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## Demystifying an Appropriate Use of a Performer's 'Energy' Where the Performer's Body Becomes 'Real'

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### Abstract

*This thesis investigates the meaning of a performer's energy taking into an account of the full bodily engagement as the flow of energy and/or psychophysical readiness focusing specifically on the significance of qualitative bodily transformation. In this contemporary era, the dominance of performer training and its approaches to acting/training has very frequently meant that how to play a character in a textual based approach by emphasizing on interpreting and impersonating the role as real as possible. In this sense, as a performer trainer, from my observation and research findings shows that it is common for the term energy is not to be motivated by what a performer's body needs within a specific moment in specific performance which they are working on. To address the problematic issues, this thesis begins by interrogating the practical meaning of transformation with addressing the principle and process of movement by means of the flow of energy on stage. For a performer, inhabiting/integrating his/her body and mind as oneness and/or unity means s/he sincerely encounter, confront, and therefore listen to his/her body in here and now. Because since the performer's physical appearance completely defined his/her psychological state, no one can play either the past or the future in the moment. In this manner, an appropriate use of energy synonymous with the flow of energy correspondence with the given time and space in which the performer's body informs and initiates movement as necessary action. To be precise, the performer's bodily movement either visible or invisible in a sense of training and rehearsal is perceived as attaining or achieving psychophysical involvement as the full body engagement which enable to make the event happen in the right moment. Here, this thesis argues that the significance of a performer's inner intensity reminds us of the necessity of qualitative transformation on which the performer could discover his/her own mode of awareness as well as a way his/her body function in the given circumstance. From this point of view, this research finding would advocates that the performer's body maintains in the field of energy flow where his/her conscious effort and/or mindfulness disappear. The performer's movement is a manifestation of the whole bodily engagement by means of being as real in that moment rather than representing reality.*

**Keywords:** *A Performer's Energy, A Qualitative Transformation, The Whole Bodily Engagement, Response as a Function, A State of Being as Real*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research explores the practical meaning of a performer's energy in articulating its place and role in which a performer's body is able to alive in the given circumstances on stage. For a performer, facilitating and inhabiting the source of life, energy through his/her body means the performer evidently acknowledges where and how his/her body initiate in here and now. In this manner, the performer's body is defined as an integrated oneness rather than s/he tries or attempts to assume what comes in the next which s/he may anticipate before his/her body moves. Here, the performer's body is being in the moment by means of the smallest details of his/her body came to be felt and understood as 'real' rather than 'represent reality.'

A performer's energy, more precisely the *flow* of energy is implicated in his/her active awareness with intuition that allows any bodily movement to be alive on stage. In the same manner, Stephanie French and Philip Bennett note that controlling and moving the flow of energy "leads to the creative state that invites inspiration." In addition to this, the state also encompasses the "circulation" of a performer's mental-physical energy on which the communication/relationship between a performer and spectator "fully engaged" in the performance [1].

As a performer trainer, my observation with the latest research findings show that it is common for a performer's energy not to be motivated by a central bodily need, thus, to be a confusion concerning the reason for. Accordingly, this thesis argues that a performer's exploration through studio work and/or a process of rehearsal should be understood by experiencing and maintaining his/her bodily sensations in order to discover new dimension(s) which his/her body acknowledges then accepts what his/her body wants to achieve as adapting/applying a specific training source(s).

Arming the points above, this thesis would address the following questions as potential dilemmas for performers with regard to an appropriate use of his/her energy and evaluate its significance for contemporary performer training:

- A performer's energy/breath becomes shallow and/or labored in his/her unconscious level
- There is little sensation in a part of a performer's body
- As the performer's body locks up s/he cannot be aware of his/her body
- There is a tense and discomfort as a form of rigid or robotic body
- The performer's body is not fully engaged in what his/her body is meant to be saying

All the descriptions with the problematic issues of a performer's energy provided above emphasize the fact that the key principle of acting is directly linked to the question of 'how to initiate and appropriately use one's body' in order to survive within unknowable/unpredictable moment on stage. The incarnation of a performer being greedy undermines organic and complementary relationship between his/her body and the source of energy, breathing. Therefore, it is the performer's "first and foremost responsibility" to make the event "happen" on his/her feet, studio work as well as throughout rehearsal [2]. In other words, a performer's energy has to be developed then applied to what is 'happening' within the performance environment where his/her body must 'respond' in that moment. Namely, it is a process of invisible to visible by means of the 'reality of doing.' For the reason, a state of a performer's consciousness is highly desirable and therefore allow the performer to experience his/her own experience through internal process.

The implication of internal process reminds us of the need for a performer's qualitative bodily transformation from daily pattern of a performer's body/energy to inhabiting/controlling the energy in his/her conscious level. This suggests that the necessity of bodily shift by means of a performer's scenic behaviors which facilitate his/her body to be in a state of the whole bodily engagement as corporeality. It is the

performer's bodily awareness within which the performer's body enables to a sense of intuitivity in spiritual manner, not religious terminology. As the foundation to being/changing in that moment on stage, the performer's energy intensifies the quality of his/her identity as a doer/performer in here and now. That is, being in a state of psychophysical readiness of a performer, explicitly awakening and maintaining the power of passivity in order to circulate his/her energy around the space/time, the given circumstance.

For pursuit of a deeper, I will discuss a performer's energy specifically addressing its appropriate use and, as a result of this, a state of a performer's body as to being 'real.' In doing so, I will make sense of this fundamental aspects of the performer's body based on a community of experience and practice. To address the problematic issues mentioned above, I examine the phenomenon, particularly being in such a state where the body as oneness or unity itself react through his/her psychophysical score rather than predetermining or rationalizing intellectual knowledge.

## 2. AN APPROPRIATE USE OF A PERFORMER'S ENERGY/BODY: ACHIEVING PSYCHOPHYSICAL INVOLVEMENT

First of all, acting is about a process of creative transformation, no matter what method or system is employed. The term, 'transformation' in this context basically indicates the idea of a "person transformed into someone different" [3]. Specially, John Gillett refers Michael Chekhov's notion of the word, that is, a performer's "nature, consciously or subconsciously, longs for" in which Gillett further suggests that the term denotes a "complete alternation in form and character, so that one thing changes into another" [4]. The differentiation from a performer to someone we do not distinguish in place of allowing to being as an "unknown quantity" by means of a "new person" [5]. In other words, the quality of a performer's body lies in responding to the smallest stimulation from in/outside including other performers, objects, and additional theatrical surroundings within which the body is perceived as to be alive moment-by-moment.

For a performer, this process would mean that each key principle of acting is accompanied by encountering his/her body in order to fit into the given circumstance. The state, for example, we generally prefer a sense of 'comfortable continuity' in daily life is different from what the term transformation essentially signifies. Thus, it has to be stressed that working on the performer's whole bodily engagement denotes not only the integration between his/her body and mind but also maintaining a state of psychophysical readiness.

Here, we can see that the performer's psychophysical action necessarily needs to involve his/her inner experience in order to "stir and convey the turmoil inside" of the performer [6]. This concept with its approach reinforces and constantly feeds other aspect of practice/training. More specifically since a performer's physical appearance directly precise his/her psychological state, no one can play either the past or future in the present. It means that the performer's central task is how to sincerely encounter and listen to his/her body in here and now which facilitates his/her body to sincerely encounter/listen to the other performers. Naturally, the process in turn transfigures the time and space within which the performer's body informs an appropriate use (meaning) of his/her energy and necessary action.

In this manner, obtaining psychophysical involvement is triggered by projecting and articulating what is taking place in the circumstance ideally in the simplest way. In contrast to this, making or mostly *showing* a number of unnecessary traits, action, and/or movement is unable to be present. That is, as Hugh O'Gorman notes the performer does not maintain his/her "target of attention" on his/her partners and the surroundings. Hence, in this sense, the performer is not *doing* his/her job [7]. O'Gorman further argues that being in such a moment, he defines the moment as a state of "self-generating" suggests the performer's energy is not fit into the event happen. Instead, the body/energy is presented as "acting independently of one another" and therefore "nothing happened" in the moment/performance. As a consequence of this, the event/story is not "occurring"

and "being told" [8].

Therefore, the notion of continuity of a performer's internal intensity has to be understood as a prerequisite condition which the performer has to accurately inhabit through his/her bodily experience. This again refines the ultimate purpose and/or goal of any discipline. That is, what Phillip Zarrilli calls the performer's "ability to deploy kinaesthetic/bodymind 'knowledge' in the 'flow' of the moment" [9]. Zarrilli's concept with thought is intensely based on the hypothesis that mind and body are profoundly related, rejecting the idea of bodymind dualism. In terms of training, Zarrilli's approach contains request for what is deficient and what necessarily needs to be done to regain the balance in which the performer's body as a useful vehicle enrich his/her perceptual capacities while one moment will be psychophysically linked to the next.

Parallel with Zarrilli's perspective, Amanda Brennan takes the kinetic energy which as we have already discussed "always flows, vibrates and is transformative" [10]. For Brennan, energy is 'life force' and inhabiting/releasing the vital source as a pivot facilitates the intensity of a performer's bodily awareness simultaneously enable to integrate the body as to be articulated and/or balanced unity. This underlies that inappropriate use and/or distribution of the source, energy causes the performer's psychophysical disorder where his/her body loss balance, accordingly the body is not being in the flow of energy.

For this reason, it is important to note that working and being from the state alters the way a performer's bodily *function* on stage. More significantly, the process confirms that the performer can be alive from his/her bodily experience by means of his/her *own* sense, focus, and energy through discovering inside him/herself towards professional identity.

### **3. THE ATTUNEMENT OF THE BODY TOWARDS A PERFORMER'S FULLY ENGAGED BODY: THE FLOW OF ENERGY**

As discussed above a performer's internal readiness accompanies his/her energy as the performer's substance which in turn to initiate his/her body. Maintaining the intensity of energy offers to discover each performer's *own* mode of bodily awareness as well as its *function* on stage. The body in this perspective is being in an appropriate use of energy in pursuit of a specific objective with really engaging in what it is s/he is doing. Eugenio Barba suggests that it is "patterns of energy which is applied to the way of conceiving or composing a dramatic action" [11]. In other words, the decisive meaning come along in the 'doing' which strengthened the performer's psychological realms without a conscious effort. Here, the absence of effort or tension of a performer's conscious endeavor should be understood as his/her mature internal cultivation where the "way for the appropriate gesture will follow" [12].

Then how can this process be applied and embodied through the performer's body? And how to transform the performer's body to being in a state of whole bodily engagement specifically in the absence of tense or conscious effort of the performer?

Addressing the questions with the process of the embodiment is answering the question of what attunement body is by means of a performer's qualitative transformation. Again, as we have discussed earlier, the process of transformation asks us to rearrange habitual and/or customary personality for example a socio-culturally conditioned habits and persona. In a simplified account, the process requires a performer to inhabit a sense of the flow of energy to gaze into his/her inner world. It is evident that within the next series of moment, the performer's body would meet a point of departure where his/her conscious effort and/or anticipation minimized.

Here, the phenomenon, being free from ordinary emotion or wandering thoughts incorporates inward bodily awareness in the moment that s/he is *working* on. The performer's body is "engaged in what is actually happening *now* – this moment" aside from his/her presumptions that s/he might has an idea of what s/he think is right or "correct" [13]. Maintaining in the moment enables to expand the performer's bodily experiences

and allow him/her to (re) discover a range of new possibilities along with having to keep encounter and contact with his/herself.

In contrast to this, those unnecessary actions including the force of effort and/or mindfulness often from the performer's self-admiration with ego-consciousness reflect the body is not in acting and responding (function) to an appropriate energy and the right moment. In particular, listening and confronting to one's body informs a state of the flow on which as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi notes the "ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one" that is "your whole being is involved" [14]. Certainly, the performer is necessarily needed to reach the point where these principles can be made use while s/he is performing.

From a perspective of Csikszentmihalyi's view, it is neither a matter of learning an explicit discipline nor a specific method or system by judging in an intellectual sense. Rather, the point reminds us of the significance of encountering and experiencing the subtle and/or invisible movement within which the performer's body is "being connected to, and present with, your whole self in the moment" [15]. More specifically, the performer's inward subtle shift, to be precise 'transformation' works as a meditator to integrate the gap between the performer's inner concentration and outer movement.

This confirms that a performer's internal preparation for the whole bodily engagement again underlies the process of how to listen his/her body allowed and enhanced the flow of energy having a sense of internal quality. In addition to this, being in such a series of moment facilitates movement to happen. Also, it is no matter how slight a bodily action since the performer's body initiate, move, and act according to his/her subtlety where the performer's inner intensity moves and/or changes from the invisible to visible.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We have examined the implication of a performer's energy in considering and pursuing a way focused mainly on its appropriate use on stage. Then we have moved on defining and articulating the phenomenon specifically addressing the term, transformation as prerequisite condition for the performer towards the optimal state of the whole bodily engagement by means of the flow of energy.

For the performer, experiencing then inhabiting the source of life, energy implies that the body is to being a state on which his/her body act/respond to the smallest stimulation simultaneously to right moment. We have acknowledged that the performer's daily habit, particularly a sense of comfortable continuity in his/her unconscious level is completely differ from what the principles and practices of a performer's qualitative transformation fundamentally informs.

It is to say that this personal habit and/or compulsion, that is, "machinelike subservience" necessarily needs to be eliminated [16] so that the body as to being balanced unity means a state of non-tension/stiff. As this research finding shows that an appropriate use of a performer's energy depends on answering the question and process of how the performer sincerely listen to his/her body in here and now. A series of moment, taking place from the performer's body, is inner intensity by means of a state of awake, connected to, therefore being alive and/or told in a given situation.

Freeing from such psychophysical disorder is the performer's body is appropriately function in initiating and moving with ease on stage. Here, the body as its *function* on stage implies allowing for the motivating external movement from inner intensity. Also, we have discussed that the ultimate clarity and creative moment comes from minimal, invisible and/or tiny movement. Without having found the details through his/her bodily experience and sensation will merely remain as representation of words and/or gestures by means of the performer's exterior appearance.

We argued that it is an important aspect of the performer's work both in terms of his/her creative learning

and practicing a wide range of disciplines, and its application/adaptability for enhancing his/her performance capacity according to what his/her practical needs. Equally, the concepts with approaches discussed above resemble that the attunement of a performer's body has to correspondence with initiating then allowing a subtle, invisible and/or any tiny movement. As a point of departure, the subtle, invisible and/or tiny 'movement' means the performer is in a state of the whole bodily engagement, fitting into the event happen rather than pursuing on an outcome or the result.

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