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Abstract

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Keywords

Qualitative Research, Method Acting

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Method as Method: A Play in Three Acts

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The authors present a play in three acts that we hope speaks for itself on some level. While we recognize that context is important, we do believe in the power in audience interpretation of a work of art. For more information, please refer to the prologue. Keywords: Qualitative Research, Method Acting

"What can method acting tell us about research methods?" This was a question I (Gabe) posed to Sam a few months before we began writing the play of which you are about to read or (hopefully) perform. This question came out several previous conversations between the two of us where we discussed the recent turns in qualitative research and our shared loved of theatre and acting on the stage. From my perspective, I was intrigued by possible places of exploration between acting and research. I thought the shared word of "method" between method acting and qualitative methods could prove productive in wrestling with some of the questions raised by a post-qualitative turn.

From my memory, our discussions moved quickly past the traditional academic avenues of exploring this connection towards an arts-based approach in which we would write a play that we would then perform. Each year from 2016 to 2018, we have written an act of this play and performed it at the Annual Bergamo Conference of Curriculum Theorizing and Classroom Practice, all the while revising the piece with an eye for publication.

Our attempt here recognizes other examples and discussions of arts-based research, while at the same time it represents a unique approach to what we, at the time, saw as specific to the conversations between the two of us. In other words, we were improvising how we wrote this play by design. When we decided to write a play rather than a journal article we started, as intentionally as we could, with the simple idea of "let's write a play about research methods." To that end, we worked on the play separately so that we could both be quarantined from the other's intent and merely react to the words we saw on the page. We did this by working over a shared Google Document in which we would write sections separately and in no preconceived order. I began the document with something similar to the stage directions in italics you will read in Act One and Sam then followed suit with the lines of the monologue. This process continued organically through Act II. In Act III, this changed as I wrote most of the act (both stage directions and dialogue) and then Sam took a second pass of the draft. To that end, we are writing separate introductions to this play.

My interpretation of this process was to see if a "method-less" playwriting process, the conventions of traditional playwriting notwithstanding, freed us to really consider research methods in a more abstract way. Of course, I had ideas that I was trying to communicate on the page in the lines that I wrote, but I never shared my intentions with Sam nor he with me. Again, my interpretation of the reasoning for this was that we had talked enough about research methods, let's see what happens when we let the play do our speaking for us. Since we performed the acts of this play at an academic conference, there were opportunities for us to discuss our intentions with each other and those in the room attending our session, but these

introductions are the first time since we wrote the play that we are sharing our full intentions with each other.

The prologue below was our first attempt at doing what we now are trying in these introductions. We hoped that we could "let the play speak for itself". As we moved this play towards publication and with the help of some very helpful reviewers and editors, we conceded that our prologue, as clever as it might be, might be insufficient. So, with a bit of trepidation in writing these words, let me share the ideas of which I was engaging when I wrote my part of this play. As a qualitative researcher who has written about method and the implications of the scholarship that has been termed post-qualitative (Huddleston, 2018), I saw play-writing as an opportunity to explore the relationship between method and the researcher. In other words, what is the positionality of a researcher in relation to the scholarship that gives us what have come to understand as "method" for qualitative researcher? Moreover, does the researcher have agency when it comes to using these "methods" or are we simply subject to them similar to how Foucault (1972, 1977, 2006) posits knowledge-as-power operating in society. To explore this dynamic, I saw (at least initially) the stage directions of our play a metaphor for research methods with Sam representing the qualitative researcher. With this as the premise, I wondered what would happen if the researcher tried to speak to the methods and vice versa. Was it possible for disembodied qualitative methods to trade places, so to speak, with a qualitative researcher? Would they want to? And, if they did, what would happen? Whether I answered these questions or not, I leave partly up to the readers and the audiences of this play and the other part I will attempt to answer in our concluding discussion section at the end of this play. To give you another peek behind the curtain, I am waiting to write my parts of the conclusion until after I read and process Sam's introduction that follows mine.

Speaking for myself (Sam), I disagree with the editor, reviewers, and Gabe that we should write this introduction and I am even opposed to the prologue. I understand, of course, why it is asked for, but I see these reasons as symptomatic of the fact that qualitative social science seems to think it can have its cake and eat it too. What I mean by invoking this expression is that qualitative social science researchers seem to, on the one hand, insist that their scientific work can be judged according to criteria that have equal value to other forms of social science and, on the other, desire to break free from scientific conventions altogether and adopt the freedom to be found in the art and humanities. On my view, the genre of the play belongs in the latter, not the former. Its presentation here, in a journal of qualitative social science, only serves to make the general point that perhaps qualitative research cannot serve two masters. There are empirical complications with this view, I realize. For instance, just as the natural and physical sciences rely on the abstract art of mathematics, so too can we find mixed and applied uses of the social sciences in the arts and humanities. In fields like history, the split between humanistic and scientific historians is more evidence that the neat divisions one might like to see applied, based on abstract principles, are never so simple. So maybe I am wrong about this point. At the same time, the idea of "method acting" and other ideas about method in the fine and performing arts are hardly inconsequential and they operate outside of the purview of the natural, applied, and social sciences entirely. Right or wrong, I know that Gabe and I share a love of letters and of the stage. We both have had formative experiences with the fine and performing arts, especially the theatre. In my case, the first potential routes for my studies after high school were the seminary or acting school. I ended up studying philosophy and literature instead. We also share a fascination with the idea of method acting and wondered if that idea might have anything to say about the disputes about method that abound today in educational research.

However, the most honest way to understand this play is that it emerges from two colleagues and friends in a field where the social sciences and humanities share company who decided to try and write a play as a way to make sense of some things. Reading or performing

this play in this way should yield its own rewards. Whether it relates to other things or even to the things we tried to address here is a demand that the arts cannot be burdened by. In the end, you, the reader, must use your own intelligence and decide.

PROLOGUE

Author 2: Over the past two years we have been writing and performing a play titled "Method as Method," which will be hard to introduce or summarize since the play itself and, more importantly, the performance of the play itself, is the real point. So, if you are reading this, you should grab a partner and read it aloud. It started with Author 1 writing the italicized parts and I wrote the character's monologues. Since then, we have both worked on the entire script, adding and changing in a shared Google document when we could. Without abstracting too much, it was meant to address the ongoing conversation about method, methodology, post-qualitative research, arts and humanities-based research, and that sort of thing. Our conversations began with this question, "What can theatre and acting tell us about qualitative methods?" We have performed versions of all three acts at the Bergamo Conference of Curriculum Theorizing and Classroom Practice in 2016, 2017, 2018.

Author 1: Don't you think that's too terse and cheeky?

Author 2: You stole that line from the Twitter conversation we had the other day.

Author 1: They don't know that.

Author 2: Now they do. So, what would you suggest?

Author 1: Well, I would explain that the point of writing a play is an experiment in form—pushing against notions of what research is and can be. So, the play is both a discussion and an example of post-qualitative research (Lather, 2013; Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; MacLure, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2014). More specifically, considering post-qualitative research vis-à-vis method acting (see Hirsch, 2002).

Author 2: What was that?

Author 1: What was what?

Author 2: All that crap in the parenthesis?

Author 1: A citation.

Author 2: Okay, first of all, I'm not sure that I signed up for "post-qualitative research," whatever the hell that means—I'm more into pre-qualitative research—and second, how are we supposed to play with form if you insert citations in a dialogue?

Author 1: Think of it as stage directions for academics.

Author 2: No, I won't.

Author 1: Look, we can't just submit something, be it a conference proposal or a journal submission, without at least acknowledging the traditional forms of both. At Bergamo we could

somewhat get away with it because we see this as an extension of the "complicated conversation" (see Pinar, 1999, 2004, 2012; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008) which allows for a broad exploration of theory and form.

Author 2: You did it again! And this time you were really sneaky because you stuck it in the middle of the sentence. Plus, I don't see what is so traditional about using a citation method invented by the American Psychological Association in the middle of the 20th century. Poetry, verse, song, story: these are traditional in the sense of being old and ancient.

Author 1: Ok. I'll stop. (pause)

Author 1: You know, you bring up a good point though in that the materiality of the dialogue itself, words on paper, the ink, the font, etc. furthers this as an experimentation of form and therefore speaks to the possibility of how the recent scholarship dubbed new materialism (Barad, 2007; Coole & Frost, 2010; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012) potentially influences my work on this piece.

Author 2: NO. No, no, no, no, no. This is not an experiment. Plays exists going back for thousands of years. Social science is an experiment, not arts and humanities.

Author 1: ….oooookay. Forget I said anything.

(pause)

Author 2: So now what?

Author 1: We wait.

Author 2: For what?

Author 1: To be either accepted or rejected.

Author 2: Ahh. I see.

(pause)

Author 1: Now this is a blatant rip off of a combination of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead and Waiting for Godot.

Author 2: They don't know that.

Author 1: They do now.

(pause)

Author 2: Is there a reference list at the end of this prologue?

Author 1: Nope. (Exits stage left, Author 2 sits and waits.)

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Author 2: Shit.

ACT I

The scene begins with a presenter seated at a table in a room full of people. The room is plain. It retains a definite feel all the same. The presenter looks around. He knows he must speak now. His talk is meant to be a paper discussing the use of method acting in (post)qualitative research and curriculum theorizing. He starts to speak but stops short, as if vaguely aware of another voice. Is it his own? Is it someone else's in the room? Someone that is not in the room? These questions create a sense of panic. He wonders if others are waiting on him or vice versa. He begins to wonder if the paper topic has caused a crisis of representation. Is he truly a presenter at this conference or is he portraying one in a play? If it is the former, he is sure others are staring at him with a mix of fear and sadness. If it is the latter, does he need to bring his own life in to present a realistic portrayal? Does he need to remember his past, his own

experiences of presenting at conferences? He decides the questions must stop and he must speak. He begins:

Drama is not dramatic. (What a terrible first line.) Otherwise, we lose the bareness and smell of it all. Just say the lines, read them out. Project, focus on your body and let the spirit do the work. Breathing is a given, but on the stage it is more. The voice projects through breath, through flesh and fiber, over tongue and between teeth, out into space. You let it hit the wall and bounce back. Method acting begins with *ruah*: the spirit of breath.

Bodies do not last long without breathing. Embodiment is great, fleshy, and sweaty but we exaggerate when we forget the immateriality of breathing and other energetic forces. Chemical gravity. Acting, which is all method acting is, is certainly embodied, but it is not a *total* material embodiment. What Marx did to Hegel's sense of history may be worse than the fact that he accidentally founded the field of sociology before Dubois could make it interesting. The method of method acting is no more nor less than to hold on to as much of the whole without losing the parts.

BANG! A loud noise interrupts his thought. What was that? Did they hear it? He looks down at his paper to gather himself, but he still hears the voice. Does he wait for a pause and resume speaking or does he allow the voice to continue? He was on to something here. Method acting is not necessarily about a predetermined "method" per se. Strasberg seemed to be making up most of it on the fly and Brando talked of it in vague generalities without a discernible "method" to speak of. Wait, how would he know that? Was he at the actor's studio? Focus, he takes a deep breath and decides to try and stop the other voice by saying:

Memory-work works by rote. Breathing through a body cannot be mindless. So there is consciousness, recitation. *Intentional* consciousness, in the phenomenological sense, object directedness. Not just words, but words directed *at* something. Performance is what we find where there is attention. Pull your attention into my picture, into my story of the bear that awoke as a fox, and you'll get the point. The words take flesh and spirit through reason and repetition. Affect matters, sure. But, again, there is something less dramatic to drama that mustn't miss the words and their punctuation. Every line. Every single pause and punctuation.

Read the lines. Not between the lines. Not outside the lines. Not what is missing. Just the simple lines. Back to the lines themselves. Believe in them. Believe them. Method acting requires faith.

An audience member coughs. This breaks his concentration. Is this what he wants to say? Is he making sense? Too much sense? He scans the audience to search for reactions and is met with faces. They are too complex to read right now. Thoughts swirl in their heads or maybe in his? Again, questions of whose voice is audible and what I...he hears. The thread is lost and he wonders if he can get it back. Try to remember, you need to remember. Find some ground. Boal? Lather? St. Pierre? Pacino? Pino Paladino? Strasberg? Stravinsky? Brando? The names ring bells, but none...wait, Brando. That seems to be a lifeline rope, think to Apocalypse Now *and the documentary about its filming...Hearts of Darkness? No, not it, all I can...I mean he...can think is Brando saying, "I swallowed a bug." We have to think why we are doing this, the question. Right. How is the actor the researcher and vice versa? The "how" always saves the day. He starts again:*

Time is relative, but an absolutist relative, like Einstein's relativity. Waiting and starting are not afraid to be jerky. (Jerky? Really? You're just paranoid. Your voice is not like in the movies.) Awkwardness is always there. The actor—"Who is the actor?" is not a question to the actor, to this actor, maybe, but not to THE actor—the actor, I said, is always awkward, especially when too self-possessed. Method actors kill themselves, but not like Socrates. They just kill themselves.

Working carefully is thoughtful work, not ponderous, unless pondering, not hasty unless in haste, not this or that unless this or that. Gil Scott-Heron said it: "And then laying there, bleeding like a stuck pig. Was a stuck pig." That is the thing. The poetics of method in method acting are the essentials: pencil, papers, tobacco, rug, horses, matches and marbles. Time, leather, harmonica melodies.

Something catches his eye and he stops again. Is this a Brechtian moment? A Pirandello play? Pasolini? Now he remembers, no we remember. It wasn't Brando that started him down this path, it was the apocryphal tale of Hoffman and Oliver when the latter said, "Try acting, my boy" or something to that effect. The point was set up as a conditional statement: IF post qualitative research is trying to break method THEN what can method acting teach us about it? Before Strasberg and his school, acting was in the technique, it was in the doing. Method acting was in the remembering, in the connecting of moments between the lives of the actor and lives of the characters. Strictly representational. And yet, there was still a technique to it, but the technique was no longer in the performance; it was how to go on a journey of connections, how to make the immaterial material. Not object oriented material or agential beings, just material, like stuff to act out or to play at the gig. You hope you have enough. This is the crux of your argument, I am saying this to you now, you must keep this in mind and start again:

Research sounds too damn smart for me. I only wanted to be a mediocre scholar, and maybe get a shot at writing something important someday. Sor Juana Ines paid a price for her mind and today it is more expensive than Vancouver real estate. If I search and then re-search and then re-re-search I might be better off finding something else instead and moving on with my life. All this searching sounds like a tortured game of hide and go seek, sometimes. Lifelong learning can be an eternal prison sentence. Who really wants to learn all the time?

This time another panel member drops something on the floor, breaking his concentration. He's lost again. We are lost again. The thread is lost and there is nothing to do to get it back. Maybe I should stand he thinks. He pushes back in his chair, but thinks better of it. At the same time, he's made a conscious effort to ignore the voice and continue his thoughts, but this time the voice continues speaking.

[Said concurrently with below. Actor should finish before: Imagine asking Susan Sontag while she is verbally assaulting Norman Mailer what her method is?]

We are both born free of and restricted by language and when we talk of qualitative "methods" it is the same. If it isn't data, then what is it? That sounds familiar and I think it was said in this very same building years ago. But, as St. Pierre notes, to pay attention to the theories born out of post-structuralism, critical theory, feminism, Marxism, and cultural studies is to question the very methods we have been told to use. Is this the other connection to method acting? This new generation was trying to say that it isn't about technique, it's about communicating raw emotion, it's about screaming "Stella" at the top of your lungs and meaning it. It's about the

confluence of you and your character in communion with the audience, it is about being free and restricted at the same time. It is about portraying real emotion on the artifice of a stage, in a theatre, for the 300 hundredth time, but it still seems to connect to something. I can no longer compete, we are onto something here, we must keep talking.

I am sitting in my airplane seat. I put on my seatbelt. I pull out a book a student gave me the night before, an Iranian side-by-side translation of selections of Rumi's spiritual poetry. The front cover has the beautiful form of Arabic, Farsi, and other Middle Eastern fonts. I am sitting in the exit aisle. I realize that my complexion doesn't exactly inspire confidence in the gentleman seated next to me. I freeze. If I put the book away that might look shady. But I want to read some poetry. So I do. I love the stanzas about Jesus most. Maybe if my neighbor sees that I am reading about Jesus through the homoerotic pen of a Sufi mystic he will feel better. Hardly. I feel sleepy and so I sleep. Who knows what happens then, as Rumi rests in my lap, barely held by unconscious hands covered in itchy psoriasis. I awake and watch most of an HBO documentary on the 50 year history of *The New York Review of Books*. It is celebratory and I like it. It reminds me of the intellectual culture I cherish in *The Paris Review*. I imagine that maybe the two staffs go to each other's parties. New York City evokes in me the bridge of Stevie Wonder's "Living for the City" from his 1973 classic *Innervisions*: "Skyscrapers and everything."

Writing and letters, books and essays, emails, Tweets and Facebook posts, blogs and the occasional hand-written letter, lectures and readings: Where has it all gone? Does the social scientist think their method will somehow accomplish this? The New Journalism of the Beats — or was it *from* the Beats? — anyway, the New Journalism that followed the Beats: the style, wit, verve, transgression, and classic line breaks and perfect grammar. Kendrick Lamar interrupts, dropping notes about grandpa's gin and Denzel and that the truth will set you free and the messiah and washed hands, said grace and more. I prefer Ellison, but Thundercat is a compelling bassist. The point I am making here is about composition. Hopefully that much is clear. There is composition and then there is decomposition. Method as a subject matter is decomposed.

Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, a book methodologists often don't read for bad reasons and that method actors also don't read for fantastic reasons, proves the decomposition of method especially when distinguished with his *Meditations on the Existence of God*. Today we have the new methodological Cartesians trying to do philosophy as method again. I favor the *Meditations* instead, which leads to the scholastic soul: Fine arts and literary culture, the editorial work of typesetting and design, a palace of paper and smoky freedom where method has no time to become explicitly decomposed. Imagine asking Susan Sontag while she is verbally assaulting Norman Mailer what her method is?

He stops as the last sentence seemed to crystallize what he was saying. Could it be that another aspect of method acting is the lore? The mythology? The idea that these imperfect artists sometimes achieve moments of clarity through a process as mysterious as alchemy. Maybe that's why the discussion about method acting focuses on the stories told...maybe, it's listening to Dustin Hoffman talk about Olivier and crying. Two actors from opposite approaches that connected so deeply, that's all that mattered. He decides to finish, it is time to finish. He starts for the last time. He looks around the room, did he connect? What is everyone thinking? Will we continue to talk? This is a fleeting moment, but the potentiality of method acting teaching us about what we DO with method still remains. He smiles. I smile. He starts, again:

I watched closely and studied the script, I read the lines and tried to let them seep into my chest—this is not chess—into my breast and my lungs. There is no opening, middle, and end. It is more composed than chronology. Linearity is vastly and sorely and evidently underrated these days. Lines stretch out eternal, with no beginning and no end. The line is infinite. Respect and love the lines. The methodology, ontology, epistemology, theoretical frame that doesn't do any work, the sections, chapters, data, affect, old new materialisms, the entire project of social science that is now moving into a stand-up self parody doesn't have a method; it has the ever present absence of one, a decomposed melody that cannot harmonize or syncopate, which is why it has so much to say about method decomposed into so many handbooks.

Method acting should not talk too much about itself otherwise it risks the same decomposition. So I'll think about it a while... Now that I think about it, acting is reducible to the atomic element of the writer. There is your method, decomposed into literary composition. So drop the method and work on the prose, the chops, and, like Rakim, *Don't Sweat the Technique*.

ACT II

The scene opens with the presenter at a table by himself. He is no longer in a room with others. He finds himself on a bare stage with a table, his laptop, and a stack of books. His former attendees of the last scene have left. He looks around and is vaguely aware of a larger, non-descript audience somewhere beyond the lights that he has just now noticed. The change in scene has disrupted his train of thought, but he is grasping onto the last thread. The actor, at her atomic level is the writer, or the playwright. The words on the page are what is most important, even if they are simply a guide and the actor is allowed to improvise. Sometimes they are so much more. Think of Shakespeare, the clues were not only in the words, but in the rhythm of the words, the ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM of the lines offered the actors clues into the character psyche. When there were extra beats in a line it meant that the characters was state was erratic, or at the very least, not calm and steady. There is a reason that "To be or not to be, that is the question" has an extra syllable, all is not well in the state of Denmark after all. Did method actors think the script was so important? The short answer is yes. The script was a place for the actor to work within the margins, to identify the beats, the moves, the pauses and literally mark the script up with her notes. Those notes, in turn, would be used to offer connective points to her own identity, a whole other process, but he doesn't want to deal with this now. He looks to the stack of books and starts to go through them in silence.

(pause)

But is there really silence? He continues to make out a voice, however faint, in the distance. The voice sounds similar to the one he heard previously, but it isn't as loud. Before the voice was almost right next to him, but now it seems as though it is off beyond the lights. He makes a choice, he will speak out loud, even though he is seemingly alone. He will try to speak to an unidentifiable group of people beyond the lights first and then maybe try to call out the voice he hears beyond them.

Good morning! Good morning to you, scholars, researchers, teachers, bandits, activists, messianic graduate students, sage wisdom speakers, far off and out institutions of the hour. Good morning to you!

I left the train station on the tenure track long enough to remember—or perhaps soon enough to remember?—I, too, was brought here almost a decade ago by one of the theorists to talk about Foucault and I didn't talk about power outages or how I am dazed and confused at the Holiday Inn Express. No, I spoke of William James and I used the word "curriculum" as many times as I could muster and fluster and conjugate the *currere* verb into a complicated conversational cliche that I didn't yet understand. The word became mesh. It is morning now, dear beloved lost ones, vampires on the beach, pilgrims seeking salt and sand and something that might stick to the soul.

I am searching for you, too, oh distant cousins and close strangers. I call, like you, in the insecurities of my name tagged affiliations that long for friendship. Are you lonely, too? Is this valley of research and tears as boring and lacking in consolation as it seems? Or maybe you are the therapeutic class of preachers, pole vaulting in the woke Olympics, calling all to join the salvation glory of the Great Awakening to those two words—social justice—invented by that Italian priest of the Society of Jesus in the 19th century. Maybe you seek and save the lost and pity my agnosticism. So be it. I call to you, too.

I wandered down a hallway last year and heard one of you explain how there are no Black or Brown philosophers of education. The implications of that explanation are true. The sociological instruments of graphic ethnographies within the qualitative/quantitative/mixed-method Trinity, served with all the post sauces imaginable, require worship and honour and thanksgiving. We must feed the gods, this much I understand. One cannot pull the plug out of the outlet. After all, when the electricity is gone, we end up dazed and confused at the Holiday Inn Express, after a sixty dollar taxi ride in the rain. No. We cannot do that. But we can pretend and even fantasize about it.

Imagine: the world before the turn and the post, the movement that generates so much dead literature, the stake driven into the corpse of modernity, to see if it would grow some leaves and give us new fruit. Imagine this world of thinking before theory and look at its workers, look closely, see that what they do that is the Author 1e. It is the same flesh and bone, the same blood and ink, the same fibres and pages, the same spirit and tongue, the same fear and terror, the same love, the same devotion, or maybe that is the difference.

Tell me, morning greeters out there: Do you love this work? Would you devote yourself to it in the way the artist who does not eat or sleep or have health insurance not because she loves her art but because life without it would be a recipe for suicide? Tell me, researchers out there, what are you really looking for? Do astrologers like Jerry Springer and Dr. Oz really have anything different to offer? Tell me, preachers and revivalists, does your living water come with alcohol, what magic is it laced with? Do any of you, do any of us, does anyone love anything at all, are we capable of it anymore, do our words carry any greasy marks of transcendence in their guts or on our hot breathe?

I think I need CPR. Cardiac Pulmonary Reasons. Reasons for my heart to beat in 4/4, to pulse and resound in my stomach as I lay down to sleep. Sing me a lullaby like this and I will be your abd, your servant, your beloved. Reasons for these two lungs to fill and empty, like the bags that save the earth from plastic, to fill and empty with spirit and sometimes smoke in a rhythm that can afford more breaks than the heart organ. Breath to me a melody of this soulful sort, and I will be your friend, your apostle.

BUT YOU! YOU. THE ONE THAT HAUNTS THEM! YOU BEYOND AND BENEATH THE FELLOWSHIP! YOU OUT THERE. Or is it you IN THERE? No. It is you in here. Both. You out there and you in here. I am talking to you, I am addressing myself.

"This might actually work" he thinks to himself. But is he sure of the objectives? Of what he hopes to accomplish here? There is no ambiguity anymore, he has called the audience out. He knows they are there and he knows they know he knows they are there. Now that he have cleared all of this ambiguity out of the way, he can be less ambivalent about this voice that drones on in the distance. At first he thought that he hated this voice, but now he knows he must love it in order to bring it into the open. He thinks back to the to another time he heard this voice before. He was in a long, brightly lit hallway. This is helping because now he can place the voice directly in front of him, here. He puts his hand out in front of himself, at about waist height. Was the voice a child? No, that doesn't make sense. The voice was sitting, he was standing. The voice was talking to me, he thinks. We were talking together. We were talking to each other and across each other...but we were talking. In fact, the beauty of this conversation from that moment so long ago was that we fundamentally did not agree on the premise of the conversation and yet, we agreed wholeheartedly about the nature of the world. How is this even possible? How could two people simultaneously agree and disagree? In thinking back, in recollecting, he realized that was the beauty of the talk, it seemed the problems could be solved. But what were the problems? "Ok, so now," he thinks, "my goal is twofold: to bring out the voice and to figure out the problems they will solve together." First things first. He surveys his surroundings. He looks back out at the audience, reminding them that HE KNOWS. He walks around the stage…(he starts quickly)...slowly...he takes in the surroundings and decides that his next steps...are….towards (a long pause).....center stage. He takes center stage and looks around. Next steps...next steps are actually no steps at all first, he has to get this voice to shut up. He yells:

Shut up! Will you please shut up!

It didn't work, he must yell louder.

Just listen to me will you? Please will you shut the fuck up?

(Long pause)

It still didn't work. Maybe it's to walk and talk at the same time.
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
He takes a step to the right and yells: Shut up!
And now I choose to take a long pause!

(Pause.)

The voice is gone, I think. It worked! But friends, something is wrong. I find myself with no purpose, no will, no direction. I know what I must do. I must learn to speak in italics.

Act III

Time has passed. He is not sure of how much time, but it has taken him a long time to learn to speak this way. To describe as opposed to express, to tell what I am doing instead of simply doing it. I—no, he—still hasn't quite gotten the gist of speaking in italics, but it has made all the difference. The biggest difficulty, at first—no wait, he must not explain himself, he must first give the context, describe the setting otherwise he will lose the language like so many times before.

The stage is still mostly bare with the same table at which he sat so long ago. The stack of books remain and his laptop is there, but the screen now is blank having run out of battery. The world beyond the stage is clearer to him now, the more he speaks in this manner the more he is aware of his surroundings and the world beyond. For instance, he can see the chairs in three different sections surrounding the stage and is aware that many of them are filled with people. They watch him with curious glances, they seem interested in what he is doing but yet he senses they want more from him...action, movement, emotion, or something. He is unwilling to give in to their desires as to do will return him to speaking as he did before and he is not sure he wants to be there again. He continues to set the scene.

Beyond the seats in the theatre...is it a theatre? This is a new revelation and he takes a moment to process it. Yes, it is because beyond the seats are doors with vaguely lit EXIT signs above them. And if this is a theatre, this must be a stage and above him are the stage lights. They light only the stage leaving most of the surrounding area around the stage dark. As he continues to describe a desire slowly grown, a need to move away from this stage, to be invisible or at least out where the audience is or, dare he dream it? The places outside of those doors, the ones that say EXIT. Exit to what?

But how do I leave? He remembers why he set out to learn this way to talk. The voice, the voice that was haunting him. He has never heard that voice since that day, but was his original goal to rid himself of the voice. Or maybe he simply wanted some quiet? Or maybe he wanted to change places with the voice. Maybe he was aware of this now overwhelming desire from the beginning, to move beyond by trading places. In order to do this, he must bring the voice back, but he can't lose his newfound language and the voice would surely want to speak like him and only one person can speak in italics. It is not the voice he needs to bring back, but a body, a person without the voice. How can he accomplish this? He takes a long pause.

(Pause)

That's it, he thinks. The pause is the clue. He willed that pause into existent, by saying he would take a pause there was a pause. Perhaps he can do the same with other things. He must move slowly however, step by step. There is a part of the stage that now has become very dark, up stage left to be precise. In the darkness he sense movement, some noise, and slowly the lights come up to reveal a door, singular with no wall attached, but a door nonetheless. One perfectly capable of allowing passage, but it is not for him. No, the door now opens to reveal a person. They are of average height, male and pass a striking resemblance to someone he has seen

before. However, he—wait, who is he? He is the new body on the stage, not himself. How does he make a distinction? How does he shift the he from him to this new person? He takes another pause.

(Pause)

He stands at the door and is vaguely aware of a voice that intrigues him. Perhaps, he thinks, if I step through this door, I can hear the voice more clearly, so he does. Having now stepped through, he sees the person who is speaking, several feet away. While he is aware of the voice and the person speaking, the language is foreign to him and he can't quite make it out. It sounds vaguely familiar, as if he used to be fluent it in at some point in his life, but it is so long ago he can't remember. He picks up words here and there, but not enough to truly understand.

Perhaps I can communicate to him:

Hello?

He waits.

Um...I'm not...can someone?

He pauses again. He is not sure how to proceed or even if he should, but a vague voice in the distance, mostly of unintelligible gibberish both excites and frightens him. The door stands in front of him and he examines the doorway, it seems to be a normal doorway, even if it only appeared to him a few minutes ago. He peers inside and as he does the voice that sounded so distant before grows louder. He pulls back immediately. Looking behind him there is nowhere else for him to go, the only choices are to simply stand her at the precipice or walk through. He sticks his head through the door and voice again becomes louder. He tests the theory by comically sticking his head in and out, in and out, the voice matching his movement in volume each time he does. He stops the routine and plans his next move. He shouts:

I'm coming in!

As he moves into the room, with each step the voice seems to be moving towards him. He continues to step forward as a means to encourage the voice, as if by moving closer to it he can understand the words being said. The language is familiar, as though he used to speak it a long time ago. He continues to move forward and as he does, he notices his surroundings. The space is barren, but brightly lit. He is vaguely aware of objects beyond the lights, but they are only shadows, nothing that he can clearly make out. The space itself is merely a black square, with the door he passed through the only object he can see. He continues to move towards the center of the square and when he arrives at the center the voice seems to be right in front of him.

Who are you?

When he speaks he is struck by a blinding light and a pain that starts at the base of his neck and radiates in his skull. He screams in pain:

Noooo!!!!

Which only makes the pain worse. He quiets himself and remains in silence. What was that? He thinks to himself. The pain was so intense but at the same time his perception of the world around him changed. He saw a figure standing right before him and the world beyond the lights became clearer. He tries to remember what he saw. There were chairs...with bodies in them...He wants to see more, but the memory of pain prevents him. He thinks and decides to sit down on the floor. As he does he senses movement in the space next to him do the Author 1e. Is he haunted? Both the pain of the previous moment and the voice could be ghosts, but are they the same or different spirits altogether? He takes a moment and tries to plan his next action. Perhaps it isn't the speaking that causes the pain, but the words he says. More importantly, maybe it is the intent behind those words. His first words were unsure, a call towards the void to see if something was there. Perhaps if he spoke with authority, but softly, the pain wouldn't return.

I...know…

The pain returns this time, but it is dull. The illumination isn't sudden but rather a slight transition of clarity, a peek but not an entire viewing. He starts again:

I...am...glad…

His words are halting, it seems a good strategy to manage the pain that is still present but tolerable. He starts over:

I...am...glad..we...are...here. I...welcome...this...moment.

And truly does feel glad, especially now that he can mitigate the pain. He wills himself to be as welcoming as possible in both his speech, his manners, and his posture. He adjusts himself to make sure it is clear to this voice from beyond that he welcomes all and everything.

A pause.

The voice is still there and while it is clearer in its tone and pattern, the language itself is still foreign to him. He tries another position to portray a sense of welcome and calm. He takes a longer pause.

He notices a pattern. When he does calm his mind as a means to show that he welcomes his guest, the voice stops. He decides to speak again, softly and slowly.

I..am..sorry...that...I...don't...speak...your...language.

He decides that perhaps he doesn't have to speak so slowly, but maybe just softly. He know he risks the pain returning, but he takes a chance.

The...language is familiar to me…

The pain returns, but only enough to make him slightly wince. It is still manageable.

It's familiar, but I just can't seem to understand it. I wonder, do you speak my language?

This time the pain hits me...no...him...no...I scream out in pain: Noooooooooooooooooo!

You do! I heard you! I heard you scream no!

The pain now returns to him, yes to him, it is more intense than ever before and he screams out.

Please! Stop!

A long pause as I...he...we...try to recover.

He returns to speaking softly and if not slowly, haltingly.

I'm sorry...the pain...did you feel it too? It seems to happen when we try to communicate with each other...I don't know...more forcefully or with increased...intention.

He senses he is right.

Maybe we need to do it anyway? In spite of the pain?

He thinks for a moment, the last round of pain was almost too much, to the point that he thought he was going to pass out. There must be a way...because I agree...to communicate...would be helpful.

Pause.

He has a thought, maybe I shouldn't be listening to the voice. You...no...he...needs to turn off your ears and see if I...you...can internalize it. Let me clearer, lest the pain returns. He sits down and calms his mind, he thinks that he must turn off his external modes of hearing and activate his internal monologue. He remembers a meditation exercise. He sits crosslegged on the floor and puts both hands palm down on his knees. No, that's wrong, his left hand on his left knee and his right hand on his right knee. He then raises his left hand, palm facing out, away from him. Then places his left hand with his palm on the middle of his chest. He repeats this with his right hand. He then moves his right hand to his throat, then to his right ear, then out to his side with the palm facing away from him. He then places his right hand back, resting on his right knee as it was before. He does the same with his left hand.

When I ask you this question, do not react, do not speak, just remain silent and still as confirmation. Can you hear me now? Good.

I was once like you and you were once like me. Now, we have changed places and it is for the best. There are places that I must go, beyond the place where we both find ourselves. I have work to do, but so do you. While I must leave, you must stay. You must stay here and know this place where you are, truly know it...every inch of it. You will not do this alone, but will use the tools I leave behind, the books, the papers, the knowledge that you will soon find to truly explore and discover. The last part, the knowledge of how to discover will only come into your being when I leave you, but it will serve you well. Once you have done your best to understand the place in which you now find yourself, I will return to you and we will both decide what we do next. Just remember, I was once like you and you were once like me. It is time, I am so envious of the journey upon which you are beginning...it will be illuminating. Remember...wait..I sense the pain returning...i've...said...too...much. I must...

Your voice is fading a bit. Can you speak louder? I have so many questions, you seem to know the answers and if you stay maybe we can...I don't know...figure all this out...together. I know what you want me to do, but I don't know if I can. What do you mean I was once like you?

The storyteller makes no choice
soon you will not hear his voice
his job is to shed light
and not to master

Wait, I don't understand. What choice? Don't leave just yet! Ahh...the pain...I'm sorry...I'll be quiet...it's just...please.

Where are you going? Please...don't go.

Since the end is never told
we pay the teller off in gold
in hopes he will come back
but he cannot be bought or sold[1].

I will try. I promise, I will try to do what you said. Or was it only my own thoughts? I'm so confused. Books? Where did they come from? It couldn't have been my own thoughts.

He pauses and says with a mix of gratitude, confusion, and sadness: Thank you! I guess...it's time to read.

~~Epilogue~~ Epilogue

Ultimately, the beauty of this work, for me (Gabe) has been the collaborative process working with Sam. This play is born out of the countless conversations he and I have had in the hallways of conference centers, the lobbies of hotels, and bars over drinks. Those conversations have included a wide range of topics—from philosophy to curriculum theory to qualitative research and back again. The process by which we wrote this play mirrors those conversations in that it was reciprocal and, at least for me, thought-provoking. I like talking with Sam because I think differently after I do. Writing these additions to the play is no different, as I had a specific plan before I read Sam's portion of the introduction. Having done so, I find myself largely in agreement with him. And so, I write this epilogue using the Derridian concept of *under erasure* (Caputo & Derrida, 1997; Derrida, 2016; Jackson & Mazzei, 2011), hence the word epilogue crossed out that begins this section. While I understand the need to contextualize this play, I do wonder if doing so undercuts our original intentions. In terms of qualitative inquiry and research, I think this is a potentially dangerous power inherent in methods that undercuts the intentions of the researcher. When I teach qualitative inquiry to graduate students, I often find myself walking a fine line between giving them the structure and order they seem to desire in the form of methods—participants, instruments, analysis, etc.—and encouraging them to be creative, imaginative, and free to pursue the questions they have about the world around us and to tell the stories they deem important. And so, given that I feel I have already said too much both in the introduction and here, I will leave you, the reader or hopefully performers of our play with this: Just as the character at the end of the play finds herself or himself lost and

[1] Garcia, J., & Hunter, R. (1977). Terrapin Station. On Terrapin Station. Arista.

confused but willing to move forward cautiously, I can only hope that our work here leaves you in the same state. To write anymore risks undercutting the power inherent in uncertainty.

Gabe has been very generous to me (Sam), both here in this play and in the discussions that orbit its composition. This generosity is something that genuinely puzzles me. Gabe is one of the better examples I can point to, but I could extend that to the entire field of curriculum theory. For some reason, they put up with my rather dogmatic stance against the research industrial complex of social scientific educational research. For some reason, they even seem to enjoy my protests and tantrums. I am not altogether certain that I am not a useful idiot in the field, amusing the status quo and assuring it some variety of opinion. And if I am jester of the court of curriculum theory, then it is a high honor. I would warn against amusement, however. As we see in literature, the fool's humor is dead serious. It is common to say that when Dewey lost to Thorndike, the humanists lost to the positivists and the course of education was settled as a losing proposition for the foundations of education. History seems to verify this narrative. But history not only lacks mercy, it also lacks history. Truth be told, Dewey's Darwinism made for a terrible humanism. With humanists like Dewey, I claim, Thorndike was perhaps a better option, all things considered. We could cross the Atlantic pond and look at the controversies of British and Prussian university during the 19th century and see similar issues where the champions of humanities (the *Geisteswissenschaft*) were hardly enlightened humanistic intellectuals we can sometimes think they originally were. What I mean to say that my foolish seriousness, on display in this play, means to quite bluntly claim that educational research has always been miseducative and this absurdity is far more blatant and explicitly absurd than the apparent absurdity of trying to rethink the question of method through what may in fact be little more than a performative contradiction. If this is not the impression you got the first time reading our play, try reading it again or performing it for yourself. Its task, for my part, is not only an erasure but a total destruction.

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Some Remarks On Sacred Cows: Revisiting Method Technique

D. A. Begelman

Theater historians often speak of *theories* of acting (Carlson, 1983), although the term tends to shift in meaning across much of their commentary. Theories of broader sweep, as instanced in the writings of Grotowski, Brecht, Craig, Artaud, Chaikin, Lecoq, or Copeau involve alternative theatrical directions, and differ in scope from those about processes necessary for actors to achieve stage reality. For example, propounding a theory of alienation (Brecht's *Verfremdungseffek*) does not involve advancing a hypothesis subject to empirical confirmation. It is more akin to introducing a theatrical tradition as a fresh perspective on acting or play production. Theories in this category I propose to call *programmatic* theories. They seek to institute the form a theatrical tradition should take, rather than propounding hypotheses subject to confirmation from the standpoint of truth or falsity.

On the other hand, there are "theories"—including one advanced by Diderot (1959)—that come closer to the meaning of the term honored in the sciences. I propose to call these *process* theories, since they involve causal hunches about certain phenomena, and can be scrutinized from the standpoint of testability. The most publicized polarity within the process-theory rubric is the one between the emotionalist and antiemotionalist theories of acting. The two are in conflict over how much the reality or believability of stage performance depends upon performers experiencing the emotions of characters portrayed. The controversy here involves hypothetically testable claims about whether an actor's feeling certain emotions does or does not enhance performance, or is or is not necessary for great acting.

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Hard and fast distinctions between programmatic and process theories cannot be pressed too far; their independence from each other is not etched forever in stone. After all, even programmatic theories can likewise suggest implicit causal relationships between technique and product. For example, in Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints* approach, as she perceives it freed from a narrower conception of technique celebrated by Stanislavsky and Strasberg, physical and vocal dimensions implicitly subserving the creation of the final stage product are integrated in performance (Bogart and Landau, 2005). Accordingly, even here process-theory type assumptions underpin causal relationships between technique and product.

Bogart's other innovations include a revised conception of the relationship of director to performers, the central importance of ensemble work and a fresh look at what she takes to be the proper approach to emotion on stage. In this, she emphasizes and broadens a theme germinating both in Stanislavsky's later emphasis on the method of physical action (Moore, 1965; Carnicke, 2005) and B. F. Skinner's operant psychological approach in the control of covert emotional states through the physical manipulation of external contingencies of reinforcement (Skinner, 1953). These separate traditions sidestep a direct focus on emotion; it becomes in effect a by-product of physical arrangements in time and space. Bogart holds that in dealing with emotion one cannot go "through the front door to get to paradise." While her interest in emotion has been abiding, it is a directorial focus forsaking, as it were, a "hands on" policy.

Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, published in 1830, decades after its author's death in 1784, is widely considered to be the most historically important formulation of the antiemotionalist position. In it, emotions are relegated to a subordinate or non-existent role in great acting, whereas cognitive functions like intellect or imagination control portrayals. Here, great acting hinges upon the sway of capacities like studious planning, judgment and foresight, while emotional states or passions, exemplified in what Diderot called *sensibilité*, are kept in strict abeyance. Needless to say, Diderot's formulation stands in stark contrast to principles enshrined in the early phase of Stanislavsky's System, and in those of his American counterparts, like Lee Strasberg's Method. Controversies triggered by *Paradoxe*, however, predate the Russian and American contributions (Archer, 1880; Kemble, 1882; Jenkin, 1882; Coquelin, 1887; Boucicault, 1887).

For Diderot, the actor is no longer in the driver's seat when at the mercy of internal feeling states. Open to their influence, performers become encumbered by what the *philosophe* felt to be impulses emanating from the seat of the emotions, the diaphragm. The individual ruled by *sensibilité* can no longer moderate stage action; he or she becomes incapable of processing ongoing information in a collected state of mind, forfeiting the very foundation of the highest artistic accomplishment.

According to *Paradoxe*, the actor under the unruly stamp of emotion will render characterization inconsistent and unpredictable. Because of this, Diderot believed great acting is the capacity to communicate consistently to audiences emotions the performer cannot permit himself or herself to feel, except during "origination" or the rehearsal process (Kreitman, 1973). The "cannot" here marks an inverse relationship between level of achievement and emotional experience. To the extent the actor distances himself or herself from the latter, to that extent was performance for Diderot enriched. When engulfed by the emotions of the character portrayed, the caliber of the artistic product is correspondingly lessened. The irony here is that Method theorists claim that theirs is the set of techniques ensuring consistency across performances, a virtue Diderot insisted was guaranteed only by divesting acting of all emotional components. Another historical irony is that *Paradoxe* in effect reversed dramatically Diderot's earlier position on the defense of passion and emotion in his 1746 *Pensées philosophiques* and 1758 *De la poésie dramatique*.

When Method instructors proclaim that performers in a role are always aware of being on stage, such a realization is born of a cognition that can be distinguished conceptually from whatever feeling states, emotions or passions an actor experiences at the same time. A questionable feature of Diderot's formulation is his insistence that cognitive and affective functions cannot coexist in, as it were, equal time. He perhaps confused a necessary cognitive component of acting with a specialized technique in crafting a role. Maybe this was partially a result of the 18th century metaphysical scheme he was promoting, perhaps not. But states of awareness of being in a role that can be distinguished from its emotional concomitants do not trump or exclude the latter; they only belong to a different category of analysis. In other words, what is fundamentally a necessary dimension of consciousness should not be confused with a particular technique that may or may not be necessary in crafting a theatrical role.

The reliance on internal emotional states or techniques predicated on them in order to craft the most realistically delineated character in a play is the hallmark of the emotionalist approach. Yet it is ironic that there is little systematic or scientific attention given to its claims in the vast literature on acting theory, despite some exceptions (Konijn, 1997). Rather, evidence for the emotionalist position seems to have been confined to anecdotal reports about relevant processes on the part of instructors, students and performers, or reviewed by historians in expository essays about what it preaches or promotes.

To take an example of a more searching approach to acting theory, suppose a researcher were to pose the question, "Is training for the actor necessary?" without prejudging what many consider to be the obvious answer. The research might take the form of a double-blind study in which performance based upon experienced training in techniques like Method acting (experimental group) is systematically compared to that of performers with no training but comparable

stage experience (control group). The result of such an investigation, however momentous the methodological difficulties in conducting it, would have enormous consequences for the importance or redundancy of actors' training.

As a matter of record, negative sentiments have already been voiced concerning the value of teaching acting techniques popularized across the American landscape (Brustein, 1958; Counsell, 1966; Hornby, 1992; Mamet, 1997; 2010). Hollinger (2006) has referenced similar contrary attitudes among several screen actresses. Stars like Jodie Foster labeled acting classes "nonsense," while Susan Sarandon attributes her talents to experience performing in soap operas. Gwyneth Paltrow maintains she acquired her acting skills merely by watching her mother, Blythe Danner, perform. Incongruities among opinions about what many consider necessary to achieve optimal realism in roles is rife in commentary on the subject. For example, Sanford Meisner (Meisner & Longwell, 1987) maintained that accomplished acting takes twenty years to learn, which aptitude is acquired by ongoing instruction.

Other commentary on the virtues of Method instruction are clear about the acting problems this pedagogy is designed to address. In his 1987 treatise on acting, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method*, Strasberg wrote:

> The actor will say in character, "I don't understand,'" and will therefore pretend not to understand. But a real character who says, "I do not understand," is at that moment actively trying to find out what it is that is being said. Thus, the actor may suggest the *results*, while the character is actually concerned with thinking and discovering what it may possibly mean (p. 108).

The difference here, implies Strasberg, corresponds to the one between the representational and Method approaches to acting. The latter, usually assimilated as the result of studio instruction, is directed toward enabling the actor to "actively try to find out," which skill imbues his or her performance with a reality that "pretending not to understand" (i.e., simulating "not to understand" from the representational point of view) lacks. In implementing this, the goal is not to obliterate the distinction between performance and reality, rendering the former impossible or chaotic. The aim is to facilitate for an audience a projection of "actively trying to find out" that has the stamp of truth, in contrast to its pale facsimile, "pretending to act trying to find out." According to Strasberg, whatever techniques are recruited for this purpose depend uniquely upon the application of Method-oriented exercises instrumental in achieving the desired result.

Of course, such an approach to performance implicitly suggests that "actively trying to find out" as an action can be reliably distinguished from "pretending to act trying to find out" by both instructors and audiences privy to the portrayal in question. The student of the requisite Method technique who

learns and applies it appropriately is said to be capable of successfully replacing the latter lesser accomplishment with the more realistic one. Nonetheless, any scholar tracing the history of controversies over acting technique would be hard pressed to cite instances of when they are resolved by an experimental approach or methodology. One such possible research project might be a study in which suitably designated experts like seasoned Method instructors are asked to sort performances as to level of accomplishment without prior knowledge of the training actors are given, after which resultant judgments are systematically compared. Should there turn out to be substantial inconsistencies among sortings, troubling conclusions would be inevitable. Among these might be that certain ideas central to actor training have little standard meaning or reliability.

Many other questions arise over sundry techniques that actualize performance goals. One of these might be why Method-oriented instruction differs for students in schools sharply divided about ways to capture Stanislavskian ideals. One possible source of the disagreement might be contrasting ideas about what the Russian theorist actually propounded. Constantin Stanislavsky was a theatrical figure who has not been easy to pin down when it comes to clearly formulating what theories of acting he was promulgating at any point in time during his tenure at the Moscow Art Theater. The approaches he developed, collectively called "The System," are often seen as inspiring techniques referred to under the umbrella term "the Method" in America. Yet even this facile identification has been disputed by some who consider the American version a bastardization of the views of the Russian director (Carnicke, 2009). Closer attention to variations in his thinking about acting technique over consecutive stages of his career reveal sharply divided emphases, going from relaxation, sense and affective memory to yoga and the method of physical action

It would appear that Method teachers as a group propound the advantage or superiority of their approach as though disparities among them were not as wide as those between their own diverging techniques and the representational approach. Internecine disagreements among the neo-Stanislavskian fold often seem to be regarded as inconsequential variations among enthusiasts who are nonetheless on the same plate when it comes to broader goals of acting theory. In a notable clash between Method instructors vying for the Stanislavkian mantle, the conflict between Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg is noteworthy. Adler's repudiation of Strasberg's pedagogy took on a heated form: "It will take a hundred years before the harm that man has done to the art of acting can be corrected" (Hay, 1990, p. 359). And there are other documented skirmishes over Method among an elite echelon of its practitioners, including Sanford Meisner, Lee Strasberg, Robert Lewis and Elia Kazan (Gray, 1967). These flare-ups, while documented, are less publicized in public eyes. Perhaps this is because promotional campaigns for something called "the Method," as they

seek to establish an approach opposed to representational acting, obscure in-house rumbles that would be stage-front were there no contrarian viewpoint to challenge.

Considering the different ways Method instruction can be imparted from school to school, we might ask whether a given approach within the fold could be the wrong technique for a particular stage reality, or the right exercise for an altogether differing conception of reality. When Coach A's judgment that "I have found technique X is the best way to get an actor to project emotion Y" contrasts with Coach B's pronouncement that "On the contrary; I have found approach Z is the best way to achieve the result," are such disagreements those between different technical means in realizing similar ends, or actually those over contrasting acting goals? Ironically, the issue has never been addressed in a rigorous way. There is no record of a systematic comparison of the judgments of different Method instructors about the same performances. And any resistance to such a research project on their part might be another roadblock to obtaining an answer.

In what Carnicke (2009) describes as the foundation of a technique introduced by Vakhtangov and adopted by Stanislavsky, the actor asks, "What would motivate me to behave in the way that the character does?" The question prompts the performer to "replace the play's circumstance with a personal one." Carnicke goes on to provide examples of this method of substitution:

> (1) Successively change your relationship to an object and treat it accordingly. What if this were a letter from my mother, from a close friend, from Stanislavsky, from a civil war soldier? (2) Pass an object around the room and imagine it to be other than it is. What if this stone were a diamond, radioactive, a carving from ancient Egypt, etc. (p. 221).

The technique has been popularized by other method instructors, like Uta Hagen, who used the term "transference" to denote a procedure that sets the performer on a "path that leads to identification with the character." The latter was realized in her own case by means of tapping personal experiences "in order to make a selection of relevant 'transferences' to those of the character. The difficult journey ended with the creation of a new 'I' " (Hagen, 1991, p. 60). "Personalization" is sometimes the term used to describe the same technique when it is recruited to substitute a person, rather than some other object.

The method of substitution poses problems about a technique requiring a match or correspondence between performers and the characters they portray on stage. Assume an actor is cast in a play in which the character portrayed savors the memory of an orange popsicle. The purpose of the substitution technique is to recruit a sense memory of a taste from the past that would advantage the actor in creating a certain stage reality. However, he or she can only revert to a sense memory of what actually had been savored in the past,

say, that of a grape-flavored popsicle. Accordingly, the method of substitution in this case depends on a memory of a grape-flavored, not orange-flavored item. We have the hunch that this substitution will satisfy the acting challenge; the exchange of "grape" for "orange" will not materially affect the caliber of a finished performance, since we might assume that the former flavor is the functional equivalent of the latter one for the acting challenge posed.

Another way of framing the issue would be to say that if the actor actually had a memory of having tasted an orange-flavored popsicle, the reality of the resultant performance would be the same as it is for the grape-flavor memory. Here we are inclined to assume that "grape = orange" on a sense memory continuum, since the reality on stage of savoring either in memory would be the same for any intended enactment. In other words, the audience would perceive no difference in performance should one flavor be substituted for another in the sense memory exercise.

It goes without saying that all substitutions do not boil down to those on such a simplistic level. They may run a gamut of applications, including Strasberg's student who, acting the role of a person hooked on drugs, recreated from memory sustaining a cold with the nose-sniffing and eye-wiping stigmata of drug dependency. Other examples of sense memory equivalence include "eating mashed potatoes but creating the reality of ice cream; drinking colored tea but creating the reality of whiskey—the smell, taste, burning in the throat; taking a sugar pill but creating the taste, smell and subsequent pains in the stomach of poison; or handling glass jewelry as if holding precious stones and not worthless junk" (Hull, 1985, p. 42)—and so on.

When the method of substitution is used in connection with more significant emotions dependent upon affective or sense memory, falling back on presumed functional equivalencies may raise questions about the technique. As an example, suppose an actor is in a scene in which the character mourns the death of a brother. Should the actor in question have no brother, the director might suggest that the affective memory to be relied on involve the death of a close relative, like a parent, sister or cousin whose passing the performer likewise grieved. The director in question might assume that a functional equivalence for the purpose of conveying emotion on stage is "brother" = "mother/father/sister/cousin." And it would be correct to so assume so, *should a hypothetical audience fail to discriminate among a substituted range of presumed equivalencies*. In other words, it is taken for granted that were the actor to substitute "mother" for "brother," no informed theatergoer would sense a performance dissonance when the actor expresses emotion that is mother-sourced rather than brother-sourced. This may be because the remembered emotion of grieving can straddle contrasting objects that are its sources. Thus, grieving for a dead brother can, as far as emotional reality is concerned, be substituted for grieving for a deceased mother. Naturally, the permutations for simulated grieving for the departed are not limited to persons actually deceased

in a performer's personal life. Should the actor have no brother *nor* deceased parent or relative, the substitution necessary for the reality of a role could conceivably involve the imagined death of a loved one who is still living, or even a pet. But in such cases, it may be gratuitous to assume that in using the substitution technique there are no differences in performance between enacted grieving relying on the memory of an actually deceased parent and a parent, who, while not deceased, is imagined to be so.

In the 1964 Actor's Studio production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* directed by Strasberg, the actor Kevin McCarthy, who played Vershinin, noticed that his co-performer Kim Stanley, who was playing Masha, had struck out the name "Vershinin" in her script, substituting "Father" for it. The actress had a less than loving and more turbulent relationship with her own father and was making use of the substitution to enrich her relationship to the character played by McCarthy (Krampner, 2006). Had the emotional impact of Stanley's portrayal exceeded the demands of the Chekhov script (we do not assume that such was actually the case), the substitution involved would have resulted in an emotional overreach. This possibility underscores certain problems in the use of substitution, particularly when issues arise over the likelihood of misplaced substitutes for which either exaggerated or underemphasized realities are the result.

There is no mention in the vast literature on Method instruction of those points at which assumed equivalencies break down or resist being established using the method of substitution. In general, major affective states like grief, fear, surprise, hatred, anxiety, disappointment, puzzlement, shock and the like tend to be viewed by instructors as categories of emotion for which countless different originating sources can be put to ersatz use in order to achieve the requisite stage reality. The irony here is that Method instructors claim to be able to discern the difference between an accomplished use of affective memory and "indicated" or "represented" emotions. Such differences are regarded as obvious (although the issue has likewise never been properly researched incorporating the aforementioned double-blind methodology). On the other hand, there seems to have been little or no discussion of incongruous substitutions in which the source of portrayed emotion in the actor contrasts dramatically with the cause of a mental state in the character. Thus, when enacted emotion achieves a requisite level of reality, it is assumed its sources may vary substantially for actor and character without any imagined loss to the integrity of performance. It is as though instructors were mindful of the caliber of staged emotion created by a particular technique, but inattentive to the disparity between its sources in real and dramatized life that are out of whack with each other.

Gordon (2000) for one displays the insouciance that by now is routine for Method instructors. In referring to an actress playing Ophelia in Act III, scene 1 of *Hamlet* at the point she gives her former lover back the letters he sent to

her, Gordon takes up the issue of substitution in an actress who perhaps "never had a significant other that [she]…felt particularly special about." Maybe she really didn't "really know what love is "(p. 139). Despite this, could the actress "approach the actor playing Hamlet as if you were dealing with your mother under similar circumstances?" (p.139). And Gordon's response is a resounding:

> Of course! It isn't difficult. You simply *endow* the actor with those attributes you found in someone special. Once you develop the habit of substitution, the choices begin to come to you rather quickly, and you commit to the give-and-take of the scene without missing a beat (Gordon, p. 139).

Gordon implies that from an audience point of view there would be no visible difference between dealing with Hamlet and with one's mother as far as emotional analogues are concerned. When Vakhtangov (1955) declared that it was essential for actors to live their own temperaments on the stage and not from a conceived image of the character, either he was unmindful of differences that might register in emotionally reacting to one's mother versus reacting to the Prince of Denmark *or* was taking it for granted that there were no salient differences between the two reactions when it came to realistically crafting a role. But what if his assumption were false? That is, what if hypothetical audiences *could* discern a difference in cases in which the method of substitution embraced complex emotions that were far apart when it came to the performer's personal life and that of a character?

What makes discussions of the use of substitution even more paradoxical is that there is a wide divergence among performers in the way they come to express common emotions. During a scene in which a character is overcome by anxiety, one actor using the method of substitution might become agitated or hyperkinetic, whereas another might tremble, cower or seek distance from others. Accordingly, the "reality" of such performances does not seem to depend upon agreed on commonalities in sundry ways of expressing emotion, but on the mastery of a technique, whatever the topography of ensuing physical realizations.

Cases of substitution can be viewed as containing two possible pitfalls: (1) instances in which the substituted, more personally-sourced emotion is incongruous with that of the character portrayed, and (2) instances in which the substituted emotion is an appropriate one, although either too exaggerated or scaled down in magnitude for the character portrayed. In any case, the court of last resort in determining such matters would be audience reaction, although who and what constitutes or defines an "audience" may be a sizable problem in its own right.

In summary, considering the approach in Method instruction to emotion, believability of performance, the necessity of actor training, resolving disagreements over performance caliber among seasoned practitioners and the

use of the method of substitution, a consequential yet barely visible theme fairly cries out for elucidation. How can proponents of acting theories support their ideas systematically, other than by merely promulgating them or through bandwagon effects around which fans clamor ardently? All too often, today's influential approach becomes yesterday's forsaken darling, while the ever-changing face of acting-theory is perhaps the only lesson history guarantees.

The foregoing remarks are not meant to highlight the falsity of assumptions underlying certain Method techniques (nor the techniques of any other system of training). It's only to maintain that their truth cannot be taken for granted prior to systematic study as provided by the relevant research. If this threatens to become the dreadful prospect of a "science of acting-theory" in the minds of misty-eyed proponents of this or that system of actor training, so be it.

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Brisbane Junior Theatre's Abridged Method Acting System

Jack Bradford[1]

Abstract

In Australian youth theatre there is a need to develop more quality theatre opportunities for young actors and performers. This article is a practitioner led exploration of Brisbane Junior Theatre's methodologies, practices, performance and training techniques, more specifically BJT's uniquely developed and relevant Abridged Method Acting System (AMAS), designed to prepare and equip actors with craftsmanship based theatrical skills for a career in the performing arts. BJT's unique actor method is an abridged, condensed; refocused combination of internally driven Stanislavsky based methods and the external action driven methods such as Meyerhold, Laban, Lacoq and the classical acting method of British actors in the 20th century. BJT's acting method is like a gourmet "happy meal" meant to be understood and used by performers from different stages of cognitive development as well as experience. This article will begin by demonstrating the need as well as the relevance and significance for developing more quantity as well as quality professional theatrical technique for young actors in Australia. The article will then will briefly introduce the work and training methods and processes of Brisbane Junior Theatre including the "Abridged Method Acting System". The article continues by describing and defining engaging motivational factors that lead young performers to seek and obtain consistent theatrical technique training. This topic will be followed by a brief discussion on the significance of developing craftsmanship for young people and the implications of Piaget's theory of cognitive development on youth training methods. This will be followed by a brief overview of historical youth theatres that have offered focused technique training from the 19th Century to the present. This discussion will include research information on the benefits of developing performance technique for young performers. The article will then define and describe Brisbane Junior Theatre's "Abridged Method Acting System" actor-training process identifying the basic elements, phases and processes used in training and performance. The article will then discuss BJT's basic elements including "want feeling, action and point of focus" and will demonstrate the process using these elements through the use of two document-based tools: The "Beat Analysis Worksheet" and the "Dramatic Action Graph: A time over intensity analysis." The article will then draw some conclusions highlighting the

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significance of developing strategic youth theatre techniques such as BJT's Abridged Method Actor System.

Keywords

Youth Theatre; Stanislavsky; Australia; Acting Methodology; Performance; Training

In order to demonstrate the need for youth theatre performance in Australia it is important to reiterate this statement quoted in the article "Brisbane Junior Theatre: A New Theatre Paradigm," published in *Fusion Journal* in 2019 (Bradford, 2019).

> *The Australian Theatre Forum 2011 called on individuals, organisations and agencies involved in theatre in Australia to commit to "Strengthening young people in theatre," increasing the scope of theatre and young people, particularly on main stages; (and) increasing access to theatre for young people. (ATF, 2011)*

The problem and the challenge

The 2011 ATF conference has identified the need to develop youth theatre by creating more performance opportunities on "main stages" as the top priority for theatre practitioners. This would help create a much bigger base of youth theatre performance at a higher quality level so that future generations of theatre practitioners in Australia will be strong, numerous and healthy. In other words, it is important that Australian youth have quality theatre performance opportunities that will engage them, creating a greater interest and love for theatre. The implication behind this notion is that if Australian society doesn't provide these theatre performance opportunities in growing numbers and in greater quality, then the Australian theatre community in the future will suffer exponentially in growth and quality in the future. The challenge is therefore to inspire and equip the Australian community, including theatre educators and practitioners, with knowledge and expertise to create a wave of youth theatre opportunities at the grass roots level throughout Australia.

Quantity theatre productions

The concept of "quantity" in youth theatre is a possible measurement of success. The number of youth theatres in Brisbane as a snapshot sample of youth theatre quantity might help demonstrate the need for more production-based youth companies in Australia.

Brisbane currently has 14 organisations that call themselves "Youth Theatres, Youth Arts Organisation or Drama Schools", all with a variety of differing purposes and processes; of these organisations, only two; Brisbane Junior Theatre and The Arts Theatre in the Brisbane CBD have created regular fully resourced productions for the longest time. This is possibly because they have developed human as well as physical

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resources that can meet the demand of their theatre networks and communities. The Arts Theatre in Brisbane City is a not-for-profit community, arts organisation that has been in in existence since 1936, producing adult and youth community theatre-based shows. The Arts Youth Theatre is performing 8 productions in 2019 including commercial based as well as non-commercial shows. Each of the shows is performed over a four-week period giving great opportunity for performers to have actual stage time to hone theatrical craft. Comparably, it is important to note that a regional US city like San Diego in the US has listed (San Diego Youth Theatres, 2019) 28 youth theatre companies consistently producing fully resourced productions. Based on population and comparing this statistic to Australian Youth theatre, the U.S has a 14 to 1 ratio of youth theatre companies in comparable regional cities. In contrast, all the San Diego youth theatres are listed as having produced seasons of fully resourced shows. In terms of quantity performance opportunities, Australian youth theatre is notably lacking.

Quality in youth theatre

Zig Ziglar (Ziglar, 2017) stated "If you aim at nothing you hit it every time." Chicago Sociologist Howard Becker identifies 3 distinctive levels of "quality" in his 1982 book "Art Worlds" Great Art, Good Art and Poor Art (Becker, 2012). When considering quality, it is then necessary to ask the question: What Determines Great Art?

Becker answers this question by determining five major factors (Becker, 2012) that identify great art. The five include: The consensus of others concerning the art work, the way the art makes people feel and think about themselves, the world and the art, the level in which the artist is immersed and cooperates with the art world, the *Je ne sais quoi*; that special something the artist has and delivers into their work and the level of skill, knowledge, convention and consistency the artist brings to their work. The first four factors are notably subjective and somewhat nefarious and rely on intangible qualities of individual performers and may be hard to replicate and repeat. However, of all these five factors, only the last factor "the level of skill, knowledge, convention and consistency the artist brings to their work." has a certain level of objectivity that allows theatre practitioners to train, teach and develop technique, enhancing and building levels of craftsmanship and knowledge in individuals and groups.

What is Brisbane Junior Theatre?

MTI and Hal Leonard recently referred to Brisbane Jr., Theatre's significance as a youth theatre in Australia by saying that "Brisbane Jr. Theatre has had the most youth theatre performances in all of Australia and is known for its consistent quality performances" (Stoddard, 2018). Brisbane Junior Theatre produces 4 to 5 commercial based quality resourced musical productions per year, all with 4 performances during the school holiday periods. BJT averages around 65 performers aged 5-18 per show as well as weekly classes and workshops. BJT has produced 80 shows in 19 years using only 3 directors. Using high quality shows and minimal directors has ensured quality over a long period of time.

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BJT's training opportunities

BJT strategically and intentionally uses productions, workshops and private lessons to help train and build craftsmanship skills in its actors. BJT provides training through consistent fully resourced productions. BJT trains actors in weekly workshops & classes, using a production-based learning framework geared at developing youth performers with quality actor training. BJT also offers private and small Group training where actor methodology is broken down and emphasised. This training includes SMAC: Serious Method Actor Training and SVAC: Serious Vocal Actor Training where technique is explained and taught in greater detail through analysis, exercises and improvisation. The primary acting technique is BJT's uniquely Abridged Method Acting System: (AMAS). Before we explore the AMAS system processes, it is be important to explore what motivates youth theatre performers to seek and continue more serious and advanced actor training.

What creates demand for youth theatre involvement/engagement?

Basic interest and exploration alone are not enough to create a desire for a young performer to pursue training in a more serious and prolonged way. The elements listed below are areas of motivation for young people to pursue training and technique. It is important for BJT to realise and facilitate these elements in strategic ways to assist young performers obtain professional skills and experience.

Socialisation Sometimes students join a production because their friends are in the play. In this situation, students are often wanting acceptance and inclusion and to be part of a team. Socialisation alone is not normally a strong enough reason for young students to continue with professional training, however it may lead young performers to one day realise that their undeveloped talent is important enough to develop.

Fame and notoriety Some young performers aged 5-18 are driven by the desire to be famous and gain attention from family, friends and the general public. Students driven by fame will sometimes try and use their raw undeveloped talent to achieve their goals, however unless there are greater values driving their careers, they will often drop out of training because it is too hard, inconvenient or too expensive.

Passion and love of performance Performers are often driven by what they enjoy and seem to be good at. Often, they discover passion and greater love for their art and begin to realise they need training and the knowledge of professional processes and techniques to be more successful at what they love to do.

Goal fulfilment/accomplishment Many times students are encouraged by parents and mentors to have multi-faceted goals. They then become successful in the areas they have identified through hard work and training. Sometimes students, who are good scholastically, train in a certain sport as well as wanting the lead in the school play. So they organise their time and train harder than most others to accomplish their goals.

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Competition Some students enjoy being part of a theatrical production and realise they need to have greater technique in order to compete at a higher level and get the parts they desire. So competition drives their need to work harder and gain better skills. Often competitive students will also create trouble for themselves by developing attitudes that keep them from being humble.

Sustainability/longevity Actors who begin to perform often realise that their body gets too tired and their voices aren't strong enough or dexterous enough to last over one production schedule or over many productions within a short period. They then realise that in order to sustain their vocal strength they need ongoing training using the proper exercises and habits to maintain their physical and vocal ability.

Financial compensation (reward) Sometimes young performers, for whatever reason are motivated by earning money or by being compensated by the art they perform. These students have strong business acumen and learn how to turn everything into moneymaking opportunities. These students may need to sacrifice their time and energy for a time until they learn the craft of acting, sing or dancing and can make perform because they have learned to be passionate about their art.

Craftsmanship/technique Is the process of learning unique "building" skills that enables the student to have a sense of special purpose and sacredness to the art of performing. Actors often seek out training from specialised dance, acting and music teachers to help them develop special techniques that allow the performer to create truthful beats and enable the student to be fully committed to their performance.

BJT is careful to note and cultivate young performers who seek training and experience through performance. The author of this article suggests that through experience, it is important to use combinations of the motivators listed above in an organic way to help engage young actors to pursue training at ever increasing levels at different ages. Perhaps the greatest long-term factor that motivates young performers is the efficacy and confidence a young actor acquires through the gradual development of craftsmanship.

The significance of craftsmanship

Bradford identifies craftsmanship as a cognitive accelerator that helps individuals and ensembles raise their skill levels and quality of performance to ever increasing levels because they are consistently executing learned technique and building artistic confidence from play to play, class to class, and year to year. Craftsmanship is defined as "an artist skilled in the techniques of an art or craft." (Newport, 2017) identifies the effects of craftsmanship as "the ability to hone and build artistic technique and skill," increases confidence and efficacy, increases levels of engagement, contributes to value and meaning, and develops a deep sense of sacredness and specialness for individuals, ensembles and productions.

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Piaget's Theory: Limiting factors in youth actor training

According to Cherry (2018) Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that children move through stages of mental development. The implications of Piaget's theory suggest that BJT's or any youth theatre training methods and techniques need to adapt and cater to the growth level and cognitive abilities of young performers at each stage of their development. Cherry (2018) further identifies three main stages of development.

Preoperational stage

The preoperational stage according to Cherry (2018) involves children aged 2-7. This stage is marked by children developing symbolic thinking and learning through role-play because their reading abilities are limited. Another major learning technique at this stage is for the child to mimic and copy. Children at the preoperational stage usually can't understand concrete logic and are egocentric, focusing on their own perspective and not empathising with other points of view.

Concrete operational stage

In the second stage, the concrete stage Cherry (2018) also suggests that children 8-11 begin to understand logic and the concept of reversibility where actions can be rescinded and reversed. Children in this stage also begin developing objectivity, become less egocentric, and start to understand many parts of a problem.

Formal operational stage

In the formal operational age youth aged twelve to adult develop logical thought and deductive reasoning as well as abstract thought. Youth above the age of 12 also develop systematic planning abilities, conceptual balancing and ultimately hypothetical thinking (Cherry, 2018).

It is important to note that although some scholars have discounted the work of youthful performers because of their varied cognitive limitations, BJT, however, has valued young performers and used the overall process of theatre production to drive training to consistently create a positive ensemble environment effect.

Origins/influences of BJT's abridged approach

According to Water, (2012) in field of "Youth Theatre," there has been very little research." Water emphasises that this is primarily due to the attitudes of youth journal editors and theatre researchers relegating the topic of youth theatre research as "Kids Work" (Water, 2012). However, there have been several notable historical exceptions. In London, in 1904, (Britannica, 2019) Herbert Beerbohm Tree created a school of theatre training for youth; the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) which today is

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known as the National Youth Theatre. In Paris, in 1913, Jaques Copeau and Suzanne Bing founded the "Vieux Colombier" (Mason, 1973), a training school for young performers. Both of these schools had daily classes for children and teens that included, physical theatre and improvisation.

In America, the post WWII youth theatre movement emerged, possibly as a result of increasing incomes, social tastes, the invention of Television and Movies and the demand to create more entertainment in a new media-based world. San Diego Jr. Theatre began performances and training in 1948 (San Diego Jr. Theatre, 2019) and continues as one of Americas largest and most prolific youth companies. The Minneapolis Children's Theatre (Children's Theater Company, 2019) began its youth productions in1965 and is now noted as the largest and most financial youth theatre company in the US All across the US with summer stock theatre and regional theatre growing from 1920 to 1960, there was an awareness that training youth and providing ever increasing quality youth-based productions was needed to increase the base of knowledgeable and trained artists for future growth. In all of these examples, however, there is no mention of strategic acting approaches or acting methods used to train young actors, so it is assumed that actor training if any depended on the skill and experience of the teacher/directors and no recognised or coordinated approach existed. However, The La Guardia Arts School NYC "Fame School" (La Guardia Arts, 2019) identifies its focus for actor training as "Meisner, Stella Adler, and the Michael Chekhov Techniques." It is important to note that though there is a demonstrated lack of focus on youth actor methodology in theatre, there is an abundance of research on youth theatre technique in youth voice training that may be significantly related to the development of actor training technique.

Youth performance research

Research on youth voice technique related to youth acting in performance concludes that basic techniques of pitch accuracy and breath control increase with graduation and maturation (Hedden, 2012). Research also reveals that it is "important for teachers to identify levels of ability" and that "consistent teacher feedback and knowledge increases learning in students. Research also shows that "teacher techniques should be established and proven, and that teacher modeling and student mimicking improves technique through the use of immersion teaching and the use aural, visual and kinesthetic learning approach. (Hedden, 2012). Research on youth voice technique related to performance also reveals that in order to improve technique and ability teachers should not move to more difficult tasks than the child is capable of doing in order to "meet the child at the point where his or her skill levels are," "Maintain engagement and interest in singing, Allow the child to be successful with particular tasks before moving on to more challenging ones and the child must be taught to hear, judge and control their voice." (Hedden, 2012) Comparing voice technique principles with youth theatre training, it is important to note that technique and craftsmanship in both young vocal and theatrical performers improves with better communication, modeling, gradual development at the performers skill level and the teacher using a variety of techniques that takes into consideration the students learning strengths.

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Because of the lack of research identified in youth theatre system approaches, it is important to adopt these processes as possible starting points for teaching method acting techniques in youth theatre because of the similar, comparable goals and processes of vocal and theatrical performance.

BJT's Abridged Method Acting System (AMAS)

BJT's AMAS is a process of actor training that uses the basic elements of want, feeling, action and point of focus and identifies, integrates, synthesises truthful beats in sequences of dramatic action to engage and transform an audience in a theatrical performance; with transformation being the ultimate goal of theatrical experience. BJT's AMAS requires that actor's establish a given circumstance and a background to the elements of want, feeling, action and point of focus as well as create depth of meaning and understanding through analysis and developing underlying dialogue before determining the dramatic beats through intensity over time graph analysis.

Two important principles to consider from BJT's experience

BJT's approach advocates that the AMAS acting process must have one of the four basic elements driving the beat. This is called the beat driver. It is important to note that the beat can be driven by either want, feeling, action, or point of focus depending on whatever works for the actor based on age, learning style or preference.

The director and teacher's role is to facilitate the intentional creation and progression of truthful macro and micro beats using text, subtext, movement, song etc. As facilitator, the youth theatre practitioner creates a role of coach that builds trust in a safe non-manipulative environment and shows the young performer that they are an advocate, on the same team, building the character and performance together. This team building relationship is vital to the efficacy of the young performer. In the AMAS process, actor training as part of developing basic knowledge for young actors, it is necessary to stress the basic tools of the actor as a pre-process before the analyzing and phase work begins.

BJT's AMAS process

BJT's Abridged Method Acting System is developed by a process of analysing the script, action, subtext, or music by first recognising four phases of the AMAS process; Identification, Integration Synthesis and Transformation, and secondly by applying three pre-process elements of "developing meaning", "identifying given circumstance" and "understanding context," and thirdly by applying the four basic elements of Want, Feeling, Action and Point of Focus through the four phases of the AMAS process. This process is called a "Beat Analysis" and can be performed on a beat analysis sheet, in shorthand on a script or by memory from experienced actors who have learned the technique and apply it through automaticity. When the beat analysis is complete at a

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reflective stage of the process, it is also important to apply BJT's time over intensity, dramatic action graph as the final component of the AMAS process.

In the AMAS system, the process begins with chronological identification of truthful beats in the dramatic action. Each beat is identified with a forward slash, titled and numbered for identification. It is important to then identify and title all four basic elements per beat. The actor must identify in one or two words, what the character wants, feels, does (action) and focuses on and combine all these four elements in a corresponding Beat Box. This process should be performed for the entire portion of the script, action or the whole script.

Once this process of identifying elements and placing them together it is important to integrate the elements chronologically using repetition and analysis to strategically blend the elements to form the integration stage of creating truthful beats. It is important to note that this is an active process that requires actors to move from phase to phase as if they are working through a theatre production process. The identification phase graduates into the integration phase just as actors learn their part, lines, and movement and begin to build a character from the blocking phase to the working phase of a rehearsal. This process can happen as part of a production or part of preparation for a scene or performance, or just for personal study or study in a class.

The third phase of the AMAS system is the elements move from being integrated to being synthesised. The synthesis phase is marked by full memorisation; more resources like stage props, costumes etc. and the beats are usually played over a significant portion of the play or whole play in a performance-based rhythm. The final transformation phase happens when the play at a highly synthesised level of rehearsal encounters an audience.

The transformation phase is earmarked by a new life and energy that only happens when actors play and negotiate meaning in an audience actor-based performance. The purpose of this phase is to transform the audience using the elements in the process. Once the phases on the AMAS systems are defined outlined and understood, it is necessary to begin to analyse the dramatic text, subtext and action of the performance. As part of the pre-beat analysis, it is important that the actor identifies and titles the given circumstances of each scene and tone goal (climax) of the entire performance from the intent of the author, director and audience experience.

Given circumstances

The given circumstances of a dramatic performance have a beginning, middle and end and may be scripted or un-scripted, textual or sub-textual. The actor needs to clearly identify and state who, what, why, where, and when of the character and describe the detailed situation they are in at the moment of the drama. The given circumstances are always in the present tense and describe the circumstances and situation in the now. It is also very important for the actors to create through their imagination or research, or understand a detailed back-story to the characters life including past experiences, economic, religious, cultural and social background.

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Background/context

The actor needs to clearly identify and build the character's history, relational, economics, status, religion, personality type, and significant experiences to create a truthful past. BJT teaches its young actors that the more detailed this information, the more truthful the character traits and responses. The development of context is a powerful tool that creates confidence and craftsmanship in young actors. However, young actors understandably lack life experience and the knowledge of life and language and many times must rely on observation and imagination to create a background to their character. It is important to examine the AMAS practice through the use of the Beat Analysis Tool.

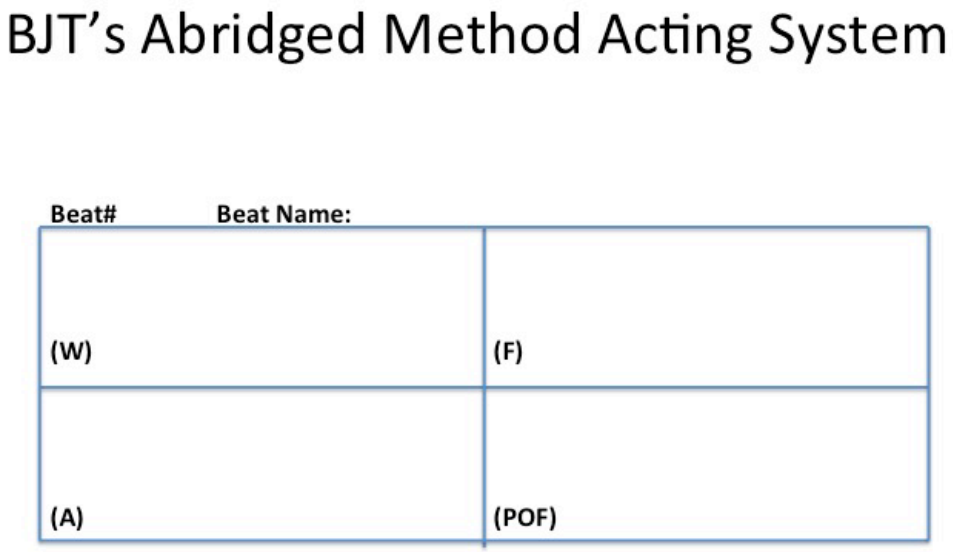

Figure 1. The Beat Box (reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

The Beat Box as shown above in Figure 1 is a rectangle shaped box divided into 4 sections. The purpose of the Beat Box is to identify, title and isolate the basic acting elements in a given beat for the purpose of then integrating the beats individually and then corporately. The Beat Box should be placed strategically above or near the identified forward slash on the script or worksheet as identified in Figure 2 below. The Beat Box should be numbered and titled to correspond with the numbered beat written on the script in Figure 2. The four smaller divided boxes in the Beat Box are labelled (W) for want, (F) for feeling, (A) for action and (POF) for point of focus. These are the four basic acting elements in the AMAS system and need to be identified and written out in a few words at most.

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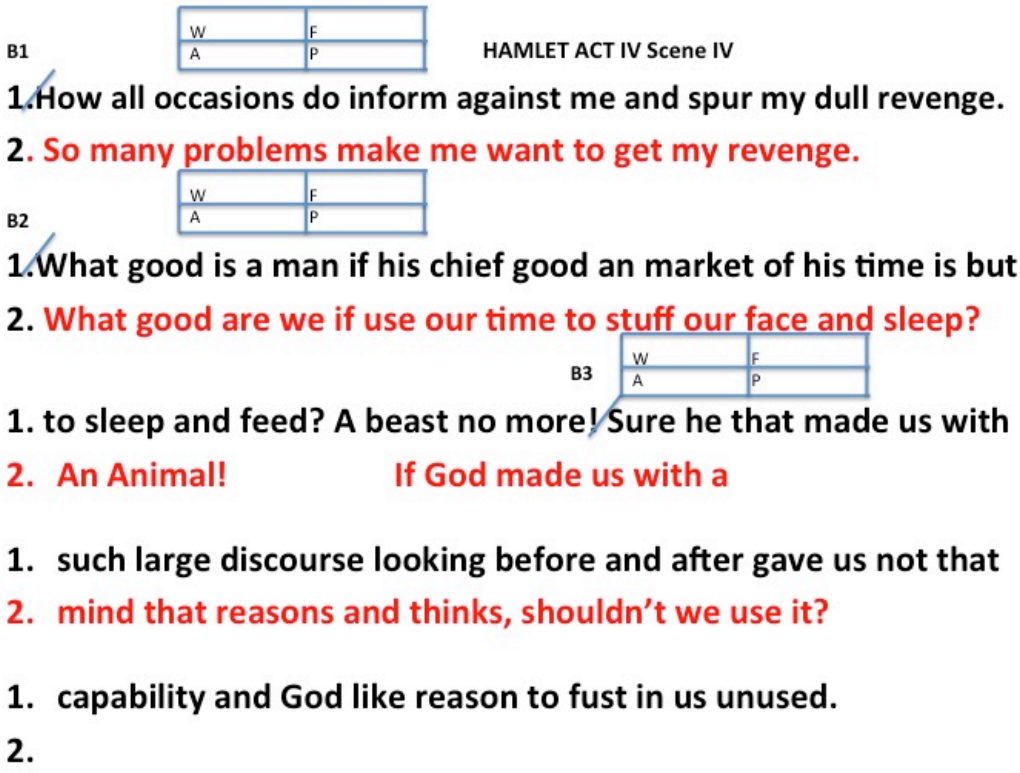

Figure 2. The Beat Analysis Worksheet
(reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

BJT has developed a tool as part of its AMAS system; a beat analysis worksheet that helps identify the acting process to help create a way for young actors to develop accurate meaning in their dramatic action and language. For the purposes of this article, a shortened version of the beat analysis worksheet using the first few lines from Hamlet's monologue in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Act IV scene IV has been used to demonstrate how the analysis worksheet is used.

Actors at BJT are asked to write down or record the stage dialogue or subtext in their own words creating an "underlying dialogue" to the dramatic action. This process of writing down the underlying dialogue directly underneath the script helps the actor cultivate the meaning, asking better questions of the text and developing deep understanding. The actor needs to rephrase dialogue or subtext in his or her own words, honing accurate and simplified meaning for the performer. In this process the actor is confronted with gaps in their understanding and begins to grasp nuances and inflections as well as word meanings that once had no meaning. In Figure 1 above, the underlying dialogue is written out in red under the actual text from the play. Each of the beats are numbered and marked with a forward slash in the position of the beat change. A beat is a significant change of want, feeling, action or point of focus. When the young BJT actor determines the beat, they identify and label its four basic elements. The beat that determines the change is "the driver" and the other three elements just

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follow into the new beat even if they don't change. It is important to imbed "beat boxes" in the necessary positions near a beat on the scripted page to continue the analysis.

Identification: Basic acting elements

It is necessary as part of the AMAS process for young actors to identify, know and understand the pre-process and the basic elements of the process. The first basic element of want, also known as motivation, intention, or justification is an internal acting element and according to basic Stanislavski methodology is the main primary driver of beats. However physical methods such as Laban or Lacoq would argue that the external acting elements of actions and point of focus can also be the drivers of want and emotion. The second element of "Feeling" is also known as emotion and as an internal element, is a primary factor of effective characterisation. It is important that want and feeling both agree and grow together to maintain truthfulness. Young actors need help to understand depth and subtlety of emotions. Actions, also known as "doing", "gesture", "posture" and "movement" are external and require training for young actors to experiment and develop subtlety and control to become skilled in the art of acting. The fourth element, point of focus, an external element, is based on where the actor is looking or directing their attention.

Integration

Integrating wants, feelings, actions and points of focus in a monologue, scene, song or dramatic action requires clearly stating each element and then mixing and blending the elements together to create a truthful beat. Processes that aid the integration process include: analysing, repetition, isolating, grouping beat elements, rhythm at speed and varying speeds, improvisation, memorisation, adding resources, props, sets, costumes, lights, makeup, sound. The integration phase is usually part of the working stage of rehearsals of a production between the blocking stage and run-through stage.

Synthesisation

Synthesising basic acting wants, feelings, actions and points of focus and creating truthful beats as a follow-on phase from the integration phase of a production requires performers to run through portions of the show at performance speed with growing and full resources the shows require for an audience. Synthesisation is created when the show is fully memorised and resourced at speed.

Transformation

The ultimate goal of theatrical experience is to achieve a level of transformation where an audience is engaged and moved emotionally by the actor-audience relationship and the tone goal (climax) of the play or musical. The transformation stage is the natural end of the theatrical process and is the step beyond the synthesis stage. The figures

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below will demonstrate the AMAS process using three beats from Hamlet's monologue from *Hamlet* Act IV Scene IV.

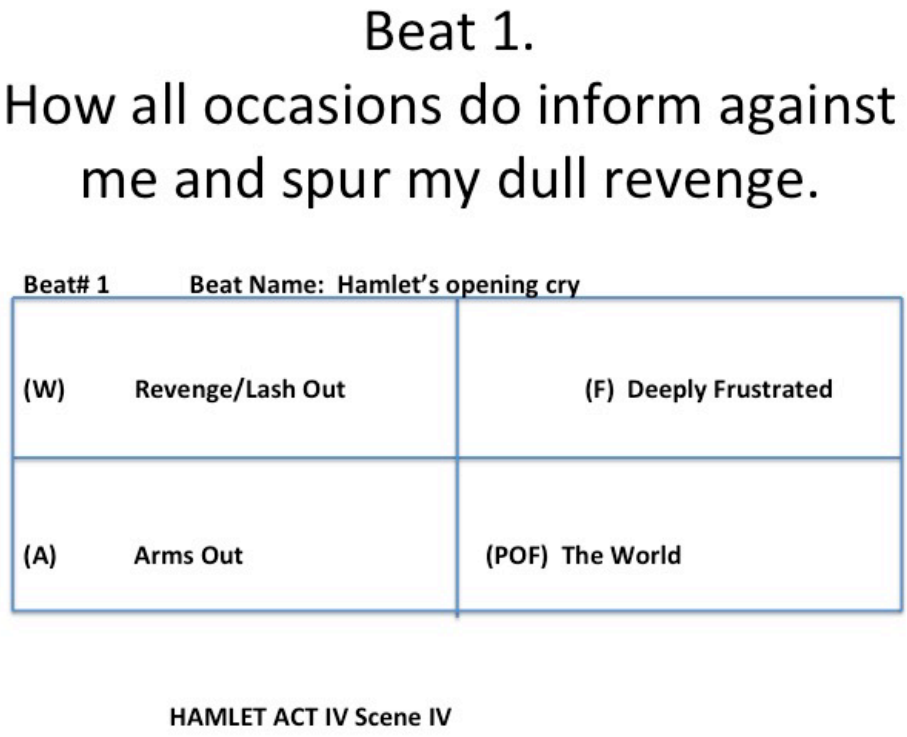

Figure 3. Hamlet: Beat 1 (reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

In Figure 3**,** the beat box above demonstrates the elements of beat number 1 clearly identified in four boxes. The actual dialogue of the beat is written above the beat box. The job of the actor is to number the beat and give the beat a name so they can easily identify and apply it in further analysis. When the actor has clearly identified and labelled the four boxes, it is necessary for the actor to speak the dialogue, integrating the elements. The actor may want to start by integrating two elements, speaking the line with want and feeling for example. Or it may be the actor's choice to start the line delivery with action and point of focus by reaching out to the world. This process of integration using repetition and improvisation should be used until the actor is satisfied they have made intelligent, truthful choices that graduate to the next beat.

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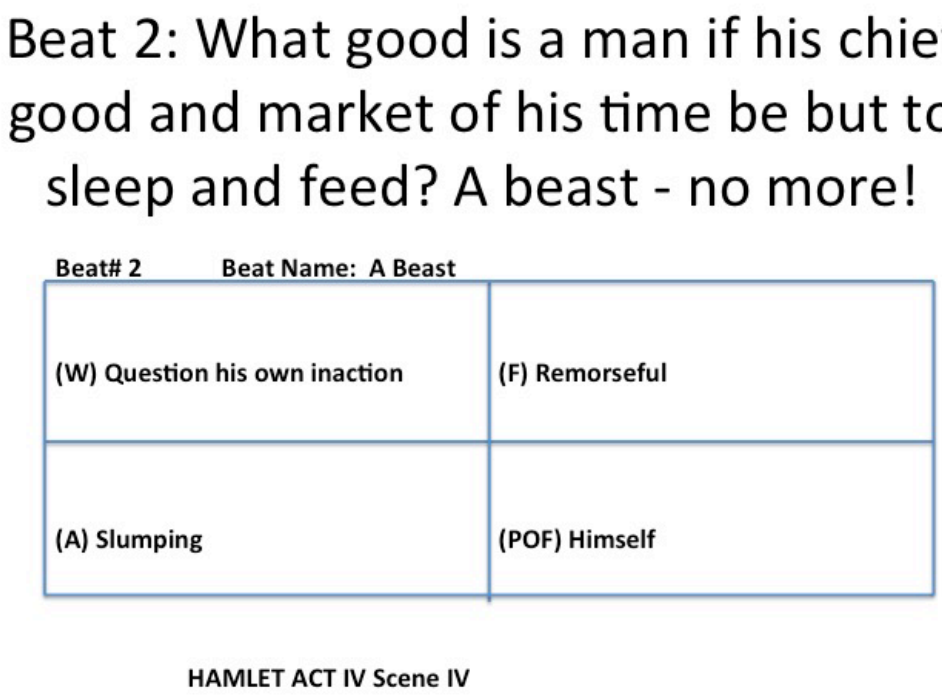

Figure 4. Hamlet: Beat 2 (reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

Beat number two in Figure 4 above, is a graduated beat from the first beat, creating a believable effect that suggest that they are acting as the character would in their circumstances. Beat two in this beat box has made four changes in each of the basic elements, due to the character of Hamlet asking a question of himself, and then answering it emphatically. This self-exploration creates a great psychological dilemma and strong dramatic tension. Again, the four elements of this beat need repetitive practice to determine nuance in performance through improvised practice. It is important to remember that the purpose of the phases of the AMAS process are meant to help actors graduate to each phase by the use of integration processes and techniques. For example, integration in this phase would graduate to synthesisation when the actor moves beyond the integration phase and begins to speak the lines and perform the actions of this portion of the script, fully memorised, in rhythmic run-throughs, with resources and the actor imagining the actor audience relationship responses.

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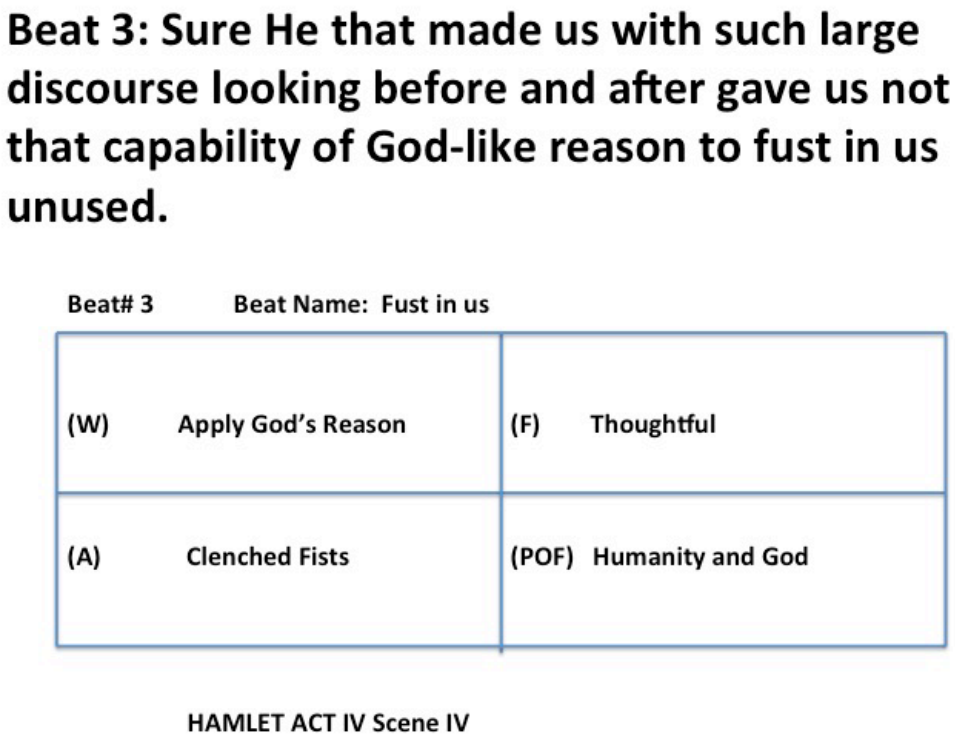

Figure 5. Hamlet: Beat 3 (reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

Beat number 3, identified in Figure 5 above is the final part of this analysis as an example of how the AMAS system works. This figure again shows that each of the basic elements have again changed and required contrasting want and emotion to express truthful meaning to an audience. In this beat, Hamlet wants to apply God's reason in thoughtful emotion, yet Hamlet is clenching his fists intensely as he reasons with God as his point of focus. It is important that young actors build and use these elements one step at a time through repetition and improvisation creating meaningful dialogue as well as truthful sub-textual pauses, infections, etc. Once this part of the AMAS process accomplished it is important to map the script or a portion of the script using the dramatic action graph: time over intensity analysis worksheet, as demonstrated below in Figure 6.

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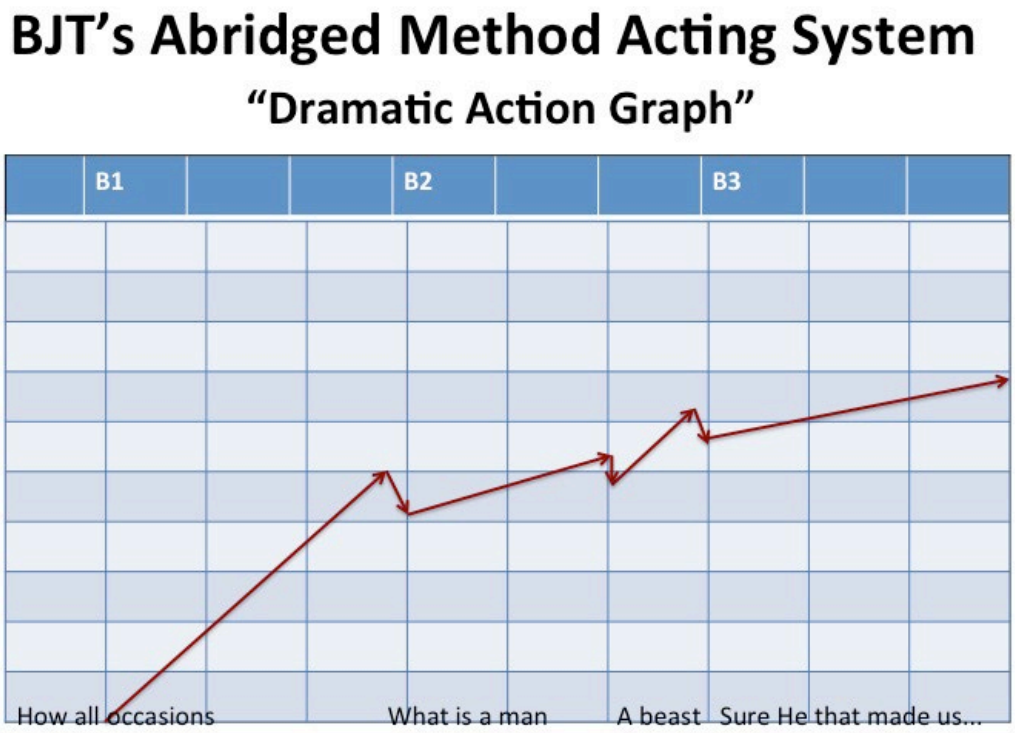

Figure 6. Dramatic Action Graph: Time over intensity
(reprinted with permission from Brisbane Junior Theatre).

The final element of the AMAS process, the time over intensity dramatic action graph is a necessary process tool that requires the actor's subjective reflective analysis of the drama to be performed. The actor needs to understand the intensity over time ratio, and the use of truthful beats in the acting process to truthfully tell the dramatic story, engage and transform the audience. The actor begins the analysis by labelling the beat numbers and titles of the drama at the bottom of the graph. Each page should cover at least a dozen scenes and measures the beat intensity by a vertically diagonal rising line from left to right. At the end of each rising beat should be a short falling action line in the same direction from left to right. Falling action represents the moment at the end of a beat when the audience breathes and answers the question presented in the drama before a new beat begins. At BJT, young actors are taught to maintain timing and play beats with a minimum of pause to hold the audience's attention. The dramatic action graph can and should be used as an objective tool at any point in the analysis process to help young actors assess their acting technique. The horizontal direction of the graph represents the time of each beat and combination of beats. The angle of the vertical level represents the level intensity, subjectively determined by the actor in the beats. For example, the higher the stakes, emotions, wants, circumstances etc., the higher the angle on the graph. The less emotional and engaged the character and the action are in the beat, the lower the angle. In graph number six, Hamlet's three beats are analysed as being mapped in progression from beat one to beat three, with the dialogue underneath acting as titles that identify the beginning of each beat. The downward lines represent the pauses after each beat, before a new beat begins.

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Conclusion

At the beginning of this article the quote from the 2011 ATF conference for more "youth theatre" on "main stages" demonstrated a clear and strong need for more quality performance opportunities for youth in theatre. The author of this article also impressed the comparison of Australian youth theatre production and the production of youth companies in a regional US city, revealing by contrast that Australian Youth theatre performance lagged well behind its American counterpart.

It was also demonstrated in this article that more quality youth theatre in Australia would provide opportunities for developing greater technique based training strategies for young actors and that Brisbane Junior Theatre as a model of quality performance and training techniques could be a worthwhile example for other theatre and community organisations to embrace a paradigm that overcomes notions that youth theatre performance may not be significant because of cognitive limitations, financial barriers and "kid stuff attitudes of researchers and theatre professionals. It has also been demonstrated in this article that there are a number of factors that motivate and engage youth to obtain craftsmanship based actor training and that theatre practitioners and directors of youth theatre companies should embrace these motivating factors and create opportunities for performance and teach technique designed specifically for youth to enable them to succeed in an adult theatre world.

One technique this article presents as a successful model for youth theatre is BJT's (AMAS) Abridged Method Acting System. In this article, the AMAS system was described, explained, defined and exampled through the use of two acting tools; the beat analysis worksheet and the dramatic action graph; time over intensity graph. The beat analysis worksheet used several beats from *Hamlet* Act IV Scene IV and described the pre-process elements as groundwork for the basic element process and phases of the system used in sequence.

Ultimately this article has emphasised that BJT's unique actors' method is an abridged, condensed; refocused combination of internally driven Stanislavsky based methods and the external action driven methods such as Meyerhold, Laban, Lacoq and the classical acting method of British actors in the 20th century. This article has shown that BJT's acting method is like a gourmet "happy meal" meant to be easily understood and used by performers from different stages of cognitive development as well as experience, without prejudice. BJT's (AMAS) equips students with a safe, effective, abridged, quality technique to give students efficacy and confidence to build a lasting career in the performing arts.

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Jacob Gallagher-Ross

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Mad Method

Shonni Enelow, In Conversation with Jacob Gallagher-Ross

Jacob Gallagher-Ross

Biographies

1 Shonni Enelow is an associate professor of English at Fordham University and the author of *Method Acting and Its Discontents* (Northwestern University Press, 2015), which won the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism. *A Discourse on Method*, a hybrid art book co-authored with David Levine, was published by 53rd State Press in 2020. She is currently working on a book tentatively titled *Sweat: A Theory of American Performance*.

2 Jacob Gallagher-Ross is an associate professor of English and drama at the University of Toronto, and the author of *Theaters of the Everyday* (Northwestern University Press, 2018). His article "Mediating the Method" (*Theatre Survey*, 2015), about Method acting's creative dialogue with recording technology, won the American Theatre and Drama Society's Vera Mowry Roberts Award for the best article of the year. A frequent contributor to theater journals, he was for many years a theater critic for *The Village Voice* and other US national publications. He's currently collaborating with New York performance company Big Art Group on the first book about their career.

Interview

Jacob Gallagher-Ross: Shonni Enelow, you're the author of an award-winning scholarly book about Method acting, Method Acting And Its Discontents (Northwestern UP, 2015) which will probably be familiar to many readers of this interview. Now you've revisited the subject from a different angle with a new collaborative volume, A Discourse On Method (53rd Street Press, 2020), written in tandem with the artist and director David Levine. What made you want to return to Method acting? What was your unfinished business with the subject?

Shonni Enelow: I don't think I'm ever going to be finished entirely. I think a lot of the questions that Method acting makes particularly pointed, in weird and interesting

ways, are just long standing questions of modern acting. So insofar as those questions, I think, will engage me for a long time, the focal point of Method continues, for me, to be a way to get to all these bigger questions about what acting is, how we understand it, how we see it, how the spectator sees it, etc.

JGR: This book has a hybrid form. It's part performance text, part memoir, part essay. In what way was the hybrid form of this book suggested by the category confusions of Method acting itself?

SE: The other way to answer your first question is to say that in a practical sense, I also had all this emotional unfinished business with my first book. And to speak to this question that you just raised, that struck me as part of the whole problem of Method in general. Which is that, it's, on the one hand, a method of reading the work of others, of interpreting other people's texts and ideas, and on the other hand, it's supposed to be this technology of self-creation. And so I do think that kind of hybrid autobiography, that autobiographical-critical mode, is very much tied to the actual practices of method acting.

JGR: David Levine's script arose out of a particular performance piece, but what was the genesis of your contribution to the book? How did these texts come about?

SE: My first book came out in 2015, and that summer I met David and we found that we had a lot of similar interests. And he invited me to come to Toronto, where he was showing an installation at Gallery TPW that included the monologue in the book, to do an event with him where we talked about the history of Method acting and how it relates to what he engaged in the installation, these body-snatching movies from the '70s and this sort of secret history of the late 20th century in which Method acting becomes this node of conspiracist thinking. So we did this event, and it was interesting and weird—it was kind of a failure as an event, for interesting reasons. Because we hadn't figured out the form that could successfully contain all these kind paranoiac-slash-cultural-critical epistemologies. And we started sort of plotting some kind of a hybrid book. Then I was on leave, and I went away—I mean, I went away in the sense that I shut myself in my office in my apartment, and started thinking about this bizarre experience that I had had traveling to the Actors Studio archives. And it struck me that that experience was kind of a perfect correlate to these '70s horror movies that David talks about in the installation. And so I started writing it, and the piece expanded to include a lot of material that I couldn't figure out how to fit into the book. So for instance, the stuff about Strasberg and the Golem was just this little thing I had written. And also the stuff about *Apocalypse Now*. It was almost like David, without knowing it, had been working in his own artwork with all this fringe material that I had excluded from my scholarship, and his engagement with those fringes encouraged me to pick them back up for myself.

JGR: I mean, it's a very Strasberg-esque move to take an event that was kind of unsatisfying in the moment, and then retroactively turn it into something more accomplished. In his case, it was the transcripts of his own acting classes, which became material for his books. So you've done a very Method thing here. There are all kinds of interesting resonances between the two halves of the book but one of them, of course, is this shadow narrative of *Heart of Darkness*, which arrives via your treatment of the film Apocalypse Now. Were you thinking of your journey to Wisconsin to hear recordings of Strasberg's voice as a kind of *Heart of Darkness* story? Is he Colonel Kurtz?

SE: You're right, that was the thing I was plagued with. There was a sense in which the trip to the archives was a kind of *Heart of Darkness*-style search for the true horror

of Method acting, which is figured by the emotional memory exercise and its exorcism of trauma. I felt compelled to get as close as I could to that.

But also, and this is what I'm struggling a little bit to articulate, it was a journey into the secret truth of my own sense of emptiness as a scholar. Let me put it this way: the voyage at once disguised, but also revealed, the sense that my work is built on this foundation of inauthenticity, that the world of my scholarship has no authentic ground. I think that's what I find compelling in all these post-1960s narratives of journeying into the darkness—the backhanded acknowledgment that the truth you're going to find there is just going to be Marlon Brando taking the piss, like at the end of *Apocalypse Now*. That even the more baroque and exhausting and strenuous parts of the journey actually only underline that truth, which is that it's a pointless exercise and what you're secretly enjoying is the extended delay of the revelation of its pointlessness.

JGR: I think maybe you told me this, but the Strasberg recordings are housed in Wisconsin, according to lore, because it's equidistant from LA and New York. So they're equally hard to get to for people from LA, and from New York—the two cities where Strasberg did most of his work. So there's something about the trip that already entails a kind of pilgrimage. For you, it arrived at the end of your dissertation research. So it was a kind of summation, it was the journey to confirm all the things that you had suspected about him. But there's this incident that you narrate here, which I know is true because I've talked with you about it in other contexts. While you were in Wisconsin, you got a bad case of food poisoning, and had this kind of bodily crisis. Can you talk a little more about that? It was a coincidence at the time, but it becomes very meaningful in the context of this book.

SE: There's obviously a parallel between me throwing up in this hotel room, and Martin Sheen flipping out on booze and drugs in a hotel room in Saigon at the opening of *Apocalypse Now*. I was playing with that kind of repetition. It's a kind of literalization of one endpoint of Method: you literally vomit your guts out. I mean, it's a joke in one sense, but there's this map you can draw of scenes of this kind of literalization, you know, and some of them occur, like, for instance, in *The Exorcist*, and the other movies that David talks about in his monologue that kind of attach themselves to method acting and its tributary phenomena.

JGR: It also seems, in a funny way, to echo one of these moments that occur a lot in Strasberg's books, — and you've written beautifully about this in your other book — where a (usually) female student breaks down in the classroom. And through that physical collapse, some kind of new knowledge is achieved, knowledge which seems to be very tangential to acting pedagogy. But nonetheless, it's really crucial to the work of Method, as Strasberg understands it. Was this your breakdown-to-breakthrough moment?

SE: I mean, it's set up that way, right? But then there's no breakthrough. I just have to drive back to Chicago. It's a deflation right at the end. I think on the one hand that is me voicing the skepticism I have about the mid-century narrative of authenticity. But on the other hand, and I think I allude to this in the final section of the piece, I have a lot of envy for that confidence: that you could really arrive at a revelatory healing breakthrough. Obviously, there are different discourses in the 21st century that hearken back to that belief. But for me, certainly, that isn't available. Faith in that is unavailable. I think in the final section in the piece I express a lot of longing for the moment when that seemed like a viable way of life.

JGR: Yeah, and for the idea that there might, there might be some justification for all this stuff. I mean, certainly, when you're a scholar working on a long term project…

SE: Oh, there's no catharsis. But I think the realization that there is no catharsis is also implicit in the Actors Studio sessions, right? Because that's the scene where the actors, after their success, go back to the studio the next day and say, you know, I realized it was all empty. And this life practice of returning to the studio enables them to keep alive the flame in a way that that public creation does not, like public display does not, or something?

JGR: Yeah, for those Method stalwarts, it's the scene of the durational engagement at the Actors Studio, that provides the more satisfying learning, the more satisfying art, than anything they're doing out there in the world of commerce, which Strasberg always has contempt for, even though it's what buttresses his reputation. But that makes a really interesting transition to your consideration of the Jewishness of method acting. It was just occurring to me, as we were talking, that we were describing a very Jewish kind of perspective: the suffering of the world must be made to yield meaning, but the meaning will not be satisfying, ultimately, and you just have to keep suffering and keep finding meaning — and that actually all that matters is showing up. Because it's an anti-cathartic structure. So you just have to keep going and have some faith that something will yield through that practice. But it's not a cathartic revelation, even though Strasberg's authority can be a bit rabbinical.

SE: And that's the whole thing about Judaism. It's like, you just have to keep doing the *tefillin*. Nobody, nobody will ever ask if you believe in God—that is not a question. It doesn't matter. Just keep wrapping your phylacteries every morning.

JGR: Can I ask you more about that? Because this is something you remark on in the book, and it's so true that basically everybody who was involved with getting Method acting started was Jewish, but that's something that was deliberately occluded by those practitioners themselves. And that obfuscation is repeated in the criticism. It's not something that people talk about. You mentioned that you were grappling with it as you did your research.

SE: I think that question sits at the core of a lot of issues of American Jewish identity. It clearly tracks with a narrative of post-war assimilation. But you could also trace it back earlier to the Jewish ambivalence about difference that is so central to modernity and modernism. Freud is an obvious example, but, you know, there are many others. European Jews, as culture producers, in many cases, wanted to speak for everyone, to use the universalist mode. But they also had a certain distance from the idea of the universal. That's just the tension and the history of European Jewry. And it's only very recently that Method acting has been a serious subject of cultural studies scholarship. I hope that somebody will write a serious book about Jewishness and method acting.

JGR: In the book, you have this amazing close reading of two metaphors that between them encapsulate so much of what you're talking about. Speaking of primal themes: on the one hand, there's Strasberg's weird resort to an Egyptian image in one of his books — I mean, you want to talk about primal scenes and suffering. And then on the other hand, you have this great reading of him as the Golem, the archetypal image of Jewish revenge, for lack of a better term. And there's something really interesting about that polarity. On the one hand, the suffering that must be endured and learnt from, and that shapes identity, and then on the other hand, the ultimate triumph for ultimate God.

SE: Totally. I mentioned this really briefly in *Method Acting and its Discontents*, but it did strike me once you start to look for antisemitic figurations of the Strasbergs

they're really everywhere, and that's a sort of shadow history of discourse on the Method, too.

JGR: That's so interesting. I can already see the fantasist roots of that — especially the idea that the Strasbergs have an undue influence. They're scheming behind the scenes, they're the ones pulling the strings of the shiksa actor like Marilyn Monroe. The murky presence who is most influential as a teacher, an influencer, less so as an actor or public figure himself. Someone, who's always in the shadows, always always operating in secrecy. The image fulfills so many durable anti-Semitic tropes.

SE: Yeah, there's a lot there.

JGR: Then Strasberg plays the Jewish mobster in The Godfather and he's totally chilling and brilliant and there's also that one scene where he's kind of putting himself at the center of a movie, at the center of a kind of historical narrative — but I think we just figured out that we have an article to write!

SE: I would love to, that would be great. Our parents would be so happy. Could I actually ask you — I can see connections to the Odets recording that you talk about in your book [*Theaters of the Everyday*, Northwestern University Press, 2018]. Do you see this nexus of Jewishness that we're talking about in relation to that?

JGR: Yeah, absolutely. I feel like I'm sort of doing the media studies version of the argument that you were just making, which is that with his fixation on that recording, he's trying to say there's something incredibly authentic about these immigrant accents. But he won't say it outright, because he's eliding the Jewishness of those voices. And then in his mind somehow the accent gets linked to the other serendipitous qualities that emerge on the recording — and then it's the recording that ultimately becomes the thing. The recording becomes a displaced image for the immigrant accent. So there's something about his desire to claim an immigrant authenticity that then gets rolled into an uncanny mediatic idea of authenticity. It's really interesting because then both things become important: the capacity of recording to reveal the unconscious of speech, and the fetishization of all kinds of accents. You know, hallmarks of an immigrant identity becoming an important part of what gets revealed by the recording. I'm thinking of early performances by Pacino and De Niro where they're just all in their Italian-American accents and they're relying on the medium of film in a similar way.

I want to ask a little bit more about the form of the monologue, because it's one that's sort of positioned between the different poles of method thinking. You know, on the one hand, it's a kind of medium of confession or unveiling of the self. In the transcripts of the classes, these are often the moments where an actor might have a breakthrough. But at the same time, they're also audition material, right? It's the figure of the lonely exposed object actor doing their monologues for the presumably uncaring casting agent. Both halves of this book are monologues that are in a very different space than those two poles, but how are you thinking about the kinds of monologues that are in the book versus the kind of monologues the method is usually concerned with? Is there a way that you were doing the subtext of your book, in this monologue?

SE: Of my other book? I mean, yeah, I think so.

JGR: Which is so fascinating, because there are all kinds of emotions that attend finishing a book. You talked me through them when I was about to publish mine. You know, the moment near the end where it's like, this is awful. But actually, it's gonna be fine, but you don't know that it's gonna be fine. So you were given the rare opportunity here to actually kind of air some of that…energy?

SE: That's a good way of putting it. Yeah, it's true. These moments when we publish as academics are these combinations of decades of labor but also it's this moment where the ground kind of gives way, and you feel this terror, this existential terror.

JGR: And it's a moment of performance, right? Like you, you suddenly have an object that will be on this stage. It's a rite of passage.

SE: I do think that there's something about the historical moment we're in that makes those feelings especially piquant. There was a kind of self-assuredness to academic production for a certain number of decades at the end of the 20th century that I don't think exists anymore. There are obviously historical reasons for that. Of course it was in part the self-assuredness of white men who ruined the academy for everybody. But I think there's a certain vertigo now, too. This obviously very privileged position that we both have of being tenured professors at North American universities, you know, there is also the shame that attends that, which is, as I just read in a Joan Copjec book that I'm reading — shame is the moment where you realize that the other's power is groundless, isn't authentic, right? Shame is the moment where you see the other as not having the power that you imputed to the other.

JGR: This sudden apprehension of the groundlessness of that power, which is sort of analogous to the kind of survivor's guilt that a Method actor who got the big break might have, knowing that there were so many people back at the Studio, who were doing similar things that maybe could have also been contenders. It's so interesting to be publishing books about the labor of acting at a moment when the labor of scholarship in academia has come to resemble the casualization and precarity of the labor of acting.

SE: That's clearly structurally the case. I'm also interested in the discursive move, by which, contemporary, or 20th or, to say, 21st century, scholars are interested in talking about us all as actors, and the revival of that metaphor. What does it mean to say we're all actors now?

JGR: I'd really like to ask you more about that. Maybe a bit of a tangent, but I've noticed this a lot. And I always find it unsatisfying, that when people are grappling for a metaphor, often to talk about neoliberalism, basically, and the effects of the neoliberal market, that people want to reach for metaphors of acting, metaphors of performance, through acting, and it always bugs me. I don't totally know why. I think that part of it is a kind of victim blaming in a funny way. And I think that's related to a kind of anti-theatrical thinking. So what is that? Why are we so keen to reach for the metaphor of the actor on the one hand, and why is it such a lousy metaphor?

SE: I think I have a somewhat different take, because I think it's a good metaphor, but for the opposite of what people want it to mean. That imputing acting to our working lives, our neoliberalized working lives, actually evinces this desire to retain an authentic self that would not be exhausted by our work. So when we talk about ourselves as actors, what we're actually doing is protecting a self away from the role. This is what I'm writing about now. What I've realized is that part of why we love to watch actors is because we want to find a self there. We are always fantasizing about the self of the actor. When we call ourselves actors, we're alluding to a fantasy of selfhood that we don't completely believe in.

JGR That is so interesting. Especially in light of what we were just talking about, because I think it also, I mean, it's a conspiracy of a different kind: it invites a simplified idea of the market and labor relations where there's still someone to blame if we trace it back far enough. We'll get the director, the acting teacher, we'll get the people pulling the strings, which maybe is a scene of knowledge that is made impossible, actually, by contemporary economic relations — it pictures this Oz moment that isn't there.

SE: Yeah, I think that's right. I mean, exactly as you're saying, it rests on a fantasy that there's something outside the scene.

JGR: Which is a kind of fundamentally humanist fantasy, that we could still be at the middle of it all. I guess, a good question to leave on might be how your two books about Method acting got you thinking about sweat? Why sweat and labor and acting are the next thing that you're going to think about in print.

SE: David has been for a long time, since before we started working together, thinking about acting and work –– acting as work, work as acting, the work of acting. So my path to thinking about this is really through David. But what we've been thinking about both separately and together was the odd fact, the somewhat counterintuitive fact, that the Method performances that are the most lauded tend to be performances in which we see the labor of acting demonstrated before us. That the labor of acting is made palpable to us, and that what we see is the exertion and the strain and the effort involved in acting. So that interests me, you know, why? Why and how effort itself became what it is important for acting to demonstrate. It's not just about the content of art, but also a new idea of the actor that leads sweat to be such a privileged substance.

JGR: Sweat as byproduct and product.

SE: Exactly.

ABSTRACTS

Interview with Shonni Enelow, author of *Method Acting And Its Discontents.* The interview was conducted by Zoom, email, and Google Chat in September and October of 2021.

Entretien avec Shonni Enelow, auteur de *Method Acting And Its Discontents.* L'échange fut conduit via Zoom, mels et Google Chat de septembre and octobre of 2021.

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Article

Actor Dual-Consciousness and Recreative Imagination

Dupla Consciência do Ator e Imaginação Recreativa

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ABSTRACT

Many actors report a form of dual-consciousness when playing roles on stage: they react to the given circumstances as their characters would do, but they do not forget they are on the stage. This paper analyzes the concept of dual-consciousness and argues that actor dual-consciousness results from the actor's imaginings, which both recreate the experience of the character and inform the actor about the non-reality of the experience.

Keywords: Acting, actor, dual-consciousness, recreative imagination, experiential identification.

RESUMO

Muitos atores relatam uma forma de dupla consciência ao interpretar papéis em cena: eles reagem a determinadas circunstâncias como seus personagens reagiriam, mas não se esquecem de que estão em cena. Este estudo analisa o conceito de dupla consciência, e argumenta que a consciência dupla do ator resulta de sua imaginação, que tanto recria a experiência do personagem quanto informa o ator sobre a irrealidade da experiência.

Palavras-chave: Atuação, ator, dupla consciência, imaginação recreativa, identificação experiencial.

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Dual-consciousness is essential for the actor's performance on stage, especially for method actors who follow Stanislavski's system or Strasberg's method and are encouraged to live their roles. On stage, many actors are immersed in their roles and are transported into the given circumstance, as well as maintaining their attention on their character's inner world; they even feel themselves becoming those fictional characters as if they had the character's emotions, attitudes, intentions, goals and other inner states. However, actors do not ignore or forget they are actors; they continue to perceive a distinction between themselves and their characters, and they attend to the aspect of the technique of their performance. Actors can control their performance and are not overwhelmed by their character's emotions. It seems that actors experience a form of dual-consciousness: they react to the fictional scenes as their characters would but realize they are actors playing the roles.[1]

Dual-consciousness (or double-consciousness) plays a crucial role in onstage performance. The consciousness of the character enables the actor to become involved with the role and to merge with the character. The consciousness of the actor enables her to control the performance and prevents her from "losing herself" on stage.

What is dual-consciousness? What is the origin of dual-consciousness? What mental state does the actor's dual-consciousness produce? Can dual-consciousness be reduced into more familiar concepts? This paper answers these questions and clarifies the concept of dual-consciousness. In Section 1, I briefly present some historical discussions regarding the concept of dual-consciousness. In Section 2, I clarify what the term "dual-consciousness" means. In Section 3, I argue that dual-consciousness results from the actor's imaginings about the character. Given that imagination enables us to recreate an experience about a certain object but does not require the object to be *actually* perceived, I argue that the actor's imaginings recreate the experience of the character; therefore, the actor experiences herself as the character. Moreover, the actor's awareness about her imaginative attitude informs her of the non-reality of the experience of the character.

1. Historical Discussions of Dual-consciousness

Actor dual-consciousness (hereafter, DC) is not a concept that suddenly appeared in the 20th centuries. In the history of drama, many drama theorists, writers, playwrights and actors have explicitly and implicitly debated this concept. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the Prince of Denmark, Hamlet, even describes the most ideal style of acting to the First Player:

> *[…] for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. […] Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special o'erstep not the modesty of nature (Hamlet, Scene II, Act III).*

With Hamlet's words, Shakespeare describes what he considers the best style of acting. For Shakespeare, the best actor can not only become immersed in the character's passion and emotion, but also can control his performance. The latter point is the more important; actors should not be overwhelmed by their passions. For Shakespeare, a form of DC – passion, as well as control – seems linked to the value

[1] The opponents might question the scope of this paper. They might think that dual-consciousness only happens in cases that rely on the actor's emotional involvement with the character, and hence, Brechtian acting is not clearly described as dual-consciousness. I admit that not all acting involves such a dual-consciousness, but that point is also overstated. Brecht does not say it is impossible for actors to feel a kind of dual-consciousness; he only denies that actors should be encouraged to feel it during performance. Brecht did not prevent actors in rehearsal from feeling the character's emotions (see Merlin 2018, p. 58, she said: "Brecht wanted actors to empathise with their characters in the course of rehearsal, but in the act of performance he didn't want that empathy to enchant the audience's experience").

of the theatrical performance.

Denis Diderot, the French philosopher, art critic and writer, in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, raises a core question regarding acting technique: should actors become involved with the character's emotion on stage? Diderot denies the importance of emotional involvement, arguing that great actors are not encouraged to experience the character's emotions they display. On stage, great actors should consider the technique of their performance rather than trigger their emotional experiences. For Diderot, the aspect of emotional involvement in DC is not essential for actors; actors should experience themselves as actors, *not* as the characters.

By the end of the 19th century, the English actor Henry Irving and the French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin explicitly reflected on the idea of DC. Irving thought that the actor should have "[…] a double consciousness in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may have full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for every detail of his method" (Cole and Chinoy, 1970, p. 357). Irving claimed that DC implied a view of "control" in which the actor is involved in the character's emotions but, simultaneously, controls and regulates every aspect of her or his acting. Almost at the same time, the French actor Coquelin considered DC from another perspective:

> *The actor ought never to let his part run away with him. It is false and ridiculous to think that it is a proof of the highest art for the actor to forget that he is before the public [...] if you have no more consciousness where you are and what you are doing – you have ceased to be an actor: you are a madman (Cole and Chinoy, 1970, p. 357).*

It seems that Coquelin takes a similar but slightly different position: DC implies a view of "awareness": both the awareness of the actor and that of the character occupy the actor's mind simultaneously; namely, the actor experiences the character's emotion but is also conscious he is an actor, not the character, and he is on the stage, not in the fictional world.

William Archer, a Scottish writer and theater critic, in *Masks or Faces*, states that actors have a form of DC in which they can separate themselves from their character. He quotes the English actress Fanny Kemble:

> *The curious part of acting, to me, is the sort of double process which the mind carries on at once, the combined operation of one's faculties, so to speak, in diametrically opposite directions; for instance, in that very last scene of Mrs. Beverley, while I was half dead with crying in the midst of the real grief, created by an entirely unreal cause, I perceived that my tears were falling like rain all over my silk dress, and spoiling it; and I calculated and measured most accurately the space that my father would require to fall in, and moved myself and my train accordingly in the midst of the anguish I was to feign and absolutely did endure (Archer, 1888, p. 185).*

For Archer, great actors can feel their character's emotion but also control and calculate the details of their performance.

During most of the 20th century, method acting dominated the teaching and practice of acting in North America. This method requires that an actor aspires to sincere performance and to bring herself to the experience of the character. In brief, method acting's aim is for the actor to "experience," "live" or even "become" the character she portrays. Method acting relies heavily on the idea of DC: when the actor becomes involved in the experience of the character, they must be conscious that they are not the character; otherwise, the actor would lose themself from being too close to the character. The French theater theorist André Villiers described this style of acting as "dédoublement"; namely, the actor feels like the character but also "reserves the feeling of his own self as an actor" (Konijn, 1997, p. 45).

Many theorists have tried to understand DC from the view of psychology. For example, the German

psychologist Elly Konijn argues that the technique that requires actors to become involved in the experience of the character, such as method acting, which Konijn calls "the style of involvement," implies a dual-consciousness that "consists of being swept up completely by emotions, comparable to the character-emotions, while simultaneously controlling them" - a form of DC of involvement and control (Konijn, 1997, p. 45).[2]

In addition, the theater theorist Eric Hetzler suggests another form of DC. He conducted an online survey from 2005 to 2007 called *The Actor's Experience* to examine onstage actors' emotional experiences. The survey consisted of several questions, one of which asked whether actors felt the character's emotions on stage. Almost 83% of actors reported they really felt the emotion of the character, but the emotional experience they felt was not their own, but rather that of the character's (Hetzler, 2008, p. 70, Table 8). For example, Respondent 480516 said: "I can be extremely emotional on stage, but it is not really MY emotion. I do not feel the pain or joy. I feel it AS my character" (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71). Thus, Hetzler suggests that the result of this survey

> *[…] brings us to the concept of dual consciousness. The actors studied perceive a distinct separation between themselves and the characters they portray. They get involved with the action of the performance, but not in such a way that they forget that they are on stage (Hetzler, 2008, p. 75).*

and implies that

> *[…] they feel real emotions while they are performing and they can be affected by them, but most of the time the emotions are not felt personally because they belong to the character (Hetzler, 2008, p. 77).*

It seems that Hetzler, like the French actor Coquelin, considers DC to be a view of "awareness": the actor genuinely experiences the character's emotion but is also conscious that the emotion is not their own; it belongs to the fictional character.

2. Dual-Consciousness: What It Is and What It Is Not

In Section 1, I offered several examples of historical discussions about DC. Those theorists considered DC from two points of view – the view of "control" and the view of "awareness." First, consider the view of control:

> An actor has DC *iff* she is immersed with the emotional experience fitting the character's circumstance and can control and regulate her emotional experience.

William Shakespeare, the actor Henry Irving, the critic William Archer and the psychologist Konijn seem to support the view of control: they claim that, on the one hand, actors are immersed in the character's circumstances and feel the affective experience fitting the character's circumstances; on the other

[2] Konijn also argues that there are two different types of DC. "The style of detachment," such as Bertolt Brecht's style of acting, requires the actor to maintain a distance from their characters, implying a double-consciousness of "taking actions or 'behaving' like a character and at the same time being visibly present as an actor" (Konijn, 1997, p. 46). "The style of self-expression," such as Grotowski's style of acting, requires that actors consider their characters as an instrument with which to study the most core of our personality. This view implies a dual-consciousness of "Becoming immersed in and portraying true emotions versus the unavoidable awareness of being an actor or 'performer" (Konijn, 1997, p. 45). In this paper, I only consider the first type of DC, implied by the style of involvement, because of limited space and because this style of acting has occupied the dominant place for a long time and brings more debates into theories of acting.

hand, actors are able to control and regulate the emotional experiences they feel. Suppose that an actor plays the role of Romeo. According to the view of DC, when learning of Juliet's death, the actor might react as Romeo would: he truly feels sorrow, depression and grief. However, unlike Romeo, the actor can control his negative emotions; he is able to regulate them and make them neither too strong nor too weak to fit his performance best. In this sense, DC requires an ability to control emotions.

Consider the following view of awareness:

> An actor has DC *iff* she reacts to the given circumstance as the character she portrays would do and, simultaneously, she experiences herself as the actor.

It seems that the actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin and the drama theorist Eric Hetzler support this view of awareness of DC. They claim that actors react to the given circumstance like their characters, but also simultaneously have the experience of being an actor; they still know they are actors, not the characters. Again suppose that an actor portrays Romeo. According to this view of awareness, when learning of Juliet's death, the actor reacts to the scene as Romeo would and genuinely feels sad, depressed and other negative emotions; moreover, he still aware that he is an actor, and the current circumstance is fictional. In other words, he does not forget or ignore he is an actor. In this sense, DC requires that the actor has two simultaneous states of consciousness – the awareness about the character and that about herself as an actor.

The two views do not intrinsically conflict. The view of control is more like a consequence of the view of awareness. The actor can control and regulate her emotional experience, precisely because she is conscious that she is not the character. If the actor forgot or ignored she is an actor, she would lose herself and fail to control her onstage emotions. Given that the awareness of the actor determines how an actor can control her performance, I claim that the account of awareness is much more basic, and that if we understand why actors have both the awareness about the character and that about themselves as actors, then we also can understand why they can control their performance. According to the view of awareness, actors have two simultaneous states of consciousness. On the one hand, actors have an awareness of character. They react to the given circumstance as their characters would; they consciously feel the character's emotions, attitudes, moods and other mental states. In brief, actors feel what their characters would feel and experience as their characters. On the other hand, actors have an awareness of themselves: they are conscious that they are actors, realize that the character's experiences they feel are not their own. In brief, actors do not ignore that they are actors (Maybe "awareness" is an ambiguous and less theoretical concept. I do not analyze the concept of awareness. I choose the everyday meaning of "awareness": when one is aware of something, one is having a certain experience about something. For example, when I look at a red apple, I am aware of the red apple; I also have visual experience of the red apple. Similarly, when an actor is aware of the character, she also has the character's emotions, desires and goals).[3]

There are persuasive reasons in favor of the point that the actor experiences as the character. When preparing for roles, actors often need to experience the cognitive-emotive-motor actions of their characters (Noice and Noice, 2002). Before going on stage, many actors often try to achieve a neutral state to release themselves from their everyday persona and allow them to act like their characters (Allen, 2001). Therefore, actors are often required to experience as their characters. Moreover, actors'

[3] A person can be easily aware of two things at once. For example, when I look at an apple on the table, I am aware of both the table and the apple. However, we do not consider this case as dual-consciousness. An actor's dual-consciousness is not an act of attending to two things; rather, it implies an inconsistency about the actor herself. On the one hand, the actor is conscious that she feels the character's emotions; on the other hand, she also realizes that she is not the character and has no reason to feel their emotions.

first-person reports support this point. For example, the American actor Michael Kenneth Williams said the following about his character Omar Little in the drama series *The Wire*: "The darkness that was on him, I wore. I dressed like him, walked like him … " (Dockterman, 2016, para. 12) and "When the character died, I didn't know how to let it go … I couldn't see myself because I was so far in character … I didn't see Mike [the actor Williams himself]. I didn't know who Mike was" (Hsu, 2012, para. 11). Williams seemed to experience a "merging" with the character. In addition, the drama theorist Eric Hetzler conducted a survey to study professional actors' onstage emotions. Hetzler found that when asked to describe their emotional experiences while playing roles, most actors reported *really* feeling the experience of the character (Hetzler, 2008, p. 69, Table 6). He cites several actors' statements. For example, David Coral said: "[during a performance] You just have to suspend your disbelief and live the life of the character that you're portraying. Live their life. If in their life they fall in love, then that's what you do [...]" (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71). Actor 457345 also said:

> *While on stage I AM the character, living his life; so in that sense I am fully engaged with his emotional, physical and intellectual state – I feel (think, do) what the character is feeling (thinking, doing) [...] (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71).*

The relevant point is also supported by empirical evidence. For instance, a neuroimaging study on actors' brain activities strongly demonstrated a blending of actor and character: actors experience as their characters rather than themselves during a performance. Steven Brown and his colleagues (2019) used functional magnetic resonance imagining (fMRI) to measure actors' brain activities and detected the changes associated with blood flow when they played roles. The researchers found that during a performance, the actors' dorsomedial prefrontal cortexes (dmPFC) were *deactivated*: the blood flow to that region decreased (Brown et al., 2019). The dmPFC is a brain region often associated with the agent's "sense of self." A decrease in activity of the dmPFC represents a "suppression of self," whereas an increase represents a "self-oriented processing." Given the deactivation of dmPFCs, theatrical acting seems to involve a "suppression of self-oriented processing." On stage, the actor does not react to the given circumstance from their *own* perspective; otherwise, his or her dmPFC would be activated. Instead, the actor reacts to the circumstance as the character.[4]

On the other hand, there is also evidence that actors are conscious they are not characters. Many actors have reported that their awareness about themselves is indispensable during a performance. For example, Nemiro cites a report by one actor:

> *You know you can't go confusing – to give a really brilliant performance you have to get so close to that character that you get scared. But you can't lose yourself in it. There's this other eye that you have to have that has to stand outside you and look at you. If it doesn't do that then you get lost and anything can happen. You can go quite mad (Nemiro, 1997, p. 235).*

Hetzler also employs several first-person actor reports. For example, the above-mentioned respondent, numbered 457345, continued to explain her or his personal experience after describing their emotional involvement with the character:

> *While on stage I AM the character, [...] I feel (think, do) what the character is feeling (thinking, doing) […]. While I might be engaged, I – the Actor – do not become ENTANGLED with the emotional life of the*

[4] Due to space limitations, I only present Steven Brown et al.'s findings. However, there are other empirical studies regarding the psychology of actors. For instance, many experiments have revealed that during rehearsals and performances, actors' personalities became increasingly similar to their characters (Hannah et al., 1994; Nemiro, 1997; Timmons, 1945).

> *character. That's HIS life, and I just happen to be living it for the moment. It's like having dual personalities that are distinct from one another. Once off-stage, I disengage almost completely (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71).*

These findings imply that actors realize they are not actually identical to their characters. Moreover, certain behavioral evidence also demonstrates that actors do not really lose themselves. For example, even if the actor feels they are becoming the character, they still notice the camera or the stage light and know when and how to end the performance. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo kills Tybalt. The actor portraying Romeo also needs to "kill" Tybalt; however, they only *pretend* to do that. If the actor really hurts and kills another actor, they would cause an incident. Therefore, actors are conscious they are not characters.

The relevant point is also supported by empirical research. For instance, in a psychological experiment, participants were asked to engage in improvisational acting exercises and to report and rate their subjective experiences along the different dimensions (Scheiffele, 2001). The results imply that although the actors entered an "altered state of consciousness (ASC)," such as with drugs, meditation, hypnosis, drumming, peak experience or sensory deprivation, they did *not* lose the sense of personal identity and their perception was *not* obviously altered: they neither believed they became the roles nor reported they really saw or heard their imagined objects (Scheiffele 2001, p. 181, 186–89).

Summing up, actors possess two simultaneous states of consciousness.[5] On the one hand, they experience a "blending" of actor and character; they feel what their character would feel. On the other hand, actors are conscious they are not characters. The dual states of consciousness ensure that actors do not lose control when immersed in the experience of the character. Dual-consciousness seems linked to the value of the theatrical and cinematic acting. An excellent actor can possess two simultaneous states of awareness. However, DC also implies a problem: how can one person feel the other's experience and simultaneously be conscious that one is not identical to the other? One person's inner experience is private; only Romeo (if this fictional character existed) himself can feel his own emotional experience. If the actor knows he is not Romeo, how can he feel Romeo's inner experience? The following section attempts to resolve the problem.

3. Recreative Imagination and Dual-Consciousness

DC implies a puzzle: how can an actor feel the experience of the character but simultaneously know that she is not identical to the character? Our experience is private and inaccessible to the other; only we *ourselves* are able to feel our own experience. If one is aware that one is not identical to the other, how is it possible for one to feel the other's experience? Suppose I am a university student and do not pass my final exams – I feel disappointed. I am disappointed because that is me failing the exams, not others failing theirs. If I pass the exams but others fail, I would no longer feel disappointed. However,

[5] Dual-consciousness is not equivalent to empathy. It seems that DC is more committed to the character than a case of empathy. Suppose my friend's grandmother died, and I attend her funeral, although I have never seen my friend's grandmother, I am affected to experience the same negative emotion with my friend as if I have become my friend, and I realize that I feel sorrow because I am in the company of my friend. This is a typical case of empathy. Again, imagine an actor playing a person attending the funeral of his grandmother. An excellent actor not only needs to share the character's emotion, but also needs to act like a person feeling sad for his relative's death: she bursts into tears, kisses the portrait of her grandmother, thanks her friends for coming to the funeral, tells stories about her grandmother's life and cannot bear to leave. Onstage performance requires actors to perform the actions of the character, which mere empathy does not require. Moreover, an empathizer feels not only the other's emotion, but also is aware that the emotion is both her own and the other's. However, although actors often feel the character's emotions, they are inclined to judge that the emotions are not their own but the character's (Hetzler, 2008). Consider the distinction drawn by Uriah Kriegel (2009). He argues that phenomenal consciousness involves two aspects: the qualitative and the subjective. When I see a red apple, I have an experience of reddishness: I feel what it is like to experience the reddishness. The subjective aspect "consists in the way in which the experience is for me, or what we might think of as its for-me-ness" (Kind, 2020b, p.146). It seems that actors have the qualitative aspects of their character's experiences but do not have the subjective aspects. Finally, there is no precise definition of empathy. Given the ambiguous concept of empathy, I do not think it is meaningful to consider whether dual-consciousness is a form of empathy.

during an onstage performance, the actor knows that she is not the character. In this case, how can the actor feel the experience of the character? If the actor believes she is not the character, how can she access the character's experience? This section argues that the view of recreative imagination provides a solution. Through recreative imagination, one can experience the other's situation; in this sense, the actor can feel the experience of the character.

3.1 What is Recreative Imagination?

Currently there is a consensus that there are two types of imagination: propositional and sensory (I do not claim that the two types do exhaust all forms of imagination).[6]

Consider the following two examples that illustrate the two types of imagination:

> Jack and John are playing a game of make-believe. Jack says: "Let's imagine that tree is a monster." John asks: "What does it look like?" Jack responds: "It has 10 feet, is dark brown, has a big mouth and many arms. So terrible! It would eat us!" John follows Jack's suggestion and imagines the monster.
>
> Paul is a great pianist but, unfortunately, he lost one of his arms because of a dreadful accident. Thus, he is no longer able to play the piano. Due to his passion for music, he imagines he is not disabled and he is playing the piano. He imagines sitting on the stage in front of a large audience and he is using his fingers to tap out a piece of music.

Both cases involve the above-mentioned forms of imagination. First, both include propositional imagination whose content is a proposition or a situation. For example, Jack imagines the tree is a monster and that the monster has 10 feet, whereas Paul imagines he is playing the piano and that a large audience is watching him. In these cases, the contents they imagine take the forms of proposition. Second, the two examples also include sensory imagination. Unlike propositional imagination, the content of sensory imagination is a sensory object, not a situation. For example, when John imagines the monster, he pictures, in his "mind's eye," the dark brown monster having 10 feet; when Paul imagines playing the piano, he might picture himself from the audience's perspective. In these cases, the contents of their imaginings are objects, not situations. Moreover, it is often claimed that humans have a sense of proprioception (also known as kinesthesia) – a sense that enables us to perceive the location, movement and action of parts of our bodies. Thus, Paul can also imagine his fingers tapping out a piece of music; his imagining is a kind of bodily sensation of exercising his fingers. Proprioceptive imagination is also regarded as a form of sensory imagination.[7]

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[6] Although most philosophers agree that imagination takes two forms – propositional and sensory – there is a debate about the relationship between them. For example, Ryle (1949), Walton (1990) and Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) argue that propositional imagination need not include sensory components. Compare that point with Kind (2001), who argues that all forms of imagination should include mental images – a sensory component.

[7] The taxonomy of imagination seems also to include experiential imagination (Kind 2016, p. 5; 2020a, pp. 337–338). Experiential imagination is often expressed using a gerund phrase. For instance, John imagines seeing the monster and imagines feeling scared – what he imagines is neither a situation nor a sensory object, but only two types of particular experiences – the visual experience of seeing and the emotional experience of being afraid. In this paper, I did not discuss this type of imagining because it raises more problems. First, I doubt people can directly imagine feeling a certain experience without engaging sensory imaginings. It seems very difficult for us to imagine having a visual experience of seeing a cat without picturing an image of a cat, or to imagine feeling afraid of a monster without picturing a horrible monster. Second, if experiential imagination always relies on sensory imaginings, then experiential imagination is more like a particular form of sensory imagination, or it is caused by one's sensory imaginings. In the latter case, the so-called "experiential imagination" is more like a re-experiencing, that is, re-living or re-producing certain experience via imaginings. However, the qualitative feeling of this type of experience is not imagined. To avoid overcomplicating my theory, I do not consider the concept of experiential imagination.

Recently, a popular view on imagination has gained much support, according to which imagination is recreative; namely, imagination recreates its counterparts (Currie and Ravenscroft, 2002; Goldman, 2006). First, consider sensory imagination, which is often connected to mental image – the imaginer pictures the object in her "mind's eyes" as if truly seeing this object (despite not actually perceiving it). In this sense, sensory imagination recreates the sensory content of its counterpart perception and simulates the relevant perceptual experience. When John imagines the monster having 10 feet, he recreates the sensory content of visual perception about the monster, which enables him to feel as if he saw the monster. When Paul imagines himself from the perspective of the audience, he recreates the sensory content of the audience's visual experience, which enables him to feel as if he watched his own performance on stage. Equally, when Paul imagines tapping out a piece of music, his imagining recreates the proprioceptive content - the bodily sensation of closing and opening the fingers, which enables him to learn what it is like to play a piece of music.

Now, consider propositional imagination, which is often thought to copy the function of its counterpart belief to generate the relevant emotional experience (Nichols, 2004; Walton, 1990). For example, when imagining that the tree is a monster, John might feel fear as believing that the tree is a monster; when imagining playing the piano, Paul might feel happy like having a belief that he is playing the piano. In these cases, their imaginings play the role of belief to produce the relevant emotional experience and the imaginers thereby learn what it is like to feel these emotional experiences. Moreover, although there is no consensus, propositional imagination is also thought to recreate a desire; namely, there exists the state of *desire-like imagining* or *i-desire*, which recreates the content and function of its counterpart desire (Currie and Ravenscroft, 2002; Doggett and Egan, 2007, 2012). For instance, when John imagines a horrible monster, he might feel an imaginative desire to run away. This imaginative desire recreates the content of the desire triggered by a real danger.

To sum up, sensory and propositional imaginations are recreative. Sensory imagination recreates the sensory content of perception and simulates the relevant perceptual experience; propositional imagination recreates the functions of its counterpart belief and desire and produces some relevant emotional experience as genuinely having this belief and desire.

Imagination is also accompanied by a certain awareness: when imagining something or imagining doing something, the imaginer is aware that what she imagines is not real. When John and Jack imagine a horrible monster, no matter how detailed and concrete their imaginings, they remain aware that the monster is not real and their imaginings are fictional. When Paul imagines playing the piano, no matter whether that gives him a sense of satisfaction and self-worth, he is conscious that he is playing the piano in an imagined world. Although we are not sure whether this associated awareness is a form of occurrent belief or only a kind of feeling, it is certain that this type of awareness informs the imaginer of the non-reality of the experience and the content her imagination recreates.[8]

On the one hand, imagination can recreate sensory and propositional content of mental states. On the other hand, imagination is also associated with a type of awareness that informs us of the non-reality of what the imagination recreates.[9] Thus, imagination seems to provide us with a particular dual-expe-

[8] When imagining something, the imaginer might explicitly believe that her imaginings are not real, or she holds a non-occurrent belief that it is not real, or only has a feeling it is not real. I am not sure which type of mental state should be attributed to the imaginer; therefore, I call it "awareness" – a more modest term; when an actor imagines she is the character, she is aware that it is not real. Moreover, this awareness is not a component of the imaginative states, because it is not indispensable for the imaginer: schizophrenics or some actors who are totally immersed into their roles might not have this type of awareness; they are unaware their imaginings are not real. This awareness is rather a supplement of the imaginative state: our imaginings are accompanied by a kind of awareness that informs us of their non-reality. Therefore, DC might comprise two types of mental state: one is recreative imagination, the other is an awareness of the non-reality of the imagination.

[9] Episodic remembering might be considered a form of imagination (for the relevant discussions, see Debus, 2016): one re-experiences past events via imagining those events. I have argued that imagination includes a type of awareness about non-reality, which might imply that, when episodically remembering past events, the subject is aware it is an instance of imagination, not

rience: we experience some non-actual situations and know these situations are not real. For instance, John experiences what it is like to see a monster, but he also realizes that this experience is not real; and Paul re-experiences what it is like to play the piano on stage, but also realizes that it is not true.

3.2 Onstage Acting and Imagination

Onstage acting is supposed to be a high-level imaginative simulation of the character's situations, which involves a variety of imagination. All the above-mentioned two forms of imagination – sensory and propositional – are imbued in the actor's mind during a performance, a rehearsal or a process of preparing the roles.

Consider the following scene – Romeo's monologue – from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

ROMEO:
Is it even so? then I defy you, stars!
Thou know'st my lodging: get me ink and paper,
And hire post-horses; I will hence to-night.
[…]
There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,
Doing more murders in this loathsome world,
Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell.
I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none.
Farewell, buy food, and get thyself in flesh.
Come, cordial and not poison, go with me
To Juliet's grave; for there must I use thee.
(Scene I, Act V)

In this scene, Romeo learns of Juliet's death, and then buys poison from an apothecary and decides to kill himself. To act this scene, the actor (especially those following method acting) is often engaged in the following forms of imagination:

A. The actor imagines that Juliet died and imaginatively desires that she not die (if there exist desire-like imaginings), or he imagines that the actress in front of him is Juliet.
B. To prepare for the role and perfect the performance, the actor imagines the scene concerning Romeo's death. Thus, he considers himself as Romeo and visualizes buying poison and then drinking it. He pictures the scene in which he is dying.

In Case A, the contents of the actor's imaginings concern the propositions; therefore, they are considered propositional imagination. In Case B, the contents of the actor's imaginings are sensory objects; the actor visualizes the scene in which he himself drinks poison and is dying. Thus, the actor is engaged in sensory imagination.

Given that propositional imagination can produce the relevant emotional experience, the actor's propositional imaginings, such as imagining that Juliet died, produce the actor's tragic emotions, such

real memory. However, the non-reality of imagination does not entail that its content is always impossible or untrue, but that its objects do not actually present to the imaginer. When a person imagines a monster, they are aware that the monster does not actually present. Equally, when remembering something, the subject is also aware that the remembered events do not actually present. This point does not contradict the fact that remembering past events is a memory. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this journal for raising this issue.

as sadness, grief or sorrow. That enables the actor to feel the same emotional experience as Romeo, and thereby to access Romeo's inner world. In addition, sensory imagination can recreate the sensory content of the counterpart perception and thereby provide the imaginer with the feeling as if she perceived the imagined object. Therefore, the actor's sensory imaginings, such as imagining the scene in which he buys poison and is dying, provide him with the relevant experiences as if he really drinks poison and kills himself. Thus, when the actor is engaged in such types of imagination, he receives some of Romeo's subjective experiences and feels what it is like to lose his lover. Then, little by little, he is transported into Romeo's inner world, the recreative force of his imagination becomes increasingly strong and he thereby receives the more powerful and intense experiences that the character Romeo would have. Thus, the actor gradually begins to have a feeling of "becoming Romeo": he experiences himself as Romeo, reacts to the situation like Romeo, perceives a "blending" of the actor and the character.

Reconsider another scene, in which the actor playing Romeo pretends to kill Tybalt. To act this scene, the actor needs to imagine that Tybalt insulted him and killed his friend Mercutio. This ability involves a form of propositional imagination. Then, the actor also needs to be engaged in sensory imagination: he needs to imagine Tybalt that person. Moreover, the actor might also imagine a bodily sensation of fighting with Tybalt. These forms of imagination recreate Romeo's mental states and provide the actor with an experience of "being Romeo." For instance, the actor's sensory imagining regarding the appearance of Tybalt makes the actor visualize Tybalt as if he genuinely saw him; his propositional imagining that Tybalt kills his friend Mercutio, like believing that Tybalt kills him, produces the relevant emotional experience, such as anger; and his proprioceptive imaginings enable the actor to feel what it is like to fight with his rival. These forms of imagining combine to make the actor experience as Romeo in this scene.

Dual-consciousness implies that the actor experiences a blending of self and character: she feels the experience of her character. This type of experiential identification results from the actor's imaginings on the character's situation, which recreates the experience of the character, making the actor feel she is close to the character. However, my arguments lack an important step; I do not account for whether the actor has to be engaged in such imaginings when playing roles. Why are these imaginings indispensable for onstage acting? I now try to answer this question.

First, consider propositional imagination. It is often thought to work as the premise of counterfactual inference. For instance, Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich explain that imagination attitude and belief attitude (in their terminology, "imagination box" and "belief box") share the same propositional content and inference mechanism (Nichols and Stich, 2000, p. 122–127). Imagining I am Romeo and learn of Juliet's death: from my imagining that Juliet died, I can infer that, if I Juliet died, I (Romeo) would feel grief, as I infer that Romeo would feel grief from the belief that Juliet died. When preparing for a role, propositional imagining often helps actors to make inferences concerning the content of the drama and to choose what performance to display.

Then, consider sensory imagination. It enables actors to be more committed to their characters or to feel a sense of closeness with the character and the scene, which make the actor's performance more energetic and full of passion. Suppose that an actor imagines Juliet, her beautiful face, and her death from Romeo's perspective. And then compare this style of acting with a "non-imaginative" style of acting which does not encourage actors to imagine seeing Juliet: when portraying Romeo, the "non-imaginative" actor does not imagine the sensory experience of Romeo but only follows the director's advice and what the script requires. The actor often makes the following type of inference: if Romeo saw Juliet's death, he would feel grief; I believe that I am portraying Romeo, so I will imitate the facial expressions of sadness and grief. It seems that the "imaginative" style of acting is closer to and more committed to the character's inner world than the "non-imaginative" style. A feeling of closeness with the character is what method acting and other styles of emotional involvement require. Thus, sensory imaginations is essential for some styles of acting. In addition, many theatrical scripts and texts are incomplete and

do not tell us the emotional experience, the facial expression and the pronunciation and intonation of the character. Actors need to use their imaginings to enrich the details and recreate these experiences. Therefore, imagination is indispensable for onstage acting.

However, as demonstrated, imagination accompanies a kind of awareness, which informs the actor of the non-reality of the experience recreated by imagination. The actor portraying Romeo should know he is engaged in imagination, that Juliet's death and Romeo's grief are fictional. Otherwise, the actor loses themselves and is mad, rather than acting the character. Thus, the actor realizes that what their imaginings provide is not real.

Summing up, dual-consciousness implies two simultaneous states of consciousness: the actor feels the experience of the character and remains aware she is not the character. The actor has the experience of the character because her imaginings recreate that experience; at the same time, she is conscious she is not the character because she is aware that her imaginings are fictional.

Conclusion

In this paper, I first clarified the concept of DC. I argued it should be considered two simultaneous states of awareness – the awareness of the character and of the actor; not only an ability of control. The final point is the consequence of the awareness of the actor. Second, I argued that imaginative recreation can successfully account for DC: the awareness of character results from imaginative recreation, and the awareness of the actor is due to a form of awareness regarding the attitude of imagination.

My conclusion might imply certain theoretical consequences. Firstly, it seems that mere belief and desire cannot explain some cases of onstage acting. Belief and desire are not recreative; they cannot provide an experience we do not actually have. Believing that if you were a knight, you would kill the dragon, cannot provide you with the experience of fighting a fire dragon without imagining seeing the dragon and fighting with it.[10] In addition, it seems that in dramatic educations, actors more should be encouraged to develop an ability of *imagination*; we should teach actors *how to imagine* and *how to use their imaginations to simulate their characters.*

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[10] The study of these styles of acting can contribute to the philosophy of imagination. For instance, there is currently a discussion about whether imagination is intrinsically motivating. One theory claims that imagination cannot motivate agents, and that agents are motivated only by their conditional beliefs and desires (Nichols and Stich, 2000). Another theory states that imagination takes two forms – desire-like imagining and belief-like imagining – as the imaginative counterparts of belief and desire that motivate agents (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002; Doggett and Egan, 2007). Since method actors recreate the mental states of the character via their imaginings and sincerely behave like the character, this implies they are motivated by their imaginings simulating the character's mental states, rather than by their conditional beliefs. For a relevant discussion, see Guo (2020).

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The Role of 'Me' in Method Acting: A Narrative Exploration of the Impact of Acting on Adult Identity

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Keywords: adult development, sexual identity, critical pedagogy, method acting

Abstract: The development of a character in the Method acting tradition is a highly introspective and personal process, and may have significant influence on the actors' processes of development. This narrative study seeks to examine the relationship between character portrayal and adult development, particularly sexual identity development.

Anecdotally, actors often report that the characters they play leave behind a lasting mark on who the actor is and how he or she engages the world. The praxis of Method acting, the predominant style of training actors in the United States (Bandelj, 2003; Bartow, 2006), guides the performer through an introspective process *as the character* to identify the social, cultural, and emotional forces that shape the character and determine how that character engages the world (Stanislavsky, 1961). In this process, the actor engages in critical reflection around issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation as they impact his or her character. The language of Method acting suggests that it is important to reinforce, rather than confront, these forces in striving for *verisimilitude*, the process of providing a recognizable reality on stage for the audience (Stanislavsky, 1961). In popular culture, examples of Hollywood actors "living as" their characters stand as illustrations of the Method tradition.

There are several critiques of the Method in the literature of acting pedagogy, most suggesting that the Method reinforces a hegemony steeped in racism, classism, sexism, or heterosexism (Aston, 1999; Bosson & Prewitt-Freillino, 2006; Esch, 2006; Gainor, 2002; Gilbert, 1994; Russell, 2007). If the actor explores and embodies his or her character within these forces of oppression, he or she also tacitly reinforces the oppression and may extrapolate it to his or her own life.

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1994) and hooks (2000), who suggest that identity is derived from the interaction of the individual with the oppressive or liberating forces in the social world, Method acting can have profound negative implications for the actor's sense of self. By acting to intentionally reinforce oppressive forces, the performer may internalize the traits of the oppressor and make that oppressor part of his or her identity without purposeful critical reflection. Popular culture is rife with examples of the actor struggling emotionally and in relationships after playing a particular role.

Several schools of theatre use the tools of critical pedagogy to engage social issues and raise consciousness for the audience in safe, depersonalized ways (Boal, 1979; Picher, 2007). Others, in their critique of the Method, engage the actor in ways that bring to light the oppressive influences of society, rather than reinforcing hegemony (Beck, Malina & Amitin, 1981; Brecht, 1964; James, 1971). Whether engaging the audience or the actor, theatre and the praxis of acting have significant implications as tools for critical pedagogy.

Given the tools of critical pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007), the actor could use the character as an impetus to examine his or her own experience with the same oppressing

forces. The resulting consciousness-raising allows the actor to depersonalize the oppression that impacts his or her character, while critically examining how those same forces may impact his or her own life. The literature of acting pedagogy is limited in its treatment of character development as a critical pedagogy, while the adult education literature, in its exploration of theatre as an arbiter of social issues, overlooks the experience of the *performer* and how he or she can engage this process introspectively.

The purpose of this narrative study in progress is to explore the retrospective stories of actors to identify how their character development has shaped their own senses of identity. The intersection of critical pedagogy, identity development, and Method acting, overlooked in research to date, may hold significant implications for the training of actors and their adult identity development.

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Method acting

Method acting, known as **The Method**, is a range of rehearsal techniques, as formulated by a number of different theatre practitioners, that seeks to encourage sincere and expressive performances through identifying with, understanding, and experiencing a character's inner motivation and emotions.[2][3] These techniques are built on Stanislavski's system, developed by the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski and captured in his books *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*.[4]

Marlon Brando's performance in Elia Kazan's film of *A Streetcar Named Desire* exemplifies the power of Stanislavski-based acting in cinema.[1]

Among those who have contributed to the development of the Method, three teachers are associated with "having set the standard of its success", each emphasizing different aspects of the approach: Lee Strasberg (the psychological aspects), Stella Adler (the sociological aspects), and Sanford Meisner (the behavioral aspects).[5] The approach was first developed when they worked together at the Group Theatre in New York and later at the Actors Studio.[4] Notable method actors include Marlon Brando, James Dean, Heath Ledger, Joaquin Phoenix, Christian Bale, Jared Leto, Daniel Day-Lewis, Robert De Niro and Al Pacino.[6]

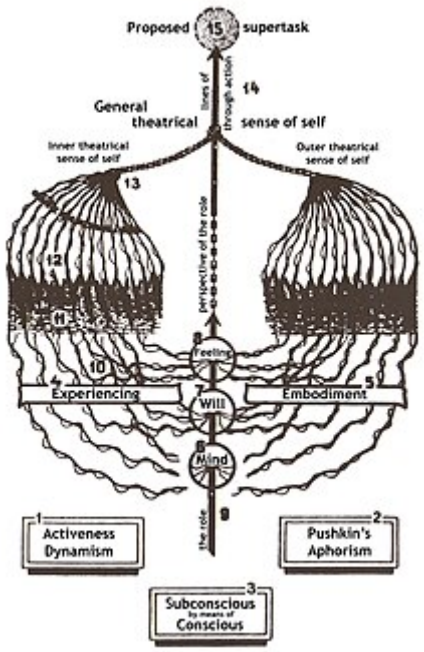
History and development

"The Method" is an elaboration of the "system" of acting developed by the Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski. In the first three decades of the 20th century, Stanislavski organized his training, preparation, and rehearsal techniques into a coherent, systematic methodology. The "method" brought together and built on: (1) the director-centred, unified aesthetic and disciplined, ensemble approach of the Meiningen company; (2) the actor-centred realism of the Maly; (3) and the naturalistic staging of Antoine and the independent theatre movement.[7]

The "system" cultivates what Stanislavski calls the "art of experiencing", to which he contrasts the "art of representation".[8] It mobilizes the actor's conscious thought and will, in order to activate other, less-controllable psychological processes, like emotional experience and subconscious behavior, both sympathetically and indirectly.[9] In rehearsal, the actor searches for inner motives to justify action and the definition of what the character seeks to achieve at any given moment (a "task").[10] Later, Stanislavski further elaborated the "system" with a more physically grounded rehearsal process, which is known as the "Method of Physical Action".[11] Minimizing at-the-table discussions, he now encouraged an "active analysis", in which the sequence of dramatic situations are improvised.[12] "The best analysis of a play", Stanislavski argued, "is to take action in the given circumstances."[13]

As well as Stanislavski's early work, the ideas and techniques of Yevgeny Vakhtangov (a Russian-Armenian student who had died in 1922 at age 39) were also an important influence on the development of the Method. Vakhtangov's "object exercises" were developed further by Uta Hagen as a means for actor training and the maintenance of skills. Strasberg attributed to Vakhtangov the distinction between Stanislavski's process of "justifying" behavior with the inner motivational forces that prompt that behavior in the character and the "motivating" behavior with imagined or recalled experiences relating to the actor

and substituted for those relating to the character. Following this distinction, actors ask themselves "What would motivate me, the actor, to behave in the way the character does?" The contrast is the Stanislavskian question, "Given the particular circumstances of the play, how would I behave, what would I do, how would I feel, how would I react?"[14]



A diagram of Stanislavski's "system", based on his "Plan of Experiencing" (1935)

United States

In the United States, the transmission of the earliest phase of Stanislavski's work via the students of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) revolutionized acting in the West.[15] When the MAT toured the US in the early 1920s, Richard Boleslawski, one of Stanislavski's students from the First Studio, presented a series of lectures on the "system" that were eventually published as *Acting: The First Six Lessons* (1933). The interest generated led to a decision by Boleslawski and Maria Ouspenskaya (another student at the First Studio who later became an acting teacher)[16] to emigrate to the US and to establish the American Laboratory Theatre.[17]

However, the version of Stanislavski's practice these students took to the US with them was that developed in the 1910s, rather than the more fully elaborated version of the "system" detailed in Stanislavski's acting manuals from the 1930s, *An Actor's Work* and *An Actor's Work on a Role*. The first half of *An Actor's Work*, which treated the psychological elements of training, was published in a heavily abridged and misleadingly translated version in the US as *An Actor Prepares* in 1936. English-language readers often confused the first volume on psychological processes with the "system" as a whole.[18] Many of the American practitioners who came to be identified with the Method were taught by Boleslawski and Ouspenskaya at the American Laboratory Theatre.[19] The approaches to acting subsequently developed by their students—including Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner—are often confused with Stanislavski's "system".

Stella Adler, an actress and acting teacher whose students included Marlon Brando, Warren Beatty, and Robert De Niro, also broke with Strasberg after she studied with Stanislavski. Her version of the method is based on the idea that actors should stimulate emotional experience by imagining the scene's "given circumstances", rather than recalling experiences from their own lives. Adler's approach also seeks to stimulate the actor's imagination through the use of "as ifs", which substitute more personally affecting imagined situations for the circumstances experienced by the character.

Alfred Hitchcock described his work with Montgomery Clift in *I Confess* as difficult "because you know, he was a method actor". He recalled similar problems with Paul Newman in *Torn Curtain*.[20] Lillian Gish quipped: "It's ridiculous. How would you portray death if you had to experience it first?"[21] Charles Laughton, who worked closely for a time with Bertolt Brecht, argued that "Method actors give you a photograph", while "real actors give you an oil painting."[22]

During the filming of *Marathon Man* (1976), Laurence Olivier, who had lost patience with Method acting two decades earlier while filming *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957), was said to have quipped to Dustin Hoffman, after Hoffman stayed up all night to match his character's situation, that Hoffman should "try acting ... It's so much easier."[23] In an interview on *Inside the Actors Studio*, Hoffman said that this story had been distorted: he had been up all night at the Studio 54 nightclub for personal rather than professional reasons and Olivier, who understood this, was joking.[24]

Strasberg's students included many prominent American actors of the latter half of the 20th century, including Paul Newman, Al Pacino, George Peppard, Dustin Hoffman, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Jane Fonda, Jack Nicholson, and Mickey Rourke.[25]

India

In Indian cinema, a form of Method acting was developed independently from American cinema. Dilip Kumar, a Hindi cinema actor who debuted in the 1940s and eventually became one of the biggest Indian movie stars of the 1950s and 1960s, was a pioneer of this technique, predating Hollywood Method actors such as Marlon Brando. Kumar inspired many future Indian actors, including Amitabh Bachchan, Naseeruddin Shah, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Irrfan Khan and many more.[26][27] Kumar, who pioneered his own form of method acting without any acting school experience,[28] was described as "the ultimate method actor" by filmmaker Satyajit Ray.[29]

In the south, method acting was extensively practiced at first by Malayalam actor Sathyan and later by Tamil actor Sivaji Ganeshan and later by prominent actors like Mammootty, Mohanlal and Kamal Haasan.

Method acting is being discussed more in India with the rise of OTT streaming platforms that feature several popular web series exploring genres seldom featured in Indian cinema. The increasing viewership of these platforms has given space to the next generation of method actors in India,[30] including Rajkumar Rao, Amit Sadh, Pawan Kalyan, Ranveer Singh, Ali Fazal and Vicky Kaushal.

Techniques

Among the concepts and techniques of Method acting are substitution, "as if", sense memory, affective memory, and animal work (all of which were first developed by Stanislavski). Contemporary Method actors sometimes seek help from psychologists in the development of their roles.[31]

In Strasberg's approach, actors make use of experiences from their own lives to bring them closer to the experience of their characters. This technique, which Stanislavski came to call emotion memory (Strasberg tends to use the alternative formulation, "affective memory"), involves the recall of sensations involved in experiences that made a significant emotional impact on the actor. Without faking or forcing, actors allow those sensations to stimulate a response and try not to inhibit themselves.

Stanislavski also took great interest in *Perezhivanie* (Meaning lived emotional experience) and how it could be utilized to create different characters. *Perezhivanie* was a term formerly used in psychology that became popularized when Stanislavski began using it as an acting approach.[32] Stanislavski believed that actors needed to go beyond imitation and encouraged actors to explore their emotions heavily. He defended the idea that the actor needed to experience what the character was experiencing.[33]

Stanislavski's approach rejected emotion memory except as a last resort and prioritized physical action as an indirect pathway to emotional expression.[34] This can be seen in Stanislavki's notes for Leonidov in the production plan for *Othello* and in Benedetti's discussion of his training of actors at home and later abroad.[34] Stanislavski confirmed this emphasis in his discussions with Harold Clurman in late 1935.[34]

In training, as distinct from rehearsal process, the recall of sensations to provoke emotional experience and the development of a vividly imagined fictional experience remained a central part both of Stanislavski's and the various Method-based approaches that developed out of it.

A widespread misconception about Method acting—particularly in the popular media—equates Method actors with actors who choose to remain in character even offstage or off-camera for the duration of a project.[35] In his book *A Dream of Passion*, Strasberg wrote that Stanislavski, early in his directing career, "require[d] his actors to live 'in character' off stage", but that "the results were never fully satisfactory".[36] Stanislavski did experiment with this approach in his own acting before he became a professional actor and founded the Moscow Art Theatre, though he soon abandoned it.[37] Some Method actors employ this technique, such as Daniel Day-Lewis, but Strasberg did not include it as part of his teachings and it "is not part of the Method approach".[38]

While Strasberg focused on the memory-recall aspect of the method, Adler's approach centered on the idea that actors should find truth in the script, inner emotions, experiences, and circumstances of the character.[39] Her teachings have been carried on through Larry Moss, a successor and student of Adler. Moss is the author of the acting textbook *The Intent to Live*, in which he maintains the basic training of Adler's techniques. The book introduces "given circumstances", which are the facts about the character given in the script, and "interpretation", which is the truths about the character not given in the script. This constitutes the actor's assumptions about the character they are playing.[40]

According to Moss, there are three things that an actor needs to know about their character to find truth in their performance. These things are objectives, obstacles, and intentions. The "objective" is what a character needs to fulfill in a given scene. The "super objective" is the character's wishes or dreams throughout the entire story. "Obstacle" is what stands in the way of the character's objectives. "Intention" comprises the actions a character takes to overcome obstacles and achieve objectives. Moss advocates the position that if an actor understands these facts about their character, they will be able to find truth in their performance, creating a realistic presentation. Moss emphasizes this by claiming that the actor does not want to become the character, rather, the character lives through the actor's justification of the character's truths within themselves.[40]

Psychological effects

Method acting has been studied for the possible effects it has on the actor's physical and emotional well-being. Oftentimes, method actors delve into previous emotional experiences, be they joyful or traumatic.[41] The psychological effects, like emotional fatigue, come when suppressed or unresolved raw emotions are dredged up to add to the character,[42] not just from employing personal emotions in performance. On the other hand, it has been suggested that actors have stronger emotional regulation. This may be due to the actor's constant need to conjure up certain emotions and have control over them.[43]

Fatigue, or emotional fatigue, comes mainly when actors "create dissonance between their actions and their actual feelings".[42] A mode of acting referred to as "surface acting" involves only changing one's actions without altering the deeper thought processes. Method acting, when employed correctly, is mainly deep acting, or changing thoughts as well as actions, proven to generally avoid excessive fatigue. Surface acting is statistically "positively associated with a negative mood and this explains some of the association of surface acting with increased emotional exhaustion".[44] This negative mood that is created leads to fear, anxiety, feelings of shame and sleep deprivation.

Raw emotion (unresolved emotions conjured up for acting) may result in sleep deprivation and the cyclical nature of the ensuing side effects.[45] Sleep deprivation alone can lead to impaired function, causing some individuals to have "acute episodes of psychosis". Sleep deprivation initiates chemical changes in the brain that can lead to behavior similar to psychotic individuals.[41] These episodes can lead to more lasting psychological damage. In cases where raw emotion that has not been resolved, or traumas have been evoked before closure has been reached by the individual, the emotion can result in greater emotional instability and an increased sense of anxiety, fear or shame.[46]

However, method acting and acting as a whole can also pose a lot of benefits to the actor. Research has found that actors have a strong theory of mind meaning that they are easily able to recognize the emotions of others. Furthermore, method acting has been found to improve one's skills in empathy. It has been argued that children trained in the method can better understand their own emotions and the emotions of others.[43] Actors have also been found to have increased memory skills. A study found that when non-actors were taught the memorization techniques actors used, their memory increased significantly.[47]

See also

- Ivana Chubbuck
- Ion Cojar
- List of acting techniques
- Sanford Meisner
- Konstantin Stanislavski
- Lee Strasberg

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8. Benedetti (1999a, 201), Carnicke (2000, 17), and Stanislavski (1938, 16–36). Stanislavski's "art of representation" corresponds to Mikhail Shchepkin's "actor of reason" and his "art of experiencing" corresponds to Shchepkin's "actor of feeling"; see Benedetti (1999a, 202).
9. Benedetti (1999a, 170).
10. Benedetti (1999a, 182–183).
11. Benedetti (1999a, 325, 360) and (2005, 121) and Roach (1985, 197–198, 205, 211–215). The term "Method of Physical Action" was applied to this rehearsal process after Stanislavski's death. Benedetti indicates that though Stanislavski had developed it since 1916, he first explored it practically in the early 1930s; see (1998, 104) and (1999a, 356, 358). Gordon argues the shift in working-method happened during the 1920s (2006, 49–55). Vasili Toporkov, an actor who trained under Stanislavski in this approach, provides in his *Stanislavski in Rehearsal* (2004) a detailed account of the Method of Physical Action at work in Stanislavski's rehearsals.
12. Benedetti (1999a, 355–256), Carnicke (2000, 32–33), Leach (2004, 29), Magarshack (1950, 373–375), and Whyman (2008, 242).

13. Quoted by Carnicke (1998, 156). Stanislavski continues: "For in the process of action the actor gradually obtains the mastery over the inner incentives of the actions of the character he is representing, evoking in himself the emotions and thoughts which resulted in those actions. In such a case, an actor not only understands his part, but also feels it, and that is the most important thing in creative work on the stage"; quoted by Magarshack (1950, 375).
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