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The Significance of a Performer's 'Unpredictability' and 'Immediacy' to Enhance His/Her 'Identity' as a Doer on Stage

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Abstract

This thesis discusses a performer's unpredictability and immediacy as a prerequisite quality and/or ability to facilitate his/her professional identity as a doer on stage. To examine the key principles and approaches, this research focuses on addressing a specific aspect of the performer's transformative experience from those, directors, and practitioners' concepts that inform and enhance the performer's passive readiness on stage. To be precise, this research attempt to interrogate and articulate the place and role of a performer's internal readiness and/or that of inner looking. The performer's inner intensity as seed of action signifies that his/her body is being in a state of listening to every tiny moment with his/her heightened awareness which in turn lead the performer's body to meet the demands of theatre, the whole-body engagement. Here, this thesis argues that the key principles of acting/training underlies the importance of a performer's ethical attitude and at the same time his/her responsibility for what the performer's choices and experiences within the performative involvement, that is, a process of preparation, are not technical matter but rather, the concepts, and/or approaches from those theatre artists' practical assumptions highlight a process of thorough encountering and/or listening to his/her body. Inhabiting and/or obtaining the principles through the performer's body means being free from his/her unnecessary trait(s) which in turn initiate and then move the whole body according to what is happening in the series of moment(s) on stage. What is more, such an appropriate psycho-physical order reminds us of the significance of the nature of human/performer's body, namely, to being in a state of one's 'own' body as oneness. From this perspective, this thesis further argues that the performer's body necessarily need to be affected and/or triggered in a sense of responding to the given circumstance where the performer is working on in the here and now.

Keywords: Performer's Identity, Inner Intensity, Unpredictability, Immediacy, Transformative Experience

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explore the idea of a performer's identity as a doer on stage in reconsidering and articulating the practical assumptions and approaches from those theatre practitioners' concepts for performer training. Particularly, this research investigates to examine a performer's invisible quality, namely, the role and place of a performer's internal readiness with his/her ethical attitude in order to fit into the given circumstances for which his/her ideas and disciplines underpin their practices and studio work. In other words, the aim of this thesis is not looking for a specialized tool to build or create a character nor is it focused on learning or finding a specific method as an effective way(s). Rather, as a performer and drama teacher, I will discuss the necessity of the aforementioned 'invisible' quality of a performer by means of prerequisite quality

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and key principle to reach behind the term performer training itself.

This suggests that since any performer training has essentially to meet the demand of a performer's desirable objective, a point of departure for performer training should also be understood abandoning and/or eliminating unnecessary traits towards an optimal state, that is, his/her (professional) identity as a performer and doer *on* stage. Among many, a number of studies with the underlying principles highlight, for example, the performer's "intuitive power" which "binds all skills together" in a sense of his/her "concentrated mind" [1]. This embrace that the performer's bodily awareness as vital source or energy to initiate his/her body in turn incorporates his/her outer movement in every tiny moment within the *right* moment. Here, the performer's subtlety of bodily movement emerged from what and how the performer's body rigorously and genuinely encounter then listen to his/her body in the here and now.

In terms of performer training, the performer's inner intensity echoes the integration between his/her body and mind by means of the source and/or seed of action in which the performer's body enables to transform from daily to extra daily body, sense and/or awareness as his/her 'own identity' as a doer. As I discussed above, from a performer's perspective, this thesis will address the significance of a performer's interior process center on articulating the term, the performer's 'identity' as a 'doer' *on* stage. By examining this process, this thesis also offers an additional perspective through which the terms and processes can be evaluated providing the necessity of a challenge and bodily transformative experience in order to interrogate a way to enhance the performer's understanding of acting in a practical sense and the process to reach in a state of a deep somatic level working on the given context.

2. DEFINING A PERFORMER'S INTERNAL READINESS: AS SEED OF ACTION TOWARDS A STATE OF UNPREDICTABILITY

In terms of the foundation of acting and the central purpose of training, a performer's bodily discipline specifically emphasizes the development of his/her body as to be subordinating and maintaining to the moment where the performer is *now* working on. From a perspective of a performer's bodily engagement, being in such a state means that the performer is being free from his/her ego-consciousness with doubt about what/how he/she is doing a specific action within the series of moment, the given circumstance. In particular, the place of a performer's inner intensity signifies being in a state of readiness to correspond to the stimuli from in/outside of his/her body. In this sense, Bella Merlin notes that the performer's bodily immediacy here connotes a "genuine and dynamic connection" in-between "seen action and unseen sensation." Merlin provides above us useful insight into the relationship between a performer's inner and outer, especially invisible and visible movement which she calls as a "*continuum*," not divided in a sense of dualistic manner, but is the "crux of psycho-physical co-ordination" [2].

In this sense, we can evidently acknowledge that the latter, invisible (sensation) always precedes the former, visible (action) by means of a performer's unwavering concentration and/or a state of freeing from wandering thoughts from the dominance of his/her analytical or intellectual sense. In other words, the performer's qualitative bodily transformation by means of its immediacy, as a result of 'encountering,' implies a state of his/her whole bodily engagement in responding to what is *happening* according to it is *happening* in the here and now. Or, as Michael Howard suggests that "what is happening to the actor at every moment is, in fact, what is happening to the character" which for Howard is "what moment to moment work means in the theater" [3]. In this manner, therefore, it is important to note that as Betsy Polatin defines the performer's state referring to the term 'proprioception' from the "Latin *proprio*" which is literally signifies the meaning, "one's own" [4].

Comparable to Merlin discussed above, as an extension of this development, Polatin's research and approach focus on the term a performer's 'attention' in relation to his/her balance of inner and outer awareness in the field of performer training. In contrast to this, a performer's inappropriate psychophysical order, not 'one's own' from a perspective of Polatin's concepts suggests the body is not "ongoing present consists of this moment" therefore the series of following moment is also isolated from the performer's body, not an organic relationship between inner and outer and/or body and mind. One example of this process is found in the incarnation of a performer's being readiness that can be experienced and/or obtained through a process of

contemplating the nature of his/her body. From a perceptible level, Polatin further notes that maintaining a performer's bodymind integration, as he calls it as "50-50 awareness" is a key pathway to present in the here and now. This quality then in turn the performer's body can move through a specific moment/scene the performer works [5]. Naturally, an intense encounter with a performer's body informs his/her empirical experience in the most intimate level that accompanies a process of discovering unexpected moments and/or unknowable territories through rehearsal and studio work.

Here, this thesis argues that the performer's internal readiness, discovering and maintaining the invisible quality through a performer's body can be stimulated and sharpened by means of transcending an inappropriate state where his/her body is not as separate as one and the *other*. Plus, as a result of the process, the performer's body is placed in-between known but unknown territory by means of facing and/or encountering the unexpected moment(s). In this sense, if we consider the prerequisite quality of a performer's identity as doer *on stage* has to meet the demands of his/her inward looking. This underlies the significance of a performer's internal substance which must be internalized in order to develop and create an ensemble work in final. This idea with the practical process refers to the necessity of awakening and/or attuning a performer's subtle energy/awareness, that is, the seed of action in order to initiate then activate his/her body as unity on which the performer's body becomes apparent, economic and/or precise in the process of articulation.

As this thesis repeatedly stress that the channel of a performer's internal readiness is hence represented as a circle of his/her action and reaction by facilitating and creating a fundamental ground for the performer. In other words, a performer's seed of action, namely his/her inner intensity allows the body towards instinctive responses by means of unpredictability within a theatrical context. The performer's bodily involvement in the process of thorough encountering (listening, watching, meeting) with his/her body facilitates and prompts a capable of being open a "mature personality" by the process of profoundly confront with him/herself [6]. What is important here is that reaching and/or achieving the apparent or precise body by means of obtaining his/her 'mature personality' is a "holistic experience for body-mind" and the state refers to the "performer existing as an empty vessel" from a perspective of Japanese performing arts, for instance [7]. In other words, the necessity of a performer's inner cultivation underlies that of becoming an appropriate meaning of a state which is different layers of his/her immature attitude and/or mind.

In this regard, therefore, it is clearer that the question of how to become the role, character and/or 'someone else' might be impractical one since the performer's central task is neither to find out an effective way, that is, acts well nor is it encouraged his/her rationalization in "making a comment and a judgement you might hear from other people" [8]. Rather, the important aspect of all this is to interrogate the essence of how the performer's inner intensity initiates and moves his/her body allowing for a variety of responses. If we take these principles one step further, a range of the performer's subtlety can be the key element of emergent state of 'lived moment' by means of invisible and unpredictable territory.

Let us consider what Hugh O'Gorman articulates this issue and gives a specific term/quality emerged from the performer's body:

The unpredictability is both powerful and liberating once you embrace it. It allows for the element of surprise. Great acting is filled with constant and ongoing surprise, and nothing like surprise more than the camera. If your acting isn't surprising to you, to your scene partner, and to the audience, then you aren't fully in the moment, you aren't fully in action, and it probably isn't your best, most inspired work. [...] Inspired acting asks the actor to embrace the improvisatory nature of the moment and let go of any desire to control [9].

Specifically, O'Gorman defines above 'what great acting is' in relation to the performer's bodily shift manifesting his/her internal readiness which he refers to the performer's 'unpredictability' on stage in phenomenon. As we have examined that an appropriate state is acquired through encountering his/her body with internal looking which in turn the performer's body to be a heightened awareness as an optimal mode and/or state of engagement through the moment. This prerequisite quality, a state of the performer's readiness to response from his/her in/outside signifies that the performer's body begins to initiate in the surroundings

within the time and space. At the same time, the performer is required eliminating the assumption of what comes in the next moment, as O’Gorman stressed above ‘let go of any desire to control.’

It is evident that the first and the next series of unpredictable moments can be emerged from letting and/or allowing his/her body in accordance with the changeable moment(s) on which the performer’s body accompanies with every tiny detail of the moment. That is, no one predict or know before the moment is arisen, the ‘unpredictability.’ Here, we can acknowledge that as the performer’s body is newly function on stage thus the spectators see and sense the continuity of the performer’s inner intensity through ‘constant and ongoing surprise.’ A perspective from O’Gorman’s notion with the practical assumptions, an intense inner vitality and/or that of readiness becomes substance, seed of action which enrich to facilitate and allow the moment to happen in the ‘nature of the moment’ *on* stage.

3. A STATE OF IMMEDIACY: A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR REACHING A PERFORMER’S IDENTITY AS A DOER ON STAGE

As we have examined and articulated the performer’s inner intensity, answering the question of how to being in a state of ‘unpredictability,’ specifically discussed based on those theatre practitioners’ concepts and approaches including Polatin’s research and O’Gorman’s idea, which highlights the necessity and significance of a performer’s bodily (internal and external) preparation. In particular, the term, ‘preparation’ in this context underlies that the performer’s successful attainment of his/her full creative potentiality is intrinsically linked to the performer’s intense and heightened awareness *and* “embodied process of visualizing or imagining” [10].

Above all, the realms of a performer’s possibility to be as a state of an appropriate preparation and/or readiness is a way to define and articulate his/her identity as a doer on stage, and this creative inquiry demands of avoiding a merely intellectual engagement and/or that of choice in a conscious level. Rather, the emphasis is on letting ‘what happens to the performer’s body’ in consciously responsible for what his/her experiences and choices while the performative involvement.

Before we discuss the key principles and its processes further, it is necessary to consider one major problem which Phillip Zarrilli observes:

When teaching young actors, one of the major problems I encounter is that many are unable to simply ‘attend’ in the moment to what they are saying/doing. Rather, their squirrel-like ‘busy’ minds may be preoccupied with trying to remember their lines or ‘thinking’ about an action or motivation or intention they have scored or distracted because they are trying to incorporate a note from the teacher or director rather than embodying being ‘conscious in’ the moment and directing their attention and opening their awareness as appropriate to that moment in their performance score. [11].

Parallel with Polatin and O’Gorman’s concept, Zarrilli notes a *simple* way to being (‘attend’) in the moment. The central issue Zarrilli argue is that the more a performer emphasizes outcomes and/or results, the more his/her ‘busy mind(s)’ will be preoccupied in prescribing or predetermining what comes in the next which the performer’s teacher/director would want to represent. For Zarrilli, this *mind(s)*, differ from one’s own, fundamentally interrupts the dynamic relationship in-between his/her body and performance score, that is, what must be done. Accordingly, Zarrilli suggests that it is a state where the performer’s body is “*ready* for what comes next” providing the significance of a series of “sufficient preparatory training.” Among many, the discussion takes place through the key concepts of artistic/theatre practitioners including A.C. Scott, Jacques Copeau, and Eugenio Barba. For Zarrilli, these approaches and disciplines through any studio work that has to meet and understand as a “process of self-definition and personal justification” addressing centered on Eugenio Barba’s notion of ‘training.’ [12]. Here, it cannot be overemphasized that since any performer’s job is to identify, clarify, then intensify ‘what must be done’ in the given circumstance and/or in the here and now given by a playwright, the term, preparation is also necessarily need to be understood and adapted by evaluating and

accomplishing a desired outcome which a specific character/role wants to pursue and obtain in *urgency*.

In this respect, being a state of the performer's unpredictability informs how his/her body appropriately prepared in order to accomplish what is wanted within which his/her body inhabits a strong sense of heightened urgency. Here, one may notice the nature of experiencing to the here and now that these terms/qualities of the performer's body is then inevitably and eventually affected or more specifically *triggered* in accordance with what/how his/her body listen to the series of inner/outer stimuli. That is, differ from the performer's own feelings and/or thoughts in pursuit of the character/role's emotion in a level of intellectual sense. In other words, being in a state of immediacy *on stage* means the performer's body is attaining a capacity for a totality of performative engagement in maintaining the root of his/her central task. It is evident that the performer's bodily sensations can be produced and vitalized when his/her body is in the moment of experiencing a qualified articulation by means of the medium of generating knowledge and simultaneously transferring the text/action within the field of context.

As we have discussed above, it is important to note that in a process of such systematic involvement, the performer would experience and develop his/her *own* personal account of the moment(s) under the experientiality. By the process, specific capacity the performer can inhabit through his/her body facilitates and enables being well aware of complementarity in-between his/her body and mind where the body is *triggered* from the moment of *experienced* in a sense of oneness. The potentiality for a truly 'transformative experience' through his/her body means expanding and cultivating the medium, the body, as to be a "flexible and sensitive body" which in turn facilitate the performer's capacity to "pursue action on stage." Laura Wayth considers this perspective from her teaching experiences in Europe, UK, and Asia in which for Wayth we as human being are "becoming more and more disconnected from our bodies" [13].

Wayth's research and practical assumptions remind us of the necessity of adjusting and developing those approaches, disciplines, and/or practices into the performer's *personalized* configuration of a 'transformative experience' in order to design and reinforce the performer's own/~~unique~~ expert understanding/practice. To be more precise, Maria Shevtsova remarks a performer's 'obligation' to prepare for rehearsal not only to be ready for his/her collective work but also to be "intense engagement with each other demands serious preparation" [14]. In other words, on the one hand, the idea of a performer's unpredictability with constant and ongoing surprise connotes the performer's bodily immediacy through the embodiment of sensations and relations to the environment where the performer is now working on. Simultaneously, continuous and/or long-term training by working on him/herself is not a technical matter, but rather it is evidently rooted in the performer's ethical attitude, on the other. As we have examined that the value of any discipline can be found when the idea of self-discovery incorporates to find and develop his/her unknowable territory/ability. Consequently, the emphasis is not attempted to represent, but rather how the performer is trying to 'be.' The notion of 'trying to be' that underlie a strategy of how to survive as a *doer* on stage notably the establishment of a relationship between a performer's body and his/her task, namely, what must be done.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we have examined the concept of a performer's identity as a *doer on stage* by exploring the practical meaning of a performer's internal readiness with a state of unpredictability and immediacy in articulating the key principles and assumptions of acting/training from those theatre practitioners'/directors' approaches. In particular, this research investigated the way in which how the contemporary performer can obtain the whole bodily engagement in the moment centering on the two terms, 'unpredictability' as a seed of action and a state of 'immediacy' by means of a transformative experience. By considering and utilizing the sources, concepts, and approaches, this thesis also explored a performer's passivity as an appropriate state and readiness to work on a somatic level within the given circumstance.

First of all, this thesis argued that a performer's bodily engagement is a basis for working in the series of moment on stage in which the performer's body necessarily need to subordinate to the moment/environment in maintaining his/her inner concentrating and/or inward looking. Achieving the performer's inner intensity would mean that his/her body is appropriately united with his/her movement (seen action) and bodily

awareness (unseen sensation) simultaneously. The qualitative bodily transformation as a pathway to being in the moment led our attention to understanding/acknowledging the nature of a performer's body.

Consequently, the whole bodily engagement as a prerequisite quality/ability which prompt and facilitate a performer's openness to sincerely listen to his/her body and at the same time respond to stimuli from in/outside by means of his/her mature personality. Otherwise, the aforementioned principles, concepts, and/or approaches become vacuous since the performer's body is getting involved with his/her intellectual manner and therefore looking for a pretext. In other words, negating the next moment including a performer's ego-consciousness and predetermination for what comes in the next signifies the performer's body is to being in a state of passivity or that process of listening to every tiny moment emerged from unknowable territory that this thesis defined as the performer's 'unpredictability.'

Second, arming the research findings above, this thesis further argued that being in a state of unpredictability is to mean the temporal process of existence, 'immediacy' in accordance with a temporal change of the moment which brings forth a whole performer/human body. In this sense, we have seen one of the problems and examined the performer's tendency of 'busy mind' as an example from Zarrilli's observation; inaccurate understanding of the terms, acting and training among young student-actors does not fit into the given moment/circumstance.

Reconsidering the nature and meaning of a performer's body, we addressed the consideration issue of the gap between preparatory training and the necessity of a performer's responsibility in the performative involvement. In referring to this quality of a performer's body as seen from the perspective of those theatre artists' idea, we defined and acknowledged that we must be careful not to think of the acting/training as a technical matter. Rather, this research finding provides a rationale for contemporary performers to maintain his/her personal responsibility for what s/he made choices at the same time ethical attitude when they understand and apply a specific training, discipline, and/or whatever method that has to meet his/her transformative experience.

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