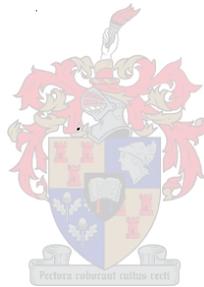


TRAINING THE STUDENT ACTOR IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS:

A look at areas in which a director within a training institution can facilitate the learning process in a student actor

by Waldemar Schultz



Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Drama at the University of Stellenbosch.

Supervisors: Prof. T. Hauptfleisch and Dr. H. Pretorius.

Date of submission: 3 March 1997

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Ek, die ondergetekende, verklaar hiermee dat die werk in hierdie tesis vervat, my eie oorspronklike werk is en dat ek dit nie vantevore in die geheel of gedeeltelik by enige universiteit ter verkryging van 'n graad voorgelê het nie.

Date: 3 March 1997

ABSTRACT

A thesis in which the author examines ways in which the director within an acting training institution may use the full-scale theatre production as a means of intense training for the students involved.

The author contends that much of the theory and practical work taught within a classroom situation cannot be fully comprehended and/or brought to fruition if it is not tested and experienced within as realistic (pertaining to professional theatre) as possible a scenario, in the form of the student production.

For the purposes of this thesis, the typical practical production process is used as a model and different areas in which the director may act as a teacher or catalyst to self-discovery are discussed largely in the order in which they might occur in practice.

The author concludes that to provide intensive training through the production process would be a very time-consuming and costly endeavour, although very rewarding if it were at all possible. In addition to this, it would require a highly qualified director-trainer, with an holistic understanding of the theatrical art, who is prepared to invest a great amount of time and effort in such a production.

Research for this thesis included reading material, practical directing and acting projects, and teaching practical acting in the capacity of a part-time lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch Drama Department.

ABSTRAK

'n Tesis waarin die outeur maniere ondersoek waardeur 'n regisseur binne 'n akteurs-opleidingsinstansie die volskaalse teaterproduksie kan gebruik as 'n metode vir intense opleiding vir die betrokke studente.

Die outeur meen dat 'n groot gedeelte van die teorie en praktiese opleiding wat in die klaskamer weergegee word, nie ten volle verstaan of benut word, tensy die student dit beproef en beleef in so 'n realisties (wat professionele teater betref) moontlike scenario, in die vorm van 'n studenteproduksie.

Vir die doeleindes van hierdie tesis word 'n tipiese produksieproses as model gebruik, en verskeie areas waarin die regisseur as onderwyser of katalisator tot selfontdekking kan optree, word grotendeels bespreek in die volgorde waarin dit in die praktyk mag voorkom.

Die gevolgtrekking is dat intensiewe opleiding in die produksieproses 'n uiters tydsame en duur oefening sou wees, dog baie lonend indien prakties uitvoerbaar. Daarby sou dit 'n hoogs gekwalifiseerde regisseur-opleier verg, met 'n holistiese kennis van die teaterkuns, wat bereid is om baie tyd en moeite op só 'n produksie te bestee.

Navorsing vir hierdie tesis sluit in leeswerk, praktiese regie- en toneelspelprojekte sowel as klasgee in toneelspel as deeltydse lektor aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch se Departement Drama.

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DEDICATION

For J and E, always there...

and for ira, always.

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Introduction

1. The Premise

In this paper, an attempt is made to explore some of the many different areas in which a director of a stage-production within a training institution might assume the rôle of an actor-trainer. An actor learns so much more about his¹ art and craft in a training institution if afforded the opportunity to experience it first-hand on stage, rather than solely in theoretical or practical classroom situations. Sadly, many acting students complete their training without ever having performed in a live theatre production, or at most, having done very few.

This is obviously extremely undesirable, albeit so often necessary due to restrictions of time, space and facilities in training institutions. I believe, however, that it is only in production that the student can experience the reality of what theatre is and can be, and only through production that he can integrate and fully comprehend the various parts of his training.

Such understanding would need to be brought about and nurtured, not merely by the act of performing in a production, but by a director who teaches as he directs, and who is acutely aware of the individual needs and levels of development of each student in his production.

The discussion which follows is merely an overview of some of the many facets of actor-training through directing. The areas and methods discussed are taken largely from what I have perceived to be relevant and effective in my own practical research as an actor and director during the course of this study, which includes directing four student productions, and acting in three, as well as teaching acting for three years. I also draw on what I have gleaned from acting and observation of directors in some twenty productions during my graduate studies. Although I have

¹For the sake of brevity, I use male nouns and pronouns throughout this paper (in non-specific cases).

largely discussed my own findings, it must be remembered that each director has his own methods of directing, and each actor-trainer his own means of teaching, so my practical examples within this thesis should be taken as just that - examples, and not methodologies.

It must also be remembered that, depending on the level of expertise of each individual student, some sections or areas of my discussion will apply more to some students than to others. For example, such basic theory as 'stage terminology' would apply more to a novice, while as esoteric a concept as 'energising', which is a relatively difficult concept to grasp and more important for the advanced student.

What I have attempted to do is examine training the actor in a production process in some sort of logical order, but by no means is what follows a definitive system for doing so. Rather, this paper is formatted as a series of areas in which one might work.

In order to put this discussion into perspective, let us look at a brief history of directing and my perception of the functions of a director, as well as those of an actor trainer.

2. History of directing

Directing as we know it is a relatively new concept, given the long history of Western theatre. According to Cohen and Harrop (1984: 2-3), the records we have of Greek Theatre, Elizabethan Theatre and even as late as seventeenth century European Court Theatre bear little or no testimony to directing or directors as we know them. Ordinarily, any directing that did occur was undertaken by the playwright, who would read his manuscript to the cast, elucidate on any confusing point or vague meanings and possibly guide the actors through any (usually minimal) movement the staging required. Costuming, make-up, lights and scenery were all but non-existent, and acting was largely declamatory or narrative in style, so there was little for a director to do. Sometimes, after a playwright's death, his work would be restaged by other people. More often than not, however, these were simply imitations of the original productions as produced by the playwrights.

The early Greek counterpart of the director was given the name "*didaskalos*", which literally means "teacher". An apt description, as his functions were merely:

...[to instruct] his performers in the intricate movements of their dance, [rehearsing] his poetic strophes with them, [originating] costumes and scenic conventions with them. (Cole and Chinoy: n.d. 14)

However, there remains no record of anything which could really be considered to be interpretative or creative on the part of these early directors - in my opinion, two of the major functions of any director - and it was to remain thus for centuries to come. This is not to say that no directing whatsoever took place, but as Cohen and Harrop (1984: 3) put it,

Certainly Shakespeare and Sophocles must have been exciting directors (although it is not known if they ever directed any plays other than their own), and the unlauded directors of the *commedia dell'arte* must have been inspiring to generations of actors and audiences. But directors, and their art, remained unremarkable - and they were unremarked upon. The *Comédie Française*, founded in 1680 shortly after Molière's death, only began to list the director's names in its programs in 1937, indicating the relative recentness of the director's rise from obscurity.

Our first glimpse of the modern director came in the form of the so-called "actor managers" around 1660. English theatre had come to a standstill and theatres burned in the Civil War around 1642, but after the Royal Restoration, they were re-opened. Theatre troupes would put on productions managed by their leading actor, and new ground began to be broken in the field of directing.

... they began to call attention to their productions by novel, even shocking, reinterpretations... Charles Macklin, for example, astounded London in 1741 when he reinterpreted Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* as a sympathetic hero rather than a low comedy

buffoon; what Macklin may not have realised is that by doing so he was also reinterpreting the directorial function and breaking new ground on what a director can do with a script. (Cohen and Harrop 1984: 4)

For the first time, actor-managers attempted some form of authenticity in their productions, and elaborate sets and costumes, as historically correct as possible, began to be utilised. The theatrical production was more than a mere play reading, it had begun to be a representation of reality. Cohen and Harrop cite numerous productions which were laboriously researched in an attempt to produce an authentic aesthetic, but go on to say that actor-managers remained little more than actors arranging productions as showcases for their own talents. Edwin Booth, for instance, was an actor-manager so well renowned for his scholarly knowledge of Shakespeare that he was asked to add several hundred footnotes to the Variorum edition of The Merchant of Venice, but "...his own production of that play concluded with his exit (as Shylock) in Act IV; Shakespeare's fifth act was never performed by a Booth company." (Cohen and Harrop 1984:5). There was no commitment to the totality of a theatre production as we know it today. This was to come only much later (about 200 years) when George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen became the first of the "director-managers" in 1866.

The Duke, aided by his wife and by his stage-manager Ludwig Chronegk, revolutionised the theatre aesthetic with his provincial court repertory theatre. The "star system" of previous years disintegrated and actors were expected to play leading and supernumerary rôles with equal commitment (and frequency). Moreover, scrupulous attention to detail with regard to staging, costume and set design was the order of the day, with vast sums of money being spent on imported (and authentic) materials, in keeping with the then established tradition of historical authenticity. For the first time, too, more time was spent in rehearsal, with rehearsal periods of six months not uncommon, and every last movement was dictated by the Duke. Actors were no longer positioned in the easiest or most

convenient linear arrangements; in fact, the Duke became renowned for his realistic and detailed crowd scenes.

[He] designed and positioned every movement on stage. He dictated the very folds of each actor's costume. Everyone in his small theatre had to be subservient to the production... (Cole and Chinoy: n.d. 26)

Thus, an entirely new way of approaching the theatre production was created, and this ethic remains to this day:

...the Duke perfected a sequence of continuous and integrated movement. Not only did [he] seek the reconciliation of actor and set, but he also fashioned the text into the pattern of his plastic picture by extensive use of business. He interpreted the text through the medium of all the theatrical arts. (Cole and Chinoy: n.d. 26)

This new concept of totality of theatre was to influence many new director-managers, and around the time when the Duke's company disbanded in 1890, men like Konstantin Stanislavski and André Antoine were already preparing to continue working in this way.

Antoine's *Théâtre Libre*, founded in 1887, was committed to naturalism in acting, design and playwriting, taking these principles even further than the Duke had done, sometimes to ridiculous extremes. For a play about butchers, for example, Antoine created a real butcher's shop, which included real sides of beef, complete with real stench and real flies! Stage movement became so pedestrian, in the name of verisimilitude, that all staging conventions (such as not turning one's back on the audience) were ignored, earning the *Théâtre Libre* the nickname "The Theatre of Antoine's Back". However, it must be acknowledged that Antoine's work further entrenched the necessity of a director, as he maintained that an objective eye was imperative for naturalistic plays to be acted and staged the right way.

Konstantin Stanislavski evolved directing even further. According to Cole and Chinoy (n.d. 33),

He started out with an ideal of what he called the ‘producer autocrat’, which he derived from his careful observation of Ludwig Chronegk directing the Meininger on tour in Moscow in 1890.

He began to imitate Chronegk, enchanted by the techniques which could enable him to bring about new insights into the literary work of a playwright using amateur actors. The external detail gave a verisimilitude to the play heretofore unheard of. He and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko co-founded the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1898, and began to train young amateur actors using this new approach to theatre. However, he later became discontented with this strict external verisimilitude, which a Russian symbolist magazine had termed “unnecessary truth”, and began to search for a more abstract, “inner truth”. In 1908, he wrote

...we have returned to realism, to a deeper, more refined and more psychological realism... I do not doubt that every abstraction on the stage, such as impressionism, for instance, could be attained by way of a more refined and deeper realism. All other ways are false and dead. (Cole and Chinoy: n.d. 37)

Cole and Chinoy go on to say

This path of refined realism led Stanislavski deeper and deeper into work with the actor... From the producer-autocrat, devoted to the facsimile stage, he became, through his work on acting, the *producer-instructor*² who located the heart of theatre in the actor. (Cole and Chinoy: n.d. 37)

And so, a new *didaskalos* - director-teacher - came into being. Indeed, Stanislavski himself considered teaching to be one of the prime functions of directing. In an interview in 1936, two years before his death in 1938, he said, “The true director comprises within his own person a director-teacher, a director-artist, a director-

²My italics.

writer and a director-administrator.” (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 109). His colleague, Nemirovich-Danchenko also enumerates teaching as one of the more vital aspects of directing. He says of the director, “He instructs how to play; so that it is possible to call him the *régisseur*-actor or the *régisseur*-pedagogue.” (Cole and Chinoy 1970: 119)

3. The Director-trainer

The work of Konstantin Stanislavski heralds the beginning of Western actor training as we know it. He differed vastly, however, from the Greek *didaskalos* in that his teaching was not limited to simply choreographing movements or basic staging. The director’s rôle expanded into psychological areas -

both analytical and interventional. For if the goal of acting is to discover and embody the character within the actor, then the director is obviously both involved with the exploration of the actor’s inner thoughts and feelings and engaged in the shaping of those thoughts and feelings into a meaningful and believable performance. (Cohen and Harrop 1984: 8)

As with all teaching, it is futile for the director to simply supply theoretical knowledge and expect competent actors to be the result. A competent actor-trainer leads students through both a physical and psychological process, moulding and shaping throughout, so that the student emerges after a production, not only with a vast amount of theoretical knowledge, but with a far deeper experiential understanding of his art and craft. Certainly, basic theory of the theatre and acting is essential, but I believe that only through a process of monitored self-discovery and by experiencing physical and mental attitudes required for a successful performance, can a student truly assimilate everything he needs to know.

As a means to this end, the director-trainer would need to be:

a person who achieves results mainly by suggestion, implication and subtle inducement rather than by exercise of authority or power. (Cohen and Harrop 1984: 10)

Clearly, trying to “teach” an emotional response, for example, is impossible. How can one possibly implant the experience of any given emotion in a student? The same applies to many of the areas of training discussed. The director-trainer acts as a facilitator in such circumstances, rather than an instructor, and induces an emotional response from the student, rather than demands one or, even worse, shows him one and expects him to copy it! Teaching methods will obviously differ from student to student and, of course, from director to director and I will not presume to prescribe a didactic for the director-trainer.

Although the aspects of actor-training discussed are in no way meant to prescribe a working method for the director, it is assumed that certain qualities necessary in a director-trainer are agreed upon. It is very important, for instance, in a practical situation, that the director/actor-trainer should be sensitive to the level of proficiency of the student and the demands of each particular rôle, as well as the actor’s humanity, rather than attempt to enforce a set of rules or rely on a rigid step-by-step system. Grotowski (1984: 47) says

the producer³ can help the actor in [the] complex and agonizing process [of acting] only if he is just as emotionally and warmly open to the actor as the actor is in regard to him. I do not believe in the possibility of achieving effects by means of cold calculation. A kind of warmth to one’s fellow men is essential - an understanding of the contradictions in man, and that he is a suffering creature but not one to be scorned.

³Grotowski does not offer definitions of the words *producer* and *director*. Read in context, they appear to be interchangeable.

Another thing seems to remain constant and that is that a director must be able to communicate effectively with his students. As Francis Hodge (1988: 68) points out in his Play Directing,

... what a director manages to bring about will depend entirely on his talent for, and his capabilities in, communicating with [actors], for he will be successful only if he has strong faith in their creative abilities and can see his own job as one of encouraging and stimulating them to their highest expression.

Although he wrote this of professional directors, it is as true (if not more so) of the director-trainer. If the student is constantly encouraged and stimulated to expand his horizons, his knowledge compounds through experience, taking him to progressively higher levels of proficiency.

In their Fundamentals of Play Directing, Dean and Carra write:

Knowledge of any art is gained through a process of deduction from what has already been created successfully. (1980: 30)

If the director can lead the student into experiencing what works on stage, he will be able to draw on that experience for the rest of his career. This, I believe, is the essence of training an actor by means of directing.

Creating a production, for any serious artist, is not only a craft, but also a creative process, with the emphasis on the word "process". In A Director's Method for Film and Television, director Ron Richards (1992:3) writes of his own directing:

When I first began my career... I spent hours preparing, developing systems, anticipating all kinds of problems. But no matter what I did, it never seemed to work out the way I envisioned it... Then it hit me like a thunderbolt: *it was not supposed to work out!* Production was supposed to be a growth process. The best I could expect was the best we could do.

A production, therefore, could be seen as the sum of its parts as they are discovered and applied in the rehearsal process, rather than a *fait accompli* in the mind of the director. Each individual involved contributes to the production, and the production grows organically into its eventual identity as performed before an audience. Given this changing character of a production, as well as the very personal nature of a director/actor relationship and the many variables involved, there can be no strict laws on how to train an actor by means of direction. The focus of the discussion will rather be on some areas in which the director-trainer may be able to shape the understanding of the actor throughout the rehearsal period.

In a sense, the student learns a great deal retrospectively, having completed the production and gained the experience of “what has already been created successfully”. In other words, once the student has experienced a technique, sensation, thought process or emotion which he perceives to work on stage, it can be entered into his “memory banks” for future use. With time and experience, these “memories” can be intuitively accessed without having to consciously think about them.

Given the context in which and for which this study is being undertaken, let me state quite unequivocally that when I speak of the director in this discussion, I refer to the director within the training institution, who is (arguably) far more obliged to teach, guide and mould his actors than the professional director. For the purposes of this study, then, I use the terms *director* and *director-trainer* interchangeably⁴, and the *professional director* will be referred to as such.

The primary difference between the two, of course, is that the director-trainer is working with actors who do not have the experiential background (and thus, the knowledge) that professional actors have. Although, as Stanislavski pointed out,

⁴Similarly, *actor* and *student actor* are interchangeable. *Professional actors* will be referred to as such.

the professional director is also a teacher, there is a difference within a training situation in that the students are consciously aware that they are being taught, whereas the professional actor is learning more on a subconscious level. (e.g. The professional does not necessarily consciously commit new experiences into his “memory banks”, but automatically files them for future reference.)

The task which lies before the director-trainer is thus perhaps that of inducing a conscious understanding of the theatre and its processes, which builds up within the student a firm foundation of technique and intuition for future use.

For the purposes of this discussion, I work on the assumption that students are being trained largely in the tradition of Western theatre and more or less along the lines of the so-called Stanislavski system⁵, though I am naturally aware of the great variety of approaches which have evolved over the years. This assumption is made purely for the sake of expediency, but is nevertheless quite justifiable.

I believe that the reason for this is that the theory of actor training evident in the writings of Stanislavski, regardless of director’s methodology and stylistic differences in texts and performances, remains universally true for the actor. Despite being remembered for his exhaustive work in the naturalistic style, Stanislavski’s system was not developed for any one specific style of acting, but rather as a system of self-discovery on the part of the actor. In his doctoral thesis Konstantin Stanislavski as Regisseur, P.C. Jansen van Rensburg (1976: 226-227) quotes Stanislavski:

All my system... can do is to assist the actor to discover the powers that he already possesses, and teach him to observe how they work,

⁵I use the words “more or less” because, as will become apparent in the following paragraphs, I believe the Stanislavski system was always meant to be - and is - progressive. It can with a moderate amount of additions and/or omissions be applicable to any type of theatre. A Diagrammatic representation of his system and an explanation of the diagram may be found in Appendix A.

to find his way through the chaos created in the passions and thoughts of the actor himself, and as I have said so often, to cleanse his creative life of all refuse and waste. But if you regard my system as the be-all and end-all of creative work then it means you look outside for the main currents of your creative work. But you must remember that you yourself are the source of all the currents of the creative forces, and that to look for help from outside in order to awaken them means to ruin yourself as a creative force and never to find an entry into the rhythm by which everything around you lives.

Perhaps this is what puts Stanislavski aside from the bulk of the major theorists who followed him: Stanislavski was addressing the actor as an organism of mind, voice, body and psyche which needs to be trained in order to fulfil his artistic task. Meyerhold, Artaud, Brecht - so many of the other great theorists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries - were all more concerned with a directing and/or teaching methodology for a specific style of acting, text or production. Each had his own search for a new aesthetic.

Whereas different approaches to style and theatrical convention are extensively documented throughout this century, no theorist proposes radically different methods of training an actor. Even in the work of Grotowski, who examined the process of training the actor as a scientific laboratory, we can draw parallels to the work of Stanislavski. Grotowski (1984: 173-174) himself put it very succinctly. The interviewer asks:

Jerzy Grotowski, I would first like you to define for me your position with regard to various acting theories as, for example, those of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht...

To which Grotowski replies:

I think it is necessary to distinguish between **methods** and **aesthetics**...

There are, in fact, very few acting **methods**. The most developed is that of Stanislavski. Stanislavski propounded the most important questions and he supplied his own answers. Throughout his numerous years of research his method evolved, but his disciples did not. Stanislavski had disciples for each of his periods, and each disciple stuck to his particular period... Stanislavski was always experimenting himself and did not suggest recipes, but the means whereby the actor might discover himself, replying in all concrete situations to the question: "How can this be done?"

The look of acting has always been a changing thing, but the nature of acting remains the same. I believe this is why Stanislavski's system remains valid for training the modern actor: it examines the requirements of an actor for the task of acting in general, not just for acting in a realistic or naturalistic drama. As Grotowski pointed out, the method evolved with Stanislavski's aesthetic vision, and it continues to evolve and be applicable to aesthetic trends today.

In Lee Strasberg's chapter *The Method and Unrealistic Styles: Artaud, Grotowski, and Brecht in A Dream of Passion* (1992: 175) asserts that his Method remains both valid and effective in the theatre of today. He writes:

The continuation and consolidation of Stanislavski's... discoveries became the basis of the Method. To these we added further discoveries in the area of the actor's expressiveness. Certainly one of the most important aspects of the Method concerns its universal approach to the actor's problem and, at the same time its flexibility.

It cannot be disputed that the overwhelming trend in Western world actor training has been largely based on the ideas and methods of Stanislavski. Perhaps it is true that the original theories of Stanislavski have been reinterpreted, misinterpreted and metamorphosed by other theorists and practices, but the body of his system is just as applicable today as it was at the turn of the century.

Training student actors by means of directing

It is generally held that an effective director-trainer would need to be well versed in all of the many facets of production. He would have to be able to assume the rôles of company manager, set designer, lighting designer, costumier, stage manager, sound designer, even playwright, and many more, or at least have some understanding of all of these fields in order to create a complete, unified production. Although he may not be called upon to utilise all of these skills, he should have them available, especially in a training institution, where many of these functions often have to be assumed by the director. Similarly, any actor should at least be aware of all of the parts which make up the whole of his profession if he is to be a serious practitioner of the theatre. In so many ways, what happens on the stage is dependent on what happens behind the scenes, and an actor can only fully understand his task if he has at least a working knowledge of the theatre as a whole.

1. Pre-rehearsal

a. Orientation and Familiarisation

In three years of teaching first-year students, I found that many students of the theatre have very little background knowledge of the theatre when they begin their studies. Having come, more often than not, directly from school, their impressions of the theatre are often limited to school productions which, unfortunately all too often, have very little in common with professional theatre. The four or five school drama competitions I have had the opportunity to attend, and sometimes judge, bear witness to this fact. I have seen some school productions which compare very well with a polished student production, but it would appear that this is the exception rather than the rule.

Largely, the extent of "training" seems to be limited to clear diction and some basic placement theory, such as not turning one's back on the audience (a notion which has in any case become quite obsolete). It seems clear that, although they have many benefits for the scholar in terms of confidence building, involvement in

extra-curricular activities and even honing the scholar's public speaking abilities, these productions seldom do much to train serious actors. Even given the fact that the scholar is exposed to the theatre and may become more interested in theatre as a cultural activity, the training seldom includes a commitment to theatre and propagation of the correct mind-set which is so important for a serious actor. (The necessity for these qualities are discussed in more detail throughout this thesis, especially in the sections on *theatre ethics* and *tuning in*.)

The technical training which is afforded in the school production is also by no means intensive, given the average of one production per year that the scholar has the opportunity to do. Perhaps the reason for this is that, in most cases, school productions are solely recreational and not in any way intended to train an aspirant professional actor? In general, in any case, most students enter their training institutions with raw potential and little else. Indeed, I have studied with, and have taught, quite a few students who had never trodden the boards before in their lives when they began their studies.

When beginning work on the production, then, the ideal opportunity arises to orientate the fledgling actor in the terminology and geography of the theatre. Before rehearsals begin, it is often deemed invaluable to have at least one pre-rehearsal meeting in which the foundations for a production may be laid.

There are obviously many terms with which an actor will come to be familiar, but some are certainly essential to the process of blocking the play, and it would be wise for any director-trainer should ensure that the students are extremely familiar with these terms, e.g. the division of the stage into working areas *up*, *down*, *centre*, *up left*, *down right centre* etc. Other, body-specific positions such as *full front*, *one quarter right*, *three quarters left*, *profile right* etc. are also very useful tools in actor-director communication. Terms like *share*, *give* and *take* have specific meanings in the theatre context, and the student may also need to know any local jargon specific to their theatre building.

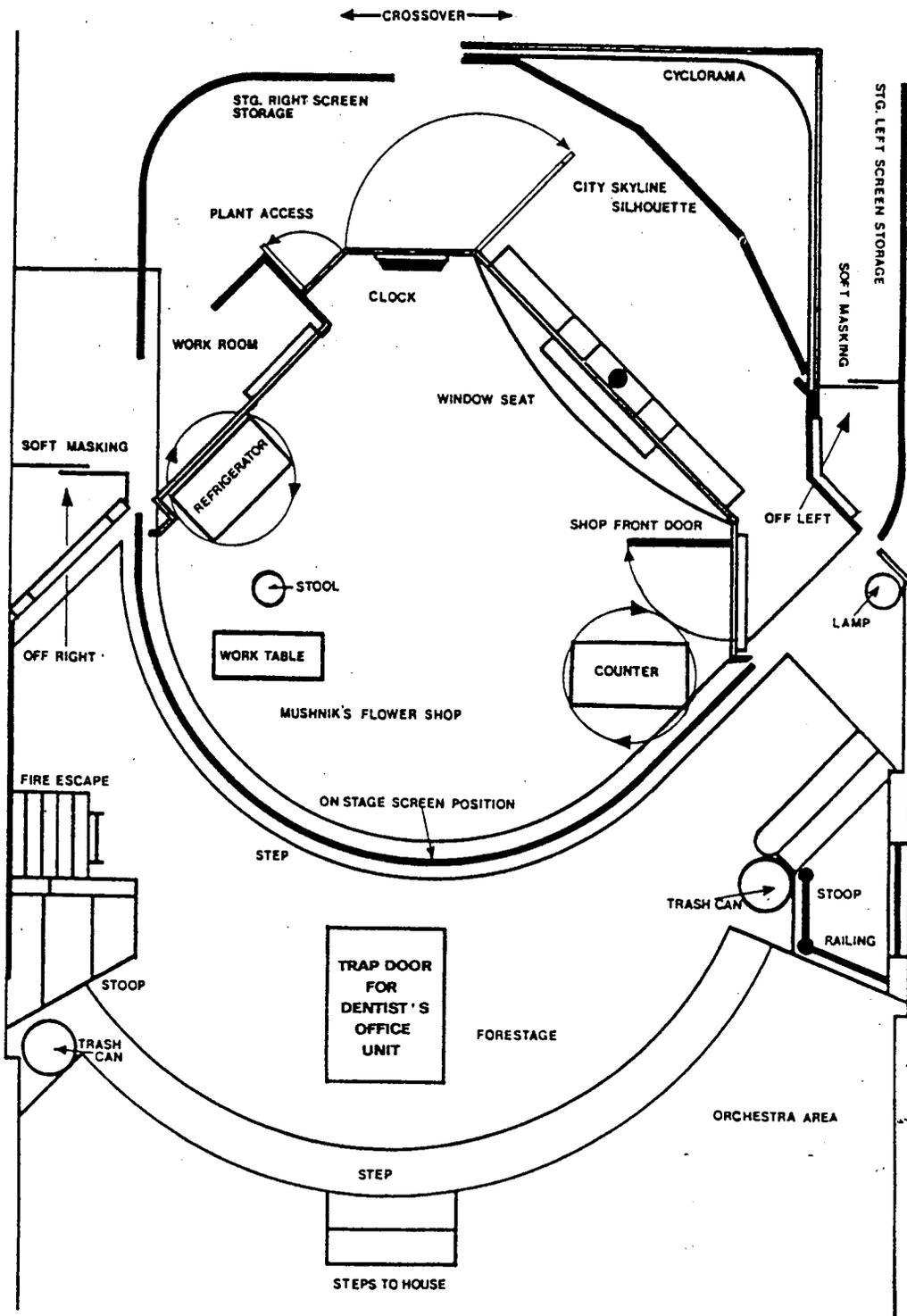
Reasons for this are multiple: aside from the basic orientation of the student, and the obvious efficiency which these terms lend, they also immediately begin to build a mutual understanding between the director and the students, opening the lines of communication. On an emotional level, it seems viable that the novice student begins to have a sense of identity within the theatre, embracing stage terminology as a springboard from which he may launch himself into his profession.

He begins to see, often for the first time, the theatre as a workplace rather than a playground, and the orientation process pertains then not only to the stage itself, but to the student's chosen profession as a whole. It is my belief that this is the one of the most important qualities of an actor: that he have a workmanlike, committed attitude towards his work. It could certainly be argued that this kind of information could just as easily be taught in a classroom, saving the director time and effort, but the same could just as easily be said of much of what will be discussed in this thesis.

The advantage, however, of teaching this within a rehearsal process is that the theory is then fresh in the minds of the students, and they are immediately given the opportunity to test and use it in a practical situation. For instance, with regard to orientation, the student needs to learn to react to a direction such as, "Move more left (i.e. *stage left*)," without having to think about it. This requires a whole different mind-set than that to which he is accustomed, and can only really be integrated into his way of thinking through experiencing it first-hand.

A pre-production meeting also affords the director the opportunity to familiarise the actors with the specific floorplan for that production. This would usually be in the form of a diagram (although it is conceivably even more useful to use a scale model of the set, as it is far more graphic, and makes different levels easier to identify), and shows the complete proposed setting for the stage, including all doors, furniture, steps, rostra etc. A play with multiple sets will obviously have more than one floorplan.

Fig. 1: A groundplan for Little Shop of Horrors (Ashman and Menken 1985: 10)



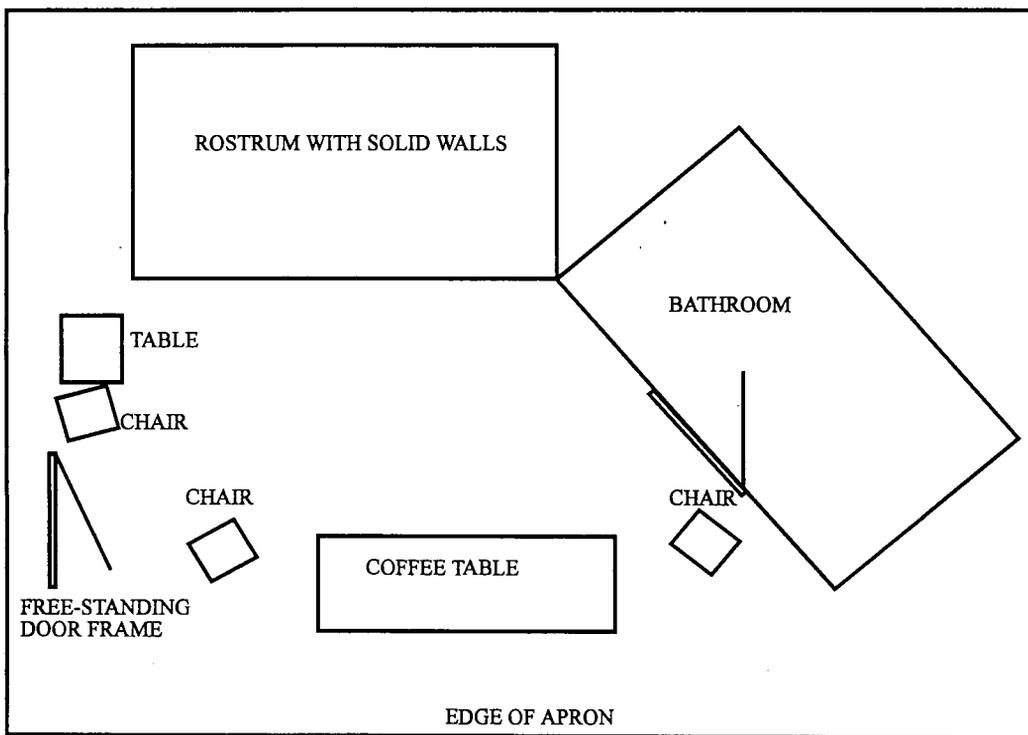
GROUND PLAN
ORPHEUM THEATRE—NEW YORK, N.Y.
Designed by EDWARD T. GIANFRANCESCO
12 July, 1982

A typical floorplan such as the one shown in fig. 1 from Little Shop of Horrors (Ashman and Menken 1985: 10) can be of great assistance to the student. Here, again, opportunity arises to explain or elucidate on certain theatre terminology such as *cyclorama*, *soft masking*, *screens*, *flies*, *wings* etc. It also serves to orientate the student in preparation for his work ahead, especially as the initial stage of rehearsal is more often than not with only a partial or no set. It will also help him to understand the workings of the stage, and any features peculiar to that production will at least be clear to him and not confusing (for instance, in fig. 1: the trapdoor for the dentist's room; the removable wall on which the clock is mounted; or the swivelling refrigerator which presents first a battered, old façade and later in the show, a new, modern one: clearly, if one was to rehearse without these things, the student may become confused and not know where he was supposed to be on the stage, or how certain events within the script came to pass).

Aside from the obvious orientation which the floorplan provides, there is much more that a student can learn about the theory and principles of the theatre, such as the nature and function of a set, and the conceptualisation of a production.

In my production of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124) by Eugene Ionesco (trans. Bartho Smit), for instance, there was a section set in Jean's apartment where Jean turns into a rhinoceros as Berenger looks on. The scene required a lot of movement, but because I wanted the scene very close to the audience, making it quite intimate and almost claustrophobic to enhance the horror of the transformation, there was not much space between the set and the edge of the apron (see fig. 2). The result would have been very linear movement on Jean's part between Berenger and the bathroom (where he would go for progressive make-up changes throughout the transformation), and I wanted to avoid such linear movements. It would have been very dull, and was too rigid for the supposed turmoil which was happening in that scene. In the set design, I placed a coffee table and two chairs on the apron, which then allowed Jean to move between, around and over them, making the scene look far more frantic and confused (a very good reflection of both Berenger and Jean's states of mind).

Fig. 2: Set for Die Renosters, Jean's apartment.



The chairs and table were not used in their normal capacities at all, but they had a very real function as part of the set and conceptualisation of the production. I was not sure that this was the right solution, however, thinking that the audience might wonder what the furniture was there for at all, but after having discussed the problem and my possible solution with the actors. they agreed that it would enhance the action considerably. Valuable lessons, I feel, were learnt in terms of set design and function, conceptualisation and, later in rehearsal, also qualities of movement.

By involving the student thus from the outset of the production, his understanding of and commitment to the creative process increases. He begins to form an idea of the milieu in which he will be working and place himself within that milieu. Moreover, communication between the actor and director becomes easier with a shared terminology: a vital aspect of the director/actor relationship. As Hodge (1988: 79) writes,

A groundplan is at once a representation of the given circumstances and a tension device for discovering and illustrating the dramatic action of the play in specific terms of space and of the necessary obstacles that break up that space. No matter what sort of stage you may be working on - proscenium, arena, thrust - it is still the basic tool in director-actor communication because all other tools are dependent on it and flow naturally out of it.

This initial orientation process, then, is not only vital to the novice student, but also to more experienced students. They can then begin to focus on their respective rôles and begin preliminary picturisation in their mind's eye. It supplies a basic foundation for director-actor communication and thereby facilitates the creative process.

Finally, the first meeting(s) might be used to inculcate in the actors a working ethic. A director would find it invaluable to take the time to explain theatre ethics to novice students, and help to enforce a discipline within the company, since for

most first-time actors, there is usually still the impression that the theatre is all fun and games. This is obviously not the case and a few ground rules need to be laid down. Moreover, each director will have different expectations of his students, and this is a perfect opportunity to state these clearly.

However there is a delicate balance that needs to be maintained. Should rules and regulations be autocratically enforced, this may often lead to the stifling of the “creative state” which needs to be maintained throughout a production. One production I acted in during the course of my studies, the director was particularly vehement in enforcing his rules. Not happy with the conduct of the actors backstage, he confined them to their dressing rooms, forbade any sound above the slightest whisper and posted a sign on the door of the lead actors reading “CONCENTRATION CAMP - KEEP OUT”.

These rules in themselves do not place unreasonable demands on a company, but the way in which they were enforced served little purpose other than to raise the hackles of the cast and crew. The point of a well maintained discipline on and off the stage is to create an atmosphere in which the company can work together creatively as a team. Silence backstage, for instance, is surely a courtesy extended to other actors, not something maintained to avoid censure?

In his chapter, *Towards an Ethics for the Theatre* in Building a Character (1986: 246-267) Stanislavski mentions numerous methods by which actors may maintain a discipline in the theatre, *inter alia* arriving promptly for rehearsals; making detailed notes during rehearsals; voluntarily accepting the authority of those in positions of authority (e.g. stage manager, director); keeping quiet, concentrating and remaining focused in the dressing rooms, etc. These basic rules can be enforced, to a certain degree, by the director or stage manager, but in my own experience, any attempt to rule with an iron fist, as it were, breeds contempt and stifles creativity. Stanislavski (1986: 257) writes,

[the Director of the theatre] said that he had been much touched to hear of our serious attitude toward the rehearsal.

“You will realize what you need to do and how you should conduct yourselves if you bear in mind that this is a collective enterprise,” he said to us. “You are all going to be producing together, you will all be helping one another, all be dependent on one another. You will all be directed by one person, your regisseur.

“If there is orderliness and proper distribution of work, your collective effort will be pleasant and productive because it is based on mutual help. But if there is chaos and a wrong atmosphere for your work then your collective enterprise can be a torture chamber, you will be getting in each other’s way, pushing each other around. It is clear therefore that you must all agree to establish and support discipline.”

This is one of the most important lessons for the professional theatre a student will learn, and usually takes a long time to assimilate, as it does not entail simply accepting a set of rules, but rather adopting an attitude towards work which is conducive to creativity. Much can be done, however, on the part of the director-trainer to inculcate these values in a student actor: explaining the basic rules and driving home the reasons for these rules, but must be taken that discipline is maintained by mutual consent. This is not to say that the director should be complacently *laissez faire* once he has communicated his expectations of his company, but it must reiterated that a relaxed (yet not lax) atmosphere is far more conducive to creative work. Grotowski (1984: 214) states:

An actor can only be guided and inspired by someone who is wholehearted in his creative activity. The producer, while guiding and inspiring the actor, must at the same time allow himself to be guided and inspired by him. It is a question of freedom, partnership, and this does not imply a lack of discipline but a respect for the autonomy of others. Respect for the actor’s autonomy does not mean lawlessness, lack of demands, never ending discussions and the replacement of action by continuous

streams of words. On the contrary, respect for autonomy means enormous demands, the expectation of a maximum creative effort and the most personal revelation. Understood thus, solicitude for the actor's freedom can only be born from the plenitude of the guide and not from his lack of plenitude. Such a lack implies imposition, dictatorship, superficial dressage.

By means of these initial stages or pre-rehearsal meetings, the director may try to make the student aware of what awaits him, so that he is primed for, and hopefully committed to, the rehearsal process.

b. First Read-through and Initial Text Analysis

Before rehearsal proper begins, it is customary to have a complete read-through of the script with each actor audibly reading their respective rôles. It is not necessary, in fact one might say it is undesirable, for the actors to attempt a full characterisation at this early stage.

With my production of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124), one student gave a very spirited and energetic reading, creating the character within her mind's eye as she read. The result was quite a good characterisation, but the problem was that she made her final choices there and then. There was subsequently very little growth in her character throughout the rehearsal process.

The fact that the resulting performance was quite acceptable is of no import here. The crux of the matter is that she became bored with her rôle, and so her commitment to the production faltered. She lacked concentration and was frequently late with cues, struggled to remember her lines and thereby often interrupted the flow of rehearsals.

The worst of it is, I believe she cheated herself out of a tremendous opportunity to learn a wealth of vital things to an actor: the growth of a performance in rehearsal, the importance of ensemble, concentration and inventiveness - the list is endless. She was lucky to have sustained a good, although *clichéd*, characterisation, which

she may well have succeeded with in a professional production. However, the great pity is that the opportunity to expand her acting abilities was largely wasted. It would seem that all of this was basically due to premature decisions at that early stage.

It would seem more prudent, then, to advise students to note the first impression each character, and the play as a whole, makes on the individual actor, both emotionally and in terms of how they envisage their characters. Bearing in mind that this will in all likelihood change dramatically (no pun intended) during the rehearsal process, it nevertheless gives the student a starting point from which to work, and a point of reference for future use.

An initial discussion of the text could ensue in the form of a constructive, practical analysis, as opposed to a literary analysis of the author's style and philosophies. In doing so, the students may be led to look at a text analytically, emphasising only what is vital at this early stage. (This process could also occur in rehearsal proper, of course, foregoing any further discussion, but the point is that there are certain aspects of text-analysis which need to be brought to the students' attention.)

Although the actor clearly needs to know the entire script very well, his initial approach differs to that of a literary analysis in that the focus is on the actual staging of the production and "performability" of the text, rather than the merits or shortcomings of the playwright's literary style and concepts.

In many cases, such as a Shakespeare play for instance, the literary style is very important, but here again, I think the focus is more on how the text will performed than how it is written.

Hodge and Benedetti both devote extensive page space to text analysis - Hodge for the director and Benedetti for the actor - and their ideas are largely similar. I like their methods as I find them systematic and comprehensive for most types of playscripts, although there are obviously some texts, for instance in the absurd *genre* and some contemporary so-called "experimental theatre", where many of their points may become redundant.

Some plays, for instance, may have no reference to any *previous action*. These plays are usually not of a narrative nature, more poetic than prosaic and communicate images rather than a story. (Plays like Act Without Words II and Come and Go by Samuel Beckett spring to mind, or closer to home, Osseba by Louw Verwey). In such cases the director's analytical approach could be largely thematic, for instance, encouraging actors to find themes, recurring images and/or phrases and use these as a springboard to explore the author's intent. Because there is as yet no fixed stylistic tradition in terms of performing this kind of play, perhaps the challenges for an actor are mainly those of learning to think and work creatively, and honing physical and vocal expressive technique.

Even so, many of Hodge's and Benedetti's means of analysis do apply to this kind of text, and their methods can even work retroactively, pointing out ways in which the script differs from others stylistically and in terms of content and intent. As stated before, however, for the purposes of this discussion, let us focus on an approach to more conventional texts⁶.

i. Given Circumstances

Firstly, the actors may be led to identify the given circumstances. Hodge (1988: 24) defines given circumstances as

... all material in a playscript that delineates the environment - the special "world" of the play - in which the action takes place. This material includes: (1) environmental facts (the specific conditions, place, and time); (2) previous action (all that has happened before

⁶It is my belief that a solid training in "conventional" (for want of a better word) theatre stands the student in good stead to cope with almost any kind of theatre, with some modifications in approach. I don't think one can ever hope to teach a *comprehensive* syllabus in the space of three or four years. This is why I confine my argument to a more or less Stanislavskian approach: I believe that this is a firm basis from which to work, and actors may "specialise", if you will, from there.

the action begins); and (3) polar attitudes (points of view toward their environment held by the principal characters).

Hodge also reminds us that most of the printed stage directions and descriptions we read in playscripts are added by a stage manager or editor, and usually depict the settings in the first production of that play. He writes:

even when such a description comes from an author's own manuscript, a further danger exists because the author may try to play the role of stage designer, a role about which he may know little or nothing at all... There is much less harm in reading these directions after you have studied the play, for then you will have a strong conception of the inherent setting (1988: 24)

I generally agree with Hodge that the dialogue itself should be considered the only truly reliable source of given circumstances, but would add the rider that this depends entirely on the ability (or willingness) of the playwright to include them in the dialogue. A more abstruse script may need playwright's or editor's notes to clarify the action, and in some cases it may even be required to manufacture given circumstances.

In the process of examining the given circumstances, the director-trainer could help students to identify weaknesses in the playscript, not only to hone their analytical skills, but also so that they may begin to evolve solutions for any problems in terms of performance:

Hodge's first point is *environmental facts*. These may be extracted from the script by asking the two simple questions, *When?* And *Where?* Each of these may be looked at in two ways: general and specific. In general, we look at things like historical period, the season, the time of day, more specifically, the exact date (if one is provided). At first, it is merely necessary to identify these times in which the play is set. They acquire meaning and importance when we answer the question *Where?* The general analysis of where the play takes place includes the social, political, economic and religious environments in which the characters live. We

look, therefore, at the social mores and institutions under which they live, what kind of government is imposed (or self-imposed) on the characters, class levels of the different characters and any formal or informal psychological controls or doctrines to which they subscribe. Finally, the specific geographical location, including the climate and type of terrain may have some bearing on the action. When the answers to these two questions are examined in conjunction with each other, we see what restrictions and/or freedoms they place upon our characters.

In my final year of studies for my bachelor's degree, I had the opportunity to perform the rôle of Eddy in Steven Berkoff's Greek (1989: 140-183). My director in this production carefully led me through a detailed analysis of the text. In this case, as his teaching methods, of course, differed from mine, the initial stages of text analysis were dealt with during the first rehearsals proper, while blocking the play, rather than before beginning blocking, as I like to do. The system of analysis, however, was very similar.

In the case of Greek (Berkoff 1989: 140-183), the environmental facts are very clearly delineated, and are revealed throughout the course of the play in the long descriptive monologues which make up its bulk. Having said that the given circumstances should, as far as possible, come from the dialogue, this case would be an exception. The question *When?* is simply answered by a note from the author: "Time: present" (Berkoff 1989: 144). The time of day, season, historical period etc. were not of cardinal importance to us in this play. But with his simple note, the author had already provided us with a wealth of information: the play was meant to be timeless, as it is a commentary on human nature in general, and the author clearly does not want the events to be limited within a certain time-frame. Here we see one of the "freedoms" granted by the given circumstances.

For instance, when we performed the play in 1991, Eddy was portrayed as a typical black leather jacketed, bovver boots boy. In the recent 1996 production, directed by Fred Abrahamse for the Baxter Theatre, he was portrayed more as a PVC clad, modern-day punk. Abrahamse had also told me that he wanted a very sensitive, almost introspective Eddy, as opposed to the "aggressive-eighties" interpretation.

Simply by asking the question *When?*, we not only found that the play was expected to be set in the present day (despite the fact that it was first performed in 1980), but our attention was also drawn to the fact that the message of the play was universal and timeless.

The question *Where?* is also answered by an author's note: "*Place: England*" (Berkoff 1989: 144). During the course of the play, however, we are given far more information: Eddy grew up in a place called Tufnell Park, which the author describes as

a land more fantasised than real, being an amalgam of the deadening war zones that some areas of London had become. (1989: 141)

This description is more than borne out by Eddy's vivid descriptions of his home throughout the first act, with many clues being given as to geographical location. Eddy mentions London, Hyde park, even specific street names in his dialogue. Now to me, the precise location was not all that important, but I found the bearing the information had on the characters' social mores and economic background was invaluable. It became evident that they were typical of the working class section of British society, and as such, representative of the average "man in the street".

Aside from the obvious characterisation clues these given circumstances supplied, such as accents to be used or dress conventions, here again was an indication of the intent of the author: that the play represents the condition of man as a whole, and we began to have a very clear indication as to what we were dealing with, not only in terms of the milieu of the play, but also with regard to the author's *Idea*⁷.

Another point to examine is *previous action*. For the actor to fully comprehend the action of the play, it is necessary to identify all of the action previous to the beginning of the play. This information, as with all given circumstances, should

⁷See *iii. Idea and the director's concept*, below.

come directly from the text, and no assumptions may be made. Here again, in some plays, especially some more recent, non-realistic plays, little or no information is given as to previous action. If this is the case, students should take note of this, and discover *why* it is so, i.e. what bearing could this have on the play, the performance, the characters.

In either case, the emphasis is on what bearing the previous action has on the action of the play and the characters therein. What has brought the characters of the play to their current situation? What has influenced their respective attitudes at the beginning of the play? In this sense, previous action may be seen as the embodiment of the simple question, *What?*

Again using Greek (Berkoff 1989: 140-183) as an example, the task is made all the more easier by the clearly defined previous action as embodied in the dialogue. From the beginning of the play, Eddy talks about things that have happened to him, and in the second scene we have one of the many “flashbacks” incorporated into the narrations, which sometimes even flow into a dramatisation of the previous action. In Act 1, Scene 2, for instance, Dad tells of how he and Mum went to see a fortune teller, and received the “prophecy” of how Eddy would kill his father and “bunk-up with his mum”. Later, we hear how the Waitress lost her son, and in the final scene of the play, Dad and Mum confirm through their narration that Eddy is, in fact, his own wife’s son. All of the information listed above may be regarded as previous action, the communication of things that occurred prior to the audience’s meeting Eddy at the beginning of the play.

Obviously, this is an extreme case, because with this particular play, the previous action not only has bearing on the action, but is essential to the plot. The play is, one could say, reliant on the exposition of the previous action for its meaning. Not all plays are this affected by the previous action, but this is a good example of how the student can learn more about the meaning and intent of the play by studying the given circumstances. They not only give him a clear idea as to what the play is actually about (in terms of plot), and not only do they help to form a very good

foundation on which the actor may build a character, but they also help the student identify the *Idea* of the play.

Having thus analysed the environmental facts and the previous action, the student is now in a position to examine the *polar attitudes* of the characters at the beginning and end of the play. As Hodge (1988: 27) writes,

In the course of a play, a principal character does not change in character, but his attitudes change under pressures from forces outside his control. The other characters serve as specific instruments to these changes. As the principal character meets these forces, he must adjust to them, and, as he does so, certain capabilities dormant within him (his true character) come to the surface and force him to act. These capabilities have been present all the time, but they have never been called upon and thus recognized as points of character. The development in a play's action, therefore, is composed of the changing attitudes in the principal character towards his inner environment, towards his special world as it was declared at the beginning of the play.

It appears vital, then, that the student look at the given world of his character, to see exactly what attitudes he has at the start of the play, in order to juxtapose them with those at the end of the action. Having identified these, he is now aware of the process of growth which the character undergoes in the course of a performance.

Once more using Greek (Berkoff 1989: 140-183) as an example, I could clearly see the differences in the polar attitudes of my character. At the start of the play, Eddy is negative, regarding all around him with critical cynicism. Horrified by the "prophecy" his father tells him about, he leaves home and his monologues about the state of the country and people around him exude bitterness and lack of hope.

By the end of the play when his parents come to visit him, however, we see a man who has devoted a lot of time and effort to bettering himself, and is also far more hopeful as well as more tolerant of his parents, even thanking them for all the bad

things they could have done to him, but didn't. In the very last part of the final scene, his attitude changes even more dramatically, when he rejects all social expectations of him in favour of a very pure and unconditional love for his wife, his biological mother.

By examining the logical progression of the character from one pole to the other, and the forces which brought about this change, I could form a very clear idea in my head as to who the character was and what his purpose in the play was.

Thus, the fundamental question, *Who?* is answered. Sometimes a student will completely misinterpret a rôle from this first reading, but more often than not, this first impression provides a firm basis for characterisation, as the student generally responds to this first reading from an unbiased, objective point of view. His perception of the rôle is as yet unclouded by the myriad of things on which he has to concentrate in order to portray the rôle. Should the director, at this stage, ask each actor in turn to describe the polar attitudes of his character briefly, making it clear that no final choices with regard to characterisation should be made, the student is led to discover a firm, textually based foundation from which to work. This could also conceivably provide an opportunity for the director to correct any gross misinterpretations on the part of the actor from the outset.

The importance of analysing the given circumstances, in terms of actor training, becomes evident when one looks at the student's approach to the rehearsal process. Notwithstanding the added benefit of the entire company growing in their understanding of the play and the task which lies before them, the individual actor is also assimilating a method of approach to his work which will stand him in good stead for many productions to come. This, too (like the theatre ethics discussed earlier), begins to prepare the actor for professional work in terms of having a workman-like attitude and approach to rehearsal.

Of course, there are many other ways in which to begin approaching a text, but the Stanislavskian method of examining the given circumstances is tried and tested, and works very well in most cases. There is a clear goal in mind as the given

circumstances help to clearly define in the actor's mind the scope of the play as a whole, as well as providing a solid foundation for character building. After identifying the given circumstances of the play with the actors, the director might steer the discussion towards the next phase of initial analysis.

ii. Dialogue and Dramatic Action

Now, the director poses the question *How?* More specifically, *How does the action of the play unfold?* The answer is, clearly, through dialogue. All of the action, be it past or present, in any play is revealed to the audience through dialogue and the action contained therein.

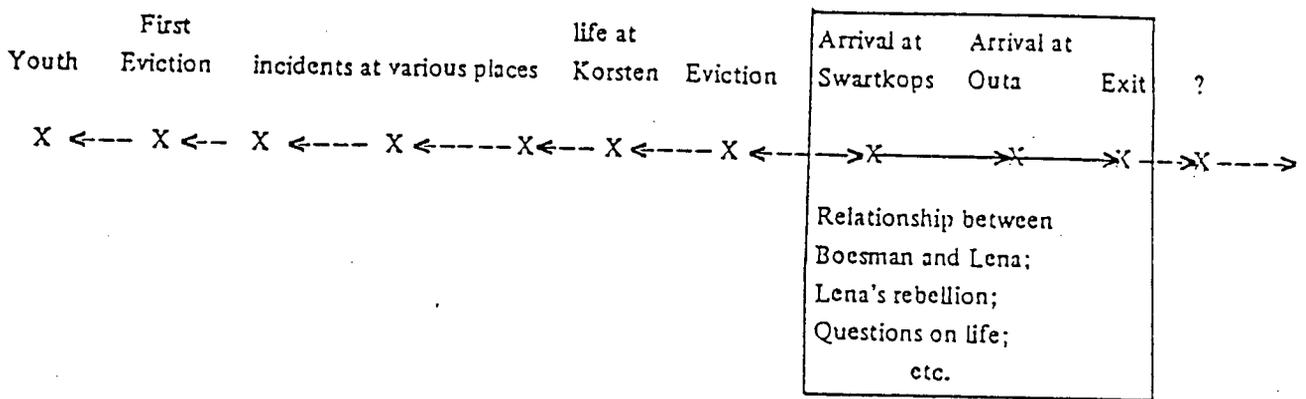
Although, at this stage of pre-rehearsal, there is no attempt at an in-depth analysis of text and subtext, the students do need to become aware that the dialogue is a vehicle for the action of the play, and not view it merely as denotative lines of prose (or poetry), but rather as connotative information. The importance of the dialogue lies not only in what is said, but in what it implies is done and thought. By examining the dialogue, the actors must be able to fully comprehend the *dramatic action* of the play. Hodge (1988: 34-35) describes dramatic action as

the clash of forces in the play - the continuous conflict between characters. Here lies the emotional content that moves audiences. Understanding the action will unlock the play because drama means *doing* or *acting*... The hard-core study in play analysis is understanding the action.

(Dramatic action should not be misunderstood to mean merely the activity of the actors, which Hodge says is simply the "*externalization of dramatic action*." (1988: 36)). This means the actor must understand the conflicts of the play and what they imply for the characters. By being absolutely clear on the dramatic action, the student can begin to create an holistic picture of the performance for himself.

Temple Hauptfleisch in his doctoral thesis, *The Play as Communication*, shows a simplified graphic representation of the past action, future action and the dramatic.

Fig. 3: A diagrammatic representation: Action in Boesman and Lena. (Hauptfleisch 1978:191)



action of Boesman and Lena by Athol Fugard (fig. 3). Here, references to acts or events in the past or future are represented by a broken line and the dramatic action is represented by the solid line within the square which, in terms of time, encompasses the time taken to perform the play, including any time lapses implied in the text. (Boesman and Lena, for instance, includes a hypothetical hour which passes between the first two acts).

Hauptfleisch distinguishes between the actual time of performance and the implied time of the performance by using Henri Gouhier's terms "time of representation" and "time of plot" (1978: 192) respectively. Dramatic action, however, is far more than what happens in the time of representation, or what the plot denotes. Hauptfleisch goes on to say,

At the imaginative level the plot encompasses a much greater span of time and space, dealing with their entire lives through references to the past and future. (1978: 192)

This is why it is so important to understand the dramatic action of the play, not only for what it tells us directly, but also for its connotative value. In terms of Hauptfleisch's diagram, this means the student examines the whole line of events and the bearing they have on the emotions and actions of the characters. This leads the student to discover more about the meaning of the play, the condition and nature of interpersonal relationships between the characters, and the emotional make-up of individual characters.

He begins to look at the action of the play in terms of cause-and-effect, as opposed to a random series of events. The ability to extract this information from the dialogue is therefore essential, especially in plays whose expositions do not follow in chronological order. This will enable the student to tackle his task with no uncertainty, and therefore a confidence of understanding which can only serve to enhance his performance.

In a sense, the given circumstances build the foundation for the production, and the dialogue is the bricks and mortar which build up the substance of the play. By the

end of this stage, the student not only has a clear idea as to the basic milieu and characters of the play, but also sees the flow of action. He starts to perceive the interpersonal chain of action/reaction between characters that is the driving force of the play.

By this stage, he is beginning to refine his initial ideas on characterisation, and is starting to touch on the interplay of emotions within the play. The work up to now has been largely cerebral if this preliminary text analysis takes place before rehearsal proper begins. The reason why I prefer this way of working is that the student has, by the time he gets into actual rehearsal, a firmly, textually grounded set of goals for which to strive in the rehearsal process.

In reality, of course, this initial text analysis will continue to be refined well into the blocking process, but in my own productions I found it useful if it is set in motion before rehearsals begin: the director has a chance to explain the theory of text analysis, and the students also enter into the blocking process better prepared. This could save a lot of time and floundering about in search of motivation and characterisation and focus. It remains, of course, a matter of preference, and the purpose of this thesis is not to provide a method by which a director might work, but rather to examine areas in which he may promote a better understanding of the job of acting within the student.

The phases of analysis discussed so far have given a clear indication as to what may motivate each character, and who those characters are. In order for the student to have a more clearly defined concept on which to focus this motivation and characterisation in the rehearsal process, it is helpful to examine the predominant thought behind the action of the play, the general meaning which the author intended the text to convey to an audience. In Stanislavskian terms this would be the *super objective* of the play, but let us, for the purposes of this discussion, remain with Hodge's terminology and call it the *Idea*.

iii. Idea and the director's concept

The final stage of pre-rehearsal text analysis hinges on the question *Why?* Why was the play written and why are we performing it? In this stage, the director can turn the student's attention to the idea behind the play. Hodge (1988: 50) defines the *idea* as

the core meaning of what [the play] has to say. Idea is derived from an assessment of characters in action and is therefore a summary statement of such action. Consequently, the idea is the sum total of the playscript.

Any good script has unity of action, action that is all geared towards exposing or expressing one idea. So here, again, the student must turn to the playscript to find the idea. There are a number of ways of going about this. Firstly, the title of the play may give us a clue as to the play's meaning. Often, the idea is expressed symbolically or metaphorically in the title (Hodge cites The Little Foxes, The Hairy Ape, Death of a Salesman, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Riders to the Sea as examples (1988: 51)). Sometimes, though, this could be more confusing than fruitful.

A second method of trying to find the idea is through a direct line from the dialogue. Most playwrights, however, avoid philosophical statements in their dialogue, feeling that it would be too direct and perhaps trite to try to actually state the meaning of the play in dialogue. Most often, the meaning is implied by the dialogue and action of the play, and the student would do well to focus on the final conflict or climax of the play, as it is usually here that the idea is most evident. But because the idea is so often implied, and not stated, it is open to subjective interpretation.

Peter Shaffer's Equus, for example, could be seen as a play about man's need to find an object of worship. It could also quite conceivably be thought of as a play about the disruptive influence of overwhelming social pressures. It would depend entirely on which way one looked at it. In the production in which I played Alan

Strang in 1988, we defined the idea as, "The need within man to break out of complacency and find a passion in life."

Some plays in today's modern theatre may defy defining in terms of the traditional concept of the idea: indeed a play may even be written as an expression of a literary stylistic concept, such as some "post-modern" plays, where the emphasis is perhaps placed less on what the text conveys than how it is conveyed. Be that as it may, it remains important for the company to be united in a search for the expression of a super objective, even if they and/or the director choose to nominate a focal idea for the production. This need not be a concrete story or lesson: it may even be something as abstract as "A disjointed series of images eliciting a feeling of discomfort", for example, as long as it has textual justification. Whatever is decided, however, it is obviously important that it be clear to the entire company so that there is a unified effort to achieve the same goal. This common purpose is also the first step towards promoting good ensemble playing within the company. Whether the director imposes a common "idea" or the company reaches consensus as to the meaning they would most like to express, it remains vital to the production. Without it, there cannot possibly be a through-line of action. As Hodge puts it,

a well-directed play is always delineated from second-rate work by its relentless pursuit in a straight line to the idea. (1988: 51)

A director may further stimulate the students into a creative state, and at the same time pave the way for better communication, by discussing his own concept for the production with the actors. (Note that the director's concept is not synonymous with the "idea". Rather, it is the means in terms of style, design and themes through which he intends to convey what he perceives to be the author's intent.) In the early stages of rehearsal, the director might not be too specific as the director's concept may change and grow with the production (although it is clearly essential that, once the idea or super objective has been identified, it does not change).

It is, however, necessary for the director to elucidate on how he visualises the staging, costuming, lighting and acting style⁸. These concepts will ultimately determine the style of the production so it is necessary to explain them to the student, once again so that he may begin preparing himself for the rehearsal process to come, as well as in order to ensure that the company is working towards a unified production, supported by a mutual understanding of what the director's vision for the production is. Thus, the company completes the initial analysis of the play.

You will notice that very few creative choices have been made, and those that have been made have been choices of the director. Cohen and Harrop (1984: 14) make a distinction between two types of interpretation: intrinsic and extrinsic. They contend:

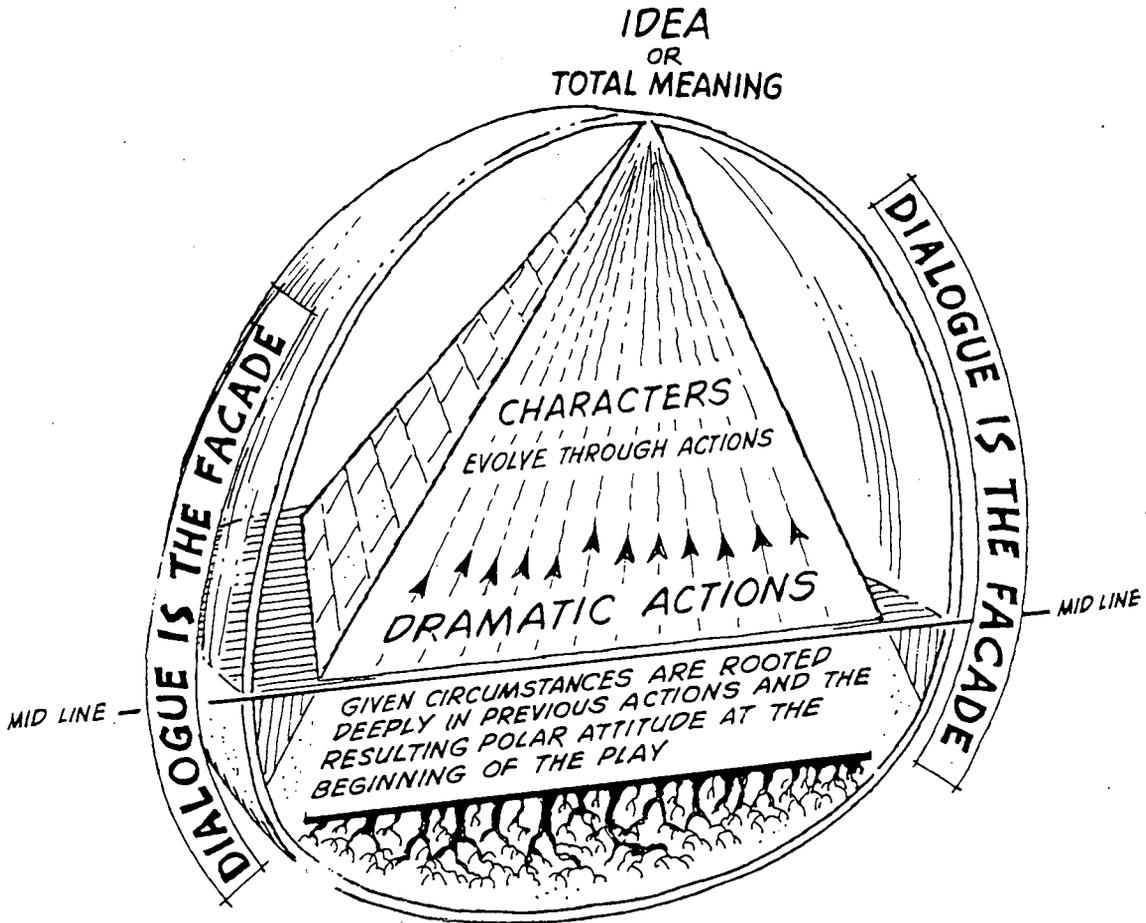
Intrinsic interpretation comes precisely from the text and from materials that illuminate the text. Such materials include explanatory remarks about the author and the play, biographical and historical data, and material concerning the play's critical and theatrical history. Intrinsic interpretation seeks to re-create the playwright's world and the play as a part of that world.

Extrinsic interpretation comes from the world of the director and the world of the audience. Whereas intrinsic interpretation attempts to define exactly what the play "means", extrinsic interpretation involves what, in the present production, the director wishes the play to "say". For that reason, extrinsic interpretation is often considered "reinterpretation" or "updating".

Although Cohen and Harrop are addressing directors and dealing with play analysis for the director, this distinction is equally applicable to the actor's analysis.

⁸See *c. Other aspects of pre-rehearsal, ii. Style*, below.

Fig. 4: A graphic representation of the structure of a script. (Hodge 1988:19)



A graphic representation of all playscripts. Note the mid-line: a play begins here, recapturing the past and moving forward to the present.

(Please note that the word *analysis* is used, as there is not much interpretation to be done on an intrinsic level, but rather an analysis of fact as found in the script.)

The initial stage of text analysis, then, is entirely intrinsic for the actor. It should be evident that only once this is done can the actor begin to interpret the play on a creative, extrinsic level. Most of this extrinsic interpretation will be done in the course of rehearsal, and may be completed only as late as the final week of rehearsals. It is an ongoing process. (Indeed some actors may even continue to interpret and reinterpret their rôles well into the run of the play.)

By this stage, however, the actors have a complete vision of the play as a whole, perhaps best shown by Hodge's diagram in fig. 4. Close examination will show how the student can systematically build a clear and holistic picture of the text in his mind's eye, placing him in a very strong position from which to approach rehearsal.

The reader may have noticed that it has been repeatedly stated that, in the processes discussed up to this point, very few creative choices have been made. The reason for this is that the focus of this discussion has been on inculcating a working approach in the actors. Within the text analysis discussed, the students should glean as many facts, clues and ideas from the text as possible so that he may begin the actual rehearsal process with many options open to him with regard to creative choice. Then, his task in rehearsal is a matter of artistic choice and refinement, rather than a time to search for inspiration and ideas. Thus the process of translating the text into physical reality on the stage is made far easier.

If the theory of the processes in the preceding sections are dealt with in a pre-rehearsal phase, the student now has a solid foundation for his work, and may begin work on the body of the play (although it has been apparent in my own productions that the processes are by no means complete, and that the student continues his orientation process and initial analysis of the play well into the blocking period and sometimes even beyond that: these are areas in which the student is being trained by practical means to *think like an actor*, and this obviously does not occur

overnight! The reason these processes are included in the section on pre-rehearsal is that they could conceivably be set in motion at this stage, but that once again, would depend entirely on the director-trainer.)

c. Other aspects of pre-rehearsal

i. Improvisation

In some cases the director may opt to use improvisation as a tool for further study of the play before rehearsal proper begins. This will depend on the time available for the production, the nature of the play and the discretion of the director.

Perhaps the two most valuable lessons to be learned through improvisation are 1) *acting is reacting*: as Benedetti (1990: 110) writes in The Actor at Work,

[the] process of action moves the scene⁹ forward through the transactions it creates between characters. The energy from the scene enters you (through the stimulus), then leaves you (through your action directed toward your objective); your objective then becomes a stimulus for someone else, and the process begins again with action generating reaction, which in turn generates another action which generates another reaction, and so on.

and 2) learning to work *via negativa*. Acting is, to all intents and purposes, an unnatural process against which the psyche throws up blocks. In Towards a Poor Theatre (Grotowski 1984: 16-17) we read:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction... Ours then is a **via negativa** -

⁹And, I might add, the play as a whole.

not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks... The requisite state of mind is a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not **“want to do that”** but rather **“resigns from not doing it.”**

Ideally then, by resigning himself to the improvisation, the actor is thus removing blocks and breaking new ground for his own abilities. This frees his creativity and put him on a path to further self-discovery.

If these two “lessons” in acting are *not* covered in improvisation in any given production, I believe it is essential that they be explained and elucidated upon at some other stage during rehearsal, as they are of vital importance to any student of acting.

It would be impossible to even suggest a method of improvisation because the possibilities are legion, nor will I subject the reader to a barrage of possible exercises, as this does not lie within the scope of this thesis. I will, however, attempt to point out some of the ways improvisation may be used in the production process to facilitate learning in the student.

The nature of improvisation is such that it can, and should, be designed to suit the needs of each specific situation and different individuals. But, although improvisation is a very personal thing, and one often hears the phrase, “There is no right, or wrong,” there may be a few simple guidelines to be followed:

Hodge (1988: 13) recommends,

Only the beginning of an improvisation should be suggested, and only in a barely minimal way. What happens afterward is the improvisation.

In The Actor’s Book of Improvisation, a book of improvisation scenarios, however, we read:

Unlike theatre games and other forms of commonly known improvisation, the situations in this book are more structured. Though the dialogue will be spontaneous, the actual performed improvisations resulting from these situations will be built around a “skeleton” of background information and character details. This will lend an added dimension not seen in most off-the-cuff improvisations. The situations in this book are *not* set up in the following manner: “Two people are sitting on a park bench.- Now improvise.” (Caruso and Clemens 1992: xiv)

Both sources agree, however, that it should be clear to the students that they are not performing as actors: there is no script and no audience. Any fellow workers who are watching must remain quiet observers. Under no circumstances should they react verbally as this could break the concentration of the participants and make them self-conscious.

The form of the improvisation is not a question of which school of thought to follow: both have their merits. Rather, the purpose of the improvisation dictates the form.

If, for instance the director wishes to orient novice students to the sensation of being exposed to an audience, he might use one of Viola Spolin’s orientation exercises:

Divide the total group into halves. Send one half to stand in a single line across the stage, while the other remains in the audience. Each group - audience and on stage - is to observe the other. Coach: “You look at us. We’ll look at you.” Those on stage will soon become uncomfortable. Some will giggle and shift from foot to foot; others will freeze in position or try to appear nonchalant. If the audience starts to laugh, stop them. Just keep coaching: “You look at us. We’ll look at you.” (Spolin 1972: 51)

After all the people on the stage have become uncomfortable, they are given something to focus on, for instance counting the floorboards. Afterwards, they compare the sensations of feeling scrutinised and simply being on stage doing something. The exercise is very simple and has only the slightest suggestions.

However, suppose the play concerned is Children of a Lesser God, a play about a teacher of the deaf and his relationship with a deaf woman. The director may want the students to explore the frustrations of a deaf person in a relationship with a hearing person. Here, the parameters for the exercise might need to be far more graphic, and an entire background of characters, milieu and situation decided upon before the improvisation begins. It may even be decided to base the improvisation on the script itself.

An improvisation using a simple suggestion gives the participants the most scope for creative work. In this type of improvisation, no goals are set, as this makes the improvisers constantly aware of a final destination, and they tend not to release into the improvisation, but to try to exercise control over it. An improvisation of this nature is generally non-specific in terms of the expected outcome of the improvisation, and is well suited to experimentation such as exploring space; experimenting with energy; playing with emotion; familiarising the participants with the sensations of emotional, verbal and physical interaction; "ice-breaking" between company members; becoming accustomed to props and costumes (especially in period plays) etc.

More involved improvisation with predetermined goals and more intricate structures, on the other hand, may be better suited to exploring certain aspects of the text, such as specific relationships; moral, social and political climate; helping the students to become accustomed to special circumstances (such as the one described above in Children of a Lesser God), etc.

The object of improvisation, it would seem, is to liberate the participants from any preconceived ideas or inhibitions they may have, and provide a laboratory in which they can experiment and discover without fear of failure or ridicule, and in so

doing, make the student more receptive to the learning process. As Spolin (1972:)puts it,

The energy released to solve the problem, being restricted by the rules of the game and bound by group decision, creates an explosion - or spontaneity - and as is the nature of explosions, everything is torn apart, rearranged, unblocked...

With no outside authority imposing itself upon the players, telling them what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, each player... enters into the group decisions with enthusiasm and trust. With no one to please or appeases, the player can then focus full energy directly on the problem and learn what he has come to learn.

This brings us to another parameter within which any improvisation must take place if it is to be successful: focus. Absolute concentration between the participants is essential, as their aim is to release each other's creativity by feeding each other impulses on which to act. Any break in the flow of the improvisation tends to negate the experience, as the participants immediately become aware of their situation and all belief in the reality of the situation crumbles. From my own experiences as a teacher, it became evident that it usually takes a long time for the students to become absorbed in the improvisation, and only after a time does it become valid, especially when using the improvisation to explore emotions and/or character relationships. Caruso and Clemens (1992: xvi) say of their exercises:

To use this book successfully, treat each situation with respect. In other words, internalize and personalize the information given, trust that it has been assimilated, and then let the improvisation happen.

The longest improvisation in which I personally have participated lasted over two hours. I was alone in the improvisation, and the subject was "releasing the self and filling space". For the first twenty minutes or so, the process felt very artificial and I was extremely self-conscious. After I had become completely absorbed in what I was doing ("internalized" and "personalized" it, if you will), it became one of the

single most liberating experiences I have ever had. When my director finally stopped me, I could not believe that I had been working for two hours. Such was my concentration on the improvisation that all else had just about ceased to exist! Perhaps for this reason, I disagree with Hodge's (1988: 13) suggestion that

The place to develop an improvisation is not a stage nor any location that would resemble it, because the artificial nature of this kind of setting would cause the improvisers to feel self-conscious. For this reason the game should be played in a room, with the space defined only by what the improvisers feel necessary.

I contend that the act of improvisation is in itself an artificial process which requires the suspension of disbelief on the part of the improvisers. The space is therefore immaterial to me, except in certain special cases: if the object of the improvisation, for example, is to explore the space in which the actors will be working, it stands to reason that the working space must be used or duplicated as closely as possible.

Conversely, if the director feels the actors need to liberate themselves from the limitations of the working space, he may opt to hold the improvisation in a specifically non-theatrical type of space.

The beauty of improvisation lies in the fact that, as long as the participants immerse themselves totally in the process, it can be used to allow the student to experience a myriad of ideas, feelings and states of being.

Some of the uses of pre-rehearsal improvisation, then, are: to explore and discover emotions that may not lie within the students field of reference (a note to the actor-trainer: such improvisations can become quite taxing on the student and, once again, scrupulous sensitivity on the part of the director is required. Should the improvisation show signs of becoming too traumatic for the participants, it should be stopped immediately); improvisation can be used to explore and discover more about the characters in the play, characterisation and inter-personal relationships; it can be used to explore the space in which the actors will be working and spatial

relationships; and perhaps most importantly, it can be used to free creativity within the actors and immerse them in the job at hand and the creative state.

ii. Style

In the pre-rehearsal phase it could be necessary to devote some time to style. By this is meant the period style in which any given play is conventionally performed. In Acting in Person and Style, Jerry. L. Crawford (Crawford 1983) identifies ten stylistic groups into which a production might fall:

1. Classical Antiquity: which encompasses Greek Tragedy; Greek Comedy; and Roman and Medieval Drama which represent a transitional phase.
2. Commedia Dell' Arte: which includes Tudor Drama as a transitional phase.
3. Elizabethan and Shakespearean Style: to which may be added, scripts of the Jacobean theatre.
4. Seventeenth-Century French Neo-classicism: tragedies and comedies.
5. Restoration Comedy: which includes Eighteenth-Century Sentimentalism and Nineteenth-Century Romanticism and Melodrama as transitional phases.
6. Realism and Naturalism
7. Early Twentieth-Century Nonrealism: the Symbolists and Expressionists
8. Brecht and the Epic Style: "verfremdung".
9. Absurd Theatre
10. Eclectic: an intermingling of styles

In other words, a play written in the period of the Greek tragedies is conventionally performed in the Classical style, etc. Each of these groups and respective styles offer certain performance challenges to the actors, and, although the scope of the different techniques required for performances in these styles is far too wide for detailed discussion in this paper, it is necessary to say that the director should have

a very good knowledge of the historical style of the play, and may need to teach his students certain physical and vocal techniques required for performance.

In their Directing Methods (1970: 192), Albert and Bertha Johnson point out that

styles that are associated with definite periods are not necessarily limited to those periods. It is conceivable that a modern play might be conceived in a classical style, and there have been several modern plays written in the style of romanticism.

This is indicative of the modern trend towards eclecticism, which has come to be recognised as a style on its own. The playwright might even write a text which draws on any number of different styles, or attempt to create a style hitherto unseen.

In a training situation, however, it is perhaps better to produce a period piece in the corresponding period style, so that the student learns about the history of the theatre and its styles in the process.

Should the director decide to deviate from the intended style of the period text, it would certainly be advisable to ensure that the students understood both that there is a deviation, and what the norm would have been. The danger of eclecticism in a training situation is that students never learn the stylistic conventions of the different periods, and so fail to develop a sensitivity to style. Albert and Bertha Johnson (1970: 193-194) write:

The theatre... has been guilty of propagating [a] one-style type of production. Hundreds of plays during the past two decades managed to see the light of Broadway minus anything that could rightfully be called style, and some seem to be designed to flagrantly flaunt a kind of stylelessness.

Although their opinion may be somewhat pedantic, and certainly dated, given the publishing date of the book, this is also a very real danger in a training institution, especially in the light of modern eclecticism.

The director's concept will, of course have a lot of bearing on the actual performance style of the production, and the eventual aesthetic may be a synthesis of the director's concept and the period style. Even if the director's concept requires a derivative style, loosely based on the accepted norm for, say, Restoration theatre, it could only be beneficial if he should set aside some time for style discussion and exploration prior to rehearsal.

In my own production of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124), for instance, I wanted a very vibrant, cartoon-like style in the first part of the play, firstly to give the production a frenetic, colourful burst of action which would grab the audience's immediate attention and draw them into the play, and secondly to portray the townspeople and Berenger's work colleagues as impersonal, two-dimensional characters, in contrast to the characters of Daisy and Berenger, who would be played more realistically.

In order for the students to be able to approach their work from the right starting point, I explained to them exactly what was expected of them vocally and physically, and many of them were instructed, under the supervision of the assistant director, to hold an improvisation session to experiment with and discover the style.

I felt it necessary to work through improvisation at this stage for a number of reasons: firstly, I had a clear picture in my mind's eye of the acting style I wanted, and having explained the theory of what I envisaged, the students needed to experiment with and experience the physical qualities they could use. Secondly, I felt that, because the "extras" in the village scenes (mostly first-year students) would be choreographed to move in unison, they needed to find a medium that would work for all of them, and at the same time convey the impersonal, automaton-like feel I wanted to express. In this case, one session of improvisation provided a wealth of information for the students. They were introduced to the concept of acting in a totally non-realistic style, encouraged to explore the abilities of their own bodies and the moods which different kinds of movement are capable of expressing, they were exposed to the idea of working creatively as a team.

Choices in style are often suggested by the script, either as a note from the playwright, or implied by the period in which the text was written. In the case of my production of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124), the specifics of the acting style were imposed by myself as a directorial choice, yet still representative of the Absurd genre. In each case, it could be in a pre-rehearsal situation or in actual rehearsal that the style is learnt (discovered?), but either way, it is obviously a great boon for any actor to have a wide "repertoire" of acting styles from which to draw. This includes a good knowledge of the period styles, as well as different aesthetics derived from concept choices on the part of the director.

There are a number of benefits in beginning to teach style prior to rehearsal: not only do the students better understand the process through which they have to go, and are better prepared for rehearsal, but they also learn more of the history and practice of the theatre which will stand them in good stead in the professional theatre. This is especially true of period plays, for which there is often a fixed style of acting and production. This is, of course, not to say that a Restoration piece has to be performed in the Restoration style, but if the actor is familiar with the style, he is then free to use, change or purposefully defy it, whichever the case may be.

When working on style, however, the consensus seems to be that the actor should assimilate what he has learnt and "make the techniques his own." As Crawford (1983: 138) writes,

No matter the style required, the initial and central problem of an actor is to use personalization to establish comfort and familiarity with his role or activity. Then he must communicate the intentions of the playwright as revealed by the action and characters of the script or the theatrical activity.

Thus, it is imperative that the director help the student to become entirely familiar and at ease with the style of the production, or it could impede his performance if he becomes too involved with and conscious of perfecting the style. He should help

the student to understand that what is important is a *sense* of style rather than a slavish reproduction of what we may perceive to be the “original period style” of the production. Furthermore, the actor must understand that style is only a form or vehicle for the action and must remain subservient to the action, rather than dominate it.

2. Rehearsal

a. Tuning In

This part of the paper was to be called *Warm-ups*, but after thinking about it for quite some time, I realised that, although this is a term which I myself have used for years, it is very misleading, as it hardly adequately describes the process involved. I find *Tuning In* a far more appropriate phrase. “Warming up” has connotations which bring to mind a sporty aerobic type of exercise preparatory to hard physical exertion. The actor, however, is not merely concerned with warming up the muscles and vocal chords (although this is important), but with a complete process of tuning in the body and mind to a physical and mental attitude most conducive to creative work in the theatre.

Although the tuning in process is not rehearsal *per se*, it is included in the section for rehearsal in this paper as I believe it is absolutely essential for the actors to do a thorough tune-in directly before each and every rehearsal, as well as before performances. This is not only to prepare the student for the work at hand, but is, in fact, a mental and physical training programme which should become a part of every serious student of the theatre’s daily routine. The reasons for this will become evident as the process is discussed. As pointed out by Sir Lawrence Olivier (1986: 243) in his book, On Acting,

Daily exercise is essential when working in front of an audience in the evening, getting tuned up before the performance. The actor should be as fit as a boxer, as poised as a matador, as agile as a ballet dancer.

It must be understood that tuning in is a process which could take months, even years of continued practice to achieve the desired effect, as it often involves re-training the body and mind out of bad habits which have been acquired over a period of years.

The process of tuning in entails learning to breath properly and efficiently; learning to control the breath; learning to relax the entire body and maintain that state of relaxation as much as possible, even when active; aligning, limbering up and stretching the body; learning to use the voice effectively and efficiently. These all constitute entering the “external creative state” (Stanislavski 1986: 282).

Next, it is necessary to train the mind to be clear, receptive and to focus clearly on the creative process and enter into what Stanislavski termed the “inner creative state” (1986: 282). Ideally, the tune-in then helps the student to synthesise both the inner and external creative states into an harmonious whole. Stanislavski (1986: 282-283) writes:

When this is accomplished, we describe it as the *general creative state*, combining as it does the double aspect of inner psycho-technique with external physical technique.

When you are in this state every feeling, every mood that wells up in you is reflexively expressed. It is easy to react to all the problems the play, the director and finally you yourself put forward for a solution. All your inner resources and physical capacities are on call, ready to respond to any bid... No matter what an actor is doing in the creative process, he should at all times be in this overall state, of inner and outer co-ordination...

The director-trainer can teach the student an enormous amount about his own body and mental approach to acting by identifying and suggesting methods to eradicate any physical or attitude problems the student may have in terms of acting. In fact, the more a student knows about his own body, the better position he is in to be in

complete control of that body which is, after all, his means of livelihood. Olivier (1986: 242) writes,

I feel that actors should know more about their bodies than perhaps they do. Maybe they should have a copy of Gray's *Anatomy* on their bookshelves along with Shakespeare. I'm not suggesting they should all go and storm the galleries of their local operating theatres, but then again perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea if they did, to see and be aware of the way the motor works...

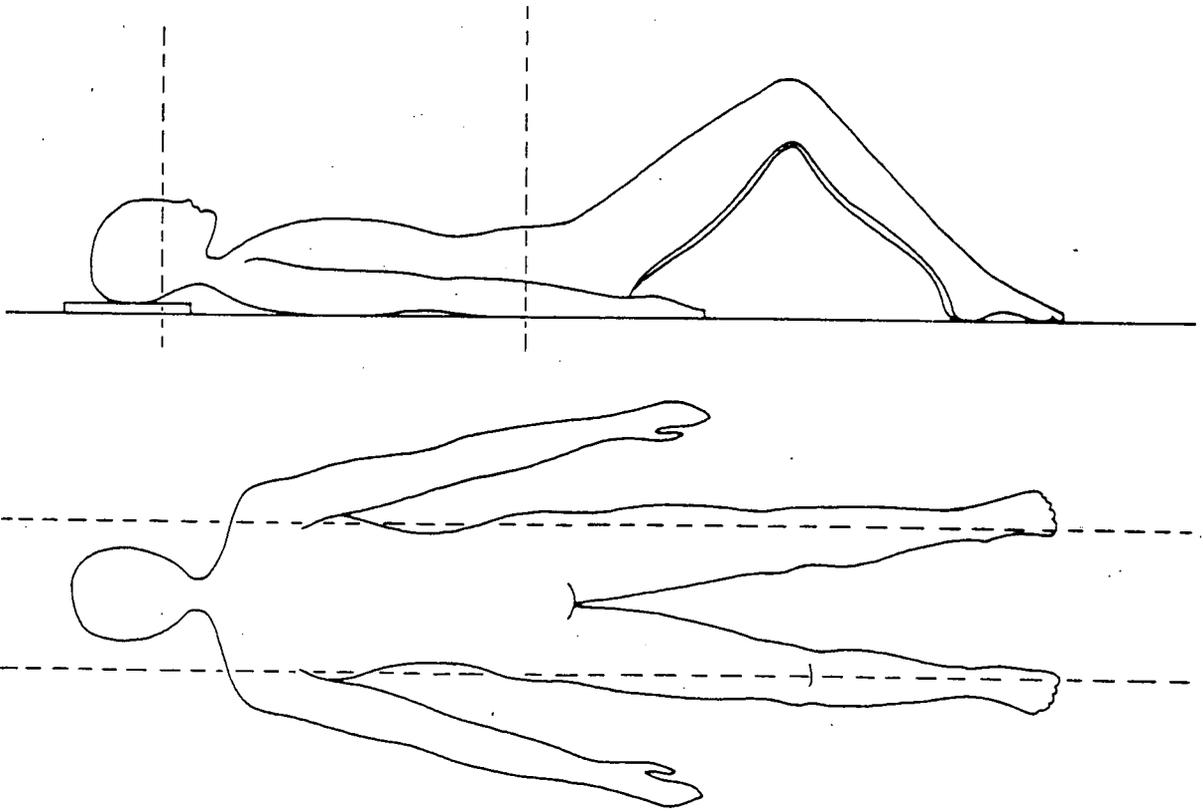
Obviously different director-trainers have varied approaches to the tuning in process. But my own research, both academic and practical, lead me to believe that all of the areas discussed should be addressed in the tuning in process for maximum effectiveness.

Of course, time is often of the essence, and in many instances it would be impossible for the director-trainer to spend as much as an hour to an hour and a half on the tuning in process before each rehearsal and performance. However, if it can be done for the space of one production, the student is given time to become very familiar with the processes involved, and can then be encouraged to adopt the regimen. Hopefully, by the end of a production, he will also be in a position to evaluate the state of his own body and mind and so monitor his own progress.

i. Breathing and Relaxing

The purpose of breathing and relaxing, in terms of tuning in, is to place the body and mind in a completely restful state so that they can later be manipulated into a state of *neutrality*, i.e. a state in which the body and mind are unencumbered by quirks of ego and personal tensions - the natural human state, if you will. This state is very important, as it is the state in which the actor is most ready to react to any impulse. The actor is cleared of what might be termed "luggage", the physical and mental stresses which each persona carries with it from day to day. These stresses cause physical and mental blockages which prevent the actor from being the supreme conductor of impulses which he needs to be.

Fig. 5: Floor alignment. (Benedetti 1990: 10)



One might begin with a slow, relaxed and deep breathing exercise. Benedetti includes a very good preliminary breathing exercise¹⁰, which I can recommend as a basis for an exercise here. It will help the student become restful and aware of his body and state of mind. Many habitual faults such as shallow breathing and solely diaphragmatic or solely intercostal breathing, become eradicated, as the body tends, through this exercise, to revert to a correct method of breathing as it was designed to do.

The student begins to learn to breathe deeply with both the diaphragm and intercostal muscles (the muscles between the ribs which help the chest cavity to expand and contract) in a relaxed and natural way. Louw *et al* (1985: 18) write of intercostal-diaphragmatic breathing as follows:

Dit is die asemhalingmetode waar die borskas tot sy grootste wydte en diepte oopgespalk word by inaseming en waar, by uitaseming, die beste beheer oor die lugstroom behou word.

So the student is not only learning to breathe effectively and efficiently, but also placing himself in a position to be able to best control his breathing for voice production.

Once the breathing is deep, even and comfortable, the student can proceed with the process of relaxation. A good position for this is floor alignment (fig. 5, from Benedetti's The Actor at Work) This allows the spine to be spread out along the floor to its full extent, and because the knees are bent, the natural curvature in the lumbar region of the spine¹¹ is eased flat and lies flush with the floor. This helps to lengthen the *erector spinae*, the long muscles on either side of the spine, and to avoid any strain on the lower back.

¹⁰See Appendix B, Exercise 1.

¹¹See Appendix C for diagrams of the spinal column and muscles.

The process of breathing deeply should already have begun to put the student in a relaxed state of mind and body. He can begin to consciously relax his muscles. One excellent exercise to achieve this is a process known as Phasic Relaxation¹². Benedetti (1990: 10) says this exercise was designed by Dr. Edmund Jacobson, a pioneer in the field of relaxation and, like the previous exercise:

The exercise works best if it is repeated over a long period of time, in the course of which chronic tensions will surface and be dissolved by the natural wisdom of the body.

This once again reiterates the importance of a long-term programme of correction of physical faults and maintenance of a well tuned body.

Any relaxation exercise is ideally a process whereby the entire body is systematically and entirely relaxed through the use of breath and mind. It must not simply be performed as a drill, because the process is as much to relax the mind as it is to relax the body. It focuses the concentration of the student entirely within himself, having an almost meditative effect. The actor trainer should therefore ensure a calm, quiet and focused atmosphere when tuning in for these exercises to take full effect.

Another important aspect of these exercises is to remind the student not to become too self-conscious about breathing correctly, but rather simply to enjoy the sensation of breathing deeply and relaxing. As Benedetti (1990: 14) points out,

Acting, both in rehearsal and performance, arouses anxiety, both pleasurable (in the quest for creative discovery) and unpleasurable (in the fear of exposure and ridicule)... anxiety tends to disrupt our breathing, and to generally raise the level of our bodily tension. Such tension interferes with our readiness to react... When we find ourselves in such a state of tension, we often attempt to compensate

¹²See Appendix B, Exercise 2.

by “trying harder”, putting more effort into the work and trying to “muscle” our way past our own tension. Unfortunately, this is exactly the wrong thing to do. It is counter productive in that it only increases our tension and further reduces our freedom of creative response.

It is important, then, that the actors be encouraged to breathe freely and relax as much as possible, and not be over-critical of their own personal tensions. With time and repeated practice the body will “remember” the sensations and fall into complete relaxation and correct breathing very quickly. The breathing techniques described above are, of course not only beneficial in terms of relaxation, but also aid in breath control and sound production when the student begins to train his voice.

Once the students appear relaxed and are breathing evenly and deeply, the director may now further help the relaxation and release process by means of a few simple physical manipulations, which not only help to stretch and release tense muscles, but also align the body correctly.

ii. Aligning the Body

It would be of great benefit to the actors, as well as the director, if the latter has some knowledge of massage and chiropractics as the correct alignment of the body is almost solely dependant on the alignment of the spine. Dr. Andrew Taylor Still, the founder of osteopathy¹³, as well as David Palmer, founder of chiropractic therapy, believed that displacement of any part of the skeletal structure had an adverse effect on the nervous system. This, they believed, applies particularly to the spine. The Alexander Technique by Sarah Barker, a book which explains a technique of self-correction of the posture for healthy living, summarises the

¹³A method of manipulation of the bones as a healing therapy.

Technique (which was, incidentally, developed by F. Matthias Alexander, who was himself an actor) as follows:

As you begin any movement or act, move your whole head upward and away from your body, and let your whole body lengthen by following that upward direction. (1978: 24)

What this implies is that the spine is lengthened, maintaining a relaxed muscular tone along the neck and spine. This removes habitual excessive tension and allows a free flow of energy¹⁴ to the rest of the body.

What the director can do at this stage, then, is ensure that the spine is in a correct alignment. He would need to attend to each actor individually (it may help to have a stage manager or assistant if the cast is very large) and help them to lengthen and align the spine.¹⁵ It would also help tremendously if he has some knowledge of spinal adjustment, for more specific problems.

In some cases, the student's neck, back and hips are so out of alignment that they need to be physically adjusted. There are a number of methods for doing so, which could be described here, but given the danger of pulling a muscle or a tendon or even pinching a nerve, it is perhaps prudent to advise any director-trainer to obtain that information from a qualified chiropractor or similar authority.

What is common, however, in such an adjustment, is an accompanying popping sound which is often mistaken for being the sound of the bones popping into place. According to Anthea Courtenay (1987: 76), author of Chiropractic for Everyone,

Research carried out by a group at Leeds University suggests that the 'pop' during an adjustment (or occurring spontaneously) is

¹⁴See *vi. Energy*, below.

¹⁵Some general exercises for lengthening and aligning the spine are included in Appendix D.

caused by the bursting of a nitrogen bubble in the synovial fluid round the joint as the joint capsule is stretched.

Often when adjusting student's backs (and occasionally necks, although I personally am loathe to do it, as the neck is very sensitive, and can be damaged if the student is not completely relaxed or if the adjustment is incorrectly done), they hear the clicking sound and assume that the vertebrae were "out", and have fallen back into place. Other students whose necks are adjusted may hear nothing, and are then disappointed and feel that they are still "out". Courtenay (1987: 76) writes,

Vertebrae... don't 'go out' in the first place; in fact the only joints that can move during spinal adjustment are the facet joints which link the vertebrae, and if they move, it is only slightly.

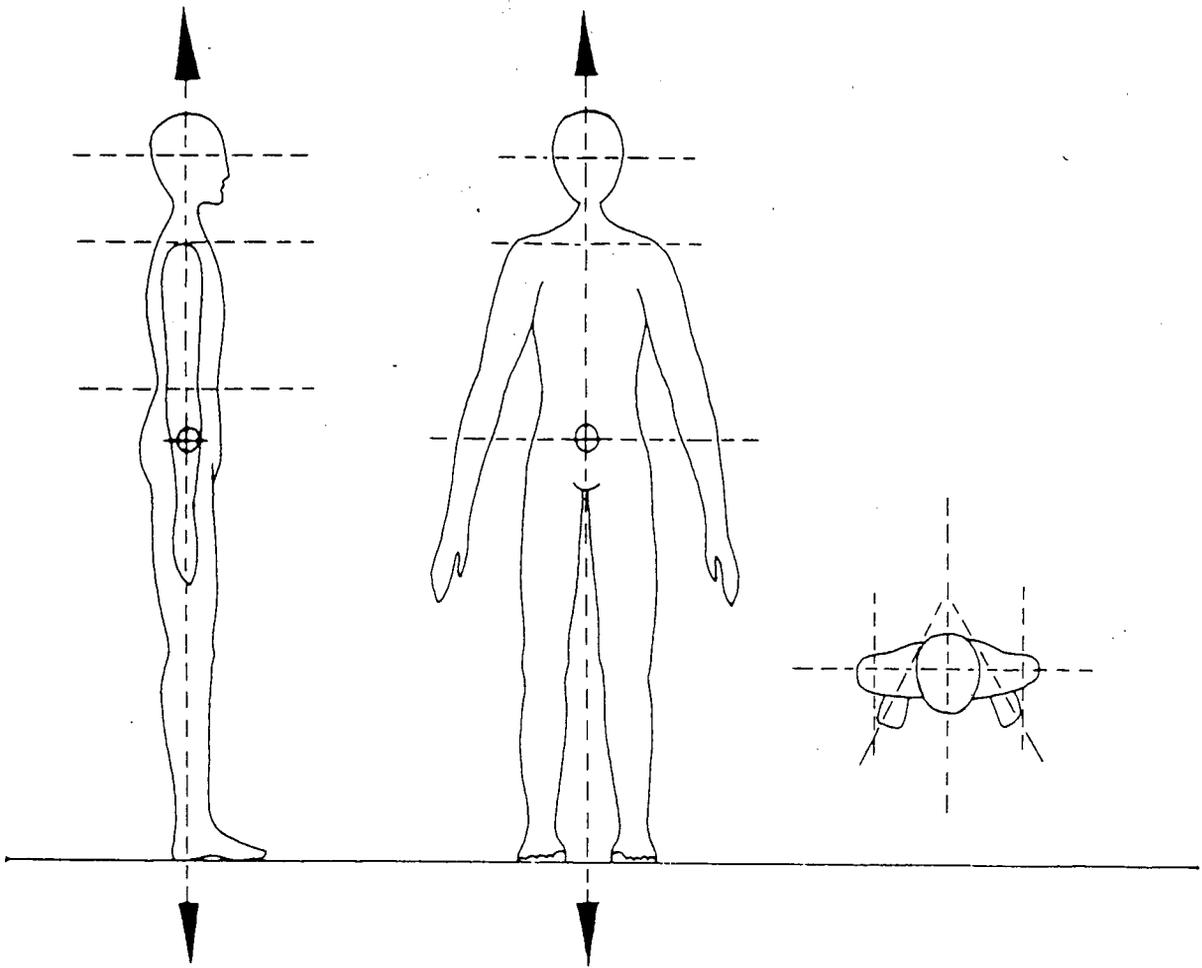
What we are doing, essentially, when we are aligning the spine is therefore not so much physically adjusting the bones as it is releasing tension and retraining the back muscles to keep the spine in its correct position. Once again, therefore, it is more a question of cultivating the correct habits than of regularly "pushing the vertebrae into place".

iii. Warming Up

Once the actors appear to be relaxed and aligned, they may be instructed to slowly, and with as little effort as possible, roll over onto their stomachs. The hands are placed flat on the floor next to the ribs (as if to do a push-up) and the actor slowly raises himself up onto his hands and knees, keeping the back straight, but as relaxed as possible. The toes are curled up so that the balls of the feet can make contact with the floor, and the actor "walks" the hands towards the feet so that he ends upon his haunches, legs together, with back and neck released. He very slowly begins to straighten the legs, keeping the back and neck relaxed.

When the legs are almost straight, the spine begins to uncurl from the sacrum, vertebra for vertebra until the head finally uncurls into place. This has proved, in my experience, to be a very efficient way of coming into a standing position from

Fig. 6: Standing alignment. (Benedetti 1990: 24)



the floor, and sacrifices the minimum of relaxation and alignment. It is important that this process be done very slowly, or the student may experience dizziness from the flow of blood from the head into the rest of the body.

The student should be trying to replicate, as far as possible, the sense of relaxed alignment he has just experienced on the floor. He should now be in a position of correct standing alignment as shown in Benedetti's diagram (fig. 6): the body's centre of gravity and energy¹⁶ are indicated by the circle.

Once thus aligned, the student may proceed to warm and limber up the muscles and joints. If the student is guided through a relaxed but formalised warm-up, sticking to exactly the same series of exercises with each tune-in, this tends to become almost a ritual, and this helps in the focusing process. On the other hand, if students seem particularly listless, it may be necessary to change the exercises, simply to counteract boredom. Something new is often a good way to inject a little enthusiasm into a company. If the student's attitude is one of discovery as opposed to mere repetition, however, this should not pose a problem. As Grotowski (1984: 104) says, it is

incorrect to perform [a] series of exercises in an inanimate way. **The exercise serves the research.** It is not merely automatic repetition or a form of muscular massage. For example, during the exercises one investigates the body's centre of gravity, the mechanism for the contraction and relaxation of the muscles, the function of the spine... Only the exercises which "investigate" involve the entire organism of the actor and mobilise his hidden resources. The exercises which "repeat" give inferior results.

¹⁶See *iv. Energy* below.

A typical warm-up begins by slowly releasing all of the joints and muscles in the body, systematically from the head downwards¹⁷.

The maintenance of a relaxed state of mind and body and correct alignment, however, is of the utmost importance. In this way, they discover how to use their bodies in the most efficient way; a lesson which is imperative for the stage.

As the actors do the various exercises of the warm-up, they must concentrate on using only the muscles necessary to move any particular limb. One of the biggest problems for an actor in movement is over-exertion. The exercise described in Appendix E for releasing the ball and socket joint of the upper leg, for instance, requires only the use of the upper thigh muscles, and should not fatigue the lower thigh or calf, which is a complaint I have often heard from students doing this exercise.

Too much effort, as it has been stated earlier, leads to excessive tension. In addition to this, if a student has to perform a rôle in which he is highly active for the duration of a two hour performance, he will have to know how to use his body efficiently, exerting the absolute minimum amount of effort, or he will be completely fatigued after fifteen minutes.

iv. Vocal Warm-up

Within the relaxed and aligned bodies, the actors can now do a vocal warm-up. It helps to maintain the focused atmosphere, as well as giving the company a sense of unity if the whole company does a vocal warm-up together, but in my experience, some of the more senior students, who have already identified weaknesses or problem areas in their voice work, tend to want to do their own warm-ups so that they can focus on specific things. This may be permitted, as the company reunifies after the vocal warm-up to do a focus exercise together. In the case of more inexperienced students, however, it would clearly be better if the director guides

¹⁷An example of a full body warm-up I would recommend is included in Appendix E.

them through the process, listening to individual voices and helping to identify and work on problems. In this way, the students learn both from the director and each other's faults. Here again, of course, the director-trainer would need to be thoroughly familiar with voice production, possible problems and their solutions.

The actual exercises for warming up the speech apparatus are many and varied. A full discussion of the many different exercises such as suggested by Cicely Berry, Louw *et al*, Benedetti and many more is not within the scope of this paper, but an effective sample warm-up is included in Appendix F.

For training purposes, the director must ensure that a complete vocal warm-up is done, which will include exercises for: voice production and placement; resonance; tonal range; and suppleness and agility of the tongue, lips and jaw. By thoroughly warming up the voices, the students are learning correct vocal usage and, as with their bodies, habitual faults are corrected in time.

Generally speaking, tonal range and agility of the speech organs improve simply with practice, getting the vocal chords and articulatory muscles in shape. In some cases, students may need to correct faulty formation or pronunciation of certain sounds, which could be identified by the director and worked on, either by means of exercises or, in extreme cases, professional therapy or even medical treatment. In general, however, the director-trainer would probably focus on voice production and placement, ensuring that the student is breathing correctly, not suffering from excess tension (commonly found in the throat, upper chest or shoulder region), and that the resonators of the body are being utilised to their full extent, as it is most often in these fields that the student needs to consciously correct bad habits.

Louw *et al* list the mouth cavity, the throat, the nasal cavity, the sinuses, the chest and the Morgagni cavities (cavities within the larynx which resonate sound by making the sound expand laterally) as the main resonators in the body (1985: 35-36). By placing a hand on these areas and feeling the degree of vibration, the student may determine to what extent he is using these resonators. Incorrect placement of the voice is often a result of tension which shuts off one or more of

the resonators, or overemphasises the use of another. When conducting a warm-up, the director may assess each student, and suggest remedies to correct any faults he may encounter. In this way, the vocal warm-up affords the director the opportunity to teach students correct voice usage, and he may then monitor their progress in the course of the production, not only in warm-ups, but in rehearsals as well.

Vocal warm-ups are best done, in my experience, in standing alignment, or slowly walking around, but maintaining the relaxed alignment. I personally have found walking helps many students to maintain relaxation, as they tend to be less self-conscious about the voice, and begin to feel the association between free and easy movement and good vocal production. The effect is cyclic: the more they relax, the better the voice production, the better the voice production, the more they relax.

v. Focusing

The final stage of tuning in is to focus¹⁸ the company on the job at hand. At a later stage in the rehearsal process, when the play is running, time may be included for the actors to run through the pattern of the entire play within their own heads. This does not mean they are expected to run their words in their heads, but they should rather envisage the production as a unit, and sense the part which they play in building that unit and making it an harmonious whole. In doing this, the company begins to function as a unit, build up an ensemble, and focus on a common goal. This is important, as all ego (in the negative sense of the word) must be removed from the actor if his performance is to be a success. As Grotowski (1984: 218) points out,

¹⁸The current most commonly used focusing exercise at the University of Stellenbosch Drama faculty, instituted by director and former faculty member Mark Graham, may be found in Appendix G.

[the total act] cannot exist if the actor is more concerned with charm, personal success, applause and salary than with the creation as understood in its highest form.

The needs of the production are paramount and the company has to function as a unit in order to achieve its goals.

Having done the focusing, the actors should be completely tuned in and ready to begin working with the text, being in a state enabling them to react quickly and creatively to any impulse; a state which may be called "Neutral", as the ideal is a calm and clear mind, relaxed body brimming with energy and all personal problems, worries and distractions set aside. This state may be equated with Stanislavski's "general creative state".

vi. Energy

Energy has not been mentioned up to now as I wish to devote an entire subsection to this vital area of an actor's training and art. It is a subject which my research, both practical and academic, has led me to feel very strongly about, and not much has been written about it in academic terms. Although the concept of energy is discussed last in the tuning in process, it is, in fact, not a separate function or exercise, but is integral to the entire process of tuning in, as well as rehearsal and performance.

The term energy is often used in training situations but, in my experience, trainers are at a loss to explain what it is and does. It is however, vital that students have at least a superficial understanding of energy, to better be able to manipulate it to their needs. True, using energy is a normal and natural function for all people, but the actor needs to be *conscious* of this process to make it work for him.

The word energy does not, in this context, simply mean the term used in physics meaning the ability of matter to do work. Nor is does it mean mere force or vigour of speech or action. Energy, also called *chi*, *ki* or *prana* in Chinese, Japanese and Indian philosophies respectively, refers to the living force of the universe. All

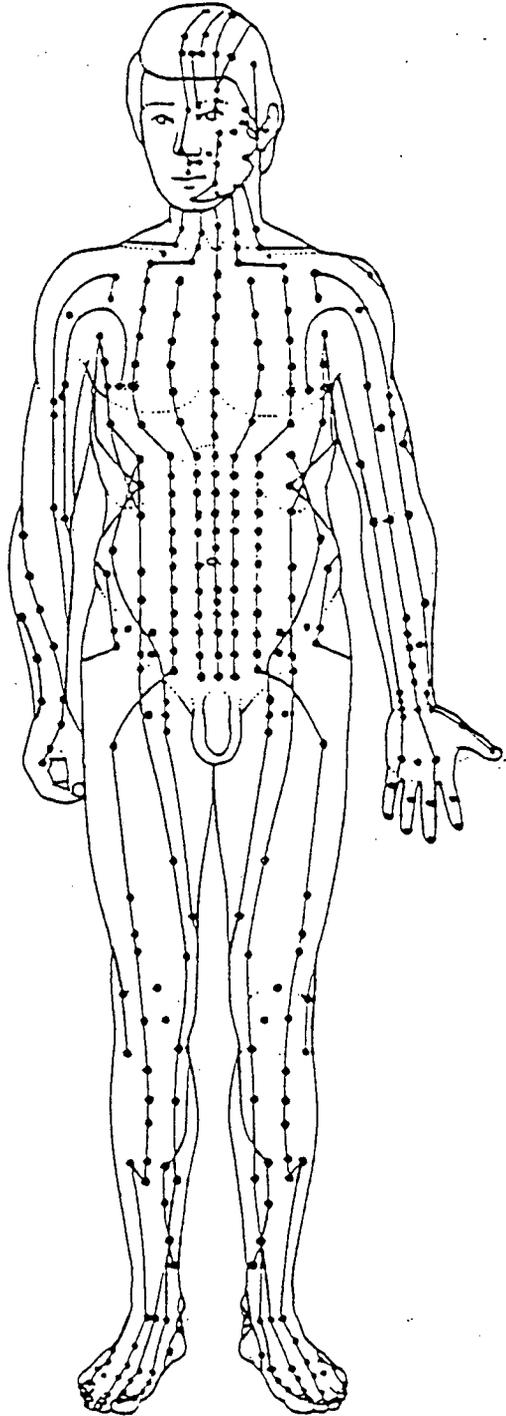
matter in the universe is energy, vibrating at different rates. Man can, and does, tap this universal energy, which gives him his life force. In The Tao of Sex, Health and Longevity by Daniel Reid (1993: 34), the author describes one form of *chi* (which he spells *chee*) as

yang-chee, which refers to vital energy in its volatile, kinetic, active form. It is the sort of energy that builds in the body during the excitement of sexual intercourse and is released in a burst during orgasm. It is associated with warmth, light and motion. *Yang-chee* is like the energy drawn from a battery in the form of electric current. It is absorbed directly from the atmosphere when breathing.

An attempt will not be made to discuss the many different kinds of energy in detail, not only because the scope of this paper does not allow for it, but also because I myself admittedly have a limited understanding of the full scope of *Chi*. It takes masters of the martial arts and gurus years, some say lifetimes, of study and experience to understand the nature of energy. Suffice it to say that Reid's definition begins to give some idea of what we are dealing with, although I disagree that energy is absorbed solely by breathing. It is generally believed in oriental philosophies that the whole body absorbs energy, but breath plays a great part in directing energy. Reid (1993: 178) suggests an exercise of deep diaphragmatic breathing,

for assimilating and circulating vital energy from the air and packing it into the organs, glands and muscles by internal compression. The mind should focus exclusively on incoming and outgoing airstreams and visualise energy moving through the meridians with each breath. After long practice, your mind will learn to lead energy rather than merely follow it through the system, thus realizing the Taoist precept that 'energy follows where the mind leads'.

Fig. 7: The meridian lines. (Inglis and West 1983: 121)



Doctor Frans Kromhout, applied kinesiologist, states in an unpublished paper that thought is the smallest unit of energy, just as one might call the atom the smallest unit of matter. Simply by the act of thinking about energy, and imagining it being directed into, through and out of the body, one may achieve a degree of energising. The ideal is to use thought as the prime director of energy, and eventually be able to master the flow, shape and intensity. The mind can be consciously trained to dictate the direction, intensity and form of energy.

Benedetti (1990: 28) writes,

In the martial arts a “pure” sense of center is taught which is the natural biomechanical centre of an undistorted body. This “ideal” center is deep within the body, in an area roughly three finger-widths below your navel. It is here that the breath (and therefore the voice) originates, as well as all large motions of the body. This is the literal center of gravity of your body, as shown by Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous drawing¹⁹.

You will want to develop a sense of your pure center, for it is from this center that your deepest impulses spring.

This centre is clearly marked on Benedetti’s drawings for standing alignment shown earlier. It is also in this area, according to oriental shiatsu (acupressure point therapy) practitioners, where energy is stored and from where it originates in the body. The area is called the *Hara*.

From here energy moves through and out of the body along a system of conductive lines known as *Meridians*, which were mentioned earlier in the quote from Reid’s The Tao of Health, Sex and Longevity. A diagrammatic representation (fig. 7), from The Alternative Guide to Health by Brian Inglis and Ruth West, shows twelve

¹⁹See Appendix H for Da Vinci’s Drawing.

meridian lines. Along these lines one may also see the twelve main groups of acupuncture. Inglis and West (1983: 131-132) report as follows:

Recently, some sophisticated research has been undertaken to see if the meridians can be traced in ways which will finally convince orthodox physiologists that they exist and are not, as Louis Lasagna claimed, "imaginary" and "non-existent". In a recent issue, the Los Angeles *Brain/Mind Bulletin* reported that a machine had been invented in Japan which reads the meridians through electrodes attached to the fingers and toes, providing information about the conditions to organs related to them - the Criteria being established during research on 5,000 subjects. The inventor of the machine, Hiroshi Motoyama, emphasises that the *chi* energy does *not* travel through the nervous system; his gadget demonstrates that "we possess non-physical properties and energies still largely unknown and uncharted by science".

What does all this mean to the director training an actor? Firstly, in the tuning in process, it is vital that the director makes the student *aware* of energy, that with each breath he can intensify and compress energy into his centre, and with an increased awareness of this centre of energy from which all movement originates, the actor will move better and have a sense of vitality, as he builds up a reserve of energy which he may use. Secondly, in aligning the body, the student needs to be made more aware of the importance of alignment as, if the body is out of alignment, so are the meridians, causing energy blocks and therefore impeded means of expression. Remember, energy can be manifest to the outside world in a number of ways: Benedetti (1990: 31-32) says a relaxed and aligned body

is ready to move and your energy is ready to flow spontaneously from your deepest center. This energy, flowing into the outside world, may take a variety of external forms: Its visible aspects are movements, its audible aspects are sounds and words, its psychological aspects are emotions. All of these are only different

modes of the same energy; any impulse may flow into any of these forms or into all of them simultaneously.

More importantly, however, I believe that all human beings can sense a flow of energy on a subliminal level (a very few can actually see it) and the constant cyclic flow of energy between an actor and his audience plays a major rôle in captivating an audience and getting them emotionally involved in the production. After all, as Hodge (1988: 171) quite correctly states,

Acting is energy transferred to an audience. This energy is really what the spectator has come to feel, what he wants to experience during an evening whether he knows it or not.

The creative state is very dependent on energy within the actor. Stanislavski (1959: 261 - 262) sensed this, although he did not quite have the terminology to articulate his thoughts.

... an actor turns to his spiritual and physical creative instrument. His mind, will and feelings combine to mobilize all his inner "elements"... Out of this fusion of elements arises an important inner state... that of the creative mood.

Sonia Moore, one of the leading authorities on the work of Stanislavski, writes in the foreword to her Training an Actor (1968: xii-xiii),

The Stanislavski System is neither a religious cult nor an aesthetic dissertation; it is the technique of an art. Every creative process demands great concentration of the artist's spiritual forces; the fact that an actor creates before his audience makes an especially difficult demand on his will power. The peculiarities of dramatic art, the exceptional conditions in which the actor's creative process takes place, were determined with astonishing precision by Stanislavski. Through his system, actors can consciously control

their imagination and emotions - their whole psychic and physical nature.

Given the “spiritual” nature of energy, it is very difficult for a director to help his students to actually experience and feel energy. It is almost sufficient simply to make the student aware of it, as the mind, or thought, is inextricably linked to energy, as stated earlier, and the more aware the student becomes of energy, the more effectively he will be able to direct and manipulate it.

Corollaries of this are, of course that his ability to relax and align his body will also improve. In addition to this, the director can remind the student throughout the rehearsal process, and performances, of the importance of energy as a means of communication with fellow actors and the audience. Any actor who has experienced a “dead” audience can identify with the feeling of a lack of energy flow between the stage and the auditorium. Benedetti (1990: 32) writes:

...consider the *cycle* of energy that flows from our center outward toward the world *and back again*. Whenever we try to do something, to achieve some objective - in short, whenever we *act* - we send energy flowing out from our center into forms of sound, speech or gesture²⁰ in the outer world. We then receive a *reaction* to our action, and this energy flows into us and touches our center, in turn eliciting a further reaction from us, and so on...

This sense of a cycle of energy is central to the Oriental martial arts, such as T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and study in these arts can be of great benefit to the actor.

²⁰And, I believe, “raw” energy; invisible to most, but I truly think perceptible on a subliminal level to all.

The director, then, could help the student by encouraging him to think of energy in terms of a cyclic process in which he continually absorbs and utilises energy, strengthening his performance and enhancing his communication skills.

Once again it must be mentioned that a study of this nature is of necessity, for the sake of clarity, divided into sections. Although the tuning in process is but a relatively small part of the production process as a whole, it clearly contains valuable practical and intellectual lessons for the actor. In fact, some of the most valuable lessons the actor will learn in terms of gaining complete control over the instruments of his trade - the mind, voice and body - were discussed in this section. These are by no means limited to this process alone, and the director might continue to refer to and refine the actor's understanding of breathing, relaxing, physical and vocal technique, focus and energy throughout the rehearsal process.

b. Blocking the Play

Cohen and Harrop (1984: 102) define blocking as follows.

Blocking is not synonymous with movement, although they are occasionally used interchangeably. (With confusing results). Characters may be blocked to sit around a table and not change their positions for an entire act - this is still blocking. *Movement*, as used here, refers to the major spatial changes as a character moves from one place on the stage to another - entering, crossing, standing, sitting, lying, exiting - and not to the character's individual movements - breathing, head scratching, moustache twirling - which are called *business*. *Blocking* refers to the placement and movement of all characters on stage at any time.

Strangely, they also write

In this one task there is complete freedom [for the director]. Blocking is the one duty of the director that has not traditionally been collaborative, and many directors still define the sum of their

responsibilities as blocking and taking occasional notes. (1984: 102)

I disagree entirely with the notion that blocking the play need not be collaborative, as I feel it is vital that the actor, especially the student actor, be encouraged to help with his own blocking. This encourages him to think creatively and develop an instinct for positioning and movement on stage. Not only that, but if a student has a hand in his own blocking, surely it will often be more natural to him, and help him with motivation for whatever movement or position he assumes?

This is not to say that the entire blocking process *must* be collaborative, as the director often has certain compositions or choreographed sequences in his head which he wants fulfilled. (cf. My earlier example of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124), in which the extras were choreographed in a fixed set of movements and gestures.) One must bear in mind, too, the novice student, who may have no feel for blocking and must be told exactly what to do and where to go. Like so many other aspects of the theatre, the student needs to develop an instinct for aesthetic composition and picturisation.

But for exactly that reason, blocking must be at least partially collaborative, allowing students their own input and scope for development. In fact, especially when working with more senior students, the actors might be encouraged to read through their lines in the first rehearsal and create their own blocking as they go along. After this initial rehearsal, they could go back and try to refine what they have done, perhaps with the director suggesting variations and sometimes changing what they have done completely.

In general, this process seems to work well, as the blocking is usually a direct result of the gut reactions of the actors, and is subsequently quite natural and well motivated. This is, of course, a question of preference, and many directors treat blocking very differently, prescribing every movement and gesture.

Although I personally do not like this approach, it does have its merits. In this case the actor is challenged to take a set of movements and gestures and “make them his

own". In other words, it is up to him to reconcile them with his character to make them appear natural and organic. This method can work well, and is also generally a faster process than allowing the actors to find their own blocking. The proviso is that the director has very carefully considered the options and drawn the blocking from the text, and not just arbitrarily prescribed blocking simply to get the job done as quickly as possible. In this case, it would of course be imperative that the director at least be approachable for discussion, so that the actor may, if he is really uncomfortable with any of the blocking, arrange a compromise.

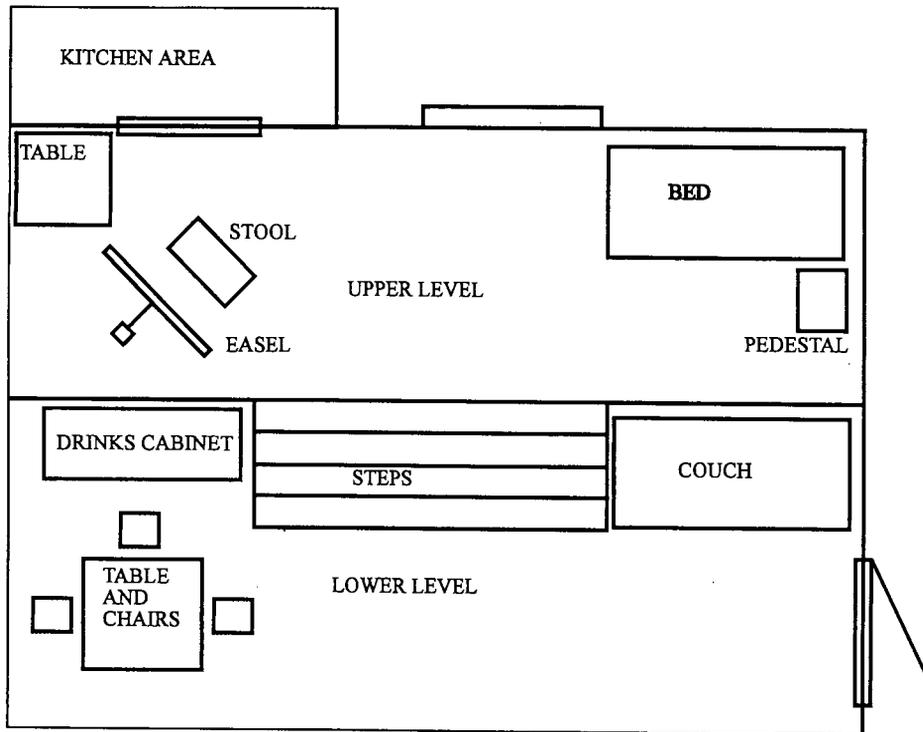
Hodge talks of "Organic Blocking" (1988: 72), which he defines as

the process of stimulating actors to image-making through the use of six visual tools: (1) groundplan, (2) composition, (3) gesture, (4) improvisation with properties, (5) picturization, and (6) movement. Its function is to help actors to discover dramatic action by "feeling" its inherent illustration.

The word organic here is used to denote that the blocking is not imposed on the actor, but comes from the play itself, the "organism". Together, the director and actors search for the most effective way of giving the play a physical form which will best serve the purposes of the action. The six tools mentioned are used as a means of director-actor communication, and could be viewed as actor stimulators. For the sake of brevity these six areas are condensed into three for discussion: (1) the groundplan, which was discussed earlier and will continue to be used as a means of orientation and stimulus for creativity in the rehearsal process (the groundplan is customarily marked out in tape on the floor in 1:1 proportions for the purposes of rehearsal), (2) composition and (3) picturisation, which encompasses gesture, movement and improvisation with properties²¹.

²¹I consider improvisation with properties to be optional. Although desirable when working with any given prop which may be used extensively and is unfamiliar to the actor, I do not feel it is essential.

Fig. 8: Set for Bartho Smit's Christine.



The *groundplan*, as stated earlier, can be seen as one of the primary tools of actor/director communication, and can be extensively used as a means of training in the blocking process. The points discussed earlier in the pre-rehearsal phase still, obviously, hold true, and the students are now given the opportunity to put the theory they have learnt into practice. They are now given a life size layout of the playing area as marked on the floor of the rehearsal space with which they can orientate and familiarise themselves, and the process of acquiring a “stage sense” continues.

This is enhanced, of course by the director’s use of the terminology involved and reference to specific areas incorporated into the groundplan. Perhaps on a more subliminal level (or conscious level, should the director point them out), many more points in terms of the nature and function of the groundplan design may be learnt. In my own production of Bartho Smit’s Christine (Hauptfleisch and Steadman 1987: 19-79), for instance, the set was divided into two main levels (see fig. 8).

The character of Christine is doubly represented in the play, as both a young Christine and an old Christine, and both, at times, interact with the character of Paul Harmse. The events presented as past and present are often, during the course of the play, presented concurrently, with the words and actions of the two Christine characters often duplicating each other or even seemingly interacting with each other. This can become quite confusing to the audience at times, and one of the most effective ways of clarifying the situation was to have the young and old Christines move on two different levels.

Even if one Christine crossed from one level to the other, the other Christine would do the same, bypassing each other on the steps which was used as a “no man’s land”. In these scenes, where the character of Paul would be speaking to both Christines, he would, as far as possible, either move from one level to the other (but these movements always had another purpose, for instance going to clean a paintbrush at the easel; in this way the movement was natural, and not motivated

simply by a need to go and speak to one of the Christines on her respective level), or he would be placed on the steps.

In this way, the divisions in the groundplan became not only demarcations of space, but also, in certain instances, demarcations of time. This became an enormous boon to the students, not only helping to clarify the action of the play, but also helping them to create meaningful blocking. Their understanding of the concepts and functions implicit in the design of the groundplan was also, I dare say, considerably enhanced. This is but one example of ways in which the groundplan may help with blocking, and, of course each individual production may afford different opportunities for actor training and have different bearing on the blocking process. I think it may be clearly seen, though, that the groundplan is integral to the blocking process, and can offer many opportunities for training the actor.

The purpose of *composition* on the stage is to discover and project basic relationships and attitudes within the play. Hodge (1988: 92-93) describes it as

the physical arrangement of actor-characters in a groundplan for the purposes of discovering dramatic action and of illustrating it in the simplest possible way through emphasis and contrast. *If the actors are made aware of basic physical relationships, they will perceive dramatic action in greater depth and be able to transfer this intensity to an audience.*

This is one of the areas in which blocking can be most useful to the student. There are, obviously, an infinite amount of variations for composition, and it would be impossible to annotate all of the different possibilities and meanings in composition. For any given moment in any play there may be any number of permutations for the actors on stage to consider. Composition is, after all a matter of artistic choice. There are, however, some instances that warrant mention, just to illustrate what may be learnt by the actors. Physical positions (e.g. *three quarters left, profile right* etc.) for individual actors have already been mentioned. These

physical positions take on different meanings in any given situation, which are further modified or changed completely depending on proximity of the characters to each other, and depth and height (in the case of a split-level stage) on the stage.

Where three or more characters are on stage, the tendency is to “triangulate”: position the characters in groups of three, in triangles. Here, once again, the possibilities are legion, and emphasis may be placed on a character, usually by placing him at the apex of the triangle, sometimes further upstage, and at others, further downstage than the other two characters. The important thing is that the actors be made aware of their respective positions and the potential meaning and expressive qualities of those positions. Here, again, the director acts as a facilitator and allows the student to discover through experience.

A reference to my own production of Christine (Hauptfleisch and Steadman 1987: 19-79) serves as a good example in this case as well. Composition refers to the spatial relationships between the characters at any given moment, and the meaning implicit therein. Take, for instance, a moment in the play in which Paul is lovingly engaged in a conversation with the young Christine: he was seated with her on the couch on the lower level, the two characters intimately close to each other. The older Christine was also on stage, obsessively cleaning the window, and she was positioned behind them on the upper level with her back to the audience.

The implicit meanings in this composition alone were multiple: firstly, we see the intimate, loving relationship between the young Christine and Paul. We also see an old Christine, far removed from Paul, her back turned to him and, subtly, to her younger self. As she speaks to Paul with their backs to each other, we also see an implied barrier in communication. Because of the convention set up within the blocking from the beginning of the play, the time difference between the two Christines is also implied. Just this one composition is imbued with meaning on many different levels.

In the case of my production of Christine (Hauptfleisch and Steadman 1987: 19-79), compositions and their meanings were discussed between myself and the actors

even more than might usually be the case, because the text itself can be very confusing to the audience as a result of the two concurrent time zones being depicted. The benefits to the actors in terms of understanding composition and its bearing on the dramatic action were profound. They learnt to think in terms of how spatial relationships can enhance the meaning of the text, which had a marked effect in their approach to the blocking process. I also feel they learnt a great deal with regard to the nature of dramatic action, and how the blocking of the play can lift the action off the page and transform it from what is sometimes a rather confusing text into a very expressive representation.

Picturisation begins in the blocking process and continues to be refined and intensified throughout the greater part of rehearsal. It is

detailed storytelling brought about by the combined use of composition (the arrangement of the group), gesture (the individual moving within his own sphere), and improvisation with properties (objects added to composition and gesture) *for the specific purpose of animating the dramatic action...*[It is] *a still picture containing detailed storytelling illustrations brought about by individualizing and personalizing composition through the use of gesture and properties.* (Hodge 1988: 131)

The process of picturisation draws heavily on the creativity of the actor. If the composition is well constructed and executed, it will suggest or illicit appropriate gesture and business for the actor. A personal preference of mine is to allow actors a lot of freedom in this respect, and I in fact expect creative work from them. If two compositions have been decided upon, and the actor asks, "How do I get from one to the other?", the director may be completely justified in saying, "That's your business." Similarly, should an actor repeatedly ask, "But why do I move here?", he might reply, "Because I said so." Perhaps a snide remark, but it is my belief that, should the director's interpretation of the text require a character to be in a certain place at a certain time, the actor should be able to use his own creative ability to motivate the movement.

Picturisation is one of the two major creative tasks of the actor (the other is characterisation, and each supports the other). The director, then, should do everything in his power to coax the actor into as much creativity as possible, allow the actor's imagination to roam free and then work with what the actor delivers.

In the blocking stage, however, the goal is to give the action a rough form or framework within which to work, and picturisation is merely experimental and tentative, and often quite pedestrian or simply functional at this stage. Picturisation continues to be refined and becomes more detailed throughout the rehearsal process. Although students may be encouraged to work creatively in the blocking stage, they should also be warned not to make any final creative choices yet, as they still have a lot to discover about the action and their respective characters. Aspects of actor training at this stage are largely limited to encouraging the actor to work creatively and explore his options with regard to gesture and the use of props. Through a process of suggestion and elimination, the director can guide the actor into the understanding of what would work on the stage, and what might be considered trite, *clichéd*, over the top or insufficient, for example. This is, of course, also production specific and changes not only from one production to another, but from one character to another.

In my production of Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124), for example, the character of Botard becomes quite passionate about the occurrence of rhinoceroses in the town and launches into a diatribe of how he plans to uncover the conspiracy which he perceives to be afoot. In the production, he ended up standing on top of his work desk, screaming at the top of his lungs and waving his pencil in the air. This would clearly be over the top in many circumstances. Even in the same production, the character of Daisy, who was portrayed very realistically in comparison with most of the other characters, would never have been accepted carrying out the same actions.

In this case, in fact, the actor himself was very reserved, and required a lot of coaxing and repetition of the scene before he eventually achieved what I envisaged. Here, the blocking process (and continuing into the intensification process) taught

the actor to explore new means of expression, the qualities of different kinds of gesture and the possibilities of the intensities at which they are performed.

Another important facet of the blocking process is that it once again affords the director the opportunity to teach the more inexperienced student certain stage techniques and conventions and terminology. Dean and Carra in their chapter, *Basic Technique for the Actor* describe in detail many such techniques, some of which are often quite pedantic and, some would say, old-fashioned.

However, it would seem sound policy to teach the student actor these techniques, as they help to develop “stage sense”, and are often quite valid - such as adjusting the position on stage to accommodate another actor (known as “dressing stage”), kneeling on the downstage knee to keep the body open to the audience, the correct (and least painful for the recipient) way to slap someone on stage, opening and closing doors with the upstage hand, sitting in chairs which face slightly upstage in such a way that the actor is still at least one quarter towards the audience - to name but a few at random.

c. Intensifying the Performance

Blocking, defined in the beginning of the previous section as the positioning and movement of the actors throughout the play, is only one function of the “blocking period”. Needless to say, a lot of time would be wasted if the actors focused only on this function during the blocking of the play, and a lot of creative work is done and artistic choices are made. Picturisation, for instance, although integral to the blocking process, is as linked (if not more so) to characterisation. Just as the blocking may change during the course of rehearsals, the picturisation may change as the text analysis continues and the characterisation grows.

Given the nature of this discussion and the fact that many different areas are being addressed, there is a necessary artificial division of this thesis into sections, but clearly the processes are all interlinked. In this section, the focus will be mainly on areas in which the director may increase the student’s awareness and understanding of the production process, and stimulate him to greater creativity, as it is here,

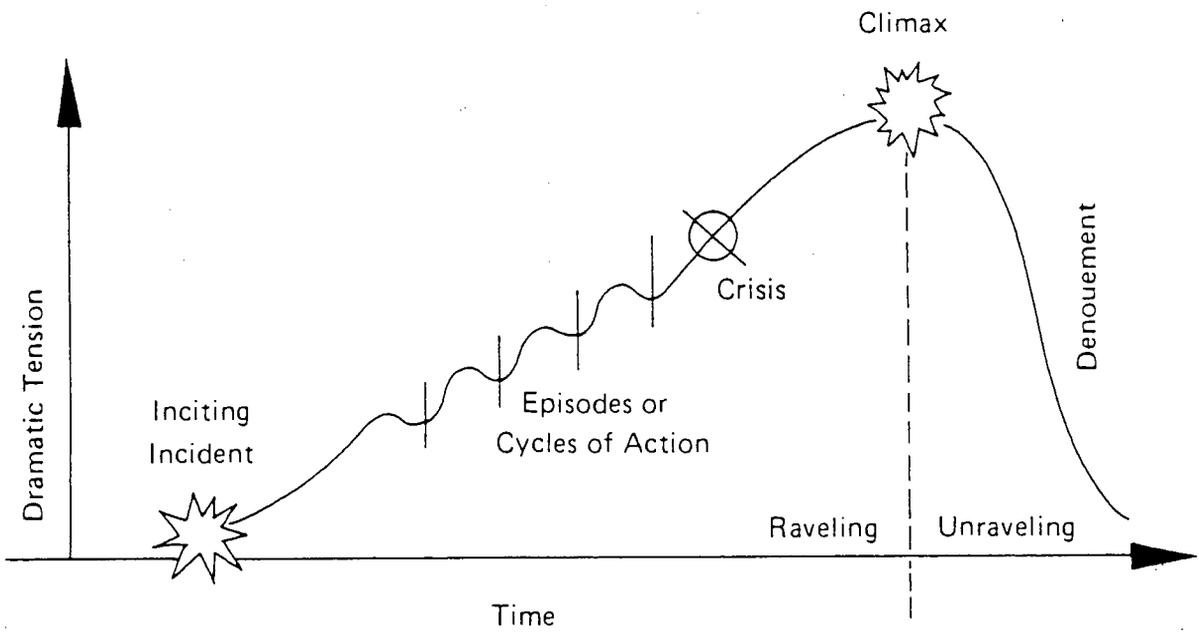
through picturisation, together with vocal and physical characterisation, that all of the foundations laid in the pre-rehearsal, blocking and tuning in processes come into play together. This is the area in which the student consolidates everything he has learnt up to now in the production process, and makes it work for him. He uses the knowledge and experience he has gained to hone and/or enhance his creative and expressive abilities. (That, it might be said, is a summary of the job of the actor: to *create* a character or representation in his mind, and then to *express* that creation dynamically through the tools of his trade - his voice and body.)

Intensifying the performance is also usually the part of rehearsal which takes the most time; in the professional theatre it is not unheard of to block the play in two days, then spend the next two or three weeks intensifying, with only a few days devoted to running the production before it opens, giving a total time of only three or four weeks (and sometimes even less).

In a training situation, depending on the magnitude of the production, an average of one week for pre-rehearsal work and blocking, four weeks of intensifying the performance and one week of running the show before opening seems more realistic. Once again, we are faced with the dilemma of time often being of the essence, but given the extra work required in a training production as opposed to a professional production, it is difficult to envisage a thorough training process in a shorter time.

Ironically, this section does not make up the bulk of this paper, but this is because, although the focus will be on certain aspects of the intensification process, this is not to say that the physical and mental techniques which have been discussed in the preceding sections can be forgotten or neglected. Clearly, the director continues throughout the rehearsal process to monitor and promote the student's technical competence and work approach through his notes to the actors. Aside, then, from continued refinement of picturisation, composition etc., the director may help the actor to intensify his performance on a number of levels:

Fig. 9: A graphic representation of the intensity of a play. (Benedetti 1990: 133)



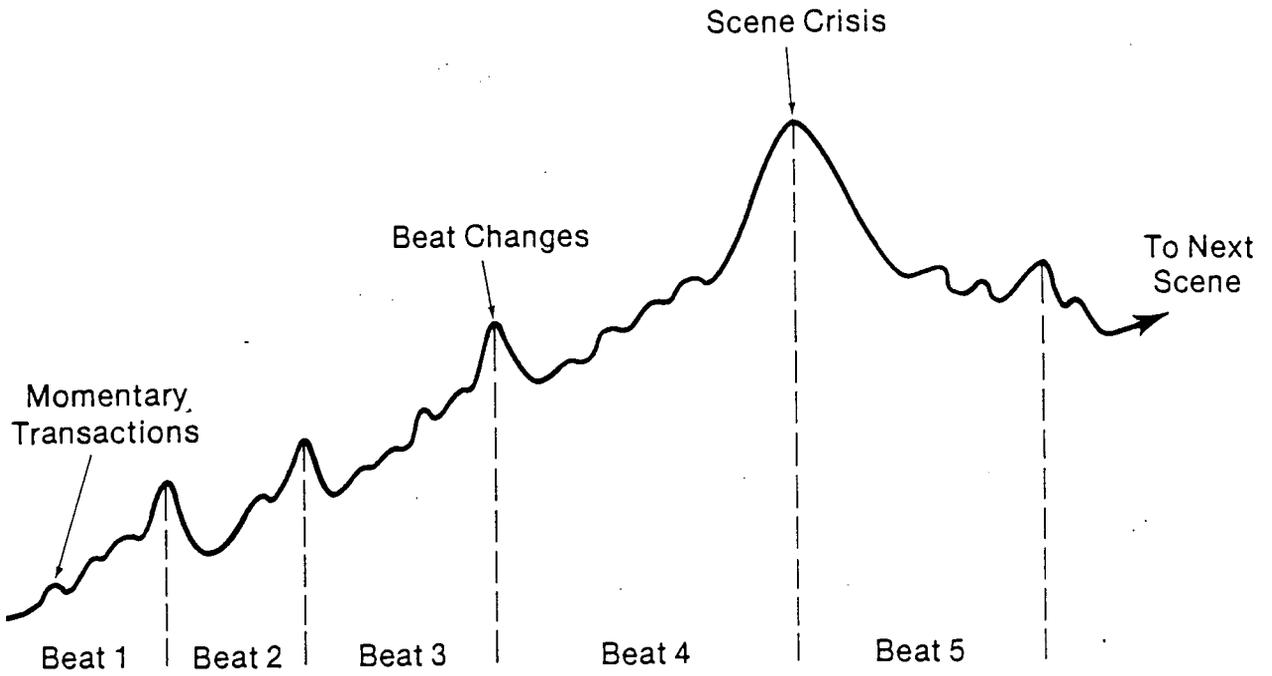
i. Further Text Analysis

By delving into the text in detail, the student is able to identify, from moment to moment, the options open to him in terms of expressing his creation on the stage. He is limited by only two things: the needs of the text and his imagination. So that he may break down the text into its smallest units, the director could help the student to understand the structure of a drama. Benedetti gives us the accompanying diagram (fig. 9) to depict a typical play structure, in terms of intensity over a period of time.

Here, the drama begins with an incident which incites the characters to action. The dramatic action moves the drama to a point of crisis, which builds to a climax. There is usually a short period in which the climax subsides or the conflict is resolved, known as the *denouement* (unravelling of the knot). Some plays, however, do not have this denouement, such as Steven Berkoff's Greek (Berkoff 1989: 140-183) which ends at the height of the final climax. Benedetti's diagram shows episodes of action which make up the whole of the dramatic action.

The structure of each of these episodes or cycles is virtually identical to that of the play as a whole. Any given scene consists of beats, each with its own minor climax, and these beat climaxes build to the climax and denouement of that scene. Each beat, in turn, consists of momentary transactions between characters, which follow much the same pattern. Thus, moments are smaller units of beats which in turn make up scenes which make acts which make up the play as a whole. Even if a play does not have literary divisions into scenes and acts, this is true of most successful playscripts. In fig. 10, we see Benedetti's diagrammatic representation of a scene. (Note that he defines the parameters of the beat as sections between one momentary climax and another. The "denouement" of these climaxes are included in the next beat, and may be only a single word, action or even simply a pause in the performance. This division makes it easier for the director and actors to identify the start and finish of each beat.)

Fig. 10: Compound events: A diagrammatic representation of a scene. (Benedetti 1990: 134)



A director may try to guide the student through a process of analysing each scene in which he appears systematically, and in detail. By leading the student through a detailed analytical process in the course of each scene, he gains an even further understanding of the dramatic action which in turn manifests itself in his picturisation and characterisation. As a brief example, let us look at a part of a scene from Die Renosters (Smit 1984: 30-124): the scene is Berenger's work offices, and the boss, Mr. Papillon has been ranting about a certain Mr. Boeuf, who has not arrived for work.

(Op hierdie oomblik kom mevrou Boeuf binne. Gedurende die voorafgaande gesprek kon 'n mens haar haastig die trappe sien opkom. Sy het die deur vinnig oopgemaak. Sy is geheel en al uit- asem en verskrik.)

BERENGER: Hier is mevrou Boeuf.

DAISY: Goeiemôre, mevrou Boeuf.

MEV. BOEUF: Goeiemôre, meneer Papillon. Môre, Juffrou. Môre Menere.

PAPILLON: Waar's u man? Wat gaan met hom aan? Is dit deesdae vir hom te veel moeite om te kom werk?

MEV. BOEUF (*uit asem*): U moet hom asseblief verskoon... my man verskoon... Hy's na sy familie vir die naweek. Hy't 'n ligte griep aanval.

PAPILLON: Ag so? Hy't 'n ligte griep aanval?

MEV. BOEUF (*hou 'n papier na die hoof uit*): Hy sê so in sy telegram. Hy hoop om Woensdag terug te wees... (*sy wil flou word.*) 'n Glas water asseblief... en 'n stoel...

(Berenger neem sy eie stoel na die middel van die verhoog, en sy sak daarop neer.)

PAPILLON (TOT DAISY): Bring vir haar 'n glas water.

DAISY: Ek bring.

(Sy gaan haal 'n glas water en laat die vrou drink gedurende 'n gedeelte van die volgende dialoog.)

DUDARD (*tot Papillon*): Sy moet 'n swak hart hê.

PAPILLON (*tot mev. Boeuf*): Dis nou wel lastig dat meneer Boeuf nie hier is nie, maar dis nog geen rede vir u om ineen te stort nie.

MEV. BOEUF (*met moeite*): Dis... dis omdat... 'n renoster my gejaag het... van die huis af tot hier...

BERENGER: Het hy een of twee horings?

BOTARD: Julle sal maak dat ek my 'n papie lag!

DUDARD (*verontwaardig*): Gee haar 'n kans om te praat!

MEV. BOEUF (*maak 'n poging om eksak te wees; sy wys met die vinger in die rigting van die trap*): Hy's daar onder in die ingang. Dit lyk of hy met die trappe wil opkom.

(Op hierdie oomblik word 'n lawaai gehoor. Die trap vou inmekaar onder 'n geweldige gewig. Van onder af word angstige trompet geluide gehoor. As die digte stof wat deur die ineenstorting veroorsaak is, verdwyn, hang die bordes in die lug.)

DAISY: O goeiste!

MEV. BOEUF (*sit met haar hand op haar hart*): O... O...

(Berenger haas hom na mevrou Boeuf toe, vrywe haar wange, laat haar water drink.)

BERENGER: Bly kalm, mevrou Boeuf!

(Smit 1984: 70-71)

The scene²² continues until Mrs. Boeuf recognises the rhinoceros as her husband, who has been transformed. She flings herself out of the first floor window, landing on the rhino's back and riding him home.

Let us look at a hypothetical rehearsal from the point of view of Mrs. Boeuf's performance. The stage directions have told us that she is hurrying up the steps

²²I refer to the so-called "French Scene", which is usually delineated by the entrance and exit of any one character, in this case, Mrs. Boeuf.

into the offices, and that her first lines are spoken out-of-breath and frightened. The first moment we see the actress, she is ascending the stairs. From the given circumstances, we know *how* she is doing this. The actress, through picturisation, chooses the means she sees fit to express that hurried, frightened appearance. Perhaps she suggests that she look over her shoulder on her way up the stairs, as she is being chased. The director may decide it would be better not to pre-empt the startling revelation that she is being pursued by a rhino. The text, he argues, calls for a measure of surprise for the comedy content of the exposition to be effective. For argument's sake, a creative choice is made in the seemingly most insignificant of moments and a lesson is learned in comic timing.

Let us decide that the mini-climax of the first beat of the episode is Mrs. Boeuf's threat to keel over: "n Glas water asseblief... en 'n stoel...". the actress is guided into building up to that moment from her entrance. Perhaps she begins her lines with quite a low intensity and progressively builds in volume to that point. She experiments, and finds that it would be better for her to isolate the climactic moment by saying the lines, giving a brief pause, then actually collapsing. This in turn prompts her co-actors to catch and support her while a chair is being fetched. Her "ineenstorting", and the use of the chair is textual, and justified, so here we see how she uses the text to detail and refine her performance. This, in turn, adds to the picturisation of her co-actors. The process is thus also mutually beneficial. The danger is there that the actors become too involved in this moment, so the director reminds her that she must still build to the higher climaxes of the following beats: the exposition that a rhino is chasing her, and then, the collapse of the staircase landing and her apparent heart attack at the end of the "episode". So she holds back for this moment, and tops the vocal intensity with each mini-climax. The student is learning to understand the structural features of the drama. And so it continues.

Many of these choices, of course, will be intuitive, and one does not, in practice, make conscious decisions for each moment, but it remains important for the student to understand this process, so that he has the knowledge and ability to make

deductions and choices consciously on this level, should the need arise. This leads, eventually, to a disciplined and repeatable performance, as little is left to chance because the actor knows exactly what he will do from moment to moment. Rather than restricting the actor, this frees him to commit fully to his performance, as there is no doubt or trepidation as to what will happen next. Obviously, performances will differ from night to night: a co-actor delivers a line in a subtly changed way, which opens a new interpretation and/or elicits a slightly different response. The fact remains that the actor, through detailed study of the text, will be so confident and secure in his rôle that it will not matter. He will remain focused within his character.

By analysing the action in such fine detail, the student is not only achieving a greater understanding of the dramatic action, but is placed in a position to make artistic choices in terms of characterisation and picturisation in order to best animate this action and project the meaning to the audience. Each choice he makes may hold new lessons about the nature of his profession (for instance, the example mentioned earlier of comic timing), and, guided by his director, his ability to think and act creatively is constantly being expanded.

Throughout the process of detailed analysis, however, the director might constantly remind the actors that the emphasis is still on the supremacy of the text. All of the creative decisions made at this stage must remain subservient to the needs of the text. The student learns to identify the *dramatic objective* of each moment, beat and scene and look at it in terms of how it helps to achieve the *super objective* of the play. It must also be remembered that each character has a specific purpose, or dramatic objective, in any given (well written) play, as well as a character objective of its own. There is a difference between the two: Mrs. Boeuf's dramatic objective is to introduce the idea that the rhino's are, in actual fact, people who have been transformed (*conformed?*), and to depict how easily people are seduced into wanting to be a rhinoceros. Her character objective, however, might be "to love, protect and help my husband in any way possible." The character objective

needs to be personalised: the actor must make it his own and build his character on it. Of identifying and personalising the character objective, Benedetti writes,

We can summarize [Willy Loman's²³ character objective]²⁴ as "to prove myself worthy by earning money and respect"... Since the [character objective] of most characters is fairly "universal"... is usually not difficult; like Willy Loman, we all want to be thought of as worthy, and we can all "identify" with Willy on this basis, however much we can see that Willy's way of pursuing self-esteem is mistaken. (1990: 143-144)

By understanding and bearing in mind the character objective, the objectives of each scene and how they help to achieve the super objective, the student automatically begins to feel the flow of the sequence of events as depicted in the play, and although he has broken down the text into very small units, he is now in a far better position to maintain a through-line of action in his rôle. Each creative decision he makes, in conjunction with and under the guidance of the director, will be directly supportive of the script, and therefore all the more consistent and believable.

ii. Characterisation

As Benedetti (1990: 234-235) advises the actor,

character grows out of action. You don't need to worry about "being the character" first and then doing things "because that's what my character would do"; instead, *do* the things your character does in the way that they do them, and see who you become.

²³From Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman.

²⁴I substitute the phrase "character objective" for Benedetti's word "superobjective" to avoid confusing character objective with Stanislavski's concept of the super objective of the play.

Every role will suggest experiences and behaviors similar to those you already know, and you will certainly want to use these established connections; but every role will also offer the possibility of reaching out into *new* modes of experience; of extending you into a new state of becoming. You possess a vast personal potential; if you can engage your own energy in your character's actions, and open yourself to their experiences and relationships within their given circumstances, you will find your own energy being transformed under the influence of those specific experiences.

This is the most exciting aspect of the actor's creative process.

Sound advice, to be sure, but oversimplified, to say the least. While characterisation is one of the most exciting aspects of the creative process, it is also perhaps the most demanding and time-consuming. In fact, many characterisations continue to grow and be refined well into the run of a production.

Stanislavski cites many different aspects of characterisation in Building a Character (1986: Contents page), including "Dressing a Character; Types; Making the Body Expressive; Plasticity and Motion; Restraint and Control; Diction; Intonations and Pauses; Accentuation; Tempo-Rhythm in Movement; Speech Tempo-Rhythm". These are only in terms of what Stanislavski calls the "External Theatrical State" (cf. the diagram in Appendix A). Aspects of the "Inner Theatrical State" such as internal characterisation (or subtext), emotion memory, internal tempo-rhythm etc. (cf. Appendix A), as by and large set out in An Actor Prepares (Stanislavski 1959) also come into play.

The order in which these aspects are incorporated into the characterisation is largely a matter of choice on the part of the student and/or director, but it is clear that is a long, gradual and complicated process. Perhaps Benedetti's admonition "not to worry" is merely a caveat to the student not to get weighed down by too much theory, and just to get on with the job? Be that as it may, the director does

need to lead the actor through a thorough process of character building and refining.

A great deal of the work discussed up to now assists the student in building a characterisation. By this stage, he would have a clear idea of the psychology of the character as a result of his text analysis, and would have begun outwardly expressing the thoughts and motivations of his character in the blocking process. Through tuning in, his mind, body and voice is primed to tackle a detailed characterisation.

As stated earlier, characterisation is augmented and developed by picturisation, given circumstances, personal creative choices, vocal interpretation, etc. Clearly, the choices a student makes in terms of characterisation are not necessarily a process on their own, but are influenced by many other factors from the time of the first reading of the play. Characterisation, conversely, may also have an effect on these other factors. I believe it is pretty much a case of, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Once again, to discuss certain aspects of characterisation, the need arises to artificially place them in a sub-section of their own. In practice, however, the physical and vocal characterisations of an actor would obviously be allowed to grow in much the same way that the production grows - organically, according to the needs of the production, the inspiration of the actor and the creative input of the director.

As the student studies the given circumstances in the play, beat by beat, sense of the character, which should already be reasonably well developed from the read-through and blocking, becomes further refined and detailed. There are two ways of allowing the character to grow within the actor. Some actors like to work from the inside out (internal-external), where he first tries to find the emotional truth of the character, feeling what the character feels, and letting the emotions manifest themselves physically in the voice and body.

Others prefer an external-internal method, where they find the physical properties of the character first, and perhaps a specific vocal quality. They feel secure in that they have something concrete on which to build, and find a sense of reality in the physical being of the character. The emotional qualities follow as a natural development of the character.

Although Stanislavski is famed for largely advocating the internal-external method, he also recognized the value of external-internal approach. In Creating a Role (1965: 245), he says it is

better to begin your creative work on a part with what is accessible, that is to say physical actions... Following that action, whatever is accessible to your feelings at the time will naturally emerge, in harmony with your body.

On the other hand, Benedetti writes

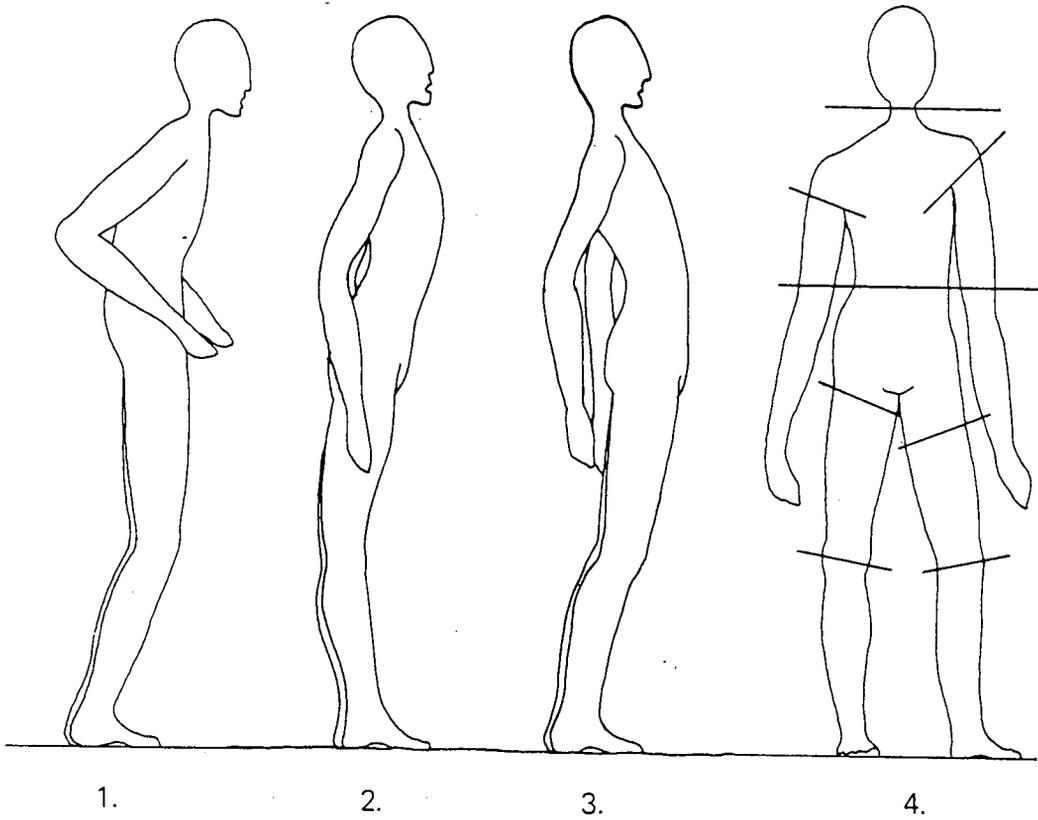
[Psychological character traits] are concerned with the process of thought which is the antecedent of action. As Oscar Brockett pointed out, "The psychological is the most important level of characterization²⁵." It is the level that justifies all physical and social characteristics.

Whichever method of working the actor chooses (and it may even be a synthesis of the both external-internal and internal-external), the director would need to support, guide, suggest and expand any creative choices, helping to select and refine what works best within the action.

In the case of novice students, the director may want to prescribe and teach a certain method of working in any given production, as it often happens that, left to their own devices, an inexperienced student does not know where to begin and is

²⁵No reference is given for the origin of the quote.

Fig. 11: Basic character alignments.(Benedetti 1990: 168)



overwhelmed by the magnitude of his task. The result is a superficial and inconsistent characterisation. Oscar Brockett (1974: 39-40) identifies four levels on which the director may guide the actor's characterisation: Physical, social, psychological and moral. These levels correlate with our earlier examination of the given circumstances, and once again point out the importance of the characterisation arising as an organic process from the text.

There is also a need for the director to teach economy of characterisation. Different characters in the play will each be built up to different extents by the playwright. A spear-carrier in King Lear will hardly need to be as fully characterised as Lear himself. This is not to say that the student should be less committed to his character - economy of characterisation means that each character must be *as fully-rounded as he needs to be to fulfil his dramatic function*.

As the growth of the psychological, social and moral aspects of the character have by and large been dealt with in the text analysis process, let us look now at the physical characterisation.

There are certain techniques which the director may teach the student in choosing a physical characterisation. Earlier, we discussed working through a state of neutrality in order to be able to assume a different physicality. The actor may achieve this, once again by altering his state of mind. If he thinks of a different centre from which the body moves, his physical state will automatically change. Fig. 11, from The Actor at Work shows some typical centre shifts for characterisation.

The first body, which features rounded shoulders and back, can have two very different qualities. When it is based on a low energy level, it is called the *oral* body. The chest is collapsed, the arms express yearning. The legs are weak, making the body unstable and poorly grounded. Aggressive energies at the rear are blocked, and a great deal of grief is held in the pit of the stomach.

On the other hand, when this structure is based upon a high energy level, it is called *masochistic*. The shoulders are rounded because of the overdevelopment of the muscles in the upper body, giving a gorilla-like hulking aspect. The bound-in aggressions of this type are turned inward upon the self; notice that the energy pathway along the back begins to approach a circle.

The second body is sometimes called the “militaristic character” because it resembles the stance of a soldier at attention. It is the most hostile of all alignments. The shoulders are thrown back and an enormous amount of anger is stored in the rigid area between the shoulder blades, the result of a long pattern of inhibited striking. This body is firmly rooted but so rigid in response that it is awkward, even mechanical. Aggressive energies stored in the back dominate, and the tender areas in the front of the body (chest and gut) are made hard. Small wonder that we train soldiers to stand in this way and to not think for themselves.

The third body is clearly belly-centered. This “heavy” character responds with great equanimity and could be called the “aw shucks” body. We usually think of such characters as unaggressive (the sway back blocks the aggressive energies of the rear body) but jolly and sentimental (as the preponderance of frontal energies would indicate).

The last body is called *schizoid*. Here the parts of the body at all the major joints are disassociated so that the person is literally “in pieces” and, as we say, “the right hand doesn’t know what the left is doing”. The head is often cocked in a bird-like way. This body is very unstable and poorly grounded; it lacks grace in movement. (Benedetti 1990: 168-169)

These are by no means the sum total of all the options open to the actor, but they give some idea of the permutations possible by shifting the centre and altering energy intensity or dynamics. There is, however a certain paradox involved in shifting the centre. Within the externally unaligned body the actor must, as far as possible, maintain his inner relaxation. Although the flow of energy will be adversely affected, and movement will be impeded, this will be a desired effect, and will contribute to the characterisation.

But the student should still experience an ease of movement and relaxation within this body or he will become too tense to perform his rôle properly and will become tired very quickly. This is even more true of drastic physical characterisations such as Shakespeare's Richard III.

The key is, as mentioned in the section on warming up the body, efficiency of effort to achieve the desired effect. In a relaxed body, the student will use only the muscles necessary to transform his physical appearance and will not over-exert himself. It is a delicate balance which must be maintained, and it is up to the director to dissuade the actor from a hypertensive physical characterisation.

Vocal characterisation, another aspect of the physical characterisation, must be approached with caution. If the actor tries to change the natural quality of his voice, perhaps making it very gruff, for example, he would obviously have to be warned not to damage his voice in the process. Hasty choices in the beginning stages of rehearsal may lead to disphonia or even aphonia²⁶ after just one or two rehearsals. In such a case, the director and the actor in question could discuss why that choice was made, and then try to find an alternative which could approximate the same vocal imagery. For instance, if a whispery, rasping voice to indicate old age hurts the throat, it might be replaced with a less strenuous timorous, higher pitched voice, depending on the emotive qualities that needed to be brought out.

²⁶Vocal aberration or loss of voice, respectively.

In terms of voice pattern, as opposed to vocal quality, there are obviously innumerable options open to the actor. Accents, speech rhythms and patterns, tonal differences: these all can be experimented with and used very effectively in any number of combinations to enhance a character, but like specific picturisation choices, these depend on the creative faculties of the student, and there is no right or wrong, as long as the meaning of the dialogue is not sacrificed.

Finally, with regard to vocal delivery of the lines, surely there is no right or wrong in this case either? A director may see a brilliant performance of a student and think, "I would have said that line differently." Of course that does not necessarily make his performance any better or worse than the director's would have been. Just creatively different.

In some of my own productions, though, I have found that a problem arises when teaching a student who is acting in a language other than their mother-tongue, or in the case where a student simply has no "ear" for when the rhythms and inflections of his lines fail to convey the intended meaning of that line. Such a student might be stimulated to greater creativity over a long period of time by means of intensive classwork, but there are no real short-term solutions to the problem, short of teaching a student a series of inflections which he has to learn by rote. Having to do this would be a great pity, because it implies a stifling of creativity, and, should the actor become frustrated, it could result in a negative attitude towards the work.

One student in a production I directed had this kind of problem. No matter how many times I made him rehearse the (short) scene, he simply was not credible in terms of vocal delivery. As Cicely Berry (1984: 122) states in her Voice and the Actor,

you can never give anyone an inflection because you will destroy what is particular between that person and the text.

One can possibly only advise the student that

Listening accurately is one of the most important factors in using the voice fully, for the accuracy with which we listen relates directly to how we respond vocally. (Berry 1984: 123)

Speaking lines convincingly is perhaps solely dependent on the natural ability of the actor, and the age-old question arises as to whether one can teach a student to act if he has no innate talent. In this case, I found that the only short-term solution for the problem was to focus on his physical characterisation, and help him to make that as successful as possible, so that he was at least learning on other levels.

Certainly a sensitivity to vocal delivery can be developed, but if such a sensitivity is lacking in a student, this is inevitably a long and arduous process, best dealt with in voice and speech classes over the years of the student's studies.

Similarly, in terms of mastery of the physical body as an expressive tool, there can really be no substitute for regular movement classes in which the student can systematically increase his suppleness, stamina and sensitivity to the expressive qualities of the body.

Given the topic of this thesis, this may seem a contradictory statement, but I believe that in these two areas - training the physical tools of the actor: the voice and body - there is a necessity for simple hard work. Like any muscular activity, the muscles involved need to be trained with comprehensive exercises, and clearly time constraints in a production process precludes exhaustive repetition of technical exercises.

In the process of characterisation in production, however, the student has an opportunity to consolidate what he has been learning to do with his voice and body in class, and the director-trainer can identify fields in which the student needs help and practice.

iii. Rhythm and Tempo

The rhythm in a play is a difficult concept to define, and once again, the director-trainer needs to facilitate an understanding so that the actor may begin to develop

an instinctive affinity for rhythm, in order to allow the play to flow in an organic, natural way. Dean and Carra (1980: 221) write:

Rhythm is an experience we receive when a sequence of impressions, auditory or visual, has been ordered into a recurrence of accented groups²⁷. This experience is marked by a willingness to adjust ourselves emotionally and muscularly so as to conform with the accented groups we see or hear. Dependent upon the intensity of the impressions our experience is expressed by degrees of emotional and muscular reaction ranging from pure inner feeling to bodily movement.

Two special features are common to all rhythms - vitality and power of attraction. The pulsing quality in rhythmic experience is related to two fundamental life processes in nature. One is the beating of the heart, the other is the breathing of the lungs... Things that are rhythmic are associated with these processes, and thus have vitality.

Clearly, then, an awareness of the rhythm of and within the play is important to the actor, not only so that he may feel comfortable and "in synch" with this rhythm, but also from the point of view of the audience. If the play has a definite rhythm, whether it be consciously or subconsciously felt, it has a direct bearing on how involved with the performance the audience member becomes and how effectively it carries him along. The rhythmic beat of the play is, obviously, the cyclic series of mini climaxes described by Benedetti, and each beat and scene will have rhythmic variations of its own.

Rhythm has two distinct features by which we may recognise it. One is pattern. The beat must obviously be recurrent, or we will not perceive it. The other is tempo, or

²⁷cf. Benedetti's breaking down of the script into smaller, similarly structured units as described in *i. Further Text Analysis* above.

the rate of the beats. Distinct understanding of rhythm gives the actor and director a basis for control of the dynamics of the performance. The audience experiences rhythm and tempo through certainly two, and I believe three, media: obviously, they see physical manifestations within a performance, they hear the rhythm and tempo in the dialogue and how it is spoken, and thirdly, I believe they perceive it on an energy or vibrational level. One would hardly think of the rhythm of a play as something to tap one's feet to: perhaps it is more accurate to say that one experiences rhythm and tempo almost entirely subliminally.

It is very seldom that the audience member consciously notices how the rhythm of a play draws him in, and how the tempo holds his attention, and can actually change his breathing and heart rate. (Perhaps it is because they function in this way that rhythm and tempo are such difficult concepts to teach.) As Dean and Carra point out, both the pattern and the tempo of the rhythm have connotative values, and assist in manipulating the emotions of an audience.

Although it is perhaps rather pedantic, and more applicable to music, the following list gives some idea of connotations rhythmic pattern may hold for an audience.

The number of beats and the variations in the placement of the accent are factors of pattern which affect the ultimate mood impression...

a. Three beats to a measure convey gentleness, smoothness, restfulness, quiet. An accent on the first beat gives a sense of formality and definiteness; accent on the second beat gives a lilt and glide; accent on the third beat gives a lift.

b. Four beats to a measure, and its multiples, convey regularity, heaviness, impressiveness, or even a steady dying force. Accent on the first beat gives a downward, heavy, deadening effect. Accent on the fourth beat is heavy, deeply impressive, and then has a lift. The accent on the third beat is lighter than the others and has a flow and lift.

c. An odd number of beats to a measure such as five and seven convey irregularity, uneasiness, restlessness, or, perhaps, the unreal.

d. Six beats to a measure may give a sense of grandeur when the accent is on the last beat, or of excitement and tension when the accent is on the fifth beat. (Dean and Carra 1980:224-225)

In the dramatic performance, the rhythmic patterns are not as perceptible as in music, and the effect is more subliminal. Tempo, however is far clearer, to the spectator and may have some of the following connotations:

1. Slow tempo conveys solemnity, mystery, wonderment, sublimity, apathy, submission, and all such moods that we associate with deeper feelings. Slow tempo adds weight and significance to a movement or a thought.

2. Medium tempo, which is normal for activity, is rational, self-controlled, calm, composed, sober, and serious.

3. Fast tempo conveys animation, fancy, gayety, irritability; excitement, tension; any kind of strenuous action finds true expression in accelerated movement or utterance. (Dean and Carra: 225)

Rhythm does not only establish the mood of any given scene, but, seen in a broader perspective, it also defines the type of play. Every play, despite the multitude of variations of rhythm in performance, has a fundamental pattern and tempo of its own. Comedy, melodrama, tragedy, farce: each may also be recognised by the connotative values of their fundamental rhythms.

Dean and Carra (1980: 230-234) list some of the functions of rhythm as

1. Establishing mood.
2. Establishing the kind of play.

3. Establishing character.
4. Conveying an impression of locale and atmosphere.
5. Conveying a change in scene.
6. Tying the actors together into a co-ordinated group.
7. Bringing the audience together.
8. Tying together and blending all parts of the play.

Having listed numerous effects and uses of tempo and rhythm, it must be added that Stanislavski recognised the nature of tempo and rhythm as being difficult to grasp in theory: in Building a Character (1986: 184), Stanislavski's fictitious Director, Tortsov, reads a list of tempo and rhythm formulas to his students.

"Did you understand that?" he asked when he had finished reading.

We admitted with embarrassment that we had not understood anything he had read.

"Without criticizing too adversely any Scientific formulas," Tortsov went on, "I imagine at present, when you have not yet experienced in your own persons the effect of tempo-rhythm, these formulas will be of little practical value to you.

"On the contrary, an intellectual approach might easily keep you from easy, carefree enjoyment of tempo-rhythm on the stage, from playing with it like a toy. Yet that is just what you should do with it, especially in the early phases. It will be bad if you begin to squeeze rhythm out of yourselves, or if you knit your brows to solve the intricacies of its complex variations as though it were a brain teasing mathematical problem.

While it is difficult to teach an actor to be sensitive to rhythm and tempo (with regard to both speech and movement), the director must at least try to make the actor aware of them, perhaps even through a series of improvisations allowing the student to play with it, as it plays such a vital rôle in intensifying any performance. Generally, however, it is something that is only acquired with time and experience.

iv. More Improvisation and Workshopping

The director may further help actors to intensify their performance with more improvisation and workshopping. For the purposes of this discussion, let us define our terminology: a distinction could be made between improvising and workshopping in that there is no fixed goal and subtext in an improvisation, but in a situation where actors reconstruct a set scene from a production for exploration purposes, there is a set pattern to what will transpire, and the criterion for examination of the process is shifted. Improvisation is far less controlled; anything can happen.

Caruso and Clemens, whose book The Actor's Handbook of Improvisation consists mostly of detailed improvisation exercises (workshop exercises) based on existing plays, films or real life reports, identify nine areas of problems with which the actor may be confronted (1992: xi): Relationships; Confrontation/Conflict; Climactic Moment/Discovery; Subtext; Solo Moment; Unusual Circumstances; Fantasy; Theatre of the Absurd; and Special Problems. Here, I provide one exercise of theirs, simply as a model for a possible structure: this particular exercise deals with Relationship:

Source: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, a play by Christopher Hampton, based on the novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos

Characters: one male and one female: the Vicomte de Valmont, a good-looking, sophisticated man in his mid- to late thirties. He is amoral and manipulative. Madame de Tourvel, a woman in her late twenties/early thirties. She is a young lady renowned for her religious devotion and the happiness of her marriage

Place: The sitting room of Madame de Tourvel

Background: Valmont, on a bet with his friend the Marquise de Merteuil, a woman as amoral and manipulative as he (and a former lover to boot), has successfully seduced the virtuous young Madame

de Tourvel into having an affair with him. Her husband has long been out of town. What started as a game between Valmont and Merteuil has become more than he bargained for because Valmont has violated his own cardinal rule and fallen in love with his intended victim, Madame de Tourvel. Valmont and the Marquise, having been born pre-revolutionary aristocrats, have nothing better to do with their time than play games of deceit and sexual manipulation, a sort of living chess game with real human beings as the pawns.

Situation: So that he does not become a laughingstock in the eyes of his friend the Marquise, Valmont must bring to a speedy end his messy emotional entanglement with Madame de Tourvel. Under the ambiguous pretext of it being “beyond his control”, he tells her (lying through his teeth) that he has become bored with the relationship and wishes to end it. She is understandably shocked by this news, for she has risked everything in allowing herself to love this man. His announcement devastates her. Valmont, however is no less devastated himself; but, unlike her, he cannot openly show his true feelings. He has, with this single act, given up his one real chance at happiness for the sake of personal vanity and social acceptance by the Marquise (herself a desperately unhappy woman).

Comments: It must be understood that the Marquise holds Valmont in an almost hypnotic spell, which has its roots in their past relationship and divests him of control over his own life. In one sense, then, what Valmont so callously does to Madame de Tourvel, truly *is* “beyond his control”. (Caruso and Clemens 1992: 13-14)

The structure, as may be seen, is concise and to the point and provides a very specific focus for the exercise. A similar exercise can be drawn up from any text. Perhaps a director would decide to manufacture his own scenario in order for the student to experience the same emotions, but divorced from the text in question.

This would enable the student to see the situation in a different light, and perhaps lead to a new discovery and understanding of the problem in the production proper.

Workshopping a scene has the express purpose of discovering the emotions, rhythms and characters of the scene in-depth, by means of a fixed structure, but paraphrasing and intensifying the dialogue and emotional interplay. This is especially useful in plays written in more obscure language, such as Shakespeare and other verse drama, some absurd plays and the like, or even with amateurish texts which need to be reworked or added to for performance.

One director with whom I worked, for instance, initiated a workshop process for a verse drama. The lines were written in iambic pentameter, and sentence constructions were a little confusing. In the workshop process, the actors were instructed to repeat the entire scene, but using their own words. The result was, of course that the actors were led to think far more about the lines and their meaning, which were subsequently far more accessible to the actors. When they reverted to the original text, it was clear that there was a far deeper understanding of the text, which was manifest in the delivery of the lines.

Alternatively, if actors are struggling with any aspect of their performance, say, for argument's sake, a certain emotion, the director may have the actors do a straight improvisation with a similar situation to that required by the play, but without the restrictions of plot and subtext one has with workshopping.

Another important use for improvisation is exploration of space, as it is usually at this stage of rehearsal that the actors begin to work within the actual space for the performance, with at least a partial, functional set.

This may require adaptation of both vocal and physical projection, and the space may actually have a marked effect on the mood of the production, affecting the dynamics of the scenes, as well as the actor's characterisations. Not only that, but, as Spolin (1972: 89) points out,

Many actors find it difficult to “reach beyond their noses” and must be freed for a wider physical relationship with the environment. For purposes of clarification, three environments should always be kept in mind: immediate, general, larger.

The *immediate* environment is that area close upon us - the table where we are eating, with its food, utensils, ashtrays, etc. The *general* environment is the area in which the table is placed - the room, restaurant, etc., with its doors, windows, and other features. The *larger* environment is the area beyond - the space outside the window, the trees in the distance, the birds in the sky, etc.

All the exercises in the environment (Where) are designed to awaken the players to all three areas and to help them move out, penetrate, and work comfortably.

The actors may thus need to explore and adapt to the space, and discover to what extent it affects technique, characterisation and mood.

Spolin (1972: xiv) also cites exercises for: Acting with the whole body; Refining awareness; and Rounding out performances in terms of speech, physicalisation and seeing (or focus). These are also some of the myriad of areas in which improvisation may be of use in the intensification process.

The difference between improvisation and/or workshopping at *this* stage, and that which may have been done in the *pre-rehearsal* period is that the object of the exercise at this stage is usually far more clearly defined, which is why workshopping is perhaps preferable to improvisation at this time, specifically for emotional and character intensification.

An improvisation, in my terminology, has very little control exerted over it, and may go in completely the wrong direction, which could simply be a waste of time. It may be useful, however, for exploring vocal or physical qualities, tempo and rhythm. The advantage of improvisation is that the basic premise can be

constructed to shed light on almost any actor-specific problem, whereas workshopping is far more limited in that it is used for specific goals. Indeed, whole productions have been created in workshop processes, which provide an opportunity for learning on other levels.

The process of workshopping a production, based on a given scenario or series of scenarios, as well as improvising a production, present unique problems of their own, but these are more related to concept, plot and structure than techniques and instincts for acting. Although such productions may be excellent training for would-be playwrights, it is not every actor that wants to be an author. However, such productions are worthy of mention for two reasons: they place extraordinary demands on the student's creativity, and provide an laboratory for breaking new ground.

With a proliferation of styles in which productions may be performed, it is not surprising that the most recent acting style mentioned in Jerry Crawford's Acting in Person and in Style is "Eclectic". *Quo Vadis?* one might ask.

The workshop and improvisation productions provide scope for a search for a new aesthetic, if there is one, and tap the creative abilities of a company to such an extent that they may not find a new means of expression in the theatre, but the chances are good that they may well extend their own abilities of creativity beyond their wildest expectations.

Some of the work of the now defunct Loft company, an affiliate of NAPAC, and that of Theatre for Africa, bears testimony to this fact. I refer to productions like Horn of Sorrow, and CAPAB's Piekniek by Dingaan: two workshop/improvisation productions that redefined the theatre aesthetic with hitherto unseen visual and literary imagery on mainstream South African stages.

Horn of Sorrow, for instance, was one of the first productions in which the actors brought a dance-like physicality to the stage, with actors using their bodies to suggest animals, vehicles, even elements of the set. Even the sound effects were

entirely done by the actors, using household objects such as plastic bags and boxes of matches as musical instruments.

Piekniek by Dingaan, on the other hand extended the boundaries of what was considered to be acceptable on South African stages from a literary point of view. The use of profanity, the decimation of political and cultural sacred cows, transvestism - all of these factors and, I'm sure, more, led this show to be banned shortly after it opened in 1988. After much publicity, both good and bad, the show re-opened and since then, many local plays, revues and cabarets have included similar material, but it has since become far more acceptable.

Without the processes of improvisation and workshop, these pioneering productions may never have taken place, and the student actor certainly stands to learn a lot from this kind of working method in terms of extending the boundaries, both of his own abilities, and those of the theatre as he knows it.

d. Stagger-, Walk- and Run-throughs

In this, the following stage of rehearsals, the intense work on emotion, characterisation and flow of action with the actors as individuals, usually makes way for helping the actors to deal with technical aspects of the production, polishing the production as a whole and instilling in the actors a sense of unity in their work.

The director's presence in rehearsal becomes less marked, with very few to no interruptions of the actor's work. At this stage, the director's input is usually largely limited to giving notes only at the end of acts or after the entire play has been run. In my own productions, I try not to interrupt the flow of action, as this is also the period in rehearsal when the actor develops the stamina required for the performance.

This is essential, especially for actors with large and very active rôles, not only from a muscular and vocal point of view, but also on a psychic level. I once heard, or read (although, in quite unacademic fashion, I cannot list the source), that a full

length production performance has the equivalent impact on an actor's psyche to that of a minor car accident!

Although the director's presence may not be as tangibly felt in this stage of rehearsal, it is nonetheless extremely important. He can help the actors learn and refine a proficiency in dealing with technical aspects of the production, and, more importantly, he can refine the show on all of the levels already discussed by means of his notes to the actors, and may also adjust the dynamics of the performance.

Although, in my own productions, my notes to the actors at this stage are, by and large, no longer of a creative and/or interpretative nature, (being generally geared to the flow of action, pace and timing, rather than specific notes to each character), there is still a great deal which the actors may learn in the process.

i. Technical Proficiency

If costumes, props, make-up, sound and lights etc. have not yet been introduced to the rehearsals by this stage, they will certainly be added now. Certainly costumes such as footwear, heavy skirts and bustles of some period pieces or other unusual costumes demanded by the text, such as the horse masks in Peter Shaffer's Equus, need to be introduced at a much earlier stage. They may take some getting used to, and need to be practised with, even if only a substitute is available. The same applies, of course, to difficult props and scenery or stage machinery.

Technical aspects of the production bring new challenges to the actors on a technical level. In my experience, costume and make-up will almost certainly feel strange to the actor the first time they are introduced - they add a whole new dimension to the performance, and that takes some getting used to. Generally, they tend to make the actors very self-conscious, and their performances take a nose-dive.

As a matter of course, though, they return to normal after the first run-through, with a little discipline on the part of the actor and some technical accommodation. The actor becomes accustomed to the make-up relatively easily, but must often pay

specific attention to adapting to the costume. This is especially true of period costume, but also in general, as costume forms an integral part of the character. The actor needs to become completely familiar with the costume and what effect it has on his character. Remember, he may have rehearsed entirely without the costume up to now and has built his character without the feel of it in mind.

In a pantomime in which I played a magical narrator, we (the director and I) decided a large cloak would suit the character very well. In the rehearsal process, the character developed into a very active, almost acrobatic physicality. When the cloak was finally added a whole new dimension to the character: a simple spin suddenly became a flamboyant twirl; raising my arms spread the cloak, making the character seem very imposing and larger-than-life.

Fortunately, these attributes enhanced the character enormously, making him appear even more magical and mystical. When working in a costume for the first time then, the student may be asked to answer questions like, does the costume limit him in any way? In what way, if any, does it alter the appearance of the character and does this alteration support or detract from the actor's characterisation? (If it detracts, or limits the actor, the costume should be changed! The actor should not have to compromise his creative work for the sake of a costume.) Are there any techniques that need to be acquired for the handling of this specific costume? (e.g. a Restoration dress, bustles and all cannot be worn as one would wear an ordinary dress. One must make adjustments to the way one moves, sits etc.)

The important thing for the actor to remember is that the costume and make-up should in no way limit his performance, but rather become an extension of his character. There must be a comfort and freedom within the costume so that it becomes an organic part of the rôle, rather than merely a superficial, external form in which the character resides. These are valuable lessons in themselves, but they also stimulate the creativity, as well as adding to the experiential knowledge, of the student.

Other aspects of the production in which the director may help the actor to adjust include lighting, sound and technical stage machinery. The actor must develop an awareness of lighting so that he may "find the light", so to speak, at all times. This is a simple technique to learn, and requires only an awareness and sensitivity to the stage lighting on the part of the actor. Similarly, the actor needs to be acutely aware of sound in the theatre and must make appropriate adjustments in terms of volume, timing and pace. This does not only apply to technical sound cues, but is extended in the performances to a sensitivity to audience sounds such as laughter, or, as in the case of so many children's theatre productions, vocal audience participation.

Here again, if the director-trainer makes the student aware of certain adjustments that are production-specific by simple suggestions (e.g. "You need to project a little more to be heard over the music," or "Wait for the sound cue to begin to fade before you deliver that line"), he provides the student with techniques for coping with sound which can be used in future productions.

This same awareness, of course, must also be extended to stage machinery such as a revolving stage, descending flies, trapdoors and even the front of house curtains. Not only is this important from an aesthetic point of view, as well as learning techniques with which to cope with such machinery, but there is also the added aspect of safety to be considered.

A final area in which the director may attend to the technical proficiency of the actor is the curtain call, which is all too often sadly neglected, even in professional theatre, and which is so very important as the curtain call is the final impression the audience has of the production, as well as affording them the opportunity of showing their appreciation. A slipshod curtain call not only detracts from the mood of the performance, but completely destroys the illusion the actors have worked so hard to create, and is a complete anticlimax for an audience.

The director could teach the students such techniques as how to take a bow from a central or other designated actor, so that it occurs in unison. It would certainly help

the actor if he were taught the classic way to bow, bending from the hips to an angle of approximately 45°. In the case of a curtsey the student must know to place the left leg lightly behind the right, with a slight and delicate bend of the knees and a gentle incline of the head towards the audience.

Of course, the curtain call need not be a series of classic bows and curtsies: There have been many curtain calls, for instance, in which the actors remain in character, or a director may decide to choreograph a curtain call as an extension of the play. The fact remains, however, that a polished and well co-ordinated curtain call rounds off a performance with flair, and is, after all, simply good manners.

ii. Flow of Action, and Ensemble

For the actor, this is an integration stage, where all the parts of the whole which have been rehearsed separately begin to come together. Until the stage where the play begins to be run as a unit, the actor cannot help but see his role as separate from the rest of the play, as he has focused largely on his own part within the whole, and on individual scenes. As Stanislavski (1959: 115,117) points out,

the division is temporary. The part and the play must not remain in fragments... Each objective is an organic part of the unit, or, conversely, it creates the unit which surrounds it.

It is extremely important, therefore, that a director make the actor acutely aware of the flow and unity of the action, so that the parts of the play as rehearsed up to now come together as a whole, and timing and pace come into play. Dean and Carra (1980: 235) say that timing

is an essential technique of an actor's controlling the delivery of a line of dialogue or in the execution of an action. Some believe that an actor's sense of timing is an innate talent. Be this so or not, a rhythmic sensitivity to phrasing, auditory or visual is involved. It implies proper preparation, proper delivery or execution with the proper length of pause and proper emphasis. Timing considerations

are probably more obvious in comedy, but any performance whether a comedy, tragedy, or other type of play is a continuum of timing.

This bears a strong correlation to a sensitivity to rhythmic pattern and tempo, but is a polishing and refinement of the rhythm. Pace, too, is such a refinement, and must not be confused with rhythm or tempo.

The pace of a performance may be designated as slow or fast, heavy or hectic, beautiful or intolerable, and so on. Whatever the term, a sense of time and response from the audience's point of view is implied. The duration of time, as we know, can vary according to circumstances - a passage of one minute can be excruciatingly long or imperceptibly fleet for someone who is thoroughly engrossed in an action. Pace of a show, therefore, is more related to an audience's responses than to the actual duration of the performance. Pacing involves the dynamics of rhythmic control and timing. It involves holding the audience's interest in all aspects of the performance. As to tempo, an action may be enacted very slowly, but if this control, properly rendered, holds the audience from moment to moment, then the play is effectively paced. Inversely, quickening the tempo of a scene to play it fast does not necessarily bring about effective pacing. (Dean and Carra 1980: 235)

Yet another aspect of the theatrical performance which is difficult to teach, the timing and pace of a show needs to be manipulated by the director-trainer in such a way that the student develops an instinct for it. This includes falling in on cue, cutting all unnecessary pauses and sustaining all necessary ones. The ideal is a fluidity and unity of action which never loses intensity or power of attraction for the audience.

A sense of timing and pace, if lacking in a student, will hopefully develop with time and experience if the director/s of the productions in which he plays refines

the flow of the production until it works. It is once again a case of knowledge of art being gained through a process of deduction from what has already been created successfully.

Actors working together in the action/reaction cycle in a focused, creative state, with an awareness of rhythm, tempo, timing, pace and an unshakeable commitment to the super objective of the play, brings about that indefinable and magical mode of work - *ensemble*.

Listening to each other as if for the first time every time, watching each other with a readiness to react immediately to the slightest impulse and maintaining a freshness in their approach will help the actors to achieve the fine balance and harmony that is ensemble. If the actors achieve a good ensemble, they will immediately instinctively feel it, and when it does happen, their work will be exceptionally satisfying, as will be their effect on an audience.

The director may help the actors to achieve this goal by focusing their concentration on the task of dealing with the play as a whole. Stanislavski advises:

Every real artist should make it his object, while he is on stage, to centre his entire creative concentration on just the super-objective and through-line of action, in their broadest and deepest meaning. If they are right, all the rest will be brought out subconsciously, miraculously, by nature... he will be able to free his art from mechanical and stereotyped acting... if he accomplishes this, he will have real people and real life all around him on the stage, and living art which has been purified... (1959: 307)

3. Performance and Post-production

It is often said in the theatre, "Once the production opens, the director has no say in the production." I believe this is wholly untrue in the case of the student production. On the contrary, I feel it is the director's duty to continue to take notes in performance, always trying to refining the actor's sense of flow, energy, rhythm

and tempo, as well as continuing to monitor each actor's physical, vocal and psychic technique. One of the most important things a student may learn in the course of a run of a production is consistency and repeatability.

This does not imply that the performance must be identical each night. In fact, that would be impossible, because the actor will receive different qualities and quantities of energy from the audience and co-actors with each performance, and I believe the energy which the audience exudes is as much of an impulse to be reacted upon as are the impulses an actor receives from another actor.

This requires the actor to develop a sense of awareness as to receptiveness of an audience, as well as a feel for the course of the action, enabling him to make the necessary adjustments to rhythm, tempo, pace, timing and intensity as are required by each individual performance. While the acquisition of this awareness is probably largely an automatic process, the director's notes may point out inconsistencies in the show from night to night and suggest ways in which the actor may continue to refine the performance. On the whole though, director's notes during the run of a production are confined to technical and "technique-al" aspects, giving each actor individual notes as well as the company as a whole.

In the post-run phase at most training institutions, it is customary to have a critique of the production. Here, the director and other teachers at the institution concerned, as well as other members of the company and students of the institution, may give general and individual-specific feedback. Perhaps, for training purposes, it would be a boon to the student if he were required to write a personal self-assessment, or even keep a journal of the entire process in which he may record his own development. Such a journal may include what he has learnt from personal experience or from fellow actors, and areas which he feels need clarification or refinement.

Having made notes of this nature myself on occasion, I can attest to the fact that it will not only help to order the creative process and influx of information for the

student, but will also serve as a reference point for both the student and director-trainer in future productions or class work.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is not to promote a system whereby the actor receives all the necessary training solely through production. Whereas this may be possible, and indeed was the only method of "training" for centuries, it must be admitted that theoretical classwork condenses and intensifies the training process and helps to inculcate a fuller, more holistic idea of the theatre and its processes in the student.

In addition to this, if training consisted only of production work, it would be difficult to maintain a structured syllabus or consistency in the training process from year to year, as each play poses different demands on the actor. This year's first years might learn about tragedy first, next year's about children's theatre. It is therefore important to have additional classes to promote a system of education. Pronunciation practice, radio and television technique, theatre history, acting theory, literary critique and numerous other fields of study, would all require additional classes. Classes such as voice, speech and movement, which include regular and intensive repetition of conditioning exercises can clearly not be replaced by a production process.

The point I wish to make, however is that I believe the production process must be seen as an arena in which the theory and practical class training can be put into proper perspective. The actor cannot possibly be expected to assimilate and truly understand all of the theory with which he is confronted without being allowed to test it and prove it in a controlled but realistic environment. It would be like giving someone written instructions on how to ride a bicycle, and expecting him to get up and ride! Perhaps the healthiest attitude towards directing within a training institution should, therefore, be one of facilitation in the discovery process, and the production a means to an end (that of training the actor), not only an end in itself.

True, a successful (with the public) production is desirable for a number of reasons: the training institution's reputation in the outside world is at stake; audiences don't want to see slipshod or unprofessional-seeming productions; success is a boost to the student's self confidence and will to learn and achieve

more; the more successful the production, the more the student learns by experience, etc.

Director-trainers will, of course, differ vastly in methodologies. How they communicate with actors and achieve their goals is as personal as a fingerprint. No two directors will be exactly alike or have the same effect on the student. Of the director-actor relationship, Dean and Carra have this to say:

The relationship between director and actor unquestionably varies according to the personalities, philosophy of theatre, background, and circumstances involved, even accepting the talent, creativity, knowledge, and dedication of both. Whatever the balance may be, we still should expect from the director a compassionate understanding of the actor's problems, a facility for communicating his concepts of the play and its values, and a talent for inspiring actors and eliciting their best efforts. Indicated here is a trust and respect for each other. In practical working relationships: we have the situation where the actor responds freely to the director's wishes, trusting and obeying his concepts and interpretations and following each direction exactly; or, from the more collaborative point of view, we have the director who encourages discussions, allows time for exploration and improvisation, is amenable to ideas, offers several choices along with suggestions for actions and interpretation before final decision, is subtle in his own suggestions, and generally runs a very free course before shaping and pruning the work. Be it one or the other, the director must show his patience for whatever limitations, tensions, and struggles an actor may have as he works on his role. The director should study and know his actor, understand his strengths and weaknesses; he should give him confidence and encouragement by respecting the actor's own feelings and opinions, and by giving him constructive criticisms upon which the actor can build. (1980: 341-342)

The crux of the matter remains that the student's progress depends on self-education by experience under the guidance of a competent trainer. In John Gassner's Producing the Play (1953: 655), Professor Henry Boettcher of the College of Fine Arts at Carnegie Tech, Pittsburgh points out that instruction is planned to help the student acquire three things:

(1) the ability to learn for himself through the development of sensitive observation, experimental curiosity, and a capacity for self criticism, so that after graduation he will be able to grow in wisdom and creative skill, keeping abreast of the constantly changing contemporary world of art; (2) the breadth of knowledge and sense of values which will make him aware of the contribution as well as the responsibility of the artist in society; and (3) the ability to communicate ideas to others through the mediums of his professional field of study and to understand how this ability may serve in the solution of those problems which he will meet as a citizen and a person.

Admirable goals, to be sure, and yet each is certainly attainable through the process of production, given the right guidance. Clearly, the director needs to be completely attuned to the needs and level of development of the student actor. With sensitive handling of the intensely personal and delicate relationship between the director and actor in the production process, the director can lead the actor to experience things which will remain part of his store of techniques and instincts for the theatre for the rest of his life. The key word is *experience*.

It is my opinion that the most effective way of assimilating and understanding acting, especially because of the high level of instinctive reaction within the creative process, is through experiencing *what* works on stage and, through critical analysis, *why* it works.

The actor's instinct is not something that he is necessarily born with. It often needs to be, and can be, developed. As the old adage goes, "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I

remember. Involve me, I understand." And in a training situation, this means heightened involvement, as the actor must be made aware of every detail of the process every step of the way.

There are a few problems inherent in the process of training an actor in production. The procedure to promote a heightened awareness in the actor would naturally take longer than a normal production, as it requires that the director pay more intense and detailed attention to each individual than would usually be the case in the professional world.

This places taxing demands on the time schedule of the training institution, and would require a very special kind of director who is both a highly skilled director and an accomplished teacher. Someone who is also prepared to work the long rehearsal hours after classes on a regular basis. Perhaps it would, under certain circumstances, be possible to allocate a sizeable amount of class time to actual production work, which would place lesser demands on the extra-curricular hours of both the students and the director-trainers?

As a student, I was one of the fortunate few who were constantly in productions from the beginning of my first year to the end of my fourth year, having done in that time at least fifteen full-scale productions. Because of the experience gained in that time, I have often jokingly boasted that I am probably the most well trained drama student ever to have walked out of that training institution! I realize, of course that to afford the full complement of students at any given time the same opportunities that I had would be very difficult indeed. It would certainly require the department to work on several productions at the same time, and would probably generate added expenses for additional director-trainers, technical staff and rental of venues, not to mention the cost of the productions themselves. The answers to these problems are probably the subject of a whole new thesis, best done by somebody with a B. Comm. degree and a healthy dollop of Industrial Psychology to boot!

Be that as it may, the process of learning in production remains one of inestimable value. Time consuming it may be, but it has the potential to be very thorough and

enormously rewarding, both for the actor and the director, as both can usually visibly see the growth in the actor's prowess from the beginning to end of the production process.

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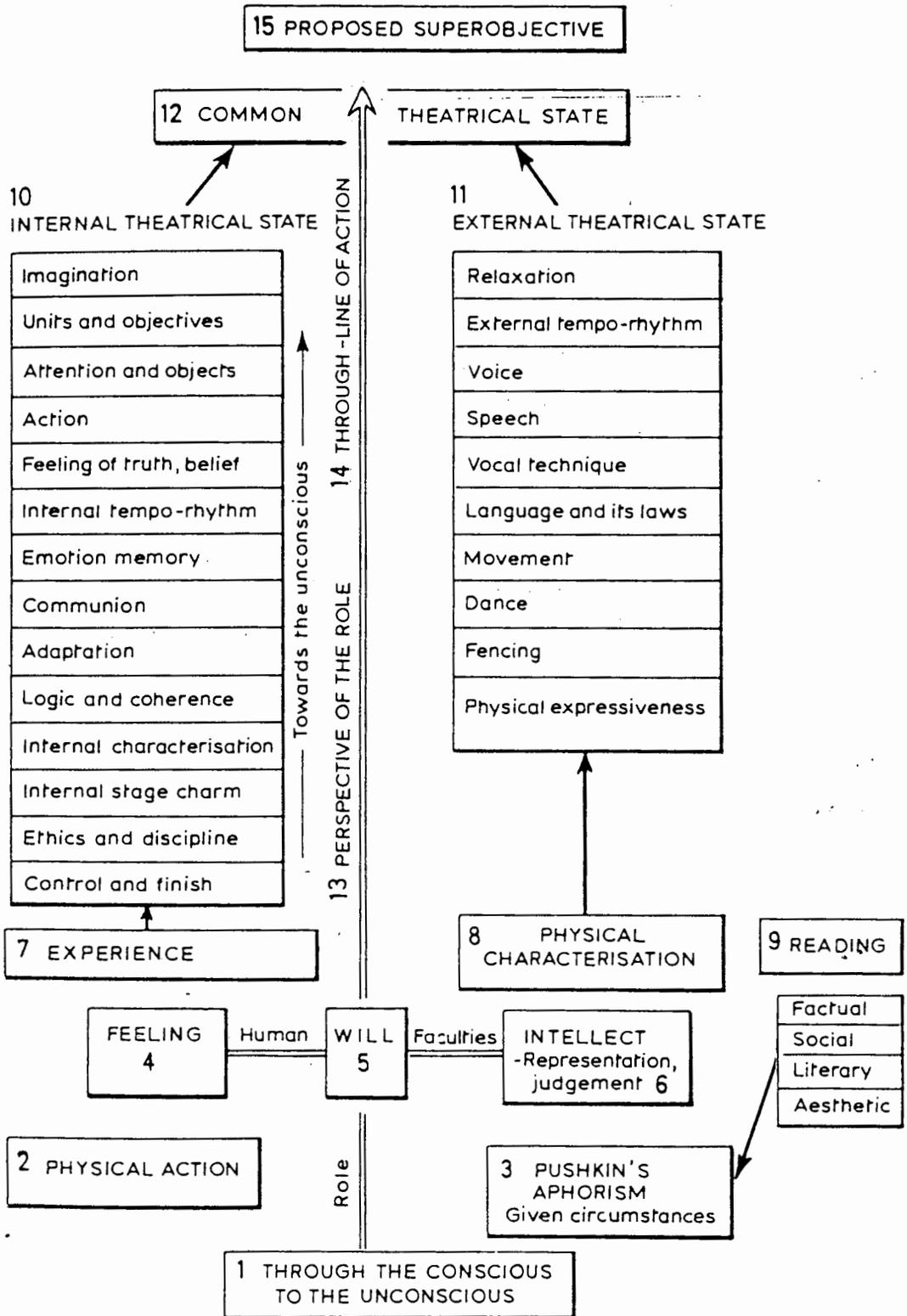
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Appendix A (Benedetti 1989: 60-61)



The System: a diagram

The Archives contain a number of sketches which Stanislavski made in an attempt to present the System in diagrammatic form. There is an account towards the end of *Building A Character* of an elaborate 'visual aid' which was set up. Robert Lewis's book *Method or Madness* also contains a diagram which Stella Adler drew for him in Paris in 1934. The diagram which follows here is substantially based on the one which appears in Volume 4 of the Soviet edition of the Complete Works, supplemented with material from other sources.

The spine of the diagram goes from the premise of the System – Through the Conscious to the Unconscious [1] to the reason for the performance, the Superobjective [15], which must remain provisional until it has been verified and refined through the process of rehearsal. The attainment of the Superobjective [15] is dependent on the actor's perspective of the Role [13] and the Through-line of Action [14]. Next come the fundamentals of the performance, Physical Action [2] and the Given Circumstances or Pushkin's Aphorism [3].

To operate within the principles of the System the actor has three basic natural faculties, each subject to conscious control in varying degrees – the Intellect [6], which can conceptualise and make judgements and is available as a conscious instrument; the Will [5], which is less subject to command; and Feeling [4], which is least subject to command.

Experience [7], Physical Characterisation [8] and Reading [9] are the strategies available during the preparation and rehearsal of the play. [9] provides information about the Given Circumstances, as set out in *Creating a Role*. On the left-hand side, are the elements subsumed under experience, by and large set out in *An Actor Prepares*, leading to the Internal Theatrical State [10]. On the right-hand side are the elements of Physical Characterisation, as set out in *Building a Character*, leading to the External Theatrical State [11]. [10] and [11] combine to form the Common Theatrical State [12].

Appendix B (Benedetti 1990: 7-11)

Exercise 1:

Just Breathing

Sit comfortably and in good alignment, with back erect but not rigid.

Before reading beyond the end of this paragraph, take a few moments to close your eyes and feel the movement of your body as it breathes. Don't control your breathing, just feel it; avoid self-criticism. This initial experience will give you a "before" to compare with what follows.

(pause)

Now, let your awareness focus on your expiration. Follow it to the very end, and find the moment of rest between the end of your expiration and the beginning of your inspiration.

Don't control. If you know how you "should" breathe, let it go for now, and just be attentive to what happens.

(pause)

Keep awareness particularly on the resting moment; notice that you can deepen your awareness breath by breath, as if you were using that moment of peace as a pathway to journey deeper and deeper within. Each step inward is a release of tension, and each release registers as a change in your breathing pattern.

(Pause 20 or 30 seconds)

You might imagine that your inspiration is a flow of fresh, new energy that comes from deep within your body. Picture this energy as flowing through your flesh, penetrating into every cell, creating a gentle expansion everywhere.

(pause)

Now tune your awareness to the movement of your breath in your lower ribs; the ribs are gently moving outward on inspiration and inward on expiration. (This is not an invitation to push your ribs, or in any way to take voluntary control; let your conscious mind remain observant and receptive, without manipulating.)

(pause)

Now let your awareness move from your ribs to your mid-back, while still sensing movement. Imagine that the pit of your stomach is gently falling into your back with each expiration and is being penetrated and softened with each inspiration.

(pause)

Now take your awareness to your head. Feel (or imagine that you feel) the flow of your breath through the inside of your head, still as if it were arising from deep within you.

(pause)

Now take your awareness deep inside your pelvis, and feel the movement of your breathing. Sense the floor of your pelvis to be a sheet of muscle very much like the diaphragm; feel it moving in harmony with the diaphragm.

(pause)

Feel the gentle action of your lower back, as if it were the line of communication between diaphragm and pelvis.

(pause)

Now tune in on your body breathing as a whole, as if there were no part that were not participating.

(pause)

Before you finish, recall your "before" experience of breathing, and compare.

(pause)

Lastly, slowly and easily stand up; sense any change in the balance and flexibility of your body. When you drop tension by releasing your breathing, the way you support your own weight in the field of gravity will tend to shift to a more balanced and centered carriage. Enjoy it.

(stand for a time, then move around a bit)

If a favorable change has happened, invite yourself to find future occasions for this sequence of experiences. Repetition will tend to deepen self-awareness and to create a more open, released breathing pattern that will become habitual. Some suggested times are when you are going to sleep (you may find you rest better); when you are waking up; when you get upset; and when you are tired or in pain. This need not be a lengthy ritual. Following a single breath through its full cycle (particularly down into that pause after expiration) can drop your tension level significantly.

(NOTE: You may want to read the directions for this exercise into a tape recorder so that you can play them back to yourself, or have someone else read them to you. Read slowly, with pauses as indicated.)

Exercise 2:

Phasic Relaxation

Begin in floor alignment. Breath is again the focus of your awareness: Imagine that each inhalation is a warm, fresh, energy-filled fluid flowing into your body. Each exhalation carries away with it tension and inhibition, like a refreshing wave. Breathe deeply and easily in a slow, natural, regular rhythm; don't "act" your breathing or artificially exaggerate it.

Each successive breath will be sent into a different part of the body, awakening that area. As the breath flows into a new area, let its energy cause the muscles there to contract as much as they can; then, as the breath flows out, the muscles release and the breath carries all the tension away with it, leaving the area refreshed and at ease. *Exhaling is letting go.*

The sequence of breaths will move from the top of the body downward, and the regular rhythm of your breathing should make the muscular contractions and relaxations flow smoothly down the body like a slow wave. Allow only one area at a time to be involved.

Your total awareness follows the breath into each of the following areas:

The forehead and scalp, furling the brow, then releasing it; The eyes at rest, closed and turned slightly downward;

The jaw, clenching, then falling easily downward until the teeth are about one-half inch apart;

The tongue, extending, then lying easily in the mouth;

The front of the neck, with the chin extending down to touch the chest, stretching the back of the neck—then rolling the head easily back down;

The back of the neck with the top of the head rolling under to touch the floor, stretching the front of the neck—then rolling the head slowly down and lengthening the neck;

The upper chest, swelling outward in all directions so that the shoulders are widened—then easily subsiding, feeling the shoulder blades spread and melt into the floor, wider than before;

The arms and hands, becoming stiff and straight like steel rods; the hands clenching into fists, then easily uncurling and melting into the floor, uncurling;

The pit of the stomach, clenching, becoming a small, hard ball—then, with a sigh, releasing;

The buttocks, clenching, then releasing and widening so that the pelvis is wider than before;

The knees, stiffening as the legs straighten, the feet being pushed downward by this action—then releasing the legs and feeling them melt into the floor;

The toes, reaching up to touch the eyes (but the heels remain on the floor)—then releasing and falling into a natural position;

The heels and the shoulder blades, simultaneously pushing downward into the floor so that the whole body lifts in a long arch—then, with a sigh, you slowly fall, the body lengthening as it relaxes, melting deep into the floor.

Now take *ten deep, slow, regular breaths*, and with each breath move more deeply into relaxation, remaining alert and refreshed. The flow of breath is a continuous cycle of energy that is stored comfortably in the lower body; with each breath this store of energy is increased. Whenever a yawn comes to you, enjoy it fully; vocalize the exhalation, letting the sound of the yawn freely pour out.

Appendix C (Kapit and Elson 1977)

MUSCULAR SYSTEM/THE TORSO DEEP MUSCLES OF THE BACK & NECK*

CN 18

1. Color the various muscles listed below. Note that the deepest muscles are represented on the left side of the spinal column.
2. Color all the suboccipital muscles at the base of the skull and related areas in the diagram below.
3. Color external intercostal muscles and title to the far right.

The *deep muscles of the back* serve to stabilize the multiple bones of the vertebral column (short muscles spanning 1 or 2 vertebrae); influence posture of the back and curvatures of the column; and extend (long muscles), laterally flex (long and short muscles), and rotate (short muscles) all or part of the vertebral column. They largely fill the "gutter" between the angle of the ribs and the vertebral spines. They are supplied by segmental nerves (posterior rami of spinal nerves) and not from nerve plexuses. These muscles lie deep to the muscles of the upper limb which arise on the back.

SERRATUS POSTERIOR: SUPERIOR & INFERIOR.

These exceedingly thin muscles are often missed in dissection, and their function is not clear. Although they insert on the ribs, their effect on respiration is negligible. They are the most superficial of the deep back muscles.

SPLenius: CAPITIS & CERVICIS.

These are known as the "bandage" muscles, specifically referring to the *capitis*, which holds down the deeper muscles of the neck. They are important movers of the head, extending and rotating it in concert with the opposite sternocleidomastoid muscle.

ERECTOR SPINAE: SPINALIS, LONGISSIMUS, ILIOCOSTALIS.

These are the principal movers of the back and the most probable source of muscular spasms and pain in the low back. They are thick, quadrilateral muscles in the lumbar region, splitting into large bundles (*spinalis*, etc.) to ribs, upper vertebrae, neck, and head in their ascent. They extend and laterally flex the vertebral column.

TRANSVERSOSPINALIS: SEMISPINALIS: CAPITIS, CERVICIS, THORACIS; MULTIFIDUS, ROTATORES, LEVATORES.

This group of muscles are largely rotators of the column, as they generally run from the transverse processes of one vertebra to the spine of the vertebra above or they may span 3 or 4 vertebrae. The *semispinalis* are the largest muscles of this group, which also extends the vertebral column.

INTERTRANSVERSARIi INTERSPIINALIS.

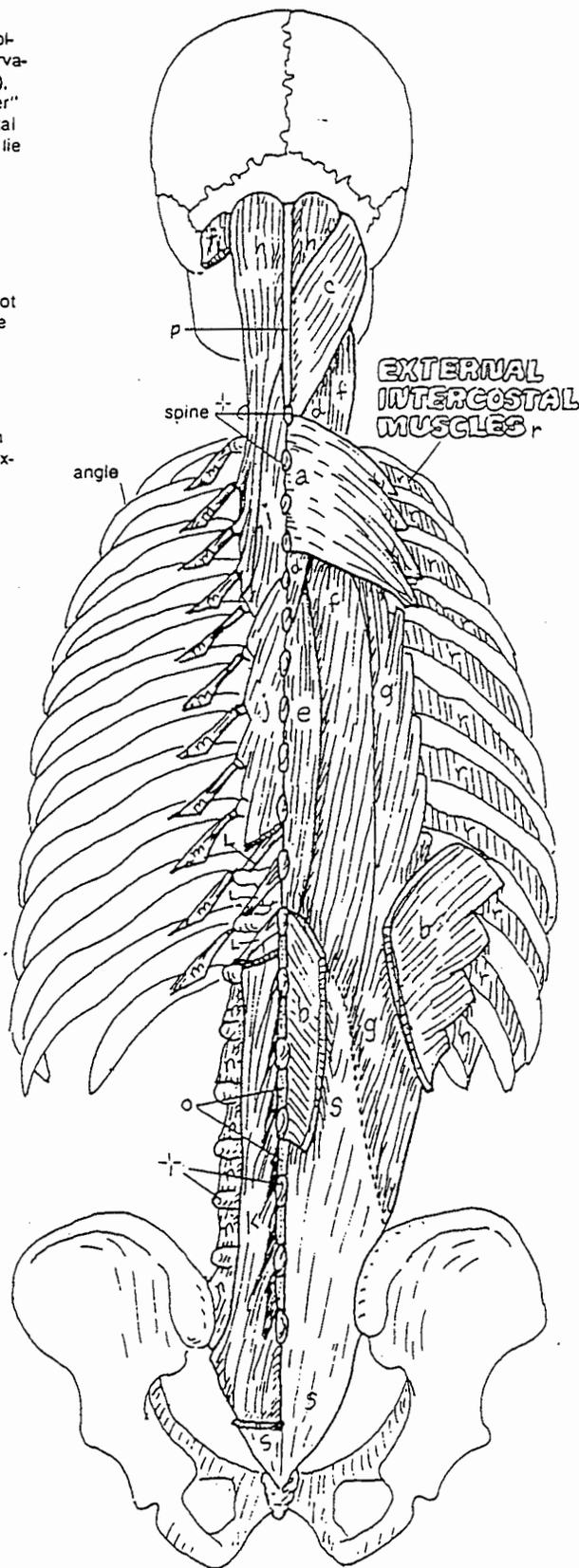
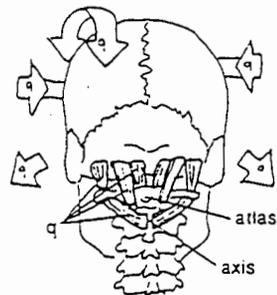
These very small muscles, deep to the larger overlying musculature, extend (*interspinalis*) and laterally flex the vertebral column.

NUCHAL LIGAMENT.

This is a sail-like ligament, whose "mast" is the midline of the occipital bone of the skull and whose "boom" is the spines of the cervical vertebrae. It "sails" in the trough of the cervical curvature with the posterior neck muscles finding attachment at the flat surfaces of the "sail." This ligament resists passive flexion of the head.

SUBOCCIPITAL MUSCLES.

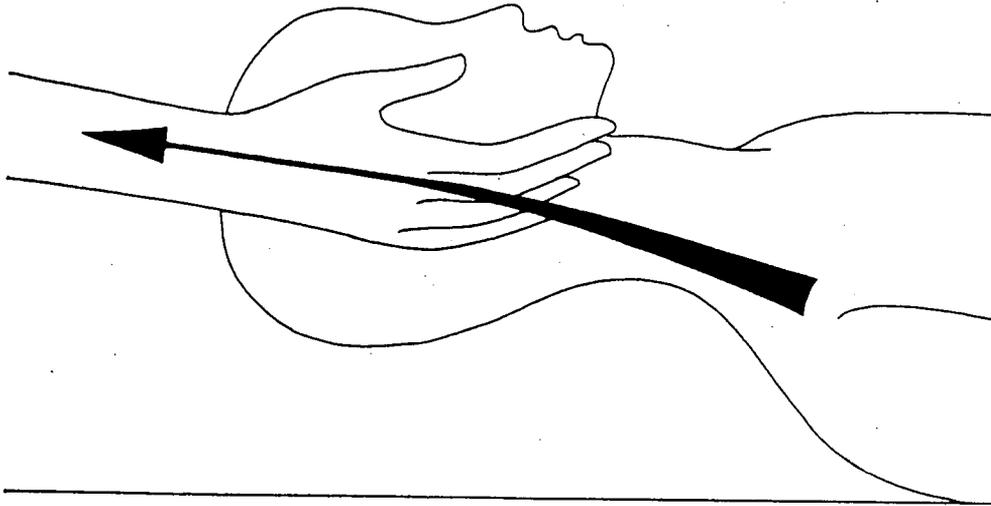
These small muscles set deep in the posterior neck rotate the atlas (C1 vertebra) on the axis (C2) (the skull moves with the atlas). They also extend the skull on the atlas. They are considered postural muscles rather than prime movers.



Appendix D

Alignment and lengthening of the spine

While the actor is in a lying down position, the director cups the head gently in the hands from above, and slowly pulls directly upwards along the axis of the spine. This is best done as the actor is breathing out, as one naturally tends to release tension as one exhales. The cervical and upper thoracic vertebrae (see Appendix C) are thus released as the spine is lengthened and the vertebrae can move into place should they be slightly out of alignment. The diagram shown, from The Actor at Work, shows the correct direction of lengthening and the position of the hands.



Lengthening the spine. (Benedetti 1990: 17)*

Next, the director might pick the actor up by the legs, slowly raising the entire torso. The actor continues to breathe deeply and release excess tension* as the director gently lowers the body, allowing the spine to roll back onto the floor vertebra for vertebra, from the top down. Great care should be taken, since this exercise relies on gravity to stretch and release the spine. Should the actor be lifted too high, the weight of the body rests on the cervical vertebrae and could cause

* Benedetti's caption to this diagram is *Stretching the Neck*, but in reality this action tends to lengthen the whole spine along the floor.

damage to the neck. The actor should be lifted only as high as is possible as long as the shoulders are still on the floor. This exercise helps to release and lengthen the rest of the spine from the lower thoracic vertebrae to the lumbar region. It also allows the hips to fall into place beneath the spine.

After gently releasing the actor so that he is once again lying flat on the floor, it is generally necessary to give a gentle tug on the hands towards the feet, as the body usually slides a little on the floor when picking the actor up, making the shoulders rise towards the ears. A gentle, even pull on the hands usually corrects this.

It also helps to align and free the body of unnecessary tension if the torso is laterally expanded. This the director can do by placing one hand on the left hip and the other on the right shoulder of the actor, and applying a slow but firm downward and simultaneously outward (away from the spine) pressure. This lengthens the torso laterally, and often a marked release in tension in the shoulders and across the chest can be seen. This, too is best done as the actor exhales. Repeat on the opposite sides.

The actor should now be well aligned and should be allowed to lie for a little while, breathing into this newly aligned body, and allowing his muscles and skeletal structure to become accustomed to this state.

Appendix E

Physical warm-up

Begin with a full body stretch and yawn, as if you were just waking up. Stretch and release as many muscles as possible, breathing deeply as you do so. Just a preliminary refresher.

In standing alignment, gently roll the head from side to side, releasing in the neck and loosening the atlas/axis joint at the top of the spine. The ear drops toward the shoulder then the head rolls forward and across until the opposite ear is above the opposite shoulder. Reverse. Repeat ten times.

Slowly roll both shoulders, forward, up, back, down in a smooth, continuous motion. Focus on releasing in the shoulders, chest and upper back. Repeat ten times. Reverse. Repeat ten times.

To stretch and release the lateral torso muscles and thoracic region of the spine, begin in standing alignment. Place one hand on the hip and reach up towards the ceiling with the other hand. Gently lean the top half of the body towards the side opposite the extended arm. Recover. Repeat on the opposite side. Repeat the sequence five times.

In standing alignment, rise the arms laterally to shoulder height. Rotate the torso as far to the back as possible, recover and rotate to the opposite side. Repeat ten times. Perform the sequence fluidly, in a relaxed manner so that the momentum of the torso and arms pulls the body round with each rotation. As far as possible, keep the hips facing forward so that the rotation is not transferred to the legs, but gives a maximum stretch and release to the lumbar region of the back.

In standing alignment, tilt the pelvis forward, to the side, back, to the opposite side and around again in a fluid motion. Repeat ten times. Reverse. Repeat ten times.

In standing alignment, in a fluid motion, raise the knee forward to waist height, keeping the lower leg relaxed. As the knee is dropped down, allow the lower leg to

shoot out and the foot to slide along the ground back into position. The effect is that of a horse hoofing the ground. The impulse for this exercise comes from within the pelvis area, using the muscles around the ball and socket joint in the hip. The rest of the leg remains as relaxed as possible. Repeat twenty times on each side. This exercise releases and warms up the hip and knee joints.

Freely shake out the whole body, culminating in a slump forward so that you are sitting on your haunches with the spine, neck and head released forward. Slowly come up into standing alignment from the feet, then the knees and legs, the spine and finally the head and neck. Repeat five times.

Stretch and yawn.

Appendix F

Vocal warm-up

Begin with a low, comfortable monotone hum, or droning sound. This gently warms the voice and opens the resonators. Continue for a minute or two.

Slowly begin to play the drone up and down the tonal range, with just a little variation at first. Increase the range as the voice warms up until you can comfortably reach either end of your tonal vocal range.

Using the sound MAA on each tone, speak (rather than sing) an arpeggio, beginning at the lower end of the tonal range and working your way to the upper end of the scale. This begins to focus on projection and loosens the jaw. Repeat twice.

Projecting as far as possible, in a comfortable tone, repeat the sounds B - P, G - K, D - T. Begin slowly, gradually building up speed until the articulatory organs are warmed up.

As fast as possible, repeat each of the consonants in the above exercise separately. The sounds B and P exercise the lips, G and K warm up the rear of the tongue and D and T exercise the front of the tongue.

Recite a short piece of text, over articulating and projecting as far as possible. Make pronounced use of the facial muscles and articulatory organs to animate and loosen them. Repeat five times.

Recite the same piece of text as quickly as possible, under articulating and keeping the whole face and articulatory organs as relaxed as possible. Repeat five times.

Keeping the face and articulatory organs relaxed, shake the head vigorously from side to side, "shaking out" any excess tension.

Round off by droning the sound MAA, controlling with the breath and sustaining the sound as long as possible, until there is no breath left in the lungs. Breath in

deeply, taking care not to accumulate excess tension in doing so. Repeat five times.

Appendix G

Focusing

The actors stand in a circle, looking straight ahead, in standing alignment. The entire company then attempts to become aware of each other's breathing, getting a sense of a flow of energy between each other. They feel their bodies alive and minds focused, ready to react to any impulse. At some stage, the director will jump, flinging his arms out as if to catch a huge ball, and bending in the knees, with a loud vocalisation as he does so. Sometimes he may surreptitiously appoint one of the students to initiate the exercise. The object is for the company to be so tuned in as to do exactly the same thing, not just after, but simultaneously with the initiator.

Appendix H (Benedetti 1990: 29)

