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# Embodying Shakespeare: A Psychophysical Approach to OP Rehearsal & Performance

RAYMOND PAUL JANNISE II

This thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

Original Practices Shakespeare calls for a specific mode of performance exemplifying a strong unity of thought, action, and speech. Sometimes called Living Thought, actors must realize this state within a typically short OP rehearsal process while maintaining tight, rapid pacing emblematic of the form. This thesis examines Living Thought as a state of psychophysical fluency and asks how a psychophysical approach to OP rehearsal practice can enable actors to manifest it. The research demonstrates how Living Thought can be contextualized and explicated through a psychophysical perspective, constructed through a consideration of existing psychophysical performance practices, especially those of Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Bella Merlin, and Phillip Zarrilli, and the psychophysical work of specialists in vocal performance including Cicely Berry and Kristin Linklater.

This thesis establishes the principal conventions of OP Shakespeare and asks how and to what extent an approach informed by psychophysical performance practice can be utilized for OP. This thesis addresses the challenge of utilizing psychophysical practices typically associated with durational training in the context of the short OP rehearsal process.

This project operates under the hypothesis that a psychophysical approach will facilitate the realization of Living Thought in performance. A toolkit assembled from existing performance practices and adjusted for the demands of OP is explored in a series of workshops to investigate that hypothesis practically. This toolkit of psychophysically derived techniques for OP rehearsal and performance is presented in complete written form with an analysis of the supporting documentary evidence, including supplemental video footage from each workshop illustrating each technique and evidence of Living Thought in practice.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1:1 OP, Living Thought & Psychophysical Practice

Original Practices Shakespeare, henceforth referred to as OP, is a branch of Shakespearean performance operating under historical staging conditions to preserve and illuminate the inherent aesthetic value of Shakespeare's text and stagecraft. OP represents a move away from contemporary technological effects and psychological realism in Shakespearean performance, placing greater emphasis on the actor, the actors' physical instrument, and Shakespeare's text.

My professional background as an actor has given me firsthand experience with OP theatre and the distinct demands on the actor the form entails. These requirements have been encapsulated in a performance philosophy described as Living Thought. Living Thought emphasizes the unity of word, thought, and action inherent in Shakespeare's text that manifests in lively, energized performances with brisk pacing.

When I was first contracted by the American Shakespeare Center (ASC), an OP theatre operating in the first historical recreation of Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse, I was sent a company handbook detailing my contract and professional responsibilities. Included amongst those responsibilities was Living Thought. Under the section 'Performance Style and Philosophy,' actors are told they 'must find ways to think and react with and ON [their] lines rather than BETWEEN them' (American Shakespeare Center, 2009).

Other proponents of Living Thought in Shakespearean performance have suggested that the philosophy constitutes an approach in and of itself. Des McAnuff, former artistic director of the Canadian Stratford Shakespeare Festival, credits the late Michael Langham with originating the term. Langham believed that Living Thought encapsulated 'all that was essential to know about acting Shakespeare' (Ney, 2016, p. 252). For Langham, embodying Living Thought was the prescribed method for getting the most out of a Shakespearean performance. 'And ultimately,' McAnuff explains, 'if one is successful, there's no separation between the thought, the word, and the emotion' (Stageside Shorts: Living Thought ft. Christopher Plummer, 2011). As with the ASC, Langham and McAnuff also conceived of Living Thought as embodied ideally through the complete unity of the textual elements and performance.

There is no recommended method for achieving this unity at the ASC, only the requirement that a way must be found. Finding Living Thought philosophically aligned with his own practice, McAnuff adopted it as an approach but acknowledges that it is 'much easier to describe than actually do' (Ney, 2016, p. 252). Despite its potential importance to Shakespearean performance, especially OP, there is no specific methodology towards achieving Living Thought, nor technique to correct a performance failing to embody its principles of textual fluency and unity.

The level of unity called upon for Living Thought, thinking and reacting within and on the line at the ASC and/or unifying thought, word, and emotion with McAnuff, calls for a strong harmonious balance in performer between the psychological and physical forces at work and being enacted. This project draws upon psychophysical practices, such as martial arts, where 'mind-body unity is among the express

purposes' of training (Reid, 2012, p. 89) to better understand Living Thought and how it might be achieved in performance. The great actor and acting theorist Michael Chekhov was one such psychophysical theorist (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 20) whose work can help to clarify our understanding of Living Thought and bodymind unity. Chekhov acknowledged that 'the human body and psychology influence each other and are in constant interplay' but he also recognized that 'it is seldom that we find a complete balance or harmony between the body and psychology' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 1). Chekhov saw the actor's work as working towards 'the attainment of complete harmony between the two,' but believed that every actor, to some degree, suffers from 'resistance' to this unity, and so identified a need for physical technique 'built on principles' beyond physical fitness (pp. 1-2). At its most basic, psychophysicality represents those principles. Actor, director, and acting theorist John Britton describes the psychophysical as, 'an integrated view of mind and body, thought and action' (Britton, 2013, pp. 314-315).

The integrated view of psychophysical thought is associated with such attainments of mind-body harmony as Chekhov describes. Japanese philosopher and psychophysical practitioner Yuasa Yasuo describes such a state of optimal oneness of bodymind thusly:

...when the dualistic and ambiguous tension in the relationship between the mind and body is dissolved, and the ambiguity overcome, a new perspective will... come into view. The 'oneness of body-mind' describes that free state of minimal distance between movement of the mind and of the body, as...in the dynamic performance of a master actor on a stage (Yuasa, 1987, p. 28).

As McAnuff explained, if one is fully successful with Living Thought, the division between action, text, and emotion dissolves. Living Thought and the oneness of bodymind both require that 'minimal distance' of movement between mind and body.

This project investigates the hypothesis that Living Thought is best approached as an achievement of bodymind oneness essential to OP to cultivate mind-body and textual unity in rehearsal and performance.

In *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski*, acting coach, martial artist and scholar Phillip Zarrilli argues that the Western emphasis on psychology and emotional expression contributes to the problem of disharmony, an expression of mind-body dualism (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17). Zarrilli sees psychophysical practice as an avenue to overcome the mind-body split understood as an impediment to performance, which I term the Actors' Mind-Body Problem. I have often heard some derivation of 'you're in your head' issued to myself or my peers when a director perceives that a performance seems inorganic or somehow out of synch with the performer. A performer can, in nuanced but perceptible ways, present as *out of time*, or *off rhythm* from their impulses, leaving their actions disjointed; this critique can be understood to mean that the performer is in some way overthinking to the detriment of performance. Receiving this criticism, I understand that my director or coach perceives this mind-body disharmony through observation, but I also experience this split internally. I would liken such experiences to feeling almost disembodied, a spirit observing externally my body performing actions or perhaps, less severely, as if I were a pilot mechanically operating my body but not actually inhabiting that body. Though what I perceive is an impression, not literal truth, I also know that when I experience this disconnect between body and mind, I am not experiencing my role genuinely onstage. I am not 'present.' This experience is hardly unique to myself and one of the best articulations of it I have heard comes from the WTF podcast hosted by American actor and comedian Marc Maron. During

an interview with fellow stand-up comic Brian Regan, the two said the following of the challenge of pre-prepared material:

Maron: You want to at least feel like you're engaged with it, but not walking through it... [You do not want to] have that weird moment where you're like, 'hey, look at that guy doing my jokes... That's me!'

Regan: (agreeing) The out of body thing... There's me saying some memorized stuff... (Regan, 2015).

Amy Cook, whose scholastic work examines the interplay of neurocognition and theatre, explains that whatever feelings of disconnect we feel from our actions, there is no 'homunculus in the brain, watching the world pass by as a movie in front of him and then ordering the organism about' (Cook, 2010, p. 69). However, when a performer is 'in their head,' experiencing the Actors' Mind-Body Problem, there can be precisely that feeling of one's body operating mechanically, without true/organic impetus. Regan describes it as 'mailing it in,' Maron calls it 'walking through it,' in the vernacular of my peers, I have usually heard it called 'phoning it in.' These performances can be very unsatisfying for the performer and the audience. Such disembodied performances must preclude Living Thought since it is defined most clearly by its strong unity of words, action, and thought. Shakespeare's text, in OP, does not merely join the mind and body together, but is the source of the action, including speech, and the experienced response in the performer. Living Thought is the expressed embodiment of these aspects unified at high levels.

By contrast to the mind-body split, one of the unifying beliefs found in the plurality of psychophysical practice is the holistic view that the mind and body are interconnected. This project looks to psychophysical theatre practices, especially those of Zarrilli, Michael Chekhov and Stanislavski, in the development of technique to overcome the Actors' Mind-Body Problem and foster a sense of unity, i.e., Living

Thought, in the rehearsal and performance of OP Shakespeare. In contrast to an actor exhibiting, externally and/or internally, a mind-body split, an *embodied* performance will bring the interconnected aspects of mind and body together in performance, as is required to manifest Living Thought.

## 1:2 Research Questions

1. What is OP?
  - What are the common conditions and performance requirements of OP to consider when approaching Living Thought?
2. How can Living Thought be understood?
  - What qualities indicate Living Thought in performance?
  - How can psychophysical practices inform understanding of Living Thought?
  - How do the conditions of OP affect our approach to Living Thought?
3. How can technique derived from psychophysical theory and practice be adjusted to address the specific needs of OP Shakespearean performance to better facilitate Living Thought?
  - To what extent can a toolkit of techniques derived from psychophysical performance practice facilitate Living Thought in OP Shakespearean performance?
  - What can be learned about Living Thought through practical research by approaching OP Shakespeare with technique derived from psychophysical theory?

Within the context of OP, this thesis includes a detailed examination of the idea of Living Thought in Shakespearean performance. Living Thought originates in name from the performative philosophy of renowned director Michael Langham and the American Shakespeare Center, but this thesis will demonstrate the performance principles of Living Thought are far ranging in Shakespeare performance, especially in OP. This thesis is the first attempt to examine the components and requirements of Living Thought in detail and to address those needs in performance.

### 1:3 Lineage of Research & Practice

As explained in 'Chapter 2: OP', the practices grouped as 'Original Practices' Shakespeare, share an appreciation for historical staging conditions as useful to understanding Shakespeare's stagecraft. Essentially, OP practitioners are interested, to varying degrees, in the value of Shakespeare as 'intended', played on 'the original hardware'; often sans lights, sans sound equipment, sans sets, sans everything associated with post-Shakespeare technology. It is important to acknowledge the differences between the Shakespearean performance tradition and psychophysical performance practice, notably the durational training associated with psychophysical traditions and the rapid production schedule and truncated rehearsal time typical of OP. This project primarily examines the rehearsal period, often truncated by design in OP, with training being contextually relevant but of secondary concern for purposes of research. Instead of building a training regimen, this project assumes that, as with many scholastic programs and professional companies, performers will come from a variety of training backgrounds.

There are unique challenges, even potential objections, to the efficacy of Stanislavskian practices on Shakespeare; however, this project proceeds from Stanislavski's psychophysical theories as a starting point, and then principally from late-Stanislavskian psychophysical practices and their direct lineage. This thesis will demonstrate that not only are these potential obstacles avoidable, but that the holistic nature of a psychophysical approach is both compatible and advantageous to understanding Living Thought in practice.

This thesis owes a great deal to the foundational work of Stanislavski scholars Jean Benedetti, Sharon Carnicke, and Bella Merlin. This project relies exclusively on the comprehensive Benedetti translation of Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work* and relies on Carnicke's superb *Stanislavsky in Focus* to understand the divergent views of Stanislavski's work as representing the psychologically driven American Method in the West and the predominantly action-driven Method of Physical Actions/Active Analysis in Russia. Psychophysical practitioner Merlin has devoted much of her career to exploring the psychophysical aspects of Stanislavski's system and its use in contemporary theatre practice. Significant to this project, Merlin has published several accounts of applying her psychophysical interpretation of Stanislavski's toolkit in Shakespearean performance under director Tina Packer [ (Merlin, 2013) (2013) (2018)]. Though Merlin was not working under strict OP conditions, she was using the lens of psychophysical practice in her approach to Shakespeare, making her work in that regard a precursor to my own.

This thesis features a predominantly Stanislavskian-derived psychophysical approach to OP Shakespeare, informed by the legacy of his System as practiced and explored by Maria Knebel, Jean Benedetti, Bella Merlin, Sharon Carnicke, et. al, while offering broader contemporary psychophysical performance practice for more complete context. Despite the emphasis on Stanislavskian-based technique, this project expands beyond the direct application of any single practitioner's technique on Shakespearean performance by exploring an example of an approach to Shakespeare rehearsal and technique informed by psychophysical practice. The Living Thought toolkit is meant to represent an initial example of such an approach. While taking this broader view of psychophysical practice, this project also narrows

its focus to forms of OP, though any insights are potentially useful to other styles of Shakespearean performance.

This dissertation makes an original contribution to research most distinctly as the first significant work documenting the application of an explicitly psychophysically derived practice to OP Shakespeare and to Living Thought in particular. There have been practitioners in the field using psychophysical theories and practices in application to Shakespeare prior to this thesis, most notably, Phillip Zarrilli, Tina Packer, Bella Merlin, Kristin Linklater, Cicely Berry, Michael Chekhov, and, of course, Konstantin Stanislavski. Merlin has gone so far as to extensively document her personal experience as a performer applying her self-described psychophysical reading of Stanislavski while working with Tina Packer's Linklater-influenced theatre Shakespeare & Company, but this thesis does as Merlin herself suggests in her work, *Beyond Stanislavsky: the psycho-physical approach to actor training* (2001). This project, too, looks *beyond* Stanislavski to the broader spectrum of psychophysical practice that has followed him for deeper context and elucidation.

One of the most significant developments in psychophysical performance since Stanislavski has come from the eminent Professor Phillip Zarrilli. In *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2009), wherein Zarrilli provides a thorough analysis of his performer training regimen and acting methodology which he calls Psychophysical Acting, Zarrilli provides a detailed overview of the spectrum of psychophysical practices that he perceives between the titular Stanislavski and his own intercultural approach. This thesis, including the practical research methodology, is triangulated between three points: on the psychophysical plane, the

work is found between Stanislavski<sup>1</sup> and Zarrilli with Original Practices Shakespeare as the third coordinate.

This thesis extends and expands from my MFA dissertation at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC)<sup>2</sup>, where I initially investigated a psychophysical approach to Shakespeare in individual and personal practice (Jannise, 2016). In this respect, I follow in the tradition of actor/academics like Merlin and Benjamin Askew of Central St. Martins, who have provided an example of writing about psychophysical technique for Shakespeare from the perspective of a performer. In this thesis, I have instead used my experience as performer to inform my work as researcher of OP. Though there is overlap between my practice and theirs, this thesis bridges the gap between psychophysical practice and OP, specifically; and focuses explicitly on Living Thought, which neither Merlin nor Askew address. Merlin's work comes nearest to OP through her work with Packer, a director whose perspective is somewhat aligned with OP, but Packer neither operates as an OP director, nor claims to do so. Neither does Merlin. This thesis brings them as sources into the broader conversation on Shakespearean practice while remaining focused on the implications of the research for OP. Furthermore, Merlin's work is stated to be an application of Stanislavski's practice to her personal work as a performer in Shakespeare while this thesis is primarily focused on the work of students and actors in a rehearsal/classroom and performance setting.

Together, insights from Merlin and Zarrilli's respective psychophysical practices and into Stanislavskian practices, are used to explain the role of breath and Tempo-

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<sup>1</sup> Stanislavski as interpreted as a psychophysical practitioner by Merlin, Benedetti, Carnicke, et. Al

<sup>2</sup> Then known as the Birmingham School of Acting

Rhythm in Living Thought. Extrapolating from their work and known Shakespearean practices, notably those working in the field of Voice & Text like Cicely Berry and Kristen Linklater, I explore breath as the meeting point between Shakespeare's text and Stanislavskian psychophysical practices. This discussion can be found in 'Chapter 4: Breath & Verse.' Linklater, especially, notes the psychophysical nature of Shakespearean text as a product of the Elizabethan perspective:

Shakespeare's text integrates words, emotions, objectives, intentions and actions, and in so doing it accurately reflects the Elizabethan society to whom it spoke. Elizabethan men and women spoke in a language four hundred years younger than ours. It was a language that was still part of the oral culture that had shaped all human interaction for thousands of years. Language lived in the body. Thought was experienced in the body. Emotions inhabited the organs of the body. Filled with thought and feeling, the sound waves of the voice flowed out through the body and were received sensorially by other bodies which directly experienced the thought-feeling content of the sound waves. We can picture the speaker's body as all mouth and the listener's body as all ear (Linklater, 1993, p. 6).

Linklater describes a performance text in which emotion, feeling, and sound; in which thought and physicality, were more unified conceptually and experientially by the Elizabethan audience for whom it was written. She is not alone, Shakespeare Scholar Professor Evelyn Tribble has likewise identified the Early Modern acting perspective as embodied and psychophysical (Tribble, 2017). In *Early Modern Actors & Shakespeare's Theatre: Thinking with the Body*, she writes of the typical actors preparatory process:

His preparation consisted primarily of private study of this part, during which time he scanned the part for the changing passions on display and uplifted them into his body – moving them from the language of the playwright through his body, and by means of the art of the gesture out to the audience (Tribble, 2017).

Tribble draws upon the 17<sup>th</sup> century work of John Bulwer on gesture to better understand 'the psycho-physical foundations of the art of gesture in the period'

(Tribble, 2017). To state it more plainly, from what Linklater and Tribble have identified, psychophysicalism **is** an Elizabethan staging condition appropriate for OP.

This thesis also contributes through its development of rehearsal technique and acting theory in OP. While OP is a significant subject of academic interest, it is most often examined for its potential historical insight, with acting theory rarely discussed. Most OP research is conducted by observers of OP performance, but I draw upon my experience as an actor working within a professional and expressly OP-aligned theatre, the American Shakespeare Center, to better explain and contextualize the performance conditions of OP as the theatrical habitat of Living Thought.

Furthermore, my experience and research into OP informs my role facilitating intensive practical elements of this project and offers a rehearsal process specifically for OP. Though OP as a practice was essentially born out of the interaction of various British and American theatres and practitioners influencing one another, OP practices in academia are most often focused on *either* British or American practices. I have connected these practices to best understand OP not by a single prominent example, such as Shakespeare's Globe, but in the broader context of numerous similar historically derived Shakespearean practices.

As stated, psychophysical practitioners known for working with Shakespearean text, like Merlin and Benjamin Askew, present relevant research regarding Shakespeare, but little regarding OP. The field of OP is of primary concern to this dissertation, and no thorough discussion of OP Shakespeare can ignore Shakespeare's Globe in London, easily the most recognizable source of work in the field of OP and Askew brings his personal experience as a performer at the Globe to his academic interest in Shakespeare. However, it should be noted that the Globe has not claimed to

operate as an OP theatre since 2006, despite continuing to share many style and performance philosophies of OP. Askew was first contracted with the Globe in 2007. Still, Askew is one of the few people besides Merlin to have written anything approaching Shakespeare psychophysically, and has even addressed, in part, some of the challenges/objections to Stanislavskian practice applied to Shakespeare. His doctoral dissertation applies psychophysical performance principles to the analysis and composition of metric verse:

... the examination of the acting process offered in this thesis confines itself to what the Stanislavskian teacher and commentator Bella Merlin calls “mental reconnaissance”: the process of textual exploration by which an individual actor makes a series of preliminary performance choices. In order to incorporate this work into a more complete acting methodology, further investigation is required into how these initial choices may be explored, shared, challenged and refined in the collaborative environment of the rehearsal room. I believe... teachers of acting may be the best qualified to carry out such work. However, a discussion of the more advanced stages of rehearsal lies beyond the scope of the present study (Askew, 2016, pp. 14-15).

Advanced stages of rehearsal are of central concern to *this* study.

With OP Shakespeare, the idea of preliminary ‘mental reconnaissance’ can potentially represent an impediment to the actor’s ability to discover *through* ‘performing’ in a rehearsal setting. However, despite this difference of mode, this dissertation is the first attempt to refine a psychophysical approach specifically for Shakespeare, any mode of Shakespeare, into technique applicable to rehearsal and performance, contributing to a ‘more complete acting methodology’ as called for by Askew. Like he with the Globe, I draw from my personal experiences as a contracted performer with the ASC to inform this thesis. OP performance practices are a popular subject amongst academics, especially those interested in historical

performance practices, but perspectives on acting theory per se remain uncommon, and the perspective from that of a performer even more unusual.

Also unusual is the examination of OP from a global perspective. While overlap exists, it is uncommon for contemporary British and American practices to be examined together. This is the first detailed examination of the shared performance practices across the spectrum of major OP theatres. Charles Ney's *Directing Shakespeare in America* (2016) certainly acknowledges the British influence on the field of contemporary Shakespeare in North America, but as his title implies, is more focused upon the perspective of the director.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough explication of OP, contextualizing all that follows. Chapter 3 examines psychophysical performance practice derived from Stanislavski and contextualized with regard to contemporary practice and its relationship to Shakespeare. 'Chapter 4: Breath & Verse' explores breath as the meeting point between psychophysical practice and OP through Tempo-Rhythm. Chapter 5 presents my assembled Living Thought Toolkit derived from psychophysical theory and practice and optimized for OP, as well as research and theoretical rationale for their inclusion and relevant provenance. Chapter 6 analyzes the results of the toolkit in practice through an examination of participants' relative achievements towards Living Thought and discusses what can be learned from that exploration. Chapter 7 concludes this study with relevant findings from and practical reflections on the research of theory and practice discussed herein.

## 1:4 Methodology

This thesis makes use of Practice as Research (PaR). According to the Higher Education Academy report supplied by Boyce-Tillman et. Al (Boyce-Tillman, 2012), PaR in Britain is usually divided into two primary camps: Practice Led research and Practice Based research (p. 10). Practice Based research entails creating a work as research while Practice Led research uses practice to make discovery (Smith, 2009, p. 5).

This project should be understood as Practice Led PaR, the reasons detailed in the following section.

### 1:4:A Practice Led Research

Acting theory does not live on the page, but on the stage, in the studio, and in any space in which performance can be explored as laboratory. Acting theory must be applied by actors to have value as technique, and the rush of energy that is born from performing before an audience in real time cannot be imitated, duplicated, nor fully conveyed via recording. Thus, it is essential to include the observation and analysis of actors at work in this project. The thrill and challenge of OP exists as performance, and the practical workshops I designed each lead to performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in front of an audience. Although each workshop's concluding presentation is a theatrical performance by dint of that audience, it is not intended nor should it be judged as a 'production,' nor a 'final exam' but as my only chance to see Living Thought as it is intended to manifest, in live performance before an audience.

Advantageous to the research of applying any approach to OP, or any other theatrical form, is understanding the challenges and limitations of implementing that technique in a laboratory setting. The workshops serve to enable a detailed observation and analysis of Living Thought in action. The practice of the workshop provides the participants' the opportunity for insightful discovery through experimentation with the toolkit, framing this project's approach to PaR within the realm of Practice Led research.

Practice Led research, according to the Boyce-Tillman et. al, 'concerns the nature of practice and is concerned with originality in the understanding of practice in a particular area' (Boyce-Tillman, 2012, p. 10). By developing focused research into the psychophysical nature of Living Thought, this project is intended to provide a basis for further practitioners and scholars interested in Shakespeare and psychophysical performance.

I participated in workshops 1 and 5 as a performer as well as an instructor when other participants were unavailable. I did not wish to significantly cut the script further than I had nor to unduly burden participants with further lines and characters, determining that six participants at minimum were required to meet the needs of the text. Further cutting might have lessened the effect of Shakespeare's text, already in a reduced form for the workshops. My position within these workshops was firstly that of instructor/coach, then director, with my performance as actor being of least importance. As such, I do not present my performance as actor as an exemplary to the process. Indeed, the performances of the other students were of greater importance to my research into the efficacy and effect of a psychophysical approach to OP Shakespearean rehearsal and performance. My participation as actor was

relatively minor for the fifth workshop, which occurred entirely online, but I concede that it was disruptive and inhibiting to aspects of the first workshop, further expanded upon in Chapter 6.

This thesis will demonstrate a strong theoretical and philosophical alignment between OP and psychophysical performance practice but supplements this theory with practical insight gained through a series of workshops. Within the workshops themselves, my function is not that of researcher but as teacher, acting coach, and director, which blend together as a general facilitator of performance based upon the theories at hand. My role as researcher comes before, studying the theory and history of OP, Living Thought, and psychophysical acting practices respectively and using those to develop techniques. Those techniques were then presented to participants in the workshop as a toolkit for a practical Shakespearean performance.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of psychophysical acting theory applied to OP for the cultivation of Living Thought. Recognizing that acting theory with no practical application is useless, the workshop series serves as laboratory to experiment with that theory in a studio setting. While this may be regarded as a *de facto* test as to the viability of my toolkit as practiced in this workshop series, I do not present the toolkit as perfect, but as a first step. One insight I hoped to gain through such a series was to better understand how the ideas can be further developed and refined. Further, discovering the potential limitations to the toolkit was no less important.

The role of the participants is that of student actors, learning technique but also rehearsing and performing a role in a traditional OP setting. I am grateful for their

volunteering to participate in my research in this role, but they are not researchers. I do my best to instruct and guide them as facilitate the learning of particular exercises, the execution of techniques, and even as traditional director. Outside of the workshop, I return to my role as researcher in evaluating the data, generally for the viability of the toolkit, but more specifically for evidence of Living Thought in performance.

#### 1:4:B Ethical Research

All participants in the workshops that inform this project were given written and verbal explanation about the research before taking part. Most participants were over the age of 18 and provided written consent to participate and for the use of film recording of their participation for archiving and research purposes. Participants under the age of 18 required the additional written consent of their parents as well as the participatory consent of the students themselves, and the copies of all appropriate materials were submitted to the University of Huddersfield for record, in addition to my own. The consent forms offered all requisite information per the University of Huddersfield's standards for ethical research. In accordance with ethical research standard, all participants' names have been anonymized for their privacy and protection, and all video documentation materials securely stored.

#### 1:4:C Research Design

This thesis investigates the hypothesis that psychophysically informed technique can foster mind-body oneness towards the embodiment of Living Thought in OP Shakespeare rehearsal and performance. To examine this hypothesis and the research questions it is intended to address, I have constructed a Practice Led

research process consisting of the toolkit of dramatic techniques and exercises, extrapolated in Chapter 5, that were utilized as my primary methodology in directing Shakespeare in a series of five workshops preparing and rehearsing an abridged version *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Working under the hypothesis that a psychophysical approach will better facilitate Living Thought in OP, I built the toolkit mined from Shakespearean and psychophysical performance practices, further adjusted for the conditions of OP and Living Thought. This toolkit is then explored through implementation in a series of laboratory-style workshops operating under OP conditions. The workshops provide practical insight into the extent to which the qualities of Living Thought can be cultivated through techniques designed to attune psychophysical unity.

Each workshop culminated in a short OP-style performance presentation.

I utilized the same toolkit for all workshops, adjusting only as I became more adept as an instructor, but keeping the process between workshops as similar as possible. I worked with several groups to ensure that sufficient numbers would allow to better observe responses. Each of the five workshops consisted of different groups of students to understand the efficacy of the toolkit across a broad range of likely Shakespeare student/performers. By testing the toolkit with different groups, I avoided the risk of confusing one group's facility with a technique as evidence of that technique's universal efficacy or applicability. The toolkit of techniques implemented and discussed in detail within this thesis include:

- Physicalizing the Text
- Six Energies
- Renaissance Run-Thru
- The Amorphous Body

The tools were introduced to students and explored over the course of 6-7 sessions, each on average 3.5 hours in length. Over the course of each workshop, the techniques were applied to the rehearsal of an *A Midsummer Night's Dream* culminating with a performance presentation of the work before an audience. Discoveries and insights from these workshops are explored in 'Chapter 6: Living Thought in process.' Additionally, supplemental footage of the rehearsal/performance process is presented with examples of students manifesting traits indicative of Living Thought in practice. While the presented toolkit was assembled largely from techniques present in existing practice, the toolkit makes significant adjustments to suit the needs of OP.

OP challenges addressed in this study:

1. Brisk Pacing
2. Relatively short overall rehearsal schedule
3. The Primacy of the Text
4. Doubling (a single character playing multiple roles)
5. Heightened/Theatrical Style
6. (Technologically) Poor Theatre
7. Improvising Shakespeare

The energetic style and pacing that Living Thought exemplifies is almost universal across the range of OP approaches, and while each technique in the toolkit is intended to address specific challenges of Shakespearean and OP performance, all techniques assembled were selected to facilitate a sense of mind-body harmony towards the manifestation of Living Thought in performance. Each technique is discussed in depth in 'Chapter 5: a Living Thought toolkit.'

The Renaissance Run-Thru (**Ren-Run**) is a rehearsal technique originating from the ASC in which the cast of a given production is tasked with preparing and then exhibiting a run of the full script without prior rehearsal together, and without

directorial input or guidance. The technique was designed to provide the performer with a semblance of the experience of Elizabethan actors, who had little rehearsal time and no director. Though an OP technique, it represents an opportunity for improvisation in the tradition of Stanislavskian psychophysicalism but optimized for Shakespearean performance, as discussed in detail in '5:4:B Improvising Shakespeare'. A description of the Ren-Run technique as practiced and a discussion of its potential for improvisational exploration in OP are detailed in '5:4 Renaissance Rehearsal'.

The so-called '**Six Energies**' provide a means of approaching the rehearsal process with a physically active emphasis and vocabulary, suited to the energetic style of OP and Psychophysical Activation. The Six Energies are derived from the six dynamic movement qualities of dance theory. These dynamic movement qualities have been reinterpreted for acting theory by Louise Papillion, Organic Movement instructor at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC) where I learned the technique under her as an MFA student. A description of each of the six energies and my experience of their practice as an acting technique is detailed in 'Chapter 5:3 Six Dynamic Energies of Active Emotion.' Supplemental footage of me coaching students through physical improvisations and embodiment exercises for each of the six energies is provided in the accompanying drive with links to online hosting. These and all other unlisted video clips are accessible only via the hyperlinks in this document for the safety and anonymity of all participants<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Any scholar accessing this dissertation for purposes of research is asked not to share the links for the safety and anonymity of the participants of this study, accessing them only for further ethical research.

Each workshop in this project's series begins with a process I call physicalizing the text derived from practices known to me through voice training, most notably through practices learned directly from Cicely Berry and Linklater-certified instructors. The 'voice tradition', sometimes called 'text based', or Voice & Text, is a fundamental aspect of Shakespearean performance studies that addresses the use of Shakespeare's language as speech. Shakespearean Voice & Text work was pioneered by RSC vocal coaches, most significantly Kristin Linklater and Cicely Berry. This toolkit is not presented as an alternative to such Voice & Text work, but it is meant to work in conjunction with it. OP practice is closely aligned with approaches to Shakespeare that focus 'on the language as the primary vehicle for production,' (Ney, 2016, p. 31) and physicalizing the text extends the Voice & Text work into the early rehearsal process. A discussion of physicalizing the text is found in 'Chapter 5:2 physicalizing the text,' with an extended discussion of Voice & Text and the influence of Berry, Linklater and others found in '5:2:A to be moved'.

Physicalizing the text encapsulates a series of exercises in which the student pairs reading lines aloud with corresponding physical activities. The activities explored in this project were derived from my own experience with Voice & Text training at the RSC under Alex Taylor, head of Voice, and vocal coaches, Simon Radcliffe and Françoise Walot, both certified Linklater instructors, as well as additional experience with vocal workshops under Alison Bomber, Barbara Houseman, the late Cicely Berry, and The Company of Wolves<sup>4</sup> (2018) theatre group in Glasgow.

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<sup>4</sup> I attended The Company of Wolves' workshop: Finding the Pulse: Bringing Shakespeare to Life (2018) as practical research into embodied and physical Shakespearean performance.

Though the exercises presented in this toolkit under physicalizing the text were in part assembled from existing practice, they were identified and examined from those practices relevant both to psychophysical practice and to OP. Their implementation as tools for fostering a sense of Living Thought may differ partially or significantly from the source material. Theoretical bases for the exercises in their form as explored in this study are included in Chapter 5.

Character Sculpting is my term for explorations combining Michael Chekhov's Imaginary Body technique with animal work to create a sense of character through physical challenge and engagement rather than psychological analysis, eventually integrating elements of the Six Energies discussed above. Discussion of Michael Chekhov's Imaginary Body technique, my experience of animal work in theatre training and rehearsal, and this project's studio work exploring their combination as an Amorphous Body, malleable and responsive to the OP challenge of doubling and the psychophysical challenge of embodiment can be found in 'Chapter 5:5 Character Sculpting.'

The workshops were conducted as follows:

#### Workshop 1

**Studio Session Dates:** October 20, 21, 26-28; November 1-2 2018

**Presentation Dates:** November 2-3 2018

**Location:** University of Huddersfield  
Sir Patrick Stewart Building  
Huddersfield, UK

**Participants:** EP, LH, RN, LB, AR

#### Workshop 2 & 3

**Studio Session Dates:** June 22-29, 2019

**Presentation Dates:** June 29, 2019

**Location:** Acadiana Center for the Arts (ACA)  
Lafayette, Louisiana, USA

**Participants:** Acting Up (ACA resident professional company)

**Workshop 2:** LC, KL, SB, DL, ZL, CW, DB, MW, CL<sup>5</sup>

**Workshop 3:** CM, JA, ZC, GS, LM, IF, OF

#### Workshop 4

**Studio Session Dates:** Thursdays January 16, 23, 30; February 6, 13, 20, 27; March 5, 12<sup>6</sup>

**Presentation Dates:** n/a<sup>7</sup>

**Location:** University Campus Oldham  
Oldham, Greater Manchester, UK

**Participants:** 1<sup>st</sup> Year (second term) BA Drama Students:  
D1, D2, H, J1, J2, M, S1, S2, S3, T

#### Workshop 5

**Online Session Dates<sup>8</sup>:** July 19 - 26 2020

**Livestream Presentation Date:** July 26 2020

**Location:** Online via telephony and livestream<sup>9</sup>  
Event hosted from Huddersfield, UK

**Participants:** AS, AP, CP, EB, JP

The toolkit presented in this thesis, as stated, is not intended to be presented as a definitive path towards Living Thought. Even given the rigorous examination of Living Thought's identifiable criteria discussed in Chapter 6, a certain degree of subjectivity as to what constitutes its manifestation in performance remains.

Psychophysical theories on performance have broad application and the practical and theoretical structure of this thesis is to examine those theories for the purposes of OP Shakespearean rehearsal and performance and to present that evidence herein. I hypothesize that, given the theoretical relationship between Shakespearean performance and psychophysical performance practices, that a psychophysically-informed approach to rehearsal and performance can facilitate the manifestation of Living Thought. What evidence I gathered of Living Thought from the workshop series is discussed in Chapters 6 & 7.

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<sup>5</sup> Did not perform

<sup>6</sup> Final sessions cancelled due to onset of 2020 global pandemic

<sup>7</sup> Workshop abruptly cancelled due to onset of 2020 global pandemic, see Chapter 6

<sup>8</sup> Workshop conducted entirely online due to continuation of 2020 global pandemic, see Chapter 6

<sup>9</sup> 9 Zoom Video Communications

## 1:5 OP, to and from

This thesis is written from the perspective of an OP practitioner and researcher for the potential value to OP practice and research. In the following chapter, I provide a detailed account of the context within which Living Thought and the historical staging conditions of OP are found. Further, this chapter establishes the key figures in the field of OP as it exists today and those figures that contributed to the founding of the OP movement. In '2:2 Development of OP,' I explore the history of OP and how the construction of historical facsimile playing spaces contributed to its practices and the conditions under which it, and by extension this project, functions. Previously, this information had not been drawn together in such a comprehensive or linear account, especially with regards to the cultural exchange of OP principles and practices across Britain and North America. To this discussion of OP, this thesis here turns.

## Chapter 2: OP

### 2:1 Shakespeare's stagecraft

The term Original Practices, hereafter referred to as OP, has been used collectively to refer to staging conventions derived from historical study into the theatrical conditions for which Shakespeare wrote. Shakespeare scholar Alan C. Dessen identifies the new London Globe, the ASC, and the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse in Atlanta, Georgia as among the most prominent practitioners of OP (Dessen, 2008, p. 45). Stephanie Shine, serving as artistic director of the Seattle Shakespeare Company, and British director Tina Packer, founder of Shakespeare & Company in Vancouver, are also identified as prominent figures amongst those approaching Shakespearean performance with an Elizabethan model (Ney, 2016, p. 102).

Directing professor Charles Ney, author of *Directing Shakespeare in America: Current Practices*, identifies the birth of the OP movement, beginning in the 1980s, as marking a significant change in Shakespearean performance perspective. For Ney and many adherents to OP:

Original Practice is a revolt against today's visually oriented, technologically complex theatre production systems. Devotees believe there are values in the original texts and theatrical practices that are lost when transposing a play to another period or using visually oriented contemporary theatre methods... (Ney, 2016, p. 16).

Defined broadly, OP practitioners demonstrate interest in recreating Elizabethan staging practices for contemporary audiences because they 'seek to unearth characteristics embedded in the text that would not be there without those stage practices' (Ney, 2016, p. 31). Ney identifies several directors as significant American OP practitioners: prominently amongst them Ralph Alan Cohen and Jim Warren, the

founders of the American Shakespeare Center, both of whom directed me during my time with the company.

Cohen, Shakespeare scholar and director of mission for the ASC, looks to historical staging conditions and the OP-outlook of the company as an approach to Shakespeare's plays 'with respect to his stagecraft, not just his word craft' (Shakespeare's American Home, 2013). He believes:

... directors who pay attention to the stage and the stagecraft of Shakespeare... will find that in doing so they will be freeing the plays from the accreted technological conventions that have substituted for their strongest dramatic energies. (Harris-Rambsy, 2013, p. 118)

Further, the use of OP conditions properly places the emphasis more upon the actor and audience. Warren, retired artistic director of the ASC, explains the company's outlook:

How might we be able to capture either the real thing or the spirit of something Shakespeare did... he wrote stuff for his environment that can only come out when you play with that environment in mind (Shakespeare's American Home, 2013).

He echoes Cohen's concern for technology, arguing that returning to centuries old staging conditions enables one to 'unlock some power in these plays that were written for that, that you cannot do with great sets, great lights, and great kinds of technical things' (Ney, 2016, p. 103).

Theatre professor Frank Hildy, advisor to Shakespeare's Globe in London, argues that it was the drive to recover Shakespeare's stagecraft that ultimately led to the Globe's Creation. He suggests that the recreation of Shakespeare's Globe in London, and this appreciation of Shakespeare's stagecraft in general, can ultimately be attributed to Edward Capell, the seventh editor of Shakespeare's plays (Hildy, 2008, p. 13). In 1775, Capell finished his introduction to the plays by suggesting that

complete understanding of Shakespeare required 'the stage he appear'd upon, its form, dressing, and actors should be enquir'd into,' because these elements 'had some considerable effect upon what he compos'd for it' (pp. 13-14). Hildy describes Capell's observations as:

... the first articulation of the notion that there is a relationship between the way a playwright constructs a play and the physical conditions of theatrical performance that exist during the playwright's career. The obvious implication was that you cannot fully understand one without and understanding of the other (p. 14).

Just as Cohen and Warren founded the ASC with respect to Shakespeare's contribution to stagecraft, Sam Wanamaker founded Shakespeare's Globe in London under the very similar 'assumption that Shakespeare as player and co-owner of his company's two theatres always knew exactly what he was doing' (Gurr, 2008, p. xvii). The Globe's founding OP principles operate from the theory that such an approach 'to the original staging of his plays... should be able to show us a lot more of his practical genius than we have discovered in the last century or so' (p. xvii). Many OP practitioners translate their devotion to historical staging conditions to the construction of Elizabethan facsimile stages for contemporary productions of Shakespeare, such as Shakespeare's Globe and the ASC: Blackfriars Playhouse (Ney, 2016, p. 16). For adherents of OP principles, Shakespeare's stagecraft comes through more clearly in an historically recreated space, but the stagecraft being sought out comes from the text, directions for staging and acting embedded within the words, especially the verse. Yet it was the construction of historically recreated spaces that marks the significant stages in the development of OP as a movement, one that slowly gained momentum as an idea criss-crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

## 2:2 Development of OP

After Edward Capell, the most significant influence on the development of OP was British director William Poel, founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society. By 1897, Poel had been 'attempting to recapture Shakespeare's stagecraft for over sixteen years' (Hildy, 2008, p. 15). The conventions of antiquarianism dominated Shakespearean performance of Poel's time and led to numerous distortions to the text that he found objectionable. He detested the star-system that led to cuts and restructuring of plays to better serve the ego of the actor, the overly complex set pieces that proved an impediment to scene changes, and the overall sloth of productions (p. 15). Despite accusations of museum Shakespeare, critic Rinda Frye Lundstrom argues that Poel never indulged in 'archaism for its own sake' (Falocco, 2010, pp. 7-8) but as a means of engaging with a play's content. Though his early work was more doggedly pedantic than contemporary OP practice, his interest in historical conditions gradually came to be less historically stringent and more of an embrace of the 'functional necessities of Elizabethan staging – **continuous action**, the **thrust configuration**, and the **absence of scenery within a sparsely functional set** – without regard for antiquarian decoration' (p. 8). Poel's work in rediscovering Shakespeare's stagecraft made him the leading figure of the movement known as the Elizabethan Revival (Hildy, 2008, p. 16).

Poel influenced fellow British theatre practitioner B. Iden Payne, who "proselytized" his ideas about performing Shakespeare to theatre organizations and universities throughout the US' (Ney, 2016, p. 7). Like Poel, Payne believed in efficient, simplified staging, but he was not interested in uncovering dramaturgical or aesthetic material from historical practices, nor was he averse to heavily excising text (pp. 7-

8). Sir William Tyrone Guthrie was another British director like Payne who proved influential on Shakespearean practice in North America, especially OP. Guthrie's interest in Elizabethan-style permanent sets and Renaissance staging conditions developed as an aspect of his interest in the open-stage movement, of which he was a founder (Falocco, 2010, p. 98). In the 1950s Guthrie introduced North America to his concept of a classical playing space, 'a three-sided non-proscenium, open, classless democratic space' (Ney, 2016, p. 9), bringing it first to the Canadian Stratford Festival Theatre and later to the Minneapolis Guthrie Theatre (p. 19). Both the new Globe and Blackfriars place the audience on all three sides in an arc roughly 180 degrees from the stage, reflecting the lasting influence of Guthrie's thrust design (Falocco, 2010, p. 98).

For Poel and his followers, recreating an historical staging space for Elizabethan plays was the ideal environment for experimenting with OP conditions and getting the most out of Shakespeare's plays. Recreated early modern theatres, such as the indoor Blackfriars Playhouse and the outdoor London Globe are, as Paul Menzer said, 'themselves architectural essays in search of a greater understanding of how the play, their authors, their actors, and their audiences worked' (Menzer, 2006, p.

15). As scholar K.M. Moncrief put it:

They are physical representations of the spaces for which Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote, allowing twenty-first century actors, directors, designers, musicians, scholars, and students access to the physical and cultural centrality of early modern theatres, those crucial sites where the dynamism, preoccupations, and desire of cities like Shakespeare's London were expressed (Moncrief, 2013, p. 13).

Interest in Elizabethan staging design increased with the discovery of the famous Swan drawing in 1888. It represented the only example of a 'contemporary drawing of the interior of an Elizabethan open-air playhouse' (Hildy, 2008, p. 16). After

seeing a Munich production of *King Lear* performed on a 'classical stage,' Poel realized that his work had been lacking the proper staging environment. Poel began with a classical design known now as the 'Fortune fit-up' in 1893, heavily influenced by the Swan illustration design. Poel's efforts were paralleled across the Atlantic by Harvard University, which constructed an Elizabethan playhouse for a production of Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* in 1895. Poel's 1897 illustration of a recreated Globe, publicly exhibited in 1902, was the first such model, but it would hardly be the last (p. 17).

Just as Poel had been influenced by the Swan illustration, Poel inspired others with his 1897 drawing of the Globe. The 'Merry England' exhibition of 1912 featured the first 'nearly full-scale reconstruction of the Globe' (Hildy, 2008, p. 18) at the Earl's Court, designed by architect Edwin Lutyens. This 1912 Globe was the idea of Mrs George Cornwallis West, formerly Lady Randolph Churchill, the Brooklyn-born mother of Winston Churchill. One visitor to the 1912 Globe was O.S.E. Keating, who managed another 'Merry England' project for the Chicago World's Fair, overseeing the construction of a Globe recreation for 1933-34, though this Globe was something of a step back in authenticity, being significantly reduced in size and built with a roof over the yard (p. 19). Despite its shortcomings, nearly 400,000 attendees visited the Chicago Globe, among them, actor and director Sam Wanamaker. Inspired by the Chicago Globe, at least three American theatre companies constructed Globe-recreations across a three-year span during the Great Depression, producing 5,000 performances of Shakespeare and Marlowe seen by more than 2 million people in Chicago, San Diego, Dallas, and Cleveland. In 1939, the Chicago Globe was recreated for the New York World's Fair, though this project was an abject failure (p.

21). The Depression-era globes led directly to a boost in popularity of Shakespearean theatre in North America:

These Globes of the Great Depression were... given legitimacy by the inclusion of an Elizabethan theatre in the Folger Shakespeare Library when it opened in 1932. Their success inspired the creation of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (1935) and the San Diego Shakespeare Festival at the Old Globe Theatre (1949). Those organizations, in turn, inspired the more than 150 such Shakespeare festivals that exist across the United States and Canada today, including those which claim a relationship to the 1599 Globe like the Stratford Festival Theatre in Ontario, Canada (1953), the Utah Shakespeare Festival (1961) and the Globe of the Great Southwest in Odessa, Texas (1965) (Hildy, 2008, p. 22).

Just as British practitioners like Poel, Payne, and Tucker have profoundly influenced Shakespearean practice in general and OP particularly in North America, the American actor and director Sam Wanamaker profoundly influenced OP practices in Britain by spearheading the development of Shakespeare's Globe in London, with initial plans for its construction dating to 1969 (Hildy, 2008, p. 14). The most significant recreation of an Elizabethan playing space in the world, Wanamaker's Globe inspired more than a dozen new Globe theatres to be built across the world while his playhouse in London became the birthplace of contemporary OP (p. 22).

In the early 70s, while Wanamaker's Globe was still in the planning stages for England, celebrated English director Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performing in an American tour. Highly influential, Brook's *Midsummer* 'shattered all preconceptions' (Ney, 2016, p. 6) about the play, directing, and drama for many aspiring North American directors. His stripped down and relatively low-tech experimental production predicted what would become central tenants of OP as textually-driven theatre:

...he advised what a liberating force the rigidity of the rhythm and the use of vowels and consonants could be for bringing out the meaning of the words, although he maintained that Shakespeare was trying to explain

something beyond words altogether and that the actor should seek and sound out the word's impulses... In this way he was constantly searching for a 'necessary theatre' and broke with the prevailing approaches to speaking verse at the Royal Shakespeare Company in the sixties, which had been operatic on the one hand or naturalistic on the other (Martin, 1991, p. 77).

Brook's production employed such traits similar to OP as the poverty of technological staging, the primacy of text, and the actor's work of channelling the impulses of the text, but Brook also predicts Living Thought in his understanding of the effect that such surrender to the process can bring:

Brook's continuing search for an immediate theatre resulted in the RSC production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970) ... experimenting and discarding what was not useful. This openness applied not only to set and costumes, but to words as well. 'You must act as a medium for the words. If you consciously colour them you're wasting your time. The words must be able to colour you.' As one of the actors explained, Brook wanted the text to play them, rather than they the text (Martin, 1991, pp. 79-80).

With Living Thought, the line between impulse and action blurs while the performer moves and is moved by the text as they enact, embody, and perform it. Brooks' *Midsummer* introduced North American directors to the power of Shakespeare's text, above all, to empower a production.

The OP movement proper arose in the late 1990s with Patrick Tucker's Original Shakespeare Company, pioneering OP methodology with several productions featured at the London Globe (Ney, 2016, p. 17). Among his OP practices, Tucker is known for his devotion to the First Folio technique, placing great importance on the performance clues in 'the First Folio's punctuation, spelling, capitalization, parenthetical phrasing, rhyme schemes and shared lines' (Ibid). Besides Tucker, OP at the new London Globe is most associated with several productions by Mark Rylance, Claire von Kampen and Jenny Tiramani (Ibid). Together, they were

interested in developing work 'exploring certain stage conventions of late sixteenth-century theatre' (Tiramani, 2008, p. 58). According to Tiramani, the term 'original practices' was first coined in 2002, though OP is now attached to several productions staged between 1997-2000 (p. 58).

Other than recreations of the Globe, OP has also developed from recreations of indoor Elizabethan theatres. Nugent Monck worked for years as Poel's stage manager and went on to become his most ardent proponent in England. In 1921, his Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich 'became the first recreation of an indoor Elizabethan playhouse in the world' (Hildy, 2008, p. 16). The recreated Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia is the centrepiece for the OP company, the American Shakespeare Center. What would become the ASC began as the experimental Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, a touring company created by Cohen and Warren in 1988 while Wanamaker's Globe was still being developed. In 2001 the SSE gained a new name and a permanent home with the construction of the Blackfriars Playhouse, bringing their OP aesthetic with them while maintaining a touring company as a means of continuing to share their work beyond the playhouse (Cohen, 2008, p. 212). In 2014, Cohen was awarded the prestigious Sam Wanamaker award by Shakespeare's Globe for pioneering work in Shakespearean theatre; he was the first American to receive the award named after his fellow American, Sam Wanamaker (Williams, 2014).

The work of the Atlanta Shakespeare Company to produce Shakespearean plays under OP conditions began shortly after the founding of the SSE in Virginia, with their first production in 1989. In 1990 the Atlanta Shakespeare Company opened the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse which the company website describes as, 'the only

Original Practice Playhouse®' (Atlanta Shakespeare Company). In 1995, they were honoured as the first American group to perform on the new Globe's stage.

## 2:3 Conventions and Variations

OP is not a set of concrete staging conditions and performance practices that have been handed down from Shakespeare's time in an unbroken line of succession. OP theatres function, in part, as laboratories to explore theories of historical stagecraft, how that stagecraft might be practically implemented today, and what effect that implementation has on the overall play. Historical and dramaturgical scholarship is an essential aspect of OP, producing theories that are then tested on OP stages, but debate among historians and theatre scholars results in a family of related approaches sharing similar but not identical conventions (Dessen, 2008, p. 45).

On the variation of practices located broadly under OP, Jeff Watkins, Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse wrote:

My colleagues and I disagree on a good many details, but we all agree that 'Original Practice' is an approach to performing Shakespeare that assumes a burning desire to understand Shakespeare's text as it was understood by the actors who first spoke that text and by the audience who first heard it. It also assumes an appreciation and respect for the stagecraft originally employed by Shakespeare's company (Watkins, 2006).

OP practitioners are keenly aware, as Shakespeare scholar Andrew Gurr points out, that recreating 'the full set of conditions under which Shakespeare produced his plays is impossible now' (Gurr, 2008, p. xvii). Therefore, OP exists less as a set of rigid criteria, and more a scale weighted towards historical authenticity.

Though OP has its origins in productions staged at Shakespeare's Globe, even founders of the movement recognize the limitations of authenticity. Tiramani

acknowledges the 'many possible early modern interpretations of the design for each and every OP production we did in the first ten years at the Globe proposed a particular interpretation of the evidence' (Tiramani, 2008, p. 57). Her colleague at the Globe, von Kampen, agrees that the OP 'approach we developed to address the question of "authenticity," then, can be described as exploratory, using methods that were rigorous yet practical for a contemporary commercial theatre' (von Kampen, 2008, p. 185).

In the strictest interpretation of OP, not only should staging practices conform to historical conditions, but all materials involved in the staging should also, as much as possible, reflect period accurate design and composition. This view is expressed in the mission statement of Atlanta's Tavern theatre:

...productions feature hand-made period costumes, all live music and sound effects, thrilling sword fights, and abundant 'direct address' to the audience, all of which is orchestrated to assure that the passion and poetry of Shakespeare's genius remains at the heart of the theatrical experience. This is unlike 'modern' approaches that routinely update, alter, deconstruct, or otherwise adapt the plays in the supposed service of a 20th Century sensibility This Core Aesthetic, known as Original Practice, informs and inspires all of our work (Atlanta Shakespeare Company).

Under the strict interpretation of OP, even Shakespeare's Globe, where OP practice originated, can no longer claim to operate as an OP theatre. Will Tosh, currently a research fellow and lecturer with the Globe's research department, reports that only a few shows, *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* in 2012, have been produced under the OP rubric since 2012 (Tosh, 2019). After Dominic Dromgoole took over the position of artistic director from exiting Mark Rylance in 2006, the Globe's productions were instead produced under what has been called 'Renaissance style' conditions, which required period costuming but not historically accurate production materials.

Dromgoole's more significant deviation from standard OP practice comes from his

use of significant alterations to the set design, including the occasional use of scenic 'prosthetics,' such as stage extenders, which would not have been present in Elizabethan London (Ibid).

Current Globe artistic director Michelle Terry ascribes to a similar approach to 'original practices' that she calls 'original processes,' making conspicuous use of the same OP initials. Original Processes relies less on precise construction material, clothing, and instruments than it does on the 'artistic and dramaturgical openness to the early modern collaborative spirit of play production' (Tosh, 2019). Despite this recent aversion to the OP label, Tiramani points out that even Globe productions 'conceived as "original practices" ... cherry-picked particular "original practices" elements to explore on stage, while rejecting others' (Tiramani, 2008, p. 58). It has also been observed that some OP conventions remain a permanent part of the new Globe. By its very nature, the Globe features (1) **Universal Lighting**, (2) **Thrust Staging** (audience on at least three sides of the stage), and the (3) **basic configuration of the stage itself**, in addition to the frequent use of period costume and music (Dessen, 2008, p. 46).

Cohen freely admits that the ASC did not begin with grand 'principles of "original practices,"' (Ney, 2016, p. 101) but as they continued to experiment with Elizabethan staging conditions, they were encouraged by the results, which encouraged the gradual taking on of more OP. Their initial focus required only (1) **Universal Lighting**, (2) **Thrust staging**, and (3) **a rough 'Two Hours Traffic' time limit**. Cohen believes that the ASC became more serious about OP conditions as they learned to trust the imbedded stage directions in Shakespeare's text, for example:

...kings enter first in Shakespeare's stage directions, and because they're frequently talking when they enter, then they are talking with their backs to the people who follow. At first that seemed wrong, then we realized it showed status (Ney, 2016, p. 101).

Other OP conditions adopted by the ASC include:

- Limited cast size (preferably thirteen or fewer)
- Doubling (a requirement with many roles due to the limited cast size)
- No sets (only moveable set pieces and the permanent stage itself)
- Reducing the length of some scripts
- Acoustic music & sound effects

All sounds and effects at the ASC are produced by actors, with electronic instrumentation and lighting effects completely forbidden.

In addition to thrust staging, as many as a dozen playgoers might be seated on the stage itself, as was practiced at the original Blackfriars playhouse, offering convenient targets for actors to address with asides or comic business (Dessen, 2008, p. 45). According to scholar Leslie Thompson, 'the most expensive place to sit at the [Elizabethan] Blackfriars was on the stage, a spot popular with young men about town' (Thomson, 2013, p. 141). The ASC Touring Company had slightly more freedom in the staging of their entrances and exits, allowing some movement through the audience. This ability was justified by the historical need for Shakespeare's own touring company to make use of whatever space they had available, be it a tavern yard or a hill. Because there was insufficient evidence of actors moving through the audience in the historical Blackfriars Playhouse, we were proscribed from doing so in the Resident Company. The Touring Company of the ASC created the basic thrust staging wherever they went. They also seated audience members on either side of the stage, as with the Blackfriars Playhouse.

Period costuming is frequently, but not universally, applied to productions and the ASC is not strict about the use of period materials in the construction of its props or costumes. Sometimes a play might take on a Japanese or 17th century costuming aesthetic, but the words and story remain sacrosanct. Shakespeare was a notorious anachronist, and the ASC are hardly averse to the same within reason. All music, including pre-show and interlude music, is performed live by the cast, but they play with whatever acoustic instrumentation they wish, however modern. Additionally, music, especially outside of the play itself, is usually contemporary, anything from bluegrass to rock to jazz. The rationale given for allowing the use of modern popular music performed live by the acting company during the pre-show and intervals is that similar music, i.e., what was popular during Shakespeare's time, would have been played in similar situations. For the ASC, this is in keeping with the spirit of the original practice.

Though she has not always worked in historical facsimile arenas, Tina Packer follows what she interprets as the 'Elizabethan model of staging plays' (Ney, 2016, p. 102) as a director. Her criteria include (1) **creating an open relationship between actor and audience**, (2) **symbiotic use of music within the production**, (3) **minimal scenery**, (4) **impressive fight sequences**, and (5) **allowing the clowns to improvise** (p. 102). Though not necessarily in contradiction to ASC practices, Packer emphasizes the development of acting skill sets beyond original staging conditions, including voice work, physical techniques, clowning, and stage combat proficiency. According to Ney, Packer 'wants a visceral theatre that goes beyond Cohen's and Warren's in that she seeks "to feel things in my body, have less intellectual discussion, and more embodied experience"' (p. 93).

In their recent staging of 'The Tragedy of Merry', a play excerpted from the 1601 play *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Emma Whipday and Freyja Cox Jensen embraced OP because of how the inherent historical conditions illuminate the layered meaning of the text (Whipday, Summer 2017, p. 291). The OP conditions utilized by Whipday & Cox Jensen included (1) **Universal Lighting**, (2) **Contemporary Costuming**, (3) **Thrust Staging**, (4) **Limited Rehearsal Time**, and (5) **Cue Scripts** (pp. 291-292). Whipday & Cox Jensen consider their use of modern costuming an OP consideration, as audience members of Shakespeare's time would frequently observe performances by actors in the quotidian dress of the day; in other words, playgoers saw actors perform in clothing similar to what they were wearing as audience members (p. 292). A similar argument for present day clothing has been used by other directors working in OP (Ney, 2016, p. 17). As with the ASC's anachronistic music and costumes, the use of modern costuming fits the spirit of OP for some practitioners better than recreated historical costume.

Whipday & Cox Jensen also made use of Cue Scripts in their OP production. Also known as 'Sides,' a Cue Script contains only the lines of an individual actor's role, as well as a few snippets of the preceding line so that actors can be aware of their cue, hence, 'Cue Script.' The practice originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a security measure in the days before copyright law. The practice is now utilized as a condition of OP with some theatre companies, like Shake-scene Shakespeare and the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project, making it their central focus.

The use of Cue Scripts has gradually become a more common practice in the OP community (Ney, 2016, p. 17), with Whipday & Cox Jensen's use indicative of the trend. While it is not standard practice during the ASC's regular Summer-Fall

Season, their Winter-Spring Season, known as the Actors' Renaissance Season (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) does make use of them. When I was contracted for the 2011 Renaissance Season, I was given cue scripts for three of the five repertory shows in our season, with full scripts for the remaining two. There was no prohibition against also reading the entire script, but we were encouraged to use the Cue Scripts as much as possible.

Reactions from the cast were varied. Some veterans of the company often used them, some less. Some enjoyed the process of not knowing what lines were coming, some did not. Though I read the scripts beforehand, I did most of my actual memorization of lines from the cue scripts. I found that, in the limited rehearsal time of the Renaissance Season, I was much more alert and ready for my next cue line, with the effect that I listened far more acutely to everything being said. A castmate in the same predicament, experiencing the Renaissance Season and cue scripts for the first time, told me that the effect was the opposite for him. He felt that he was listening only for his cue line to the exclusion of everything else. There seemed to be no consensus between veterans or rookies as to what was the proper way to learn Shakespeare's lines, not even under the strictures of the Renaissance Season. According to Renaissance Season veteran, Jeremy West, 'It's a curious season for actors. It's wonderful but it's some of the hardest work that an actor can do. It's a process that doesn't work for everyone' (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 464). As invigorating an experience as it can be for actor and audience alike, the high demands of the Renaissance Season may limit its appeal to performers.

## 2:4 Commonalities

There are few universal traits found in OP besides the intention of using Shakespeare's stagecraft and historical staging conditions to best perform his text rather than adapt it. As demonstrated, there are many differences in interpretation and execution of that lofty goal across the broad range of OP, but there are also significant commonalities.

One way in which OP almost always breaks with Shakespeare is on the matter of casting a diverse group of actors with regards to ethnicity and gender. OP theatres often call upon a commitment to diverse casting with regards to gender and ethnicity, not as a compromise, but paradoxically as a defining characteristic of OP. The Elizabethan stage remains infamous for the exclusively male casts with younger boys playing the roles of most women. People of colour would have been played by white Englishman in dark makeup.

It must be understood that though historical staging conditions are counted, individually, as literal original practices, i.e., the original practices utilized by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the OP movement generally is a new form of theatre. It is largely defined by its adherence to historical considerations, but OP is not just recreation. Because it is recreation with the intent of discovery, already the motives of OP adherents today become separated from the actual historical practitioners unencumbered by such considerations.

While OP is dependent upon and, to some extent, in the service of history, it is not museum theatre. Much of OP's value derives from historical recreation, but experimental dramatic archaeology is only part of the OP movement. For most OP

practitioners, there is no need to make Shakespeare accessible by altering his words, adding special affects to a production, or even using sound amplification technology. OP exists as a testament to the idea that Shakespeare already is accessible not through adaptation, but through faithful exploration of Shakespeare's own form coming from the text. I believe that the common interest in performing Elizabethan plays with a diverse cast is in keeping with this spirit of accessibility.

The ASC, the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival, the London Globe, the Tavern Playhouse, Tina Packer, Whipday & Cox Jensen are all largely aligned with regards to set. OP sets should be minimal, usually the stage itself should be the only real set while a few pieces, like tables or the occasional chair, which can be easily taken on and offstage, along with the frequent dead bodies - this being Shakespeare. This attitude towards sets is inherited from history by way of Poel, whose 'efforts and those of his disciple Monck embraced the minimalist aesthetic of what Grotowski later termed a "Poor Theatre"' (Falocco, 2010, p. 5).

London's Globe and its imitators do their best to recreate Shakespeare's original outdoor playing space, but these spaces and the recreations of the Blackfriars Playhouse, including the ASC's home theatre and the Sam Wanamaker Theatre with London's Globe, share thrust staging as did the work of Whipday & Cox Jensen. Most of these same practitioners embrace Universal Lighting as well.

Outdoor arenas like the Globe rely on sunlight for their illumination needs during the day and simulate that sunlight at night with electric lighting. Indoor theatres like Sam Wanamaker can make excellent use of nothing but candlelight. The ASC, largely for safety and practical reasons, uses electric lighting to simulate the sun and candles

but proudly proclaim on the t-shirts in their giftshop that they 'do it with the lights on.'

With universal lighting, the light used by the actors is the same basic illumination shared by the audience, so actor and audience are equally visible to one another. This also contributes to a tone of blurring the line between audience member and performer.

Warren has interpreted these elements of OP, thrust-staging, and universal lighting as 'indicative of a need for the audience to be 'inside the story' (Ney, 2016, p. 66). He believes that the audience needs to 'feel like Hamlet's confidant. They need to feel like they are one of Henry V's army in those scenes. The audience takes on different roles' (p. 67). Warren's long-time associate and co-founder of the ASC, Ralph Cohen demands the acknowledgement of and collaboration with the audience as an essential element of OP performance. He suggests using soliloquies as opportunities to cast the audience as part of the show:

Such moments as Antony's funeral oration, King Henry exhorting his troops at Agincourt, and Claudius addressing the court at Elsinore are obviously moments in which Shakespeare has transformed the house into a part of the play. All Shakespearean plays have such public moments that transcend the bounds of the stage to include the world inside the theatre. Directors should look for those moments and have their actors address their speeches specifically to the audience and not... 'to the exit light' (Cohen, 2008, p. 219).

This becomes more vital with audience members seated on the same stage upon which the actors perform. Cohen further suggests casting individuals during asides and soliloquies, allowing the actor to speak to a specific member of the audience, one all too visible to his fellow spectators, as if that spectator is a friend, confidante, or the butt of an insulting joke (Cohen, 2008, pp. 219-220).

Cohen and Warren's purpose in including the audience in this way is not just as a means of garnering amusement or investment from audience members, nor is it simply adherence to historical practices, though both likely contribute to the ubiquity of the practice in OP. Warren sees his purpose as an OP director, beyond director archaeologist, as someone who creates 'community, story, journey environment' for his audience to experience together (Ney, 2016, p. 31). In casting, Cohen and Warren were keenly interested in seeing actors meaningfully connect with people using the text:

When we audition, we bring people into the space in groups of twelve. And they see each other work. We tell them immediately, 'Look at us. Don't look away. When you talk to us, you talk to us. Use each other when appropriate.' So we try to see what it is that they can do in an atmosphere like that with the people around them... Right from the audition, we are looking for people who are comfortable with this connection to the audience. A big difference between what we do and most theatres is that the audience is a part of it (Ney, 2016, p. 172).

This aspect of audience inclusion in OP-related performance spaces supports Mark Rylance's claim that 'The Globe is an audience's theatre' (Rylance, 2008, p. 108).

He explains:

In mainstream British theatre, I think the Globe does upset some hierarchical concepts. Mostly I think it challenges how we treat audiences in modern theatre architecture and practice. I think the major changes taking place at the RSC, the new predominance of the actor/audience relationship, the stress on ensemble, a thrust stage, international companies.... I think the Globe building has affected theatre practices more than people want to admit. This architecture does demand much more from an actor. It demands we get over our fear of the audience; that we convince them eye to eye of our reality, that we light or stage with our voices. It gives the audience a different power... Audiences want to have something more happen than they did twenty years ago. I do not think they are happy to sit quietly in the dark and admire us (Ibid).

OP, and the Globe especially, represented a direct challenge to 'hierarchical and formal nature of theatre-making in the English tradition' (Carson, 2008, p. 125). This challenge was sometimes met with antagonism. For their enthusiastic inclusion of

the audience with their style of play, as Rylance puts it, 'for placing the story so unabashedly between us and the audience', they were unfavourably compared with pantomime and selling-out to the audience (Rylance, 2008, p. 109). W. B. Worthen likens the audience at the Globe not only to performers, but tourists arriving for an interactive experience as much as a show (Carson, 2008, p. 5). For academic Christie Carson, it was the 'positioning of Shakespeare as a populist dramatist supporting a commercial theatre rather than as an elite artist holding up the subsidised theatre' (Carson, 2008, p. 33) that made the audience of the Globe theatre special. She saw the distinctions between RSC and the Globe as a cultural difference, juxtaposing a capitalist American model at the Globe against the 'British public-service model' (Ibid).

Indeed, theatres like the Tavern Playhouse see the relationship of the performers and audience as an attraction. Their website promises potential customers that the actors will 'talk directly to you, the audience, in much the same way we believe Shakespeare and his acting company would have directly addressed Elizabethan Audience members' (Atlanta Shakespeare Theatre, 2020). Aside from its potential as a draw, the Tavern Playhouse was founded with the 'conviction that communion of actor and audience through poetry is the essence of theatre' and a vital aspect of OP (Dessen, 2008, p. 45).

Despite the Globe no longer claiming to operate as an OP theatre, their commitment to Shakespeare's historical accuracy drew media in attention when Emma Rice was controversially dismissed as artistic director. Her use of contemporary lighting and sound technology in productions had strayed beyond the Globe's mission, according to their board, and they were committed to returning to universal lighting productions

after her tenure ended in 2018. The BBC reported that ‘until Rice's arrival, actors have usually performed in “shared light,” meaning the performers can see the audience, who feel more involved, as they would have done in Shakespeare's day,’ (BBC News, 2016).

## 2:5 Clarity

Charles Ney characterizes OP as a reaction against ‘today’s visually oriented, technologically complex theatre production systems,’ likening it to Poel’s Elizabethan Stage Society and their ‘rebellion against the excesses of Victorian Shakespeare productions’ (Ney, 2016, p. 16). Inevitably the OP approach to Shakespeare is contrasted with the traditional approach, epitomized almost entirely by the RSC. Sir Peter Hall founded the RSC in 1960 to ‘realise his vision of a resident ensemble of actors, directors and designers producing both modern and classic texts, with a distinctive house style’ (RSC, 2020) a style known for lavish sets, technical effects, and high production value. Christie Carson characterizes the position of the RSC in the twentieth century as ‘largely unchallenged as the “preserver and presenter of legitimate Shakespearean performance”’ (Carson, 2008, p. 117) before the opening of the new Globe. Because of the RSC’s nearly monolithic claim on Shakespearean performance, it is tempting to characterize OP’s reaction against the ‘traditional approach’ as a challenge or rejection of the RSC style.

There is significant truth to this, especially with regards to the abandonment of modern technology, but also with regards to the question of performance style. Rylance, an RSC veteran before his OP work with the Globe, struggled with the idea of style in performance. He argues that the RSC’s focus on defining their style as

'way off the point' and unhelpful to the actor (Rylance, 2008, pp. 107-108). OP proved liberating for Rylance who felt that performing at the Globe released him from the burden of style because the playing space defined the style for him. He explains that physical performance space demanded a 'style of play whether we liked it or not,' (p. 108) a near summation of the primary goal of OP in general and the use of an historically recreated space specifically. As previously mentioned, the ASC does have an identifiable playing style, with written parameters referenced in their internal handbook, no less; but that style was derived through OP experimentation in the historically recreated space of their Blackfriars Playhouse. As previously mentioned, the ASC's precursor, the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express began with only a few historical considerations in mind, but as one success with OP led to another, a style gradually developed and was inherited and refined by the ASC. Their space made demands on their approach which mirrors Rylance's experience with Shakespeare at the Bankside Globe. By contrast, Hall's vision of the RSC began with a search for a house style, one that could serve both Shakespearean performance and contemporary works. That RSC style, whatever it may be, is as valid artistically as anything produced by artists working with OP but with the arrival of OP, an alternative approach to Shakespearean production has become viable. As Carson explains:

What the Globe Theatre has done to a large extent is to open up a range of theatrical performance styles to choose from, introducing competition in Shakespearean performance. The Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre are no longer the only venues for classical theatre, and the style of acting that these theatres have... has been presented with a radical alternative (Carson, 2008, p. 125).

Before the RSC-produced television series *Playing Shakespeare* premiered in 1982, relatively little scholarship had been devoted to the practical performance of

Shakespeare. Taken together with the companion book of the same name and *Word of Mouth*, an earlier RSC television special, *Playing Shakespeare* remains today one of the most comprehensive approaches to Shakespearean performance. In that OP is a reaction to the RSC tradition, it cannot help but be influenced by that school of Shakespearean performance, but the RSC's influence on OP should not be misunderstood as one purely to be reacted against. While OP does consistently break with the RSC style in significant ways, in many ways OP is building upon the foundation laid by the RSC, significantly, the reverence for Shakespeare's text.

Rylance believes that his experiences in the Globe playing space gave him a greater understanding of the 'physical beauty of the line; the actual sound of the consonant and the vowel' but he came to the Globe with the RSC training that had engrained within him a focus on understanding the text (Rylance, 2008, p. 111). Besides Rylance, other significant figures to OP have come from the backgrounds with the RSC including Patrick Tucker and Tina Packer, bringing the focus on Shakespeare's words with them. Peter Brook's influence on all American directing of Shakespeare also deserves mention. His landmark 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, later toured in the US and proved influential to many directors (Ney, 2016, p. 9). Though certainly not an OP production, Brook's *Midsummer* would have demonstrated the artistic and commercial viability of Shakespeare with minimal set dressing. Amongst the many RSC names held in high esteem by theatre professionals of all circles, John Barton is prominent within OP for his influence. Cohen names Barton as one of the most important voices in giving primacy in Shakespearean performance to the words of the plays over any other consideration (Cohen, 2008, p. 213).

It is hardly surprising that Barton, who came to the RSC from Cambridge, is still influential on the OP movement which itself relies on a symbiotic relationship with academia. Barton was incredibly influential to Shakespearean performance history as the director and principal writer of *Playing Shakespeare*, where he extolled the importance of Shakespeare's text, going so far as to define Shakespeare as his text. He argues that the form of the text provides the performer with naturalistic clues and embedded stage directions, predicting the OP dedication to Shakespearean stagecraft.

Robert Gordon, a theatre professor at Goldsmiths University of London, sees the assumption that 'hidden direction' could be found inherent in Shakespeare's text as inherited from Poel and Copeau (Gordon, 2006, p. 171). For Barton, the importance of Shakespeare's text represents a line, albeit a fuzzy one, between performing Shakespeare and adapting it. For Barton, and many who followed after, not only must Shakespeare's words be respected but the textual clues related to embedded direction, especially within the verse, must be addressed. Contemporary American director Mark Lamos agrees, describing verse-speaking as 'the muscular core of the production' where all else flows from 'its rhythmic certainty (Ney, 2016, p. 30). Barton argues that if the textual clues of Shakespeare's embedded directions are ignored, then Shakespeare's intentions will be distorted (Gordon, 2006, p. 171).

If anything, the OP movement represents even greater reverence for the text than advocated by Barton. In a response to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 'translation' project, in which 39 of Shakespeare's plays were altered into common language, Cohen offered praise for the scope of the project but criticized it heavily. He was particularly troubled by the loss of meaning that comes from altering

Shakespeare's words, though even more concerning for Cohen, author of *ShakesFear and How to Cure It: The Complete Handbook for Teaching Shakespeare*, was the alienation affect that the undertaking projects. It tells the audience that Shakespeare requires translation because his language is not 'our language,' it condescends to audiences and robs them of the chance to acquire for themselves the language of the plays and promotes the general anxiety that many already feel with regards to understanding Shakespeare (Cohen, 2015). Cohen advocates 'Six Big Rules' for contemporary directors working with Shakespeare which will be explored further in the following section of this chapter, but the first and most important of these commandments is quite clear, 'HAVE ACTORS ATTEND STRICTLY TO THE WORDS' (Cohen, 2008, p. 213).

Beyond the RSC and OP, this adherence to Shakespeare's text is equally vital to those whom Charles Ney calls Language & Text directors, including the aforementioned Mark Lamos. While not adhering to the historical confines or staging requirements of OP, Language & Text directors remain closely aligned with OP (Ney, 2016, p. 31). Ney defines a Language & Text director as one focused on language 'as the primary vehicle for production' (p. 30), which could also be said of OP. All OP directors are arguably therefore Language & Text directors first, they just go one step further by recreating Elizabethan staging conditions bringing them into the realm of other OP (p. 31). Director Joanne Zipay observes, 'Everybody has different ideas about original practices. We're all approaching it differently. But there has to be an essential connection with the language' (p. 18).

For OP directors, the staging conditions are not separate from their adherence to the text, but an extension of it. Jim Warren has complained about 'the number of

productions where somebody's talking about a hat and they're not wearing a hat,' just one among numerous 'internal staging directions that people ignore,' even when the company is claiming to be doing 'text-based productions' (Ney, 2016, p. 66). After the strict adherence to the text, Ralph Cohen's most important rule for OP is, 'WHENEVER POSSIBLE EMPLOY THE STAGECRAFT OF THE AUTHOR' (Cohen, 2008, p. 214).

Other directors working in the Language & Text paradigm include Henry Woronicz and Kent Thompson, both advocating for work that promotes the primacy of the text (Ney, 2016, pp. 56-57). Another Language & Text director, Paul Mullins, not only advocates for the primacy of the text, but he also wants practitioners to make that text as clear as possible, advising directors to 'tell the story by using Shakespeare's words, and making those words plain, and telling the story in a plain way', but which he means without an interpretive directorial vision that could overshadow the text (Ney, 2016, p. 31). This perspective is common in my experiences with OP directors, including Cohen, Warren, and Curt Toftland, formerly the artistic director of the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival who has also directed for the ASC. Instead of providing a new and bold interpretation of the play, OP directors such as Cohen, Warren, and Toftland tend to focus on clarity. Like Mullins, these directors are trying to present Shakespeare's text plainly, which is to say, clearly and honestly. As with all working theatres, their productions strive for greatness, but that greatness is defined in OP, at least partially, by how accurately the text has been embodied. Cohen explains that he is not there to provide 'the splendid,' he views his role as helping the actors mine the text for Shakespearean stagecraft and historical context, but he leaves the splendid to his performers (p. 65). Likewise, Stephanie Shine, also

classified as an OP director, sees her role as clearly identifying the story that Shakespeare wrote and advises against competing with him within his own play (pp. 31, 67). This has the consequence of placing more of the onus back onto the actor for creative choice.

The turn towards a Poor Theatre version of Shakespeare in OP is not only a means of experimenting with more historically accurate staging conditions, but a means of stripping away the obfuscation of modern technology. To put it another way, in OP the absence of certain technological conventions is as important as the presence of certain historical staging conditions. Jim Warren explains:

What were Shakespeare's staging conditions? From the beginning, our mission has been recreating those... It not only produces great entertainment, but there are things written into these plays that get covered up if you play in a different kind of arena. I think that by returning to the staging conditions of 400 years ago, we actually unlock some power in these plays that were written for that, that you cannot do with great sets, great lights, and great kinds of technical things... I don't mean to say that if you use sets and lights, you're not going to have a good show. But it's different (Ney, 2016, p. 103).

## 2:6 Living Thought

Ralph Alan Cohen's Six Big Rules for Contemporary Directors working with OP are:

1. Have actors attend strictly to the words
2. Wherever possible employ the stagecraft of the author
3. Do nothing to lengthen the play
4. Acknowledge and collaborate with the audience
5. Play the moment, not the play or its supposed genre
6. Challenge your audience and do not be afraid to make them work

The 1st rule pertains to the OP reverence for the text in general, and the 2nd is an extension of the first beyond words into acting, directing and staging from that same text. The stagecraft and primacy of the text that these rules reference were both discussed in the preceding section. His 4th rule encapsulates the overall spirit and

philosophy of OP in general, that aspect that engages directly with the audience and brings them into the play as active participants, not just spectators, discussed in 2:4. The 5th rule will be discussed in relation to psychology, Shakespeare, and psychophysical practice in Chapter 3. The final rule could be applied to any work of art, but specifically Cohen is encouraging OP directors to trust audiences to respond to Shakespeare without embellishment by modern technology, nor drastic contemporary reinterpretation. The remaining rule relates to the concept of Living Thought.

To reiterate, Living Thought is a mode of performance calling for a strong unity of thought, action, and speech in the performance of Shakespeare. For the ASC Living Thought is part performance philosophy, part house-style, and part directive.

Michael Langham, who may have originated the term, saw Living Thought less as a direction and more as a method unto itself. According to Langham's friend and successor as the Stratford Shakespeare Festival's artistic director, Des McAnuff, 'first and foremost, [Langham] saw these plays as blueprints for live performance' much like the OP movement in general with regard to Shakespeare's stagecraft (Stageside Shorts, 2011). Through Living Thought, Langham advocated for an approach to Shakespeare wherein his work is understood to be human thought in textual form, and therefore for the performer, almost literal Living Thought embodied.

Speaking on Langham's ideas of Living Thought, director Dean Gabourie explains:

The works of Shakespeare... were the greatest record of subconscious thought made conscious. These thoughts were coming to the actor as they were speaking them which led the way for stream of consciousness and discovery in almost every line (Ibid).

Finding a similarity in his own approach to Shakespeare with Michael Langham's, McAnuff adopted Living Thought into his own practice, though he admits that it is

easier to advocate than successfully enact. McAnuff defines Langham's version of Living Thought thusly:

In a nutshell... there is no separation between the word, the thought and the emotion. The key principle is that Shakespeare's texts are about thought and not conversation. Every line is a rolling series of discovery. Over time, I have found 'discoveries' is inadequate as a description, so I tend to use words like 'revelation' and 'epiphany' (Ney, 2016, p. 252).

Actors working for the ASC are required to embody Living Thought, thinking and reacting on the line, rather than between lines (ASC, 2009). Gabourie virtually paraphrases this notion in his advocacy of Living Thought:

... you can see when you give them the direction of discovery, the direction of allowing themselves to go with the thought, and flow with the thought, and **think on the word**, there's something that immediately becomes extremely exciting. And you can watch the actor **onstage in the moment** coming towards a realization (Stageside Shorts, 2011).

McAnuff sees the ultimate success of Living Thought as eliminating all separation between thought, word, and emotion. (Ney, C. 2016: 252). Success made by these criteria would necessarily meet the requirements of the ASC's performance statute concerning Living Thought, with the addition of 'action' to the simultaneity of word, thought, and emotion.

Inherent within Living Thought is a drive towards rapid, fluid action, as opposed to the drawn-out or ponderous performances for which Shakespearean drama is infamous. Even with heavy editing, antiquarian Shakespeare plays were 'slow because of the time required to change sets and deliver lines in an overly ponderous manner that destroyed the momentum of the plays' (Ney, 2016, p. 15). Poel's student, B. Iden Payne saw the idea that 'the fundamental quality of a Shakespearean performance should be the complete fluidity of action' as one of the most important aspects of his legacy (p. 17). The desire to keep the action and pace

lively, fluid, and dynamic has been inherited by OP through Poel's Elizabethan Revival and remains vital today in places like the Globe and the American Shakespeare Center and, as previously mentioned, Jeff Watkins of the Atlanta Tavern even categorizes 'fast-paced productions' as an essential component of OP (Dessen, 2008, p. 45).

It is for this reason, to maintain the fluidity and pace performance, that the ASC makes significant effort to avoid lengthening Shakespeare's plays, in accordance with Cohen's 3rd cardinal rule. Speaking on his 3rd rule, Cohen suggests to directors, 'HAVE ACTORS PICK-UP – ALMOST JUMP – THEIR CUES' (Cohen, 2008, p. 217). Under the ASC's interpretation of OP, actors must pick up cues more quickly than it would be possible to do unless already primed and ready to speak. Furthermore, a rule I learned while performing at the ASC was to speak whenever my cue line was called, wherever I might be at that time. If backstage, if carrying a table to set up a scene, if the actors of the previous scene were still departing the stage with a corpse: as the performer, I was supposed to begin speaking, loudly and clearly enough for the audience to hear. It seemed at first unnatural to me, to strike set pieces while actors from the next scene, by then, already in progress, carried theirs onstage. After some practice, the approach had some appeal to me from the sheer momentum of it. It was not naturalistic but unironically and consciously theatrical, but it began to feel natural in performance, perhaps because the style is better suited to Shakespeare by being closer to the practices of his day, as is the intent of all OP.

These rules help to keep performances at the ASC tightly paced and reasonably short. Not counting interludes, most plays at the ASC are kept close to a two-hour

'time limit,' one of the first OP considerations taken on by Cohen with the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express. This two-hour goal comes from the prologue to *Romeo & Juliet*, which informs the audience of 'two [sic.] hours traffic of our stage' which the ASC and others have interpreted as evidence of historical practice (Ney, 2016, p. 17).

In addition to the avoidance of anything that might unnecessarily lengthen the play, the ASC, OP directors, and Shakespeare directors in general often advocate for the cutting of Shakespeare's plays. For directors with OP concerns, this means excising words from the play, a delicate procedure for those who claim special reverence for the text. Even the cutting of Shakespeare's words, however, has some basis in historical stagecraft. Andrew Gurr, the first head of scholarship under Sam Wanamaker's Globe, believed that there would have been a maximal text but also a shortened performance text, a belief common amongst OP directors (Ney, 2016, p. 135). Jim Warren also believed that Shakespeare wrote considerably more text than his actors ever performed (p. 134). Still, the ASC ascribes to a 'liposuction' approach, as opposed to 'amputation,' trying to trim scenes of excessive words rather than excise characters or scenes entirely (p. 138).

The ASC and other productions concerned with OP often save a great deal of time because of the lack of excessive set pieces. The stagecraft of Shakespeare necessitates a relatively Poor Theatre, and thus clunky scene changes are removed entirely. Additional stage business not coming from the text is heavily frowned upon if not outright forbidden. Acting and action must occur on the line for Living Thought and Ralph Cohen's rules.

This idea of rapidity is not exclusive to OP but informs a great deal of Shakespearean performance practice. Unsurprisingly, considering how closely aligned academically they are to OP, some Language & Text directors describe Shakespeare's text in veritable paraphrase of Langham & the ASC's philosophy of Living Thought. Henry Woronicz believes that in Shakespeare, 'There is no thinking off the line. No thinking before the line' (Ney, 2016, p. 30). Mark Lamos likewise expresses ideas closely aligned with Living Thought, especially with regard to verse:

[W]hen an actor is speaking verse, he is saying something elemental and direct. He is thinking as he speaks; sometimes in fact thought and speech are simultaneous. There is no thinking off the line. No thinking before the line. (And not thinking prior to making an entrance, since there is no subtext in Shakespeare). Shakespeare writes as speech the 'pause' that a modern dramatist would present as a stage direction. ... We hear the character thinking his way to the ultimate point he's going to make. This can feel absurd to a modern actor... but of course it's the way we all talk. Conclusions are arrived at, not forgone... (Ney, 2016, pp. 58-59).

Lamos and Woronicz also believe that pauses should be eliminated from Shakespeare without strong textual support such as the presence of a shortened verse line in the First Folio (Ney, 2016, pp. 58-59). Otherwise, pauses are damaging to Shakespeare's rhythm, especially verse which should, by their view, propel the momentum of the play forwards.

Royal Shakespeare Company founding associate director and Shakespeare scholar John Barton also believed that it was 'pretty certain... that Shakespeare's actors played the text a good deal quicker and tighter than we do' (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982). RSC actor Jane Lapotaire interprets the note 'pick up the cue at once,' as meaning, 'speak as you think. Not speak faster, but think faster,' a comment that Barton praised as 'vital' (Ibid). Barton blamed the

naturalistic bias in 'modern' acting for the inordinate use of pauses and plodding delivery, an example of modernity as impediment that OP is intended to avoid.

## 2:7 Seven Standard OP Parameters

Having now rendered a survey of the practices prominently associated with OP, I suggest the following conditions be recognized as standard for OP as a theatrical form:

1. The Primacy of the Text
2. Historical Staging (almost always in a thrust configuration; sans set)
3. Audience Interaction
4. Universal Lighting (the same illumination shared by actors and audience)
5. Diverse casting (in contrast with historical practice)
6. Fluid, Lively Pacing
7. Clarity of Storytelling

As discussed in 2:5 the primacy of the text comes to OP from the RSC; but the notion that Shakespeare's words should be the principal concern for a production has only become more strictly adhered to by those classified as Language & Text directors. OP directors are among those Language & Text directors that take a further step by exhuming Shakespearean stagecraft concerning the staging and performance from information conveyed by the text.

After the primacy of the text, Historical Staging is the most significant aspect of OP. The idea of OP largely derived from experimentation in recreated historical playing spaces. The Globe, the ASC, and the Tavern Theatre all work on such stages, with the primary set being the stage itself. The Kentucky Shakespeare Festival also uses a permanent outdoor stage in as the primary set, roughly similar in basic structure to the Globe but on a far more modest scale. Whipday & Cox Jensen used thrust staging in their OP production, as well, as does the ASC touring company, creating a

thrust configuration in whatever space they visit. Tina Packer, whose work is closely associated with OP but not operating exclusively within that mode, still advocates for minimal scenery in her productions.

Only slightly less common is the use of Universal Lighting, also referred to as Shared Lighting. Obviously, there was no electricity in Shakespeare's time. The Globe operated by sunlight and the Blackfriars additionally made use of candlelight. Circumstances and technology created a space where the actors and audience were able to observe one another. The interactive relationship of play between audience and actor that is common to OP theatres was born from this environment. In the original Blackfriars Playhouse, where some young men began to exhibit themselves by sitting on the stage itself, members of the audience were even further placed within the story of the play. Universal Lighting is meant to break down the artificial barriers between the performers and the audience, barriers that would not have existed for Shakespeare's company, performing well before the advent of the 'fourth wall' convention. The ASC, the Globe, the Tavern Theatre, and Whipday & Cox Jensen all ascribe to Shared Lighting for OP.

When the new Globe first opened in London it met with harsh criticism for the 'Disneyfication' of Shakespeare (Cohen, 2008, p. 211) but the model of Shakespeare as popular entertainment found in OP has found success. The Audience Interaction that grew out of experimentation with Shared Lighting and liberal use of direct address initially provoked critics to lambast the Globe for bringing Shakespeare down to the level of Panto. That same relationship with the audience is also one of the principal draws of OP theatres, only exacerbating the accusations against them for 'selling out.' OP directors would likely disagree. From the OP perspective,

Shakespeare's theatre was a commercial endeavour and Shakespeare was a popular entertainer writing for the format and audience of his time. The Globe, the ASC, the Tavern Theatre, and Tina Packer all emphasize the importance and power of the relationship with the audience when performing in OP. The Audience Interaction in OP also presents a specific acting challenge to performers. When one has to find and connect with an audience member, sometimes to tease or participate in some bit of stage business, there is always a level of risk. You never know what they will do. It provides moments of micro-improvisations that keep the play lively for the audience, and the performers engaged.

As discussed in 2:4 and in accordance with the broader theatre community, OP theatres are open to diverse casting choices with regards to ethnicity, gender, etc. There are occasional experimental productions with all male casts, such as the Globe's 2002 production of *Twelfth Night* but this is the exception rather than the rule. At the ASC, almost all female roles are played by women, though women also usually play several male roles per show. On occasion, a man will play a woman's role, but because there are so few female roles in Shakespeare relative to male this is less common.

OP Shakespeare, many directors and scholars would say Shakespeare-in general, should move at a Fluid, Lively Pace in support of the tenants of Living Thought as discussed in 2:6. Germane to the subject of pace is the pace of OP productions themselves. What is common is the knowledge that Shakespeare's company had very little rehearsal time and no official director. Some OP adherents have experimented with reducing the role of director and truncating the rehearsal time in order to inject some semblance of the rapid pace of staging each play (Ney, 2016, p.

17). The previously mentioned Unrehearsed Shakespeare Co. in Chicago has no rehearsals, with actors only having individual meetings with their director before performance (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Co., 2019), but this extreme practice is not common to OP. In Whipday & Cox Jensen's staging of the *Tragedy of Merry* using OP conditions, they cited the significance of the limited rehearsal period several times to their work (Whipday, Summer 2017, p. 292).

The ASC experiment with truncated rehearsal periods and absent directors in two ways. First, the aforementioned Ren-Run. The standard setup of the Ren-Run requires that the cast has not yet rehearsed any scene of the play, they must be off-book, and they will be left alone for some hours to assemble a rough imagining of the play. Though this practice originated at the ASC, I first encountered it at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival. After Toftland encountered the technique while directing at the ASC, it was then imported to his own practice. The director will then be one of the audience members taking notes on the discoveries and choices the actors have made. While this experience can be intimidating, it is also a chance for actors to indulge in daring choices. The director still exists, and what has come to be traditional rehearsal with set blocking resumes following the Ren-Run but OP directors tend to give their actors significant freedom with Toftland preferring to think of himself as a facilitator rather than director. Directors in OP are principally interested in preserving the Clarity of the text for the audience rather than imposing ideas upon the actor, as a result, much is left to the actor to decide and create. Charles Ney recognizes that the lack of rehearsal and directors gives actors greater ownership over individual choices (Ney, 2016, p. 17). With this freedom comes

greater responsibility for the actor to bring their own work forward without the invisible strings of a director pulling them in certain directions.

In addition to the standard six-month Summer-Fall Season, and the eleven-month Touring Season which takes residence at the Blackfriars' in Winter, the ASC also offers a third season. This three-month contract is called The Actor's Renaissance Season. Like the resident company of the Summer-Fall season, the Renaissance Reason or Ren-Season, is comprised of six shows performed in repertory. The Summer-Fall Season usually has at least a couple of weeks before the first show of the seasonal repertoire goes up, still far less than many professional companies, but the first show of the Ren-Season premieres before an audience after a couple of days of rehearsal. The Ren-Season has no directors nor designers, each actor pulls what costume they wish from the stock and scenes are worked out between the performers in that scene. During my Ren-Season contract, even fight choreography was arranged by the actors without outside assistance. For most shows in the Ren-Season, a prompter sits offstage and will offer the performers assistance if they request a line by calling 'prithee.'

These productions are unpolished, but the raw, frantic energy that drives them appeals to audiences and the Ren-Season has proved very popular for the ASC. There is a greater sense of improvisation to these performances, even more than is demanded by the interactive audience relationship that is common in OP, and too, a greater sense of play. And unlike the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Company or Whipday & Cox Jensen's project, there is truly no director during the Ren-Season.

For many scholars, OP is about history. OP represents a chance for scholastic theories to be tested in a practical environment. Scholarship in Britain on the matter is especially weighted towards the interest in the use and application of production materials in addition to staging concerns; considerations I have largely ignored. While questions of such material can be relevant to performance, costuming and makeup, particularly; I have attempted to focus instead on OP from the perspective of acting theory applied to rehearsal and performance, for which there is comparatively little written. With that in mind, I look towards psychophysical acting practice to address the needs of OP towards the goal of achieving Living Thought in performance.

## Chapter 3: From Stanislavski

The central focus of this project is to explore the potential of a psychophysically informed approach to Shakespearean rehearsal and performance, specifically OP, towards the achievement of Living Thought. The previous chapter identified some of the most common and prevalent conditions of OP performance, and this chapter will identify basic psychophysical performance practices that can inform an effective approach to OP and how these practices are conducive to manifesting Living Thought. Compared to OP Shakespeare, psychophysical theatre practice is extremely broad in range and interpretation, and it is beyond the scope of this project to explore it exhaustively. This chapter is therefore more narrowly focused upon the psychophysical theories and practices of Konstantin Stanislavski because this project follows intentionally in his tradition and builds upon his foundational theories and practices. As Merlin explains, 'acting will always be psycho-physical to a greater or lesser extent. There can be no question that Stanislavsky was the first twentieth-century practitioner to investigate it seriously' (Merlin, 2003, p. 156). While focused upon Stanislavski, this chapter branches out beyond him where necessary to contextualize, and in some cases, explicate Stanislavski's work more deeply or thoroughly through psychophysical performance practice.

### 3:1 Psychophysical Thought

'Psycho'- comes from the Greek 'psyche', meaning 'life, spirit, soul, self' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 18) and is used in modern context to reference something mental or psychological. Taken literally, psycho-physical as a term references the interaction between the mind and body. In the context of psychophysical practices, this is

broadly taken to represent a holistic view of mind and body rather than a separate or dualistic interpretation. Paradoxically, the ideas of psychophysical unity might best be understood to many Westerners through the contrasting view of mind-body dualism, especially Cartesian dualism.

French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes famously engaged in a thought experiment in which he attempted to remove all preconceptions of reality and thereby establish what he could definitively know. He concluded that it was the mind that was the most real, because though some powerful 'evil genius' could create an illusion of physical reality, even in such an illusion it would be his consciousness that perceived the experience, and therefore only consciousness could be verified as a genuine experience (Descartes, 1996, p. 8). His conclusion led him to distinguish between two substances, 'thinking substances', which he equated with the soul, and 'extended substances which constitute the physical world' (Thompson, 2008, p. 99). Descartes considered 'thinking substances' from the realm of consciousness as more real than 'extended substances' of the physical realm, and this emphasis on the mind over the body was inherited by Western psychology. Descartes' duality, Cartesian Dualism, had far-reaching effects on the understanding of the human body. Before Descartes, physical ailment was often seen as punishment for sin, but Cartesian Dualism had filed the soul into the mind category and left medicine to natural science.

As alluded to in Chapter 1, the problem of mind-body dualism is particularly prevalent in the West and problematic for Western actors due to the pervasive over-emphasis on psychology in acting practices. This emphasis on psychology in acting

practices emerged from Western psychology as it coalesced as a branch of independent study from philosophy, as Zarrilli explains:

When psychology emerged as a separate discipline from philosophy in the nineteenth century, the sciences of mind and the self were often considered separate from the science (s) of the physical body. This split reflected the long-term Western binary dividing mind from body that so problematically crystallized in the mind-body dualism of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650). Scientists and philosophers who wanted mind and body to be considered in relation to one another, rather than separately, began to use the compound term 'psycho-physical' to bridge this gap (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 13).

Though psychophysical ideas challenged Cartesian Dualism, the basic assumption that the mind and body belonged to separate areas of study prevailed in psychology. As psychology itself became more popular and influential, Cartesian Dualistic biases have been carried over with them, eventually coming to influence performance practices.

Zarrilli argues:

Preoccupation with emotion and the psychological has meant that most American method approaches to work on "the self" and creating a character have been highly susceptible to some form of body-mind dualism (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17).

What I identified as the Actor's Mind-Body problem in chapter one is a demonstrable form of mind-body dualism interfering with acting ability and antithetical to Living Thought. Zarrilli describes how dualism creates distinct symptoms of 'in-head' acting:

At one end of the spectrum is the potential overemphasis on the actor's personal, subjective emotional life. In its most extreme form, acting is reduced to what the actor- as- person feels emotionally in the moment. There is no clear articulation of the distinction between the emotional life of the actor- as- person and that of the character. The result can be self-indulgence to the neglect of the physical side of the acting equation. At the other extreme is an over- intellectualization of the process of creating a character, in which the physical also gets left out (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17).

This over-emphasis on psychology to the exclusion of the physical, Zarrilli argues, is a problem that descends from Cartesian dualism. He is ultimately laying the blame for what I term the Actor's Mind-Body Problem in Chapter 1 at Descartes' proverbial feet. It is the job of the actor, in Zarrilli's words, 'to swim upstream against Cartesian dualism' (p. 121).

The science that Cartesian dualism empowered eventually brought together what Descartes had separated. Scientist Friedrich Beck describes a 'materialist revolution' that arose against Cartesian dualism and classical physics, in part brought on by Darwin. Charles Darwin's view of thought as a materialistic 'excretion of the brain' (Beck, 2008, p. 70) left little room for the dualistic non-material substance of thought within the hard sciences. And yet, the problems of mind-body dualism persist in philosophy, and for the performer.

Numerous thinkers in science and cognitive philosophy have offered various perspectives on reconciling the mind-body problem in a post-Darwin landscape. Cognitive philosopher David Shaner argues that, phenomenologically, 'one can never experience an independent mind or body' (Shaner, 1985, p. 42). He does not suggest that 'mind' and 'body' are meaningless terms, however. Though he recognizes that aspects of experience are either primarily mental or physical, the alternate is always present even if not consciously perceived. Rather than thinking of 'mind' and 'body' as separate 'dual' aspects, he suggests that they are symbiotically 'polar' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32).

Modern psychology and neuroscience acknowledge 'the close functional dependence of minds and brains, that physiological changes very readily affect the

mind in many ways, and that mental intentions... affect both the... nervous system' (Thompson, 2008, p. 101). Cognitive philosopher David Oderberg concludes that matter 'simply is not sufficient to support or explain the phenomenon of human conceptual thought' (Oderberg, 2008, p. 230). In our daily lives we engage with a mental, psychological, "inner" life; from a very young age, we can distinguish between imaginary things and physical objects (Wellman, 2008, p. 17). As children we can recognize a mental cause at the root of another person's actions (Antonietti, 2008, p. x). We can also understand concepts that have no basis in physical reality, ideas that are purely fantastic, and therefore 'purely' mental (Wellman, 2008, p. 16). Cognitive philosophers Wellman and Johnson call this 'common-sense' approach to distinguishing between the mental and physical Naïve Dualism (p. 3). These examples demonstrate that thoughts, though formed through physical processes in the brain, are understood within ourselves and others in terms of mind. Naïve Dualism is potentially compatible with the Darwinian derivation of a monistic view which asserts that only a material/physical world exists, and thought is nothing but a biological process, albeit a complex one; but the mind-body relationship is likely even more complex.

Certain neurocognitive theories suggest that to 'engage in concept formation, judgement, and reasoning is to engage in a process not entirely dependent on matter' (Oderberg, 2008, p. 211), allowing a place for the Mental (i.e. non-physical) to exist. In *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, theatre scholar Amy Cook explains:

...it is no longer clear that there is a part of us that thinks and a part that feels, a part that remembers, and a part that dances. Indeed, many scientists believe that what we consider "Thinking" happens not within our brain, but in the relationship between a body and an environment (Cook, 2010, p. 22).

In some ways, the mind even projects its own interpretation of the physical world outward, which may or may not be accurate, further blurring the line between mind and body and our perceptions of both (pp. 8, 76, 132).

Scientist Ian J. Thompson explains:

... the way we perceive external physical things does not only depend on their nature but also on the construction of our own cognitive apparatus: our sensual organs and our intellect. How we see things is determined by an interaction between the external objects and ourselves (Thompson, 2008, pp. 139-144).

If a material, monistic approach were practical, it too, might still therefore be insufficient as indicated by the above-mentioned scientists, philosophers, and scholars.

Even if thought could be reduced to a purely physical event, a supposition which is hardly certain, the complexity of the thinking process is not easily explained by the firing of neurons. That is not to say that the biological view is incorrect, nor irrelevant, but insufficient, especially for the performer. To understand thoughts and actions in terms of neurological activity will not necessarily bring the actor any closer to inhabiting them in performance. Still, it remains noteworthy that for contemporary science, our reality is understood as a psychophysical reality, one in which the mind and body, mental and physical, define one another in material and immaterial ways. What are the implications for developing a system from a presumption of the actor as a psychophysical being? Here the discussion leaves the terrain of the conceptual, and enters into the examination of psychophysicality in practice, because it is there that the actor may find practical answers. To address Shakespearean performance, the subject of this project, I turn to psychophysical performance beginning with the

progenitor of contemporary acting methodology in the West, Konstantin Stanislavski, those that he influenced, and those that influenced him.

### 3:2 Beyond Descartes

Two of the most significant sources influencing Stanislavski's psychophysical practice were 19<sup>th</sup> century French proto-psychologist Theodule Armand Ribot and the American Yogi Ramacharaka (Carnicke, 2009, p. 154). While Freud became the de facto name in American psychology, Ribot was equally revered in Russia (p. 155). Stanislavski disregarded Freud but owned six of Ribot's books, filling the margins with his own handwritten notes. Ribot's work appealed to Stanislavski's need to overcome his perception of a divided mind and body, because Ribot himself 'sought to define a psychophysical continuum between mind and body' (Ibid). In attempting to 'bridge the Western gap between mind and body' (p. 8) he drew upon two practices already demonstrably psychophysical, Ribot's psychology and Indian yoga (Ibid).

Ribot was one of the first scientists to significantly study emotion, and he saw a connection between some psychological experiences and the body, but not all. Ribot distinguished between what he referred to as 'concrete' recollections, involving the entire psychophysical organism, and memories that were purely 'abstract.' Those memories that he did not determine to present physiological significance, he deemed 'nothing but a purely intellectual state' (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 155-156). Ribot may have influenced Stanislavski's psychophysicalism, but in this distinction between the 'concrete' and the 'abstract,' his psychological theories represented still

more dualism. Beyond Ribot, the most significant influence on Stanislavski's psychophysical practice was yoga.

Stanislavski's sources on yoga were *Hatha Yoga* and *Raja Yoga*, both books by Ramacharaka (Carnicke, 2009, p. 170). He is known to have quoted liberally from them, with many of his 'System's images and catch phrases' originating from Ramacharaka (p. 172). According to Carnicke:

Eastern thought offered him different and in ways more satisfying models for the mind/body relationship than science alone could offer. These models he found not only theoretically but, more to the point, practically useful (p. 175)

and, further:

Eastern practice allows Stanislavsky to move beyond the Western propensity to see mind and body as two separate realms and to establish a mind-body-spirit continuum for actors who seek to communicate the full scope of human experience through their art (p. 13).

It should be noted, however, that Ramacharaka was representing these Eastern ideas as a Western practitioner, being an American.

Still, Stanislavski was taken enough with the ideas he found in yoga to risk the ire of Soviet censors by including the Hindu term *prana* in his work to describe the 'energy centre in the solar plexus' (Merlin, 2003, p. 65) and as the energy often translated as 'radiation' in some of his exercises (p. 99). As discussed in detail below, yoga, operating within a psychophysical paradigm, was free of the influence and presumptions of Western thought inherited from Cartesian Dualism, which dominated and transformed the world of Western philosophy and medicine, leaving an indelible mark on psychology.

Stanislavski and many of the acting theorists that followed in his tradition looked to Eastern traditional practices for guidance in overcoming the divide between mind and body and developing a higher sense of coordination between them; many, including yoga, operating from a psychophysical paradigm. Such practices specifically identified by Zarrilli as psychophysical include yoga, tàijíquán (tai chi), Buddhist meditation, the martial arts, and traditional theatrical forms such as Beijing Opera, Butoh, noh, and kathakali (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 65). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Western psychology did not grow out of Western philosophy until centuries after Cartesian Dualism had been accepted as the order of the day, with the study of the body and physical practice considered separate. According to Zarrilli, this is in decided contrast to how traditional embodied practices developed as they spread through Asia:

Embodied practices were not separate from the development of philosophical thought, rather practices such as yoga and Buddhist meditation contributed to and were shaped by the development of ever-changing religio-philosophical systems of thought as they travelled from South Asia to Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan (p. 64).

Advocating the usefulness of 'Asian perspectives on mind, body, and emotion' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 76) for theatre practitioners, Zarrilli also warns actors against the dangers of Western dualism likelihood of exacerbating the Actor's Mind-Body problem:

...Western dualistic thinking creates problems for the actor. Acting is either too easily over-intellectualized or becomes overly subjective. This is due to our compartmentalization of mind, body, and emotion. It is commonplace to assume that mind is an absolute organ or category separate from the body or our feelings and emotions. We often assume that a thought is something taking place in the head or that emotions are irrational. While certain intellectual processes can and do seem to occur in our heads, and while experiencing an extreme emotional state such as an unexpected bereavement can be personally debilitating or lead to seemingly irrational behavior, to separate mental processes from the body

and our feeling/emotional world or vice versa, is highly problematic from the perspective of understanding acting process (p.76).

Zarrilli begins *Psychophysical Acting* with a discussion of the spectrum of Western psychophysical theatre practices after Stanislavski besides his own, included amongst the discussion are Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, and Eugenio Barba, each contributing to Western practice by studying traditional embodied practices. As these teachers influenced others, the scope of traditional embodied practice brought into contemporary Western psychophysical practice broadened as well, all pedagogical descendants of Stanislavski.

Stanislavski's prized pupil Michael Chekhov shared his mentor's interest in yoga, introduced to it at the First Studio by Leopold Sulerzhitsky (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 10). Sulerzhitsky, like Stanislavski, used Hindu terminology learned from his yogic practice, including *prana*, to describe the radiating of an energy field (p. 67).

Grotowski recognized that his own work built upon the theatre tradition of Stanislavski and Meyerhold, amongst many others (Grotowski, 2002, p. 24), and among Grotowski's myriad influences, it is known that he incorporated into his practice elements of yoga, tai chi, and vocal techniques influenced by his 'wide travels and studies in interior central Asia, India, and China' (Schechner, 1997, p. 26).

Inspired by drama theorists including Grotowski, Zarrilli also travelled to India where he studied kathakali, a form of Indian dance-drama that had been influential to Grotowski as well as Grotowski's pupil, dramatic theorist Eugenio Barba (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 4). Zarrilli became the first Westerner to make a serious study of the Indian martial art of kalarippayattu (PhillipZarrilli.com, 2016), studying yoga as an integral

part of his wider training (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 5). Zarrilli's own intercultural practice was modelled on the influence of non-Western ideas on acting theory:

Psychophysical Acting is therefore self- consciously intercultural. I draw directly upon non- Western philosophies and practices in order to freshly (re)consider a psychophysical approach to contemporary acting, East and West. Significantly, with the exception of American method approaches, most of the major theorist/ practitioners of contemporary acting including Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Meyerhold, Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, Barba, Copeau, Tadeusz Kantor, Herbert Blau, Suzuki Tadashi, Yoshi Oida, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Anne Bogart have been influenced in some way by non- Western traditions (p. 8).

Zarrilli's Psychophysical Acting draws upon numerous sources, hence his description of his approach as intercultural, with traditional Asian embodied practices especially prominent, especially tai chi, yoga, and kalarippayattu (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 65). He makes explicitly clear that 'the goal of training is not to make all who train with me expert martial artists! I am training actors to act.' (p. 82). He advocates for the value of these practices and others like them for their value in 'a continuous exploration of the underlying dynamics and principles of the energetics of acting' (Ibid).

In the continuing discussion of Living Thought and how to approach it through the cultivation of Stanislavski's Creative State, it will be useful to draw upon concepts and principles from specific traditional embodied practices whose vocabulary better suits psychophysical description. Though contrived through the experiments of Stanislavski and his students, there are significant similarities between the optimal level of creativity in his practice and other heightened performative states found in traditional embodied practices.

### 3:3 Stanislavski's Psychophysicality

Though Cartesian Dualism was still *de rigueur* in Stanislavski's early life, he independently came to reject dualism in lieu of a psychophysical understanding of the world. Stanislavski observed that there was 'no easy way to separate the... mind from the body' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 147). He was 'the first to use the term psychophysical (*psikhofizicheski*) to describe an approach to Western acting focused equally on the actor's psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 13). Zarrilli describes Stanislavski's use of the term 'psychophysical' as its 'most obvious and commonplace meaning: "interrelating or existing between the physical and the psychic," or "partaking of both physical and psychical"' (p. 18).

Stanislavski began his work at a time when the physical dominated theatre, but in such a way that the actions taken by the performer seemed empty and meaningless. According to Merlin,

The artistic climate into which Stanislavsky emerged as a theatre practitioner was fairly bleak: a chaos devoid of coherent stage pictures, design concepts, directorial decisions, trained professionals and ensemble companies. Under these conditions... Stanislavsky began his process of 'revolution' (Merlin, 2003, p. 8).

The System he sought to create, a methodology for acting, would continually attempt to coordinate mind and body, action and thought, and to fill that perceived emptiness with meaning. In his autobiography, *My Life in Art*, he writes what could be considered a preamble for *An Actor's Work*, his acting manual that he would soon compile:

Do we need to say that there cannot be a system for creating inspiration any more than there can be a system for being a violinist of genius or a Chaliapin? ... but there is something else... essential for both Chaliapin

and a member of the chorus, for both have lungs, a respiratory system, nerves and a physique, even if it is better developed than in others, whose task it is to produce sound according to a law that is common to all. In rhythm, movement, speech, voice training and breath there is much that is common and therefore incumbent upon all (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 347).

While inspiration is an important focus of Stanislavski's approach to acting, he is acknowledging here that inspiration is not something that can be taught. But if it cannot be taught for acting, then neither can it be taught for musicians or singers, yet musical training is still practical. If this is so, as Stanislavski suggests, then inspiration may be difficult to achieve, but those performers that have prepared their minds and bodies physically will naturally perform better than those less prepared. At minimum, the System would provide this training towards basic competence, but Stanislavski wanted his methodology to provide more than that. He wanted to exercise the creative process of acting itself, the work of processing material and technique through the body and mind as a work of performed art:

... since all actors without exception need to feed the mind according to the laws of nature, to preserve what they have acquired through their intellectual, affective or muscular memory, rework the material in their artistic imagination, engender artistic characters with the inner life that that implies and embody them naturally according to the laws that are known and natural to all (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 347).

In so doing, Stanislavski's process often revolved around the central idea of preparing a worthy home for inspiration, were it to arrive, in ways unique for the actor's expression.

Stanislavski's discussion about natural laws can be read as evidence of his preference for naturalism, but he is also correct that audiences can perceive the false or the superficial. That natural laws are 'known to all' is a reminder that physical activity and performance which reflects life is supported by an inner life, one of psychological motivation and familiar 'natural' responses. And yet, even as

Stanislavski discusses this, he is also recognizing the challenge of translating those natural laws, that sense of true life in performance, as an artistic expression for others to receive for the stage. Stanislavski's System was intended to provide those 'creative techniques of the conscious mind' that would be useful to the actor in developing their abilities as performers, the 'tasks, sol-fa, arpeggios and scales' as he put it, of acting. Without technique, he argues, the performance, whether inspired performances or insipid play-acting by way of 'stock-in-trade... clichés and trickery' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 348), will be left only to chance.

### 3:3:A real action

In contrast to the meaningless gestures of stock-in-trade he was 'striving for a *psycho*-physical theatre, where gesture was invested with inner-meaning, as well as theatrical expression' (Merlin, 2003, pp. 18-19). Merlin argues that Stanislavski demonstrates this psychophysical perspective as a director through his production plan of *The Seagull*, where he juxtaposed the conflicting objectives of Polina and Dorn 'in broad, physical pictures, where psychology and physicality are inextricably linked' (p. 98). She concludes, as did Stanislavski, that acting is psycho-physical to some extent or another, *necessarily*, and the actor a psycho-physical instrument (Merlin, 2007, p. 5).

As a student of the Russian-branch of Stanislavskian practice, Merlin's understanding of Stanislavski recognizes psychophysicality at the very core of actor training:

The foundation of a decent actor-training as far as Stanislavsky was concerned was PSYCHO-PHYSICALITY... PSYCHO-PHYSICALITY basically alludes to the fact that your body and your psyche are trained together to achieve a sense of inner-outer co-ordination. This means that what you experience *internally* is immediately translated into an *outer*

expression, and (conversely) what your body manifests *physically* has a direct and acknowledged affect on your *psychological* landscape. So, I bury my head in my hands: before long, my muscular memory and my imagination kick-in, and I start to feel despair. Or maybe I'm feeling buoyantly happy: without me consciously contriving it, my shoulders relax and my chest expands and there's a Puckish spring in my step. The membrane between what's going on inside me and my body's expression of that inner information is delicate and porous (Merlin, 2007, p. 19).

From her overtly Stanislavskian background, she sees the basis of psychophysical performance as the recognition that 'inner feeling and outer expression happen at the same time... whatever emotion you may be experiencing, your physical response to that emotion is instantaneous' (Merlin, 2001, p. 27). In Stanislavski's words, 'In every physical, in every psychological Task and its fulfilment there's a great deal of the other' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 147), and in 'every physical action there's something psychological, and there is something physical in every-psychological action' (p. 180). If the mind and body are always present with one another, then there is no divide between mind and body, but rather a continuum, as Merlin suggests (Merlin, 2001, p. 27), and this continuum moves in both directions:

Psycho-physical training is one in which body and psyche, outer expression and inner sensation, are integrated and inter-dependent. The brain inspires the emotions, which then prompt the body into action and expression. Or the body arouses the imagination, which then activates the emotions. Or the emotions stir the brain to propel the body to work. All the components – body, mind, and emotions – are part of the psycho-physical mechanism which makes of the actor: psychology and physicality are part of a continuum (p. 4).

Physical actions when performed for their own sake, like the playacting and stock-gesturing he despised, was useless; but physical action when properly applied was capable for the 'truth and belief these actions help us to arouse and feel' (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 162-163), but just as physical action can be a boon to the imagination, so too does imagination prompt physical action.

Stanislavski writes, 'Actors physically feel the things they are thinking about and can hardly restrain their own inner impulse to action, its struggle to find outward expression' (p. 181). Because an interconnected mind and body experience influence from either direction, Stanislavski saw the importance of both on the actor's preparations and he investigated differing routes to bring them into better alignment.

As Merlin explains:

PSYCHO-PHYSICALITY refers to the dialogue between your body and your psyche. Your body can give you as much information about the character as your brain does, and your psychology inevitably affects how you use your body. It's an inner-outer transference (Merlin, 2007, p. 21).

According to Zarrilli, from his 'early focus on affective memory to his later Method of Physical Actions, Stanislavski always attempted to overcome what divided "mind from body, knowledge from feeling, analysis from action"' (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 13-14).

However his process changed, Stanislavski's interest in improving the sense of inner-outer coordination between the mind and body remained a constant, but his tactics and overall approach shifted towards the end of his life. While Stanislavski had, at times, focused primarily on the psychological aspect of acting, as with his experiments involving affective memory, in later years his focus was increasingly on the physical body as the most immediately responsive tool available to the actor (Benedetti, 1982, p. 66). Merlin describes it as:

The main vehicle you have for communicating to the audience the world that the writer has invented is your body, in that the physical form you present on stage or screen conveys your psychological interpretation of a character. And by 'body', I also mean your vocal apparatus, from your lungs to your lips. If you didn't have a body, how could you give shape to your thoughts, feelings and fantasies? (Merlin, 2003, p. 21).

Stanislavski writes:

Outer communication relies very strongly on inner experiencing in our school of acting. To be able to reflect a life which is subtle and often subconscious, you must possess an exceptionally responsive and

outstandingly well-trained voice and body, which must be able to convey hidden, almost imperceptible inner feelings instantly in a distant and accurate manner. This is why an actor of our school, much more so than of other schools, must be concerned not only with his mental apparatus that facilitates the process of experiencing, but even more with his physical apparatus, his body, which conveys his inner feelings in a believable manner – their other form, their embodiment (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 20).

Carnicke reminds us, however, that Stanislavski did not interpret physical action as more important than psychology (Carnicke, 2009, p. 191), just as more accessible and ultimately more reliable. 'Physical movements are easier to detect and capture, that's why we turn to them,' he writes (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 480).

### 3:3:B Inspiration in process

Stanislavski's System was always in process. While his continued efforts to coordinate the mind and body were, appropriately, the unifying themes carried across the full breadth of this work, Stanislavski's writings can seem very contradictory because of his devotion to experimentation. Examining the overall System, it is possible to chart a relatively straightforward path of progression, especially if we can learn to begin where Stanislavski ended, with action; then we can better understand Stanislavski's model of psychophysical performance.

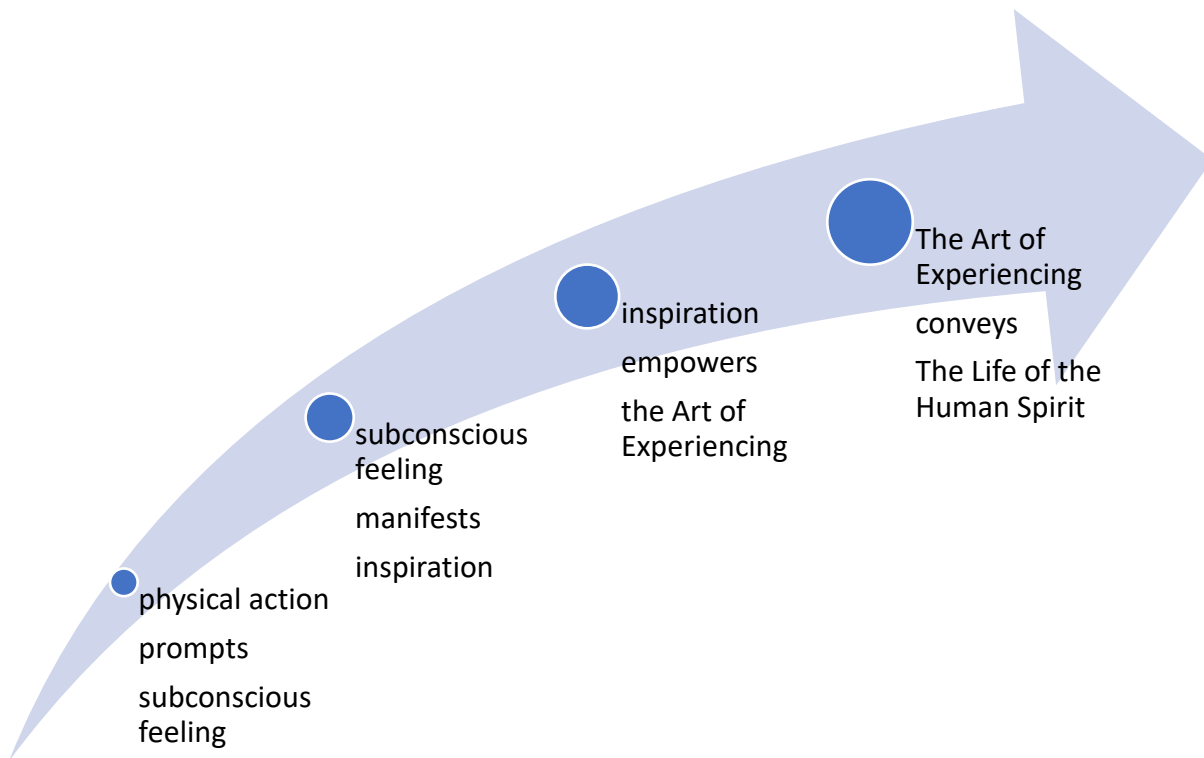


Figure 1 Stanislavskian psychophysical process

Stanislavski considered the basic goal of acting ‘the creation of the life of the human spirit in a role and the communication of that life onstage in an artistic form’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 19). To effectively embody that living spirit, one had to be Experiencing a role, not just playing it. Carnicke defines Experiencing as Stanislavski’s term for how he describes ‘what actors feel when the exercises successfully release their full creative potentials’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 129). He tells us, ‘Each and every moment must be saturated with a belief in the truthfulness of the emotion felt, and in the action carried out, by the actor’ (Merlin, 2007, p. 118). Such a performative truth as Experiencing can only come from inspiration, but inspiration could only manifest in the subconscious. This presents a challenge for the actor, as one of Stanislavski’s fictional students expressed, ‘We are supposed to create on inspiration, but only the subconscious can do that, and we can’t control it’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 17). Stanislavski never entirely trusted the subconscious as an artistic source because of its unreliability and his own concerns for people’s

mental wellness. Eventually, he dispensed with attempts to directly engage the subconscious but decided instead to seek an indirect approach. He advises us 'not to chase after the ghost called inspiration. Leave that question to the enchantress, nature, and concern yourself with what is accessible to human consciousness' (p. 320).

Stanislavski committed more and more to what he found the most consistently reliable over a lifetime of teaching, physical action: 'Acting is action. The basis of theatre is doing, dynamism. The word "drama" itself in Ancient Greek means "an action being performed"' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 40). As Benedetti explains:

If the intellect can inhibit, and the emotions are fickle where can an actor begin in his exploration of a role? The answer is, with what is most immediately available to him, with what responds most easily to his wishes- his body (Benedetti, 1982, p. 66).

Setting that body into purposeful motion became the surest way to consistently arouse inspiration, and any real feelings that come with it. In his final production, *Tartuffe*, he said, 'Do not speak to me about feeling. We cannot set feeling; we can only set physical action' (Benedetti, 1982, p. 69). His training, his System, evolved around the idea of preparing the actor, body and mind, to best engage with action, because action was the first step towards embodying the life of the human spirit in a role.

### 3:3:C The vitality of the human spirit

Stanislavski believed that embodying the 'life of the human spirit in a role' was the basic calling of the actor, their role as an artist, referring to it specifically in *An Actor's*

*Work*<sup>10</sup> no less than sixty times.<sup>11</sup> Carnicke argues that Stanislavski meant spirit in the traditional sense: ‘When Stanislavsky asserts that acting should embody “the life of the human spirit of the role,” he does indeed mean the psyche as “soul”’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 167), though even that requires some interpretation. When Stanislavski says, ‘The actor creates the life of the human spirit of the role from his own soul... and incarnates it in his own living body,’ (p.133) he is not speaking of a Judeo-Christian soul, but he is certainly speaking of the psyche, the inner life of an individual person. Through yoga, Stanislavski understood that the physical could be the ‘threshold into the spiritual’ (p. 169) but whether he equated the human spirit he so frequently discussed as identical with *prana* is not explicitly stated.

Whatever the nature of the spirit or psyche Stanislavski believed in, and it is possible he never came to complete conclusions, it was too much for the Soviet state:

‘...his system... based upon the premise that there is an indissoluble link between mind and body, spirit and flesh – violated the required materialistic philosophy. Body and flesh were acceptable, mind questionable (if it meant the subconscious), and the spirit unacceptable’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 102).

Stanislavski’s discussions about spirit and what comprise it, including ‘inner sorrows, joys, relationships,’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 185) can often be categorized as psychological rather than strictly spiritual, but that interpretation itself betrays a Western dualistic bias that he was actively trying to overcome. They were spiritual to Stanislavski and he certainly discussed spirituality of a more overt nature in his

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10 The totality of Stanislavski’s acting manuals. The Benedetti translation includes *An Actor’s Work* (2008) & of *An Actor’s Work on a Role* (2010). This covers all material comprising that of the Hapgood translations known as *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, & *Creating a Role*.

11 From *An Actor’s Work* (2008): 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 36, 111, 118, 145, 157, 189, 214, 227, 231, 239, 244, 254, 262, 275, 282, 288, 299, 313, 352, 365, 372, 284, 399, 437, 444, 446, 512, 516, 555, 563, 580, 583, 584, 597, 689; from *An Actor’s Work on a Role* (2010): 19, 54, 57, 58, 63, 66, 70-74, 78, 84, 85 [discounting other historical documents published in this volume]

writings, especially with regards to *prana*, in ways that cannot simply be reduced to metaphor. However one interprets 'spirit' in discussing Stanislavski's theories, it essential to recognize that 'the life of the human spirit' will in some way exhibit 'the spirit of human life,' that, even if non-realistic, an outward performance will not have vitality without an inner life to support it. He tells us:

Only when the actor understands and feels that his inner and outer life onstage, with all the conventions that this implies, is proceeding naturally and normally, even to the point of being totally naturalistic in accord with all the laws of human nature, can the deep secrets of the subconscious make a cautious appearance. From them feelings which we cannot always understand emerge (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 18).

Acknowledging his disdain for stock-in-trade acting and the meaningless unrealistic posturing it was known for, I think we can be forgiven for assuming Stanislavski is suggesting *some level* of naturalism. As Carnicke explains, Stanislavskian actors gained the reputation as 'functioning best in realistic dramas with psychologically rounded characters' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 145). While he may have at times meant naturalism in its exact form, depending upon the production, his idea of natural when it came to the human spirit had more to do with life and truth than realism, and a different sort of life/truth than one experienced outside of a dramatic context.

Explaining himself, he writes:

The virtue of my work then lay in the fact that I tried to be sincere and sought truth, and banished lies, especially theatrical stock-in-trade ones. I began to hate the theatre in theatre, and sought in it living, genuine life, not ordinary life, of course, but artistic (p. 30).

'Living truth on stage,' he elucidates, 'is not at all what it is in reality... On stage truth is whatever you believe and in life truth is what actually is' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 144).

According to Benedetti, 'Stanislavski did not accept the mere transposition of the elements of everyday life, unaltered, onto the stage, as truthful acting' but 'is peculiar to itself (Benedetti, 1982, p. 34).

Carnicke argues that ‘actors “live” on stage, because they “create” on stage.... Performing becomes the sincere reality of creative process. “Truth” itself is consequently redefined...Acting generates its own experiential dimension in performance’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 144). Even actions taken with truthful intention of purpose were not performed purely for the sake of realism, but ‘in order to stimulate an experiencing of the role’s human spirit in us as a natural reflex’ and specifically noted that ‘the importance of the human body’ in stimulating a natural reflex should not be ‘confused with the devices of Naturalism’ (p.190). Merlin explains, “theatrical truth” is not the same as real life. So the students needn’t become obsessed with naturalistic detail’ (Merlin, 2003, p. 42).

Stanislavski advises actors to perform actions ‘to the point where nature and the subconscious come into play’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 609), but ‘we don’t do this just be naturalistic or realistic but because our creative nature, our subconscious need [sic.] it’ (p. 406). Merlin adds:

Even if we’re on the planet Mars, the characters’ behaviour will have a certain psychological dimension to which we can relate as twenty-first-century human beings. That doesn’t necessarily mean we believe in what we’re seeing: rather, we believe in its possibility (Merlin, 2003, p. 17).

‘They need truth, even a fictitious truth which we can believe and live’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 406) and, ‘If one small truth and moment of belief can put an actor in a creative state then a whole series of such moments, in logical succession, and in sequence, can create a very big truth and a whole, long period of belief. They will support and reinforce each other’ (p.164).

The spirit of human life embodied by the performer need not be naturalistic or realistic to meet Stanislavski’s idea of ‘true,’ but it must be vital, actions must be

supported by inner-meaning, and it must be Experienced truthfully by the performer in the moment. By rendering truth as the 'sense that the moment-to-moment performance of a role as the actor's present reality' Stanislavski opened 'the door to non-realistic aesthetics' to operate within his paradigm (Carnicke, 2009, p. 3).

Eventually, Stanislavski began to regard the 'theatrical event itself as the source of the actor's genuine experience' (p. 144). Chekhov's theory aligns well with the later psychophysical focus of Stanislavski, including a broader perspective on artistic truth:

Moreover, under the hypnotic power of modern materialism, actors are even inclined to neglect the boundary which must separate everyday life from that of the stage. They strive instead to bring life-as-it-is onto the stage, and by doing so become ordinary photographers rather than artists. They are perilously prone to forget that the real task of the creative artist is... to *interpret* life in all its facets and profoundness... (Chekhov, 2003, p. 3).

What made Experiencing an art for Stanislavski was not simply the act of emulating real life onstage but *living* a real life on stage. This is unmistakably accurate to embodying Shakespeare's heightened reality in OP, as Linklater explains:

Shakespeare's "truth," therefore, is different from our daily experience of "truth." The scale is larger than our domestic reality. But he does not express his truth in a different language, he expresses it in a different experience of language. When today's actor starts to experience Shakespeare's language as a whole-body process, s/he is led to a larger and deeper experience of thought and emotion... (Linklater, 1993, p. 6)

Shakespeare's overtly heightened language and distinctly theatrical style still demand verisimilitude born of vitality in performance, but that truth will be different than psychological realism, just as Chekhov and Stanislavski agree is required of performance.

### 3:3:D The Art of Experiencing

Artistic Experiencing, by Stanislavski's standards, meant that the actor was fully engaged in their experience onstage but also embodying that experience in such a way that could be perceived by the audience, writing, 'the actor must not only experience the role inwardly, he must embody that inner experience physically' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 20). Benedetti describes Experiencing (*perezhivanie*) as denoting 'the process by which an actor engages actively with the situation in each and every performance' (Benedetti, 2008, p. xviii), though I argue that this is more precisely a description of the process required to embody Experiencing. Still, as previously established, the primary difference between empty play-acting and Experiencing action is whether or not the action is supported by an inner life. He warns, 'stock-in-trade actors aren't capable of experiencing a role and so they can never understand what the outward consequences of this creative process are' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 28). It makes sense that Stanislavski, in his attempt to overcome the divide between mind and body, would have placed some greater emphasis on psychology, at least initially, given his perception of the field of acting as being dominated by superficial physicality. Responding to the empty physicality he disliked in theatre, he suggests the 'subtlest technique cannot compare to the subconscious when it comes to physical embodiment' (p. 20).

### 3:3:E the indirect path

He described acting as 'above all inward, psychological, subconscious. The best thing is when creation occurs spontaneously, intuitively, through inspiration' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. xxxvi). Stanislavski said, 'If today you are in good form and

are blessed with inspiration, forget about technique and abandon yourself to your feelings' (Merlin, 2007, p. 46). He acknowledged that inspiration could come by chance, at least in flashes or bursts, but Stanislavski had no patience for the 'instinctive actor' who manifested inspiration only when, in Stanislavski's words, 'they are lucky and fortune is with them' (Benedetti, 1982, p. 64) because they relied upon chance, gambling with their art, and regarding their success as 'an act of Providence, a gift of the gods' (Ibid):

[Instinctive actors] believe in inspiration alone. And if that should fail, they... have nothing with which to fill the gaps... This results in long periods of low nervous energy, total artistic impotence, and naïve, amateurish playacting. At those moments your performance, as with any instinctive actor, became lifeless, stilted and laboured (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 22).

Grotowski later echoes Stanislavski's beliefs, reminding performers of the demanding, imminent nature of theatre:

However, the theatre, and in particular the technique of the actor, cannot – as Stanislavski maintained – be based solely on inspiration or on other such unpredictable factors as talent explosion, the sudden and surprising growth of creative possibilities, etc. Why? Because unlike the other artistic disciplines, the actor's creation is imperative: I.e., situated within a determined lapse of time and even at a precise moment. An actor cannot wait for a surge of talent nor for a moment of inspiration (Grotowski, 2002, pp. 127-128).

While Stanislavski does not directly say that inspiration defines the Art of Experiencing, his first example of Experiencing in *An Actor's Work* is the moment when Kostya's engagement with the performance of a Task in an exercise leads him to inspiration through his subconscious reactions. Through Tortsov, Stanislavski explains:

It is always best when an actor is completely taken over by the play. Then, independent of his will, he lives the role, without noticing *how* he is feeling, not thinking about *what* he is doing, and so everything comes out spontaneously, subconsciously. But unfortunately, this is not always within our power to control (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 17).

Inspiration 'hides in the subconscious and is inaccessible to human reason' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 548). Fortunately, as elusive as inspiration can be in the oft inaccessible subconscious, Stanislavski has a solution, it 'is the *indirect*, not the *direct* influence on the conscious and subconscious mind' (p. 17). The System he outlines through all three sections of his treatise on acting theory are devoted towards the indirect path of stimulating the subconscious:

The essence of my book is to access the subconscious through the conscious. I try to use the conscious methods in an actor's work to study and stimulate subconscious creativity – inspiration. I maintain, on the basis of long practice, that this is possible, with, of course, this one proviso, that all creative initiative be given to nature, the only true creator, which is capable of creating, forming what is truly beautiful, inscrutable, unattainable, inaccessible to any form of consciousness, i.e., which has a living spirit within it. The conscious mind can only help her (Stanislavski, 2008, p. xxvi).

The conscious path to the subconscious was his System, based upon the idea that 'aspects of the human psyche obey the conscious mind and the will, which have the capacity to influence our involuntary processes,' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 17). In *My Life in Art*, Stanislavski advocates for the necessity of such conscious techniques in actor training:

...they must be studied by every actor for it is only through them that the superconscious creative apparatus can be set in motion which, evidently, will always be a matter of wonder to us. The greater the actor, the more mysterious is the mystery and the more he needs the creative techniques of the conscious mind to influence the superconscious that is hidden in its secret places where inspiration lies (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 348).

There is not much difference in what Stanislavski refers to as the 'superconscious' and the term popular in Freudian terminology, but Stanislavski was pushed to find synonyms that would pass censor. According to Benedetti, he was 'obliged, particularly when dealing with the subconscious to create his own terms and

definitions which are often highly convoluted and confusing' (Benedetti, 2008, p. xviii). Benedetti explains:

...he was locked in a bitter battle with pseudo-Marxist Soviet psychology which... did not recognize the existence either of the subconscious or of the Mind. Consequently, he substantially rewrote whole passages in an attempt to appease the authorities' (p. xvii).

'My book has no pretensions to be scientific,' he writes in his introduction, divesting himself of all authority to properly accepted terminology, 'Although I take the view that art should be on good terms with science... Acting is above all intuitive, because it is based on subconscious feelings, on an actor's instincts (Stanislavski, 2008, p. xxiv). He spoke of spirit, the mind, and the subconscious as much as he was able, but he was often obscure, perhaps intentionally, regarding the exact nature of them, writing:

Questions about the subconscious are not intellectually my business. Besides, let's not destroy the mystery and awe with which we surround moments of inspiration. Mystery is beautiful and is a spur to creation (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 208).

While that statement could simply be read as a concession to censors that Stanislavski would not contradict the party-approved definition of consciousness, it is likely that he also legitimately wished to preserve the spontaneous element of subconscious inspiration that could be ruined by overthinking, which he understood very well.

He had no more patience for the overly intellectual than he did the stock-in-tradesman or the 'instinctual' hoping for a fortunate bout of inspiration. 'Actors of the third type – in whom the mind dominates feeling and will... unwittingly give the role an overly intellectual, cerebral emphasis' and warned against such practices, because audiences will 'reject work which is the result of sterile theatrical calculation'

(Stanislavski, 2008, p. 282). Michael Chekhov, too, warned against dry reasoning which 'kills your imagination. The more you probe with your analytical mind, the more silent become your feelings, the weaker your will and the poorer your chances for inspiration' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 25). Stanislavski felt that action supported by inner meaning was essential to Experiencing, but he thought an actor with 'a stuffed head and empty heart' was useless onstage (Benedetti, 1982, p. 65). He saw an overabundance of intellectual performances 'all in the mind' and a rarity of 'genuine, living, emotional theatre' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 277). When Merlin trained in Moscow, she found that her Russian tutors of Stanislavskian lineage 'used little cerebral analysis of text in rehearsals; everything was discovered through improvisation' (Merlin, 2001, p. 6).

For Stanislavski, emotion was like the subconscious, part of the actor's inner life, but it too was filled by engagement with the physical:

The physical line of the living human body and its movements is based on the apparatus of embodiment, which is comparatively crude. As regards the life of the human spirit, it is created out of elusive, capricious, unstable feelings, which are barely perceptible when it comes into being. In comparison with other muscles of the body that produce movement and action, feeling is like thread of gossamer (Stanislavski, 2010, p. 84).

Over intellectualizing did not fill a performance with inner life, rather it stunted the genuine responses to action which should be emotion. Unfortunately, as Grotowski later observed, 'emotions do not depend on our wills' (Grotowski, 2002, p. 246) and Stanislavski was quite aware that 'feelings can't be fixed. Like water they slip through our fingers' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 340). Confronted with an 'emotional role,' Stanislavski observed that the actor would 'contort himself, exaggerate his passion, 'tear it to tatters,' dig around in his soul and do violence to his feelings' (Merlin, 2007,

p. 135). Martial artist and psychophysical performance theorist Daniel Mroz further elucidates:

Working on an actor's emotions directly, i.e. asking her to feel a certain way while performing, or worse, behaving in such a way as to manipulate her into feeling a certain way, is ineffective for the simple reason that feelings cannot be reliably predicted or forced (Mroz, 2011, p. 134).

Hence Stanislavski's indirect approach to inspiration. As his former student Chekhov later explained:

[W]e cannot directly command our feelings, but... we can entice, provoke and coax them certain indirect means. The same should be said about our wants, wishes, desires, longings, lusts, warnings or cravings, all of which, although always mixed with feelings, generate in the sphere of our will power (Chekhov, 2003, p. 63).

Paradoxically, is it not thinking but doing that Stanislavski found the most consistently engaging method of stimulating the inner life of emotion and the subconscious. Carnicke summarizes the idea:

During performance, the actor places his or her full attention on carrying out the required action, with the character's emotions arising as a natural result of the action. By focusing solely on action, the actor experiences something akin to the role's emotional life as a subsidiary effect (Carnicke, 2009, p. 88).

Action is the indirect path. Taking action with true intentionality, engaging in genuine and productive action, will provoke inner psychological, emotional, responses. The mind and body are already linked; improving the coordination between them intensifies the effects of the body's physical actions on the psychological mind, which, in turn, will be felt within the physical body. Once the psychophysical apparatus is functioning as bodymind, the performer is primed for higher levels of performance, like Living Thought, where impulse, action, and feeling begin to blend.

### 3:3:F reputation and practice

Already having determined that inspiration needed guidance from indirect means of stimulation, action came to define that indirect means for Stanislavski. Yet, his reputation continues to be associated heavily with psychological realism, emotion memory, and/or the American Method. In *Stanislavsky in Focus*, Carnicke not only examines the work of Stanislavski but how his legacy became split between America and Russia, and from there, fractured further as schisms formed between his students and disciples. Stanislavski retroactively experienced damage to his reputation through the dubious methodologies of his students. She writes:

Many who reject him actually reject his constructed image, not his fundamental intuitions about acting. Playwright David Mamet writes that: “The Stanislavsky ‘Method,’ and the technique of the schools derived from it, is nonsense. It is... a cult.” ... Mamet is not arguing with Stanislavsky but his statue (Carnicke, 2009, p. 4).

Lee Strasberg garnered second-hand knowledge of some of Stanislavski’s early experiments into a reputation as America’s acting guru. He co-founded the Group Theatre in New York and assumed authority over the institution of Method acting even though Strasberg never worked with Stanislavski directly, but with Stanislavski’s student Boleslavsky (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 16). Richard Boleslavsky overemphasized and extended Stanislavski’s ideas of emotion/affective memory at a time when Stanislavski was already moving on towards an emphasis on action in his own practice (p. 15). At the Group Theatre, where the Method was born, Strasberg established emotion as the ‘primary criterion for acting’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 152), taking precedence over Stanislavski’s interest in action and experience (p. 148).

Carnicke writes:

Stanislavsky may have taught that if the given circumstances in the play are clear, the actor’s senses and imagination are working, then “all the

actor needs is action,” but Strasberg disagreed. “Well, I say, if all these things are there, I can afford the luxury of not having the action.” (Carnicke, 2009, p. 64).

Given Circumstances are the conditions of the play itself, the lines, actions, and implications of the script. Stanislavski believed that it was easy to stimulate truth through the ‘simplest physical Tasks and actions. They are accessible, stable, visible, tangible, they submit to conscious mind and to orders’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 160). When simple Tasks are contextualized with exciting Given Circumstances, the actor can perform them without over-thinking or psychologizing (p. 166). The action of engaging with Tasks produces inner-feelings striving to be expressed through yet more Task, as ‘the only way for your internal desires to find sufficient outlet, like a boiling kettle or a stopcock under pressure’ (Merlin, 2007, p. 135). Zarrilli further explains how action propels action:

Engaging with simple task- based structures, the actor begins to more explicitly explore the nature of impulse and action as they are shaped into what looks like, and indeed constitutes, performance.

The actor begins to act “without [trying to] act”

The actor ideally begins to “play” (unthinkingly) within each structure not knowing when there will be a shift in awareness or focus/attention discovering experientially what it feels like to inhabit a psychophysical score without pre- meditation.

What is essential in “playing” a structure is to work simply within its rules and thereby to be open to perceptual experience and discovery as they take place (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 101).

Strasberg’s methodology was far more punishing, manipulative, invasive, and overtly psychological (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 54-55, 64) than Stanislavski’s comparatively gentle indirect methodology. Stanislavski clearly proscribes actors from trying ‘the direct route to the subconscious, because you are looking for inspiration for inspiration’s sake. That only leads... to the opposite result’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p.

337). Strasberg *demanded* actors' appeal to the subconscious (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 16). Despite Stanislavski's association with emotion/affective memory, it should be noted that he also cautioned against simply diving into emotionality for the sake of a role, and not simply for reasons of psychological well-being but also because of the temptation to overly indulge emotional impulses too often resulted in generalized acting (Merlin, 2007, p. 135). Carnicke writes of affective memory:

While most theatre practitioners assume that Stanislavsky used affective memory liberally in his early work on the System, he actually did not. His concern for actors' privacy and their 'mental hygiene' as well as his own modesty prohibited him from asking actors to perform affective recall in front of others. Stanislavsky told Joshua Logan, 'We never ask anyone to practice my method in public.'... Stanislavsky also worried that personal associations could threaten the actor's focus on the play and confuse acting with playing oneself, a criticism often leveled at Method actors (Carnicke, 2009, p. 153).

Nor did Strasberg's idea of the subconscious match Stanislavski's model.

Stanislavski may have grown frustrated with any attempt to directly mine the subconscious, but he still saw it as the birthplace of inspiration. Unreliable in some ways, Stanislavski still described the subconscious as a great friend, not an enemy. Carnicke believes that Strasberg 'treats the subconscious as the actor's foe. For him, it is the frightful, mysterious, uncontrollable place that popular Freudian tradition pictures' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 161) and his approach to acting suggests 'a therapeutic approach to acting: the person who wishes to act must confront and overcome blocks and repressions in the psyche in order to free the means of expression' (Ibid). Strasberg is the anchor that holds Stanislavski's reputation in place concerning psychology and the subconscious, but they had opposing views on their very nature. Strasberg treats the subconscious as the obstacle preventing proper artistic expression. Contrarily, Stanislavski, in Carnicke's words, understood the subconscious as an 'infinite source for our imaginations' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 160).

The subconscious for Stanislavski is simply *there*, to use contemporary parlance, 'running in the background' of our daily life but indirectly accessible for creative life if properly approached (Ibid).

When actor and theorist Stella Adler, a member of Strasberg's Group Theatre, worked with Stanislavski directly near the end of his life, she was struck by his 'rejection of any direct approach to feelings and his abandonment, except as a last resort, of Emotion Memory' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 16). And yet, his reputation for affective/emotion memory continues to the present. As recently as 2016, American actor William H. Macy reduced all of the System to 'affective memory in an intro to a comedic bit on late night television. When asked how he managed to communicate the idea of 'internal heartbreak,' he answered:

...technically speaking, there's ... Stanislavski, what's called an affective memory, you think of the time your dog got killed by a car and you think of that memory and bring it to the stage; there's Grotowski, where you do the motions and the actions and the emotions will follow; and there's my technique where I just fake it... (Macy, 2016).

Macy, a student of Mamet's, was clearly joking, but the joke is indicative of the continued reduction of Stanislavski's entire System in the public consciousness to a technique that he eventually abandoned.

Strasberg shares the blame for placing undue emphasis on the psychological aspects of Stanislavski's early system, but this misunderstanding of Stanislavski has also been perpetuated by the original English translations of his work. His primary work on acting theory, collectively referred to as *An Actor's Work on Himself*, remained incomplete at the time of his death. He began this work after a heart attack in 1928 ended his acting career, and relied heavily on earlier, often incomplete notes and articles, with material dating back pre-Revolution. It was intended to

outline a two-year course, with the first year focusing on creating an inner-life for the character and the second dealing with expressing that inner-life physically (Donnellan, 2008, pp. xv-xvii). *An Actor Prepares*, the English translation by Elizabeth Hapgood, is an incomplete form of the first part of *An Actor's Work on Himself*, the portion focused on the psychological 'inner-life,' first appearing in 1936, five years after Strasberg's Group Theater were already working with their own interpretation of his technique.

*An Actor Prepares* was 'heavily – often clumsily – edited by its 1930s' translator and publisher, not to mention the translator's husband' (Merlin, 2008, p. 1). Stanislavski was justifiably concerned that this 'first volume would be identified as the total "system" itself, which would be identified as a form of "ultranaturalism,"' and unfortunately, this is exactly what came to pass (Donnellan, 2008, p. xvi). By the standards of Carnicke and Zarrilli, the problematic Hapgood translations privileged not just a psychological, but a specifically Freudian interpretation of the System at the expense of physicality (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 15). Carnicke and Zarrilli also argue that Americans are culturally vulnerable to reading Stanislavski, or anything else, with a bias privileging psychology born of what Carnicke describes as the American 'Freudian-based, individually oriented ethos' (Ibid).

Carnicke argues that such an ethos led to a 'specifically American reading of Boleslavsky's teachings,' (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 64, 148), themselves an interpretation of Stanislavski, and eventually to theatrical practices that led Strasberg to be 'accused in the press of practicing therapy without a license' (p. 64). Whatever interest Stanislavski demonstrated in psychology as a subject the truth is that he seems to have been completely 'uninterested in Freud's work' (p. 155). His

reputation for psychologically-based acting is not even accurate to the sources on psychology from which he drew. Freud had not been particularly popular in Russia, as opposed to America, and as previously mentioned, Stanislavski cared nothing for him (Ibid).

### 3:3:G Stanislavski, reunited

Because Stanislavski's theories were always in process and his primary work of theory remained incomplete at the time of his death, there can truly be no complete view of his System. With the benefit of hindsight, we can at least examine his theories with the full context of his life. With the fall of the Soviet Union, scholars like Sharon Carnicke, Jean Benedetti, and Bella Merlin have been able compare Stanislavski's split reputation between Russia and the United States, with the full body of his work. Carnicke believes this is vital to understanding Stanislavski's work:

While both centers [American & Russian] tapped the same source... Neither of the two approaches found Stanislavsky's study of avant-garde and Eastern arts of more than passing interest. Neither integrated the mind and body of the actor, the corporeal and the spiritual, the text and the performance as thoroughly or as insistently as did Stanislavsky himself. Both considered Stanislavsky's work in the Realist style most compelling. In short, two doctrines evolved from the same source, each gaining the force of unambiguous authority within its own culture... (Carnicke, 2009, p. 8).

Benedetti produced the most complete and faithful English translation of Stanislavski's actual words in *An Actor's Work* (2008) and *An Actor's Work on a Role* (2010) as a way to rectify this as much as possible through the original text. Most of Benedetti's translations were compiled in the first volume, *An Actor's Work*, in part to honor as much as was practical, Stanislavski's desire for the System to be presented in a single work. The book comprises the materials from the Hapgood editions entitled *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character*. With *An Actor's Work*,

Benedetti reconnected the mind and body in Stanislavski's printed words as Stanislavski had hoped to do in his own practice. As previously mentioned, Stanislavski was concerned that readers would read the first volume of his work, Hapgood's translation of *An Actor Prepares*, and nothing else, developing an unbalanced view of his System. He intended an overview of the entire System to be included with *An Actor Prepares* that might have mitigated this somewhat, but never actually wrote it (Merlin, 2008, p. 3). Merlin explains the significance of this wholeness of the manuscript in her article 'An Actor's Work is finally done,' largely in praise of Benedetti's translation:

...many of us who are unable to read the original Russian texts, have had the impression that *An Actor Prepares* is the heart of the 'system,' so not all of us go on to read the partner piece, *Building a Character*. Even those of us who do read both probably don't have a wholly clear sense of just how intricately they interconnect. So publishing the two books in one volume is a major development... (Ibid).

Taken together, Stanislavski's System is explored by both halves of *An Actor's Work*, the inner-life in the first and the outer-expression in the second, and arguably represents 'a unified, coherent psycho-physical technique' (Donnellan, 2008, pp. xv-xvi) certainly more than the deeply analytical psychotechnique of his reputation.

Unfortunately, this is the reputation that continues to haunt him particularly with Shakespeare, despite the redemptive apologetics of contemporary practitioners like Merlin, Carnicke, and Benedetti. In an article on contemporary actor training by Stephen Simms, Professor of Actor Education and the vice principal and head of acting at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, he writes:

Much of the blame for the perceived decline in the quality of Shakespearean acting is placed at the door of Stanislavski and interpretations of his method popularized by movie acting. As Stanislavski is at the core of much actor training, this accusation is worrying when it comes to teaching actors to perform Shakespeare (Simms, 2019, p. 121).

If anything, his reputation is even more suspected in OP:

“There is no subtext in Shakespeare.” This claim, made during a presentation at the 2009 Blackfriars Conference [hosted by the American Shakespeare Center] by Demetra Papadinas, the artistic director of the New England Shakespeare Festival, is a refrain often repeated by many who consider themselves “original practitioners” of Shakespeare’s work, particularly those who follow the First Folio as a guide to performance. 1 The target of such an assertion is Constantin Stanislavski, whose approach to acting is predicated upon the notion of subtext: “That is what we do to the work of the dramatist; we bring to life what is hidden under the words.” 2 By disavowing the notion of subtext, these original practitioners make a claim that subverts not only Stanislavski’s method, but the mainline twentieth-century approaches to acting that are rooted in Stanislavski’s work (Kanelos, 2013, p. 64).

But this argument takes an unnecessarily narrow reading of inner-life, one that is steeped in the idea of inner-life as relates to psychological makeup, subconscious but Stanislavski often broadened the inner-life to simply be one engaged in purposeful activity. How do you fill a performative action with inner-life from Stanislavski’s perspective? While the presumed Stanislavskian answer seems to be to psychoanalyze the character and then play the results of the analysis, instead most often Stanislavski would suggest taking action *with purpose*: ‘above all you must create consciously and believably. That will prepare the best soil for the subconscious and inspiration to burgeon’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 18).

Action brings Stanislavski’s entire System into play, enabling the actor to convey to the audience the life of the human spirit in the role:

...what is conscious and credible gives birth to truth, and truth evokes belief, and if nature believes in what is happening inside you, then she, too, becomes involved. And in her wake comes the subconscious, and, just possibly, inspiration may then follow’ (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 18-19).

He tells us, ‘People on stage act and these actions – better than anything else – uncover their inner sorrows, joys, relationships, and everything about the life of the human spirit on stage’ (Carnicke, 2009, p. 185). Stanislavski’s psychophysical

theories defined 'the process of acting as inherently psychophysical: body and mind interrelate and affect each other, and the imagination is completely embodied' and 'bound up with action' (Daboo, 2013, pp. 162-163, 166).

Performing action perpetuates action, as the attentive work of acting creates feelings and impulses needing to be expressed; expressing those impulses – through more action – continues the process along. When those inner-feelings meet the outer expression necessary for performance onstage, the actor embodies the life of the human spirit in the role. From a creative point of view, one action inspires the next. By the end of his life, Stanislavski advises the actor to simply jump into action. 'Start bravely, not to reason but to act,' he advised, 'As soon as you begin to act you will immediately become aware of the necessity of justifying your actions' (Benedetti, 1982, p. 69). Benedetti summarizes:

...physical action triggers an experiencing (*perezhivanie*) of the play, and that the text presents the actor not only with words but also with a structure of actions. These notions radiate out from another of Stanislavsky's key assumptions, that action distinguishes theatre from other forms of art. While Stanislavsky examined the mind-body-spirit continuum through psychology and Yoga, he used his final workshops to explore these two other ideas through the language of action (p. 194).

By his final workshops, the entirety of the rehearsal process had become a creative laboratory built upon action.

### 3:3:H The Primacy of Action

For Stanislavski, acting was work. 'I am a practitioner,' he tells us, 'and it is not through words but through work that I can help you know, that is feel, artistic truth' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 72). For Stanislavski, all that was required, 'physical actions, physical truths, and physical belief in them! Nothing more!' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 187). During the rehearsal of *Tartuffe*, the final play he directed, Stanislavski said,

'Do not speak to me about feeling. We can only set physical action' (Benedetti, 1982, p. 68) so long as the action was performed productively and with intentionality.

Performing action mechanically, playacting, or otherwise pretending with a vague sense of emotion was indicative of the sort of 'generalized' acting that Stanislavski was actively working to oppose, arguing that 'Onstage you shouldn't perform actions "in general" for actions' sake. You should perform them *in a way which is well-founded, apt and productive*' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 42). Stanislavski recommends *genuine* action, which will always meet the criteria of being well-founded and apt (ibid). Of utmost importance 'was to achieve genuine, productive, purposeful action' (p. 58). This idea of genuine, productive, purposeful, well-founded, and/or apt action can be summarized in a single term that continues to be one of his most enduring gifts to the world of acting, Task.

Stanislavski's term *zadacha*, which Benedetti translates as 'task,' is the progenitor of similar terms commonly used in theatre including 'goal,' 'objective,' or 'intention' but Stanislavski's Task is somewhat bereft of the additional psychological baggage that the latter terms indicate. Words like 'goal' or 'intention' suggest an endgame in the mind of the individual playing them. Carnicke explains:

...*zadacha*... it can be translated 'problem,' and Stanislavsky in fact associates it with a child's arithmetic problem to clarify his idea. Such a 'problem' implies a logical solution; and for the actor, Stanislavsky says, the solution lies in the action. The Russian word is also commonly translated as 'task,' which demands fulfilment through action.

... Webster defines 'objective' as 'something aimed at or striven for,' in short, a goal. Thus, 'objective' stands at the opposite pole of meaning from that of *zadacha* by implying not an impulse toward action but rather the action's outcome, and hence further confusing the path from 'problem' to 'action' as described by Stanislavsky (Carnicke, 2009, p. 90).

Merlin adds to this argument the recognition that desire, even when relevant, may be obscure and therefore still beyond the actor's purview of conscious practice:

[I]n life we often don't really know what we want until we're in the middle of a situation. We may think we have one intention, but the minute we actually find ourselves in dialogue – be that a conflict-ridden dialogue or a harmonious one – our intention can subtly shift *in response* to our partner... Defining your 'Task'... arises out of direct interaction with another person. If the term 'objective' has a sense of predetermining what you might be striving for *before* you actually go out on stage, 'Task' seems to arise out of the physical actions in which you engage *once you're out there* (Merlin, 2007, p. 16).

Zarrilli warns against the idea of working based on 'goal' or 'intention,' contending that 'Intention, effort, and the lack of a more complex understanding of the body-mind continue to be the actor's worst enemies' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 4). Further, he argues that the act of wilfully asserting said intention upon a given action will necessarily engage tension in the performer (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 23-24). For anyone familiar with the Alexander Technique, this mentality may be reminiscent, if not outright identical, to that of 'end-gaining.' Proponents of the Alexander Technique for the relief of bodily tension see end-gaining as the extremity of focus placed upon a goal's achievement rather than 'the means whereby' a goal might be achieved (Rootberg, 2011, p. 157).

As with Zarrilli, Alexander practitioners see end-gaining as a counterproductive source of tension, a potential obstacle to any goal in mind. In Alexander's own words:

'...in each attempt to gain an end in learning or playing their games or in pursuing their art or craft they are doing a great deal to lessen their chance of success by cultivating undesirable habits of use in their trial-and-error efforts to gain their end' (Alexander, 2001, p. 161).

Alexander Technique places the emphasis away from the end gain and onto the 'means-whereby', the method of achieving said goal, what I interpret as the Task.

Similarly, Stanislavski cautioned actors against what I will henceforth refer to as an end-gaining mentality. He also considered it a mistake for actors to place more thought on result than action. Bypassing the action, and focusing on result only resulted in, by his consideration, hammy, forced, stock-in-trade, or otherwise bad acting (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 143-144). But, by engaging with Tasks through 'the genuine, productive and purposeful actions necessary to fulfil them' onstage, the results take 'care of themselves if everything that has been done beforehand is right' (ibid). Stanislavski's Task was always expressed as a verb and expressly *not* as a noun because nouns failed to 'suggest dynamism or action. Yet every Task must inevitably be active' (p. 149). Merlin explains:

You should not try to express the meaning of your objectives in terms of a noun... [Task]<sup>12</sup> must always be a verb... This is because a noun calls forth an intellectual concept of a state of mind, a form, a phenomenon, but can only define what is presented by an image without indicating motion or action. Every [Task] must carry in itself the germ of action (Merlin, 2007, p. 75).

While it may be simple to consider a noun as a goal, e.g. 'the crown' as a goal for Richard III, Stanislavski always described Task as what was being done to attain a goal, not just the goal itself, much closer to Alexander's means-whereby than something striven for, such as an endgain. He explains:

Life, people, circumstance and we ourselves endlessly set up a whole series of obstacles one after the other and we fight our way through them, as through bushes. Each of these obstacles creates a Task and the action to overcome it (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 143).

Too often, Task is reduced, especially when thought of as a goal, simply as a desire, i.e. what someone wants. Wanting to get someone's attention for the sake of

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<sup>12</sup> Merlin here uses the term 'objective' denoting the identical concept in Stanislavskian's teachings, otherwise referred to as 'goal,' 'intention,' etc. but changed to reflect the more precise Benedetti translation which I prefer.

wanting their attention, for example, is an expression of desire, a goal, but it is completely unsupported as a Task (p. 332). Examples of Tasks as actions from Stanislavski are phrased like 'to laugh at Iago's ridiculous slanders' or 'to understand what the other person is saying' (p. 333). Task is not just what you want but much more importantly, 'what do I have to *achieve*... to get what I want?' (Merlin, 2008, p. 16).

Task = Wanting + Doing, but the emphasis is on the doing.

He warned actors not to 'play the result onstage but to fulfil the Task genuinely, productively, and aptly through action all the time you are performing' (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 143-144). As Merlin concludes, 'this definition makes it absolutely clear that the actor's 'Task' on stage is to engage in real, dynamic, vital action' (Merlin, 2008, p. 16).

Tasks constitute much of an actor's work in performance according to Zarrilli. For psychophysical theatre practitioners, Stanislavski's interest in psychophysicalism may seem axiomatic by now, but his reputation with Shakespeare and OP remains largely with that of Method acting and ultrarealism. In Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting*, 'task' is both the action that Zarrilli's attunement training is in preparation for and a part of that attunement training:

The beginning actor's commonplace problems of anticipation, pushing, not listening, inattention, etc. are all manifestations of not entering fully into a state of being at play in the moment.

Engaging with simple task-based structures, the actor begins to more explicitly explore the nature of impulse and action as they are shaped into what looks like, and indeed constitutes, performance.

The actor begins to act 'without [trying to] act' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 100).

In context, Zarrilli's tasks, which he refers to as 'actions/tasks,' are an even purer form of activity than Stanislavski's Task. Stanislavski uses Task as = (Wanting + Doing), but Zarrilli's actions/tasks are reduced to simply the actions themselves. That said, any task administered as an exercise by Zarrilli has a training purpose, but the only 'goal' when performing within the exercise is to *attend to the given task*.

As a coach, Zarrilli would often add instructions while students were already in the process of an overall task; say, attending to the formal positioning of Elephant Stance. His guidance provided a constant reminder to extend senses and awareness, but is also noteworthy as an extension of the action/task mentality. Practitioners are not asked to emote; they are tasked with extending their sensual awareness in specific ways while attending to other very specific tasks, e.g., animal stances. Other than a sense of wanting to assiduously perform a given task, wanting is not what Zarrilli's task/actions represent. Desire, for Zarrilli, is an entirely separate variable in the equation which I will discuss further below.

One technique that Zarrilli uses to bridge the gap between pre-performative training and the final stage of actual performance is what he calls 'structured improvisations' in which Tasks play a key role (Kim, 2016, p. 449). A very basic version of a structured improvisation that Zarrilli used when introducing students to psychophysical acting involved little more than conscious breath and focus. In my own experience with Zarrilli, he had us (the students) seated shoulder-to-shoulder. On each half-breath, our external focus shifted, usually to one of the other students in some way, depending upon the rules and the action/task assigned. There were boundaries, but instructions were very broad, none of which had any overt psychological or emotional connotation. By his own rules, the structures have 'no

predetermined meaning, narrative, or conclusion' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 107). According to Zarrilli, there are two directorial goals with these 'structured improvisation':

- to find a means of activating each actor as an individual through psychophysical processes and images that constantly engage that actor's bodymind, energy, awareness, and the sensation/feeling of form; and
- to find a means of activating the actors inter-subjectively as an ensemble so that they are being active/reactive in the moment for each other (p.113).

For the actor, ideally, they will begin to play with each structure without thinking about it:

- not knowing when there will be a shift in awareness or focus/attention
- discovering experientially what it feels like to inhabit a psychophysical score without premeditation (p.101).

The implications for this exercise on psychophysical acting and actor training involve Zarrilli's overall psychophysical training process, but for the purposes of discussing Stanislavski specifically, I note how each task, when assiduously performed, took on significance in my imagination. The simple act of shifting my gaze to another individual, when performed with mindful intention, felt portentous in the performance of it. We were each also given an opportunity to observe the group from the outside so that we could see that same meaning conveyed to the audience. Whatever experience I or the other students felt, it was an organic reaction to the performance of our task, the structure or rules, and the natural response to the performance of that task. Zarrilli believed that the essential component to playing the structure of his structured improvisations is 'to work simply within its rules and thereby to be open to perceptual experience and discovery *as they take place*' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 101).

In retrospect, the exercise represents Stanislavski's Experiencing encapsulated into a single technique. Belief, imagination, and any emotional reaction are purely products of engagement with the pure Task; the action simple as the shifting of attention and the desire being absent, at least beyond the desire to keep engaging in the given task. Returning now to Stanislavski's own practice, Merlin explains:

Instead of true emotion being the end-product of an acting technique, he wanted to devise a rehearsal process of which emotion was a by-product. In other words, he sought a process in which emotions arose inevitably from the actions, rather than actors consciously trying to arouse emotions as the main challenge to their acting skills (Merlin, 2003, p. 29).

Zarrilli eventually does add to this exercise 'a desire' beyond simply the execution of the exercise itself. Still, crucially, 'each desire set in motion is simply stated, task-specific, and clear' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 107). In *Psychophysical Acting*, even *wanting* is active. In the example used in his book and my experience, the students are coached to continue shifting their focus on each half-breath: either on the face of another student, straight ahead, or on the empty chair, while adding the desire to sit in the empty chair. Within the rules of the exercise, participants must desire the seat, but must know that they cannot leave their current position, even while being coached to increase the intensity of their desire. Throughout the exercise, I recall feeling a desperate sense of competition for the chair, and each time my awareness focused on a fellow student's eyes, it felt confrontational and challenging while the shift away, to another point of focus, registered as a definitive retreat.

Stanislavski explains this phenomenon:

... physical actions acquire great force within the context of the Given Circumstances. Then there is an interaction between mind and body, action and feeling, thanks to which the outer helps the inner, while the inner stimulates the outer. Washing the blood off helps Lady Macbeth fulfil her ambitious thoughts and her and her ambitious thoughts oblige her to wash off the blood... The small, real, physical action of washing off the

drops acquires great significance in Lady Macbeth's subsequent life and powerful intentions (ambitious thoughts) need the help of small, physical actions (2008, p. 165).

As previously mentioned, 'Given Circumstances' are Stanislavski's terms for the conditions of the characters in the play, or in the case of Zarrilli's structured improvisations, the structure itself. Once Zarrilli added the 'desire' to the given circumstance, the complexity of my emotional/imaginative reaction deepened, but with or without it, Stanislavski's assessment applies. Just as action is the basis for the actor's creation with Stanislavski, the 'experiential field' in which the actor performs under Zarrilli is 'structured by the set of actions/tasks immediately at hand,' whether those tasks derive from an authored text like Shakespeare or an improvisational exercise, the set of tasks constitutes 'the performance score' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58).

Stanislavski believed that 'living tasks and genuine action (... well substantiated by Given Circumstances ...) draws nature itself into play as a matter of course. Only she can fully guide the muscles correctly' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 130). Placing Tasks within the context of the Given Circumstances allows the actor to perform without over-thinking or psychologizing (p. 166). Merlin summarizes Stanislavski's overall argument with a simple formula:

Given Circumstances + Actions = Powerful Emotions (Merlin, 2007, p. 67).

With Stanislavski, Benedetti, and Zarrilli in mind, I interpret this formula as the assiduous performance of Task in the context of the Given Circumstances, i.e. the 'structure' of the work. Because the Given Circumstances can be anything, even the fantastical, the System has the potential 'to make you believe in things that do not

exist. And where there is truth and belief you have genuine productive, specific action, experiencing, the subconscious, creativity, and art' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 611). When we include Stanislavski's Magic If as a modifier to those Given Circumstances, the reaction can be even more intense.

[(Magic If)(Given Circumstances)] + Actions = Powerful Emotions Intensified

The Magic If is simply the act of placing yourself within the Given Circumstances of your character's situation and asking, 'What would I do 'if' it were me?' (Merlin, 2007, p. 127). It is another way of infusing action with a deeper sense of truth, and Stanislavski adamantly belief that if the actor could feel that truth, then their passions would be activated (p. 120). Merlin describes it as 'a surprisingly non-coercive tool,' even, 'liberating' as it replaces "the command 'Thou shalt believe in this fiction' with the provocation 'What would you do *if* this fiction were true?'" igniting a chain of 'imaginative ideas and creative possibilities' (p. 129).

Stanislavski explains:

'Take your beloved "if" and bring it face to face with all of the Given Circumstances you have brought together...

'This question immediately arouses your dynamism. Respond to it through action, say: "That's what I would do!" And do the thing you want, whatever you are drawn to do, without thinking about it.

'Then you will feel inwardly – either subconsciously or consciously ... "the truth of the passions" or, at least, feelings that seem true. The secret of this process is, don't force your feelings, leave them alone, don't think about "the truth of the passions" because these "passions" don't depend on us, but emerge of their own accord. They will not be coerced. 'The actors should concentrate on the Given Circumstances. Start living them and then "the truth of the passions" will arise of itself' (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 53-54).

If anything, action has taken on even greater importance in the Stanislavskian tradition after his death. Kedrov took over direction of Stanislavski's *Tartuffe* after

the master's death. One of the actors involved, Vasily Toporkov described the new approach as being not so much work on a play, but 'work on perfecting the technique of actors engaged in a play' (Merlin, 2001, p. 154). This was a rehearsal methodology instead of a system for actor training, now known as the Method of Physical Actions, with Kedrov as its chief proponent (Ibid). He was known to emphasize the "logic" of action and its concreteness' (Ibid). Merlin calls action 'Kedrov's lodestar' and her instructor, Filozov, as a young student of Kedrov's, concluded that 'Without action, an actor is not an artist' (p.155).

The final stage of Stanislavski's work in his lifetime, the Method of Physical Actions, was a clear indication of Stanislavski's final focus on 'the language of action':

The main purpose of the Method of Physical Actions was for actors to find the precise and logical sequence of actions that would enable their character to achieve their 'tasks.' (Merlin, 2003, pp. 30-31).

While Stanislavski was pestered by government censors for his discussion of the subconscious, mind, and spirit, the Soviets embraced other aspects of his work. Stalin's regime dictated Socialist Realism and by 1934 it was the only style tolerated by law, and Stanislavski, national treasure that he was, became the figurehead of its ideal (Carnicke, 2009, p. 38). While Strasberg had created a false idol to his psychologically-oriented Method Acting, the Soviets had done the same with Stanislavski as the model of the party-approved labour-driven Method of Physical Actions; for them, the rational and scientifically sound endpoint for the System (p. 100). Active Analysis, contrarily, was 'holistic and open-ended', dedicated to his 'deep commitment to the improvisatory state of mind necessary to performance, his promotion of acting as a discrete art, and his respect for the actor as artist' (pp. 13-14). It was called such because analysis was achieved through activity:

...the actors analysed their roles actively using their bodies, imagination, intuition, and emotions on the rehearsal room floor. So – just like the Method of Physical Actions – the detective work on a play was carried out by the actors using their entire beings and not just their intellect... The psycho-physical information that actors glean from experiencing the scene through improvisation was undoubtedly vital... The power of Active Analysis lay in its immediacy. It acknowledged the reality of the situation ('Okay, we're on the stage, so what shall we do?') and combined with a sense of playfulness ('But what would we do *if...?*') Stanislavsky called it 'Here, Today, Now.' (Merlin, 2003, pp. 34-35).

Active Analysis follows a specific process:

1. Read the scene
  2. Discuss the scene
  3. Improvise the scene without reference to the script
  4. Discuss the improvisation with reference to the script
  5. Return to the script, incorporating new adjustments, gradually incorporating lines of the author's text
  6. Repeat the entire process until the complete script replaces the improvisations
- (Merlin, 2007, p. 197)

At its core, Active Analysis is *practical research* achieved through the doing of the scene instead of preparation through analysis (Merlin, 2001, p. 21). As noted in Chapter 2, per Merlin's training, analysis of the text was left to discovery via improvisation (Merlin, 2001, p. 6). The process is premised on the notion that '*doing* the scene teaches you what the scene is about, and one action feeds and inspires the next in an endless chain of spontaneous moments,' (p. 94). Stanislavski found excessive tablework to be disengaging for actors from their 'physical and emotional resources' (Merlin, 2007, p. 197). Active Analysis demonstrates a furtherance of Stanislavski's notion that inner-life is generated by purposeful engagement with action. Stanislavski tells us the 'best way to analyze a play is to take action (*deistvovat*) in the given circumstances' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 195). In the world of action, Task becomes the basic unit of creative composition, 'the main source of actual performance material' (Mroz, 2011, p. 142).

Kedrov rejected the refinements to Stanislavski's System away from the Method of Physical Actions. His sentiment echoes the Soviet regime, insisting that Stanislavski had overcome his earlier errors by embracing scientific accuracy (Carnicke, 2009, p. 100). Maria Knebel was another of Stanislavski's final students and assistants, and she was determined to continue to stress the newer aspects of the System:

Knebel stressed how the multi-dimensional (physical, spiritual and psychological) scope of their mentor's last work built upon the foundation of his earlier experiments. She would later name this rehearsal technique 'Active Analysis' in order to differentiate it from Kedrov's Marxist intervention (p. 100).

Kedrov fired Knebel after he became the artistic director of the MAT in 1949 (p. 191). Filizov, once a young impressionable acting student of Kedrov's, eventually came to believe that the Soviet-approved Method of Physical Actions had 'killed Russian theatre' (Merlin, 2001, p. 158). Looking for something he felt lacking in his training, he found Maria Knebel and, through her, Active Analysis (Ibid). Merlin argues the 'subtle difference' between the Method of Physical Actions and Active Analysis is that the latter 'allows for more chaotic, illogical results' (Merlin, 2003, p. 143). By her understanding, Merlin believes Active Analysis affords the actor more creative freedom:

The reason why ACTIVE ANALYSIS is different from the METHOD OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS is that it didn't put all its eggs in one ACTION basket: as well as their bodies, the actors could follow their EMOTIONS or their fantasies. I'd say ACTIVE ANALYSIS generally had an exciting edge of play and anarchy and a 'Give-it-a-Go' bravura. Basically, it was less aesthetically 'anal' than the METHOD OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS. (Merlin, 2007, p. 198).

Stanislavski became gradually less interested in accurate research and more concerned with 'unexpected interpretations and the possibility of inspiration' (p. 27). The academic's goal is knowledge when researching, but Stanislavski felt alternatively that the actor's goal must be feeling (Merlin, 2007, p. 61). What Kedrov

ignored was that physical was not more important than the psychological, lacking Stanislavski's "more complex understanding of 'action'" itself as psychophysical in nature (Carnicke, 2009, p. 191).

### 3:3:1 A Psychophysical System

The System exists to train actors to embody the basic goal of acting, to portray the life of the human spirit in a role through Experiencing which requires inspiration. Inspiration is fickle, but Stanislavski consistently sought a methodology intended to place the actor 'in the strongest possible place – physically, imaginatively, emotionally and vocally' for inspiration to occur (Merlin, 2007, p. 19). He suggests we disregard thinking about feelings themselves but instead concentrate on 'what made [them] grow, the conditions which led to the experience. They are the soil which you have to water and manure,' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 218). These conditions makeup the cultivation of the overall Creative State, the fertile field, 'the soil of our inspiration' (p. 347). Inspiration is the crop that the actor hopes to harvest. The 'seed' of inspiration comes from the text itself, the Given Circumstances, the collective pieces of information concerning characters and the dramatic situation of the play. If inspiration is the crop, then Tasks are the rake and spade of Stanislavski's toolkit, the most fundamental tools available to us for the cultivation of our Creative State. Any Decoy, i.e. Lure, represents fertilizer to enrich and nurture growing inspiration.

Stanislavski described the Decoy as bait used to lure inspiration and emotion to the actor, like hunters use decoys to lure their prey (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 225). Merlin describes it as the actor's initial 'trigger' into the role (Merlin, 2007, p. 64). 'I'm no

wizard,' Stanislavski tells us, 'I can only show you new lures, techniques for arousing feelings and experiencing' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 320). Because a Lure could potentially be anything that engages the actor with their own creativity, much of Stanislavski's System is made up of a 'compendium of "lures"' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 151). One of these Lures, Stanislavski's Magic If, is perhaps important enough to think of as life-giving water to burgeoning inspiration.

Instead of psychological construction, Stanislavski has, through his psychophysical System of Lures and physical activity, given the performer the tools to build a character through action, by performing Tasks in the given circumstances, be those circumstances the structure of the exercise or the dramatic situation of a verse tragedy. Practice in training and rehearsal prepares for embodiment in performance, as Zarrilli explains:

During performance, the actor ideally embodies, attends to, and inhabits an experiential field structured by the set of actions/tasks immediately at-hand. Whether based on an authored text, or the structure of an improvisatory exercise, these actions/tasks constitute the performance score (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 58).

Of 'character', Zarrilli believes that the specific performance score 'that constitutes the aesthetic outer body offered for the abstractive gaze of the spectator- often read and experienced as character in a conventional drama' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 57).

Accepting his assessment, I prefer to characterize the creation of character as an emergent phenomenon, occurring in the mind of the audience through their experience of the performance. In Stanislavskian terms then, character is what the audience experiences *of* the actors' own *Experiencing* when embodying the life of the human spirit onstage. We must strive, as Stanislavski's fictional ideal acting-student strives, to 'dedicate [ourselves] to everything to learn how to prepare the soil

for the subconscious so that inspiration may come to me!' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 347). The System prepares actors to prepare *themselves* for inspiration's arrival and this System is all-encompassing.

Stanislavski's System is not just a rehearsal technique, nor a collection of exercises, but is intended to represent an entire professional and artistic work-life philosophy.

Stanislavski tells us:

...in our profession everything must become habitual, so that the new is transformed into something organically our own, into second nature. Only when that has happened can we use what is new without thinking of the mechanics of it. The same thing ... applies to the creative state, which will only save the actor once it has become his normal, natural and only state... (Benedetti, 1982, p. 52).

Though Stanislavski did not use the term, his strategy here represents psychophysical attunement training; performance training that is intended to attune the bodymind of the performer as a psychophysical instrument. A properly attuned bodymind is one operating on a high or even optimum level of mind-body coordination, will be the most reactive, responsive, and aware possible, a product of Stanislavski's psychophysical principles. Stanislavski scholar Rose Whyman explains:

...what Stanislavsky means by 'psychophysical' or 'psychophysiological' is the totality in which the actor fully experiences and embodies the role, and is present in the moment, drawing on sensory information and experience' (Whyman, 2016, p. 158).

Living Thought is this totality for OP, where the text is fully embodied and experienced in the moment by actors performing at once with spontaneity but also demonstrable preparedness.

Speaking of his own psychophysical practice, Britton writes:

It is a foundational training, applicable across a range of aesthetics and styles. I train actors, dancers, musicians, circus performers, improvisers and also work more widely in the area of creativity. The training is not about how to perform this or that, but about how to perform' (Britton, 2013, p. 315).

All performers need to be present, reactive, and sensually active, observant with all of the senses; attunement training prepares performers towards that end. The awakening and cultivation of the creatively attuned bodymind is a lifelong commitment (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 89). This is true for the martial arts, Psychophysical Acting, and even Stanislavski's System was meant to be understood as an 'entire culture that must be nurtured over many long years' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 612). In this, Stanislavski was heavily influenced by yoga:

Indian yogi, who work miracles with the sub and superconscious give practical advice in this field. They approach the unconscious through consciously preparatory methods, from the physical to the mental, from the real to the unreal, from the naturalistic to the abstract. We actors should do the same. All the preparatory work we do on ourselves and the role is directed to preparing the soil for genuine, living, natural passions, for inspiration that lies dormant (Stanislavski, 2010, pp. 165-166).

The Creative State was Stanislavski's term for an actor operating in an attuned state receptive for inspiration:

If the creative state was to become second nature the actor must condition himself. This meant daily exercises. No less than the dancer or the athlete the actor must keep himself on form (Benedetti, 1982, pp. 52-53).

According to Zarrilli, the 'attunement of the actor's awareness ideally provides a heightened, non-ordinary ability to inhabit one's body-mind and stay sensorially and perceptually alert in the moment to the acting tasks at hand,' (Zarrilli, 2013, p. 29).

Stanislavski was a proponent of basic physical fitness, however the exercises of his System were not about conditioning but developing reactive instincts and awareness. Merlin explains:

[True] listening can only exist when you're in a particular state of receptivity: rather than fixing your performance to be exactly the same every time you do it, you have the confidence on stage or in front of the camera to respond playfully to the ever-changing nuances of each moment. If you can be this responsive, then the opportunities for stimulating INSPIRATION may come thick and fast. And ultimately we all long to be inspired actors, so anything we can do *consciously* to prepare the ground for the possibility of being inspired is surely a positive thing (Merlin, 2007, p. 19).

Chekhov maintained a similar philosophy. He recognized that physical exercises were necessary for actor training but thought they should be:

...built on principles different from those used in most dramatic schools. Gymnastics, fencing, dancing, acrobatics, calisthenics and wrestling are undoubtedly good and useful for what they are, but the body of an actor must undergo a special kind of development in accordance with the particular requirements of his profession (Chekhov, 2003, p. 2).

Zarrilli's pre-performative training involves many techniques and exercises taken directly from external sources, many of them expressly physical, such as the stances of martial arts and yoga but he does this *because* of the utility for training what Chekhov called the 'particular requirements' of actors. Zarrilli identifies and classifies the 'particular requirements' through analysis of the 'underlying dynamics and principles of the energetics of acting' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 82). Addressing these 'underlying dynamics and principles' is central to psychophysical training systems like Zarrilli's and Britton's. Likewise, applicable to Zarrilli and Stanislavski, is the understanding from Britton of what attunement training provides from his own practice:

The training is intended to liberate a performer's ability to react spontaneously, intuitively, and physically to impulse without... having to 'think about' her reactions. This requires that actions and reactions become embodied.

Embodiment is a complex and frequently misunderstood process. It is the process by which an action (or a sequence of actions) comes to operate without conscious attention. Embodied actions are not 'habits' or things a performer does not know she is doing, They [sic.] are actions that, having

first been designed and rehearsed, can eventually be performed without the performer having to “think about” them. Embodied actions remain available to a performer’s thinking and, when she needs to, she can intervene in and alter them. Embodied actions can operate without conscious intervention, freeing a performer to direct her primary attention elsewhere (Britton, 2013, pp. 320-321).

With assiduous practice through a system like Zarrilli or Britton’s, reactivity, responsiveness, and awareness become more possible as your bodymind becomes more attuned. The idea of attunement is an important distinction, especially concerning awareness, between psychophysical systems like Psychophysical Acting, the System, and the psychologically derived Method of Strasberg. Robert Brustein, founder of the American Repertory Theatre, argues:

It is clear enough that... the Stanislavski System bears about as much relation to the Strasburg method as caviar does too hot dogs. Russian performing, as a matter of fact forms a distinct contrast with American naturalistic acting, for it is firm, open, direct, and clearly articulated... While the Strasberg actor is listening most intently to himself... the Stanislavski actor is listening most intently to others... (Allen, 2000, pp. 126-127).

Awakening sensory awareness will have a synergetic effect on reactivity; as Merlin explains, ‘You can *never* stop listening – and if you truly listen, it’s impossible to fix your inner life. Fixedness and spontaneity are as incompatible as trying to open and close a door in the same moment’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 110). Anytime Brustein, Zarrilli, Merlin, or Stanislavski refer to ‘listening,’ I think it helpful to expand that idea to all perceptual awareness, intake, and observation. As the body and mind are finely-honed, coordinated into attuned alignment, perceptual awareness should increase across the entire gestalt psychophysical being, as if your entire being is one sensory organ, like a body that is all eyes. The optimal state of the performance in *kathakali* and *kalarippayattu* is known as *meyyu kannakuka*:

...‘when the body becomes all eyes.’ A Malayalam folk expression encapsulating that ideal state of embodiment and accomplishment of both

the actor and the *kalarippayattu* (Indian martial art) practitioner. When one's body is all eyes' then like Lord Brahman 'the thousand eyed one' is like an animal- able to see, hear, and respond immediately to any stimulus in the immediate environment (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 1).

Through assiduous practice of the System, the Creative State becomes more easily accessible, as Merlin explains, 'If an actor regularly practised these physical exercises, the 'creative state' could become the *natural* state for the performer (Merlin, 2001, p. 30). Operating in this optimum mode for inspiration naturally leads to inspiration occurring with greater frequency. When this is no longer a struggle, but the default performative state of the performer, that actor might be said to have mastered the Art of Experiencing.

Stanislavski understood the subconscious to be far too nebulous an idea to promise inspiration. As Merlin says, 'All we can do is prepare favourable ground' (Merlin, 2007, p. 45). From the actor's goal of conveying the life of the human spirit in a role we have come at last to the beginning of System, for any psychophysical system must be one of habitual cultivation. The System, all its component pieces, alternating tactics, and experimental approaches, exists to cultivate the Creative State, the favourable ground. Stanislavski declares 'the fundamental objective of our psycho-technique is to put us in a creative state in which our subconscious will function naturally' (Merlin, 2003, p. 72).

This is the actor's work from Stanislavski, to foster inspiration by cultivating the creative state, through durational training or, in the case of Active Analysis or the work of this project, in rehearsal.

### 3:4 Living Thought & the Art of Experiencing

Stanislavski understood that the acting required of Experiencing demands ‘the coordination of the entire organism’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 109), where the mind and body are so highly attuned with one another as to be, ideally, one. The System’s work on the Creative State therefore, is intended to improve mental and physical unity overall, but specifically for performance, as with Zarrilli’s Psychophysical Acting or Britton’s ensemble work, ‘Self-with-Others.’

At least initially, Stanislavski’s approach was to nurture one then the other, preparing the mind and body through somewhat separate regimens before employing them as a unified whole. He writes, “My ‘System’ is divided into two basic parts” (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 75):

1. The internal and external work of an actor on himself
  - a. The inner work of an actor consists in perfecting a psychological technique which will enable him to put himself, when the need arises, in the creative state, which invites the coming of inspiration.
  - b. The external work of an actor on himself consists in preparing his bodily apparatus to express the role physically and to translate his inner life into stage terms.
2. The internal and external work on a role.
  - a. Work on a role consists in studying the spiritual essence of a dramatic work, in understanding the original seed which gave it birth and life, which determines its meaning as a totality and the meaning of the individual roles which go to make it up.

And too, the Creative State was divided, per the Benedetti translation, as:

1. the Inner-Creative State, primarily psychological
2. the Outer-Creative State, primarily physical
3. the General Creative State, where the mind and body come together

While these divisions may have been very practical to Stanislavski early on, they betray the dualistic bias that Stanislavski was actively working to overcome.

Carnicke explains:

However much Stanislavsky tries, he never fully escapes Western dualism. He is bound, as is Ribot, to a language that contains within it deeply dualistic assumptions. Despite the fortuitous Russian word that means both “emotional feelings” and “physical sensations<sup>13</sup>” and despite continuous reminders about the indissoluble link between the psychic and physical, Stanislavsky creates an almost endless series of oppositional concepts: inner/outer, emotion memory/muscle memory, mind/body, spiritual/physical, truth/lie, invisible visible, motion/lack of motion, unconscious/conscious, subconscious/superconscious, etc. Whenever he turns from one to the other, he unwittingly betrays hidden Cartesian elements in his thinking (Carnicke, 2009, p. 81).

The division between the inner- and outer- aspects of the Creative State and his early approaches to them are yet more examples of Stanislavski’s habitual dichotomizing. And yet his idea of the well-balanced and fully-functioning bodymind, the General Creative State, where ‘every feeling, mood, experience you have created is reflected externally... all the mental and physical elements of their creative state are on alert and answer the call immediately’ (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 583) was one of psychophysical unity. He describes the experience of performing in the Creative State:

In exceptional moments like these, the actor’s whole creative apparatus, all its separate parts, all its, so to speak, internal “springs” and “knobs” and “pedals” function superbly, almost the same as, or better than, in life. That’s the kind of creative state we need to the maximum when we are onstage, since only then can genuine creative work be done. That is why we place such a special value on it... How fortunate we are to have a psychotechnique which can, at our behest, at our discretion, produce the creative state, which used to come to us by chance, “out of the blue” (p. 295).

The General State is, according to Stanislavski, ‘the working state’ of the actor (p. 584). He insists:

Actors must be in this state, whatever else they do. Whether they are doing the play for the first or the hundredth time, whether they are learning or repeating the lines, whether they are working at home or in rehearsal, whether they are trying to find mental or physical material for their character, whether they are thinking about the life of the human spirit, or

---

13 *perezhivanie*, i.e. Experiencing

its outward shape, about costume and make-up, in other words every time they have the least contact with the role, they must be in the inner and outer and general creative state in performance (pp. 583-584).

In *Psychophysical Acting*, Zarrilli describes numerous states found across the spectrum of psychophysical practice, noting Stanislavski's:

...optimal state of awareness or concentration as one in which [the performer] reacts not only on his sight and hearing, but on all the rest of his senses. It embraces his mind, his will, his emotions, his body, his memory and his imagination' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 14).

Zarrilli's perspective on elevated states of bodymind is not just academic, but also shaped by his practical expertise in martial arts. He is the first non-Indian to achieve a stool (*pitham*) representing his mastery over *kalarippayattu*, and his studio (Tyn-y-parc C.V.N. Kalari) in Wales was the first training ground (*kalari*) outside of India to certify to the standards of the practice (Kim, 2016, p. 446). Apropos to the spectrum of psychophysical practice, and the development of its ideas in Western theatre, Zarrilli was initially inspired by theatre practitioners Eugenio Barba and Jerzy Grotowski to, 'take my own journey beyond American versions of Stanislavski available to me at the time' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 6). This led him to Kerala, India and *kathakali*, a source of inspiration for Grotowski and Barba. *Kathakali* itself was inspired by *kalarippayattu*, and Zarrilli returned from India after seven years, having made a serious study of both art forms, theatrical and martial. He developed his own Psychophysical Acting methodology using a wide variety of embodied practices, hence the descriptor 'an intercultural approach,' including prominently yoga, *kalarippayattu*, and tai chi and his discussion of elevated states of bodymind consciousness are likewise intercultural and sweeping from India to Japan, from *meyyu kannakuka* to *mushin* (p. 76).

*Mushin*, *wu-hsin*, or 'no-mind' is the optimal state of bodymind performance in many traditional embodied practices from China and Japan, including the practice of tai chi. The Actor's Mind-Body Problem represents a palpable split between the actor's experience of coordination between their mind and body. By contrast, 'no-mind' represents the idealized harmony between them. So harmonious as to exist properly as a complete bodymind where there is no distinction between intention and action:

...when there is repeated training in the practice of performing techniques, and the body-mind is disciplined, then the state of conscious movement changes into one in which the hands, legs, and body unconsciously move of themselves (Yuasa, 1993, p. 31).

Far from acting mindlessly, the idea of no-mind represents the concept of holistic thinking where the 'movement of mind and body become indistinguishable' (p. 27).

Philosopher Yuasa Yasuo explains:

When I hear the phrase 'body-mind oneness,' my association is of the beautiful performing technique of a master in the martial arts... or figure skater. A neophyte or a person with awkward motor nerves cannot move his or her body as the mind wishes; the movement of the mind and that of the body are totally discordant. However, with repeated training, the movements of mind and body gradually coincide with each other in a way that is unique to each person, depending upon one's efforts and innate disposition. If one reaches what is called a perfect performance, one achieves a state in which one can move the body freely without intending it. Here the movements of mind and body are one; there is no distinction between one's mind and body. To move one's body without conscious effort suggests that a person is approaching the state of no-mind while letting ego-consciousness disappear (p. 32).

The term Zarrilli chose for the optimal performance state in his personal practice, Psychophysical Acting, is 'I can.' Demonstrative of Zarrilli's stance against Cartesian dualism, he takes 'I can' in this context as opposed to Descartes' infamous 'I think' to demonstrate the ultimate reduction of being. Zarrilli credits Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the thinker from whom he receives this use of the term 'I can,' with:

...the philosophical foundation for a more processual account of how our relationship to the worlds we inhabit is constituted by our inter-sensory and

inter-subjective engagement with those worlds. The actor, like other skilled practitioners, ideally gains the ability to inhabit a particular world of the 'I can' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 46).

Zarrilli also drew on the Western philosopher David Edward Shaner to discuss these heightened performative states. Shaner argues:

Although there may be mind-aspects and body-aspects within all lived experience, the presence of either one includes experientially the presence of the other. This relationship may be described as being "polar" rather than "dual" because mind and body "require each other as a necessary condition for being what they are". The relationship is symbiotic (Shaner, 1985, pp. 42-43).

Within this polarity, Shaner identifies three orders of bodymind awareness. The third-order of bodymind awareness is the most analytical and least kinaesthetic. It would be in the third-order where, where we 'can forget we have a body' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32), that the Actor's Mind-Body Problem will be most evident. At the opposite of that pole is the first-order of bodymind awareness, one of innocence and a lack of intention, where 'we think with our body and act with our mind and vice versa' (Shaner, 1985, p. 46). The second-order is similar to the first-order, but it represents those optimal states of performance:

...assiduous modes of embodied practice such as martial arts, yoga, or acting... Through practice or rehearsals as we gradually expand our awareness and perception, the exercise or score becomes known to us and our "intentions are neutralized" (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 32).

Shaner's second-order bodymind awareness therefore serves as a category under which we could categorize *meyyu kannakuka*, *mushin*, 'I can,' and Stanislavski's Experiencing. Carnicke interprets Stanislavski's Experiencing as 'something akin to that of a yogi who has reached a higher state of consciousness; there is an "all-perceptive" sharpening of the senses, an "intense awareness,"' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 130).

What then is Living Thought in a psychophysical performance context? Living Thought is sometimes viewed as the 'form' of Shakespeare's dramatic voice in performance. This was how Michael Langham suggested the actor approach Shakespeare's text. At the ASC it was presented to me as a requirement: words/actions/thoughts must be unified. I also approach Living Thought similarly to how the System approaches the Art of Experiencing, i.e., through the cultivation of the Creative State. The Art of Experiencing conveys the life of the human spirit in a role. Living Thought represents the living spirit of Shakespeare's text when embodied by the performer onstage. In terms of cultivation and practice, however, we can approach Living Thought as the Art of Experiencing for Shakespeare. This clarifies our work to be about nurturing the right creative state within performers and the rehearsal process at large.

This project does not presume to replace the pre-performative attunement training of Zarrilli, Britton, Stanislavski, nor, for that matter, any training process. Most directors and teachers of Shakespeare will often be directing actors that do not come from a dedicated psychophysical performance background. However, any director may choose to foster a sense of psychophysical harmony through the rehearsal process based upon the same psychophysical principles used in the durational training. The following chapter presents a toolkit for Living Thought intended to help actors cultivate a Creative State specific to the needs of OP throughout the rehearsal and performance process to improve the chances of inspiration and the Art of Experiencing, or, more precisely for Shakespeare, Living Thought. From training to rehearsal, Zarrilli's psychophysical practice, when applied to a 'specific performance project requires the actor to develop a specific psychophysical performance score'

(Zarrilli, 2009, p. 88). The toolkit is meant to facilitate the composition of that psychophysical score whilst meeting the challenges defined by OP. Stanislavski writes:

The actor must tirelessly try to induce the right creative state, not only during the performance but before it, in rehearsal and when working at home. The right, creative state is unstable both early on, when the role is not secure, and subsequently when the role is a little jaded, and has lost its edge. 'The right creative state wavers continuously. It is like a plane hovering in the air, which needs to be piloted. With more experience the pilot's job becomes automatic and doesn't require much attention. 'The same thing happens in our own profession. The Elements of our creative state need constant adjustment which you finally learn to cope with automatically (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 302).

The toolkit is devised to induce and reinforce that Creative State, fostering the unity that is required of Living Thought and that Stanislavski, too, sought through desire for 'a rehearsal technique that would engage body, mind and emotions simultaneously,' (Merlin, 2003, p. 28). With an understanding of OP and psychophysical practice now firmly established, this thesis turns to Shakespeare's verse, bringing OP and psychophysical work together through the interplay of embedded stage direction, Tempo-Rhythm, and breath.

## Chapter 4: Breath & Verse

### 4:1 The Psyche-Enlivening Principle

For Zarrilli's psychophysical practice 'training begins with the breath because it offers a psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind,' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 26), restarting each day in the studio at this 'beginning':

Everyday, when crossing the threshold into the training studio, or when stepping onto the stage, it is necessary to begin, once again, at the beginning. There are no shortcuts. There is no "silver bullet." The actor's individual and collective work is ideally grounded in a fully embodied psychophysical process that returns over and again to the beginning, that is, the first breath... the first action... the first step... the first word... as the actor begins to open her attention, *ki/qi* ("energy"), and embodied, sensory awareness to the feeling-tone appropriate to each task/action at hand, and simultaneously outward to others (Zarrilli, 2013, p. 370).

To speak, move, think, act, and live we must breathe. Breath is especially critical for some life roles including athletes, musicians, singers, and actors, where good breath control, or the lack thereof, will have a demonstrable effect on the quality of performance. While Stanislavski understood the psychophysical as a principle of interconnectedness between body and mind, though he could not entirely define either even to his own satisfaction, contemporary psychophysical practice begins with an holistic perspective on the mind-body as axiomatic. In Zarrilli's practice, breath provides the 'psycho' in psychophysical work, though he does not take a traditional view of 'psyche'; in other words, his idea of psyche should not be mistaken for synonymous with the traditional Western concept of 'mind.' He explains:

Rather than beginning from a modernist understanding of "psycho" with reference to psychology of the self, I want to argue that conceptually and practically it is more useful for the contemporary actor to begin with a broader understanding of the "inner" territory marked by the original Greek term *psyche*. *Psyche* can also be translated as "the vital principle," ... the enlivening quality of the actor's energy. This meaning of psyche is akin to the Greek *psyche* in meaning "to breathe, blow"...When taken in this latter

sense as “the vital principle” associated with the enlivening, animating, life- giving nature of breath, psyche comes very close to the uses and meaning of both the Sanskrit *prana* (or *prana- vayu*) and the Chinese *qi* (Japanese and Korean *ki*) (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 19).

Zarrilli defines acting as a ‘psychophysiological process: the embodiment and shaping of energy’ (p. 42). Breath is the source of the energy being manipulated (p. 25). Zarrilli would begin and end each day of training with a series of controlled breathing exercises towards the awakening of the performers’ ‘inner energy’ (p. 86, 39). Psychophysically trained actors, in Zarrilli’s approach, learn ‘to direct the passions as’ they learn to control the breath’ (Ibid):

In acting, this energy takes the form of impulses which initiate action(s) that constitute a performance score... The actor senses and experiences both *the feel* and *the subtle movement* of this energy within *as it is shaped* by the dramaturgy and aesthetic form in the moment of performance. As each action in an actor’s performance score extends outward taking shape in kinesthetic and/or verbal form reaching, touching, or vibrating other performers and the audience that action simultaneously *moves within the actor herself*. Inner feeling and outer (physical) form are two sides of the same coin. The actor simultaneously senses the inner feeling of the kinesthetic/verbal form-in-action as it is performed. As Bella Merlin argues, “*inner feeling* and *outer expression* happen at the same time” (Zarrilli, 2009, pp. 19-20).

In the Introductory chapter, I triangulated the psychophysical work of this thesis between Stanislavski, Zarrilli, and Shakespeare. Here, with Zarrilli and Merlin, that point is most specifically clear. Zarrilli connects us to Stanislavski’s psychophysical work through Merlin, whose own work brings Stanislavski and psychophysical practice to Shakespeare. American Shakespeare director Barry Edelstein understands breath as both an energizing agent and as a literal source of thought, which we can now recognize as linking Shakespeare back to psychophysical. He writes:

...the word inspiration, which means “the inhalation of a breath of air,” also means “a stimulation of the intellect and emotions, especially to an act of creativity’. To inspire is to fill with arousing or enlivening energy. It

is also, literally, to breathe in. Anyone who has looked into Eastern spiritual practices [or] taken a yoga class... knows that an intimate connection exists between creativity and breath (Edelstein, 2007, pp. 175-176).

Edelstein's conception bridges the traditional concept of 'psyche' as mind with Zarrilli's concept of 'psyche' as energy analogous to *prana/qi*. As Edelstein describes it, breath *is literally* inspiration, i.e., the act of inhaling; but also, through that inhalation, breath energizes the mind, giving rise to thought. With the inhalation of breath comes the energy of life which Edelstein argues includes the energy of thought. Carnicke has noted, however, that Stanislavski 'rejected the Western "breath" of inspiration' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 169) as elucidated in the previous chapter, and he had very specific ideas about inspiration unrelated to breath.

This distinction is largely semantic however, because just as Carnicke makes this observation, she is arguing in favour of Stanislavski's embracing:

...the Eastern view of a breath as a means to control the energy of life (*prana* in Sanskrit). In the organic continuum of body and soul, Stanislavsky betrays his interest in Yoga, which views the physical as the threshold into the spiritual' (Carnicke, 2009, p. 169).

Psyche in its traditional sense is analogous to 'spirit,' especially when either term is also used synonymously with 'mind' and/or *qi*. Stanislavski recognizes the breath as a source of energy available for the actor even if he does not classify it as 'inspiration' in the artistic sense. Stanislavski comes very near to Zarrilli's idea of *prana*, identifying it as "the vital energy... which gives life to our body," (p. 178) even if he never reaches Zarrilli's emphasis on breath in the cultivation of *prana*. Still, Stanislavski and Zarrilli's psychophysical ideas are probably most closely aligned through their mutual interest in yoga, though by comparison, Stanislavski was an amateur enthusiast and Zarrilli a serious practitioner.

The yogic influence is evident in Stanislavski's identification of a separate energy centre 'apart from the centre of the nervous system in the brain, one located near... the solar plexus' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 233). He interpreted this centre as the source of a type of energy that flowed from, through and beyond the body, 'like mercury, like a snake' (Gillet, 2014, p. 15). This flowing energy he calls prana, a vital energy derived from breath (p. 11). Stanislavski's 'energy centre' simplifies the chakra concept from yoga. The third chakra is located at the solar plexus, however, Stanislavski scholars Gutekunst and Gillet argue that Stanislavski's 'energy centre' should be identified as the second chakra, the sacral chakra of yoga corresponding to the Chinese lower dantian (tan tien), (Gutekunst, 2014, p. 37) located about two inches below the navel (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 92), also the general location of the Enteric Nervous System where a cluster of neurons governs the gastrointestinal tract, so that in a biologically literal way, we 'think from the gut' (Curthbertson-Lane, 2009, pp. 82-83).

Chekhov, too, saw yoga 'as a system of mind-body and energy control' useful to the actor (Mala, 2003, p. xxxiv) and he also took the *chakra* concept from yoga mixed with concepts from Anthroposophical philosopher Rudolph Steiner to create his Imaginary Centre technique (White, 2015, p. 117). Though in his practice, such as with his Imaginary Centre exercise, he liberally adapted the *chakra*-concept, 'changing their traditional shape, colour, temperature, and texture' (Ashperger, 2008, p. 191). The *sacral chakra* continues to be commonly referenced in recent pedagogy of his technique (p. 192). Like Stanislavski and Zarrilli, Chekhov also described the projection and manipulation of energy as an aspect of acting, 'True

acting,' he tells us, 'is a constant exchange,' between radiating (giving) and receiving' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 19).

## 4:2 Breath & Tempo-Rhythm

The psychophysical understanding of energy as inextricably linked to breath comes into play for Shakespeare through the shape, texture, and form of the verse.

Stanislavski believed that an appreciation for Tempo-Rhythm was critical for good acting. As a term, it is meant to be interpreted literally; "tempo" is the speed at which you carry out an action, and "rhythm" is the intensity with which you carry it out'

(Merlin, 2007, p. 139). Merlin describes Tempo-Rhythm as:

...key to putting yourself into a state of genuine, creative excitement and, through that genuine excitement, arousing within yourself the relevant emotional state... TEMPO-RHYTHM also had the power to conjure up exciting images and memories' (Ibid). Like the subconscious, Stanislavski believed, 'TEMPO - RHYTHM is an unavoidable part of natural life...

Wherever there is life there is action; wherever action, movement; where movement, tempo; and where there is tempo there is rhythm... (p. 109).

Action and desire (wanting) were tied together through Task (Wanting + Doing), but

Stanislavski found Tempo-Rhythm to be the doorway to true emotion. 'Tempo-Rhythm directly affects feeling,' Stanislavski writes (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 503).

While direct access to emotion was embraced by the Method, in his System

Stanislavski concluded that Tempo-Rhythm was far more effective at stirring emotional and imaginative responses in the performer:

*...Tempo-Rhythm leads us to conclude that it is our closest friend and companion because it is frequently the direct, immediate, at times almost automatic stimulus to Emotion Memory and, consequently to inner experiencing...*

*We are talking about the immediate, frequently automatic effect Tempo-rhythm has on willful, arbitrary, disobedient and apprehensive feelings, which won't take orders, which shy away at the least hint of being forced and hide*

*away where they can't be got at. Hitherto we've only been able to affect it indirectly, using lures, but now we have a technique for direct access* (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 502).

Stanislavski was clearly not advocating for a direct engagement with one's emotions, per se, but arguing that Tempo-Rhythm indirectly affects our ability to feel emotions as a natural by-product. Merlin's argument, distilled from Stanislavski, is that purely from alterations made to breath pattern, muscle memory is engaged, and emotions are activated (p. 35). 'It's not a trick,' she explains, 'it's just another way of working psycho-physically' (Ibid). Put succinctly, she writes:

BREATH + RHYTHM = EMOTION (Merlin, 2007, p. 34).

This is an expansion of Merlin's arithmetic as mentioned in the previous chapter:

Given Circumstances + Actions = Powerful Emotions

[(Magic If)(Given Circumstances)] + Actions = Powerful Emotions Intensified

Recognizing the imaginative power of tools like the Given Circumstances and the Magic If in an actor's work, these Lures are not understood as components of emotion in the same elemental way as breath. Many if not most Lures from Stanislavski's Toolkit potentially enhance the experience for the actor, per their intended design, and through that experience, for their audience, but even the Given Circumstances themselves are essentially another *modifier* of an emotional reaction. Tempo-Rhythm and breath are more fundamental, comparatively the raw materials of emotion itself.

In a paper published in the journal *Social Development*, 'Social process theory of emotion: A dynamic systems approach', University of Utah psychology professor Alan Fogel et. al argue that 'emotions are not states but self-organizing dynamic

processes intimately tied to the flow of an activity in context' (Fogel, 1992, p. 122). Instead of a fixation on the idea of emotional 'display' or 'expression', a dynamic systems-model of emotion 'directs one's attention to the process by which emotions become organized into coherent patterns' (p. 124).

Shakespeare's verse follows a very coherent pattern, and understanding the interaction between Tempo-Rhythm and verse and its role in the experience of the emotion is the dynamic process at work when embodying Shakespeare. Engaging in that process incites an emotional response through action in context, the play itself, i.e., the Given Circumstances. Shakespeare directs emotional responses through the text through his verse structure. When his verse is played for Tempo-Rhythm and breath placement, that structure generates psychophysical conditions within the performer, stirring emotional and imaginative responses. His text is in some ways analogous to a musical score, but also a psychophysiological formula for a theatrical emotional process.

The emotional expression as perceived by the audience in the actor's experience will not be identical to the emotional displays in the drama of 'Psychological Realism', but a genuine experience of emotion in and of itself. Shakespeare's embedded stage directions guide the performer through a theatrical version of the emotional experience the character is meant to have, genuine in and of itself in the performance not in its mimicry of a real-life situation. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is the 'theatrical truth' that Stanislavski distinguishes from that of mundane reality. It must still be vital, and with Shakespeare's verse that vitality comes from the performer literally breathing that text into life. As Shakespeare and voice specialist Kristin Linklater explains:

Voice is made of breath, and breath gives us life; thus, the actor must breathe as the character they are creating and donate their identity to the identity of the character, so that the character lives and is plausible (Linklater, 2018, p. 214).

Voice specialist Rebecca Cuthbertson-Lane, in an article on breath and holistic practice, (Boston, 2009) examined the relationship between breath and emotion. She was interested not only in the obvious connection between breath control and relaxation, but the occasional and seemingly spontaneous releases of emotion that occur with some students during breath work associated with voice practice (Cuthbertson-Lane, 2009). She links this process to the fight-or-flight response system, which is engaged whenever a threat is registered with the Sympathetic Nervous System 'triggering a cascade of electrical, neurochemical and hormonal information transmission throughout the body' (p. 75). The body responds to stressors, physical or psychological, she explains, with the same type of biochemical fight-or-flight engagement. The biochemistry exists to improve our ability to survive in a life-or-death scenario, but in the case of a stressor where physical action is not required, chemicals primed for physical activity can remain unreleased, culminating in 'pockets of dense, rigid, contracted tissue throughout the body' (pp. 75-76), trauma stored as muscle memory. Because 'breath is a crucial aspect of both repressing and releasing trauma' (pp. 76-77), Lane argues that conscious breathing practices have the potential to degrade the barriers of tension blocking emotional release in the student, resulting in occasional outbursts of emotion. Whether towards the release or store of trauma, Lane's argument suggests that breath is intimately connected to the experience of emotion.

## 4:3 Tempo-Rhythm & Shakespeare's Verse

Harley Granville-Barker writes in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 'verse was chief means to emotional expression and when it comes to staging the plays, the speaking of the verse must be the foundation of all study' (Granville-Barker, 1946, p. 12).

Barton explains:

Blank verse is probably the very centre of the Elizabethan tradition and perhaps the most important thing in Shakespeare that an actor has to come to terms with. Or rather I should say that an actor needs to get help from. I stress that because many actors, particularly if they're not familiar with Shakespeare, very understandably look at the verse as some kind of threat. They know they will somehow come to grief if they ignore it or be chastised if they do it wrong. It becomes a mountain to be climbed or else an obstacle to be avoided. But no, it's there to help the actor. It's full of little hints from Shakespeare about how to act a given speech or scene. It's a stage direction in shorthand... Shakespeare was an actor and his verse is, above all, a device to help the actor... (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982).

Blank verse and its basic rhythm of alternating light and strong stresses, commonly described as 'di-Dum di-Dum', is frequently characterized by Shakespearean scholars and practitioners as very close rhythmic approximation of regular English speech patterns (Barton, 1984), (Hall, 2003, p. 15). Voice & Text practitioners have also noted innate similarities between the basic rhythm of blank verse and the basic rhythm of the human heartbeat. Linklater advises students to hear the rhythm in the 'heartbeat when you have been exerting yourself, or listen to a baby's heartbeat –it goes '[de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM]'; weak/Strong, weak/Strong, weak/Strong' (Linklater, 1993, p. 123). By synchronizing breath to Shakespeare's verse, we create within ourselves a physical experience of his words and form a literal connection between and/or from blank verse to heartbeat through breath. Bomber suggests that, like the heartbeat, when the verse is 'working properly you don't have

to worry about it. It can speed up with excitement, it can slow down when you're feeling calm and confident' (Bomber, 2015).

Just like the rhythm of the heartbeat or common speech, Shakespeare's verse can vary drastically in form depending on the specific characterization he chooses to manifest by the subtle alteration of the Tempo-Rhythm of his meter. RSC actor Lisa Harrow observes, 'the punctuation [of the verse] gives you your naturalistic breathing spaces which also helps to release the meaning of the line and also gives you clues to the emotional state your character is in' (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982). Those 'clues' do more than suggest; by engaging with the text psychophysically, the text potentially also works *upon* the actor to help create an emotional experience through the counter-balance of Tempo-Rhythm and breath. On the importance of adhering to verse line-ending in this process, voice coach Margaret Jansen explains:

In the iambic pentameter, Shakespeare is using the heartbeat with the breath, as it takes roughly five times of the heart beating for one cycle of breath. In a genuine, natural, breathing rhythm – to which the body yields if you allow it – there's a moment of pause. There's always space between the breaths. That moment is the end of the iambic line. It's a natural rhythm. Shakespeare's writing to the rhythm of the heartbeat, he's not writing to the rhythm of the mind. So when speaking Shakespeare it's really about taking the time to find the breath. If you don't, you're not really speaking Shakespeare: you're imposing your own twenty-first-century neurotic self (Merlin, 2013, p. 165).

Barton encapsulates the need to preserve the text for the inherent imbedded stagecraft that defines OP. Barton argues:

If the textual points are ignored, then it's pretty certain that Shakespeare's intentions will be ignored also or at least twisted. Something else will be put in their place, valid in itself but none the less a distortion. I'm not trying to knock that kind of work. It can be rich and exciting in its own right. But if it ignores the verse it leads to an alternative to and not a realization of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is his text. So if you want to do him justice, you have to look for and follow the clues he offers. If an actor

does that then he'll find that Shakespeare himself starts to direct him  
(Gordon, 2006, p. 171)

If Shakespeare is his text, as Barton argues, and that text is comprised of verse, then preserving that verse in performance is, in essence, preserving Shakespeare. When the lines are smoothed out, run-on, or otherwise broken against the pattern of the text, the actor is distorting the text, justified or not. Actors and/or directors have every right to 'distort' Shakespeare in any way they wish, and using any interpretation, translation, technological enhancement of, or alternative to Shakespeare they can imagine. Any work they produce is as potentially valid artistically as anything produced under the strictest OP conditions. What OP directors and traditional Shakespearean scholars like Barton together argue is not against that work existing, but that such work represents movement away from the text and, therefore, away from Shakespeare. If, for example, one performs verse as prose, it will cease to be verse in performance and that is distortion, not only of how the words will sound but, psychophysically, how the experience of the saying the words will affect the actor. As Stanislavski says, 'We feel verse differently than prose because verse is shaped differently,' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 498). Stanislavski worried that many actors were too taken with the poetic shape of verse, 'only attracted by the externals' (p. 504) and ignoring the internal Tempo-Rhythm of emotion and Experiencing. Experiencing the emotive power of the verse, an experience that should feel distinct from prose, requires that the verse be maintained in performance.

As with musical notation, the overall texture of the individual lines and word choices provide the Tempo-Rhythm of Shakespeare and the line endings provide a place for rests (Barton, 1984, p. 34). Through that combination of Tempo-Rhythm and

breathing space, the verse structure is something of a psychophysical obstacle course. As the actor performs the text, the text will work upon the actor. Margaret Jansen objects to the actor imposing their modern 'neurotic-selves' upon the text in performance because the text is not structured to accommodate our psychology, it is structured to give us insight into the psyche of the characters played by literally breathing with them, i.e., by breathing as them. As Kristin Linklater, Jansen's own voice coach, explains:

The voice reveals authentic character more than spoken words, because the voice is formed by breath and because breath is intrinsically connected to our senses, our psychology, our behaviour, and our emotions; all of which are experienced in the body. Voice training for actors is not a matter of acquiring a skill. Voice is identity. It says, "I am" (Linklater, 2018, p. 214).

When preparing for her role as Queen Margaret in Tina Packer's *Richard III* for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Merlin worked with Jansen who:

...revealed that the very point of breath in text work is to stir oneself from the inside out, to make one's imagination available to the potency of Shakespeare's images. Speaking Shakespeare is thus all about inner life, but from a perspective that is physical, physiological, and imaginative, rather than introspective and overly psychological (Merlin, 2013, p. 25).

Tina Packer collaborated with Kristin Linklater in the founding of the professional theatre *Shakespeare & Co* (Merlin, 2018, p. 31), where they developed the Dropping In technique, an exercise in which the actor utilizes voice/texts prompts towards an imaginative response to the language, and utilized by Packer and Jansen with Merlin in their production of *Richard III*. Jansen describes the actor's work as: allowing 'your imagination to be in your body and as you're responding to the images of the play's circumstances, to allow your breath to drop into your body and for the sound to come out in response to those images' (Merlin, 2013, p. 164). Merlin describes her specific experience with the technique as she experienced it with Packer:

...the actors in a scene sit opposite each other with knees interlocked... Next to each actor sits a “dropper in” (usually Packer herself if she’s directing and/or her associate directors). Eye contact is maintained between the actors. Their bodies remain as relaxed as possible... They breathe deeply into the pelvis (as with all Linklater voice work) and their lips are slightly parted to prevent their jaws from clenching...

The “dropper in” then ask a series of questions to stimulate the actors’ imaginations.

The actor answers all the questions only using the dropped-in word... However, each time they answer a question (as long as they’re dropping in committedly and imaginatively), the word is inevitably loaded with images and feelings provoked by the alchemical mixture of the question and the word (Merlin, 2018, pp. 39-40).

With Dropping In, that which is ‘dropping’ is the imagery/feeling/experience, coming ‘in’ with the in-drawn breath, another example of breath as a psyche-enlivening agent as already identified with Zarrilli, Merlin, and Edelstein above. Packer instructed Merlin to ‘accept whatever images come up, no matter how inappropriate they may seem. And with every breath, new images come in – or increase the intensity of the one sitting in your body’ (Merlin, 2018, p. 40). In this way at least, Zarrilli’s practice and Linklater’s independently recognize breath as the fundamental agent energizing the performer’s work. She describes her work as belonging to ‘the live breath of human bodies in a room together’ (Linklater, 2018, p. 212).

#### 4:4 Breathing Shakespeare

In *RSC: Playing Shakespeare*, Patrick Stewart<sup>14</sup> asks ‘When do I breathe?’

Barton replies, ‘You breathe at the end of the verse lines. I myself believe that in Shakespeare’s later verse it is still right more often than not to phrase with the verse line’ (*RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse*, 1982). Barton ultimately

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14 Now, *Sir Patrick Stewart*, chancellor emeritus of the University of Huddersfield

concedes that 'Shakespeare leaves us with a choice, but "to breathe or not to breathe" is one more question in which the answer helps me tell the story' (Ibid). Setting aside the question of whether breathing is voluntary (not entirely), Peter Hall gives a much firmer answer, one without qualification: 'Breaths whether small or substantial should only be taken at the end of the line,' (Hall, 2003, p. 29). The importance placed upon breath by directors and voice specialists comes from their appreciation for the shape and texture of Shakespeare's verse and its preservation from text to performance. Breathing with the verse, as opposed to against it, preserves that shape and allows for the shape to work upon you as intended through the text, especially the shape of the verse but also the punctuation<sup>15</sup>, the caesura, antithesis, alliteration, etc. Also, by preserving the verse where appropriate, the sudden breaks of iambic regularity carry intentional significance.

In Barton's words, 'Shakespeare uses blank verse by first setting up a norm and then significantly breaking it' (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982).

Shakespeare demonstrates dramatic effect by breaking the regularity of his rhythm by alternating the number of stresses in a line, usually by providing more than the ten formally required for iambic pentameter (Ibid). Peter Hall directs actors to take advantage of these verse irregularities by using them:

...to express emotional turbulence because that is what Shakespeare heard... The nearer the verse gets to collapsing, the more tortured and emotional the expression but it must never actually collapse; the excitement is that it often nearly does. The actor must risk rhythmical disintegration, yet never allow it to happen... (Hall, 2003, pp. 26-27).

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15 For a further discussion of 'Shakespeare's punctuation,' see the discussion of physicalizing the text further in this chapter.

Barton interprets the playing information inherent in the individual Tempo-Rhythm of each character's text as 'stage direction in short-hand,' exemplified by *Henry V's* St. Crispin's Day speech. Henry's overstressed verse is suggestive of a 'tired out-of-breath leader, desperately trying to reach out to and rally his men' (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982). Directors often suggest Shakespearean lines be delivered swiftly, 'trippingly on the tongue,' an almost universal requirement for the mode of OP, and it is one which I find personally invigorating as a performer and potentially exciting as audience. I also adhere to both Barton and Hall's recommendation of a slower methodical approach to monosyllabic lines which, they argue, become incomprehensible to the audience at speed (Hall, 2003, p. 35), a direction that I have also heard given from KSF director Kurt Toftland.

Merlin combines her Stanislavski training with a similar attitude to that of Barton et.

Al, that Shakespeare is textured with embedded stage direction:

Stanislavsky's first research resource is naturally the text itself, as a 'subtle understanding of the literary texture of the play is one of the most important conditions for an actor to be able to render . . . feelings on the stage' (Stanislavsky, 1984, p. 126). For me, 'literary texture' comprises tempo-rhythm, structure, and language' (Merlin, 2007, p. 59). Clearly, the literary texture of Shakespeare's writing is exceptionally rich... (Merlin, 2013, p. 26).

American director Barry Edelstein suggests that line endings specifically create an opportunity for thought interconnected with breath (Edelstein, 2007, p. 174).

Inspiration, in the sense of literally drawing in breath in the sense of thought, 'happens at Shakespeare's line endings. Characters draw breath, and as that new breath rushes into their lungs, it carries a new idea into their minds' (pp. 175-176).

Now, with a greater understanding of the role of breath as the psyche-enlivening agent, each breath point in the verse is an opportunity for a new discovery, a new

consideration or re-consideration of a theoretical position, a potential distracted tangent, or an amplification of a concern. Whatever the thought is, it is a *new thought*, brought in with, what I suggest here, is the psyche-enlivening principle of Living Thought.

Jansen advises actor to discover that character through the verse breathing pattern:

Give over to that breath. It's cellular. You have the lungs filling with air, the blood cells carrying all this oxygen, touching all the organs, going through everything, so the breath drives the heartbeat, the circulation. Don't forget that the blood and the fluids are moving at a pace. We know the word 'emotion' has the word motion in it: it is movement. To let the breath in is to allow the emotions to move. With Shakespeare, the psychological underpinnings of the character are in with the breath (Merlin, 2013, p. 167).

This all suggests that Shakespeare's practice would have been highly embodied.

The actors' work in cultivating the Creative State is to practice psychophysical fluency, freeing them to experience and be moved by/with the text.

For Zarrilli, and to a lesser extent Stanislavski, we generate *qi*, the energy of an actor's work, through breath. For Edelstein, the breath ignites the actual thought process. In either case, we are awakening the psyche through breath. During my intensive with Zarrilli, he agreed with me, broadly, that performing Shakespeare psychophysically should be much like performing anything, specifically directing the passions though the manipulation of breath was as applicable to Shakespeare as any other material for the stage. I contend that with Shakespeare, that is precisely what the performer is doing when they allow the text to work upon them through the proper placement of breath and the exploration of the text's Tempo-Rhythm.

Through the place for breath at the end of each line of verse, Shakespeare communicates the Tempo-Rhythm of his text. As Stanislavski explains, if an actor is properly engaged with the Tempo-Rhythm of their performance:

...feelings and experiences arise naturally. But if the Tempo-rhythm is wrong, inappropriate feelings and experiences will arise in precisely the same way, in the same passage, and you won't be able to put things right until you have replaced the wrong Tempo-rhythm' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 469).

If Shakespeare's text can help the actor feel, 'How does performing the text make me feel?' might be a more helpful question for performers approaching Shakespeare, instead of 'How do I feel about the text?'

In *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*, Merlin asks, 'what happens if the amount of breath required for certain performance situations isn't the same as the amount of breath required for the character's emotional rhythm?' (Merlin, 2007, p. 58).

Answering from an OP paradigm, I argue the premise should itself be fallacious as a complex question. The text defines the rhythm and breath and, through them, creates the emotional response. Just as OP strips away many modern technological conventions, so too are other elements of performance, like an actor/director's concept of the play or character. Extreme examples, such as setting Hamlet during the American Civil War, are obviously prohibited but this idea can extend to performance as well. When an actor preconceives character with 'a concept,' they can lose the chance of discovering the character. Shakespeare is his text, his verse is his direction from beyond the grave, and character is not the result of an interpretation, but more of an event born of engagement with the text in performance.

Recalling Fogel's argument that 'emotions are not states but self-organizing dynamic processes intimately tied to the flow of an activity in context,' (Fogel, 1992, p. 122) changing the context, which in this case means changing the *text*, means altering all aspects of the event in question.

Those like Jansen, Barton, Hall, and many others, especially working in OP, argue for the playing power of performing the text as written. This understanding suits Zarrilli's contention that acting was best understood through an enactive view, i.e., one coming from the perspective of the enactive theory of Merleau-Ponty which models 'the mind of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 46). Taking an enactive view of acting, Zarrilli writes:

The notion of an 'act' as a thing 'being done' also suggests the processual nature of the acting-as-doing, that is, acting is enactment. One meaning of the noun 'action', is 'the process of change or alteration' (ibid.: 21). This sense that there is 'change or alteration' at the centre of action points in two directions: (1) towards the actor's 'inner' process and experience 10 INTRODUCTION in which psychophysiologically there is a sense/awareness of 'inner' movement taking place within the actor's body-mind as the actions/tasks that constitute the actor's score shift and change, and (2) the audience's perception and experience that something is happening given the shifts or changes taking place in the actor's score (Zarrilli, 2013, p. 9).

As the enactment of the text, through the psychophysical entanglement of action, word, thought, and emotion, and through the significance of breath, many systems already applied to or made for Shakespeare include some aspect of psychophysical attunement; though there is relatively little written combining the two in name. At Mary Baldwin University, closely tied to the ASC, the MFA Company Manager and Director of Training for Mary Baldwin's Shakespeare and Performance Program, Doreen Bechtol, employs psychophysical practices in her work, which operates

under the same OP conditions and often using the same stage as the ASC's professional company. Bechtol, who has also worked as an actor and choreographer for the ASC, 'blends several modes of training, such as: Suzuki and Viewpoints, acrobatics, dance, yoga, and basic calisthenics' (Mary Baldwin University, 2020). Professional performers of OP, from the Globe to the ASC company, however, will be recruited from myriad backgrounds. In the 2020 Holiday Season company, for example, not a single actor came from Mary Baldwin University as an undergrad or an MFA despite the universities' ties to the program and despite very few universities besides Mary Baldwin hosting programs with training especially applicable for OP.

As a director of OP, or of any Shakespearean theatre, there will likely be a diversity of backgrounds amongst the performers, some of which may potentially conflict with psychophysical performance or psychophysical training. The toolkit is designed to make the process of 'experiencing' Shakespeare's words psychophysically accessible even for relative beginners to Shakespeare and/or psychophysical practice. Still, psychophysically trained actors that have assiduously practiced any sort of attunement training, as many do, will likely be more sensitive to any sort of psychophysical work, including engaging with the text physically to be emotionally stirred by the Tempo-Rhythm and breath patterns of the verse. As with any psychophysical practice, experience and consistent practice towards Living Thought should garner greater facility in achieving it in performance and greater fluency with performing Shakespeare in general.

The Living Thought toolkit presented in the next chapter represents one specific way of introducing a performer at any level to psychophysical work that compliments

rather than detracts from the clarity of the verse, beginning with the physical exploration of that verse and its shape. Embodying the verse is the OP actor's work and through that embodiment, the verse will work upon the actor. If that seems to suggest that performing Shakespeare is easier than often conceived, that is to the point.

#### 4:5 Quality of Ease

As Jansen explains, 'Let go of the desire to work hard... Why not work easy? Fire the hard worker and hire the easy-worker' (Merlin, 2013, p. 165), which Merlin likens to Chekhov's Quality of Ease. Chekhov identified four qualities which the artist had to implement in the act of creation, Ease, Form, Beauty and Entirety (Chekhov, 2003, p. 13). Chekhov believed 'performers should be concentrating with a feeling of ease' (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 100), explaining:

While acting, heavy movements and inflexible speech are capable of depressing and even repulsing an audience. Heaviness in an artist is an uncreative power. On the stage it may exist only as a theme, but never as a manner of acting. 'It is the lightness of touch which more than anything else makes the artist,' said Edward Eggleston. In other words, your character on the stage can be heavy, awkward in movements and inarticulate in speech; but you yourself, as an artist, must always use lightness and ease as a means of expression. Even heaviness itself must be performed with lightness and ease. You will never confuse the qualities of the character and those of yourself as an artist if you will learn to distinguish between what you act (the theme, the character) and how you do it (the way, the manner of acting).

Ease relaxes your body and spirit... (Chekhov, 2003, pp. 13-14).

As a relative newcomer to Shakespeare, RSC actor Sheila Hancock made a similar observation to Jansen's, noting the relative ease of performing Shakespeare when in tune with the text:

...coming to it at my 'great old age'... I wondered if I was going to have to alter my whole approach to my work... but I found, miraculously, when I

got on the stage and in front of an audience having to communicate... I found that if I let it flow, just *happen*, it seemed the most natural thing in the world. And what's more, the language is so potent that I felt I had to make less effort than I had to make in the whole of my career... I find sometimes that it's better just to stand and say it (Playing Shakespeare - The Two Traditions, 1982).

Hancock is here aligned with Jansen on understanding the ease of performing Shakespeare *when* tapped into the power of the text, which Jansen reminds us, includes adherence to the proper placement of breath at the ending of verse lines:

Kristin Linklater will say that the modern voice is mostly neurotic because we're not expressing that heightened language. The language we use is not imagistic enough to express our feelings... Taking breath at the end of lines is like tapping into the matrix of Shakespeare's world, the reality that we all agree on. When you give over to Shakespeare's structure, it's like Neo plugging into that matrix. If you're not taking the breath with the line endings, you just make so much work for yourself. But the body will naturally do what's most efficient. So I say, 'Let's be efficient.' (Merlin, 2013, p. 165).

From an OP perspective, Shakespeare does not need to be 'fixed.' His text does not require an alien anachronistic coating of director's concepts, conceits, or technological tricks to come alive onstage. If the actor is prepared to channel Shakespeare, to embody his text, then there should be a feeling of ease in being moved by it. The text does not need to be overworked, it needs to be understood, and through the toolkit, that understanding is gained psychophysically. Actors performing in OP, and to some extent Shakespearean performance in-general, are discouraged from thinking they need to 'fix' Shakespeare or 'make him work.' RSC actor Mike Gwilym argues that Shakespeare requires actor to begin 'trusting the language,' explaining:

I think every actor who approaches a... Shakespeare text comes to a point especially in emotional scenes... [where they say to themselves] 'I know exactly how this character feels, I know the depth of his passion, I know about what the brain is doing, why have I got these flipping words in the way?' and 'it's not the way I would say it!' And the... leap we have to get over, is *that* one. So that we have to come to terms with the fact that

the evidence for ...who a character is, is not just what he says but how he says it (Playing Shakespeare - The Two Traditions, 1982).

The sacrifice of ego required to allow the text to flow through the performer does not negate the work of the actor, but that work needs careful definition. In his *Preface to Othello*, director and scholar Harley Granville-Barker advises the Shakespearean actor thusly:

Let him rather acquire an articulate tongue, an unfailing ear for the pervasive melody and cadence of the verse, let him yield to its impetus, and – provided of course, that he knows more or less what it is all about, and this sympathetic self-surrender will aid him there, Shakespeare can be counted on to carry him through (1946, p. 144).

While Barton generally agrees with Barker's ideas, he takes issue with his lack of articulation. Responding to the above passage of Barker's, Barton writes, 'To an actor, such advice is deadly. Acting is built upon specifics but Granville Barker is tantalizingly vague... he also sounds condescending,' (Barton, 1984, p. 2). Agreeing both with Barker's advice in principle and Barton's assessment of it in practice, I further suggest that yielding to the 'impetus of the verse' and expecting Shakespeare to 'carry you through' can be potentially misleading advice to the actor, though, ultimately accurate.

Shakespeare will carry you, in the sense that his text is doing most of the work, much like a horse is doing significantly more work than his rider, but the jockey must still exert skill if they do not wish to be thrown at full gallop. Another way to think of it, one which suits well the metaphor of allowing Shakespeare's verse to 'flow' through the actor as Hancock suggests, is that of a raging river. The rapids carry the kayak, certainly, but if the kayaker does not wish to capsize, they must navigate the river while managing the subtle and overt forces working upon them. Zarrilli writes:

...at optimal virtuosic levels of performance, one does the action/task while simultaneously being done by the action/ task. The actor plays the

acting score but is simultaneously played by the score. The dancer dances but is danced by the dance. Distinctions disappear. One is what one does, even as one is able to adjust as one does (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 83)

Performing Shakespeare at 'optimal virtuosic levels', the actor playing

Shakespeare's text should be moved by the text through the shape of the verse;

Shakespeare does this by directing Tempo-Rhythm and breath. The Living Thought

toolkit presented in the next chapter is intended to help the actor explore

Shakespeare's text by allowing it to move the actor, but with more specific technique

than provided by Barker.

## Chapter 5: a Living Thought toolkit

### 5:1 inventory

In this chapter you will find an extended discussion detailing four tools for the rehearsal and performance of Shakespeare's text towards the manifestation of Living Thought. These were my primary tools for the *Midsummer* workshop series. I instructed the participants in each tool's application and coached their implementation as performance through rehearsal. My role as director, per the style of OP, was primarily to facilitate clarity of the text in performance, leaving open the creative specifics of how that was done to the performer by providing creatively useful boundaries. These boundaries came from the requirements of OP and the parameters of individual exercises/techniques. In the workshop series, all exercises were both psychophysically-informed and intended to assist in the psychophysical embodiment of the performance, including the text.

These are tools for the cultivation of Living Thought in rehearsal and performance of OP Shakespeare in the sense of psychophysical training, e.g., the cultivation of the Creative State in Stanislavskian practice, but carried forward into and throughout the rehearsal and performance process. Such long-term attunement training is not the subject of this thesis. However, for anyone unfamiliar with Shakespeare, the toolkit offers entry points to Shakespearean practice through techniques derived from psychophysical practice, chosen for their application to OP performance. Though OP has somewhat stringent regulation regarding performance conditions, these techniques are equally apt for other Shakespearean practitioners seeking to channel

Shakespeare's embedded stagecraft in performance, such as OP-adjacent directors in the Language & Text tradition.

This toolkit includes:

- physicalizing the text
- Six Energies of Feeling
- Renaissance Rehearsal
- Character Sculpting

The workshop sessions (7-8) were, on average, approximately three hours per session; with the exception of the fourth workshop, which was conducted as an aspect of a university theatre course and for which I held two sessions per day.<sup>16</sup>

The other four workshops were limited to one session per day on the dates listed in Chapter 1. The workshops' progression can be broken down as follows:

1. Embodiment exercises
  - a. Physicalizing the text
  - b. Preliminary character sculpting (animal work, introduction to Imaginary Body)
  - c. Introduction to Six-Energies
2. Read the Script
3. The Ren-Run Process
4. Rehearsal
  - a. Scenework
  - b. Character Sculpting
    - i. Imaginary Body
    - ii. Amorphous Body incorporating animal/Imaginary Body
    - iii. Application of Six Energies to Amorphous Body

The first few sessions are the introductory period and primarily focused on introducing the students to the techniques and vocabulary, physical and literal, that we will be sharing throughout the learning/rehearsal process. The collection of exercises that I group together as **physicalising the text** are physical actions taken in conjunction with the reading of the text. This tool is intended to help the

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<sup>16</sup> Approx. 3 hours in the morning and 2 in the afternoon

student/performer better engage with the text on a psychophysical level by exploring the rhythm/structure of the text in conjunction with physical exercise. These exercises are the first I introduced to the students, done before casting, so that students can use these exercises as part of their private preparation process. Each exercise was practiced for approximately 3-5 minutes with accompanying discussion for roughly an hour of practice in total. **The Six Energies** are an active vocabulary drawing on the dynamic qualities of movement from dance theory in which each emotion is conceived of as an action/energy that generates and/or expresses that emotion. I begin introducing students to the Six Energies and actively exploring the psychophysical nature of these energies in the earliest sessions. Exploring each of the six in freeform physical improvisations to accompanying music as an extended process was always twenty minutes or more. These explorations took place in the first few sessions before the Renaissance Rehearsal process began.

**Character Sculpting** is more of a process than an individual exercise, beginning with the Imaginary Body technique of Michael Chekhov, animal work, and the integration of the two, eventually leading to more complex psychophysical explorations applying the Six Energies. Character Sculpting exercises were primarily practiced *after* a full read-through where student/performers had a chance to ask questions about the text itself to discover any meanings that were not clear. Initial explorations of the Imaginary Body or the utilization of animal work are limited to roughly ten minutes of physical action per exercise because I did not wish to exhaust my students with what I know from personal experience to be potentially gruelling work.

**The Renaissance Rehearsal<sup>17</sup> Process** takes roughly two full sessions and so marks a transition from instruction to rehearsal. The rehearsal process proper then proceeds. Besides scene work, Character Sculpting continues throughout the process so that student/performers can practice each of their multiple character roles and to continue to develop the amorphous bodies they have created through regular exercise and practice, as well as occasional exercises practicing the transition between one amorphous character body and another. Sometimes these exercises were relatively short, but the more complex explorations of amorphous bodies integrating ideas of Chekhov's Imaginary Body, animal work, and the application of the Six Energies were longer, between fifteen and twenty minutes. The sessions concluded<sup>18</sup> with a final presentation from the cast before a live audience.

Each tool in this toolkit, assembled and altered from existing techniques, was chosen to fulfil specific needs in Shakespearean performance in general or OP specifically as defined in Chapter 2. I chose to select the basic tools from common practices recognizable in a variety of theatrical contexts, from Shakespearean vocal technique and physicalizing the text to the Six Energies of Feeling from dance theory, adjusted as needed for the purposes of fostering Living Thought in an OP habitat. There were two fundamental principles that guided my choice for any technique's inclusion in the toolkit besides fulfilling a need in OP:

1.) The tools must represent psychophysical technique, or physical technique that can be engaged with psychophysically, rather than a naturalistic and/or psychologically-derived technique.

2.) The tools must be simple, immediate, and accessible. The OP production rapidity, the schedule of the workshop series, and the challenge of Shakespearean material in general means that time is always of the essence. This simplicity should suggest how a wide variety

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<sup>17</sup> The Renaissance Rehearsal was impractical for the online session and thus omitted

<sup>18</sup> Except for the fourth which was abruptly cut short due to the pandemic

of dramatic technique and acting theory can be applied to Shakespeare. What I sought with this technique, through a combination of simplicity and physicality, is a more primordial approach to the experiential field of Shakespearean performance, rooted in imagination and fully supported by the text.

## 5:2 warmup

As discussed below, I created a short warmup sequence designed to prepare the participants' voices and bodies for the intensive work, but focused most of my attention on the rehearsal toolkit exercises themselves. My warmup routine did not include much in the way of dedicated energy cultivation, and only some basic breath work. The energy of breath was instead tied to the shape of the text and the regulation of the breath by means of the verse as described in Chapter 4. The consequences of these decisions will be discussed in Chapters 6 & 7.

## 5:3 physicalizing the text

Physicalizing the text refers to any exercise experiment with the grammatical form and vocabulary of the text through some form of physical action. The collection of exercises under which I group 'physicalizing the text' were introduced in the early days of my performance workshops before the students' roles had been selected, and before they had read the play together as a cast. The tool was thus available to them throughout their entire process of rehearsal. I encouraged each of the participants to use the techniques, but I also do not think an entire rehearsal process based upon physicalizing the text, and nothing else, as a viable option in most OP circumstances. It remains their choice as to what extent they prepare using the techniques at their disposal, but I consider their exploration of Shakespeare's metric-form through physical exercise vital.

Physicalizing the text entails each student holding a handily readable copy of Shakespearean verse text and vocalizing that text aloud while performing physical actions in conjunction with specific elements of the verse structure, e.g., walking each line of verse and reversing direction at the line-endings, or standing on tiptoe at each comma. The physicalizing the text exercises utilized in the practical research of this thesis and discussed below are as follows:

Walking the text – Students are asked to read a passage of Shakespearean verse aloud while walking, changing directions only at full-stops, taken by most Shakespearean scholars as ‘very full stops indeed’ (Pollard, 2010, p. 91). Sometimes, due to room size, this required circuitous ‘curves’ rather than proper lines, but I asked participants to make distinct breaks and decisive changes in direction upon reaching the full-stops to make them clear.

Reversing the text – Students are asked to read a passage of Shakespearean verse aloud while walking, reversing direction at the end of the line ending.

Tiptoeing the punctuation – In conjunction with one or both previous exercises, students are asked to tiptoe on each punctuation mark but otherwise continue along their path except when called upon to change or reverse direction.

Trampoline words – Practiced alone or in conjunction with any/all the above exercises, students are asked to make a slight hop at any other word they believe to possess special significance while reading aloud.

Kicking the ending – Students are asked to read aloud a passage of Shakespeare’s verse, kicking an object once on the final word ending each line.

Sitting caesura – Students begin seated in chairs next to empty chairs. They are asked to read a passage of Shakespeare’s verse aloud and switch between chairs as they come to each caesura within the lines of verse.

5:3:A to be moved

According to Kristin Linklater:

Work on the text means letting the words of the text happen to you; finding ways to let the text impregnate you so that sensory, emotional,

imaginative, physical and vocal discoveries are the foundation on which the intellect can build (Martin, 1991, p. 178).

Other benefits exist, but physicalizing the text, for the purposes of manifesting Living Thought, offers the performer a chance to experience how the text can move the actor psychologically, physically, and, ideally, psychophysically by pairing a physical experience (action) with the performance of the text itself. Within the context of the role of Tempo-Rhythm and breath, both aspects of this physical engagement, taking physical action in conjunction with textual structure creates this opportunity to be *moved* literally by the text, as Stanislavski suggests, to 'let the new material filter through' and give it life by 'using your imagination, as we do in the school of experiencing' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 25). That experience, in turn, is intended to stoke the imagination towards action as Askew discusses with the Laban-Malmgram-derived system he employed in his psychophysical study of metric verse:

...verse rhythms are understood and experienced as purposeful movements of the human body, which are, in turn, understood and experienced as the psychophysical sensations of dramatic action. In other words, rhythmical performances of metrical verse can embody psychophysical dramatic activities (Askew, 2016, p. 34).

The same perspective guides most exercises that amount to physicalizing Shakespeare's text, incorporating not just rhythm, but all aspects of the textual structure that potentially influence the performer through the performer's experience of it. Recall Stanislavski's belief that the feelings and thoughts that arise 'can hardly restrain their own inner impulse to action' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 181) perpetuating the psychophysical creative apparatus: movement – to feeling – to movement inspired by feeling.

Berry's approach demands a 'thorough understanding of the rules of metre and form' (Martin, 1991, pp. 172-173) to better inform performers' decisions on when or why to

ignore them. Berry believes, as with many Shakespearean practitioners, that 'meaning is always contained in the structure of the thoughts which coincide with the metrical form, with the demands of the iambic pentameter and use of caesura' (Ibid.) and the significance of stressed syllables.

During Peter Brook's famous *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970), an experiment in stripping Shakespearean performance to the essentials which predates the OP movement itself, he directed his actors to 'act as a medium for the words. If you consciously colour them you're wasting your time. The words must be able to colour you' (Martin, 1991, pp. 79-80), a veritable echo of the advice issued by Harley Granville-Barker and Sheila Hancock as discussed in the previous chapter.

Linklater's perspective also advises actors to:

...feel the text rather than simply see it, so that it can be transformed into sound; do everything possible to develop a sensory and physical response to the text rather than an intellectual one (Martin, 1991, p. 178).

She further adds that it 'behooves' the actor to 'test the shades of meaning in the text which the iambic rhythm opens up' before becoming beholden to 'what we think it means and how we think the emphasis should lie' (Linklater, 1993, p. 137).

Physicalizing the text in some form is therefore an obvious but indispensable tool set in attuning the performer physically to the spirit of the text, so that the words can fully work upon/inspire/move/influence the actor. If Shakespeare's text flows like a river, physicalizing the text amounts to learning how to practice strokes with your paddle, as elemental and indispensable as scales for a pianist.

Askew describes his work as:

... a new methodology for metrical analysis, 'actorly' interpretations of Shakespearean dramatic verse, a series of training exercises that

‘sensitise’ the playwright to the performative potential of verse rhythm, and the creation of original material for a new verse play (Askew, 2016, p. 3).

While I am focused upon the performer and not the playwright, textual physicalizing exercises with Shakespeare’s verse are here likewise intended to ‘sensitise’ or otherwise attune the performer. Askew’s practice and my own attempt to bring attention to ‘features of verse construction that might otherwise go unnoticed’ (Askew, 2016, p. 36). To ensure they are noticed, his work and my toolkit encourage ‘rhythmical performance choices that take account of those features’ (Ibid.) Through such exercises, practitioners can become sensitised, i.e., attuned, ‘to the performative potential of metrical dramatic verse’ (Ibid). In Askew’s doctoral thesis, he investigates the potential of psychophysical investigation into the verse for the benefit of contemporary verse playwrights. Discoveries made through psychophysical investigation into the text are, if anything, more imminent for the performer who will be tasked with embodying the playwright’s embedded directions before an audience in real time.

It is because of the potential for performative-discoveries made through physical engagement with the text that OP actors are well advised to adhere to Grotowski, who tells us ‘the actor must begin by doing nothing’ (Grotowski, 2002, p. 251). It is difficult to understand how Shakespeare’s text works upon you, the actor, if you have already brought a certain amount of emotional or psychological preconception to the text before experiencing it on ‘its own terms.’ Stanislavski believed that understanding a speech required ‘a careful analysis of the structure of the text and the grammatical structure of the sentence,’ (Martin, 1991, p. 51) but this general understanding of the words is not the only advantage provided by studying the

structure of the language. In general, structural approaches to examining the verse, embodied or more traditionally analytical, attempt to avoid the pitfall of 'overcoding':

These methods, which strictly follow a structural approach emphasize the importance of text as a point of departure for the interpretation and performance, because it prevents the actor from what Umberto Eco calls 'overcoding' the practice of forcing a surplus of expression of the addressee by a surplus of content. They can be seen as an attempt to reinstate a form of 'poetics' upon which the vocal-delivery is based (p. 36).

This reinstatement of poetics brings the general voice work associated with Shakespeare into philosophical alignment with that of OP, where Shakespeare's text is meant to be preserved and clarified in performance, not obviated by extratextual concerns. Notably, in comparison to OP theatres, Berry observed of the RSC that during the common rehearsal:

...of a Shakespeare play in Stratford so much talking has been done around the character and so many choices have been made, that how the language is used has to be made to fit what has already been decided before one has the experience of speaking it (Martin, 1991, p. 174).

This is anathema to OP and physicalizing the text serves an important role in avoiding this pitfall.

While the exercises I chose for physicalizing the text in this toolkit derive from a vast spectrum of sources, I selected them to emphasize the role of Tempo-Rhythm and breath placement above other concerns because, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Tempo-Rhythm and breath are primary components of emotion. Berry alternatively emphasizes:

...the organic structure, the dynamic, of each word... all exercises for articulation are designed to explore just how the vowels and consonants are related to each other in each word, so that the thought is released through this physical activity (Martin, 1991, p. 172)

This contrasts the psycho-linguistic aspects of the Linklater-aligned ‘Dropping In’ exercises discussed in the previous chapter. These exercises are meant to help the students better interpret the substantive information of the text in the context of the substantive information, i.e., the plot, Given Circumstances, implied actions, etc. derived from the text.

### 5:3:B developmental background

What I refer to as ‘physicalizing the text’ derives from any number of activities which meet certain criteria from Shakespearean Voice & Text work where such practices are prevalent. In my own experience, I have found the idea of being ‘in my body’ often demanded, but for which guidance remains vague. For this reason, simple practical exercises of this type may be the most fundamental to connecting with the text in a physical way. The relative clarity of the task associated with each exercise creates simple connections between physical actions and textual structure may be crudely literal, but a direct way to begin working the text ‘into the body.’

I have no recollection of the exact phrase ‘physicalizing the text’ being presented during my voice training at the RBC, nor any subsequent workshop; nonetheless I do not claim the phrase and certainly not the idea as my own, because it is so basic and fundamental a concept to most work in voice and text, especially with regards to Shakespeare. In my personal experience at the RBC and workshops with voice specialists Cicely Berry, Barbara Houseman, Alison Bomber and The Company of Wolves, exercises of this type have been universal, though the shape varies in minor and significant ways. I am aware that the specific phrase is associated with some practices of at least one Chicago-based company (Unspeakable, 2020) whose

eponymous technique entails a six-week course through Theatre Unspeakable comprised of aspects of 'Viewpoints, Alexander Technique, Mask work and Lecoq pedagogy' (Ibid) with such work then applied to text, but their work was not a direct influence on any of my sources and any similarity is coincidental.

On a practical level, this period of working with the students individually with small bits of text is my 'audition' period. Given the brisk nature that OP Shakespeare can take, casting during the workshop period adds that element of truncated rehearsal time to the energy of the work. I am principally concerned with near-equal distribution of lines for the purposes of my research and the equitable training for all student volunteers. Therefore, it is principally important that the students are engaged with the text, with any 'production value' of lesser concern.

Despite these exercises largely coming from and overlapping with voice practice, even here there are differences. While I encourage my students to feel the text 'in their bodies' in ways linked to each specific exercise, I am not concerned with vocal quality per se, as much as the manifestation of Living Thought. That said, physicalizing the text, as I understand it, derives most specifically from pre-existing vocal practice. Students already familiar or well-trained in vocal work would likely find the exercises very familiar but focused on Tempo-Rhythm/structure.

Cicely Berry and Kristin Linklater have been enormously influential on the history of Shakespearean performance, textual analysis, and the field of voice work, to say nothing of this thesis. While this dissertation addresses the application of psychophysical work in rehearsal and performance, Berry, Linklater, and many other voice practitioners have laid the groundwork for applying psychophysical work to

Shakespearean text. Voice work of this nature tends to be pre-performative, not intended necessarily for the rehearsal process, but instead, for the general conditioning of the actor for vocal work in much the same way that Zarrilli's regimen attuned the actor's bodymind awareness.

The voice work of the type practiced by Linklater, Berry, and other notable practitioners like Patsy Rodenburg tend to focus (beyond the use of the voice *in general*) on examining Shakespeare's text through vocal embodiment. The work of actor training and rehearsal is the application of the voice work, ideally beginning where voice work ends. In describing her own work on the field of voice, scholar Jaqueline Martin describes the field of voice itself:

*Voice in Modern Theatre* is concerned with... vocal delivery... In order to define the complex nature of vocal delivery more precisely, it concentrates on the problems connected with performing Shakespeare in the twentieth century, where trends and styles have replaced each other in rapid succession – all of which have been a far cry from Hamlet's advice to his players, 'suit the action to the word and the word to the action (Martin, 1991, p. xiii).

Principally, for this study, I am *not* concerned with vocal delivery. The physicalizing the text exercises that I focused on were derived from voice performance practices and will likely improve vocal delivery in some ways for those who adopt the practices, but the ones I chose were, by my assessment, more likely to bring the structure of the text into the performer's overall bodymind with any vocal improvement being ancillary.

In an article in *New Theatre Quarterly*, scholar Sarah Werner, taking a feminist critical perspective on the voice work of Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg, begins with the unassailable truth of their collective importance to the field:

ALTHOUGH it is not fair to suggest that there is a single acting methodology for the performance of Shakespeare in Britain, Cicely Berry's approach to reading and speaking Shakespearean plays has strongly influenced how those plays are performed in Britain today. As a voice teacher at the Central School of Speech and Drama, and as Voice Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company for more than twenty years, she has come into contact with and shaped many of today's top Shakespearean actors. Her published work, along with that of Patsy Rodenburg, who trained at Central and is now head of the Voice Departments at the Royal National Theatre and Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Kristin Linklater, who has brought voice work to the United States, have spread voice work into rehearsal spaces and classrooms across Britain and North America (Werner, 1996, p. 249).

Werner's assessment of the voice practitioners was criticized for overly simplifying the similarities between their respective practices. In response to the article, scholar Jane Boston writes:

It is true that they share the common ground of roots in classical systems of actor training, but it is also important to remember that they occupy different positions in the field of voice training and have very different ways of representing their expertise in print and in practice. It is simplistic to speak solely of their commonalities when the deeper task of isolating their philosophical and ideological differences is so much more important (Boston, 1997, pp. 248-249).

I clearly wish to avoid the same error and only cite the controversy for being among the rare examples of the similarities of the practitioners being discussed instead of the more significant differences. Martin, comparing Berry and Linklater, nonetheless highlights their differences:

...Cicely Berry's approach to the vocal delivery of a classical text is principally through the text itself, whereby the actor is encouraged to involve himself actively in the structure of the thought at the moment of communication... Kirsten Linklater's approach is based on the organic function of the voice, which, when liberated, received its impulses from the senses and consequently informs the text... both of them are attempting some sort of integrated method – Cicely Berry through the text and Kirsten Linklater through the voice – whereby both what is said and how it is said should spring from the same source (Martin, 1991, p. 38).

Since it is the commonalities and their influence on this project that I wish to explore, I defer to Cicely Berry's own response to Werner's article concerning the overlap between her work and her esteemed colleagues:

I SEE MY JOB, as I know do my colleagues Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenburg, as intrinsically to do the following: (i) through exercise to open out the voice itself so that the actor finds her/his true potential: after all, do not singers train? (ii) by working on text - hearing and listening - to give the actor choice, and power over that choice.

Now how can you challenge the politics of Shakespeare without these tools, these ways of working? And when I say the 'tools' I mean both the awareness of the physicality of the language, and the breath to carry it out - skills which you can only acquire by working at them (Berry, 1997, p. 48).

My 'job', as Berry puts it, is to facilitate the performers' understanding of the script and staging, but even without focusing upon voice, these exercises are still to help actors discover their 'true potential'. But my work here has been to help performers discover the influential power of the language without the need to take power over the language. Berry's defensive posture is a response not only to Werner's oversimplification of her vocal practices as compared to her colleagues, but also Werner's accusation against all three of, essentially, anti-feminist antiquarianism:

This emphasis on freeing the self is related to the belief that through voice work one can access a deeper, more primitive, and more innocent self that is healthier both for personal life and for life as an actor. Although the focus is on a psychological as opposed to a historically based primitivism, an unmistakable result of this drive towards the innocent and primitive version of the self is a naturalization of the good old days, those mythical days in the past when we were more in touch with our emotions and closer to the very origins of language. This longing for innocent, carefree days of yesteryear (and especially for Shakespearean England) is a pervasive and little examined nostalgia - there is no problematizing of the past, no mention of what perhaps was wrong with life in the old days. Instead, from its inception, voice work taught the actor to trust Shakespeare, who came from those better days, and to focus on private, transcendent emotions (Werner, 1996, p. 250).

Coming from an OP perspective, I am distinctly interested in exploring the text without intentional alteration, but I freely acknowledge that any work actively fighting against the constraints of the specific form is valid. In line with Berry, I would offer that knowing the embedded stage directions through physical exploration of the textual structure will only deepen one's knowledge of the script as it stands, presenting more options for a practitioner wishing to subvert it. Studying language from the historical perspective in which it might have been used does not mean condoning the society from which that linguistic practice grew. Another of Berry's critiques against Werner serves as a stark warning for other academics:

It would seem to me profitable for anyone writing a thesis such as that from which Ms. Werner's article derives that they would at some time have direct contact with those they are writing about - and perhaps experience of their teaching in practice. It is so dangerous when academic argument/language can have supremacy and weight over actual experience. We voice teachers are not talking theories: we are interacting with people and the ways they live. What is theatre for if not to make people more aware? (Berry, 1997, p. 49).

In this regard I am somewhat better prepared than was Werner, having been trained under Linklater-certified instructors Simon Ratcliffe and Françoise Walot, as well as in workshops from notable specialists including Alison Bomber, Barbara Houseman, and Cicely Berry, respectively. Berry's technique was the most familiar, but only because, having pioneered voice and text technique in general, Linklater follows in her wake much in the way Chekhov follows Stanislavski, taking an entirely different path but approaching the similar psychophysical goals in voice and/or performance. Subjectively, Berry's techniques seemed the clearest to me perhaps because they were so fundamental, but I experienced Linklater training in snippets over long periods of time, exploring the vocal progression of her work over multiple terms of a two-year postgraduate course. Linklater's influence is still significantly felt in this

project through her articulation of voice work as psychophysical work. Martin describes Linklater's work:

...based on psychotherapeutic principles, emphasizing that in order to unlock the mind, one must unlock the body... she has evolved a system of vocal training, psycho-physical in nature, where the emphasis is placed on the relationship between mind and body' (Martin, 1991, p. 176).

The basis of all Linklater work for Linklater progresses from the notion 'that voice and language belong to the whole body rather than the head alone and that the function of the voice is to reveal the self' (Linklater, 1993, p. 4).

She later writes:

...the mind and the body must learn to cooperate in activating and releasing inner impulses and dissolving physical inhibitions. Actors must develop bodies that are sensitive and integrated, rather than super-controlled and muscular; and they must educate the voice into the union of self and body (Linklater, 2006, p. 8).

The voice work practiced by Linklater, Berry, and others essentially pioneered a psychophysical approach to Shakespeare, but whilst they were focused on vocal preparation, I am concerned with the work of rehearsal. My workshops therefore are not so much moving beyond them as flowing from them.

### 5:3:C walking the text

In the words of Linklater, 'I must acknowledge that very few of the physical exercises were created by me' (Linklater, 2006, p. 3) as previously stated. Berry, perhaps being one of the first notable practitioners in the field, may be the ultimate source of most, if not all, textual-physicalizing exercises of this kind. She is certainly my primary source for 'walking the text.'

Figure 2 [W1: 20/10/18] [Walking Text 1](#)

Figure 3 [W3: 22/6/19] [Walking Text 2](#)

The shape of verse can make the through-line of long Shakespearean speeches difficult to perceive. There is a danger of the end of the verse-line being taken as an artificial stop, losing momentum at points in the text when they should be ideally infused with new energy by an influx of breath. This momentum is not meant to conclude at the end of each verse line, but driven to the end of the thought process represented by the full-stop. Periods are thought, in general, to 'signify a greater stop' (Sullivan, 2007, p. 87).

The punctuation reveals the rhythm, and as performers, the choice of the specific version of a text being used may alter the experience through any alteration to rhythm but the process of discovery remains the same. Barry Edelstein likewise identifies Shakespeare's punctuation as:

...delineating those crucial shifts between fast and slow and long and short that keep the notes in the text sweet and varied,' adding that 'punctuation can be one of his most effective indicators of rhythm (Edelstein, 2007, p. 251).

It should be noted that Shakespearean scholars, notably Dover Wilson, have suggested that Shakespeare provided very little punctuation in his manuscripts, and further:

Dramatic punctuation existed in order to guide the actors in the speaking of their lines; and provided the dramatist could be certain that the players spoke them in the way he desired he would not greatly care about the stops in the prompt-book (Wilson, 1930, p. 408).

During my MFA workshop with Berry, she too acknowledged that Shakespeare likely did not provide a great deal of his own punctuation, but nevertheless emphasized its importance in studying his text for performance. Proponents for the interpreting of embedded stage direction in Shakespeare's text argue that even minor punctuation is thought to carry significant playing information:

As a member of his own company, Shakespeare could omit overt stage directions and instead rely on breathing cues of varying lengths to block his plays as he wrote, and thereby signal movement, either vocal or physical, in the drama through the use of meter and punctuation. While we don't know how Shakespeare drafted because we don't have those drafts, we can infer that, like most writers who have drafted a work by hand, those drafts must have eventually included shorthand notes and annotations, so the lack of overt directions can be compensated for by this invisible system of stage directions in the guise of punctuation. The primary punctuation marks that dominate Shakespeare's works—the comma, semi-colon, colon, period, and exclamation point—are indicators, not dictators, of stage directions (Sullivan, 2007, p. 84).

Obviously, we cannot know for certain what punctuation was provided by the composers or the playwright, and with any modern edition of Shakespeare, what choices editors may have additionally made. Though my practical suggestion to the performer is to explore the structure of the version of the text given, editors are cautioned to preserve as much of the original text as possible unless they intend to change the meaning of the text, as one scholar explains:

Subsequent changes to punctuation, through standardization and modernizing, eliminate the cues already existing in the text and deny the actor and scholar insight into not just the playwright's intentions, but also important rhetorical indicators for the performance (Sullivan, 2007, p. 94).

By walking through the verse-breaks, the student ideally moves through any self-imposed barriers arising from initial reaction to the perceived verse-structure, and instead experiences the momentum and continuity of thought within the text to the conclusion of a thought process that may take up multiple lines of verse. As

Edelstein explains:

...Shakespeare's characters argue their thoughts *in order*. They think coherently and methodically. There's a system at work in their minds. One thought connects to the next. Ideas are strung together. They are arranged to be maximally clear, organized so that they will have a strong impact (Edelstein, 2007, p. 73).

Shakespeare's speeches are, as Langham characterized them, thought processes carried out in linguistic form and these processes drive towards conclusions.

### 5:3:D reversing the text

'Reversing the text' is a variation on walking the text with alternative focus, more catered to experiencing momentum than the complete flow of the argument. I can definitively identify Alison Bomber as the coach that first introduced me to the variation of a full reverse, re-treading the same path back and forth over the course of exploring a passage of text (Bomber, 2015). Bomber called it 'running away' from the previous thought; particularly apt for passages like Hamlet's 'To be' and Macbeth's 'If it were done', where some turns of line may reflect shame or horror at the implications of the character's own considerations. Additionally, feeling the immediate 'charge' of the full line of verse from beginning to end, then re-experiencing that same charge from the opposing perspective, helps to develop a sense of layers and counterarguments with their own momentum and force.

What I experience while retracing the same path over the course of a single passage is how the thoughts of a given passage are stacked against one another. In Macbeth's 'If it were done' soliloquy from *Macbeth* Act 1, Scene 7, Macbeth explores options on one side, essentially stacking evidence for killing Duncan in the first eight lines before considering the unpleasant consequences throughout the rest of the monologue. By contrast, Hamlet's argument in *Hamlet* Act 3, Scene 1 carried out across his 'To be' soliloquy is relatively more chaotic, sometimes reversing his position with each passage, sometimes affirming his previous point. Reversing the ending can help the performer feel how the shifting tide of the verse stacks elements of an argument against or atop one another.

Figure 4 [W1: 21/10/18] [Reverse the Text 1](#)

Figure 5 [W4: 16/1/20] [Reverse the Text 2](#)

### 5:3:E tiptoeing punctuation

Used in conjunction with either of the previous two exercises, I ask students to tiptoe at each punctuation mark that is not a full stop to feel the more subtle change in rhythm that comes from that of minor punctuation, such as the pause of a comma, as compared to the more overt changes observable from line to line or at the completion of a thought, adapted from technique learned from Barbara Houseman (Houseman, 2015).

*Figure 6 [W1: 20/10/18] [Tiptoe](#)*

Different aspects of the text, the complete statement/thought, the verse form, and the punctuation have differing corresponding physical expressions provoking different psychophysical reactions to each element of the text.

### 5:3:F trampoline words

'Trampoline words' is entirely my own phrase describing an exercise in which I asked students to add a little hop upon reaching words of particular importance to the line of text with one or more of the previous exercises. While the idea of 'important' words in a Shakespearean text is relative, I offer the suggestion of words that identify an individual, as well as conjunctive phrases ('and,' 'or,' 'but'), and words that resonate by rhyme or alliteration within a given text, etc. The reasoning behind the exercise was to remind the actors of the power of individual words within a line of text to re-energize and propel action forward. Conjunctions are not exciting in and of themselves, but my training has taught me to think of them as springboards for the energy of the verse rather than 'filler'.

While the exercises were intended to demonstrate the relative shape of the statement and verse, my intention with this exercise is to marry the psychophysical exploration of the verse shape with that of the vocabulary. Sullivan notes the 'relationship between what is said and how it is said,' in Shakespeare, 'is underscored by the meter of the line, which works in conjunction with the punctuation' (Sullivan, 2007, p. 86).

Frankly, this exercise was not entirely successful in this project's workshop series, stemming, I believe, from my lack of specificity in this exercise. In the future I will only apply trampoline words to conjunctions and, if I choose to explore other aspects of word choice, e.g., antithesis, alliteration, etc., I recommend selecting corresponding specific and distinct action for those elements just as with the structural exploration exercises discussed above.

### 5:2:G kicking the ending

This exercise I originally learned from Alex Taylor at the RBC, but I also learned another variation through Berry's workshop (Berry, 2015). The exercise was largely identical in practice. As we spoke a passage of verse aloud, we were tasked with providing a forceful kick on the final word of the verse line. While this can be done with a relatively stationary object so long as it is sufficiently padded so that the student does not injure their foot, the exercise can also be performed with just about any small object. What I noticed when we were taught by Berry, is that with a small object, the kick would send the object into motion, meaning we the performers had to physically move, literally chasing the object representing the concluding word of

each verse line. This was potentially valuable for exploring the varying lengths of the verse, and verse-line vary significantly in length, even when perfectly iambic because of other necessities of speech. Even several lines with equal numbers of syllables/strong stresses will likely have slight variations which can be further accented by textual punctuation. Kicking a small, light object offers a slight chaos-factor, as objects will rarely move at a steady distance or predictable path. Ideally, the actor will experience this as a game, trying to time each reading as to reach a natural conclusion that is at once strictly formal, always coming at the end of a line, and entirely organic, born out of a genuine reaction to an unknown event, the object kicked. I used this variant whenever feasible during the workshop series. During the final workshop, conducted online due to Covid-19 restrictions, punching a pillow was a crude substitute for the kicking of the cushion variant, which seems the slightly inferior form, given the opportunity for creative reaction to genuine unpredictable circumstances. After having taught the technique using different forms, I continue to think Berry's free object works best.

Figure 8 [W1: 20/10/18] [Kick the Ending](#)

Figure 9 [W5: 20/7/20] [Punch the Ending](#)

While this exercise reinforces the general shape of the verse within the text as with 'reversing the text', the exercise holds further psychophysical playing significance:

There is, therefore, a vital discovery to be made about the place where the line ends in Shakespeare's verse. It is not arbitrary. It goes beyond the expression of poetic craft. The choice of the final word in the pentameter line is intentional and the actor who pays attention to how the line ends taps into a rich seam of acting information (Linklater, 1993, p. 153).

The necessity is not to strike an object or even chase it, but to place a strong and definitive physical action on each final word. While a strong stamping of the foot or a

clap might suffice, the punch/kick against a cushion or light mobile object was my preference for its blunt simplicity.

### 5:3:H sitting caesura

Berry describes the caesura within Shakespeare's verse as 'the break which occurs within the line' (Berry, 2011, p. 58), explaining:

... there is nearly always a break within the line, in most cases after the second or third stressed syllable. Sometimes this break coincides with a full-stop or a colon, and so with a break in thought. But more often, as in the passage we are looking at, it is simply a poise on a word – i.e., the word holds and lifts for a fraction of a moment before it plunges into the second half of the line (Ibid).

Berry's phrase, 'poise on a word', is my favourite description for what can be an elusive moment of the text. As Berry suggests, I find that if I look for a place within the text where one portion of the line is set against the other, it usually seems clear. Just as Shakespeare sets down lines of argument across lines of verse, there is almost always a perceptible division within most given lines of verse. By 'set against one another,' I do not necessarily mean opposing.

In the 'reversing the text' exercise, one literally paces back and forth going over the ideas of the text, reminiscent of a common natural habit of active contemplation. Likewise, the two 'uneven halves' of any given verse line can be in relative support of each other, opposed, or, more likely, simply representing two distinct elements of the line balanced against one another. In the example below, from *Titus Andronicus* Act 3, Scene 1, you can see how one 'half' of each of Marcus' lines can be clearly divided from the other:

**Now farewell, flatt'ry;** die, Andronicus.  
Thou dost not slumber. **See thy two sons' heads,**  
**Thy warlike hand,** thy mangled daughter here,  
Thy other banished son **with this dear sight**

**Struck pale and bloodless;** and thy brother, I,  
Even like a stony image **cold and numb.**

I am familiar with two variations on essentially the same exercise of physicalizing the caesura in Shakespeare's text. What is most important is to instill the physical sense of the shift from one portion of the line at the division point. Students can be asked to stand/sit at each caesura point while reading the text aloud to practice this embodiment. Preferably, however, each student will begin seated beside an empty chair, to the students' immediate left or right. At each caesura, the student is then tasked to move from one seat to the other. Having practiced both as a student and teacher, I would recommend the chair exercise as the more literal physical representation of that balance of text-to-text. What matters most, as Linklater's 'poise' term suggests, is that the caesura fundamentally represents a *shift in position* which we can literally embody by sitting, standing, or moving from side-to-side.

In moments where the caesura might seem unclear, I encourage students to test different points to determine which might be best suited to serve as the line of division. If it does not feel natural to the performer, then another position will probably mark the delineation of the caesura more accurately. As I remind my students, there are no Shakespeare Police that investigate the correctness of our processes. We can only experiment with what seems plausible given historical context and make a judgement. As Barton reminds us, the important task for the actor is to 'ask the question' (RSC Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse, 1982).

Figure 10 [W1: 20/10/18] [Sitting Caesura](#)

Unless the caesura is punctuated by a full-stop mid-line, which occurs very rarely in Shakespeare, taking a breath would probably be rhetorically inappropriate, something Linklater argues strongly against:

Then there is the myth of "enjambement," which suggests that there is a special Continental artistry in attaching the end of one line to the beginning of another. And there are those who emphasize the "caesura," which allows you to breathe in the middle of the line. If you put together the "enjambement" and the "caesura" you might as well rewrite all Shakespeare's iambic verse, putting the middles of the lines at the end and the ends in the middle (Linklater, 1993, p. 154).

In addition to Linklater's warning, I further warn against the traditional phrasing of 'break in the text' to describe a caesura within the context of performance, because any pause felt in performance should be no more substantial than that provided by punctuation. Unnecessary pauses and the dropping of energy that comes from them are the clearest indicator of the disruption of Living Thought, much as fluid rapidity most clearly represents its manifestation. What the performer must gain is a physical sense of the balance or imbalance that will inform their own performance, either through the psychophysical interaction, or more deeply per any discoveries of intention or textual subtlety.

### 5:3:I toward the ease of embodiment

During a voice workshop with Alison Bomber in 2015, I discussed with her my frustrations with 'feeling' certain aspects of Shakespeare's verse, specifically his variations on usual iambic pentameter such as spondee or trochee. She explained that she had avoided using those terms in our workshop intentionally. While such in-depth study may be appropriate for some vocal work, as it certainly is with literary analysis of poetry, I was attracted to the simplicity and immediacy of Bomber's engagement methods, which were universally psychophysical. Physicalizing the text represents a small aspect of voice work, and is no substitute for it, but its strength lies in creating an opportunity for discovering the rhythm and meaning of Shakespeare's text and experiencing that on a psychophysical level.

Bomber's workshop occurred during my MFA cohort's rehearsal for *Hamlet*, directed by Stephen Simms. The production was using the Quarto 1 (1603) script, the oldest print-version of *Hamlet* in existence, but maligned as the 'bad quarto' edition compared to its lengthier and more popular counterpart from the First Folio (Werstine, 1990, p. 65). Simms describes our production:

To herald the UK celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, I decided to create a production of the 1603 quarto text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a vehicle through which to explore the aesthetic of performing Shakespeare in a postmodern/post-dramatic world. The production would be performed by students studying the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) acting (the British tradition) course, as one of their final productions. Central to the production was whether actors trained in the British tradition could embrace a postmodern approach to production and create a theatrical whole. The challenge of the production was therefore one which tested the flexibility of their training (Simms, 2019, p. 125).

I struggled through most of the rehearsal process. Having performed Shakespeare professionally before attending graduate school, I had acquired methods of memorization and textual engagement that I was reluctant to shed, though they were not yielding positive results. Simms, noting my exertions to adjoin breath to verse ending, kept advising against my training and comprehension, to breathe wherever I wished. 'You can breathe anywhere,' he said.

And I agree, despite all that I have argued thus far that **in performance** before an audience and in rehearsal, the actor should breathe wherever they feel most comfortable. Though I contend that best practice demands exploring breath primarily at the end of the verse line, I think that exploration best left to practice *outside of* rehearsal. The *Midsummer* workshops conducted as practical research for this project were designed as a hybrid of crash-course in Shakespearean performance practice and rehearsal, but the RBC production of Q1 *Hamlet* was a pure rehearsal space. I immediately realized that I was not psychophysically fluent

in the lines that I had memorized by old habits of brute-force memorization. Haphazardly chained to new theories offering insight on verse-construction, I had intellectually ingested them largely divorced from the rest of my bodymind. Contrarily, the fluency I sought would be not just the unity of text and action in performance, but where embodiment was more accessible altogether. I was trying to be on the text but still suffering from the Actor's Mind-Body Problem, disconnected from my actions and physical inhabitation. Given the faculty feedback, I think it fair to say my performance was ultimately good<sup>19</sup> in part because I found a path towards embodiment relatively late in the process. I eventually found the engagement with the text I needed to act, but throughout I was a step behind most of the cast.

While I made my students aware of the ideal of breathing in-synch with the shape of the verse, I made no attempt to enforce or correct this because even if the breaths match the verse as intended in harmonious rhythm with the text, this is not Living Thought if performed mechanically. Rather than focus on the enforcement of technical correctness, I offer tools that encourage physical exercise of textual shape to reinforce, psychophysically, breath placement, structure, etc. I focused my efforts on instilling the verse form in the students through the physical exercises, especially reversing the text and kicking the ending, which place special physical emphasis on the end of the verse line. I asked students to do their best to breathe at the end of these verse lines only; this is so physical practice and textual practice interweave for the purposes of breath placement and embodiment. The embodied memory of the textual form with imperfect breath placement is still better for the performer than a performance 'disembodied' by the actor's clear distraction thinking about breath

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<sup>19</sup> Dangerously near adequate

placement, as noted from Simms' direction. The purpose of synchronizing the breath to the text is to more fully embody the text, but if attempting to strictly adhere to 'breathing rules' disrupts the psychophysical harmony of the performer, then the technique's purpose is lost.

In the RSC's *Playing Shakespeare* television series, Barton and several RSC cast members discuss the irony of being distracted by the awareness of the verse when it is structured to help the actor perform with greater ease. David Suchet observes, 'you start off by being aware of the verse and it's up to that moment that you break-through that awareness so that it doesn't impede... and you've got to get rid of it' (RSC *Playing Shakespeare - Using the Verse*, 1982). Barton agreed, 'that's all stuff that's got to get into your subconscious and then you've got to throw it away,' (Ibid). John Britton makes similar observations regarding his psychophysical performance training:

The most powerful learning happens when a trainee, without distracting herself, pays full attention to her experiences.

This separation of experience from reflection and reflection from analysis encourages trainees to practice single-minded engagement with each task. If you are thinking 'about' (or having opinions about) what you are doing, you are not fully doing it...

The training is intended to liberate a performer's ability to react spontaneously, intuitively and physically to impulse without, except when necessary, having to 'think about' her reactions. This requires that actions and reactions become embodied (Britton, 2013, pp. 319-320).

I interpret their collective idea of letting go of the structure, with psychophysical and OP considerations in mind, as suggesting that performers must reach a point in attunement with the verse when they must forget the verse structure intellectually as *text* and remember it primarily in their bodies. These physical techniques, literal exercises, reinforce these ideas psychophysically when practiced. As the physical

action and textual embodiment blend, the actor is further preparing themselves for the unity of Living Thought in performance.

#### 5:4 Six Dynamic Energies of Active Emotion

Corresponding to their counterparts in dance theory as Dynamic Movement

Qualities, the 'Six Energies of Active Emotion' are:

1. Percussive: the energy of aggression, anger, confrontation
2. Vibratory: the energy of stress, anxiety, fear
3. Swinging: the energy of joy, happiness
4. Collapsed: the energy of despair, sadness, pain
5. Sustained: the energy of control
6. Suspended: the energy of build-up and anticipation

#### 5:4:A developmental background

In order to build a psychophysically-activating rehearsal, I sought a psychophysically-active rehearsal vocabulary that could be practiced in conjunction with the text and with other aspects of the toolkit, specifically Character Sculpting (discussed below). Though Chekhov, Laban, and others provide systems that reduce actions and/or qualities to a set of physical expressions, I chose the Six Energies of Feeling, derived from the Six Dynamic Movement Qualities of Alonzo King, who developed 'a choreographic process that emphasizes qualities of movement over shapes and structures' (Jensen, 2008, p. 375) based on his personal performance philosophies. King's philosophies, like those of many psychophysical acting practitioners, reflect the importance of 'non-Western movement practices and spirituality' (Ibid) to his practice as a dancer. He believed these non-western influences had been more influential on his success as a dancer than the pure structure of 'countless demi-plies, tendus, and pirouettes' (Ibid). The 'Six Energies of

Active Emotion' or simply, the 'Six Energies' was then developed for acting from dance theory by HEA Teaching Fellow Louise Papillon from whom I received training (Papillon, 2016).

The Six Energies in this context connect action to feeling, with feeling as 'a by-product' arising from physically embodying certain qualified actions, just as Stanislavski sought as discussed in Chapter 3 (Merlin, 2003, p. 29). Furthermore, while completely different in approach, the Six Energies in this employment are meant to serve as a practical 'embodiment and shaping of energy' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 42) exercise, per Zarrilli's previously discussed theories of acting. These energies are also entirely compatible with textual needs, and the specific energy levels and qualities employed/deployed by the actor in performance emerge from and are performed in service to the text.

Emulating Papillon's practice, students are asked to assign energy 'scores' of 1-5 in levels of intensity for each type of energy in the scene or passage. As she explained it, there should always be at least a minimal level of 1 present at any given moment, even if that quality, for instance *swinging*, is completely overshadowed by collapse at maximum intensity of 5. At Ophelia's funeral, Hamlet is still making clever remarks despite anything else he might be feeling. The 'swing' is the type of energy manifesting in those small moments, perhaps rising above the base level in small moments across an entire scene or play. The energy levels are completely dynamic and fluid, potentially changing in any combination of intensities at any point.

At first, students learn each energy individually as they are tasked with embodying that energy. They may embody this energy as literally or figuratively as they wish,

go where they wish. I offer suggestions, but I also offer alternatives. During these free-form improvisational movement sessions, students should be aware of one another but not focused upon one another. I find music essential during these exercises to truly feel the inherent Tempo-Rhythms of each type of energy that the actor will work and which will work upon the actor in performance, and I pair the tracks to corresponding energies or combinations/progressions of energies to clarify the qualities and versatility of each energy. Once students have been educated in the nature of the energies through these exercises, in further explorations they are tasked with embodying the blending of energies, i.e., 'mixing' energy levels. These exercises are performed without text, without voice, just pure physicality in reaction to the music and my prompts as instructor.

*Figure 11 [W4: 6/2/20] [6 Energy Exploration 1<sup>20</sup>](#)*

*Figure 12 [W2&3: 23/6/19] [6 Energy Exploration 2<sup>21</sup>](#)*

Movement of this type is Task-based in a purer form than Stanislavski because the only 'want' available for the performance of the Task is to continue to perform the task, attempting to embody the energy felt in the music at whatever levels or whatever combination being prompted. There can be no success, but neither can there be failure. As Jedi Master Yoda instructs us, 'Do or do not, there is no try' (The Empire Strikes Back, 1980), there is only 'doing' in these embodiment exercises.

One of the few 'consistent' directions given during these exercises is to 'fill the space'. This is an obvious direction, but one that presents the essential Task-based

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<sup>20</sup> Password: PJannise2021 (for all footage hosted on vimeo)

<sup>21</sup> Joint-session of Workshop groups 2 & 3

structure that gives students a guideline that propels movement but does not dictate form. I noticed Ewan Downie, Artistic Director from the Company of Wolves using the phrase often in roughly similar exercises during the workshop I took with them in Glasgow (2018) and it is to him that I credit its inclusion in this project and my practice.

#### 5:4:B towards a psychophysically active rehearsal process

With all tools included in this toolkit, I seek useful techniques for bringing the mind/body and action/text together into greater unity for a more embodied performance ideal for Living Thought. Working with the Six Energies is a relatively literal example of an embodiment exercise and one that also provides another function for direction. As facilitator, I sought a system of shared vocabulary of action that can be used throughout the rehearsal-process proper, i.e., scene work.

Layering multiple similar systems could be potentially beneficial but also confusing, especially given the limited schedule. It certainly risks redundancy when there are other aspects of psychophysical OP performance to explore under a truncated rehearsal time. Tools such as the Six Energies work best within this abridged rehearsal period as a technique that can be taught once but can perform 'double-duty' as an embodiment exercise and a common point of reference between director and cast.

By creating a psychophysically-activating rehearsal vocabulary, I could communicate with the participants using shared 'active' terms rather than committing a veritable sin against Stanislavski's ghost by demanding a general wash of emotion, such as 'be angrier'. An active direction informed by such a shared vocabulary might be

better rendered as 'you should beat those words more forcefully' or 'strike harder' coming from a Chekhovian background or 'kick more powerfully' from Laban. This was my approach to direction in the workshop series, utilizing the vocabulary of the Six Energies, e.g., asking a performer to 'swing' with further intensity instead of 'be happier.' I found the energies to offer a potential psychophysical shorthand by linking action to emotional experience because each of the Six Energies is itself an action, e.g., 'swinging' is also, 'to swing'; but corresponds to emotional resonance, and so I had six reliable 'actions' to categorize any directorial need for scene work.

Besides training with the 'Six Energies' with Papillion, I received similar training under different instructors, including the Laban Efforts under Keith Barlow<sup>22</sup> and Chekhov's 'archetypal actions' under David Jackson (Jackson, 2016), as a graduate student. Franc Chamberlain notes the similarities between the Laban Efforts and Chekhov's 'archetypal gestures':

These movements of opening and closing are among those Chekhov called 'archetypal gestures'; other ones that he describes are: thrusting, stretching, beating, throwing, lifting, holding, dragging, pushing, tossing, flowing, moulding, radiating and flying. To some extent, these archetypal gestures can be seen as analogous to the eight 'basic effort actions' identified by choreographer and dance educationalist Rudolf Laban, who was at Dartington during the same period as Chekhov. Laban's eight actions are: pressing, wringing, flicking, dabbing, slashing, gliding, thrusting and floating. Thrusting is the only one to appear in both lists, although... floating has its place in Chekhov's scheme (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 31).

Though all three approaches are potentially valuable, I found it practical to select only one of these practices, each in their way reducing all 'performance action' to a type of elemental action, given the time constraints of OP and my workshops. Given a longer time period, regardless of OP 'standards', I believe it would be efficacious

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<sup>22</sup> RBC Head Movement instructor (2014-2016)

for students to have multiple sources to draw from in building their personal practice. I chose Papillion's adaptation of King's dynamics in small part because it is a relatively obscure acting practice compared to the analogous work of Laban and Chekhov. On a subjective level, I found the idea of the Six Energies the most accessible and, given that I had the most experience with this technique relative to the others, I was most comfortable teaching others the practice in the shortened rehearsal time.

Essentially, the Six Energies were the shared language of rehearsal. All discussions of scene work were carried out in terms of action, and 'emotional' expression was reinterpreted as activating/embodying a type of energy. Directing then becomes a matter of adjusting relative levels of intensity and focusing the overall action for audience clarity.

I also find music useful in helping students to experience a particular quality, with the Six Energies seeming to me to be the most directly analogous to musical quality among the practices with which I have experimented. Hearing the musical quality of a given piece helps to reinforce the psychophysical experience of the energy/movement quality, i.e., that emotion has a dynamic physical component, and the inherent suggestion of action in the idea of the energies themselves. Happiness is a state, but swinging is an action, and it is an action that both evokes and can produce the experience of happiness. For this reason, I determined that the Six Energies would complement a system in which Tempo-Rhythm and verse plays such a vital role, doubtless a quality that derives from its background in Dance Theory. They practice embodiment of the energies that create emotion while being acted upon through music and prompting by those energies. As they do, they learn to

*move with* and *to be moved by* Tempo-Rhythm, as in the 5:3:A video example above.

The Six Energies also provides a method of examining the physicality of emotions as potentially equal with one another in terms of intensity, power, and expression. While the idea of ‘fury’ may seem more powerful than ‘despair’, the idea of percussive energy that might be expressed as anger is potentially equal to that expressed by collapsing energy. Sadness, despondency, etc. can seem weak, languid, depressed, but the energy of collapse can be immensely powerful, like the collapse of a building or a star. It is an important distinction to make, that the students are not embodying emotional levels but attempting to embody energy qualities at varying levels.

Figure 13 [W1: 20/10/18] [Swinging](#)

Figure 14 [W1: 20/10/18] [Vibratory](#)

Figure 15 [W1: 20/10/18] [Percussive](#)

Figure 16 [W1: 20/10/18] [Collapsed](#)

Figure 17 [W1: 20/10/18] [Sustained](#)

Figure 18 [W1: 20/10/18] [Suspended](#)

## 5:5 Renaissance Rehearsal

The idea of the so-called ‘Renaissance Rehearsal’ ultimately comes from practices originated at the ASC, which I first encountered at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival under director Kurt Toftland [ (Shakespeare, 2006) (2007)]; Toftland, a former guest-director at the ASC, referred to them as his source for the practice. It is practically very simple: before proper scene work has begun, the director leaves the actors to rehearse alone for several hours with the collective Task of improvising the

entire play. Following the Renaissance Rehearsal is a Renaissance Rehearsal Run or 'Ren-Run' where the cast will then present this Renaissance Rehearsal in a 'run' of the entire show, which effectively *begins* the 'traditional' rehearsal process of scene work, blocking, etc. Just as Stanislavski's theories on Tempo-Rhythm and breath provide a link between psychophysical performance practice and Shakespearean performance, there is an essential similarity in the Renaissance Rehearsal process of OP Shakespeare and Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions rehearsal process:

The main purpose of the Method of Physical Actions was for actors to find the precise and logical sequence of actions that would enable their character to achieve their 'tasks.' The technique for doing this was in fact very simple... 'Without any reading, without any conferences on the play, the actors are asked to come to a rehearsal of it' (Merlin, 2003, p. 30).

The Renaissance Run differs significantly in detail, however. Most importantly, Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions takes, at times, extreme liberties with the text. Merlin notes that he 'even went as far as to forbid the deliberate memorising of the playwright's text' (Merlin, 2003, p. 31), but the Ren-Run is always *on the text*. Without having received any direction or blocking from an 'authority', i.e., the director, the cast must improvise the entire play using the text as lodestone.

Between the Ren-Run and the performance presentation is the rehearsal, with the obvious benefit of beginning with an entire show's framework laid out as a relative whole piece, beginning with everything. What the Ren-Run process and the Method of Physical Actions share is the discovery of the action by the play *through* the performance of the play. The time for these Renaissance Rehearsals is purposefully truncated, like many OP techniques, attempting to tease something of the immediacy and energy of the original Renaissance Rehearsal period through artificial truncation

in contemporary practice. Toftland warned actors against discussion during the Renaissance Rehearsal because there simply was no time, and instead to keep things on their 'feet', to discover simply by saying the lines and allowing them to lead the actor wherever they will. Because of this necessity for discoveries to be made through action, and the brisk pace which disallows for any discussion, this exercise situationally encourages the primacy of action.

### 5:5:A improvising Shakespeare

In keeping with the overall goal of the toolkit to aid in approaching the overall rehearsal processes psychophysically, textual analysis of Shakespeare, including memorization of lines and explorations of verse structure, should as much as possible be approached through physical action. The goal of minimizing the tablework is not to minimize the role of textual fluency, only to incorporate such work into physical work wherever possible; as Stanislavski said, 'the best way to analyse a play is to take action (*deistvovat*) in the given circumstances' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 195).

The importance of *acting* Shakespeare to understand Shakespeare's text is the purpose of all physicalizing exercises discussed earlier in the chapter. They provide an opportunity to explore the text on the micro level, exploring the effect of individual words and punctuation through action. The Renaissance Rehearsal process, instead, presents an opportunity for the performer to explore the relative tidal movement of an entire work of Shakespeare, and to experience the flow of that work move around them all at once. I say 'tidal movement,' because this is in itself a physical metaphor that attunes the student to the energetic flow of the narrative and

provides a way of thinking about the 'whole' in terms of energetics. The requirements of Shakespeare's text, the action called upon by the text itself, carries its own force, with the collective actions of all performers pushing forward while that very drive pulls those performers along in its wake. This process could be thought of as a physical metaphor that attunes the student to the greater rhythm of the metanarrative, i.e., the entire play, providing yet another means whereby the play might be understood in terms of energetics. As with other aspects of this toolkit, the Ren-Run is a versatile tool. It functions as a psychophysical means of textual analysis, but also as a means of improvisation.

This thesis derives from a Stanislavskian tradition of psychophysical practice, and in the Stanislavskian psychophysical tradition, improvisation plays a crucial role; though he was not always heavily focused on improvisation within his work, it became increasingly important as with other aforementioned psychophysical factors in his later years (Frost, 2016, p. 8).

Stanislavski developed the rehearsal technique known as The Method of Physical Actions near the end of his life (Merlin, 2001, p. 4). Others, notably Maria Knebel (Merlin, 2007, p. 296), developed a second method, Active Analysis; in many ways just a further refinement of the former. These techniques were the culmination of Stanislavski's System into a psychophysical rehearsal process designed to cater to the needs of the bodymind interaction, integrating analysis with action (Merlin, 2001, pp. 4-5). As psychophysical methods, these techniques share a focus on accessing 'character through *experience*. In other words, by *getting up and doing it* through a process of improvisation' (p. 4). Active Analysis and the Method of Physical Actions remain closely related, with the former being largely an extension of the latter. Their

connection was strong enough to elicit debate as to whether there was a difference between them (Merlin, 2007, p. 196). What they most certainly had in common, was Stanislavski's emphasis on improvisation:

As far as Stanislavsky was concerned, the quickest and most powerful way of feeling the pulsating connection between your IMAGINATION and your body is to improvise: 'Student actors who have been trained in improvisations later find it easy to use their imaginative fancy on a play where this is needed.' This maxim was to influence Stanislavsky right up until his death, with the rehearsal process of the METHOD OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS and ACTIVE ANALYSIS focusing heavily on improvisation' (Merlin, 2007, p. 174).

According to historians Frost and Yarrow, 'improvisation was particularly important in working on structure, rhythm, atmosphere, and social context in Stanislavsky's last (posthumously performed) production *Tartuffe*' (Frost, 2016, p. 8). By Zarrilli's assessment:

... the optimal state of Merlin's psychophysical actor is helpfully described as one of "constant inner improvisation" a state in which the actor opens out to, acts within, and responds to the performative environment she inhabits in the moment (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 18).

Her 'optimal state' demonstrates the vital import of improvisation remains in contemporary Stanislavskian practice, largely stemming from the Method of Physical Actions. In this way, Merlin reflects her Moscow training where her tutors 'used little cerebral analysis of text in rehearsals; everything was discovered through improvisation' (Merlin, 2001, p. 6).

The Method of Physical actions can be applied to any section of text in three stages (Merlin, 2007, p. 195):

1. Identify the Task for the scene or section which you are exploring
2. Identify a 'score of physical actions' that includes a sequential list of all the small actions that must be carried out in order to achieve the proper task (e.g., lighting a cigar, sitting down, eating a pretzel, etc.)
3. Test the 'score of physical actions' through improvisation

The improvisations for the Method of Physical actions usually began with Silent Études, exercises in which scene partners worked out the objective for their improv-scene and communicated with each other in absolute silence (Merlin, 2007, p. 208). Stanislavski preferred to begin with silence, gradually adding in textual elements of the actual play to avoid actors becoming disconnected from the emotional quality of the words before the creative ground was properly prepared through psychophysical activity. From these principles, Active Analysis was refined into five essential stages:

1. Read Scene
2. Discuss Scene
3. Improvise Scene
4. Discuss Improvisation
5. Return to Script and Compare/Contrast Improv with Text (p.197)

Instead of improvising in silence, the improvisation of Active Analysis is with the actor's own words, *instead of* the actual text. Actors are free to bring in elements of text, even possibly bits of text from another scene in the play. As the rehearsal process progresses, the director guides the actors into coming closer to the actual text until gradually the entire play is learned.

This expedition into embodying Shakespeare psychophysically grows out of the Stanislavskian lineage, albeit less directly than practitioners like Bella Merlin. Merlin traveled to Russia as a student enrolling at Moscow's State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) (Merlin, 2001, p. 3). Her primary acting instructors there were Vladimir Ananyev, Katya Kamotskaya, and Albert Filozov, and it is through them that she was trained in Active Analysis. This was the final revision of Stanislavski's System to occur in his lifetime, though he passed before the first students of the process had graduated (p. 5).

My personal experience of Active Analysis comes from my MFA experience with David Jackson, then a teacher at the RBC who directed my cohort in a workshop production of *The Merchant of Venice* (2014). Jackson, like Merlin, had learned Active Analysis from Ananyev, Filozov, and Kamotskaya. Filozov, who was the primary teacher of Active Analysis to Merlin and Jackson, had trained under Mikhail Kedrov, who was Stanislavski's assistant director at the time of his death (Merlin, 2001, p. 7). That said, Kedrov was known to take a strictly 'scientific' view of Stanislavski's System, in accordance with Soviet Socialist ideals.

When I played the characters Gratiano and Tubal in *Merchant of Venice* we began far from the text, not even cast in our roles, playing improv games, including wordless games not unlike the Silent Études. Once we were cast, we soon began rehearsing properly under Active Analysis as applied through Jackson's direction.

In some ways, I preferred the silent improvisations more than later when we were improvising scenes from *Merchant* in our own words. While I rightfully felt creatively free in the improvisations, once I needed to bring the character into the text, I felt constrained and lost. I had discovered in the improvisations a Gratiano as 'frat guy', with bold choices, at one point placing a chair on my head during a group improvisation scene. As Jackson had not cast the play yet, I was auditioning for the role, believing that I had discovered some essential element to the character in my games. Much if not all of this work had to be abandoned when I began actually working with the text, not just reading it. My superficial ideas were not necessarily incorrect, just entirely unhelpful and the loss of my own spirit of invention and energy was deeply frustrating. Towards the end of the process, Jackson related to me that it had taken considerable amount of time for the play to resettle, and I think this was

in part due to my needing to rediscover the play from the inside, not against my preconceived 'character choice'.

Though I did not know it at the time, I was experiencing a phenomenon already documented more famously by Peter Hall, coincidentally also from a production of *Merchant of Venice*. When infamous Method-actor Dustin Hoffman played Shylock as guest-artist with the RSC, he at first relied heavily on improvising each of his scenes as a method of reaching the 'inner-character,' per his training. Despite his obvious skill with improvisation, he was incredibly frustrated when attempting to embody the discoveries from those improvisations with the text, which I had also experienced. Hoffman remarked, 'You can't improvise this shit,' and Hall agreed, because with Shakespeare, 'first comes the form, and second comes the feeling' (Hall, 2003, p. 17). For this reason, I have avoided any improvisation scenario which would encourage paraphrasing, or otherwise distorting the form of Shakespeare's text. What the Renaissance Rehearsal presents is an improvisational exercise with very clearly defined limits, i.e., the text itself. How the text is played out is dictated only by the needs of the text and the 'ground rules' of OP.

In the process I followed through the workshop series, performers develop a score of actions, as with the Method of Physical Actions. Performers are encouraged to discuss after each tool or technique practiced, but welcome to do so as needed, relatively similar to Active Analysis. Through the Ren-Run, performers have an opportunity to improvise freely within the boundaries of the text, filling the role of improvisation in the Method of Physical Actions and Active Analysis. The role of Task is bound up in the action of the text, the score of actions is developed through those actions and the Character Sculpting work. The Character Sculpting process,

which continued throughout and alongside the scenework of the rehearsal process, allowed for improvisation to be practiced and then reintegrated back into scenework, again similar to Active Analysis. For comparison to these forebears, I present here a simplified rehearsal progression employed through the workshop series:

1. Embodiment exercises
  - a. Physicalizing the text
  - b. Preliminary Character Sculpting (animal work, intro to Imaginary Body)
  - c. Six Energy explorations
2. Read the script
3. The Ren-Run Process
4. Rehearsal
  - a. Scenework
  - b. Character Sculpting

#### 5:5:B developmental background

In part, this practice grew out of OP investigations into English Renaissance rehearsal conditions and experimentation with the theory that Elizabethan actors rehearsed much less and much more rapidly than is common of modern performers. Besides modern OP practitioners, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Ney, 2016, p. 17) (Whipday, Summer 2017, p. 292), Barton and the RSC performers of *Playing Shakespeare* likewise recognized the likelihood that Elizabethan performers worked under comparatively compressed rehearsal conditions. Lisa Harrow observes that ‘the Elizabethan actors had very little rehearsal, virtually none in our terms’ (RSC *Playing Shakespeare - The Two Traditions*, 1982) with actor Mike Gwilym reiterating the point that, given their demanding repertoire, Elizabethan performers lacked ‘the luxury of time that we have’ (Ibid).

According to historian Tiffany Stern:

Time had to be spared for the constant learning and relearning required of the actors- an actor might have to learn a new role every two weeks, while keeping thirty or forty others in his head. So the number of days given

over to preparing a new play in the professional theatre is a vexed issue (Stern, 2000, p. 54).

Theatre professor Martin White contends that while we ‘have little idea how, once parts were allotted, individual actors or casts prepared for performances, but rehearsal periods were generally short’ (White, 1998, p. 62). At the ASC, the idea of the Renaissance Rehearsal eventually grew into a three-month repertory season known as the Actors’ Renaissance Season. While I never participated in a Ren Run at the ASC, only at KSF; I did participate in the 2011 Actors’ Renaissance Season at the ASC. Theatre scholar Alison Lenhardt examined the ASC’s Renaissance Season in an article for the *Shakespeare Bulletin* (Lenhardt, 2012), citing conversations with four veteran performers of the ASC Ren-Seasons: Benjamin Curns, Allison Glenzer, Jeremy West, and Tyler Moss (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 450), all castmates of mine during the 2011 season. Lenhardt accurately describes the Ren Season:

...in which the actors further explore their company’s ties to early modern rehearsal and performance conventions. In the Ren Season, the actors stage the plays without the aid of a director; rehearse each play for a few days instead of a few weeks;<sup>1</sup> and select their own costumes and props (Lenhardt, 2012, pp. 449-450).

Shortly before my time with the company, the Ren Season expanded from a three to five play repertory season (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 451). By comparison, the ‘standard’ Summer-Fall reparatory system at the ASC is also five plays, but with the benefit of directors, choreographers, costumers, spread out across six months rather than three. Actors of the Ren Season are cast a few months before the season begins and are expected to arrive with their lines memorized, knowing that ‘rehearsal time during the Ren Season is truncated’ (p. 459). Lenhardt explains the process:

In the Ren Season, which expanded... from a repertory of three to a repertory of five plays, the actors schedule one reading of each play,

memorize their parts independently, and rehearse for as little as two and a half days (approximately 20 hours of rehearsal time...) and as long as two weeks (approximately 40 to 48...). Out of the five plays... at least two are by Shakespeare, and the season opens with one of these plays. Even when a play has a longer two-week rehearsal period, the actors note that this process takes place while they are performing in other plays, so even if they rehearse the fourth or fifth play an additional week, the amount of hours spent rehearsing the play is relatively low... (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 451).

Given the time constraints, there are necessarily rough edges to aspects of the Ren Season performances, with one critic observing, 'The performances feel sometimes like sporting events where even the players aren't quite sure what will happen next but are delighted with what comes along' (p. 459).

Despite being produced on a multi-million-dollar recreation of an historical playing space, plays in the Ren Season resemble what Peter Brook categorized as 'The Rough Theatre' (Brook, 1972, p. 73). For some audience members, this is very much the appeal. Andrea Stevens noted, in her review of the 2007 Actor's Ren Season, which included a preview of *The Duchess of Malfi*, arguing the 'visible rough edges didn't detract from the overall effect' but instead noting her excitement as an audience member 'watching an experiment still in progress (invited behind the curtain, so to speak)' (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 460).

The Ren-Run, then, is the short form of the practice of the Actor's Renaissance Season. Obviously, the Ren-Run on its own cannot possibly compare with the intensity or the complexity of an entire five-play repertoire, nor the exhilaration of performing before a live audience in such an immediate way. The 2011 *Comedy of Errors*, the first play in my Actors' Renaissance Season in which I played Angelo, was one of the most exhilarating and empowering moments of my life. The ASC only casts actors who have already completed a single season or more as a

company member of one of the two resident companies, the summer-fall company and/or the winter/tour company. I had just completed a summer-fall contract with the ASC and had a taste of what the Ren-Run would be like from my experiences with the KSF but comparing the two is like comparing match to a bonfire.

That said, given the relative lack of pressure during a Ren-Run placed in the first half of the rehearsal process, not immediately before an audience, there is possibly greater room for discovery and certainly greater room for creative failure. I encourage students to 'break rules' as much as they exist, but to remember what playing conditions will be placed upon them through OP, including the 'stage setup' of an improvised thrust. This is not to suggest that the full Renaissance Season is uncreative. On the contrary, my former castmate and veteran of many Renaissance Seasons, Benjamin Curns believes actors are more comfortable making drastic choices than in a 'director-produced show' (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 451). Jeremy West alternatively notes 'that a great deal can be accomplished in a short period,' describing the Renaissance Season as 'all about action' (p. 460), which suggests it is ideally suited to marry Stanislavski's primacy of action with the OP primacy of the text.

The potential benefits from this process, as a rehearsal technique or expanded into a full season, include:

1. rapid energetic pacing
2. promotes creativity on, not against, the text
3. discovering the necessary actions of the play through action
  - a. experiencing the 'tidal movement' of these forces working in conjunction as play

## 5:5:C The Mother of Invention

Action is primary with Stanislavski and the vocal embodiment of the text is the demesne of the voice & text field. Askew believes that further analysis is required to understand how these practices come together in the performance of verse:

The difficulty, then, is that if rigorous analysis of dramatic verse is left to experts in the 'voice and text department' who, in turn, leave the rigorous application of Stanislavskian principles to the teachers of acting, this leaves a gap in our understanding of how verse might make a specific contribution to action. It may well be that, in practice, actors, directors and teachers are bridging this gap but, if so, we lack a clear and consistent explanation of how they are doing it (Askew, 2016, p. 80).

In part, this arises from Askew attempting to address the psychological aspects of Stanislavski's work as applied to Shakespeare, arguing:

Stanislavskian approaches to Shakespeare rest on the assumption that it is both possible and desirable to treat Shakespearean characters as "substantive" agents, replete with psychological motivations and desires, and capable of intentional, goal-directed behaviour (Askew, 2017, p. 141).

This is certainly not the case with OP nor required when approaching Shakespeare psychophysically, not even coming from a Stanislavskian lineage but not entirely a contradiction to Askew, however, as he seems to follow the model of Michael St. Denis in 'accepting that some of Stanislavski's techniques may be unhelpful' (p. 142) in approaching Shakespeare's verse. He believes that what is called upon is the development of a 'coherent framework for integrating' (p. 146) the disciplines of Stanislavski and voice work in Shakespearean performance.

Askew's foray into creating this framework is what he describes as the Motion in Poetry Metaphor, drawn together from 'two metaphorical concepts that involve the sensorimotor structuring of subjective experience' (Askew, 2017, p. 147), both of which suit well an overall psychophysical approach to Shakespeare:

1. Verse rhythm is physical movement
2. Psychological action is physical action (Ibid)

Though I cannot speak for the efficacy of Askew's methodology, the work of his thesis is broadly philosophically aligned with this one through his investigations into exploring metric verse psychophysically. I am intrigued by Askew's Motion in Poetry while also looking for a more fundamental method of discovering the action of the verse, discovering the necessity of further actions by taking action onstage; in the Ren-Run process; in scenework; in performance; and elsewhere with the toolkit. In a sense, the idea of 'need' is its own technique for discovery. Within the constraints of the Ren-Run exercise, action is a necessity, and through discovering that need, performers discover how to fill that need.

This thesis is primarily written to fill the gap between word, thought, and action in performing Shakespeare's text, and therefore this project consequently begins filling the gap that Askew finds between voice practice and application of Stanislavskian principles to verse. In the previous chapter, I examined the marriage of Tempo-Rhythm and breath, from Stanislavskian tradition to the application of Shakespeare's verse, which I believe is the first step in understanding how text and action fit together. In part, however, I believe that action is motivated, in OP at least, by necessity. The text demands it. Living Thought, especially as Langham conceived it, but also as it is practically approached at the ASC, dictates that we move in conjunction with the words, even when that feels unnatural. Even if it *is* unnatural/non-realistic/theatrical. The actions taken by a character *as they describe those actions aloud* through their lines are not strange in the context of the stream-of-consciousness model that Living Thought encapsulates. Without adequate rehearsal time, without *any* rehearsal time involving prior scene work, the actors

must take action *by necessity*. All initial actions are discovered, not given. That action will be driven by textual shape. I discourage actors from directing one another during the Ren-Run, intending for Shakespeare alone to direct them.

While not much is written on the efficacy of discovery through the Ren-Run, due to the similarity of function and practice, we can glean some idea of the role of need-driven action by examining the Renaissance Season. As Lenhardt observes:

Ren Season productions do seem to generate more excitement for what might happen, both for actors and audience members; however, the rehearsal process is much more structured around what needs to happen in order to put each show on its feet in front of an audience (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 459)

With the 'absence of a conventional production team' the Renaissance Season ensemble must collaboratively manage what little rehearsal time is permitted (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 451). This OP approach appropriately reflects the spirit of Elizabethan performers whose companies had to 'work rapidly and in a disciplined way' (White, 1998, p. 63) to meet the demands of their repertoire. One of the most practical discoveries to come of the ASC's OP work is the discovery that 'the space in which they perform commands their choices in blocking different scenes' traffic patterns, because there are only so many places to be on stage' (Lenhardt, 2012, p. 463). From their work, especially in the Renaissance Season where directors cannot micromanage sightlines, open diagonal staging 'naturally' comes into being, and one of the few 'staging' directions that I offer before the Ren-Run process and throughout the rehearsal process was to 'watch their diagonals.' A thrust stage as both the Globe and Blackfriars' were known to be, calls for attention to all three sides of the audience.

## 5:6 Character Sculpting

Character Sculpting is a psychophysical process that I developed to help actors create playing scores that not only embody the text but the characters of that text. The Elizabethan practice of doubling is still popular in contemporary Shakespeare performances, OP and otherwise, and creating distinctive characters becomes more challenging the more roles are required. Rather than psychologically 'building a character', Character Sculpting creates a physical challenge of playing and shaping an imaginary and amorphous form over the student/performer's own body. The Character Sculpting process is a matter of shaping this imaginary 'amorphous body', sculpting, as with modelling clay, to new forms and shapes to inhabit. In the workshop series, Character Sculpting weds Michael Chekhov's Imaginary Body technique with basic theatrical animal work, which is then further refined and applied to the overall rehearsal process.

This tool expands the psychophysical obstacle course beyond the text. Obstacle, in this instance, should not be thought of as a blockage or impediment, but an energizing and activating challenge, as Stanislavski understood as we exert ourselves through a series of obstacles that we discover 'Task and the action to overcome it' (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 143).

### 5:6:A the artist's contribution

Psychophysical theatre practitioner and martial artist Daniel Mroz writes:

The director who allows the actor to simply stand and speak takes the fiction of Hamlet for granted and leaves unexamined every formal aspect of the composition except the semantic one, unwittingly removing the kinetic, visual and aural fields of expression upon which discursive communications rests (Mroz, 2011, p. 139).

I contend that 'the kinetic, visual and aural fields of expression' in OP are drawn from Elizabethan stagecraft via the text and staging conditions.

OP delves into just how much of the 'kinetic, visual and aural fields' of composition can be discovered from the text itself beyond simply the 'semantic' layer. As with the previous discussion of improvisation, improvising or otherwise working against the text is contrary to the performance philosophy of OP in general, but, as demonstrated, OP has few definitive lines, only commonalities of practices. As argued in Chapter 3, I believe that an overall psychophysical, rather than psychologically realistic, approach is more suitable to the theatrical material; but there is still work for the actor to do *beyond* the text. That need not conflict with OP so long as the work is moulded to suit the text and not the other way around.

That said, Character Sculpting addresses two needs, one being the actor's contribution to the performance and the other stemming from OP: doubling. As discussed in Chapter 2, the practice of doubling whereby one actor plays multiple roles within a single play was popular in Shakespeare's time (Grote, 2002) and it remains popular today, often a requirement in OP theatres. At the ASC we were allowed, even encouraged, to put on 'character voices' to help distinguish between characters when cast in a 'character-track' of numerous roles, in keeping with the popular entertainment approach to Shakespeare upon which OP theatre is modelled.

Much of the action of the text will be discovered through the text itself but Character Sculpting is about specificity in movement and refinement of character. Again, character is enactive, not static. There is not a psychological attitude that the performer is expected to exude, and any 'idea' of the character will always be subject

to alteration and adaptation, but an amorphous imaginary body to physically inhabit whilst attending to other textual needs.

As with the Six Energies, the animal work incorporated into Chekhov's Imaginary Body technique is not meant to be the definitive use of the principles of the amorphous body or any other aspect of character sculpting or this toolkit.

### 5:6:B Michael Chekhov's Imaginary Body

Character Sculpting is primarily an expansion of Michael Chekhov's Imaginary Body technique, which is where the Character Sculpting process begins. From Chekhov's perspective, the text is the author's work of art, not the actor's. The work of the actor was to discover and embody 'the psychological depths of the character' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 26) though he was not advocating for a psychoanalytic approach to acting. In fact, when discussing improvisation, he coached actors to let 'each successive moment of your improvisation be a psychological (not logical!) result of the moment preceding it' (p. 37). Chekhov's idea of non-logical psychological character depth is an expression of his intention that, within his technique, 'all exercises are psychophysical' (Michael Chekhov Canada, 2020), with 'outer physical action' awakening the inner, psychological, response' (Ibid). While he believed physical exercises were needed to overcome mind-body disharmony, he was very clear that his physical exercises were psychophysically motivated:

First and foremost is extreme sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses. This cannot be achieved by strictly physical exercises. The psychology itself must take part in such a development. The body of an actor must absorb psychological qualities, must be filled and permeated with them so that they will convert it gradually into a sensitive membrane, a kind of receiver and conveyor of the subtlest images, feelings, emotions and will impulses (Chekhov, 2003, p. 2).

The Character Sculpting process is intended to engage the performer's creative impulses through the physical task of shaping an imaginary form. There is a physical challenge towards embodying specific features, such as an animal's shape, that could arguably be performed objectively well or badly, but the physical challenge alone is unimportant. Even the quality of the physical challenge's execution is not necessarily important. What is most important to a technique like Character Sculpting, and in Chekhov's technique from which it is in part derived, is its potential as a source for inspiration.

Technique is meant to enable the Chekhovian-actor to transform, with transformation being 'what the actor's nature, consciously or sub-consciously longs for' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 77). His technique developed from his core appreciation for the actor's role in creation, and his ultimate goal of transformation offers particular insight into psychophysically-based character acting. For Chekhov, however, transformation went beyond just reciting the playwright's words while essentially 'being yourself' onstage. He felt that limiting an actor to the constraints of their own personality was a crime, 'making of [the actor] an enslaved laborer rather than an artist' (p. 27). He reminds us that no two characters are the same; their differences define them as characters and therefore individuals:

[Y]ou face the need to incorporate these characteristic features that make the difference between yourself and the character. How will you approach this task?

The shortest, most artistic (and amusing) approach is to find an imaginary body for your character (Chekhov, 2003, p. 78).

Again, with the brisk pacing of OP, this makes his imaginary body technique potentially valuable even without further refinement. In the case of doubling, it is helpful for each character to have a different imaginary body with which to shape

their performance score. Chekhov scholar Franc Chamberlain describes the imaginary body technique in practice:

... imagine the character's body outside of ourselves, in as much detail as possible, and then to step into it. We can wear the different body as if it were a different costume. We use our imagination to create an image of the character, paying particular attention to how the body of this character is different from our own. We then step into this imaginary body as we might a set of clothes. Chekhov reminds us how, in our daily life, a different set of clothes can change the way we feel, and this is not an uncommon feeling amongst actors. But he claims that putting on the character's body has a more profound impact on our psychology. Once we are 'dressed' in the imaginary body, we can begin to move and speak as the character (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 79).

I first experienced the imaginary body technique under David Jackson at the RBC through the course of a workshop introducing Michael Chekhov's Technique (Jackson, 2016). My description of the technique taken from my 2016 MFA thesis demonstrates how similar the technique remains to its original source:

Beginning with the imagination, one visualizes a mental version of the physical body of the character you wish to inhabit. I then imagined pursuing activity with that IB, moving it about the space in my mind. When the class was psychophysically warmed-up, we were instructed to step into our imaginary bodies, physically attempting to fit the IB over our own like as if trying to wear it like a set of clothes. We then began learning to walk and move with a new body inhabiting the same space as our original (Jannise, 2016, pp. 42-43).

Properly inhabiting an imaginary body is an act of constant interaction, because all aspects of the self are being affected by the imaginary second individual with whom the performer is 'sharing space.' In some ways the performer and the imaginary body merge, in some ways the imaginary body can exist as an independent field for the performer to inhabit. Chekhov believed the '*whole being, psychologically and physically, will be changed – I would not hesitate to say even possessed- by the character*' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 79) when the actor engaged with the Imaginary Body. In some ways, it feels the other way around, as if I am in possession of my character

because the process involves ‘fitting’ the imaginary body over the real one. The inhabitation, then, is as literal as it can be and so potentially valuable for inverting the sensation of disembodiment that can come from the Actor’s Mind-Body Problem. By focusing on the action of literally operating a second body, albeit an imaginary one, the actor exists more within their own body.

When coaching students through the Imaginary Body technique, I begin with the students’ idea of the character from limited experience with the text, perhaps no more than a single read-through. However they imagine this character initially, I warn them that this will change as they grow more familiar with the text and we proceed deeper into the rehearsal process, but, however they imagine the character *initially* is how this imaginary body begins. My goal is to broaden the students’ imagination here, not limit it; I suggest the Imaginary Body may be of a different gender, different height, different weight, etc. I guide the students through imagining the Imaginary Body of this character as their own mirror images and then, when they are ready, to psychically ‘remove the bones’, all of the inner ‘stuff’ of that character body, letting it fall to the ground like a pile of laundry. From there, I demonstrate how to fit the imaginary body over my own, beginning, as with a pair of trousers, one leg at a time, gradually pulling the body over the shoulders and setting a new head atop my own.

From there, I coach the students to experience the space in their imaginary bodies, noting how the body fits in some places, resists in others, encouraging them to note differences in the movement, experience, and feeling of the body from their own. Through the course of rehearsal in each workshop, this process is repeated to ensure student performers have a chance to explore an imaginary body for each role

cast. At first, I practice removing the imaginary body very carefully, even suggesting that students store their imaginary bodies in a 'psychic wardrobe' where it will remain as they left it until they need it again.

Figure 19 [W1: 20/10/18] [Imaginary Body 1](#)

Figure 20 [W2: 26/6/19] [Imaginary Body 2](#)

Figure 21 [W5: 21/7/20] [Imaginary Body 3](#)

As the rehearsal process continues, when we return to the imaginary bodies, I ask students to note the differences in fit, to think of any changes, how aspects of the Imaginary Body might be looser, tighter, more or less comfortable, etc. As Chamberlain reminds us, 'There are limits to how much difference we can manage, but it's fun to explore those limits to find out where they are' (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 79). Chekhov tells us that when performing characters, 'It is always you plus somebody else' (Chekhov, 2003, p. 137). With the imaginary body I think that 'somebody else' is NOT the Imaginary Body, but the new 'somebody' that comes into being through enactment of the performer's body engaging with the Imaginary Body technique that can be perceived by others. The performer's body remains the performer's body, but that body engaged in the act of inhabiting the imaginary body is transformed into the character, not as a static persona, but a fluid and continuous experiential field of the type described by Zarrilli:

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

The performance score of actors in the workshop can be found through the inhabitation of this 'experiential field' through character sculpting and other techniques of this toolkit then applied to the action mined from the text.

The process of changing in and out of the body becomes itself more practiced and fluid. Eventually it will become necessary to dispense with the fitting altogether, for the actor to simply transform in the moment onstage. After the first workshop, I found that more work was useful in practicing these changes and made later 'quick change' exercises part of the rehearsal process, something Chamberlain suggests:

One thing to explore is stepping in and out of the imaginary body until you can do it with ease— something which is especially useful if you're playing more than one character in a performance and need to make quick shifts. From Chekhov's perspective, we need to take care that our representation of the character isn't superficial, so we have to continue to develop our sense of the character's feelings and will. One way of doing this is just to practise with the imaginary body, becoming more and more at home in it and allowing thoughts and feelings to emerge. This should all be done with a sense of ease (Chamberlain, 2019, p. 79).

By allowing 'thoughts and feelings to emerge', the performer is receiving character and performance information by means of the imaginary body technique, characterization through a psychophysical process. According to Zarrilli, 'inhabiting a score gives rise to associations of varying intensity' (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 118).

*Figure 22 [W1: 20/10/18] [Removing Body 1](#)*

### 5:5:C The Amorphous Body

Animal work was the focus of an entire term of organic movement at the RBC under Papillion during my MFA. Papillion favoured an intense extended embodiment project in which students were assigned an animal and expected to thoroughly research that animal, embodying characteristics as literally as our physiology would allow. The final exam was a two-part practical, the first part of which was roughly

twenty minutes of continual inhabitation as the animal in question. We could take small breaks within that time as the animal would take a break or demonstrably rest. When the time was finally called, a collective groan filled the room and we all dropped to the floor, drenched in sweat.

When guest director George Scott directed my cohort in the Georgian comedy *The Rivals*, he used animal work as an aspect of his directorial perspective, but he did not assign animals, instead tasking the performers with choosing animals for their characters. The most intense form of the animal work we practiced over the course of the rehearsal for the *Rivals* was about five minutes long because Scott himself described animal work as 'brutal.' Judging from the organic movement final, I concur that it can be, and it is intensely physical, but Scott wisely advised the cast to push ourselves only so far as was sustainable, a subjective level for every actor.

By my academic marks and instructor feedback, my performance as Bob Acres in the *Rivals* was my most successful across my MFA graduate program in acting. I ascribe this, in part, to the value I found in engaging with animal work regarding the character. The animal I chose for Acres, a country bumpkin 'putting on airs,' was that of a Clydesdale, a breed of draught horse. What I found with the animal work was that overall physical movement was altered by this new experiential field, and it guided the specificity of those moments with a general quality of 'human draught horse.'

I asked the students to choose an animal for at least one of the characters they are playing in the *Midsummer* workshops, and before applying that animal work to character, I guide students through exploring the 'raw animal'. In these exercises, I

asked the students to exert themselves only to the point of sustainability, suggesting they adjust to their own comfort levels beyond any other suggestion I might offer. Papillion used various exercises to help us explore animal at varying levels and I found this useful too with the animal workshop I implemented in the practical research.

I asked the students from a relative neutral to begin rolling down to the ground very methodically and slowly. As they rolled to the ground, they became more animal by percentages, and I suggest ideas of scales, feathers, and other changes in physiology that might influence their psychophysical experience of the exercise as they descend. When reaching the floor they were coached to be as near to 100% animal as they can imagine/sustain. After a few minutes exploring the animal body, not long considering how exerting such exercises can be, I guided the students through the opposite, returning to 'human shape' by rolling up from the ground and humanizing incrementally.

*Figure 23 [W1: 26/10/18] [Animal Work 1](#)*

*Figure 24 [W2: 23/6/19] [Animal Work 2](#)*

*Figure 25 [W4: 23/1/20] [Animal Work 3](#)*

I offer the students a set of animal behaviours to examine when researching their animals that might be useful in considering with regards to any actions or Tasks their corresponding roles require. While Papillion did not provide a definitive list of behaviours, the behaviours I suggest are in part derived from her commentary during classroom exercises and my own assessment. How these behaviours are expressed will depend upon the animal and the performer, and these actions will be further abstracted when applied to text-based action. Behaviours:

- Hunting/Foraging (looking for food)
- Playing
- Fighting
- Grooming
- Courting
- Resting

The animal work is not incorporated directly into the performance but blended into the Imaginary Body. How much relative animal begins with the actor's own tastes and vision, but as the director, in this regard I have a shared vocabulary with the performers, just as with the Six Energies, to adjust per the needs of the play. In some cases, as with the fairies of *Midsummer* or Nick Bottom after he has been partially transformed into an ass, it may be preferable for performers to retain more inhuman qualities from the animal work into the Imaginary Body. At first, the animal work must be explored and experienced atop the Imaginary Body work, but soon the animal work is incorporated into the Imaginary Body of the actor in question. I began to call this the Amorphous Body to distinguish from the strictly Chekhovian work.

Figure 26 [W1: 28/10/18] [Amorphous Body 1](#)

Figure 27 [W2: 27/6/19] [Amorphous Body 2](#)

Figure 28 [W4: 2/6/20] [Amorphous Body 3](#)

Through the progression discussed above, student/performers begin the process towards performance and, ideally, toward Living Thought, with Embodiment exercises. Physicalizing the text exercises teach performers to connect physical action and shape to the text, and in so doing, physically engage with the text for deeper understanding of it and its inherent textures, rhythms, and verse form. The Character Sculpting process, too, begins with initial work done mimicking/inhabiting animal shapes and experimenting with the Imaginary Body of their characters. In these early stages, performers may only have a vague notion of who their characters

are, e.g., Titania or Puck; but the Amorphous Body is malleable to suit further changes throughout the process. In these early stages, before the Ren-Run, students also explore physicalizing and inhabiting the Six Energies of Feeling with music corresponding to the energy or energies being shaped and channeled.

The introductory period of rehearsal cannot end until after the cast and facilitator have read the script together. During this time as teacher/director, I attempted to answer any questions or clarify anything about the text as requested from the cast. Once the read-thru had been completed, the Ren-Run process began soon after, and then, without the director present; allowing for free, bold, and uninhibited choices supported by knowledge of the text. Once that process was completed, as facilitator of textual clarity, for the actors and the audience, I directed the scenework process away from any deviations to the text unsuitable for OP back within those boundaries. Throughout the scenework process as practiced in the workshops, we would return to Character Sculpting, integrating animal and Imaginary Bodies to create an interactive 'shape' for each role, practicing each role in turn, and then switching between character bodies and the inhabitation of different forms. The Six Energies were sometimes incorporated into character work as physical inhabitation exercises, and the Six Energies further served as an active vocabulary between actors and director throughout the scenework process. The workshops culminated as designed with final presentations in which Living Thought might be achieved before an audience.

In the following chapter, I examine workshop footage, principally from the Ren-Runs and final presentations, for evidence of Living Thought, and an examination of that evidence for a more nuanced understanding of it as a performance achievement.

## Chapter 6: Living Thought in practice

### 6:1 Living Thought, observed

The two most significant sources for Living Thought for this thesis are the American Shakespeare Center in Virginia and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario. As previously mentioned, the ASC defined Living Thought as an aspect of their house style and philosophy, demanding actors find ways to ‘think and react with and ON’ the line (2009). For the ASC, Living Thought encapsulates the demand to be ‘on the line’ in performance, which grew from the ASC growth as a major theatre working in the field of OP.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Michael Langham of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival believed that it was a mistake to view Shakespeare’s words as literature, instead Langham called it Living Thought, arguing that ‘the Works of Shakespeare comprise the greatest record we have of subconscious thought’ (Stageside Shorts, 2011) and it was this interpretation that defined his approach to Shakespeare, passing this perspective on to other Shakespearean luminaries linked to the festival, notably the aforementioned director Des McAnuff and the celebrated actor Christopher Plummer. As it was used by Langham and his artistic collaborators at the Stratford Festival, Living Thought was essentially a description, but one still guiding the overall approach to complete unity of the ‘thought, the word, and the emotion’ (Ibid) that McAnuff describes as the ideal. To these Stratford Festival practitioners, Shakespeare’s words were written as if they were the verbatim thought processes of their characters enacted in performance. Those characters think and act simultaneously because they make no distinction between their inner impulses, their

'inner monologues', and the external expression of them. As noted by practitioners and scholars including Linklater (1993, p. 6), Zarrilli (2009, p. 19), and Martin (1991, p. 36), the Elizabethan outlook was psychophysical. Shakespeare's performance text embodies that Elizabethan psychophysicalism, with words spoken, actions taken, emotional responses, and thought processes all happening at once onstage. Living Thought then, is even more clearly understandable as *embodied* thought.

These perspectives share the principle of unity between word, thought, and action as primary in Shakespearean performance. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that the link between the verse through Tempo-Rhythm and breath in Shakespeare represents embedded stage direction, prompting performers' own energy through rhythm and breathing patterns. The toolkit described in Chapter 5 is constructed to assist the director/performer towards achieving Living Thought in performance. Living Thought is the ideal of the unities in performance of Shakespeare and that ideal unity, in turn, presents thought embodied in performance. To research Living Thought in practice, I considered those performances I have seen at the ASC which seemed to best exemplify it; further, through correspondence with past and present company members, I have refined and extended that definition and my own understanding of the term and how it might be identified and achieved in practice. Specifically, I asked, what does Living Thought present as? Are there qualities that make a performance immediately recognizable not as good or bad, but Living Thought? What criteria distinguish Living Thought from other standards by which a performance might be evaluated?

Kelley McKinnon's extensive experience with the ASC and their OP conditions includes three touring seasons as an actor for the ASC, performing in *Much Ado*

*About Nothing, Macbeth, and As You Like It*, amongst others, as well as eight years directing experience with American Globe in Manhattan, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and the *Comedy of Errors*. Besides her acting experience with the company, McKinnon has also directed *Love's Labour's Lost* (2010) for the ASC (ASC, 2021). For McKinnon, performing on the line was a product of her training in First Folio technique under John Basil (McKinnon, 2021). She describes the experience as 'all text-based, it emphasized acting on the lines and not between them' (Ibid).

McKinnon's approach to Living Thought, 'performing on the line,' is derived from practices closely aligned with OP beyond the ASC house style. Apropos of the First Folio technique, Charles Ney associates it with those Shakespearean directors he classifies as Language & Text Directors, like Kate Buckley (Ney, 2016, p. 30). Buckley describes the First Folio as a lodestone similar to McAnuff's Living Thought, claiming the 'First Folio technique 'has moulded everything about my work with text' (p. 31). Recall from Chapter 2 that Ney believes that the Language & Text directors like Buckley and Tina Packer are closely aligned philosophically with OP directors like Jim Warren and Ralph Alan Cohen. Buckley describes the First Folio technique as used in her own practice:

... I start with that text as my foundation, then I look at other editions and dramaturgical research. I started as a folio purist. It's the way that Shakespeare came alive for me as a young actor... I have become less stringent about the technique, but I am more rigorous about what I call service to the playwright. Using the First Folio as my basic manual has been an important tool (Ney, 2016, p. 62).

Adherents to Folio Technique, as with Buckley, hold not just Shakespeare's text, but the First Folio specifically, in special reverence. Most importantly, Language & Text directors and OP directors both value the text above all in any Shakespeare

production, but OP directors are more restricted by other staging conditions, e.g., modern technology, while the First Folio is important but not necessarily centric to OP. Besides McKinnon, another OP practitioner with significant directorial experience is Jim Warren, who, also like McKinnon, began as an actor. He co-founded and served as inaugural artistic director for the ASC and one of its principal directors for many years. Warren has greatly influenced how Living Thought is understood by performers and defined in practice. He explains:

Acting on the line (employing living thought) is a big piece of activating the full power of Shakespeare's language. Living thought combined with hard-core examination of rhythm and meaning allow actors to inhabit the heightened language in ways that feel "truthful," dynamic, and "real" (Warren, 2021).

The toolkit is designed to facilitate that 'hard-core examination of rhythm and meaning' in the text to develop a performance towards Living Thought.

Like Buckley with Folio Technique, or McAnuff and Langham with Living Thought, Warren identifies Living Thought, often referred to simply as 'acting on the line', as a focal point encapsulating the entirety of approaching Shakespeare as a performance text. He then intrinsically ties the ideas of rhythm to the inhabitation of 'the heightened language,' which I have addressed in the toolkit as physical inhabitation exercises and techniques, e.g., physicalizing the text, Character Sculpting, the Six Energies, using physical action and activity to express abstract and/or imaginary concepts, etc. As we have seen, physicalizing the text trains the performer to inhabit the shape of the text by means of physical action and Character Sculpting train performers exercises to inhabit an imaginary but psychophysically reactive form. These were interwoven with 'energy work' during the rehearsal process, the form of which is practice embodying archetypal dynamic qualities at various dynamic

levels; and the Ren-Run process, which I learned by experience with the ASC<sup>23</sup> and the KSF<sup>24</sup>. The Ren-Run process presents an opportunity to improvise within the text, which almost demands the inhabitation of the text as the only safe route, all else being unknown.

Warren also here binds seemingly contradictory concepts together, the heightened language of Shakespeare (i.e., non-realistic, theatrical) and how the inhabitation of that language by performers can still ‘feel “truthful;” dynamic, and “real”’ (Warren, 2021). The sense of verisimilitude experienced by the audience can be a reaction to an overtly theatrical performance if the experience communicated by the performers imbues the work with real vitality, as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to Stanislavski’s sense of theatrical ‘truth’. Warren here reiterates the point:

When the writing is this sharp and clear and crisp (and often witty), part of the magic is finding the rhythms – and surfing the verse in Shakespeare – that allows the magic of writing to breathe, to come alive (Warren, 2021).

Shakespeare’s heightened language conveys a sense of truth through the vitality of the performance, and the embedded rhythms of the verse. The Living Thought toolkit is shaped to channel the ‘form and pressure<sup>25</sup>’ of Shakespeare’s text into the embodied energy of the performance with special respect given to the structure and shape of the language, primarily verse, given its prevalence in Shakespeare’s canon.

Another key point in Warren’s concept of Living Thought is the emphasis on speed.

Warren describes Living Thought in action with relatively contemporary examples, citing works known for rapid heightened language:

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<sup>23</sup> I took part in the similar Ren-Season at the ASC, but we did not use the Ren-Run during the regular season. I had experienced the Ren-Run at KSF.

<sup>24</sup> Kurt Toftland learned of the Ren-Run from the ASC, where he had worked as a guest director before employing it as a rehearsal tool at the KSF

<sup>25</sup> *Hamlet*, Act 3: Scene 2

I believe all of the early modern English playwrights wrote dialogue-driven plays. The more modern equivalents are the Howard Hawks movies *His Girl Friday* and *Bringing Up Baby* all the way up to Aaron Sorkin's *Sports Night* and *The West Wing* (Warren, 2021).

For Warren, these contemporary works are 'dialogue-driven' by writers whose dialogue energized and defined their respective works. These texts, like Shakespeare, he argues, were written to be performed as Living Thought. Warren offers them as examples of Living Thought performed in modern vernacular as a basis for comparison to how Living Thought might present in a Shakespearean performance noting the importance of a speedy pace with Living Thought:

The antithesis of this approach is delivering lines with unnecessary pauses. We're taught in famous actor school not to talk until you feel the NEED to talk. I think Shakespeare wrote for continual dialogue: keep talking, keep picking up your cues until you feel the overwhelming need to STOP talking for some huge reason.

With Shakespeare, the results are that the lines sound and feel more truthful. The scenes crackle with an immediacy and an energy that dissipate when actors pause a bunch. The greatness of the writing cannot be unlocked with laborious delivery (2021).

As discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, any relative space found in Shakespeare's text, whether a full-stop or the breathing space at the end of the line, is analogous to a rest in music, and like a rest, these spaces must be used to carry the energy of the preceding text, reenergize for the next text, or even amplify the energy of a text; when prolonged, these spaces become sinkholes. In contrast to plodding delivery, Warren observes those performing 'on the text' as particularly dynamic:

Actors employing living thought (along with the other tablework techniques I used at the ASC) usually appear to be more nimble and energized to audiences. Actors making the most of living thought help the audience hear the language BETTER than those who break the rhythm/flow with ponderous pauses (Warren, 2021).

Warren's description affirms many of my own descriptions of the psychophysical process of embodying Living Thought. He identifies the inhabitation of rhythm paired

with meaning as the path towards dynamism and a sense of verisimilitude through vitality. Shakespeare's truth is a heightened truth with unrealistic dialogue performed by over-articulate people, but nonetheless comes alive as theatrical truth when the language is nimbly and articulately performed at pace. Previously I likened performing Shakespeare's text to navigating raging rapids or riding a horse at speed; similarly, Warren says, 'Actors driving the high-performance vehicle of living thought are able to help the audience who thought they didn't get/like/understand Shakespeare think/say: who did the translation?' (Warren, 2021). While Warren asks this question rhetorically, there is an answer: the performance *is* the translation. A performance of Living Thought is driven by the text but expressed through and by the performer. OP direction, as discussed in Chapter 2, is not about style, interpretation, or vision but clarity. The director is hoping to facilitate the actor's clear channelling of the text, and if that is done well, the performance can overcome the audience's difficulty in understanding Shakespeare's antiquated language and heightened poetic form.

## 6:2 Living Thought, embodied

### 6:2:A on the line

From my experience, some of the best exemplifiers of Living Thought during my stint with the company were Rene Thornton, Jr., Sarah Fallon, and Benjamin Curns, notably they played Othello, Desdemona, and Iago respectively during my first contract with the ASC (Minton, 2010). As with McKinnon, their facility with Living Thought comes from a similar emphasis on performing 'on the line' coming from their mutual training as graduates of the Professional Theatre Training Program at the

University of Delaware, a course which emphasizes classical training and texts.

Sarah Fallon reports:

It was part of my grad school training<sup>26</sup> before I got the ASC, and I am a firm believer in [being on the line]. I think that Rene [Thornton] and John [Harrell]<sup>27</sup> (usually) did this very well. Always able to act on the line, rather than between it, and keep the flow of thoughts moving. It's something I always strived to do in my work. The language is so juicy, and if you suck all the marrow from it as you are speaking the lines there is usually little need to do much else in between (Fallon, 2021).

The PTTP is an MFA course with emphasis on classical training and performance texts. Years before I worked at the ASC, I had learned about the Delaware program and the ASC from Kurt Toftland of the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival. Toftland, incidentally, had directed Fallon as a guest director at the ASC, where he encountered and was impressed by the quality of the overall company's acting and especially impressed with the work of Delaware graduates. Fallon is a veteran of many seasons, having played more than 90 roles in 68 productions, including having played Queen Margaret across four Ren-Seasons in *Henry VI: Parts 1-3* and *Richard III*. Her description of working with Living Thought strongly reflects her background in OP. Fallon and Thornton, as mentioned, come from the same training program which instilled a disciplined view of acting from the text:

As far as my grad school training went, we worked almost exclusively on the classics. Especially with Shakespeare, much emphasis was placed on honoring the verse and using the tools Shakespeare gave us. He tells you when to pause within a speech, because the meter is laid out for you. Picking up cues and moving the text along, whilst finding vocal variety and variations in phrasing ON the lines instead of between them was something we worked a lot on. Pauses had to be earned. Adding extra noises, etc. to the lines was not acceptable... I felt all those tools from grad school were reinforced at the ASC and the principles were generally the same (Fallon, 2021).

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<sup>26</sup> Not the term 'Living Thought' which is not in general use, but the approximate principle of being 'on the text'

<sup>27</sup> John Harrell, actor and Acting Manager of the ASC

That said, the actors mentioned were especially good at balancing the textual needs of Shakespearean performance with energetic performance and did so at consistently high levels of virtuosic skill. Performances of embodied Living Thought are quick, fluid, reactive, momentous (literally conveying the sense of momentum), and textually supported without losing a sense of spontaneity and play. Thornton's Othello (Minton, 2010) is especially memorable to me for the balance of weightiness and control with energy and passion without ever abandoning the line.

Already an accomplished ASC company member by the time of my stint with the company, playing Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the future Richard III in *Henry VI: Part 3*, Benjamin Curns had a very different style than the classical training in evidence with Fallon and Thornton's performances. Curns has now played Richard in *Henry VI:2-3* and *Richard III* across three consecutive ASC Actors' Renaissance Seasons. In a recent online reading of blank verse with Curns, he continued to exhibit those principles of Living Thought that I associated with him as a performer, even stifled by the necessities of conference software. I asked him if there was any quantifiable quality, he could identify in an actor performing 'on the text'. He explained:

Well in the most simple terms, it is faster; it keeps the performance from becoming indulgent in the use of pauses. I have found that it is observably useful in delivery of soliloquy: people like Hamlet, Macbeth, Brutus, Juliet, Cleopatra frequently turn on a dime and I think the handbook is saying, we don't need pauses before each of these transitions. In my own teaching, I have found that putting emphasis on "turn" words like "but", "yet", "however", even "and" keeps the speech moving briskly and has the effect of expanding the character's intelligence, speed of thought, and curiosity (Curns, 2021).

Curns' emphasis on 'turn' words is very similar to my own emphasis on conjunctions as 'trampoline words' as discussed in Chapter 5. These words are, as the exercise

was intended to express, energizing. Curns also notes the qualities that break the sense of Living Thought, specifically, significant pauses:

It's kind of the opposite of film acting which loves silent moments (which are seldom silent but filled with music). In scene work onstage at ASC, long pauses invite a response. In the Ren season, they are dangerous in that they fool people into thinking it is their line! (Curns, 2021)

Based on these descriptions, Living Thought can be identified as a vibrant and embodied performance in which creativity works within, on, and around the text while straying from it entirely the least and moving with tight and rapid pacing throughout.

### 6:2:B and in the body

Shakespeare has very specific words and, with his verse, a very specific form, and while an actor can be psychophysically fluent generally, their embodiment can be misaligned from the shape of the text or even intentionally distorting it. A performer with strong physical engagement and inhabited action must also keep the support of the text to achieve Living Thought. The line between Living Thought and embodied performance is most clear at the point of textual fluency. In a *Performance Research* article, psychologist Etzel Cardeña and Jane Beard identify such integration as essential to 'fully realized performance' (Cardeña, 1996, p. 34) which 'involves the organic integration of experience, physiology, cognition and behavior, whereas less realized acting may miss an element or lack proper harmony among various somatic and psychological components' (Ibid). When examining a performance, they note of certain unrealized performances that 'we may recognize that the tone, the posture, or some other feature is absent or not quite in synchrony with the rest of the actor's behaviours' (Ibid). Their description here of synchronization is useful in describing the seamless integration that Living Thought ideally represents. The Living Thought

toolkit, therefore, is built to cultivate a sense of embodiment in conjunction with textual work to align organically throughout the rehearsal process.

Through Shakespeare's wordcraft, he embeds stagecraft, action prompts, rhythm, flow, and he most often does so diegetically, without overt stage directions, but using the structure and vocabulary of the lines themselves. When an actor is tasked with being 'on the line,' they are tasked with much more, for they must internalize the rhythm and flow of the text, the breath of the verse structure, the action and the drama of the line meanings, and they must simultaneously externalize this experience for the audience. Being 'on the line', synonymous with embodying Living Thought, is, in sum, shorthand for bringing these textual elements together in performance in a wholly synchronized way.

In seeking this multifold unity, I have drawn heavily on psychophysical practices which seek comparable integration and used that understanding to build and implement a toolkit of psychophysical exercises that bring the physical, textual, imaginary, and rhythmic into conjunction. What I have done with the toolkit is an attempt to differentiate certain components of Living Thought and certain needs for OP performance, uniting them through the progression described in Chapter 3 in each of the workshops. Per the design of this progression, my intention is for student/performers to engage in progressive embodiment exercises alongside, in conjunction with, or also as work in textual fluency.

While different techniques within the toolkit are meant to meet different needs of OP performance practice towards the achievement of Living Thought, those techniques are also chosen for their shared potential as psychophysically activating and

engaging. Even when ensuring that all needs are being individually met, these individual tools are meant to resonate, interweave, and eventually fully integrate. As elaborated in Chapter 5's discussion of the toolkit, even when meeting individual needs, given the time constraints from OP, I also sought those tools which could perform multifold purpose; so singular exercises were meant to interweave into a unified performance whilst also serving multifold purpose with each use.

The remaining discussion of this chapter examines the performances, including Ren-Runs, of the workshop series for evidence of Living Thought. Where clear evidence is present, I will elucidate on the efficacy of a given technique, but it is not principally the purpose of this research project to test any given technique in isolation.

Here, I will consider, as hypothesized in Chapter 1, a.) whether this approach has afforded opportunity to observe Living Thought; b.) whether a student/performer can develop by degrees towards Living Thought; and c.) in the multi-textured nature of my psychophysical approach, whether some component elements of Living Thought can be developed without entirely reaching the highest performative levels in one or both categories. From the evidence given above, certain criteria for Living Thought enacted become clear:

1. Absence of overlong pauses
2. Absence of extratextual words and noises
3. Energized, nimble performances (vs. laborious or languid performances)
4. Vital performances establishing a sense of heightened theatrical truth
5. Quick performance speed overall, but especially the text
6. High levels of textual clarity
7. Embodied action, including speech, through the inhabitation of the text
8. Integration/synchrony of the above elements

Component with the 8<sup>th</sup> stated criteria, is a.) a minimal level of textual fluency to maintain Shakespeare's words, syntax, verse form, and shape; and b.) a

performance that presents as an otherwise physically embodied and active performance. With a clearer understanding of the observable qualities indicative of Living Thought in action, I here refer to the workshop series where I explored and investigated the techniques of the toolkit in a rehearsal environment for evidence of Living Thought in process.

### 6:3 Living Thought, approached

Per the design of this project, I sought to explore, understand, and identify Living Thought in practice to better understand how it can be cultivated. To that end, I worked with five groups of actors in a series of Shakespeare performance workshops all structured around *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here, I discuss extracts from the documentation of that process that demonstrate qualities indicative of Living Thought. In some instances, it is useful to contrast this work towards Living Thought with performance work which works contrary to it to understand its manifestation more clearly. In identifying those performances that most clearly demonstrate Living Thought enacted, I will try to elucidate how and why those performances worked as they did.

As stated previously in this chapter, a performance exhibiting traits that might subjectively be thought of as 'good' acting or even an embodied performance will not necessarily constitute Living Thought in Shakespearean performance. A performance can be successful with the audience, emotionally resonant, and even embodied for the performer, but still at odds with the rhythms and pacing of the text itself, or otherwise fail to cohesively synchronize (Cardeña, 1996, p. 34). Therefore, while the performances I discuss here may qualify as 'good' or 'bad' by other

metrics, for the purposes of this project their relative success as performances is not relevant. This section examines the performances that most exemplify the above listed indicators of Living Thought from 6:2:B.

### 6:3:A translation by performance

In the first workshop one of the performers that exemplified Living Thought the most and in so doing ‘translated,’ as Warren suggested, by means of a clarifying performance of the text at high levels, was AR [1: Bottom, Fairy, Hippolyta]. As a native French speaker, she was especially challenged not just by an English script, but one with the relatively esoteric language of Shakespeare, and yet the clarity of her performance demonstrates subtleties of fluency in language, clarity, embodiment, and Living Thought that might be less evident otherwise. As observable in this clip of AR rehearsing Bottom, she exemplifies Living Thought by demonstrating nuance through her facility with the text even above her facility with the English language, the pronunciation of which is irregular, but that imperfection is irrelevant to how well she performs ‘on the text.’

*Figure 29 [W1: 27/10/18] [Bottom](#)*

As demonstrated in her scene work here as the Fairy talking to Puck, AR could maintain the shape of the text, the rhythm of the text, and the form of the text as well as or better than native English-speaking members of the cast.

*Figure 30 [W1: 3/11/18] [Fairy & Puck](#)*

When I participated in the previously discussed workshop conducted by Cicely Berry (Berry, 2015), she was insistent that if you as the performer understood the text, then so would the audience, regardless of whether or not the audience understood Shakespeare’s sometimes antiquated vernacular and intricate syntax.

The clarity of AR's performance through the holistic embodiment of the text as the complete 'high performance' vehicle of communication demonstrates Berry's wisdom in this regard; her pacing is demonstrative of the requisite speed, her overall energy (i.e., liveliness, physical dynamism), and her commitment to action are demonstrably embodied. Vital, quick, energized, and embodied as she was, this embodiment had been clearly shaped and shaped around the text. She was not always textually accurate but demonstrated considerable textual fluency when she was on the line, and always inhabited her body and physical actions with demonstrable fluency. We can surmise that AR, at times, was achieving Living Thought, based upon her observable embodiment and the energy with which she propels her rapid, fluid performance, and through that performance, lends momentum to her scenes.

During the final presentation, AR noticeably falters on her line as Bottom, but while this slip is, by definition, a move away from Living Thought, she remains fully embodied.

*Figure 31 [W1: 3/11/18] [Final Presentation](#) (9:45)*

Throughout the process, AR maintains her energy, her intentionality, and recovers quickly from the loss of the words. When off the line, her otherwise embodied performance remains primed to pick it up again once the words are found to the benefit of the entire scene's collective energy and pace. While forgotten lines are not ideal, psychophysically derived attunement training is meant to prepare actors, overall, to be more naturally reactive, observing and responding in the moment with the entire bodymind, and psychophysically supple enough to cope with the challenges of live performance.

As demonstrated by this footage of her performance as Bottom from the Workshop 1 final presentation.

Figure 32 [W1: 3/11/18] [Rude Mechanicals Rehearsal](#)

AR's presence on the stage seems larger than her physicality, making the Amorphous Body of her early Character Sculpting work virtually visible despite being imaginary. By accepting the language as-is, and the rhythms of it through her engagement with the toolkit, she escapes the confines of her own unfamiliarity with Shakespeare's already unfamiliar words and instead allows the text to play her, as she plays her psychophysical bodymind as instrument. AR's work reveals a nuance about performance. I argue here that her level of clarity, despite occasional pronunciation issues, is not only strong, but given the nimbleness of her performance, her lack of pauses, and overall pacing, and embodiment, that she demonstrably achieves Living Thought. Her textual fluency is identifiable through her embodiment of the rhythms and shape of the text.

### 6:3:B specificity by design

From Workshop 2, LC [2: Demetrius, Flute/Thisbe] and SB [Hermia, Titania, Starveling] both exhibited strong evidence of Living Thought even in their Ren-Run. Both actors are also stand-up comics, and their choices differ in expression from AR's more classical background. AR is more precise, perhaps, and LC and SB more improvisational, but despite the differences in style, they all share motivated action in accord with the text, they speak/move/react rapidly and fluidly, and they do so with dynamic and physical performances suggestive of embodiment. Both performers were demonstrably skilled, but they also exhibited specific use of the toolkit in their work, notably Character Sculpting, to supplement that skill with technique that

integrated embodied performance with textual fluency. For the most part, they were also inhabiting the text.

LC used a penguin for her animal work and incorporated it with obvious literal gestures as illustrated by this clip from the Workshop 2 final presentation, by means of creating a *character* of the physical work, not merely mimicking the shape and form of a penguin but using the Task of embodying the penguin to guide the entire embodiment process.

Figure 33 [W2: 29/6/19] [Demetrius & Helena](#)

Her pacing is quick and fluid, her textual fluency and clarity are both very high, and she offers an impressively embodied performance inhabiting her actions with specificity of gesture and style developed during Character Sculpting.

Living Thought is characterized by embodiment work in service to and served by the text which can be identified in LC's crisp inhabitation of actions and reactions in line with the text. As Demetrius, LC's overall deportment as well as more specific gestures like his 'karate' stance, evocative of a penguin's flipper, are completely integrated into the words and Tasks, more recognizable for how fully she integrates her Amorphous Body into her performance.

Figure 34 [W2: 29/6/19] [Lovers' Quarrel \(3:40\)](#)

As exhibited here, she demonstrates an amorphous blend of gesture, Imaginary Body, and shape. LC here provides one of the clearest examples of deploying different animal behaviors, as introduced in Chapter 5, in human ways, e.g., flipper as 'karate chop'. This inhabitation of the Character Sculpting makes her characters especially distinctive and consistent.

As Demetrius she achieves Living Thought, but if we take the strictest interpretation of being 'on the line,' she takes some liberties as Thisbe, though these liberties are textually motivated.

*Figure 35 [W2: 29/6/19] [Pyramus & Thisbe](#) (2:50)*

Her performance presents as integrated, embodied, rapid, energized, and textually fluent, otherwise presenting with the vibrancy associated with Living Thought.

At comparable levels of Living Thought fluency with LC's Demetrius is SB's performance as Hermia and Titania. The shape of her overall presence is changed by the shape of her embodied actions. Her presence is small and vulnerable as Hermia before Theseus' court, and her presence is regal and expansive as Titania boldly confronting Oberon.

*Figure 36 [W2: 29/6/19] [Theseus' Court](#)*

*Figure 37 [W2: 29/6/190] [Titania](#)*

As discussed in Chapter 5, throughout the Character Sculpting process when actors were Tasked with fitting their Amorphous Imaginary Bodies onto themselves, I asked them to consider size, shape, and the feel of piloting this Amorphous Body and SB's performance illustrates this application perceptibly.

What AR and SB demonstrate is that form, specifically the imaginary size of their characters, can be somewhat perceivable. These performers and their bodies as they physically exist are obvious to us, but the assiduous inhabitation of their character forms give us as spectators a sense of that action-shape. They have applied their Amorphous Bodies to their performance scores as a psychophysical obstacle course, as described in Chapter 5:4, consisting of the amorphous shape they inhabit, the words they speak, and the actions they take integrated together.

When we witness the performed character as audience members, we can see a character that exists only in the imagination, but no longer in a single person's imagination insofar as it is perceptible to spectators or scene partners.

SB's Titania incorporates her animal choice of 'cobra' into the larger-than-life non-human character, which she channels with great specificity while remaining very much *on the line*.

*Figure 38 [W2: 29/6/19] [Titania](#)*

Like LC, SB uses the Character Sculpting work to create distinctive psychophysical shapes for her performance scores. SB also resembles LC in that she has more fully integrated her Character Sculpting work onto/into her own body, differing in how it presented from AR's work, which projected beyond her own body. Shape, in Character Sculpting, is not a static form, but the fluid score of imagination seamlessly blended to textual Task.

The participants whose work stands out the most, those that I have mentioned thus far, may not have been the only performers that achieved Living Thought in part or significantly in the process. These performers are more outstanding in the literal sense because of their notable vibrancy, to be expected from the high levels of clarity, vitality, and energy indicative of Living Thought. Warren described performers employing Living Thought as sounding more truthful and presenting greater clarity to the audience. While it is arguable as to what makes a 'better' performance, the combination of clarity, vitality, and verisimilitude seems to make performances like those of AR, SB, and LC, more memorable, as well.

### 6:3:C collective Living Thought

The MFA thesis from which this dissertation developed was focused upon psychophysical practice applied to Shakespeare as explored by me, as an actor working alone. For this dissertation, my design accounted for Living Thought as an aspect of Shakespeare in live performance in relation to other live performers. An actor will not be performing Living Thought in a vacuum but with a cast of varying levels and ranges of energy, skill, experience, etc., and this project was thus designed to include multiple full casts, as executed in the workshop series.

I coached each participant through the progression of the toolkit into and through rehearsal, up to the final presentation. With the inclusion of an entire cast of interactive performers, a hitherto unexplored aspect of Living Thought comes to the forefront. The energy and fluidity of Living Thought, the absence of overlong pauses or laborious delivery, is not just a matter of single, individual performances that equal the sum of its parts; Living Thought is affected by the exchange of energies between performers onstage together. The group momentum, the 'tidal movement', is dependent on the interaction of the whole group, but can be limited by individual energy levels. To better understand how participants with different levels of training responded to the process, I have included pertinent details of their relative experience where relevant to the research.

The first workshop presented many challenges, but the performers were at least familiar with psychophysical principles prior to the workshop and specifically interested in Shakespeare. Two of the performers, EP and LB, were graduates of a psychophysically-influenced theatre program and were also part-time faculty of that

institution. I also knew LB from a local production of a new play adapting elements and incorporating some text of *Henry V* with a heavy emphasis on physicality. RN, the student with arguably the least experience in the group, was also a member of the cast in question, and demonstrably enthusiastic and open to experimentation in the studio. LH was a former student of mine, who I had previously cast as Tamora in a university production of *Titus Andronicus*; my approach as teacher/director then was essentially the same to that as implemented in the practical research of my *Midsummer* workshop-series, and beyond her familiarity with this style of direction, I knew her to be a very strong performer in general. AR, whom we have already met above, was recommended to me for her strength and focus as a performer and I learned during the workshop that she had also performed in a French-language *Othello*, her native tongue. Their performance as a group synergized well enough that collective energy did not present as a significant issue during the first workshop.

Workshops 2 & 3 were conducted concurrently at the Acadiana Center for the Arts (ACA) in Lafayette, LA. Workshop 2 sessions occurred in the morning with Workshop 3 conducted in the afternoon. Possibly because the approach to both groups was so similar, beginning with an identical curriculum per day, differences between the groups' responses to the workshop seem more pronounced. All students from each group were coming from Acting Up, the ACA resident professional acting company, a company which also hosts Summer Youth Shakespeare, a theatre performance program for young people. A few participants in Workshop 2 were members of the community brought into the theatre group and were relatively inexperienced with Shakespeare and/or acting in general: [CW, DB, and ZL]. These inexperienced members are somewhat contrasted with some of *the*

*most* experienced actors that I worked with across the breadth of the workshop series within the same cast [LC, SB, MW, and DL].

The youngest of my students across the entirety of the workshop series were in Workshop 3: [LM, IF, OF, JA, and CZ], all veterans of the Summer Youth Shakespeare program, some multiple times over. Ironically, some of these youngest students had, collectively, the most training in performing Shakespeare including in comparison to their counterparts in Workshop 2. Furthermore, the Summer Youth Shakespeare of the ACA completes their productions in under two weeks, so these veterans had commensurate experience to the truncated preparation process. Along with the teenage students, CM and GS were two adult members of the professional Acting Up company. GS notably was also an experienced middle-school drama teacher.

Workshop 2, therefore, had a heterogeneous mix of experience and its cast would also prove to have drastically different levels of personal energy contrasted with Workshop 3's unified and high levels of group energy and experience. Overall, the Workshop 2 final presentation has a 'start-and-stop' dynamic at odds with the intended flow of the text.

*Figure 39 [W2: 29/6/19] [Final Presentation](#)*

By contrast, the relative similarity of the energy level of Workshop 3 and the slightly higher median experience level, makes their work more cohesive and dynamic. This momentum of a dynamic and rhythmically fluid performance brings the play, not just individual performances, closer to Living Thought, further evidence of collective Living Thought.

In Chapter 5, I discussed how the Renaissance Rehearsal process presents a chance for the student/performers to investigate what I called the ‘tidal movement’ of the entire work of Shakespeare’s play upon them and around them. As performers approach Living Thought, that relative force presumably will pull the entire play forward, i.e., it will move more quickly with the energies of the individuals propelling one another. Not all performers will have the same level of energy, but when performers consistently fail to maintain the energy of the scene, leaving spaces in their own lines, failing to pick up cues rapidly, stumbling over words, etc., an invisible ‘speed limit’ becomes more noticeable for the entire play.

DB [Theseus] and CW [Hippolyta], were inexperienced members of the local community who had only recently joined Acting Up prior to Workshop 2. CW’s response to the rehearsal process, and the toolkit, was largely bemusement and disengagement. DB’s performance tightened and improved marginally, as one might expect over roughly a week of rehearsal, as comparable between these two clips, one from the Ren-Run and the other from the Final Presentation, but there was not significant evidence of Living Thought.

Figure 40 [W2: 25/6/19] [Theseus' Court Ren-Run](#)

Figure 41 [W2: 29/6/19] [Theseus' Court Final Presentation](#)

This implies that even actors with limited experience can improve by engaging with the work simply as ‘acting practice’, but it also suggests that the approach is not entirely suited to beginners. CW disengaged from the process outside of traditional scenework, but DB always gave her best efforts in rehearsal. The difference between her performances comes from her perceivable effort to maintain her own energy and the energy of the overall play as emphasized by the rehearsal process. By contrast, CW remains entirely *off* the line. Both performers needed more energy

for Living Thought, and their distance from Living Thought cannot entirely be overcome by other performers sharing scenes with them.

Tangential to the subject of collective Living Thought, but raised now from this discussion of inexperienced performers, I note that I did not account for the lack of appeal that this process might hold for newcomers. Something my toolkit as designed cannot provide for, because I did not anticipate the need, was the openness to 'surrender' to the process inherent in the toolkit and its progression. As discussed previously, with Shakespeare's text much of the work is done by learning 'to be moved' by Shakespeare's text. Also, psychophysical performance practices, too, can present as a challenging contrast to the preconceptions and predilections of performers. The idea of surrender as an aspect of the attitudinal framework might best be built into future revisions to or derivations of the process, either through further tools or further development of those in place.

The Workshop 3 group seemed very comfortable with the Ren-Run process and boldly made unfettered choices.

*Figure 42 [W3: 25/6/19] [Ren-Run](#)*

Most of the Workshop 3 students demonstrated such basic competence in Shakespeare already that it is difficult to see anything from the workshop coming through for most at this stage. Their energy is somewhat less fluid, slightly more frenetic than is characteristic of Living Thought, but high. Living Thought is most clearly indicated by speed, which they are clearly capable of, though they demonstrably drop their pacing at times, e.g., Oberon and Puck (15:13), so it remains inconsistent. Proving capable of making unexpected choices and delivering on high-energy performance suggests the process was more about refinement than

education, more about focus and alignment than energetics. By contrast, the Workshop 2 group could have benefited from higher levels of energy overall. Given the noticeable energy level of the Workshop 3 group, my work was focused as a traditional director facilitating the clarity of the story, since they needed less help fostering creative impulses.

JA's Egeus is a clear example of the bold, creative choices that can come of the Ren-Run work. His broad comedic choice is perfectly suitable to the theatricality of OP, and as a consequence of that choice, his Egeus (1:00) is very distinctive and memorable, and even in the Ren-Run, textually supported. His performance is on the text more accurately than would normally be evident at this point in the process, evidence in part of his ability as a performer. Given the strengths of this performance, JA's Egeus can be classified as at or approaching Living Thought.

However, in the same Ren-Run, JA loses much of his momentum, and consequently Living Thought, while matching the energy of his scene partners. JA and GS (11:50) both drop a deal of the momentum playing Puck and Fairy, respectively, trying to maintain their 'character bits' that seem decidedly off the text, but are, as creative choices, ideally situated in the Ren-Run. The Ren-Run should provide space for ridiculous, even 'bad,' choices, which I do not believe either choice could, objectively be called. Choices that are unsuitable to the process are still important communications, even collaborations, with me as the director. I needed to guide them back onto the text as much as possible, per the purpose of the project, but I also did not want to direct the show 'out of their hands' entirely. This is as much *their* work on *Midsummer* as it is mine. As noted, JA was much nearer to Living Thought with his Egeus choices, which were maintained throughout the process to the final

presentation. He disrupts his process towards Living Thought, that he has already demonstrated, to match his partner's energy, antithetical to Living Thought. That said, I knew immediately that Puck as a character in the OP-mode would need more energy and outright speed of action/speech/thought than the score JA had composed would provide, with his exaggerated and dry pastiche of an American Southerner.

ZC's Oberon (15:10) unfortunately, suffers from being thematically paired with JA's drawling Southern Puck, exhibiting the same excruciating slowness in pace and completely unnecessary and anachronistic<sup>28</sup> habitual cigarette<sup>29</sup> smoking with accompanying fake coughing. ZC and JA also garble their words as they dig deeper into these gimmicks. By contrast, ZC picks up energy, pace, and clarity merely by delivering her lines without conceit as Helena when speaking with Demetrius.

Following the Ren-Run, I directed ZC and JA away from their initial choices and more toward the text while lauding their strong attack upon the creative Task of the Ren-Run. Paired together, the gimmicky drawling, coughing Southerners that ZC and JA are using slowed the current of each scene with Oberon or Puck, but were most deterred when paired together, collectively blocking Living Thought.

Caricature, even gimmick, can be tolerated in OP, however, per Ralph Cohen's rules mentioned in 2:6, choices that intentionally lengthen a play or make distortions to the text should be avoided. LC's overtly 'penguin-ish' Demetrius and JA's caricatured 'old man' Egeus are perfectly suitable broad comic choices because they do not interfere with textual clarity, shape, or dynamic; ZC's coughing American Southerner

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<sup>28</sup> While certain anachronistic conceits are tolerated in OP, using an anachronism to disrupt the textual flow would be considered poor practice in most circumstances.

<sup>29</sup> Unlit props.

Oberon, is no broader than the other performances, but in execution she disrupts clarity, dynamic, and unnecessarily adds time to the text, as did the partnered character of JA's Puck.

ZC (Helena and Oberon) had made strides in rehearsal, tightening her performance without adding unnecessary extratextual filler, but I noticed immediately as an audience member onstage, she milked the laughter when they gave her an immediate positive response in her initial scene.

*Figure 43 [W3: 29/6/19] [Helena](#)*

As she repeatedly uses the same tactic, a generalized exaggerated delivery of just about every line, she deviates further from the text, losing clarity, momentum, and form, while the gimmick offers diminishing returns on the cheap laugh. Her Amorphous Body work seems to be entirely abandoned and so, too, the flow of the scene.

The ensemble of Workshop 3 presents arguably the most complete 'play' of *Midsummer*. They began with experience and disproportionately strong performances, and continued to tighten and refine their work throughout the process.

*Figure 44 [W3: 29/6/19] [Final Presentation](#)*

JA (Puck) made admirable adjustment from placing the over-the-top 'character concept' to a very clear and direct performance of the text itself, keeping a lively, almost running pace. In fact, he rushes a little too much at one point and trips but recovers admirably, despite bruising himself. His work moved much closer to Living Thought with this surrender to the clarity of the text over the gimmick, which from the outside reminds me of my own surrender in the Q1 *Hamlet* at the RBC as discussed

in Chapter 4. JA's Puck progresses towards Living Thought observably in pace, in clarity, and embodiment between the Ren-Run and the Final Presentation.

*Figure 45 [W3: 25/6/19] [Ren-Run](#) (15:30)*

*Figure 46 [W3: 29/6/19] [Final Presentation](#) (15:58)*

JA makes one of the most significant transmissions towards an embodied and textually fluent performance, though he struggles with line memorization in the final presentation (1:00), his performance is overall still more embodied and clear. The solution to attempting to make the text work is the same as the original goal, allow the text to work upon you; or per Sheila Hancock, allow it to 'flow' through you as the performative vessel. Shakespeare's words are meant to move the performer as much as the audience, and performing his words should become easier if we allow them to do so.

Besides the strength in engaging with the truncated process the Workshop 3 cast demonstrated, their considerable group energy made their ensemble work especially strong, becoming cartoonish stooge fairies or mechanicals and enlivening the scene as invested bystanders. Consistently across the first three workshops, the toolkit yielded average results for embodied crowd work, but Workshop 3 embodied the Six Energies especially acutely and cohesively as a group for each scene. Their energy level, even when not fluid, is at a shared intensity across the group, which suited the process, which itself could be described as a type of directing through energetics, firstly by coaching actors through embodiment techniques relevant to the material, i.e., the toolkit, then deployed as the cast channeling their individual energy.

In part, the Ren-Run was included in the toolkit for its role as a cohesion exercise. As described in the previous chapter, actors must work together whilst relying only

on the script to prepare the Ren-Run. As an exercise, however, it challenges the cast's level of cohesion, but is not necessarily *practice of* cohesion, which would have been beneficial for bringing performers closer to unity with each other's performances.

This was less evident in Workshop 1 where skilled performers were operating relatively quickly, but as skill and experience levels diverged more noticeably amongst participant groups, the cast energy level proved somewhat disharmonious at times. This is a point where, seeking the unity of Living Thought, I could have provided a more unifying, more integrative process. After training individually and before setting students the challenging Task of the Ren-Run, I recommend interactive training of energy as a cast, to find an organic balance for each group. I also recommend work during the rehearsal process proper. The embodiment work of the Six Energies and Character Sculpting may serve to unify the performer, but no technique in the toolkit was designed to integrate the exchange and interchange of the energies between those performers which would have been beneficial to the cultivation of collective Living Thought.

Per the design of this project, the energy the actor is meant to channel and deploy comes from performing text to the shape of the verse. Given the truncated nature of the design, the general cultivation of energy seemed beyond the scope of the thesis. The cultivation of energy is very important to psychophysical training, such as Zarrilli's, but this project was created to examine a psychophysically informed approach to Shakespeare not in pre-performative training, but in rehearsal. I now see that such cultivation work incorporated into an expanded warmup, however limited with comparison to full training, would have been beneficial to raising and

synchronizing group energy. The warmup mentioned in Chapter 5 could be expanded to include some basic energy cultivation practices to raise individual energy, group energy, and, in conjunction with other work, synchronize that energy as an ensemble. For the practical aspect of this thesis, however, imbalanced group dynamics suggest a limitation of psychophysical application to the Shakespearean work without the supported work of energy cultivation and attunement training.

### 6:3:D Living Thought online

My final workshop was conducted with five students online during the initial 2020 lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As with the first workshop in the series, I joined the cast, but this time I chose to forgo the Ren-Run process altogether. Without being in the same physical space at the same time, much of the action-based discoveries that come from performing the play with others in the same space was moot. Group communication can be frustrating and challenging with video conferencing, and the demands of improvisation added to this made the Ren-Run an impracticability for the online sessions.

Instead, in Workshop 5 I tried to focus the expression of the toolkit, which remained essentially the same besides the Ren-Run, towards voice. Again, this work is still primarily rehearsal work, not voice work, but once more there is overlap. As discussed in Chapter 5, Berry and Linklater, two of the most influential vocal coaches and experts on Shakespearean voice in the history of the field, were both 'attempting some sort of integrated method' (Martin, 1991, p. 38), with their own practices. Berry focused more on text, and Linklater on the voice. With Workshop 5, I sought to use the Character Sculpting and energy work of the toolkit to guide the discovery and

enactment of an embodied vocal performance. Due to the limitations of physical expression when using teleconferencing software, the vocal expression of the work became more central to the performance.

As we were all using scripts, there was an additional challenge of embodiment while we had the permanent cheat sheet of reading from the script. The final presentation was performed as a livestream before an audience, similar to a live radio play. The work to prepare those readings over the course of the week was the same as with the previous workshops, but the goal was now to focus the assimilation of embodiment and textual fluency into the webcam and to place emphasis on how the overall process would affect the quality of character most on display given the medium, the voice. While the faces of the performers would be visible, it was the spoken word in this workshop that would be the principal means of communicating Shakespeare's text with much of the visible body of the performer obscured and unable to assist in the storytelling process. As with Elizabethan theatre, this run was a play to be heard.

The cast carried the toolkit work into their vocal performances with aplomb, and without the need for any real physical stage business, the reading had a lively, fluid pace.

*Figure 47 [W5: 26/7/20] [Final Presentation](#)*

AS, CP, and ZZ are very proficient, at or very near embodying Living Thought in terms of energy, fluidity, and rhythm, all of which are very challenging through video telephonic software. ZZ's Titania (13:00) is bold and expressive, her body language is exaggerated which helps to create a sense of heightened reality beyond the constraints of the workshop's online circumstances. CP also exaggerates, bringing

in the idea of 'donkey's teeth' to his Character Sculpting work to affect his voice (56:10), which helps to overcome the complete lack of costuming as Bottom transformed into an ass. AS similarly adopts a broadly comic yokel persona for Flute, matching the comic size and intensity of her castmates (9:52). From what can be seen of their bodies, they are performing physically albeit whilst stationary, without slouching or dropping the muscular energy of performance despite the change in circumstances as compared to the other workshops. Being textually fluent is obviously easier with the text to rely on, however that, too, creates a challenge for performance, while the actor must read while acting.

AS (Demetrius, Flute) is an experienced performer and her work presents as polished and skillfully adept at Shakespeare's language. Her performance observably demonstrates a refinement of exhibiting a traditional formality reminiscent of the 'style', for lack of a better term, more associated with the RSC than the 'theatre in the rough' of OP. Through that refinement, her performance presents as clear and embodied, but polished in a manner that can be read as 'telegraphing.' There is an element of curation to her performance as Lysander that suggests a disconnect, as if the actor is aware of the metatextual value of the lines she is speaking leaving the minutest of gaps between performer and character, short of Living Thought's complete unity.

EB's performance as Puck (11:34) was the Puck most evident of Living Thought in the workshop series. While JA's engagement with the same character in Workshop 3 progressed noticeably towards Living Thought, EB's engagement was even more cohesive and energized. Constrained by the necessities of performing on webcam, she performs 'actions' through the impulses in her voice. As she is reading, she is

very precisely following the text, but she is 'on the text' not just for that precision, but because of the way she allows the precise nature of the text to affect Puck's bounciness, his literal and figurative quickness.

Objectively, EB had the least experience of the Workshop 5 group, and among the other performers that most exemplified Living Thought embodied across the workshop series. Her Puck is bouncy and energetic, and her Demetrius is clear, and precisely deported. This was a strong group of skillful performers, but as the performer with the least experience in Shakespeare, EB's performance was probably shaped more by the process than the other performers, which was reflected in her openness and committed engagement with the exercises.

#### 6:4 Living Thought in process

The principles of playing on the line, fluid pacing, spontaneity in performance, and general embodiment are all indicative of Living Thought, but in some cases these qualities are more evident by their absence or partial development towards Living Thought. What I have thus far presented is, perhaps, the best evidence of Living Thought embodied across the breadth of the workshop. More in evidence was growth *towards* Living Thought. If the disparate elements of textual fluency, pacing, embodiment, etc. did not interweave fully or distinctly, then evidence of growth along those lines can still teach us something about Living Thought and how it may be cultivated. To understand the growth of these students, I will offer some information on their experience prior to participating in the workshop series; not to compare the students to one another, but to understand their individual growth. The differences in how students with varying levels of skill demonstrate progress towards Living

Thought in this study may offer implications on the efficacy of the toolkit for students with varying levels of experience and insight for future developments in approaching Shakespeare psychophysically.

#### 6:4:A shape and dynamic

Following my guidance to play fairies with more pronounced non-human or animalistic qualities, in Workshop 1, LB tried to incorporate his animal (tanuki<sup>30</sup>) very heavily into his Amorphous Body even early in the process, as is evident in the scene between Puck and the Fairy servant of Titania.

*Figure 48 [W1: 3/11/18] [Fairy & Puck](#)*

Here, AR's fairy is comparatively livelier and more dynamic, her exaggerated qualities more smoothed and absorbed into the overall embodiment of the character. LB's somewhat literal approximations leave him with a slump as a character 'posture' less than the interactive Amorphous Body and lacking the unity associated with Living Thought. While he makes obvious effort to contort his physical shape, he is here not playing that shape as action, but rather trying to hold a form leaving him looking comparatively stiff.

LB's performance as Puck tightened, not just as a performance, but most specifically *on the text*, minimizing extraneous sounds. In the early Ren-Run, he notably adds an extraneous squeal to match his entrance but relies more entirely on the text in the final presentation.

*Figure 49 [W1: 28/10/18] [Puck Ren-Run](#)*

*Figure 50 [W1: 11/3/18] [Puck Final Presentation](#)*

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<sup>30</sup> Japanese Raccoon Dog

His psychophysical fluency in playing the Amorphous Body improved as well, but there remains some residual resistance in his department. Without the full inhabitation of his body, he cannot fully embody Living Thought no matter how strenuously he does or does not adhere to the text. His performance most embodied Living Thought in the transition between characters rather than in the embodiment of a single character during any given scene. In this highly active moment concluding the lover's quarrel, LB must switch between himself as Puck and as Demetrius while also imitating himself as Demetrius, and also imitate Lysander whilst playing Puck.

Figure 51 [W1: 11/3/18] [LB Switching Roles](#)

The energy demand is high, and in matching the necessity of that energy level, LB plays closest to the levels of dynamic embodiment of Living Thought. His form is more a score of action in this moment, more reactive and fluid, than a static posture.

DL, from Workshop 2, is a veteran company member of Acting Up but admitted during rehearsal that he was used to a very different approach, though in the context of expressing a general appreciation for the process. When I cast DL as Bottom, I was unaware that he played Bottom previously in an ACA production and it became increasingly clear that he was falling back to old habits, gimmicks, and bits. He demonstrated strong comedic instincts, but where his instincts were at odds with the process, he allowed habitual pausing and the dropping of energy to creep more and more into his performance *between* lines during the Ren-Run, most noticeably when practicing his gags as Bottom/Pyramus in the play-within-a-play.

Figure 52 [W2: 29/6/19] [Pyramus & Thisbe](#)

The audience reaction was relatively positive and probably more popular when he performed it initially, but the subjective question of whether it was 'good' or even

'successful' is of less relevance to this thesis than the level of embodiment and the integration of that embodiment with textual performance. He never maintains momentum for very long, dropping energy and focus often. His familiarity with the character frankly allowed him to take the character for granted, and he never escapes old habits to embody the new process, exemplifying instead potential for stagnation with overcoding.

In rehearsal, he seemed genuinely open to the exercises in theory, but never adopted them beyond a surface level unlike LC and SB, both experienced actors in the same workshop and company. By contrast, LC and SB took to the toolkit with vigor and their performances were demonstrably more textually embodied. Their psychophysical fluency with embodiment seemed attuned enough to suggest some level of psychophysical training prior to the workshops in addition to their background in Shakespearean performance.

Observing this, I asked them if they had a background in similarly psychophysical and/or embodied practices, and, as expected, they did. LC has a strong background in dance, supplemented by further master classes taken as a professional actor and acting teacher, and Lecoq training under two different companies. SB has more than a decade of experience in dance and yoga, the latter of which, she continues to practice regularly. Given their backgrounds in embodied performance and in Shakespeare as separate entities, they were well-suited to unify and deploy their skills through the specific challenges of the toolkit.

DL was relatively open to the new process, but, reflecting on how I might have approached him differently to better direct his work towards Living Thought, beyond

simply casting him in an unfamiliar role, was helping him to let go of his old processes. Being open to new experience is necessary, but sometimes surrender in this sense *additionally* requires abandoning previous tactics and strategies *as well as* being open to new ones. Some strategies and tactics will not be compatible with one another, nor psychophysicality, nor mutually beneficial towards Living Thought, nor appropriate for OP. I did not build into the initial design any request for the actors to avoid using any old tactics, or use only the toolkit, but there may be a need to place further boundaries or, at least, suggest certain guidelines for what prior training might be most suitable to redeploy in new ways, and how that might be done; and distinguishing that from practices discommended and/or incongruous.

MW is a veteran company member of Acting Up with decades of experience as a professional dancer and dance instructor, but despite strong physicality, like DL she is often textually removed from Living Thought. DL drops the energy, losing the rhythm, flow, and dynamic of text, but MW struggles with the text more generally. She maintains the requisite energy strongly, but despite evidence of physical embodiment, her performance was not always aligned with the text simply because she struggled with memorization. Despite her experience with the company, she confessed that she usually shied away from line-heavy roles and was intimidated by the challenge of playing Helena and Oberon exactly because of the significant line load. Her work suggests that the lines are a constraint, especially at the level of specificity that OP requires and in which we are trying to work.

From Workshop 3, GS demonstrated skillful animal work creating an inhuman Amorphous Body for his fairy character, seen here interacting with Puck, which would have suggested Living Thought had it been more integrated onto the text.

What works about the Fairy is built very organically through the Character Sculpting process that created a unique fairy, vocally and physically, from any I had ever seen or experienced in the workshop series or otherwise. His Fairy represents a bold and distinctive choice, making his creature intentionally weighty and toadish, but not necessarily at odds with the text. As discussed in Chapter 5, Character Sculpting is meant to provide opportunity for this sort of creation *in conjunction* with the needs of the text. In that regard, GS habitually relied on extraneous sounds to supplement his lines, which, from an OP perspective is unnecessary and against best practice. In this case, it presents as an unnecessary safety net; another example of not meeting the challenge of surrender and, consequently, of being unable to fully achieve Living Thought. This further argues for ‘surrender’ being needed to supplement the toolkit progression to help a performer fully to Living Thought. His Bottom still moved with alacrity compared to DL’s from Workshop 2, and demonstrated the vitality, energy, and fluidity suggesting Living Thought. It was infused with theatrical life, just needing greater precision.

The habitual extra vocalizations are a deviation that, from an OP perspective, are simply not necessary and should not otherwise interfere with his choices. As with DL<sup>31</sup>, GS was constrained by his own habits rather than the boundaries of the process. It can be very difficult for an actor to simply allow the text to work upon them without having to ‘work’ the text with interjections. If the rhythms that the text suggests cannot be achieved without alteration, then it is possible that the choices have strayed too far from the source and meaning could be lost.

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<sup>31</sup> Bottom from Workshop 2

IF (Theseus) and OF (Hermia) were two exceptionally talented and strong young performers. IF had previously played Bottom in *Midsummer*, and aware of this, I cast him with other roles in mind. OF has several years' experience of ballet as well as the Summer Youth Shakespeare and she has demonstrably strong physicality, as well as a very clear and precise vocal instrument, but she was somewhat unfocused at times, which is the predictable state-of-affairs during the Ren-Run.

Figure 54 [W3: 25/6/19] [Ren-Run](#)

IF's Thisbe (56:20) is easily the most powerful performance, outrageously camp, but again, as with LC's Thisbe from Workshop 2, there is an argument to be made that the liberties being taken might be considered 'out of bounds' to strict interpretations of OP. As the 'hard-handed men' of Athens oblivious to their own ineptitude as actors, many liberties seem textually justifiable.

#### 6:4:B ShakesFear

Workshop 4 was integrated into the greater performance module for second term first-year BA theatre students. The module was headed by a long-time student of Phillip Zarrilli with extensive training in Psychophysical Acting and the martial arts, known to me as a fellow researcher. Through my colleague, the students had been introduced to psychophysical training and performance concepts prior to my working with them.

The greatest obstacle towards the students' engagement was their intimidation with the material itself. They were not just resistant to working on Shakespeare's text, they fled from it. I am keenly aware of the broad perception of Shakespeare as difficult material, but as a theatre student and professional in America, it has been very rare in my life to personally encounter actors or acting students with no

appreciation for Shakespeare. Students and British colleagues have complained occasionally about Shakespeare being forced upon them through the British educational system, but until Workshop 4, I did not really see the practical damage done.

Chapter 2 contrasts the models of the RSC and the Globe as representing the British 'public service model' set against the American model as marketable entertainment. These 'American-style' OP theatres are accused of Disneyfication, of crassly making a cultural artifact into a money-making attraction. The potential downside to the British model makes Shakespeare the artistic equivalent of bitter medicine, consumed rarely and reluctantly because 'it's good for you' and for no other discernable reason.

Ralph Cohen's book *ShakesFear* frames the education of Shakespeare in general around the fears and anxieties that present as obstacles to students engaging with the material. As much as my work is based upon the ASC's OP practices, my own work is very much a product of the environment that Cohen fostered in co-founding the ASC, but simply following his 'do's' and 'don'ts' (Cohen, 2018, pp. 18, 30) may not be enough to fully confront ShakesFear as I encountered it, and perhaps not enough for many students within the British educational system. In a review of Cohen's book written for the *Times Higher Education* journal, Peter J. Smith offers some answer as to why that may be:

... Cohen's "ploys" (practical exercises to cure his students' "ShakesFear") would not be welcome in the surveillance culture of UK universities. His playful activities - making Macbeth's severed head; designing a coat of arms (*Pericles*); compiling a pop soundtrack (*Romeo and Juliet*) or even bringing a canine "guest artist" into class with which to improvise (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*) - would get short shrift on this side of the pond. Similarly, the relaxed and creative indeterminacy of Cohen's

critical discourse is alien to the prevailing utilitarianism over here (Smith, 2018).

If Smith's evaluation is accurate, then the danger of the reductionist 'utilitarianism' that is meant to impart the value of Shakespeare is instead damaging the understanding, the performance potential, and even appreciation of Shakespeare. For the practical research of this project, I observed multiple instances of participants disengaging with the material because of stated disinterest in Shakespeare.

### 6:5 Living Thought, reevaluated

The principles of Living Thought can be thought of as the synchronous intertwining of textual fluency and embodiment. This manifests as quick, energized, reactive, and fluid performances that avoid languid performances, the addition of extratextual exclamations, or pausing. Overlong pausing, which Barton associated with psychological realism in the 80s, continues to represent thinking *apart* from the line. Shakespearean characters were not written as psychologically realistic people who pause to psychologically digest emotional or traumatic events. The entire emotional process being worked through psychologically in Shakespeare occurs via speech, with characters often discovering what they are saying as the words leave their mouths or describe actions they are already in the process of performing. The text is the source of action, thought, and emotion, and it is the tie that binds them all together. When these elements are fully integrated, these performances clarify and vitalize the information of the source material.

These principles of Shakespearean performance are not unique to the ASC or the Stratford Festival, but are essential to other approaches to Shakespeare, among them Language and Text directors, practitioners of the First Folio technique, and the

classical PTTT program at the University of Delaware. Warren echoed Langham's theories about performing Shakespeare as Living Thought as a centralizing concept that encapsulates, to restate Langham's words, 'all that was essential to know about acting Shakespeare' (Ney, 2016, p. 252). In examining the evidence of the principles enacted from the workshop series, we can now surmise further nuanced understanding of Living Thought:

- Living Thought can be evident in performers with imperfect English pronunciation/fluency if they remain otherwise 'on the text' in performance, therefore fluency in this regard has more to do with adherence to textual shape, clarity, and form
- Openness to the process and surrender to the textual forces are significant determining factors for the achievement of Living Thought
- Living Thought can be effectively demonstrated onscreen, though this was only tested during a livestream performance before a live audience through videotelephony software, and significant research remains to determine the implications for film acting theory.
- The collective energy levels of the cast and the individual energy levels of particular actors will affect the ability of *other* performers to achieve or sustain Living Thought

Suggested refinements to the toolkit and further practical research in this area include:

- Integration exercises for group synergy, before the Ren-Run and after, during the process of rehearsing scene work
- Exercises that cultivate group energy for greater balance of cast dynamics
- Exercises cultivating a sense of openness and surrender to the textual and/or psychophysical processes

The practical research demonstrates that Living Thought can be achieved while meeting the challenges of OP using the psychophysically-informed techniques of the toolkit. Living Thought was most evident in those performers who already demonstrated strong abilities and experience in psychophysical work, Shakespeare, or both. The process for these performers was one of directing their capacities for textual fluency, psychophysical fluency, and facilitating that coordination. The results

suggest that the rehearsal process may have provided limited support for beginners. I did not set out to test the toolkit techniques in isolation, but most evident were the results of Character Sculpting in the performances noted above, which consistently and successfully met the OP challenge of doubling through a process of psychophysical inhabitation, sometimes evident even when Living Thought was not being fully enacted.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7:1 OP

The ideas of this thesis as a research project originate from my MFA thesis, and that as an outgrowth of my personal practice and education as an actor and academic.

Recognizing certain similarities in function and practice between my knowledge and experience of OP as an actor and contemporary psychophysical performance practice, I sought to better understand the relationship between OP and psychophysical practice to best articulate the connection, which I saw most clearly in the idea of Living Thought. As elucidated herein, Living Thought is a higher performative state in which embodied performers of Shakespeare unify thought, word, action, and emotion in harmony. Often, to achieve Living Thought in performance requires breaking with contemporary perceptions of the human psychological process where one might pause and consider, e.g., to silently come to terms with a traumatic revelation. By contrast, Shakespeare's characters speak through their entire thought process, and the passions are both suggested and directed by the shape and flow of the text, as are most of the actions they take.

In this dissertation, I have progressed from that MFA thesis to present a more expansive, precise, and deeper understanding of OP, Living Thought, and the potential value in approaching OP Shakespeare psychophysically as a practice of textual embodiment. The work of this thesis has been to explore psychophysical methodologies for ways to achieve Living Thought more consistently. To investigate the efficacy of a psychophysically-informed approach to OP, I thoroughly researched the development of OP as a continuum of practices from both sides of the Atlantic to

identify what practices are most common and most significant for the actor. There is a rich academic community surrounding OP but writing on the perspective of the performers regarding technique and acting theory is rare. I surveyed some of the most prominent OP theatres operating today in the context of OP development provided by this initial research, and through that research identified seven common OP conditions:

As identified in Chapter 2:

1. The Primacy of the Text
2. Historical Staging (almost always in a thrust configuration; sans set)
3. Audience Interaction
4. Universal Lighting (the same illumination shared by actors and audience)
5. Diverse casting (in contrast with historical practice)
6. Fluid, Lively Pacing
7. Clarity of Storytelling

Given these conditions, I extrapolated certain challenges commonly placed upon the actor in OP conditions:

1. Brisk Pacing
2. Relatively short overall rehearsal schedule
3. The Primacy of the Text
4. Doubling (a single actor playing multiple roles)
5. Non-Realistic Style
6. (Technologically) Poor Theatre
7. Improvising Shakespeare

OP theatres value historical staging conditions for a variety of reasons, but most relevantly to this thesis, for better understanding how the material is best served by the conditions for which it was made. Proponents of OP believe Shakespeare is accessible material without need of adjustment or translation, and by design, OP performances are meant to be more accessible. As discussed, critics of OP theatres like the Globe and the Blackfriars' Playhouse in Virginia accuse them of representing the 'Disneyfication' (Cohen, 2008, p. 211) of Shakespeare, or, at best, museum

theatre (Falocco, 2010, pp. 7-8). Proponents of OP believe that as a theatrical form, it democratizes the audience relationship with Shakespeare (Carson, 2008, p. 33). While this democratization may account, in part, for the accessibility of Shakespeare to OP, the research presented here demonstrates that high levels of clarity are called upon in OP, to the exclusion of other considerations, notably 'directorial vision.' Through interview material first introduced in this thesis, we learned from Jim Warren that performances of OP Shakespeare have even been mistaken for modern 'translations' because of the high levels of clarity presented to the audience performed by actors demonstrating Living Thought (2021).

This thesis has demonstrated that Living Thought can be understood as a higher performative state unifying key performative and textual elements of Shakespeare. Furthermore, Living Thought and/or its associated principles have been shown to be critically important to Shakespearean practices that value the primacy of the text, including OP<sup>32</sup>, Language & Text<sup>33</sup> directors, First Folio<sup>34</sup> technique, Voice & Text specialists<sup>35</sup>, and, often, with traditional approaches to playing Shakespeare coming from RSC directors like Peter Hall<sup>36</sup> and John Barton<sup>37</sup>. Though Living Thought is not exclusive to OP, Warren's testimony suggests that it plays an important role in conveying the textual clarity demanded in OP (Warren, 2021).

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<sup>32</sup> pp. 9-10

<sup>33</sup> p. 57

<sup>34</sup> p. 223

<sup>35</sup> p. 19

<sup>36</sup> p. 148

<sup>37</sup> p. 64

## 7:2 Living Thought

For those who value the puissance of Shakespeare's form, Living Thought is the unity of unities; first, it unifies the shape, needs, and demands of Shakespeare's form; second, it demands the unity of the performer's bodymind in complete communion with the text. Living Thought performances are demonstrably 'in the body' of the performer and 'on the text' in action. Though Living Thought is considered very important to the referenced authorities within, there was no documented systematic method of achieving it through the rehearsal period and into the performance prior to this thesis.

Through the investigation of sources relevant but not limited to OP Shakespearean practice, the testimony of experienced practitioners, and the practice-led research presented within this dissertation, Living Thought can now be more precisely described and identified by certain qualitative indicators:

1. Absence of overlong pauses
2. Absence of extratextual words and noises
3. Energized, nimble performances (vs. laborious or languid performances)
4. Vital performances establishing a sense of heightened theatrical truth
5. Quick performance speed overall, but especially the text
6. High levels of textual clarity
7. Embodied action, including speech, through the inhabitation of the text
8. Integration of the above elements

With these specific indicators as criteria, I examined recordings collected during the practical aspect of this project searching for clear evidence of Living Thought in process, as discussed in Chapter 6. Examination of this evidence of Living Thought achieved and/or in process yielded further nuance to understanding Living Thought in practice.

As demonstrated by AR in Workshop 1<sup>38</sup>, Living Thought can be evident in performers with imperfect English pronunciation/fluency if they remain otherwise ‘on the text’ in performance; therefore, fluency in this regard has more to do with adherence to textual shape, clarity, and form. Through her assiduous dedication to learning her lines and understanding every unfamiliar word, she was textually fluent in her own material, and that fluency communicated as an achievement in Living Thought exemplified the clarity and vitality necessary to bring all associated criteria together in performance.

Living Thought can be demonstrated onscreen, as was evident in the videotelephony presentation of Workshop 5. These performers could not all share the same physical space, but, despite the technological conditions and impediments, brought the textual fluency and vitality into their performance. With their bodies mostly obscured, much of the vibrancy, and even muscularity, was demonstrably channeled as a vocal performance. As demonstrated in this thesis, the Voice & Text tradition in Shakespearean performance practice, such as Linklater’s, is psychophysical practice<sup>39</sup>, compatible with and complementary to the psychophysical toolkit investigated herein as a rehearsal methodology.

Prior to the research presented here, Living Thought had not been discussed much, if at all, in terms of a collective state or practice. The practical research of the project was designed to observe how numerous performers using psychophysically derived techniques towards the achievement of Living Thought might interact with one another. In practice, the research demonstrated that Living Thought has a

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<sup>38</sup> p. 234

<sup>39</sup> p. 174

noticeable influence on and is noticeably influenced by, group energy and dynamic. When most members of a scene or the cast of a play were operating with strong levels of embodiment at or near Living Thought, the collective energy conveyed a tidal force giving the whole performance vitality. The rhythms and pace that Living Thought depends on to manifest, however, cannot be carried by any one individual in a group scene. Collective Living Thought, the Tempo-Rhythm carried across entire scenes, and from scene to scene, is limited by the energy level of individual performers, as demonstrated by footage from Workshop 3 in Chapter 6:3:A. The practical research suggests collective energy levels of the cast and the individual energy levels of actors will affect the ability of *other* performers to achieve or sustain Living Thought.

### 7:3 Understanding Shakespeare through psychophysical practice

This thesis establishes the Actor's Mind-Body Problem, defined as a state of disembodied performance in Chapter 1, as an extension of Cartesian Dualism, drawn from the theories, practice, and research of Phillip Zarrilli, Sharon Carnicke, Bella Merlin, et. al. Zarrilli specifically argues that an unbalanced favouring of psychology in Western performance practices stemming from Descartes leaves performers more susceptible to precisely the type of dualistic disembodiment typical of the Actor's Mind-Body Problem (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 17). Zarrilli, Chekhov<sup>40</sup>, and Stanislavski<sup>41</sup> all call upon the actor to overcome the discoordination, disharmony, division, etc., between mind and body.

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<sup>40</sup> p. 11

<sup>41</sup> p. 86

As established through the research presented primarily in Chapter 3, Stanislavski's theories in the West have been and often continue to be contextualized with greater consideration given to the psychological aspects of his System, exacerbated by Stanislavski's connection to Strasberg's American Method, which placed even greater emphasis on the psychological than Stanislavski had in his earlier work. As noted by the research collected and presented from Merlin, Carnicke, Benedetti, et. al, Stanislavski had moved to greater emphasis on action in his own practice while Strasberg delved deeper into psychoanalysis.

For Shakespearean practice, this thesis has shown that at its inception, the RSC purposefully integrated what Barton referred to as 'The Two Traditions,' marrying modernistic acting with Shakespeare's stagecraft. Barton openly acknowledges the influence of Stanislavski and the psychological revolution on acting technique in general and on Shakespeare specifically. As discussed through the previously referenced work of Barton, Hall, and Rylance, the early RSC sought to reconcile the 'Two Traditions' into a signature style (RSC, 2020). Because of incongruities between older versions of Stanislavski and Shakespearean performance, they are sometimes thought to be incompatible.

The work of this thesis suggests this need not be so. Per the design offered in Chapter 1, this project follows the psychophysical focus of Stanislavskian theorists, including Merlin, Carnicke, Benedetti, et. al, and follows most closely to Stanislavski's own late-life practices and theories, especially Active Analysis and the primacy of action, as described in '3:3:H The Primacy of Action.' A thorough reading of Benedetti's translation of Stanislavski, which updates and addresses many of the issues with the original Hapgood translations deemed problematic by numerous scholars and practitioners, yielded for this thesis a concise explanation of the role of action in Stanislavski's psychophysical System:

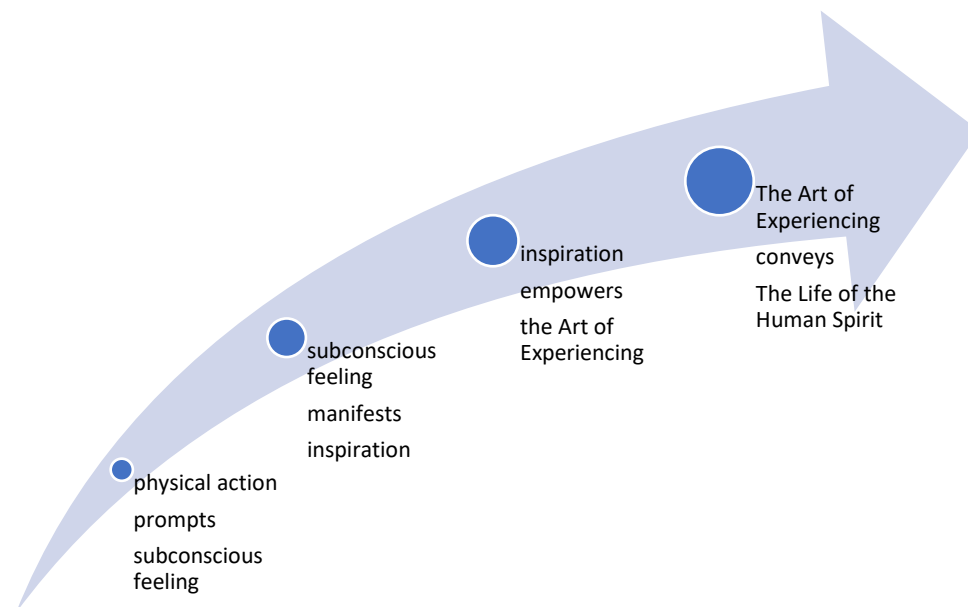


Figure 55 Stanislavskian psychophysical process

Stanislavski demands the primacy of action, which in turn goads the subconscious feelings necessary for inspiration to occur, leading ideally to Stanislavski's own form of second-order body awareness as established in Chapter 3, the Art of Experiencing where the Life of the Human Spirit is conveyed. If Stanislavski demands the primacy of action and OP demands the primacy of the text, then Living Thought is where the two become one. Living Thought, which conceptually per this

dissertation can now be understood as 'The Art of Experiencing for OP Shakespeare', dissolves the boundaries of mover and moved, text and action, as discussed throughout this thesis, resulting in the actor both performing the text and being moved by it (Martin, 1991, p. 178). Even before Living Thought can be reached in performance, all action in OP derives from the text.

Relevant to the highly theatrical style of OP, this dissertation addresses and ultimately discounts the argument that Stanislavski is wholly unsuitable for Shakespeare. Though specific aspects of his earlier work may be unsuitable for Shakespeare, much of his psychophysical theory and practice, including the primacy of action, the coordination of the bodymind, and his recognition that the theatrical act creates its own sense of truth, as demonstrated by this thesis, offers practical insight applicable to OP. Shakespeare's language creates its own sense of truth, and Living Thought, as with the cultivation of the general Creative State, requires a coordinated bodymind. As discussed in Chapter 3, even the OP primacy of the text and Stanislavski's primacy of action are potentially compatible. In OP, action derives principally from the text, and, when performed as Living Thought, the separation between text and action dissipates.

From the OP perspective, Shakespeare is accessible 'as-is', instead looking to historical staging conditions to present Shakespeare closer to 'as-was' for potential discovery of even greater nuance to his stagecraft when applied to a theatrical environment closer to their 'natural habitat.' Shakespeare's historical habitat predates psychological realism in theatre, the Psychological Revolution, and, by decades, Cartesian Dualism. As argued by Linklater (Linklater, 1993, p. 6) and Martin (Martin, 1991, p. 7). Shakespeare's performance text reflects the Elizabethan

perspective on language as essentially embodied. As practiced in OP, Shakespeare reveals his stagecraft through his wordcraft, directing actions, rhythm, emotional response, and pace, often embedded within the verse form. Though not defined as such prior to this thesis, the embodied nature of the text suggests a certain level of psychophysicalism was an historical staging condition of Shakespeare's, and thus not only potentially useful to OP, but appropriate to the needs and philosophy of the form.

I hypothesized that psychophysical practices that foster a continuity, fluidity, and unity between body and mind, action and thought, would provide insight into understanding Living Thought in performance. I drew upon psychophysical theories and practices, including those of Zarrilli, Stanislavski, and Michael Chekhov, that offered strategies to better harmonize the bodymind to influence the shape and implementation of my psychophysical toolkit. Through the presented research, I identified shared qualities of unity of bodymind in performance between Living Thought and other higher performative states in psychophysical practices, including those known from traditional embodied practices. To investigate the hypothesis in practice, I designed the workshop series and toolkit to approach Living Thought as such a mode of psychophysical fluency specific to Shakespeare.

Analysis of the psychophysical theories and practices of Zarrilli's energy cultivation and Bella Merlin's work with late-Stanislavskian practices yielded further insight into understanding the functional power of Shakespeare's verse form. Zarrilli explains his psychophysical work as the cultivation and deployment of energy, and the source of that energy is breath (Zarrilli, 2009, p. 42). In Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting*, actors learn 'to direct the passions as they learn to control the breath' (p. 39).

Merlin's work explains the role of breath in the deployment of the performers' emotional energy from the text through Tempo-Rhythm. She contends that Tempo-Rhythm + Breath = Emotion as a natural response mechanism of the process (Merlin, 2007, p. 34). This is in keeping with other research regarding breath's role in generating emotion (Curthbertson-Lane, 2009) but also complementary to broader Shakespearean practice (Barton, 1984). By examining the possibilities of approaching Shakespeare psychophysically in this thesis, we can now describe Shakespeare as directing the passions as he indicates breath and Tempo-Rhythm through his verse form, as explained in Chapter 4.

#### 7:4 Approaching Living Thought in OP psychophysically

Living Thought is demanded and demonstrably achieved in professional OP theatres internationally by skilful actors from many different backgrounds and using many different styles, but there was no specific methodology preferred, offered, or documented on how that might be achieved until this dissertation. There has been considerable relevant information to the component pieces of Living Thought and how each might be addressed in practice, but this thesis includes a detailed investigation of how these component pieces fit together. To explore a psychophysical approach to OP Shakespeare towards Living Thought, I assembled a practical toolkit to facilitate the achievement of Living Thought in rehearsal and performance adjusted to suit the above stated conditions and challenges of OP and described in detail in Chapter 5. This toolkit includes:

1. Physicalizing the text
2. Six Energies of Feeling
3. Character Sculpting
4. Renaissance Rehearsal

Given the relationship between Tempo-Rhythm and breath in creating emotion, physical exercises attuned to specific texts represent practice psychophysically exploring the embedded stagecraft and direction of those texts. These exercises present opportunities for the practitioner to be *moved* by the text, physically in action and internally, i.e., emotionally, psychologically, etc. From the discussion of mind-body coordination presented in Chapter 3 and elsewhere in this dissertation, we can understand the interconnectivity of the mind and body as a psychophysical system. The role of action in Stanislavski's psychophysical system, identified above and elucidated in Chapter 3, demonstrates how physical action creates psychological, i.e., 'inner', drives through the sense of mind-body coordination. Though the mind and body are inextricably linked, as has been discussed at length throughout this thesis, balancing or refining that sense of coordination improves the ability of the performer to inhabit and embody actions in performance.

This dissertation's research includes evidence obtained during the workshop series conducted as practice-led research per the research design presented in Chapter 1 for this purpose. As explained in Chapter 5 and illustrated with the referenced supplementary footage, the psychophysically derived toolkit listed above was deployed to facilitate the bodymind coordination process, also including Shakespeare's text, per the required criteria of Living Thought identified above. The toolkit was implemented throughout each workshop in the progression, as presented in Chapter 5. This progression, broadly outlined once more, below, was developed from the research into psychophysical performance practice that informed the toolkit. The shape of the rehearsal process developed from examination of Stanislavski's

Method of Physical Actions and Maria Knebel's further revisions of it into Active

Analysis:

1. Embodiment exercises
  - a. Physicalizing the text
  - b. Preliminary character sculpting (animal work, introduction to Imaginary Body)
  - c. Introduction to Six Energies
2. Read the Script
3. The Ren-Run Process
4. Rehearsal
  - a. Scenework
  - b. Character Sculpting
    - i. Imaginary Body
    - ii. Amorphous Body incorporating animal/Imaginary Body
    - iii. Application of Six Energies to Amorphous Body

The workshop series conducted as research for this thesis yielded insight both into the nature of Living Thought, as intended and discussed above, but also, practical insight into further revision to the existing toolkit and considerations for its implementation in practice.

#### 7:5 limitations of the research

As discussed in Chapter 6, the energy levels of individuals in the workshop series could be disrupted by the energy levels of the group, and vice versa. Based on these results, further focus on the cultivation of energy itself would have been beneficial to the median energy level of each cast, not just from Shakespeare's text, nor for the embodiment of inhabitation exercises as was practiced in this project, but as a fuel source for the performers. In Zarrilli's psychophysical practice, as discussed, the source of energy is breath, the psyche-enlivening principle, which is then manipulated and channelled through the methodology of Psychophysical Acting. Given the constraints of OP as defined by this thesis, an OP rehearsal environment cannot afford the same focus exclusively towards attunement and/or

cultivation. For this project, I incorporated the work of energy cultivation and manipulation into the rehearsal process, shifting focus away from Zarrilli's pre-performative work. However, per the results of the workshop series, I now suggest some adjustment in that direction towards dedicated cultivation and attunement work, specifically breath-work, as with Zarrilli's practice where such work is primary to 'awakening energy' (2009, p. 83). Making Living Thought habitual requires habitual work, but even for those performers who do not achieve Living Thought, such work could have a direct positive effect on group energy levels.

As demonstrated in Chapter 6, group energy and the interaction between performers of varying levels of energy has an observable effect on the group dynamic, noted within as evidence of collective Living Thought. Performers dropping energy or simply lacking the energy necessary to sustain the group pace have been shown to limit other performers from maintaining Living Thought, and affecting the overall pace, fluidity, and vitality of the entire performance. Raising median energy levels through the recommended cultivation could mitigate the effect on the group dynamic by making the overall performance livelier and improving the energy levels of individual performers. Any exercises that cultivate *group* energy, beyond just raising the individual energy level, could be especially useful for the sense of cohesion such exercises might foster.

From the outset, this project examined Living Thought as a concept encapsulating Shakespearean principles in performance and representing them achieved together as one in the moment, but I failed to account in certain respects for the critical role of integration/synchrony that I recommend for future psychophysical approaches to Shakespeare. Beyond cultivating the energy of the group in rehearsal, exercises or

techniques that synergize the group could improve dynamic and cohesion. I recommend such activities before *and* after the Ren-Run process, when the group will be most reliant on one another.

Theorist and practitioner John Britton's psychophysically-based ensemble training, 'Self-With-Others,' involves the composition of performance scores that 'De-emphasize an individual in a role' and choreographing 'collective, embodied, psychophysical tasks' (Britton, 2013, p. 280) Britton's work and therefore represents a useful source for further development of the toolkit towards facilitating collective Living Thought.

As demonstrated in Chapter 6, participants' progress towards Living Thought was often inhibited by their disconnection with the work. While, inevitably, some techniques will not appeal to all performers, in some cases the performers were willing to engage with the work but unable to overcome habits and preconceptions that proved incongruous with the process. Considering this, I recommend incorporating work that prepares actors to open themselves to the work of the text, to surrender to processes that may seem unfamiliar, and to let go of habitual tricks and techniques that seem comfortable but are at odds with the psychophysical work of OP.

### 7:6 further considerations

Living Thought is perhaps inherent in, but not exclusive to, OP. The work of Michael Langham, Des McAnuff, the University of Delaware PTPP in classical theatre, Language & Text directors in general, and adherents to First Folio technique specifically, all adhere to Living Thought in name and/or principle without being

limited exclusively to OP. However, Living Thought may be more clearly distinguished in OP, stripped down to the Grotowskian poverty (Falocco, 2010, p. 5) of Shakespeare's stagecraft and technologically retrograde setting. Living Thought must be able to manifest within OP performance, as it is shown to do in Chapter 6. In some cases, students who demonstrated the qualities of Living Thought most clearly were performing under OP conditions for the first time. Further, students operating in OP conditions for the first time can still exhibit qualities towards Living Thought, demonstrating growth as performers, even without entirely enacting Living Thought.

This project considered the above-stated conditions of OP as an aspect of the research design and incorporated them into the toolkit. Shakespeare's text, itself psychophysical as argued to this point, and the common conditions of OP call for nimble, flexible, and physical techniques that can assist performers in the practice of psychophysical embodiment and textual fluency. The more these exercises can overlap, interact, or serve in multiple functions, the more integrated the overall performance is likely to be while working efficiently to meet the brisk pacing and schedule of OP.

As a consequence of psychologically-biased interpretations of Stanislavski, popularized by the American Method and cinema, he has borne the blame for 'the perceived decline in the quality of Shakespearean acting' (Simms, 2019, p. 121), a problem given Stanislavski's ubiquity in actor training and theory. In OP, Stanislavski's reputation is tarnished by his perception as dependant on psychologically-driven subtext, which is largely rejected as irrelevant to Shakespeare, subverting 'the mainline twentieth-century approaches to acting that

are rooted in Stanislavski's work' (Kanelos, 2013, p. 64). However, given his ubiquity in the field, Stanislavski is difficult if not impossible to avoid.

As demonstrated herein, however, Stanislavski can still be embraced. While there had been little written about *cultivating* Living Thought in OP prior to this dissertation, Bella Merlin has written about applying her own psychophysical Stanislavskian-derived practice to Shakespeare, notably with Tina Packer a Language & Text director noted for her appreciation for textual primacy comparable to OP directors, as discussed in Chapter 4. Also, Packer's company, *Shakespeare & Company*, is steeped in the Linklater vocal tradition. The research of this project has brought these sources together to further the work in the field of psychophysically derived Stanislavskian practice in Shakespeare, in significant part modelled after Merlin's own work and analysis.

So long as Shakespeare remains a relevant subject in education and world literature, which remains likely for the foreseeable future of humanity, understanding his text will continue to challenge educators, critics, dramaturges, directors, performers, and students. The English language changes relatively rapidly. We may come to a time where Shakespeare's heightened Elizabethan dialect will no longer be considered 'modern' by all but the broadest possible meanings. Other academics have already predicted that Shakespeare will soon become as different a language from contemporarily spoken English as Chaucer's Middle English is to contemporary ears as of the time of this writing.

Cohen teaches us to learn Shakespeare by playing the text and/or experiencing live performance of the text. As one of the most important figures in OP, he and others like Jim Warren and Peter Brook, have demonstrated, definitively, that Shakespeare

can work in the modern era without the need for extraneous technologies, gimmicks, directorial visions, and reinterpretations. If we are to take the OP position, as I have done in this dissertation, that Shakespeare's text is most sensible in the performance, for actor and audience alike, when his historical conditions are respected, then we must also consider what we obfuscate through the inclusion of such anachronisms, e.g., 'gimmicks'.

OP and Living Thought, individually and with the latter in the context of the former, demand the clarification of Shakespearean text through performance, *as intended*.

The plays were meant to be played:

Elizabethan acting was designed to express the spirit through the physical medium of the body. The tragic actor could bring the author's character to life with a vivid grandeur of spirit and truthful intensity of emotion, and the Elizabethan audiences, well-schooled from an early age in the intricacies of rhetorical delivery, including manual rhetoric, appreciated these nuances in the text – even the groundlings could understand the difficult language by this use of gesture (Martin, 1991, p. 7).

This places the responsibility upon the performers, directors, and producers of OP to play Shakespeare with sufficiently high levels of textual fluency to clarify the text, and sufficient psychophysical fluency to convey it through their full performance. That can present a challenge to actors performing centuries' old material in a contemporary context. Unfortunately, we cannot possess the facility with their own vernacular that they possessed.

The historical staging conditions of OP strips away distractions and unnecessary shortcuts, but the work of the actor remains to bring out the meaning by embodying the words, actions, and thoughts in the text. Shakespeare's original players would have been fluent with Shakespeare's writing, blank verse, and the verbiage of the day, but most actors today will have to work to gain that fluency in some way. The

toolkit progression investigated through the practice-led research of this project was designed to fit the bounds of OP and foster the sense of Living Thought while facilitating the actors' own fluency with the text and their communication of that fluency in performance. This thesis represents the first systematic psychophysical approach to Shakespearean rehearsal for OP and Living Thought.

OP is only one mode of performance for Shakespeare. His work is in the public domain and anything produced using his text has as much potential artistic validity as anything produced in an OP setting. However, the work done in OP, and learned from OP, is potentially valuable for theatre practitioners, academics, and others in an educational setting interested in Shakespeare's text 'on its own terms'. Living Thought is considered by some of North America's most significant directors of Shakespeare to be essential to understanding and performing Shakespeare, with deep connections to the First Folio and OP's mutual foundation on the primacy of the text. The work of approaching Living Thought has implications for Shakespearean performance beyond OP and as suggested by Warren (2021), beyond Shakespeare. It is my hope that the work of this research can serve further practice in approaching Shakespeare and Living Thought psychophysically.

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