

**Shifting paradigms of practice in *Interpretación Gestual*: Integrating
bodymind training with Michael Chekhov's acting techniques within the
context of training professional actors in Spain**



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the implementation of an actor-training programme in the context of Spanish drama schools during 2004-2005. Reflecting through the student's practice as well as my own practice as a teacher, actor and director, I investigate how a bodymind training based on martial arts disciplines and designed by Phillip Zarrilli may contribute to understand the theory and the practice of an actor's use of the imagination as Michael Chekhov proposes it. Core questions arise from the evaluation of what is the professional knowledge that the integration of both systems of training brings to the students. The action of research is placed in how the process of learning such competencies take place and become informative of both the research and the acting practice. The concept of acting is being analysed by looking at the significance of the actor's imagination from a phenomenological rather than a psychological perspective. The discussion includes the challenge that developing a new pedagogy in a drama school brings up to a better understanding of contemporary paradigms of theatre practice and education.

Interpretación Gestual is since 1992 an established branch in the *Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Madrid* (RESAD). Acting in physical (gestural) theatre conveys some problematic issues concerning its theory and practice within both professional and pedagogical contexts. Implementing a new and specific teaching programme for the preparation of professional actors in the context of the RESAD urges me to clarify in-practice certain issues about these two different approaches to actor training, as well as their presence in today's education within the curriculum of official drama schools in Spain.

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The illustration on the cover is self-portrait of Oscar González done with his eyes closed. Oscar was a student of mine during 2003-2004 academic year at RESAD. This is an exercise that I normally do with the students in order to reflect with them about how an artist's imagination works. Deirdre Heddon first introduced it to me within the module *Autobiography and Performance* in my MA at Exeter University in 2001.

List of accompanying material

This thesis includes two DVDs that are attached on the inside of the back cover of this volume.

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A mi madre

CHAPTER 1: THE INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of both a written and an audio-visual account of the research-as-practice of an actor, director and educator. The primary concern of this investigation has been on teaching and facilitating a professional training programme for developing the student's knowledge of performance practice and the practice of acting.

The research originates, therefore, in the practice of acting and teaching of an individual and follows her persistent intuition on the connections between bodymind training and the imagination. Since my first contact with Michael Chekhov's techniques in 1996 two feelings had prevailed in my relationship with acting. One was the magic appeal that I observed as spectator in actors when fully participating in their imagining processes; and two, the unique revelation of the person as an artist that appeared by those same means that the imagination operated. Acting is a creative act that entails certain changes occurring between the quotidian presence of the performer as a person and that of her artistic persona onstage. Presence stands upon – if not constitutes – the relationship between the body and the mind, and happens onstage while an actor embodies her imagination. However, presence also strongly materialises, as well as is materialised by, the individuality of each practitioner while doing. This work represents a moment of a continuous

search for, and questioning of, the reasons and processes whereby these two appreciations, both observed and experienced, operate and come into being through the practice of these two techniques, their application to the theatre-making process and the actors' education in the context where I am now.

My preliminary questions in practice were set around how do these two apparently different systems and approaches to the training of an actor could merge with consistency and effectiveness. Could their integration develop a coherent pedagogy that responds to the demands imposed by an actor's artistic education and professional practice? How and why might this integration (or performance practice) become meaningful not only within its own context in my country and school, but also in the context of contemporary theatre practice and education more generally? And finally, could this research be sustained through my particular experience of acting and that of my students? If so, how?

These questions are implicit in my practice of acting and teaching through both Michael Chekhov's acting techniques and Phillip Zarrilli's bodymind training for more than ten years. The former techniques refer to the use of my actor's imagination; meanwhile the latter – derived from Asian martial arts and re-designed for Western theatre and acting – reviews acting as a psychophysical practice. Chekhov's and Zarrilli's forms of actor training converge in their attempt to challenge, reveal and reinforce through practice, respectively, the artistic sense and psychophysical connections of an actor's work. My focus of research is not only on what are the challenges these two practices propose to the student, but also on how is their unique way of exploring those challenges and relating them to the demands of today's

theatre, where psychology, character nor narrative necessarily drive the aesthetics of the performance, and theatre itself is not always concern with the representation of any short of prior reality. As I have come to understand these two training approaches they compound a continuum of practice through whose processes the development of the student's concept of being an actor and creativity happens, skills and dispositions are being embodied and staging strategies may be generated.

On the other hand, how I was going to conceptualise my practice-as-research needed to be clear beforehand, or at least, during discussion. It was not an easy point to clarify. My ideas of both artistic practice and academic research first contradicted, and later intermingled up in unexpected ways. What became my research was what was underlying my practice, and the other way around. Research as it was my practice was not exercised on a *what* but on a *how*, and this fact had radical consequences in my own way of doing and understanding practice and/as research. Questions were taking form and shaping themselves as I was getting along with my research/practice, and through my own way of teaching, thinking and doing theatre.

The research originally focused on how a specific psychophysical approach to acting could contribute to open and resolve certain aspects of Chekhov's practice. Concretely, how the bodymind training could help to uncover those *intangible* means and creative processes of performance through the students' understanding of their body and imagination. However, this core question brought to the fore many other collateral issues, all of them lured by that preliminary inquiry that as an educator and practitioner I had envisioned for my thesis; and that made up a rather complex answer from that first and

apparently simple question. These collateral issues are discussed throughout the research and are mostly concerned with the redefinition of the concepts that frame the problem of acting or performance practice. Training, acting, imagining, body and movement are, among others, the concepts reviewed in view of an actor's artistic and/or aesthetic education.

The relationship between the body and the mind that is underlined in both forms of training marks a key aspect that runs throughout my inquiry. That acting depends on processes of embodiment and that the body relates to mind are evident facts. It is also true that this evidence stands within any other system of acting and actor training. However, the implications and set of cultural assumptions this evidence involves in practice may vary considerably. In any case, I assume that the relationship between body and mind is central in an actor's professional training and, in my experience, the premises that make it happen are easily taken for granted within her artistic education.¹

I facilitate bodymind training in the acting class as a means to help students grow through their own way of translating the creativity of the imagination into action. I am not presuming any causal relationship of the imagination (the mind?) to the action (the body?) but instead I perceive a relationship of a mutual and continual co-presence of body and mind, a bodymind that is always in a process of becoming. Although it is possible, even necessary, to conceptualise and theorise the bodymind, its real value to someone training to be an actor is through the experience of it. According to this, I will anchor my discussion in the interaction between the image and the action as happening while practicing. Concrete and multiple factors emerging from this interaction will be discussed also in relationship to their relevance for the

student's concept of acting and theatre making. My aim is to broaden our understanding of the concept of the actor-as-creator through delving into the performer's experience of her own corporeality.

1.1. PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

The experience reflected on here explores the interaction of two distinct practices of actor training in an institutional and pedagogical context. As already stated, I did not know how to frame the research until the work itself had finished. For me, practice has been 'indivisible element of both research and result' (Freeman 2010: 65), in which my interests as practitioner and researcher overlap and point to some questions that are difficult to answer. Some of these questions concern characteristics inherent in non-scientific research: problems of objectivity, the risk of self-indulgence and a lack of universality. Other questions concern the design and strategies of my research that I will explain in this section.

Instead of developing a solid theory of research and practice a priori to setting up the teaching programme, I decided first to develop the pedagogical programme as a method of questioning that tried to look at these two practices of actor training as "independently" and "comprehensively" as possible within the context of a one-year programme of teaching in the RESAD. In order to explore the outcomes of the integration of these two training practices, each student needed to experience them in a way that was as precise, deep and accurate as possible, which unavoidably followed my particular approach to practice and teaching. My research lies in this space in-between, in revealing therefore what it meant for both the students and myself to embody both trainings with a certain degree of coherence and consistency.

Through interacting with the students I have been able to look at this integration as something that happens through practice, that provides the students with a knowing-how of their acting and that acknowledges my need to tease out the hypotheses intrinsic to the research by reflecting upon their discoveries. My subjectivity as a researcher was justified if the assumptions coming out of the practice are explained through a deep and comprehensive contextualization. This fact opened up an autoethnographic perspective on the research since my assumptions were based on personal, professional and artistic interests: research and researcher becoming the leading questions that guided both the practice and the research. Practice-as-research is based here upon my own experience of living through and observing how an understanding of the bodymind can lead to a concrete practical exploration of Chekhov's acting techniques. I do not expect this research to offer a unified or absolute theory of practice, but rather I hope to clarify and articulate as much as possible the area in which students will make sense of their integration, through practice and reflection, of psychophysical training and the Chekhov techniques.

The research proposal is therefore better explored through practice in the expectation that it may help to clarify and improve both the students' process of learning as well as my own understanding of pedagogical practice. My aim is that through my practice others can better understand their own, as much as I can better approach other's teaching protocols and acting conventions. In particular, I am interested in shining a light on both acting pedagogy within a drama school and the meaning of Chekhov's practice today.

Performative Research

Academic research and artistic practice have been interacting from the late Twentieth Century reclaiming the birth of a whole new approach to knowledge that uses the creative processes of performance as research methods. Practise-as-research is characterised by the diversity, in both practitioners and perspectives, that 'has created the compass of a research 'field', the reach and coherence of which is always already beyond them' (Kershaw, in Allegue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini 2009: 03). The growth and development of this new research field, the study of its different contexts, methods and outcomes, or ways of presentation and documentation is analysed in several compilations: Barret and Bolt 2007; Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund 2008; Smith and Dean 2009; Allegue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini 2009; and Freeman 2010. There are no definite answers nor models or standardised methods, topics, lines of action or research. The hypotheses of those who do this type of investigation and of those who theorise about it have different scope and implications for both practice and research, sometimes with a positive benefit and enrichment of both areas, other times pointing to the limitations and/or paradoxes inherent in either and both. Nevertheless, the hard core of P-a-R seems to be a question of urging 'crucial epistemological and ontological factors – matters of being and knowing –' (Kershaw, in Allegue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini 2009: 5) with which this new field has the power 'to trigger fundamental and radical challenges to well-established paradigms of knowledge making, inside the academy and beyond.' (Ibid.: 2).

I associate my practice within this new and distinctive research field, and further identify it with what has been described by Brad Haseman as 'Performative research' (Haseman 2006: 98-106). Haseman argues that the 'messy forms' of research and methods that have become part of performance practice's inquiries are but challenges to meaning, rhetoric and conventions of research. In performative research there are no claims of truth but prompts to dialogue. Neither symbolic numbers in formulas nor discursive text in words but the expression itself of the performance becomes both its presentational form and its main research activity. Haseman argues for an interpretational epistemology 'where the knower and the known interact, shape and interpret the other' (104), which would allow the artist to claim the 'material outcomes of practice as all-important representations of research findings in their own right' (Ibid.). Consequently, the meaning and value of the resulting practice within academic discourse seems to make the exegesis or writing of the creative practice either redundant or extremely contradictory.

Even though scholars adopt different perspectives on this issue and singularly respond to this question of redundancy, all their claims need to be somehow taken into account when setting up practice, research methods, and/or analysing the particularities of one's own reflections. My approach to this issue is close to Barbara Bolt when she suggests that the task of creative exegesis 'is to extend on existing domains of knowledge through its reflection on those shocking realizations that occur in practice' (in Barrett and Bolt 2010:34). What prevails in all these claims is that in order to come to an agreement that allowed these two domains – art and research – together to give birth to questions and methods, the approach ought to be reformulated almost in every case, research project or unique experience.

The methodology I have used in this study encompasses a P-a-R's approach as an investigative process, and reinterprets practice in terms of Performative Research. Reflection-in-action is its fundamental constitutive method. In *The Reflective Practitioner* (1987), Professor Donald A. Schön explains how through reflection-in-action one searches for improving the 'relationship between competent practice and professional knowledge' which means that research not only 'should inquire into the manifestation of professional artistry' but also 'examine the various ways in which people actually acquire it' (Schön 1987: 14). The context of practice, the role of student and the teacher, and the problems that are being setting up will determine the knowledge to be considered useful in practice as well as the kind of reflection undertaken in action.²

Other methods and perspectives that have assisted me and inform the short of reflections that compose my thesis are: comparative discussion, auto-ethnography, phenomenology of perception, a consideration of ecology and system theories, and case studies as representative methods of how the three performance projects as well as each of the student's case are pertinent to the moment of research.

Further methods & questions of research

Given that there are two main interrelated areas of concern in this thesis – the practice of research and the exploration of the practice itself – further questions appear to be at stake in the design of its research. One is what kind of knowledge is being investigated, this is, what do we assume to be the

tacit knowledge that underlies acting; two, how that knowledge is being investigated, in other words, what are the means by which that tacitness becomes somehow explicit and knowledge embodied; and three, what are the particularities of my investigation in the acting class and circumstances in the RESAD. I introduce the notion of 'paradigm(s) of practice(s)' as a means to further inform the teaching and research in contemporary performance and in the RESAD, as well as to frame the discussion of what an actor is, how someone does to become an actor, and what are the tasks and demands of acting implicit in her inquiry.

This research is better understood as a setting forth of questions on acting into practice. The practice is mainly informed by the work of two master teachers – P. Zarrilli and M. Chekhov – and explained by the integration of their two different approaches to acting [See Appendix I: Paradigms of practice]. Rather than looking at this integration solely from my own practice of teaching and acting, I attend primarily to that of my students. The main focus of my examination is, as stated, on how professional knowledge is acquired through these two established forms of training, which I do through both the student's and mine reflection-in-action.

The RESAD gives the spatial and temporal context whereas the performance projects locate a moment of a long-term research in practice and learning process. I assume that integrating these two forms of training is something that works for my students, as it did for me as an actor. What I am exploring is not only why integrating these two processes has the potential to do a certain work, but also why it works for me and for each of my students. In other words, this thesis locates the action of research in how the relationship of the actor with her practice is being established. It studies the actual

possibility of a shifting paradigm of practice within a particular context and not to demonstrate it as a given statement. Thus, it is not about *what* but *how* the questions that challenge our paradigms evolve through practice.

I argue that a paradigm that mainly defines acting according to the emotional trip of the character not only falls short in responding to contemporary devised theatre-making but is also weak in providing a comprehensive account of what would be the phenomenology of acting. Actors today need to be free to explore the consequences and meanings of their own actions within different contexts of performance, forms of playwriting and aesthetic criteria. They also need to feel independent (either from text, character and narrative) in order to grow and evolve as theatre artists according to their creative individualities, and so play with the possibility of renewing stage artistry.

The point of all this is not to prove that a prevalent psychological approach to acting in drama schools is wrong; after all, it allows actors to come to terms with the demands that the dramatic plays impose on their work and may as well enable them to awake on stage processes whereby the same experience of creative acting is attained. My question is whether certain theories of acting are really so “phenomenologically” apt in their attempt to describe acting. Therefore, my question is whether the language we traditionally use for explaining and teaching acting at drama schools really encompasses the possible dimensions included in the experience of acting.

Students’ ways of being/doing are examined through three performance projects on which this thesis is built: Individual Projects (IPs), The Project of Bernarda Alba (CBA), and *Asfixia* (ASFX). For the nature of knowledge and

research involved, the mode in which these ways are displayed is particular to each specific practice. Each of the projects covers a different mode in which the integration of psychophysical training and imagination techniques can help develop the teaching programme and also make explicit the tasks and questions pertinent to my practice research, as it will be explained later.

Documentation

Epistemological factors are important for understanding how what is being researched is being also documented, articulated and investigated through these three projects in this thesis. The thesis interweaves a written narrative with an audio-visual documentation articulating this way a process of knowledge and reflection in and on practice that is both the students' and mine.

The audio-visual documentation of the research accompanying this written work attempts to offer, in Nelson words, an 'experiential insight into what it feels like to perform' (2006: 112). The DVD rather than an objective measure in a traditional scientific sense becomes both testimony of what has been done and experienced and method for further cross-referencing the areas of research and knowledge. The aim is to create a 'dynamic model of research' (Nelson 2006: 113) that helps to structure the moments and relevancy of the students' experiences and realisations.

All the data exposed in both the DVD and the written text originated in the practice of the students. The DVD was constructed over more than 900

hours of recorded video material from exercises and improvisations during classes, performances, and rehearsals, that involved different moments in the creative process of each project, audio and video recording of meetings, interviews and tutorials with the students-actors, my own diary on the projects and workshops that happened during that period of time, and the portfolios and reflections of the students during these projects. The DVD shapes the experience primarily from the point of view of the student's learning process. It includes some of their narratives that trigger my analysis and reflection on the contents of the thesis and explain the student's interaction with their training.

My objectives throughout were to give a logical and chronological account of the pedagogical endeavour; to point out technical or contextual problems faced in acting practice and in the learning process; to evidence an approach to personal and professional problems, behaviours or actions; to better describe the role(s) assumed in practice; to express and locate relevant moments of practice as well as (the students' and mine) feelings and appreciations about training, acting and learning. My efforts to accomplish this with the level of complexity and detail of these issues would perhaps be impossible without the support of audio-visual documentation. However, the most important value that I consider in the DVD presentation is the ability to empathetically observe, analyse, comprehend and assess 'performance', and to reveal its critical position within the overall research project. Empathy, as it is conceived in art and aesthetics, may not be strictly necessary in research, but it certainly plays its role in performance and performance practice-research. I also defend the potential of the latter to communicate knowledge through the emotional component that articulates its artistic

practice, without being able to differentiate between its process and result.
Up to a certain point, performative research becomes unavoidably aesthetic
and artistic in its expression.

1.2. SOURCES AND CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

In 1983 Michael Polanyi introduced the term ‘tacit knowledge’ to refer to one’s ability to recognise and evaluate with immediacy the environment through interacting with it – something difficult to describe through a set of features or facts. In order to develop this tacit knowledge, the student undertakes a process that confounds rationality, at least in what is understood as technical rationality, and points out an ability to distinguish between the feelings of doing something right and the feelings of getting it wrong ‘*through* the tacit sensations of the tool in our hand’ (Schön 1987: 23). The learning process relies on the student who, guided by those feelings of right and wrong, is able to discern and amend his own errors. Tacit knowledge enables the student to perform a successful action though it does not necessarily help them to describe and identify the origins of those feelings or sensations.

I agree with neuroscientist Alva Noë when he considers the term ‘tacit’ rather ambiguous and proposes using ‘sensorimotor knowledge’ (Noë 2004: 119), something that brings me closer to the kind of knowledge I assume training practice specifies for the actor. Taking Noë’s argument into account, I further suggest that the structuring of acting knowledge is accomplished not by considering the body as the actor’s instrument (as is often stated) but rather I believe that the sensorimotor knowledge the student gains is in intimate relation to the stage itself (her instrument) and that teaching acting should better reflect this interaction.

On the other hand, could a feeling of acting right or wrong ever be identified? In the creative act there is no such clear pre-arranged goals as for example a sweet spot in hitting a tennis ball or keeping balance in riding a bicycle. The artist essentially depends on, psychologist Csikszentmihalyi suggests, 'a strong sense of what she intends to do' and a set of 'internalized criteria' or inner guidelines that are somehow built in the person (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 55, 56). In order to tease out those guiding principles (or feelings) and inner criteria that are being both practised and researched here, I need to start briefly by revisiting how this feeling of acting is explained by the two primary sources of my practice.

Sources of practice

For Michael Chekhov artistic inspiration is the ultimate goal in acting and it happens when the imagination is at play. In a state of inspiration – when the actor is fully engaged with her work – there is a feeling of creative flow and artistic freedom. The actor is at the same time attending to the task and demands on stage and keeping a continuous sense of improvising, which encompasses 'a new and gratifying sensation of complete confidence in yourself, along with the sensation of freedom and inner richness' (Chekhov 1953: 40-41). I relate these sensations, as well as many other descriptions Chekhov makes on being inspired, to what psychologist Csikszentmihalyi has identified as the concept of 'flow' or 'effortless movement' – an optimal state that happens when people most enjoy themselves, are fully involved in what they are doing and cannot but keep on doing it (Csikszentmihalyi

1990: 54, 4). On the other hand, this creativity and flow that happens in the state of inspiration is ingrained, following Chekhov, in a firm 'sense of a whole' or anticipation that besieges the actor, his body, mind, self and spirit just before the moment of doing.³ Chekhov's views on acting direct my attention then to the kind of knowledge that is in the Creative Imagination (1953: 22) where he locates the actor's inspiration, and focus my research on those feelings and sensations that make the actor consider herself a "creative" being on stage and the role of the imagination in reaching such feeling state.

The work itself presupposes an intuitive relationship to the world; one that is opposed to a rational clinch to reality and that is conceived as 'a higher form of cognition' (Ashperger 2008: 48). This is, for Chekhov, the only kind of knowledge able to foster in the actor an *artistic* technique and that materialises itself through the personal relationship an actor establishes to her images. According to Ashperger, Chekhov's spirituality becomes 'ordinary', translucent at class, as far as it entails (both from the teacher and the student) an acceptance and openness towards such supersensitive and intangible dimension of inner experiences as well as the reliability on one's intuitive knowledge to come to terms with it: 'This requires a willingness to take away supremacy of the intellect and quantitative knowledge and give equal validity to experience and qualitative knowledge' (73).

What I miss from Ashperger's remarks as well as from other teachers of Chekhov's technique is how to explain, facilitate and ensure such a (Chekhovian) perspective through the learning of the staging process. What are the terms through which that 'equal validity' is established? How can these opposing knowledge(s) be negotiated in the here and now of the

performance? How is the acting explained without ultimately having to be partial to the enmity between the objective and the subjective, the 'what' and the 'how', the rational and the intuitive, the scientific and the arts? These questions may become overtly exposed when there is no character, logical narrative or text to guide, play or hold onto during the acting process and the making of the performance. If everything consists in relying on one's intuition and trust in the self-development of inner criteria, there is still a need to question how that intuition and criteria are being formed and may grow in one's inner awareness and outer verification, i.e. how an actor learns how her movements and actions look like and become adequate to the context in which she performs.

Sensitising the actor to the scope of movement and response she can make starts by developing an extra-quotidian mode of listening and responding to the body. In *The Michael Chekhov Handbook*, master teacher Lenard Petit conceives the 'life-body' as an objective and differentiated body; an 'elusive and intangible force' that needs to be named somehow. The life-body is an imaginary, invisible and empowered body whereby an actor is able to locate her imagination in the muscles, and wherein she experiences the imagination as a 'connection to pure energy' (18-19). The actor appeals to her life-body in order to feel the impulses, sensations and images in terms of energy. Energy is considered both a dynamic principle and an embodied quality that can be displayed and shaped. The life-body is then a conduit for energy, and creativity is found in how energy manifests through the shape of the actor's body. According to Petit, it is not the physical body that the actor changes, but the energy of the life-body that can be transformed (77). This lived or energetic body gives the actor a chance of radiating or moving beyond his

physicality. The imagination lives, Petit concludes, in the muscles of the actor's life-body, and that lived body is meant to provide the actor with an experience of her psychophysical imagination.

Looking at Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical training, I may say that the feeling of acting is a feeling of being fully present in the action on the moment of performance, whereby the energy, focus and awareness of an actor are deployed. Furthermore, it is the practice itself of sensorimotor awareness, appreciation and adjustment that happens while acting that shapes the actor's tacit knowledge. The nature of the acting process is located in this liminal space between anticipation and adaptation, which is also the area that delineates Zarrilli's argument around intuition. Zarrilli describes intuition as the 'skilled ability to deploy kinaesthetic/bodymind 'knowledge' in the 'flow' of the moment, a kind of 'practical professional' knowledge' (2001: 44). Intuition applies to the practice of martial arts as much as to the theatre craft, since it is its continuous adaptation that characterises the relationship between who does and what is done. 'Tactical adjustments *along the way*' (2001: 43. Italics in the original) distinguishes any kind of activity that ultimately depends on its skilful repetition to become an art. Actor training is a long term process of commitment to a set of disciplines, techniques or exercises which are repeated in order to achieve a certain degree of proficiency, a solid practice and ultimately such a tactical professional knowledge. Through training the actor defines her practice and eventually constructs her identity as performer.

During the 80's and 90's, intercultural discourses coming from several sources and practitioners became prominent in contemporary Western theatre. Western approaches to Eastern paradigms of theatre and acting were brought to the fore not without controversy: undue appropriation,

simplification or mystification. Phillip Zarrilli's approach circumscribes within such delicate discourses trying to inform performance practice beyond a distinctive psychological interpretation of the actor's process that prevailed in Western theatre practice since Stanislavski:

I argue here that the psychological is no longer - if it ever was - a paradigm with sufficient explanatory and/or practical power and flexibility to fully inform the complexities of the work of the contemporary actor. (Zarrilli 2009: 8).

Zarrilli's move into the performer's psychophysical disposition looks for the intrinsic meaning of the action, so to speak, to come through the actors' use of their body, energy and scenic action. Regarding pedagogical models for their education, his Asian martial arts perspective on the physiology of acting encourages a new practice and meaning of "being a body", "the body-in-performance" and "becoming an actor". On the other hand, this intercultural approach to actor training also shares with Eugenio Barba the idea of 'learning to learn'.⁴ In both the performance and the learning processes a same principle of the body being or becoming is shared. The scenic behaviour as an extra-daily manifestation of the body is not being trained toward its conclusion but rather in and for its process of becoming. What the training provides is the discernment, not of a final doing, but of one's way to attaining it. In this concern, training becomes a preliminary work for the actor in which the theory of learning becomes a theory of acting.

He is, also, in 'training the awareness of the psychophysical bodymind', evoking a theory of learning. This theory is, for Zarrilli, centred on the counterpoint for an actor between interiority and exteriority. The central premise of this theory of learning seems to be this: actors learn best (and perform best) when the pathway between interiority and exteriority is clear and open. (Creely 2010: 226)

It is also my concern to understand in practice what I mean by the “spiritual wisdom” embedded in traditional Eastern practices such as hatha yoga, *taiqiquan* and *kalaripayattu* (a Chinese and a South Indian martial art) that configure Zarrilli’s approach to bodymind training. How might “these knowledge(s)” be transferred into contemporary actor training, and therefore how Michael Chekhov’s concerns might be considered in a larger context (Ashperger 2008: 53). In doing so, I am also interested in further discussion of how phenomenological views on the process of imagination in acting could further inform Chekhov’s techniques of characterisation and their current application. Concentration, transformation and awareness are fundamental processes which concerns both bodymind training through Eastern practices and Michael Chekhov’s acting and characterization and which, according to my experience and those of my students, may enable the actor today to inform, make sense of and embody that *certain type* of knowledge that is required for her professional practice.

RESAD’s physical theatre branch

Official drama schools in Spain are the primary institutions dedicated to the education of theatre practitioners with government support and organisation. Since its inception in 1942, the *Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Madrid* has been one of the most prominent places where professional actors can receive training in Spain. Alike in music and dance, drama schools today still advance an approach, mentality and social function inherited from the conservatory systems and mentality of the past. Today they are structured

through minimum requirements dictated by the law that provide for certain standards for building premises, entrance requirements for students, specific requirements for the hiring of teachers (i.e. specialised teachers for specific subjects), the pre-established courses and curricula of studies for each area, the ratio of students, and the criteria for evaluation, grading and awarding degrees.

RESAD's primary objective is the theatre practitioner's – actor, director, playwright or scenographer – intellectual and technical preparation in the speciality area they are studying during four academic years. As an official institution RESAD does not organise itself around only one school of thought or practice in its approach to theatre; however, two main paradigms of acting pervade in the configuration of its acting studies: *Interpretación Textual* (text-based approach to acting) and *Interpretación Gestual* (movement-based approach to acting). Acting students can choose since 1992 between these two branches defined by law as possible career paths.⁵

Acting is the most popular speciality in the RESAD, with approximately half of the total number of students (around 190 of 380) enrolled in one of these two acting branches. Less than a third of the total acting students enrol in the gestural theatre option, which from its origins has been linked to RESAD's Movement Department. The text-based theatre branch, dependent upon the Acting Department, accounts for around 36 students who are selected from approximately 500 applicants, and afterwards divided into two groups of 18 students each. Within the movement-based theatre branch, one group of 12-14 students is selected from around 70 applications every year. This lower ratio has been defended by the teachers in the Movement Department for their specificity on the delicate process of physical awareness that is

intended and the precision that movement subjects demand from the student in order to ensure high levels and minimum risks in learning a physical practice (acting, acrobatics, corporeal expression, fencing...) where it becomes on many occasions a one-to-one process. From the beginning of their studies all acting students are placed in a group with which they will remain throughout their four years of study.

Even though students have gone through a difficult and competitive selection process before entering RESAD, it does not guarantee homogeneity in the groups. Neither is it expected, at least not in the gestural branch. The students' backgrounds and previous experience can and in fact does vary notably. In general terms, even with some acting or movement experience, at the beginning the student's knowledge and assumptions about what they will be doing in the so-called "gestural theatre branch" is still not very clear. Once inside, physical activity becomes clearly specific and becomes highly demanding. More than 55% of their total classes are going to be based on individual and/or group practice: Acrobatics, Corporeal Expression, Dance, Fencing, Mime and Pantomime, Oral Expression, Vocal Technique, Speech, Chant, Music and Acting. Another set of subjects is rather theoretical: Dramatic Literature, Theatre History, Art Theory and History, and Dramaturgy. Practice and theory combine in subjects like Make-Up and Costume that complete these studies.

Interpretación Gestual is the main subject within the speciality. It covers almost 20% of the teaching hours of the total four years. Rehearsal time throughout the year is not included in this account, which may add up to 40% of their total time. At the time of this research the subject of *Interpretación Gestual* was divided in two modules, *I and II*, each one covering a full

academic year. *Interpretación Gestual I* (in second year) offered the students a first encounter with the basic material, establishing a general knowledge and practice within a physical approach to theatre that, as previously mentioned, is normally scarcely known or practised. The core practice of this research – the development of a comprehensive teaching programme on the speciality throughout one academic year – is inscribed in this first module. *Interpretación Gestual II*, on the other side, represents a second year in the students' option (a third in their studies) and it will be dedicated to learning/practising concrete approaches within movement-based acting approaches, focuses on one or two full productions where the students delve into character composition, a particular style or genre.

During their final year, all acting students in the RESAD are involved in a last production within the speciality they have chosen. During the period of my research (2003-2006) it was a relatively free project that the students of either speciality elaborated in groups gathering around similar interests within an area, play or theme. Acting students independently of their branch were free to explore any approach to theatre or project they would like. The respective departments were in charge of evaluating and setting the criteria by which the students are marked for this final degree project. My third and last project of *Asfixia* was born and later evolved from this final degree moment of a group of 6 text-based acting students.

Pedagogical circumstances

There are two concerns that are pertinent to the development of the practice

in this research. One concern is the relationship of my practice with the Acting Department, and second, the relationship and specific orientation within the Movement Department.

Acting teachers in each branch (text and gesture) belong to different departments – Acting and Movement – and articulate their programmes independently. This is meant to promote their independent approach to an actor training within the school. The differences between the acting programmes of both departments, besides their years of existence and the theatre traditions in which they are based, lay in their conception of theatre-making and acting, their focus on mainstream or alternative visions of theatre practice, methods and settings of training.

In the text-based theatre branch a general programme is designed for the four years along a continuum within a similar concept of acting and approach to an actor's education. Predominantly acting teachers in this department conform to a psychological paradigm, which has defined the actor and her education within the school since almost its inception. This is an acting approach derived from the Stanislavski's system and Method acting that has prevailed in drama schools curricula all over Spain until recently. Mainly, the focus on these programmes is on the psychological interpretation of classical and contemporary texts, the representation of the characters and the narrative logic of the play, and comprehension and development of the student through the study of the organic unity between self and emotion.

On the contrary, acting programmes in the Movement Department are varied and highly dependent on the professional background of the teacher in charge of each group/year. Still, they all share a common concern in the

reinforcement and preparation of the performers' physical presence, corporeal awareness and scenic movement. Up to now there has not been an established programme for the three years of the acting subject in physical theatre. The considerable number and heterogeneity of teachers and approaches given in the acting classes in the movement branch since it started in 1992 has provided the students with a rich and varied experience. However, bureaucratic conditions and contractual requirements within the school have made it very difficult to come to an agreement about a definitive working structure of the subject of *Interpretación Gestual* within the overall studies in the RESAD. On the other hand, the reality of the branch itself mirrors in some way the instability and changing nature of theatre practice that invades professional acting and training today, where no definitive paradigm can be (does it need to be?) established with certainty. This aspect compels the dialogue and flexibility among the teachers' approaches – a key factor in shaping a functional and coherent option for each group's progress.

When I began to teach at RESAD in 2000 the main lines of work that defined the gestural branch were mostly based in the French mime tradition [See Appendix II: What's in a name?]. Nevertheless, there was also openness towards new orientations and techniques. I was then offered the opportunity to try out a new programme within the subject of *Interpretación Gestual* in the branch of *Teatro del Gesto*. From 2000 to 2006, teachers and professionals coming from the mime schools of Jacques Lecoq and Marcel Marceau, the traditions of *Commedia dell'Arte* and Buffon as well as dance-theatre practices were forging the distinctive range of practices within the department. However, a much-needed debate about the student-actor profile within this branch and the best way to articulate such studies within the

school has yet to take place.

The specific problematic inherent in the RESAD affects and influences the learning process, and therefore the circumstances of my research. Sometimes vague, sometimes opposing definitions of acting pervade the institutional setting and permeate each student's assumptions in relation to her speciality and approach. Any technique and theory of acting aims at an actor's conscious experience of her art; however, their languages are dependent on the conceptual systems to which they belong. Those acting systems and languages in class are therefore immersed in broader paradigms that circumscribe their unique approach to theatre. Nowadays, opening up the students to new paradigms of acting seems to be inevitable in order to better understand what could be a flexible model for an actor's process of becoming. Otherwise the education of an actor may fall prey of either something fanatic and/or radical subjectivism which put at risk the individuality of an actor, easy to be diluted among the multiplicity of methods and approaches to actor training and performance existing today.

My research aims towards a transformation or paradigm shift in theatre practice at the RESAD, while at the same time that provides with specific techniques and a particular orientation towards the physicality of the actor on stage. This fact does not try either to annul or give a definitive response to the idiosyncrasies and necessities of debates concerning the education of the actor within RESAD; rather, it is influenced and contextualised by the reality of the school and the Department. What is necessary, from my perspective, is to further articulate the preparation of the actor that favours a corporeal presence, visual composition and kinaesthetic understanding of the theatrical event. Having said that, the focus and goals of the professional

education of an actor may alternatively rest on any other distinctive features of today's alternative theatrical manifestations in either its dramatic or postdramatic manifestations.

The performance projects

My practice involves planning, implementing and evaluating a teaching programme that helps to develop a model for the education of the physical expression and creativity of the student. None of the participants in the research had previous experience in bodymind training or a clear concept of a structured and demanding process of psychophysical preparation of the imagination for the stage. At the time of this research, it was in the third year that I implemented this teaching programme, and as far as I know, nowhere has anyone ever implemented nor researched the actual integration of these two specific practices before within the context of the RESAD.

The research projects represent three ways of looking at this integration through three different situations in which my teaching was involved. In a certain sense, each project has imposed its own situation, rules and objectives from which to examine this integration within the context of the school and the students. My attempt now is therefore in isolating these conditions and perspectives from which I can look at the practice involved in each situation or moment of practice.

The first and second projects were developed with my regular second-year students during 2004-2005. This group was made up of 9 students, variable

in terms of age, professional maturity, theatre concepts and initial assumptions about theatre and being an actor. The first project (IPs) explores the performative application of the bodymind training made by second-year acting students during the first semester of the academic year and through their own personal staging. These individual projects explore the student's conceptualisation and implication of the psychophysical in the actual process of the performance. The second project (CBA) explores with 7 of these same students Michael Chekhov's techniques of characterisation within a context of non-linear narrative staging using some selected scenes from García Lorca's play *The House of Bernarda Alba* during the second semester. It studies the logic of the Creative Imagination of the actor from a dramatic play and a physical approach to the setting of performance.

The teaching programme is explored through these first two projects taking place within the class during the first and second semester respectively (October-January and February-June). The public presentations of the students' individual projects were due in the first week of February 2005; and the open presentation of the scenes selected from Lorca's play happened in the beginning of June 2005. These two first projects informed connections between the two forms of training in their philosophy and pragmatics, as well as in relation to other subjects within the context of the school.⁶

Asfixia (ASFX), on the other hand, includes the workshops and performances of the final degree project of a group of 6 text-based acting students in a fully devised production, from an original idea to the final presentation of that idea. It explores the symbiosis of both acting paradigms for the making of performance. This third and last project had a different nature, in which both the students and the variables of research were particular to its specific

context. The previous two projects had focused on the implementation of a teaching programme integrating elements from both systems of training, which allowed an understanding of a psychophysical perspective to the work on the imagination. The project of *Asfixia*, on the other hand, focused on the repercussion of such a methodology in approaching acting and theatre-making with a group of 6 students from the text-based theatre branch nearing graduation. The challenge was creating and performing a devised piece for the final degree project with a group of students who were trained in an a priori divergent approach to acting. *Asfixia* represented one possible materialisation of the teaching programme in a production in which neither a dramatic text nor characters were involved at the outset of the process. My inquiry mainly centred on how a new methodology and approach to actor training and performance making was going to be incorporated by the students coming from a rather different training path. The questions this project raised for the students in view of their previous assumptions about acting became the 'outcome' of both practice and research.

Asfixia was further informative at a metatheoretical level, i.e., what is the locus of an actor's education and what disposition is required in order to arrive at certain coherent conclusions that can be directly applied in professional practice? This last project also allowed me to comprehend my study as a superposition of both forms of training or paradigms rather than the fusion of them, a point that will be explained later through my discussion of the project.

The following chapters explore the practicalities and consequences of these three projects in the way the student learns and modulates her thinking of theatre, acting and being an actor. My goal is to represent coherent

correlations on the emerging questions that arise from these three main scenarios of practice regarding the mutuality of the two acting approaches involved and the shift of paradigm that constitutes their practice.

My task through Chapter 2 is to observe how, through specific bodymind training, the student can make a case for the body-in-performance. The tools Zarrilli's training proposes urge the practitioner to embody an energetic perspective on acting process. The clarity of such a vision will be also intimately responsible for (as much as dependent on) those tools becoming operative throughout the process. This exploration is developed through the student's attentiveness to the concepts of breathing, energy and the bodymind and their experience of actualising them in performance through their Individual Projects.

Chapter 3 aims to further develop such an account through the students' learning process of Michael Chekhov's techniques and theories of acting. It aims to clarify the relationship and connections between the previous tools acquired through bodymind training and Chekhov's theory-in-practice that prioritises the use of the imagination in acting and performance. To accomplish this I study the terms in which the psychophysical process of the imagination is explained through Chekhov's main techniques – Atmospheres, Imaginary Body and Psychological Gesture – and how it can be related to the performance process as it has been already introduced to the students.

In Chapter 4 I observe how the integration of these two experiences in the physical and intellectual realms for the actors violates or problematises the prevalent paradigm of acting that is supported by the curricula in Spanish drama schools. Under the prevailing paradigm, actor training is articulated as

the psycho-technical preparation of the student and based on the reaffirmation of an either intentional and/or emotional private coherence or the personal self (Hornby 1992: 60).

A final chapter displays the conclusions of this inquiry in terms of the pedagogical consequences of this shift of paradigm in our acting practice. Conclusions involve the re-evaluation of psychophysical training and preparation of an actor in Spanish drama schools in order to further develop a model for the education of the performer's corporeal expression and creativity in the syllabus for the branch of *Interpretación Gestual*. It aims to assist me in meeting some demands uncovered during my first years of teaching experience in the RESAD: a reconsideration of actor's psychophysical education under a flexible and comprehensive paradigm of acting; the necessity of a fertile ground of practice and solid theory for clarifying various approaches to acting in physical theatre; and a re-evaluation of the syllabus, content and methodology used to teach acting in Spanish Drama Schools.

So although there are no definitive conclusions, it is the process of reflection itself that may help to clarify the perspective adopted in tackling these issues. There is not only a concrete focus of this research that aims at eliciting the tacit/sensorimotor knowledge of the students but also an over-arching goal of aiming to satisfy the demands of the creative work involved in contemporary physical theatre practice through their education in the RESAD.

CHAPTER 2: TRAINING THE BODYMIND

The teaching programme that underpins this research is an attempt to enable the students to search for an individual technique which helps them to increase their physical presence and their commitment “to being” on stage. The physical disciplines and techniques that are involved focus mainly on the interiority of the performer both as individual and as artist, after the assumption that the actor is more creator than interpreter and that training is essential not only for the education of her physical as well as mental and emotional responses (Callery 2001: 4), but also for doing it in relation to the construction of meaning that derive from them.

During the first term each class consist of approximately an hour and a half of training followed by structured improvisations. Without seeking out dramatic formulae, these improvisations provide the adequate context for growing an awareness of the performativity of and in the body, exploring its own psychophysical principles, reassuring perception and one’s inner reason for being on stage. It will reinforce the corporeal awareness and type of commitment required for the performing body to operate. The training, improvisations and individual projects are conceived as either and both the physiological and psychological preparation for the student’s work on Bernarda Alba’s project which will take place in the following term.

The individual project assignment is given on the first day of class as it develops over the whole four-month period. The students design and develop a ten-minute piece which involves concepts, principles, and processes from the training. The last month is left aside for staging the projects. Then, I relegate my function to being an outside observer and guide the students along in their way of absorbing and adapting what they have acquired through the training. Students concentrate not directly on the technique, but on questions related to 'what to do with the technique and to what ends, what meaning to give it' (Barba 2000: 26).

Creative processes are different among the students according to their previous experience and education, which vary considerably. The artistic interests and needs of each student are also taken into account. Although the projects are individual, the actual work is collaborative; the students participate in each other's project, as performers, stagehands and/or observers. They are also free to apply any other knowledge, approaches to performance, any other class-work or workshops they are doing or have done. In a way they are left to their own devices and must manage alone during this period in which they begin to consolidate a vast array of experiences: 'This is the transitional phase in which discursive knowledge must become active knowledge, capable of changing, adapting itself and interacting with the context.' (Barba: Ibid.)

The DVD in this section examines aspects related to the personal embodiment and connection of the training and its relationship to performing, considering the doubts and questions that the students face throughout this period; mainly, how these aspects affect their understanding of theatre and the actor. The tutorials were recorded in December 2004, at a time when the

students already had some experience in the training to draw from in order to give shape to their final pieces. The quotes are extracted from their final portfolios, diaries entries and/or reflections during the classes.

2.1. EXPERIENCING BREATHING, ENERGY AND THE BODYMIND

[DVD1-IPs-Bodymind training]

Significance of breathing

Training starts and ends with the breath. Breathing opens the channel by which body and mind start to speak to each other. The body is ready, open and available... Nothing now. A gesture, an image, a different body will be there later. Let it happen. [DVD-IPs-training]

‘Breathing’, ‘energy’ and ‘bodymind’ refer to concepts rooted in Eastern cultural contexts and practices, rather specific to the martial arts disciplines involved in the training: *yoga*, *taiqiquan* and *kalarippayattu*. They are concepts for mapping both the student’s understanding of the training as well as the subsequent implications in the imagining process. The term ‘bodymind’ – ‘a compound which refers to the simultaneous presence of both body-aspect and mind-aspect in all experience’ (Shaner, in Zarrilli 1993: 12) – attempts to surpass a dualist understanding of practice and language usage and refers to the indivisible unity of form and content. As a gestalt, the bodymind will be also ultimately responsible for transcending the actor’s dichotomy between meaning and representation (Zarrilli 2009: 50).

Zarrilli’s work invites us to reconsider the “psychological”, proposing a process of inquiry through bodymind training. The psychological side in the compound psycho-physical is re-interpreted as ‘the actor’s complete engagement of her energy, sensory awareness, and perception-in-action in the moment’ (2009: 21). Focus, energy, and awareness become those pre-

performative aspects of the work through which the student starts to embody the practice of both training and performing (103). The first learning principle the student is confronted with is that of exploring the bodymind as her own working hypothesis versus accomplishing it as a given statement. The learning process of the bodymind starts with the breath.

Movement and/or voice education within the RESAD focuses on the physiological aspects of breathing, in the development and application of specific exercises directed to either 'make students aware of such process, opening up respiratory capacity and lung ventilation, or in order to correct anomalies and facilitate breath control while moving, whether it is for adapting movement, relaxation or the emission of sound' (Schinca 1988: 26-27). Within the context of an acting class, these exercises or practices can be more or less integrated in the acting exercises, rehearsals and performance. However, they normally do not focus on the students' awareness of some underlying connections that may be prompted by an assiduous attentiveness to the breath while training and performing and upon which an actor's education may as well be adapted. The implications and outcomes that appear through an active engagement of the actor with breathing are not only concerned with direct and conscious exercising of respiration to improve muscular and physical response.

From my experience "to breathe" in terms of the training means to inhabit an unknown place far from one's daily experience and awareness, a new knowledge/experience of one's body in its relation to mind or one's mind within the body. It is a daily play in the space between body and mind that I need to activate both for acting and for teaching. Breathing is a natural process, a physiological function, that may also be embodied either as a

concept, a process or a technique, and that definitively broadens its meaning and significance by assiduous training. Attention to breathing through practice is paramount due to its physiological implications of the whole body but especially for its ability to enhance and inhabit the 'space in between' the body and the mind. Once activated the body enters in an accomplished state of being at work or, as Zarrilli suggests, 'at play' (2009: 99).

The first contact with the training is being completely involved in what you are doing at the moment. Through the yoga breathing exercises the breath takes a relevant position because your attention focuses on the inhalation and the exhalation as you do a physical activity. For the project, I followed some of our class improvisations, generating first the desire of carrying out an action and then exhaling in the moment of its execution; and taking into account, as we did in the training, [sensing] both the space above my head and the rooting of the feet into the ground as if through this space below my feet and above my head the excessive tension of my body could be released. It allowed my body to be quiet and for me to be centred only in the movement. For that, as I said before, the moment of exhalation was crucial as it also was to have a clear focus point. It was as if my body and focus were a consequence of exhalation. (Sonia de Martín, IPs portfolio)⁷

It is also important for the students to sense that energy and awareness can be generated, 'can be moved and shaped' (Zarrilli 2009: 86), and to have the feeling of when and how it happens through the breath. The energy – 'its movement within' (Zarrilli: Ibid.) or 'internal dynamic' (Huston 1992: 20) – *can* be deployed and irradiated outwards to the surrounding space. Eventually, the breath brings the student closer to understanding how they can enter the relationship with the environment (stage) and with the doing (acting) becoming thereby more flexible in their thought and practice:

The first thing I do is a mental revision of the fundamental concepts that we worked on in the training - awareness of the soles of the feet, breath,

external visual focus, centre, space over my head, energy projection, allowing the tension to go away. I search for an extra-quotidian body, that is not Julia who is inside the bubble. I inhabit another body. I put on a new dress. How does this being move from inside there? (Julia Moyano, IPs Portfolio)⁸

This significance of breathing is apprehended because direct implications are continuously made explicit while training. Later on, during the improvisations these connections will be made further clear. Throughout the training the attention to the breath changes slightly. Sometimes it is more obvious. Other times it is implicit in the execution of an exercise or sequence. However, its main function as foundation of the bodymind, inner energy and/or performing body soon becomes relevant. Exploring deep breathing through the training sequences means engaging with the experience of the breath when the body is either ready to move or still, and with the sensations that are awakened from this inner or subtle body. It is also something the students may not be familiar with [see Julián Ortega's tutorial in DVD1-IPs-bodymind training-yoga & taiqiquan]. The movement or the pause becomes the breathing, as breathing becomes a movement or a pause. The bodymind is then thought of and sensed as a gestalt, without inner/outer division. Experiencing one's bodymind as a unitary phenomenon within which form participates in content and content is implicit in the feeling of the form, becomes one with the feeling of breathing. Lara Cobos, as example, reports that 'in training the breath, a moment comes where form and breathing becomes one sole thing that is part of me and for which there is no need to wait'. In her later performance project this rigorous attention became crucial for controlling her expression – 'I did not allow the breath to go wherever it wanted, I compelled myself so that breath and form become one.' (Lara Cobos, IPs portfolio)⁹ [See DVD1-IPs-Performance Projects-Imagina]

One main accomplishment in the training of the breath is the development of a simultaneous internal and external focus that strengthens the connection or full presence in the action through the movement and score. This accomplishment plays an important role in becoming an independent and skilful practitioner. Thus, the students begin to realise how their own sensations articulate through (and are being articulated by) the external form or movement. The breath as implicated in this process of sensitisation properly activates and controls one's energy while embodying the form as well as becomes crucial in discerning one's bodymind actualisation as mediator of what is being actualised through the outer form. Students explore through the breathing the 'inter-subjective relationship' (Zarrilli 2009:85) that happens when the bodymind actualises and realise their chances of creation and re-creation within the reality of the performance. They begin to learn about their body not as an instrument or an object, but as an agent. From this state of being-by-creating and creating-by-being through the score and with the audience, the body incorporates the work with images and Chekhov's concept of the "psychological" in the psychophysical compound. Under such assumption the responsibility of the actor is not in the interpretation, representation or illustration of the meaning of an action but in inhabiting the space in-between; that is, in the creation in all senses of the action. The individual creativity and identity of an actor could be located in this play of inter-subjectivities.

Spatial awareness

Through the yoga sequence attention to inhalation and exhalation during the stretches develops a special kind of awareness of (or relationship to) the body *in* the space by means of following the breath with an “inner eye” while still keeping one’s “external eye” focused outside. During pauses outer activity or visible movement is absent; however, one is simultaneously still and active by keeping awareness on the passing of breath through the body and the space. The gaze may be fixed on the spot ahead; shifting according to the exercises (from the wall, to the body, to the floor or ceiling); or following a trajectory through the space (‘travelling focus’), but is always part of one’s awareness. As much as the hips are a wheel for the control of the body’s movement (both in *Taiqiquan* and *Kalarippayattu*), the gaze is of enormous importance for it defines where your focus is as much as controls the spectator’s attention. Hips and gaze are essential “muscles” for the actor and need to be trained and controlled through these sequences and the score.

Fixing the external eye on a spot ahead doesn’t mean over-focusing but instead implies being aware of others and the space around – keeping also a ‘soft focus’ or ‘peripheral awareness’:

What was hard to me was to keep a fixed point. You said to us: “look at a fixed point and do nothing. Do nothing.” I get wrapped up in it and, of course, that was not the point. [...] I was totally “there”, abstracted in a spot, like meditating on such a fixed point and consequently I was not “here”, active. I didn’t get it. I got it later, afterward: when I am active and when I am just staring. After school I went into contact improvisation classes and they said the same thing to me. Still in the training we are doing now I sometimes realise that I kinda go there and whenever that happens I break it. Because I notice how I lose life, how I get hooked on

something and I'm not reacting. (Cristina Cerezo, personal interview)¹⁰

Keeping the inner eye on the breath means listening to the breath's corporeal journey through the body and beyond through the space and to the point ahead. Keeping the external eye on a spot ahead, looking, impedes dispersing the outer attention by getting lost in one's inner sensations or spacing out. This balance of our sense of sight and feelings is basic for developing focus and relating to space. Focus is always in relation to time and space. Time and space materialise in one's focus. To be "in focus" is for an actor to realise through her body a complete engagement to the action at hand and to feel that her physical body and subtle or inner body are involved in a same direction right in this moment and place:

The English word "focus" does not do justice to the actor's fully embodied engagement in this psychophysical action. The actor is not looking at something and bringing his eyes into focus in a scientific sense; rather, looking is a manifestation of a fully embodied inner state of engagement. (Zarrilli 2009: 78)

Breathing in focus makes the student recognise and establish through her body the feeling of being in relation to space – i.e. a meaning of inhabiting the space. When an actor is at work and enters the stage she is embodying the self not in psychological terms such as "me and my circumstances", but rather in terms of "me and my space".¹¹ Such is the meaning and value of being focused in practice.

Residual awareness

Over time the student is able to remain in focus even though the external

gaze is not directly set on the spot ahead. The connection, energy or 'intension'¹² (Fabio Mangolini, in Garre 2009: 75) of one's concentration is kept and felt through the body even though the actor may be looking in different directions while doing a sequence of actions.¹³ This inner link or sensorimotor memory helps the student to identify and play with the idea of 'residual awareness': 'a trace, resonance and/or feel of' being kinaesthetically and energetically connected through a chain of movements that makes a form (Zarrilli 2009: 91). When following the journey of the breath through the physical actions that articulate a sequence or score, the student negotiates her knowing-how to connect one moment to the next through her awareness, and eventually learns to 'weave together psychophysical tasks and actions into a set of connected sensory relationships' (Zarrilli 2009: 104).

As they make use of their 'residual awareness', students learn the ability to have an open, multi-layered disposition of awareness. In practice, developing this capability of attending to two or more things at the same time while still keeping one's inner commitment with what the body is doing is not so straight forward. It is neither easy to recognise in performance how the priority of one's awareness changes and moulds according to evolving circumstances, as explained by one student:

This [residual awareness] reappeared in the second semester during *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. I found that it was particularly helpful when I had to leave the scene after my character [Poncia] had an encounter-clash with Adela. I had to leave withholding all that had happened, conscious of leaving something behind, but without telling [illustrating] it. I achieved that through breathing such a moment, turning back and starting to walk, concentrating on my body's attention where she had left the room, even though I was going in the opposite direction. (Violeta Gil,

Energy

Kalarippayattu together with *taiqiquan* are martial arts recycled, so to speak, for actor training because of their potential to enrich and cultivate a meditative state – an active state of heightened awareness – required by an actor in situation of performance. They ground the location for the students' psycho-spiritual experiences, which ultimately refers to a personal mode of living through and explaining the inner connections between the feelings of the body, the state of mind, and the perception of space and time that occurs in such specific moment of performance and/or encounter with an audience.

The attention to inner sensations has nothing to do with the personal feelings or moods which one may manifest through facial or bodily outer expression, as much as energy has nothing to do with muscular exertion. Although these two aspects of practice – force and energy or personal feelings and inner sensations – overlap at the beginning of the student's practice, it does not take long to make the student aware and sensitive to this distinction as one develops an attitude towards the different use and quality of the energy through the sequences.¹⁵ In my experience, the difficulty is to sustain the necessary concentration over time and to discern this same "quality" while acting. Time and on-going training are needed to perceive (embody) the distinction between energy and strength as factual categories of experience rather than abstract categorical theories.

Energy may be voluntarily trained and generated by the use of opposing forces, retaining impulses, or exercising endurance. Students are able to perceive energy as palpable when educated in its nuances. To discern energy both in oneself and the others means to know-how to embody it. The principle of 'enactive perception' (Noë 2004) may explain how what one perceives is in correspondence with what one does and knows-how to do, this is, perception is considered an active and relational process in which the perceiver enacts or acts out his own possibilities of perceiving according to what he is able and ready to do (Noë 2004). In this view sensations and therefore energy are neither pure nor independent from both a conceptual and sensorimotor understanding of them.

The shape and feel of a practice are not derived from or intrinsic to the sensations per se, but rather are gained from what becomes an implicit sensory, embodied knowledge of the organization and structure of sensation-in-action. (Zarrilli 2009: 48).

On the other hand, according to principles of physics, energy is something that exists and manifests. It is not created nor disappears, it only transforms. Until the moment of death the body is energy. As dormant, latent or scarce as it may seem energy is capable of being activated and transformed (modulated) in different manifestations (modes and types) through the actor's body and movement. It may be strong or soft, opening or closing, direct or sudden, active or passive... Each student thinks of her energy by noticing her actual experiences, feeling awareness, and types of sensations it awakens in the moment of doing.

I used the awareness on the soles of the feet; the exercise "up when I go up" and the type of energy we manage in the Kalaripayattu - the idea of an energy that is not cut, that is dynamic and precise, that even when you are still you continue projecting without blocking the energy's

own inertia, and which then you use for the next impulse -; the opposition of energy going upwards and another one going downwards through the soles of the feet; the play with opposites. (Julia Moyano, IPs portfolio)¹⁶

Dynamic breathing

Through the *kalaripayattu* sequences, poses or kicks there is not such an explicit attention given to the process of deep breathing, but it is the doing of the sequence that impels an implicit and continuous awareness of abdominal breathing. This is done only through the nose, maintaining the alignment of the spine and the movement's support at the hip zone during the execution of the sequences. Deep, continuous and abdominal breathing builds inner tension and so energy circulates through the body. Like in the *taiqi* sequence, the generating, channelling and controlling of one's energy is firmly supported by managing an abdominal connection to the breath throughout the duration of the sequence. The best example for approaching the peculiarity of *kalaripayattu* breathing is the *vanakkam* sequence.¹⁷ This specific sequence is first assimilated through the coordination of movement and breath before it is done a second time through; this is what Zarrilli calls at work 'continuous dynamic support'.

The first time the sequence is done it is slow, accompanying the inhalation and exhalation with each movement and paying special attention to the transition moments or endings of each half breath-movement. This is when the connection with what you are doing is most dangerously at stake. A similar use of the breath and its reciprocity with the movement, form and

totality is found in the *taiqi* sequence, however the quality of the movement in the *vanakkam* is not felt as a continuous circular flow, but instead as demanding a more linear and direct use of energy and sharpness in the movement. This distinction in the quality of the energy is further evidenced when one shifts her attention to breathing during the sequence's performance with dynamic support. Movement becomes faster as the attention is not now in the active and conscious harmony between each movement section and each half breath. The precision, continuity and transitions become the students' primary locus of attention and challenge. They loosen their previously established relationship with the sequence through the breath and initiate a freer one. Movements are felt as being lighter, as one releases the need to keep primary attention on the breath. Speed is allowed inasmuch as precision is required to fully embody the sequence; a precision that depends on the student's feelings and awareness of her centre, ground, space, and alignment.

At this point, breathing ideally becomes a natural embodied process. It may not follow the same timing and placing that it had the first time, but with further practice the student awakens to the experience of flowing through the sequence, and to the sensations and modulation of her energy throughout. The student distinguishes *when* the body is ahead of the action and *when* it is one with it, flowing, not rushing. She further learns how speed and precision are the two sides of the same coin: precision and completion allow her to embody the score, to circulate the energy and to enjoy the freedom within. Fast and slow become something that depends on precision and completion of each gesture and not on an end-gained velocity.

everything [while training] served to give continuity to what we did on

stage, so it was not a combination of isolated moments but a totality. The same happened in the *vanakkam*, where the execution of the movement, the beginning, middle and end of each movement, was important in order to reach the necessary precision of the movements. Once the score is fixed, this will allow us to enjoy spontaneity. (Elmano, IPs portfolio)¹⁸

During the *meippayattu* sequences (kicks and combinations of poses, jumps and turns) this second type of implicit breathing or dynamic support takes over the attention of the student. Awareness during *kalarippayattu* (except for what has been commented on the *vanakkam*) is not overtly on breathing; rather, it is more specifically on one's control and manipulation of energy, and/or how the process of energy becomes alive for the actor's experience - what Zarrilli refers to as the presence of energy-in-the-breath or a *ki-energy* sensitive actor.

The quality of energy

As students progress through the training, the contrast in the quality of energies in these disciplines helps them to begin to understand the potentially rich expressive possibilities open to them through embodied processes of work. (Zarrilli 2009: 29)

This first conscious and active, even intrusive, attention to breathing evolves during the training sessions, and gradually diminishes in time as its relation to energy is being forged. The compound breath-energy circulates through the body awaiting to be eventually discovered and attuned to by the students' awareness of their centre and alignment: the opposition between the pull of gravity and the verticality of the spine, the simultaneous awareness of the

soles of the feet and the top of the head, the straightened spine and the slightly bent knees, the external focus or spot ahead and the inner eye at lower abdomen or *dantian*, where everything departs and returns to.

The breath's connection to energy is first apprehended through the *taiqi* in a qualitative mode. A quality is added on the movement-breath coordination since the *taiqi* sequence evolves slowly through a continuous flow of circular-felt soft moves of energy.

Thinking on the type of energy used in the warm-up during the yoga exercises and T'ai Chi Ch'uan sequence helped me. They are softer, breathed in movements. My impression is that they are denser movements. That gave me a special quality of movement, a kind of soft twist [...] a sensation of play, comfort and stability. (Julia Moyano, IPs portfolio)¹⁹

By keeping one's attention on the lower *dantian*, the student works through the sequence from a stage of deep breathing awareness and centring towards connecting breath to energy by attending to the living impulses within the body. The Japanese notion of *jo-ha-kyu* (Zeami, in Oida 1992: 62; Barba 1991: 214; Zarrilli 2009: 152) implies an alternative way of thinking with the body the completion of both movement and breath. During the sequence the student first becomes aware of the impulse, how the energy accumulates in the body through a moment of anticipation (*jo*); energy is then released (*ha*) as it evolves through the movement until the final part of the gesture becomes embodied and fulfilled in a complete ending; that ending contains in itself both a feeling of accomplishment and a state of readiness capable to take you and your movement elsewhere (*kyu*). The notion of the *jo-ha-kyu* is in itself a way of experiencing movement that leads the student towards a relationship with the doing based on feeling the energy within

rather than intellectualising or memorising the external form of the movement or the action. In this way breathing trains and provides the body with a sense (feeling) of completion and rhythm in the body, thanks to its connection to movement energy and dynamics.²⁰

I have found that for students, as well as for myself, understanding the evolution of a movement from its beginning, through its middle and to the end in terms of accumulation, delivery and retention of energy is useful and practical for maintaining the continuity; and not only of the physical movements, but also and mainly of one's inner connection to them. This idea understands the completion of an action on an operational – energetic – level that allows the student to go beyond the result-logic of the movement and look into how the process of the movement or gesture is coming. Similarly Chekhov reports that:

There are two kinds of pause – the pause which comes before something happens and the pause which comes afterward. There is never a pause which means nothing. When you have a pause, you must always be conscious that something will be done or that something has been done. If you will train yourself in this way, you will get accustomed to find always instinctively the right place for the pause. Your pause will always be very significant if you train yourself to meditate, to be aware that a pause is something that comes before or after some happening. The pause must always be the result of something, or it should be just before something. Without the feeling of the *whole*, the pause has no significance. (Chekhov 2000: 43. Italics in the original)²¹

Acting intuition

Eventually deep, rhythmical and relaxed breathing is developed freely,

without the mental effort that the students usually report after initial sessions of training. The breath is sustained through the abdominal region and implicates, as already seen, the whole body as much as the body relation to the space around. The students increase their breathing capabilities in terms of capacity, endurance and control; as well as their full awareness through inhalation, exhalation and especially the two brief pauses in between. These key pauses are short moments of learning “how to do nothing” however essential in order to live through the action, its continuity and flow. These are also moments where the body experiences how everything done before may be tied together, as well as the sense that what is coming after is ready to begin (Zeami, in Zarrilli 2009: 90). Zarrilli suggests the actor ‘inhabits the space between’ (Zarrilli: Ibid.), the cusp of breathing, as the germ of creativity, as the place of nothingness, the time of void, when the body becomes all intuition, this is, all possibility. It gives a chance for an impulse to be rooted in the bodymind rather than the time for an intention to arise in the self (Zarrilli 2009: 87). Such is the location for the creative or acting intuition:

the creative intuition springs forth from the base of the unconscious process, thrusting the self into motion. As inspiration, intuition acts out of the base layer of the body-mind. At this point, the self becomes an instrument or empty vessel receiving this intuition, that is, it simply acts as no-ego. The intuition potentially takes hold of a targeted action, and the bodily behaviour, guided by this intuition, simply follows the path made visible. (Yasuo 1987: 199)

This sensitive approach to the feelings of the breath as a natural and complete process of embodiment eventually moves in on the completion of an action on stage and one’s acting intuition *if* and *when* the place for connections between the training and the acting has been solidly built. I mean, enhancing the students’ sense or feelings of the whole (or completion

of the energy through the move); flow (the free move of the energy within); form (integrity of shape or mindfulness of action); and meaning (the movements' intrinsic quality of energy) happens through an overt attentiveness and trust to the flow of sensations awakened by the breath. Through an assiduous practice of the breath the student's concept and confidence of being an actor are also being shaped. So the breath becomes the platform where the relationship between the actor-body and the actor-mind becomes. The bodymind is so revealed as the foundation of an actor's psychophysical work, which involves the ground of her education on precision and her development of sensorimotor perception and kinaesthetic sense. At the same time, it is the place of her creative intuition, understood as the actualisation of energy in a state of no-intention, void or non-self where 'the growth of unexpected meaning is made possible' (Barba 1995: 88). The bodymind becomes both main resource and informing material of a performer's artistry.

The "psychophysical" is therefore reinterpreted as a particular way to be attentive to the immediacy of the moment – i.e. to one's bodily-being before making decisions – and to listen to what possibilities one can/may be already actualising. In its essence, psychophysical training teaches more about the possibilities of acting (or one's possible relationship to it) than about what acting is about (a determinate definition and approach to acting a specific score or dramaturgy). Acting intuition builds on these subtle self-constructing psychophysical processes in the training. By facing and resolving your own difficulties in reaching an adequate or developed concentration – or state of active meditation – you are defining the problems that you find while performing and at the same time you are building up the necessary

confidence for your own acting. In this sense, this training follows a very specific learning strategy which is important to consider, that is not about doing the training but about one's will and interaction with it:

I think that Kalarippayattu is something that makes people show in the training what they are later showing on the stage. It's like a magnifying glass. What you said during training was almost what was more valuable for me to apply afterward on stage. For example: "Do not push yourself so much, you always want to do everything right, and no" - you said to me -, "do not try to do it right", "do not force yourself to do it perfect, do it and then you'll see". (Ivana Heredia, personal interview)²²

Active images

Now I am going to focus on the specific interplay between the image and the action that is involved in the training, before the dialogue between the image and the action is taken further through the work on the specific techniques of Michael Chekhov. Breath and energy are key processes/phenomena in bodymind training, both deeply interconnected and explored through exercises and the use of images:

through daily practice of the exercises, and especially through the concentrated use of breath in relation to movement and use of images to engage the mind, one eventually begins to experience the body and mind as related [...] Once discovered and sensed, the presence of energy-in-the-breath within becomes more consistently present and moves as the bodymind moves. (Zarrilli 2009: 83)

A particular aspect of bodymind training relates to the confluence of the imagination and the breath within the process of embodying an action. It assumes that there is a corporeal sense of the image that makes that image

“breath” or manifest through the body. The embodiment of a movement action and that of an image would merge in one sole human action. There would be no difference between both processes since they are so closely involved with each other through the realisation of the bodymind. For example, the image of a flowing river is used to awaken the student’s awareness of breathing through the body. The image may be thought of as engaging the mental aspect within bodymind awareness, meanwhile the breath could be thought of as being involved with the somatic aspects of that same awareness. The student, through breathing, first experiences understanding the image as something active and dynamic that engages the whole body and mind in ways that do not need to be predetermined. [See DVD1-IPs-Structured Improvisations-The Journey]

Images in the training are active because they awaken psychophysical connections that give the student a sense of a clear connection to that specific image. Concretely the student connects with certain points and/or subtle movements that such an image (mind) is suggesting to her (body) to attend: ‘placing the eyes in the lower abdomen (*dantian*)’, ‘looking out from the guts’, ‘follow the breath with the inner eye’, ‘as stream of water to and from the lower *dantian*’, ‘to the periphery, the walls and the space behind’, ‘through the soles of the feet and the top of the head’ (Zarrilli 2009: 89,90). The imagination in the training ‘is not passive, but active and reactive’ (87) as it is during the performance process. As the practitioner opens her perceptual and sensory awareness, Zarrilli argues, she also opens up her imagination (44). The act of imagining is not just visual as it is not just mental. Images are as much a psychophysical experience as the psychophysical is actualised through them.

They are active in that each provides a simple but clear point of entry into developing and sustaining *a relationship to the exercises while doing them*. When fully engaging an active image, the mind does not wonder, but it is active as one enters and embodies the image. Rather than thinking about an image or end-gaining, when embodying the image the doer enters a relationship to the image and exercise that actively engages both mind and body as one. Active images thereby help awaken and activate energy and awareness while doing the exercises. (Zarrilli 2009: 90. Italics in the original.)

This use of ‘active images’ – mostly related to centring, breathing-energy and opening awareness – can give a clear example of how the imagination is conceived through training and can be part of an actor’s engagement in the action. Zarrilli’s aim is to facilitate the embodiment of specific training principles and the experience of concepts that eventually mark the actualisation and reinforcement of the entire bodymind in and for performance. This understanding of the psychophysical imagination definitively, as Zarrilli explains, ‘provides a simple but clear point of entry’ for the actor’s optimal psychophysical state. However, It also suggests to me the need to see through further development of this understanding of the image in and for the performance. In other words, how this same imagination may determine or inform the actor’s “point of exit”, so to speak. In this sense, Chekhov’s techniques would be looking at how the imagination not only enables but also defines an actor’s performance, this is, the scoring of movements, actions and gestures.

In training through ‘active images’ the student assumes and explains imagination as part of the bodymind realisation, which corroborates Michael Chekhov basis for acting and training: if you reinforce your bodymind realisation you do so with your imagination. It also further connects the

imagination to the process of breathing as being in charge of one's activation of energy and presence (awareness) through the bodymind. Breathing awareness provides the actor with an accessible tool to operate and manage her performance through images, which eventually enables her to modulate her presence and behaviour by allowing the relationship to the doing to change and adapt according to the dialectic of the action-image at play.

Core in my practice-research is the fact that, as the student is learning how she establishes a certain type and quality of relationship to either the image through the action or the action through the image, she is acquiring tangible criteria to discern when the action or image she is getting involved with is certainly being embodied and fully actualised. This process of embodiment allows her to realise when the possibility of expression is rendered present and when it is not, or not with enough clarity. It seems essential to learn when and how feeling(s) of having an image in the body are working for her – and consequently for an audience – at a particular moment and for a particular task. On the other hand, once the student apprehends the terms in which her body commits to such an image (physicalises its action), there is no need to conceive the visual or mental presence (picture) of the image when executing the score. It is, so to speak, already there in her body and manifests itself through her personal relationship (inner commitment) to it. When a clear relationship to the score/action is felt through the body, the actor's mind can release and start noticing how her work is adapting (adjusting) through the performance of the score. To be attentive to the image in *that* particular way – Chekhov will call it 'special concentration' – corresponds to the psychophysical process of being attentive to the process of 'sensation-in-action' (Zarrilli-Noë) and identifying the inner criteria required

for its control. The heightened state of consciousness that acting and performing demands is already urging the actor on *that* certain detachment from the doing of her actions that is necessary to build an actor's 'inner muscle':

Impulsive reactions cloud awareness. Don't react, remain aware continually, without interruption. By not reacting, by just noticing, we come to know the "noticer" as separate from the experience being noticed. This builds internal muscle. We're not whipped around in the wind anymore; the phenomenological world becomes something to watch. From calm strength, we're able to choose responses. (Zaporah 1995: 181)

The internal muscle that Zaporah invites the actor to build is in my opinion one of the main resorts of bodymind training practices regarding Chekhov's imagining body. The same sense of detachment happens when fully embodying the martial art sequence and the artistic form. The conditions for it to happen are being built and reinforced through the assiduous practice of training and its tangible application in performance.

2.2. EXPERIMENTING THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE DOING

[DVD1-IPs-Structured improvisations]

After approximately one to two hours of training, the class focuses on how the awakened body “serves” to apprehend the practice of acting. Before tackling the tasks required by the score or dramaturgy, the student explores the stage demands: the meaning of giving and receiving; being present on stage; completing the scenic action; discerning and controlling the energy through the body and throughout the score; and relating to each other and to the space around within the performance situation. ‘Structured improvisations’ are therefore an occasion for the students to actualise the main processes underlying bodymind training on the stage.²³ They focalise in the body the special state of concentration that is needed to become aware of the acting tasks and the demands of practice. The student watches her acting in terms of the relationship that is being established with the actions she undertakes.

In this research these improvisations also constitute a further means for students to explore the links between their acting body and the imagination. They become the place where the student recognises and delves into the acting concept per se, isolating for a moment the connection of her work to the specific dramaturgy at work. Together with the individual projects, “practice” will become the place to question and regain the purpose of the training and the imagination in acting and performance.²⁴

Structured improvisations are designed for delving into basic principles in an actor's work: reduction and/or containment of movement and energy; residual awareness and continuity of one's awareness; listening and establishing contact with the space, the object, the partner and the audience; and experiencing a multiple awareness that allows one to correct "the form" as one goes along. The students experience them as principles by which they may comprehend and regulate their behaviour on the stage: the action, the relations to the ensemble or the partner, their verbal elocution and the motivational and emotional aspects of their being/doing.²⁵

An important part of this process relies on educating the student's inner eye while doing as much as when looking at partners. This is a slow building process of noticing how the relationship to the acting practice alters and affects the results in terms of presence and type of communication, not only between actors but also between the actor and the spectator. In other words, a process of realising what they need to activate in their perception in order to relate to what they do and perceive while watching others [See Sonia De Martín's tutorial in DVD1-IPs-Performance projects].

Implicit in the training is the assumption of the bodymind as a generic state which forges the scenic bodymind or body-in-performance independently of any theatrical form, code or style.²⁶ The conditions for this necessary reorganisation of certain structures that shape one's presence while training modify in a theatre context, in the sense that such reorganisation needs to adapt to (or incorporate) the presence "towards the other" that exists in the performance situation, and which is not necessarily explicit during the training. There are, however, moments in the training when the students observe each other doing the sequences and reflect on what they observe as

moments of energy or interruption of attention, or the right and wrong of outer forms and/or the interruptions of energy. These are significant moments as students start to see from the outside what it means to be engaged in the doing and they get an external reference point of what is being accomplished.

After watching each other work, I invite responses to each step of the process from the perspective of “inside as a doer” and that of “outside as observer/spectator.” I invite observations from the outside on “what attracts or sustains your attention?” Invariably comments are offered about being attracted to the performance of a structure when one is “being simple”, “not anticipating”, “not pushing”, “not showing attitude,” or manifesting a “full awareness”. (Zarrilli 2009: 106).

Actor as creator

The students’ evaluation of these new performance conditions is rooted in their own experience of training and personal connections to their ideal work of an actor. The aim of practice, first through the structured improvisations, then through their personal projects, is therefore to facilitate making one’s concept of an actor clear enough for their work on stage; i.e. to be meaningful enough for themselves and the audience. The aim of these improvisations is to analyse how psychophysical training can provide a feasible model that understands the body-in-performance as a learning process that fulfils each actor’s *modus operandi*. It’s the same to say that teaching acting lays its foundation on the self-development of a performing body as a vehicle rather than an instrument of the student’s individual presence and energy. In coaching the students through this intersection

between training-and-acting, I came to centre my attention on the training inferred assumptions of “creating as doing” and “acting without acting”.

“Creating while doing” means following one’s bodymind experience of being as the doing happens; in other words, actualising one’s possibility of perception and enacting one’s sensory awareness related to the movement, action and/or score. Creativity happens at the level of perception through selecting and sharing the feelings and sensations that you play behind each action. The actor finds her reason to be on stage in the embodiment, i.e. creation, of an action.

“Acting without acting” means materialising such processes in front of an spectator, letting them permeate through both body and presence; allowing acting to happen by being an observer, a ‘noticer’ (Zaporah) of what happens while doing and sharing it with the other(s). The interaction with the audience makes the structured improvisation re-educate a ‘feeling tone of the dramatic’ (Zarrilli 2009: 87) even prior to the task implied by the performance structure or score:

Engaging with simple task-based structures, the actor begins to more explicitly explore the nature of impulse and action as they are shaped into what looks like, and indeed constitutes, performance. [...] As the actor’s subtler awareness is attuned and enhanced, *to the observer watching the performance of a structure* what emerges are all the elements that constitute acting - behaviour, character, and relationships. The actor begins to act “without (trying to) act” (Zarrilli 2009: 100. My italics).

I am now going to explore some of the phases that follow from the student’s structured improvisations. These three phases are documented in the DVD as The Journey, The Object, and The Other.

The Journey

[DVD1-IPs-Structured Improvisations-The Journey]

The improvisation builds on the coordination of breath and movement while 'shifting external focus on the impulse of a half-breath' (Zarrilli 2009: 103). The breathing facilitates being fully in the action and in the space. Breathing-in-action enables the students to observe the feelings, sensations or even emotions that may arise from their commitment to the action. I call it 'The Journey' because the emphasis on this improvisation is in inhabiting one's route through the movement and the breath between an initial place/moment and a final arrival/new departure through slow movement and breath.

This idea of the journey which appeared in class early on has been fundamental throughout the year. While doing the exercises and elaborating my project I put it in practice whenever I remembered. Whenever I did so, it considerably changed the sensation prompted by my movements and they became filled with meaning. Even when you know what the next step is going to be, you should pay much more attention to the journey. (Violeta Gil, final portfolio)²⁷

The relevance of the exercise lies on the importance it gives to the trajectory, not only on the connection that is established at the starting or final position, but on how such awareness or connection travels and modulates from point A to point B. Living through the transitions is one of the most intricate demands of being an actor, and how the student is able to discern in her practice and through her body a knowing-how-to-do it without anticipating the completion of the action is far from obvious:

they [students] often try to show that they have seen something before they have genuinely seen it. They are merely going through the motions. They perform the gesture before having found the sensation which motivates it. (Lecoq 2000: 32)

The pulse of the breath becomes the impulse for an action. Awareness depends on allowing oneself the sufficient and necessary personal 'inner tempo' (Chekhov, in Du Prey 1979-80: 28-30) to listen 'now, doing nothing but breathing (and *taking* time, take *time*)' (Blau 1982: 86). Thus, observing how the connection between the impulse and the action is realised through the body and in the space is a premise for developing one's sense of precision and timing. Eventually the student is able to also play with their possibilities of dilation, retaining an impulse inside that may break either immediately or after a while.

The students remain at work inasmuch as they allow their somatic processes (weight, muscles, tonicity, positions, and articulations) and kinaesthetic sense (sense or proprioception of the movement being done) of the body-in-action guide the improvisation. They use their residual awareness to bridge tasks and actions through sensations by attending to what happens while shifting the external focus and attention to a different place in the body without losing the connection with what has just been done. This remembrance of the movement stops the student from cutting off the energy that keeps the sequence alive and helps to maintain a continuous inner engagement all the way through.

The student is also attentive to whether he follows or loses track of the exercise's demands. When the latter happens, there is normally a "showing" of one's intentional efforts or a self-indulgent fall in personal feelings or critical mind. These instances affect negatively the quality of the body's

reflection (one's reflecting practice), which is what the students are aiming towards in the first place. Interferences may be unavoidable; the question is in probing to see how far one's attention can go in order to keep those thoughts far from the task and self-commitment. "To be concentrated" is not perceived as a goal, as it is neither an actor's objective "to be uninhibited". These are just processes through which each student grows. The real benefits of concentration, in improvisation as well as while training, will come from assiduous and small attempts. There is not a purpose of doing it well but of continuous listening. That effort in itself teaches more than the accomplishment of doing it.

With new sensations and emotions the dynamic is quite similar to our thoughts. The difference is in its way of entering into the process of embodiment. Sometimes the thoughts that come up during practice are disembodied, as if the body was not there. However, at other times, the sensations, the feelings that provoke such thoughts do come from the body, and therefore appear already as embodied thoughts – for example, sustaining an injury while training. It is this judgement on them or *extra*-awareness that makes them disturbing. The same thing happens with unexpected emotions or sensations. These emotions have the potential to negatively affect in some way the quality of our doing. More specifically, they disturb the quality of the relationship that we will establish with our doing if we judge, anticipate, stop being fully there, inhibit, illustrate, drop into or push them.

In the same way one may recognise that there are also thoughts, feelings and emotions that may guide and direct our body's attention to interesting places – for example, those coming from breaking with our physical routines

in the midst of training or improvising, or from remembering previous achievements and positive feelings. The learning process relies on remaining *within* the doing while thoughts, sensations and/or emotions are being present in such a way that the work (the breath, the action and the impulse) is still the priority. When the student knows how to focus on the tasks or demands of an improvisation, she can discover, modulate and control those appropriate feelings, thoughts and emotions that constitute her goal and therefore her personal resonances to the doing of the action. Yet, the anchor is still set on her task or action.

Stanislavski coined the term 'feeling of truth' to signify some crucial actor's qualities for assuming responsibility in her learning process and artistic matters: 'an artistic sensitivity to truth and to the truthful in his soul and body', 'the feeling of true measure' where 'childlike *naïvité* and the sincerity of artistic emotion' lives and 'the play of and the creation of creative faith' rest (1967: 431). Michael Chekhov borrowed the term from Stanislavski and emphasised with it the need to trust sensorimotor knowledge, a necessary certainty and property to develop on the actors' benefit:

I speak of the truth of emotions, of the truth of inner creative urges which strain forward to find expression, of the truth of the memories of bodily and physical perceptions. (Stanislavski 1967: 430)

At this early stage, bodymind work seems to suggest the student how "the truth" he is learning to appreciate is physiologically rooted and shaped. With this I mean: (1) it is not made of psychological arguments; (2) it is not referencing the everyday personal self; (3) it is not based on an emotional drive towards doing (though emotions can be derived from that doing); and (4) it is supported by a sense of body-being, a sense of completion and

wholeness of one's perceptual awareness while either moving or in stillness. One may even think that this connection to being truthful consists of a transient feeling of playing with one's possibilities of remaining truthful to the task and the action – i.e.: remaining coherent with them in the here and now of the moment – and not necessarily rooted in an accomplished state of truthfulness.

To remain connected or truthful is first learned through breathing and depends on giving it the attention and necessary concentration it requires in order to keep breathing in focus. Eventually the breath becomes internalised in what the students are doing, so that primary attention releases and gives way to more subtle experiences and connections coming from the doing (like in the *vanakkam* sequence). The student is cautiously launched into a free improvisation wherein her experience of the bodymind as “implicit breath” rules her acting. Acting would depend on noticing how one is relating to those immediate sensations coming from the body in action. As the students report in the DVD, it is also dependent of some sense of not-knowing but an access to intuition and surprise, this is, of one's openness to the multiple sensations, thoughts even emotions that may come through the doing of the exercise.

This starting structure – ‘The Journey’ – was introduced to me during the rehearsal period for the production of *The Water Station* at Exeter University in 2000. My interest in it is not only because of the evolution that I experienced as an actor by then, but also for the way that such experience can be conceptualised now in order to better understand and approach the work with images/sensations. When fully involved in the exercise, feelings of the body, thoughts and sensations are prone to come and may seem to

overwhelm you until they rearrange and accommodate themselves into the performing of the exercise, this is, the composition of your improvisation. “Contact with a partner” or “breathing in the sky” become such clear inter-subjective exchanges already referred to: the realisation of a process of enhanced perception being made with the whole body and not just its accomplishment [See Appendix III: The Sky Improvisation].

Nowhere is it clearer than in the case of an actor that there is no difference between her perceptual experience, rooted in her sensorimotor knowledge, and what she is both doing and creating.²⁸ ‘For an actor, to perceive is to feel’ (Stanislavski 1967: 426), so being able to delve into your perception of things as they are happening – into the way you observe these affects both in your body and in the other’s practice – has as much importance to acting as the development of one or another way of doing (technique or method, code or style). At its deepest levels, bodymind awareness affects your mode of doing and perceiving that doing in quite a radical way (*Asfixia*).

When a performer behaves in this manner, s/he usually experiences a significant change in the way of perceiving and thinking of what s/he is doing. Some performers say that at this point ‘images start to come into’ their minds. Others claim that when what they are doing ‘works’, the distance between the head, which is giving the orders, and the body, which is carrying out those orders, disappears. (Barba 1995: 112)

According to this, a psychophysical approach to actor training will enable the student to exercise and reconstruct the process of the body’s perception considering the role that it plays in acting. The idea of enacting perceptual experience can be further linked to what Zarrilli has conceptualised as the relationship that is being established between the *doer* and the *done*, i.e. an increased awareness and sensitivity towards what you notice and its

interrelation with what and how you do. Understanding the actor's psychophysical doing as a state of heightened awareness gives the possibility of a dual consciousness or conceptual split between *doer* and *done* – your feelings and your doing – happening at the same time inside what is, on the other hand, indissoluble in practice. Meaning is apprehended through a process of retrospection based on sensations rooted in the body rather than through a projection made by the physical body.

The Object

[DVD1-IPs-Structured Improvisations-The Object]

In a second stage of the structured improvisations, students further explore the inner vibration of energy, timing, sensory perception at play in relation to the construction of meaning on stage and the establishment of communication – *what* and *how* is shared with a spectator. Improvising with a hidden object is an exercise I have designed in order to study the complexity of the acting task and staging demands. In finding a way to resolve this particular improvisation many questions arise that help to articulate the student's reflecting practice and their questions about the work. The principle of residual awareness is further developed through this concrete improvisation as a means to find a sense of the whole at the end that frames both each previous action and the overall scene.

I designed this concrete improvisation in order to explore the images/sensations that appear along the chain of actions and reactions that

may come from an object that is hidden in a box at the centre of the scenic space.²⁹ The improvisation is different for each student as they do not know what the object will be. Objects are simple: an envelope, a postcard, a watch, a robe, a handkerchief, a knife, a rubber duck, a ball, a gold ring, etc. The object is considered as the stimulus for a personal acting process that the student is meant to come to terms with. Students articulate their experience(s) and meaning(s) of the improvisation throughout, as they face and observe the challenge(s) it introduces in their performing bodies. The improvisation aims to teach the student how to be in the moment through the logic of her sensations-in-action, rather than through the interpretation she may bring into play.

The students draw from the principles of the training as well as their own feelings and assumed notions about what their being (and nature) as actors is. They do that by living through, let's say, a deconstruction of their own process of acting-creating the scene, and observing in practice what they have learned from the experience. They confront both their practice and understanding (or misunderstanding) of the acting situation according to a complex web of interactions, emergences, interruptions, and states of not-knowing. They also learn how the body becomes an agent or site for the manifestation of multiple discourses (social, cultural, emotional, political and personal) and negotiation of identities that cannot be isolated from the meaning and/or interpretation they may draw on from the experience of either doing or observing.

Alike the other improvisations, and especially in early stages, this one is done in slow tempo, ensuring an acute perception of the sensations and points of awareness that the actor is playing with, as well as the difficulties to

remain present in and with them. 'The Object' builds on top of previous improvisations, in the sense that some pre-performative knowledge(s) or connections between training and acting have already been introduced and exercised. These gradual proceedings constitute a careful work so that the student got ready to face a more demanding and complex comprehension of the phenomenon of acting and the processes within. Otherwise this particular improvisation might cause them to become rather lost.

The instruction for the improvisation is as follows:

You enter the space from point A and go to B, while crossing the space you feel the moment in which you sense the box. You look at it. You walk closer to it. You open it. You see (feel) what is inside. Listen. An impulse may come and you decide to do (or stop doing) an action with or in relation to the object. You leave the space. The improvisation finishes after you exit the stage, once you are not seen. A very slow tempo runs through the performance.

The objectives of this improvisation are: to keep present both in the body and the space at all times; keep breathing; remain centred and focused; follow the beginning-middle-end of each impulse (action); as well as play with their residual awareness along the overall scene.

I had to breathe, fix my stare to a spot in the space and go towards it. I had to decide whether I would advance with the desire to go forward to that point or with the memory of the spot I had left behind. Then, feel the box in the floor, generate the desire to look at it and do it; approach the box, as if each movement constituted a work of art in itself paying attention to the feet, the head, and the focus. Open the box and react to what is inside, but react in a way that was not visible to the others, non illustrative. Let the body react; let it be; look ahead; decide to leave. How will you go? What has changed? Do not lose what has been created. To avoid illustration is difficult; not rushing too. One has to be bold, alert, available to receive whatever comes; to be vulnerable. I do not anticipate anything, there is nothing to anticipate. Only to live. If an actor

tells what she feels, she is already not feeling. It is not interesting what she can say about her sensations, but to live them, to be able to translate them into something corporeal: a spark in the eyes, a quick squeeze on the arms, air through the feet... whatever. The most important thing is to do; and to do whatever one is doing at that moment, and not anything else. Don't lose the attention, for if the actor does it so does the spectator. The image does not need to be a photograph, or something quite concrete that appears in your mind - an empty stomach can be an image. (Violeta Gil, diary entry 25 October, 2004)³⁰

Both while doing and watching others, the students are checking their bodymind as an awareness and presence of the body-in-action, seizing the moment of each impulse, noticing how it develops through the movement and sensing the energy behind each action or moment of pause. They may also discuss afterwards the structure and composition of actions that would shape a possible performance score. They do it not only in terms of the interesting or proper actions to choose next time, but also in terms of one's inner tempo, the timing and duration of each action and/or tempo-rhythm that better fits with what has already been felt/seen/done. The final walk (exit) informs in certain sense of the coherence of the chain of actions that have preceded it. It is as if this final moment of awareness of what has been done (residual awareness) encapsulated and brought forth the link between each already undertaken action as well as the feeling of their whole. It is the distillation of a possible yet undetermined overall meaning or corporeal sense resulting from that particular score as already done.

Several meanings may be waving back and forth during or after the improvisation is done; meanings that can be discussed through psychological, narrative, characterological, poetic or abstract discourses. However, the interest is in *how* and *why* these discourses *can* be examined,

this is, how and why they “reach” the spectator. The premise is the clear kinaesthetic commitment that occurs in the moment of doing, which allows a consequential order and clear completion of each of the actions and their weaving together on the course of the scene. It is that commitment that virtually provokes the imagery of both actor and spectator as well. Meanings are discussed on the basis of their inner and kinaesthetic logic as well as their composition or correspondence with the actions. These improvisations are not designed to be done right or wrong; but instead they are a means to explore all these questions and interconnections, and bring forward new challenges for each of the students.

This has been the “star improvisation” of the year. I think that all of us have often used it afterwards for generating actions in the project, in order to know how to react by channelling the impulse through the body and not showing it. It was the first time we saw in the clearest way what all of this pre-expressivity was about, and the first approach to this new form unknown to us. What is in the box? What’s in the letter? I move forward thinking about what I leave behind. I move forward thinking where I am going. I breathe into each action, I physicalise it. To physicalise... I don’t think there is neither such a word nor a verb. The physicality of impulses. Neither this exists, but they help me more than others which do exist. (Violeta Gil, final portfolio)³¹

Looking ahead

At one point in this or any other structure I include the command to establish direct contact with the audience by looking ahead. Being present on stage demands doing and, at the same time, sharing one’s personal engagement as an actor. To share means to open up your awareness to the space and to

the presence of the others. Sharing is more adequate in this context than giving. "Act without acting" means to share with the other you're the clarity of your doing without worrying about what the other may think or interpret from your action. It is not about trying to ensure the intention behind the actions in the other neither in you, but the perception of your action.

A time comes when I suggest the students stop, sense a place ahead, look at it and breathe. The moment depends on each student and each improvisation. It deals with an appropriate moment just before or after an action has been outwardly and inwardly completed. It also considers a time when the student's commitment has become strong enough to be able to ensure that connection to the external direct gaze of a facing audience. I follow my own kinaesthetic connection with what the student is inwardly elaborating at that moment. Later on as we will see in the next improvisation it is not necessary to call forth their awareness. Students just pause and practice their own (body) listening and reflection as they go along.

Presence, irradiation, and the notion of energy though emanating from the actor are rather independent processes from one's activity or intention in the sense that they are not thought nor practised as a force that is applied, but rather as awareness within. Presence, irradiation and energy are rooted in the act of an embodied perception rather than in the delivery of the expression of the action. They are certainly actualised through the actor's will and action; however, this does not mean that the actor is intent on doing so. Her will is concealed in the process of directing the attention to the *in-betweenness* of an inward-outward movement. To irradiate one's energy and presence beyond, towards the space, the object, the other or the spectator is to let whatever it is *be* in the body, stay with it, breathe it in and out, flowing in

and out, creating and re-creating inside-out and outside-in. Radiation is not

unidirectional in its extension beyond its visible physical contours, [but rather] the human body bristles with openings and extensions that are nothing other than the rays of perception that flow out of every sense organ. (White, in Zarrilli 2011a: 247)³²

It is an actor's disposition towards her embodied work rather than its psychological interpretation – or will to express it, or intention to communicate it – that allows the creation and recreation of stage presence and irradiation. A shift in perspective about the source of being on stage and the body-in-action seems somehow compelled in order for each student to come to terms with this practice.

Whatever is being involved in practice breathes in and out, sharing the presence of the actor with an audience. The 'Looking Ahead' moment clarifies the exchange that is being allowed (or is not) with the spectator. The exchange is not imposed nor it is meant to say something. It does not need to be, nor can be probably, verbally explained. The actor being fully present in what she is doing just justifies it. In the moment of facing the audience the realisation of presence becomes a condensed moment of complex engagement, isolated and voluntarily maintained. In essence it is simply a question of spatial awareness and consciousness of the energetic exchange that grows as an 'inner conviction' (Blau) and that becomes evident for both the student and her audience, in this case, the other students observing (studying through) their partner's work. The projection of that 'inner conviction' or deep consciousness makes the acting surpass the level of personal experience and become an art:

That doing without showing is mere experience. The showing is critical, what makes it show (by nothing but breathing) is the radiance of inner

conviction, the growing consciousness that it must be seen, what would make the word come even if there were no breath. (Blau 1982: 86)

One of the lines of thought that interlaces with this research is the relationship that is being established with the spectator. The sense of contact with the audience is in part understood as embedded in an actor's spatial and corporeal awareness: her presence. But also is in part due to the actors' awareness that her deployment of energy through the movement, gesture, action or pause is directed or somehow conveyed towards someone. "Contact" is therefore an exchange guaranteed by the kinaesthetic inner coherence that the actor endows the actions with rather than due to the actor's intention to be in contact with audience. The spectators become active in this process, in the sense that the final meaning does not reside exclusively in what the actor is doing but in the observers' active perception of the actor's actions in the context of the performance. And this is also what constitutes one of the main challenges for the student; i.e. to think of her job from that perspective and "give room" for the spectator to complete the action with their own imagination and not pushing by trying to finish or interfering with that process.

The learning process builds up in the exchange that happens when students do, when they see others doing, as well when she goes then back to doing. Perception is being attuned towards the kinaesthetic apprehension of their work, located in the inbetweenness of their inner and outer processes, and informed by their own inner-outer processes as much as from those of the others. The actor's body is being educated as much as the actor's eye. Doing and observing are complementary, and as reported by some students become indispensable [See DVD2-ASFX-Actor's interviews-Ivana Heredia]. On

the other hand, the relationship audience-actor also changes from being involved in the narrative logic or representative meaning that could be embellishing the action, towards the kinaesthetic apprehension of the action and the endless possibilities of meaning, narratives or meta-narratives that this work may be suggesting. They discover that part of their work and therefore their learning process depends on the spectators – it is made with them, so that there may be as many meanings and narratives as there are observant eyes in the audience:

The actor is completely dependent upon the creative potential of each audience member and must be able to adjust and respond to whatever ensues. The actor initiates and the audience completes the circle with their imagination, memory and creative sensibilities. Without a receiver, there is no experience. (Bogart 2001: 69).

The Other

[DVD1-IPs-Structured Improvisations-The Other]

“Following the breath” is both an action and a feeling of the presence of one’s body structure and weight from the soles of the feet through to the top of the head. One becomes present in the space and allows the space to become present in the feelings of the body through sensing – alignment, the space behind, in front, up and down and to the sides, the inner eye, to the lower abdomen, through your external focus... Breathing in-and-out guides the actor’s path, movement and trajectory without necessarily over-determining it. The sentient (breathing) body shapes the student’s first feelings of presence and embodiment upon which her acting body grows and evolves.

However, it is the quality of presence to what they are doing that determines the meaning of it (Feldshud 1976: 89).

Structured improvisations work as layers building one on top of each other, nourishing a sole and unique personal experience that increase and moulds through practice. Each student gradually recognises, explores and organises concepts, processes and skills through these layers as an individual and unique organic system. To “physicalise” a desire adds a crucial layer to the conscious doing of the actors and introduces them in the level of feelings and psycho-dynamic relationships:

The principle of introducing a desire, but denying the actor the possibility of externally acting on the desire, is a further refinement of Zeami's notion of withholding or reduction. In terms of *ki*-awareness, the psychophysical act of stopping an action once initiated by a strong impulse to move creates an extremely strong inner psycho-dynamic relationship. So much is happening inside the actor that it vibrates and resonates the actor's entire bodymind, and creates interest for the spectator. (Zarrilli 2009: 107-108)

Giving oneself time to sense the impulse that is coming from a desire – i.e. feeling how the body gets ready for it – is a way of perceiving and being open to the sensations that articulate what the body reads or identifies as such desire. Meaning is apprehended not in its psychological motivation but in its sensorimotor activation. This inner focused listening rather resembles (if not holds onto) following the breath, its different phases (inspiration-apnoea-expiration-apnoea), and sensing the time that it needs to be completed and fully embodied (*jo-ha-kyu*). The physicalisation of an inner impulse to do something or desire follows the same pattern. Precipitation and a big urge to tell or illustrate the intention that must be read behind the action may be undermining this process of listening and of giving time for that meaning to

be elaborated through the body. Meaning springs forth as a discernible feeling through the body's inner action and presence even before the moment of doing. There is no need to illustrate or do anything special, just to listen to this preparatory moment and allow it to be.

This last stage of the structured improvisations is entitled 'The Other' and is mainly a creative exploration of the interaction with another actor as regards gesture, movement and action. The relationship that is being forged between them and their possible ways of communicating it to the audience is explored through the student's own inner dynamics in relation to the original desire or inner action. Looking back into the nature of expression and the consequences of our embodied meanings there is the assumption that gestures reveal the actor's self and intention. Where does expression come from? How is the meaning of an action or a gesture generated? Does it come from the actor or the spectator? How far does the conscious self go in its creation and possibility of control? How big is an actor's responsibility to determine meaning (content) for the spectator? When does the coming of meaning become necessary?³³

These questions arise through the training and gradually evolve through the improvisations. As students are learning to remain mindful in movement, action or gesture, these collateral questions become embodied questions at work – the meaning one gives to actions, or to the self through the action, as well as the meaning of the action itself, or in relation to the other actor, etc. However, the answer (if any had to be determined) belongs to the actor who is being born, rather than to the teacher or the technique.

'The Other' is a remix of Zarrilli's structured improvisations of 'introducing a

desire', 'introducing objects' and 'adding text' (Zarrilli 2009: 107-109) with Chekhov's technique of Psychological Gesture. The desire is now related to another person and the text in this improvisation is a short dialogue that Joanna Merlin introduces when working on Chekhov's technique. The same dialogue will be again used in the second semester for learning such technique.

Through the improvisation the student develops and articulates the psychodynamics of the body (a desire) linked to her actor's task objective (for example, to dominate). It is as if a distillation of the meaning of such a verb through movement was taking place alongside the improvisation. There is a corporeal search for the endless connotations of meaning of "dominating" through different gestures, actions, qualities and negotiations with another human being. By searching for a physical manifestation the student is also finding her way to articulate her commitment, like a painter whose palette is made of sensations of movements and who is now learning how to put them in the canvas so she can make (arrange) her final picture. Again we are not looking for a scene, or for a final meaning, or right gesture or expression, but for the endless possibilities of generating material that is interesting to live through (exercise) and to look at (explore). Commitment, revelation, presence, mindfulness, total act, concentration, acting without acting, creating as doing... are already becoming the students' internalised criteria that guides their observation and performance.

Student A learns to arrange the gestures, actions, feelings and sensations in relation to her desire, and also to accommodate to the presence of the other, both partner and spectator. She also manages the feelings that she receives from her own actions, the other's presence and the demands of having an

audience. Partner B as a means to facilitate A's study in action is told to be neutral but accepting, active in her listening but passive in her responding inasmuch as the improvisation allows. It is also an interesting true playing in-between for B.

As in previous stages, the student's awareness to the space, the body, the breath and the audience is called forth along the improvisation as needed. They are ongoing injunctions that the student is ready to receive rather than short-circuits of attention. She delves into her continuous commitment to what she is doing: an observation of the relationship – its specific quality and nature – between her as a *doer* (dominating) and her as being *done* by that inner gesture or desire (her gestural composition).

The relationship to doing is not necessarily a psychological immersion, personal or emotional identification, but a heightened state of presence, active study or meditation. Its observation is neither just cold technique nor emotional collusion, but 'a kind of knowing that does not require conscious control' (Feldshuh 1976: 87). This knowledge will enable the actor to accommodate and respond not only to her desire, the partner, and later on to a text, but also to the here and now of the performance and eventually to the hypothetical demands of the staging. This improvisation is already setting (this is, physiologically preparing) the praxis of the imagination, where Chekhov locates the praxis of intuition. The moment you move, the images your body provides you with not only have the ability to make you relate to what you do in an appropriate manner but they also constitute the embodied awareness you need as an actor for continuously adjusting your psychophysical engagement.

A further challenge contained in this improvisation is worth commenting: the difficulty of adding the text, as far as introducing articulated voice, for second-year students. Voice and text are the best guidance for students to check on their psychophysical connection. Voice is so connected with one's intimate self and critical mind that introducing text is very prone to making the student self-conscious of her doing. The right and strong concentration becomes crucial – a feeling of an almost aggressive grasp of one's attention. Time is needed, as well as voice and vocal training in order to facilitate the coordination of body and voice work. As much as vocal technique (or any other technical knowledge of our "instrument") may be needed, there is no sense of it unless the student knows how to incorporate, actualise and/or surrender to its certain knowledge in the moment of performance. The awareness that any technology of the body provides is only useful as far as it pulls the doing in so that the sense of the here and now of a creative act is enhanced.

No outward methods can teach the actor to speak truly artistically and expressively if he has not first penetrated into the deep and rich content of every individual letter, each syllable, if he does not first understand and feel the living soul of each letter as a sound. (Chekhov 2005: 79)

The text optimally, and eventually, becomes integrated as physical action, albeit a much more sophisticated and elaborated one. Corporeal and textual scores are for an actor's dramaturgy two different channels of communication that may be completely united or partially isolated. They are connected in the deep layers on one's body awareness and engagement – as students are now investigating – but free to be explored at a later stage through the outer articulation of their respective meanings. The physiological counterpart that I find in my actor's experience is found in the *vanakkam* sequence. When

exercised in a continuous dynamic support the ultimate goal is that the breath (energy) can circulate freely through the form. The text does not follow the rhythm and pulse of breathing. It travels free along the body as energy and breath do through the sequence. The textual and gestural scores are like different tracks on one same sound mixing board, and the actor as a highly qualified technician can play with these two different tracks at the same time, make changes, mix and match in a way that work one direction or the other for the audience. This idea becomes extremely useful when exploring Chekhov's technique of Psychological Gesture in performance as well as the performative possibilities of body-and-text (*Asfixia*).

2.3. EXPLORING AN ACTOR'S DISPOSITION

[DVD1-IPs-Performance Projects]

I see in the work we do rather than a method an actor's and an acting philosophy that is reinforced by a technique (martial arts) which re-educate us. (Cecilia Aguado, 2007)³⁴

The individual projects' performances are the culmination of a first step towards an ideal and individually oriented comprehension of bodymind work in the actors' training and eventual performance. The training in the teaching programme reveals its potential through the design, organisation, scoring and performing of an individual project. Each project has its own inquiry into a staging or acting problem designed from the actor's interests and questions in practice. Although they may be not perfectly articulated, these concerns reveal with no remission a particular set of challenges for each of them as individual actors as much as for me as a teacher and for my own research.³⁵

Another of my objectives [IPs] was to get my body trained, sensitive, open and expressive, so as to awake the necessary concentration and availability for approaching the image and the emotion through it. (Lara Cobos, IPs portfolio)³⁶

The students have developed their attentiveness to the breath, the bodymind and the energy. They have also observed how these relate to their doing on stage through the structured improvisations. A third area is concerned with the philosophical understanding of their own working method and the meta-theoretical reflections of their learning practice. In this third and last section I will discuss the individual projects from the point of view of these last two

areas.

Training sets the actor on a personal quest. Each of the students' thoughts on acting marks the direction in which such a quest is materialised in a performance context through personal practice. Individual projects confront the students with the nature of their own creativity, their possibilities of 'physical eloquence', artistic 'independence' and their 'own life' (Barba 1991: 245).

That's what is interesting; to discover new ways [by] starting from an idea that seemed to be finite or completely amorphous. At the same time it becomes complicated; for, when you have time limitations and not much experience, it is difficult to decide which things to preserve and which ones to discard. (Violeta Gil, final portfolio)³⁷

The key question in the overall process is *how* to learn rather than *what* to learn. This includes having an attitude and will to do so. I am not necessarily thinking of a pre-made intention or intellectual decision that may or may not happen. I rather believe it is a (bodymind) disposition that can only grow through practice and training. The bodymind, as already stated, is acquired through the training not as a final accomplishment but as a working hypothesis. The disposition of the student is shaped by bodymind practice as much as their bodymind is moulded from the depths of their own approach to theatre, assumptions of being an actor and inhabiting their body – they forge each other. They both alter the relationship that the student establishes with her work and job as an actor, which does not lack its own problematics both in the short and long term.

In my analysis, I came to the conclusion that the actor's desire for a traditional drama was based on a conventional attitude towards acting a role: they wanted to have psychologically developing, believable

characters and key dramatic scenes for expressing the inner feeling and qualities of the role. According to convention, a good part (and a good actor) seems to cover the scale needed for those qualities. (Kinnunem, in Freeman 2010: 32)

In encouraging this commitment to 'learning to learn' through and from their bodies, this one-year programme attempts to help the student to find a proper balance between being creators and being observers of their own acting and theatre-making processes. This balance will imply a profound immersion in their attitudes towards themselves, the work and the concept of acting per se. Certain questions need to be clear from the start. Even though this investigation may become highly gratifying it does not imply that it is always easy or smooth. Their attitudes are mainly shaped by their experiences as much as by personal interests, expectations or curiosity as actors and/or performers. To discover the points of friction so that attitudes can grow through the work and the work through their attitudes is what we are after and what the practice itself has the potential to reveal.

Learning strategies that free an actor's creativity are linked to the empowerment of the student's individual and personal approach to practice rather than with the reinforcement of a pre-established code or convention. It will bring important implications for the perception of their role(s) as students, actors and theatre practitioners:

I have learnt to listen to critiques in order to know how to select those comments that really help me for my work and those that I'd better recycle quickly. I have enjoyed becoming aware of the work we are doing, and as my project evolved [...] I have also begun to better understand the subject, the objective of the training, I have got to know myself in a different manner, and have been able to explore other things of myself. (Julia Moyano, IPs portfolio)³⁸

Whether the presence of an actor is built and maintained on the dialogical interaction with an image (Hulton, in Hodge 2000: 161), on a possibility of an altered or heighten consciousness (Hodge 2000: 7), or on a special kind of concentration (Chekhov 2000: 29), its perception deepens and grows as much as does the student's ability to be both (and at the same time) observer and agent of the overall acting process. The autonomy that eventually the training provides in the learning process of an actor even though diffused in the beginning stages becomes crucial through the students own artistic processes in later stages. In this sense, the success of the teaching programme regarding these individual projects depends on my ability to coach and pinpoint when this autonomy was happening or when excessive self-consciousness or not enough consciousness of the process(es) hindered this possibility. 'It is not our job to determine *what* must be seen, but to see that what already must be seen is seen' (Huston 1992: 29. Italics in the original). The job is then co-responsibility between the teacher and the student on the basis of a mutual agreement of how one can contribute to the other's teaching-learning processes. To make sure that what must be already seen (or done) *is* certainly done (or seen) consists of balancing, negotiating and refining the students' relationship to doing according to their dispositions. My teaching/coaching throughout each of the projects focused on facilitating this self-educating process, making it feasible and attainable to each student both in the smallest detail and in the overall meaning the student may plan for her performance. To step in and out of the work means thereby to step in and out of an attitude towards the body, self, acting and the learning-teaching process.

Portrait of an experience

The physical training exercises make it possible for the performer to develop a new behaviour, a different way of moving, of acting and reacting, a specific skill. But this skill stagnates into a one-dimensional reality if it does not reach down into the depths of the individual. The physical exercises are always spiritual exercises. (Barba 1995: 88)

Throughout the individual projects several aspects were defining the students' attitudes towards their practice. Each student, alone, follows her own unique pathway into this spiritual dimension Barba refers to. What I call an actor's disposition can be mapped upon the following aspects:

- Patience and commitment
- Origins and inner conviction
- Emotion
- Determination
- Inner coherence
- Stage language
- Courage
- Images

Patience and commitment

This attitude reaches the students as the training helps them to be open and calm, attentive and appropriately focused on their listening and feelings of practice. It implies such patience and commitment so that the acting practice grows, which requires a deepening reflection on the potential of bodymind training in one's practice.

Through this work on pre-expressivity one aims to gain presence on the stage. But that presence in itself is not enough in order to embrace all that is intended in that pre-expressivity. The actor learns to lie and falsify that pre-expressivity with a certain presence. Over time, if nothing else is attached to it, this certain presence fossilises and impedes that all the play - whose point of departure is such pre-expressivity - is fluid and organic. (Elmano Sancho, IPs portfolio)³⁹

Some years later I read:

On the other hand it is not sufficient for an actress to have stage presence in order to appear luminous, vulnerable or seductive. As an actress I can dance my actions and yet cause indifference, vibrate with intensity and yet be boring. An actress's magic on stage and her ability to capture attention also depend on discipline and experience, on personal need and trust in practice, on conviction and luck. (Varley 2011: 29)

It is just as important to question the meaning that the teacher (and student) gives to the training. This enriches and complicates the process in a very particular way since this new variable gathers different intentions, motives and personal trajectories in doing theatre. This ultimate reason remains deep inside in each individual; it is not necessarily present in words and it may be not even conscious. It is also something (hopefully) not rigid, but rather flexible and constantly renewed through time and experience, as essentially occurs through any learning process. Such particular meanings intrinsically

affect and are affected by the quality and potential of the training itself and therefore the acting that follows.

Eugenio Barba alludes to this personal justification as an 'inner necessity' that determines relentless energy and premises the process of self-discipline and self-definition involved in the training (Barba 1985: 56). Herbert Blau refers to it but in terms of the factual acting or showing. It is the projection of that 'inner conviction' or deep consciousness that makes the acting surpass the level of personal experience and become an art (Blau 1982: 86). Tadashi Suzuki directly asserts that 'there is no such thing as good or bad acting, only degrees of profundity of the actor's reason for being on stage' (in Bogart 2001: 119).

Origins and inner conviction

The project of Elmano Sancho germinated exactly during that moment in which he faced blockages while improvising with a box and a robe [DVD1-IPs-Structured Improvisations-The Object]. When some months later he describes his experience during the improvisation he alludes to not listening enough to his body, fighting against it, the "need" for its approval, thinking 'why a robe?' and getting stuck in that thought. He also reports having strange aggressive feelings while standing there (Elmano's IPs portfolio). Underlying his individual search in the project was a question he had made explicit after such a restless experience: how he could turn the origins of such confusion into something theatrical, interesting enough to be watched.

What happened was not of theatrical interest but what happened inwardly a few seconds after the improvisation was over could have been. Because at that moment the reaction came from my body, from what had just happened. That experience was one of the most important in order to realise which of the two approaches (only two?) I could choose for my education as an actor; and to understand that I should apply it now in my personal project and not postpone it as usual. (IPs portfolio)⁴⁰

After that improvisation, Elmano decided to anchor his project on the control of tension and the idea of the fear of exposing oneself. The theme for the performance came after, when he observes he had 'almost forgotten about it'. An experience in the metro led him to portray theatrically quotidian contradictions: the will to do what your body asks you to do, but that is not done because of rules and social conventions. An Edward Munch's painting led him to speak about solitude, and to confront the body with two differently felt spaces: 'one space is safe, comfortable and warm; the other one is cold, hostile and aggressive' (IPs portfolio).

Elmano's inner instinct or necessity was articulating his entire creative endeavour through the techniques and tools that were being provided and arranging them towards the devising of a 10-minute performance score. Individual practice is personally and emotionally attached and meant for the students to make sense of what they do and to apprehend the meaning of their practice. Spirituality, creativity, artistic intuition, creative "I", self and non-self are ideas that unavoidably appear when students are trying to make sense of the bodymind processes in performance. Because they appear *in* the relationship each person establishes with practice – in the experience of it – they must be individually understood. Whereas a deep conviction in the natural talent of the student may reassure them, actor training and education

may alternatively offer tangible means to allow them.

Elmano's is just one example of the process a student may face while involved in an individual project. I have chosen it because it allows me to delve into two further questions pertinent to this investigation. First, it points up that the embodiment of the training disciplines is not independent of the meaning that is given to it; and second, that personal emotions are challenged when dealing with this psychophysical approach to acting.

Emotion

Elmano's question can be reframed as how to turn one's personal emotion into something artistic without losing a feeling of truth or deep commitment with what you do. He was not the only one to connect sincerity with one's quotidian self and/or emotional identity. However, since this was a personal question it demanded a personal answer, one that I couldn't give any other way than providing the grounds for his own experience to grow, so that he could arrive at some kind of conclusion.

He has to see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see just by being 'told', although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see. (Dewey, in Schön 1987: 17).

What is the role of emotions in this actor's bodymind process? Even then, I could not guarantee that what "worked" for me, either in terms of Zarrilli's psychophysical states of being/doing or Michael Chekhov's understanding of

the practice and use of images for reaching artistic emotions, could also work at that point for him. But the search is set, and the place where each individual actor is going to locate her personal quest on emotions is, among others, another factor upon which one decides the practice to be. The problematics in my research and approach rest in trying to elucidate a way into the complex web of connections that may exist between the implicit assumptions in the bodymind training, the later embodiment of images and the artistic individuality the student brings up. Because there must be, according to my perspective, some connection between the students' individual search of their (tacit) sensorimotor knowledge – something discovered through training and essential to it – and the free and unique Creative Individuality in which Michael Chekhov's techniques stand.

Determination

In the “real” professional world, the student will have to choose and negotiate according to personal vocation and/or certain interests. Not all theatre or performance forms demand the same level of commitment or precision, even not the same sort of spiritual dimension. On the contrary, the business (and the profession) seems to promote, directly or indirectly – more often than what would be desirable – the stamp of one's appeal at the expense of any kind of artistry and reflection (Garre 2004). The actor's feeling(s) of truth when acting may oscillate, wildly sometimes, according to one's (or the other's) personality, according to the demands of the production, its dramaturgy or director's aesthetics. This feeling(s) of truth become

indispensable in the career of an actor, not because it gets the actor to be truthful to herself or to the other, but in order to understand and assimilate the necessary skills and techniques to respond to the specificity of acting in any context. The education of an actor can hardly be built or referenced from her personality, but from knowing-how to negotiate with and within those certain feelings or margins.

The profoundness on the work with the image in Chekhov's techniques before and after the training is evident in my experience of both teaching and acting. Training strengthens the feelings of the body's own understanding of creativity and possibilities of committing to its expression on the stage. Reinforcement of physicality and what is beyond it (the spiritual?) implies as much as is implied by the understanding and determination of certain connections in one's individual disposition.

Inner coherence

American stage director Anne Bogart talks about how it is important for the actor 'to set the exterior (the form, the action) and allow the interior (the quality of being, the ever-altering emotional landscape) freedom to move and change in every repetition' (Bogart 2001: 102). In this regard, Grotowski recognised a call for an inner coherence behind such an apparent freedom of flow of inner-outer dialogue – i.e. the necessity of a final coherence or structural awareness. Paraphrasing Grotowski, one can build the structure but not the process, and even then that's only a 'condition' and not its 'essence' (Grotowski 1992-93: 38). These words are very revelatory not only

for the act of performance, but even for the design and consideration of the learning process itself.

As a director I may plan a score responding to my views on the scene premises and my own sense of inner coherence, but it is the actor's own scene premises and sense of coherence that make the creation work with the spectator in the moment of performance. As a teacher I create a whole-year programme, provide it with a design and take into account the sense of a whole that I believe the student's capability for coherence may grow through. Upon these bases each person creates (learns) perhaps even beyond or in spite of the contents and objectives that may have been originally planned. So although the structure may be closed, the act of learning may remain open. While either directing or teaching, I am interested in reaching with the actors that '*certain* capability of coherence without which nothing can be created' (Grotowski, *Ibid.*). Within what is done – the action, score or improvisation – there are essential aspects and moments that reveal essential qualities and properties and others that are unnecessary either for the inner coherence of score, the acting itself or the student's artistic concern. Inner coherence, as the actor revelation on the stage, may become present but cannot be ultimately determined.

Inner coherence does not represent any psychological dimension but refers to a further complex understanding in which the actor's physicality on stage will depend on awareness and control of the components of the language of the stage. Actors synthesise in space and time the action (score) in order to deploy their energy within. They set the score and block the scene in order to be able to re-produce and repeat it, and do so with the expectation that it will bring a possibility for them and the audience to experience the action's

aesthetic dimension. When appealing to the spectator's imagination the acting work depends at least on the precision of the score of actions, the adequate deployment of energy all the way through, and the knowing of the scenic code and conventions involved.

Stage language

Many times students feel dislocated when they have to redefine in the performance what was once the original impulse for the piece in terms of appropriate actions instead of intellectual decisions. 'I wanted to show the audience what is in my head', reports Julian Ortega, 'however as rehearsals went along I was changing my vision of all of that' (IPs portfolio). Challenges may start early on at the beginning of the process:

I was blocked for a long time because images and sensations appeared that I didn't know how to translate into movements, I did not know how to externalise through the body what those images suggested to me. (Julia Moyano, IPs portfolio)⁴¹

Karina Garantivá further explains:

The first difficulty is that I do not find the language in which I want to express myself. It was my first time improvising with an object and trying to use this I can feel that it brings things up, but I am not sure about understanding these as a language. Neither do I know how to remember what interests me for the work, nor do I distinguish with clarity what can be interesting. I do not know if this is due to lack of concentration, or just simply that I'm barely starting to understand the language of gestures and I don't know how to deal with it. (IPs portfolio)⁴²

There is a changing disposition towards the work onstage, since the practice

enhances the stage as a place of possibilities and requirements for becoming the actor's instrument. Acting is a human action and the stage, understood as a virtual and real space at the same time, is both medium and instrument through which this communication occurs. The time, knowledge and appreciation of what makes the stage "sound" to an audience will be as crucial for practice as the practice itself.

Courage

Challenges were resolved or avoided in their own ways by each individual student. Different strategies were tried out, some worked while some others didn't. One person may focus on the search for sensations and internal rhythms with which they can again feel the aliveness of the score that it had when first discovered. Another person may prefer to continue constructing, evolving gradually towards the precision in the scoring of actions. In some moments, or for some students, specific concrete images allow them to create and re-create the score. In others, the scoring started out by combining techniques of dance, acrobatics or voice. Each student finds her own way through the creation of her project, choosing and discarding, trying to be faithful to the objectives of both the work and their own personal creativity. My support and coaching was done by observing through their different proposals and experiences this process of personal negotiation of each student, and suggesting, if necessary, what else could be tested.

The communicative exchange with the students becomes a key tool here. It is important to share the same model of practice, one that is flexible and

open, which shares the same settings and objectives but that enables the student to explore and build in, if possible, a distinct (and personal) code of performance practice. The establishment of a common framework or paradigm of practice became an inescapable hypothesis for exploring an ability to facilitate this kind of work for my students.

This is not an easy endeavour as it is not uncommon to discover that part of it includes the student dealing with frustration, insecurities, doubts and dissatisfaction, and other emotions perhaps involved in the knowing-by-doing of their project and the doing-but-not-knowing of their training. Enjoyment is usually reported once the score (structure) is set. Then the work seems more manageable, though this does not mean it is easier or less problematic. I can feedback directly on their work, presence, breathing, completing of actions, opening the space and the contact with the audience according to their dramaturgical, scenic and/or aesthetic options. Once the score is there the rest is a matter of trust and courage.

The day of the presentation I did not listen properly to my body and its rhythm. I felt it, but I imposed a rhythm against its nature. The problem does not lie in listening, or not, to my body, but in the need to impose other rhythms onto the scene. And I should have done it [listened]. I had not the courage to do it. I do not know why; maybe it was for fear of losing what I had. Perhaps, this [fear/not listening] may have been also the cause of such sensation of going backwards that I felt from one rehearsal to the other. (Elmano Sancho, IPs portfolio)⁴³

Images

I clearly had in my mind - because rehearsals had led me to it - that by

mixing the qualities of “legato” and “down” I got the character to be old, despondent and sad. That’s what I wanted to convey. At first I felt that, up to a certain point, I had it. However, as rehearsals went by I started to slowly lose it. [...] my main difficulty was that, as total creator of the proposal [project], my vision as director always defeated my vision as actor and, as Sol already told me, I ended up illustrating everything instead of living through it. For me, this is very difficult to avoid, especially when I improvise or as in this case I am, besides being the actor, the director and author of the proposal. (Julián Ortega, IPs portfolio)⁴⁴

Working with images throughout the individual projects meant sometimes deciding what images were useful from the point of view of the external composition of the scene; other times which images could facilitate a meaningful embodiment of the actions or score already chosen or visualised for that composition; and, at some point, of finding an active image for the task that facilitated an adequate contact with the spectator while performing; this is, that determined certain type and quality of presence and/or stage behaviour from which to build the score. In either case, the search is done upon the experiential knowledge of the principles that intermediate between the image and the action and how they do in each individual.

In order to play with images there must be a certain type of relationship one can identify and maintain, even if that is not explainable with words and it is just planned as a feeling, sensation or intuition. That sensation has to be rooted in the body and experience of the individual *in relation to* what is being performed. As in any relationship, it implies a distance between the image and what you do, and it is thanks to that distance that the actor obtains an interesting (personal) input from an image into the action. However, the other way around can be also stated: a mindful doing allows the actor to discern the images that mediate in her relationship to the action. Through the

structured improvisations students had already discovered how a mental image could be living and flowing through the body. They had already become aware of how a concrete sequence of body sensations, feelings and actions can make up an image – ‘The Sky’ improvisation. Body, thought and emotion merge. Thus, when the work with the image is rooted in the bodymind the process is mindful, and its observation always traces back to a concatenation of corporeal events and motorics that possess an inner coherence or physiological logic. This observation could be successfully put into service in both acting or in devising the performance score and dramaturgy.

The actor’s embodiment of images in terms of the relationship she establishes to them is not a question of doing rightly or wrongly, but a rather dynamic process to be listened to and performed through: an awareness in or connection to. A student may have great imagery inside or multiple images to work with, but all of that may not be “properly” articulated through the acting, or in accordance with the performance aesthetics, the theatrical environment or the dramaturgical context. When images have been exclusively selected through a rather “intellectual” process – disconnected from the bodymind experience – they may not serve to communicate either what the student wanted or expected to say, or to fulfil what is coherent with a whole series of personal artistic impulses which will constitute her (actor) dramaturgy.

Mental images by themselves, as well as intellectual decisions over what images to choose from their preferences within the ideal design, tend to be weak in keeping its potential throughout the rehearsal and the actor’s performance. Training the body through ‘active images’ reinforces not only

the student's understanding of the bodymind, and consequently the upcoming selection and use of images, but it contributes to eventually enhance the images' capability to remain operative – i.e., to maintain bodymind awareness and connection during longer periods of time. It is as if bodymind training enabled a type of corporeal knowledge in/behind the image to be recognised and therefore used for an estimated period of time.

Whatever the student's need for an image was, that image could not come from me but ultimately from her. If I suggested one image I did on the basis that she had already assumed it so she could decide then if that image was “active” enough in her personal experience and knowledge of what she wanted to share with the audience. The teacher-student encounter is for clarifying as much as possible the questioning process of an actor. Each individual artist establishes her own dialogue with images, her own inner logic, and with it the use she gives them in order to comply with the demands of the project and satisfy her own artistic impulses. Either the student's selection comes from a rather intellectual approach or by “trying” images; in any case, there should be a free but clear dialogue between the body in action and the sensation of the image(s).

An actor's understanding of her bodymind and presence throughout the performance involves knowing the demands on that particular stage as well as the artistic impulse that motivate that performance. This knowledge grounds the experiences by which she is able to use images with rigour, consistency and independence. Their meaning and awareness are associated intuitively in bodymind training and eventually while performing with/through them. Energy and awareness (breath) will determine that meaning as well as the quality of the actor's presence. Energy and

awareness become the tools by which actors download their visualisations, so to speak, onto performance, allowing them to facilitate and assist the acting and performance process, to enrich the knowledge(s) and exercise of the body's ability to imagine as much as to build the imagery for the piece.

In this practice there is an implicit recognition that images are the primary means available to open up the work of an actor and her relationship with the spectator. Coaching the students through the exploration of those images that are able to awaken the quality of energy necessary for the moment helps them in their later embodiment of the performance score. Conventionally one may think that images or sensations may be chosen because of their ability to facilitate the actor's process of reaching certain psychological states (moods or emotions) or dramatic results (revealing the intentions behind the actions) akin to the ones the actor imagines for her character or persona in particular moments of the performance. For instance, Julián first attempted to use the qualities of legato and down in order to play old, despondent and sad. However, images can be understood as primary tools informing the actor's work on energy and action. They may also become a means for going beyond the reach of an immediate result, or the representation of something stipulated beforehand, and moving towards the possibility of leaving the meaning of performance open for both audiences and actors themselves.

In conclusion, experimenting her relationship to the doing through active images provides the actor with an experience and knowledge that sustains the growth of an inner coherence or internal criteria for practice. Reinforcing such private processes of searching, discarding, and selecting images that really activate her on stage forges a clear disposition to the certain aspects of images that are really valuable to their personal artistic work.

CONCLUSION

Admittedly, intuition is an elusive quantity, a shadowy force that seems to evaporate under the light of scrutiny. For this reason many teachers have refused to encounter the challenge of training intuition in any direct way. "Don't talk about it, just do it," is a repeated and often useful response to young drama students who insists on "understanding" the acting process. However, this prejudice against "talking," if simply a negation, is only partially useful. It does not suggest what the "it" is that cannot be talked about. Nor does this injunction offer a way to intensify the young actor's experience and acquaintance with the "it" that can only be touched by going beyond the boundaries of "talking about". To "just do it" leads as often to ignorance as intuition. (Feldshuh 1976: 82)

Training gives the actor the possibility of thinking of the action as an embodiment of her creativity. Presence in the action or creativity, as well as energy, does not "belong" so much to the actor as it does to the action. Presence and energy both emerge from the actor's interaction with the action. The action becomes therefore the main target of an actor, through which she articulates her performing body and makes it available for an observer. When the action is not complete, fully here and now, it will affect an actor's credibility in views of the spectator and if the actor is sensitive enough, it will affect her as well. However, it mostly hinders the act of individual revelation that is expected from the actor as a theatre artist, either as interpreter of a text or as creator of the performance. As I understand, psychophysical training directs the performing artist towards forms of communication whereby personal (distinctive) meanings and experiences are not predetermined but expected to be found.

There is the assumption in both training through martial arts and Michael Chekhov's techniques that the creativity in acting and the artistic revelation of the person who is the actor happen prior, so to speak, to her scenic

behaviour. Their locus is her intuition or state of inspiration. Any scenic action – from the very simple act of just standing on the stage to the most complex psychological characterisation – calls our attention primarily for becoming a ‘personal version’ (Elmano Sancho), a characteristic energy or individual commitment displayed and perceived as being creatively unique. I assume that such an artistic claim develops from the realisation of the bodymind as a possible state of being/doing in relation that can modify its certain quality, type and nature. This is what acting is based on. Training your acting intuition is from the very beginning already a creative act or creative training:

I would like to talk about the concepts we have been learning throughout the semester, and how these have been reflected in a final project, or better said, not only about the concepts in this semester. Without the work of the first part of the year it would have been impossible to internalise this subject [...] In order to carry out this process of the Creative Imagination it is essential to develop harmony, communion, body-mind. The body needs instruction, training in order to impede blockages for reaching that “zero point”, that state of absolute availability away from yourself to make way for creation; to achieve a psychophysical creative state; to connect the body without blockages with the image. The creative process begins therein. Training the body and the mind, an available body, together with a high degree of concentration. (Julia Moyano. Reflections on CBA)⁴⁵

CHAPTER 3: DYNAMICS OF THE IMAGINATION

Training aims not only to be a preparation of the body's commitment on stage but also for the mind to face the creative moment implied in acting. By this moment I refer to what concerns the imagination of an actor while either planning, resolving or evaluating her acting tasks. An actor's preparation involves therefore an individual's exploration and reflection on the process of imagining through the body, as well as the logic and role of the imagination in acting and making performance. On the other hand, the education of the student in *Interpretación Gestual* at RESAD entails responding to demanding physical skills, embodying specific and different corporeal grammars or codes, and the understanding and application of multiple devising and compositional skills according to varied dramaturgies. This means a rather personal and professional flexibility and adaptability for which students also need to be ready. Even though hopefully these abilities mature individually and develop throughout their artistic careers, a fertile and supple ground (body) of what is the theory-in-practice that can respond to these demands should be forged during their time at school.

The pedagogical programme this year is sustained in our (the students' and mine) common understanding of the learning process as a deep exploration into *what* is the commitment to the image that may better hold and promote

their acting possibilities on the stage. Zarrilli's preliminary training enables the student to question, feel and consciously participate in the bases of this exploration – i.e. the concept and process of the bodymind, the principles that awaken and regulate energy and meaning, as well as the meaning of being present in the action and on the stage at all times. Understanding the becoming of the bodymind leads the student to sense their performing body as a vehicle for communication and to work through the perceptual and sensory processes that are involved in that state or activity. It seems logical to anticipate that the embodiment of specific acting techniques that also embrace bodymind, energy and presence as a main resource of the actors' imagination will deepen and improve after their discovery, reinforcement and modulation had happened through their stage work.

However, when it comes to the process of constructing meanings from an a priori independent experience of both actor-training approaches (bodymind and the imagination) my previous explanation may not be enough to give a proper account. The paradigm upon which the meaning of presence, energy and the bodymind is being comprehended through our first semester aligns the acting and performance-making processes with approaches that defy or, at least, open our views on traditional Western standards, Aristotelian premises and literary forms. These are theatre forms and premises in which, on the other hand, Chekhov's system is deeply rooted. Furthermore, the many varied physical and/or devised theatre practices in which the student's education is divided also differ in their strategies for opposing, surpassing or dismissing such prevalent or traditional concepts of acting. Taking this reality into account, I am interested in seeing how a specific psychophysical approach to acting may consequently shine a distinctive light onto what the

student brings into their own experience of Chekhov's techniques, the meanings and applications they may draw from it. Also the other way around, how the ways in which they apply their imagination in performance might inform the process of the bodymind training. Michael Chekhov's practice will be studied through the projects of Bernarda Alba and *Asfixia*. These two projects will look at certain situations of practice that betray the juxtaposition of these two theatre paradigms occurring in the student's learning process within the context of the RESAD.

The Individual Projects have explored how the body and the mind transcend their duality in order to achieve an alternative mode of being present both to oneself and to the other in the moment of performance. The bodymind is a means for becoming active in one's full and personal commitment to being on stage. Through practice, observation, critical thinking, reading, and written or verbalised reflections, students have established connections between their psychophysical "warm-up" and acting; between the training and the overall learning process and experience; and between the perception of their bodies and the becoming of one's performative (body) being. This experience has forged a sense in the students of an acting body, which is (and will be) constantly and gradually attuned through an ever-evolving cycle of learning and performing (Zarrilli 2009: 85). Now I investigate the intermission of the imagination by observing how that certain awareness influences their specific work on the techniques and provides the students with collateral means for understanding their being as an actor and comprehending theatre.

Therefore, what I assume of special interest for this research is not that any of these techniques – Atmosphere, Imaginary Body or Psychological Gesture

– determine *what* to act, not even *how* to do it, but rather it is their alternative mode of explaining and understanding what acting is and how it becomes. Training becomes indispensable for getting the body ready to listen and to be attentive to its particular mode of being (perceiving) as much as for its deference towards how the imagination operates through the body and what it may offer to the performer. It is in *making available the channels by which the imagination works* that I see the trials and tribulations of shifting paradigms in performance practice, a shift that perhaps is better understood as a growing awareness rather than as a rupture.

Description of the project

The performance project is based on scenes from Federico García Lorca's play *The House of Bernarda Alba* that the students have personally and intuitively chosen as best representing the atmospheres, characters and gestures that they are going to play. Concepts, principles, processes and techniques are introduced through class exercises and the preparatory work for the project. The rehearsals look at the process of making performance and staging. The DVD includes excerpts from this whole process and its public presentation at RESAD in June 2005.

Through the three main techniques of Atmospheres, Imaginary Body and Psychological Gesture I articulate, in this project, Chekhov's approach to acting and his proposal for actor training. For the DVD, I select and analyse some key exercises taught to me by Slava Kokorin, David Zinder and Joanna Merlin as well as my own approach to the work. My interest in the students'

encounter with Chekhov's techniques is especially focused on how the embodiment of images through the techniques informs the acting and the performance that happens as a result; that is, on how the adaptable image-action happens in the here and now of the stage. Through their imaginations students become sensitive, creative and committed to their own responses to acting and characterisation. Chekhov's techniques overlap in their unique approach to acting and promote an overall conception of the play, its dramaturgy and approach to the *mise en scène* collectively forged by the ensemble.⁴⁶

The Bernarda Alba project also integrates the body knowledge(s) and skills acquired through two other subjects, concretely *Expresión Corporal*⁴⁷ and Dance. As a pedagogical project, it emerged in collaboration with the Dance teacher, Eva Lara, and her work with the students on excerpts of Mats Ek's choreography for the same play. The subject of Corporeal Expression has already introduced the student to Laban's concepts and analysis of movement, which become also an ally to the techniques for the students' consciousness and vocabulary of the use of muscle force, gravity pull, tempo, space and flow (reference to this contribution will be done later). In addition to this, a workshop with a Chekhov master teacher and theatre director, David Zinder, was organised during the year. The student could experience Zinder's approach to 'image training' and to the techniques. It helped them to further reflect-in-practice and post-practice in the many questions raised by the techniques and implied in their learning process.

The techniques not only constituted the creative bases upon which each of the actors was individually constructing her character and entering the world of the play. They also became the foundation for the devising process of this

one particular group of people and meeting point for their imaginations. The project served also to look into the embodied word, the speech that arises from the gesture and that comes through the body within the context of the performance.

Concepts and techniques underlying performance practice were explored on stage and in front of an audience through the two different performance scores – one of an actor and the other of a dancer. Both scores were result of a process of interaction and exchange between images and gestures back and forth between the theatre piece and the dance choreography. The performance in front of an audience helped the students to adhere to their physicality both as actors and dancers and explore the meeting points beyond the context of a class. The aim was for the performer to become aware of her determinate presence onstage and explore her concrete relationship to the doing upon the score.

The acting score of Bernarda Alba was 30 minutes long, the dance scenes selected for this project were all together 15 minutes long and they were shown after the theatrical version. The physical rigour and commitment that was required to tackle the high level of technical exigency of Ek's choreographies allowed us to establish an open channel of communication between both disciplines of an incredible artistic and pedagogical value and support.

We've combined what we do in dance class, and dancing bodies have changed their consistency, they are different, look different. Acting bodies also have fed on the source of dance. They complement each other. The dance process has been hard. Important, very important to be very clear about the choreography, in mind and in body, but actually the same must happen in the acting so that the body has freedom. I know

what happens in each scene, I know what I have to do; now I only have to live through it. (Violeta Gil, final portfolio).⁴⁸

3.1. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA

Preliminaries: sensations versus emotions

'The right objectives through the right means' was a statement hanging in the Chekhov Studio Theatre at Dartington Hall (1936-1938). The right objectives are to be found in the sensorial and aesthetic realm of the play and the actor, whereas the means are right as far as they lead the actor 'to evoke the sensation rather than to provoke the emotion'. The ultimate goal is therefore to develop in the actor a clear and heightened 'aesthetic conscience' of who she is and the stage she inhabits:

The realm of movement in the art of the actor is just as complicated and just as little and dilettantishly developed - and here also an artistic approach is necessary, here also is a need to develop a quite particular attention from within one self to one's body, to one's movements, there is a need to develop what might be described as an 'aesthetic conscience'. (Chekhov 2005: 80)

In his system, sensations are prioritised over the emotional in the relationship that the actor establishes with the character or play he is going to stage. The imagination was Chekhov's means to overcome the dangerous emphasis on the emotional or sense memory that Stanislavski proposed as a means to awake artistic feelings on stage (Powers 92: Tape 3). On the other hand, it also responded to the aesthetic nature of the creative process Chekhov envisioned for the actor. It was through the imagination that performers approach physical sensations and their bodies could be further developed so they become a reliable site to receive and play artistically with the emotions

on the stage. Through the education of her sentient body the actor achieves those ideal feelings that function as inner personal criteria with which to guide one's acting.

I will go insofar as to say that while working upon our parts we should forget about our feelings and be concerned only with sensations, and especially in the original state of our work. What we really need are exercises on sensations so that we finally get freed of all the doubts about the power of our sensations and will have full confidence in them, then our feelings will be ours without any special efforts on our parts. (Powers 92: Tape 3).

Chekhov's ideal sensations arise from archetypal feelings. These archetypes come after a subconscious process of abstracting that gathers the sensations of our feelings, as they have been known to the senses and synthesises our whole individual experience into just one category of feelings:

No brain efforts can substitute for the wisdom of our subconscious. All our private, subjective, particular life experiences having been altered, amalgamated, summarized, purified, condensed by our subconscious wisdom become archetypes, prototypes of feelings and these archetypes we call sensations. And only these sensations, these prototypes we can experience immediately, directly, spontaneously; such is the nature of our human psychology. (Powers 92: Tape 3)

Chekhov's training is about knowing how to read the archetypal movement - i.e. staccato and legato; expanding and contracting; giving and receiving; push and pull; etc. - that organise one's corporeal feelings as far as their sensations are virtually present in every human experience of objects, moods and feelings. When an actor evokes such a sensation (of lifting something, for example) it will produce a whole chain of feelings and resonances with which the actor awakens and builds up the actions and emotions adequate to

the performance context. Emotions - as well as all the other inner life implicated in acting such as moods, intentions, motives, goals or feelings - become task-dependent and not actor-dependent. Their nature, unlike personal emotions in daily life, is primarily objective and aesthetic. These emotions are rather flexible and able to be adapted to the context of performance. The context is determined by its specific nature of a particular dramaturgy and relational encounter with an audience. The actor relies on her process of synthesis, abstraction and possibility of deployment of her imagination within that particular context. Images are therefore formed from a basis of corporeal sensations, which function as her artist's private palette with which to compose the scene.

Beginnings: A sensitive membrane.

[DVD1-CBA-Atmosphere-Objective atmosphere]

It [inspiration] involves what he [Chekhov] calls awareness, being absolutely open to what is going on, so that it flows into you and takes you and lifts you and moves you. If you really are aware, thoroughly aware with every part of your being... body, soul and spirit - the whole thing - that's your being [bodymind]. The act of being, and that awareness, had to be as sensitive as a membrane, Chekhov would say. (Du Prey 1979-80: 10)

The actor's aim is in developing an 'extreme *sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses*' (Chekhov 1953: 2. Italics in the original). And the key point, as Du Prey states, is in the act of being - the whole awareness of what is inside and around (Ibid.). This dual or in-between

awareness reinforces the creative aspects that are embedded in an actor's psychology assumed as a state of constant improvisation. Dependence is not on a logical pre-reasoning or personal motivation but on the somatic reference from the affects and feelings that arise in the moment of performance.

The first thing to explore is the meaning of such a 'sensitive membrane' - i.e. to delve into Chekhov's idea of the actor being a 'receiver' (listening) and a 'conveyor' (responding) at the same time of the 'subtlest images, feelings, emotions and will impulses' (Chekhov 1953: 2). This membrane actualises a preliminary state in the body, a disposition that precedes what an actor receives (feelings and sensations) and conveys in terms of meanings (intentions or emotions). The idea of a membrane gathers an understanding of Chekhov's creative psychology and the idea of the bodymind holding a specific relationship to doing. This new sentient skin explains the development of an actor's imagination. Starting the work with the students from the technique of Atmospheres, and particularly from this concrete exercise on the specificity of an actor's state of corporeal awareness or sensitivity allows the practice, on the one hand, to rethink the specific principles and particularities of the techniques within the system; and, on the other, to set down common principles coming from bodymind practice and upon which these techniques may be discussed after practice with the students.

Slava Kokorin first introduced the embodiment of an imaginary sensitive membrane at a MICHA conference in Lake Baikal (2000).⁴⁹ The complete exercise shows that what the actor follows while acting is the impulse to and not the motivation for. Slava emphasised Chekhov's idea that theatre is

based on receiving rather than on giving – what the actor receives provokes an impulse and a subsequent reaction. Acting is a response that comes, as it is explicit in the case of atmospheres, from the feeling of a different space that awakens energy in the body. To receive implies for Kokorin to know that energy transforms the impulse by generating one concrete reaction that can last for five minutes or even a whole life – ‘as the first slap to a new born’ (he exemplified). Assuming that energy hides in the difference, he places the actor’s question on what she receives that is “different” to her. What became important in performing was not even the reacting, but the place from which such reactions came. The key was in the kind of energy an actor receives – and therefore the response he awakens – from the outside.⁵⁰

The interest while building up this sensitive membrane is on the simultaneous interplay of the attention during the exercise (by keeping the mind engaged in the ‘image’ of the membrane) and the study of its ‘inner mechanism’ (attending to the kinaesthetic relationship to it). Once the membrane was re-created by the interaction with it through the movement, it became rather easy to become observant of the reactions that come from it (membrane). As if the body would have taken over the image and the mind is freed to explore beyond.

A relationship with the image in terms of movement is first explored through a chain of actions and reactions repeatedly – an active exploration of the membrane by touching and reacting to its limits. The image “becomes” by keeping the attention as much as possible on the adequacy to the feelings of the membrane and its limits. The right feelings (image) are given by the precision that the body experiences while touching-reacting. Eventually the body develops its own somatic knowledge of the image and criteria. Then,

the membrane is moved closer to the body. It “intuitively” responds to an outside contact (my touch), without the need of mind intervention (visual image of the membrane). By resting in such feeling or sensation, actors start to play freely from their bodies. The challenge is in maintaining such a specific concentration (the membrane) as they go along. Two main processes are being nurtured at the same time.

On the one hand, the difference between imagining in the head and being able to notice and sense an image, i.e. evoking and creating in one’s body the necessary feelings to do so, becomes certain. The sensations are being built upon actions or interactions between the body and the object of exploration – either real and actually done (as in life) or imaginary and perceptually anticipated (as in the theatre).⁵¹ The visual image – internal representation in mind of an image – may explain the process up to a certain point. The membrane exercise revealed to the students that the imagination relies on each of them as whole beings, in their own experienced-based perceptual processes and voluntary commitment modelled mainly by their kinaesthetic sense and sensorimotor experience (corporeal awareness).

Before starting with Chekhov, I never thought that it was possible to train the imagination. I thought that some actors had more imagination than others and that it was a question of luck; also I was afraid that a moment came in which my imagination would run out. Now I know that the imagination is something one must work on. (Lara Cobos, reflections on CBA)⁵²

On the other hand, the membrane working process also reinforces a sense of inner truth, which ultimately guides the acting throughout. This inner criterion is neither located in the real emotions caused by determinate reactions (the possible suffering, for example, when receiving an electric

charge or a reaction to pain), nor in the reality of the visual image set around the body built exclusively inside the head (having a beautiful picture of an animated skin). The adequacy of an actor's response to her inner feelings or sense of truth is an attunement of the relationship feeling-action that establishes through the image *while* reacting to others here and now. This sense of truth can be traced back to the bodymind training and its capability for enabling the student with a free movement between the feeling of the action and the doing of it while doing the sequences. The building of the image further remains a personal decision and a free will to play off that awareness or disposition in the interaction *with* the other.

Each actor's personal answer to an image, quality of movement or atmosphere relies on her growing knowledge and assurance of her body's kinaesthetic and somatic responses, her acute attentiveness to perceptual and sensorial information and her ability to remain concentrated on this specific process without getting distracted or lost in meaning, emotions, moods or feelings (resonances) that may be born out of it. This aspect is especially crucial at the beginning stages of the process because this understanding of the work will ensure the conceptualisation of what kind of knowledge they are after and what or how they need to focus on it so that it becomes non-tacit.

The membrane exercise introduces this way the student to the aspects she needs to be aware of and involved with during the technique that follows: Atmosphere. It sets the rules of the game through which as an actor she unfolds her improvisation and work. However, this does not mean that the membrane is *the* formula by which Atmosphere (any technique) can be easily embodied and solutions found; but a preliminary step that boosts an active

disposition of the student into a state of not-knowing, a premise for noticing and subsequently for creating by doing.⁵³ Acting-and-imagining will be then explored and confronted through the student's physical, mental, aesthetic and emotional skills when dealing with an Atmosphere.

One of the most important lessons I have learned this year is that I don't have to do or say anything to feel in an atmosphere. Sol did not ask us for results ahead of a possible audience, so if she or the others did not see that atmosphere it was OK. What matters is what one experiences when wrapped inside them, when visualising them [...] The minimum doing was enough, as I said, because in this kind of work one does not have to tell anything, just feel and act in accordance with what one is feeling without ever losing, indeed, [...] the beginning, middle and end of movement, of every action taken, nor the space above the head or the centre to which we must place our attention and breath at all times. (Julián Ortega, reflection on CBA)⁵⁴

"Atmosphere" names a process as much as a technique. One cannot act out an atmosphere, but it is certainly something happening both for the performer and the spectator alike during the performance. It involves both the actor's and spectator's sensitivities and perceptual processes by which the specific theatrical environment stirs their imaginations. This imaginative and creative reaction is a kinaesthetic and natural response of the bodymind wherein the sensorial world of the play becomes alive.

Looking at the students' practice, for example, Julián Ortega and Sonia De Martín [See DVD1-CBA-Atmosphere-Objective atmosphere] built their improvisation upon the relationship that was born between them during their exploration of the heavy atmosphere of Lorca's play. They are already suggesting its story and perhaps some of its characters to the viewer, even though there was no previous assignment of characters. I also believe they were not in their heads during their improvisation. The improvisation was just

based on their approach and individual commitment to acting through attending to their bodymind's interaction with the objective and general atmosphere of the play.

In this beginning aspect of Chekhov's work (membrane) I see a grand ally in the one-hour training that precedes the exploration of each technique. As a matter of fact, the attentiveness to (sensitivity towards) the bodymind and energy that have been hopefully already enhanced during training, overlaps. Upon this overlapping of training-technique lies the potential of practice both as an artistic outcome as well as a methodological resource for inquiring into both systems of practice. The connections are done by the students from their private experience and body-in-practice. One evidence of this integration remains in the student's disposition, state of concentration, and complete engagement with the doing that feeds into their creation of an aesthetic illusion.

Sensitising the actor towards the movements he can make in relation to an image by developing a sensitive membrane is furthermore a technique to enter into a specific relationship to acting. A sense of detachment towards one's body and actions sustains Chekhov's techniques and builds in their practice. As argued in the previous chapter, one aspect of the bodymind refers to the relational nature of its experience. The bodymind is conceptualised as a state of constant renewal of the relationship between body and mind and environment, and it is not considered as something fixed in a pre-established reality or causality. Every response happens through a relational body that re-invents itself anew each time the image (stimulus) is present and the relation established. From this perspective, the bodymind functions as a state of concentration in the moment that allows the actor to

feel free to respond and construct her response away from any previous consideration either of the antecedents or consequences of doing, at least not in a cognitive or intentionally conscious way. On the other hand, the sensitive membrane (bodymind) actualises a relationship to the action that is neither judgemental nor emotional. The body realises its “becoming one” with the action in the moment just before a judgement or an emotion can come through, as if the experience were “caught up” in the moment prior to one’s mind’s evaluation. The actor experiences a moment of being in an accomplished bodymind state or complete engagement with the doing, in which one seems to get rid of any sense of self and time.

The excess of muscular tension that may come from mental efforts or a self-centred responsibility “to act” is released when working from bodymind awareness or this special state of concentration. Any exercise or technique within Chekhov’s method finds herein an adequate commencement at the same time that it explains the students’ own processes of listening and apprehending their “action in” or “reaction to” an atmosphere, an imaginary body or an inner gesture. In certain sense, the experience of the sensitive membrane anticipates the split of consciousness that Michael Chekhov identifies as an ideal creative state (the fourth stage) whereby the actor-as-creator ‘becomes inwardly free of his own creation and becomes the observer of his own work’ (1991: 155).⁵⁵

It is my belief that the most important and challenging aspect in any of Chekhov’s techniques, in fact in any technique, is to have a clear awareness of how the means of creating or re-creating your feelings on stage intercede with the here and now of the performance. That (multiple) awareness is the only way to avoid, as Zarrilli advises, ‘conflating into some imagined real the

palpably present, physiologically-based vibratory feelings that one experiences while acting and the actor's own personal emotions' (2009: 40). By the same token Michael Chekhov insists in the idea of dual consciousness or Higher Self:

The actor with a Divided Consciousness will be far from those who say, "All is forgotten around me when I act," or "The audience does not exist for me," or "On the stage I have the same real feelings as in life." This attitude numbs the actor's consciousness. (1991: 157)

This dual consciousness seems to be physiologically evoked while working from the membrane for it allows the student to notice her reactions at the same time she is acting upon them. The bodymind actualises *in* the reaction through the choices it makes. In turn, being aware of such reflection-in-action (what the body is doing) makes the actor's feelings of presence in what she is doing (concentration) more acute. This heightened awareness in the action will also permit a later conscious reflection of the body's response after the completion of each action, exercise or improvisation.

There is a point where there is the pure, imaginative, spiritual state, and another where there is full acting, and the line is a continuous unbroken one. What we are trying to do today is to bring these two things together to a certain extent, so that it is imagination and it is action at the same time; a certain strange thing. (Chekhov, in Ashperger 2008: 107-108.)

Into the midst of the technique of Atmospheres

Studying the reaction of the body to an atmosphere through a 'sensitive membrane' enhances the actor's awareness and potential of the bodymind in re-creating itself in its interactions with the environment. However, it could be

also said that reinforcing the actor's bodymind through the commitment to an action enhances the potential understanding of how our imagination responds and interacts with the space, i.e. how it becomes part of our embodied perceptual process as happening in the moment of performance. The point of this is that through increasing bodymind awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness one improves one's inner criteria of practice and therefore the possibilities of development and growth through the imagination and the techniques.

Chekhov's practical and philosophical focus on the sensorial world of the performance and performers' interaction with such environment may allow me to explain its intrinsic paradigmatic shift in one's way of thinking about theatre. The primacy of sensations in Chekhov's system situates individual perceptual processes at the core of the students' analysis and embodiment of the techniques, inverting the process that as actors they naturally think their art through – i.e. the psychological and emotional features of their art. At the same time, their learning process is being redirected towards *how* their bodies do in order *to receive* from the world rather than towards *what* they do in order *to express* it.

This leads me to stop for a moment in a meta-theoretical reflexion rather significant in practice, which intimately links this idea to the experience of breathing that students acquire in bodymind training. Considering the breath and bodymind's implications for understanding an actor's expression means, among other things, overcoming what is common throughout acting classes and manuals: the equivalence of expression to an exhalation of the student's voice and effort in action. Following Hollis Huston (1992), respiration can be understood to sustain a theory of expression that provides an insight into the

overall learning process. Even though expiration and expression describe a similar process of finishing and completing something, they are not convergent. Huston explains that even expiration supports the voice and it may support the action too, it is divergent from one's expression: 'your breath sustains your life without expression. Your life is supported on the rebound of inspiration, and so can your voice be' (1992: 24). Taking this analogy further, Huston defends the idea that it is not in expression that theatre lives, but in waiting: 'The stage is a space of waiting, an articulate anticipation – a nothing no longer empty' (21); and for the body, says Huston, 'inspiration makes ready. Readiness is all. The rest, no matter what, is downhill' (29).

The new location of acting and expression is in this research relevant for the two following reasons. First, there is a similarity between Huston's location of breath and Chekhov's understanding (following Steiner) of acting as the place for anticipation and creativity, i.e. a place for potential more than realisation – 'Not that which *is* inspires the creation, but that which *may* be; not the *actual* but the *possible*.' (Steiner, in Chekhov 1953: 21. Italics in the original). Second, because of its connections with the ideas – so easily misleading students – of irradiation and/or presence. As seen in chapter 2, they become dependent not on the actor's intention to deploy any certain type of force or special energy, but on her will and capability to remain *within* certain kind of awareness. The same thing happens when the actor plays within an atmosphere.

An atmosphere is first delimited as a concrete performing area demarcated within the space of the class. The students remain outside ready to enter a new and different world or quality of the space – i.e. into the perceptual presence of an imaginary space. As if a big pool was in front of the actor who

is (made) ready to step in – ‘crossing the threshold’, Chekhov would say. The pool made of sensations that the students have associated with the play during their first readings. No characters are assigned yet. The process starts in an open mutual gathering and building up of the collective imagination. The atmosphere in *The House of Bernarda Alba* had already been defined as one of oppression and imprisonment by the group. The students are asked about the peculiarities of this atmosphere for them. They say out loud one or two personal images or sensorial associations. What kinds of smells, shades or lights, temperature, clarity or opacity of the air, its material, its weight... They are invited to take away any types of associations that arise; always trying to decipher what its underlying meaning or personal connection is to the atmosphere in terms of sensations it evokes in them. The challenge is in discerning the most characteristic sensation or feeling that is hidden in their comment, image or association when they are not clear.

To discern the (my) meaningful sensations, feelings or images is a premise in order to discover how ‘the universal poetic sense’ (Lecoq 2000: 46) of the play is made particular in each of us and incites our desire to create.⁵⁶ What we are looking for is the sensations, images or associations that may stir one’s inner movement or dynamic, which come from our impressions while reading the play and the qualities that make us vibrate or be moved:

I understood that an artist must know how to receive an impression. This means knowing how to select impressions and find a relationship to them. [...] he must be receptive to every impression and find a clear and conscious relationship to it. (Chekhov 2005: 116. Italics in the original)

These impressions must be presented as easily and directly as possible to oneself and to the others: a noun, verb, colour, object, material, adjective, sensation, moving image, etc. Upon this observation of the play’s sensorial

grounds and implicit inner movements the student builds up what will become her individual way of relating to it. These are non-definitive answers, not right and wrong. One student may find a brown colour and another one black for her feelings of imprisonment. One can find the forces of pulling within, and another one of pushing for describing their feelings of an atmosphere of oppression. Objects can be also very suggestive to one person, several people, or the whole group. But the atmosphere that causes them - whatever is “there” in the imagination - is as virtual and objective as real objects are. We are creating the atmosphere by relating to it, not by its independent truth or reality. Nothing is disregarded until one finds a way to relate to *that* atmosphere through *that* specific quality of sensation however strange it may seem at first sight. An abstract scenery made of both common and individual sensations is slowly built up in front and projected through our imaginations into the performing area.

What is unique and also theoretically complex is that the term describes a typical in-between phenomenon. Atmospheres stand between subjects and objects: one can describe them as object-like emotions, which are randomly cast into a space. But one must at the same time describe them as subjective, insofar as they are nothing without a discerning Subject. But their great value lies exactly in this inbetweenness [...] atmospheres are experienced affectively, and one can only describe their characteristic insofar as one exposes oneself to their presence and experiences them as bodily sensations. (Böhme, in Brown 2010: 143-144)

The fact is that these bodily sensations, as a result of their inbetweenness, have the potential to move and affect the actor as much as an actor has the possibility to feed and inform them at will. Like the other techniques in the system, Atmospheres aim to discern an essential quality or generic property that unifies an overall feeling or sensation. It needs to be defined by the

individual while looking for a description of its common rather than universal experience.

It is through time and practice that the students learn to discern which images are adequate – and most inclined to stir up their capability of moving and being moved inside the atmosphere – from other images which are too intellectual and maybe beautiful but do not exhort in them any movement nor the quality and vividness of response (i.e. their desire to create) in a clear way. For that, previous exercises relating atmospheres with qualities of movement have been done. They constituted a conscious and essential preparation before tackling the complex atmosphere of a dramatic play.

These exercises are fundamentally directed to learning the personal but also the human and collectively shared systematic correspondence and possibility of convergence between language, thoughts, emotions, desires and our commonly shared sensorimotor experience of them.⁵⁷ Their main purpose is to discover a natural mode of organising what happens in the bodies – feelings and sensations – when they interact with the environment through movement. They are subjective as much as they depend on one's personal relationship with such movements, that is, a referential point of view or perspective from where one feels. But they are also objective in that the same movement shaping the experience happens within the same reality of that body's cultural and conceptual system.⁵⁸ Upon the mastery of these psychophysical experiences and their underlying principles grows a corporeal rather than intellectual procedure of learning how to listen to images and incorporate them. Gradually the techniques are comprehended, the psychology enriched and the body sensitised. At the same time a new possibility for a theatre language is opened and a philosophical acting

system becomes embodied.

Qualities are available in experience as possibilities, as potentialities, but not as givens. Experience is a dynamic process of navigating the pathways of these possibilities. Experience depends on the skills needed to make one's way. (Noë 2004: 135)

Chekhov's movement qualities: what and how

'The Action (and Will) expresses "what" happens, whereas the Quality (and Feelings) shows "how" it happens' explains Chekhov (1991: 39). The opposition between *what* and *how* of an action is a delicate point in the philosophy underlying these techniques that enters quite often the reflections in and after practice of the students. For example, let's take a quality (or inner movement) that permeates through the actor while embodying a daily action (or outer movement): to read a newspaper with a quality of flowing. In this exercise the student may ask where concretely her attention as an actor is. Is it on what she does (reading) or on how she does it (flowing)? Is the actor thinking in "showing" water? What does it mean to be permeated? How does the actor need to imagine water for it to become strong as motive and successful as response? Who defines success and how is it explained? Is it strictly necessary that it is perceivable from an outside eye? How and to what extent?

While learning Chekhov's qualities of movement - moulding, flying, flowing, irradiating - Julián Ortega reports:

In this type of exercise it is essential to avoid unnecessary stress and be

constantly aware of the strength and power that comes from such quality, for later on all that moulding will be reduced and we are left only with the sensation - just with the relationship that our centre maintains imaginarily with such quality - in order to be able to address the quotidian actions through that “moulding” though internalising it. (Reflections on CBA)⁵⁹

The paradox is that, as an actor, one apprehends the (artistic) meaning of water while doing and being primarily in the action, for ‘an indefinite but not unlimited’ (Best, in Fleshman 1986: 12. Underlined in the original) possibilities of “acting” – doing “newspaper reading” on the stage – that the movement of water may bring. A connection to the quality through the by-product of its creative action (resonances) happens when the actor embodies that specific action/quality.

This is a process that, as Lenard Petit stated, depends ultimately on the movements one can make, which are to be found in one’s perceptual awareness. The sensation remains in the body as far as one’s perception of the movement – i.e. the relationship to such certain sensation – is clear and concise. This is, when the agreement of inner-movement and outer-action really compounds one and the same sense of being: a sensation that is not fully me (nor mine) neither am I fully it, but as one working through the other.

We were concentrated on the material of what forms the character and not on how that character is. One focuses on the relationship between the quality and the centre and from there, it is not him, the actor, who acts, but one lets the character be the one who acts. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)⁶⁰

The analysis of movement the students undertake in *Expresión Corporal* comes to the fore in these particular exercises. The four basic qualities of movement that Chekhov describes – flowing, flying, moulding, and irradiating

– can be analysed through Laban’s system as representing four different combinations of gravity and muscular intervention. As an example: Air (the quality of flying) is a movement done against gravity where there is no active muscular participation; Water (flowing) is the work of gravity operating through a body whose strength does not oppose but accompany it; Earth (moulding) represents a voluntary muscular implication that accentuates our sensations of weight and gravity; and Fire (irradiating) is but a wearying physical strength fighting against gravity. If there is no physical realisation of weight (working against/for gravity) and activation of the muscular strength that participates in the quality, it is relatively useless to think how the actor can relate her acting (actions) to such quality of movement. The corporeal awareness of these “technicalities”, let’s say, in each of these qualities of movement not only becomes an ally in the understanding of the work but it is a fundamental part (knowledge) in their possibilities of enactment through the score. And this is so not only for the immediate implications of the physicality and expression of the outer action, but also because of the information in terms of awareness that this knowledge provides in regards to establishing a clear and concise relationship to doing. Such technical work on one’s corporeal awareness does not necessarily interfere negatively with the purpose of the techniques *when and if* the aim of the actor is firmly established not only in the performativity of the action but also in its creative potential for enacting the whole performance score.

Metaphorically speaking it is not the question of how the mind or image (A) is presented to or articulated through the actor’s body or action (B), but how when they both are together the actor may start working from it (C). The state that is seized by assiduous training of the bodymind actualises through the

techniques as first-hand experience of (my) actor's imagining body through the scene. The actor's bodymind becomes a referential point of being-in-representation. It is a generic body-being state to start working from, which avoids an intellectual or technical-only approach or a subjective or emotional-only relationship to either the quality or the action. Action and quality merge in the doing of the bodymind, in the imagination. This perspective may also explain why the practice of Chekhov's psychophysical exercises and techniques ultimately reinforce and expand an actors' range of movement and bodymind without the need of an alternative form of training. The sensorimotor knowledge and precision upon which the technique works also determines *what* the students will perceive in their future images (impressions) and *how* they will develop their work through them.

The aim in the training as well as in the acting class is still in the adequacy of these sensations to their corporeal manifestation – like the subject of *Expresión Corporal* – yet what changes is the perspective from where to look at it. It is not just about an attainment based on the necessary skills and movement analysis, but in the relationship to such attainment. In other words, how this kinaesthetic knowledge is then particularised and understood by the individual actor in order to search for and develop her physicality and eloquence on stage.

The study of the play through atmospheres can be conceived as an extension of this work on qualities: what if *that* movement of water or quality is set outside the body, but in the space around? This indicates that an atmosphere - or the "aliveness" of space - is a means to explore how this embodied knowledge may – as if from a different location of the image – further influence and inform scenic behaviour and stage presence.

Spatial awareness in the technique of Atmospheres

There are two characteristic aspects in the actor's embodiment within an atmosphere. One, as seen, was the kinaesthetic nature of the necessary relationship to be established with the image while doing. The other is the significant presence and awareness of the space that makes up the acting. Both aspects interact in a particular and relevant manner in the technique of Atmospheres. They furthermore give way to looking further into another process that Chekhov's system establishes as the root of creativity. It is the 'transformed I', new 'sense of self' and/or the 'lack of egotism' required in order to be fully permeated and available to the work that is being done (Chekhov 2000: 71-72). The image (in this case an atmosphere) materialises for the actor and spectator as well through these absences and/or vulnerability to the environment.

Performing artists and audiences share the atmosphere as a potential psychophysical experience that is made available through (not imposed by) the performer's commitment to the performance score.

When we train an actor traditionally, we tend to train him to use his energy in a manipulative way; that is, to send the energy out toward an objective or through an intention so that the energy of the situation becomes a reflection of, is coerced by, the energy of the performer. In the traditional stage situation, the performer creates his own field of energy. (Benedetti 1977: 55)⁶¹

An alternative to that traditional situation is in the potential attention that an actor may deploy towards the space and its active presence while acting:

It's very much a question of knowing the whole thing and making choices. You still have a right to an intention, but you are finding the intentions in relation to the space as opposed to manipulating space from a priori idea of what the intention should be. (Worley response to Benedetti. Ibid)

The reaction to the atmosphere is the result of an 'active-passive relationship'⁶² to the stimulus that inhabits such space. The actor's bodymind is receptive to what occurs in her body, active in its engagement with the image by "keeping" the stimulus – atmosphere – around. But it is also passive by not being assertive or imposing the energy of the body back into the space. Students let the energy awakened by this imaginary space move through the body and inspire a compound of intermixing sensations, feelings, thoughts, associations and emotions. These resonances fulfil her by "allowing" rather than "finishing" the performance. An active-passive relationship allows the actor to prompt and adjust her responses to the images in the context of performance by following the articulation and modulation of creative impulses through appropriate actions.

The particularity in the technique is that both the doing and the done are not just involved in the reaction to only one image or feature within the image, but in a further complex process of remaining active to the dynamics of the imagination and the spatial awareness at the same time. This spatial imagination, so to speak, may reveal or awaken buried sensations that were "cognitively" hidden, yet they provide the actor's body awareness with a feeling understanding of the sensorial world of the play - i.e. a meaning. This corporeal understanding is made conscious (tangible) thanks to the atmosphere's imagining action upon the scene. It puts the performer in contact with the living experiences imprinted in her body. Olfactory, tactile,

visual, kinaesthetic, aural and gustatory sensations are in the body and relate organically and incessantly when the play is recalled. In this sense, the concept of atmosphere is understood instead as a dynamic quality of the imagination beyond the quality of the particular image that elaborates it.

Being in that atmosphere, surrounded by images and/or sensations, leads to a kind of somatic or embodied knowledge about what the play means in terms of its involving power of suggestion or what-would-be its overall coating – a sense of its whole. At the centre of its embodiment is Chekhov's idea of not trying to perform the atmosphere but letting it be outside and inform from "there" another dimension of the actor's relationship to the play. The actual atmosphere of any performance takes shape through the representations and is finished after they conclude. At an early stage, exploring the atmosphere in the house of Bernarda Alba may help to define the acting and the future performance. The significance of actions, movements or speeches is not only based on the specific meanings or intentions the atmosphere confers, but also on the suggestive connotations and/or ambiguity which it transfers kinaesthetically to and from the actor and the spectator (as seen in Julián and Sonia's improvisation).

Atmosphere becomes a way the actor has to create the performance score or the character – i.e. a mode of participating in her particular embodiment *without* necessarily defining results but by leaving possible meanings open [DVD1-CBA-Atmosphere-Character's atmosphere]. This aspect is what gives an actor-creator an enormous potential to explore in and for performance. It does not determine the answer but depends on the movements your body can make and the aesthetic dimensions that you, as an artist, are willing to play. The way the imagination/atmosphere guides the performance in the

here and now reveals, in my experience, its distinct nature, more abstract, elusive and as Bachelard suggests more 'imaginary' based:

We always think of the imagination as the faculty that *forms* images. On the contrary, it *deforms* what we perceive; it is, above all, the faculty that frees us from immediate images and *changes* them. If there is no change, or unexpected fusion of images, there is no imagination; there is no *imaginative act*. If the image that is *present* does not make us think of one that is *absent*, if an image does not determine an abundance –an explosion– of unusual images, then there is no imagination. There is only perception, the memory of a perception, a familiar memory, an habitual way of viewing form and color. The basic word in the lexicon of the imagination is not *image*, but *imaginary*. The value of an image is measured by the extent of its *imaginary* aura. Thanks to the *imaginary*, imagination is essentially *open* and *elusive*. It is the human psyche's experience of *openness* and *novelty*. More than any other power it is what distinguishes the human psyche. (Bachelard 2002: 1. Italics in the original)⁶³

Training the muscle of the imagination is for an actor a double process. On the one hand, it explores the endless movements, feelings and sensations that the imagination awakes within the body. On the other hand, it re-discovers the potential of these experiences in the immediacy of the stage, that is, the possibilities that are 'rendered present' (Hulton, in Hodge 2000: 161) each time as if for the first time in the moment of performance. These possibilities are not being thought of as finished actualisation(s) of something that the actor attempts to repeat in each performance, but as processes of embodiment that the actor allows to happen for each occasion. 'The truly awakened imagination', observes Chekhov, 'is in constant, fiery activity' (1991: 4). That activity of the imagination is the through-means for a continuous renewal of the body on stage.

3.2. IMAGINARY BODIES IN GARCÍA LORCA'S PLAY

[DVD1-CBA-Imaginary Body]

The technique of the Imaginary Body

If the idea of atmospheres allows the student to explore her impressions of the play through the sensory world that surrounds them, the Imaginary Body (as well as the Imaginary Centre) allows her to explore and experience the sensorial reality of a fictional body that she recreates for her character. Remaining with the idea of an active/passive relationship established with the image while performing, the student approaches the body (and/or imaginary centre) of a character as a means to understand and embody its meaning. The student is asked to explore the possible patterns of sensorimotor responses that come from a different perception of their own bodies and, through that perception, the interaction of such a new body with the environment. The image is not expected to live mainly thanks to a constant spatial awareness this time, but through one's corporeal continuity and precision in the incorporation of a foreign physicality while doing the scene. The exercises for the technique are in themselves games with the possibilities of an imaginary referent – physically present – to be played on stage. These games represent the collision between the body of the actor and that of the character – 'That which constitutes their *difference* makes them *characters*' (Chekhov 1953: 86. Italics in the original). Through these games the student gives birth to an aesthetic image.

The technique rests therefore on the actor's sensorimotor understanding of *that* process by which she is able to create in her mind a whole picture of a new corporeality that awakens her artistic impulses – again (a) knowledge of its in-betweenness. What is once considered distant from us is afterwards brought closer and in-corporated as if it were a new garment; and – given that certain conditions are being allowed – a psychological permeation happens through which the image elevates the actor from a passive state of mind to a creative and active one (22). In order to become reliable the mental image depends on a total and precise identification and selection of concrete physical aspects and details with which to play.

Such a mental construction announces the absence of the actor's physical body, and provokes a tensional relationship between the actor and the image: the actor is, but is not the image. The process of incorporation neither occurs because of an analogy between two objects simultaneously present in one's consciousness – my self image and that of my character – nor to a logical action of comparing and contrasting the two distant images, but to a process of synthesis and of 'undue appropriation of their different elements that merge after collision and produce the aesthetic illusion' (Maillard & Pujol 2006: 39). The aesthetic experience is understood both for the actor and the spectator in terms of a physical metaphor, and felt as a pleasure aroused by this tensional nature of 'to-be-but-not-to-be' at the same time (Maillard & Pujol 2006: 40).

The technique itself ultimately depends on the power of the actor's will or concentration to carry out such significant and complete process of defining these features within the context of the performance. This means, the game is set in-between the actor's imaginary body and her stage figure and

behaviour on the stage. The actor becomes the character by remaining faithful to the possibilities of its differential components in the performance. For that, actors need to be aware of the process of how such an imaginary reference is informing their acting both as artists and stage figures: 'However strong the sensation which the centre produces in you may be, the extent to which you wish to display that sensation while acting will always depend on your judgement.' (91).

A dual consciousness is being called to the actor's attention while performing as well as it was in the process of learning the technique. How one displays an imaginary body opens up connections to the principles of residual awareness and reduction that were introduced in the first semester. The actor can either overtly enact this whole new body, play from a "partial" awareness of what she has just done (is doing) through this other body, or condense her energy inside as much as she wants: 'How strongly you express the qualities of your imaginary body while acting will depend on the type of play and on your own taste and desire.' (87)

The technique is in itself a search for those particular features that will allow the acting to reach the hallmarks of each artist's particular characterisation - i.e. defining its "enabling properties", so to speak. It is now relevant to allude to the distinction that Michael Chekhov makes between the character (as a whole) and the characterisation, the latter being the special features that the actor is going to make use of in her final performance.⁶⁴ The spectator's (and in my opinion also the performer's) attention is drawn not to the character itself but to the 'finishing touches which an artist bestows upon his creation' (91). This distinction activates the student's search and process of awareness, whether consciously or not, of her own individuality as an actor.

It is only from that inner conviction or implicit realisation of the actor's individuality that the technique will enable the student to inspire her creation. That undoubtedly will depend on the actor's creativity, personal decision and taste, as well as the dramaturgy and the aesthetic code in which she anticipates her performance being immersed.

Searching for the body

In practice, the Imaginary Body requires that before embodying what has already been created in the mind or the imagination, the actor's body must be ready, must be forgotten, must be lacking in expression as if in a state of neutrality and/or passiveness towards what is to become.⁶⁵ In order to avoid, as Chekhov suggests, repeating her own body's clichés and therefore not allowing the chance of 'merging with' the Imaginary Body, the actor instead thinks of allowing her corporeality to transform into an-other. She does not to try to adapt the virtual image to her actual everyday self or body, but to yield to the possibility of a virtual body becoming an actual aesthetic image on stage.

Important steps in this process of an actor's incorporation are learning how to cooperate with the image by accepting its suggestions and how to wait and not to step into the process too soon by intentionally forcing the physical body into the form (Chekhov 1953: 31-32). It certainly implies an awareness of the adequate time and disposition of mind that is needed for getting the self out of the way and letting "the other" to become – i.e. knowing-how to detach from one's physical body so a new possibility may happen:

if an actor approaches a character with a sense of a changing bodymind and 'self', they can firstly understand the way in which they construct their own 'self' through habitual patterns of their bodymind, and in turn this may assist in the creation of an-other set of patterns appropriate to the construction of the character in a specific moment of a play. (Daboo 07a)⁶⁶

One of Chekhov's basic psychophysical exercises on Imaginary Body is that of 'the stick, the veil and the ball', which is just 'a full body investigation' (Petit 2010: 65). These three objects synthesise the guiding lines of body movement and psychology that the actor may use for making sense of the character she is going to portray. They constitute a possible means of objectively organising the subjective experience of the imagination on stage:

We worked with three imaginary bodies. One was a stick, another was a ball and another was a veil. With this we did a group improvisation where different types of movement and a variety of actions emerged. Body movements of hardness and precision arose with the stick. To me, it suggested images of war. The body of the ball was flexible, changeable, fleeting; it suggested game, interaction. The veil was a subtle body, related to the air, with sensuality, sweetness, softness. When trying to relate Magdalena with one of these imaginary bodies, the association is with the stick. (Karina Garantivá, reflections on CBA)⁶⁷

Two other exercises in this project helped to get an acquaintance of the character that is being formed in – therefore informed by – the sentient bodies of the students and their relationship to Lorca's drama. One exercise was based on their exploration and play with three imaginary centres: the chest, the abdomen and the head. It facilitated further imagery towards the character in a similar direction that the objects had previously offered, that is, by the different sensations and associations that arise when the person moved from each distinct centre:

In other words, it is not the energy itself which helps us discover its

source, but, on the contrary, it is by *imagining* the place in the body in which the source is situated that we are able to think of the energy, to experience it as something material, to divert it through subtle variations, to intensify it by means of a slalom which moulds it into scenic *bios*. (Barba 1995: 75. Italics in the original)

Another exercise was set from the play with the sonority of the words chosen by Lorca for naming the characters. Not only ‘the oppressive monotony of a dominant and tyrannical character is expressed in the magnificent alliteration of the *a’s*’ (Francisco García Lorca, in García Lorca 1956: 24. Italics in the original) in “Bernarda”, but also the grappling consonants in “Martirio” or “Angustias” reflect their (struggling) psychology, as well as the contrasting soft consonants and open vowels in “Magdalena”, the open sweetness of “Amelia” or the free opening of “Adela”, and even the roundness and weight of “Poncia” connote their different characters, gestures and bodies.⁶⁸

The objective is to retrieve from the student’s corporeal knowledge the whole psychophysical portrait that feels right for the role.⁶⁹ Then, it is the act of “knowing” that body and not the image *per se* that is guiding the study forward. In the context of the play the image constantly actualises in the interaction between *that* body and a particular scene. The student’s active-passive relation to what she is doing, her endurance of concentration and commitment, guarantee the delicate freedom of her artistic activity.

Once one puts on the costume (to give it another simile) the important thing is to inhabit it; not just putting it on and accentuating its features, as always. Not telling how that body is. Not illustrating it [...] but giving freedom to the body of that character, trusting him so that it is him and not our desire to achieve a result which will give us everything we want in a natural and gradual way. So, there is no need to overdo the subtle inspirations that we get from the new body, and we can launch ourselves onto the stage with him only when we feel completely natural and

sincere while wearing it. (Borja Luna. Reflections on CBA)⁷⁰

The most typical qualities and features of the character can be revealed as almost 'imperceptible indications' and be easily overlooked (Chekhov 1953: 86). The technique aims to develop an exquisite perception and realisation of those features the mind may be unaware of in a first instance. Rooted in deep impressions and therefore in the sensorimotor experience of the student, these indications remain in the body as part of the imagery of the play, waiting to be discovered or awoken to consciousness through the action-interaction of the new body with the environment of the play. The value of this body in the actor's performance resides in finding and keeping the location from where these subtle indications may be significant to the artist and allude to their depth and spiritual connotations:

I discovered that Maria Josefa, in itself a fictional character, symbolises so many things that [...] without our imagination trying to interpret her would be an offense. It would be like to outrage a myth. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)⁷¹

An actor's spirituality is in Chekhov's practice rather concerned with one's human ability to remain open, receptive and available to the play, the role or the stage, the fellow actors and the audience, that is, towards what they are demanding at each moment from her and her artistry. Neither is Chekhov concerned with acquiring skills to impose upon any of these – the play, the audience, or the role – one's artistic deliberate choices, nor is he proposing any kind of esoteric or mystical way of acting. The Higher Self or Creative I suggests, or rather becomes, as he states, just one's personal attitude towards what is going to be performed on the stage (Powers 92: Tape 4), and ultimately a disposition towards what one may call art and profession.

The grotesque body

[DVD1-CBA-Imaginary Body-Grotesque body]

'The ability to observe', continues Chekhov, 'becomes more acute when you know exactly *what* you are looking for' (1953: 92). As mentioned before, the spectator and performer are not attracted to the character itself but to the strokes the artist makes. Noticing what is building up their individuality, what is inspiring their selection becomes a rather important process. So, how can the students find those 'finishing touches' which will optimally call forth an entire character or ensure her performance? In order to access to that particular refinement of perception I have devised the improvisation of the grotesque body⁷²:

In this exercise, I bring to my mind the image of the character. I'm stating out loud her characteristics and allowing these features to be experienced by my body, which will be slowly transforming itself: long legs and arms, long fingers, tall and thin (the body is placed in such a way that is easy to feel the thinness), very small head (this detail was important to find her voice, feeling the head as a point from which the sound came), long and heavy hair, no bust. I kept working with these details. Then I exaggerated them to the most grotesque point, even the voice. The voice is radically transformed, it sounds like a ray cutting the air, and the body turns into something a bit monstrous. Then I leave aside all that may be left over and stay with the essentials to keep Magdalena: sunken chest, small head and arms rotated. The power of the voice remained, but there was more flexibility as well as nuances appeared in the text. (Karina Garantivá, reflections on CBA.)⁷³

The principle in this exercise would be a counterpart to the movement reduction (percentage) seen during our first semester.⁷⁴ It may amplify the

character of a movement, a quality, a sensation, a gesture or a feature of the imaginary body by pushing its expression beyond the limits of the rational. The improvisation evolves from naturalism to a gradual accentuation to an exaggeration to the absurd to the grotesque and beyond, to a kind of abstract expressionism where it becomes either a purely abstract form or a primal creature. Throughout the improvisation students reinforce their personal commitment to the work they are creating – i.e. those aspects that are making up each individual's physicality. After that, the body goes carefully back to "normal" but keeps what is remaining of that body - its imprint - inside.

We carried the body to the grotesque. Every detail is accentuated by the thousands. We began to make it [the body] more and more plausible. What is left? What impression is left in my body? Search for the adaptability of the image, [for] having the data with which to work, but not [for] showing the body, it is just for me. (Julia Moyano, reflections on CBA)⁷⁵

The conclusion of this exploration is a kind of purification of the sensorial and perceptual processes that are making our "interpretation" work – 'in the grotesque part I discovered a part of her power, as if she had this incredible strength', Sonia De Martín reports. It brings forward the condensation, clarification, easiness and completeness of the smallest and least perceptible nuances with which one may characterise her whole presence on the stage: 'It was interesting to see how this new body finally took hold of mine with only one contraction, the hands and the space above the head' (Borja Luna, reflections on CBA)⁷⁶

The character's personal object

[DVD1-CBA-Imaginary Body-Character's object]

The improvisation of the character's personal object was introduced to me by Joanna Merlin at the Michael Chekhov International Conference in Croatia, 2004. It is basically a characterisation exercise that helps the actor to connect to her personal sensibility and imagination regarding the character's body in relation to space, and mainly to explore further its own personality and psychology. As I see it, it introduces a new layer in the work of the student's creative individuality.

The exercise starts with the visualisation of the character's abode, de-contextualising the work from the text and setting it in a private place that – as in this case – was not even referred to in the text. Slowly the exercise directs the student's imagination through inhabiting such an intimate location and the uncovering of a secret object hidden within. The students arrived at this point easily, which is usually followed by vivid responses, strong enough to make them move and interact with whatever they “see” in their imaginations and sensing bodies.⁷⁷ The improvisation commences while doing what is being suggested. Images arise effortlessly and invade the student with the different feelings, sensations, and thoughts their characters may only show in private. They inform the character's innermost layer as a kind of rich and profound somatic information in which students will further ground their characterisation. The improvisation normally reveals distinct and hidden aspects peculiar to the role and crucial to the empathy the students bring to their personal relationship and understanding of the character and their impersonation.

In the text there are no direct references to these rooms so important in the particularly tough atmosphere of Lorca's play. The meaning behind this kinaesthetic and sensory exploration of each private room and secret object is difficult to put into words. The question here is how far the student needs to put this work into words. She has already been provided with enough specific and rich information important for her later relationship with her doing, in this case, in terms of her character's interaction with its environment. This information is kept in the Imaginary Body, as if it would have been its own particular way of studying and memorising the psychophysical lines of role, accumulating and refining this information in terms of somatic processes and feeling patterns. This re-educated sensitivity will be resumed not only in her characterisation but also (and mainly) in her intuition while actualising the performance score in front of an audience. This whole intricate process of becoming one with the Imaginary Body is foremost affecting, in my opinion, the opening up and arranging of perception of the person who is performing. It changes the perspective from where she as an actor-and-character "looks", altering her mode of being-doing according to that new position (possibility) of her body towards the environment and the other.

The Imaginary Body in performance

It was an exercise that I really liked even though afterward I just stayed with its trace because working with the imaginary body in the final project was blocking me a bit. However, I noticed that even if I were not working on it, it was unconsciously done and somehow could be sensed,

like the psychological gesture. (Lara Cobos, reflections on CBA.)⁷⁸

Zarrilli recognises the optimal level of acting as a (yogic) state of being/doing: 'one is what one does' (2009: 20). It implies a particular commitment to the embodiment of the action in the performance moment, which happens mainly through a process of awareness and modulation of energy, breathing and tensions in the body. The moment of flow and creativity happens on stage through an adequate commitment to the score of actions and/or tasks. The goal of a performer, therefore, is not primarily in the embodiment of the images chosen to work with, but in the embodiment of the score. The potential of the theatrical environment for the spectator depends on a previous process of selection and arrangement of actions and tasks, that is, the building up of the dramaturgy for the actor and the piece. In the moment of performance the priority of the student's attention should be there, in inhabiting an action and resolving artfully her acting tasks. This important differentiation came out of practice, from certain blockages and misunderstandings that the students faced, as Lara's quote above shows. It also explained why while exploring his grotesque Imaginary Body, Borja Luna had to check if he was indeed working towards the character (Bernarda) or if, on the contrary, he was getting stuck or trapped in the experience of incorporating the image he had, in this case, of a spider [See DVD1-CBA-Imaginary Body-Grotesque body].

Characters in *The House of Bernarda Alba* were embodied through an intricate process of balancing the new corporeality provided by the image (imagining process and exercises) and the actor's relationship to the score. Even though these two aspects are deeply interconnected they are not the same. The actor's process of becoming in the scene includes a knowledge

and awareness of the character that cannot be isolated from the play – from the specific dramaturgy involved – as well as the guidance of the actor's (or director's) aesthetic vision and criteria. This new corporeality of the actor-and-character, the acquired sensory knowledge of the play and the aesthetics develop and grow together in rehearsals through the creation of the score and the acting tasks. They are finally called on to interweave at a deep intuitive level during the confrontation with the audience or in rehearsals, producing the impression of a ubiquitous consciousness that oversees its articulation through the score – something done on its own accord:

And the exercise that has finally most helped me to achieve all of this was to imagine that the body of Poncia is a little above, in front of mine, and she is doing the actions, saying the words while I follow her. She directs me, she does everything in style, and I decide if I go entirely for her proposal or stay at a 70 or 50 per cent. I choose. (Violeta Gil, reflections in CBA)⁷⁹

The dual consciousness of the performer is an upshot of an actor's intent and full awareness and – whether it is made present cognitively or not – it becomes a necessary means for managing the creation within a specific context. The conditions for it to happen, as Chekhov indicates, are deference and stillness.⁸⁰ Exactly what his techniques reveal is that there is no other way to arrive at inspiration than to *rely on* the actor's experiential knowledge and concentration. Educating the intuition means to know how to let the body learn its own language, how deep it needs to go into the awareness of its own processes so they can adjust to the performance, as well as how clear the actor needs to be about the conditions that satisfy those processes in both the rehearsal time and the performance. Chekhov's Creative Individuality, Artistic I and/or Higher Ego are but natural "outcomes" of this

experience of heightened awareness or 'special type of concentration' (2000: 42). They both actualise and grow through practice as well as systematise the actor's quest for gaining access to inspiration through a 'self-focused creativity' – i.e. 'to master creative energy in order that I might apply it within myself and upon myself' (Chekhov 2005: 87).

Concentration is, in my understanding of Chekhov's system, as much crucial as it is a complex concept. It synthesises all aspects of his system and techniques as well as it is indispensable in the working out of the Creative Imagination: 'Concentration makes imagination concrete, and imagination, if it is concrete, cannot be produced without concentration of this kind' (Chekhov 1985: 45).⁸¹ Thanks only to the means of the Creative Imagination, the actor is at the same time able as artisan 'to penetrate deeply into the inner life of the character' and as artist 'to express his own, individual, unique interpretation' (Chekhov 1953: 28). An actor's creative individuality relies then on an active and conscious process of rearranging with artistry one's perception of the image and self-perception of the performing body. Both the free expansion of artistic 'inner forces' on stage and the surpassing of dualism between body and psychology are resolved through the same means of the imagination. Through imagining, actors achieve at once both the psychophysical and the creative balance required for making their art. Through such balance they become aware of their own individuality as human beings and as artists, and becoming aware of your own individuality is a premise for inspiration (Chekhov 1953: 94).

Since one purpose of this study is to explore the mutuality of Michael Chekhov's techniques and bodymind training through martial arts, I would like to isolate now in theory, rather than possibly in practice, these two

features to help further develop my ideas. One feature considers the psychophysical coherence and balance of the individual as the basis for the establishment of a creative state of the performer. It means to explore how the bodymind training makes available – feasible and tangible – the channels through which one’s Creative Imagination becomes operative; whether these channels are explained by psycho-physical, psycho-physiological and/or psycho-spiritual clauses. The artist would respond to images because the (creative) bodymind enables her to do so – i.e. ‘to see into the image and discover its hidden subtle energies or its inner rhythmical composition’ (Kindelan 1977: 87). The discovery of these subtle energies – the character’s ‘inner might and whole rhythmical composition’ (Chekhov 1953: 26) – is a common aspect in both the notion of the bodymind and the dynamics of the imagination.

But also a second feature considers the possibility of conceiving the bodymind of the performer in regard to her target or acting task: the staging or arranging in a unique way the sensory and perceptual awareness of the character (image or idea) in regards to an audience and therefore to the specifics of a performance. The imagination facilitates an actor’s process in that it is free from the limitations that personal psychology imposes on behaviour – from old habits and clichés to ‘self-consciousness, lack of confidence and fear of making a wrong impression’ (Chekhov 1953: 148). Its fervent activity allows the artistic intuition to adjust freely the doing of the body to the work demanded by the stage (stage creativity). This means to examine one’s access to those sensory and perceptual processes capable of discerning and eliciting the right responses on stage in terms of the body’s scenic presence and behaviour and performance settings and aesthetics.

Eastern conceptions of the bodymind – the subtle powers in martial arts – and Chekhovian idea of the artist’s ‘inner forces’ (concentration) may speak to each other as follows: whereas martial arts training concentrates on awakening and strengthening the subtle body of a practitioner, Michael Chekhov’s training and techniques focus on the means with which to further explore and actualise its possibilities in performance. Concretely, they do so through the exploration of those certain channels by which an actor has already made her imagination (bodymind) ready in performance. This link is made possible because both Chekhov and Zarrilli, in line with Buddhist philosophy, are proposing that the actor investigate such a state of concentration or body-being in which perception and imagination become but one and the same realisation.⁸²

3.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURES IN THE PROJECT OF BERNARDA

[DVD1-CBA-Psychological Gesture]

The concept of Psychological Gesture

Chekhov's concept of art is fundamentally concerned with the synthesis. Art has nothing to do neither with science nor with analysis, he explains. The function of the human soul, creativity and imagination is to prompt and suggest many things to us so that we can then perhaps synthesise or condense but never analyse. To think that art is concerned with analysis is just an illusion (1992: 110).

The Psychological Gesture may be defined mainly by being a synthetic movement through which the many aspects provided by the imagination, the character, performance moment or even scene, may be summed up. As an acting technique it provides a corporeal understanding that can be used for composing a character, creating performance or just enacting a score of actions or movements. It synthesises the experiential content (artistic impressions) of the work to be done into one sole inner action or form (a gestalt). When the actor embodies this inner gesture, she feels an inner strength that moves and guides her on-going composition through the scene according to her aesthetic vision. There are no intellectual means nor enough reasoning that can satisfy the needs of an actor's performance, that is, 'to fulfil the desires truthfully or experience its feelings sincerely on the stage' (Chekhov 1953: 73):

You experience the psychological gesture, which you have found, as a means to enliven you, to awaken your feelings and bring you into an understanding of the role you want to portray. An understanding which has nothing to do with the intellect. (Du Prey 1979-80: 5)

The intelligence that the body requires to be able to listen and enact the character, to awaken its will to perform and embody the character's feelings, is fundamentally sensorimotor. Certainly, it may seem that this reason establishes certain criteria to suggest, corroborate, polish or correct what the body is doing and can do, but the doing itself cannot be easily reduced to either one or the other dimension. They work in a continuum (Noë 2004: 118). A Psychological Gesture could be thought as working upon a third compound or intelligent activity that merges both realms at the same time and that allows their balance to reach the goals of the scene. It can be said that the actor gives meaning to the technique from her educated stage intuition (i.e. her own experience of living and acting), and such meaning she cannot attain through one only kind of knowledge alone. The ultimate gesture belongs to the artist's creativity alone who decides if it is right or wrong (Chekhov 1953: 76), but it also depends on the explicit or implicit laws and principles that are being thought of as regulating the artistic behaviour of the actor (being/not being the character) on stage.

In the roots of Chekhov's concept one finds the same laws and principles that govern nature and movement, inform human interaction with the world and constitute their experience and artistic effort:

For instance, a cypress streams upward (Gesture), and has a quiet, positive, concentrated character (Quality); whereas, the old, many-branched oak, rising upward and side-ways (Gesture), will speak to us of a violent, uncontrolled, broad character (Quality). (Chekhov 1991: 39)

A gesture is then defined by an action with a quality - this is in its essence a concrete use of time, space, strength and flow. The question is how the actor builds up meanings from such significant gestures. The Psychological Gesture - one may relate to her character, role or action in performance - is something first seen by the 'mind's eye' before it is 'known' (Chekhov 1991: 108). Something that is first apprehended by a kinaesthetic sense, memory or sensorial perception and is then made cognitively conscious through movement and language. However, acquiring meaning from perception is not granted but a gradual learning process that happens in pre-established conditions:

This "looking" and "seeing" is nothing but rehearsing [establishing patterns, contingencies through body, time and space] by means of your well-developed and flexible imagination [bodymind]. (Chekhov 1953: 26).

As I understand, the mind's eye - also named by Chekhov as an actor's 'active look' - is formed by the psychophysical imagination that has already been located and trained, made from the agreement between the sensations it evokes and the movements it arises not only in the physical, but also in the emotional, mental and aesthetic realms that define the performer's activity and artistry. This inner eye refers to the commitment while doing (or experiencing) that is in the actor's will and concentration while acting. The special type of "seeing" by feeling the action inside materialises through a gesture which awakes not just the character's inner life but also the actor's own volition to act or interpret it. According to my students this would be the desire:

This theory and training depart from the assumption that a gesture - made with the whole body involved and repeated as often as needed - can take us to feel a desire so powerful that yet one's will eventually

becomes subdued by the influence of that gesture we had started with at the beginning. That is, only a gesture can lead us to feel the desire that will be the engine of our character on the stage. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)⁸³

In this sense, perhaps more clearly stated than in any other technique, the Psychological Gesture points directly to the nature of the personal relationship the actor establishes with what she is doing, materialises her personal conviction (will) to act, and commits her artistic soul in its expression towards the other. Beyond the formalised, symbolic or mimetic aims that these type of gestures may have on the stage, Chekhov used the technique primarily as a means to explore a privately connoted relationship to the other (partner, scene or audience) and, as a result, to increase the performer's means of expression.⁸⁴

The technique of Psychological Gesture

The technique of the Psychological Gesture is therefore involved with the student's sense of movement (kinesis) and proprioception (body position) while acting. Besides the other senses (aural, visual, smell, touch and taste), the kinaesthetic sense concerns the corporeal acknowledgement of the position of limbs and articulations and their relations within the body and with space either while standing still or when moving.⁸⁵ Proprioception concerns all the muscular and skeletal information (the limits, volumes, and axes) that the body needs to orientate and locate itself in space and time without the need for reasoning. It is from the body's proprioception that human beings establish the differentiation between their bodies and their environments. My

sense of movement and proprioception will play a key role in my relationship between the “I” and the surrounding world.

A Psychological Gesture is essentially rooted in an actor’s capability of proprioception and kinesis and such is the locus of its practice. However, it will be the whole body-being – experience and disposition – that interacts with the score and/or environment of the play. Through its kinaesthetic sense the body is enabled to relate a gesture to the tensions that motivate human actions, and make us perceive impulses and intentions (Barba 1991: 213). Time and experience build and reinforce their correspondences. The psychological gesture operates on this level, exploring the connections between our perception of movement and our perception of moods and intentions, and also between its reality and its possibilities for scenic creation. It synthesises an archetypal action – for example, push, pull, lift, put down, open, close, embrace or ring – and explores the quality of the energy that is behind such action – its special dynamics, force, direction, tempo and rhythm. The full awareness while embodying that gesture invites the student to enter into certain contingencies that already exist between the movement and sensations of their whole body-being concerning the action and the possible meanings of such in-tensions. When working from an inner gesture, the body stands, so to speak, on a clear and certain kinaesthetic and energetic disposition that awakens (once again) the performer’s imagery in connection to the piece, the score, the theatrical moment or scene.

Let us suppose your gesture is “pushing”. The purer your pushing is in the beginning – that is in the Platonic world – the richer will be your “pushing” in the world of the performance. (Chekhov, in Ashperger 2008: 104)

The Chekhovian pureness of an ideal gesture is given by the concreteness of

its inner sensation and kind of energy that the action awakes. It is not that the students rely on the shape of the gesture but on the intrinsic energy that such a motion carries within.⁸⁶ In reaching an agreement between the inner/outer expression of a feeling sensation the student reinforces her psychophysical knowledge of the scene through that particular gesture (as well as of the gesture through the scene). Through this technique the student is further refining her sensorimotor awareness, perceptual processes and the kinaesthetic sense introduced in the first semester. Particularly, it is in the actors' ability to keep a sense of the here and now of her presence and performance as well as using the 'principle of reduction' as trigger of her scenic behaviour.

First of all you must know the gesture, and for that you perform it in a "pure" manner. Your body knows what is "to embrace". Follow it; it will make the gesture itself. You discover how your body makes physical every gesture. Then you improvise with a certain gesture [...] and you may not need to complete your gesture, it is only, again, a source of inspiration. The most interesting part is the journey itself and not the goal. (Borja Luna, reflections on CBA)⁸⁷

Taking the gesture into performance becomes a question of focusing on the journey and not in the result – i.e. letting the gesture (image) play its role. This is a journey that the body can follow through hopefully refining its previous experiences of working on the desire and the principles of reduction, residual awareness - connecting one moment to the next through the breath - and being aware in the action. The point of the technique is to reach that creative state Chekhov proposes for inhabiting the stage:

At first I thought that the psychological gesture had to be shown, I did not understand that it was [like] the gasoline of the character, which moves her inside and arouses her feelings. The psychological gesture

caused me some blockages because I insisted on displaying it rather than letting it be. I thought it did not help me. Now after the show is finished I had a few days to reflect and certainly the psychological gesture I chose for my character (the desire to escape) was right. (Lara Cobos, reflections on CBA)⁸⁸

The technique proposes that such inner movement is able to trigger and run the performance - i.e. the imagination that comes into play. The education of the bodymind provides the students with the what and the how of their mode of attending to their performing bodies. The challenge in the technique is how to adapt the imagining action of the body (or imagining body) into the context of the scene and giving it time to trust its suggestions. Like any other technique, the mechanisms by which the student adapts her concept of acting – or accommodates her artistic work on the technique – is at stake. In this case, the student is not only exploring and studying her embodiment of the gesture, but also how that kinaesthetic image (knowledge) recreates her being and doing on stage.

Chekhov's actor works from body-awareness into and through psychophysical composition. The actor senses and feels the form of the psychological gesture as he creates and inhabits it. (Zarrilli 2009: 20).

Zarrilli's use of the term "psychophysical composition" points to the kind of immediate awareness that allows the actor to recreate while doing the possibilities of her inner gesture throughout her composition. The precision of the student's perception of her body and the environment will determine the accuracy of her responses (from the gesture) as it is furthermore determining the efficacy of her process of selecting and embodying future gestures.

This requirement for precision is clearly evident in the building process of the gestures: 'their beginning, middle and end, their repetition, making each of

them a work of art, changing rhythms, pauses, and researching all variants’, explains Sonia De Martín. Through their exploration, the students learn and build up their own experience of the sense-move contingencies that the Psychological Gesture will touch upon. Julia Moyano comments how essential it was for her ‘to follow a tangible process of forming the gesture, because the more clear and certain such process became, the more it stimulated her will’. As a result the gesture became a creative resource that helped, inspired, and did not obstruct her performance.

Julia Moyano’s psychological gesture came from the exercises in *plastiques*⁸⁹ as much as it did from her dance choreography for the piece. Through this gesture, she reports to have found a very strong connection between Angustias who was dancing and the same character performing: the two shared the desire to lift, ‘aspiring to the airy’, but both also showing the force of dragging, ‘the magnet of the earth’. Her voice was reminiscent of a complaint, as ‘invoking something’. The process of incorporating the imaginary body made further changes in her vocal emission; ‘the voice continued to be deep, low, but beginning to coexist with other shapes, colours, shades’. The text travelled in and through the gesture. The gesture, she reports, finally inspired her performance (Her reflections on CBA) [See also DVD1-CBA-Psychological Gesture- Imaginary Body & Psychological Gesture].

Preparing and completing the gesture

Wherever we discover a true piece of art, we also find an “artistic frame”. Each artistic creation, however large or small, must be preceded by a

preparatory activity and then followed by a sustaining moment. This creates the frame. Neither nature nor man is exempt from this law. (Chekhov 1991: 129)

In order to be complete, the gesture first needs to come from a concrete impulse, an anticipating moment of desire or accumulation of energy (*jo*); then, it needs to travel in and through the body in the form of a clear-cut movement (*ha*); and, finally, it aims to go beyond the body in order to respond to the need of reaching out, of being received by a potential interlocutor, yet still keeping attention in making it ready to depart somewhere else (*kyu*). Then you feel that the physical body cannot go beyond, and in order to avoid pushing you continue with your imagination, still “physicalising” your desire. This last moment of active waiting for the gesture to be conveyed towards is not only something the actor does servicing the spectator so the expression is clearly framed and finished, she also performs it as a service for herself, for her actor’s awareness and empowerment through the gesture, feeling its completion through the body.

Julián Ortega identifies two working principles in Chekhov’s technique to which he says to constantly return to. One, it is the abdominal or working centre, ‘from where everything we do departs’; and two, ‘the image of the movement that comes before the movement itself’. These two basic ideas allowed him to understand the aims and possibilities of the gesture ‘with the [his] whole being’ as well as ‘to excite the will deep inside’. A kinaesthetic image is generated, a sensation lives inside the body and radiates beyond the limits of the physical body even before the “outer” movement had began or after it had finished.

Working from the centre (the mind’s eye) and from a clear sensorimotor

sensation (the desire) is something that the body can easily recall from earlier (structured) improvisations. The feeling of truth rests in the completion and involvement the actor aims for in her doing (either in training or performing) as it is that completion and involvement that the spectator gets involved in. And yet, it is all a question of timing and precision, as Violeta Gil reports on her text work.⁹⁰

The text should not be uttered even one second before nor after [the gesture]; and it shows when you say it at the right time. You must be ready at all times, open to receive, being careful whom you want to throw to, and being prepared to give. When you feel you've said a sentence at the right time and place... that feels so good! (Final portfolio)⁹¹

Facing the difficulties of the technique

Chekhov explains that in order to obtain that strong influence in its final performance, the inner gesture needs to be rooted and explored in the personal experience and creative psychology of the actor (1953: 76) and be clearly defined in its impulse (1991: 39). The resulting movement must be strong and archetypal – able to stir whole new gestures, actions and movements of a kind (1953: 77). It should be done with the whole body-being, fully and completely (1992: 108), and executed with the correct intensity, form and tempo (1953: 84). In a manner, it should be as pure and ideal as possible in the actor's "feeling" sense (kinesis) and (corporeal) criteria. The aim is in the sensations it endows the actor with, even prior to the result that may be conveyed to the audience.

Its challenge comes in knowing how to avoid any interference (by force or anticipation) from either a physical, vocal or mental predisposition towards either the character or the gesture that should regulate the acting. The actor lets the imagination (that other kind of knowledge) guide her acting and not the other way around - trying to control her imagination on behalf of the performance. The capability to listen and receive what is for Chekhov already there, both in the body and in nature – life, experience and imagination – is at stake. The gesture's inherent information (already contained in the experience of it) is able to embrace and give life to the whole performance by learning how to be precise and coherent through one's personal artistic options and acting choices throughout the scene – the other realm of the technique, so to speak. On that account, the Psychological Gesture is not something to be performed or shown on stage but only its scaffolding or 'technical secret' (Chekhov 1953: 82), able to endow the actions on the stage with a type and quality of energy that makes them attractive to the spectator.

Personal feelings, opinions and points of view over the play and the character may interfere as impositions. Even though difficult and delicate to discern sometimes, they can slow the process until the student realises how her acting is made possible through an inner gesture. The intuition upon which the technique works is certainly immediate at first stages; however, forging and relying on such intuition in actual performance is not as instant as it may seem at first sight.

'You told me that my vision of Martirio was because I judged her and gave my personal opinion. Absolutely true.' Sonia De Martín's process and exploration of the Psychological Gesture for Martirio was arduous. The realisations came:

I believe because I abandoned the fight between body and mind. At the beginning it was as if even though something come out that I could believed was true to Martirio, I couldn't agree or validate it because in my mind I had seen it otherwise.

What I read from her experience is that in order to allow one's corporeal knowledge and imagination to enter into the work and be able to guide the process requires not allowing a premeditated result to mediate our characterisation or work. That is, allowing not knowing to take place. When the student moves from exercises in class into performance I cannot take this for granted. Presumptions on how the work will be can be built deep inside and ingrained so tight that one may be completely unaware of them, what brings me back to Barba's comment when he affirms that even though the work is in the how, it is the what that most helps guide the actor (1995: 50).

Sonia insisted on using one of the gestures coming from the dance choreography. It could have worked out, however it was through time and by looking at the difficulties of joining gesture, voice and body into one single equation that made me (us) think that something was wrong. We managed, after wilful intent to make everything work together – the body, the voice, the gesture, the in-tention, the acting, and then we both realised that such an initial gesture was not the most appropriate for *her* characterisation. Her obstinate intention had been an aid in helping her complete (and understand) her process of embodiment; following it through all the stages until what came out of it was really prompted from that concrete gesture in that particular body. The challenge is to be self-aware and to stand by a certain sense of an anticipated whole that is ingrained in one's first artistic impulse to perform a character and avoid all concerns about the results which threaten one's psychophysical search. From then on, while trying out different

gestures of her choreography, 'I did feel that the voice came from the gesture, whether it was manifested inwardly or articulated outwardly' (Sonia De Martín, reflections on CBA). Her selection of the proper gesture became actually freed.

A similar process is found in Julián Ortega exploration. After a wonderful poetic (long) analysis of the character Maria Josefa and presentation of all her possible gestures, Julián Ortega admitted:

However, the gesture that prevailed for the role in the public presentation was "to rise". And little by little, rehearsal after rehearsal, I was lifting up until together with Sol we got found a better-defined gesture and voice; until we finally reached the most adjusted expression for the character of this old woman.⁹²

I recall now Hollis Huston's quote stating that the job is in revealing 'what must be seen' to an audience rather than in determining it (1992: 29). I mean, I really did not know with certainty that "to rise" was the gesture for María Josefa. I did not know if that was also the right gesture for Julián's approach. What I knew is that such gesture not only allowed Julián to be fully there and therefore in consonance with some vision he had of the scene and the character, but that it also made his work extremely appealing for me as spectator. His commitment to what he was doing was more appealing than the final "interpretation" of the character. I was not looking primarily at the result from a director's perspective - i.e. searching for a narrative logic or any particular *mise en scène* that I may have had previously envisioned - but instead I was looking by thinking (feeling) the (psycho)physical coherence in Julián's own expression. There is, I believe, an inner assumption that what can make up the performance is deeply connected to this inner coherence or revelation of the theatre artist that is the actor, even beyond the meaning that

the author, director or even the actor herself may have previously conceived to be conveyed.

Any meaning – though it may originally inspire the process of making theatre – does not necessarily determine its result or the staging. At the most, it may determine the actor's search but not her expression. Meaning(s) may arise in the moment or may also be postponed, deferred in Derrida's sense, and made present after the performance has finished. They may even be loudly different or made particular in each spectator's imaginations. What the technique of the Psychological Gesture is implying in my practice (and as a consequence to those of my students) is that the relationship between the actor's doing and the audience's perceiving is not after the meaning but after the encounter, and that the imagination is but its most important active consequence:

During some rehearsals, yes, I was conscious of several images, but on the day of the performance during the two open presentations, I am aware of having had images, but I wasn't looking for any of them. (Sonia De Martín, reflections on CBA)⁹³

The meeting with the audience is by far and par excellence the actor's best creative moment. The challenge of such a moment is compensated by the clarity with which the body had registered the attainments and drawbacks concerning one's personal acting technique. Certain issues that also affect the process of learning and understanding the imagination in performance come to the fore. Besides the interference of excessive intellectualisation over the images we chose, as already seen, two further issues may help to describe these difficulties in practice: (1) the drunkenness of the actor, and (2) the trap of the technique. Their metaphorical title is a simple direct way to categorise certain concerns in the students learning experience and my

teaching.

1. The drunkenness of the actor:

It took me time to understand, and put into practice, the fact of not having to be on stage with all the tools continuously present; but [learning] that you had to go back and forth with them. At this moment, one had to play the text; in this other one, the general atmosphere; then the atmosphere of the scene, and afterwards to combine several [techniques or aspects]. To have it all present at once is a fact that can easily block the actor. (Borja Luna, reflections on CBA)⁹⁴

It is difficult to avoid the attempt to interpret from the head something new, unknown to the intellect, but easily recognisable in one's body and experience. It is also difficult, perhaps impossible, to run an inherently bodily and sensory process from the intellect. The actor's undertaking is of a complex and other nature. It is essentially corporeal and, in Chekhov's case, it is based upon the imaginative connections that the sensory and sensorimotor awareness of the actor is able to bring about. Trained by specific means, such corporeal and sensory processes become conscious and demand their fundamental position in one's mindful awareness. When that happens, the intellect is forced to work in a way in which it may not be used to. The logical reasoning, our propositional language, must be relegated at first, to understand how the logic and reason of the work itself enters the doing. Many times we try to force one process onto another and distrust how they may happen differently but jointly. I believe that this first challenge is not really overcome in practice unless there is a guarantee through the constant training of its practical conditions.

In my teaching experience, this grounding process demands time, continuity

and empathy, conditions that may or may not happen in formal education. However, these are undeniable requirements in order to meet a person and her artistic disposition, to learn how to manage the process so each student learns from her own experience, and to facilitate the concrete way of reasoning or the specific exercise that will be key in their understanding of the working proposal, and consequently of the challenges it brings to their own paradigms of acting.

2. The trap of the technique:

It happened to me with María Josefa that in order to achieve greater degree of aging on the movements, I began to give some quality of moulding to the actions, which in my opinion at first did very well at getting a more realistic character. But as rehearsals went on I was further and further intensifying the pressure of moulding, without even being aware of it, until I completely lost myself in the maze of my own limbs turned into obstacles. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)⁹⁵

The other side of the coin – if one is the drunkenness I referred to above that is the wanting to apply multiple things at a time – is the over-focusing on one technique, making the work on an specific aspect one's objective instead of a mean towards another thing. To be either drunk or self-confined by the technique, comes from a deviation of the student's attention (understanding) that wrongly directs them towards what is making up the technique (the result), instead of towards the building up of the scene, the motive or motor that is the stage. In other words, 'falling in love with the movement itself instead of with what makes you move', as Fern Sloan advised us in Croatia in 2004 (personal notes).

In the final stage, when everything had to be clarified, my process was

stalled, even fell back; I was aware that I was not listening, that I was on another “level”, independent of the scene. Then I realised that this was because I clung heavily to a certain psychological gesture of the character, one of them, without having any room to listen to neither the partner nor the scene. I was locked up trying to respect my gesture and discover how it changed my body, my voice, my way of... me, me, me. I was confined in me. I knew I was above [the doing], neither I was in the scene nor in myself, but I was unable to escape from where I was until the exercise of the [imaginary] body doing in front of oneself was proposed - in which we could do, more or less, which he blocked. I was surprised that from this moment on everything came almost by itself. (Borja Luna, reflections on CBA)⁹⁶

Especially with young students there are occasions when the actor is observably overdoing the technique (or the sequence), or “showing” the image that guides the performance through the scene, sometimes even persisting in the spectator’s attention who then loses track (as much as the actor) of the scene itself. The same happens with emotions or any other psychological trait one may attend, that eventually impedes being in rhythm with the scene, lose the connection with your partners or dismiss the concentration you need in order to still keep inspired. The thirst for results, thirst for techniques, even the Chekhovian drunkenness are at their depths perhaps a reflection of wanting to be “somewhere else” that the students often face when starting bodymind training. Perhaps these facts just reflect an impossibility to fully trust – comprehend with one’s body feeling – that, after all, the “techniques” are already embodied, already “there”. There is no intent to do anything else, only the capacity of inner listening and patience for hearing how, thanks to them, one responds in the moment of performance (an actor’s inner voice). Its education will depend on the clarity of the processes involved, both in nature and awareness, and the assiduous training of one’s attention to those facts as they are involved in the body, i.e.

in being and doing.

Bearing in mind the training, [...] in which you should never lose the sensation of an abdominal centre - from where everything departs and where I carry my oxygen - as well as of what is cultivated through all the different Eastern disciplines involved in this training - yoga, Tai Chi, and Kalari -, [the work] has been a continuous actualising and strengthening of all the principles that Chekhov advised to seek and, once found, not to lose: Centre, Beauty, Balance, Control, Simplicity, No Tension. In light of this training, as said, it has been very easy to understand physically the whole technique. Really revealing was then the importance that Chekhov gives to the imagination. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)⁹⁷

When I think of martial arts in actor training I am already questioning my own paradigm of acting and teaching, and in that base I may question how Chekhov techniques do so in their particular ways. In the performance situation, the concentration of the bodymind means developing a continual inner coherence of the body in relationship to the doing on the stage, and not necessarily to the doing of the image. But I also believe that Chekhov's techniques are the springboard and anchor for actualising the creativity of the bodymind through performing – i.e. the entrance into a state of flow and recreation of the Creative Imagination that is thereby proclaimed.

I was amazed also by the ease with which I remained on the scene. How - when I entered - my body was breathing slow and quiet. How by using the focus, breathing, and the "soles of the feet" all created a value, a truth, security... Also, to be aware of how they were transmitted also "almost unwillingly" the atmospheres, the body of the characters, and how these bodies were replacing ours. (Borja Luna, reflections on CBA)⁹⁸

Training during the whole year, Sonia declares, is what 'gives you the ability or will to work every day the different concepts of the technique'. In my experience, it does because of a particular disposition or arrangement of

one's psychophysical involvement in the act of performing. The mental aspects it implies are not necessarily linked to the psychological aspects traditionally understood, and less to the psychology that defines the personality of an actor or of a character, but to a generic state of active concentration or meditation. Bodymind disposition is ensured through a specific attention to the breath, establishing a relation to doing and embodying and attitude to the body and work at hand, which reinforces the fact that:

Simply by being in the atmosphere of oppression - besides, of course, of the abdominal centre, the breathing and soles of the feet - I felt already connected with my character. (Lara Cobos, reflections on CBA)⁹⁹

Julia Moyano asks to herself to what extent without the work on the first semester would have been possible to internalise the subject concerning Chekhov. She also observes how the training contributed to give significance to the danced physical score. Performing meant to her an open awareness towards 'articulating a desire of' and just 'listening' through both the acting and dancing scores: 'Until we realised how much it [the listening] was needed in the dance score, we didn't work as a totality [ensemble], but as mere individuals'. Both aspects, embodying and listening, continues Julia, joined in the training through one's connection to 'an available body, a localised centre, the management of energy, a beginning, middle and end, a presence' (her reflections on CBA).

The students' reflections and their particularities made me realise that the potential in merging these two forms of actor training was furthermore in awakening the actor to a process of questioning and reflection; a personal and artistic quest that was rather important not only for their management of

these techniques but also for their future profession and overall confidence in their process of acting and learning:

The good thing was that I was sure that whatever happened, however good or bad the outcome, I knew what to do, I knew how to channel whatever was to come, I knew how to control my body. And so I was not afraid... The important thing in this process has been finding along the most helpful exercises and methods in order to grasp a character, to create an atmosphere, and to distinguish which ones may be OK, but have not helped us. (Violeta Gil, final portfolio) ¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

Therefore, not only the warming-up [training] was presented as a liturgy [...] Even the improvisations - full of characters of fire, earth, air or water - had that mystical point, though the later themes or results were rather funny and epic. All the exercises appealed to something that had more to do with the soul than with the theatre as we know it today in the West. Each improvisation - however simply it was planned - led to me at least to concentrate on something that I, Julián, am not but certainly is within me. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)¹⁰¹

Chekhov's work is grounded in the relationship between body and mind, whereby his techniques become operative for the actor. It is because body and mind are united that the imagination is embodied and the actor becomes 'conveyor' (Chekhov) or 'vehicle' (Zarrilli) for communicating ideas, sensations, or images to spectators. The work with the image and the power of the imagination within us reinforce by themselves our bodymind connections. Up to a certain point it could be said that in Chekhov's system no preliminary bodymind training would be needed, that the practice itself of the imagination or the techniques should suffice.¹⁰² However, my experience in training Spanish actors and acting students reveals some of the apparently problematic issues that arise either while embodying images or trying to carry onto the stage the corporeal knowledge awakened by the techniques. These challenges may happen at different stages on the working process, and in different levels and degrees always depending on the student's type, past personal or professional experiences and artistic personalities.

Difficulties appear when trying: (1) to either recognise and/or respond on time to the (many) impulses coming from the body and/or prompted by the imagery; (2) to maintain for a considerable amount of time the necessary concentration through body-time-space to keep the connection to the image

and maintain its certain inner logic and continuity; (3) to convey all the vigour and aliveness of the image through a concrete movement or movement score, also to be repeated frequently and precisely; (4) to channel that potential energy or impulse into the right movement or voice, one that regulates the intensity and reality of the image appropriately to the requirements of the specific moment of the scene; (5) to communicate the subtleties (of what is carefully and internally elaborated) through the smallest but most significant detail and nuances on the movement or stillness deployed on stage; (6) to adapt freely in the moment of performance to the audience, the partner and ensemble without losing connection to an image (or its inner particular logic); and finally, (7) to do all of this in an artistic way, in Chekhov's terms, being aware at each moment of being/creating 'a work of art' (2000: 31) that embodies aesthetic qualities such as form, ease, beauty and totality.

In my opinion, these problematic aspects of the techniques reside in the actor's lack of understanding of having an image operating through her performing body in terms of concentration, awareness, timing the impulse(s) and controlling the energy throughout. In other words, what this research is bringing about is that the students are being confronted with the role given to their imagining process through the action and the physical score, both in its performative and compositional aspects. The obstacles that I observe mostly respond to viewing the image as some kind of prior elaboration in the mind that then becomes incarnated in the body rather than as a process already happening through the embodiment of the action or performance score. The problem with such view rests not only in that body-and-mind dislocate its central and integrating position within the performative moment, but also in a

lack of acknowledgement of the nature of such bodymind integration and the conditions for a relationship to the action or score to flourish through it. Opening the students to the possibility of establishing and controlling their relationship to the doing is the foundation for each of them to establish their own connections between the formation of the bodymind and the dynamics of the imagination. The same tools with which the student explores and experiences the bodymind and her acting is helping at once to explore further meanings of acting through the Chekhov's techniques. Particularly, what happens is that each of the students delves into her personal way of being inspired by the imagery as an actor, her individual processes of embodying an image throughout the performance score, and her own (possibilities of) positioning the imagination along the theatre making process.

My argument is that through the preliminary bodymind training the student discovers such questions in her body-in-practice, and in doing so, develops concrete tools in order to make it ready and prepared to undertake with efficacy the work on and through her imagination. Furthermore, it is in the martial arts' attempt to search for the terms in which such "efficacy" happens that this research may become useful for (in) the students' practice. Through both the training (Zarrilli's) and the techniques (Chekhov's) this practice-research moves towards the discovery and development of these questions with the students so that their bodies are prepared to undertake the work on the imagination in depth and lay therein the foundations of their acting and physicality onstage.

CHAPTER 4: INTEGRATING BODYMIND TRAINING WITH THE DYNAMICS OF THE IMAGINATION

Performances consist of processes of embodiment that bring forth the acting body and meaning. [...] I have not, as the two-world theory would suggest, used the term embodiment as an expression of something previously established and given, but to describe a creative process. (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 173).

Asfixia analyses and evaluates the interaction of Zarrilli's and Chekhov's practice in the staging of a theatre piece with a group of acting students finishing their studies in the text-based theatre branch in RESAD. It intended to further develop the student's means of expression whereas it allowed me to explore the contrasts and synergies with their previous experiences and approach to theatre. To get a sense of what this research has meant to the actors and also to my evolution as a teacher and approach to pedagogy, it is necessary to review the experience as a whole, considering its inception, the development of the project, its several presentations to an audience and the 'aftermath' (Schechner 2002: 191) of its practice. By aftermath I will refer to the later period of concluding reflections and memories made by the students a year after the final performance [See DVD2-ASFX-Actors interviews].

Premises

On the one hand, *Asfixia* was a means to explore the poetic action onstage and its certain logic for both the spectator and the actor and the making of meaning through it. On the other hand, the project was a means to explore the potential of merging these two practices bodymind-and-imagination for acting and devising – i.e. the construction of both the actor's and the performance's dramaturgy that actualised an aesthetic vision of the theme "asphyxiation" and its staging. The aim was to observe how these two original practices contributed in finding quick and effective means that allowed the artistic ensemble to come to terms with the goals deliberately chosen and agreed on for our practice: ensemble work, the physicality of the stage and the group devising process. Thus, they meant at the same time our methods for research and tools for enacting the performance. My role in the project was to introduce the training and coordinate the endeavour, making it feasible by providing them with an adequate design and orientation for it to happen. The experience was further informative of how the students, with different backgrounds and learning experiences, interacted with these two forms of training and faced their implicit assumptions, i.e. what they brought to the training as theatre practitioners as much as what the experience gave back to them.

Both the performance and the research were but the result of a desire of a personal and collective exploration of a theme and the use of – our interaction with – certain tools as mode of preparing ourselves for communicating such an exploration. It was our awareness of the theatrical processes implied by the bodymind and the imagination that configured out the aesthetic criteria and dramaturgical tools guiding the performance and its

making process (Lehmann 2007: 76). The piece was intended to create moods, states of awareness through atmospheres ready for the spectator's interaction and the staging planned to go beyond the representation of characters' psychology, textual analysis and/or interpretation of a dramatic text.

The encounter with the students

Being trained in the text-based theatre branch, these 6 acting students certainly had a foundation of corporeal knowledge according to their training programme at RESAD, mainly through the subjects of corporeal expression, acrobatics, dance and fencing. They had mostly been taught analysis and staging of the dramatic text from a psychological perspective on acting and not yet experienced a creative working process which was primarily based on the pre-performative principles of acting and to the embodied imagination. Although they had probably already taken some of these aspects into account in their previous learning processes, to begin to articulate their creative process as actors within an alternative approach to acting and making theatre was something new for each of them.

Laying the foundations for this devised piece included the introduction of two main processes by which the students would approach their theatre-making, altering their relationship with the artistic process for this specific project. On one hand, the acting practice meant an understanding of not only how to use their bodies on the stage but how to create the work from them, therefore to approach their stage performance from a psychophysical rather than a

psycho-technical point of view. On the other hand, the imagination was introduced as a primary means, not only to sustain their acting bodies on the stage but also to compose their scenes as well as to give form to the overall piece. In other words, the acting and devising processes were meant to be our analysis of the performative consequences that this renewed significance of their imagination-and-movement abilities brought in terms of the acting and staging. Therefore, it implied a restructuring of the acting goals and later tasks according to the actualisation of the actors' corporeal, visual and spatial imaginations. Our goals were to discern and actualise the work from the bodymind; to recognise the synthesis accomplished through the imagination; and finally, to articulate the bodies according to this new awareness in the context of the scene. This new situation of acting and making theatre would reveal some significant differences in the sort of outcomes and through-questions to those the students were familiar with within a situational, behavioural or intentional approach to theatre, text and acting.

The whole project expanded from November 2004 to March 2006. Its preparation from its workshop to its first opening in 2004 took around 8 months. Our meetings ranged from once a week to almost every day during the last month, with the vacation periods in between. Originally, it was planned to last just that first period at the RESAD, ending with their final graduation in June 2005. The fact that we continued working and presenting it on two different occasions – again in the RESAD in September 2005; and in Teatro Réplica, an alternative venue in Madrid in March 2006 – helped me to develop further the research taking it beyond a teaching-institutional context and looking at its outcomes over a longer period of time. This

enlargement of the experience also proved to be quite relevant for both the actors and myself, as it will be explained in our conclusions.

Positing the performance-research

The 'positing of the performance' (Lehmann 2006: 135-137) was to be found in the process of making research, or another way of saying it, the performance is but the research of our making process.¹⁰³ Our theatre-making was derived from our experience and exploration of Zarrilli's and Chekhov's practices within *Asfixia's* particular context. Structured improvisations, imagination exercises and techniques were planned and arranged in order to discover and build up our 'performance text' (Schechner 2002: 193) as we went along. The dramaturgy was developed as a particular arrangement of individual and collective compositions in relation to the theme: the interaction with (rather than the consequence of) texts, images, gestures and actions explored by the actors and manifested through the score. Each of the resulting scores was of a kinaesthetic and sensorial nature that articulated the actors' artistic criteria and conviction for re-creating and presenting the theme to an audience through their body, voice and movement.¹⁰⁴

The exploration of the theme's sensorial nature was intended to discover its movement and artistic possibilities, and with it disclosing the aesthetics of the performance and the kinaesthetic impressions it could arise in actors and spectators as well. The actor's inner commitment to the score becomes visible and tangible through the implication of the spectator's body and

imagination (Pavis 2003: 100), this is, their bodymind. It is through the former's particular engagement to the body and behaviour onstage (and not to her intentions) that others could respond to the theme. The responsibility of the performers relies in "sharing" (radiating) her inner commitment rather than in "communicating" it.

This process was rather akin to revealing the inner dance or gestural genetics found for the piece rather than to discover a narrative logic of a plot and/or the psychological deployment of characters. Our focus, and mainly my coaching, was in facilitating the awareness of the kinaesthetic and aesthetic experience that would respond to the performance, and revealing that artistic commitment to which the spectator could immediately relate.

Defining the theme: First meetings

These meetings allowed us to decipher the theme and arrive at some of its concrete and essential aspects. The theme was mainly concerned with the pressures and oppression that the capitalist and so-called welfare states generate upon society and individuals. Society asphyxiates individuals because even though it seems to provide ways to deal with certain suffocating circumstances, these eventually become part of that feeling/situation and not actual strategies to escape from it. Other questions were raised about how a person exhausts herself within her own feeling of asphyxiation and may asphyxiate others. Finally, what kind of lucidity appears when any of these questions are recognised?

Different ways of organising our search for material came out of these first meetings: the asphyxia as something internal, physical, real and personal which concerns the individual (suffocation); and the asphyxia as something external, common and abstract which has to do with society and the system (air rarefaction). We also decided to explore for the project an analogy; metaphor or abstraction that best represented the idea of asphyxia for us and could guide us in our search for the aesthetics of the performance [See DVD2-ASFX-Composition of scenes-The girl].

The design: atmospheres, archetypes and relationships

After these first meetings I designed three different areas to introduce the grounding concepts, principles and processes with which to explore the theme. Each of these areas was approached by means of one particular technique and also constituted a setting for acquiring an embodied knowledge and/or performative practice of the theme's main guiding ideas. These three settings built from each other, proposing or connecting questions and demands for the actors and their work from three different perspectives. They also functioned as triggers for possible scenes giving us a place to start exploring and selecting material.

The three areas explored were the sensorial realm of the piece, texts and characters, and the relationships.

- 1) The actors' response to their sensations versus their emotions:

This involved a psychophysical re-education of their bodies concerning awareness, energy and impulses; an attuning and enrichment of the somatic and movement sensations arising from the theme; and an awareness of their “transcription” – through the corporeal form and energy – onto the stage both as individual actors and as ensemble. Different exercises for approaching Chekhov’s technique of Atmospheres were used in this area to reduce the gap between the intellectual and the physical realms of their approach.

2) The actor’s concepts and considerations upon characters and text:

Another set of aspects of the actor’s creativity was explored through improvisations on an Imaginary Body given for an archetypal character. The archetype was inspired by the actor’s personal imagery related to the theme. Improvisations on archetypes were set in order to allow physical and textual discourses to appear as well as to discuss how we could make use of characters and texts throughout the process. This area mainly exercised two further training aspects: the strength of one’s commitment to what is being imaginatively elaborated; and learning to create at the time of doing. That is, how to keep the necessary active/passive relationship to the image/to the doing.

3) The actor’s exploration on relationships:

Relationships that human beings establish with each other, with

objects, or with the audience had been introduced as an aspect for investigation. Exploring the kinaesthetic nature as well as the possible types of physicalising the main force or dynamics operating in human relations would help the students turn their ideas into physical scores: something to be repeated and to be read through physical actions on the stage. Within this third and last setting, Chekhov's technique of Psychological Gesture would activate and inform the performers as well as the staging through improvisations.

Bodymind training grounded the approach to acting and to the performance event from which to frame Chekhov's main techniques. Training aimed to awaken the students to their bodymind actualisation whereby a meaningful process of embodiment occurs. Acting was meant to be the "physicalisation" of images (thought) as already happening through the embodiment of actions. The preliminary preparation of the bodymind was determining the subsequent living through the personal 'imagery' around the piece, as much as the imagination in the context of the performance was determining the actualisation of the performer's bodymind. Eventually the student forges an individual connection to the theme and the acting from where to elaborate her tasks for each particular moment.

Training helped us to explore the mutuality of each other's approach and foundation of practice, to share a common language and vocabulary, and to set up and respect the work environment and principles of our work:

It was spectacular to me to see the power of evocation that a score has. How the physical movement attracts, stimulates, and projects fascinating sensations and stimuli. [To discover] How to create, to get the actor to set down one hundred per cent of his energy in a physical score without worrying about the ideas or emotions so they can be born in the

spectator. To discover the creative universe that is hidden in a movement or score. And how to make each evening the score as rich and expressive as it was the first time. That is what I call the task. The task is for the actor what marble is for the sculptor or colour for a painter. Such a rich material [that] you could say there are exhaustible actors but inexhaustible tasks. The possibilities [of enactment] of a score are an endless discovery, but that's the job of the actor. Evening after evening, evening after evening. (Director Oscar Miranda, personal correspondence)¹⁰⁵

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT I: PHYSICAL AND CREATIVE RESPONSES

Individual postures

[DVD2-ASFX-Areas of interest-Introduction]

Listening to each other ways of recreating feelings and sensations teaches the students to be aware of their differences as well as commonalities in the act of interacting with the theme. The more personal the meaning is the more deep one can go into its embodiment and therefore into the open possibility for the spectator of recognising the “commonality” (rather than universality) of one’s collective culture, language and imagination around the theme.

The perception each actor has of the other’s work involves a dual aspect. One side of it is concerned with the observation of how the theme transforms, becomes different, through the other’s body. The other side is involved in the recognition of common feelings and sensations that resonate inside of us which can be connected to our individual experience of it. The former implies noticing the compositional aspects of such embodiment, which also depend on how one “moves” around the theme or “adopts” a certain perspective. The latter involves empathy and one’s identification or “merging with” a deep feeling or meaningful physicality of a theme, something that is recurrent in our experience of it. This duality already present in any act of perception becomes especially relevant for an actor’s way of listening and acting.¹⁰⁶ What I observe as being important to this research is that the

agreement on the theme we wanted to communicate to the audience – its corporeal quality or meaning – was to be found not only through each explicit manifestation of the theme, but also because of their complete personal commitment achieved through the body to the idea. The actors and spectators as well engage and respond with the human side of this (total) act or commitment, and not with the personal interpretation of the fact, event or mood to enact. Yet both are indispensable for expression.

The overt reflections and sharing of each individual depiction was also a metaphorical way of introducing the students to the idea that the performance could not be directed by any of our particular visions on the performance's content, but on our way of giving and yielding to each other's proposals and individual process of embodiment. Listening to one's body, each other's body, and to the performance as a third reality into the equation – a not me, not you, but "it" – was necessary in order to guide and elaborate our performance settings and aesthetics.

A question of scenic material

In the following days each actor presented a written report on some questions, taking into account the key words that needed to be further articulated in and for the performance: asphyxia, system, contemporary society and contemporary man.

- a) Concrete and recognizable related situations observed in our and/or others' daily life.

- b) Places, spaces (real or imaginary) where we perceive the sensation of asphyxiation.
- c) Related images (photographs, paintings, films, advertisements...)
- d) Texts (theatre and/or literature, poetry, articles and essays). Make concrete and explicit the connection to the theme.
- e) Sensorial (sounds, lights, colours, smells, textures and tastes)
- f) Movements, dynamics and tempo-rhythm (of what is being observed).
- g) How would you like to see all of these represented? (Aesthetics, style, code, or genre)
- h) What do you want to explore personally as an actor during this process?

Their reflections made me feel more exactly what sensations and feelings appeared when they thought of the theme. By putting in common all that information we began to ground and breed the following improvisations from which to collect ideas for developing the piece. The questionnaire also revealed very important factors for articulating what was their inner reason or personal commitment to the performance and the overall project. Their responses helped me and the director to identify strong agencies and/or sources in those concerns which appeared most clearly articulated among their reflections. Chosen concerns were strictly personal, touching and moving for the actors and also interesting enough to start searching for their performativity or possibilities of staging: the fear to love, envy, a sense of being abnormal within a kind of “normal” situation, the crowds during sales, not being able to stay in two places at a time, and the obsession of beauty. Like in the Individual Projects of second-year students, their personal concerns – ‘emotionalized images’¹⁰⁷ (Dewey 05: 68) – were strong fertilisers of both (theirs and mine) imaginations, which became activated mainly

because of the actors' firm inner conviction in performing the theme. Therein, the actor's body receives and feels its reason to *be* on stage.

More than a resource for staging ideas or anticipating possible results, the reports and first improvisations were necessary for us to start thinking about the work differently, to enrich each one's perception on the same theme through the others, to find what is common in the images we had around the theme and similar drives in our imaginary worlds. It took some time to make this clear. Sometimes during rehearsals or in our conversations afterwards, they tried to withdraw conclusions about how to stage this or that idea or image onto stage, or decide why and what for this movement is going to be useful in the final performance.

At this stage of the work to keep one's full attention in the work at hand was especially delicate for the following reason: the information [type and content of knowledge] that we were trying to impregnate our body with - which would serve as the inspirational background or the sensorial substratum for future performance - would be as if adulterated [not completed] by "interferences" caused by their judgments or expectations of attaining results, i.e. by putting the original idea into a frame too soon [De Bono 1967]. Therefore, the future acting [shared communication] with the audience would be not as clear nor as powerful as it could be, because the body's process of gaining such kind of building knowledge [the scaffolding] had not been clearly established, "purified" in Chekhov's terms. (My diary)

*'The flow' improvisation*¹⁰⁸

In this improvisation participants undertake simple actions such as walking in the room, following someone, changing tempos, crossing between two

people or between someone and the wall and stopping. They keep their soft focus and awareness on the others and the space. The impulses to move, to stop, to change tempo, to follow someone may either come from the outside – another partner, the space, a sound, etc. – or inside oneself. Eventually, a feeling of a common energy flowing through the actors and the space appears. The stage becomes alive by what feels like an assembled work made of collective impulses, a connectedness of individual actors in movement. The composition takes on a life of its own through the interweaving of impulses, the use of time and space and the growing consciousness both for actors and spectators of a common action that is guiding the improvisation forward independently of any particular will of each actor. Meaning is captured in the use of the space and their kinaesthetic responses while collectively improvising:

Here I discovered the difference between “listening” and the non productive concern of “having to do”. I realised that it is not necessary to worry about what you are going to do or have to do. These are concerns that prevent you from taking care of what you should be taking care. It is “simply” about being there in that precise moment in an active way. To listen (to perceive, to understand) what is happening out in the space and at the same time, to what is happening inside oneself within that space. To be aware of being part of the whole group by feeling your other five partners. That is what really has to move you to act (understanding acting as taking action). Not thinking about what “I am going to do” or “I have to do” as concerns, but simply to be, alert, to react actively. Even not doing, but “letting yourself be done”; and yet in an active way as part of a whole that is alive and acts, that moves. (Claudia Giráldez, written reflections after the session. Her underline)¹⁰⁹

The body is immersed in the space and the work with the others; and so is the acting. The recognition of acting as an architecture of the stage – the body in the space, the spatial relationships between the actors, and the

alternate tempo-rhythms – constituted one way for entering the idea of an atmosphere as a tool for both acting and composition. The aim was to re-direct the actor's (including the director's and mine) attention to what was being created by the group in the space, better said, the movement responses to an atmosphere through *their particular use of the space* using 'the flow' exercise. Their responses depended on an open and receptive awareness towards the others and towards being in such imaginary common space, in its immediate composition.

When moods, feelings, images, and emotions are easily triggered by, for example, the introduction of a strong ambient music, that special concentration is threatened; and in order to work properly students need to develop a rather complex and higher level of listening towards the demands of the flow and desist from "acting". It urges them certain detachment from their bodies and presences in their doing, since a complete identification with any intention or an emotional discharge would distract them from the aims of the exercise – the precision of their actions – losing the sense of the ensemble and the aliveness of the space. It is through this feeling of distance that students arrive at their own agreement with the tasks that are being tracked for the improvisation. Besides, it is also needed in order to feel in the moment (and evaluate later on) the improvisation in terms of the (performative) consequences that such music exerted in their own bodies, sense of space and time, i.e. in their composition.

I am quite confused. I am confused because, unavoidably, with the music and the movement a lot of things arise. But I was "no", saying to myself: "Out! I only have to do what I have to do, and not get absorbed in my own film". Then, I cut everything off. As I told you, I do not know where the limit is, because 50 thousand things occur to you, and if you

let yourself be carried along then... (Claudia Giráldez, during the session. December 16, 2004)

So what happens is that the music activates feelings, emotions, moods and intentions in the “imagining” body; but not so in the “acting” body whose actions still depend on the others, the space, the tempo, the immediate response or lack of response. Who runs the performance then? The challenge is in living through those images while keeping your connection to what you are already doing, that is, in keeping in relation to your partners and to the space through that imaginary quality. The psychological action, as it is traditionally understood, needs to be in a secondary plane of the performer’s conscious attention in order not to lose the continuous improvising activity- At least the actor needs to find her “right” balance for succeeding in the exercise:

Here my big discovery was not to tell, not to show [...] that was a bit arduous for me [...]. It is not about rejecting any narrative or image coming. They must be accepted, incorporated but controlled. The aim is to examine all that happens, and in order to do that, you have to be fully aware of everything happening. You have to be open enough so that things occur, but not let yourself get carried by them. Patience and rigour. (Claudia Giráldez, written reflections after the session)¹¹⁰

The imagination – not as a mental image but as already an action – rearranges behaviour and turns into a powerful tool for enriching the improvisation. Its incessant flow of images, resonances or associations allows the actor to forge the composition of the scene that is being created in the moment. It is not by directing her imagination that the actor constructs her performance moment by moment, but by letting the imagination guide her actions. ‘To explain this’, adds Claudia, ‘I have the image of pulling the reins of a horse who wants to run away at full gallop.’

The atmosphere of Asfixia

[DVD2-ASFX- Areas of interest-The Atmosphere]

The atmosphere guides the physical through-line or enactment of the score, defines and reinforces its embodiment as the tempo in music does. The performer-side is score dependent meanwhile the artist-side is atmosphere dependent. However, they are two sides of a same coin or action.¹¹¹ Performance artists depends on both and their interaction, whether they are conscious of it or not. Somehow the atmosphere is inside and outside too, it evades this division.

I was working internally with an open attitude towards what was happening within the group. I let myself be swept by them, I proposed things, I played my dynamics and theirs... I felt very comfortable. What was happening outside was much more contagious than what I was thinking. In the first improvisation I inquired into my inner asphyxia, I worked individually. But in the second, I was in the service, as it were, of the group, without much thinking about my inside. I was active, free. I probably lost my connection with the theme, but I think I worked and analysed what was occurring in the moment, there, with my partners, and I wasn't considering if that was corresponding or not to the theme. (Juan Ceacero, written reflections after the session)¹¹²

It was not the aim of 'the flow' exercise to stage *Asfixia* atmosphere, but to introduce the technique in just one session and explore its findings and possible ways of developing it in later improvisations. We were still in the terrain of educating our physical and creative responses, allowing images to guide our performance in space and with our partners; committing our body experience to new ways of looking at the reality of acting; and connecting our

Asfixia imagery to our acting (directing) tasks.

Overall, we were opening and building up a special section in our 'life-body' (Petit, see the introduction) connected to this piece. This other "virtual" body is able to remember the smallest and subtlest details in a way that our mind could ever register. This would be as if a new memory card or category of experience were created that is not directly connected with our personal lives or remembered past experiences, but directed to those of the imagination, of the potential done(s).¹¹³ We are grounding the growth of a whole new knowledge within our living body, which make us perceive, act and think in a particular way. We might entitle it "Asfixia", where we can dump all our related imaginary life experience and exercise. This new bin will determine our disposition and guide our present and future doing and decisions in/on performance if we just *know-how to rely on it*.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT II: CHARACTER AND TEXTS

Improvisation with archetypes

[DVD2- ASFX-Areas of interest-Archetypes]

When I'm working on something, any interpretative things don't occur to me. I'm concerned with action. I can honestly say I don't know about a character until afterwards, and maybe not even then. (Willem Dafoe, in Clarke 2001: 14).

Since *Asfixia* was not a traditionally play-written text, the characters, as well as the spoken texts, were not introduced as mediators or as main agents for the piece or the acting. The characters were configured as one amongst the many variables that could help shape the performance and contribute to the atmosphere of specific scenes or the play/dramaturgy of the whole. I expected this area to become confusing for the students and their understanding of the practice that was taking place, since both the building of a character and the delivery of texts had articulated all their apprenticeship at the RESAD. The student's previous training did not interfere at first with the awareness and articulation of their presence-in-action or imagination through these character improvisations. On the contrary, as they observed, it also happened to be an ally. The problems appeared in the level of intentional and emotional discharge that the students seemed to be compelled towards in front of an audience:

I remember the fateful first run-through we did of *Asfixia*. That first pass which some teachers came to see made all of us more vulnerable, smaller and we all began to pull from what we already knew; and we

blurred our first run-through: too much temperament, too carried away by the intentions, we also entered another place where we shouldn't be as actors... I think that it was the hardest part, [to know that it is] a cleansing rather than a taking off. Because you don't have to forget anything in order to do this, but to know how to combine it. The major difficulty, which is the greatest virtue of the work, I believe, is in understanding that the acting is different. (Miguel De Miguel, personal interview)¹¹⁴

The work with archetypes was based on an Imaginary Body improvisation and aimed to reinforce the students' awareness on their physicality and the articulation of the sensations that the image was awakening in their actions here and now.¹¹⁵ They were used as a means to reinforce the connections between their creativity – state of continuous improvisation – and the openness and special concentration that was being pursued in the training. The students were learning common principles in order (1) to re-direct their attention to the impulses and actions originating in their imagining body; (2) to follow the impulse-image-action in space and time with precision, continuity and control; and (3) to be aware of the audience (the other) in their doing. These three dimensions of their work allowed them to pay further attention to their 'feelings of beauty, ease, form and the whole' during the improvisation. In other words, they were exploring their own aesthetic process of creating characters through the bodymind.

When personally performing the improvisation on the work of archetypes through [putting on] his suit, I found how inspiring and creative it is. To possess through the imagination another body undoes the actor's own prejudices, inhibitions and resistances - both physical and intellectual - towards his working material: in this case the character. It is far more difficult to trick the body than the mind. The body betrays preconceptions, Manichaeism and clichés. The body takes over the will and guides work. (Director Oscar Miranda, personal correspondence)¹¹⁶

The elaboration of both verbal and physical discourse was completely free as far as it “came out” from that imagining body and not from the actor’s quotidian self. The mask was fixed, so to speak, and the acting flowed from it. The actor finds a specific image that is constitutive of her perception of the body (and therefore of her relation to time and space) *in* her own particular engagement with the scenic action. From that awareness, the embodied image had a chance to create its discourse(s) without the interference of the personal mind or judgement of the particular actor, just by adapting itself continuously to the present moment. The actor’s body opens with no resistance to be giving and receiving at the same time, towards the audience and towards the space:

I found the discourse of what I was going to say suddenly, because I found a little straw that was there [...] it was a quite clear image. It was an image marking a clear direction of being there, confronted; a set of sensations caused by the fact of having been working on the archetype of the revolutionary man. (Juan Ignacio Ceacero, personal interview)¹¹⁷

Through these improvisations we found three important elements to develop in performance. First, Ivana’s character was developed from the weird energy of her angry Hermit while giving a class in economics to the audience, something imposed on him. The feelings in and of Ivana’s body led her work towards a character, The Professor, who held incredibly racist and strong politically-incorrect opinions about life and the present times. These improvisations also fed the issues Juan worked on later in his solo performance – alienation and mental derangement. They also inspired the quality of energy and overall atmosphere in Claudia’s scene based on her restless feeling of wasting time; an issue that was being explored through her posh archetype.

Ivana's hermit improvisation was the only case where the idea of a character was taken directly to the stage. Taking this improvisation into the performance settings revealed the unavoidable complexity of identifying and constantly refining one's acting tasks throughout the scene. An arduous process was due in order to fix her use of the character and the text while still keeping up with the other tasks and demands of the staging.¹¹⁸

I think The Professor was a very complicated role - or I felt the job very complicated - because there was a direct relationship with my peers and with the audience. [...] having a character that has to be talking directly to someone - your colleagues who are doing the performance with you - and also to your audience by looking directly to them; a character who is still, not moving, that cannot do great things... [It] is to be working on one side a big containment and, on the other hand, to be confronting yourself. It feels a bit contradictory. Anyway, it confused me and kept me from concentrating. (Ivana Heredia, personal interview)¹¹⁹

Learning from the improvisations

Juan and Ivana commented afterwards that *how* these improvisations were introduced was key for them in order to shift their way of thinking about a character. This was mainly because of the specific tasks and demands imposed on them as students. They followed the rules of the game that had been set out for them (to play with this body) rather than the hypothetical result that they could have been asked for (to be that person). It is not on a first level of their consciousness that they are becoming (or not). They do better if they delegate that to the audience. Actors grasp their (individual) sensations of the image, embody its dynamics and let their acting be done

through the interplay with the audience. This special attention to the character's physicality in relation to "the other" gives no chance for the students to fully identify with the experience of it, whereas it allows them to think as actors in terms of what they are 'doing' instead of what they are 'being':

I remember a scene in which I had to represent a man in his forties in a tense situation but very confident of himself. I remember the bad time I had trying to be like that, so different from me. If I had to play that role now I would address it in a very different way. I would go straight into the action. What do I have to do? I wouldn't worry about anything else. Now, I look more into myself, inside, how I am today, and from there I enter the scene. It has to do with the will, according to how the will is. The work starts from there. I do not say anymore: "today I will try this in the scene" (a feature of the character or a quality). It makes no sense. Now I tell myself: "Today I do the scene." (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹²⁰

The character is born neither from nor for complete and truthful identification with "who" the actor thinks she is or becomes. Her focus is on the tools, in recognising what are the strategies the body is following so that as an actor she can articulate the improvisation, i.e., her reflection-in-practice of what is happening in the scene:

There are a number of things that I discovered in the training that are where the language that I am working as an actor really is. [...] The difference was that, before, everything depended more on analysis: who I am, where I am, what my motivation was; and now the focus is on the tools, on the language. This means that the actor works with the language of the stage, and therein lies their focus. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹²¹

What changed in their approach to characters and acting may not be perhaps determined in terms of result, but in terms of the attitude or disposition towards their on-going work and the communication that this

allowed with the audience. [See DVD2-ASFX-Actors interviews-Ivana Heredia; Juan Ceacero]

Asfixia served to inspire the students' acting and devising beyond the self-confinement of the technique, wherein the most important thing was not to build up a full characterisation and/or psychological logic of the scene, but to increase the imaginary resources so they could apprehend the character's position within a richer and wider composition of their acting.

In principle, I think all acting techniques have to help the actor's creative role, and allow the freedom to create the character. With this technique you feel in a special way you're carving, modelling something, a kind of sculpture that moves and speaks. You work so closely with so many little things that you ultimately do a kind of sculpture which becomes the character; and especially in the way we did in *Asfixia* it encompassed much more than that. Not only you were creating the character, but also the whole proposal was creating it. Everything had to be perfectly knit together. (Miguel De Miguel, personal interview)¹²²

The use of texts in Asfixia

For actors used to creating characters, it is often quite difficult to trust the fact that working without character, and with a simple relationship to energy and resonance in the act of speaking can create sufficient interest and experience for the audience, especially when spoken text is part of a qualitative montage. (Zarrilli 2009: 186)

In these archetypal improvisations the discourse was induced by physicality both in content and form. Like the character the text itself was not the aim. Students had complete freedom in what to say given that they always kept contact with what they were doing physically. On such occasions, I quickly

and directly said “body”. This gave the students a moment of pause (sometimes even an instant) to recover and to connect back with the particular sensation that was prompting their words. By giving such “priority” to the body (the physicality of the scene) instead of to the words (their meaning) that were being said, the students’ voices and texts articulated organically, which meant a clear inner organisation, integral and coherent with the outer physical movements.

It is interesting to observe that finding a voice (and a text) for the Imaginary Body was also clearly easier for them. My second-year students had taken more time and faced another kind of problems while learning the technique. Because the students in *Asfixia* were used to doing vocal work, it was relatively smooth for them to adapt to these new demands. It was smooth in this beginning, as the principles of the work were being slowly established through improvisations. Similarly later, while working through physical actions (Psychological Gesture) in the workshop period, the actors incorporated intonation, nuances and in-tension in their vocal work without losing the connection to their whole bodies and their acting. However, this original issue that had taken longer accomplish for beginners, for the *Asfixia* participants took more time to become useful and effective in the blocking of the scenes and the acting in front of an audience (see Miguel’s above comment on the disastrous first run-through or Ivana’s on blocking her scene). The actor grasps her acting through corporeal dynamics and sensations, and lets “it” be done through the interplay with the audience. Her responsibility and tasks deal with the audience’s presence and reception, and not with the interpretation of her work, and such uncertain knowledge was not easy to accomplish:

The process of internalising the tools was the most complicated part. Knowing “what” we are playing. What this is about. We came from another story where the actor’s art is not conceived that way. The acting is something that I drive directly. I mean, I’m Hamlet and put my intention of certain something in this sentence and then I lead the work here. There is a set of games rather focused on the exhibition of the work being done not in a wrong sense though in a clear sense. And this work [ASFX], in general terms, had to do with the dispossession of all those things, with the cleansing of any type of showing of the work that was being done. It’s a job where you need to remove more than attach, a little bit that ‘via negative’. It is from that cleanness that you may start building from another place.¹²³

On the other hand, these character improvisations opened up an important issue to set up in the forthcoming performance process of composition. Students could start to identify and maintain their attention on two different levels of their performance: the textual score and the physical score, playing a dramatic contrast between them and searching for the theatricality of language and texts based on possible juxtapositions of acting tasks. For example, having to deliver a text (giving a conference or telling a children’s story here and now) while trusting their body being involved in an apparently independent action – as playing an imaginary body or, as we will see later, a relationship with the other. Here the actor engages two different tasks in the same improvisation. The actor is articulating for us (her partners) a talk or storytelling while simultaneously responding to her impulses in a free movement improvisation. This compromise with a corporeal dynamics was afterwards taken into the performance context in the dialogues and monologues with the partner(s) and the audience.¹²⁴

What I learned through this exploration of archetypes, characters and texts was that the student’s learning process ought to pass through the reduction

of characterisation to a minimum, even better to perform without characters in order not to divert the many aspects implicated in acting. Focusing on one quality or feature helped us to simplify the work, to find the one or two aspects that worked as the motive for the scenes (the essence). Reduction, simplification and synthesis were our main effort throughout the work on *Asfixia*. The acting tasks we searched for were those that articulated in terms of motor actions the connection to the score as well as the connection between the theme and the spectator. These connections could come from any other image as well as from the embodiment of a character, an atmosphere or a relationship. In our search for scenic material, these improvisations particularly helped us to find new ways of expression by changing contexts, proto-characters and/or situations, introducing or mixing different texts and playing with the idea of hypertextuality.

Texts were selected and weaved within each composition according to the particular goal of the moment or scene. They came from different sources: everyday greetings or a colloquial phone conversation, TV commercials, weather forecast and recent news, the editorial in a fashion magazine, poems or narratives written by the students or selected for the piece, excerpts from novels or books, and re-edited texts or monologues coming from the improvisations or written in their questionnaires. Text was mainly used as a pre-text, running parallel with the strong physicality of the actor and addressed to the partners and/or the audience, either to distort its meaning or enhance certain effects in the reception of spectators. [See DVD2-ASFX-Composition of scenes]

The use of monologue in contemporary postdramatic performance is often a means that facilitates approaching the theatrical reality of texts and

surpassing the representational aspect of language (Lehmann, 2006: 125-129). In this sense, 'confessions' as Miguel De Miguel's in *Asfixia* become a method to intensify communication with the audience rather than the exposure of his personality through his own words and personal feelings of the theme (envy). I mean, through an articulated physical score working "separately" from his own speech, the emphasis became in the sensations that the quality of his movements were conveying, relegating the importance of the verbal discourse to a second or collateral plane. [See DVD2-ASFX-Actors interviews-Miguel De Miguel]¹²⁵

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT III: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS

Working with a desire

[DVD2-ASFX-Areas of interest-Relationships]

A third and last area to approach theatre-making from was based on the actors' exploration of the inner actions that make human beings relate to each other. This area relied on the actor's ability to articulate and maintain a specific relationship to the doing through body, space and time. The articulation of scenic presence and behaviour was discovered by making physical their concrete desire to do an action to the other, that is, in their intentions (rather than intention) to satisfy an inner gesture throughout the context of the scene. The living through the score is in harmony with the gesture, induced by it, but is not marked nor delimited by its effort:

As soon as any actor demonstrates an intention [...] rather than inhabiting the simple psychophysical state, the actor forecloses the possibility of being, in-this-moment of inhabitation, and cannot serve as an appropriate vehicle for the audience's experience. (Zarrilli 2009: 192. *Italics in the original*)

Exploring the desire to touch, to caress, to twist or to asphyxiate means to embody certain physical, manta, emotional and aesthetic possibilities and to explore them in your individual response when involved in those motor-actions. This experience of the body-in-action is distinctive when having one or the other desire, as it is especially noticeable during the transition from one to the other state. The theme or desire to asphyxiate is not approached

from its (only) psychological or emotional premises. The exploration is done on the physical and physiological grounds making possible that the movement improvisation and the contact with the partner evolves in here and now. Students are looking into the vigour of their movements, living through the feeling sensations and resonances that are giving meaning to their interaction with each other. This particular attention is enclosed in each action's own cycle of completeness and involvement through time, body and space. Concentration is then that phase of actualisation before the interference of any judgemental or predetermining mind into the doing of the action. Thoughts, intentions and emotions come after our embodied desires, so to speak. Because of the specificity of her implication, the actor observes the nature of thought, emotion or intention in the relational reality of her doing instead of in the intentional or causal purpose of her actions.

The resulting action (acting) emerges then from an actor's previous, voluntary and conscious entrance into her own corporeal process of reflection. This reflection is not set upon the quotidian experience of the self, nor does it have anything to do with the possible re-elaboration of personal psychology according to the scene. This sort of reflection comes from the cultivated experience of the body one has re-created through training (or practice) as a kind of first hand, experiential hypothesis to experiment with. Reflecting through the commitment to the action or to the image implies having a complete awareness of the whole being while involved in doing (bodymind) and to separate the idea of a self (an existent ego) from the actual experience of doing. Both training and acting reinforce the capability of perceiving the body in such preliminary and optimal state of performance. As Zarrilli suggests, long-term training – as it is one's acting practice – is mainly

about becoming a 'perceiving awareness' (2009: 128). From such a clear perception one consequently relates to the environment in a different mode, let's say, receives and responds to it from a different perspective.¹²⁶

Let's come back to our unfulfilled desires of touching, caressing, twisting and asphyxiating. Such states of inner contradiction generate a process of constant abstraction of the corporeal experience with which the actor manages to step into the aesthetic dimension of her craft. There is an aesthetic pleasure when the students think of their corporeal experiences and rely on them as a form of maintaining a clear and distinctive connection with their partner and with the (virtual) spectator. An actor's experience of her aesthetic process articulates: (1) an acute perception of one's own and the other's doing under such spatial and gestural circumstances; (2) the potential to make it tangible and plausible for both one's self and for the other through the form; and (3) the ability to radiate to the partner as well as to the audience what that process is about for you as an artist, right in this particular moment through these feelings, movements and actions. This is to say that in order to complete the artistic cycle – to develop an aesthetic consciousness of form, beauty, ease and the whole – all these three considerations are somehow taken into account at once by the performer.

The psychological image-gesture

Playing with an impulse that cannot be satisfied provokes movement and evidences energy. The movement is in itself an exploration of the nature and quality of energy that is in the original impulse and/or inner gesture. When

the actor plays with an inner gesture or desire, associations in the form of images arise in and through the body's movement, actions, and feelings. Such is the immediate psychophysical process impelled by the technique of the Psychological Gesture. While inhabiting the physical and mental space of the scene, the gesture resonates according to what feels more adequate for being related to in the here and now of the performance. As seen in the previous chapter, the gesture works upon the contingencies between what the body has learned to do and the meaning(s) that the individual is used to find. As an actor, the student draws on sensorimotor knowledge and experience, on what she (her body) knows and can do in regards to the present moment. She also learns to enjoy her articulation of energy, presence and behaviour taking this gestural knowledge to a different place, i.e. to being eloquent on the stage.

The Psychological Gesture, for example, is a combination of image and gesture itself. What makes it psychological is what it has of the imaginary, I think. The search for a gesture is a round trip: starting from the gesture I seek the image that is within the gesture, or I have an image and it emerges as a gesture. So I think the psychological question has more to do with the image rather than with psychology. Psychology comes later when you interpret what that means, when you give it a sense. For me the Psychological Gesture is a gesture that is loaded with an image, basically. I can work it internally, though it's making me articulate the scene in a certain way. Somehow the miracle is how I can transform - translate - something that is merely a form into a completely different physical manifestation. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹²⁷

The image, as an inner gesture, is for an actor just a form of articulating a complex interweaving of sensations that are rooted in the body. It is the way the body has to understand its multisensory experience. Further reflection during or after this exercising of images-gestures in *Asfixia* was but a

performative inquiry on and of the nature of human relationships – i.e. that sensorial substratum that builds the way we relate to the other in our everyday lives. Physical and physiological responses to sensations trigger the actor's (body's) choices in acting, her "taking action". When I think of the psychophysical while working with an image, I am not considering any visible consequence or correlations between the possible picture (image or gesture) and the acting body, but the potential of that inner engagement to come up with certain action qualities and choices and not others. These qualities and choices can be grouped by the actor as having an archetypal, particular sort of quality that permeates her relationship to the chain of actions that make the score. She may realise this as either a kinaesthetic image (inner gesture) or a concrete visual picture that inspires her body in performance. In any case, it is through a primary focus on inhabiting the score that the actor governs the Psychological Gesture, any other image or technique. By the same means she is also governing her capability for inspiring and articulating the performance through the gesture without limiting her acting to just showing the image itself or getting stuck in its inner action.

What I have learnt from all of this is that I can enter the scene only concentrated on just an image, an inner sensation, an atmosphere or quality, or both if necessary, and achieve, if I am confident in them, an effortless improvisation; whereas - before this work - entering the stage to improvise appeared to me as a dangerous jump into the abyss. Now it is still so, but there is no fear of jumping. Already I know that such vertigo is not only logical but also healthy, since it - if you know how to use it - increases your concentration on what you are working on... One has to leave his fears, his ego behind and put all his attention on what he is working on inside, yes, but also in what is happening in that moment on stage. (Julián Ortega, reflections on CBA)¹²⁸

Creativity manifests through the physicality and speech that comes after a

gesture. The gesture inspires rather than defines the actor's intention. It involves the word and the action but it does so not by imposing its dynamics, tempo, duration and energy. These aspects rather belong to the score, to the choice of the actor or the moment of performance, but not to the gesture. In a similar way to the keynote in the musical score, the inner gesture determines its character and not its composition. Otherwise the actor's expression would become regular, monotonous and rather obvious. The Psychological Gesture serves the actor to find her inspiration (rather than her aim) in her own body-memory, living or imagining body, and to follow a regular track through its imprint in her stage work. The vocal and corporeal creation will not always be the same as this is not the gesture's intended result. The gesture is for giving life to inspiration, for actualising one's special concentration or bodymind.

Language used for opening up this area was also fundamental, as it was for introducing the other two areas. First improvisations were based on the exploration of movement through the bodymind - "I physicalise the desire to". In the first stages this command becomes crucial. It is not about what "I want" (I may just do an action and I am finished with the improvisation), but about how one is able to make from that feeling (desire) something tangible that lives through the body so that "I can" relate to my actions, to the other and just play. The sensation-in-motion or driving force is being moulded and controlled through the movement, presence, and action of the body in the space, given that the body has been already prepared for that certain involvement.

Like in the previous two areas, the student is working upon a certain sense of detachment from the doing that allows her to identify that special nature and quality of the relationship between her as a doer and what is being done, and

therefore to take the inner commitment prompted by the image to another place different from where it originated. The job is done upon the abstraction of a feeling sensation that the actor eventually transfers to the physical language of the staging:

Here in this type of work [...], if there is no previous physical experience, the work makes no sense. I have first to experience a number of things about the scene to understand how the scene is. That is, we start from the very language of the theatre that has nothing to do with literature or with textual analysis. It has to do with the actual physical work of the items that are onstage, which are time, space and the partner, and with what is emerging at this very moment between the two of us, either through a text or through doing whatever you are doing. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview.)¹²⁹

This was a delicate aspect to take care in our practice since many times the actors were using personal material (gestures) to compose the scenes. Three clear examples may show how this study can be followed. One example is Cristina's scene when working with the feelings and experience of her personal theme – 'fear to love' [See DVD2-ASFX-Actors interviews-Cristina Cerezo]. She builds a symbolic scene upon her relationship with Miguel, who participated as a passive "neutral" character enabling Cristina's scoring and staging (as in 'The Other'). Another example already commented on was Claudia's defragmentation throughout the scene after her unsuccessful feeling of wanting to be in two places at the same time and the impossibility of doing it [See DVD2-ASFX-Scene composition-Two Places]. The last example is Miguel de Miguel's scene. It was constructed upon the feeling of envy, something asphyxiating when personally recognised. It was not the point of the scene to delve into Miguel's personal envy or to represent his feelings on the stage in front of an audience [See DVD2-ASFX-Scene composition-Envy].

What was interesting to explore was the feeling itself – the desire of wanting, taking or having what the other has and oneself lacks – and the physicality it run within the scene:

My scene, obviously, changed a lot. [...] I think it gained in that I realised that less is more. At first, in the first version, I really wanted to do everything, I was thrilled with the technique and the type of work and I wanted to explode on the stage. In the following versions, especially in the third one, I realised that all this was not necessary in order to transmit what we wanted to convey. It evolved into a much more... static is not the word, but kind of more simple score that still had for me, not yet the same power, but I think it was even more powerful. Basically it was like a cleansing of the previous work. It was as if my psychological gesture in the beginning would have been huge and I had found a way to refine it, to give with the same [gesture] a minimum per cent with a maximum result. (Miguel De Miguel, personal interview)¹³⁰

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT IV: TRAINING THROUGHOUT *ASFIXIA*

There was a process in which at first you were fine, suddenly you were extremely lost. You didn't know what you had to do. If you moved an eyebrow you felt a fatal mistake. Then, suddenly, you begin to understand all in a very natural way. That sure was shocking to me because, all of a sudden, there was understanding. There was nothing rational that would compel me to understand; just the body understood what that was all about. (Ivana Heredia, personal interview)¹³¹

This recognition of the suddenness of knowledge is a constant throughout the students' experience both in *Asfixia* and with the second year students. It emphasises in practice what I have already stated in this thesis about the nature of acting knowledge and the students' ways of accessing such awareness.

In understanding the process, things like "do not explain it to me", "do not tell, just do" were key to me; but by seeing it in your partners. That is, when you gave these guidelines to others and by me being out and seeing what were the changes occurring in them; because for me, when you told me, I was incapable; especially at the very beginning, because you aren't aware of your body. So, seeing it in my partners was something that helped me. You see the changes in them and then you try to apply them to yourself. (Ivana Heredia, personal interview)¹³²

On the other hand, the strong physicality and concentration that the preliminary training forms demand from the actor are so extreme that personal idiosyncrasies hindering or disturbing these processes easily appear. Personal impediments also soon become something recognisable and acceptable, which becomes a premise for letting them go and continuing the work towards being fully present and aware of the forms. Assiduous

training follows its own specific learning strategy, and as already stated, it is not about doing the training but about one's interaction with it. The aim is not about being good or doing it perfectly, but about a constant search and a re-adaptation to the demands of the training at that specific moment and with that specific body. The effort teaches more than the hypothetical fact of being fully there, concentrated all the time. Our common regular training was disciplining us to develop full awareness of the body, to keep us fully committed to and aware of what we were doing so that the exploration through the improvisations were facilitated:

I, as an actor, did not work with the breath [before]. Indeed, yes, one breathes as a person but does not breathe as an actor. [...] No. The actor [breathes], not the person. The actor breathes and is conducting his work with the breath. Understanding this type of work suddenly was also very important in order to see how we were telling [expressing], because you are establishing in advance a distance between what you are doing and you the actor. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹³³

The trained actor breathes through her doing as much as the doing breathes through her. The breath becomes her performer's mode of awareness. It is by these means that the duality of the internal and the external can be discovered and overcome by the students. Duality dissolves when complete attention is paid to the doing and how this doing needs to be done in order to be realised by or through the body. I mean, acting is not about meaning but about the disposition required for capturing meaning.

And here there is one division (which is another learning process) that I think you were asking us with a clear example like entering the space in a certain way. "I enter" - I leave my daily questions out. Only understanding that, or starting from that place, is something completely different to go in straight, take off my shoes and: "well, come on, what needs to be done? Ha, ha, hee, hee." No. We leave the street outside

and we enter here, and the body is already different. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹³⁴

The student's disposition can only be accessed by a voluntary gesture of entering the place to rehearse, to train and to be ready to perform. This is both common in Chekhov's 'crossing the threshold' (in Ashperger 2008:165, and Chamberlain 2004: 116) and Zarrilli's training, by leaving your shoes out of the room, touching the floor, the forehead, and the chest when you enter the kalari or studio. However, such a disposition is not automatic nor can be taken for granted, on the contrary it needs to be cultivated, challenged and restored, ideally throughout the actor's career.

The corporeal experience in these two forms of training is different, as are the languages they use and the skills and possibilities they open. They apparently work on two different dimensions of practice, which sometimes even seem to collide: the freedom and playfulness of the imagination (intuition) and the restrictions of the martial forms (katas). However, over time – and this is the crucial trial in the meeting of these two practices – one realises that in the end everything comes back to one's perception of the bodymind or imagining body and its particular training.

Acting is about the form, the precision and the continuity of an inner commitment that gives a chance for meaning to be realised. Form, continuity and precision made up the coaching in training and also set the criteria for the later process of rehearsals and embodying the imagination. By focusing on the form, continuity and precision of their actions, the students apprehend their attention and how it is and can be divided into the multiple aspects that build up her work: inner life, outer actions, space, partners, audience, the score, the performance text and situation.

Two further interrelated occurrences in *Asfixia* helped me to clarify these certain questions or relations. One is the ‘staccato and legato’ exercise, which became crucial to understand in practice the link between both forms of training, both for the students and myself. The other was the problem that the students faced in developing their proposals throughout the open improvisations after the workshop stage had finished.

The ‘staccato and legato’ exercise is made up of a repetition of lunges done as a group by which Chekhov introduces practice on “presence”, “significance” and “radiation”.¹³⁵ How the actor keeps, increases and plays with these three feelings, which are but just one act of the body (significance, radiation and presence) through these lunges nurtures the psychology that Chekhov suggests for stage practice. As he explains, they will prevent the actor from doing unnecessary movement and business that normally keeps them preoccupied – ‘this unnecessary “dancing” business on the stage’ (June 9, 1939). What the stage demands is not the bodies (make up, costume, or outer appearance) but the psychology of an actor by means of her body and voice, continues Chekhov, so the preliminary work is done at the level of the artist’s personal relationship with her material – in this case, body, voice and artistic soul. My point here is that for Chekhov the meaning of the psychophysical in acting goes beyond the relationships between the emotional and the physical manifestation of such emotions, or the correspondences between the psychological and the physical features of a character. The psychophysical actor is aiming at an extra-daily sense of the body, theatre and acting that is manifest in a personal attitude towards what she is going to play and which is achieved by means of bodymind concentration.

In *Asfixia*, the 'staccato and legato' exercise functioned as a short cut for understanding the demands of the stage in terms of scenic presence and behaviour, acting tasks and composition. It condenses all the "common" elements found in the two approaches: zero point and being rooted (always keeping one foot on the ground in a ready position); discovery and control of one's energy rather than muscular force; discernment of two main qualities of energy and their modulation through the body in time and space (fast, sudden and strong versus slow, sustained and soft); irradiation (the working agreement between one's corporeal and spatial awareness and the projection of energy through it); centre and alignment (being rooted and in control of one's hips, spine and/or excessive tension on the shoulders, hands or knees); the feelings of form, ease, beauty and the whole (that includes the feeling of completion that is implicit in the idea of *jo-ha-kyu*); breathing, voice, and the reduction of the external movement while keeping full commitment inside (percentages); inner-outer "I" or focus; and ensemble listening and awareness (risk, timing, readiness and the confidence necessary to establish contact within a group). And still another aspect that may also be approached and explained by these lunges is the value and need of repetition for your acting. The exercise provided the students with the tools and means by which they could think and educate their acting intuition – i.e. their ability to articulate their creativity just in the moment of the improvisation:

In the free improvisations - when working with this desire that you have to physically manifest and let it be shown in some way - you're like on a cliff, in front of a terrible abyss, and suddenly, all these exercises [staccato and legato] more or less consciously come to you and you start to articulate [the scene] in a certain way. In the moment that this happens, you cannot do otherwise, you cannot drop out. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹³⁶

The education of creativity seems to depend on the ability of an actor to stand 'on the edge of a breath looking' (Zarrilli 95: 177), to rise in front of that 'terrible abyss' and grasp that moment wherefrom 'you cannot do otherwise'. I remember now Elmano's breakthrough during the rope improvisation [DVD-IP-Structured Improvisations-The Object]. I believe one of the major problems in the student's learning process was on assuming that the acting and devising depended on managing such an extreme point of uncertainty, on their acute alertness during such uneasy place of waiting:

One of the first and most obvious problems arose on May 27. The theme for the improvisation was the exploration of an idea - the automatons and races - from music. The difficulty was in reaching an agreement in practice for which proposal to explore. Every time something that might have been interesting to develop came up, each of the others continued their work individually and the original proposal was lost. Then they took their improvisation to inadequate or private places - a intellectual, judgmental or emotional display. They had shown good ensemble listening when the proposal was already organised and the pattern of the improvisation had been clearly pre-established. But the problem (now) was of another kind, of patient or creative listening necessary in order to fit with each other in one and the same proposal and to explore its possibilities all the way through. They seem not to give themselves the time or the space to sense - to know through the senses rather than through their psychological analysis - the proposal or possible pattern that could be already played. (My diary)

Acting in devised theatre is but a constant and uncertain wager the actor does with her own certain criteria so to fit her actions with what and how she wants them to convey. When you start to articulate your material from that unsure place - or not knowing awareness - the difficulty in going on, in keeping concentrated and in apparent control all the way through is accentuated. I mean "apparent control" in the sense of opening a constant feedback loop that allows your body to check its inner sensations and

associations while keeping alive the commitment between your doing and that of the spectator without perhaps being able to explain what is making your work evolve.

As an actor, always in my previous work I tended to be constantly dropping out of something and letting things fall. But I cannot do that now. You propose something and you go on with that, which leads you to other things as if you were dragging all the work forward. That was just what happened to us. We proposed something and that thing vanished. We were unable to grab things. And it was something you kept telling us “if you have proposed something, follow it through.” In that sense [I remember] all those improvisations, when you required us to maintain the desire very clear, whatever it was, no matter which one. In this case [ASFX] - because we were creating something from nothing - [it was important] to force ourselves to continue with what we had taken, even though without knowing what exactly it was. We should carry on with “it”, assuming “it” was something concrete. (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹³⁷

In *Asfixia* the challenge was in discovering that certain criteria that make the work evolve through the sensorimotor knowledge of the performers rather than from their intellectual or psychological analysis. This knowledge is not immediate or direct and in many cases it is unnecessary to bring forth a rational explanation for it. ‘Patience and rigour’ (as Claudia said) were essential for discovering that criteria within, to trust them and have confidence in your educated intuition to overcome and resolve the stress and tension that by nature constitutes the performance situation.¹³⁸

The training seems basic in this regard. After training I felt like “I have the power”. All that work did or does a kind of purification of body and soul that makes you surrender to what you’ll be doing from then on. To know that your body is ready also gives you tremendous security, but not just your body. This warming up has a magical component, I think, that makes you also place the brain. Later you realise that there are many other factors. It’s not magic. It’s something physical - pure

breathing and stretching. It's concentration - since you will be working with images, centres and so on, it's a sort of cleansing of your body that makes it totally vulnerable to what it means to me to do this technique. I do think that the training was what gave me the security to work on Asfixia. (Miguel De Miguel, personal interview)¹³⁹

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT V: COMPOSITION OF SCENES

[DVD2-ASFX-Scene composition]

How does a piece of material become a scene in a show? By generating the material through clear and concise concepts we can decipher its essence. If the essence of the material selected is, for example, the repulsion of the smell of onion and its physical expression is a given score, we can modulate that score by guidelines such as percentage, quality or tempo, creating thereby a satisfactory resulting score. In another case if, for example, the essence of the material is the impossibility of being in two places at once and the physical outcome is the disintegration or physical de-fragmentation of the body, by modifying simple aspects as the space or the tempo, we can get to the [final] score of the scene. (Oscar Miranda, personal correspondence)¹⁴⁰

Asfixia serves as a sample of how the ideas and outcomes in both the Individual Projects and the project of Bernarda Alba may map out a particular *mise-en-scène*: the staging of the actor as creator (free, inspired and in state of continuous improvisation); the exploration of the stage as the actor's proper instrument for reaching the audience (the search for and discovery of an adequate language for it); and the actualisation of the body as a vehicle for rather than as an instrument to convey the possible meaning(s) of the stage (performance). The nature of this work impelled that the overall performance text, as well as each score and scenes, were explored by the performers' creative individuality. At the same time, this creativity was being forged in the unavoidable interchange of individual and collective efforts that converged in our experience in training, researching, rehearsing and creating together.

The scenes were composed through discerning and selecting the particular acting tasks for the score and the demands of the stage of the piece. This required from the actor and director a continuous stepping in and out of different working layers: considering and structuring the improvisations or exercises (games) around each theme, recovering and adjusting first discoveries for future repetition or for continuing the search, and arranging the courses of action and/or aesthetic criteria that best favour the actors' psychophysical engagement (realisation of an essence) within that moment of the performance. These layers imply duties and responsibilities of different natures that intertwine during the rehearsals and contribute to the final production. These responsibilities could be smoothly negotiated between the members of the ensemble and the director *given that* the focus of the work had been clearly established and agreed upon:

- The bodymind needs to be ready every day for preserving and trusting the natural evolution of the theme through the scores (disposition).
- The performance needs to be understood as a continuous work-in-progress that is alive (embodied) in the moment, rather than in the demonstration and/or reaffirmation of a director's (even the particular actor's) definite views on the matter.¹⁴¹

The design of the research – *Asfixia's* workshop process – had brought out the main themes or ideas. They were conceived as “essences” that came through exploring the sensory world of the play. The composition of the scenes was an adventure into these discovered essences in order to find a principle or task with which to map the scores. In other words, rehearsals were but a process of submerging with each individual actor in their personal

way of dealing with and deciphering what is in the psychophysical nature and quality of her engagement within the performance. The type of experiences and images explored and the organisation of their corporeal awareness was particular to each individual actor as it was to the landscape they wished to explore. The aim was to share with an audience a complex sensation that lives in the body of the actor, particularly in her individual urge to create in relationship to the theme. The means to get it was the performance score, which engaged and is composed at the same time by her artistic personality. The piece presented to the audience several moments of our continuous process of moulding and adjusting our artistry according to how it grew in time through a process of deciphering that is potentially infinite.

The dialogue between the principles of the training, exercises or improvisations and the final performance score was constant and personal. It materialised differently and distinctively in each stage of the process as well as in each person according to her personal approach to the theme, the starting proposal she brought and/or the material provided regarding the one particular scene or moment. Overall, their compositions were based on the acting vocabulary and the technical possibilities acquired during the workshop period. Therefore scenes were the result of investigating the concrete (actor's personal) connection to the theme through each particular-actor's means. This way the dramaturgy of the performance became determined by the performers' and not the other way around.

Each particular scene delved into its guiding idea or essence so that the actor could give it a precise form, space and time and create from it a defined and repeatable experience. This meant to us exploring a concrete concept, principle or process within a particular technique or within the training that

grounded the target of our practice. This way training and techniques were helping us to find and re-define the tasks that could both guide the acting and the composition through:

- the dynamics of a concrete sensation evoked or of the emotion explored through the body;
- the quality of movement or overall feeling state required for that section or transition;
- the concrete desire in the relationship with the other or with the audience in the moment;
- the transformation of the feelings of the bodies throughout the scene.

There were also particular atmospheres of seduction, indifference, isolation, automatism... that helped us to depict throughout the piece our general and objective atmosphere of *Asfixia*, a resonance that we wanted the spectator to leave with after the performance.

On the other hand, what the actors created was not the result of shaping their body and energy into the idea, for instance, of an imaginary body, an atmosphere, or a relationship. Rather the performance score was a consequence of their bodymind interacting with the theme through those “invisible” means. Any meaning that can be derived from the spectator’s interaction – what he reads or perceives – is captured upon the stage in what I will call, according to Huston, ‘what is seen’. What the spectator actually sees is the result of the actor’s bodymind and imagination being shaped through the sensory world of the piece. But it is also the score that becomes alive in the here and now of the performance thanks to such a potential

(however virtual) 'what is seen'. One cannot reshape body and mind for the immediate result of the scene as if this resulting meaning were already something planned in advance in someone's imagination. Yet, it is from her (already trained) imagining action that the actor gives body to whatever happens (is seen) on stage. The imagination is not just for incorporating the character or the image or just for embodying the action or performance. It contains and materialises both functions at the same time in the moment of interaction with an audience.

Alike in music the performer first has to blow the instrument and make noises through it, actors sound the stage out in order to make such instrument speak to an audience. Then, they can begin to model the meaning of 'what is seen' – musicality, quality and rhythm of harmonies and melodies – through composing a form (score) and a mode (keynote) in which those particular sounds and meanings of that particular instrument, stage or performance will reach the audience. Everything on the scene needs to be orchestrated as much by the actor, whose awareness includes the rest of the elements of performance, as well as by the director whose eyes and sensibility help from the outside: 'The director is the real conductor in the whole sense of the word' (Michael Chekhov. January 14, 1937)¹⁴². My work as a director together with Oscar started there, once the performance had previewed and we could see how what needed to be seen could be more clearly and effectively seen – i.e. corporeally experienced.

The students comprehend the practicality of this when they become aware that everything done on stage in terms of actions has meaning not because "I" (the actor) give it meaning, but because my score or action already has a meaning that is intrinsic to it and that is revealed in my relationship to the

doing of these actions in front of the audience. It is my mission as an actor to approach the potential meaning(s) of a score through my whole commitment to the essence of what I do; my 'total engagement':

A person can be intellectually or emotionally involved in what he is doing, imaginatively involved, physically involved, but the real authenticity we recognize is when the person is totally involved. (Nachmanovitch 1990: 173-174).

This holistic approach leads the score and not the actor towards expression. The action reverberating in the actor's unique body is what causes an immediate and consequential impression in the spectator. The order is being inversed, we educate the actor not to be expressive but the action to become expressive in its own terms; terms which undoubtedly are being established by the actor's awareness of her own body and aesthetic experience.

I don't want to see you on the stage; I want to see the action. Nor do I want to see you in the action but the specificity of the action in what you do. That will prompt my imagination as I am now in the action with you. Following your movement as you go along. (Coaching students)

CONCLUSION

Asfixia was a turning point in my life as an actress and as a person. As an actress, it made me realise that it is more important to bare yourself and to know what you want to convey, than really to make it perfect, excel, focus only on yourself. It changed my focus from *me* to the audience, to what I wanted the person that comes to see me to feel, to what I want *him* to open up in his own life, something to change, to open his heart with, to make him feel and think too. (Cristina Cerezo, personal interview)¹⁴³

One of the consequences of this practice has been its necessity to find the synthesis between the self and the other – whatever is seen on the stage – beyond the grounds of the actor's everyday life and behaviour. Students did not arrive at this work as a result of their struggles with their selves in order to become another, but by a displacement of the self to make room for the other. The actor is offered a different point of departure into the acting situation. She starts from a place that is not centred on a self-motivation towards becoming something or someone but on his own (body's) will and concentration to do it – 'I do this' rather than 'what if I were this'.

Rather than trying to bring the words, text or particular psychology of a character to their own body and energy, their focus is on the will to actualise a distinctive body and energy that *is* at disposal of the particular context and each spectator. The student's focus changes from the inner self towards what is happening in the moment, on stage, and with the audience. This does not necessarily mean a loss (or negation) of self, but rather a shift in direction, a type of influence and mode of being attentive to one's body in interaction with the world. It implies that the actor be and think through an inner-outer exchange of perceptual activity demanded by the improvisation, the performance score or the theatrical moment. This shift also brings the

actor's target back to the multiple possibilities of meaning her doing may open for the viewer [DVD2-ASFX-Actors interviews-Juan Ceacero].

Asfixia pivoted around realising the essence (each guiding idea, core sensation, inspiring feeling or image) that was making the actions resonate for both actors and audiences. These essences were researched and defined in terms of sensorimotor patterns and psychosomatic knowledge. They arranged a performance score of kinaesthetic and sensory nature, which articulated through the body, voice and movement the actors' artistic criteria and inner conviction to be on stage. Each particular score became part of a scenic composition by which each actor or the ensemble actualised their will and artistic personality. The acting task makes that guiding idea or driving force become something concrete to play with while being on stage. The acting imagination flows from the performer's specific commitment to her acting tasks and does not tend to represent an interpretation of a play or a theme, as much as to present its actualisation. The artistry and learning of an actor is found in the power of suggestion and inner coherence she can bring to the score and to the performance text. Acting cannot be done in isolation:

It [ASFX] made me see what I want to do; it placed me as an actor and spectator too, as a theatre person. I became much more demanding. This work is rather global, it makes a total actor covering many more things and not only acting. It also covers aspects of artistic direction and all other issues that have to do with the whole play. Until then I only paid attention to what was my work as an actor, or to what an actor does. This work has made me see otherwise, that everything is in perfect communion, that nothing can be gratuitous, not a gesture, a look or a wink. (Miguel De Miguel, personal interview.)¹⁴⁴

Temporality

The final run of performances at Réplika theatre was like *Asfixia's* eclosion: the moment in which I saw and felt that this was a performance and a finished work, that it had enough sense and strength to be shown to the whole world. I felt very proud of what we had done. If this had not happened I would have stayed with another sensation of having done a good project, something interesting, different at school and that's all. (Ivana Heredia, personal interview.)¹⁴⁵

It is indeed debatable that the circumstances that cause *Asfixia's* aftermath were peculiar, perhaps uncommon, and result of the idiosyncrasies of those students, their generation, my personal and professional situation in RESAD at that time and the extra year we dedicated to the project after their graduation. The shift of the acting paradigm that *Asfixia* supposed for both the students and my research happened through and because of time. I am not sure it would have happened otherwise. At least, it wouldn't have been possible to measure, evaluate or even speak of it.

Time and a non-institutional context were needed in order for skills to mature and to be able to apprehend the on-going discoveries and changing meanings that are normally expected through long-term practice, something not possible in the context of one-year drama school programme. However, it is such key – and normally 'unsaid' – processes that need to be considered and taken into account in the continuous investigation of one's teaching practice. It definitely makes me reflect on the role that time plays in acquiring certain tools and understanding, in the programming of the subject and its adaptation throughout the year.

This practice is not about *when* and *how* students shift their thinking of acting, it is rather a question of the discipline one needs for relating with what

one does every day, for understanding the bodymind and energy through time, and for making sense and use of Chekhov's, Zarrilli's (or any other) practice within preferably different contexts, dramaturgies and aesthetics of performance. An actor's education is therefore a question of surpassing different stages through training and acting, of managing the self in performance, and ultimately of exploring the subtle reason(s) for the practice and reshaping of one's private commitment to its evolution. It is then possible to postulate an entire change of paradigm that facilitates the coexistence of multiple and different ways for looking, models for thinking, learning and teaching. In this respect, the study of new dramaturgies and alternative theatre perspectives had been crucial for opening up the *Asfixia* students towards new possibilities of dialogue(s) within their education:

Before, I was in total rejection of the things that were done from the gesture, to which I found no sense or reason. The things that I was doing by then removed me so much away from it. It also has to do with dramaturgy. The fact of working with Ernesto Caballero, and him opening up new paths in dramaturgy, made us look for other ways of approaching theatre and that's when we contacted you. Since then I have also learned to appreciate the movement in theatre or dance. At the same time, it has made me see how difficult it is to know where the limits of each of these other forms are and to ask myself: "To do this, do you need to be a dancer or an actor?" (Juan Ceacero, personal interview)¹⁴⁶

Failures, gaps and prospective changes for the future

In ordinary life, as well as in the business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competences than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations than with the truths that they learn.

(Ryle, in Huston 1092: 185)

It has proven difficult to outline the gaps of these two systems of training since they are implicit in the doing and explained through the practice. Still, there are three exercises that I have redesigned according to the needs of my students, and to address the weaknesses that I perceive in these systems and within my context. These gaps are made explicit in the exercises 'The Object' (or box improvisation in p. 82), 'Looking ahead' (p. 86), and 'The grotesque body' (p. 157). These exercises are my own approach to the work as far as they delve in a particular way into how these techniques emphasise certain aspects that I consider not explicit enough in their original systems. These are: the search for personal questions and individual practice after the improvisation is done; the student's realisation of the shared experience with the audience through the breath; and the discernment of the details that the actor is looking for in their corporeal experience and imagination. By clarifying these three processes I have made possible the understanding of these different approaches to acting and the improvement of the students' practice and awareness, i.e. their presence onstage.

The main implicit critique of the systems in this investigation is their inclusion in theatre paradigms that pretend to either define acting under stable coordinates (representation in the case of Chekhov) or encapsulate all acting within its new variables (the bodymind and energy in the case of Zarrilli's training). In any case they seem to serve, in my context, to question or reveal the questions that defy one's personal paradigm(s) of practice; a need that I have come to believe is as important as the actualisation of the systems themselves. To re-understand acting as a method of questioning one's

professional knowledge brings a new responsibility and challenging power to the creator-actor that is sometimes not clear enough when dealing with master teachers of both techniques. Furthermore, both techniques ultimately depend on the previous knowledge and practical background of the student/actor that is performing. The more experience one has, the better. However, the clarity of the student's disposition toward broadening their understanding of theatre becomes an a priori question and not a desirable consequence of practice. For that, a change in the practical knowledge that should be learnt as well as the mode of acquiring it should also be considered when dealing with the exercises and techniques. A new epistemology of practice needs to be somehow comprehended in order not to confuse the considerations of the art of acting with the expectations of teaching or learning.

In the case of Zarrilli's method I see a weakness in that the dramaturgy of the piece should be (re)designed each time by the teacher or trainer who really understands how to employ the tools of the training in performance. There is, in Zarrilli's training, a need to be involved in more than two productions in order to understand how one can deal with these tools in different dramaturgical contexts (Zarrilli 2009: 89). Even then, not all contexts may allow the same application, each needing perhaps other knowledge that is not necessarily implied in the training. Training establishes a vocabulary that needs further tools to be developed independently by actors. These other tools are on one hand the knowing of the individuality that characterises you as a creator, and on the other hand, the knowledge of the different dramaturgies and staging strategies where those knowledge(s) and vocabularies may be resolved adequately. Reinforcing those two areas for

students can facilitate the links to be done by each actor without the need to depend on the director to find or accomplish an expected result on the stage. In order to achieve that, both students and director need to know and understand each other artistically and emphatically, respecting their cultural backgrounds and aesthetics. The focus of practice is not on the tools that the bodymind provides the actor with but in the exchange that happens when the curtain rises. It is relatively easy to shutter the student away in the reality of the training without any connection to the demands of different forms of theatre. The imagination plays a key role here and, in my opinion, contributes to a large extent towards an improvement on Zarrilli's approach in that it broadens the scope of his investigation.

On the other hand, Michael Chekhov, as already implied throughout this thesis, seems to take for granted the complex reality of the bodymind as well as to attribute to talent the doing of the imagination. I don't think that either the bodymind or the imagination activated alone in performance. Each of them needs a specific training to enhance the awareness of their reality and possibilities on stage; i.e. a discipline to be able to re-create the optimal circumstances in which a special state of concentration can happen and personal and specific links between training and stage can be established. There is a tendency in Chekhov's approach of using the imagination for determinate results, given by the representational aspects of theatre. However, it is my understanding that Chekhov already goes beyond them through his emphasis on the act of creation itself, and by re-educating the actor through a phenomenological approach to – rather than a psychological interpretation of – her artistic experience. The ambiguity of the theatrical and artistic premises where Chekhov grounds his techniques can easily limit

these “techniques” to a pre-established reality, when it is in fact the opposite; Chekhov is urging the actor to find the reality of theatre through her imaginary experience. At least, this is where I see the main pitfall in the practice of these techniques. The focus is on what can come out of them (of the imagination), and not on what is already there, i.e. our personal and idiosyncratic psychophysical contingencies. The techniques build a method of and for reflexion for which a tangible experience of the bodymind is demanded in order to not repeat oneself within the same terms of images-results. Besides there is the question of who defines such relationship; is it your imaginary experience as an actor or is it the emotional or narrative logic of the text? Or both? The fact that there is an alternative reality of theatre disconnected to the dramatic text that may happen through the means of the imagination widens the scope and vision one needs in teaching or learning the techniques.

My personal input in the work lies in my deep concern with those things that my students struggle with. They have put me on a road opening towards the meaning of theatre, art and the actor. This is the most valuable premise I have been able to rescue from the systems I am analysing, through which I aim to improve my theatre practice in the future. Thanks to this research I have opened bridges to explore and connect to in my practice. Amongst them, one is a renewed understanding of old and new dramaturgies of theatre as organic systems of communication with the audience, a knowledge that needs to be included in the teaching-learning process. Further study on the connections between a theory of acting and a theory of reception will ensure in the future the clarity of my research in this regard.

Another is the weight that the concept ‘enactive perception’ takes on in both

the actor's process of learning and acting and the spectator's doing and receiving. It is in the encounter between perceptions and imaginations where I see the point of further development of this research and approach to these two systems of training as well as ground my own growth as a teacher and director. The parameters within which the actor-spectator relationship is being built in postdramatic performance differ from those that we may find in traditional and representational theatrical settings. Taking these new parameters into account has been ultimately responsible for the approach and adjustments that I have made to these forms of training with my students at RESAD, and will continue to affect how I apply them in my future practice and professional projects.

The education of an actor today tends toward an indiscriminate pool of acting approaches with scarce regard to the theatrical context(s) in which they would be utilised. A strong emphasis on certain actor's abilities, skills and disposition may unavoidably exclude other acting profiles. However, it may also guarantee the rigour of a training programme's effectiveness and its ability to build up the actors' confidence in their craft. Perhaps, teaching acting in physical theatre should be also reconsidered, and redirected towards how students learn to arrange their body, design their movement and/or compose their behaviour by looking at the underlying issue of how they view and construct meaning in theatre.¹⁴⁷

CHAPTER 5: THE CONCLUSIONS

This thesis originates from a desire to unveil a personal tacit experience of the adequacy of Zarrilli's bodymind training in Chekhov's practice with images. I arrive at the conclusion that a mutual contribution is possible by looking at the idea of an imagining body that realises that both image and action are just one and the same creative process of embodiment. That is, by situating the interconnection between the bodymind and the imagination at the core of acting and the actor's education. The image appears when an actor is fully embodying an action within a certain disposition towards body, mind and environment. When the imagining body is realised in performance, it affects the spectators' attention as well, who then feel "abstracted" into this doing of the imagination. This process of abstraction – and attraction – that is implied in an actor's active imagination involves the audience in such a way that makes them active participants of what they see and experience in the performance and not just passive receivers of a final product.

In my MA thesis (2001) I pointed out my difficulty of understanding Chekhov's concepts and dichotomy between the 'higher' and the 'lower' self, since they seem to equally operate together in the moment of inspiration. At that time I hinted that their possible communication could be explained by the same process that interrelated our bodies and minds (64). In a footnote I

wrote:

My intuition about this matter is that breathing, as it have been trained throughout this year, is our means not only to connect body and mind, but also, and depending on our psychophysical connection or “disconnection” to it, the means leaving open the channel through which these second levels of consciousness operate. Further study could be useful for exploring this new common point and set the basis for the integration of Michael Chekhov’s technique within a psychophysiological paradigm. (78)

I have argued in chapter 5 that the meaning and comprehensive nature of the breath in training – that is, the empowerment of an actor’s perceptual and sensorimotor processes through breathing – can explain some of the reasons why that wonder of the imaginary occurs, or at least to make sense at this point in my quest of the conditions that allow it to happen. The significance that through training both breath and perception have acquired through this research in the acting and learning process is then reflected in the setting of teaching goals and acting tasks. Chapter 6 has explored how those tasks and goals mainly have to do with the discernment, connection to and articulation of one’s own sensations and response to sensations. The imagination is the means to move the actor inside this realm, which allows her to think out that particular way of doing and being done by the scenic/poetic action.

When I think of the actor from this perspective (ASFX) I’m pointing towards an artist or creator who does not conceive her work as something defined and stipulated beforehand through which she can creatively deploy certain acquired tools and techniques for predetermined results. Rather I am thinking of a creative person who sees her job as an artistic pursuit for which a certain kind of knowledge or enhanced awareness is needed. This is a disposition

that enables her to arrange her skills, tools and techniques in order to adequately source the specific theatrical, professional and cultural context she inhabits at that moment. Therein lays the nature of her acting and creativity on stage.

When I improvise, I do not think in images or frames as in a film. My senses, my body memory, my mind and my nervous system think, act and react as a whole. Without consciously identifying my points of departure, my actions remember the original information and this continues to be part of them even when the actions are transformed and acquire new meanings for the spectator. I do not use a linear logic. Contradictory motivations co-exist within my actions, they appear and disappear. Everything happens at the same time. (Varley 2011: 1)

Looking back at the research questions

My preliminary questions have been successfully answered throughout this research, as far as it has explained how these two apparently different systems and approaches to the training of an actor can merge with consistency and effectiveness in the preparation of an actor. Their integration has developed a coherent pedagogy that responds to the demands imposed by an actor's artistic education and professional practice in the context of the RESAD. However, there still a need to further explore how might this integration become meaningful in other contexts where theatre traditions and cultural backgrounds change significantly. In the context of contemporary theatre practice and education I see a value in this research as far as it delves into the practice of concepts which otherwise may remain in a theoretical realm uneasy to put in flesh. Its big challenge, which I also

personally consider as its most valuable outcome, is how this research has been sustained through my particular experience of teaching and acting and that of my students. It highlights problematics that are involved in the personal experience of the students, but that are, on the other hand, able to defy the more general aspects of the paradigms of theatre that we all assume in our everyday practice. This work has provide me with a model of practice-as-research that certainly will need further development in my future career, but that hopefully may serve now as useful guideline or foundation for other teachers and practitioners to deal with in similar situations of practice.

As a point of departure, images stir up creative impulses in any artist in their respective art form, independently of how aware they are of them or capable of explaining their work. The problem drifts from the use of images to the presence of actions, and to the difficulty, as Julia Varley denounces in the previous quote, of analysing her actress way of 'thinking with the body' or giving an account of the kind of knowledge that runs in her practice in any other way than words. Whether actually conscious or not in the moment of doing, actors' sensitivity conveys a dual activity since those images are being embodied at the time they are being "translated" into a particular language and behaviour. This language and behaviour is marked by the artistic nature and the stage codes of the performance that engages the actor. Besides, personal conviction seems to play an important role in this whole process. Opening up this apparently dual process and/or disposition helps the actor to become sensitive and responsive to the use of concrete images that may prompt and guide her acting.

On the other hand, the recognition of these two parallel aspects happening at once in the bodymind of an actor when dealing with images in performance

clarifies the way in which I feel incorporating a new perspective in Chekhov's primacy of the imagination could help students to comprehend their own resources as performers and creators. A particular awareness of the bodymind certainly has the potential to ground Chekhov's understanding of the actor's process of imagination. However, looking at the two acting approaches as a whole, it is too simple to conclude that Phillip Zarrilli and Michael Chekhov are speaking of two different procedures within the same process – one is starting from the image and the other from the action. Neither am I saying that they are simply talking about two different processes altogether – the former (bodymind) grounding the latter (stage creativity). An actor's intuition is a key aspect in these two forms of training and it includes both an actor's bodymind (pre-performative) realisation and the actualisation of its creative (performative) possibilities. The conclusion I draw from this study is that this integration cannot be sustained in practice by a linear logic. It would indeed reduce the complexities of its theory but unavoidably impede the holistic understanding of the paradigms of practice implied in each of them and their assimilation in the doing of the student. Assuming that this is the case, I can only investigate the specifics of their interrelation (integration) in the students' learning process and later practice, and attempt to offer an explanation from there.

My argument, which is both my contribution and explanation to the work of these two masters, is that the imagination is a psychophysical activity of the bodymind, by which the image becomes embedded in the sensorimotor knowledge of the body. Inspiration and creativity emanate from that experience of the bodymind. Through assiduous training, the imagination becomes a growing awareness of how sensorimotor processes are lived in

the here and now of performance.

The psychological concerning the exercises and techniques mostly relates to the creative (spiritual in Chekhov's terms) condition of an actor: that of being on stage in order to convey her individuality as a performer. Psychology, as it is traditionally assumed in acting (i.e. the chain of intentions, emotions and coherent inner line through events) is considered both by Chekhov and in this research as a by-product of an actor's creative continuous activity. The life of a character crystallises in the actor's image, particularly in its 'inner rhythmical composition' (Kindelan 1977: 87). The inner dynamics once being observed in a concrete object, image, or any event in life, can be then applied in regards to the composition of the character, scene or the play. It is, according to this research, the kinaesthetic aspects of this relationship with the material that makes the image (imagination) creative. Acting psychology is made up of such a particular way of experiencing (relating to) images: those objective and independent beings whose life is felt separately from that of the person who is actor. The distance thereby re-created between the self and the imaginary world is what ultimately frees the creative process and empowers the will or desire to act. Once the actor is able to perceive with her whole body what lies behind the image, she becomes infected by it, thus the inner movement of the image becomes that of the actor. It is in this affectional process – letting oneself to be affected by – where the actor's actual psychology (and therefore training) rest. It is in relying entirely on this process of synthesis at the time of being completely aware of the multiple sensations that awaken in the body that the actor may become one not with the image itself, but with what the image is suggesting for her body to do in the performance context; this is, the scenic action. As I understand this

process, this is fundamentally done through a proprioceptual and kinaesthetic apprehension, or inner sense, of the movements one is able to project onto the performative situation.

5.1. IN THE PERFORMANCE PROJECTS

Both acting systems require that the actor concentrate on a dual activity of being simultaneously internally and externally engaged in what she is doing. The actor needs to be able to arrange her multiple levels of awareness concerning the body, the stage and the action so that the acting may take place within the context and moment of the performance in front of an audience. This multiple awareness characterises both the actor's full commitment to what she does (IPs) as much as her state of imagining flow or continuous improvisation (CBA), including in a relevant manner their way of understanding and interpreting them both within the making of performance (ASFX). The performance score, aesthetics and dramaturgy designed for the piece mediate between the actor's activity and that of the spectator. Acting happens in the moment of the actor's interaction with the score. This interaction is done *in regards to* a potential meaning that does not depend ultimately on the actor alone. The point of acting in any case seems to be set not *in* the actor but *in the exchange* that happens between her and the spectator. It is not something that occurs inside each actor and belongs only to their personal sphere, but it is instead something that expands beyond self-limits embracing what one may call a poetic and interactive dimension. The subject matter of their work and education rely on that specific process of embodiment that happens *in* the moment of performance, which ultimately depends on the actors' actualisation of certain educated sensorimotor and perceptual processes as they are occurring during this exchange.

The routine of psychophysical training serves to help the student find the right balance between what she is feeling while doing and perceiving while doing. This is a generic condition to be developed independently of any theatre form or aesthetics of performance. Upon this balance the actor realises an overt attempt to apply her imagination in her acting and the performance process. Both forms of training reinforce the feelings and perceptions of the body as the sequences of training or the imagery techniques become gradually accomplished and more physically and mentally demanding. It is through discipline and practice that the body obtains the criteria by which to make these adjustments along the way and to discern gradually the adequacy of one's possibilities while embodying the action/image onstage.

Through concentration and/or breathing the student reinforces not only her corporeal awareness but also an implicit understanding of her body-in-relation, both in scenic behaviour and performance. It facilitates an optimal, so to speak, state of relationship in order to absorb and play in the moment the theatrical environment; that is, a virtual reality or 'possibility rendered present' (Hulton). In order to do that the actor plays with her attention and awareness. Knowing how to keep unnecessary thoughts and feelings at a distance is a first step towards learning how not to divert one's attention in the moment, being here and now at all times, letting the action be done in completion and full awareness.

Psychophysical training is therefore an entrance into the kind of knowledge that ultimately constitutes the goal of the efforts of an actor. One cannot apprehend sensorimotor experience by thinking, even though one's tendency may equal knowing with cognitive or rational understanding. Neither one

does by means of propositions, tacitness or intangibles. An important assumption of psychophysical training is that the students understand how to educate the body's performance through the same language – *modus operandi* – with what that same body learns, explores and knows the world, its sensorimotor patterns and contingencies, this is, her perception and/or imagination. Acting in physical theatre (*Interpretación Gestual*) demands an open and clear access to corporeal knowledge and/or sensorimotor experience. Therein lays its main material for creation.

5.2. ON THE TRAINING(S)

Zarrilli's teaching/practice

The identification that Western theatre has traditionally established between acting and a certain understanding of the psychological process of the actor, together with the corresponding discourse for analysing audience reception, has made its teaching especially prone to potentiate dualistic visions of an actor as well as to determine the perspective by which body and mind relate to each other. In order to further attain significant results in the mutual practice and understanding of bodymind training and Chekhov's techniques, a radical and uneasy shift needs to happen in this respect.

This move involves a complete and long-term process of relying on the sensory and perceptual processes that rule in the actor's construction of scenic presence and behaviour. This means a new perspective on the nature of the processes involved in acting and the mode of obtaining awareness of such processes. All begin by realising that the psychophysical unity of the performer, rather than being an accomplishment or conclusive evidence of acting, is a process of continuous becoming and a vehicle for the creation of the performance. Acting defines the relationship between the body and the mind, i.e. the psychophysical, as a mode of body-being that actualises while performing rather than as a cognitive attainment that is granted for acting.

The training and practice of the bodymind is a way to surpass not only the dangers of mystification or reification either of the body or the mind,

prioritising one over the other (Zarrilli 2001), but also the limitations that their dichotomy through language imposes upon the Western mentality and the understanding of human experience. I particularly refer here to the attempt to explain an actor's physicality on the stage by causality and intentionality – i.e. by the relationship between the antecedents and consequences that govern the actor's actions – as it is predetermined within the realm of the daily persona. Determining also harmony of mind and body as something that already *is* seems to cling to a positivist approach to acting; an intellectual inquiry for propositional truths about what this reality is instead of as a working hypothesis more akin to its experiential strategy. The former leads to a practical problem-solving understanding of imaginary work though limited for the actor to obtain certain scenic result, the latter offers an open reference frame to decide what are the tasks and demands of the stage and how to resolve them.

Adopting a new acting perspective drives the students towards open meanings of action and performance, and their learning process towards listening and responding to their own processes of perception. The bodymind is somewhere beyond the “I” and my personal feelings. It is a re-arrangement of awareness so that mind, emotion, feelings and will participate in our existence in a different way than they normally do (and are interpreted to do) in everyday life. Chekhov claims that the ultimate will that invades the depths of the soul of an actor – as conscious or unaware as she could be of it – is a profound desire for transformation. This transformation consists, according to my research, of the understanding and training of the bodymind.

Chekhov's teaching/practice

Chekhov's theatre system, on the other hand, is rooted in the ability of the body to perceive and the actor to educate her movement according to what she finds in nature and experience – i.e. as a consequence of her encounter with the world. The body is able to perceive that movement because it itself is made ready (formed) to do so and able to reproduce that movement within. The idea that how one perceives the environment depends intrinsically on the movement one can make and on the (dis)position from where one perceives – a referential body or bodymind – provides me with an argument that can reveal to the actor how to make sense of the whole process of her imagination in performance.

Sensory and perceptual processes grow from the ability that the body has to reproduce and improve its kinaesthetic feelings in both qualitative and quantitative ways. We can consciously generate awareness, a condition or a disposition in our bodies that reinforces our sense of, for example, radiance, beauty, moulding or any feeling of being in an imaginary body or space. Because these sensations relate to something that is already there – time, space and body – they depend on the perception of our “physical” reality rather than an “imaginary” one. Creating feelings or imagining something depends therefore on the sensations we are able to bring up, the feelings or sense that will make them seem real and change our body's perception. Mind, awareness, body sense and physical structure ‘would realign itself to this shift in perception’ (Ralston 2006: 60). Concentration reinforces our awareness of images as physically present; they become stronger and more

real so they produce a neat trace on our body and on its own perceptual possibilities.

Concentration is at the core of the embodiment in Chekhov's techniques and becomes basic and critical in eliciting one's particular response in the performance situation. However, in my understanding it is not enough by itself to give full account of the technique. Chekhov's techniques seem to be further concerned with how to make art from those 'feeling-states' (Ralston 2006: 59) and how to elevate them up to the multidimensional aesthetic level of performance – i.e. with their optimal actualisation within the imaginary event that happens through the audience. Expanding one's sensorimotor knowledge becomes the premise so that the body can better "adjust itself to" the image within the aesthetic context of the performance. My consideration of Zarrilli's approach to actor training in regards to its potential in Chekhov's work points in this direction. Asian martial arts train the sensitivity of kinaesthetic feelings so that the actor can rely on the precision of her awareness and visible movements in the 'here and now' of her performance. As the actor gains an increased range of movement, she gains an increasing range of discrimination both in training and performing (Best, in Fleshman 1986: 16).

It is also certain that an effective and accurate process of incorporation of images as Chekhov's technique suggests not only an increase in the possibilities of a successful performance but also the chance to expand one's range and potential of both movement and imagination in relation to performance. My claim is that relying on one's artistic intuition and/or active imagination on the stage would come after setting clearly and personally defined criteria of embodiment of both the image and the scenic action. Such

criteria involve the education of an actor's ability to use her scenic movement intuition and/or capability to respond to the context and circumstances at each particular performance – i.e. her stage creativity. Chekhov's inspiration is drawn from his highly devoted theatrical intuition and dramatic conventions of his time. His legacy is an open invitation to others to follow their own quest in their own theatre practice and performance conventions.

My own teaching/practice

My theory-in-practice reinforces the fact that an actor's deep engagement with her capability of imagining happens while embodying *towards* the other her own perceptual processes in regards to the specific image, theme or guiding idea. From this point of view, the imagination empowers the kinaesthetic aspects of the performance text – what *is* seen, and encourages its independent status from the dramatic – what *should* be seen. At its very end, the work of an actor, teacher or even director (coming back to Huston's quote) is summed up in the "making seen" whatever should be seen rather than in defining it.

An important aspect of my practice deals with the students' need to understand what it means (feels) through their own body to be part of the bigger picture and not just only its nucleus, even though she may actually be. In this sense, my research has probed the emergence of two statements throughout: the actor as creator and the stage as instrument. Students create through their commitment to the total work of art as much as the work of art is recreating their acting persona back. Their response-ability lies in that

liminal space. This is achieved through an ensured awareness of the bodymind inside the framework of the performance, which is what circumscribes and describes simultaneously one's bodymind practice and artwork. Everything on the stage happens within a certain delimited time and space: from its beginning to the end, from the curtain raised and to the curtain call. Within that temporal-spatial frame an actor defines and tells the audience what the acting will be about. The stage then becomes an open instrument of the director and the actor to act both with and within.

It is the actors' final goal to find the inner reason for what they do in terms of what leads their work to expression, in other words, what is causing an impression in them as artists. The performer's aesthetic elaboration through time, body and space will provoke a collateral affect or simultaneous impression on the spectator. To make art from an action requires the performer to delve into the way she is constructing the meaning of her action – i.e. into her own perception of that action in that particular moment. The students construct presence and behaviour *in* the control over the inner perception and outer articulation of the action. Such control is but a heightened awareness occurring in the extra-quotidian realm of the actor. There is no freedom but limitations on the quotidian states of being because there is no conscious control over one's actions; if any, the control is over an expected meaning. By reinforcing what could be called a performative awareness of an action, acting-and-creating becomes united and expression liberated. For defining her creative activity the actor relies on the knowledge and realisation of the aspects that make up her art. Acting is creative and free in its experience, which is the same as saying in its performativity (Dewey). When the students understand creativity within these parameters

there is a passing through a door, a shift of paradigm, that implies seeing your kind of work as a craft, as an art too, that depends on discipline and that relies on training.

5.3. THOUGHTS OF PEDAGOGY

The schools' didactic programmes are insufficient because they can only refer to knowledge which is communicable and formalised, thus reducing teaching to one dimension only. In this sense those who affirm that the art of the actor cannot be taught are right. The point is whether it can be learnt. And on what conditions. (Barba 2000: 17)

Barba's quote is made upon the differentiation between knowledge that can be formalised and formulated, and a silent process that cannot be programmed and has a scarce margin to operate within institutional contexts. This is in part right. Barba distinguishes between an acting knowledge of explicit conventions and the actor's own experience, and speaks of the necessity of both knowledge(s) to coexist and relate in order to be artistically effective on stage. These two 'points of departure' forge professional identity, and in both instances this identity relies ultimately on a 'profound personal process' of reflection on one's individuality across one's own theatrical culture and craft. Whether these two ways remain two different and independent learning processes for an actor or can be integrated through a reconsideration of theatre practice is one of the questions of this research.

In investigating the superposition of two different forms of actor training – bodymind and imagination – I approach from two different theatre paradigms the psychophysical definition of an actor. My research concludes that the juxtaposition of training the bodymind and the imagination constitutes a powerful platform for connections the students may attempt regarding their art and preparation. Relating acting education to the study of the embodiment of a physical action on stage may or may not imply in the

learning process the presence of characterisation, logic, and narrative or the interpretation of a dramatic text. It foremost implies the study of the different uses and applications that could be drawn from it through the student's connections in support of their scene work. My approach reveals a need to be aware not only of the actor's individuality but also of the mode(s) of perception in theatre and performance that affect the doing of both the actor and the spectator.

Pedagogical needs and context

On the other hand, this research has also tackled the problem of the student's linking in an effective way two aspects concerning their preparation: her physical education, normally removed and relocated in specific subjects in the official programmes of traditional drama schools, and her understanding of acting, something traditionally assumed and conceptualised under a paradigm based on the actor's psychology, dramatic literature and Aristotelian aesthetics. Within the Spanish educational system and curricula, acting technique and the physical education of an actor have been usually considered as two independent processes and their connections consigned mostly to the student's responsibility. In the RESAD, as far as my experienced goes, psychophysical awareness has remained – at least until recently – far away from the language and demands of the acting class. The instruction of the body has been considered as something of which specific subjects are in charge of and whose additional contribution is often times taken for granted. They help as auxiliary matters, facilitating the student to

better manage their own everyday bodies and improve “consequently” their own body’s implication in acting. Acting itself, on the other hand, is concerned with the emotional development and psychological understanding of both the character and the self.

Through the Individual Projects and the Project of Bernarda Alba I evaluate the manner in which the students in the RESAD’s physical theatre branch could carry out an effective implication of these two sides of their education, or even its possibility. The investigation of how in this new pedagogy is incorporated by the students coming from a more traditional theatre approach (ASFX) revealed further needs and hindsight in this regard. The challenge in this research has remained not only in facilitating for the students the connections between the physical exercises in their training and the psychological aspects of their acting, but to do it through their own insights and implicit research into what is ‘acting’ and what ‘technique’.

I have been incapable of escaping from the influence of a factor that is, in my experience, notably present in the students’ progression in Chekhov’s techniques or Zarrilli’s discipline of training. I mean their tacit reinforcement of an alternative and profoundly personal theory of becoming an actor and doing theatre; something that is, as Barba points out, far from being systematic. These training(s) have become appealing not for their systematising of definite training forms, ways of doing, or theatre settings but for the optimal conditions they are after and the variability of axes and grids that they may offer for forging the identity of an actor.

A growing and individual meaning of becoming an actor is necessary so that each student’s reliance on the strengths of the training(s) does not mean

blind dependence on one method, technique, approach even concept they may believe as inherent in Phillip Zarrilli's training, Michael Chekhov's techniques or my own teaching of them. "Relying on" may become a first and required step for a subsequent "inspired from" in future doings and the eventual growth of artistic autonomy. As Christopher McCullough (1998) documents, teaching in performance arts may be better thought of as a means for empowering the person rather than providing them with the skills to become an artist.

As a teacher, I attempt to validate and favour the student's development of her capabilities beyond the discourses of talent or natural aptitudes for being an actor. I look at the acting body as the vehicle for the scene and at the scene as the instrument of the actor. As a researcher, I try to locate the debate in the appropriate knowledge and training which is needed for chosen purposes, scenic languages or concrete results. As a practitioner, I venture into the factual possibility of gaining presence and forging identity through the students' understanding of their own process of acting and evolution as theatre artists.

RESAD is a conservatory with the purpose of educating professionals and has the responsibility for their readiness on the job. The education and maturity of an artist can be hardly reached in a four-year commitment. As in any other art, it happens that to be an actor implies a whole life of dedication and an eager attitude and patience towards knowledge and craftsmanship. The RESAD is an educational platform for physical and intellectual skills as much as professional dispositions either in gestural or textual theatre practices.

Though I may personally think that there would be no need to separate, and therefore segregate, the actor in these two different branches – a theme easily contested and discussed among teachers, professionals, and drama schools – there is implicit in my approach to teaching a recognition that four years of study should provide the student with an approach to practice consistently enough so that it ensures a significant level of acquisitions of skills, and allows the necessary time and implication to do so within a particular field. The consistency of an approach doesn't mean rigidity of methods, techniques nor theatrical forms or manifestations, it does mean just that: the consistency of its approach.

During the last decades, practice-based research in English and American Universities has offered an open and fruitful environment for the study and development of multiple and heterodox approaches to theatre, visual and embodied practices, and the body's possibilities of expression and communication. These new experiments and/or independent laboratories in academia (which would be otherwise beset by a harsh reality of survival) represent a continuous quest for theatrical and acting possibilities and they seem to offer an alternative to an actor's education. Although the efficacy and efficiency of such alternative programmes within the education of an actor could be further contested (Murray and Keefe 2007a: 125), I would like to stand for such kinds of theory-practice marriages, which undoubtedly can contribute to the dissemination, depth and better understanding of theatrical and artistic practices (Furse, in Delgado and Svich 2002: 64-73).

In the so-called professional – whether mainstream or alternative – theatre and education, practice may not be often desirably framed, structured and/or clearly articulated (Prior 2007: 295-305). The term “paradigm” suggests an

order of values, problems to solve and rules to follow which organise one's way of thinking as much as of experiencing. The term enables a degree of flexibility that allows the acceptance of a set of rules and assumptions as working bases through which: (1) to ensure the students sufficient involvement and study; (2) to shape their way of conceiving being an actor; and (3) to affirm their individuality within or from a multidisciplinary approach. A paradigm of acting may include a set of theoretical discourses and technical skills and competencies coming from different theatre or artistic practices within the field, however it can never be defined unless it takes into account the particular challenges it imposes in the individual manifestations.

Spanish drama school dilemmas

Drama school subjects are configured and implemented around particular fields of knowledge: dramatic literature, poetry, prosody, fencing, dramaturgy, scenography, costume, mime and pantomime, speech and voice technique, vocal and physical expression, acrobatics, etc. that are arranged in the RESAD's official curricula according to each branch or acting speciality. This acute division of subjects and matters, methods and techniques, should be lessened by taking the responsibility of making sense somehow of the variety. It seems more efficient to do so by making reference to some kind of reality, even if it is a particular whole, and not by letting their coherence be exclusively in hands of the student.

Many are the dilemmas that encompass an actor's education today through private or public, official or unofficial, institutions or drama schools, which

strive for a form of normalising a professional's artistic knowledge that seems to restlessly preclude any systematisation. The more poignant critique or controversy has already been set up from contemporary American playwright and director David Mamet questioning first of all the real need of such schools, a spark of an old academy-trade conflict rather acute in our Spanish culture (RESAD 2006, Herreras y Molero 2005, and Granda 2000).

Herreras and Molero in their chronicle *Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Valencia* (2005: 34) identify some of these critical choices that underlie and even may characterise the pedagogical approach of a drama school. There is indeed the need to review the meaning and tensions derived from our assumptions around technique and talent, as well as over the relationship between the theory and practice in regards to these two. Another dilemma may be in the multiplicity of methods versus the unity of them. In the case of offering a freedom of methods, one must further decide on the logic of methods employed or on the basis of a common language. Other dilemmas can arise from the delicate treatment of feelings and emotions as integral content and form of the acting education; or from the flexibility and response that is observed towards the variability and profile of its students and throughout the years. Finally, the dilemmas may revolve around their commitment to contemporary texts and stage dramaturgies, conceptual approaches and/or technological devices.

The alternatives are but difficult choices given the uncertain reality and circumstances of being and becoming an actor today. They all deserve ample discussion, questioning and research. Rather than probably giving any definitive answer to them, critical reflection upon acting and its learning processes – the “upload” of its tacit discourses and assumptions in practice –

may eventually help to make sense of one's practice, understand others' practice, and approach sensibly these or any other questions involved in the teaching of acting and development of pedagogy.

5.4. FINAL REFLECTION

There are scholars who strongly disagree with this paradigm shift theory. Some believe that change takes place slowly and cumulatively, and that what seems like a paradigm shift is actually the result of many small changes built upon each other. Others see development and change in science and society as a history of competing ideas. They believe that there are always alternate and opposing explanations vying to become the “accepted” explanation of reality. In this view, every paradigm has proponents who will gain from its acceptance, and opponents who will lose. The struggle over personal interest is as important as some supposedly “objective” scientific attempt to uncover “the truth.” (Kohl 1992: 118)

The idea of a shift in our paradigm of practice that concludes this research is but the starting point of my teaching practice, its main assumption or hypothesis. I am not suggesting in this thesis that the actor should change her paradigm of acting in order to practice Chekhov’s techniques, I rather say that while practicing the techniques she is already in a theatre paradigm that is different from the representational one for which Chekhov created these techniques. The notions of energy, focus and awareness, and the techniques of Atmosphere, Imaginary Body or Psychological Gesture as discussed throughout this dissertation are shaped in the corporeal awareness and experiential knowledge of the student, and that is what the training is revealing to the actor in its very specific way through practice and assiduousness. Such experiential knowledge for not being able to be communicated nor apprehended through an objective description, rational thinking or clear propositions doesn’t mean that it is mystical, subjective and/or depends on whatever interpretation. The actual experience and application in each acting practice validates its inter-subjectivity, wherein

one's individual practice and experience come to the fore.

Bodymind training itself has become a way of thinking about practice; a form of understanding my body and behaviour in their already implicit processes of reflection while acting and teaching. When an alternative training like this takes place in an institutional context – as happens within the compulsory curricula of a drama school – its teaching may indeed turn problematic and accentuate certain issues that come and go in any learning process: 'refusing to suspend disbelief', 'not entering other's views on the matter', 'mechanising the process(es)', or 'being unaware of incongruent performance' (Schön 87: 155). However, there is *that* component in the training that allows one's efforts to teach it reach unpredicted goals from those that could be originally planned. That component derives from the fact that practice becomes a matter of learning how to question yourself and your professional knowledge within a certain field and context. Training-and-reflecting has meant (and still means) to me a way of understanding the whole realm of a profession that is unstable, undefined and quite variable in its demands, and besides, whose fundamentals I am expected to teach. The juxtaposition of practices is technical to a certain extent, but it is also a way of individually coming to terms with the obstacles and benefits that are involved in the doing and developing of creative practice.

Finally, I would like in this last section to call special attention to the problem of 'over-learning', considered by Schön as a negative effect of professional specialisation (1995: 60-61). The problem, identifiable in teachers and students as well, concerns the lack of 'wholeness of experience and understanding' that occurs when practice becomes repetitive and routine, and practitioners miss the chance to think about their doing. I have needed to

become proficient to a certain point in my own process of reflection in order to be able to feed back to the student from and for that same personal-and-professional reflective intuition. My own experience of training becomes indispensable for being able to give other's correction and reinforce their way of becoming aware of/on their own body and their own intuition. In the teacher-student encounter through embodied practices, perhaps more than through any other subject, it seems necessary to search for a kind of 'wholeness of experience and understanding' in order to coach the student through her own processes of reflection and guarantee as much as possible the progress through them beyond the context of the school. Paraphrasing Damasio (2006: 5), the quality of our intuition will depend on how good we have reasoned, classified and related events and emotions before, as well as the quality of our reflection on right and wrong past intuitions.

It is my belief that one of the main benefits that this integration of training and imagining suggests for an artist is also one of its main pitfalls. It has to become yours, you have to become through the doing of it. And this means time, courage and a disposition to knowing your body, performative context and theatrical heritage to a certain degree. There are no masters. Training is your master. Your body is your master. It is not just about doing the training or techniques but also your interaction with acting. A whole set of interconnected relationships that need to be born and built up from one's personal impulse of being/doing on stage and the knowing of the artistic form that one is involved in. From these interconnections the immediacy of an actor's disposition is built: a unique breath, presence and mode of relation.

Intuition, perception and craft are the concomitant ingredients for inspiration and spontaneity. Intuition is about seeing patterns that are

already there and about creating new ones, perception is about understanding how to apply them and craft is the development of technique in order to communicate. All three provide the space and satisfactory environment for inspiration to flourish. The greatest enemy of intuition is fear. We don't always want to see or hear what is in front of us. We don't always trust the light of our calling. But there is endless treasure to be found if we can but dare to walk the path that opens up for each of us individually, alone. (Errollyn Wallen, in Bannerman et al. 2006: 57)

The acting and teaching approach I am detailing in this thesis represents a moment in my on-going process and development. I hope it is the writing process of the practical difficulties and advantages of my implementation that clarifies and contributes to the theoretical challenge for contemporary discussion about new paradigms of theatre practice and education.

CHAPTER 1: THE INTRODUCTION

¹ This issue is further and otherwise exemplified in the thoughts of both Barba and Zarrilli on the consequences of taking the premises of the work of the actor for granted. Barba, for example, speaks of the drift of the exercises assumed by Stanislavsky to make 'scenic' the actor's quotidian behaviour or body-mind relationship, and how these exercises became for many over the following years 'the quintessence of doing theatre' (1995: 109). Zarrilli, on the other hand, states that 'one of the major problems with contemporary theories of and approaches to Western acting is that they often do not differentiate between the actor's preliminary work in constructing a particular type of performance, such as a psychologically real or believable character, and the embodied phenomenon of acting per se.' (2009: 41) In my opinion, Zarrilli's remark is also a result of merging within the same interpretation different epistemological criteria, which often problematises both the practice and the teaching of acting.

² 'When a practitioner reflects in and on his practice, the possible objects of his reflection are as varied as the kinds of phenomena before him and the systems of knowing-in-practice which he brings to them. He may reflect on the tacit norms and appreciations which underline a judgment, or on the strategies and theories implicit in a pattern of behaviour. He may reflect on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way in which he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context.' (Schön 1995: 62)

³ 'What I lost in the period of my inner crisis was a *sense*, and even an *intuitive feeling*, of the whole. It was because of this sense of the whole that it never occurred to me that a part in a play or a story or simply an impersonation of someone might not actually come off. [...] When I was about to play a part [...] I was strongly gripped by this feeling of the *whole that was to come*, and with full *confidence* in it, I began without the slightest hesitation to carry out whatever it was that was occupying my attention at the time. Out of this *whole*, the details emerged of their own accord and appeared objectively before me. I never invented the details and I was merely an observer of what came to light out of the *sense of the whole*. This *future whole* [...] was not exhausted or extinguished however long the process of coming to light lasted. I can only compare it with the seed of a plant, in which the entire future of the plant is contained in so wonderful a way.' (Chekhov 2005: 26. Italics in the original)

⁴ For his exploration Barba makes a comparative study of the extra-daily behaviour of the performer in Western and Eastern traditions. In 1979, he created ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) as a means to study how the pre-expressive behaviour of the performer is arranged in the moment of representation; and how the 'knowledge of the principles which govern the scenic bios can make it possible for one to learn to learn rather than to learn a technique' (Barba 1991: 5).

⁵ There are four main areas of specialization established by a national government law since 1992 at RESAD: Acting, Directing, Playwriting and Scenography. I am referring to the curricula for the studies in Dramatic Art established by the 'ORDEN de 1 de agosto de 1992 por la que se aprueba el currículo de las enseñanzas de Arte Dramático', published in B.O.E. (national official bulletin), on August 25, 1992. There are also two further areas indicated by this law as possible paths within the acting speciality though they were not present at RESAD in the moment of this research. These branches are *Teatro de Objetos* (object theatre) and *Teatro Musical* (musical theatre). Musical theatre started this past academic year 2011-2012.

⁶ In order to approach the generalization of principles and the deepening of the processes in other subjects, I attended during that year the classes of Helena Ferrari, teacher of the same group in *Expresión Corporal* - a subject concerning the bases for the physical education or 'corporeal expression' specific to the actor. In addition to that, the project of Bernarda Alba had a dual approach to the subject made in collaboration with the dance teacher Eva Lara. I coached the acting in a fragment of Mat's Ek dance choreography that had been studied in the dance class as well as guided the student's through the elaboration of performance scores based on the play and Chekhov's techniques. Both exercises were presented together to an audience at the end of the process, as I will further explain later.

CHAPTER 2: TRAINING THE BODYMIND

⁷ 'El primer contacto con el entrenamiento es el de estar completamente involucrado con lo que estás haciendo en ese momento. En los ejercicios de yoga la respiración toma un puesto relevante ya que enfocas la atención cuando inspiras y cuando expiras mientras estás realizando una actividad física. Incorporándolo al proyecto [esto] lo utilicé de la misma manera que en algunas improvisaciones de clase; es decir, generando primero el deseo de realizar una acción y en el momento de realizarla expulsar el aire teniendo en cuenta, al igual que en el entrenamiento, el espacio por encima de la cabeza y la sensación de enraizar los pies en el suelo como si tuviera raíces y [como si] por ellas, al mismo tiempo que de mi cabeza, saliera el exceso de tensión de mi cuerpo dejando tranquilo [a] éste, centrándome sólo en el movimiento. Para ello me ayudaba a hacerlo, como he dicho antes, el momento de la expulsión de aire, al igual que tener claro el foco de mi mirada, como si el cuerpo y el foco fueran consecuencia de la expulsión del aire.'

⁸ 'Lo primero que hago es hacer un repaso mental de los conceptos fundamentales que trabajamos en el entrenamiento, conciencia de la planta de los pies, respiración, foco visual externo, centro, espacio por encima de la cabeza, proyección de la energía, dejar que las tensiones se vayan. Búsqueda de un cuerpo extra-cotidiano, que no sea Julia la que está dentro de la burbuja; habitar otro cuerpo; ponerme un traje nuevo. ¿Cómo se mueve ese ser desde ahí dentro?' Julia's project was exploring the experiences of confrontation that happens after being in a comfortable and protecting ambiente (she created an imaginary bubble for that) and entering a hostile one. Revealing from this quote it was the similarity with Chekhov's concept of an Imaginary Body, not explicitly seen at this point.

⁹ 'No dejaba que la respiración fuera por donde quisiera. Me obligaba a que forma y respiración formaran una unidad.'

¹⁰ 'Lo que me costaba era el punto fijo. Tú decías "mirar a un punto fijo y no hacer nada. No hacer". Yo me quedaba como embobada y, claro, no iba por ahí. Creo que entendí mal ese concepto y me costaba. Tú me decías, "rómpele, estás demasiado absorta en un punto, relaja la mirada y estate más activa, reacciona, no vayas ahí". Era como si mi concentración... como que me abstraía totalmente en un punto y estaba "allí", en ese punto fijo, como meditando, y claro no estaba "aquí", activa. No lo pillé. Lo pille luego, después: cuando estoy activa, cuando tengo la mirada fija. Después de la escuela me metí en clases de *Contact Improvisation* y me decían lo mismo. Todavía en el entrenamiento que estamos haciendo alguna vez me doy cuenta de que se me va un poco ahí, y lo rompo. Porque noto como que pierdo vida, como que me quedo enganchada en algo, y no estoy reaccionando.'

¹¹ "I and my space", we both enter the stage. This is the simile I use at class in order to facilitate the experience of a certain type of new awareness rooted in the body. It is not the duty of my research to demonstrate some kind of truth behind it, but just the "feeling of" which will open the possibility for the students to relate in performance to what they are training. Though originally the purpose of yoga may remain within one's self encounter (Zarrilli 2009: 56, 224), Zarrilli's instruction of these exercises tends towards making the practitioner sensitive to how this inner work reaches out by continuously connecting her with the awareness of the space "outside".

¹² I have to thank my colleague Fabio Mangolini for this term - in-tension - that he alludes to in his research and practice into *Commedia dell'Arte*. Its resemblance with the word "intention" can be used to lead more adequately the students in their practice and approach to mask (physical) work.

¹³ The continuity of one's connection depends on an inner commitment rather than to exclusively external awareness. In the yoga exercises, when after the stretch the external focus cannot be kept ahead (or on the hand) because the movement does not for it, it may shift to the knee or another point in the body or the floor. However, one is still keeping her attention on (as innerly continuing looking at) the original point one was looking before, therefore keeping that sensorimotor memory or in-tension of a "previous" connection. The same thing happens during the *kalarippayattu* sequences when your external eye is never solely fixed out in front (especially with weapons!) even your inner focus always is.

¹⁴ 'Esto volvió a aparecer en el segundo trimestre con La Casa de Bernarda Alba. Me resultó sobre todo útil cuando tenía que abandonar la escena después de haber tenido un

encuentro-desencuentro con Adela. Tenía que irme con todo lo que había pasado, con esa conciencia de dejar algo atrás, pero sin contarlo. Y eso lo conseguí respirando ese momento, y dándome la vuelta, caminando, con la atención de mi cuerpo puesta en el lugar por el que ella se había ido, aunque yo estuviera yendo en otra dirección.'

¹⁵ The most conspicuous difference between force or strength and intrinsic energy is attained through practice itself, as *aikido* exercise of the 'unbendable arm' (Zarrilli 2009: 27-28); or images that may be suggested, as the lifting up of weights versus the preparatory circular movements of an athlete before throwing a disc (Huang 1979: 420).

¹⁶ 'Utilicé la conciencia en la planta de los pies, el ejercicio de "arriba cuando voy arriba" y el tipo de energía que manejamos en el Kalarippayattu: la idea de una energía que no se corta, que es dinámica y precisa, aunque estés quieto sigues proyectando, no bloquear la propia inercia de la energía y utilizarla para el siguiente impulso. La oposición de la energía que va hacia arriba y otra que sale por la planta de los pies, el juego de los contrarios.'

¹⁷ The *vanakkam* is the only sequence in the training through Kalarippayattu in which a special attention is brought forward. As Zarrilli points out this concrete sequence could be derived from the yoga's sun salutation (*surya namaskaar*, Zarrilli 2009: 67) which may explain the connection with the breathing as the sequence is taught.

¹⁸ 'todo servía para dar continuidad a lo que hacíamos en escena, que no fuera un conjunto de momentos aislados mas una totalidad. Lo mismo pasaba con el *vannakan*, donde la ejecución del movimiento, su inicio, desarrollo y final, eran tan importantes para alcanzar la precisión de los movimientos. Esto nos va a permitir, después de fija la partitura, disfrutar la espontaneidad.'

¹⁹ 'Me ayudó pensar en el tipo de energía que manejamos en el calentamiento en los ejercicios de Yoga y la secuencia de T'ai Chi Ch'uan, son movimientos más suaves, respirados. Mi impresión es que son más densos. Esto me daba una calidad de movimiento especial, una especie de retorcer suave [...] mucha sensación de juego, comodidad, estabilidad.'

²⁰ The dynamic principle read as *jo-ha-kyu* by Eastern theatre forms is a rhythmic pillar that underpins also movement and dance training in the West. In Western actor training the dynamics of the movement and movement composition become explicitly used and trained, for example, in Meyerhold's biomechanics - *otkaz, posil'* and *tochka* (Pitches 2003: 55); and, more elaborated, in Decroux's dynamo-rhythms, a series of complex arrangement of movement's completion and resistance through trajectory, speed, and weight (Leabhart 2007: 81). Laban's theory of effort is also for both actors and dancers a reference in the study and analysis of different rhythms and inner dynamics (energy) in movement. We could also trace back this study up to Delsarte and Dalcroze.

²¹ Andrei Bely describes Chekhov's Hamlet on the basis of the relationship between his pauses and the potential energy of his gestures and movements: 'The linking of a pause, gesture and word in Chekhov's acting as described here unites his method with that of Vsevolod Meyerhold, in particular with the principle of 'pre-acting' (Chekhov 2005: 214. Editorial note).

²² 'Yo creo que el kalarippayattu es algo que hace que las personas, muestran en el entrenamiento lo que luego están mostrando en escena. Es como una lupa. Entonces, lo que tú decías en el calentamiento casi era de lo que más a mí me valía para luego aplicarlo en escena. Por ejemplo, "no te exijas tanto, siempre quieres hacerlo todo bien, y no". A mí era de las cosas que me decías: "no intentes hacerlo bien", o sea, "no te obligues a hacerlo perfecto", hazlo y luego irás viendo.'

²³ Structured improvisations are a 'set of very simple psychophysical tasks' in which to apply 'the most essential elements cultivated in psychophysical training - *ki*/sensory awareness, energy and attention' that serve as 'a bridge between the ongoing pre-performative training and performance' (Zarrilli 2009: 100). The difficulty and complexity of acting tasks and rules in the improvisation build gradually as the work with specific dramaturgies is approached. I am interested in the first stages of this process of exchange between training and performing, in order to observe if and how these improvisations become facilitators of certain understanding of the work of an actor that may affect the student's possible undertaking of Chekhov's approach.

²⁴ My walk through this basic scheme of improvisations is inspired by the experience I had

doing them during my MA. They are also described in *Psychophysical Acting*: (1) 'beginning structures' (coordination of breath, movement and external focus); (2) 'seated structures' (that includes the presence and interaction with other players); (3) 'introducing a desire' of doing the action (which changes the quality of the relationship to the action and of the energy deployed); (4) 'introducing objects' (adding a relationship to it by the desire of touching or rejecting the object); and finally, (5) 'adding the text: the desire to speak' as a means to embody text and language as physical actions (99-112). Structured improvisations are for Phillip Zarrilli 'exercises for "playing" in-between' designed so 'actors can learn how to shape and modulate their inner energy and awareness to the demands of specific dramaturgies and acting tasks' (Zarrilli 2009: 88). They are mainly located in a workshop setting and are closely linked to the performance process that is going to follow. They are the means used to give life to the underlying psychophysical tasks that the director understands and reads for the actor in order to inhabit the performance score. Built and conformed according to the specific dramaturgy and aesthetic involved, the actor establishes and embodies through them the adequate relationship (energy and vibration) to the performance score (Zarrilli 2009: 100). As has been said, the point of these improvisations in this research changes slightly since my perspective is mainly pedagogical.

²⁵ The motivational aspects of an actor's action - to act - respond to the stage and not necessarily to the emotions of a character or the actor's persona that is being played. Konijn's study on *Acting Emotions* (2000) refers to these kinds of feelings towards the body onstage and in-scene. There is, in my opinion, an attempt to make reference to the complex interweaving of emotions, interests, motivations, and patterns of behaviour that determine any human action. Acting, as any other art, is a rather complex human action. An excessive specialisation in the "technology" of the scenic action can make us lose the sense of its complexity in every human being.

²⁶ A performing body is being defined by the tasks it is directed towards: from constructing a character to executing a series of actions passing through the different degrees and types of commitment the dramaturgy and aesthetics may impose on the actor. In this regard one may hint at certain evolution of an actor's discourse in the last two decades. At the end of the 20th century Zarrilli identified 4 acting paradigms operating in Euro-American theatre according to what was defined as the specific relationship between the performer and the performed. The acting tasks are concerned then with: the identification with a dramatic character, a psychophysical commitment with a score, a detachment from the epic retelling, and the act of embodying of a sequence of actions (1995: 323). Acting theories in the 21st century open up these tasks to six categories depending not only on the acting tasks but on main goals of performance: psychological truth, scenic artifice, play and game(s), political act(s); personal encounter; and cultural exchange (Gordon, in Zarrilli 2009: 41).

²⁷ 'Esta idea del recorrido, que apareció muy pronto en las clases, ha sido fundamental a lo largo de todo el curso, y la puse en práctica siempre que me acordaba cuando hacía ejercicios y en la elaboración de mi proyecto. Cuando lo hacía, cambiaba mucho la sensación que mis movimientos provocaban, y se llenaban de sentido. Incluso cuando sabes cuál será el siguiente paso, debes darle mucha más importancia al recorrido.'

²⁸ Alva Noë states that perception is in part an embodied awareness of one's sensorimotor knowledge that implies the whole structure of a perceiving body – 'The basic claim of the enactive approach is that the perceiver's ability to perceive is constituted (in part) by sensorimotor knowledge (i.e., by practical grasp of the way sensory stimulation varies as the perceiver moves)' (2004: 12). According to this hypothesis, Noë argues, 'it is clear that the task of phenomenology, and of experiential art, ought to be not so much to depict or represent or describe experience, but rather to catch experience in the act of making the world available.' (176. Italics in the original).

²⁹ 'The sky' improvisation as well as 'grabbing the object', together with other improvisations not documented here (like 'seated structures' or 'ensemble walking'), are structured improvisations developed by Zarrilli that I had previously experienced during my MA. They constitute a means for delving into the key concepts and experiences of training: the containment of energy or the principle of reduction (Zeami, in Zarrilli 2009: 108), the principle of residual awareness, and the kinaesthetic awareness of the body, the other and the space. In my experience, they also analyse and demonstrate further the body coming into a relation to images and actions, their completion and interdependence that will determine the foundations for the students' work on images during the second semester.

³⁰ 'Tenía que respirar, fijar un punto en el espacio y avanzar hacia él. Debía decidir si avanzaría con el deseo de ir a ese punto o con el recuerdo del punto que dejaba. Después sentir la caja que estaba en el suelo. Generar el deseo de mirarla y hacerlo. Acercarse a la caja, como si cada movimiento constituyese una obra de arte por sí solo. Atención a los pies, la cabeza y el foco. Abrir la caja y reaccionar a lo que hay. Pero reaccionar de manera no visible para los demás, no ilustrativa. Dejar que el cuerpo reaccione. Sin prisa. Dejarlo estar. Mirar al frente. Decidir irse. ¿Cómo te vas? ¿Qué ha cambiado? No perder lo que se había creado. No ilustrar es muy difícil. No tener prisa también. Hay que ser valiente. Alerta. Dispuesto a recibir lo que venga. Vulnerable. No anticipo nada, no hay nada que anticipar. Sólo vivir. Si un actor cuenta lo que siente, ya no siente. No interesa lo que pueda decir de sus sensaciones, sino que las viva, que las pueda traducir en algo corporal. En una chispa en los ojos, en pinchazos en los brazos, en aire por los pies... lo que sea. Lo más importante es hacer. Y hacer lo que se está haciendo en ese momento y no otra cosa. No perder la atención, porque si la pierde el actor, la pierde también el espectador. La imagen no tiene por qué ser una foto, ni algo muy concreto que te aparezca en la mente. El estómago vacío puede ser una imagen.'

³¹ 'Esta ha sido la improvisación estrella del curso. Creo que todos la hemos utilizado después mucho para la creación de acciones en el proyecto, para saber reaccionar al impulso canalizándolo en el cuerpo y no contándolo. Fue la primera vez que vimos de forma más clara de qué trataba todo eso de la pre-expresividad, y el primer acercamiento a esta nueva forma desconocida para nosotros. Qué hay en la caja. Qué hay en la carta. Avanzo pensando en lo que dejo. Avanzo pensando a dónde voy. Respiro cada acción, la fisicalizo. Fisicalizar. No creo que existan esa palabra y ese verbo. Fisicidad de los impulsos. Tampoco eso existe, pero a mí me ayuda más que otras que sí existen.'

³² In this essay Zarrilli analyses the influence of yogic, ayurvedic and Indian psychophysical theatre paradigms in his research. Zarrilli introduces White's discussion of medieval descriptions of the powers of yogis - whose rays emanating from the eyes and heart could enter other's bodies - based on the model of the radiant sun. Zarrilli approaches the same embodied meaning of "looking" from Eastern yogic cosmological paradigm within the levels of performance and action aesthetics (Zarrilli 2011a). My account delves into the consequences of such a drift in understanding acting practice and the learning process, and especially in what concerns the grounds it embodies for grasping Michael Chekhov's approach to performance.

³³ There is in these improvisations a resonance with physical theatre/dance forms from German expressionist dance and theatre, especially with their attempt to empower the audience to see the actor, the action, and the stage rather than conceal them behind the mimetic nature of theatre (Kuhns 1997). These particular improvisations sometimes resemble Pina Bausch's invaluable work on staging human relationships through the reiteration and isolation of quotidian actions. The images Bausch composed in her shows are poetic and suggestive, they 'are not didactic, they don't tell us how to feel, but open up an experience into which we need to project our own meaning in order to complete, if meaning is what we are after' (Climenhaga 2009: 64). It is through delving into their personal experiences and making them artistic that Bausch's dancers created and composed actions which were significant for the performance and therefore connected with the spectator's own personal experiences of such actions. This working approach is further investigated in *Asfixia*.

³⁴ 'Veo en el trabajo que hacemos más que un método una filosofía del actor y la actuación, reforzada por una técnica (las artes marciales) que nos re-educan.' (Cecilia's portfolio, December 2007). Cecilia was my student in 2007 and although she does not take direct part of this project, she - as many other students - contributed to my ongoing thought and analysis.

³⁵ My own questioning starts with the learning process itself and therefore with the questions that the actor-student commits to when being onstage. At this moment being onstage is rather independent of characters and narrative, but concerned with what is going to be enriching the imagining process in the body and on the stage. These are some of the student's first questions for their individual projects:

- 'My objective is to be able to build a piece where the most important thing is the presence of the actress that I am and that the actions are breathed in and result from a desire. As regards to the relation with the spectator, I want it to be direct. I want to create interest in

them, that whatever they are seeing is interesting and they are looking forward seeing all the time' (Violeta Gil, pre-project)

- 'I would like to learn to synthesise my movements in a clean manner, without any waste. Also to get that degree of courage that only great comedians possess in order to attract the audience's attention and get them play with what is being proposed' (Julián Ortega, pre-project)

- '[I want to] Create a character from the kind of work we do in improvisations. Also to take care of unnecessary movements, not intellectualizing and letting the body do. Taking care of breathing. Important to me is the contact with the spectator as well as concentration, presence and not to tell but to do.' (Julia Moyano, pre-project)

³⁶ 'Otro de mis objetivos es conseguir un cuerpo entrenado, sensible, abierto y expresivo, y despertar en él la concentración y disponibilidad necesarias para a través de él llegar a la imagen y a la emoción. [...] Encontré un cuerpo neutro, pre-expresivo y extracotidiano.'

³⁷ 'Eso es lo interesante. Descubrir nuevas vías a partir de una idea que parecía finita o amorfa por completo. Resulta a la vez complicado, pues cuando no se tiene mucha experiencia y se tienen limitaciones de tiempo, es difícil decidirse por qué cosas conservar y cuáles desechar.'

³⁸ 'He aprendido a escuchar las críticas, a saber seleccionar aquellas que realmente me ayudan para mi trabajo y aquellas que más vale que recicle pronto. Me ha gustado tomar conciencia del trabajo que estamos haciendo, y conforme evolucionaba en mi proyecto [...] también he empezado a comprender mucho mejor la materia, el objetivo del entrenamiento, a conocerme de otra forma, a explorar otras cosas de mí.'

³⁹ 'Tener presencia en la escena es algo que se pretende obtener a través de este trabajo de pre-expresividad. Pero esa presencia por sí sola no es suficiente para abrazar todo lo que pretende ser esa pre-expresividad. El actor aprende a mentir y falsear esa pre-expresividad con una determinada presencia pero con el tiempo esa presencia sin otra cosa que añadir se cristaliza e impide que todo el juego que tiene como punto de partida esa pre-expresividad sea fluido, orgánico.'

⁴⁰ 'Lo que pasara no era material teatral pero lo que interiormente pasó en esos segundos poco después de la improvisación podría serlo. Porque ahí mi reacción vino del cuerpo, de lo que pasara antes. Esta experiencia fue una de las más importantes para que yo empezase a entender cuál de los dos caminos (¿sólo dos?) debería elegir para mi formación como actor y para entender que debería aplicarlo ahora a mi proyecto personal y no prorrogarlo para más tarde como usual.'

⁴¹ 'Esta parte me tuvo mucho tiempo bloqueada porque me venían todas esas imágenes y sensaciones y no sabía cómo traducirlas en movimientos. No sabía cómo exteriorizar a través del cuerpo lo que estas imágenes me sugerían.'

⁴² 'La primera dificultad que surge es que no encuentro el lenguaje en el que quiero expresarme. Acabo de tocar por primera vez este tipo de improvisación con objeto y, al intentar utilizarlo, puedo sentir que arroja cosas, pero no sé si entenderlo como un lenguaje. Tampoco sé cómo recordar lo que me interesa para el trabajo, ni distingo con claridad lo que puede ser interesante. No sé si falla la concentración, o simplemente el lenguaje del gesto es algo que apenas empiezo a comprender y no sé como abordar.'

⁴³ 'El día de la presentación no estaba escuchando mi cuerpo y su ritmo. Lo sentía pero impuse un ritmo contra su naturaleza. Nunca ha sido un problema de escuchar o no mi cuerpo, pero una necesidad de imponer otros ritmos en la escena. Y debía haberlo hecho antes [escuchar]. No tuve el coraje de hacerlo. No sé por qué. Tal vez por el miedo de perder lo que tenía; y tal vez esté también ahí el retroceso que sentía de ensayo para ensayo.'

⁴⁴ 'Yo tenía muy claro, porque me lo dieron los ensayos, que mezclando las calidades de "legato" y "abajo" conseguía que el personaje fuera un anciano deprimido, triste. Esto era lo que yo quería dar. Y en un principio yo sentía que hasta cierto punto lo tenía. Sin embargo, a medida que pasaron los ensayos fui poco a poco perdiéndolo. [...] mi mayor dificultad estaba en que, como creador total de la propuesta, siempre mi visión como director le podía a mi visión como actor y, como ya me dijo Sol, terminaba contando las cosas en vez de viviéndolas. Es algo que me cuesta mucho evitar, sobre todo cuando improviso o [como] en este caso soy además del actor, el director y el autor de la propuesta.'

⁴⁵ 'Me gustaría hablar de los conceptos que hemos ido aprendiendo a lo largo del cuatrimestre, y como éstos se han visto reflejados en un proyecto final, rectifico, no sólo los conceptos de este cuatrimestre, sin el trabajo de la primera parte del curso hubiera sido imposible interiorizar esta materia [...] Para llevar a cabo este proceso de Imaginación Creativa es fundamental desarrollar la armonía, comunión, cuerpo-mente. El cuerpo necesita una instrucción, un entrenamiento, para impedir que aparezcan bloqueos, para poder llegar siempre a ese punto cero; es ese estado de disponibilidad absoluta; alejarte de ti mismo para abrir paso a la creación; lograr un estado creativo psicofísico; conectar con el cuerpo sin bloqueos, con la imagen. Ahí empieza el proceso creativo. Entrenamiento del cuerpo y de la mente, cuerpo disponible junto con un grado elevado de concentración.'

CHAPTER 3: DYNAMICS OF THE IMAGINATION

⁴⁶ Although the project and DVD focus on these particular techniques, their practice (research) cannot be assumed in isolation. It is informed by each student's previous acting experiences and skills as well as their learning of collateral subjects, their constant bodymind training throughout the year, and obviously their complementary training on Chekhov's psychophysical exercises. Some of Chekhov's basic improvisations were already introduced and explored throughout the work on Individual Projects as being both a support for their individual practice design during that first term (the exercises were selected and arranged according to the students' practice) and a convenient grounding towards this second term.

⁴⁷ The term *Expresión Corporal* is closer to the English term "physical expression" than to its official translation in curricula, which could be "body language". Marta Schinca has been an important precursor of this subject and its configuration at the RESAD since the 70's (Schinca 1988). Her working method - a valuable theory-in-practice that combines Laban's work and Jacques Dalcroze rhythmic education - has not only a seminal importance for the development of the subject in all over Spain and Spanish drama schools, but also reached other aspects of corporeal training and expression: psychomotor activity and physical education of both children and adults, also for handicap and for human welfare, in performance, sports and everyday life.

⁴⁸ 'Hemos unido lo que hacemos en clase de danza, y los cuerpos que bailan han cambiado de consistencia, son distintos, miran distinto. También los cuerpos de interpretación se han alimentado de la fuente de danza. Se complementan. El proceso de danza ha sido duro. Importante, importantísimo tener muy clara la coreografía, en la mente y en el cuerpo, pero en realidad en interpretación debe pasar lo mismo, para que así el cuerpo tenga libertad. Sé lo que ocurre en cada escena, sé lo que tengo que hacer, ahora ya sólo tengo que vivirlo.'

⁴⁹ Slava's exercise started with the feeling of our space around and outside ourselves by which we were confronted. It also had its limits. We were advised neither to look at it nor to think about it but to feel it by touch, recognizing its limits without blocking our bodies with intellectual intermissions. Once we touched the limit, the response was a movement charged with energy: "as a drop of water touching fire" (my notes). The membrane could be enlarged or shrunk as easily as we could put it on or take it off. We could also move around the space within that space delimited by the membrane. As the exercise went on, the first original reaction (water touching fire) transformed into burning, laughing, crying either when we touched it from the inside or when the membrane was touched from the outside. The response is what the actor can change and play with. The actor does not look for the reason to cry, laugh or love, but for the impulse generated by (the contact with) an imaginary object or another person.

⁵⁰ Several contemporary practitioners follow this idea of identifying acting as reacting. Meisner technique, for example, is built upon such principle; however the applications - the actual doing and spontaneity of an actor - are mainly searched for within the developmental psychology of the (actor) character and behavioural patterns of the plot and the play (Krasner, in Hodge 2000: 142-146). A similar approach is that of Declan Donnellan. In *The Actor and the Target* (2002) Donnellan builds his approach to acting and directing in the external target: 'This active target locates the energy outside so we can live off it; the target becomes an external battery. Instead of always wondering 'What am I doing?' is it more helpful to ask 'What is the target making me do?'"(25). According to Donnellan, focusing on the self and on the many questions that arise from its doing paralyse the actor. In physical theatre acting, John Wright, for example, explains how the work of the actor is based on the complicity actors assume with themselves, in just allowing and being open to their reactions:

'I used to think that acting was about being expressive, that feelings were a bit like steam building up in a pressure cooker and that emotions were released when the pressure was high enough. Today I see acting as a reaction to an action rather than an expression of a feeling' (2006: 60). Emotions come themselves afterwards and, according to Wright, they are not an actor's concern. The word "complicity" leads back to Lecoq's vision of the roots of theatre – 'a profound experience of play' (Lecoq 2000: 97) - and of his acting pedagogy, which inspires Wright. Acting and pedagogy develop in Lecoq's system upon the discovery of such a quality of play, its intrinsic internal harmony and the dissolution of quotidian personality in both character and theatre games.

⁵¹ It is interesting to observe the parallelism with Noë's discussion on "perceptual presence" (2004: 59-65).

⁵² 'Antes de empezar con Chéjov nunca me había planteado que la imaginación era posible trabajarla, pensaba que algunos actores tenían más imaginación que otros y que era cuestión de suerte, además tenía miedo de que llegara un momento en que mi imaginación se agotara. Ahora sé que la imaginación hay que trabajarla.'

⁵³ The fact that the membrane exercise facilitates the student's encounter with the learning and the acting experience does not preclude the idea that knowing how-to-perceive implies a process of trial and error, confusions and doubts, especially when rather complex images and actions intervene later on. A first incursion in the techniques is, and needs to settle, an essential "not-doing" but "how-to-listen" learning period, which will guarantee an active wait for answers (contingencies) to possibly appear. The goal at this early stage is successfully accomplished as much as the exercise allows the necessary time and space for the student's practical investigation concerning her body, her imagination and her way to act.

⁵⁴ 'Una de las lecciones más importantes que yo he aprendido en este curso es que no tengo que hacer ni contar nada para sentirme dentro de una atmósfera. Sol no nos pedía resultados de cara a un posible espectador, de manera que si ella o los otros compañeros no veían esa atmósfera no pasaba nada. Lo importante es lo que uno experimenta por dentro al involucrarse en ellas, al visualizarlas [...] Con hacer lo mínimo bastaba, como ya he dicho, porque en este tipo de trabajo no hay que contar nada, sólo sentir y actuar de acuerdo con lo que se siente sin perder nunca, eso sí, [...] el principio, medio y el final del movimiento, de cada acción a realizar, ni tampoco el espacio por encima de la cabeza o el centro al que hay que llevar nuestra atención y aire en todo momento.'

⁵⁵ In a talk at the New School for Social Research in New York in October 1935, Chekhov advanced that theatre will become more conscious of the creative process that permeates actors' artistic practice in regards to the elaboration and guidance of images. The process is explained in four stages living through an artist's creation. These moments refer to the states of: (1) anticipation of the artistic piece to be developed, (2) creative and active elaboration of images around it, (3) incorporation of such living images, and (4) finally an optimal state of creativeness or inspiration. [Original transcript of Chekhov's lecture given first at New School for Social Research in New York, in October 1935: *The four stages of the creative process*. Dartington Archives. Box IV. Memoirs. Also published in Mala Powers' edition (Chekhov 1991: 146-158)].

⁵⁶ In Lecoq's practice there is also a similar process of building awareness in what he identifies as the "universal poetic sense": 'Here we are dealing with an abstract dimension, made up of spaces, lights, colours, materials, sounds which can be found in all of us.' (Lecoq 2000: 46). Actors approach the "essence" of life and the arts on a parallel journey during their learning process. This deep down journey explores a common heritage that awakes in the actor both "dynamic vigour and desire to create", therein "they students can develop their own creativity" (Ibid.).

⁵⁷ The sensorimotor experience of an image may be interpreted as a bodymind actualisation and assurance of the existence of psycho-physical contingencies. They appear through the corporeal experience of concepts and meanings and are particular to the language of description and conceptual system in which that experience takes place. In *Metaphors we live by*, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) make explicit the role of metaphor in understanding body, mind and language acquisition, and discuss how and why metaphors may offer an alternative lens for understanding the world beyond the myths and opposition between the objective and the subjective (195-197).

⁵⁸ It is worth observing the different gestures - action and quality - for one same action (for

example, to take) given by a group of students with different nationalities in Lecoq's training (See Roy, Jean-Noel & Carasso, Jean-Gabriel 1999, DVD).

⁵⁹ 'En este tipo de ejercicios es imprescindible evitar la tensión innecesaria y ser consciente en todo momento de la fuerza y el poder que emana de esta cualidad, porque luego reduciremos todo este moldear y nos quedaremos con la sensación únicamente, sólo con la relación que nuestro Centro mantiene imaginariamente con esa cualidad, para poder abordar las acciones cotidianas con ese moldear pero interiorizándolo.'

⁶⁰ 'Estábamos concentrados en el material del que el carácter está formado y no en cómo es ese carácter. Uno se concentra en esa relación entre la cualidad y el centro y desde ahí, no es él, el actor, quien actúa, sino que deja que sea su personaje quien actúe.'

⁶¹ In 1977, Robert Benedetti interviewed Lee Worley, a founding member, actress, and teacher on The Open Theatre. From an operational perspective, the following excerpt of the interview summarises not only what Atmospheres imply in acting but also what all the other of Chekhov's techniques propose to the actor.

⁶² 'Cultivating sensitivity is possible by forming an active-passive relationship with an object' (Jeungsook 2008:155) as much as 'the reaction is a result of the active-passive relationship to a specific stimulus' (176). This is also implied in David Zinder's idea of managing the creative moment using the metaphor of pushing the soap bubble: 'Pushing it too hard will burst it; pushing it too gently will not give it enough energy to move' (2002:12). In *Tao Te Ching* there is the concept of non action or *wu-wei*, which 'does not implies the absence of action. Rather it indicates spontaneity and non interference; that is, letting things follow their own natural course.' (Victor H. Mair in the Afterword of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* (1990))

⁶³ Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) was a French philosopher committed to study the phenomenology of the poetic image.

⁶⁴ The imaginary body and centre found for a particular character, says Chekhov, only help to create a character, and are not the character itself (2002: 83). An actor's characterisation is but a small part of the entire character, which is made up of all its possible little peculiar features. The premise for those details to become alive (both in the actor's and spectator's imaginations) is in Chekhov's idea of a sense of a whole that is implied in such imaginary body or character. This is in the tendency of our imagination - perception - to complete the picture.

⁶⁵ An important foundation on Lecoq's education is the work with the neutral mask. This mask is mainly a tool for the actor's search of economy of expression, physical precision, effectiveness of gestures and developed spatial awareness. There are clear connections in regards to understanding the work of the imagination in the body.

⁶⁶ Concerning the Buddhist notion of non-self and today's' scientific investigation on the possibilities of visualisation in sports performance, Jerry Daboo explains Chekhov's view of the self, bodymind and the imagination much as they are involved in the mental practice for improving highly specialised performance: to see and sense a perfect movement allows one to attain the right kinaesthetic feeling (before or during execution) that potentially guarantees a successful performance. This extremely focused and precise utilization of the imagination 'takes a good deal of concentration and training' (Daboo 07b: 263). Furthermore, it is the sensorimotor knowledge that a highly specialised sport individual has *already* embodied that allows such an adequate elaboration and realisation of images. In this sense, as Petit explains, the actor already imagines with her muscles rather than with her head.

⁶⁷ 'Trabajamos con tres cuerpos imaginarios. Uno que era un palo, otro era una pelota y otro era un velo, con esto hicimos una improvisación de grupo en la que surgieron tipos de movimiento y acciones muy diversas. Con el cuerpo del palo surgían movimientos de dureza, precisión. A mí me surgían imágenes bélicas. El cuerpo de la pelota era flexible, cambiante, huidizo, sugería juego, interacción. El velo era un cuerpo sutil, relacionado con el aire, con la sensualidad, dulzura, suavidad. Al intentar relacionar a Magdalena con uno de estos cuerpos imaginarios, la asocio con el del palo.'

⁶⁸ I have to refer to the teachings of Sarah Kane who first introduced me to this specific exercise. Her approach to Chekhov is based on a profound knowledge of Steiner's speech training, eurhythmic, as applied to the technique.

⁶⁹ The discussion of this technique easily links the ideas of the "sensitive membrane", the

“life-body” (Petit), “body-memory” (Grotowski) or “subtle body” (Zarrilli) whereby the somatic processes and sensorimotor patterns that inform our psychophysical experience are somehow imprinted.

⁷⁰ ‘Una vez puesto el disfraz, por darle otro símil, lo importante es habitarlo. No colocárselo simplemente y acentuar sus características, como siempre. No contar cómo es ese cuerpo. No ilustrarlo [...] darle libertad al cuerpo de ese carácter, de confiar en él para que sea él y no nuestras ansias de alcanzar un resultado, el que nos vaya dando todo lo que queremos de una manera natural y paulatina. O sea que no hay que exagerar nada las sutiles inspiraciones que nos llegan del nuevo cuerpo, y sólo podremos lanzarnos a escena con él cuando nos sintamos totalmente naturales y sinceros al llevarlo puesto.’

⁷¹ ‘Descubrí que en sí misma María Josefa, un personaje ficticio, simboliza tantas cosas que [...] sin nuestra imaginación sería una ofensa tratar de interpretarla, sería como ultrajar un mito.’

⁷² It combines my experience of David Zinder’s diligent and detailed (one-piece-at-a-time) incorporation of an imaginary body, with a preliminary exercise to mask work introduced by Fabio Mangolini in a *Commedia dell Arte* workshop at RESAD. Mangolini’s exercise was entitled “from the beautiful body to the grotesque body” and was based on a sequential transformation of the body according to the perceptual awareness of your own body.

⁷³ ‘En este ejercicio traigo a la mente la imagen del personaje, voy enunciando sus características y permitiendo que estas características sean experimentadas por mi cuerpo y que éste vaya transformándose lentamente: piernas y brazos largos, dedos largos, alta, delgada (el cuerpo se coloca de una forma en la que le es fácil sentir la delgadez), cabeza muy pequeña (este detalle fue muy importante para encontrar la voz, sentir la cabeza como un punto desde el que salía el sonido), cabello largo y pesado, sin busto. Con estos detalles fui trabajando. Luego los exageré hasta llegar al punto más grotesco, incluso en la voz. La voz se transforma radicalmente, suena como un rayo que parte el aire, y el cuerpo se vuelve un poco monstruoso. Luego voy dejando de lado todo lo que sobra y me quedo con lo esencial para no perder a Magdalena: pecho hundido, cabeza pequeña y brazos rotados. La potencia de la voz se mantuvo, pero había más flexibilidad y aparecieron matices en el texto.’

⁷⁴ I consider this exercise for its technical application of a principle rather than for its set improvisation. The same principle ruling this exercise can be used in different contexts. I use it, for example, when embodying “psychological” qualities (of love, fear, the mischievous...) and observing their inner-outer movement as the body is taken to its maximum expressive consequences with the blindfolds on. I have shown this exercise in my presentation at the Changing Body Seminar at Exeter University 2005. The quality of the movement, or better said, the inner movement that defines the quality is observed and felt through the body while the eyes are closed. Then its prominent features as defined through the student’s corporeality are taken to its limits, accentuating its characteristics beyond realism. When the student opens the eyes, she studies the exchange that happens between what the feeling is “inside” and the physical world in the actual time and space. She explores and “equalises”, so to speak, such inner feeling in contact with the other (space, partner or audience). Being studied and analysed that way, the term is known and approached in the specificity of what originally caused the movement. It also helps to explore a possible quality of an atmosphere through ‘individual postures’ - as for example, the one in *Asfixia*, in first instance a complex term (atmosphere) to be approached through the body [DVD1-ASFX-Areas of interest-Introduction. Individual Postures].

⁷⁵ ‘Llevamos el cuerpo a lo grotesco, se acentúa por mil cada detalle, empezamos a hacerlo cada vez más plausible, qué queda, qué huella ha dejado en mi cuerpo. Buscar la adaptabilidad de la imagen, tener datos con los que pueda trabajar, pero no contar el cuerpo, es para mí.’

⁷⁶ ‘Fue interesante comprobar como finalmente este nuevo cuerpo se apoderaba del mío con solo una contracción, unas manos y el espacio por encima de la cabeza’

⁷⁷ It is shocking to realise how much information one may draw on for her character just by imagining what would be this private space, where the character dwells alone. Where do these images come from? Why do they appear with so much precision and awareness? It is worth mentioning the study of phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard *La poétique de l’espace* (1957), in which he analyses the human adherence to the primary function of inhabiting, and

the fundamental embodied values of intimacy and home. The dialectics of the imagination in regards to its reality and/or virtuality - the thoughts and dreams it inspires - becomes rather rich and complex. It is probably due to the depth of this vital experience, its intrinsic power and full poetry, that one's imagination can respond so immediately to the questions of such a vital place for a character (the other), a personal object hidden in that room, the place where it is hidden, and/or the place in the body it is concealed. This work may also be further explored in relation to the student's experience of the three different centres previously mentioned - head, chest and abdomen – where the secret object can be innerly “kept” during the performance.

⁷⁸ ‘Fue un ejercicio que me gustó mucho aunque después sólo me quedara con la huella, ya que al trabajar con el cuerpo imaginario en el proyecto final me bloqueaba un poco. Pero sí notaba que aunque no lo estuviera trabajando, inconscientemente estaba y se podía oler, al igual que el gesto psicológico.’

⁷⁹ ‘Y el ejercicio que finalmente me ha ayudado más a conseguir todo esto ha sido el de imaginar que el cuerpo de Poncia está un poco por encima, por delante del mío, y va haciendo las acciones, va diciendo las cosas mientras yo la sigo. Ella me dirige, lo hace todo a lo grande, y yo decido si entro por entero a su propuesta o me quedo al 70%, al 50%. Yo elijo.’

⁸⁰ ‘My exhaustion and calmness had turned me into a spectator of my own acting’, reports Chekhov on his experience with Skid in *Artisten* (2005: 144).

⁸¹ Further reference can be found in Ashperger's analysis of the supersensible and the bodymind (2008: 32), the sense of the whole and “higher self” (25), and Chekhov's own thoughts on yogic powers and creative forces (2005: 86-87) and concentration (2000: 15). Informed by Eastern influences, concentration is the site for a prime and direct link between Chekhov's spiritual approach to acting and Zarrilli's psychophysical training through Asian martial arts (Garre 03, 09).

⁸² For further discussion of this argument see Daboo, J. (2004) ‘The mind of a flower: The psychophysical experience of performance’, unpublished doctoral thesis: Exeter University.

⁸³ ‘Esta teoría y entrenamiento parten de la base de que un gesto realizado, con todo el cuerpo comprometido, y repetido, cuantas veces haga falta, puede llevarnos a sentir un deseo de manera tan poderosa que hasta la propia voluntad termine subyugada al influjo de aquel gesto del que partíamos en un principio. Es decir, que tan sólo un gesto nos puede llevar a sentir el deseo que será el motor de nuestro personaje en escena.’

⁸⁴ During the first decades of the Twentieth Century, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Delsarte, Dalcroze, Laban and Steiner were also locating the gesture at the core of the performers' activity emphasising its enacting possibilities, and so they delved into the performativity of gestures within their artistic forms and approaches. Du Prey argues that the specificity of Chekhov's technique relies in his approach to the potential contained in the inner gestures regarding the whole creative process of an actor going beyond the performativity of the gestures themselves (Du Prey 1979-80: 5).

⁸⁵ The number of senses that human beings possess as well as the possibility of being considered separated entities is called into question by contemporary science (see Ward 2008: 31-58). Pain, temperature, balance, proprioception and interoception are also considered as proper senses besides the five already known. Furthermore, they are being considered less for depending on their different receptors and more for configuring systems which information interlaces in the brain, not only between them but also with our past experiences of sensing the world. Multisensory perception, metaphors mixing senses and synaesthesia are consequences of the complex process of perception that run in our lives and experience.

⁸⁶ Stanislavski had already made this point in his chapter on the corporeal education of the actor, concretely in developing her plastic sense. In *An actor prepares*, Stanislavski alludes to the actor's attention to the energy of the movement - its inner sensation - and the continuity of this motor (driving) energy with which to mould the plastic form or outer movement. He also acknowledged the dual awareness of the body (actor) while engaged in the plasticity of movement: a visible outer flow (movement) and an inner invisible flow (energy).

⁸⁷ ‘En primera instancia debes conocer el gesto, y para ello lo ejecutas de manera “pura”.

Tu cuerpo sabe qué es “abrazar”. Síguelo, él hará el gesto por sí solo. Descubres cómo hace físico tu cuerpo cada gesto. Luego improvisas con un determinado gesto [...] y no tienes que llegar a hacerlo de una manera completa; sólo es, de nuevo, una fuente de inspiración, siendo lo más interesante el camino no la meta.’

⁸⁸ ‘Al principio pensaba que el gesto psicológico se tenía que mostrar, no entendía que era la gasolina del personaje, lo que le mueve por dentro y le despierta sentimientos. El gesto psicológico me causó algunos bloqueos porque me empeñaba en mostrarlo en vez de en dejarlo estar. Pensaba que no me ayudaba. Ahora después de la muestra he tenido unos días para reflexionar y sin lugar a dudas el gesto psicológico que elegí para mi personaje (el deseo de escapar) era el adecuado.’

⁸⁹ David Zinder had already introduced to the students during his workshop at RESAD at that time the idea that Grotowski’s *plastiques* may become into psychological gestures.

⁹⁰ The exercise Violeta Gil will refer to was done at class, uttering the text while throwing sticks, finding the right timing of gesture and voice, the physical and vocal energy that collide in one same impulse. See also Roberta Carreri’s performer training and preparation in *Traces in the Snow*, audiovisual documentation, Odin Teatret, 1994.

⁹¹ ‘El texto no debe salir ni un segundo antes ni uno después, y se nota cuando no lo dices en el momento justo. Debes estar todo el tiempo preparada, abierta a recibir, atenta a quién quiere lanzar, dispuesta a dar. Y cuando sientes que has dicho una frase en el momento y lugar... ¡Que sensación tan buena!’

⁹² ‘El gesto que quedó, sin embargo, para el personaje de la muestra que hicimos a público fue “levantar”. Y poco a poco, ensayo tras ensayo, fui yo “levantando” hasta que junto con Sol conseguimos definir mejor ese gesto y esa voz; hasta que finalmente alcanzamos la expresión más ajustada para el carácter de la anciana.’

⁹³ ‘Durante algunos ensayos sí fui consciente de diversas imágenes, pero el día de la muestra en las dos representaciones, soy consciente de que tenía imágenes, pero no lo soy de haberlas buscado.’

⁹⁴ ‘Me llevó tiempo entender, y poner en práctica, el hecho de no tener que estar en escena continuamente con todas las herramientas presentes, sino que había que ir alternándolas. En este momento había que jugar el texto, en este otro la atmósfera general, luego la de la escena, luego combinar varias... pero no tenerlo todo presente, hecho que puede con facilidad atascar al actor.’

⁹⁵ ‘A mí me pasó con María Josefa que para conseguir mayor grado de vejez en los movimientos empecé a darle cierta calidad de moldeo a las acciones, cosa que a mi juicio en un principio le fue muy bien al personaje consiguiendo mayor realismo. Pero a medida que fueron avanzando los ensayos fui intensificando más y más la tensión del moldeo, sin ser consciente de ello, hasta que me perdí por completo en el entresijo de mis propios miembros convertidos en obstáculos.’

⁹⁶ ‘En la recta final del trabajo, cuando todo tenía que aclararse, mi proceso se atascó, retrocedió incluso; era consciente de que no escuchaba, de que estaba en otro “nivel” independiente de la escena. Luego me percaté de que esto era porque me aferraba de sobremanera a un determinado gesto psicológico de personaje, a uno de ellos, sin tener espacio a escuchar al compañero y a la escena. Me encontraba encerrado intentando respetar mi gesto, y en descubrir como éste modificaba mi cuerpo, mi voz, mi manera de..., mí, mí, mí. Estaba confinado en mí. Sabía que estaba por encima, que no estaba con la escena ni conmigo mismo tampoco, pero era incapaz de escapar de donde me encontraba; hasta que se propuso el ejercicio de ese cuerpo que hacía antes que uno, y que nosotros podíamos hacer, más o menos, lo que él marcaba. Me sorprendió como a partir de ese momento todo surgió casi solo’

⁹⁷ ‘Teniendo en cuenta el calentamiento, [...] en el que nunca debías perder la sensación del centro abdominal - de donde todo parte y donde llevo mi oxígeno - y de lo que todas las disciplinas orientales - yoga, Tai Chi, Kalari - cultivan en este calentamiento, [el trabajo] ha sido un continuo realizar y fortalecer todos estos principios que Chéjov aconseja buscar y, una vez encontrados, no perder: Centro, Belleza, Equilibrio, Control, Sencillez, No Tensión. Teniendo en cuenta este calentamiento, decía, nos ha sido muy fácil entender físicamente toda esta técnica. Lo realmente revelador ha sido, pues, la importancia que Chéjov le da a la imaginación.’

⁹⁸ 'Me asombró también la tranquilidad con la que me mantuve en escena; cómo cuando salí, mi cuerpo respiraba pausado y me encontraba tranquilo. Cómo utilizando el foco, la respiración, y "la planta de los pies" todo cobraba un valor, una verdad, una seguridad... Asimismo, ser consciente de cómo fueron transmitidas también "casi sin quererlo" las atmósferas trabajadas, el cuerpo de los personajes, y cómo éstos reemplazaban a los nuestros.'

⁹⁹ 'Simplemente estando en la atmósfera de la opresión - aparte, claro está, del centro abdominal, respiración y plantas de los pies - ya me sentía conectada con mi personaje.'

¹⁰⁰ 'Lo bueno era que estaba segura de que pasara lo que pasara, saliera mejor o peor, yo sabía qué hacer, sabía cómo canalizar lo que viniera, sabía controlar mi cuerpo. Y por eso no tenía miedo... Lo más importante de este proceso ha sido el ir encontrando los ejercicios y los métodos que más ayudan a encontrar un personaje, a crear una atmósfera, y distinguir cuáles de ellos pueden estar bien, pero no nos han ayudado.'

¹⁰¹ 'Por lo tanto, ya no sólo el calentamiento se presentaba como liturgia de las clases [...] Hasta las improvisaciones, llenas de personajes de fuego, de tierra, de aire o agua, tenían ese punto místico, aunque luego salieran temas o resultados de lo más cómico y épico. Todos los ejercicios apelaban a algo que tenía más que ver con el alma que con el teatro como hoy conocemos en occidente. Cada improvisación, por sencilla que se planteara, nos llevaba, a mí por lo menos, a un concentrarme en algo que yo, Julián, no soy, pero que, desde luego, sí está dentro de mí.'

¹⁰² I have to thank Andrei Kirillov for provoking me into reflecting deeply on this issue. He certainly made a point about the real necessity of any pre-performative training: 'If we are talking from the point of M.C. - body or mind themselves or the mechanism of their interconnection uninterested for us as the artists [sic]. Everything (including body and mind) are [sic] valuable for us through the focus of [the] image. Chekhov gives us not the process only but the order as well. Imagination is the starting point. Do not speed to move your body. Let it follow [the] imagination.' (Andrei Kirillov, 2001 personal correspondence).

CHAPTER 4. INTEGRATING BODYMIND TRAINING WITH THE DYNAMICS OF THE IMAGINATION

¹⁰³ The title has been inspired by Lehmann's new concept of theatre that reclaims its right as staging practice to come to terms with the reality of the theatre situation itself and not with its representation. In his look at new modes of perception, new performances, Lehmann focuses on the challenge they set to the viewer's position already in the process and on the exchange that happens between audience(s) and stage(s). The 'positing of performance' is made to facilitate the success of an act or moment of communication, opening up a whole range of styles and poetics of staging.

¹⁰⁴ What Patrice Pavis describes as the "underscore" (Pavis 2006: 100) is hereby reinterpreted as the kinaesthetic awareness that intermediates between the actor's imagining process and her stage behaviour. Another deviation from this perspective on acting analysis is in the consideration of the nature of such a score. The sensorial substitutes the emotional that is thereby relegated as by-product or consequence that completes (and not determines) the cycle in the interaction of the spectator and actor with the score.

¹⁰⁵ 'Para mí, ha sido espectacular ver el poder de evocación que tiene una partitura. Cómo el movimiento físico atrae, estimula, y proyecta fascinantes sensaciones y estímulos. Cómo crear, al conseguir que el actor deposite el cien por cien de su energía en una partitura física sin preocuparse por las ideas o emociones, que éstas nazcan en el propio espectador. Descubrir el universo creativo que se esconde en un movimiento o partitura. Y cómo hacer que esa partitura sea cada tarde tan rica, expresiva y como la primera. Es a lo que llamo tarea. La tarea es para el actor lo que para el escultor el mármol o el color al pintor. Una materia tan rica [que] se podría decir que hay actores agotables pero tareas inagotables. Descubrir las posibilidades de una partitura es interminable, pero ésa es la tarea del actor. Tarde tras tarde, tarde tras tarde.'

¹⁰⁶ Both aspects are present in the content of perceptual experience of object, events, and

moods or states of things (Noë 2004: 163). Alike other moments in this thesis, I am establishing here a parallelism between Noë's notion of perception and the acting process.

¹⁰⁷ Dewey describes: 'when excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized images. To be set on fire by a thought or scene is to be inspired.' (05: 68)

¹⁰⁸ 'The flow' is an exercise used in *Viewpoints* to introduce within a group improvisation different points of awareness that eventually make the actor fully committed to what she is doing, enabling the participant to give meaning to her own composition while doing it. Such points of awareness are based on spatial, temporal and gestural premises or patterns. I used a simple version of this exercise in *Asfixia* as much for reinforcing the group's working collaboration as to let the actors explore – reflect-in-practice - new places where they could find the "meaning" of their doing. *Viewpoints*, inspired by American postmodern dance, is a movement technique originally designed for dancers and created by Mary Overly and Anne Bogart in the 80's. Director Anne Bogart introduces the technique for actor training and developing work in the SITI Company.

¹⁰⁹ 'Ahí descubrí la "escucha" frente a la preocupación nada productiva del "tener que hacer". Me di cuenta de que no hay que preocuparse de lo que uno va a hacer o tiene que hacer, eso son preocupaciones que impiden ocuparse de lo que hay que ocuparse. "Simplemente" se trata de estar en ese momento preciso ahí de forma activa. Escuchar (percibir, entender) lo que está pasando fuera en el espacio; a la vez de lo que pasa en uno mismo dentro de ese espacio. Ser consciente de formar parte del conjunto sintiendo a los 5 compañeros. Y es eso realmente lo que tiene que mover a actuar (entendiendo actuar como accionar). Llegar a no pensar en lo que "voy a hacer", en lo que "tengo que hacer" como una preocupación, sino simplemente estar, alerta, reaccionar activamente. Incluso no hacer sino "dejarse hacer", pero de una forma activa como parte de un conjunto que está vivo y actúa, se mueve.'

¹¹⁰ 'Aquí mi mayor descubrimiento fue el de no contar, no mostrar. [...] Esto ha sido un poco arduo para mí [...] No se trata de rechazar cualquier historia o imagen que venga. Hay que aceptarlas, incorporarlas, pero controlarlas. El fin es hacer un estudio de lo que pasa, y para eso hay que ser plenamente consciente de todo lo que ocurre. Hay que estar lo suficientemente abierto para que ocurran cosas, pero no dejarse llevar por ellas. Paciencia y rigor.'

¹¹¹ Any intelligent operation, observes Gilbert Ryle in 1949, is made of one only action and not two - 'thinking what to do and doing it' (in Schön 87: 22). Knowing-how implies a duality that can only be cognitively conceived, but not in practice. In this thesis I allude to several instances that are both consequence and reflection of this original thought that Ryle proposed to debunk propositional knowledge. I have already argued how bodymind and stage creativity may become two different processes and just one action (*Imaginary Body in performance*, in p. 162-164) as well as I will discuss it in my conclusions (*Looking back at the research questions*, in p. 253). Similarly, I have also assume throughout this research that the image is for the performer already an action and/or the action already an image (*Active Images*, p.67-71), and that the actor does not decide first what is the meaning to give to her actions; she is already giving meaning to her actions; or, that is the same, her actions contain already a meaning ('The Journey', in p. 76).

¹¹² 'Yo trabajaba interiormente con una actitud abierta hacia lo que pasaba con el grupo. Me dejaba llevar por ellos, proponía cosas, jugaba con mis dinámicas y con las suyas.. Me sentía muy cómodo. Me dejaba contagiar mucho más por lo que pasaba afuera que por lo que yo pensaba. En la 1^o improvisación indagué en mi asfixia interna, trabajé individualmente. Pero en la 2^a yo estaba al servicio, por así decirlo, del grupo. Sin plantearme demasiado mi interior. Estaba activo, libre. Probablemente perdí un poco el norte del tema, pero creo que trabajé y analicé en el momento lo que ocurría allí con mis compañeros y no me planteaba si se correspondía o no con el tema.'

¹¹³ During my research I have discovered some close links between many of Grotowski's proposals for technique and concentration and Michael Chekhov's approach to acting. For example, they both differentiate between two types of techniques, one personal and revelatory of the individual in performance, and the other one operative and responding to theatre convections. They both also coincide in that they pursue and assume a personal

quest for the creative act. Amongst their concurrences, there is the notion of body-memory or life-body that surpasses the memory of the individual in the artistic response of the performer (Grotowski 1992/1993: 34); and/or the invisible body or Creative "I" who runs the creation that Chekhov considers. Unfortunately this argument would deserve an explanation that goes over the extent of this thesis.

¹¹⁴ 'Me acuerdo de un primer pase fatídico que hicimos de *Asfixia*. Ese primer pase que venía a verlo algún profesor nos hizo más vulnerables, más pequeñitos a todos y empezamos a tirar de donde sabíamos; y desdibujamos nuestro primer pase de *Asfixia*: que si demasiado temperamento, que si nos fuimos muy lejos con las intenciones, a otra parte en donde no teníamos que estar como actores... Creo que eso era lo difícil, depurarte que no quitarte. Porque no tienes que olvidarte de nada para hacer esto, sino saber cómo combinarlo. La mayor dificultad, que es la mayor virtud del trabajo, yo creo, es de repente entender que la interpretación es otra cosa.'

¹¹⁵ In Chekhov's system, Archetypes - as a technique for characterisation - help the actor to build the role involved in the dramatic text. Within Chekhov's vision of the whole characterisation process, this particular technique becomes a way of acquiring experience of some of the physical-and-psychological guiding traits of the role (an outsider, a mother, a virgin, a spoil child, a widow, a lover, a protector, an enchanter...). In *Asfixia*, my purpose was in relating the actor's practice with the embodied image and exploring from it further themes and ideas connected to their experience of asphyxia. It would open up different possibilities also in the devising and staging processes.

¹¹⁶ 'Al realizar personalmente una impro de este trabajo de arquetipos a través de su traje, pude comprobar lo inspirador y creativo que resulta. Poseer, a través de la imaginación, otro cuerpo deshace los prejuicios, inhibiciones y resistencias tanto corporales como intelectuales del propio actor frente a su material de trabajo: en este caso el personaje. Es muchísimo más difícil engañar al cuerpo que a la mente. El cuerpo delata las ideas preconcebidas, los maniqueos y los clichés. El cuerpo se apodera de la voluntad y guía el trabajo.'

¹¹⁷ 'Encontré el discurso de lo que iba a decir, de repente, porque me encontré un trocito de esparto que había allí. [...] sí había una imagen muy clara. Había una imagen que me marcaba una dirección muy clara de estar ahí enfrentado; una serie de sensaciones que me había causado el hecho de haber estado trabajando el arquetipo del hombre revolucionario.'

¹¹⁸ Throughout the rehearsal period, and later on during the preparation for each presentation of the project, I tried several strategies in order to help Ivana to manage the scene, to feel secure and in that apparent control that would bring the confidence she needed onstage. Some strategies were related to playing with the Imaginary Body and the speech she was uttering in different ways; others to creating a score of movement which innerly guided her through a predetermined text; finally we tried by focusing on the execution and embodiment of the physical actions that built up the scene. It is my opinion that they did not completely work until she realised where the significant handicap to her concentration was.

¹¹⁹ 'Yo creo que el profesor era un trabajo muy complicado, o yo lo sentía muy complicado, porque había una relación directa con mis compañeros y con el público. No era como la niña que tú estás metido en tu mundo y estás trabajando tus cosas, y te olvidas del resto. Te metes en tu burbuja, en tu trabajo y eso es lo que hace que eso salga al exterior y hace que te comuniques con el público pero desde un sitio muy interno tuyo. Pero tener un personaje que tiene que estar hablando directamente con alguien, tus compañeros, que están haciendo la obra contigo, y también con el público mirando directamente, un personaje que está quieto, que no se mueve, que no puede hacer grandes cosas..., es estar trabajando por un lado una contención muy grande y, por otro lado, estar enfrentándote. Parece que va un poco a la contra, o eso era lo que a mí me despistaba, me impedía concentrarme.'

¹²⁰ 'Recuerdo una escena que tenía que representar de un hombre de unos cuarenta años en una situación de tensión pero muy seguro de sí mismo. Recuerdo lo mal que lo pasaba intentando ser así, tan alejado de mí. Si tuviera que hacer ese papel ahora lo abordaría de una manera muy diferente. Iría directo a la acción, qué tengo que hacer, y no preocuparía de más. Ahora me miro más a mí mismo, dentro, a cómo estoy hoy, y desde ahí entro a la escena. Tiene que ver con la voluntad, según como esté, el trabajo parte desde ahí. Ya no digo "hoy voy a probar esto en la escena" (una característica del personaje, o cualidad). No

tiene sentido. Ahora me digo: “Hoy hago la escena.”

¹²¹ ‘Un cosa que me reveló el entrenamiento, fue que me hizo ver que había una serie de herramientas, [...] una serie de cosas que luego he descubierto que ahí es donde realmente está el lenguaje que yo estoy trabajando como actor [...] La diferencia era que antes todo dependía más del análisis, quién soy, dónde estoy, cuál es mi motivación, y el foco de atención está ahora en las herramientas, en el lenguaje. Es decir que el actor trabaja con el lenguaje de la escena, y ahí está su foco de atención.’

¹²² “En principio creo que todas las técnicas tienen que ayudar a esa función del actor creador, y que tienen que dejar libertad a la hora de poder crear al personaje. Pero con esta técnica, de una forma especial sientes que estás esculpiendo algo, modelando algo. Al final haces una especie de escultura que se mueve y habla. [...] Porque trabajas tan minuciosamente con cositas que al final haces como una especie de escultura de lo que es el personaje. Pero además, de la forma que lo hicimos en *Asfixia* es que abarcaba mucho más que eso. Ya no sólo tú estabas creando un personaje, era todo, era una propuesta. Todo tenía que estar perfectamente hilado.”

¹²³ ‘La parte más complicada del proceso fue la interiorización de las herramientas. El saber a qué estamos jugando. De qué va esto. Nosotros veníamos de otra historia en la que no se concibe el arte del actor de esa manera. El arte del actor es algo que yo manejo directamente. Es decir, yo soy Hamlet y pongo la intención de no sé cuanto en esta frase y esto luego me lo llevo aquí. Hay una serie de juegos muy enfocados en la exhibición del trabajo que se está haciendo, no en un mal sentido, sino en un sentido claro. Y este trabajo tenía que ver con la desposesión de todas esas cosas, con la limpieza de cualquier tipo de ilustración sobre el trabajo que se estaba haciendo, en rasgos generales. Es un trabajo en el que hace falta quitar más que poner, que es un poco la vía negativa ésta. A partir de esa limpieza uno empieza a construir desde otro sitio.’

¹²⁴ This approach to the use of texts in *Asfixia* was inspired by Pina Bausch and DV8. During my visit at Royal Holloway in 2000, I was invited to a MA Physical Theatre programme training session conducted by Liam Steel, from DV8. In his class, Liam introduced this exercise as a mode of approaching the performers’ research into their process of embodiment as well as relationships in *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Man* (1990). The influence of both Jerzy Grotowski and Pina Bausch in Newson’s company can be hinted very clearly in this production (see Buckland 1995: 371-380).

¹²⁵ In regards to the many theatrical possibilities of using texts in performance see also Arthur Holmberg’s *The Theatre of Robert Wilson* (1996: 41-75), in which he analyses ten strategies used by Wilson to deconstruct and stage language in *A letter for Queen Victoria* (1974).

¹²⁶ In *The Actor and The Target* (2002) Declan Donellan alludes to two elements that help the actor in her tasks in front of an audience. One is the target, always set outside and in relation with the person who is acting. The other is the actor’s capability of seeing through her character’s eyes, or perceiving through the body what the character does or feels. Unfortunately it is not clear in this text where the character comes from neither how the actor attains that capability of changing her perception.

¹²⁷ ‘El Gesto Psicológico, por ejemplo, es una combinación de una imagen y de un gesto propiamente dicho. Lo que tiene de psicológico es lo que tiene de imaginario, yo creo. La búsqueda del gesto es un viaje de ida y vuelta: yo busco, a partir del gesto, la imagen que tiene el gesto; o tengo una imagen y surge un gesto. Por eso yo creo que la cuestión psicológica tiene más que ver con la imagen y no tanto con una psicología. La psicología viene después cuando tú interpretas qué quiere decir, cuando le das un sentido. Para mí el Gesto Psicológico es un gesto que está cargado de una imagen, básicamente. Que puedo trabajar interiormente, pero que está haciendo que yo esté articulando de una determinada manera la escena. Un poco el milagro está en cómo yo puedo transformar, traducir, algo que es meramente una forma en una manifestación física totalmente distinta.’

¹²⁸ ‘Lo que yo he aprendido con todo esto es que puedo salir a escena tan sólo concentrado en una imagen, en una sensación interna, en una atmósfera o en una cualidad, o ambas si es necesario, y conseguir, si confío en ellas, realizar una improvisación sin ningún esfuerzo. Mientras que antes, para mí, salir a escena a improvisar se me presentaba como un peligroso salto al abismo, ahora sigue siendo así, pero ya no hay miedo al salto, ya sé que ese vértigo no sólo es lógico sino que además es sano, ya que, si lo sabes usar, acrecienta

tu concentración en lo que estés trabajando... Uno tiene que dejar su interior, su ego, su miedo y poner toda su atención en lo que esté trabajando por dentro, sí, pero también en lo que está sucediendo en ese momento en la escena.'

¹²⁹ 'En este otro tipo de trabajo [...] si no existe la experiencia física previa, este trabajo no tiene sentido. Es decir, yo tengo primero que vivenciar una serie de cosas de la escena para entender cómo es la escena. Es decir, partimos del propio lenguaje del teatro que no tiene que ver con la literatura, o con el análisis de textos. Tiene que ver con el trabajo físico real de los elementos que hay en escena que son el tiempo y el espacio, y el compañero, y qué es lo que está surgiendo en este momento entre los dos, teniendo un texto o haciendo lo que se esté haciendo.'

¹³⁰ 'Mi escena, obviamente, cambió muchísimo. [...] Yo creo que ganó en que yo entendí que menos es más. Al principio, en la primera versión, tenía como muchas ganas de hacer todo, estaba muy emocionado con la técnica y con el tipo de trabajo y quería explotar en escena. En las siguientes versiones, sobre todo la tercera, entendí que no era necesario todo esto para poder transmitir lo que queríamos transmitir. Se quedó en una cosa mucho más... no estática, pero sí era una partitura más sencilla que seguía teniendo para mí, no ya la misma potencia, sino que yo creo que era más potente. En el fondo era como una depuración de todo lo anterior. Era como si mi gesto psicológico en un principio hubiese sido gigante y hubiera encontrado la forma de depurarlo, de dar que con eso mismo [gesto] un mínimo por ciento con un máximo resultado.'

¹³¹ 'hubo un proceso en el que al principio estabas bien, luego, de repente, estabas perdiéndísimo, que no sabías que había que hacer, si movías la ceja te sentías fatal, 'me van a decir...' Luego, de repente, empiezas a entender eso de una forma muy natural, que eso sí que fue para mí impactante porque, de repente, surgió el entendimiento. No hubo nada racional que a mí me obligase a entender sino que el cuerpo entendió de lo que iba aquello.'

¹³² 'A mí me ayudó a entender el proceso cosas claves como lo de "no me expliques", "no cuentes y haz". Pero, viéndolo en los compañeros, o sea, cuando tú les dabas esas pautas a los compañeros, y estando yo fuera y viendo cuáles eran los cambios que se producían en ellos. Porque desde mí, cuando tú me lo decías a mí, yo era incapaz. Al principio sobre todo, porque no eres consciente de tu cuerpo. Entonces verlo en los compañeros fue lo que... Vas viendo los cambios en ellos, e intentas aplicártelos a ti.'

¹³³ 'Yo, como actor, no trabajaba con la respiración. Es más, sí, respiras como persona, pero no respiras como actor. Y ni siquiera respiras como personaje, respiras como actor. [...] No. El actor, no la persona. El actor respira y está conduciendo su trabajo con la respiración. Entender ese tipo de trabajo, de repente, fue muy importante también para ver cómo estamos contando, porque ya de antemano estás desplazando lo que tú estás haciendo del tú actor.'

¹³⁴ 'Y hay ahí una división, que también es otro aprendizaje, que creo que nos pedías tú con un ejemplo tan claro como era entrar en el espacio de una manera determinada. "Yo entro" - dejo mi cuestión cotidiana fuera - era algo que... Entender sólo eso, o partir de ese lugar, ya es algo radicalmente distinto a entrar directamente, me quito los zapatos, "bueno, venga, qué hay que hacer. Ja, ja, ji, ji." No. La calle la dejamos fuera, y entramos aquí, y el cuerpo ya es diferente.'

¹³⁵ This exercise includes a series of lunges of the whole body towards the six main directions (right, left, front, back, up, and down) that Chekhov adopted from Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmy. Through these physical movements students reinforce their awareness of movement and space, and the projection of the gesture (and sound) beyond the body. While doing it, they become aware of the energy that is generated by playing with two different contrasting qualities of one's inner force: a fast, explosive and direct quality (a sudden movement or staccato) and/or a slow, soft and round mode (a continuity of movement or legato). Chekhov suggests that the actor examine presence – 'psychological presence' - and then drop it, through these simple activities and/or gestures (Du Prey 1979-80: 28-30). It is not about expressing, but about feeling in one's terms what is the right meaning (feeling) of being present: 'Do not imitate with your body this presence on the stage - it is very wrong and kills our inner life when the body tries to substitute the functions of our spirit' (June 9, 1939). A second psychological suggestion or 'spiritual practice' - as he names it - is that of 'radiation'. Finding the ability to be present and finding the ability to radiate so they become just one thing: 'there is nothing within the sphere of our psychology which cannot be

radiated' (1953: 12). And finally, bound to these two experiences it is that of 'significance'; not to persuade the audience we are significant but realising that if we are present (psychologically) and radiating we are already significant. 'Each gifted person knows from his nature what it means to be present, to be radiating and significant' as much as 'everybody is much more gifted even than he thinks he is' (June 9, 1939). Without mental or physical effort one recognises through her feelings and sensations what it is to be present, radiating and significant to one self, 'and thus the audience will follow you' (Ibid.).

¹³⁶ 'Luego en las improvisaciones libres - durante el trabajo con ese deseo que se tiene que manifestar físicamente y que tiene que surgir de una manera - estás ahí como en un precipicio, en un abismo terrible y, de repente, todos esos ejercicios, de una manera más o menos consciente, vuelven y empiezas a articular de una determinada manera. En el momento en que eso ocurre ya no puedes hacerlo de otra forma, también [es un momento] en el que no puedes romper.'

¹³⁷ 'Yo como actor, siempre, en el trabajo anterior, tendía a estar constantemente rompiendo algo y dejando las cosas caer. Pero ya no puedo hacer eso. Tú propones algo y sigues con eso, y eso te lleva a otras cosas, pero como que arrastras todo el trabajo hacia adelante. Y eso era lo que nos ocurría, que proponíamos algo y se desvanecía. Éramos incapaces de coger las cosas. Y era algo que tú nos decías constantemente: "si has propuesto algo, sigue por ahí". En ese sentido, [recuerdo] todas las improvisaciones, cuando nos obligabas a mantener el deseo muy claro - el que fuera, daba igual. En este caso, porque estábamos creando algo desde la nada, [era importante] obligarnos a seguir con eso que habíamos cogido, aunque no supiéramos lo que fuera, mientras fuera algo concreto podíamos seguir por ahí.'

¹³⁸ In *Acting emotions* (2000), Konijn proposes a thorough analysis of the psychological risks that actors (and performers as well) face any time they stand in front of their audiences. It is definitively a risk comparable to climbing. Acting emotions or task emotions deepen our sense of acting and creating, in fact all our senses, beyond any character emotion we may feel prone to enact. Our acting holds on that risk (Ilgner 2008).

¹³⁹ 'El calentamiento me parece básico en ese aspecto. Yo hacía el calentamiento y ya con eso me sentía "I have the power". El hecho de tener todo ese trabajo hecho hacía o hace una especie de purificación del cuerpo y el alma para entregarte a lo que vayas a hacer a partir de ese momento. Y eso te da una seguridad también tremenda, el hecho que sabes que tu cuerpo está preparado, pero ya no sólo tu cuerpo. Porque este calentamiento tiene un componente mágico, yo creo. Te coloca también el cerebro o algo así. Ya te digo que luego hay muchos más factores, que no es magia. Que es físico, es pura respiración y estiramiento. La concentración - porque como luego vas a estar trabajando con imágenes, con centros... hace una especie de depuración de tu cuerpo que lo hace totalmente vulnerable a lo que significa para mí esta técnica. Pero sí que creo que en ese aspecto fue lo que me dio esa seguridad para trabajar en *Asfixia*.'

¹⁴⁰ '¿Cómo se convierte un material en escena de un espectáculo? Al estar generado, el material, a través de conceptos muy claros y concisos podemos descifrar su esencia. Si la esencia de un material seleccionado es, por ejemplo, la repulsión de un olor como el de la cebolla y su expresión física es una determinada partitura, podemos modular esa partitura gracias a pautas como el tanto por ciento, cualidad, o tempo, creando así una partitura resultante satisfactoria. En otro caso si, por ejemplo, la esencia del material es la incapacidad de estar en dos sitios a la vez y el resultado físico es la desintegración o desfragmentación del cuerpo podemos, modificando aspectos tan sencillos como el espacio o el tempo, llegar a la partitura de la escena.'

¹⁴¹ I do not mean that at some points decisions don't need to be taken and the role of the actor seems to necessarily "step out" of the decision making process. However controversial this period could be, I have learnt how important it is for both director and actors to search and share one same main goal for the common progress in this regards and take (or yield) responsibilities in those areas that concerns each of them at different stages of the process. I do not assume that the maturity of students (actors and director) on this matter is optimal by nature. In my experience, oftentimes, this is taken for granted. Like all the other matters in this chapter, this particular reflection is also another impulse to my main hypothesis of a paradigm shift. The actor-director relationship suffers from this experience a radical transformation compared to most of the professional mainstream theatre standards, at least, in Spain.

¹⁴² *The Theatre and the Actor*. MC/S1/21, Dartington Archives.

¹⁴³ 'Para mí *Asfixia*, fue un cambio decisivo en mi vida como actriz y también como persona. Porque como actriz, me hizo darme cuenta de que es más importante, pues, desnudarse y saber qué quieres transmitir, más importante que realmente hacerlo perfecto, lucirte, centrarte en ti mismo. Cambió mi foco de *mí* al público a qué quiero hacer sentir a la persona que me viene a ver, qué quiero hacer que se abra en *su* vida, que cambie algo, que abra su corazón, que sienta, que piense también.'

¹⁴⁴ '[*Asfixia*] me hizo ver lo que quiero hacer. Me colocó como actor y como espectador, como persona del teatro. Me hizo mucho más exigente con todo. Como espectador y como persona de teatro me hizo ser muchísimo más exigente. Porque me parece que este trabajo es muy global, entonces hace que el actor sea actor total, que abarca muchísimas más cosas, no sólo la interpretación: aspectos de dirección, todo lo que tiene que ver con el conjunto de la obra teatral. Yo, hasta entonces, me fijaba más en lo que era mi trabajo como actor, o lo que hace un actor. Y este trabajo me ha hecho ver que no, que todo es una comunión perfecta, que no puede estar nada... No puede haber nada gratuito, ni un gesto, ni una mirada, ni un pestañeo.'

¹⁴⁵ 'Para mí fue como la eclosión de *Asfixia*, Réplika. El momento en el que vi y sentí que eso era una función y que era un trabajo, y que tenía sentido y tenía fuerza, y era algo mostrable al mundo entero. Porque yo me sentía muy orgullosa de lo que habíamos hecho. Y si eso no hubiera estado me hubiera quedado con otra sensación, de bueno pues hemos hecho un proyecto, una cosa interesante, distinta, para la escuela, y ya.'

¹⁴⁶ 'Antes tenía un rechazo absoluto a la cosas que se hacían desde el gesto, a lo que no encontraba sentido o razón. Las cosas que hacía me alejaban tanto de eso. También tiene que ver con la dramaturgia. Al abrimos nuevos caminos en la dramaturgia durante el trabajo con Ernesto Caballero nos hizo buscar otras formas de acercarnos al teatro y fue cuando contactamos contigo. A partir de entonces he aprendido además a apreciar el movimiento en el teatro o en la danza y, al mismo tiempo, me ha hecho ver lo difícil que es saber dónde están los límites de cada una esas otras formas y preguntarme: "para hacer esto, ¿se necesita un bailarín o un actor?". Theatre director and playwright Ernesto Caballero was by then a teacher of text-based acting at RESAD, recently named director of CDN (Spanish National Theatre).

¹⁴⁷ Inspired by Vincs et al.'s (2007) approach to performance research through practice within the field of choreography (in Smith and Dean 2009: 95), I propose the actor to follow the same way of looking at her scenic actions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: THEORIES OF PERFORMANCE AND PARADIGMS OF PRACTICE

The term “paradigms of practice” represents a way of framing the problem of acting, i.e. what the actor does and how she does it. They include theories of performance (ways of representing and constructing the acting knowledge in action), metatheoretical reflections and practical accounts in a non-linear logic and a multi-referenced way. It frames both acting theories and practices within the same equation in order to study and explore their reality and problematic(s). On the other hand, the term helps me to study the interaction of these two established forms of training, aiming to build a reference map from which to act and reflect on theatre circumstances.

A paradigm of practice tends to reach as many areas and categories as possible in order to better frame and interrogate the problem at hand and according to the experiences of those who take part in the research or practice. It is not designed for finding answers – what is acting? what is the practice? – but for locating a place where it is possible to structure the questions that emerge in practice. This is, the location where the student makes sense of her acting and identity as an actor. Epistemologically speaking it facilitates a system where the convergence of meanings is made possible – i.e. a transient meaning that is given by the actor and not by the paradigm per se.

In the following chart I oppose terms and processes of the two forms of actor training(s) and practice(s) involved. I contrast what otherwise I consider able to be described, experienced or embodied in a possible continuum. By means of presenting them in opposition I attempt to find possible links underneath their conceptual reality. I am aware of the “arguability” of some of this differentiation of terms and ideas on my analysis and the possible reductionism of some of its assumptions. However it is by contrasting them (Derrida’s sense of ‘différance’) that I suggest the insight may occur.

APPENDIX I: THEORIES OF PERFORMANCE AND PARADIGMS OF PRACTICE

<p>Zarilli's Bodymind training: Asian martial arts and an actor's PSYCHOPHYSICAL INVOLVEMENT</p> <p>EMBODYING THE ACTION The (pre)performative knowledge(s). Is on the here-and-now of the performance</p> <p>Energy's inner resonance and vibration Awakening of the subtle body</p> <p>PRESENCE Being on stage: How the actor "is" or becomes on stage. To deploy</p> <p>THE BODYMIND Operates through the precision of the body in action (Involvement)</p>	<p>Chekhov's actor-training: the dynamics of the imagination and an actor's STATE OF INSPIRATION</p> <p>INCARNATING THE IMAGE The psychological/creative side. Is on the objective and independent world of the imagination</p> <p>Archetypal sensations provoke artistic emotions Trusting the Higher Self</p> <p>REPRESENTATION Characterization: How the character is/becomes on stage. To transform</p> <p>THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION Operates through one's experience of her artistic feeling of truth (Inspiration)</p>
<p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">The Psychophysical (the focus of the actor)</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">The emotional</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">The actor's task</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">The actor's means</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">The act of creating happens at the time of doing in a state of continuous improvisation. The acquisition of extra-daily techniques or imagery techniques, instead of building up a codified physical grammar they signify a potential range of compositional and dramaturgical rules and conventions.</p>
<p>Finding the right relationship to what she is doing STRUCTURED IMPROVISATIONS</p> <p>Analysis of the actor tasks and dramaturgical demands The performance score</p> <p>The spectator perceives, reads and interprets the performance by following the performer's through the action and score. The spectator is made present in the actor's awareness and involvement in the action, and the ultimate goal of the actor is to alter and/or transform the spectator's awareness through the course of the play. The aesthetic/creative bodymind is being realised and manifested through the actor's relationship with what she is doing or body-in-performance. In performance the body becomes, in terms of energy, focus and awareness, a site where multiple discourses come together.</p>	<p>How the actor articulates her Presence & Scenic Behaviour</p> <p>How the actor manages through Dramaturgy & Scene</p> <p>How the actor establishes/maintains her Relationship with the spectator</p>
<p>Playing with the feelings/qualities of actions/gestures PSYCHOPHYSICAL EXERCISES</p> <p>The analysis of atmospheres (imagery) of the play Tools for composition</p> <p>The spectator feels, empathizes and comprehends the action of the character and so he lives through the feeling dimension of the play. He is being moved by the character's inner life as in experienced through the actor's bodymind. The spectator is made present in the actor's aesthetic awareness and involvement in the character, play and ensemble through the feelings of form, beauty, ease and whole. The imagination works in the sense of creating a special communication with the object, the audience, the partner and the ensemble.</p>	<p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">The act of creating happens at the time of doing in a state of continuous improvisation. The acquisition of extra-daily techniques or imagery techniques, instead of building up a codified physical grammar they signify a potential range of compositional and dramaturgical rules and conventions.</p>
<p>THEATRICAL WORLD OF THE PERFORMANCE</p>	<p>SENSORIAL WORLD OF THE PLAY</p>

APPENDIX II: *INTERPRETACIÓN GESTUAL*. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Acting in the Theatre of Gesture is a literal translation into English of *Interpretación en el Teatro del Gesto*. It comes close to what many professionals in Spain have been defending for the actor's education and codifies it as a distinctive branch within the official curricula of Spanish drama schools. Gestural Theatre (or *Teatro del Gesto*) and "gestural acting" (*interpretación gestual*) are derivatives commonly used in Spanish and at the school for both the branch and the subject.

Patrice Pavis includes the term "gestural theatre" in his second edition of *Dictionnaire du Théâtre* in 1996 and defines it as follows:

A form of theatre that gives preference to gesture and body expression, without necessarily excluding the use of words, music and all possible scenic resources. This genre tends to avoid not only theatre tied to written text but also *mime*, often enslaved to the codified and narrative language of classical *pantomime* à la Marcel Marceau; it makes the actor's *body* the origin of performance and even of speech, in that *rhythm*, phrasing and *voice* are seen as expressive gestures. (Pavis 1999: 161-162. Author's italics)

This possible description and implied meaning of the term helps to differentiate an approach to theatre that includes both movement and text, but that comes from a different perspective, categorised by Pavis as 'genre'. Although it aims to go beyond classical Mime and Pantomime, an actual definition is still unresolved. It is difficult to articulate and even imagine the realities behind a name that attempts to categorise a restless practice of theatre, relentlessly multiple, varied and even peculiar for each artist or ensemble.

The origin of the Spanish term *teatro del gesto* is the French term *le théâtre du geste* given by Jacques Lecoq to the theatre approach he was developing in his school beginning in 1956. It mainly refers therefore to a creative theatre derived of Lecoq's concept of mime and movement education that influenced and inspired many leading practitioners and physical theatre companies: Steven Berkoff, Ariane Mnouchkine, Julie Taymor, Phillipe Gaulier, Complicité, John Wright and Told by an Idiot, etc.

Teatro de movimiento is an analogous term that comes from the French

théâtre du mouvement, which is also the name of the theatre company founded in 1975 by two heirs of Etienne Decroux's corporeal mime: Claire Heggen and Yves Marc. Their company researches the theatricality of movement, capturing and accommodating traditional mime in contemporary practice. Along the same line the Theatre de l'Ange Fou and the International School of Corporeal Mime (formerly known as the Ecole de Mime Corporel Dramatique) were created in Paris in 1984 by Steven Wasson and Corinne Soum, and relocated to London in 1995. Wasson and Soum were the last assistants of Decroux, recognised as the father of Modern Mime (see www.angefou.co.uk).

Finally, the impact of DV8 Physical Theatre, dance-theatre company founded in 1986 by former dancer Lloyd Newson, coined and propelled the use of the phrase "physical theatre" in England and beyond. In Britain the term has taken in a wide series of diverse performance practices based on the body and movement. Newson's physical theatre was originally inspired by the psychophysical work and actor's training proposed by Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski. Today it brings together, not without controversy, a multiplicity of theatre forms and dramaturgies based on the physicality of the actors and contemporary dance that go beyond the standards and expectations of commercial theatre:

Many current practitioners resent the way their work is categorised as 'physical theatre' when they maintain that they are simply making 'theatre', and their work should be viewed as innovative rather than marginalised by bracketing. Lloyd Newson complains the phrase 'physical theatre' is attached to anything which doesn't fit the staid conventions of commercial theatre. (Callery 2000: 6)

The Spanish translation *Teatro Físico* also includes a Grotowskian connotation and although known among Spanish theatre practitioners is less frequently used and has definitively been surpassed in usage by *Teatro del Gesto* in the context of official drama schools and curricula. Despite still not being a very popular term, 'theatre of gestures' and 'gestural theatre' have been officially recognised in theatre programmes and curricula of Spanish drama schools and physical theatre discourse in Spain.

Each one of these original terms makes reference to a different style,

tradition or perspective towards the physicality on the stage. They are related in that interest in the body of the performer, however they provide with distinctive insights into the work. It makes difficult to recognise or isolate one only term for the possible common background of their respective theatrical manifestations. To complicate the question further, the word “devising”, or “devised theatre”, seems to have become a common and almost definitive component in physical/gestural theatre. Yet, “devising” seems to be describing a feature in many other forms of theatre and performance that are not necessarily involved with the politics of the physical and body in theatre, but instead of process of theatre-making:

A critical dimension of understanding the emergence of physical theatre practices is to locate them historically within the devising paradigm and its politics of *process*. The histories of physical theaters and devising are certainly not identical with each other, but there is a productive and symbiotic relationship between them that is impossible to ignore. (Murray and Keefe 2007a: 18)

In *Through the body. A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* (2000), Dymphna Callery addresses this problem of defining and tracing a theory and history of physical theatre. At its depths, the term defends a strong and manifest tendency ‘to defy conventional views of what constitute “theatre”’ (6). At its surface, it describes theatre companies ‘whose work has a strong visual dimension, companies who have developed a theatrical style which focuses attention on the physicality of the performers, and those defining themselves as “new mime”’ (Ibid.). “New mime” refers mainly to the impulse given by the organisation Mime Action Group, later Total Theatre, founded in Britain in 1984. Taking into account the impossibility of codifying physical theatre, Callery proposes ‘a broad paradigm’ of theatre in which some features may be isolated:

The emphasis is on the actor-as-creator rather than the actor-as-interpreter.

The working process is collaborative.

The working practice somatic.

The stage-spectator relationship is open.

The live-ness of the theatre medium is paramount.

The method of working is based on the idea that theatre is about craft,

celebration and play, rooted in collaboration, and made by an ensemble dedicated to discovering a collective imagination. (5)

More recently Simon Murray and John Keefe have investigated the field, or as they say, the landscape of physical theatres, which includes and can't escape the critical analysis and discussion of its inherent paradox that is the physical in theatre. *In Physical Theatres. A Critical Introduction* (2007), the authors attempt to provide a 'history and outline to our understanding of theatre' (1), i.e. 'our understanding of the mutable nature of modern Western theatre practice' (20). The conclusion of their project withdraws the discussion on physical theatre from an exclusive, alternative even forgotten theatre form or genre, and directs it towards mapping, identifying and examining contemporary forms of physical theatres. In order to do that they set a number of axes or tensions which articulate their mode of theatre history:

Literary drama and postdramatic theatre.

Acting and performing: character and 'performance persona'.

Theatre and performance.

Task and psychology.

Presence and representation. (20)

These coordinates are also closer to the perspective on theatre making and the acting paradigm I am exploring, and as stated in the body of my thesis, the discussion on physical theatres is very fragile one and an easy pray of being framed in an artificially restrictive way. I am more interested in delving into the reasons whereby the body and the physicality of the actor become the principal location to explore contemporary theatre and creativity in art.

APPENDIX III: THE SKY IMPROVISATION.

After the hour and a half of intensive training that prepares and sensitises the bodymind for the acting tasks to follow, we explored the bodymind-breath-movement relationship in a twenty-minute improvisation that gradually evolved and transformed a simple score of actions through different stages (The Journey). During this exercise there was constant feedback and an invitation to keep our awareness open to the body, to the space around the body, to the top the head and soles of the feet, and especially to the residual awareness of the focal points in the previous action so that one moment and movement can be connected to the next through the breath and awareness. Zarrilli relates the structured improvisation directly to the tasks and demands of the dramaturgy at hand. On that particular occasion, the work on *The Water Station* demanded a heightened awareness of the sensations of the body, of movement, of tempo-rhythms, of objects and especially of the space. This work was undertaken so as to make possible the embodiment of a score of actions within a particular dramaturgical and aesthetic setting where minimalism and divestment were taken to extremes. This experience became crucial for my present research.

The improvisation was built upon the coordination of breath and movement, first by looking at spots on your own body (palms, knee, belly...). You begin by sensing the spot and then, in the next half-breath, you look at it. Thanks to the repetition, and to being constant in my attempts, I managed, after a while, to keep my breath and awareness well enough focused to be able to realise something else about the action that I was doing and the body that I was looking at. The action and the body were felt to be deeply interrelated, as if one was determined by or determining the other - movement and breath as already one "becoming". I felt the action defined by its closeness with my body, and also my body as something dependent on my doing or looking. However, this something else was not realised in the moment of doing, specifically in the looking at my body. I understood those deep interconnections *when*, following Phillip's instructions, I placed my external focus outside and away from my body by looking at a spot somewhere in the surrounding space. This new stage in the improvisation enlarged distances and modified the demands of the first body-focused stage towards a spatial

awareness, as well as made me aware of the body's knowledge that I had accumulated in the doing of the previous stage.

This opening of my external focus took my action to a different place, but was still connected in some way since it was the same action (looking at something) that came through my body-breath. This new stage brought new connotations to the act of looking at, since both the action and its meaning were transformed according to the differential space (light, colours, distance...) and trajectories involved. My body-gaze-action accommodated these differences and they could be perceived sensorially and were manifested as subtle changes in the quality of the relationship to the action of looking at something in the surrounding space. A differential perception was possible because the body(mind) was remembering, keeping a residual awareness of this sensation of coming from - that is, what had just been done within the limits of my own body. The action was the same - to look at - but its realisation altered because of the interaction with a different object and because its settings within a new context were also transformed. The subtle change in the quality of my relationship with the action (in my experience) came about and was perceived through retrospection.

The realisation of what was going on when looking at the body came at the time when I was sensing how I was looking at the space, while "looking at" was acquiring a rather subtle new meaning by such differences felt throughout the body. My relationship with the doing was made conscious to me afterwards, which does not necessarily mean that my body was not aware of it at the moment of doing. Another insight was that the action was also conceived/perceived as a realisation of my interaction with X, rather than as a result of cause-and-effect. For an actor's body "to look up" does not have the same meaning as "to look down". The essence for the actor here is in the *how*: in the actor's body is knowing *that*, rather than the actor herself questioning *what for*; her body needs to know the *how*. This was for me a subtle, but illuminating, change of perspective.

The improvisation moved on towards a third stage where the point of external focus was the face of a partner. The meaning of the action changed again as if renewed by the content of this new experience, the different nuances and demands made by the action arose as the partner appeared in the equation.

This time there was also the discovery of the partner as if never seen before. The space again became evident in comparison and retrospection, as well as the partner when I later changed my focus again to “look up at spot on the ceiling”. This building process resembles one of a child in constant state of opening and changing awareness. The difference is that because we are adults we make a conscious registration - step by step - of what the meaning of that particular action is, in that particular body.

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