

**‘Filled Nothingness’:
Hearing Silence Onstage**

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to address the question of how silence can be defined and applied as a communicative device in theatre. The study consists of a theoretical and a practical component. The theoretical component relies primarily on a literature study.

I firstly provide a theoretical framework by discussing the role and place of silence within verbal and nonverbal communication, with specific reference to the theatre. As a result silence is framed as relational to space and is defined as the absence of words/language, rather than the absence of sound, acknowledging the impossibility of pure silence. The performance of John Cage's composition *4'33"* is discussed as an example of silence in performance, highlighting the role of environmental sound within silence.

The literature study, secondly, focusses on an investigation of Samuel Beckett and Robert Wilson's approaches to theatre, with specific reference to their respective use of silence, and identifying possible methods employed within their praxis. Within my analysis of Beckett's plays *Breath* and *Not I*, I identified the methods of textual scoring and formalized periodicity. In my analysis of Wilson's *Deafman Glance* and *Einstein on the Beach*, I identified the methods of reiteration and Wilsonian Time.

The practical component employs an exploratory research methodology within a practice-led approach to implement the identified methods within my own work as director. Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* was selected as text for my practical exploration. I provide background on the work of Kane, and *4.48 Psychosis*, discussing the ways in which silence features in the text.

An account of the practical exploration is given, detailing my two phase rehearsal process with a cast consisting of four female performers. This included the development of exploratory exercises and the application of Beckett and Wilson's methods. During the rehearsal process it became clear that a combination of methods is possible, with the definition of silence extending to multiple levels, including visual, auditory, and psychological/emotional. In understanding silence in a contextual sense, the relationship between different aspects of theatre (particularly that of silence and space) was explored in the production.

The communicative value of silence was found to be similar to that of spoken language in terms of conveying emotion and relationship. I also found that silence may be indirectly curated through the active handling of another aspect of performance such as rhythm, movement or sound itself.

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie is om vas te stel hoe stilte gedefinieer en toegepas kan word as 'n kommunikasiemiddel in die teater. Die studie behels beide 'n teoretiese en praktiese komponent. Die teoretiese komponent bestaan hoofsaaklik uit 'n literatuurstudie.

Ek verskaf eerstens 'n teoretiese raamwerk en bespreek die rol en plek van stilte in verbale en nieverbale kommunikasie, met spesifieke verwysing na die teater. Stilte word gevolglik in verhouding tot ruimte beskou en word gedefinieer as die afwesigheid van woorde/taal, eerder as die afwesigheid van klank, deur erkenning te gee aan die onmoontlikheid van suiwer stilte. Die uitvoering van John Cage se komposisie "4'33" word gebruik as 'n voorbeeld van stilte in uitvoering en belig die rol van omgewingsklank in stilte.

Tweedens fokus die literatuurstudie op 'n verkenning van Samuel Beckett en Robert Wilson se benaderings tot teater, met spesifieke verwysing na hul onderskeie toepassings van stilte, en op die identifisering van moontlike metodes wat binne hul praktyk gebruik word. My ontleding van Beckett se toneelstukke *Breath* en *Not I*, het die metodes van tekstuele notering en geformaliseerde periodisiteit uitgelig. My ontleding van Wilson se toneelstukke, *Deafman Glance* en *Einstein on the Beach*, het die metodes van reïterasië en Wilsoniaanse tyd uitgelig.

Die praktiese komponent maak gebruik van verkennende navorsingsmetodologie en 'n praktykgeleide benadering om die geïdentifiseerde metodes in my regie toe te pas. Sarah Kane se *4.48 Psychosis* is gekies as teks vir my praktiese verkenning. Ek verskaf agtergrond oor die werk van Kane, spesifiek *4.48 Psychosis*, en bespreek hoe stilte in die teks voorkom.

Verslag word gelewer oor die praktiese verkenning en verskaf besonderhede oor my tweeledige repetisieproses met 'n geselskap bestaande uit vier vroulike spelers. Die proses het die ontwikkeling van verkenningsoefeninge ingesluit en die toepassing van Beckett en Wilson se metodes. Tydens die repetisieproses het dit duidelik geword dat dit moontlik is om metodes te kombineer en dat die definisie van stilte verbreed kan word tot verskeie vlakke, insluitende die visuele, auditiewe en sielkundige/emosionele. 'n Begrip van stilte binne 'n kontekstuele sin, het dit moontlik gemaak om die verhouding tussen verskillende teateraspekte (spesifiek stilte en ruimte) in die produksie te verken.

Die kommunikatiewe waarde van stilte is bevind om soortgelyk te wees aan gesproke taal ten einde emosie en verhouding oor te dra. Ek het ook bevind dat stilte indirek hanteer kan word deur die aktiewe hantering van ander uitvoeringsaspekte soos ritme, beweging, of klank.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and rationale

Throughout my studies – as both undergraduate acting and performance student and Honours directing student – I have been given direct instruction in terms of various elements used within theatre and performance. Vocal elements, such as tone, pace, rhythm and pause, have informed my own practice. Performance classes have included discussion, research, and practical exploration of (amongst other aspects) text analysis, character creation, use of space, movement and gestures. Within directing classes, I have made use of silent exercises and scenes, but always in order to focus on another element of theatre. These exercises have therefore never been a direct experiment in silence itself. This realisation prompted my interest in pursuing research into the use of silence onstage. My interest in the way in which silence may communicate within theatre is therefore a product of my work as a developing director within other elements of theatre. It is my hope that this study will facilitate a definition of silence which will ultimately aid in the understanding of silence as a communicative device in performance.

In A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre, Bogart (2001) speaks of the violence involved in the act of performance. This violence comes from the act of decision-making, whereby one option is chosen and utilised, while all others are banished and cut out of the process. She asserts that in creating a theatrical role, there is a necessary violence due to the need for repeatability: “in the theatre it [the moment] must be repeatable” (Bogart, 2001:46). This understanding of theatre as an act of repetition informs my understanding of the way in which theatre is constructed. The ‘moment’ in performance is made up of various elements, which can be made use of in a variety of manners. Bogart’s interest in repeatability leads to the supposition that if we are to describe a method of curating silence, we are also finding a method of repeating silence – as one possible aspect included in a moment of performance – for an audience, performance after performance. The act therefore becomes artificial and must be recognisable to an audience. In researching silence, I am therefore also attempting to find a way of resurrecting silence within each individual performance.

‘Hearing silence’ is a construct, a pairing of two words, which I have chosen to explore within the context of my research. Hearing silence implies listening to silence, which in turn implies silence’s capacity for communication and meaning making. An active process is introduced, whereby silence is a dynamic ingredient within theatre which may express feelings and ideas, emotions and states.

This recognition of silence as an active process within theatre informs my chosen research design and methodology, which will include a practical project and is discussed in section 1.4. I have also chosen to analyse the approaches and methods of Samuel Beckett and Robert Wilson, as both can be considered experimental theatre practitioners who work outside the genre of realism. My interest in Beckett's work with silence was piqued when I watched a production of his play *Endgame* at the Baxter Theatre Centre in 2018. The use of silence and space within the production intrigued me as the silences never felt like gaps within the production, but rather like carefully constructed moments. I was introduced to Wilson's work as a director during my Honours studies. After watching the documentary about his life and work, titled *Absolute Wilson* (2006), I came to the realisation that what we refer to as silence is where some people 'live' due to various disabilities and alternate modes of communication. Wilson's work with disabled people and their influence on his theatre incorporates silence as an integral process, and I became interested in identifying and making use of his methods in my own work.

In *Poetics*, Aristotle (1895:9) lists and describes what he terms "the elements of tragedy":

every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which determine its quality – namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. And these complete the list.

Silence is missing from his list. If Aristotle's description of what constitutes theatre is to be upheld as a seminal text with influence over the Western canon, where and how can we define and make use of silence in a theatrical setting? Perhaps silence is part of and between all of these elements. We may consider Kane's (1984:17) assertion that "silence is not absent from the text, neutral within the text, nor more profound than the text. In the play, as in life, silence is a moment in language". If silence is "a moment in language" then we can consider silence an inevitable ingredient or element of the theatre. Considering language as communication, silence can then be described as a form of communication, a coded system of interpretation and subjective value.

Silence may appear undefined, but it has been shown over and over again to hold weight and presence of its own. We use phrases like 'a heavy silence', 'a pregnant pause', 'deafening silence', 'radio silence', 'wall of silence', 'silence is golden', and 'a moment of silence' (to name a few). These common sayings seem to suggest that silence may take up space, be ascribed value and importance, and even take on a character or meaning of its own. Wilcox (2003:547) speaks of silence in relation to space as an "abstract place that *appears* unfamiliar and undifferentiated, and yet has an unmistakable presence of its own" (his emphasis). This presence of silence is always "defined in

relation to surrounding elements” (Wilcox, 2003:547). Silence therefore appears to be the ‘in-between-ness’ that occurs in the gaps onstage, in the moments of active rest, emphasis, or stillness, which urges me to ascribe to Wilcox's (2003:547) view of silence: the mysterious “filled nothingness” that seems to elude finer study.

John Cage, an experimental composer, examines silence through an awareness of space. Even though Cage specifically analyses silence from a musical perspective, his acknowledgement of environmental sound can be applicable within any performance as performance occurs within space. His silent composition 4'33" “is a musical silence, not a sonic silence” as it “does not invite a listening to sound as sound but to all sound as music” (Voegelin, 2010:80). In this sense, Cage’s curation of silence involves the introduction of context, whereby the set up of a musical performance informs the content of the silence within the space.

In *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, Brown (2012:3-4) considers the audience by addressing the notion of ‘hearing’, as well as the interaction between sound and silence. Rather than classifying sound and silence as separate, or as opposites, he points to the relationship between sound, silence, and meaning:

if sound is elemental to theatre, as a building and live event, then acoustemology is fundamental to dramaturgy, which deals with meaning and must therefore understand that audiences know sound only as they are culturally equipped to. The categories of aural dramaturgy – voice, speech, music, noise, silence – are not fixed but determined in the cultured ear of the listener. Here, then, we come to aurality, the subjective phenomenology of hearing (his emphasis).

In this sense, Brown asserts the effect of cultural environment on the meaning making process. If audiences ‘know’ sound as they are culturally equipped to, then we may consider that they know silence in the same sense. He further elaborates on the potential of mishearing, stating “noise is also in the hearing” (Brown, 2012:4). Further studies on silence in performance include that of Wilcox (2003) who asserts the relationship between silence and space, and Alker (2008) who discusses the possibilities of silence as medium for feminist performance art, as well as the audience’s role as witness in silence. Poyatos (2002) discusses silence in relation to nonverbal communication, asserting the communicative ability that it may hold.

While these practitioners and academics have addressed silence within performance, they do not provide insight into the practicalities of curating silence in the theatre. While their theories are curated from a performance perspective, my research is considered through the lens of directing. That is, this

study has the practical aim of implementing various methods and approaches in order to stage and discuss silence in theatre. The lack of practical guidance and methods of staging silence is what I aim to address.

1.2 Problem statement

Considering Aristotle's definition of the elements of theatre, the absence of silence arguably leaves a gap in our understanding of the practical theatrical elements. The seeming lack of study and definition surrounding silence as a performative technique for application by a director, also emphasises this perceived gap in existing knowledge. Within my study I will attempt to narrow this gap through the analysis of selected practitioners and a practical exploration.

1.3 Research question and aims

My study of silence encompasses two components, namely an analysis of Robert Wilson and Samuel Beckett's work with silence, and a practical exploration of the use of silence within my own style of directing. In studying the work of Wilson and Beckett, I plan to make informed decisions regarding the handling of silence during rehearsal and in performance onstage, thereby better defining and utilising silence as a theatrical element. Ultimately, my focus lies in the concept of silence as a communicative device. As Dodd (2018:633-634) states, the "feature of silence that I want to stress is that it can genuinely be heard. We do not just hear sounds; we hear silence, the absence of sounds". My primary research question can be formulated as follows: How can silence be defined and applied as a communicative device within theatre?

My research therefore aims to firstly provide a practical definition of silence within theatre; and secondly to explore and develop practical methods of working with silence, informed by identified approaches and/or methods of Beckett and Wilson, through the staging of a production.

Secondary questions that support my primary research question are the following:

- What is the communicative value of silence?
- What approaches and/or methods did Beckett and Wilson employ in their practice that relate to silence as theatrical device?
- How can these approaches and/or methods be applied and adapted in my own directorial processes?

1.4 Research design and methodology

My research resides within a qualitative research paradigm and incorporates a combined methodology. Within the first component of my research, I use a literature study to investigate and

document the approaches and methods of theatre practitioners Samuel Beckett and Robert Wilson; with specific reference to their use of silence within selected examples of their work. The second component of my research consists of a practice-led inquiry – utilising an exploratory research methodology – in which I direct and stage a text of my choice. The text which I chose to use in this practical exploration is Sarah Kane’s *4.48 Psychosis*.

In *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences*, Stebbins (2010:4) defines exploration as “a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking”. My use of exploratory research falls into his category of ‘innovative exploration’. Stebbins (2010:2) describes this category as follows: “in this – *innovative exploration* – the goal is to gain only the degree of familiarity with the properties of substances and procedures that is needed to manipulate them so as to achieve the desired effect or product” (his emphasis). It is therefore a suitable methodology for my study, as it will enable me to engage with Beckett and Wilson’s methods on a practical level within my specific focus on silence.

Sullivan (2009:48) describes that the interest of practice-led research lies in

the possibility of new knowledge that may be generated by moving from a stance more accurately seen to move from the ‘unknown to the known’ whereby imaginative leaps are made into what we don’t know as this can lead to critical insights that can change what we do know.

In utilising a practice-led inquiry, my study is attempting to provide new knowledge through my practice as director. Smith and Dean (2009:1) acknowledge that the practice-led approach provides “a raised awareness of different kinds of knowledge that creative practice can convey and an illuminating body of information about the creative process”. The data collection tools that I will utilise during the practical exploration include participant observation, journaling, focus group discussions, as well as the video recording of various exercises and scenes during the rehearsal process and a recording of the final production itself. After staging the production for a live audience, I will also be able to reflect (from a director-spectator perspective) on the perceived effectiveness of the various methods I have made use of.

Due to the qualitative nature of my chosen methodologies, my own influence – and bias – as a participant in the research process must be acknowledged in order for the study to be an accurate reflection of the process. As both researcher and director during the practical inquiry, I will be aware of the performative nature of the study. The final production will function not only as a product of the study, but also as a production which will be directed for public consumption. As such, my awareness of the audience as director cannot be removed from the project. The study therefore encompasses both a research output concern as well as specific aesthetic requirements and

preferences on my part as director. In discussing the challenges facing the participant observer, Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013:98) state that “in many participant observation settings, there will be limits on your ability to record your observations right at the moment they happen”. This is a pitfall of my role as researcher/director as rehearsal time will be limited. In order to navigate this, I will keep brief notes during rehearsal and expand on them later once a rehearsal has concluded. As researcher/director I have also previously been in proximity to the research participants, hailing from the same academic department – Stellenbosch University’s Drama Department. I have interacted with them prior to the project in various capacities, such as tutor, and social acquaintance. In order to mitigate any potential conflict arising from this, I will define and discuss clear roles and hierarchy with the participants prior to the commencement of the rehearsal process.

1.5 Theoretical framework

In *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, Kendrick and Roesner (2012:xv) state that

theatre provides a unique habitat for noise. It is a place where friction can be thematised, explored playfully, even indulged in: friction between signal and receiver, between sound and meaning, between eye and ear, between silence and utterance, between hearing and listening.

This statement acknowledges the theatre as a space of communication, while highlighting the relationship between sound and silence through speech. In comparing silence and ‘utterance’ it is implied that language plays a role in silence and vice versa. The juxtaposition of words and silence allows for exploring the role of silence in language, but as an extension it can also question the role of sound which does not include spoken language. Are these sounds to be regarded separately, or as a kind of silence? Or are they a halfway point between spoken language and silence? Kendrick and Roesner’s concept of theatre providing a unique habitat for noise, may also be interpreted as theatre providing a unique habitat for silence, as sound and silence are asserted perhaps not as opposites, but as relational. Kendrick and Roesner (2012:xviii) further claim, for instance, that

all sound, noise, music and utterance begin and end with silence. Silence is the continuous counterpoint, the defining ‘other’ to theatre noise, sometimes as a manifest absence of sound, sometimes more philosophically as an idea and ideal.

Peter Brook (1996) speaks of silence as a reaction to theatre, introducing the concept of silence within an audience rather than the performer. He states that there are two “possible climaxes” to a theatrical

experience, the first being vocalised cheering and applause, the second being “the climax of silence” (Brook, 1996:55). He further states that

we have largely forgotten silence. It even embarrasses us, we clap our hands mechanically because we do not know what else to do, and we are unaware that silence is also permitted, that silence also is good. (Brook, 1996:55)

This assertion implies that silence may ‘speak’ as it can express admiration or awe from the perspective of an audience. In Brook’s view, the interplay between performer and audience is therefore supportive of the concept of silence as a part of language and/or silence as an intrinsically communicative device.

Silence may also be considered through the lens of space. Performance occurs within space, and therefore possesses spatial context. Hixson (2009:271) states that “if there is a cavity of space, there is sound”. He discusses artist Jonty Semper’s exhibition piece, titled *The one minute of silence from the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales* which incorporated the playing of a recording of one minute of silence in tribute to Princess Diana at a memorial held in 1997. This one minute of silence was followed by a recording of one minute of studio silence. Hixson (2009:271) observes that this studio silence was “predictably less noisy” than the memorial recording. In this sense, Hixson asserts that space holds and has impact on sound. This recognition of the relationship between space and sound, and the presence of sound within the physical environment aids in understanding that this research is not a pursuit of pure silence, but rather a deepening of the understanding of different types of silence and methods of working with silence onstage.

Within my study, I am therefore defining silence as the following: silence may seemingly suggest the absence of noise but should maybe rather be considered the absence of spoken words/language. In this sense, silence is a state whereby nonverbal forms of communication occur, where words (or language) are displaced as the communicative device. Pure silence is defined as an absolute absence of any sound, a state which is regarded as an impossibility due to the occurrence of environmental and bodily sound. Voeglin (2010:83) states that “silence is not the absence of sound but the beginning of listening”. In this sense, silence is therefore considered as context-bound; relying on context to infer meaning or provide expression. Within this study, context forms an important part of the methods identified, and my practical exploration of silence will incorporate textual, spatial, and emotional contexts. If the silence has context, it may communicate and be ‘listened to’ as one may listen to spoken language.

In light of the above, I will regard silence from the perspective of nonverbal communication, by considering wordless sound and the interaction between verbal and nonverbal communication. In

addition, John Cage's work with environmental silence in performance, Jean-Luc Nancy's (2007) theory of hearing and listening, as well as different perspectives on the use of silence in theatre – including those of Rosenberg (1963), Wilcox (2003) and Poyatos (2002) – will serve as theoretical departure points. These are discussed in more detail in chapter two.

1.6 Ethical considerations

In order to obtain ethical clearance for my study, I followed the procedures as laid out by the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University. This included detailing my data collection methods, which include the embedded data collection within the rehearsal process, as well as separate processes such as discussions. As part of the ethical stipulations, I obtained informed consent by drafting a form to be signed by all participants. This consent form stated that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. As a result of this, I (as researcher and director) ran the risk of participants withdrawing from the study and consequently the final staging of the production as the product of the study, as the participants also fulfil a dual role of participants/performers. This potential risk was acknowledged, but fortunately I did not have to contend with it during the practical component of my research.

I also applied for and was granted institutional permission to hold auditions and cast participants from the Stellenbosch University Drama Department. In selecting participants for the study, I posted audition notices detailing the preparation requirements for the auditions, indicating that the show was to be staged as part of my research. In this audition process, I made use of purposive sampling to select my cast. In defining purposive sampling, Daniel (2011:88) states that “the researcher purposely selects the elements because they satisfy specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the study”. These criteria included various physical and vocal abilities, as well as availability and language restrictions. Within this thesis, participants are identified by the first letter of their name in order to preserve a sense of privacy.

1.7 Chapter layout

Chapter two will provide a theoretical framework for my inquiry by discussing the function of silence in verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as the function thereof within communication in a theatre/performance context.

Chapter three entails a literature study of Samuel Beckett's work with silence, specifically within the plays *Breath* (1969) and *Not I* (1972). From these plays I identify and discuss the methods of textual scoring and formalised periodicity which I will apply within my own practice.

Chapter four provides a literature study of Robert Wilson's work with silence, specifically within the plays *Deafman Glance* (1971) and *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). From these plays I identify and discuss the methods of reiteration and Wilsonian time which I will apply within my own practice.

Chapter five firstly provides an overview of the work of Sarah Kane and *4.48 Psychosis* – the chosen text for my practical exploration. I discuss the silence found within the text, as well as my own directorial practice and interpretation of the text as a contextualisation for the practical process. The rest of the chapter provides an account of the practical process of my study, detailing directorial preparation, the rehearsal process and the application of the methods identified in chapter three and four, the technical considerations for the production, as well as observation made during the final staging of the production for a live audience.

Chapter six includes an overview of the aims and outcomes of my study and provides a final reflection on the practical exploration of silence as a communicative device in theatre. It concludes with the provision of further research questions that have been prompted by the study.

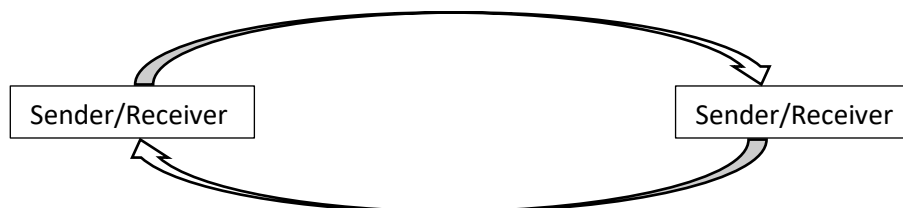
CHAPTER 2

SILENCE AS PLATFORM FOR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework within which my inquiry can take place. Considering that silence is defined (in simplified terms) as the absence of verbal language within my study, I will firstly discuss verbal and nonverbal communication, pointing to where silence may reside, and whether it functions differently within each form of communication. Thereafter in section 2.2, I will discuss communication and silence within a performance context. Section 2.3 will focus on John Cage's composition, *4'33"*, as a practical example of silence in performance.

2.1 The role of silence within communication

Communication in its simplest form is a responsive relationship between receiver and sender. It is a reciprocal process whereby the receiver interprets and responds to stimulus from the sender, and vice versa. For the purposes of this study I have constructed a simple diagram illustrating this reciprocal process of meaning-making and inference in which the sender and receiver may switch in role or embody both roles simultaneously:



Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson's (2011:29) description of communication supports this model as they argue that everything is communicative, because intention does not equate to perception. They state

First of all, there is a property of behaviour that could hardly be more basic and is, therefore, often overlooked: behaviour has no opposite. In other words, there is no such thing as nonbehaviour or, to put it even more simply: one cannot *not* behave. Now, if it is accepted that all behaviour in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot *not* communicate (their emphasis).

This concept of not being able to *not* communicate acknowledges the subjectivity involved in meaning-making. Watzlawick et al. (2011:30) further define communication as an outcome of behaviour by stating that "all behaviour in an interactional situation has message value". It therefore seems important to differentiate between what the individual is trying to communicate, and what

others are trying to understand. From this perspective, we can define verbal communication as consisting of behaviour which is made up of speaking, that is spoken language based behaviour. We may also define nonverbal behaviour through this lens as consisting of behaviour which does not include verbal language. This may then include movement and wordless sound.

If verbal communication involves the choosing of words and phrases, we may suppose that the possible meaning or intention behind the communication is usually discerned from the actual words chosen. However, within nonverbal communication, we may find other means of interpretation. Čulo and Skendrović (2012:325) state that

nonverbal communication includes gestures, such as facial expressions, body movements and eye contact. It is comprised of physical signs and twitches that are performed and repeated with a degree of consistency though our conscious selves may not be aware of what we are doing.

This means that bodies or objects may send constant signals, or that constant signals may be interpreted even when not intended. Of course, verbal communication may be similarly misconstrued, because if there is no dictionary to turn to, deciphering meaning must make use of other means of recognition and deduction. Čulo and Skendrović (2012:325) further assert that “speech also contains nonverbal elements known as paralanguage. These include voice quality, emotion and speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress”. In this sense, the categories of verbal and nonverbal communication do appear to overlap slightly, however verbal communication maintains spoken language as a component.

Although verbal and nonverbal communication may be differentiated on the basis of spoken language, it may be argued that both contain silence. Nonverbal communication in the sense that it does not include spoken language, thereby adhering to my definition of silence in chapter one, and verbal language by nature of the prosodic features as listed by Čulo and Skendrović. Silence can be asserted as forming part of the sound of spoken language, as it informs elements such as rhythm and intonation.

Rush (1999:86) asserts that communication may be present outside of the physical body as he comments on the value of silence using an example of the missing persons’ posters after 9/11:

while initially emblems of hope, these silent posters of the disappeared are now for those who survive tokens of mourning, transitional objects... hope evaporates into dread, and dread turns into grief. In this mute space, the shock of trauma slowly transforms into the reality of loss, and in this regard, silence might be considered that moment before that liminal space from which loss

is expropriated into its symbolic meaning. Silence, then, is not the opposite of speech but, indeed, its very condition of possibility, the precondition of knowing and of meaning.

Within Rush's description, we find that silence is placed as an environmental condition. The silence is not asserted as 'speaking' or communicating by itself, but rather as the result of the images and events surrounding it. Silence is shown to extend into space, and to be informed by it. Silence as the 'condition of possibility' can then be considered a possible framework for all communication, with silence not being placed in opposition to speech, but rather in relation to it. In the environmental condition of possibility, we may find either language or the absence of it. Both verbal and nonverbal communication may therefore incorporate silence as environmental condition.

Nancy (2007:7) considers meaning and sound, asking:

What can be the shared space of meaning and sound? Meaning consists in a reference. In fact, it is made of a totality of referrals: from a sign to a thing, from a state of things to a quality, from a subject to another subject or to itself, all simultaneously. Sound is also made of referrals: it spreads in space, where it resounds while still resounding 'in me', as we say.

Nancy acknowledges the myriad references which inform the possibilities of meaning. Meaning and sound are asserted as systems of referral, wherein endless possibility and variation reside. Considering Rush's assertion of silence as the condition of possibility, we may consider silence forming part of this system of referral. In terms of interpreting and understanding this system of referral, Nancy (2007:6) differentiates between hearing and listening:

'to hear' is to understand the sense (either in the so-called figurative sense, or in the so-called proper sense)... to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible.

If the listener is straining toward meaning, then we may be able to suppose that a contextual silence forms a part of this search for meaning. While both hearing and listening are active processes, according to Nancy (2007:7), "to be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning". In this sense, he defines listening and hearing as separate, yet related processes in which meaning is inferred. Considering Rush's assertion of silence as environmental condition, we may consider the possibility of hearing or listening to silence, as Nancy describes. If meaning exists in a space of referrals, and silence embodies the condition of possibility, then it can be said that silence is relational to sound and space, and that it may hold communicative value in the same sense. Within Nancy's theory, we find

the possibility of all communication being listened to or heard, as he describes a search for meaning rather than just an auditory focus.

Alker (2008:123) asserts that silence may be listened to as it forms part of a bodily process:

Silence, after such detailed investigation by Cage and others, can no longer be heard as absence, but instead as a heightened listening. When one listens to silence, one realizes how the body is complicit in making sound. Silence, while seemingly passive and defined in opposition to speech, undermines its own ontology through performance and reverses the roles of activity and passivity between she who acts and she who listens.

In asserting silence as an embodied act of listening, Alker recognizes that silence is dependent on and related to other elements, such as sound itself, whilst also asserting that silence causes an activity within the listener, as meaning must be listened for/sought out. This supports Nancy's theory of the active meaning making process.

Considering the assertions of Rush, Nancy, and Alker, it becomes apparent that both verbal and nonverbal communication may inherently include silence. Once we regard silence also as a spatial phenomenon, rather than just as an embodied action or state, the understanding of communication widens to incorporate environmental context, that is, communication may reside within space as well as within the body. With the body never being truly silent, silence appears as a kind of precondition (as asserted by Rush) which supports the possibility of communication.

In differentiating between the function of silence in verbal and nonverbal communication, we may look to the textual nature of spoken language. Poyatos (2002:5) claims that "all kinds of bodily or environmentally generated signs" are "explicitly (described or 'written') or implicitly ('between the words or lines') incorporated without exception into the text". This implies that verbal communication – that is, spoken or written word – may incorporate the implication of nonverbal communication. In this case, Poyatos appears to point to verbal communication as holding the impetus for the nonverbal and perhaps vice versa. The existence of a written text may then create a map of communication, wherein the reader finds or decodes the subtext of nonverbal communication. Considering this relationality, it can be asserted that silence can be found in the gaps between verbal communication, and that in these silent gaps nonverbal communication may also reside or arise.

Margolin (2008:95) supports this understanding by asserting that in a theatrical context "language onstage is just the certain needlework on a larger fabric of silence. If language really worked, there'd be no drama. Theatre doesn't mind language's failure". In this case, it appears that nonverbal

communication is a necessary component in the act of communicating verbally, and that silence is a necessary condition for this act. Alker (2008:124) furthers this understanding of silence by stating that “the silence of performance is a universal invitation to witness so that each audience member takes full responsibility for the clarity of her or his own meanings”. Silence then allows for nonverbal communication to take place and in turn encourages an active meaning making process.

Verbal and nonverbal communication are therefore in many cases largely inextricable from one another as they form a system of relationality in which silence provides the conditions necessary for communication to take place. Residing in the gaps or ‘failures’ of spoken language (as stated by Margolin), silence allows for the inference of the nonverbal, at times within the verbal.

2.2 The role of silence in theatre/performance

Wilcox (2003:548) asserts the link between silence and space:

Generally amorphous and defined in relation to other elements – silence is the lack of sound, space the lack of a defined place. Both share the illusion of emptiness, when in reality they are as substantive as their more defined opposites.

This illusion of emptiness found in both space and silence is precisely what points to their relationality. Both encompass one another, with silence relying on space to provide context, and vice versa. The meaning making process in theatre is therefore an integrated one.

Rosenberg (1963:2) describes the reciprocity of this process as it occurs in performance, stating

If the actor communicates effectively enough the character’s emergencies, there is a felt experience, an empathy, *a feeling with...* the special power of physical and vocal gesture to evoke this response derives partly from its correspondence with our earliest and most urgent experiences. In life as in art the beginning is never the word. We learn to wail and croon before we talk; we learn to strike and caress before we can say why. Since we are fated to be symbol-making animals, we promptly turn our sounds and movements into meaningful gestures.

If these meaningful gestures are physical or nonverbal, it is implied that they form part of nonverbal communication. Which is to say that while they are being expressed (whether intentionally or not) they do not rely on words to frame their meaning, but rather on context. Silence that is listened to in Nancy’s sense can provide the environment in which these meaningful gestures are interpreted and/or interpretable.

Vannier (translated by Pronko, 1963:181) categorises spoken language as a “vocal form of gesture”. In this understanding, language does not take precedence as the communicative medium, but is rather placed as one element within larger communication. Given equal standing with gesture, there is the possibility of language being destabilized, with nonverbal communication acknowledged as active in and necessary to the theatrical space. Rosenberg (1963:1) acknowledges the role of the nonverbal, stating,

If plays were made only of words, they would surrender, as poems do, to intensive verbal analysis. But words are only part of a broad spectrum of symbolic sound and movement by which a play is made to arouse an audience; drama often speaks most eloquently through its other languages – through action and nonverbal sound, through the direct physical expression of feeling and thought.

Theatre is meant to be experienced on more than just an auditory level. It therefore encompasses not only the written text, but a performance text which is made up of nonverbal communication which may be instigated by the physical expression.

Rosenberg (1963:5) furthers this view by asserting that ascribing meaning to silence is fundamental to communication in the theatre. He uses the performance of Shakespeare’s works as an example:

in the poetry of sound, one of the most important accents is silence. Silence too is among our earliest companions, and we hardly become acquainted with it before we endow it with symbolic meaning: the silence of darkness, of fear, the silence of angry authority, the silence of love... in the drama it is fused with the language of action: Macbeth stands frozen in the quiet that follows the knocking; Juliet brings the sleeping draught slowly and fearfully to her mouth; Lear waits for Cordelia to wake from death. (Rosenberg, 1963:5)

In asserting silence as an ‘accent’, Rosenberg implies that verbal and nonverbal communication may complement one another onstage. The ‘language of action’ links nonverbal communication to the performers in the theatre. These bodies may be moving or still, such as Juliet bringing the sleeping draught to her lips, or Macbeth standing frozen respectively. This description also asserts the relationality of silence, both to the spoken text and space, as the silence is contextualised through the elements surrounding it and may hold expressive power.

It is apparent that within theatre, silence and communication are relational, as they are within general communication. Both are interpreted through contextual cues, often linked to space and movement, and these contextual cues may provide/result in silence or be provided by/result from silence.

2.3 Cage's 'silent' performance

John Cage's avant-garde work with silence in musical composition introduces the concept of “sounds being themselves” (Pritchett, 1996:4). He composed an experimental work called *4'33"* in 1952, which provides a practical example of the communicative ability of silence in performance. The piece is a silent performance, a musical piece composed of no actual instrumental sound. In response to audience reactions to the first performance of the piece, Cage (in Kostelanetz, 2003:70) states that “they missed the point. There's no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds”. The composition then, was not made up of purposeful sound, but rather silence which proved to be filled with naturally occurring environmental sounds. Cage's concept of silence operates on the assumption that silence has the power to be unexpected, to take an audience by surprise, and/or to defy their preconceptions of what a performance must *do*, precisely because it provides a platform for nonverbal communication.

Wilcox (2003:547) states that “in a very real sense, the legacy of *4'33"* is a challenge to presumptions in which the idea of nothingness must be addressed as eminently filled with something, be it sound, light, energy, and so on”. In this sense, Cage's work highlights the potential communicative power of the environmental, which is the context of silence. Cage's composition also asserts that nonverbal communication does not only originate in people's bodies, but that other environmental factors may also communicate as part of silence. This is because of the meaning-making process conducted by the audience. In this case, a bird singing outside may communicate even though it is wordless, as may the sound of breathing within the audience. As asserted by Rush, silence provides the condition of possibility for communication in the performance. Wilcox (2003:547) further states that

while the space may not be endowed with the same defining qualities with which we approach place, it is not absent; in fact it is very much present. That which is meant to be silent in a traditional performance situation is generally ignored, as is undifferentiated space, and yet the sound of this silence and the presence of this space are more than conceptually apparent since they are always defined in relation to surrounding elements. Framing a span of time of four minutes and thirty-three seconds, Cage set off 'silence' from the sound that surrounded it and discovered that this silence, this nothingness, had substance.

Wilcox asserts silence as a spatial and auditory experience within the performance. Cage may not have had control over the actual environmental sound, but he did have control over the framing of and therefore the focus on it. Silence in *4'33''* appears to be treated as a kind of frame, in which other elements are given focus and attention. This relationality to the other elements of the performance is precisely what affords the silence its substance. In the case of *4'33''*, silence therefore both provides a context for the performance, and is provided with context by the performance itself.

2.4 Conclusion

Verbal and nonverbal communication are relational, just as space and silence are relational. They inform one another and may often be found within one another. Within theatre, silence holds the capacity to communicate because it forms part of communication and context, as is shown in the practical example of Cage's *4'33''* wherein silence is used as a frame for nonverbal communication.

Against this theoretical background, the following two chapters will provide overviews of Samuel Beckett's and Robert Wilson's approaches to theatre and silence in performance. I will discuss selected examples of their work, from which I will identify methods and approaches to be applied within my own practical study.

CHAPTER 3

BECKETT'S FILLED SILENCE

3.1 Introduction

Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish Nobel Prize-winning Modernist novelist, playwright, director, poet, essayist, and literary translator. Having studied French, Italian, and English at Trinity College in Dublin, Beckett went on to become a lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1928. It was in Paris that Beckett met the writer James Joyce who was also originally from Ireland. Through socialising with Joyce, Beckett was requested to write an essay defending Joyce's writing. Beckett's essay, titled *Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce*, "claims an author's right to create an opaque text that is difficult for the reader to comprehend" (Lyons, 1983:2). In describing an 'opaque text', Lyons (1983:2) refers to Beckett's argument against a division of form and content; Beckett's concern was therefore not ease of comprehension, but rather the expression of an encompassing atmosphere. This notion of placing atmosphere above ease of comprehension would later become apparent in his theatrical work.

It was not until 1948 at the age of 42 that Beckett wrote his most well-known play, *Waiting for Godot* (first performed in 1952). The text embodies his sentiment of uniting form and content in the sparseness of the language. This sparseness, or economical use of words, in turn reflects the sparseness of the world found within *Waiting for Godot*, a world of eternal waiting and nothingness. The "opaque text" of Beckett's writing places his work within the realm of the absurd, where "obstacles that interfere with the spectator's immediate comprehension" are found (Lyons, 1983:17). These obstacles take form in the seeming lack of unification between elements such as plot, setting, and characterisation; and although these elements may be theatrically unified and sensible within the logic of the presented world, they do not aim to create and show a realistic representation of human behaviour. İçöz (1993:282) states that "the restriction of plot, setting, and dialogue focus attention on the fact of being on stage", allowing for Beckett's audience to actively engage in meaning-making.

Beckett wrote prolifically, producing in excess of 30 theatre texts. His most popular texts are from his middle period after WWII up until the late 1950s. These texts, such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* (1957) largely focused on the futility of existence, incorporating conventions of Absurd Theatre. Meredith's (2006:17) statement that "Beckett's work sings the poetry of failure and silence, and dramatizes the essential pathos of the human condition" is applicable to both his middle and late period. His late period works, from the 1960s onwards, incorporate a more minimalist sentiment, with Beckett exploring the boundaries of communication within theatre. Having lived in Paris for much of

his adult life, Beckett wrote the majority of his work in French and translated many of his works himself.

In the following section, I will discuss Beckett's approach to, and views on, his own work as a writer, as well as the views of others. I will then attempt to identify methods used by Beckett in order to create or sustain silence within his work. My aim is to not only investigate the possible function(s) of silence within his work, but also the way in which it is curated. I will refer to specific texts and performances which I find appropriate for my study on silence, namely *Breath* (1969) – this text does not contain any spoken words or use any performers –, and *Not I* (1972) – this text makes use of non-traditional staging and speech with an emphasis on visuals. Both texts therefore subvert the traditional expectations of communication onstage. I will lastly discuss the methods and approaches I am taking forward for practical application and exploration in my own study of silence as a communicative tool within the theatre.

3.2 Beckett's approach to theatre

As he often refused to give interviews and commentary on his work, Beckett's process and approach will be viewed through a combination of his own rare statements and the accounts and analyses of others. Beckett's formative friendship with James Joyce inspired him to make the following comparison:

I realised that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [being] in control of one's material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I realised that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding. (Beckett in Knowlson, 1996:352)

Considering this comment, Beckett's approach appears to be a process of distillation whereby he subtracts in order to highlight the essence, rather than working in excess. This concept can be considered on a textual and a physical level (although the two may be intertwined). Beckett further comments on this process in a letter to Georges Dethuit (2011:217-219) in which he expresses his dissatisfaction at a director's idea for the set of *Waiting for Godot*, saying,

I want a theatre reduced to its own means, speech and acting, without painting, without music, without embellishments... The setting has to come out of the text, without adding to it... Any formal specificity becomes impossible. If it is really essential to know where they are (and in my view the text makes that clear enough), let the words look after that.

For Beckett, words were at the very essence of the theatre, and his focus on precision is what makes for texts and performances which are stripped of the unnecessary. This is the core of his working ‘in impoverishment’: a theatre which does not entertain the unnecessary, but rather one which relies on the text to provide all context and which must be followed precisely.

According to Meredith (2006:18), Beckett extended this interest in precision to his directorial approach:

if he paid little attention to providing an actor with psychological motivation, he concentrated minutely on other aspects of their performance, and had a number of techniques in order to ensure that they moved and spoke in ways appropriate to his vision. On one occasion, for example, he brought a piano into the rehearsal studio to find the appropriate tone for the actors to follow, and he also once consulted Stravinsky in an unsuccessful attempt to notate silence exactly.

This preoccupation with precise execution of vision reflects Beckett’s writing style. Kenner (1973:157) refers to Beckett’s writing as “a game of silences in which new situations are appraised: hence Beckett’s most frequent stage direction, ‘Pause.’”. While Beckett was unsuccessful in his desire to exactly notate silence exactly, his impulse to do so highlights his investment in precision. On Beckett’s approach to rehearsals, Knowlson (1996:302) states, “it was not only a musical approach to theatrical language that he was adopting. He also needed to find an acting style that suited his vision. He sought to achieve his effects minimally, taking out rather than putting in”. Once again, we find the notion of Beckett removing the unnecessary. However, Knowlson’s acknowledgement of Beckett’s musical sensibility may provide insight into his structuring of text. If the text is considered musically as a score, then we can consider pause to hold equal importance with words, with both being indicated in the text. When treated as a score, the text leaves no room for chance as not only words are being considered, but the space surrounding them as well.

Khasawneh (2014:31) states that “related to silence is the obligation to express. The text that has nothing to express finds itself under the necessity to express”. In considering Beckett’s apparent purposeful equal treatment of word and pause, Khasawneh’s statement appears to acknowledge the tension found between words and silences or pause. If Beckett’s pauses are defined as silences, then according to Khasawneh’s statement, the very space around the words may serve Beckett’s thematic content. The textual scoring therefore provides opportunity for silence to communicate as the silences indicated are purposeful and not to be disregarded.

With Beckett's texts often having little to no setting given in the stage directions, and by focusing on themes of isolation and eternal waiting, he explored the existential existence of his characters. These characters became what Taggart (2010:105) terms "Beckett's tramps, cripples and blind men". Actress Billie Whitelaw (in Meredith, 2006:18), who performed in Beckett's productions on multiple occasions, comments on the challenges of Beckett's writing style:

It is difficult to do sometimes because with what we call a proper play you have act one, scene one which will sort of lead you into something as an actor... I suppose why Beckett is such a genius is that you go zonk, straight in to what the play is all about and every comma and full stop and pause or dot dot dot between words is what it's about.

In this description, we find further acknowledgement of Beckett's precise textual scoring. Whitelaw ascribes significance to not only words, but to punctuation and typography. The "dot dot dot between words" can be interpreted as her way of explaining ellipses in typography, but it can also be related to textual scoring. If the "dot dot dot between words" is considered a device used to allow space for pause, a physical act of writing pause into the text in a visual manner (in the way that letters indicate words), Beckett's attention to pause can be seen as a fundamental element of his texts. In reference to Beckett's approach, Derrida (1978:72) states that "death strolls between letters". From a thematic perspective, this statement can be interpreted that Beckett's use of pauses allow for a maturation of his themes of isolation and nothingness. Beckett's use of pauses therefore becomes communicative, as it allows for the furthering of mood and atmosphere onstage.

Brinzeu (1993:229) comments on Beckett's approach to text by stating, "in Beckett's drama, speaking and non-speaking are intimately bound, vocalizations and pauses conjoin: speech cannot be authenticated as a linguistic act unless it is saturated by the constant presence of the pauses". If we are to use this description in order to understand Beckett's textual scoring, word and text must be considered distinct from one another. Word/s can be defined as the actual words spoken (as indicated in the text), and text can be defined as the entirety of the score of the language of the play. In other words, text includes both words and silences (indicated through words, punctuation, and typography), as words frame the silences (or pauses) and vice versa. One can consider Beckett's work with textual scoring to be an act of subtracting superfluous words; to be replaced with the space (or silences) afforded by the pauses as defined by Brinzeu. Textual scoring can therefore be considered to be one of the means by which Beckett creates work 'in impoverishment'.

As mentioned earlier, İçöz (1993:282) states that "the restriction of plot, setting, and dialogue focus attention on the fact of being on stage". This statement can be thought of in relation to Brinzeu's

statement on speech and pause. Both statements support Beckett's description of his own approach as one of subtraction or restriction. İçöz's statement acknowledges that Beckett's textual scoring allows for a clear focus within his work. Without unnecessarily elaborate design and speech, we can perhaps consider the possibility of sparseness in the work, as a kind of visual silence, as well as an auditory one. Both İçöz and Brinzeu's understandings of Beckett's approach to theatre indicate a refining process whereby precision is curated in the work.

3.3 Silence in Beckett's work

Actor Bud Thorpe (in Knowlson, 1996:668) quotes Beckett during a rehearsal as saying "now I am going to fill my silences with sounds. For every silence there will be sounds, be they the shuffling of feet, steps, dropping things, and so on". The idea of balancing silence with sounds and allowing environmental sound within every silence is an intriguing one. Rather than filling silences with words, Beckett therefore curated silences filled with other nonverbal communication cues. Wilcox (2003:552) acknowledges Beckett's work with space and silence, comparing it to Cage's silence:

Beckett's 'places' become Cagean silent spaces in which our individual observations as spectators mingle with ambient sound and ambient space to help differentiate, via text and image, a unique system of values created not by production, but through the interaction of production and spectator.

Wilcox (2003:550) specifically references the way in which Beckett instructs silence in his short – only thirty-five seconds long – play *Breath* (1969), stating "the entire piece rests, like Cage's 4'33", on the spectator's anticipation of something, and the realisation that the mind is encouraged to wander about this mental, physical, and audible space". After writing his more famous works (*Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*), Beckett wrote many compact, minimalist works in his later writing period, including *Footfalls* (1975), which consists of a woman pacing up and down in a metronome-like fashion outside of her dying mother's room. She converses with her mother, who is only heard and not seen, with her footfalls underscoring the words and pauses in a constant rhythm. Another text from this time period is *Rockaby* (1980). In *Rockaby*, Beckett presents another isolated female figure. She sits in a rocking chair, not moving for the duration of the play. The chair rocks of its own accord as a tape of her voice plays, recounting stories of her own life as well as her mother's. In both texts we find a strong rhythmic base and minimal set.

3.3.1 *Breath* (1969)

Breath arguably takes Beckett's work 'in impoverishment' even further as it calls for no actual actors. There are no bodies onstage. Within this play, Beckett has reduced life to its fundamental function: breathing. A recording of a baby's first cry after birth, also termed *vagitus*, is played twice. Other

than the cries, only breaths (termed inspiration and expiration in the text) are heard through the recording, played over miscellaneous rubbish strewn on the stage. This recording can be considered to take the place of the traditional performer.

The text, due to its lack of characters and spoken dialogue, consists only of specific instructions. The instructions in the text are numbered one to three and are highly specific, giving indications of duration. Hutchings (1986) writes that *Breath* follows the traditional set up of a play: it incorporates introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and then resolution. It manages to do this, however, with a complete lack of speech, a verbal and visual silence, and in the space of 35 seconds. The text is as follows:

1. Faint light on stage littered with miscellaneous rubbish. Hold about five seconds.
2. Faint brief cry and immediately inspiration and slow increase of light together reaching maximum together in about ten seconds. Silence and hold about five seconds.
3. Expiration and slow decrease of light together reaching minimum together (light as in 1) in about 10 seconds and immediately cry as before. Silence and hold about five seconds (Beckett, 1984:211).

His choice to use the word ‘expiration’ instead of ‘exhalation’ hints at the themes and atmosphere of the piece. Beckett does not reduce the cycle of life to 35 seconds without incorporating death. While thematically similar to his longer works from both the late and middle period, *Breath* appears to be even more minimalist, and operating with precise textual scoring.

In this case, the “dot dot dot” (as described by Billie Whitelaw) is replaced by time indications. Silent pauses are indicated as lasting five seconds. Without language being presented, nonverbal communication takes precedence and meaning must be made via alternate methods.

Lyons (1983:3) states that “Beckett consistently questions the power of language to signify, demonstrating a keen scepticism about the possibility that words can sustain a concept of reality for any length of time”. Within his play, *Breath*, Beckett illustrates that it is possible to convey theme and meaning through nonverbal communication that does not involve performer’s bodies and therefore movement. Through the use of recordings of recognisable wordless sound, the text is able to deliver something relatable or rather, recognisable. Beckett saw the problem of literature as “trying to find a form for [...] silence”, and in writing *Breath* it appears that he may have found a form for silence within the acknowledgement of silence as wordless rather than devoid of any sound (Atik, 2001:95).

Hutchings (1986:90-91) states that “the longest word in the OED — floccinaucinihilipilification — accurately describes the prevailing critical assessment of *Breath*: the act of estimating something as worthless because it is small or slight”¹. While the work is ‘small’ in length, it is important in its contribution to nonverbal communication onstage. It offers an alternate mode of storytelling for the playwright/director. Beckett's silence is therefore highly specified and curated, as opposed to Cage's allowance of chance in embracing the environmental. Wilcox (2003:550) states the following in this regard:

While Beckett’s hyper-specificity could never be confused with Cage’s use of chance and non-determined actions, the entire piece rests, like Cage’s 4’33”, on the spectator’s anticipation of something, and the realisation that the mind is encouraged to wander about this mental, physical, and audible space.

Beckett’s curation of silence, through the use of textual scoring which does not rely on the spoken word therefore becomes the primary communication – and meaning-making – medium.

3.3.2 *Not I* (1972)

Not I thematically focuses on a preoccupation with the desire to express oneself. This play by Beckett is, on multiple levels, useful in the study of silence. Firstly, the text functions as a monologue written for the character of Mouth. During the performance, Mouth takes the form of a disembodied mouth with red lips that floats eight feet above the stage floor; this is created by only lighting the performer’s mouth, with the rest of the body in darkness. The mouth belongs to a woman who refers to herself in the third person as ‘she’. Another (silent) character, the robed Auditor, observes Mouth from a distance. The Auditor is described as follows:

downstage audience left, tall standing figure, sex undeterminable, enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit, standing on invisible podium about 4 feet high shown by attitude alone to be facing diagonally across stage intent on Mouth, dead still throughout but for four brief movements where indicated (Beckett: 1984:214).

Secondly, the text is filled with pause and hesitation, moments of silence which break the barrage of words from Mouth, indicated through the use of ellipses. According to Van Hulle (2009:22),

¹The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (2010:671) currently defines ‘floccinaucinihilipilification’ as “the action or habit of estimating something as worthless”.

hesitancy marks the moments the texture² is punctured by pauses, such as the countless ellipses in *Not I* or the numerous moments in *Happy Days* when the text is interrupted by a “[Pause]”. After the war, Beckett thus did what he only said in the 1930s. He wrote texts ‘eaten away with terrible silences’.

Not I presents a form of both visual and auditory silence as a result of the stage setting and the structure of the writing. The “terrible silences” that Van Hulle references are highlighted in the text because of the sheer amount of words surrounding them. Beckett therefore juxtaposes sound and silence as a means of heightening the effect of the silences. It is implied that the woman in *Not I* has been mute for some time, apart from the occasional outburst, as she states: “speechless all her days... practically speechless... even to herself... never out loud... but not completely... sometimes sudden urge... once or twice a year...” (Beckett, 1984:220). She repeatedly denies that she is talking about herself while she recounts experiences, hence the title *Not I*. In this piece, Beckett directs attention to the various senses. The implication is that Mouth speaks, the audience sees, and the Auditor hears. Mouth’s speech is structured as one long sentence broken up by ellipses, – the “dot dot dot” of Billie Whitelaw again inferred. These ellipses can be considered indications of the space surrounding the words, and together with the words, comprise the text. An example may be taken from any moment in the text, as they are consistent throughout. Beckett’s text indicates that the beginning of the play consists of the voice unintelligible behind the curtain. As the curtain rises, Mouth speaks:

... out... into this world... this world... tiny little thing... before its time...
in godfor-... what?... girl?... yes... tiny little girl... into this... out into this...
before her time... godforsaken hole called... called... no matter... parents
unknown... unheard of... he having vanished... thin air... no sooner buttoned
up his breeches... she similarly... eight months later... almost to the tick...
so no love... spared that... no love such as normally vented on the...
speechless infant... in the home... no... (Beckett, 1984:216).

Catanzaro (1990:36) refers to this textual device as “formalized periodicity – that is, cyclical and repeated phrases”. In using cyclical and repeated phrases, Beckett creates a staged world in which the audience’s attention is directed toward the visual and structured auditory stimulus of the red mouth, apparently emerging from darkness. Wilcox (2003:550) explains that

it is in this absence of a defined location, indeed the absence of any determined place save the blackened theatre, that Beckett allows the space of the stage to resonate a presence with its presumed absence, forcing the

² ‘Texture’ in this case refers to the full text of the performance, including stage directions, pause, and punctuation.

spectator to confront a plasticity of space created by the visual and dramatic tension among the auditor, the mouth, and the surrounding space... Beckett created a dramaturgical structure in which the space of the theatre is addressed as space and not as an illusionary place. It is with this notion in mind that Beckett was able to side step the notion of dramatic place to allow the theatrical space to take precedence, and like Cage's work with the non-silence of 4'33", illuminate the power and presence of that which is presumed empty.

In embracing theatrical space within the production, Beckett allows for a form of communication which is not rooted in realistic portrayal or narrative, but rather in gesture and the silence of the space itself. The impact of the text is also found in the highly specific instructions that accompany it. During rehearsals for the 1973 production, Beckett requested that actress Billie Whitelaw speak at a rapid pace as Mouth. Knowlson (1996:598) quotes her as saying, "I've been practicing saying words at a tenth of a second... no one can possibly follow the text at that speed but Beckett insists that I speak it precisely. It's like music, a piece of Schoenberg in his head". This could imply that the piece operated in the realm of sensory overload, which is ironic as the performer seemingly suffers a form of sensory deprivation by being draped in black, with only her mouth uncovered.

Khasawneh (2014:32) states that "Beckett's dynamic prose conveys 'the literature of the unword'" where both language and narrative are intentionally manipulated to overcome limitations of artistic representation. In his juxtaposition of words and hesitations (through ellipses), Beckett destabilizes the traditional authority of words as communicators in theatre by giving the hesitations equal emphasis. Williams (2012:249) explains further:

To start with, punctuation is concerned with stops. If the function of punctuation is, among other things, 'the division of text', or 'the [...] articulation of appropriate pauses', one can view the beginning and end of the text, where it starts and stops, as the most radical and unavoidable of punctuational conventions. Here, what is the text is divided from what is not the text; the silence itself is punctuated, and the words heard against the pauses which precede and follow. Viewed this way, beginnings and endings are much alike.

Not I's formalised periodicity creates room for silence to permeate the text and in turn the stage space. The silences, filled by what comes before and after them, simultaneously serve as beginnings and endings in a space where time seems curiously absent, alluded to only in Mouth's third person recollection of her life.

By not providing context for the performance through setting or time, Beckett silences through the imagery created, but a sense of contextual silence also emerges. The constant drone of words, broken by the ‘dot dot dot’ hesitations, mean that (as in *Breath*) the audience becomes (to a certain extent) solely responsible for meaning making. Lyons (1983:155-156) states that because *Not I* presents Mouth in the moment of her conflict “with the interrogating light that dominates [her] present... the audience must not only create a sense of narrative through implication, but construct an image of character as well”. While *Not I* includes performers, the absence of Mouth’s body causes a lack of context. The ‘unnecessary’ elements are eliminated and we are left with a highly specified visual and auditory focus. While the text does include allusions to Mouth’s past – such as “no matter... parents unknown... unheard of... he having vanished... thin air...” (Beckett, 1984:216) with reference to her absent father – the fact that she refers to herself in third person and recites the text in such a formalized way leads to a “sense of the absence of time” (Lyons, 1983:159).

Simpson (2015:404) states that “Beckett's directorial practice entailed a troubling of the alignment of ‘self-expression’ with ‘acting’”. This is also a result of the style of his writing. Within *Not I*, Beckett does not provide the reader or the audience with given circumstances as such. There are some phrases within Mouth’s speech, such as “what?... seventy?... good God!” (Beckett, 1984: 217), which could give an indication of her possible age, but other than that we are presented with the text as it stands. That is, the ranting of a woman who cannot seem to stop herself from confessing/witnessing her own experiences in the third person.

Simpson (2015:410) observes that “the Beckettian actor, it seems, exists purely to give physical possibility to the text, in a passive submission rather than an active ‘acting’ on stage”. This echoes Whitelaw’s sense of the impossibility of the task of performing *Not I* according to Beckett’s specifications. The functioning of *Not I* as a text can be considered through Nojournian’s (2004) understanding of the placement of silence as a counterpart to language instead of as its opposite. As a result of this placement the text “deconstructs the opposition of language and silence telling us that they are inscribed within one another” (Nojournian, 2004:396).

3.4 Beckett in my practice

In Beckett’s (in Knowlson, 1996:352) own words, he realised that the strength of his work lay in “subtracting rather than adding”. Thematically, my chosen text, *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane, is similar to the oeuvre of Beckett in that it deals with themes of existentialism. The concept of existing in a distilled state is already present in the work, both thematically and in the total lack of stage direction and general given circumstance. It can be considered similar to *Breath*, in that there is no

indication of character present in the text, however, *4.48 Psychosis* does include verbal communication.

In *Breath*, Beckett curates a stage event in which there is no speaking and no bodies present, and yet the storyline and arcs are intact. This has been achieved through precise and careful instruction on Beckett's part as a script writer. The consideration of the audience within the text is apparent. Given cues action and nonverbal sound, as identified by Rosenberg (1963:1) and referred to in chapter two, the spectator is given space to infer their own meaning and their own experience within the realm of the text and performance. It is in this way that the story can remain intact when it has been stripped down to such an extent. Beckett's awareness of the anticipation that results from silence (whether auditory or visual) appears to be the key to executing his version of theatrical impoverishment precisely. Due to the lack of given setting in Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*, I feel that Beckett's emphasis on visual cues and recognisable, wordless sound will be a useful and effective method within my practice as director.

The text of *4.48 Psychosis* calls for silence consistently through the variations on the stage direction '(Silence.)', and it is inferred that the silence called for is a wordless silence placed in contrast to the words within the text. I plan to use visual cues (such as a bathtub to indicate a bathroom, and a large hanging frame to indicate a glass elevator) in order to allow the audience space to create meaning without filling the space with anything unnecessary. Furthermore, because the text of *4.48 Psychosis* is constructed from words and the indication of '(Silence.)', I plan to introduce wordless sound, such as the cries and 'inspiration' and 'expiration' indicated in *Breath*. My interest therefore lies in how wordless sound can be constructed in order to communicate. What impact will a cough have? Or a hum? In experimenting with the construction of wordless sound I hope to create full silences; silences that may communicate or facilitate communication with the spectator while allowing the narrative of the piece to progress.

Beckett's treatment of Mouth in *Not I* engages with the concept of audience expectation to a large degree. Instead of a character who is fully visible and coherent, Mouth appears as disjointed red lips, floating in black space. The visual representation called for in this production interests me as a director as it calls for one ultimate focal point onstage. The entire presentation is geared toward the spectator being transfixed on this disembodied mouth which speaks incessantly, while maintaining a peripheral awareness of the lurking figure of the Auditor. The audience is therefore watching the watched which allows for nonverbal communication in the sense that the Auditor's role must be inferred by the audience via their own meaning-making process. In contrast to this silent process, Mouth's role is one of never-ending speech which is punctuated by constant hesitation and new trains of thought. Coupled with the breakneck speed at which Beckett wished it to be performed, one can

presume that the performance of *Not I* could, to the spectator, be perceived as quite a rhythmic event. Van Hulle's (2009: 22) recognition of Beckett's "terrible silences" is connected to this seemingly perpetual delivery of the text, which is given a rhythmic element through the juxtaposition of the silences/hesitations and sound/words.

As Brinzeu (1993:231) states, "it is established that the frenzied monologues of the characters help them flee from their own identity in quest for anonymity and self-annihilation. Pauses, on the contrary, are recoverable abysses". This juxtaposition of sound and pause is useful, and I am interested in experimenting with the effect created by sudden silence, or sudden sound in contrast to what has come before. If pauses are "recoverable abysses" is it possible for the pause to not be long enough for recovery to take place? Or is it possible for the pause to be so long that recovery is abandoned in favour of discomfort or expectation? Within *4.48 Psychosis* there are a few scenes which are written in such a way as to infer the listing of various desires or states. I plan to attempt some of the speaking speed of *Not I* in contrast with recoverable pause in order to achieve the effect of heightening the silences.

The recognition of "formalized periodicity" is a useful technique in a text such as *4.48 Psychosis* where the text can appear to be unstructured or disjointed. The text contains many moments of repetition and perhaps introducing a kind of motif specific to these moments may help to create both recognisable links as well as to emphasise the space surrounding the words (Catanzaro, 1990:36). In my practice I will therefore explore the method of formalized periodicity, hopefully allowing for text to become a rhythmic event in which hesitation and pause function as silent reprieves, full of anticipation in light of what is still to come. Beckett's visual treatment is also of interest, as in tandem with the periodicity, it creates an indisputable focal point.

According to Lyons (1983:13),

Beckett's theatrical strategy is one of refining and distilling. He gradually eliminates everything from the text that is not absolutely required to communicate the image he desires to create. His plays become more and more theatrical in that they demonstrate his growing reliance on the intensified theatrical image in combination with the abbreviated text.

Considering this process of refinement and distillation, my treatment of *4.48 Psychosis* will be one of eliminating what is unnecessary to my understanding of the text. Because the text does not have any indication of character/performer, it is entirely possible that not all of the words in the text are meant to be spoken. As a result of this, my process will include an emphasis on theatrical image as a form of nonverbal communication. My process will therefore be a process of figuring out and

deciding what is to be spoken and what is not, but also of finding the essence of the text. That is, I plan to allow the audience space to infer meaning whilst preserving what I, as a practitioner, find imperative to the text.

CHAPTER 4

WILSON'S SPEAKING SILENCE

4.1 Introduction

Robert Wilson, born in 1941 in Waco, Texas, is a theatre director, sound and lighting designer, writer, performer, and installation artist. He received a degree in architecture from the Pratt Institute of Art in 1965, after which he began creating and directing theatre. As a child, Wilson suffered from an auditory processing disorder which caused a stutter. He overcame the stutter through the assistance of a dance teacher, Byrd Hoffman, who would play piano in an adjoining room whilst Wilson moved and spoke, slowing down his speech in order to prevent his stutter. According to Shevtsova (2007:1), "Wilson thinks of her as the first artist he had ever met". This formative experience impacted Wilson's view on both theatre and communication. Wilson (in Appleyard, 2012:8) has stated that "stuttering was like speeding in place, so I just had to slow down". This "slowing down" is identifiable in his theatre work, where a slowing and warping of time pervades the stage space. For example, *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), is a five hour long opera (with music by Phillip Glass) with no intervals in which time is slowed to the extent that it takes a train almost half an hour to inch onto the stage and then back off again three times.

While studying at the Pratt Institute, Wilson worked as a recreational therapist with hyperactive and brain-damaged children, as well as people in iron lungs:

I was hired to get the patients to talk. The director of the hospital thought it was important for the patients to communicate with each other and the staff. I worked there for two years, and at the end of that time I came to the conclusion that it wasn't necessary to try to encourage these people to speak.
(Wilson in Holmberg, 1996:3)

In disregarding speaking as the primary mode of communication, Wilson's focus was rather on figuring out the patients' own unique methods of communication. As Holmberg (1996:3) states, "this sensitivity to difference would later enable him to restructure theatre according to alternate modes of perception and communication". Later in his life he worked with two young boys, Raymond Andrews (in 1968) and Christopher Knowles (in 1975), who were deaf-mute and autistic respectively. Both Andrews (whom Wilson adopted) and Knowles made use of alternate methods of communication as a result of their conditions. Wilson founded the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds (an experimental theatre company) in 1967 and in collaboration with Andrews and Knowles he created productions

such as *Deafman Glance* (1970), *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974), and *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). In *Deafman Glance*, Wilson created a seven hour long “silent opera” in which visual stimulus was the tool for communication. Louis Aragon (1976:6) was the first person to label the production an opera:

The spectacle, for what else can I call it? It is neither ballet, nor mime drama, nor opera (although it is perhaps a deaf man's opera, a silent opera, as if we were at this moment in a world like sixteenth century Italy which had seen Cardan and watched the birth from Caccini to Monteverdi, l'opera serio, baroque of the ear, passing from the vocal counterpart of religious chants to this new form of art, profane in its essence)... It heals us, in the balcony, the orchestra, from being like everyone else from not having the divine gift of the deafman, it makes us deaf through silence.

In Shevtsova's (2007:10) view, Raymond Andrews' “capacity to order the world in pictures had confirmed his [Wilson's] belief that language was not indispensable for knowledge and communication”. Just as Wilson was inspired by Andrews' visually based communication, he was inspired by Knowles' use of language. In 1974 Wilson devised *A Letter for Queen Victoria*, using some text written by Knowles and some that he himself wrote in Knowles' style. Shevtsova (2013:11) states that “much of *Queen Victoria* was slyly comic, indicating how well aware Wilson and Knowles were of the language games they were playing”, and describes it as “Wilson's most exuberantly verbal piece”. Knowles would rearrange and repeat language, with focus on the sound of it, which resulted in “random sentences, odd colloquialisms, grammatical errors, slipshod punctuation and play with syllables” in juxtaposition with backdrops painted with words, syllables, and letters (Shevtsova, 2013:12).

Wilson has directed and devised numerous productions, including *The King of Spain* (1969), *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969), *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (1973), *Death & Destruction in Detroit* (1979), as well as Beckett's *Happy Days* (2008) and Krapp's *Last Tape* (2009). I have chosen to focus my study on *Deafman Glance* and *Einstein on the Beach* due to the treatment of verbal and nonverbal communication within them.

This chapter will firstly discuss Wilson's approach to theatre, before analysing his use of silence in *Deafman Glance* and *Einstein on the Beach*. I aim to identify his methods in this regard, in order to make use of them within my own practice, which will be discussed in in the final section.

4.2 Wilson's approach to theatre

Wilson (in Stearns, 1984:64) states that John Cage's *Silence* had "an important effect on his thinking" regarding the use of sound onstage. Cage (as discussed in section 2.4) acknowledges the occurrence of natural sound and as a result does not regard any silence as truly silent. In dialogue with Fred Newman (2003:125), Wilson stated his views on the kind of theatre he makes:

I think that the theatre I try to make is an epic theatre in the sense that Bertolt Brecht talked about. This glass full of water can be as important as what I'm saying. I can turn all the lights out in this room and just light this glass of water. In a sense, the light and the water and the glass are all active participants. They're each one of the layers that is put together in theatre. Theatre can be a gesture, it can be a light, it can be a sound, can be a word, can be a colour. It can be anything, and there are all of these stratified zones that you are layering together and structuring, in my case often through counterpoint...each layer has a different structure, a different taste, and you can make a choice of how you put them next to each other and how they complement each other. The text is one of those layers. I try to make what we see as important as what we hear.

In Wilson's view, text is therefore not the primary communicator onstage. His acknowledgement of theatre being made up of many elements correlates with Cage's understanding that sound (and by extension words) is not the only communicative device within performance. Furthermore, Wilson's use of the phrase "active participants" in reference to the light and the water and the glass is significant as it ascribes a sense of agency to the inanimate. It appears as if Wilson's view rests on the idea of curating meaning or agency in more than just the performer. In his example there is no performative body, and yet there is a performance.

Regarding his interaction with performers, Wilson (in Schechner, 2003:126) states the following:

I give formal directions. I have never, ever in 30-something years of working in the theatre, I've never told an actor what to think. I've never told them what emotions to express... there is freedom for the actors to fill in the form.

In only directing formally, Wilson curates image and movement as opposed to emotional through-line and psychological landscape in his characters. In this sense it can be said that in his approach the performer's body becomes an element of theatre, such as lighting, or space. Because Wilson is less concerned with traditional text and plot, bodily movement becomes the visual or nonverbal

communicator. An example is found in *the CIVIL warS* (1983-1984) where the visual motif of a soldier figure slowly crossing the stage for the duration of the performance was used. This action becomes repetitive because of its slowness. The viewer has time to notice and analyse each frame of movement as the soldier forms a part of the whole onstage.

Mitter (2005:185) states that “not many directors have done as much as Robert Wilson to displace language from the centre of the theatre act”. This displacement of language appears to also be a displacement of the traditional performer. Wilson’s admittance to not directing emotional expression and his dismissal of textual authority can be thought of in tandem. Text is not the primary communicator for the audience in his theatre, as other elements (such as sound, lighting, and bodies) are given communicative agency. Wilson’s approach can furthermore be considered to be filtered through his studies in architecture:

Go to our universities and our colleges; look at the people who are studying theatre design. Ugh. Yuck. It's theatre decoration. They actually call it that - – ‘theatre decoration’. No! No! No! No decoration in theatre. Theatre should be architectural (Wilson, 2003:125).

This ‘architectural’ sentiment can be considered through Wilson’s approach to structure and relates to his layering of theatrical elements in order to communicate. Mitter (2005:185) in turn relates this structuring to movement: “in Wilson’s work, the script is often absent and the performance is structured around the movement of bodies in a space. Wilson’s dramas are like mobile sculptures”. This sculptural quality can once again be attributed to Wilson’s architectural interest. Marranca (1996:x) states that “this theatre refused to believe in the supremacy of language and offered a multiplicity of images in its place”. These images serve as nonverbal communicators within Wilson’s work.

4.2.1 Epic images

Marranca (1996:xii) defines Wilson’s approach as a Theatre of Images, stating that “in the Theatre of Images the painterly and sculptural qualities of performance are stressed, transforming this theatre into a spatially dominated one activated by sense impressions, as opposed to a time-dominated one ruled by linear narrative”. In terms of understanding these “sense impressions”, Wilson (in Eco, 1993:89) states the following:

I think interpretation is for the public, not for the performer or the director or the author. We create a work for the public and we must allow them the freedom to make their own interpretations and draw their own conclusions.

We can therefore surmise that Wilson's approach is based on the subversion of literary theatre or, as stated by Umberto Eco (1993:89), that his is "a 'non-literary theatre', a non-story theatre". Wilson (in Appleyard, 2012:8) expresses his frustration with the parameters of literature-oriented theatre by remarking that "every 10 or 20 seconds, we've got to react. But it's okay to get lost. If you read a good novel, you can get lost, but we're so afraid in that space of letting the public go". This "space of letting the public go" can be interpreted as allowing space for individual meaning-making processes. Instead of trying to tell a story or give a definite meaning, Wilson appears to be more interested in "breaking linguistic codes and creating new ones" (Holmberg, 1996:9). This new linguistic coding can be related to Marranca's Theatre of Images, with the images created being treated and constructed as communicative. However, these images are not dictated by plot. Rather, they stand independently and as parts of a whole simultaneously.

Innes and Shevtsova (2013:163) claim that although Wilson's theatre "was almost immediately defined as a 'theatre of images'", it is also "as much a theatre of sound, as has been finally understood in the twenty-first century". While Wilson does assert that visual communication is important, he does not claim to ignore sound. According to Wilson (2003:125), "the two primary ways in which we communicate, we relate to one another, are through our eyes and through our ears". His view ascribes equal significance to all theatrical elements and his understanding of the 'epic' can be considered as a theatrical form in which all elements communicate via juxtaposition. Innes and Shevtsova's view therefore appears more holistic and less restrictive than simply defining Wilson's work as a theatre of images.

Holmberg (1996:2) states that Wilson's theatre "inclines to the epic". This description may refer to the large scale of his work in terms of both space and time. It can also correlate to Wilson's (in Newman, 2003:125) statement that "[theatre] can be anything, and there are all of these stratified zones that you are layering together and structuring". In addition, Kristeva (1994:65) is of the opinion that "the traditional categories – painting, sculpture, stagecraft, etc. – no longer correspond to reality". Wilson's inclination to the epic can then be thought of in relation to this view, whereby theatre does not emulate reality, but rather presents a new reality, or a reality which is filtered through various modes of communication.

Barnes (1976:33) asserts that within Wilson's work one finds "ritualistic pictures". With production titles such as *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969), *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (1973), *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974), *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), and *Edison* (1979), we can perceive Wilson's interest in famous figures. Wilson (in Eco, 1993:89) motivates these references to well-known individuals when he states, that

they are mythic figures, and the person on the street has some knowledge of them before he or she enters the theatre or the museum space. We in the theatre do not have to tell a story because the audience comes with a story already in mind. Based on this communally shared information, we can create a theatrical event.

This can also be considered in terms of what Holmberg (1996:2) terms Wilson's "mythopoetic vision". If Wilson aims to use recognisable, mythologised figures within his work on the understanding that audiences will come "with a story already in mind", it can be posited that Wilson's mythopoetic vision aims to detract from the perceived authority of spoken text as the ultimate communicator, by drawing on cultural myth and reference points in order to encourage a theatrical experience in which plot and spoken word are juxtaposed with visual signs and symbols.

4.2.2 Wilsonian Time

Wilson's productions often take place over long stretches of time. His longest production to date is *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDENIA TERRACE: a story about a family and some people changing* (1972), with a duration of 168 hours and involving thousands of performers. This extended duration of productions is a result of Wilson's treatment of time and space, which is referred to as Wilsonian time. Wilson (in Shyer, 1990:xvi) states that Wilsonian time is

NOT in slow motion, it's in natural time. Most theatre deals with speeded-up time, but I use the kind of natural time in which it takes the sun to set, a cloud to change, a day to dawn.

This treatment of time encourages – maybe even forces – a different kind of focus, disregarding the objective of giving the audience things to watch and listen to onstage. Rather, Wilsonian time allows the audience space to make their own meaning and invest in a deeper sense as the action in front of them has no concern for theatrical reality – as already referred to earlier –, but rather cyclical reality. An example of this may be found in *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969), where a performer playing a tortoise takes over an hour to walk across the stage space (Mitter, 2005:188). The tortoise moves whilst other action is happening, and as a result the viewer may forget it is moving and focus on other elements onstage. This movement and treatment of time is described as "so slow, so smooth, so controlled that the spectator is not aware that the person is moving until, with a jolt, he realizes that the performer is on the other side of the stage" (Holmberg, 1996:4). This treatment of time and movement therefore creates a cyclical reality as the different bodies or images onstage complete their own courses of movement in juxtaposition, allowing the audience's eye to roam about the space.

Regardless of where the audience looks, the tortoise will still make its way across the space at a set speed. Because this speed is so slow and is presented in contrast to all the other bodies onstage which are in perpetual movement, the audience may perceive the movement of the tortoise as stillness.

Wilson (in Appleyard, 2012:8) describes this preoccupation with slowing time by stating, “when you walk slower than you normally would, you begin to perceive things differently. You become more aware of smells, you have time for interior reflection”. Wilson’s desire to slow down time therefore seems to be rooted in a desire to expand the view of what is worthy of attention in a theatrical setting.

4.3 Silence in Wilson’s work

Wilson’s agreement with Cage’s understanding of silence extends into his practice as a theatre maker. As a result of this, Wilson has been referred to as “the prophet of silence” (Holmberg, 1996:52).

According to Wilson (in Letzler Cole, 1992:150),

silence is a continuation of the sound... whether you’re speaking or not speaking, it’s the same thing. John Cage says there’s no such thing as silence... when you stop speaking, you’re still aware of sound. It’s one continuous movement. It’s not stop and start.

Viewing silence and sound as one continuous movement infers that Wilson perceives silence to hold meaning in the same way in which sound and spoken language hold meaning and therefore silence forms an integral part of communication.

We may consider silence as related to more than just sound itself. Silence may also be directly related to stillness or static action. When silence is defined as a visual and auditory phenomenon, it can be stated that “sometimes the slowness of time is perceived as equal to something still” (Manzoor, 2003:38). Ionesco (in Holmberg, 1997:52) has spoken of Wilson’s mastery of silence in relation to Beckett’s experiments with silence, stating that

Beckett succeeded in creating a few minutes of silence on stage, while Robert Wilson was able to bring about a silence [in *Deafman Glance*] that lasted for four hours. He surpassed Beckett in this: Wilson being more rich and more complex with his silence. His silence is a silence that speaks.

It appears then that in Ionesco’s view, Wilson’s use of silence (specifically within *Deafman Glance*) is more communicative than Beckett’s use of silence. The idea of Wilson’s silence “speaking” relates

directly to his interest in nonverbal communication and can also be related to Cage's concept of a full silence, namely a silence with the power to communicate as language.

In discussing Wilson's use of silence, I have chosen two of his productions, *Deafman Gance* and *Einstein on the Beach*. My reason for choosing these productions are that they were developed directly as a result of an investment in nonverbal communication on the part of Wilson as director. I will be referring to the 2014 Opus Arte recording of *Einstein on the Beach*, and the 1981 Byrd Hoffman Foundation television recording of *Deafman Gance* (directed by Wilson) for the purposes of this discussion.

4.3.1 *Deafman Gance* (1970)

Deafman Gance was devised by Wilson through his interactions with deaf-mute Raymond Andrews and depicts a world through the experience of a deaf boy who interprets through images as his primary mode of communication. The piece was performed by Wilson, Andrews, Sheryl Sutton and the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds, incorporating 60 performers (Robert Wilson: *Deafman Gance*, n.d.). As stated on Wilson's official website, "the mostly silent work was constructed of fantastical scenes composed purely of performed images. This was not performance that resulted in images, but images that, essentially, called for performance" (Robert Wilson: *Deafman Gance*, n.d.). The production begins with the presentation of a mother and her three children. The oldest son (played by Andrews) witnesses the mother silently killing his siblings. Thereafter, a surreal and dream-like world is introduced (presumably a representation of Andrews' retreat from reality into his imagination) wherein an array of creatures and characters entertain and interact with him. The play was constructed from the drawings that Andrews gave Wilson in order to communicate with him and was developed through "workshops centred on movement and body awareness" (Holmberg, 1996:4).

Wilson (in Holmberg, 1996:3) relates Andrews' alternate method of communication as follows:

he began to make drawings to point out various things to me that I wouldn't notice and that he would be more sensitive to because of his being deaf. Then I realized that he thought, not in words, but in visual signs.

This visual signing can be considered to delocalise word-based language from the act of communication, embracing silence as a natural state rather than as pauses between words.

Within *Deafman Gance*, this communicative coding rests heavily on the absence of spoken language. However, in structuring this silence, Wilson places emphasis on imagery in order to fill said silence. Through a "prevailing landscape of slow processions and fragile gestures", Wilson embeds the

auditory silence of the piece with images (Manzoor, 2003:22). The beginning of *Deafman Glimpse* sets up Wilsonian time, with the characteristic slow and repetitive movements present. We see a silent picture in which a woman in a black dress stands with her back to the audience. A boy sits reading and a small girl sleeps. In slowed action the woman (presumably the children's mother) pours a glass of milk which the boy drinks. Then, continuing at the same slow pace, once the boy has finished drinking, she takes the glass back to the table. There she cleans a knife with a cloth and makes her way back to the boy. She stabs him slowly. He does not react with any sound or expression. She places him on the floor, gently. She then repeats the same slow process and stabs the girl. An older boy (Andrews) screams.

In slowing the action, Wilson allows for the viewer to see everything, just as Andrews sees every detail. There is no time to miss any moment because there is so much time taken. In this scene which stretches out for 26 minutes, it is as if space, movement, and time are one device, united in speaking without speaking. Barnes (1971:5) describes it as "like watching cloud formations, slowly evolving their figurative suggestions, and at times, naturally more rarely, it is like watching a street accident". Barnes' statement acknowledges the space to see and notice in which Wilsonian time operates. It also acknowledges the suspense that may be created as a result of that time. In this case, the audience observe the ritual followed by the woman which leads to the boy being stabbed. When they see it begin to repeat, they know what will happen to the girl but are powerless to stop the aching slow repetition of the ritual leading to the girl being stabbed. In this sense, the audience is forced to see the world through the eyes of the deaf Andrews.

Once the world of imagination has opened up, a running figure enters and crosses the stage from right to left. This figure is a constant recurring presence, one which Manzoor (2003:22) describes as being "regular as a metronome". This metronome device determines rhythm, but also provides a stable image around which, and in contrast with, the other images may form a kaleidoscopic stage experience. In contrast to the metronome runner, the rest of the imagery plays out, providing Andrews' view of the world. The repetitive runner is set up in contrast to a frog sitting and drinking at a table, ladies in white listening to Beethoven, and stars falling from the sky. In juxtaposing these alternate rhythms, Wilson exaggerates the warping of time as well as the silence associated with it. Although music is periodically present in the production, the communication is not presented through verbal means by the performers.

Within *Deafman Glimpse* the necessity of communicating must exist without words and this parameter contributes to the silence speaking as actual speaking is not present. However, Beckett's *Breath*, although only 35 seconds long, also eschews verbal communication. Ionesco's earlier statement of

Deafman Glance's superiority may then refer simply to the four hour time period in which the silence is sustained. Ultimately, both practitioners assert that the theatrical event does not require text in order to exist and function communicatively. Of course, Beckett eliminates the performer within *Breath*, which Wilson does not do. However, it can be said that in displacing the text, Wilson achieves a similar goal in that both approaches subvert traditional Western expectations of theatre and performance. Quadri, Bertoni and Stearns (1998:11) assert that within *Deafman Glance* "the vocal fabric and dialogue are practically non-existent, especially in contrast to the pronounced iron rhythm of the visual score". It is the pronounced rhythm of the visual score within this slowed time that allows the silence to speak.

Wilson (in Shyer, 1989:xv) asserts that in order to view his work one must "listen to the pictures". In making use of Wilsonian time in *Deafman Glance*, Wilson therefore allows the space for an audience to truly listen to the pictures presented. Aragon's experience of *Deafman Glance* (related in an open letter to Andre Breton) provides further insight into the use of silence in this production:

and all of a sudden one no longer needed, or hardly needed his ears. The world of a deaf child opened up to us like a wordless mouth. For more than four hours, we went to inhabit this universe where, in the absence of words, of sounds, sixty people had no words except to move...Listen to what I say to those who have ears, seemingly not for hearing: I never saw anything more beautiful in the world since I was born. Never never has any play come anywhere near this one, because it is at once life awake and the life of closed eyes, the confusion between everyday life and the life of each night, reality mingles with dream, all that's inexplicable in the life of deaf man. (Aragon, 1976:4)

From this description, the effectiveness of Wilson's use of silence through the slowing of time and deliberate movement is apparent. As Wilson (in Schechner, 2003:120) states, "the more space around anything, the more important it becomes". In considering Wilsonian time alongside Wilson's view of silence as a continuation of sound, we may imagine that Wilson's silence is not curated in order to dictate meaning to an audience, but rather to allow space for the audience to piece together all of the elements presented (alongside their own experiences and understandings) in order to draw meaning from the work. The silence can be considered auditory and visual as the speed of movement dictated by Wilsonian time becomes a sort of stillness, a visual silence, which on closer inspection is filled with great detail.

4.3.2 *Einstein on the Beach* (1976)

Einstein on the Beach is an opera which “avoids both any conventional narrative and any straightforward representation of the characters it features” (Potter, 2012:1). Made up of five sections, the production includes actors, musicians, and a choral ensemble. There are three locations shown, namely the Train, Trial, and Field/Spaceship. In constructing the production, Wilson made the first of his visual books which act as a frame by frame guide to the images in the show. As Hess (1976:110) states “It’s a serial art, equivalent to the slow-motion tempo of Wilson’s theatrical style. In drawing after drawing, a detail is proposed, analysed, refined, redefined, moved through various positions”.

The text was created through Wilson’s interest in Knowles’ specialised communication that developed as a result of his autism. Knowles’ understanding of language meant that he had his own specific version of communicative coding. Knowles had a “way of disassociating sounds, words and sentences from conventional sense and of making chains and variations out of them” and Wilson used this system of language in the production (Shevtsova, 2013:11). As a result, language is warped and layered. Repetition is used, and the expectations of language are subverted. In a way it is as if the authority of text is subverted because the individual words themselves are not important. It is rather the actual texture, sound, and experience of language that infers relationship and meaning. An example of this is found in the Child Judge’s lines,

Would.
 Would it.
 Would it get.
 Would it get some.
 Would it get some wind.
 Would it get some wind for.
 Would it get some wind for the.
 Would it get some wind for the sailboat? (Act 1, Scene 2, Trial 1, in
 Shevtsova, 2007:101)

The repetition and auditory building of the sentence strips the words of their original meaning, placing emphasis on the sonic qualities produced by the syllables uttered and of the actor’s voice. Owens (1977:28) states that “words are combined into rhythmic, alliterative, or rhythmic sequences because of their equivalence as pure sound. In this way, new semantic relationships are established-or lost ones restored-on the basis of purely physical parallelisms”. Another example of this is found in the lines spoken by the Witness in the second Trial scene:

I was in this prematurely air-conditioned supermarket
 and there were all these aisles
 and there were all these bathing caps that you could buy
 which had these kind of Fourth of July plumes on them
 they were blue and red and yellow
 I wasn't tempted to buy one
 but I was reminded of the fact that I had been avoiding the beach. (Act 3,
 Scene 1, Trial 2, in Holmberg, 1996:54)

These lines are repeated in the same tone 43 times in succession. In repeating the lines so many times in the same tone, the words begin to lose their descriptive meaning. 'Pure sound', as Owens terms it, then becomes a device of silencing in the sense that subverting systems of traditional meaning-making results in a kind of descriptive silence. Although the scene is not silent by virtue of the absence of sound, it becomes silent in the sense that the meaning of the text is dislocated. In reducing text to pure sound, Wilson performs a sort of collage, whereby various elements are juxtaposed to exaggerate or highlight certain moments. In this instance, the collaging of language reflects a subversion, whilst also emulating the elements of visual collage on an auditory level. Shyer (1989:xvii) states that collage "describes not only Robert Wilson's art, but his process and evolution as an artist; it is the basis of everything he does in the theatre".

Within *Einstein on the Beach*, Wilsonian time is also present. It is found in the slow-moving train, as well as in the scene change between Act 1, Scene 1, Train 1 and Act 1, Scene 2, Trial 1. This scene change takes 10 minutes to complete. In that time, we see the courtroom being set up in silhouette. While it is being set up, a woman holding a conch shell stands front stage left. Her movements are so slow that they are almost imperceptible. Front stage right, a man in a red shirt stands, arm poised as if to write on a chalk board. Occasionally he 'writes' in the air, but as the scene change continues, he shifts in speed, first still, then slow, then fast, then slow again. Eventually the light on the woman goes out, and the man remains, repeating his writing ritual at varying speeds. No one speaks through the ten minutes, and though there is music in the background, it is largely ambient and repetitive. As Manzoor (2003:15) states, "he [Wilson] explores space and time by employing fragmented, non-linear patterning and by juxtaposing objects without any reasoned connection. In this way he achieves new relationships between the micro and macro worlds". These new relationships allow for exploratory work which ultimately may result in new communicative coding within the stage space.

Barnes (1976:33) terms Wilson's work "the craft of reiteration" and in considering this scene change, his statement seems apt. In making use of slightly varying reiterations of the same movements, Wilson

sets up a visual rhythm. In making use of three separate tableaux onstage at once, all with distinct individual rhythms, Wilson fills the silence or lack of speech, with images. One may focus on one image, disregarding the others, but there will always be some form of fullness or movement on the stage as a result of the combination of the images. Because the movement of the train is slow, it is perceived as still or silent, and yet Wilson claims that the architecture of the piece rests on the interaction of various elements. He states, “the power is in opposing the music. That's the architecture, the tension” (Wilson, 2003:125). Although the music is consistent in this scene change, the performers behave independently of it. Their movement is not dictated by the rhythms of the music, as each image on the stage has its own individual rhythm even though they are in collage. This concept of reiteration in *Einstein on the Beach* can also be extended to the text which is highly repetitive.

Manzoor (2003:21-22) asserts that visual plasticity allowed Wilson to construct “a drama that was motionless but continuously evolving in its own process of time”. This describes the constant moving/evolving images in the work. According to Owens (1977:27),

The locus of this process of reintegration is the consciousness of the individual spectator. Structure is thus inborn, that is, emerges while the work is performed as the spectator spontaneously apprehends the relations obtaining among images. Thus, coherence is not a result of any logical sequence of images... but resides in intuitively grasped similarities among images derived from a common motif.

It is then possible that within Wilson’s work, silence forms part of the imagery which is reintegrated by the spectator as they engage in meaning making. By constructing ‘speaking silences’, Wilson allows for subversion of traditional text and therefore the warping of both language and time.

4.4 Wilson in my practice

Wilson’s approach to theatre holds similarities to my own in terms of his preoccupation with images. My interest in adopting Wilson’s methods is therefore chiefly in the curation of images onstage which support and allow the silence to speak. My chosen text, *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane is an experimental text as there are many different forms of writing present in the text. There is a combination of monologue, prose, poetry, and dialogue in the text. I would therefore like to explore Wilson’s subversion of traditional text through the reframing and restructuring of linguistic codes.

In exploring this linguistic coding, I plan to restructure some of the text, using the method of reiteration identified in *Einstein on the Beach*. The reduction of language to “pure sound” also interests me as it opens up space for new meaning to be inferred. This will be implemented through

're-writing' certain passages of text by introducing the use of repetition and breaking sentence structure, thereby staggering words and allowing for a sense of alienation from the original meaning. Repetition is already present within the text, but by treating words as pure sound I hope to explore the silence presented in words being stripped of meaning.

I also plan to make use of physical reiteration. In repeating movements and rituals (such as the man in the red shirt writing with chalk in *Einstein on the Beach*) images onstage could potentially confer new and changeable meaning. *4.48 Psychosis* does not include any indications of character or number of performers. In making use of reiteration I hope to define the performers onstage both as individuals and as a collective. These moments of silent physical reiteration have the capacity to communicate relationship and transformation. In order to develop these reiterations, I will conduct physical exploration with my performers which is tied to the thematic content of the text.

Since Wilsonian Time allows for more to be seen due to a slowing down, I plan to use the methods of Wilsonian Time and reiteration collaboratively in order to construct moments in which individual text-less tableaux can be viewed separately or in unison. I will aim to create significant visual and movement based nonverbal communication within the work through this combination.

In order to direct climactic moments, I will follow Wilson's (in Schechner, 2003:120) theory that "the more space around anything, the more important it becomes". Allowing space around an important moment includes adopting Wilsonian Time by slowing things down and allowing for active pause. As Wilson's silence is always dynamic, I believe it will be important to establish a clear focus and distinct imagery. The concept of allowing space has inspired my decision for the last scene of the production to make use of a staircase. In elevating the performer there will be an allowance for physical space, but also auditory space as the scene is largely silent.

Wilson's admission to making use of recognisable, mythologized figures in order to play on the viewers' preconceived understanding is intriguing due to the amount of Biblical reference within *4.48 Psychosis*. The concept of using his mythopoetic vision in order to aid the silence can be implemented in this regard. I therefore plan to incorporate certain recognisable religious images into the performers' reiterations and the set in order to support and contextualise the silence.

The following chapter will provide a discussion of and reflection on my practical exploration of silence as a communicative device during the rehearsal process and staging of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*.

CHAPTER 5

SILENCE IN PRACTICE

Sarah Kane (1971-1999) is referred to as the “enfant terrible” of British theatre (Rees, 2012:136). After her suicide at age 28 in 1999, “her death has created a critical climate in which the details of her life become the lens through which to view and discuss the plays she left behind” (Rees, 2012:112). Her work consists of five theatre texts, written between 1995 and 1999. Her last text, *4.48 Psychosis*, was performed posthumously in 2000. Her only other published work is the 10 minute long short film, *Skin*, which aired on Channel 4 in the UK in 1997. Kane only ever directed two productions professionally, namely her own text *Phaedra’s Love* in 1996, and Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck* in 1997.

In 1992, Kane graduated with an honours degree in drama from Bristol University. That year she attended a performance of Jeremy Weller’s *Mad*, which had a profound effect on her theatrical views. In a letter to Aleks Sierz on 4 January 1999, she explained:

as an audience member, I was taken to a place of extreme mental discomfort and distress and then popped out the other end. What I did not do was sit in the theatre considering as an intellectual conceit what it might be like to be mentally ill. It was a bit like being given a vaccine. I was mildly ill for a few days afterwards, but the jab of sickness protected me from a far more serious illness later in life. *Mad* took me to hell, and the night I saw it I made a decision about the kind of theatre I wanted to make – experiential. (Kane in Saunders, 2003:99)

The influence of *Mad* on Kane’s writing is evident in her portrayal of violence. Her first play, *Blasted* (1995), caused considerable controversy for the depiction of graphic violence onstage. The play opens in a hotel room to a middle-aged man called Ian and a much younger woman called Cate. Ian is abusive, raping Cate, and the first half of the text appears to follow the conventions of a drama. However, this genre is ripped apart by the entrance of a soldier as war suddenly breaks out with no context. Bombs explode and no indication of who is fighting is given. The given circumstances of a traditional drama are seemingly eliminated. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the violence of the piece. In a subversion of the beginning, the soldier rapes Ian, sucks out his eye, and cannibalizes him. The conventions of drama are further unravelled as time is no longer adhered to. Seasons change in moments and the action is fragmented, leaving only snippets of Ian split up by blackouts. He masturbates, he defecates, he laughs, he sleeps, he cries, he eats, he attempts to die. In the introduction

to Kane's collected works, Greig (in Kane, 2001:x) compares the final moments of the text to "those moments in Beckett where the human impulse to connect is found surviving in the most bleak and crushing places". This performance was met with outrage, with many reviewers expressing anger at the writing. Jack Tinker's review of the production in the Daily Mail labelled it "This Disgusting Feast of Filth" (1995:5).

Kane went on to write an adaptation of the Phaedra myth, titled *Phaedra's Love* (1996). In 1998 she wrote *Cleansed*, followed by *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. Rees (2012:114) states that "Kane's later plays *Crave* (1998) and *4.48 Psychosis* (2000) go even further in fracturing the tentative social structure suggested in the early plays: they have no recognisable location, or context, nor do they offer recognisable social explanation or commentary". Kane's last two plays display her interest in cutting away the unnecessary. In removing certain contexts, such as location and character descriptions, Kane places the emphasis on the spoken word. In commenting on *Crave*, she said "again there's no waste. I don't like writing things you really don't need, and my favourite exercise is cutting" (Kane in Rebellato, 1998). In *4.48 Psychosis* it can be said that this 'cutting' is taken even further than previously as Kane does not provide indications of who is speaking or indicate how many cast members are required for the performance of the text.

In this chapter I will discuss Kane's approach to theatre, as well as the feature of silence in *4.48 Psychosis*. I will discuss the practical process of directing *4.48 Psychosis*, detailing my two phase rehearsal process which entails the development of exploratory exercises and the application of Beckett and Wilson's methods. I will detail the technical aspects of the production. Finally, I will discuss my observations from the performances.

5.1 Kane's approach to theatre

Kane's approach to theatre can be considered from the perspective of her interest in mortality, and seemingly linked to this, violence. In her first two texts (*Blasted* and *Phaedra's Love*) we find the representation of violence and often death, with an emphasis on physical action. For example, in *Phaedra's Love* the stage directions describe the killing of Hippolytus: "Theseus takes the knife. He cuts Hippolytus from groin to chest. Hippolytus' bowels are torn out and thrown onto the barbecue. He is kicked and stoned and spat on" (Kane, 2001:101). This text can therefore be considered to subvert the Greek theatre tradition of describing rather than showing extreme violence. Hippolytus is disfigured by this attack, but he does not die immediately. Instead he lies motionless, and eventually "a vulture descends and begins to eat his body" (Kane, 2001:103).

In discussing her religious upbringing and its influence on her writing, Kane (in Saunders 2009:60) states:

I was convinced that I would never die. I seriously believed that Jesus was going to come again in my lifetime and that I wouldn't have to die. So, when I got to about eighteen or nineteen it suddenly hit me that the thing I should have been dealing with from the age of six – my own mortality – I hadn't dealt with at all. So, there is a constant debate in my head about really not wanting to die; being terrified of it, and also having this constant thing that you can't really shake off if you've believed it that hard and that long as a child – that there is a God, and somehow I'm going to be saved.

This understanding of the issue of her own mortality in relation to Christian themes is also present in her last three texts. *4.48 Psychosis*, for instance, quotes directly from the last words of Jesus Christ on the cross. In quoting words related to such a mythologised figure within not only religious history, but world history, Kane makes use of the recognisable in her exploration of mortality. With Jesus Christ serving arguably not only as a mythologised figure, but also as the ultimate martyr, Kane extends the concept of violence. In *4.48 Psychosis*, however, we find no stage directions dictating violence as is, for instance, found in *Blasted*. This could be indicative of a shift in her writing as she embraced a more experimental form, relying on language to convey imagery.

When questioned about the necessity of violence in her work, Kane (in Stephenson & Langridge, 1997:133) states:

It's crucial to chronicle and commit to memory events never experienced – in order to avoid them happening. I'd rather risk overdose in the theatre than in life. And I'd rather risk defensive screams than passively become part of a civilisation that has committed suicide.

In avoiding becoming part of a 'civilisation that has committed suicide', Kane highlights her view of theatre as a kind of preventative. Her texts can be thought of in relation to her awareness of daily violence. In viewing theatre as the representation of possible events, Kane appears to assert theatre as a preventative measure in society, a space in which dangers may be confronted. These dangers can be linked to her interest in mortality.

In an interview with James Christopher (1997), Kane elaborates on her approach to style:

My approach to directing is pretty much the same as my approach to writing, which is not to start with a style – start with a style and it's fucked from the beginning. But if you go from moment to moment and go for the truth of each moment then the sum total of that is the style. And then people can call it whatever they want to call it.

Kane's reluctance to choose a style before beginning to write or direct may be related to her experiments in form. It may also be related to her interest in experiential theatre, as introduced to her by *Mad*. Sierz (2000:3) defines experiential theatre by stating that it "forces us to look at ideas and feelings we would normally avoid because they are too painful, too frightening, too unpleasant or too acute". This definition, when considered in relation to Kane's description of "the truth of each moment" and *Mad* being like "a jab of sickness", gives insight into her commitment to showing the ugliness and violence of life. Her willingness to discuss and portray violence and taboos can be considered a defining feature of her approach to theatre.

In terms of Kane's last three works, language appears to take precedence. Kane (in Rebellato, 1998) describes *4.48 Psychosis* as being about a psychotic breakdown:

what happens to a person's mind when the barriers which distinguish between reality and different forms of imagination completely disappear, so that you no longer know the difference between your waking life and your dream life... various boundaries begin to collapse.

This disappearance of barriers is not only a thematic choice, but also structures the text itself, as Kane (in Rebellato, 1998) explains, "formally I'm trying to collapse a few boundaries as well; to carry on with making form and content one". Kaplan (2015:121) perceives this attempt in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* as "at least in part a mapping of inner states", while Saunders (2003:7) terms it a record of the "dissipation of self". These interpretations of the unification of form and content within the text may be related to Rees' assertion that Kane's suicide became the lens through which to discuss her work. As researcher, I am less interested in Kane's personal life, and more invested in her structural decisions and the way in which the text communicates through them. Her own assertion of aiming to collapse boundaries and unite form and content will inform my practice.

5.2 Silence in *4.48 Psychosis*

4.48 Psychosis, considered through Kane's desire to "collapse boundaries", presents as a collection of poems, prose, lists, and dialogue, rather than as a traditional play. Though there is a central theme of psychotic breakdown, Kane provides no indication of characters, time, place, number of performers, or stage directions. The text is divided by three dashes between sections, and when dialogue is inferred, it is done so through the use of a single dash. For example:

- Have you made any plans?
- Take an overdose, slash my wrists then hang myself
- All those things together?
- It couldn't possibly be misconstrued as a cry for help.

(Silence.)

- It wouldn't work.

- Of course it would.

- It wouldn't work. You'd start to feel sleepy from the overdose and wouldn't have the energy to cut your wrists.

(Silence.) (Kane, 2001:210).

In this extract we see the dashes which can indicate different voices, but these voices remain anonymous. In considering Kane's text as a unification of form and content, it can be said that the result is a distilled performative text which places focus on emotion and the value of the language, rather than spatial signifiers, such as set and movement. The text makes use of only five indications, or what can be considered stage directions, namely; "*(Silence.)*", "*(A silence.)*", "*(A long silence.)*", "*(A very long silence)*", and "*(Looks.)*"³. Kane gives no indication of what she means by these directions. It is up to the director or performer to decide if the silences indicate auditory or visual silence, as well as how long a silence is. The text therefore challenges the interpreter's understanding of how silence is defined, and of how silence is used.

Urban (2001:44) describes *4.48 Psychosis* as a "textual collage". This is due to the large amount of literary referencing used. The text operates as a palimpsest as it references and quotes many other texts and sources. There are many biblical references, such as the previously mentioned last words of Jesus Christ, alongside references to psychological tests and techniques, as well as her previous texts. Sánchez-Palencia (2019:4) claims that:

Sarah Kane stresses the limits of language to communicate and demarcate the boundaries between desire and reality, between the self and the world. The result is a frustrating boomerang language, instances of which can be perceived in the long silences, repetitions, suspended or unanswered questions as the only response to the speaker's desperate claims.

This "boomerang" language can be considered a result of the form encompassing the content. As the voice⁴ present in the text becomes more psychotic, frustrated, and isolated, a system of signifiers and meaning is constructed via textual collage and referencing. The lack of immediate context therefore

³ "*(Looks.)*" is the least common indication, only being used once, while "*(Silence.)*" is indicated 29 times and "*(A long silence.)*" is indicated 13 times. "*(A silence.)*" and "*(A very long silence)*" are indicated twice.

⁴ As there are no character indications in *4.48 Psychosis*, I will refer to 'the voice' in the text for the purposes of clarity. Baraniecka (2013:165) refers to "the voice", stating that "choosing death is seen by the voice as an act of indulging in the self by finally satisfying the desire to fully become what it is: nothingness as the unimaginable state that cannot be grasped by language". This assertion informed my decision to make use of this term in reference to the speaker in the text.

serves to isolate and silence, while the boomerang language makes use of intertextuality in order to illustrate the voice's own systems of meaning-making and understanding. The form and content can be considered in tandem as they inform one another. The repetitive and self-referential language illustrates the voice's inability to mediate its own existence. In Charles Spencer's (2001) review of the first staging of the text he states that "anyone who has suffered from depression will recognise the way Kane's language pins down the way in which its victims become trapped in repetitive loops of useless thought and feeling, and the desperate desire for peace or mere oblivion". These "repetitive loops" strongly recall Sánchez-Palencia's boomerang language and serve to illustrate the thematic content of the text.

Similar to Urban's description of *4.48 Psychosis* as "textual collage" (as mentioned earlier), Diedrich (2012:377) argues that the text "is constructed from and refers to a significant number of texts outside itself, and Kane's engagement with depression, psychosis, and suicide is mediated through ideas and structures that she adapts from a range of sources". Diedrich (2012:378) points to the use of "Serial Sevens" in the text. Serial Sevens is a technique used to test for cognitive impairment. The patient counts down from 100 in sevens. The first use of Serial Sevens occurs in the first quarter of the text, with the voice being unable to correctly count down in integers of seven (Kane, 2001:208). In the second appearance of the Serial Sevens in the third quarter of the text the voice is able to count down in integers of seven with no mistakes (Kane, 2001:232). The use of this technique forms an intertextual layer within the text, but it is never introduced or contextualized. Instead, Kane simply inserts it into the text, leaving the interpreter to decide its significance.

The layout of the text also contributes to this sense of textual collage, as the text is typographically most similar to poetry. Words are spread across pages in patterns and seemingly random orders. The text can be thought of as a kind of landscape, a geography of the mind of the voice. As there are no stage directions or indications other than various "silences" and one "looks", one may suppose that the typography of *4.48 Psychosis* should hold some significance to the reader/director. My own interpretation of the text relies on the visual image of the "geographical" text guiding the visual images presented onstage. In this way, as director I have chosen to incorporate the typography into physical movement. An example can be found in the following passage:

It is done

 behold the Eunuch
 of castrated thought

skull

unwound

the capture

the rapture

the rupture

of a soul

a solo symphony

at 4.48

the happy hour

when clarity visits

warm darkness

which soaks my eyes

I know no sin

this is the sickness of becoming great

this vital need for which I would die

to be loved (Kane, 2001:242-243)

In this passage, the typographical structure of the text draws the reader's eye in a step-like pattern, which is poetic in form. In my physical interpretation of the text, I make use of an actual staircase which is ascended after the performer has spoken the lines. The physical act of ascension ties into the biblical themes and references in the text, as well as providing a kind of homage, or realisation of Kane's typographical geography. Kane's textual form can also be considered an extension of the thematic content, and Kane's intention is to unite form and content becomes clear with the actual text mirroring the breakdown of the voice present in the text. Kaplan (2015:122) extends this geographical sensibility by relating it to perceptions of identity and sanity:

her language both maps inner experience and challenges the limits of theatrical form. But she is also up to something else: she is questioning the boundaries of identity and the concept of sanity. To live consciously, she

seems to say, is to speak the full force of experience, which abolishes meaning, blasts open logic, and refutes linearity. These are structures, strictures, imposed, artificial and untrue. For Kane, her ‘madness’ is her sanity.

In this sense, the structure of *4.48 Psychosis* can be considered fugue-like. The use of multiple voices navigating the theme via repetitions with slight alterations creates a compositional effect, with the consistent indication of silences indicating a reprieve (or breathing room) as would be indicated in a musical composition.

5.3 The practical process

Since there are no characters indicated within the text, I will refer to the performers by the first letter of their respective names for the purposes of this discussion, namely A, K, M, and R. I will firstly discuss my preparation as director prior to the beginning of the rehearsal period. In the second section I will detail the structure of the rehearsals. Thereafter, I will provide insight into the two phases of the rehearsal period, detailing various exercises which I constructed to aid in applying the methods of Beckett and Wilson, as well as how I applied the methods within *4.48 Psychosis*. I will address the technical aspects of the production, as well as my observations during the performances. Finally, I will reflect on the practical process.

5.3.1 Directorial preparation

Recognising my dual role as researcher/director impacted my directorial preparation. As researcher, the implementation of the identified methods had to be recognised, whilst as director, my considerations were largely focused on text analysis, ensemble work, and aesthetic decisions. My preparation therefore consisted of this dual awareness, with the literature studies on Beckett and Wilson informing the research aspect, and my experience as director informing the directorial aspect. My own practice as director is largely informed by an awareness of the reframing of the recognisable. Within the theatrical space, actions hold more purpose and precision than in real life as they occur within a time limit and with a specific need to express. My approach to theatre carries an awareness of this dichotomy. The detail of the recognisable interests me, because in framing recognisable moments – such as a cough, a shrug, or a nail bite – we have the ability to denote meaning and provide context or emotion, depending on what surrounds that recognisable detail. As director, I follow a structure of equal text analysis and rehearsal. In general, my process begins with my own analysis of the chosen text. I read through it, taking notes, making observations. Very rarely do I research the writer’s personal life, as I am more invested in the text speaking for itself as a standalone product. Due to the nature of this research project, I researched Kane’s background prior to beginning the

rehearsal process. Kaplan (2015:125) views *4.48 Psychosis* through the lens of Kane's own mental illness, stating that "[t]here is no unitary self, no coherent 'story' or history of the self; rather there are multiple selves, partial reflections, splintered experiences. More than in any of her other plays, Kane, in *4.48 Psychosis*, is writing of herself". Considering this statement, I agree that the text exhibits "multiple selves, partial reflections, splintered experiences", however, I do not feel equipped to assert the voice in the text as Kane herself, because Kane did not do so. Rather, I am inclined to consider Kane's own assertion (in Saunders, 2002:113) that the play is "about the split between one's consciousness and one's physical being. For me that's what madness is about". This perspective enables practical work with the text, rather than an attempt to represent someone who is unable to deliver guidance or further comment.

Because the text does not include indications of time, space, setting, number of performers or character, I firstly sought to identify the intertextuality within *4.48 Psychosis* as a starting point for my text analysis. This decision was informed by my research on the text and, due to my own religious upbringing, I was able to identify that the text makes use of some of the last words of Jesus Christ. This led me to consider the text through the lens of faith/religion, particularly as Kane was invested in questions of mortality and salvation. The last words of Jesus are seven sayings which he spoke on the cross, which are usually ordered as follows:

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).
2. Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).
3. Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother (John 19:26–27).
4. My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46 & Mark 15:34).
5. I thirst (John 19:28).
6. It is finished (sometimes translated as "it is done") (John 19:30).
7. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit (sometimes translated as "commend my spirit") (Luke 23:46).

4.48 Psychosis directly quotes the fourth and sixth saying, while the others can be considered to be inferred through the content. For example, the seventh saying is similar in content to the line "you are my doctor, my saviour, my omnipotent judge, my priest, my god, the surgeon of my soul. And I am your proselyte to sanity" (Kane, 2001:233). This informed my decision to split the text into seven sections, with each section corresponding to one of the sayings. This was partly to highlight the perceived religious intertextuality, and partly to provide an identifiable structure and compartmentalisation within the production as the text does not follow a traditional narrative. This decision also enabled the image of martyrdom being correlated with the theme of psychosis. I termed

the seven sections into which the text was split as “days”, alluding also to the seven days of creation. At this stage in my preparation I was not yet sure of how to present these days to the audience. My vision for an ending making use of a physical ascension was confirmed due to the exploration being grounded in religious context, coupled with the last section of the text functioning as a sort of farewell/suicide. The final pages of the text are sparse in comparison to the beginning, with the voice stating, “I have no desire for death, no suicide ever had” (Kane, 2001:244), and then “please open the curtains” (Kane, 2001:245). Considering the actual theatre space that the production was to be staged in, as well as the theme of the martyr, the image of an ascension seemed apt. The Adam Small Laboratory Theatre has shutters at the back of the stage which open to a wall of windows looking out over Stellenbosch. I therefore chose to interpret the last line literally, with the shutters opening after the last spoken line, and the use of a staircase, as previously mentioned in Chapter four.

In my text analysis, I also identified numerous moments of textual repetition. One phrase in particular, “remember the light and believe the light”, which is first seen on page 205 and is repeated three times in the text. Other phrases such as “what do you offer?” (Kane, 2001:205) and “hatch opens, stark light” (Kane, 2001:225) also repeat throughout. This repetition led me to viewing the text as circular in structure, with no indication of space and time, but rather feelings and thoughts and reflections being expressed by the voice. In choosing to split the text into days, I therefore aimed to provide a sense of time passing, as well as the symbolism of seven days within Christianity.

In my initial preparation, I noticed that the text references silencing through the theme of silencing of the self. The voice in the text asserts that it experiences a sense of fragmentation of identity, and at times claims a unification of identity. For example: “I need to become who I already am and will bellow forever at this incongruity which has committed me to hell” (Kane, 2001:212). Further on in the text the voice states, “I dread the loss of her I’ve never touched... I miss a woman who was never born/ I kiss a woman across the years that say we shall never meet” (2001:218), only to later claim “I know myself. I see myself” (233). It is possible then that within the text we find an identity in flux, a constant state of silencing of the self, of negotiating and renegotiating identity.

As a result of this, as well as my study of Wilson’s productions *Deafman Gance* and *Einstein on the Beach* which made use of multiple performers, I knew that I wanted to work with an ensemble. Knowles’ (2016:168) asserts that the text is “trying to represent the irrevocable loss of self, a person who has lost touch with the boundary between the self and the world”. In representing an identity in flux, an ensemble serves as a visual signifier of this fragmentation. I did not immediately assign a gender to the voice in the text, originally considering a cast of both male and female performers.

However, during the audition process⁵, I observed and chose the individual performers who I felt best complemented one another physically, vocally, and in personality, and subsequently chose a cast of four female-identifying performers. Although the performers were female-identifying, I did not attach a gender to the voice, rather deciding to allow for ambiguity (through costuming and treatment of the bodies onstage) as the text itself does by never asserting the gender of the voice. I identified four states within the text in order to divide the text amongst the cast, namely the states of questioning, wanting, foreboding, and reflection (cast as M, A, K, and R respectively). These states within the voice were perceived in the themes found in certain monologues, prose and poetry within the text, and I assigned them to the individual performers based on their various vocal and physical qualities. Although I split the text into these four states, the voice was still ultimately viewed as one person, with these states functioning as parts of a whole.

5.3.2 Rehearsal structure

The rehearsals followed a structure of three to four rehearsals per week over a two month period. Rehearsals ranged from three to six hours in length interspersed with breaks. In total, the process was made up of 30 rehearsals. These rehearsals were divided into two phases. The first phase was primarily exploratory, consisting of warmups, exercises, improvisations, and readings. The second phase followed a more traditional set up regarding the staging of a text, incorporating warmups, the work generated in the explorations, the finalising of structure and characterisation, as well as the technical aspects of the show. In the first week of the second phase I used some of the rehearsals as individual sessions for monologues and various pieces of solo work, including some silent sections of the text.

The rehearsal process culminated in two full technical rehearsals, and three performances. It is important to acknowledge that during the rehearsal process, I was still busy refining my research on Beckett and Wilson's work in silence. Before the beginning of the rehearsal process I had identified the methods which I wanted to utilise within my own practice, with my continued research taking the form of distilling and refining the information collected. In this sense, the literature review of both practitioners was continual, resulting in an overlap of the theoretical and practical process. I felt it necessary to continue my theoretical research, partly in order to maintain my role as researcher within my dual role as researcher/director, and partly to ensure that my practical application truly reflected the identified methods.

⁵ Only registered BA in Drama and Theatre Students in their second, third, or Honours year could audition for the play.

5.3.3 Exploration in the first rehearsal phase

During the first rehearsal phase, I used the time with the performers to develop a sense of ensemble and camaraderie, and familiarity with the text. I also used this time to conduct physical explorations related to the methods of Beckett and Wilson. Beckett's method of formalised periodicity, defined as "cyclical and repeated phrases" (Catanzaro, 1990:36) can be considered present within *4.48 Psychosis* to a certain extent, as the text does contain repetition. However, in considering Beckett's method, I developed an exercise (which we referred to as soundscaping) aimed at identifying certain phrases within the text which could be repeated.

Having previously participated in soundscape exercises within voice classes for my undergraduate degree, I felt it would be an appropriate exercise as it relies on silence as a starting and end point. The exercise was constructed through the cast first reading a section of the text aloud and discussing what they had perceived in terms of theme and emotion. Thereafter, they sat in silence with closed eyes. They were encouraged to embrace the silence of the space, but also to notice the environmental sounds surrounding them, as well as the sounds being made by their own bodies. This exercise did rely on a certain amount of impulse perception as they were required to soundscape (incorporating vocal and bodily sound) once they felt that creating their own sound was necessary. The impulse for this sound creation was therefore a combination of the text that had been read and discussed, as well as the silence in which they were seated. The outcome of this exercise unexpectedly informed my use of both Beckett's formalised periodicity and his textual scoring, as the cast created worded and wordless sound. In a sense, the exercise found the sounds within the silence of the space, whilst also highlighting certain elements of the text. This exercise was performed in most of the rehearsals during this exploratory phase. At times it was used as part of the warmup, and at other times it was performed in order to identify sounds to be used for textual scoring, or pieces of text to be used in repetition. Another outcome of this exploration was the introduction of the song "Lovin' You" by Minnie Riperton. *4.48 Psychosis* references love on numerous occasions, and during these explorations the song became part of a few of the soundscapes generated. The performers' own memories and experiences therefore began to inform the process, and I viewed this as a way of further developing characterisation.

In terms of Wilson's methods of reiteration and Wilsonian time, I constructed an exploration made up of two components. The first component served the dual purpose of creating a physical vocabulary for reiteration, as well as characterisation and contextualisation in terms of the text's religious content and structure. As with the previous exercise, the cast would read sections of text and discuss, before moving into the physical exploration. In this exercise, which we called "the heartbeat", the cast would sit in a circle together. In order to assist them in physically connecting with the religious content of

the text (which is often framed as negative), they would sit in silence and focus on their breathing. Once they were feeling rested, I would ask them to find their heartbeat, and observe its rhythm. Once they had done this, I would ask them to externalise that specific rhythm in either a vocal or bodily sound (such as tapping a finger on the floor). They would all sound this rhythm together, observing the overall quality and balance of sound and silence. I would then instruct them back into silence and stillness. The second step was to envision a memory of a positive religious experience (or in the case of a non-religious member, a positive religious experience she had seen portrayed in a movie). In imagining this experience, they were instructed to move into a body position that they felt invoked that specific feeling. Once in the position, they would again observe their heartbeat, externalising it either vocally or physically and taking note of the overall sound quality and balance of sound and silence. The third and final stage of this exploration was the invocation of a negative religious experience, following all the same steps as the previous two sections. However, this step was taken further, as they did not only find body positions, but actual movements which accessed this feeling.

The second component of this exercise followed the same structure, but the performers were instructed to halve the pace of their heartbeat in order to slow their physical movements. These movements were slowed a number of times in this manner to create a physical vocabulary in Wilsonian time.

In observing this exercise, I noticed that the positive experience resulted in more vocal sound, whilst the negative experience resulted in more bodily sound such as rubbing hands, stomping feet, coughing, and clearing throats. I suspect that this was due to the use of vocal sound within religious settings as an affirmation of belief and/or agreement. For example, in evangelical Christian settings verbal affirmations such as the exclamation “amen” and singing carry positive and joyous connotation. With regards to the negative experiences invoking bodily sound, I would surmise that this is due to cultural conventions of politeness discouraging verbal exclamations of discomfort or distress. The movements that resulted from this exercise informed the use of reiteration within the production, whilst also unintentionally informing my understanding of textual scoring through bodily sound resulting from the exploration of negative experiences. Both of the exercises were recorded on video and through journaling in order to keep a record of the vocabulary generated.

It was in this phase of the rehearsal process that I made the decision to not directly discuss the methods of silence with the cast. In the very first rehearsal I had mentioned the method of reiteration, and found that as rehearsals progressed, the performers were showing concern regarding whether they were interpreting (performing) the method correctly. This was a challenge to the process as it created a sense of self-consciousness and distracted from the holistic process of the rehearsals. Atkinson (2007:211) defines this as a challenge to participant-observation, stating that “divulging some sorts

of information might affect people's behaviour in ways that will invalidate any conclusions from the research". I identified this as one of the challenges of my dual role of researcher/director within the practice-led approach. For this reason, the discussions regarding silence were always in relation to the performance itself and not the literature studies. The discussions took place during rehearsals as a less formal and more integrated process. In doing this, the primary role of the performers as performers was preserved, with their role as participants placed as a secondary function, while my role was firstly as researcher, and secondly as director. In order to address this challenge, I chose to take part in the exercises performed within the first two weeks of rehearsal. I took part in order to develop my own understanding of the practical exploration, but also to ensure the comfort and ease of the performers. I found that participating at this level aided them in taking part, easing any worries or self-consciousness they might have with regards to the exploration.

The one concept which I gleaned from this part of the process and which I consider valuable is the question of what constitutes silence. My research on nonverbal communication aided me in defining silence as not only auditory, but also as visual and possibly emotional or psychological. Silence can also be related to a lack of words or structured language. This led to the affirmation that silence is not necessarily a language in and of itself, but rather that silence forms a platform on which nonverbal forms of communication and meaning making are given focus and space to be elevated and explored. That is, silence provides the environment and/or conditions in which communication or performance without words can take precedence. In understanding this broader definition of silence on a practical level, I found that implementing Wilson and Beckett's methods became a more holistic process, where the methods used influenced and affected silence, but also became directly related to other theatrical elements. On reflection, silence is not separate from, but rather part of, and influenced by other elements whilst also influencing them. The use of silence in theatre occurs within a context. When context is not provided by the text through given circumstance, the context may be gleaned via other means, such as observing visual decisions including costuming and set, as well as elements such as rhythm and movement.

5.3.4 Application of methods in the second rehearsal phase

I did not work chronologically through the text during the second phase of rehearsals. The first few rehearsals were spent working on the first and last scene of the text. The aim was not to set the scenes regarding blocking, but rather to ground the work so that the cast knew what they were working from, and towards, in terms of the performance. As a result, the first and last scenes of the play were consistently developed ('updated') throughout the process. The other sections of the text were addressed as the days (corresponding to the seven sayings of Christ). These were rehearsed chronologically as sections from day one to day seven. Because of my decision to not directly discuss

the methods employed with the cast, I directed them as I usually would, guiding pace, character, rhythm, pause and movement. I referred to moments as “silence” when movement and sound were being utilised during it. When movement and sound were not being utilised, I referred to moments as “pause/s”.

During this phase, I constructed the set. Considering the performers as different parts of the same voice in the text, I decided to emulate that fragmentation in the set. I chose to make use of four areas on the stage, each representing a different space. I chose a bath for private home space, an elevator for a space of travel, a platform with two chairs as a space for dialogues, and a staircase as the space of ascension used in the final scene. I also made use of a bed as a more liminal space. This bed was a representation of the space of “4.48”, the early hours of the morning in which the voice feels most sane. Instead of making use of an actual bed, I constructed a bed image through the use of a pillow and a duvet, held up by the cast, whilst R assumed the position of laying in the bed for her monologues. Throughout the play her position in the bed could change in order to indicate time passing. The bed was therefore a fleeting image of a space rather than an actual physical space on the stage, reflecting the impermanence of the moments of perceived sanity for the voice. I chose these spaces because they invoke certain aspects of the psychosis in the text. The bath is a private, protected space for the voice, whilst the platform is less so. The elevator functions as travel between the two aforementioned spaces, and the staircase is symbolic of the freedom and release that suicide may offer the voice. In combination, they form a whole space of experience and memory, whilst separately they also hold significance, similar to my interpretation of the states within the voice.

Considering Sánchez-Palencia’s (2019:4) claim that *4.48 Psychosis* operates as a “boomerang” text which repeats and references itself through repetition, I considered the possibilities of boomerang action as being similar to Wilson’s reiteration. Knowles (2016:198) states that “the play allows audiences to grasp the nature of depression on a physical, potentially pre-verbal level. These moments challenge the stigmatization of the mental illness by offering a glimpse of its experience on a bodily, visceral level”. Considering a “bodily” level it can be said that the lack of stage directions and set indications could be a purposeful attempt to tap into this impulse. Instead of dictating this, Kane allows room for the experiential. This therefore supported my impulse to utilise a physical and spatial understanding of the thematic content, which could be supported by the use of repetitive physical action.

In representing the physical nature of depression, I decided to highlight the bodily experience of the elevator. As alluded to earlier, the elevator functioned as a mode of travel to the sections of the text I interpreted as dialogue, which I chose to interpret as therapy sessions. The different states of the voice would all take part in these therapy dialogues, meaning that they would all use the elevator, further

asserting the collective identity. In order to illustrate the declining state of the voice and the dread related to these sessions, the elevator was constructed as taking increasingly longer periods of time to arrive at its destination. The elevator therefore served largely as an externalisation of the voice's mental state. Each consecutive elevator trip progressively warped the generic music chosen to accompany the action, until the trip became fully silent with a performer seemingly stuck inside the elevator. The repetition of this concept throughout the text attempted to realise my concept of reframing the recognisable, as each trip was repeated with slight alterations. With each elevator scene followed by a therapy scene on the platform, the decline experienced in the elevator affects the atmosphere of the therapy dialogues. These dialogues are filled with the indication of silence, and in framing these scenes through the elevator experience, I aimed to insert the dialogues with tense silences. Because the silences indicated are found within conversation, I decided to insert body position changes and adjustments during them in order to indicate discomfort. In this way, the performers' bodies display the pressure to speak/reply, whilst they are verbally silent.

The treatment of the elevator also related to the repetition of the first scene of the text. This scene, first found on page 205, and then again on page 236 led to my interpretation of the voice being simultaneously situated in the present and in memory. The voice shares current and past psychosis, with seemingly very little to distinguish between them. It (the voice) has been struggling for a long time, and therefore time warps for the audience in the same way that it has warped for the voice. The progressive warping of the elevator attempted to illustrate this, as the voice effectively re-performs memories for the audience whilst also commenting on them.

It was also during this phase – whilst making decisions regarding the set – that I decided to make use of AV in order to portray the seven sayings of Christ as the titles of the seven “days”. I knew that I did not want the sayings (other than those already present in the text) to be spoken by the performers and decided on projections as a way of visually cueing the audience, rather than adding more verbal communication to the text. I chose to order the seven sayings from last to first, because the voice speaks of suicide and wanting to die in the beginning of the text. I felt that stating “it is done” as the first projection would convey the inevitability of the voice's death from the beginning, particularly as I had identified a circular structure and memory within the text. I also made the decision to add a subtitle to each saying, taken directly from the content of the text in each section, relating the voice directly to the martyrdom of Christ. The title projections were as follows:

FIRST DAY

“Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Remember the light.

SECOND DAY

“It is done.”

Fuck you fuck you fuck you.

THIRD DAY

“I thirst.”

You allow it.

FOURTH DAY

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Every act is a symbol.

FIFTH DAY

“Son, behold your mother. Mother, behold your son.”

But you have friends.

SIXTH DAY

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Of course I love you.

SEVENTH DAY

“Forgive me, for I know what I do”

It is done.

I decided to alter the final title projection to reflect the voice’s prior discussion on and commitment to suicide. In this sense, the voice is ascribed a sense of agency by taking ownership of its actions.

During this second phase, I also made some textual changes, incorporating Beckett’s method of textual scoring and formalised periodicity. One example of this is found in the moments just before the monologue which first mentions 4.48 which is found on page 206 in Kane’s text. The previous monologue consists of a list of things which the voice considers to be problems in its life. At the end of the piece the voice states,

I am terrified of medication

I cannot make love

I cannot fuck

I cannot be alone

I cannot be with others

My hips are too big

I dislike my genitals (Kane, 2001:206)

I chose to direct this piece as a jog building up into a run, based on the physical actions developed through the heartbeat exercise. The voice, embodied by A in this instance, is portrayed as externalizing her internal landscape both physically and verbally in daily activity. As she speaks her feelings, she becomes more and more upset until she is running at an intense pace. However, she never actually travels anywhere because she is running on the spot. The phrase “I dislike my genitals” was one of the phrases that repeatedly surfaced in the soundscaping explorations in phase one, and I therefore chose for it to be repeated, using the word “dislike”. The phrase then became the following:

I dislike my genitals.

I dislike dislike my genitals.

I dislike dislike dislike my genitals.

I dislike dislike dislike dislike my genitals.

I dislike dislike dislike dislike dislike my genitals.

I dislike dislike dislike dislike dislike dislike my genitals.

This phrasing, coupled with the sound of A’s feet hitting the floor while she ran, created a build-up of sound which ended abruptly when she finished speaking and stood still, thereby emphasising the ensuing silence. The textual scoring was used after, and was informed by, the running. Once she stopped running, A’s breathing was laboured as she attempted to catch her breath again (see Image 1). I decided to have the sound of her breathing continue, while fading the lights to a blackout during performance. The audience would then experience her breathing in a visual silence, as well as an auditory (no spoken words) silence. After this scoring was established, K’s voice spoke the next monologue out of that darkness. K was instructed to offer the words exactly as they are written in the text. In choosing to use darkness in this section, I also aimed to mirror (to some extent) the lack of context given in the actual text, all the while underscored by A’s breathing. Once applying this, it became clear that the methods used created an emphasis on the spaces between the words, as A’s breathing and K’s speech overlapped and informed one another. However, I had to wait for the technical rehearsals in order to fully test the full effect with lighting.

In further application of the phrases identified during the soundscaping, I explored formalised periodicity within a short section of the text – which simply states “RSVP ASAP” (Kane, 2001:213) – by taking phrases from the surrounding text, as well as wordless sounds, and layering and

structuring them rhythmically. It is important to note that an unintentional outcome of this was the blending of Beckett and Wilson's methods. This resulted from the way in which some of the wordless sounds were created during the exploration phase. Whilst focusing on sound, certain physical movements became necessary, thereby facilitating reiteration. For example, one such sound is the rubbing of fabric. K would rub her hand across her chest creating sound through friction. The movement needed to create the sound then became a visual image in this part of the process, meaning that the "RSVP" scene utilised a combination of formalised periodicity and reiteration. The scene was constructed as a build-up to the next monologue, which I interpreted as one state of the voice speaking for the whole voice. The soundscape was constructed as a combination of wordless sound and phrases (mostly phrases which do appear in the next monologue and which were identified in the first phase). The combination of these sounds was aimed at conveying emotion, and the sound built up to a breaking point of silence. The wordless sounds comprised of breath, sighs, hums, trills and throat clearing. The text "RSVP ASAP" was never vocalized, but rather projected above the performers. All four performers were involved in this scene (see Images 2-4). In juxtaposing silence with the text and wordless sounds, the emotional space of the silence was heightened as words spoken by the four performers were perceived to be unable to communicate effectively. The projection became a kind of subtext which informed the words spoken. This was done in order to place focus on the silence itself as a space of nonverbal communication wherein body language and gesture can communicate to the audience when language seems unable to express the voice's emotions.

I furthermore attempted to use reiteration – utilising physical vocabulary of reiterated gestures and movements developed during the heartbeat exercise in the first rehearsal phase – to allow for the communication of relationship, ritual, time passing, as well as highlighting changes or transformations without verbal explanation. A simple example is found in A's running. As previously mentioned, the run is set up in her first monologue. It is then later repeated within a different monologue (on page 235), where the ending of the action is slightly altered. As reiteration is a technique that allows for the building of an image, once this image has been built and understood, it can be progressively visually unbuilt.

Similarly, the physical ritual of the elevator sequences was developed and introduced to the performance. The elevator ritual was established as (a) walk to the elevator, (b) press button on outside of the elevator, (c) the sound of the door opening and getting into the elevator (stepping onto a rostrum), (d) press button on inside of the elevator, (e) music, (f) arrival and a floor announcement, (g) exit the elevator, (h) followed by a therapy scene. This recurring motif was aimed at structuring time within the production, as well as portraying emotional through-line with small alterations to the movements communicating changing emotional states (see Images 5-9). In this motif, I found the

potential for progressive silencing, hence the increase in time spent in the elevator and progressive warping of the music, eventually ending in an elevator trip comprised of two minutes and 40 seconds of complete auditory silence. In this way, I found that Wilson's physical reiteration can be applied on both a visual and an auditory level.

In making use of Wilsonian Time, I aimed to allow for silence and space to be linked. If everything is happening slower, then the viewer has more time in which to see and experience all of the action in front of them. I incorporated this use of time in two ways during this phase of the rehearsal process. The first was through projections. I chose to make use of video projections along with the title projections in order to experiment with Wilsonian time in juxtaposition with theatrical time. Videos of the cast were recorded and slowed down to a fraction of the original pace. I decided to juxtapose the videos with real time action onstage in order to create contrast between the paces, and also to heighten the themes of isolation in the text. An example of this is found in the portrayal of the monologue on page 218. I chose to project a video of K's eyes above a bath in which K sat (see Image 10 and 11). This presented a double reality. The projection of K cannot speak and only watches, moving in Wilsonian Time, while the real-life K struggles to find her words and moves in real time but feels trapped. In this way, Wilsonian Time in contrast with real time aided me in exploring multiple levels of silence simultaneously. This scene explored silence in a verbal and emotional sense, as well as in a visual sense as afforded by the use of Wilsonian time. This was another scene which could only be fully tested during the technical rehearsals due to the need for a data projector.

The unintentional blending of aspects of both Beckett and Wilson's methods that occurred during rehearsals of the "RSVP" scene, led me to attempt intentionally blending textual scoring and reiteration. I therefore introduced the motif of 'pouring water' in the beginning of the production, before the spoken text began. I knew that I wanted the bath to contain water, and therefore explored this blended method for the filling of the bath. Instead of having one instance of pouring water into the bath, I decided to use a large bottle of water to fill 40 glasses that were arranged at the front of the performance space (see Image 12). I chose the pouring of water as a continuation of the biblical themes introduced in the last words of Jesus Christ. The bible contains many allusions to water pouring, for example, "arise, cry aloud in the night at the beginning of the night watches; pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord" (Lamentations 2:19). This also ties into the biblical allusions that Kane makes use of in the text, such as "fear God and his wicked convocation... Christ is dead and the monks are in ecstasy" (2001:228). The water pouring also addresses the practicalities of filling a bathtub onstage. The verbally silent action of pouring water into glasses made use of Beckett's textual scoring, whereby only the wordless sound of the water and moving bodies is used. It simultaneously incorporated Wilson's method of physical reiteration within the

action of pouring. The repetitive movement of pouring and the wordless sound of the water allowed for the silence between the sounds and movements to heighten the ritual aspect of the action. This also functioned as a device which guided the audience into the space, establishing the silence of the space, and the space of silence within the theatre. The pouring water motif was reintroduced later in the text during the first Serial Sevens sequence:

100

91

84

81

72

69

58

44

37

38

42

21

28

12

7 (Kane, 2001:208)

This sequence (as explained in section 5.2) represents a psychological test. If the test subject is unable to count down in integers of seven, they are suffering from psychosis. I used this section of text to reintroduce the pouring water motif due to its ritualistic connotation. As R counted down, she handed A and M the glasses that had been filled with water. They then walked a set path to the bathtub, where they poured the water in, after which they placed the empty glasses in a line at the front of the performance space (see Image 13 and 14). This action was repeated until all the empty glasses formed a line between the performers and the audience, symbolic of the disconnection from the world that the voice experiences.

By the end of the second rehearsal phase the production had a running time of one hour and 45 minutes. There were four full runs in the rehearsal room, before we moved into the theatre space for the two technical rehearsals.

5.3.5 Technical aspects

As the treatment of AV and my decision regarding the set has been discussed in the previous sections, I will discuss lighting, sound, and costuming in this section. In terms of sound, I collaborated with David Wolfswinkel who is studying conducting and composition at the Stellenbosch University Music Department. I chose to work with him because of his own interest in Wilson, as well as his studies on Philip Glass (who composed the music for *Einstein on the Beach*). In preparation for the composition and creation of the final music and sounds, David sat in on rehearsals, drawing inspiration from the sounds (and by extension, silences) made by the performers themselves. The composition process was one of consistent re-working as the production grew, and David's work with silence was informed by my research and identification of Beckett and Wilson's methods. In this sense, while I did not directly discuss the methods with the performers, I did directly discuss them with David in order to extend that knowledge into his music. The music and sound effects for the elevator sequences were created by him, along with two compositions for the Serial Sevens scenes, and additional sound effects such as church bells. One bell in particular was created in order to be juxtaposed with silence. I placed this bell toll before the scene on page 226, which begins with the line "I thought I should never speak again" (Kane, 2001:226). This scene was directed as one of the "bed" scenes, with R asleep and the bell suddenly waking her up. This also serves as the beginning of the Fourth day in the structure. It follows a scene in which textual scoring has been used. I made the decision to reduce a portion of the text (starting on page 223) to wordless sound. The section provides a list of medications, many of which are anti-depressants, and their effects on a patient, presumably the voice. During the first rehearsal phase many of the sounds developed from the explorations were coughs, gags, throat clearing, and swallowing. This inspired me to structure this particular scene as wordless, with A walking onto the stage, with a pill in her hand. She brings it to her mouth, but gags when it touches her tongue. She scrapes it out and tries again. This time the pill seems to stay in, until she starts gagging and coughing, choking on the pill. The other performers can do nothing to help her and mostly watch on in shock until she manages to swallow the pill. Only one line from the scene is used: "Mood: Fucking angry" (Kane, 2001:225), spoken by M. Thereafter the stage is silent and dark as the title projection for the Fourth day shows. After about 40 seconds the big bell tolls, and there is suddenly light on a panicked R. The sound of the bell is therefore isolated between silences.

The music composed for the Serial Sevens scenes was aimed at highlighting the ritual aspect of the exercise. It also reflected the disjointed nature of the counting, as the voice is unable to count down in integers of seven. I made use of music in the first scene to underscore the water pouring into the bath, while R counted. The music therefore contributed to this textual scoring in the same way as the

water did. Because the voice can successfully count down in integers of seven in the second scene, the music was more melodic than the music in the first, with the numbers sang over it. M sang the numbers, while the rest of the performers made use of sounds developed in the exploration phase.

Ovaska (2017:364) acknowledges the affectivity of *4.48 Psychosis* in recognising that depression is represented as “a reaction of the embodied and social mind to extreme experiences or circumstances”; depression is asserted as a bodily experience in which “the basic structure of experience and being in the world have changed”. Within the text we find reference to this reaction to change:

At 4.48
 when sanity visits
 for one hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind.
 When it has passed I shall be gone again,
 a fragmented puppet, a grotesque fool.
 Now I am here I can see myself
 but when I am charmed by vile delusions of happiness,
 the foul magic of this engine of sorcery,
 I cannot touch my essential self. (Kane, 2001:229)

In describing the time of day when they feel most sane, the voice acknowledges a fragmentation or change in its connection to reality. In representing this fragmentation, I aimed to make use of my interest in reframing the recognisable through the use of lighting. Maiese (2014:525) adds that “a shift in affective framing changes not just how one perceives the world, but what someone remembers, how one engages in practical reasoning, how one relates to other people, and even which object-directed emotions one experiences”. This understanding of Kane’s text as an attempt at a shift in the framing of experience to illustrate the experiential aspects of depression, informed my treatment of the lighting. I wanted to use lighting in a non-realistic manner in order to illustrate the bodily experience of depression. In portraying the voice as struggling to engage with the world in both the present and in memory, I decided to make use of saturated colour in the lighting. I chose to use chartreuse, which is a combination of yellow and green, in order to highlight the strangeness of the space, as well as the sickly feelings which the voice addresses. This colour was used largely in the bath area as an area of privacy and isolation (see image 11). The elevator was lit in white, in order to relate the impersonal nature of it. The platform where the therapy sessions took place was slightly warmer, with more natural lighting. In choosing lighting, I aimed for the lights to reflect the moods and changing experience of the voice and incorporated numerous moments of darkness as a kind of visual silence. The staircase as a symbol of ascension was lit in streams of light to infer the holy

connotation. Furthering the religious theme, I chose to have a halo created out of light strings, which was hung above the staircase. When M ascended the staircase, the halo slowly brightened to full light (see image 16), ultimately framing M reminiscent of religious paintings (see image 17).

As there are no technical indications within the text, I interpreted some of the text as directions. For example, I read “hatch opens, stark light” (Kane, 2001:225) as a lighting cue and it was therefore not spoken. In lighting sections of the stage at a time, the lights mirrored the fragmentation present in both the text and the set.

Within the lighting and costuming, colours were taken from renaissance religious paintings as inspired by the biblical intertext. I looked to paintings such as *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo, *Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist* by Bernardino Luini, and *Madonna del Prato* by Raphael. As M ascended the staircase in the final scene, she wore a Virgin Mary blue skirt with a long train (see image 15). I chose yellow and charcoal for M as the state of questioning because yellow represents enlightenment. I chose pure white for R as the state of reflection who is most sane, and black, olive green, and tan for K as the state of foreboding because this state is darker and less hopeful. As the state of wanting A wore black and white because the monologues assigned to her very clearly list problems and desires. In this sense, the state of wanting does not occupy grey areas. I also chose to deliberately construct the costumes as androgynous, making use of men’s trousers and less form fitting clothing. The performers wore minimal makeup, and no jewellery in order to reflect the gender ambiguity of the voice. I placed two instances of traditionally feminine dress in the production and this was to pick up in the theme of gender conformity with which the voice appears to struggle. The first was after K was in the bath. The others dress her in a skirt, jersey, and shoes in the same colour scheme as previously. After the bath scene in which the voice has a breakdown, K moves on to voice the therapist in the next scene. In this way the outfit served a dual purpose of scene change, and commentary on the acceptability of the voice’s appearance. The second instance is in the final scene in which M ascends the staircase in a Virgin Mary blue skirt in order to achieve a kind of holy death. This draws on the religious images of the Virgin Mary. Throughout the text the voice refers to itself by stating, “the broken hermaphrodite who trusted herself alone” (Kane, 2001:205), “I dislike my genitals” (2001:206), and “behold the Eunuch of castrated thought” (2001:242). For this reason, I also altered the third saying of Christ slightly (the projection title for the fifth day in the production) in order to comment on the voice’s struggle with conformity. The saying was changed from “Son, behold your mother. Mother, behold your son” to “Woman behold yourself”.

5.3.6 Final staging

The Adam Small Laboratory Theatre is a “black box” space which has no proscenium arch. The space is intimate, seating 80 audience members and the seating is raked from the performance level. This setting was a good fit for the show in terms of audience proximity as the smaller space meant that they could see the small details onstage. In a larger auditorium, smaller gestures and sounds may have gone unnoticed, reducing the overall effect of the methods applied. The final staging of the show took place over three evenings, with one performance on each. The final duration of these performances was between one hour and 42 minutes and one hour and 50 minutes, while the reading of the script is 20-25 minutes long. Over the course of the performances, I watched and made notes observing the performers, the audience, and my own reactions. I consciously attempted to become researcher/spectator, rather than researcher/director. During the first performance, I observed an audience member changing seats in order to have a better view of the pouring of the water into the glasses. The audience was silent throughout this opening scene in every performance, and I began to consider the possibilities of silence and space in relation to contracting, expanding, and directing focus.

In viewing the show (arguably) for the first time without being in the role of the director, the fragmentation of the narrative became apparent. I could observe the links between different sections and states, and I was affirmed in my choice to make use of the projected titles, which I perceived as grounding the performance by providing clear indications of structure. Without these titles, the narrative might have appeared disorganised, or lacking any direction. The use of formalised periodicity was also apparent, with the repetition appearing to inform a desire for silence in some instances. A’s first running scene in which she repeats “I dislike my genitals” (Kane, 2001:206) highlighted the silences between the phrases, and because the running increased in intensity I felt that I wanted her to stop. The silence that came after provided a sense of relief in me as an audience member. The use of formalised periodicity and textual scoring therefore aided in structuring silence as a result of tension building.

I also noticed the relationship between silence and tension within the dialogue and elevator scenes. I presume that this is largely due to the stage setting for each space. The elevator ritual is established and therefore a release is expected, but tension results when the release is delayed. Within the dialogues, the platform space is set up as a space of reciprocity, so when one performer does not reply to another and they sit in silence, it results in tension because the societal convention to reply exists. In the first performance I did notice some of the verbal silences being cut short by the performers. After the show I reassured them to follow what had been rehearsed, and they admitted some nerves and fear that the audience would not accept the silence.

It is notable that the ending of the production was altered after the first public performance due to the audience's reaction. The original ending envisioned a traditional curtain call, with the performers moving to the front of the performance space to bow as soon as the audience starts to applaud. The audience, however, did not immediately applaud after the show ended, instead they sat in silence, still watching. The use of silence in the production seemed to 'train' the audience to accept (or respect) the stillness/lack of sound or spoken language. They appeared to feel the need to preserve the silence, and this caused the re-structuring of the ending of the show. Instead of the initial idea of a curtain call, I altered it to allow for a minute of silence, stillness (no movement by the performers), and darkness (not altering the final lighting state). This allowed the audience time and space to look out over the town, with the outside light entering the stage space. Throughout the production, the performers were directed to watch and observe one another's performances as there were many individual moments and monologues. Because of this, they often formed a type of audience for one another, and within these roles as observers a specific type of silence was found. The performers therefore both watched and listened to one another, often in verbal silence, just as the audience watched them in silence. After the period of stillness in which this reflexivity of silence or blending of roles could become apparent, the work lights were put on and the performers bowed. They then moved forward in order to give the audience the opportunity to engage with them. This seemed to work well as a 'debriefing' process. Very few audience members actually spoke with the performers, most preferring to, either remain seated and watch, or to slowly filter out of theatre in relative silence.

During the second performance, I noticed more confidence and physical investment on the part of the performers. The audience was also more reactive than the first evening, laughing (sometimes seemingly out of awkwardness in the tense moments, and sometimes in moments of swearing) and smiling, as well as physically reacting by flinching, leaning backward and forward, and rearranging their position during the performance. The elevator appeared to build a sense of expectation in the audience. They audibly reacted with gasps and murmurs when the ritual was disturbed and the reiteration altered. I perceived the video projections which incorporated Wilsonian time as effective. The slow pace of the projections juxtaposed with the theatrical pace onstage seemingly created a sense of discomfort in the silence.

When watching the final performance, I questioned the first scene, considering what effect the silence may have had if the lines were spoken by one performer and directed to the audience after a long, still silence, as opposed to the silent water pouring and the subsequent soft singing of "Lovin' You" by Minnie Ripperton before lines were spoken by M to A. During this performance I also came to view the elevator as a character by itself, due to its ability to affect the voice and alter its ritual. The religious imagery and undertone became more apparent and refined in this performance, and I felt that I noticed

more of the small movements and environmental sounds present, possibly due it being my third viewing of the production. Because I had already observed two performances, I may have unconsciously looked elsewhere than the established focal points in the scenes. In particular, the reiteration used in the “RSVP” scene stood out. The movements and wordless sounds allowed the space to hold context, and the emotion of the performers was therefore conveyed effectively. At times the silence caught me off guard, particularly when R and M were off stage for a few minutes during A’s second running monologue in the third quarter of the text. In realising their absence, I linked it to the silencing of the self previously discussed, as the voice was ‘missing’ half of its parts. The silence in the production appeared to frame and inform the interactions, housing the unsaid that was displayed through nonverbal means.

My final conclusions will be addressed in chapter six, which will also include an overview of the research study, as well as possible suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview of the study

This study aimed to address the following primary research question: How can silence be defined and applied as a communicative device within theatre? Within my study, I defined silence as not necessarily the absence of noise, but rather the absence of spoken words/language. Silence was asserted as a state whereby nonverbal forms of communication occur, and words are displaced as the primary communicative device in performance. Within my definition I asserted the impossibility of “pure silence”, due to the existence of environmental sound as defined by Cage (in section 2.3) In addressing the research question, I discussed the relationship between and the function of silence within verbal and nonverbal communication in Chapter 2, using Cage’s composition *4’33”* as an example of silence in performance. This framework provided the insight that verbal and nonverbal communication operate relationally, just as silence is relational to space within performance.

My secondary research questions were as follows:

- What is the communicative value of silence?
- What approaches and/or methods did Beckett and Wilson employ in their practice that relate to silence as theatrical device?
- How can these approaches and/or methods be applied and adapted in my own directorial processes?

The first secondary question was addressed in chapter two. Chapters three and four provided a literature review of Samuel Beckett and Robert Wilson’s work and their approaches to silence respectively. In analysing Beckett’s *Breath* and *Not I*, and Wilson’s *Deafman Glance* and *Einstein on the Beach*, I identified the methods of formalised periodicity, textual scoring, reiteration, and Wilsonian time. These two chapters addressed the second secondary question. Chapter five provided background on the work of Sarah Kane, as well as how silence features within her play, *4.48 Psychosis* which I selected for my practical exploration. This chapter addressed the final secondary question, by providing a detailed account of my practice-led inquiry. This included a discussion of my two phase rehearsal process, which in turn detailed the exercises which I developed to aid in exploration (and in developing) a physical and sound based vocabulary in order to apply the identified methods.

My practical understanding of silence identified the relationality between silence and context, with silence asserted as both relying on and providing context onstage. Within this study, the context of the text *4.48 Psychosis* (gleaned through intertextuality as well as the thematic content of the text) informed the application of the methods identified. The communicative value of silence was therefore found to be similar to that of spoken language in terms of conveying emotion and relationship. My research questions were largely addressed in a practical sense as I aimed to provide a practical understanding of the application and use of silence as communicative device onstage. In applying the methods within my own practice, I gained a deeper understanding of both the text, and the methods of Beckett and Wilson.

6.2 Final reflections

It is possible to apply Beckett and Wilson's methods and approaches to silence within other work, although they may not always be successful in the staging of silence. On reflection, I do question the effectiveness of the water pouring as the opening sequence. I aimed for the silence in the opening to indicate calmness, and I feel that the beginning could have been further distilled. I wonder if it would be more effective in darkness, with just the sound of water pouring at the beginning the play. Creating visual silence in this sense could contribute to the overall atmosphere of the piece, however it would eliminate the method of physical reiteration from the scene. In retrospect, I would suggest a recurrence of the glasses and water pouring motif at a later point in the production. This would allow for a more subtle build up to the true purpose of the glasses as a barrier between the audience and performers, as they end up forming a line, or fence between the two. However, an alternate beginning could possibly make use of an entrance in Wilsonian Time which would allow for an easing into the silence, both on a visual and auditory level. However, the methods used did enable the silence to operate within a context. By providing visual and sonic cues, the silence was able to communicate to the audience as a filled and purposeful silence.

During the rehearsal process, there were certain challenges regarding the performers. A tore a ligament in her hip (not as a result of the process, but rather as a result of a fall), which resulted in not being able to rehearse her two running scenes for a period of three weeks. This was in the three weeks prior to the performance and as a result, a contingency plan was required. The alternate staging was planned as A reciting both monologues while offstage, whilst M performed the run. This way the voice would be disconnected from the body and the piece would have functioned as the audience hearing M's thoughts rather than A speaking directly to them. I do think that this would have been effective as it would have delivered commentary both by asserting the connection between the various states, as well as contributing to the silencing by rendering M voiceless. However, A was given medical clearance two days before the first performance and I decided to continue with the original

staging. I decided this because I wanted to maintain the effect of A becoming breathless, with her breathing underscoring the next monologue.

Another challenge lay in the size of the rehearsal rooms in comparison to the theatre. The theatre is almost double the width of the rehearsal rooms, and as a result the production was rehearsed in a technically too small space until the two technical rehearsals. This was challenging in terms of seeing the full picture of the stage and plotting movements, but I feel that the set design aided this process, as the various components were purposefully fragmented. During rehearsals the focus was placed on interacting with the individual spaces, with the physical journeys to those spaces only being fully set once working in the theatre. At times this was a challenge when working with scenes that were not squarely set in one individual space. A's runs, the bed, and the "RSVP" scene all fell into the category of operating between spaces and could therefore only be given a set placement at the end of the rehearsal process. To combat this and avoid any confusion, I made sure to voice the scene's relation to the set spaces, for example, stating that the run occurs in front of both the bath and elevator, placed off centre closer to the elevator. This helped the performers to be aware of the spacing and to adjust accordingly once working in the theatre.

The elevator sequencing allowed for the exploration of progressive silencing which appeared to be an effective device. In making use of a small platform, a frame covered in transparent plastic, and elevator music with floor announcements, the audience recognised the elevator as a time bound device. Any performer in the elevator was therefore bound to the rules of that specific space. The elevator functioned as rhythmic and structured, building expectation in the audience through establishing ritual. They learned to look for the routine including the button press, music, floor announcement etc. I noted that once this routine was interrupted by the progressive silencing, it created the desired sense of unease, even within myself. I had a few audience members come up to me afterwards to discuss this discomfort in particular, and the actors also expressed their emotional responses to it. In this case, prolonged silence such as the two and a half minutes of the final elevator, allowed for illustration of the relational aspect of silence and sound, as the first voiced sound after this long silence offered a form of relief or reprieve from the pressure of the silence provided in the enclosed space of the elevator. In this sense, the progressive silencing in the production was aided by the use of reiteration, which facilitated the changing context of the silence.

The practical process was helpful in my understanding of both Beckett and Wilson's methods, and silence within theatre. In continuing my literature study of Beckett and Wilson, I feel I enriched my process, as a clearer understanding of the methods allowed me to implement them in combination and via alternate means such as AV. I feel that *4.48 Psychosis* was a good choice of text for this process as the text incorporates silence as a stage direction, and due to its experimental nature. The

first rehearsal phase of exploration allowed me to better understand silence as multi-faceted in terms of its interaction with and relation to other theatrical elements, as well as with regards to the myriad effects it may achieve. The exercises I developed aided in the application of the methods, as they were grounded in the context of the text, as well as religious themes, which enabled clear correlation between the first and second rehearsal phases. In this sense, the development of these exercises allowed for my research and directorial aims to be united. In applying the methods, I largely did not adapt them, rather choosing to apply them as Beckett and Wilson did (apart from my use of AV in Wilsonian time). I did this in order to gain a practical understanding of their work. However, I do think that there is possibly value in the idea of altering the methods and applying them in the spaces between the scenes in order to create a more rhythmically motivated theatrical event. The pacing of the production was largely even, and it may have benefitted from more rhythmic dynamism, as the climax in the text is placed as the conclusion. In this sense, a different application of the methods may have aided in a clearer deterioration of the voice leading up to the eventual climax.

In working with silence, I have applied it on multiple levels, including auditory and visual. While I do question some of my own applications of the methods which I identified, I do not doubt the effectiveness of the chosen methods. Through curating a vocabulary of movement/gesture, and wordless sound, I was able to work with silence as a platform for the nonverbal. The movement and wordless sound curated constitute nonverbal communication which fills the silence onstage, allowing it to be communicative without verbal communication being necessary, although the spoken text of the production did aid in framing the nonverbal and vice versa. In this sense, the verbal and nonverbal operated relationally within the production.

A blending of methods has proved useful within this process, and in developing silence in relation to other theatrical elements, the silence in *4.48 Psychosis* was able to inform all the communication present, rather than standing in isolation. In understanding silence in a contextual sense, the relationship between different aspects of theatre (particularly that of silence and space) has been explored in the production. This understanding has proven useful as I found that silence may be indirectly curated through the active handling of another aspect of performance such as rhythm, movement or sound itself. I will be taking this understanding forward within my own practice. Whilst Beckett and Wilson devised practical work based on their own writing, I devised work based on Kane's writing. I would therefore like to take my practical knowledge further by devising my own work, applying the methods on a textual level. While I feel that all four methods contribute to my understanding of silence as a theatrical element, I will in future disregard the physical application of Wilsonian time onstage in favour of my use of projections. In furthering my own unique practice, I

feel that this implementation will allow for growth within my work through the use of multiple levels of reality, as well as in an aesthetic sense through the use of multi-media.

Through my process, I found that silence may be created without being directly discussed with performers, as it operates within a larger context of performance, informing and being informed by other elements. The process was therefore largely holistic, with my directorial and research awareness differing in aims but united in my investment in curating silence. In this sense, my process was a largely curatorial one, with a focus placed on image and movement (informed by deliberate silence), rather than on emotional through-line and emotional landscape in the performers. The sequencing of images, movements, sounds, and silence therefore formed the bulk of my directorial practice. My practical study reinforced the findings of my theoretical framework provided in chapter one, and my literature review of Beckett and Wilson's work in chapters three and four. It is therefore evident that because of its relationality to other elements, silence provides a platform for communication to take place in performance. Silence was found to be indispensable from communication, as is space.

6.3 Possibilities for future research stemming from this study

There is further research that could stem from this study, particularly regarding the communicative function of rhythm in performance. Within my practical process, I found that the rhythmic action resulting from the use of reiteration, textual scoring and formalised periodicity builds expectation within the viewer, allowing for suspense or emphasis when the movement and/or sound unexpectedly ceases or alters. Within my own practice, I used this to place focus on auditory and visual silence, however I do feel that it could have numerous applications. This proposed research could be structured similarly to my own study, making use of a study on practitioners and then an application of identified methods. Both Beckett and Wilson's work may be suitable in this study as both utilise specific rhythmic devices in their treatment of spoken word and movement. The methods which I identified do make use of rhythm in their application. In this sense, it is possible for a study on rhythm to function as an extension of this research.

In relation to both my study on silence and the biblical content of *4.48 Psychosis*, one may pose the following question: How is silence present in performative religious contexts? In addressing this question through research, a participant-observation based study could be possible, particularly based within a church as a study on the rituals regarding church services as well as the preparation thereof. The study could then culminate in a theatrical event which functions as a staged service, including the observed pre-rituals of the religious leader delivering said service. In this sense, the religious service would be placed as a performative context thereby analysed as theatre.

This proposed further research provides possible ways forward in research regarding silence, whilst my study and practical exploration provide insight into the process of applying methods within an individual approach to directing theatre. The exercises which I constructed and the structure of my rehearsal process, as well as the challenges of participant-observation in the role of researcher/director, may be helpful in assisting other researcher/directors who are making use of a practice-led approach.

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ADDENDUM A

Image 1:



Image 2:



Image 3:



Image 4:



Image 5:



Image 6:



Image 7:



Image 8:



Image 9:



Image 10 (a still from the projection footage of K):



Image 11:



Image 12:



Image 13:



Image 14:



Image 15:



Image 16:



Image 17:

