997, p. 59).

The actor training scheme developed through my experiential research, particular in the three practical projects, could be employed in an actor training course in Thailand's university drama programmes, so that the trained student actors would be able to perform across a wide range of dramaturgies, including, but not limited to, those that may be described as 'postdramatic'. This is because the focus of the training scheme is placed on the foundation of the actor's work in performance, rather than a specific style of presentation (or representation). Therefore, the selection of plays and performance texts included within the actor training scheme will also demonstrate the range of contemporary performance that could be found in Thai theatre today.

The concepts that will be introduced are not new to Thai people, however. Unlike the concept of the psychological realist paradigm that has been developed in and for Euro-American theatre, the central theme of the proposed psychophysical actor training is related to Buddhism, which is the national religion of Thailand, and Asian philosophy that is embedded in everyday life of Thai people. The Thai student actors will also be familiar with the style of traditional theatre training that I refer to when examples are drawn from *Noh* theatre or *Khon* dance-drama. However, only the concepts of energy and presence in performance from the Asian traditions will be transposed to the actor training scheme, not the formal codifications.

This chapter, thus, provides a response to the overarching research question that I attempt to address: 'What is the significance of this psychophysical approach to actor training in the Thai context?', as well as describes the three main principles of my psychophysical approach to actor training, i. e. platform for creativity, meditation in motion, and presence in performance. 'Platform for creativity' describes an environment and structure of the psychophysical training that allows the student actors to fully develop and respond effectively to the tasks given during the pre-performative training, and to apply the psychophysical concepts in the realisation of dramaturgies. 'Meditation in motion' refers to the main training pattern focused on psychophysical development through ongoing repetitions. Finally, additional exercises and tasks, considered crucial to the development of 'presence in performance', are employed throughout the pre-performative training scheme to enhance the connection between the training and performance applications, which are situated towards the end of the scheme.

## **1. Platform for Creativity**

First of all, I will discuss the element that provides the environment for the other two principles, meditation in motion and presence in performance. For this, I coined the term ‘platform for creativity’ to indicate the extra-daily space of the training that provides ideal conditions for the student actor’s learning experience and for her/his unique psychophysical quality to develop organically, in training and performance. The word ‘platform’ is used here in the same way that describes a raised structure on the side of a railroad track where passengers get ready to step on a train and begin their journey. The train and the journey in this case refer to the actor’s work on acting tasks that culminates in an actual performance (journey destination). The preparations before the journey (the training) can be referred to as ‘pre-expressive’ (Barba, 1995, Martin, 2004, p. 7, Allain and Harvie, 2006, p. 22). This term was used by Eugenio Barba to describe the elementary stage where the actor’s work is not concerned with ‘thinking about what s/he will want to transmit to the spectator once the process is completed’ (Barba, 1995, p. 105). However, within the proposed actor training course, there is a stage at which the concepts learnt in the training are applied to performance situations; this stage is considered part of the training (journey simulation, not the actual journey), as the experience is shaped, and supervised by a facilitator.

The word ‘creativity’ here is used in the same way as Jacques Lecoq’s description of the second level of the Lecoq school, ‘the Roads to Creativity’ (Lecoq, 2000, p. 95) in which student actors explore a range of dramatic territories, such as melodrama and *Commedia dell’arte*, and subsequently develop their own creations (Lecoq, 2000, p. 14-15). My psychophysical actor training, however, is not concerned with this exploration of specific dramatic forms, but equips the student actors with tools considered as basic necessities in a range of performance genres and styles. After completing the training, the student actor may choose to explore any of the dramatic territories offered in other theatre courses in the university drama programmes. The key components that constitute the concept of platform for creativity are detailed below.



## **Training structure**

The structure of the proposed psychophysical actor training corresponds to the actor's process in Phillip Zarrilli's performer training module, at the Department of Drama, University of Exeter, which was influenced by Jacques Copeau's concept of systemic training and Zarrilli's direct experience in the training he undertook with A.C. Scott (Creely, 2010, p. 223). First, the student actor undergoes a process of attunement, in a group setting, that aims to 1) develop a state of habituation through repetitions of set forms, which in turn, leads to 2) activation of inner energy,<sup>12</sup> and 3) a degree of body-mind oneness, in which her/his awareness is heightened and sensitised (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 84-88, Creely, 2010, p. 217). Secondly, the student actor learns to, in Zarrilli's words, 'modulate, shape, and deploy one's [inner] energy in order to practically solve aesthetic and dramaturgical problems' (2009, p. 88). This deployment of inner energy allows a quality of presence in performance to emerge.

The aim of the training process is comparable to that of John Martin's intercultural performance training (Martin, 2004, p. 6-7) and Barbara Sellers-Young's explorations (Sellers-Young, 2001), although the method is different. Various exercises are employed within the process of finding and applying inner energy in Martin's training model; and groups of different explorations are used towards 'increas[ing] cognisance of the basic structure of the body, including breath, dynamic alignment, energy, and expressiveness' (Sellers-Young, 2001, p. xvi), in Sellers-Young's approach. I, on the other hand, use repetition of set forms to achieve the aim, in the same way that Zarrilli uses the sequences of yoga, *taijiquan* (*wu*-style), and the Southern Indian martial art, *kalaripayattu*. The selection of set forms will be drawn from my previous experiences and the choices will be made specifically for each group of participants.

## **Performance tasks**

Daniel Mroz refers to the term 'conversion', borrowed from kinesiology, when he talks about the moment the benefits of using *taijiquan* in actor training are applied in

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<sup>12</sup> 'Inner energy' here is different from a person's physical or mental power. It refers to *ki*-energy, which will be explained in greater detail in a later section.

performance contexts. He asserts that ‘The measure of a training protocol’s utility is in how effectively conversion takes place’ (Mroz, 2008, p. 136). These benefits, according to Mroz, are identified as the actors’ ‘psychophysical coordination with respect to themselves and their psychophysical coordination in relationship to a fellow player’ (Mroz, 2008, p. 136). Similarly, within the course of my training, the student actor will learn to apply the psychophysical concepts acquired in the repetitive training of set forms, and utilise her/his inner energy in response to the demands of each specific physical/dramaturgical task. The student actor will work on improvisation exercises, which in this case do not focus on creating physical actions, but rather on working with inner images, such as those of flowing inner energy. Improvisation will be used in the ways that allow the student actor to strategically apply the concepts already learnt in various situations. In other words, it will be employed towards building creativity, which is evident in the training developed by Barba (Watson, 2010, p. 244-247), Lecoq (Lecoq, 2000, p. 18), Joseph Chaikin (Hulton, 2010, p. 175), and Jerzy Grotowski (Wolford, 2010, p. 208-209), to name a few.

Furthermore, in the second half of the course, student actors will work on short extracts from a range of contemporary dramaturgies; and their working process will be guided by the facilitator acting as the director of the performance. Each student actor is responsible for tackling her/his own acting problems towards the realisation of each dramaturgy, which will be assessed at the final stage of the course. What I refer to as the actor’s dramaturgy in this thesis can be defined, in Phillip Zarrilli and Eugenio Barba’s words, as ‘how the actor’s tasks are composed, structured and shaped during the rehearsal period into a repeatable performance score that constitutes the fictive body available for the audience’s experience in performance’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 113), including the actor’s ‘individual creative contribution [...] [and] an ability to root what [s/he] recounted into a structure of organic actions’ (Barba, 2010, p. 23). The amount of the actor’s creative contribution, although always evident, varies from project to project, as the focus in this ‘foundation’ training is placed on the applications of concepts learnt in the training to the performance context. The work on performance tasks is parallel to the psychophysical development, which means that the training in meditation in motion will be carried on until the end of the course, and the student actor can constantly

returns to the process of attunement, and discover the connection between the training of set forms and the acting tasks.

### **Facilitator and Director**

In the practice of experience-based learning, students' learning situations 'tend to be managed by "facilitators" rather than "teachers"' (Andresen et al, 2000 in Moon, 2004). In this actor training scheme, the role of the facilitator is vital to the student actors' discovery of inner energy and an ability to apply the principles acquired in the pre-performative training to dramaturgical works. Like Zarrilli (1995, p. 115), and Dorinda Hulton in her Creative Actor module (1998, p. 18), the emphasis is placed upon the student actors' own learning process, rather than the teaching of a specific method. The facilitator needs to create a site for individual explorations that is structured to be 'provocative rather than prescriptive' (Hulton, 1998, p. 18). While the student actors are not expected to 'create' a performance, they should be creative when it comes to working with inner images and dramaturgical applications. Even though it may seem contradictory, I believe that the facilitator should also take on a role of the director of a performance during the students' work on dramaturgy. This is to allow the students to fully work with inner images and be able to apply the concepts in other performances in the future. Certain structures will be created in the work on performance towards the end of the course, which include directorial decisions, such as the performance score and the actor's blocking. These decisions will only be made based on close observations of each group of students' performance and development throughout the training, and their initial work on the assigned texts.

### **Discourses on psychophysical actor training**

One of the challenges of applying a new approach to acting in the Thai university setting is that the student actors, who may already be used to the language of the psychological realist acting, need to familiarise themselves with a whole set of discourses on the psychophysical approach. The concepts may not be foreign to them, as they are related to the Buddhist doctrines and Asian philosophy. Nonetheless, the

student actors may not have realised before how the concepts could relate to what they perceive as ‘acting’. Unlike the Thai traditional training in performing arts, in which the training spans over several years, in my thirteen-week training scheme, I have to articulate clearly the underlying principles of the practice, the concepts being worked on, and the purpose of the training. Outside the studio practice, this will also be done through assigned complementary reading and weekly seminars, in which the student actors engage in discussions concerning the psychophysical concepts, their discoveries and reflection on the training.

The instructions in class, in particular, have to be readily accessible to all student actors; one useful method is the utilisation of metaphors. Barbara Sellers-Young asserts the effectiveness of metaphors in the training of *nihon buyo* (Japanese dance), and later employs them in her actor training. She asserts that ‘[it] is not only a literary construct, but a summation of sensory images and a key to an embodied understanding of our conceptual reality’ (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 180). Zarrilli also makes extensive use of metaphors and imagery that allow his student actors to actualise the seemingly mystifying concepts of inner energy and presence. These metaphors include, for example, ‘flowing water’ (Creely, 2010, p. 222) for the flow of inner energy, and the Hindu imagery of the ‘body [becoming] all eyes’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 24), for the state of total readiness. Moreover, as the aim of the training is to allow the student actors to apply the psychophysical concepts in performance, the language of training needs to be transposed into their individual working process on dramaturgies as well. For this reason, I believe the facilitator has to be in charge of creating and shaping dramaturgical tasks suitable for particular student actors, and leading them through the rehearsal process, so that the concepts carried over from the training of set forms can be applied directly within the performance context.

In the following sections, the discourse on the concepts of psychophysical actor training, which is the result of my participation in Zarrilli’s training system and my individual exploration in the first practical project, will be presented. I recognise the two main principles, namely meditation in motion and presence in performance, as crucial components for the execution of the actor training course, nonetheless, they are not

considered as absolute; they still need to be explored further in practical settings, i.e. in my second and third practical projects.

## **2. Meditation in motion**

### **Context**

Influenced by the concepts in Buddhist practices, Professor Yasuo Yuasa, one of Japan's leading contemporary philosophers, uses the term 'meditation in motion' to indicate body-mind practices of 'constant repetition of bodily movement' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 23). Although he uses this term to describe the practice of movement patterns in *Noh* theatre, and other traditional disciplines, including martial arts in East Asia (Yuasa, 1993, p. 24), I believe that the unique quality developed through meditation in motion is vital to all performers. This quality, which I will refer to as body-mind oneness leads to a notion of 'presence' in performance, which is the overall goal of my practice. What this presence means will be clarified in more detail later, however, I would like to describe it at the moment as an extraordinary 'abstract quality that can be attached to people [...] which [has] more significance than appearance might suggest' (Power, 2008, p. 47). This definition for Cormac Power's term 'auratic presence' (Power, 2008, p. 47-85) corresponds to the general Thai perception of an actor's performative quality, which, for many Thai people, is a gift and cannot be obtained through training. My argument is that the quality of presence can be acquired through ongoing practices of meditation in motion, designed specifically for actor training. Although obtaining this specific performative quality is the goal of my training, the student actors should not try to work towards self-consciously becoming aware of it, as it is a concept that only reveals itself to another person who is watching (the audience in a performance), not the performer her/himself.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of meditation may be seen from the outside as very distant from acting, especially when the concept of acting in general is often associated with an active use of speech and movement 'to feign, to simulate, to represent, [or] to impersonate' (Kirby, 2002, p. 40). However, to those who practise meditation, its

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<sup>13</sup> For this specific issue regarding presence as 'emergent', see Zarrilli, 2012.

application in performance may be more apparent. Starting with the most basic form of meditation that Thai people are familiar with; the meditation while assuming a seated posture (*nang-samadhi* – นั่งสมาธิ in Thai) was taught and practised throughout my primary and secondary schools in Thailand, and nowadays I often practise this Buddhist method of ridding the mind of defilements when I feel the need for tranquillity. During the meditation, I have been taught to observe the journey of the breath, feel the expansion and the contraction of the abdomen, and time the inhalation and exhalation. In *Theravada* Buddhism,<sup>14</sup> the state religion of Thailand (*Buddhism in Thai Life*, 1981, p. 1), this practice is described as the basis for *Anapanasati*, which translates as ‘mindfulness with breathing in and out’ (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 209). The Buddha teaches that this method, consisting of sixteen steps, can lead to ‘serenity and insight’ (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 209), and ‘a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium, and tranquility’ (Rahula, 1974, p. 67) in a long-term continuous practice.

Although it may seem that this action of observing the breath suggests that the practitioner isolate her/himself from everything else other than the breath; in fact, practising Buddhist meditations allows her/him to thoroughly understand the body, feelings, mind, and wisdom – the four main sections of the practice (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 7-9). In addition, through ongoing practice and the study of Buddha’s teachings, this process can lead to realising the nature of things, and eventually, the Ultimate Truth, *Nibbana* (*Nirvana* in Sanskrit) (Rahula, 1974, p. 68),<sup>15</sup> in which ‘persons and selves are ultimately simply aggregates of evanescent [...] physical and mental events’ (Gethin, 1998, p. 235), as opposed to the conventional truth of persons and selves (Gethin, 1998, p. 235). Rupert Gethin summarises the function of Buddhist meditation as follows:

Since we fail to see things as they really are – impermanent, suffering, and not self – we grasp at them as if they were permanent, as if they could bring us lasting happiness, as if we could possess them as our very own. Thus the cultivation of calm and insight involves breaking up the seemingly substantial and enduring appearance of things – our very own selves, our own minds – are actually nothing but insubstantial, evanescent [physical and mental events]. (Gethin, 1998, p. 235)

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<sup>14</sup> ‘The ‘Teachings of the Elders.’ The only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived to the present day. Currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Burma’ (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 212).

<sup>15</sup> *Nibbana* is the realisation of the Ultimate Truth in Buddhism can be described as ‘to see things as they are (*Yathabhutam*) without illusion or ignorance (*Avijja*), is the extinction of craving ‘thirst’ (*Tanhakkaya*), and the cessation (*Nirodha*) of [suffering] (*Dukkha*)’ (Rahula, 1974, p. 40).

To be able to gain an insight into oneself and one's mind in the quotation above implies that one's awareness is heightened during meditation, which is a rather active process, even though it is often characterised by calmness. During meditation, the practitioner must work hard on freeing the mind from disturbances; once the mind is free, then s/he can begin to understand her/his own body, feelings, and mind. Because of this advantage, which could be applied to an actor's work in rehearsal and performance, I believe that meditation practices can be beneficial to actor training.

### **Buddhist meditation and its potential for actor training**

On the surface, Buddhist meditation may be applied in actor training, as an exercise to train one's concentration – an important factor in contemporary acting notable in Constantin Stanislavski's system (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 86-118, Carnicke, 2010a, p. 9-11) and Method acting (Krasner, 2010, p. 146), both of which are most prevalent in university acting courses in Thailand, as stated in the introduction. Nonetheless, Buddhist meditation is not merely an activity of the mind (that is to say an exercise to train one's concentration). It can be described as an exploration of the mind-body process (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 209), which I believe is the feature that corresponds to an actor's work in the pre-performative training that leads to the development of performance behaviours recognised by audience as presence in performance.

In the United Kingdom, Sandra Reeve,<sup>16</sup> a movement teacher, conducts several movement workshops, based on the Buddhist philosophy, in West Dorset. She describes *The Gesture of Presence* workshop that is jointly led by Suvaco Bhikkhu (a *Theravada* Buddhist monk from Hartridge Buddhist Monastery) as follows:

This workshop is designed to cultivate presence in our bodies, in the moment, in our surroundings, with others and with what is. It is a useful workshop for those interested in movement as contemplation and meditation.

The Gesture of Presence explores and encourages a sense of being present in walking, crawling, sitting, rolling, swinging, lying down, in all the shapes of the moving body. How can we be relaxed and spontaneous, awake and receptive?

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<sup>16</sup> Sandra Reeve completed her PhD in Performance Practice at the University of Exeter in 2008. Her thesis is entitled *the Ecological Body*. Her website can be found at [www.theecologicalbody.com](http://www.theecologicalbody.com).

We will pay attention to our stillness in movement and to our movement when we are still and we will explore what it feels like to be present in our bodies, in our surroundings, with others and with what is happening at any given moment. (Reeve, 2012)

It is problematic, however, when trying to make a connection between Buddhist meditation and actor training in the Thai context. Unlike in the East Asian countries where Buddhism directly influences the performing art traditions (Scott, 1993a, George, 1999), although Thai people consider themselves *Theravada* Buddhists, there are animistic and Brahmanistic-Hindu elements present in everyday life, rituals and noticeably in performing arts (Kirsch, 1977, p. 241-242, Rutnin, 1996, p. 1). While it is believed that traditional forms of performing arts have been brought to Thailand from Sri Lanka with *Theravada* Buddhism, and there is no doubt that Thai dance and dance-drama are closely related to Buddhist themes and traditions (Rutnin, 1996, p. 1-20), little has been discussed on the relationship between meditation and performer training in Thailand. This is, firstly, due to the *Theravada* Buddhist belief that performing arts are considered forms of entertainment belonging to the secular world of *kamma* that hinder one's journey to *Nibbana* (George, 1999, p. 85-89),<sup>17</sup> which is the ultimate goal of Buddhist meditation; and secondly, throughout the history, Thai traditional theatre has been developing under the patronage of the royal court, which is closely associated to Brahmanistic beliefs in sacred and elaborate rituals, rather than Buddhism (Redwood, 1953, p. 100-101, Rutnin, 1996, p. 46).

In any case, a simple connection can be illustrated to the Thai student actors between meditation and performance, before moving on to how the principles of Buddhist meditation can be beneficial to actors. David E. R. George in *Buddhism as/in Performance* makes a comparison between the basic technique of single-point awareness (breath observation) and acting, referring to performances in Sri Lanka, where *Theravada* Buddhism is also practised. He further suggests that 'arduous concentration on the rising and passing of all phenomena' (George, 1999, p. 64-65) required in *Vipassana*,<sup>18</sup> a higher level of meditation (insight meditation), resembles an actor's work in performance. In *Vipassana* meditation, which is also widely practised in Thailand, one must not direct an activity, but simply 'watch mindfully the constant flow

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<sup>17</sup> *Kamma* or *karma* in Sanskrit, means 'good and bad actions of body, speech, and mind whose pleasant and unpleasant results are experienced in this and subsequent lives' (Gethin, 1998, p. 320).

<sup>18</sup> *Vipassana* means 'insight, seeing clearly' (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 212).



of matter and mental states as they come into consciousness' (George, 1999, p. 64-65). In Europe, Grotowski has acknowledged this meditation method, distinguishing it from the western approaches to physical actions (such as in Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions and Method acting) (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 4). He asserts that if applied in performance, an actor can perform physical actions 'without being caught up in the objective of [her/his] own subjectivity' (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 4).

Reflecting upon my past theatre experiences, I believe *Vipassana* is applicable to my work on various dramaturgies. In scene five of a contemporary dance performance, entitled *Kokashita*,<sup>19</sup> I paid attention to the rhythm of the music being played, and at specific points, responded with my rehearsed body movements in the immediate moment, in connection to the actions made by other performers in the space. In another situation where I was a solo performer (in *Dancing Corpse*, my first practical project),<sup>20</sup> I watched a series of prearranged images that came into my mind in the moment of performance, paying attention to specific details, and projected each of them outward through my bodily actions. What I did not do (or tried not to do) was to be conscious about my intention. This is, of course, just one simple way of looking at an actor's work in performance – by deconstructing a performance into a set of tasks or a performance score, and simply observing each of them in turn as they develop in and through the body – which resembles the method of *Vipassana* (although the things being observed may be different). Inevitably, other factors come into play, and it is impossible to say that there really is only one point of focus for a performer on stage; but already, the connection between the Buddhist principle of meditation and acting can be seen from the examples I have given.

### **Influence of Buddhist meditation on *Noh* actor training**

There is already clear evidence of the Buddhist meditation influence in actor training in East Asia, most evidently in the *Noh* theatre of Japan (McKinnon, 1953,

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<sup>19</sup> *Kokashita* was directed by Shigehiro Ide, and performed on Saturday 14 - Friday 20 March 2009, at Owlspot Theatre in Festival/Tokyo 09 (Tokyo, Japan).

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix A: DVD for *Dancing Corpse*, performed by Grisana Punpeng on 3 June 2010, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter.

Pilgrim, 1969, Ortolani, 1972, Scott, 1975), though there are slight differences between this branch of Buddhism and the one practised in Thailand. Nonetheless, because of its close connection to Buddhist doctrines and practices, with which Thai student actors are familiar, the concepts in *Noh* actor training will be referred to frequently in this chapter. Moreover, due to a great quantity of literature and discourses available on this topic, once the psychophysical training is implemented in Thailand's university drama programmes, Thai student actors will be able to develop their understanding further through accessing books and articles on *Noh* performer training; whereas there is limited literature on the Thai traditional performer training, particularly on its relation to Buddhist practices.

As I briefly mentioned in the previous section, theatre and performances may be regarded by *Theravada* followers as producing disturbance to the mind, East Asian Buddhism (practised in China, Japan, and Korea), especially Zen Buddhism, which places great emphasis on 'the attainment of a deep state of peace by the means of calm meditation' (Gethin, 1998, p. 261), considers theatre practices to be a possible pathway towards enlightenment (George, 1999, p. 135). Consequently, Zen meditation methods have been associated with *Noh* play scripts and discourses on actor training since the fourteenth century (George, 1999, p. 137-138).<sup>21</sup> The treatises on the art of *Noh* drama, written by Motokiyo Zeami (1363-1443), seem to also suggest that a successful *Noh* actor is one who has attained a state of 'no-mind (*mushin*) or emptiness (*ku*)' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 25-27, Gethin, 1998, p. 234-237, George, 1999, p. 142-146). This refers to a state where 'There are no forms, no feelings, conceptions, impulses, or consciousness' (Chang, Garma C.C. quoted in George, 1999, p. 144), which is a higher state along the Buddhist path.

The training method in *Noh* theatre is considered a form of 'self-cultivation' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 24-28), which aims to produce a state of body-mind oneness, in which there is no consciousness of an 'I'.<sup>22</sup> The practice of movement patterns in *Noh* theatre is an example of the meditation in motion method that requires

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<sup>21</sup> There is an argument that *Noh* is related more to *Shinto* (Japanese religion) and other shamanistic practices, but it is not widely accepted (George, 1999, p. 138).

<sup>22</sup> Jeung-Sook Yoo discusses the disappearance of 'I' in her theatre practice, in relation to Phillip Zarrilli's actor training paradigm and *DahnHak* (a form of Korean meditation), in her PhD thesis (Yoo, 2008).

an actor to repeat specific forms for a period of time, and finally, ‘consciousness of oneself as the subject of bodily movement disappears and becomes the movement itself that is [moving]’ (Yuasa, 1993, p. 27). What this seemingly abstract statement suggests is that the goal of training like that of *Noh* theatre is not simply mastering physical movements, but acquiring an ability to deploy a different quality of energy in action.

### **The concept of suchness**

When applied to an actor training context, both *Vipassana* in *Theravada* Buddhism and meditation in motion disciplines influenced by Zen are not employed as a way to achieve *Nibbana*. Rather, the aim is to enable student actors to achieve a state of body-mind oneness which will allow a quality of presence to develop before an audience’s eyes in performance. Because in this state ‘the mind [is] being emptied such that one’s awareness of performance disappears’ (Yuasa, 1987, p. 108), it is often referred to as the state of ‘emptiness’ (*sunyata* in Pali) (Yuasa, 1987, p. 108, Gethin, 1998, p. 234-237, George, 1999, p. 142-146). In philosophy, the concept of emptiness in Buddhism has received much attention, and has been compared to various western theories, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the invisible phenomena (see Kim, 2009, Park and Kopf, 2009). In contemporary theatre, the concept of emptiness has been tackled, noticeably in performance arts and *butoh* (for examples, see Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, Taylor, 2010).<sup>23</sup> However, as a concept in actor training, this translated term could be misleading, since the work of an actor is never empty, either in the mind or physical body. Therefore, in a studio setting where instructions should be easily accessible to student actors, I suggest replacing it with the word ‘suchness’ (or ‘thusness’), which is an English translation of the term *Tathata* (ตถตา in Thai) in Buddhism (most prominent in Zen) (Gethin, 1998, p. 248-249, George, 1999, p. 146-147).

*Tathata* refers to a concept or a state of mind where there are no longer negative connotations; all things are asserted as they are, and seen ‘simply just so’ (Gethin, 1998, p. 248-249, George, 1999, p. 146). Hyong-hyo Kim relates this concept to Merleau-

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<sup>23</sup> Gretel Taylor discusses the concept of emptiness, in relation to her site-specific performance processes, in her PhD thesis, entitled *Locating: Place and the Moving Body* (Taylor, 2008).

Ponty's 'ante-predicative life of consciousness (*la vie ante-prédicative de la conscience*)' (Kim, 2009, p. 19-20), in which humans take the attitude of natural lifestyle and simply 'feel in their relationships in the daily life-world as they live with the sense organs of their bodies' (Kim, 2009, p. 20). Nonetheless, being a follower in *Theravada* Buddhism, it is difficult to imagine how laypersons living in the secular world (as opposed to monks) can avoid conceptualising what they see or experience in everyday life. In addition, there are arguments surrounding the validation of this notion, particularly in Western philosophy (for example, see Brubaker, 2009); and in performance applications, this can also be problematic, since many kinds of performance require actors to produce or convey some level of attitude and emotions. In spite of that, I believe that actors should be trained to be able to achieve some level of suchness, so that they become less likely to get caught up in certain emotions, and are able to be readily available, physically and mentally, in the moment of performance.

The following section is concerned with how meditation in motion operates in actor training, and through this, how it might become more explicit to student actors what kind of practice may be considered meditation in motion.

### **The function of meditation in motion in actor training**

As seen in *Noh* theatre practice, the practice of meditation in motion can be employed in actor training to engender a state of body-mind oneness, no-self, and the concept of suchness, derived from Buddhism. Fundamentally, in Buddhist practices, the goal of meditation is to develop mindfulness at all times while the practitioner is awake, so walking is naturally an integral part to the practice (Silananda, 1995).<sup>24</sup> It enables performers to be available for all that happens in the moment (maintaining various layers of awareness).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> There are various methods and traditions of walking meditation, as there are many branches of Buddhism: for *Theravada* traditions, see Silananda, 1995; and for Zen's, see Heine & Wright, 2008, p. 223-259.

<sup>25</sup> Layers of awareness refer to: awareness of the interoceptive sensations, proprioceptive awareness, exteroceptive awareness, and awareness of mental imagery.

I will now attempt to articulate how one can reach the state of body-mind oneness through Yuasa's investigation of the information systems in the body (body scheme), based on the theories proposed by Henri Bergson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>26</sup> Yuasa asserts that there are three circuits situated in the conscious region, and another one, which is only evident in Eastern philosophy and medicine, in the unconscious. External Sensory-Motor Circuit is the term he has given to the outermost layer, which directly connects the body to the external world. A sensory stimulus, once received, is turned into the information which travels to the brain. A response is then generated and sent through motor nerves to motor organs to generate actions towards the external world. The second system is called the Circuit of Coenesthesia, which he considers 'conscious awareness of [...] self-apprehending sensation' (Nagatomo, 1989, p. 132-135, Yuasa, 1993, p. 47); its function can be compared to that of a feedback apparatus (like a thermostat which displays a red light when the temperature reaches a particular level, and cuts off the supply of electricity) (Yuasa, 1993, p. 46). The third circuit, which is considered most fundamental for maintaining life, is situated in the deepest level of consciousness, closely connected to the unconscious region. This is called the Emotion-Instinct Circuit, which essentially deals with emotional responses, among the wider connection of the three circuits (Nagatomo, 1989, p. 135-137, Yuasa, 1993, p. 49-54).

Everyday activities only involve the first circuit (External Sensory-Motor Circuit), while most sports and dance practices also incorporate the second Circuit of Coenesthesia, as they constantly heighten the level of intensity in the first circuit. Meditation training, however, also includes the Emotion-Instinct Circuit, and allows the practitioner to control her/his emotions through habitualisation of the second circuit; this means that calmness can be maintained, the 'degree of correlativity between the movement of the mind and body [is enhanced]' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 55), and the state of body-mind oneness can be achieved (Yuasa, 1993, p. 55).

The fourth circuit, situated in the unconscious region, is called Unconscious Quasi-Body, and does not operate in 'everyday lived dimension of the body' (Nagatomo, 1989, p. 137). It is related to the concept of *ki*-energy – a life force

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<sup>26</sup> Zarrilli also proposes a similar body scheme, called the actor's four embodied modes of experience, drawing upon Drew Leder's *The Absent Body* (see Chapter 3 of Zarrilli, 2009).

that flows through the meridians in the body, activating physiological functions, and connects the body with the external world (Nagatomo, 1989, p. 138, Yuasa, 1993, p. 119).<sup>27</sup> Even though it is considered invisible, and cannot be perceived through the senses, *ki*-energy is said to be cultivated through meditation in motion practices, felt and directed once the practitioner is sufficiently ‘*ki*-sensitive’ (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 177, Zarrilli, 2009, p. 39).

An example of the type of meditation in motion exercises that I employ in my own practice will be given here; and my learning process will be discussed in relation to Yuasa’s body scheme above.<sup>28</sup> As I mentioned in the introduction, *Hokohtai* is a ‘slow-motion walk’ exercise I have learnt from *butoh* practitioners, Katsura Kan and Frances Barbe in various workshops in 2008-2009, and since then I have been practising it in order to prepare myself for every rehearsal (particularly in my first practical project). *Hokohtai* is generally translated in *butoh* practices as ‘the walking body’ (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, p. 151), in which a practitioner slows down her/his neutral walk, becoming an ‘impersonal, universalised [body]’ (Taylor, 2010, p. 79). When I first started practising this walk, I engaged the first circuit (External Sensory-Motor Circuit), as I simply tried to replicate my natural walk in slow motion. When I received an instruction to slow down the movement even more, I struggled to maintain my balance and appear ‘natural’; my consciousness was directed to all of my body parts involved in the walk (back, arms, legs, feet, etc.), as I made corrections, so that my walk would appear to be as smooth as possible. The second circuit (Circuit of Coenesthesia) became involved at this stage. Concurrently, when I was making adjustments to my body, certain feelings, such as irritation arose, as my concentration was directed to each specific area in the body that I found difficult to control – the Emotion-Instinct Circuit was engaged. However, after several more rounds, the exercise ‘habituate(d) the body’ (Yuasa, 1993, p. 48): I did not have to make adjustments as often as in the earlier stage, and my concentration was not placed on any particular part of the body, but the overall psycho-physiological experience.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ki* is a Japanese pronunciation. I particularly chose this pronunciation, as it is used by Yuasa, from whom I borrow the term ‘meditation in motion’. It is called *chi* in Chinese and *prana* of ‘the “subtle body” in yoga practice’ (Zarrilli, 2007b, p. 67).

<sup>28</sup> Similarly Barbara Sellers-Young uses her training experience in the Japanese dance, *nihon buyo*, to demonstrate Yuasa’s body scheme in her article (see Sellers-Young, 1998).

The fourth circuit (Unconscious Quasi-Body Circuit) came into play, as I kept repeating the walk several more times and tried to improve the consistency of the movement. When I increased the time I spent on each repetition, while slowing down the walk, emotions and other distractions entered my mind; some parts of the body became tense, and I lost control of the movement. My solution was to place my concentration on my in- and out-breath, which corresponded to the steps I took. I constantly made sure that my gaze was directed straight ahead, and my peripheral awareness was kept open. It is difficult to prove whether or not I could really feel the *ki*-energy moving throughout my body (being *ki*-sensitive), so I would explain that my *ki*-energy in the movement was perceived through my use of inner images. The utilisation of images is related more to the next principle, presence in performance, which will be discussed further later. However, it is also an essential tool for energy activation: when I actualised the image of the moving *ki*-energy within the *Hokohtai* exercise, its connection to my full body was established. I was working, in my mind through my body, on sending jets of water to the space in front of me, behind me, above me, under my feet, and even beyond the studio. Zarrilli regards this act as the ‘physical aspect to thought’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 39). All four circuits are integrated through this work with inner images (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 178), and I believe, in performative applications, the longer and more frequently the performer practises using all four circuits concurrently, the better s/he is at maintaining a state of body-mind oneness in the moment of performance.

As exemplified in the exercise above, in meditation in motion training, like the cumulative training of *Noh* actors, exercises do not only make the body move in accordance with the movements of the mind, as in sports or vocational skills learning (Yuasa, 1987, p. 105), they also eliminate consciousness of the physical body, putting the inner *ki*-energy to work (or the perception of the *ki*-energy through the use of images), and allowing the actor to ‘[observe her/his own performance] with a detached seeing’ (Yuasa, 1987, p. 108). These exercises not only reflect the concept of suchness in Buddhism, but also the common Asian notion of ‘second nature’, which one can acquire through removing her/himself from the routine of daily life, and taking on a new living pattern or a certain discipline, such as the path towards self-realisation in Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism (Kupperman, 1999, p. 18-20). Richard Schechner

notices this state in ‘almost all traditional performing arts’. He uses the word ‘second nature’ (Schechner, 1985, p. 222-225) to describe the result of ‘repeating concrete sequences of behaviour’ (Schechner, 1985, p. 226).<sup>29</sup>

In addition, Grotowski made an observation that in Euro-American theatre, actors learn how to improvise the actions, whereas the Asian performing arts place greater importance on energy, and actors learn to be able to improvise the applications of energy in different forms (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 7). Because of this advantage, many Western practitioners have integrated techniques of Asian actor training into their practices; such figures, apart from those already discussed in the introduction, include Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook, Jacques Copeau, and Wlodzimierz Staniewski, to name a few (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 8, Hodge, 2010a, p. xx-xxi). For example, Meyerhold’s assertion that practising a movement pattern leads to a specific psychophysiological quality crucial to acting is in part influenced by Chinese Theatre and Japanese *Noh* and Kabuki acting styles (Leach, 1989, p. 56, Blair, 2008, p. 36, Roxworthy, 2008, p. 38-43, Tian, 2008, p. 64-71), and Staniewski emphasises the quality of ‘body constantly in motion’ in relation to the rhythm of the breath (Staniewski and Hodge, 2004, p. 87) in his training techniques. He states that ‘[b]eing in a constant state of movement trains [one] to be present in each moment with a full sense of awareness’ (Staniewski and Hodge, 2004, p. 87).

I will now move on to discuss aspects of meditation in motion, situated in the performer training regime developed by Phillip Zarrilli, in which I have participated, to further clarify how this concept can be applied and articulated within the context of a university drama programme.

### **Case study 1: Zarrilli’s performer training module and yoga as a method of meditation in motion**

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<sup>29</sup> Stanislavski uses the term ‘second nature’ in connection with a habit (Stanislavski, 2010, p. 26), while Dick McCaw also uses it in relation to Feldenkrais’s account of learning, in which skills are ‘learned and then recalled without the need for conscious reflection’ (McCaw, 2009, p. 61). This type of learning relies on procedural memory. It will be discussed further in Chapter 2.



Upon searching for an alternative actor training paradigm that would respond to the demands of today's actors that the current acting pedagogy in Thailand university drama programmes have not been able to address, Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical actor training has been selected as the main paradigm in which my experiential research originated. Not only that Zarrilli's psychophysical approach to actor training has been influenced by its source traditions from Asia, which make it relevant to my research, but also because his training is situated within the framework of a current university undergraduate degree programme. I participated in his Performer Training module, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter, in the autumn term of 2009.<sup>30</sup>

Looking at Zarrilli's psychophysical performer training paradigm, the sequences of yoga, *taijiquan* (*wu*-style), and the Southern Indian martial art, *kalaripayattu*, though different in dynamics, can all be regarded as methods of meditation in motion. Through my own experience of Zarrilli's approach to performer training, I have discovered that the underlying principles of Buddhist meditation and self-cultivation discussed earlier, within the exercises, offer considerable advantages to a performer at the pre-expressive level, and also in performance. For instance, every session always begins and ends with breathing exercises, much like *Vipassana* meditation, which help me establish an awareness of, and a connection between, the image of *ki*-energy and the outer surroundings right from the beginning of the practice, while entering a state of suchness in the present.

In Zarrilli's training system, the breathing exercises are followed by a sequence of yoga, which will be the topic of discussion here, as it is the discipline that I am most familiar with, having practised since 2006; and especially because a yoga sequence will be employed in my practical projects. Although yoga (in its many variations) has been widely applied in contemporary Western theatre training, the way that it has been used varies. First of all, Constantin Stanislavski's work has been influenced by yoga in many ways since 1911 when he first encountered *Hatha Yoga*, a book written by Ramacharaka (Hodge, 2010a, p. 7). He borrowed the concepts of body-mind connection, being in the moment, and extending rays of inner energy into the surroundings (among others) from

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<sup>30</sup> This module encompassed the principles and practices of the Chinese martial art, *taijiquan* (*wu*-style), the Indian *hatha* yoga and the Southern Indian martial art, *kalaripayattu*. It began on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and lasted for 11 weeks. In addition, a performance of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* was integrated into the training process.

yoga and articulates them through his own exercises (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 7-12).<sup>31</sup> He also asserts at a certain period of his exploration that the yogic breathing technique should also be used repetitively for relaxation and in connection with the utilisation of inner energy (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 7-12). In addition, comparisons between his notion of the circle of attention and the meditation practice of withdrawal into a protective circle in Tantric yoga have also been made (see Wegner, 1976).

Even though Jerzy Grotowski famously states that a yoga practice aimed at developing total concentration could be so introverted that it destroys an actor's expressions (Grotowski *et al.*, 1968, p. 35-36, Kapsali, 2010, p. 195), he adopted some yoga positions as part of his corporal exercises (called the *corporels*), which aim to eliminate the actor's body resistances, allowing her/him to have full trust in her/himself (Wolford, 2010, p. 207-208). Maria Kapsali asserts that this contradiction is the result of his encounters with two different types of yoga: yoga as a traditional discipline of spiritual attainment (which he rejects) and the modern postural yoga practised towards improving psycho-physiological fitness (which he uses) (Kapsali, 2010, p. 195-196). The yoga poses that he selected were somewhat adapted so that when performed the actor can direct his attention outward, making contact with other beings and all that is in the space (Kapsali, 2010, p. 194).

Zarrilli's yoga sequence is carefully devised to allow an actor to gain self-controlled, calm emotions, while working on the employment of *ki*-energy continuously (working on all four circuits in Yuasa's body scheme). Therefore, the aim is activation not relaxation (Creely, 2010, p. 224). To a certain extent, his use of postural yoga is similar to Grotowski's, except that Zarrilli places more importance on the psychophysical work in the process leading to the forms (which corresponds to Stanislavski's use of yogic body-mind concept), rather than the forms themselves. In the Performer Training module, it can also be noted that most of the yoga postures could be performed by everyone in the group of various ages, shapes and sizes from the beginning (my own observation), which is different from Grotowski's *corporels* which

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Chekhov, who has worked with Stanislavski, also speaks of rays of energy in his actor training, though its connection to yoga is not mentioned (Chekhov, 2002). Maria Osipovna Knebel, an important theatrical figure in the Soviet era, who has studied with both Stanislavski and Chekhov, utilises the notion of radiation of energy in her acting paradigm (Carnicke, 2010b).

include headstands, somersaults and leaps, for example, that rely on ultimate physical fitness, and could take months to achieve (Wolford, 2010, p. 208).

Like other methods of meditation in motion, concentration on the breathing is important for yoga, as a way to achieve single-mindedness and activate the fourth circuit previously discussed. B. K. S. Iyengar, the founder of Iyengar yoga,<sup>32</sup> which focuses particularly on the alignment of the body, states that postural yoga practice together with the breathing technique produces ‘stability of consciousness [...] and the power of concentration allows [one] to invest [her/his] new energy judiciously’ (Iyengar, 2005, p. 72).

While various techniques of breath control in yoga practice, collectively regarded as *pranayama*, are used to sharpen one’s concentration, anatomically it can also provide spine protection and allow it to be lengthened during movements (Kaminoff, 2007, p. 16). To put it simply, the human torso is composed of two cavities, the thoracic and the abdominal, which are interrelated and can change in shape and volume when breathing. In a psychophysical training, to establish a strong foundation for psychophysical work, one must follow the in-breath down to the lower abdomen area below the navel where *ki*-energy originates (Zarrilli uses the Chinese term *dantian*). Physically, the air does not literally travel to this area, but when one inhales deeply (without straining any muscle), the thoracic cavity expands, and pushes downward, pressing the abdominal cavity, causing it to distend. Similarly, in a deep active exhalation, such as in yoga or Zarrilli’s training, the muscles which surround both cavities contract, resulting in the abdominal cavity being pushed toward the thoracic, as illustrated in figure 2. When one practises the deep inhalation and exhalation during physical movements, the stability is maintained as the full length of the spine is supported by the musculature surrounding the two cavities. Moreover, on an inhalation, the expansion inside the torso allows the spine to be lengthened naturally without force (Kaminoff, 2007, p. 5).

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<sup>32</sup> Iyengar yoga is the form of yoga which influenced the training of Grotowski’s Theatre Laboratory (Kapsali, 2010).

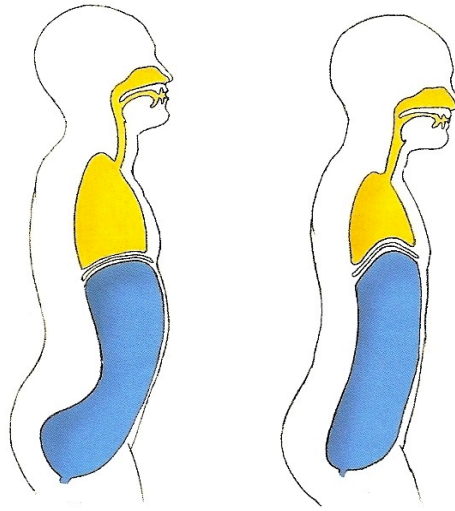


Figure 2. 'Breathing is thoracoabdominal shape change. Inhalation on the left, exhalation on the right' (Kaminoff, 2007, p. 5)

Furthermore, in order to gain full control of the breath, it is important to activate the *ki*-energy right from the start. In meditation in motion methods, the practitioner is instructed to sense (or imagine) *ki* (or any other equivalent term) being cultivated and generated in the *dantian*, and flowing throughout the body, animating all movements arising from it. In preparation, the gravity of the body must be settled into the *dantian*, while maintaining the straightened spine and the relaxed but controlled upper body. The mind is then directed to the *dantian* (Yuasa, 1993, p. 71). When one's *ki*-energy is sufficiently cultivated, according to Zarrilli, one can radiate energy both outward to the space (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 76) – a concept already established in Western actor training, for example, by Stanislavski and Chekhov. In training, when I practise the yoga sun salutation sequence (*surya-namaskara* in Sanskrit), I learn that if I lose my connection to the *dantian*, my weight shifts, and I lose my balance. If I do not pay attention to the *ki*-energy, or use muscular force to put my body in a certain position, the muscles are strained, the flow of the movement is interrupted, and I lose my awareness of the surroundings. If the pattern of breathing is uneven, or if the inhalation or exhalation is not deep enough, each posture becomes more difficult to achieve, and the movement is restricted.

To summarise, postural yoga practice, such as the sequence developed by Zarrilli, can be used not only to make the physical body flexible, or as an exercise on concentration. It is employed to train student actors to be able to activate the *ki*-energy

(or embody the image of *ki*), and, in Grotowski's words, further 'improvis[e] the applications of energy' in various situations (Grotowski and Price, 1989, p. 7).

### **Case study 2: Thai *Khon* dance-drama training, the concept of energy and body-mind oneness**

The concept of *ki*-energy in meditation in motion can be related to the concept of energy within the Thai traditional theatre training. I have particularly chosen the performance tradition of *Khon* dance-drama, because of its process of refinement dated back to the fourteenth century, and its long continued practice to the present day (Rutnin, 1996, p. 6-7), which is comparable to the Japanese *Noh* theatre (Rutnin, 1996, p. 9).

Meditation in motion methods, through the repetition of physical actions, aim to 'destroy the automatism of daily life and to create another quality of energy in the body' (Barba and Savarese, 2005, p. 227). This acquired quality of energy develops a 'decided body ready to leap and to act' (Barba and Savarese, 2005, p. 227). As discussed earlier, in Japanese culture, this energy is called *ki*-energy. However, in the Thai traditional performing art discourse, this acquired quality of energy is regarded as 'the artistic energy of the Teachers or *Kru*' (Sinthuphan, 2007, p. 213). In *Khon*, a masked dance-drama believed to have originated in the fourteenth century in the Sukhothai period in Thailand, actors have to undergo a series of physical exercises repeatedly from the age of six to eight (at the present time from the age of thirteen to fifteen) (Rutnin, 1996, p. 9). The physical forms of these exercises are said to have derived from the traditional martial art dance, in which 'soldiers stamped their feet in unison to the rhythm of drum beats' (Rutnin, 1996, p. 6). Throughout the course of training, *Khon* actors are also taught to believe in the spiritual power of the characters in the *Khon* play, called *Ramakien*, which are the gods, demons and other supernatural beings of Hindu mythology, and the power of the *Khon* masters in the past and present (Kritchanchai, 2002, p. 20). Moreover, it is an actor's duty to pay homage regularly to his masters, especially in the annual homage and initiation ceremony (Yupho, 1990, p. 5-6). This obedience and spiritual belief, together with life-long apprenticeship and

arduous training, lead to the notion that an actor embodies the artistic energy of the *Khon* masters in the moment of performance. For Thai performing artists:

[T]he performative body is neither bound to the flesh, nor the idea of individuality. On the contrary, it is a carrier of a collective consciousness, and takes in the numinous ancestral bodies of the Teachers together with successions of artists before him. It is often said that a person performs well because he has ‘the gene’ [*Chue* – *เชื้อ* in Thai] in his body. This gene, however, does not necessarily refer to a bloodline. It also points to [...] the transference of the artistic energy from one to another. (Sinthuphan, 2007, p. 213)

However, this concept of energy is not usually articulated in the training. Based on my observation conducted on 27 August 2010 at the College of Dramatic Arts (*Witthayalai Natasin* – *วิทยาลัยนาฏศิลป์* in Thai), the *Khon* actor training seems to focus on developing two particular elements: a sense of rhythm and musical harmony and physical strength and flexibility.

Please refer to DVD clip 1 (duration: 1.44 minutes)

An example of *Khon* performer training: classes of three character types: *ling* (monkey), *yak* (demon), and *phra* (male lead)

The training, like any other traditional performance preparation, requires ‘observation, practice, imitation, correction, [and] repetition’ (Schechner, 1985, p. 5), which through a period of time, allow the basic movement patterns to become second nature (Schechner, 1985, p. 223). The instructions given during training sessions are concerned only with how to achieve the correct forms through enduring muscular pain in endless repetitions. There is no discourse on the utilisation of inner energy. However, Theerapat Thongnim, one of the *Khon* teachers at the college said that a student who is determined to become a professional *Khon* will work hard at achieving the correct forms by closely observing and imitating his teacher’s quality of movement for many years. When he finally performs on stage, a special quality unique to his teacher can be perceived (interview, 27 August 2010).

Even though *Khon* traditions have been highly influenced by Brahmanism, the *Khon* training can be analysed in relation to Yuasa’s Zen-inspired body scheme. All three circuits, namely, External Sensory-Motor Circuit, the Circuit of Coenesthesia, and

Emotion-Instinct Circuit, are put into work in the pre-performative training, as the student learns to adjust parts of his body according to the teacher's instruction. After years of repetitions, he can maintain calmness in the emotional function, while increasingly developing a sense of oneness between the body and mind. Even though the concept of *ki*-energy flowing through meridians in the body is not employed in the Thai performing art context, the extra-daily quality of energy discussed above corresponds to the function of the circuit in the unconscious region. Yuasa relates his concept of the fourth circuit of the unconscious quasi-body to the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's system of 'the lived body' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 120-128), which exists at the base of the 'physiologically recognised objective body' (Yuasa, 1993, p. 121). This lived body prepares and adjusts the objective body, without conscious judgement, and directs the first circuit towards action in the external world (Yuasa, 1993, p. 120-121).

The actor is said to inhabit the energy of his teacher, and performs with the lived body, activated by the ideal image of his teacher in performance. His objective body becomes the performative body – a mere container of spiritual energy; there is no mind – the consciousness of an 'I' disappears, as there is no longer a felt distinction between the mind and body. Furthermore, Pichet Klunchun, a contemporary Thai dancer, who underwent *Khon* training for 16 years, states that the forms in Thai traditional dances involve arms and hands moving in circular or wave-like patterns, extending and returning to the centre of the body; so when the forms are correctly executed the level and flow of energy can be maintained throughout the controlled and balanced movements of the entire body (Jungwiwattanaporn, 2009, p. 24).

The concept of energy in Thai performing arts, particularly *Khon* dance-drama, which is considered an art that is 'a key to all other forms of dramatic or choreographic manifestations of the arts [in Thailand]' (Yupho, 1989, p. 23), is discussed here in relation to Yuasa's body scheme to bridge the gap between the self-cultivation method of meditation in motion in Buddhism and the Thai performer training traditions which have been largely influenced by Brahmanistic and animistic beliefs. The notion of artistic energy that a performer embodies and maintains in the moment of performance

can be said to exist in the state of body-mind oneness – a state attainable through meditation practices with which Thai people, as Buddhists are familiar.

Nevertheless, there are two major differences between the training in traditional performing arts, such as *Khon* and *Noh* theatre, and the psychophysical actor training I am developing: the articulation of the principles of practice, and the forms being practised. Firstly, because of the limitation of time in the university setting, instead of allowing the actor to gradually absorb and discover the concepts of training individually through life-long continuous practice, the concepts surrounding methods of meditation in motion must be made clear and accessible (not mythic or spiritual) to student actors both in studio instructions and discussions, and through complementary readings. Secondly, the forms that *Khon* actors repeat in daily training, for example, are the basic movement patterns that are combined to convey characters and stories in actual performances, whereas the forms of meditation in motion that I employ in the training should not leave any stylistic imprint on the body; and they are not to be shown in performance. Student actors have to be able to creatively apply the *ki*-energy, activated through the training, to their work on performance tasks, according to the requirements of each dramaturgy.

### **3. Presence in Performance**

The third element in the psychophysical actor training that is directly applicable to an actor's work in performance comprises concepts and exercises that serve as complements to the method of meditation in motion. Three main areas of exploration I have chosen to focus on are modes of awareness, image work, and the principle of reduction, all of which could be considered main components of an actor's work that establish her/his presence in performance. Within the training scheme, these three elements can be explored and developed by the student actors through exercises and structured improvisations, representing the transitional stage from the training to performance applications.

As discussed in my introduction, the notion of presence that influences methods of actor training varies from one person to another, and is mostly situated within



Western discourse. Here I will focus on how this concept is presented through the writings of contemporary Western practitioners, apart from those already discussed in the introduction, before attempting to ‘make sense’ of it in my own context, in Chapters 2 and 3.

As stated earlier, my understanding of presence is partly based on the Thai perception, which corresponds to Cormac Power’s term ‘auratic presence’ (Power, 2008, p. 47-85), which can be perceived directly by the spectators. Training through meditation in motion can lead to development of this quality. Nevertheless, I believe that more direct applications, in the forms of complementary exercises, are needed for the student actor to clearly identify what an audience’s perception of ‘presence’ may refer to, and then be able to give rise to it in performance.

For Zarrilli, presence is emergent in the moment of performance through an audience’s perception of the actor’s engagement with the details of her/his performance score; and in terms of ‘engagement’, Zarrilli insists that the actor considers each given task as a question that s/he seeks to explore (Zarrilli, 2012). The actor’s engagement is also emphasised in Joseph Chaikin’s *The Presence of the Actor* (1972), as he asserts that a quality of presence is like ‘an electric field. It’s a free heightened space in which the actor stands [...] The actor has to allow himself – has to be available to himself – has to be able to discover and call on himself – and he has to direct himself and guide his own process’ (Chaikin, 1991, p. 21-22). Eileen Blumenthal clarifies that, for Chaikin, the key to the actor’s presence is the state of being ‘totally alert at all times to the actual moments and the actual space in which [s/he] is working’ (Blumenthal, 1984, p. 51). Similarly, Alison Hodge asserts that in Włodzimierz Staniewski’s works, it is required that the actor’s ‘gate of perception is open’ (Hodge, 2010b, p. 285). However, as discussed earlier, the quality of energy that the actor in a psychophysical practice possesses is an extra-daily type of energy (whether it is *ki*-energy or the artistic energy of the teachers in a Thai performing arts context), the attention given in performance is not the same as an everyday mode of attention. It is a quality which can be observed as a state of ‘open, heightened virtuosi[ty]’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 91). In Asian traditional theatre and martial arts, this state can be achieved through extra-daily ‘behavioural rules’ (Stewart, 2002, p. 47) or ‘physical score’ (Barba, 1995, p. 122, Stewart, 2002, p.

47), and each set of these physical scores is specific to a particular type of performance or fighting task (for example, learning basic movement patterns of *Khon* dance-drama, in order to perform its repertoire).

However, my argument here is that the extra-daily elements (which I identify as modes of awareness, image work, and the principle of reduction), utilised and articulated clearly in complementary exercises, can be applied to contemporary performer training, designed for the Thai university students. Even though what will be referred to here are based on theories and discourses presented through Western perspectives, they nevertheless provide insights into the essential qualities of the actor's performance, which allow me to reflect upon my own experience, and explore the ways in which these elements could be referred to in the Thai context.

To begin with, one of the elements that distinguish the psychophysical exercises from the somatic practices in Asian traditional theatre and martial arts is the vocalising of the various modes of awareness. This understanding could help the student actor to realise that presence does not require excessive artificial use of energy, but it is 'something which pulsates in immobility and silence, a retained power-thought which grows in time without manifesting itself in space' (Barba, 1995, p. 62).

### **Modes of awareness**

Awareness of one's state of mind (or the character's s/he is playing), and the actions consequently performed is central to the psychological realist paradigms, as clearly seen in techniques such as Stanislavski's 'scoring of actions' (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 14-15), and Lee Strasberg's 'affective memory' (Krasner, 2010, p. 149-150). However, many theatre practitioners later realised that awareness of one's body is also crucial to all performers; and various somatic practices have been introduced in actor training courses, particularly in Europe and the United States from as early as 1960s (see Clay, 1972, Pisk, 1975).<sup>33</sup> Jack Clay compiles a list of 'self-use' systems which he considers to be crucial supplements to the American method acting (Clay, 1972, p.

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<sup>33</sup> Litz Pisk, in particular, began teaching theatre movement since the early 1960s at several drama schools in England. Her book, *The Actor and His Body* (1975), compiles the principles and exercises of her practice.

16-17); it includes *taijiquan*, and the practices of such practitioners as F. Matthias Alexander, Moshé Feldenkrais, and Charlotte Selver (Clay, 1972).

Self-use, which could have derived from the term Alexander uses to describe an individual's control over her/his own organism and actions arising from it – 'the Use of the Self' (Gelb, 2004, p. 25-27), corresponds to an actor's work in the pre-expressive training. Clay suggests that the actor must know the correct way of executing simple activities, like breathing, walking and sitting, before learning to use her/himself expressively (Clay, 1972, p. 17). Although I would argue against the use of the word 'correct', as the sense of correctness varies from person to person, it is apparent that many theatre practitioners have come to believe that training that helps elevate the awareness of one's body, and promote tension-free physical articulations is beneficial for actors. Phyllis G. Richmond and Bill Lengfelder wrote about their successful movement training programme for actors that combines the Alexander Technique with *taijiquan* and stage combat (Richmond and Lengfelder, 1995). Their application, explained in the article, however, did not extend to an actor's work in rehearsals and performance, and it seems that the students had to find their own ways to apply the techniques in performance. Catherine Madden and Sarah A. Barker, on the other hand, stress the huge improvement in performance after their coaching sessions (Barker, 2002, Madden, 2002). Both conclude that the Alexander Technique increases physical awareness and coordination, and reduces unnecessary tension (Barker, 2002, p. 47, Madden, 2002, p. 60).

Nonetheless, the issues arising from these two articles are: firstly, the concepts of physical awareness and self-use were introduced alongside the main actor training paradigm, as supplementary sessions, but not fully integrated into the course of training; and secondly, the Alexander Technique were used in these two instances to promote a sense of anatomical correctness in physical articulations. It could be problematic and, to some extent, obstructive if the students progress to embodying physical forms which are not based on realistic representations – the movement patterns in traditional theatre of Thailand and Japan, for example, require the performers to maintain their bodies in a stylised manner. In addition, if applied to *butoh* training in an early stage, I would argue

that, instead of freeing the body, this sense of correctness could prevent the performer from fully exploring the full range of physical expressions.

Like Barbara Sellers-Young who employed Japanese and African dance forms and techniques in her movement teaching in order to allow her students to explore their psycho-physical potential (Sellers-Young, 1998), I believe that student actors should be encouraged to develop their awareness of the *ki*-energy and its sustained circulation within the body and the space, instead of focusing purely on the physical movements. The goal of my psychophysical approach which acknowledges the influences of somatic practices is not to promote natural tension-free movements, but firmly establish the state of bodymind oneness,<sup>34</sup> which allows the quality of presence to emerge.

In *Psychophysical Acting*, Zarrilli uses phenomenologist David Edward Shaner's 'three modes of bodymind awareness' to articulate his analysis of an actor's work in the pre-expressive training (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 33). While third-order bodymind awareness refers to a state of 'reflexive, discursive consciousness' (Shaner, 1985, p. 48 in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32), in which one attempts, for example, to reflect on specific experience, or analyse a play in preparation for a performance (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32-33), first-order bodymind awareness is what everyone employs naturally in everyday life without intentionality; strolling, for example, is an activity in which one is aware of the surroundings without being deliberate. Second-order bodymind awareness is different from the first- and third-order in that there is no intention (unlike the third) in the state of 'presencing' (Shaner 1985, p. 52-53 in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32). However, the performer is ready to respond immediately to anything that happens in the moment (unlike the first) (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32).

Ongoing self-use practices could help a student actor accomplish the state of second-order bodymind awareness within the duration of pre-expressive training. However, to allow her/him to fully achieve the state of presencing while fulfilling the performance scores required in each dramaturgy, the knowledge of how to achieve this should not be informed through a separate discipline (such as in the examples given by Richmond and Lengfelder, Madden and Barker). It should be clearly articulated

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<sup>34</sup> 'Bodymind' is phenomenologist David Edward Shaner's term which refers to 'the simultaneous presence of both body-aspect and mind-aspect in all experience' (Zarrilli, 1993, p. 12).

throughout the pre-expressive training, including when it is applied to the student actor's work on dramaturgies.

Borrowing from Zarrilli's training paradigm, activating phrases (or side-coaching), tactile adjustments and partnering can be used as devices to nurture the student actor's state of total awareness (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 90, Creely, 2010, p. 225). Various qualities of focus (such as the direction of the eyes, the way the gaze is held) are explained clearly through these devices. The student actor must be familiarised with, first of all, a single-point focus, which could be both internal (following the in-and-out breath, or the *dantian*) and external (directing the gaze at a single point straight ahead, on a hand, or making eye contact with a partner). Single-point focus is more than just being aware; it is being attentive to a specific point (Creely, 2010, p. 221) – s/he could visualise sending *ki*-energy to that point (or through it). Apart from focusing through the eyes at a spot, one can also be attentive to sound, touch, smell, or even taste, according to what is required in a performance score.

In meditation in motion, martial arts and performance, the practitioner must also be aware of the space that s/he inhabits, thus, other types of awareness, which may be referred to as 'secondary awarenesses' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 90) must be recognised and employed strategically. The student actor must keep her/his peripheral vision open, and sense all that shares the space with her/him. In the acting method developed by Michael Chekhov, one could tackle this concept through Chekhov's instruction to 'radiate' (Chekhov, 2002, p. 12-13) energy and movements. He says:

send your rays in different directions from the whole body at once and afterward through its various parts – arms, hands, fingers, palms, forehead, chest and back [...] Fill the entire space around you with these radiations. (Chekhov, 2002, p. 12)

The second part of the above instruction corresponds to Zarrilli's phrases in the studio, such as 'sensing through the feet', 'open top of the head and back awarenesses' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 91).

Moreover, Zarrilli proposes another kind of secondary awareness that allows the *ki*-energy to travel smoothly throughout a performance score, linking the various points of focus within it; this is referred to as 'residual awareness':

[It] is the trace, resonance, and/or feel of one's kinaesthetic/energetic relationship to each specific form in action. This relationship is kinaesthetic (in/from the body) and energetic (filled out by *ki*-energy as appropriate to the form). (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 91)

Zarrilli's concept of residual awareness allows the student actor's concentration and energy to be sustained throughout a certain period of time without interruption. This concept can be observed in all meditation in motion sequences. In yoga practices, Iyengar notes that after one has learnt to be aware of the state of each point in the body (position of the hands, the distribution of weight, etc.) in each pose, her/his consciousness is spread evenly throughout the body, and 'there is a 'sustained current of concentration' (Iyengar, 2001, p. 181). This flow of concentration is maintained throughout a yoga sequence, in the same way that a performer, employing Stanislavski's system, maintains his focus on the 'through-action, [...which is] a uniting thread that links together all the [character]'s actions to produce an overall sense of what the play conveys to the audience' (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 15), while keeping residual awareness between the various actions throughout the story.

The gap between the work on various modes of awareness during meditation in motion and the process of realising performance scores can be filled by exercises that encourage the student actor to freely explore the concept of awareness, and result in the state of second-order bodymind awareness. These exercises allow her/him to discover the possibilities of its application in an environment where there is no right or wrong way. David Zinder's exercise called 'the Hunt and the Pounce' (Chekhov, 2002, p. 68-71) is a perfect example. Student actors are instructed to walk around the space as hunters, although they do not know what their prey is and where it is located. They must use their whole body as a sensor, and move in random directions, in order to pick up the sign of its presence. The side-coaching throughout this exercise encourages the student actors to focus on the purpose of the walk, be attentive to any sign of its prey that may emerge at any moment (whether it is visual, aural, tactile, or even olfactory), heighten the awareness of their own physical movements and the surroundings, while fully taking control of their own decision-making within this given circumstances. Towards the end of the exercise, the student actors are told that at their current positions their sense of the prey is at its strongest, and they must not move or the prey will get away. They have to stay ready for the signal (the clap) from the instructor to pounce on it. As soon as they

hear the clap, they must jump in the direction of the prey to kill it. Residual awareness must be maintained throughout the sequence from moving in the space to standing still and attacking the prey, or the overall purpose of the hunt is not achieved.

Another element that inevitably comes into play, and helps enhance the capability of one's attentiveness in the exercise above is image work. Zarrilli's metaphorical description of presence, based on an actor's work on modes of awareness could allow student actors to grasp this concept and the purpose of the exercises, such as the Hunt and the Pounce, in an instant:

The result of assiduous attention to filling empty/absent space is the knitting together of internal and external awareness into a finely textured fabric of embodied consciousness/awareness. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 92)

### **Image work**

Dorinda Hulton, a director, dramaturg and Senior Lecturer in Drama states that 'the presence of the actor [...] is related to an audience's perception of the quality of an actor's engagement with imagery' (Hulton, 1998, p. 27). This significance of the 'actor's engagement with imagery' is already evident in the practice of meditation in motion – in actualising the concept of *ki*-energy during the execution of set forms. The actor's use of imagery, however, is extensive in the transitional stage from the pre-expressive training of meditation in motion to an actor's work in a dramaturgy; and its direct relation to the concept of presence in performance has already been recognised among theatre practitioners (Hulton, 1998, p. 27, Zinder, 2002, p. 16-17, Blair, 2008, p. 52, to name a few). Working with images is concerned with using imagination; and although imagination is usually considered an activity of the mind, it is, in this case, 'a psychophysiological act of the entire bodymind' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 39). Therefore, instead of the word 'imagination' which seems vague and limited to a function of the mind, I decided to use the words 'image work', derived from David Zinder's *ImageWork Training* (although not directly related), described in his book *Body Voice Imagination* (2009, first edition was published in 2002), to give a sense of specificity and psychophysical involvement.

Metaphorical image is a powerful and effective tool for meditation in motion and in performance. As discussed previously, practitioners sufficiently trained in martial arts are said to be able to feel *ki*-energy moving inside their bodies, thus being *ki*-sensitive (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 177, Zarrilli, 2009, p. 39). To me this quality may be difficult for student actors to comprehend, especially those who are not familiar with this concept in East Asian philosophy; and whether or not one is *ki*-sensitive is not as important as whether one maintains and fully engages with an image of the *ki*-energy flowing throughout the body. In Chekhov's radiation exercise, he tells his students:

You must not be disturbed by doubts as to whether you are actually radiating or whether you are only imagining that you are. If you sincerely and convincingly imagine that you are sending out rays, the imagination will gradually and faithfully lead you to the real and actual process of radiating. (Chekhov, 2002, p. 13)

Image work is psychophysical, which means that it is a unification between inner experience of breath, imagination, single-mindedness and outer physical action (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 180). Reflecting upon my training experience with Zarrilli, this concept, which he terms 'active images' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 89-90), is emphasised in my work on a performance score. In scenario six of the performance of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*,<sup>35</sup> for instance, working with images is extremely crucial, as my outer physical expression was limited to a seated position throughout the whole scene. The premise of scenario six is concerned with a group of investigators analysing the evidence, gathered from photographs about a person named Anne. Consequently, there were several images that I developed in performance. To put it simply, I was aware of a.) my inner image of the stream of energy, which is sustained in the body and also radiated to the audience b.) the image of the photographs in front of me, and c.) the images of Anne in the places captured in those photographs. These images were 'active' in that they did not stay only inside my mind; I allowed the words in the dialogues, such as, 'big red bag' and 'Brazil', to trigger my imagination of specific items and atmosphere in particular places, then the images were projected out from the body via the path of the *ki*-energy. Concurrently, while I was engaged in these images, I was also aware of myself, in relation to the space, my fellow cast members, and the audience.

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<sup>35</sup> Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*, directed by Phillip Zarrilli, was performed on 28-29 November 2009, at Roborough Studios, University of Exeter.



Chekhov's Psychological Gesture technique (Chekhov, 2002, p. 53-76, Chamberlain, 2010, p. 72-73) is an example of exercises that serve as a transition from the image work within meditation in motion and the actor's work on a performance score, as described above. To put it simply, the technique starts off by identifying the character's main desire, similar to the process in Method Acting. Then the student actor must find a physical gesture that would express that desire (for example, slowly lifting a huge rock with both arms from the ground, holding it above the head, and throwing it as far away as possible). This gesture should be strong, simple, have a clear form, and carried out in the tempo that matches the personality of the character (Chekhov, 2002, p. 70-72). After finding and polishing this gesture, the student actor must then repeat the form a number of times, while keeping the images of the character and the flow of *ki*-energy, being attentive to the desire of the character, being aware of the space and her/his physical movement, and keeping residual awareness throughout the period of the action. This amalgamation of various modes of awareness, and image work would be most effective after a period of training through meditation in motion in which these concepts have already been instilled into the student actor's bodymind. Not only for the role as a whole, Psychological Gesture can be created for separate scenes, for the speech, and even for all the interactions between the character and others (Chekhov, 2002, p. 183-215). Thus, a variety of examples should be given to the student actors to work on, so that they would be able to access this technique as quickly as possible when working on characterisation.

Upon working on a dramaturgy, this technique can be done in rehearsals, alternating with acting, and before each performance (Chekhov, 2002, p. 136). The form itself is not meant to be visible to the audience; while keeping the inner experience fully engaged, the outer movement is reduced to only what is required in the performance score. This method of reducing the physical action, while maintaining the inner connection can also be applied in other exercises.

### **The principle of reduction**

Like modes of awareness and image work, the principle of reduction can be introduced early into the training and carried over to an actor's work on dramaturgies.

When executing forms repetitively in meditation in motion, tension tends to arise from using the mind to concentrate on the body while focusing too intently on a particular point, in an attempt to open one's awareness. This can disrupt the breathing pattern and the flow of *ki*-energy, as Shaner observes: '[they] are like mud put into a clear stream [...] They dam the flow of presencing and muddy one's awareness' (1985, p. 53 in Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32). However, this does not mean that the practitioner should relax his/her body completely, or lower the level of concentration and awareness. This concept is difficult to explain in my experience being a drama teacher; student actors in their early stage can sometimes confuse intensity with tension and superficial display of emotions. Mark J. Nearman asserts that one of Zeami's principles on the *Noh* actor training written in a treatise entitled *Kakyo* (translated as *A Mirror Held to the Flower* or *A Mirror of the Flower*) can be applied in a contemporary setting to solve this issue (Nearman, 1982, p. 351). According to the treatise, a novice first learns how to move his hands and feet using all of his energy. Once mastered, he must learn to hold back the movements a little (leaving only 70 percent), while maintaining the inner level of intensity. 'no matter how slight a bodily action, if the motion is more restrained than the emotion behind it [...it can move] the audience' (Rimer and Yamazaki, 1984, p. 75).

In the four-week *Noh* actor training workshop that I attended at the Kyoto Art Centre in August 2010, the concepts of reduction and active images are integrated and employed in the state of second-order bodymind awareness. During the training towards the *shimai* performance (a short dance section of the main character, extracted from the whole play), all three teachers from the *Noh* Kanze School emphasised the importance of image work in the moment of acting. As my character Kagetsu entertains a traveling priest through his dance that tells the story of Kiyomizu temple, I must imagine the scenery which includes, for example, a mountain, waterfall of five colours, and an old tree that blossoms before my eyes. The feelings of enthusiasm and astonishment should arise and emanate from the inside. However, the physical expressions are only limited to refined stylised movement patterns (*kata*), and my face must be kept neutral at all times (as in an actual performance, it will be hidden behind a mask). In other words, my engagement with *ki*-energy and images must be maintained at 100 percent on the inside, while the feelings may only be expressed through pace, rhythm, and directions within the limited movement pattern, on the outside. Initially, I struggled to maintain these

images as I was worried about the movements. Later, when I became accustomed to the order and execution of the movements (it could be said that I have attained the second-order bodymind awareness), I was able to shift my focus to the images, and project the qualities of these images outward.

Considered by Eugenio Barba, who founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), as one of the five principles crucial to the development of presence (or scenic bios, in ISTA's term) (Stewart, 2002, p. 47-49), this concept of reduction has been employed (in various forms) in the contemporary training by many theatre practitioners, for example, Barba, Michael Chekhov, David Zinder, Dorinda Hulton and *butoh* practitioners, such as Katsura Kan and Frances Barbe (for examples, see Hulton, 1998, p. 27-28, Chekhov, 2002, Zinder, 2002, Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006). When employed in exercises, its main purpose is to allow the actor to learn that while reducing external forms (or changing the forms according to the context of the dramaturgy), s/he can maintain the inner level of intensity, as shown in the following example, drawn from my previous experience.

In Zarrilli's performer training module, the beginning movement of the arms (and wrists) in the *taijiquan* sequence was chosen to demonstrate this concept in the reduction exercise. The students were asked to perform the movement of raising the arms to shoulder height while working 100 percent on both the external form (what is visible on the outside) and the internal connection (*ki*-energy, sensory and spatial awareness, breath focus, and connection to the *dantian*). Zarrilli then asked us to reduce the external form by a specific percentage, while keeping the inner energy at 100 percent. When I reduced the external form by 50 percent, for example, my arms were only raised to sternum-level, but the line of energy through my wrists could still be felt from the inside. I was aware of the inner engagement with the *ki*-energy, the connection to the *dantian*, and the focus on the breathing, as I tried to maintain them at the highest level throughout the movement (using the concept of residual awareness).

Like Zarrilli, by applying the reduction exercise in the pre-performative training, I believe that it clearly demonstrates that an actor's inner bodymind can be fully engaged, the *ki*-energy activated and radiated, without having to constantly move in sequences (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 103). Furthermore, it allows the student actors to fully

explore their psychophysical potential and understand how the quality of presence may be achieved through the endless range of expression.

In summary, three components of the proposed actor training scheme, designed specifically for Thai university drama programmes are listed in this chapter as ‘platform for creativity’, ‘meditation in motion’, and ‘presence in performance’. While the first refers to supporting environment in the training setting, the second and the third represent the main contents: discourses and exercises that lead to an actor’s state of body-mind oneness, which allows a quality of presence to develop. At this stage in my PhD research, these principles, discourses, and exercises, formed through the reflections on my training experience, and shaped by my understanding of the Thai context where the training will be situated, are not considered final answers. Nonetheless, I have chosen to present this thesis in chronological order, beginning with this Chapter, in that the research relies more on the theories and discourses presented through the Western eye, so that the progress of the investigation, that began from the East-West binary structure to the more localised context of the Thai Buddhist culture, could be clearly observed. At this point in the thesis, clear territories for my actor training scheme are already established, but new questions also emerge: how can the process in which the principles of meditation in motion are applied to dramaturgical work be explained? and what is the direct relation between the training in meditation in motion and the presence of the actor in performance? These questions will be dealt with in the next chapter, which is primarily concerned with my second practical project.

## Chapter 2

### **Approaching mindfulness of the present: the practice of meditation in motion in actor training**

#### **Introduction**

The psychophysical actor training scheme and its principles explained in the previous chapter are the seminal product of my experiential research as participant of various intercultural workshops and training and as an actor-creator in my first practical project, supported by my understanding of the Buddhist and body-mind theories. My subsequent research question is ‘how can meditation in motion be integrated into the actor training scheme that includes performance applications?’ As a result, this chapter presents my attempt to articulate a potential process of using meditation in motion in a psychophysical actor training paradigm, through my reflexive analysis of my second practical project.<sup>36</sup> Within this chapter, I will argue that, although training is often considered a form of preparation that may not be applied directly in performance (Féral, 2009, p. 23), the findings gained from this project demonstrate that the participants’ work during meditation in motion can be transposed into their work towards performance.

Before engaging in the discussion of the process and discoveries, I will explain the parameters within which this research project has taken place. First of all, although this research has been about an application of meditation in motion in a performer training pedagogy, this practical project was not intended to be a test of theory. The method of meditation in motion was not fully formed before the project began; its shape and the way in which I approach this concept gradually developed during the process. Many initial plans were discarded, and new ideas were devised spontaneously in the studio. I experimented with various exercises, derived from my direct experience (*butoh*, yoga and Zarrilli’s, for example), and at the same time explored several ways of

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<sup>36</sup> Here I am referring to ‘reflexivity’ in qualitative research inquiry in which my role as a researcher throughout the process, my preconceptions, beliefs and emotions are acknowledged and examined, along with inputs and findings gathered from participants and the research activity, in an attempt to fully engage in an intersubjective exchange (Salzman, 2002, p. 806, Hsiung, 2008, p. 212).

incorporating and articulating the Buddhist concept of meditation to the three participants. Overall, it can best be described as cyclical process that began with a theory which leads to action and then back to theory again, or the term ‘praxis’, that Christopher McCullough elaborated on in the introduction to the book *Theatre Praxis* (McCullough, 1998).

Throughout the nine-week exploration that began on 7th February 2011, the focus was placed on the use of meditation in motion and image work exercises to enhance the participants’ quality of presence and their ability to approach given dramaturgical tasks, rather than constructing a training scheme particularly designed for Thai undergraduate students. However, towards the end of the training, I came to the conclusion that the quality that the participants had acquired can be identified more specifically as ‘mindfulness of the present’, which will be explained later in this chapter.

Reflecting on the training process and the discovery of ‘mindfulness of the present’ as the main outcome of meditation in motion, I will refer to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, in an attempt to clarify the process of self-cultivation within the actor training framework further.

### ***Habitus***

In general, meditation training in Buddhism requires practitioners to try to maintain their attentiveness to the practice for as long as possible throughout the day, and they must repeat the practice everyday for a certain period of time. At meditation centres, the length of meditation courses ranges from one weekend to two months or more. However, practitioners are encouraged to continue the practice on their own, with regard to each individual’s lifestyle (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1962). Similarly, in the training conducted in my second project, the actions, ‘maintaining attentiveness’ and ‘repeating’ are crucial to the development of mindfulness, and because of these two components of the practice, I have come to employ Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, in order to demonstrate how the quality of mindfulness could be instilled in the practitioners’ bodies.

*Habitus* is a relatively vast territory that can be looked at from various angles. It has generally been used in the topics of social class, and practices linked with class hierarchies (Dalton, 2004, p. 612, Wainwright *et al.*, 2006, p. 548). It has also been widely discussed in connection with educational research (Grenfell, 1996, Nash, 1999, Reay, 2004), and other fields, including stage productions (Shevtsova, 2002), theatre methods (Osterlind, 2008), and the embodiment of ballet (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006), for example. Although this research as a whole could be related to the concept of *habitus* in many ways, particularly by looking at actor training as a social practice, I would like to focus mainly on how this notion could be used to provide an alternative explanation of the nature of my training scheme and its outcome, relying primarily on the argument regarding ‘varieties of *habitus* and the embodiment of ballet’ proposed by Wainwright *et al* (2006).

To put it simply, *habitus* is an acquired set of generative dispositions, embodied in the body of each individual, and expressed in a range of activities (Reay, 2004, p. 432, Wainwright *et al.*, 2006, p. 548). Basic examples can be seen through bodily actions of each society/culture’s members, such as the ways of walking, eating, or talking that can distinguish them from others (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006). In Bourdieu’s words, *habitus* is referred to as:

[S]ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them [...] (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53)

For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to stress that, despite some confusion surrounding this notion, *habitus* is not just a set of habits or corporeal automatism (Dalton, 2004, p. 612, Lau, 2004, p. 382). It is composed of dispositions which are ‘absorbed unconsciously and without premeditation’ (Shevtsova, 2002, p. 57). When transposed into various situations, specific strategies are devised based on each individual’s *habitus* to cope with the challenges, without being intentional (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 62, Dalton, 2004, p. 612, Gomez, 2010, p. 144). Nevertheless, it does not mean that *habitus* ‘absolutely cannot surface to awareness’ (Lau, 2004, p. 376, Reay, 2004, p. 437-438), and in a later section, I will suggest that the strategic acts (chosen when faced with new contexts) may not always be intention-less.

Wainwright *et al* (2006) have pointed out that within the one body of a ballet dancer, there could be a synthesis of individual, institutional, and choreographic *habitués*, and that a new *habitus* can be developed when s/he moves into a new company (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006, p. 547). I will argue that it also applies to student actors in a psychophysical training scheme employing meditation in motion, in which mindfulness of the present becomes new *habitus* that they assume.

The process of experiment (and the performer training scheme) in my project contains two phases, similar to those commonly found in other acting pedagogies, by practitioners such as Suzuki, Grotowski, Barba, and Chekhov (Féral, 2009, p. 23). In the first phase, actors attempt to master a set of exercises; while in the second phase, their energies are put to the test in devised tasks (Féral, 2009, p. 23). However, I will demonstrate that the student actors' experience in the first phase can and should have an immediate application in actual performance, and that student actors could be given performance tasks to work on in the second phase of the training. In the sections that follow, I am going to first discuss one of the forms of meditation in motion that the participants have encountered (which I believe have made the strongest impact on them), and offer three main observations that have a significant effect on the work on dramaturgies that followed. Consequently, I will engage with the concept of mindfulness of the present, as an acquired *habitus*, and the part it played in the second phase of the training.

### **1. Inhabiting set forms to obtain a new performance *habitus***

It is important to stress the distinction between this development of *habitus* and an acquisition of a set of skills in a traditional dance class, such as ballet. Referring to Féral's investigation into the twentieth century's acting pedagogies, physical training can be used for a variety of purposes. For Peter Brook, it 'develop[s] the body's sensitivity' (Féral, 2009, p. 21), while Suzuki aims for 'the actor's capacity for physical expression and [...] the actor's tenacity and concentration' (Féral, 2009, p. 21). In the context of my training scheme, sequences of movement learnt and repeated in the studio are not used to train student actors how to move in a certain way; and their ability to memorise the sequences, or improved physicality in performance are not intended



outcomes of the scheme as a whole. Michael Grenfell, in his investigation into the initial training of modern language teachers, focuses specifically on what he terms ‘pedagogic *habitus*’ (Grenfell, 1996, p. 292). Similarly, I believe that the training of set forms could lead the student actors to develop a specific aspect of *habitus* that has a significant effect within the performance context, namely mindfulness of the present.

A selection of exercises that I consider meditation in motion were repeated by the participants in every session in the studio. One of these is the slow-motion walk exercise, which will be the focus of this section.

Please refer to DVD clip 2 (duration: 1.01 minutes)

An example of the slow-motion walk exercise

Once started, the participants had to be immersed fully in the walk, inhabiting it, following the side-coaching, and believing in its potential. Full commitment must be given to mastering the set physical forms, which is generally expected in the training of traditional theatre, such as the Thai *Khon* performance, discussed in the previous chapter. Jerri Daboo refers to this type of learning as deep learning that allows the learners to take the knowledge of the concepts and ‘adapt and utilise it in other contexts’ (Daboo, 2009, p. 129).<sup>37</sup> Her discussion on this learning approach also corresponds to Grenfell’s application of *habitus* in pedagogic contexts (Grenfell, 1996).

I particularly selected the slow-motion walk for the participants, mainly because of my direct experience with it in the past, which had allowed me to recognise its potential, in terms of performance enhancement, that, to describe in terms of *habitus* based on my observation, has been incorporated in my body, long after the training had ended. Moreover, while variations of this exercise could be found in contemporary *butoh* training (Fraleigh, 1999, Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, Taylor, 2010) and Suzuki method (Allain, 2009), the nature of the exercise closely resembles a mindful walking exercise in *Theravada* Buddhism (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, Silananda, 1995), widely practiced in Thailand (mentioned in the previous chapter).

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<sup>37</sup> The concepts of deep and surface approaches to learning are taken from extensive research by Paul Ramsden (Daboo, 2009). See also Ramsden, 2003.

The use of the slow-motion walk in the studio can be compared to Phillip Zarrilli's employment of Asian traditional forms. Within his training scheme, the source traditions behind yoga, *kalarippayattu* and *taijiquan*,<sup>38</sup> the three forms Zarrilli has chosen and adapted for his actor training pedagogy, are mentioned in great detail (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 63-80). I argue that these forms, as well as *nihon buyo* and African dance forms that Barbara Sellers-Young's employ in her class (Sellers-Young, 1998), are essentially meditation in motion.<sup>39</sup> I intentionally avoided using traditional practices well-known in Asia such as *taijiquan*, since my training scheme would finally be applied to a group of Thai students.<sup>40</sup> To do this could give rise to two potential problems that are obstructive in the training: 1) the student actors may come to the studio with strong preconceptions about them, and 2) the issue of authenticity is likely to come up in the minds of the participants, as I am not a trained *taijiquan* teacher or martial artist.

Another factor taken into consideration when selecting the form of meditation in motion is the time constraint. Within the nine-week time frame (with only two to three sessions per week), I divided the training into two phases: 1) meditation in motion and 2) performance tasks. Therefore, if the forms given to the participants were too complicated or needed a substantial amount of time to master,<sup>41</sup> then the focus could be placed too heavily on replicating movement sequences. To place this experience within Yuasa's body scheme, it means that the goal is to achieve the fourth circuit (Unconscious Quasi-Body Circuit). If the movements are too complex, then the participants would not be able to move beyond the second circuit (Circuit of Coenesthesia). So, instead of only focusing on correcting one's posture, the participants can reach another stage, where 'one learns to *correct* one's mode of consciousness [...] by assuming a certain bodily "form"' (Nagatomo, 1981, p. 407). The correction of the

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<sup>38</sup> For applications of *taijiquan* and martial arts in actor training in the west, see Zarrilli, 1993, Mroz, 2008, Mroz, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> To some extent, based on written accounts, Meyerhold's Biomechanical *études* could also be regarded as meditation in motion, as each exercise, such as 'shooting the bow', contains a series of connecting poses, and the practitioner is required to be attentive to each physical movement in relation to the surroundings (Gordon, 2002, Leach, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Although yoga could be considered a traditional practice, the forms of yoga widespread in Thailand today are modern Westernised forms, already adapted for the modern lifestyle.

<sup>41</sup> It took me more than four weeks of intensive training to master Zarrilli's form of *hatha* yoga, and ten weeks for his *taijiquan* sequence.

mode of consciousness was simultaneously enhanced through my discourse in the forms of side-coaching, metaphorical and image-based instructions during the training. The use of the slow-motion walk exercise in the studio with the participants, along with the discourse attached, will be the main focus of the next section. The aim is to critically reflect upon using meditation in motion (rather than a single specific form) as a training tool, which worked on both conscious and unconscious levels, that led to the development of a new *habitus* that I identify as mindfulness of the present.

### **The slow-motion walk**

The slow-motion walk, or *hokohtai*, as discussed in connection with Yuasa's four circuits in the previous chapter, was proved to be the most accessible form of meditation in motion in the training conducted in my second practical project. I was introduced to versions of the form by the *butoh* practitioner, Katsura Kan, and later, by the movement practitioner/teacher Frances Barbe. I also learnt Tadashi Suzuki's version of the slow-motion walk called 'slow *ten tekka ten*' (Allain, 1998, p. 71, Carruthers and Takahashi, 2004, p. 79) in a physical theatre workshop by Mark Hill, from the Australian theatre group Zen Zen Zo, in 2007. The slow-motion walk, whether the *butoh* or Suzuki's version, clearly has been influenced by Japanese culture and performance traditions, particularly because both *butoh* and Suzuki Method draw on the principles of *Noh* and *Kabuki* (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 58-59, Allain, 2002, p. 97). However, I intentionally ignored this historical background in the studio, and referred to the exercise as only a slow-motion walk exercise, to detach it from all the exotic or spiritual connotations (although two of the participants have had previous experience with the form in *butoh* workshops). However, as the connection to Buddhist concepts of meditation would play an important part in the applications of this approach in the Thai context, I chose to mention its resemblance (and seeming linkage) to a walking meditation practice. Apart from a brief introduction to the practice, no demonstration or description were given to the participants at the beginning when I led them to engage physically with the form, simply walking in a straight line, back and forth, repeatedly, in the first phase of the training.

## **2. Phase one: Individual *habitus* and its encounter with the slow-motion walk**

### **Repetition**

Raymond Lau, referring to *habitus*, claims that ‘one may engage in mimicking in trying to acquire a motor skill, but whether or not mimicking does help, acquisition is ultimately achieved through self-discovery or apprenticeship with *one’s own body*’ (2004, p. 378). Forms of meditation in motion used in actor training often require student actors to learn through imitating precisely what is being shown by the leader. Examples of these can be seen in versions of yoga and *taijiquan* in actor training (see Zarrilli, 1993a, Mroz, 2009, Zarrilli, 2009). Despite appearing to be a process of motor skill learning, through a certain period of constant repetition, the student actors begin to discover the actual goal of the training within themselves, whether it is ‘a deeper engagement of breath and a greater level of focus on the momentary relationship between [...] internal sensings and the external environment’ (Sellers-Young, 1998, p. 179), or ‘[the] awakening to [the] inner energy circulating within [...], i.e. one becomes aware that *ki* is present and can travel within, as well as outward through the bodymind into the environment’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 86).

Annie Loui stresses the importance of the repetition of a sequence used as her daily warm-ups which combines exercises from ‘aikido, yoga, modern dance, and mime’ (Loui, 2009, p. 8), in her guidebook on physical actor training (2009). However, repetition is not just for warm-ups. In the slow-motion walk, the challenge for the participants was not to create an exact copy of the movement, but to maintain control of their own walk, while keeping their awareness open. Only through constant repetition would they gradually be able to adjust to new circumstances that their individual *habitués* face.

What is being dealt with here is not a general notion of *habitus*, but one that is situated in the specific field of performance training.<sup>42</sup> When Wainwright *et al.* talk about three forms of *habitus* in the field of ballet, specific dispositions used to describe

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<sup>42</sup> While the word ‘field’ is used in a general sense as a sphere of activity, it could also refer to Bourdieu’s concept of field, which is summed up by William F. Hanks as ‘a form of social organisation with two main aspects: (a) a configuration of social roles, agent positions, and the structures they fit into and (b) the historical process in which those positions are actually taken up, occupied by actors (individual or collective) (Hanks, 2005, p. 72).

the individual *habitus* of one of the dancers are ‘stature, speed and his remarkable ability to turn [which] was accentuated by his schooling and training [– institutional *habitus*] [...that] was further reinforced in the roles created for him [...] via his choreographic *habitus*’ (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006, p. 537). In the case of my performance training project, individual *habitus* (or personal habitus, in Grenfell, 1996, p. 292) refers to ‘ways of moving, gesturing, gazing, and orienting in [performance training space]’ (Hanks, 2005, p. 69).

When Takehiro Kawase, one of the three participants, first started practising the slow-motion walk, his way of walking was the first subject of his personal exploration. I noticed, and later pointed out to him, that he placed the front part of each foot on the ground first, before the heel, when he walked in slow motion. I told him that it was different from his natural walk, in which he always placed his heel down first. He explained that in his previous martial arts training, he was taught to step in the way that would create the least disturbance on the ground and the lowest noise possible. His way of walking could be described as his individual *habitus*, which, when located within my training, needed to be transformed to fit in with the structure that governs the execution of this exercise. I asked him to be aware of his feet when they touch the floor and try to place the heel down first in every step. By doing so, it would allow him to maintain his groundedness and better connection with the image of ‘rays of energy’ extending from the centre of his body through his legs into the earth, which, in this specific structure of the training within the field of performer training, is more important than the concern about disturbance on the ground. To sum up in relation to the concept of *habitus*, his individual *habitus*, that includes his specific way of walking, was challenged by ‘objective structural conditions’ (Nash, 1999, p. 184), and had to be adapted. Once the new way of walking – his new *habitus* (which includes his work on awareness and inner images in the moment of walking) – is instilled in his body, he would be able to generate practices in which the principles of the generative *habitus* are discernible (Nash, 1999, p. 178).

Relating to the concept of *habitus* allows one to clearly differentiate the training of meditation in motion from other skills training forms. Takehiro did not acquire a skill of walking in the training, but through the ‘process of questioning skills already

acquired' (McCaw, 2009, p. 60) – that is what the training was for – he was able to increase his sensitivity to the articulation of movements and make adjustments according to his inner images, based on the instructions given. Furthermore, I made it clear to Takehiro that I did not mean that his specific way of walking was wrong, or bad in anyway. This process is different from self-use techniques (discussed in the previous chapter) like the Feldenkrais Method, that aim to eliminate 'bad habits' (McCaw, 2009, p. 62-63). Roy Nash asserts that *habitus* is different from habit in that the former is always connected to a certain principle, while the latter is not (Nash, 1999, p. 180). In light of this distinction, Takehiro's way of walking prior to the training was regulated by a principle in his martial art training, so it was not simply an unconscious habit that needed to be eliminated. Furthermore, repetition was not used in the training merely to develop 'unconscious habits', either. It is for the practitioner to come to 'understand and perceive the logic of gesture [or the principles of the generative *habitus*], and doing so not only in linguistic and objectifiable terms but also through the logic of the very sensation that underlines them' (Woycicki, 2009, p. 82). Woycicki, in his investigation into the creative value of repetition in training, asserts that

[R]epetition in training can be seen [...] as a form of meditation upon the pre-linguistic, a way of stimulating unconscious processes and the wealth of information in them, in order to bring it out and make it accessible to conscious faculties. (Woycicki, 2009, p. 82-83)

The point about the connection between conscious and unconscious faculties needs to be highlighted as it is crucial to the function of meditation in motion in performer training. As stated earlier, *habitus* can surface to the level of awareness. After Takehiro learnt the specific way of walking, he was able to be more attentive to his feet and work more effectively with the image of the rays of energy, which, consequently, allowed him to be more relaxed, grounded and stable in his walk in the sessions that followed.

This noticeable quality could also be observed in Becca Savory's slow-motion walk. Prior to this project, Becca had trained in physical theatre at the London International School of Performing Arts for two years and had had many training experiences in the past, which also included a variation of the slow-motion walk. When she began practising the walk in my project, she was already able to maintain her concentration, and a smooth and steady rhythm of the walk for 20-30 minutes. Overall,

there was a good sense of control and focus in her walk, which could be referred to as her individual *habitus*. However, what I wanted her, and another two participants, to develop in the practice of meditation in motion is the connection with inner images, which could then be applied in dramaturgical work later in the project. Consequently, after several repetitions, I emphasised that they should be working on extending the rays of energy, in every direction, continuously throughout the duration of the walk. Thus, the exercise requires them to be very much conscious and active – not conscious as in trying to walk in a certain way, but conscious about their body in relation to the space and the image that they were working with in the present moment.

I would like to refer back to the concept of second nature, mentioned in the previous chapter, which is linked to how a performer is able to utilise *ki*-energy in performance. It is worth noting that the term second nature used here is different from Dick McCaw's description of Feldenkrais's method of training that relies on procedural memory (as opposed to semantic or autobiographical), which means that 'skills [...] are learned and then recalled without the need for conscious reflection' (McCaw, 2009, p. 61).

### **Second nature**

Schechner clarifies the concept of second nature in Asian performing arts by referring to a *Kathakali* performer in performance, who is

[...] nonconscious and free; he is absolutely 'controlled' in all his gestures from most gross to a tiny blink of the eye, a gesture of the small finger, a turn-up of the big toe. Psychologically he 'feels' free. Socioaesthetically he is in the web of a transindividual matrix: part of what he is has entered him through his training and repetitive performing. But at the same time he is free from thinking about the performances, he is free of himself and from himself when he is performing. He is not 'in trance', but he may as well be. He is responsible for expressing the socioaesthetic matrix that his performance actually manufactures on the spot. But he is 'in flow' in regard to that matrix; he lets go into it, and in that way he is personally free. Free even, if he is up to it, to invent. (Schechner, 1985, p. 222)

In the above quotation, Schechner repeatedly uses the word 'free', which in *Noh* theatre and Buddhist traditions is linked to the state of 'no-mind', or 'suchness', that is characterised by the state of 'seeing with a detached seeing' (Nagatomo, 1981). This sense of freedom is much more evident in Becca's walk after several weeks of training.

When I compared her ways of walking in two video clips (one from the first week, and the other from twelve sessions later), in fast forward, there is a more spontaneous flow of movements in the second; her body is more grounded, and there is a sense of energy being radiated in all directions without any interruption.

Please refer to DVD clip 3 (duration: 0.17 minutes)

The comparison between Becca's ways of walking in the slow-motion walk exercise on 7 February and 15 March 2011 (shown in four-times fast forward)

The change of individual *habitus* in both Takehiro and Becca's ways of walking was not merely a result of repetition, but due to their ability to maintain attentiveness to inner images and mindfulness of their body in space in the present moment. I would like to refer to this ability as their emerging performance *habitus* that (because of the short period of training) was still in development. This new *habitus* could eventually become second nature, if the participants engage in a long-term training.

In addition, I would like to make another observation about the exercise slow-motion walk (as an example of meditation in motion) that, although it is not part of the instruction given, is present in all of the participants' individual practices, and could be considered a component of their second nature; it is a subtle quality of meditation that is different from ordinary concentration.

### **Meditation as extra-ordinary concentration**

Concentration is one of the main skills that Stanislavski emphasises in his system of training that has been adopted and reshaped in Acting classes in Thai university drama programmes, along with imagination and communication in the first group of exercises (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 9). The Thai word for concentration is *Samadhi* (สมาธิ in Thai) which derives from Sanskrit, and is closely related to Buddhist traditions which, in general sense, is defined as 'mental one-pointedness' (Gunaratana, 1988). However, not many Thai people are aware that Stanislavski developed concentration



exercises from his research into yoga (Carnicke, 2010a, p. 9), which could be traced back to Indian philosophy that gave rise to meditative practices in Buddhism.<sup>43</sup>

In Buddhist philosophy, however, concentration is related to a wider context of the Four Noble Truths, where it is situated in the Fourth Noble Truth (The noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *Dukkha*),<sup>44</sup> in the Eightfold Path that is divided into three divisions (Virtue, Concentration, and Wisdom). The Concentration division consists of three elements: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Right Concentration, or *samma samadhi* (สัมมาสมาธิ in Thai) refers specifically to the four developments of concentrations:

There is the development of concentration that, when developed and pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here and now. There is the development of concentration that, when developed and pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge and vision. There is the development of concentration that, when developed and pursued, leads to mindfulness and alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed and pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents. (Bullitt, 2005a)

In my meditation in motion training that has a specific goal in dramaturgical applications, the development of what is referred to as ‘concentration’ would point to the first and third types that lead to ‘a pleasant abiding in the here and now’ and ‘mindfulness and alertness’ (Bullitt, 2005a). The first type, in particular, is associated with meditative practices, specifically, the four stages of *jhanas* (Pali, ฌาน in Thai) – meditative attainments (Gunaratana, 1988).<sup>45</sup> To go into more detail of the *jhanas* and concentration would be unnecessary here, but I would like to point out that within the complex networks of these concepts, ‘mindfulness’ (or *Sati* in Pali; สติ in Thai) is always attached to concentration: as a subsection (of the Concentration division), side by side in the Eightfold Path, as one of the four developments, and as the goal of one of the four *jhanas*. Therefore, when the English word ‘concentration’, is used in meditation, it does not simply mean ‘mental one-pointedness’, but also contains a sense of mindfulness ‘in the here and now’. In addition, it is worth noting that in Thai

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<sup>43</sup> For further clarifications of the connection between yoga and Buddhism, refer to Stone, 2010, Levine, 2009, and Dumoulin, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Refer to Bullitt, 2005 for a comprehensive explanation of the Fourth Noble Truth in Buddhism.

<sup>45</sup> *Jhana* is transliterated into Zen (禅) in Japanese. It is called *dhyana* in Sanskrit, which, in yogic traditions, as Swami Yatiswarananda asserts, is the real meaning of meditation (Yatiswarananda, 2001, p. 324).

everyday discourse, the word *sati* (सति) is usually used in connection with *samadhi* (समाधि).<sup>46</sup>

In practice, the distinction between ordinary concentration and the one required in meditation in motion – an amalgamation of concentration and mindfulness – can be discovered during the course of repetitive practice. Referring back to my discussion on the slow-motion walk and Yuasa’s Body Scheme in Chapter 1, this discovery came when I shifted my focus from making adjustments on particular parts of the body and the feelings that arose, to the overall experience of the exercise – the Unconscious Quasi-Body Circuit was set in motion. Being attentive to the image of the moving *ki*-energy allowed me to feel the freedom in the movements, while remaining in control of the task. The concentration did not stay only in the mind, as my awareness expanded, and connected the image with the body and the space I was in.

When I led the training in my practical project, the experience above could not be ‘taught’ to the participants, as it is something that they needed to experience in order to understand. What I did, however, was to make sure that the exercise allowed them to achieve the state of concentration-mindfulness: a period of fifteen to thirty minutes was dedicated to the slow-motion walk in every session, and side-coaching was provided, so the participants were constantly reminded to attend to the image and not get carried away by other thoughts. The words were, for example, ‘fill the room with your energy’, ‘project your energy to the space in front and behind you’. While leading the exercise, I learnt that this type of concentration could really be observed from the outside, especially in Niharika Negi’s way of walking.

Niharika was an MA student in the Theatre Practice programme at University of Exeter. At the time of the project, she had been training under Phillip Zarrilli, and had participated in a *butoh* workshop by Frances Barbe (in which she learnt a version of the slow-motion walk). Niharika is an experienced actor, who, prior to her psychophysical training at Exeter, had many acting and directing experiences in many theatrical and television productions in India. Throughout the duration of the training in my project, there were hardly any noticeable differences in her walk. This could be because of her

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<sup>46</sup> In Sanskrit, the word for mindfulness is *smṛti* (स्मृति), which is similar to *samadhi* (समाधि).

familiarity with meditative practices, that allowed her to approach and engage with the exercise with a sense of concentration-mindfulness from the beginning.

Venerable Ajahn Mitsuo Gavesako, a senior *Theravada* monk and highly respected meditation teacher,<sup>47</sup> compares training the mind to taming a wild animal:

Take a monkey for example. The first thing we must do to train it is to keep it in a cage. The monkey will revolt. But we must be patient and not give it any food or water. After a while, it will run out of energy, at which point we can begin to feed it. Gradually it will be familiar with us and finally become tamed. Thereafter, even if it still moves around in the cage, it is not revolting. We may be able to put it on a leash, take it out of the cage, teach it to sit, stand, and reward it with a banana if it is obedient. In the end we may even be able to let it out of the cage freely. (Gavesako, 2008, p. 125-126)

In training, the slow motion walk – a form of meditation in motion – is like the cage in the above quotation. When the physical movements are restricted and the mind is being disciplined, beginners in meditation usually get tired, tensed and frustrated. This is because they ‘concentrate’ too hard on one point, whether it is a specific part of their body that they feel uncomfortable, the attempt to perform the walk in slow motion, or the negative feelings toward the exercise. However, when they begin to relax, and stop trying to control the body or the mind (like the monkey in the cage that is let to revolt as much as it wants until it runs out of energy), they will feel more free and open. For Niharika, this is not the case. From the beginning of training, there was a sense of calmness on her face and freedom in her body. Her movement was light and it flowed seamlessly in a steady rhythm from beginning to end. To me, these were the signs that her mind was at ease, and it looked as if she could do this exercise continuously for a long period of time.

When I felt that Niharika and Becca, who are partners in the dramaturgical work towards the end of the project, had habituated the form, i.e. they were able to maintain a good level mindfulness-concentration throughout the task with no signs of tiredness or tension, they were allowed to gradually make a transition to the work on the performance score, first by increasing the freedom of movement. After a period of the slow-motion walk, they would begin to engage their arms and hands in the work with the image of light-energy.

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<sup>47</sup> Venerable Ajahn Mitsuo Gavesako is currently abbot of Sunantavanarama Buddhist Monastery in Kanchanburi Province, Thailand.

Please refer to DVD clip 4 (duration: 1.08 minutes)

Niharika's slow-motion walk on 22 March 2011

Upon observing Niharika in this exercise, although she was improvising, moving her arms around, they did not look forced. The whole physical movement looked connected and flowed seamlessly. Moreover, there was a good sense of control, and she was mindful of the space, the presence of her partner, and my verbal side-coaching. If more time was allowed, the two participants would gradually engage their whole body in the image work, while keeping to the task of moving in slow-motion. However, because the focus of the project was placed on the applicability to dramaturgical works rather than the form of training, the participants proceeded to work with images related to their assigned characters and situations in the performance.

From observing the three participants in the training, and how their individual *habitués* adapted in response to the slow-motion walk, I came to realise that the emerging performance *habitus* developed and sharpened throughout the repetition of meditation in motion practices could be described more specifically as 'mindfulness of the present'. As I reflected upon Niharika's work in the section above, the word 'concentration' is not an appropriate description of what the exercise required, neither it is adequate to represent the quality that needs to be transposed from meditation in motion into performance contexts. Apart from having a specific relation to Buddhist meditative practices, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter, I find that the meaning of the English word 'mindfulness' is more relevant to an actor's work than 'concentration'. To be mindful (of/that) means to be 'aware of or recognising that' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2006, p. 477), while to concentrate means to 'focus all your attention on something' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2006, p. 149). In everyday life, one may be able direct all of her/his attention on something, which may be an activity, an object or a person, but in performance, an actor must be aware of a range of things at the same time (inner images, her/his body in relation to the space, dialogues, and many others in the present moment, which often include the audience). To be mindful does not require force or tension, and as shown in the slow-motion walk, could

be carried on continuously for a substantial amount of time, which is comparable to the time required in one performance.

While Barba refers to ‘a condition of total presence’ (Barba and Savarese, 2005, p. 278) when referring to one common thing between the aim of training and the requirement of an actor in performance, I opt for a less ambitious, less mystifying term ‘mindfulness of the present’. This performance *habitus* was enhanced in the training process by repetition and discipline, which required the participants to follow a single task for many weeks. The next section of this chapter deals with how mindfulness of the present, which operates on both conscious and unconscious levels, was applied in the dramaturgical work within the project.

### **3. Phase two: Mindfulness of the present as emerging performance *habitus* in performance tasks**

#### **Mindfulness of the present as emerging performance *habitus***

The *habitus* – embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 56)

As evident in Bourdieu’s statement above, the importance of *habitus* lies not in the ‘structured structures’ that generate it, but in the mediation between ‘past influences and present stimuli’ (Wacquant, 2008, p. 268). This transposable quality is one of the main reasons that I regard the gain of the training as performance *habitus*. As Bourdieu asserts:

*habitus* performs on the basis of acquired equivalences, facilitating the substitutability of one reaction for another and enabling the agent to master all problems of a similar form that may arise in new situations. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 94)

The form of meditation in motion, namely the slow-motion walk, became merely ‘past influences’ as soon as the participants began working on their dramaturgical tasks. However, they remained practising the walk prior to each rehearsal and performance, but for the purpose of attuning to the state of mindfulness that was required of them in rehearsal and performance. Consequently, when faced with new conditions in the

dramaturgies, such as specific actions and images, they would approach them with the same mindfulness that they had in the training (or at least they were encouraged to do so).

Mindfulness of the present is not simply a skill or a habit, but extends towards what Bourdieu describes *habitus* – ‘schemes of perception, thought and action’ (1990, p. 54). Compared to his use of the concept in sociology, my application of *habitus* in as small a unit as actor training project may be questionable, especially because it was such a short period (nine weeks in this project, or thirteen weeks in a full Thai university course). Nevertheless, as shown within this project, all related elements surrounding this concept – concrete, ideational structures, embodied, generative dispositions, and practices (Grenfell, 1996, p. 290-291) – are present. Moreover, Wainwright *et al.* employ *habitus* in their research on ballet training, in which it is clearly divided into three forms: individual, institutional and choreographic (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006), while Grenfell applies it to initial teacher education, in which *habitus* is redefined as pedagogic *habitus* – ‘those aspects of *habitus* that have significant effect on practice within pedagogic contexts’ (Grenfell, 1996, p. 292). In both of these cases, it is difficult to say specifically how much time is needed for *habitus* to develop, especially in the first case, when the periods of training of each institution, and each choreography are different. Moreover, as Wacquant points out, *habitus* ‘can be modified through the acquisition of new dispositions’ (2008, p. 268), so there may be no definite moment when *habitus* is considered complete. Mindfulness of the present is regarded in my research as emerging performance *habitus*, because it is a generative disposition that keeps on developing, just like the different steps or stages that one follows in the practice of Buddhist meditation (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692). From this nine-week exploration, moments of embodiment of the concept of mindfulness could be observed and will be discussed further, however, I am not going to claim that, in the following examples, this emerging *habitus* was already ‘ingrained [or] durable’ (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006, p. 537), although it is possible in ongoing practices of meditation in motion, and can be beneficial not only in performance but in many aspects of life.

## Mindfulness of the present in performance tasks

‘Exercises are like amulets, which the actor carries around, not to show them off, but to draw from them certain qualities of energy out of which a second nervous system slowly develops. An exercise is made up of memory, body-memory. An exercise becomes memory, which acts through the entire body.’ (Barba, 2002, p. 100)

For Barba, in the quotation above, ‘certain qualities of energy’ are the outcome of training that can be transposed into performance. Although it is not clearly visible, the actor is fully aware of this energy, which can be drawn in the moment of performance. This rather abstract and mystical concept of energy is clarified by Zarrilli, drawing on modern Western philosophies, developed by David Edward Shaner and Drew Leder, and also supporting theories from Merleau-Ponty and Yuasa (Zarrilli, 2009). Within his detailed descriptions of the actor’s embodied modes of experience (the surface body, the recessive body, the aesthetic inner bodymind, and the aesthetic outer body) (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 41-60), Zarrilli effectively places a seemingly obscure notion of (*ki*-)energy within the modern Western philosophical discourse, and clearly articulates the rationale behind his use of yoga and martial arts in actor training.

While I agree with Barba’s statement above, and Zarrilli’s account of the actor’s embodied modes of experience and the significance of (*ki*-)energy, I would like to place more importance on the act of ‘being aware’ of the energy in the immediate moment of performing, which is implicit in Zarrilli’s account of the actor’s experience:

During performance, the actor ideally embodies, attends to, and inhabits an experiential field structured by the set of actions/tasks immediately at-hand. Whether based on an authored text, or the structure of an improvisatory exercise, these actions/tasks constitute the performance score. The actor embodies/inhabits these tasks/actions by dynamically shaping one’s energy, attention, and awareness to the qualities and constraints of the aesthetic form and dramaturgy informing the score. (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58)

While it requires long-term training for one to sense the (*ki*-)energy circulating and traveling outward into the environment, the act of being mindful is what the participants in my project had achieved on the first day and had been developing throughout the first phase of the project. Consequently, mindfulness could be considered as ‘amulets’ that the actors carried around without being conscious of it, and at the same time, intentionally applied its concept in the given tasks. In the following section, I am going to draw on the two dramaturgical tasks given to the participants in the second practical project to illustrate this.

### **a. *Hachiko***

Hachiko is a solo, non-verbal, devised piece that I originally created in September 2010 for a collaborative performance entitled *Satani-Shibuya-Sipraya-Station*, which reinterprets five well-known Japanese stories from the perspectives of five Thai dancers and performers. This choice of dramaturgy for my actor training project represents my transition from working psychophysically as an actor to leading the process as a facilitator.

The original Japanese tale is about a dog who keeps on waiting for his master who dies and never returns home. In my interpretation, this character is not realistically presented as a dog, or a human, but as a being that contains elements of both. All of his actions (in my performance score) may seem illogical to humans, but they are logical in this character's mind.

In the rehearsals with Takehiro, I made a transition from the training of slow-motion walk to characterisation by simply replacing the form and the inner image. The slow-motion walk was replaced by the *Noh* stance called *kamae* and the 'sliding feet' walk, *suriashi* (Griffiths, 1998, p. 38), that the character adheres to at all times. These specific forms were chosen as references to the Japanese culture from where the story was drawn, and as signs of discipline and manners that the character is trained in (reference to a trained dog). At the beginning, the instruction for Takehiro was to repeat the walk several times, while trying to keep to the specific manner of the *Kamae*. Then, during the walk, I told him to work with the inner image of radiating light, which is the same as in the training of the slow-motion walk. Subsequently, the image of the light was replaced by the image of him being tied by a big rope, at the centre of his body, connecting him with his loved one who was located beyond the door of the studio. He was pulling and being pulled by that person, so there was always a constant force that connected them together, even though he was unable to move towards that person.

While I was not conscious about which images I was working with in the performance that I did, I decided to work together with Takehiro to devise specific tasks for him while performing a sequence of actions. Throughout the scene this character



moves around his own space preparing himself for the return of his loved one. He then decides to prepare a gift for that person, which is a phrase ‘I miss you’ that he makes by laying down his clothing items (jacket, necktie, handkerchief, etc.) as letters (I-M-I-S-S) one by one, on the ground. In the end, he places a small letter on the floor where the word ‘you’ should be to represent the person he was waiting for. During the rehearsals, Takehiro was asked to improvise the performance score above several times while I observed. Even though he was able to carry out the actions with uninterrupted concentration from the beginning to the end, the character’s given circumstances were not clear.

We eventually decided on using certain images to work on psychophysically, so that Takehiro would be able to understand the character’s state of mind in the scene, which should be clearly seen by spectators in the actual performance. The ‘image work’ was brought into the rehearsal, along with ‘the principle of reduction’ and ‘modes of awareness’, all of which form the element of presence in performance in Chapter 1. In the rehearsals, he repeatedly worked with an image in which the inside of his body is completely empty like a container, first in an improvisation task of preparing a present (first part of clip 5), and later while performing the score (second part of clip 5). Gradually, as he was laying down the items, he would feel that his body was being filled by a feeling of content (which could be in any shape, or form – light, air, water, etc.).

Please refer to DVD clip 5 (duration: 5.06 minutes)

Takehiro’s work on his improvisation task in rehearsal and his work on the performance score

In addition, Takehiro was given a rather paradoxical instruction to work on simultaneously. He was to be extremely attentive to each of his actions (i.e. pour his heart into making this special gift for his loved one: everything must be neatly arranged on the floor, there must be no dirt on the items, for example), and at the same time, be receptive to all the noises around him (he would turn sharply to the origins of the noises he heard, as they could be the sound made by his loved one). During the rehearsals, while he was required to pay close attention to the objects he was making, I used prompt words to remind him to open his peripheral awareness as well: ‘be aware of the

space around you’, ‘listen to all the noises in the space and be ready to respond’; and occasionally I would clap my hands, to provide him with stimuli, to which he could choose to respond by turning to look immediately.

To sum up, the tasks that Takehiro was working on during the rehearsal process and in actual performance were 1) keeping to the *kamae* and *suriashi* 2) performing a series of actions 3) working with the inner images of ‘the connecting force between him and his loved one’ and ‘the empty body being filled with contentment’ 4) being especially attentive to his objects and 5) being receptive to the sound in the space. What connects all of these tasks together is mindfulness, and these five things that he was mindful of could be divided into two categories: perceptual awareness and awareness of inner images.

Perceptual awareness consists of three types: proprioception – ‘the sense of knowing and feeling the body’s position in space both statically and in motion’, interoception – ‘the sense of knowing how your body is feeling from the inside [...based] on the direct experiencing of it’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 56-57),<sup>48</sup> and exteroception – the sense of knowing through the five senses that relate one to her/his environment (Riley, 2004, p. 453, Zarrilli, 2009, p. 51).<sup>49</sup>

Tasks 1, 2, 4, and 5 are associated with perceptual awareness which required Takehiro, in performance,<sup>50</sup> to take notice of everything in his performance space, including the state and position of his own body, at the same time. The rehearsals allowed him to be aware of the correct form of stance and walk, through all three types of receptors – he learnt to feel what the form feels like and be able to adjust his body according to that sense, quickly and constantly. The performance score required him to be aware of his exact position in the space with regard to each action, which also required his close attention. All of these details could not just be remembered, and simply recreated on stage. Therefore, he did not merely repeat the sequence of actions

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<sup>48</sup> These two definitions were taken from Jon Kabat-Zinn’s *Mindfulness for Beginners* (2012), which provides basic concepts of mindfulness and meditation that are removed from Buddhist contexts, thus being accessible to everyone.

<sup>49</sup> Zarrilli asserts that these three modes of perception are being cultivated concurrently in extra-daily psychophysical practices (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 52-55).

<sup>50</sup> Refer to Appendix A: DVD for *Hachiko*, performed by Takehiro Kawase on 6 April 2011, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter.

over and over again in rehearsals; I allowed him to work in different spaces, turn towards different directions, and provided him with side-coaching and aural stimuli, so that he would be consciously working on ‘being mindful’ in the present moment, in the present space, in his present bodily and mental states, rather than relying on his ability to remember.

The awareness of inner images is concerned with the performer’s mindful work with images that are related to the character or the circumstances. Rhonda Blair asserts that the importance of imagery that are connected to an actor’s experience is evident in the works by two Russian pioneers, Stanislavski and Meyerhold (Blair, 2008, p. 37-38). Stanislavski, in particular states that

First we need a continuous line of Given Circumstances through which the scene can proceed, and secondly, I repeat, we need an unbroken series of inner images linked to these Given Circumstances. Put briefly *we need an unbroken line not of plain, simple Given Circumstances but ones that we have coloured in full*. So remember this well, forever: every moment you are onstage, every moment in the outer and inner progress of the play, the actor must see what is going on around him (i.e. the external Given Circumstances, created by the director, the designer and the rest of the production team) or what is going on inside, in his own imagination, i.e. those images which depict the Given Circumstances in full colour. A continuous line of fleeting images is formed, both inside and outside us, like a film. It lasts as long as the creative process lasts, projecting the Given Circumstances which the actor has fully coloured, onto the screen of his mind’s eye, so that he now lives his own life entirely. (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 74, original emphasis)

The images of ‘the connecting force between him and his loved one’ and ‘the empty body being filled with contentment’ needed to be clear in Takehiro’s mind. In rehearsal, beginning with standing still, I asked him to first construct these images, one at a time in his mind, and establish a connection to them, the same kind of connection that he had with the image of light-energy. Then, I allowed him to move around the room, improvising several actions, while maintaining the connection with the images, before putting him in the context of the performance.

While the process above is a conscious one, i.e. Takehiro was consciously being mindful of these inner images, as well as his perceptual awareness, it does not mean that he needed to be conscious about all of these tasks at all times, or constantly shifting between them in performance. According to Blair, Stanislavski, as well as Meyerhold, believes that the technique that guides the actor to establish a strong bond between ‘intention’ and ‘physicality’ may be a conscious one, but there are also ‘automatic parts

of organic processes that [are] beyond the control of the conscious self' (Blair, 2008, p. 38).

Moreover, I believe the rehearsals and his previous experience in meditation in motion allowed these images, once established, to be stored in Takehiro's body-mind without him 'trying' to be mindful of them all the time. Evidence of this expansive mindfulness, as opposed to constant shifting of concentration between the tasks, could be seen in the way that he tackled the performance score with ease, not with tension or force, and in the continuous engagement in the present moment throughout his performance. Theory of mental images proposed by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio can be used to support this issue concerning consciousness and images. He asserts that

Images may be conscious or unconscious. It should be noted, however, that not all the images the brain constructs are made conscious. There are simply too many images being generated and too much competition for the relatively small window of mind on which images can be made conscious. (Damasio, 2000, p. 319)

Damasio's concept of images covers both perceptual awareness and inner images that I mentioned earlier, which are referred to as perceptual imagery and recalled imagery, respectively, in Shannon Rose Riley's research on embodied perceptual practices in actor training and rehearsal (that are based on Damasio's theory) (Riley, 2004, p. 461). In Damasio's theory, images are mental patterns that are constructed in the immediate moment to provide a sense of knowing of the situation about the organism, and the relationship between organism and objects (Damasio, 2000, p. 182-183). They may be formed in the moment through perception, or recalled from experience; images that are invented (such as the inner images assigned to Takehiro) are also included in the 'recalled imagery' (Riley, 2004, p. 452).

To regard images in this way, however, would mean that all five tasks could be regarded as recalled images, as in performance, Takehiro's perceptual experience in rehearsals would be formed as images and recalled in the moment of performing. Therefore, I avoid using the word image when referring to perceptual awareness, for a clearer distinction between the two categories of the tasks of mindfulness. Consequently, when I refer to images in actor training and performance contexts, it denotes mental images that are given to, or constructed by actors to work on in conjunction with their perceptual awareness – actual objects, environment, or their own

organism perceivable in the immediate moment. The actor's mindfulness with regard to these two types of tasks will be elaborated on further in the following example drawn from a different dramaturgy within the same project.

### **b. *Push Up***

*Push Up* is a play written in 2001 by a German playwright, Roland Schimmelpfennig, which was adapted and first performed by a Thai theatre company, New Theatre Society, in Bangkok in 2007. I chose to work on an extract taken from this play within this project as it represents a genre of contemporary theatre available in Thailand today, to which my actor training scheme could be applied.

This extract, taken from part 1.7 and 1.8 of the play (Schimmelpfennig, 2002, p. 15-19), is concerned with an intense conversation between two characters Angelika, a top executive, and Sabine, a manager, whom Angelika accuses of having an affair with her husband. What is particularly pertinent to the issue regarding perceptual awareness and inner images in this extract is that the words that the two characters exchange and their actual thoughts could be very different. While they try to retain their formality towards one another, their minds are filled with negative thoughts and anxiety that are not directly conveyed in their speeches. With this in mind, I created a sequence of inner images for each of the two performers to work with, after our initial workshop that included read-throughs and improvisations. Inspired by the actors' work on the text in the studio, these images were designed to deliver my interpretation of what went on inside the two characters' minds. Similar to *Hachiko*, the rehearsals consisted of the three elements of presence in performance: modes of awareness, image work, and principle of reduction. In this specific example, however, apart from the image work techniques drawn from practitioners such as Michael Chekhov and David Zinder (discussed in Chapter 1), a devising technique of *butoh* performances (*butoh-fu*) learnt from Frances Barbe, was also employed (see table 1 below).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The *butoh-fu* technique was derived from Hijikata Tatsumi's working process, in which words were used to develop a choreography for his dancers (and himself). *Butoh-fu* is translated as 'butoh notation' (Kurihana, 2000, p. 14).

Table 1. Sequences of inner images employed during the rehearsals (the texts are taken from the play *Push Up*, written by Roland Schimmelpfennig, translated by Maje Zade, 2002)

<b>Angelika (Becca)</b>		<b>Sabine (Niharika)</b>	
Inner images	Key texts	Inner images	Key texts
<p>thousands of cockroaches crawling inside the body</p> <p>project all of the cockroaches out into the room through the mouth</p> <p>once there is no cockroach, the body is empty</p> <p>gradually filling the body with energy from the surroundings</p> <p>release the energy through the mouth</p>	<p>‘Do you think I’m attractive?’</p> <p>‘Does Kramer think you’re attractive?’</p> <p>‘I don’t think you’re particularly attractive.’</p> <p>‘He’s fucked you. And maybe he’s still fucking you. Is he still fucking you?’</p> <p>‘When was the last time he fucked you?’</p> <p>‘You stupid, stupid piece of shit.’</p>	<p>body sinking in quick sand, trying to get out</p> <p>suddenly sees the light</p> <p>light is absorbed in body, radiate the light into the surrounding</p> <p>big field with colourful flowers, and lovely animals, that you are talking to</p>	<p>‘Do you want an honest answer?’</p> <p>‘You’d have to ask Kramer.’</p> <p>‘Yes.’</p> <p>‘About two hours ago. Downstairs in my office.’</p> <p>‘She looked at me.’</p>

Within a short period of time (six sessions) for rehearsals, I decided to explore the work on inner images in detail, while relying on the two performers’ individual and performance *habituses*, in terms of perceptual awareness (and other aspects of performance, such as vocal delivery, and textual analysis). In the early sessions, referring to the principle of reduction, first, they would begin working individually on their sequences at 100 percent level on both the outside and the inside. Then, they would work together in the same space, and develop a non-verbal conversation, taking each other’s actions as stimuli. In the following sessions, key lines were added, and utilised in connection with inner images – as extension of the body in which the images

were manifested; an example of this technique is shown in DVD clip 6. Here it is evident that even though the actors are focusing on embodying their sequences of images on the inside, they are also engaging with the other actor and the surroundings through their perceptual awareness (particularly, visual, aural and tactile). Gradually, the external quality of images were reduced to 50 percent, and 25 percent (zero percent was also attempted in one of the sessions), while the full text and specific blocking were added.

Please refer to DVD clip 6 (duration: 2.58 minutes)

Becca and Niharika's image work on the play *Push Up*: 100 percent on the outside/100 percent on the inside, with added key lines

At the end of the process, what was presented at the PhD project presentation on Wednesday, 6th April 2012 at the Drama Department, University of Exeter, was work-in-progress, in which the two actors performed the whole section with 50 percent on the outside and 100 percent on the inside, in terms of image work.<sup>52</sup> This work would require a lot more time for development into a full performance. Nonetheless, this investigation offered me three clear illustrations of how 'mindfulness in training' transformed into 'mindfulness in performance', listed below.

### **1) Mindfulness is a key component for characterisation**

Michael Chekhov developed various techniques, in relation to the phenomenon of the embodied imagination, particularly for creating a character. His technique Imaginary Body, as well as the Psychological Gesture, relies on the close relationship between the physical body and inner images (Daboo, 2007, Chamberlain, 2010, p. 69-70),<sup>53</sup> which, after a substantial practice, 'can help create a psychophysical transformation within the bodymind of the actor to discover and embody a different

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<sup>52</sup> Refer to Appendix A: DVD for *Push Up*, work-in-progress, performed by Becca Savory and Niharika Negi on 6 April 2011, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter (the two actors performed an extract from *Push Up*, with 50 percent externalised image work).

<sup>53</sup> For further details, see Chekhov, 2002, Chamberlain, 2010, and for exercises, see Zinder, 2009 (Chapter 5) and Petit, 2010.

physicality and psychology, related to that of the character' (Daboo, 2007, p. 272). Within this transformation, it is essential that 'concentration and engagement with a particular image and action' are maintained 'as [the actors] are fully absorbed in the psychophysical execution of the exercise' (Daboo, 2007, p. 268).

Jerri Daboo's description of Chekhov's technique quoted above highlights the importance of mindfulness in the process of characterisation, which was also a crucial component in the utilisation of the series of images in Becca and Niharika's dramaturgical work. Without a sustained engagement with the images as well as a sense of freedom in the flow of movements, developed in the first phase of training, they would not be able to achieve the 100 percent level of the externalisation of the images, which was necessary for the actors, as they needed to get a clear sense of their characters. While in Chekhov's Imaginary Body exercises, the focus is placed on the images related to the physicality of the character (for example, having twigs as fingers, being twenty feet tall, or having no neck) (Daboo, 2007, p. 265), the images for Becca and Niharika were designed not only for the actors to explore the physicality and psychology of the characters within the circumstances of the play, but also the relationship between each character and her environment, including the other character in the space. In other words, being attentive to these two series of images allows the actors' perceptual awareness to merge with the psychophysical qualities of characters in the present moment. Upon reflection, this technique corresponds to the quotation (above) from Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work* (2008):

[...] every moment you are onstage, every moment in the outer and inner progress of the play, the actor must see what is going on around him [...] or what is going on inside, in his own imagination, i.e. those images which depict the Given Circumstances in full colour. A continuous line of fleeting images is formed, both inside and outside us, like a film' (p. 74).

In my case, what is going on around the actor and what is going on inside are blended into one in the moment of mindfulness, through the employment of the devising technique drawn from *butoh* (to create an unbroken flow of images), and a reduction technique that provides 'the full colour' for the performance. Even though in this project, the images were not decided by the actors themselves, it would be possible for them to explore and create their own images, if more time was allowed for dramaturgical applications. In any case, this experience clearly demonstrates the



effectiveness of mindfulness and inner images as the tools that the actor can use to approach characterisation.

## **2) Mindfulness brings everything together in the moment**

Zarrilli states that ‘the actor’s bodymind [is] a *gestalt*’<sup>54</sup> (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58, my emphasis), implying that in the actor’s direct experience, multiple modes of the body are being connected; and they are in a ‘constant state of ambiguity’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58). When enacting a performance score, the actor’s lived bodymind is not settled in any particular mode. There is always an engagement between different modes of perception and awareness.

This state of ambiguity can be explained differently through the lens of Buddhist meditation. Professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, Eleanor Rosch, asserts that Buddhist meditation can offer various explanations of how awareness operates in everyday experiences, and that the understanding of this could be directly applied to psychology (Rosch, 2007). Two of the six functions of meditation that Rosch points out, ‘expansiveness’ and ‘timeless, direct knowing’ (Rosch, 2007, p. 14-17), are especially relevant to my discoveries within the dramaturgical work.

According to Rosch, the concept of perception in science is, to put it simply, based on how one receives and interprets information from an external environment, through the senses (Rosch, 2007, p. 15). For Buddhist meditators, however, the sense of knowing is not ‘limited to a personified consciousness confined behind the eyes peering out at a separate world, but [is] something happening from all of it together: environment, mind, and organism’ (Rosch, 2007, p. 15). Moreover, in the state of mindfulness, when the awareness expands and brings everything together in the moment, one can begin to comprehend the interdependence of various connecting components in nature (Rosch, 2007, p. 16).

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<sup>54</sup> In general, the term ‘gestalt’ can be defined as ‘a “shape”, “configuration”, or “structure” which as an object of perception forms a specific whole or unity incapable of expression simply in terms of its parts’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2012). Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77951?redirectedFrom=gestalt&> [accessed 20 June 2012].)

Within the rehearsals with the two actors on the extract from *Push Up*, I discovered that it is impossible to separate the work on perceptual awareness from the work on inner images, or the characters from the actors' selves. Within the moment of performance (and each rehearsal), the actors' *habitués*, their perceptual awareness, their memories of the previous rehearsals, the given tasks, the texts, the immediate surroundings, and many other things that lingered in their minds in that particular moment were brought together by mindfulness. Networks of interdependent elements were developed, and the actors needed to be aware of them and allow the interrelationships to be sustained from the begin until the end of the performance. This state of mindfulness may be subtle, it is, nonetheless, perceivable by both the actor performing enacting the score and the spectators witnessing the performance.

### **3) Mindfulness can be observed in performance**

Similar to how Barba regards exercises as 'amulets [that] the actor carries around' (see full quotation above from Barba, 2002, p. 100), the well-known actor/director Yoshi Oida asserts that

[the] training of an actor is not directly used when working in the theatre. It is merely a part of the process of learning how to act with freedom. You train in order to acquire a technique, which you then throw away, in order to perform creatively. (Oida, 1992, p. 42)

Although I understand that both of them could be referring to the technical forms and specific disciplines within the training that would not be transposed into performance contexts, considering training in this way implies that the direct relevancy of actor training in theatre may be overlooked.

At the end of the practical project, I came to a conclusion that by specifically identifying mindfulness of the present as the acquired performance *habitus*, a clear and direct connection between training and performance can be observed.

*habitus* is at once *structured*, by the patterned social forces that produced it, and *structuring*: it gives form and coherence to the various activities of an individual across the separate spheres of life. (Wacquant, 2008, p. 268, original emphasis)

Reflecting upon the concept of meditation in Buddhism, the term *habitus* above could be easily replaced by mindfulness. Ajahn Mitsuo Gavesako states that when one has developed mindfulness through meditation, s/he will be able to approach every situation, whether positive or negative, with equanimity and clear comprehension. S/he will realise that nothing is permanent, including emotions, so s/he will be able to let go of emotions, preventing them from ruling over her/his actions (Gavesako, 2008, p. 15-27). Based on this understanding, one's improvements should be perceivable by her/himself, as well as others around her/him.

Within the short-term training that focuses more on the applications in performance, mindfulness became a requirement within the performance score. The actors were aware of what they needed to do with the given tasks, by referring to their previous experience in the meditation in motion practices, with guidance from me, as the facilitator/director. In other words, the concept of mindfulness highlighted within the training were directly and consciously applied by the facilitator/director and actors to the work on the dramaturgy that would finally develop into an actual performance. Although this version of *Push Up* needed considerable refinement if it were to be performed as a fully developed performance, the finished presentation would undoubtedly contain a strong and continuous sense of mindfulness within and among the two actors that could be perceived by the spectators.

In conclusion, this chapter, in which I reflected upon my second practical project that began with the training in meditation in motion, particularly the slow-motion walk, and ended with the showings of two dramaturgical works, *Hachiko* and *Push Up*, details my discoveries regarding 'the function' of my training scheme. While I have previously referred to Yuasa's body scheme in the discussion of the process of self-cultivation through meditation in motion, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* could also be used to aid one's understanding of the process in which the practitioner's set of embodied dispositions developed in training, governed by a certain set of principles, enables her/him to tackle performance tasks. In addition, when regarding 'mindfulness of the present' as emerging performance *habitus*, Buddhist theories related to meditative and mindfulness practices could be employed to establish a connection to the Thai social context in which the training will be placed. Furthermore, I learnt that the training in

meditation in motion could be directly applied to dramaturgical works, particularly through the consideration of perceptual awareness and inner images, and the technique of reduction, all of which are grouped under 'presence in performance' in Chapter 1. Although *Hachiko* and *Push Up* are different in style and presentation, thus requiring different set of tasks, based on specific images related to each dramaturgy, being continuously mindful in the present is crucial to the actor's work in both cases. These findings will directly influence the shaping of the training scheme, and be explored further, in my third practical project, which is situated within a Thai university context, detailed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### **‘Same same, but different’: meditating and performing in Thai university’s actor training course**

#### **Introduction**

In the summer of 2011, I led a performer training course, entitled ‘Performance Laboratory: Actor Training (ห้องปฏิบัติการการแสดงสำหรับการฝึกฝนนักแสดง)’ at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Its main objective was to explore the research question, ‘in what ways can the students be guided through the meditation in motion training leading to the development of mindfulness in performance, by a facilitator in a Thai university drama course?’ While the course follows the structure of a general Thai university course (equivalent to a single module in the UK), the training scheme was shaped as platform for creativity, one of the three main elements detailed in Chapter 1. Two dramaturgical tasks were given as the students’ midterm and final assessments. Each student was required to complete one report at the end of the term which, combining with the two performance tasks and their continuous participation, formed the summative assessments for this course.

‘Same same, but different’, used as the title of this chapter, is a phrase in Thaienglish (a form of English, that contains Thai particles, pronunciation, grammar or syntax, spoken by native Thais), which describes things which are similar but different in some ways. Here it is adopted to refer to two related issues emerging from this project. Firstly, it refers to my argument, and subsequently the students’ realisation,<sup>55</sup> that ‘meditating’ and ‘performing’ are two activities which require the same essential principle, namely ‘mindfulness of the present’. Secondly, it describes the students at the end of the process, who might not necessarily display a new set of skills onstage (thus, being the ‘same’). Because the course was not about producing actors or teaching acting skills, only slight differences could be observed in their performances. This difference,

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<sup>55</sup> This is evident in the reports submitted at the end of the course.

however, is the goal of the training in meditation in motion, as will be elaborated on later in the chapter. This chapter is thus divided into two main sections according to these issues.

## **1. The meeting of meditation and performance in the actor training**

### **Structuring the course**

The foremost challenge of this project is to introduce another approach to actor training that might be against the students' expectations of learning 'acting', the term that has specific connotations in theatre studies in Thailand which I discussed in the introduction of the thesis. Although my attempt is to bring this training closer to the Thai culture, by pointing out its relation to Buddhist meditation, the students' preconceived notions of meditation as an ancient Buddhist practice is very far from a modern Western concept of acting that they expected to learn in this course. One of the students in the class expressed in her report:

Before this course, I had always overlooked this issue, because I thought it was a small matter. To be mindful or attentive [*mee sati samadhi* – มีสติ สมาธิ in Thai] seemed like a very basic concept that needed no class or any exercise. And it would be such a waste of time to do so. In performance, the most important thing should be the script or acting. If we could develop our skills in that area, the performance would be successful. That was what I had always thought. (Pratyanan Suwanmanee, written assignment, my translation)

While the goal of the training is to allow the students to achieve a certain level of mindfulness of the present in their assigned performance tasks, as already explored in my previous project at the University of Exeter, first they must overcome their preconception towards meditation and actor training. As a facilitator, I created a structure for the process that could solve this issue. Being an expanded version of the training scheme explored in my second project, I was able to lead them through a more complex form of meditation in motion, apart from the slow-motion walk already discussed. I chose a yoga sequence, derived from Zarrilli's performer training, for the students in this project to learn and repeat in every session. Each week, they were

expected to attend three sessions (of two to three hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, for this project, I added another performance task as the first application to bridge the gap between the training and performance. This decision was made, as I have discovered in my second practical project that the actor's work during meditation in motion training can be more easily transposed to a short solo performance that is entirely composed of performance score and no spoken words, as in *Hachiko*, and that more time is needed for a transition to a duologue taken from a contemporary play, such as *Push Up*. This process demonstrates that as the students progress in the training, they can gradually apply their pre-performative work in more complex dramaturgies. It also suggests the possibilities of further applications in other contemporary plays after the course.

For this project, I chose two wordless plays that are very different in rhythm, drawn from two different cultures and time periods to demonstrate the range of possibility for applying the principles of training. At this stage, I was not interested in proving that meditation in motion and psychophysical work can be applied to contemporary dramaturgies, as that was already done in my previous projects. I was aiming to explicitly point out the link between the training and performance. Therefore, I specifically chose Ota Shogo's *The Water Station (Mizu no eki)* (1981) and Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words I* (1956),<sup>57</sup> because I had already seen that a psychophysical approach to acting could be successfully applied to these plays. For *The Water Station*, Zarrilli, in his book *Psychophysical Acting*, discusses at great length how he employed psychophysical acting in a particular production of this text shown in Singapore in 2004 (Zarrilli, 2009). Scenes from the play has also been assigned to students in his Performer Training module at the University of Exeter. As for *Act Without Words I*, I had seen an MFA Performance Practice student Chien-Lang Lin's adaptation, which was done in the style of traditional Taiwanese opera, with reference to

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<sup>56</sup> These times were allocated especially for this course. Usually in Thailand's universities, each practical course runs for only 3-4 hours per week; and because the students had many other courses throughout the week, the only times that they were able to attend my class were in the evenings from 17.00-20.00.

<sup>57</sup> Other plays that I considered, but later discarded, include an excerpt from a *Noh* play, an excerpt from Thai traditional *Khon* drama, my devised works, such as *Dancing Corpse* (from the first practical project) and *Hachiko* (from the second practical project), and Peter Handke's *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*.

his psychophysical training, again at the University of Exeter in February, 2010. Other reasons for choosing these two plays are: 1) they are existing texts written by internationally known theatre practitioners 2) each scene that the students must work on has a clear beginning, middle and end, and contains very specific details that could be executed within 8-10 minutes 3) They strongly represent two distinctive but related areas of enquiry within the training: attentiveness (*The Water Station*) and responsiveness (*Act Without Words I*), two complementary elements which I had placed under the heading of mindfulness of the present that became more significant within this project (I will elaborate on this in a section that comes later).

### ***Satipatthana Sutta***

Focusing on the training aspect of the course, its progression, as controlled and delivered through studio instructions by the facilitator, resonates with *The Discourse on the Foundations of mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta* in Pali, สติปัฏฐาน in Thai), which is one of the most important texts on the teachings of the Buddha (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692). According to the discourse, mindfulness is cultivated in four main areas (or objects, as they are often referred to): body, feeling, state of mind,<sup>58</sup> and mental contents (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 57-75). Although these four are not presented as steps, there seems to be a progression, starting from the most simple, leading to a more advanced practice, and finally bringing the practitioner closer to the heart of Buddha's teaching, 'Anatta' (not-self) (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 75). The contemplation of the fourth area, mental contents, could be seen as the highest level, in terms of mindfulness practice, but is the least relevant to an act of performing (particularly in my case), as it specifically focuses on the Buddha's teaching and practices leading to liberation. The contemplation of the Four Noble Truths within this level, for example, may be applied in daily life, but the reflections on the truth of suffering, origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering is rather unhelpful in actor training. Therefore, only the other three foundations will be discussed here, in relation to the training conducted with the Thai students.

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<sup>58</sup> This third object can also be translated as the contemplation of consciousness (*cittanupassana*) (see *The Foundations of Mindfulness: Satipatthana Sutta. Access to Insight. 7 June 2010*).



Beginning with the contemplation of the body, the first exercise is concerned with mindfulness on the breathing in and out (*Anapanasati*), which I briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, as a common practice in meditation with which most Thai people are familiar. Nyanaponika Thera asserts that ‘breath stands on the threshold between the voluntary and the involuntary bodily functions, and thus offers a good opening to extend the scope of conscious control over the body’ (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1962, p. 62-63). In practice, observing the journey of the breath is a good starting point as it has a clear single focal point to attend to, and at the same time establishes a connection between at least two of the four layers of awareness discussed in the previous chapter, namely awareness of interoceptive sensations and inner images.

Although *Anapanasati*, in its most basic form, is intrinsic to meditation in motion and training as a whole, it was highlighted in the first two weeks of training through the practices of seated and standing meditations. The students were instructed to follow ‘the journey of the breath’, or in other words, observe the sensations within the body as the air comes in through the nose into the lungs, on an inhalation, and goes out from the lungs through the nose, on an exhalation. They might find counting the breath helpful in ridding the mind of stray thoughts, but they were not required to do so. At an early stage, I left it to each of them to decide what is needed to maintain mindfulness on the breathing as well as control of the body. The encouragement of individual exploration is crucial to the training scheme, as each student would discover later that a specific instruction, metaphor, or image given may not necessarily work for her/him, and that s/he must find an alternative that is more effective to her/him in performance. This individual exploration would also be much needed after the course, as each student takes what s/he has learnt from the course further, and attempt to apply in future works. However, it was essential in the initial meditation practices that the students began to develop an inner image of the ‘breath’, to match the sequence of sensations felt from the nasal cavity to the thoraco-abdominal cavity.

From the breath, *Satipatthana* practitioners continue with exercises in contemplating bodily postures, and reflecting on the repulsiveness of the body (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1962, p. 118-119).<sup>59</sup> The latter of which contains the following

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<sup>59</sup> These are part two and four of mindfulness of the bodily postures in *Satipatthana Sutta*.

passage that corresponds to my instruction in standing meditation and, later, the slow-motion walk:

Just as if there were a double-mouthed provision bag full of various kinds of grain such as hill paddy, paddy, green gram, cow-peas, sesamum, and husked rice, and a man with sound eyes, having opened that bag, were to take stock of the contents thus: "This is hill paddy, this is paddy, this is green gram, this is cow-pea, this is sesamum, this is husked rice." Just so, monks, a monk reflects on this very body enveloped by the skin and full of manifold impurity, from the soles up, and from the top of the head-hairs down, thinking thus: "There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine." Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body. (Translated by Nyanasatta Thera, 2010, p. 7)

‘Impurity within the body’ in the above extract may not be significant in my training, however, it was crucial that the students turned their attention to specific parts inside their body, using breath as stimulus, to create a mental map of where things are, so that when sensations were felt, their specific locations could be identified precisely. At this point in the progression, gradually, proprioceptive awareness of the fourfold network of awareness was being tackled in the students’ work. Subsequently, I instructed them to work with an image of (the ball of) light-energy (*Palang* – พลัง in Thai) that is situated just below the navel, inside the body – the place that was referred to in the studio simply as ‘the centre’ (*Soon-Klang* – ศูนย์กลาง in Thai),<sup>60</sup> and radiates to every part in the body and outward into the surroundings. My instruction in the second week of training was as follows:

Imagine that every time you inhale the air into the centre of the body, you are igniting *palang* at the centre of the body. And every time you exhale, you are extending *palang* into the surroundings: starting with major points in your body, through your arms, your palms, through your legs, your feet into the earth, through your spine, through your head into the sky above. Imagine that you can send *palang* (in whatever form it is: light, air, water, wind), outward and fill the room with it. (My instruction, 22 June 2011)

This concept of energy was referred to as *ki*-energy in the first chapter, as it was based on my own experience as a student actor, and in relation to Zarrilli’s actor training. Zarrilli strongly emphasises the concept of *ki*-energy and asserts that ‘through attentive breathing, the practitioner gradually awakens, discovers, and then able to

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<sup>60</sup> In Zarrilli’s training, the Chinese term *dantian* is adopted to identify this centre. This concept is discussed in Chapter 1. Also see Zarrilli, 2009 for more clarification. This location of energy field is called *hara* in Japanese, a concept which is emphasised in traditional Japanese performing arts, as well as modern Japanese-influenced practices of Yoshi Oida (Oida, 1997, p. 10-11) and Tadashi Suzuki (Allain, 2009, p. 118-119). *Dantian* is called ดันเทียน in Thai.

circulate the energy that lies within' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 83). In the studio work, I regarded this concept that has a strong East Asian cultural connotation only as a side note, and used the descriptor *palang*, which could instantly and practically be visualised by this particular group of students. Each person's visualisation of *palang* is different. However, it was important to keep the image vivid and active, thus, I asked each of them to draw (or find) an image that illustrates this concept, and present to the class.<sup>61</sup> This *palang* is what connects the physical body to the environment, and while keeping this image in mind, it introduces the last layer of awareness to the work of an actor – exteroceptive awareness.

In *Satipatthana* practice, although mindfulness is mostly concerned with the body and mental states, awareness of external stimuli is related to a specific technique called Bare Attention, which, according to the Buddha, means that:

In what is seen there should be only the seen; in what is heard, only the heard; in what is sensed (as smell, taste or touch), only the sensed; in what is thought, only the thought'. (Udana I, 10, quoted in Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 34)

In training, the practice of meditation in motion, including an awareness of *palang*, requires one to construct a route map of her/his breath, and *palang* inside the body, which extends 'to the space in front – through the eyes, chest, the front part of the body, to the space above – through the top of the head, to the space behind – through the back of the head and the back of the body, to the space below – through the feet' (my instruction, 21 June 2011). When the student feels that s/he has already filled the room with his *palang*, I instructed them to be aware of the space beyond the walls, not to pay attention to what is happening there, but only to extend *palang* to everything in that space. Nyanaponika Thera asserts that 'Bare Attention heightens the susceptibility and refines the sensitivity of the human mind' (1692, p. 56). Following this technique in the training means that the students' minds could become more receptive to inner images, which could then be used without prejudgement.<sup>62</sup>

Although not explicitly regarded as work on imagination, the practice of *Satipatthana* requires one to engage with, and consequently embody their inner images,

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<sup>61</sup> Examples of these can be found in Appendix C.

<sup>62</sup> The concept of Bare Attention is closely connected to the practice of *Vipassana* and the concept of suchness, mentioned in Chapter 1.

much similar to the work of an actor in my actor training scheme. In the fifth section of the contemplation of the body, *Satipatthana* practitioners are asked to reflect in their body the elements of earth, water, fire and air. By reducing the body into components made up of these four impersonal natural materials, this exercise aims to free oneself from the body the s/he ‘clings’ to (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 66, 120). These four natural substances were the first set of inner images given to the students to work on in the studio, after the concept of *palang*.

Please refer to DVD clip 7 (duration: 5.05 minutes)

A variation of the slow-motion walk, incorporating the images of wind, fire, earth, and, in this specific example, the image of soap bubbles

Because of their distinct nature, these inner images can be instantly reconstructed in conjunction with the image of their body in space (the perceptual awareness). In the clip, even though it was the first time that the students performed this exercise, there were subtle but noticeable differences between the renditions of the four images, which suggest strong engagement with each image; connectedness and continuity in their movements could also be observed in this clip. Although the task was conducted with a purpose different from *Satipatthana*, this experience that could lead to a detachment from the body allowed the students to be more receptive to the images as stimuli, and willing to view their own body as ‘something else’, not their own everyday bodies. The latter point is significant because in the sessions that followed, the students would be working with metaphors and abstract images, and eventually, I hope that the students would be able to take away this working method – so they can create or select their own images that are effective, and work with them in a particular dramaturgy.

The next two sections of *Satipatthana Sutta* which apply to the work of the students in the training, particularly in the meditation in motion forms of yoga and slow-motion walk, are the contemplation of feeling and the contemplation of the state of mind (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 121-123). One of the challenges for the students in the practice of meditation in motion is that they had to keep themselves focused in the form continuously from the beginning until the end of each sequence (Zarrilli’s yoga sequence could be done in 20-30 minutes, and I usually allowed the students to practice

the slow-motion walk for 15-30 minutes). A big obstacle for maintaining such a long period of concentration is a feeling of irritation or tiredness arising in the body and mind. In Buddhism, feeling (*vedana* in Pali) should be regarded by meditators merely as pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent, and *Satipatthana* practitioners are taught to use the technique of Bare Attention to notice any feeling as only either pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent sensation, and stop it from developing it further in the mind. Bare Attention can be used in the same way with external or internal disturbances. When an unrelated thought enters the mind, the practitioner should only observe it, not to investigate into its cause or effect. S/he can acknowledge that thought, but must then come back to the task at hand. This practical method can be added to the explanation of one's learning process in Yuasa's body scheme, discussed in Chapter 1, in which I had used my experience with the slow-motion walk to illustrate the concept. I am now going to discuss how the act of observing and the principle of the feeling-mind contemplations can be applied to Zarrilli's yoga sequence.

Please refer to DVD clip 8 (duration: 4.23 minutes)

An example of Phillip Zarrilli's yoga sequence, employed in the training

When practised alone, the practitioner does not have to consider other people's movement or rhythm, and s/he can only focus on her/his own breathing pattern; but when the yoga sequence is performed in a group setting, s/he is confronted with many potential disturbances: panic about forgetting the next postures, being self-conscious about her/his movements, worry about not being able to follow the group's pace, etc. These issues are common when the students began to learn the yoga sequence, and because of this challenge, Zarrilli's carefully crafted sequence of yoga postures is a perfect meditation in motion form for the cultivation of mindfulness in the present. As shown in the clip, because the instruction for the yoga sequence was 'to move together as a group', they must stay focused and follow the pace of the group as a whole in the present moment. There was no room for other thoughts to develop, and they could not become preoccupied with the aim of going forward or what the end posture is. Each student had to pay attention to her/his own breathing pattern, movements, while observing the others' in the studio. If, for example, a feeling of soreness arose, s/he

could not spend time thinking about why it was sore, or how s/he was going to do with it. Instead, s/he should merely observe (and not respond to) that feeling, otherwise s/he would forget what the next posture is, how many times s/he had repeated the movement, or would not finish the movement at the same time as the others.

While it is important to remind the students what they should be doing while repeating the yoga sequence, the studio instruction, could not begin with what they 'should not' do, as it would put a thought, which might not be there in the first place, into the students' minds. When I stepped out to observe, I could notice when there were distractions in their minds from, for example, the disruptions in the flow of movements, or the unfocused eyes. These would lead me to prompt them with 'keep following your breath', 'open your awareness', or 'keep your eyes focused on one point'. In any case, I tried to keep my prompt words to a minimum, as sometimes, my instructions could become distractions themselves.

However, it could be argued that, in practice, the students were not merely observing, but actually 'responding' to external stimuli, i.e. they adjusted their pace and rhythm, or changed the way of executing a posture, as they were seeing and hearing others. However, this act of responding should only occur in the early phase of learning the sequence. My goal as a facilitator is that when the students have memorised all of the postures in the whole yoga sequence, they should be able to flow naturally from one posture to the next, together as a group, without any sense of the movements being deliberately regulated. Paradoxically, being responsive is another important aspect in my training scheme which is required in several exercises conducted alongside meditation in motion. I will clarify in the second part of this chapter that this quality is complementary, rather than contradictory, to being mindful in the present moment.

To conclude this section, although the training structure of the course was not initially created to replicate the progression of mindfulness training described in *Satipatthana Sutta*, reflecting on and relating it to the Buddhist discourse allows me, as well as the future participants of the training scheme, to recognise the potentials and practicalities of this process of the cultivation of mindfulness. It also offers a core pathway to follow when the training is developed further, or adjusted for a different context. Nevertheless, only approximately one quarter of the performer training course

has been discussed in this section which is the beginning part of the training that has a close similarity to the Buddhist mindfulness training. The course as a whole is not merely a meditation or a mindfulness practice. Its application to performance is of the highest importance. I will move on to argue that the training developed in my third practical project offered the students performance enhancement, which allowed them to approach dramaturgical tasks with mindfulness, rather than equipping them with a set of ‘acting’ skills.

## **2. Training as performance enhancement, not teaching acting skills**

The course in its entirety, after all, is performer training, not Buddhist mindfulness training, thus, towards the end of the course, the students should be able to ‘perform’ in the assigned dramaturgies with perceivable quality of mindfulness of the present. Moreover, they should be able to apply the approaches learnt (such as Bare Attention, or image work) in other performance tasks after the course. Therefore, the outcome of the process can be divided into two major areas: a developed quality of mindfulness of the present and widened perspectives on performing, both of which form emerging performance *habitus*. Neither of these two areas, however, can be regarded as acting skills. So, it is necessary to point out that the course, or the training scheme, were not primarily aimed at equipping students with certain acting tools that they can use in performance, such as the technique of ‘affective memory’ or analytical skills (used to identify a character’s ‘objectives’ and ‘super-objective’) that the students in an ‘acting’ class in Thailand learn. Referring back to the title of this chapter, in this training scheme, the students might be displaying ‘the same’ skills in, for example, vocal delivery, but the differences in their presence could be observed.

Furthermore, this training scheme is a seminal work which may not be regarded as a complete programme of training, when compared to other works, for example, the training offered by David Zinder. In *Body Voice Imagination* (2002, 2009), Zinder states that his training structure moves from ‘physical to physical/vocal to physical/vocal/verbal’ (Zinder, 2009, p. 4). To put the training scheme developed in my third practical project in this model, it can only be placed within the first part, namely physical to physical/vocal, where it is concerned with ‘training [...] from the purely physical to the

discovery of the sound produced by the moving body' (Zinder, 2009, p. 5). The latter part in Zinder's training structure, physical/vocal/verbal, is a vast area that requires a lot more time in the studio, and, along with the first part, could not be fitted into a single university course in Thailand. If further research is conducted, this area could be explored and developed from the findings presented in this study.

I will now move on to discuss the two main products of the training, which are the key attributes of the emerging performance *habitus* that could be seen as the noticeable difference in the students' presence in performance: a developed quality of mindfulness of the present and widened perspectives on the notion of performing. Supporting evidence will be drawn directly from the students' reflective written assignments submitted at the end of the course.<sup>63</sup>

### **Mindfulness of the present**

The topic of mindfulness of the present that is developed through the training in meditation in motion has already been discussed in my previous chapter. However, here I am going to focus more specifically on the key elements born out of the process of training in this practical project and the students' reflection on their work as actors.

While the word 'meditation' and the practices of meditation in motion, including Zarrilli's yoga sequence, the slow-motion walk, and Katsura Kan's Wind sequence that I have utilised in the training generally imply 'slowing down [...] and concentrate on what is happening in the present time' (Piyanat Lertbanchorn, written assignment, my translation), the concept of mindfulness covers a much bigger area. Furthermore, if the characteristics of the performer training could only be identified as slow-pace and meditative, then it would be relevant to only specific dramaturgies of that same nature. The aim of this training is that the students would be able to apply the work in training to a range of contemporary dramaturgies available in Thailand which, in this course, was represented by two Thai original plays, entitled *Suicide Buddy* (2009),<sup>64</sup> written by

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<sup>63</sup> The list of questions for this writing task can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>64</sup> Refer to Appendix A: DVD for the students' performances in *Suicide Buddy*, on 7 September 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.



Jarunun Phantachat, and *That's Amore* (2010),<sup>65</sup> written by Nophand Boonyai. Therefore, within the training, I clearly distinguished two complementary elements of mindfulness of the present as attentiveness and responsiveness.

To clearly identify these two areas of enquiry and what they signify in the training process, and consequently in performance, Eleanor Rosch's journal article called *What Buddhist Meditation Has to Tell Psychology about the Mind* (2007) was assigned as compulsory reading. Meditation is a religious practice that could be seen as mystical and incomprehensible (even in Thai), especially when referring to ancient discourses and presented in religious language. However, Rosch discusses it in layman's terms, in relation to modern psychology, with examples drawn from everyday life. Despite being written in English (and seemingly aimed at the Western population), the article was specifically relevant to the training, and generally accessible by the students in the course.<sup>66</sup> The key concepts (adapted from the Six Great Gestures in the article) presented in the reading are shown in the table below with regard to the two complementary aspects of training, related exercises, and performance tasks.

Table 2. Attentiveness and responsiveness, as two complementary aspects of training, in relation Rosch's the Great Gestures, studio exercises and tasks

	<b>Attentiveness</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>
<b>The Great Gestures (Rosch, 2007)</b>	- Unbiased Mind' - 'Expansiveness' - 'Direct Knowing'	- 'Spontaneous Action'
<b>Exercises</b>	Seated meditation, meditation in motion forms: yoga, slow-motion walk, Katsura Kan's the Wind sequence	David Zinder's the Hunt and the Pounce, Lane Work from Viewpoints
<b>Midterm performance tasks</b>	<i>The Water Station</i>	<i>Act Without Words I</i>
<b>Final performance tasks</b>	<i>Suicide Buddy</i> and <i>That's Amore</i>	

<sup>65</sup> Refer to Appendix A: DVD for the students' performances in *That's Amore*, on 8 September 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

<sup>66</sup> To make it more approachable for the students, I highlighted the main headings and descriptions, and clarified key concepts in a group discussion on Wednesday, 29th June 2011.

In table 2 above, I use dashed lines, instead of solid ones, to represent the interchangeability of the attentiveness elements on the left and responsiveness on the right. They are not fixed, and in exercises such as the Hunt and the Pounce (mentioned in Chapter 1), or the play *Act Without Words I*, the students could be working on both aspects simultaneously. However, categorising them in this way allows the facilitator, as well as the students, to clearly follow the development of both aspects as the course progresses. I am now going to discuss how the qualities of attentiveness and responsiveness, respectively, were cultivated and controlled within the course of training.

### **a. Attentiveness**

I have already introduced the concept of Bare Attention within *Satipatthana* discourse, and stated that it is useful when working with the image of the radiating *palang*. What is most important about this practice is that there should be no reaction, even by ‘mental comment which may be one of self-reference (like, dislike, etc.), judgement or reflection’ (Nyanaponika-Thera, 1692, p. 30). Rosch refers to this as ‘the unbiased mind’ (Rosch, 2007, p. 13-14), which could be found in a simple act of listening. Upon reflection, Kathleeya Chalermpan, one of the students in the class, realises that, at the beginning of the training, ‘[she] paid too much attention and responded to all the noises around [her], looking around to see who has just come in, thinking about the sound of laughter [she heard], adjusting [her] shirt [where it is not comfortable] and all of these threw [her] off balance’ (written assignment, my translation). After she applied Bare Attention, however, she not only became more focused on her own movements and breathing pattern in the yoga sequence, her peripheral awareness expanded (the second gesture in Rosch), and she was able to move at the same time as everyone else.

Through meditation, one can learn that ‘experience is direct, atemporal, [and] unmediated’ (Rosch, 2007, p. 17). Rosch further explains as follows:

[E]verything happens in the present; how could it be otherwise? To say that an organism has learned something means that the organism has changed so that it is a specific way right now. If you think you have a memory, that means that there is something going on in your mind right now that you’re labeling as a

memory. Only the present can be the anchor for genuinely functional explanations. (Rosch, 2007, p. 17)

This statement can also be applied to an actor's experience in performance. The exercise 'Katsura Kan's the Wind', the play *The Water Station*, and the performance of *Suicide Buddy*, can be used to clarify the progression of the students' work in this regard, from training to performance.

'The Wind (I)', is a short movement sequence of nine connecting poses/gestures created by the *butoh* practitioner, Katsura Kan. I learnt this sequence with him in a workshop in 2008 (and repeated in other workshops of his), and found it to be a useful practice of working with inner images. Kan created each pose/gesture with an image or a short situation in mind, and although Kan did not think it was necessary for the participants to know all the images, he revealed some of them in the workshop, so that there was a sense of specificity in the execution of movements. These images include, for example, a wine glass shape, a round energy ball, and a goodbye gesture. 'The Wind' has since become one of my meditation in motion sequences, both for my personal practice and for my classes. When I used this sequence in training, I attached a specific breathing pattern to it, so that the students would approach this sequence with mindfulness on the breathing first, before moving on to using the breath to expand awareness and working with images. Although the ability to replicate the exact movements that I demonstrated in front of them is the least important aspect of the exercise, I emphasised on keeping to the exact form (precise angles, height, symmetry, etc.) and mastering it in the first few sessions of practice, because the form needed to be a strong foundation for the work that came later.<sup>67</sup>

Please refer to DVD clip 9 (duration: 0.48 minutes)

An example of Katsura Kan's Wind (I) sequence, employed in the training

The majority of the work concerning the form of Kan's the Wind had to do with the active interrelationship between the physical articulation and the imagination.

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<sup>67</sup> Allain asserts that in Suzuki training and other disciplines, 'mastery rather than creativity or originality is prioritised. A routine is initially necessary to learn the form but it soon provides the means to examine yourself in relation to a fixed structure, allowing a deepening of the effect of the training on the performer' (Allain, 2009, p. 117).

Wathusiri Thongsai found that working on the images of earth, water, wind, and fire, while repeating the Wind really strengthened her ability to work and maintain connection between the physical movement and mental images. The mental images became ‘active’, as she discovered that they influenced the articulation of her movements. This instance could be referred to the concept of ‘active images’ in Zarrilli’s training (mentioned in Chapter 1), where an image ‘provides a simple but clear point of entry into *developing and sustaining a relationship to the exercises while doing them.*’ (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 90). Although, compared to his definition, not all images that the students worked with provided ‘simple’ or ‘clear’ point of entry, but they all offered direct, unmediated resources in the present moment.

When Thongsai reflected upon her work on the scene ‘Woman with a parasol’ from Ota Shogo’s play, *Mizu no Eki – The Water Station* (1981),<sup>68</sup> she stated that she ‘had to conjure up the setting of the scene, which was constantly changing, according to her imagined stimuli, such as the sound of flowing water [...] or the feeling that there was someone looking’ (written assignment, my translation). In the process leading up to her performance, this dramaturgy required her to work in the same way as the Wind exercise. First she had to memorise precisely all the details in the stage direction (equivalent to the poses/gestures in the Wind). Then, in the rehearsals, she was guided, by the facilitator, to create and work with specific images in a sequence, according to the play text (in the same way that she worked with the four natural elements). Referring to Damasio’s theory of consciousness discussed previously in Chapter 2, by rehearsing the scene several times, she was allowing her organism to accommodate to the images or the situation in her mind. Although all the actions had been repeated, the images had been recalled many times in the rehearsals, she had to visualise all the images and work with them directly in the moment of performance, not simply recreating her experience of doing it.

Thongsai’s work on her performance in an extract from the play *Suicide Buddy* also required her to work with images in a similar way. However, it became more complex as her character spoke of past incidents, and various people in her life, while writing a letter, and interacting with another character in the scene. In this final

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<sup>68</sup> The scenes that were assigned to the students were translated into Thai by the facilitator from the English translation by Mari Boyd (1990).

performance task, the other aspect of the training, responsiveness, was crucial as her direct experience in the moment of performing not only relied on her inner images but also her partner who provided her with stimuli. With this information in mind, I decided to insert exercises that would allow the students to develop the quality of responsiveness in the training scheme.

### **b. Responsiveness**

Penpitch Suphawaropas, Thongsai's partner in *Suicide Buddy*, stressed the importance of being simultaneously mindful and responsive to her partner in this specific performance (written assignment, my translation). Throughout the course, the repetition of meditation in motion practices and her individual work on *The Water Station* was aimed to enhance her ability to be mindful of her actions and maintain the connection with inner images. In addition, another set of exercises were employed to heighten the students' responsiveness, especially when it came to working with fellow actors. David Zinder's the Hunt and the Pounce, and Anne Bogart's Lane Work exercise from Viewpoints are the most prominent examples of this other aspect of training.

'The Hunt and the Pounce' (Zinder, 2009, p. 70-73), originally considered part of a whole series of exercises, was adapted (and translated), so that it could be done as a single exercise within the framework of the training. I already mentioned in Chapter 1 that this exercise is a great example for illustrating the state of second-order bodymind awareness. In an early stage of the training, I used this exercise for that purpose. I wanted the students to experience that when awarenesses (proprioceptive, exteroceptive, and awareness of inner images) are heightened, they become ready to respond, even when the physical body is in stillness. This exercise has very different rhythm and set of instructions to the slow-motion walk, however, the students' work within the task is essentially the same. As the students were told to 'sense the prey's presence', they were '[radiating] the senses out into the space [which] leads [them] through the imaginative structure to a very pure, total state of readiness' (Zinder, 2009, p. 72). As soon as the students heard the clap, they had to respond immediately by pouncing on the prey. After the exercise, I explained that this state of total readiness and responsiveness was also needed in the slow-motion walk, as well as in performance. In meditation in motion, if

they were constantly working on expanding their awareness, rather than falling into a dreamy (or trance-like) state because of its slow pace, they should be ready to respond in any moment too.

While the Hunt and the Pounce was used simply to demonstrate the concept of readiness and responsiveness in a condensed form, ‘Lane Work’ (Bogart and Landau, 2005, p. 68-69) was a recurring exercise that was practised alongside meditation in motion within the course. Like most of the exercises I have adopted, it was drawn from my own experience as a participant. I learnt Lane Work exercise, as part of the Viewpoints techniques, in a physical theatre workshop by Mark Hill of Australia’s Zen Zen Zo Theatre Group in 2007. Viewpoints, which were expanded from the original version by Mary Overlie, by Anne Bogart (in collaboration with Tina Landau), is concerned with letting go of any prejudgement and responding immediately in the moment (Climenhaga, 2010, p. 295-296). Kinaesthetic response, one of Viewpoints that is emphasised in this exercise, is particularly relevant to my training scheme, as it resonates with one of the benefits of meditation: it leads to spontaneous action that is ‘compassionate and [...] shockingly effective’ (Rosch, 2007, p. 18). Climenhaga describes an actor’s work in this realm as follows:

You work to juggle multiple awareness, leaving you to experience the connections you create with others in the room as you create them. ‘Things happen’ in Viewpoints work and, without foresight, you need to let things happen, see them happening, and then respond simultaneously. (Climenhaga, 2010, p. 296)

Please refer to DVD clip 10 (duration: 2.21 minutes)

An example of the exercise Lane Work (Viewpoints), employed in the training

As shown in the clip, my version of Lane Work, which began in the third week had a starting point very similar to the slow-motion walk in that everyone began working in her/his own straight pathway (lane), with restricted choices of movement: standing straight, sitting with extended legs, jumping straight up, running forward and backward, but with a heightened state of readiness and responsiveness. Two sessions later, at around the same time that I allowed the students to turn left or right at ninety degrees in the slow-motion walk, I expanded the working space to half of the studio,

and allowed them to apply the same rule to the Lane Work (they could choose to move forward, or turn at ninety degree), which could then be referred to as Grid Work (Bogart and Landau, 2005, p. 70-71). Their task in this exercise was merely to respond immediately, by doing one of the movements, to either the sound or the movement of others that they perceive, which means that the movements should not be generated from their own stimuli. Moreover, if they responded to one of the movements made by their friends, they had a choice (in that split second) between ‘support’ or ‘contrast’, which, for example, could be in terms of level, distance, or position in the space. A variation of this exercise is when music is played to mark the start and finish, and offer more complex aural stimuli to the students. The structure (floor pattern) and principle (mindfulness of the present) of the Grid Work and the slow-motion walk exercises are the same, but the execution differs strikingly, as shown in clip 11.

Please refer to DVD clip 11 (duration: 3.02 minutes)

A comparison between the slow-motion walk (grid pattern) and the exercise Grid Work (Viewpoints)

The close similarity and, at the same time, stark contrast between the Lane Work exercise and the slow-motion walk were intended to illustrate the two aspects of mindfulness, which is not limited to being attentive, but extends towards active, spontaneous response. While *The Water Station* could be considered part of the ‘attentiveness’ trajectory, Beckett’s *Act Without Words I* represent the ‘responsiveness’ side.<sup>69</sup> The translated extract of the play that I assigned to the students contains a solo character whose actions are born as s/he repeatedly reacts to the sound of a whistle. Similar to the Lane Work (and Grid Work) exercise, all the actions in the scene were generated at the start as spontaneous reactions to the external stimuli (by turning to look, walking towards, or reflecting), and then the actor made a decision to respond to the situation, according to an image s/he had in mind.

Although the intention was that everyone in the class had a chance to work on both *The Water Station* and *Act Without Words I* which represent the two aspects of the

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<sup>69</sup> Refer to Appendix A: DVD for a selection of the students’ solo performances in Ota Shogo’s *The Water Station* and Samuel Beckett’s *Act Without Words I*, on 1 August 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

training, it was not practical within the timeframe of the course. Therefore, only four students (one-third of the whole class) were assigned to work on the extract of *Act Without Words I*, while each of the rest of the students worked on one of the three scenes taken from *The Water Station* – ‘Girl’, ‘Woman with a Parasol’, and ‘The Man with a Huge Load on His Back’. However, having a chance to witness the rehearsals and performances would allow them to identify the two overlapping trajectories of attentiveness and responsiveness within the practice of mindfulness of the present, and begin to see how their work in the training could benefit them in performance.

### **Widened perspectives on the notion of performing**

Towards the beginning of section one, I presented a quote from one of the students who stated that she was used to prioritising script and the act of delivering it over other things, especially being ‘mindful or attentive’. This is a common issue among the Thai drama students who are used to the concept of ‘acting’ in Thailand. Another student in the course reflects upon the principles of training that she has never encountered before as follows:

Based on my experience within the course, whether it was during exercises, or the performance tasks, I can speak with confidence that being mindful in the present moment and the image work are crucial components to actor training. Throughout the course, I have markedly improved, in terms of being mindful and attentive, and I was able to apply the principle of mindfulness and image work to both the performance tasks and in everyday life. (Kathleeya Chalermpan, written assignment, my translation)

Apart from the quality of mindfulness of the present that the course was aimed to enhance, widening perspectives on ‘actor training’ and the concept of ‘acting/performing’ has been the most important intended outcome of this training scheme. Assuming that the training scheme could allow a new *habitus* to emerge, then the widened perspectives could be part of it that, in Bourdieu’s words, become ‘the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54).

To introduce and allow the students to experience an alternative approach to ‘acting’, a concept that has a very specific meaning in the Thai culture, is not an easy task. I particularly chose to work with students with no formal actor training experience, as I believed that they would be more open to experience the training without any



preconceived judgement (based on what they had understood to be the ‘correct’ way of learning ‘acting’). The training environment, or what I refer to as ‘platform for creativity’ in Chapter 1, can be compared to a phenomenology model created by Creely, in his examination of Zarrilli’s practice (Creely, 2010, p. 225). The training can be divided into two main areas: ‘the world of training (doing)’ and ‘the world of reflexivity (done)’ (Creely, 2010, p. 225); and the notions of actor training and acting/performing within these two worlds were controlled and delivered through two different but related discourses.

The discourse presented during the training and rehearsals mainly consists of instructions, and prompt words, which needed to be able to evoke certain images in the students’ minds and spring them into action. In other words, this type of discourse needed to convey the practicality of the training scheme. The image of radiating ball of light, for example was particularly effective for this group of students, some of which were able to conjure up images of Japanese cartoon characters who possess special powers.<sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, the discourse within the reflective part of the course that included class discussions, written assignments, and complementary reading was concerned with larger contexts of Buddhist meditation and actor training. It was through this particular discourse that the logic of practice and the connection between meditation and performance could be directly conveyed to the students. Three articles were assigned for the students to read and discuss in class: Rosch’s *What Buddhist Meditation Has to Tell Psychology about the Mind* (2007), a section on ten characteristics of an exercise and its effectiveness from Barba’s *An Amulet Made of Memory: The Significance of Exercises in the Actor’s Dramaturgy* (1997), and a section titled meditation and intuitive response from Anne Fliotsos’s *From Script Analysis to Script Interpretation: Valorizing the Intuitive* (2009). What was being presented through this series of readings is the progression from meditation training to dramaturgical applications, to which the students could relate their works and the discursive devices, presented in the training and in the rehearsal process.

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<sup>70</sup> Refer to Appendix C.

In addition, the discourses surrounding the two wordless plays used as part of the training and transition from mindfulness training to performance also contributed to the widening of perspectives, as it provided to the students an alternative view of what a performance can take shape. Although the background of the plays was not discussed in detail, they were presented as play scripts from two different cultures, created in two different countries, from two different continents, and are more than two decades apart. Yet, the concept of mindfulness (with its two complementary aspects) that is central to the practice of Buddhist meditation in Thailand could be directly applied to them. So, by that stage of the training, the students should be able to recognise the relevancy and the practicality of the principles of training; and although two original contemporary Thai play texts were used towards at the end of the course to demonstrate how the principles could also be applied to the form of theatre that the students are most familiar with and are most likely to encounter, the cross-cultural nature of the course could convey the versatility of the approach and allow for further explorations in other types of dramaturgies, from other parts of the world, different time periods, or even other forms of theatre.

To sum up, what this chapter demonstrates is the potential of a more localised and customised approach to actor training in Thailand, which could be considered a movement towards Asia as method, an emerging social concept mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. The comparison between ‘meditating’ and ‘performing’ presented in this chapter demonstrates that Buddhist concepts of meditation and mindfulness are beneficial to the course facilitator in terms of the structuring of an actor training course, and to the students when approaching performance tasks. It also opens up other possibilities of applying other Thai or Asian philosophies to performance training, without relying on the Western perspectives on theatre and performance. Furthermore, even though the focus of the training is on using meditation in motion practice to develop a sense of mindfulness of the present as an acquired disposition, the exercises or the style of performance used within the course are not already fixed. The proposed training approach for the Thai undergraduate drama programmes could be developed and explored further with a different group of participants, different forms of meditation in motion, and different performance tasks drawn from the wide range of dramaturgies available today in Thailand.

## Conclusion

### The continuum of practical exploration

[P]ractice as research can be seen to be a process through which performance makers are able to develop and deepen the abilities they already possess to make reasoned, autonomous and often professional judgements. Through research, practitioners can develop an increased critical awareness of the things they do in their own practice and of *why* they do these things in the ways that they do. (Freeman, 2010, p. 57)

This thesis as a whole precisely presents the process described in the quotation above, taken from John Freeman's *Blood, Sweat and Theory* (2010). It details various developmental stages of my investigation into the psychophysical actor training scheme, rather than the 'finished' product or the final thoughts on the research, which would suggest the completion of the investigation. Although the focus on 'the body-mind oneness' and the principle of 'presence in performance' that I started out with in the first chapter has shifted to the concept of mindfulness of the present, which is more specific to the Thai context in the final chapter, it should not convey the impression that I no longer agree with my earlier discoveries, or the concepts proposed by Zarrilli and others that I made references to. It is only through my practical explorations, based on those earlier concepts, which are presented through the Western point of view, that I have been able to arrive at what I now consider to be the most suitable set of discourses in the context of Thai university drama programmes. This continuum of exploration for me is not yet completed, and by documenting these various stages of my journey, it allows me (as well as other researchers) to refer back to the original sources of my current principles of actor training (for example, the concept of *ki*-energy that I no longer refer to in my current training), and develop new strands of thought for other practices in different contexts.

By considering this research as part of my continuum of exploration, I am also suggesting that the proposed actor training scheme is not a reaction against the psychological realist paradigm. This research has been informed by many theories developed by Stanislavski (as seen in a substantial number of references I made to him throughout this thesis), and connections could be made between the concept of mindfulness and the principles of Method acting. Moreover, my experience as a drama

teacher employing the psychological realist approach also contributes to the development of this research in many ways, most evidently in the structuring of the course in my third practical project and I believe that the training scheme that I am proposing will be a perfect complement to the existing ‘acting’ paradigm in Thailand. However, what I am fundamentally against is the exclusiveness of a single approach, and the idea that there is only one correct method of actor training (especially one that was directly adopted from Western culture, without taking into account the cultural background of Thai students), which were the issues that prompted me to embark on this PhD research. In the following two sections, the findings gained through this practice-led research will be summarised according to the two main concepts presented in the title of the thesis: meditation in motion and mindfulness in performance.

### **Why ‘meditation in motion’?**

In Chapter 1, meditation in motion is identified as one of the three crucial elements of my psychophysical training scheme. The term is derived from Yuasa’s theory of self-cultivation and his body scheme, which I adopted to articulate both my experience in Zarrilli’s performer training and what I considered beneficial to me as an actor. The advantages of meditation in motion, which I identified at the early phase of this research as ‘the activation of *ki*-energy’, ‘body-mind oneness’, ‘the state of suchness’, and ‘presence in performance’, were illustrated through examples drawn from my training and performance experiences (as an actor in my first practical project, in Zarrilli’s Performer Training module, and as a participant in various workshops), and Asian performer training traditions of Japanese *Noh* theatre and Thai *Khon* dance-drama. These examples could be considered supporting evidence for my argument that, along with the other two components, namely platform for creativity (the supporting environment of the training) and presence in performance (which comprises complementary exercises, based around three elements: modes of awareness, image work, and the principle of reduction), meditation in motion is a suitable tool for actor training in the Thai university context.

In Chapter 2, after exploring the practice of meditation in motion further, by taking on the role of a facilitator in the second practical project, conducted with three

international participants of varying degrees of experience, at the University of Exeter, I realised that the function of meditation in motion as a training tool, which directly influences the participants' work on dramaturgies, could be explained using Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, as Bourdieu asserts:

*habitus* performs on the basis of acquired equivalences, facilitating the substitutability of one reaction for another and enabling the agent to master all problems of a similar form that may arise in new situations. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 94)

This concept of *habitus* enabled me to specifically describe the main benefit of meditation in motion and the actor training scheme as a whole as 'mindfulness of the present', which is present in all the advantages of meditation in motion, mentioned in Chapter 1. Moreover, by comparing it to *habitus*, mindfulness can be seen as a disposition, rather than just a skill; through constant repetition of the practice of meditation in motion, it can become the practitioner's second nature, as well as allow her/him to consciously approach performance tasks with mindfulness at all times. In the second practical project, I also discovered that, by identifying mindfulness of the present as the main benefit, meditation in motion practices could be applied to an actor's work with a variety of contemporary dramaturgies, particularly in the areas of perceptual awareness and inner images, both of which are directly related to the three elements that form the component 'presence in performance', described in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 3, the practices of meditation in motion and the concept of mindfulness of the present are explored further in the context of a Thai university drama programme, for which the actor training scheme is created. In essence, this chapter demonstrates a move away from the East-West binary towards the utilisation of resources within the Thai or the broader Asian culture. Within the third practical project, references to Buddhist meditation practices were emphasised, and were particularly helpful in terms of helping the Thai students to gain a deeper understanding of the training in meditation in motion – as they were already familiar with the discourses on meditation and mindfulness – even though these discourses may not be directly related to the sources of the yoga sequence, the slow-motion walk, or Katsura Kan's the Wind sequence, selected for the training. In addition, apart from the practices employed and referred to in this thesis, there are other forms that could be considered meditation in motion, and they are not limited to traditional practices. The Wind sequence, taken from

Katsura Kan's workshop, for example, was devised as part of a *butoh* choreography, but I have removed it from the original context, adapted it, and utilised it as a meditation in motion sequence, employed to enhance the participants' mindfulness of the present. While all meditation in motion practices can be used for this purpose, each of them is unique and needs to be carefully selected specifically for a certain group of participants, so that it can be most effective within the context of the training.

### **Why 'mindfulness in performance'?**

Although the concept of mindfulness of the present emerged during my reflection upon the second practical project, it is central to the crucial elements of the psychophysical training highlighted in Chapter 1: the benefits of 'meditation in motion', which are the activation of *ki*-energy, body-mind oneness, the state of suchness; and the modes of awareness, image work and the principle of reduction that I organise under the heading 'presence in performance'. In my second and third practical project, I decided to focus on mindfulness as a transposable quality perceivable by the facilitator, actor and audience. Not only does mindfulness of the present connect all of the concepts discussed in Chapter 1, it is also achievable within the time period assigned for a single Thai university course, as it is a concept already well-established in Thailand, in which *Theravada* Buddhism is the national religion.

In Chapter 2, I regarded mindfulness of the present as emerging performance *habitus*, and stressed that it is not just a concentration skill, but a disposition that is dynamic and influential. While it could become the practitioner's second nature through ongoing repetition, the principle of mindfulness could also be consciously implemented by the performer through image work, as illustrated in a nonverbal, physically based performance, *Hachiko*, and a naturalistic text, *Push Up*. Towards the end of the chapter, I summarised three benefits of mindfulness as a key component for characterisation, an action that brings everything together in the moment, and a quality that can be observed in performance. I argue that all of these benefits contribute to the actor's presence in performance, which, according to Zarrilli and Chaikin, has to do with the actor's body-mind engagement in the moment of performing (Chaikin, 1991, Zarrilli, 2012).

In Chapter 3, by placing the training scheme in the Thai university context, the importance of the concept of mindfulness of the present, both as a method and as a complementary discourse, could be clearly identified. Firstly, it is directly relevant to the Thai context, as stated previously. Secondly, because this concept is not concerned with a single cultural perspective on acting, it is applicable to a range of performance styles found in Thailand today, as illustrated in the four dramaturgies in my third practical project, i.e. *The Water Station*, *Act Without Words I*, *Suicide Buddy*, and *That's Amore*. In addition, the concept of mindfulness can be related to a wide range of training forms and exercises, which may be drawn on to complete the two aspects of mindfulness crucial in performance: attentiveness and responsiveness. In my third practical project, exercises taken from Viewpoints, Zinder's actor training scheme, and *butoh* were combined to enhance these two aspects. Finally, the focus on mindfulness of the present is suitable for the Thai university structure, because it becomes part of a whole knowledge of actor training, rather than representing 'actor training' as a whole, as it will be situated alongside other acting and movement courses, which are based on different paradigms.

Through this research, a strong foundation has already been laid for my future roles as a theatre practitioner, a university lecturer and a researcher, and I will strive to continue exploring and making new discoveries through my research and practical work. Moreover, I hope that this thesis, or some of the discoveries made, will be beneficial to those wishing to explore alternative approaches to actor training, as well as encouraging new explorations and exchanges within the field of intercultural actor training, whether they are in a Thai, Asian, or global context.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### DVD: Performances in the first, second and third practical projects

- 1 *Dancing Corpse*, performed by Grisana Punpeng on 3 June 2010, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter
- 2 *Hachiko*, performed by Takehiro Kawase on 6 April 2011, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter
- 3 *Push Up*, work-in-progress, performed by Becca Savory and Niharika Negi on 6 April 2011, at the Drama Department, University of Exeter (the two actors performed an extract from *Push Up*, with 50 percent image work on the outside)
- 4 A selection of the students' solo performances in Ota Shogo's *The Water Station*, on 1 August 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- 5 A selection of the students' solo performances in Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words I*, on 1 August 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- 6 The students' performances in *Suicide Buddy*, on 7 September 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- 7 The students' performances in *That's Amore*, on 8 September 2011, at the Department of Speech Communication and Performing Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand



## Appendix B

Each student must answer one of these questions in the written assignment at the end of the course *Performance Laboratory: Actor Training* (ห้องปฏิบัติการการแสดงสำหรับการฝึกฝนนักแสดง, Term 1/2011):

1. In what way has the pre-expressive training in meditation in motion aided you in the work on the two performance tasks (midterm and end of term)? What are the limitations, obstacles and challenges?

(1. การฝึกฝนในลักษณะ Meditation in Motion ได้มีส่วนช่วยในการซ้อมและแสดงโจทย์การแสดงกลางภาคและปลายภาคอย่างไรบ้าง มีอะไรบ้างที่เป็นข้อจำกัด อุปสรรค หรือความท้าทาย จงยกตัวอย่างอย่างชัดเจน)

2. How have you applied the ‘image work’ (external and internal states) in creating characters or tackling performative tasks (both in the midterm and end of term practical exams)? What are the limitations, obstacles and challenges?

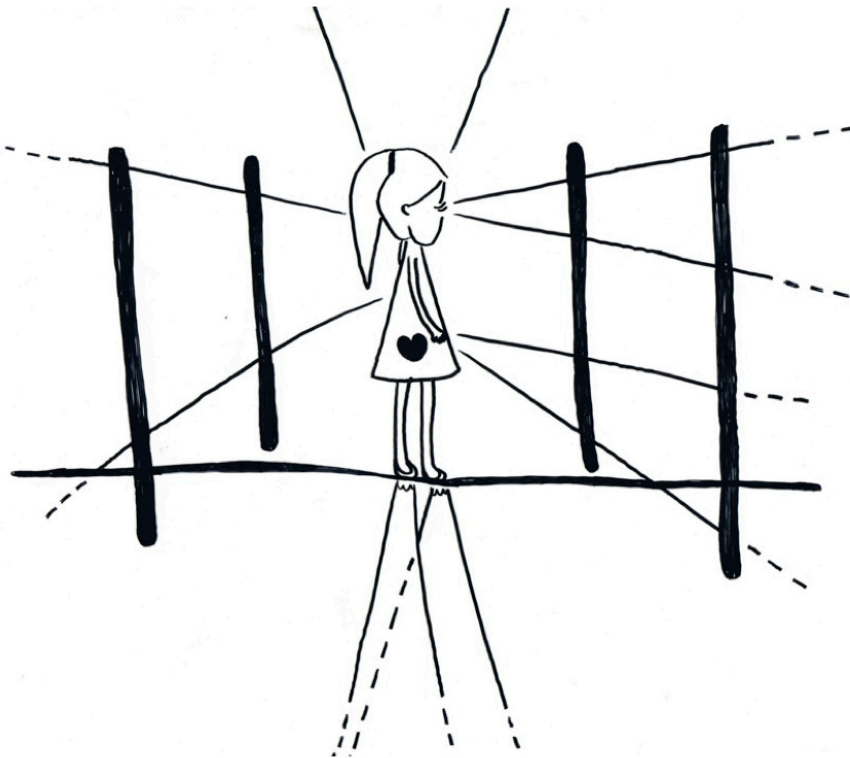
(2. นักศึกษาได้นำ “การทำงานกับภาพ” หรือ “Image work” [ทั้งสภาวะภายนอกและภายในของตัวละคร] มาใช้ในการพัฒนาตัวละครหรือตอบโจทย์ทางการแสดงอย่างไรบ้าง [ทั้งกลางภาคและปลายภาค] มีอะไรบ้างที่เป็นข้อจำกัด อุปสรรค หรือความท้าทาย จงยกตัวอย่างอย่างชัดเจน)

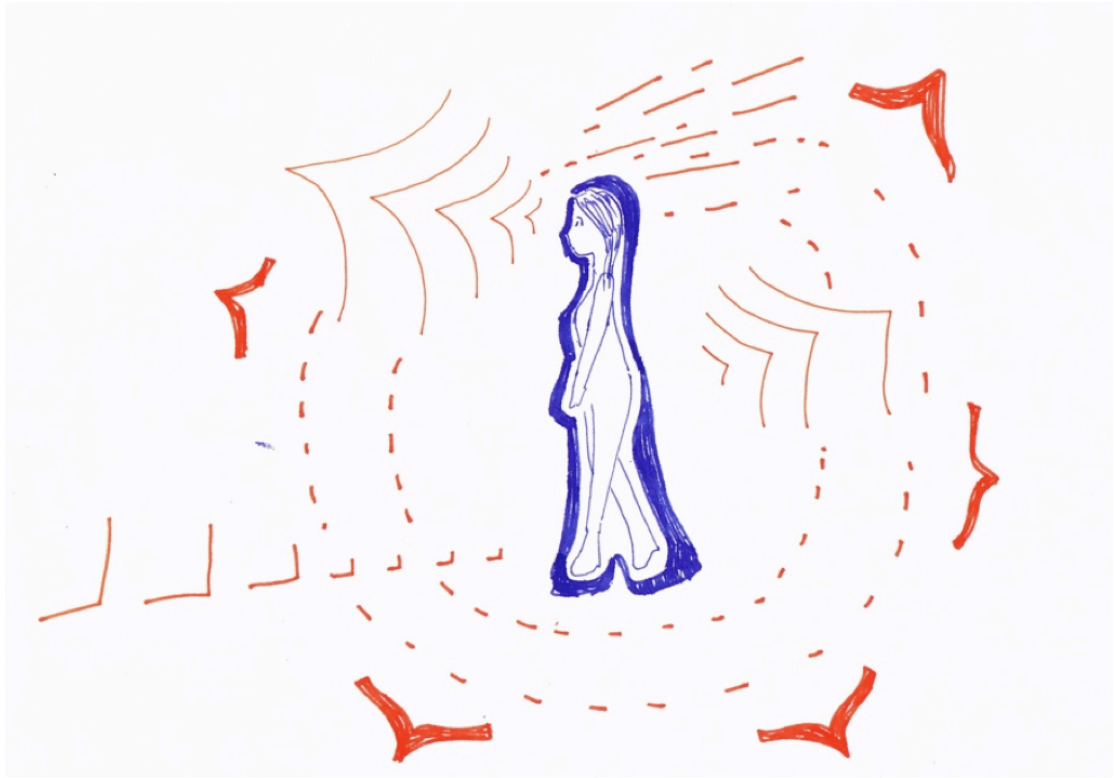
3. ‘The first step in actor training is to learn to be mindful of the present, and engage fully with inner images for a certain period of time’ discuss this statement, with reference to your experience within this course. What are the limitations, obstacles and challenges?

(3. “ก้าวแรกของการฝึกฝนนักแสดงคือการเรียนรู้ที่จะมีสติรู้ตัวทั่วพร้อมต่อปัจจุบัน และเรียนรู้ที่จะมีสมาธิและทำงานกับภาพอย่างต่อเนื่องในช่วงเวลาหนึ่ง” จากข้อความนี้ ให้นักศึกษาอภิปรายพร้อมยกตัวอย่างจากประสบการณ์ในวิชานี้ มีอะไรบ้างที่เป็นข้อจำกัด อุปสรรค หรือความท้าทาย)

## Appendix C

A selection of the students' images that represent '*Palang*'; from top: Akeera Kijthanasopa, Wathusiri Thongsai, Pratyanan Suwanmanee, and Thanawat Wongsawan





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