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SCENE

THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS THEATRE ASSOCIATION



THIS ISSUE:
Theatre across/without languages

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Edited by Emmy Abrahamson

Artwork by Jo Doidge

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Editorial

By Emmy Abrahamson

When I was younger I used to love watching the TV-series *The Twilight Zone*. The thrill of getting frightened from the safety of the sofa and surrounded by my siblings was both addictive and comforting. But there was one episode that genuinely scared me to the core – and still does. It was called *Wordplay* and centred around a salesman called Bill Lowery. As Bill leaves for work one day his neighbour refers to his dog as an “encyclopaedia”. Lowery just assumes that he has heard wrong. But during the day a young salesman talks about teaching old dogs new “trumpets”. More and more usages of words that are completely out of place occur e.g. when Lowery comes home his wife says that their son has not eaten any of his “dinosaur”. Lowery becomes increasingly frustrated at the rising level of gibberish and soon he can’t even make himself understood at all with the people around him. In the last scene Lowery sits down with one of his son’s ABC books in order to study the language he now needs to re-learn. Under the picture of a dog it says “Wednesday”...

Even now, 30 years later, thinking about this episode makes my body go cold. The possibility of suddenly existing in a world where words mean something completely different is absolutely terrifying to me. Language is how we communicate and the characteristic that separates us from other animals, along with free moral agency and, as George Carlin pointed out, our ability to make plastic. So what would happen if we took it away? Apart from me personally having a bit of a breakdown and needing to look for another career, it would probably be an amazing and liberating process in many ways. This is the reason we decided to dedicate a whole issue of *Scene* to **Theatre across/without languages**. Working in international schools we are used to being surrounded by other languages, or as Nadya Shahd writes, “where multilingualism is the norm and a classroom of fifteen students can have more than twenty different languages between them”. Yet we are still reluctant to let go of English at times and just use home languages as cute little details and after-thoughts (“If you could say ‘Merry Christmas/Hello/We wish you welcome’ in Swedish that would be great!”). Yet using no language or a foreign language in drama is enriching, exciting and engaging – and should be treated with the utmost respect. As Nita Dewse describes in her article “using languages other than English can be a rewarding and liberating experience for students and the effects it can create can be powerful ones”. The Swedish film-and theatre director Ingmar Bergman once spoke of the “pane of glass” that existed when an actor acted in a foreign language stating: “I have always had a suspicion that an actor cannot act to 100% when acting in a foreign language”. While I don’t fully agree with this statement I do believe in the existence of Bergman’s “pane of glass” and by giving our international students a chance to perform in their home language we remove it. Kevin Burns’ “Our bilingual friends” will be a great inspiration on how to use performances in other languages to bring a part of the school community together, and an example of the wonderful inclusiveness of a national group being able to see something in their own language. Theatre embedded in its cultural setting is something Clynt Whitaker explores in his “Thai ghostbusters – Phi Ta Khon” with many lovely ideas for teachers to pursue.

Simon Bell in his article “A case for theatre without language”

writes about the powerful lesson he learned as a teacher when using “signs, symbols and the understanding of the body” and how these moments become reflective impacting future practice. As he writes: “There is something surprisingly freeing about being asked to create with your body alone”. I hope that many teachers will also find inspiration from Avital Manor Peleg’s text to explore a practitioner approach, rather than a teacher one, as well as the truth and wisdom in Noa Rotem’s “The truth of matter”. In this issue we have also a very special contributor: former ISTA student Nadya Shahd. In her brilliant “A multilingual stage” she not only demonstrates the craft of research and writing but how it is also possible to fall in love with another culture. We hope to hear a lot more from Nadya in the future. In total we have fourteen exciting contributors giving us a varied and balanced range of articles on **Theatre across/without languages**, ranging from lesson plans to more theoretical texts, and lots of ideas for you to pick up on and delve more into. We’re also delighted to profile a contribution from one of our formal partners: Digital Theatre+. ISTA members get a 10% discount on a year’s subscription and they are an amazing resource for both teachers and students.

So ban English. Go on, I dare you. Ban English for one day. Or at least for one lesson with your students. Tell them that no-one will be allowed to speak English during the next lesson, yet that you are still going to teach them a new skill. From start to finish the lesson can be conducted in Swahili, French, gibberish or just using the body. Anything but English. And I guarantee that your students will *love* it. It will be one of those lessons that they will never forget. Go on, you can do it. It’s never too late to teach an old dog a new trumpet.

Emmy

Still available for booking!

3-Day Teacher Studios

ISTA is delighted to offer a new series of workshops for teachers in Asia, Europe and the United States. Three full and amazing days. Three very different locations and three very different areas of theatre.

Kathakali in Kerala

14th – 16th April 2017

Musical Theatre in London

9th – 11th June 2017

Trestle mask in Atlanta

26th – 29th June 2017

For more information and to reserve a place please contact jen@ista.co.uk

Ushering in a new era for arts education: What does it take to create an arts education resource for the digital age?

DIGITAL THEATRE+

A formal ISTA partner

Ushering in a new era for arts education: What does it take to create an arts education resource for the digital age?

With arts education provider Digital Theatre+ announcing the launch of their new platform on November 14th 2016, the rise of digital technologies is paving the way for a new era of arts education.

We caught up with the DT+ team to talk philosophy, methodology and pedagogy.

1. Why do we need digital resources in arts education?

Digital resources enable an inclusive arts education; one that ensures access to high quality, relevant and motivational

experiences of theatre and performance, irrespective of geographic or economic boundaries.

Students today demand materials to be delivered in a different form. One which is integrated into their usual data consumption; using tools and devices that are familiar to them. And available where and when they need them. The definition of “live” is changing – becoming more multi-faceted and complex.

Improvements in streaming technology have facilitated easy dissemination of performance in the classroom, offering teachers a greater range of tools to engage their students and deepen understanding of texts and performance, whatever their ability or learning style.

2. In a nutshell, what exactly is Digital Theatre+? Who uses the platform and why?

Digital Theatre+ is the world's leading

arts education platform. We provide over 3 million students across 61 countries with access to the best of live performance – alive in their teaching space, library and home. Available anytime, on any device.

Digital Theatre+ is unique in the fact that it presents created, curated and commissioned content. We work closely with key theatre organisations and theatre makers including the Old Vic, The Royal Shakespeare Company, BBC Active, English National Ballet and the Royal Opera House to bring the most educationally valuable and exciting content to our audiences.

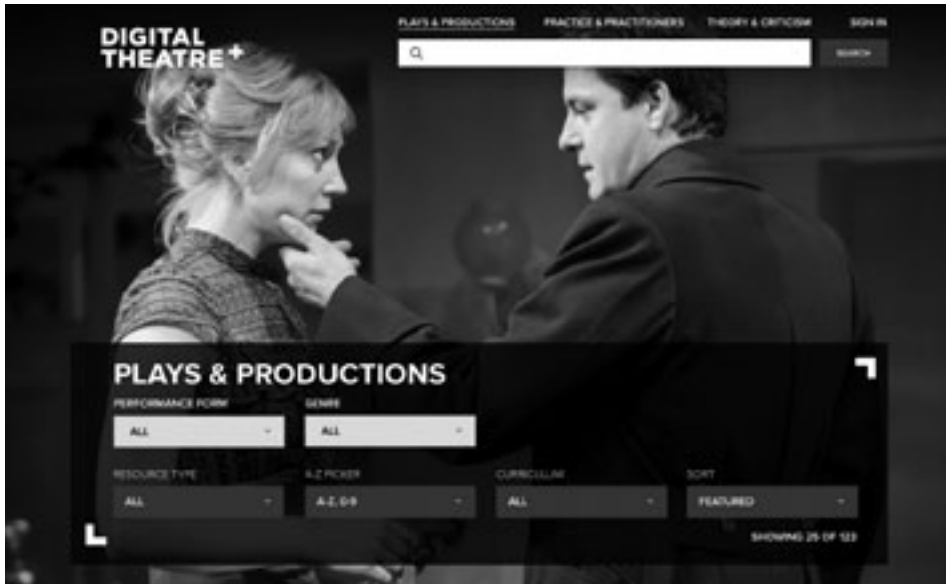
DT+ is an online, arts education centre specifically designed to meet the diverse curricula requirements of drama, theatre and performance studies, and English literature teachers and students at school, college and university levels. We work with teachers and libraries to make the platform available to the whole institution, enabling cross-curricular teaching. Students can also access DT+ from home, enabling flipped learning.

3. How do you ensure the content available on the platform is relevant for educational institutions?

We offer the highest quality productions of key texts and these are supported by a comprehensive series of teaching resources for educators and students, collaborating with leading exam-awarding bodies such as OCR and AQA, and supporting the shaping of their specifications.

Being able to provide a blend of content types is integral to the success of any education platform. Including over 300 video and audio productions, nearly 200 practitioner and academic interviews and lectures, and 150 study guides, teaching plans, lectures and essays, DT+ provides a





diverse range of resources, appealing to all learning preferences.

With the focus on teacher-led learning resources and activities, we are continually responding to the demands of the classroom, subject matter and curriculum, across both English and drama.

4. Are industry experts involved in producing the platform?

The educational experience we offer is of paramount importance. The philosophy and vision of the resource is shaped by Robert Delamere, Fiona Lindsay and Talia Rodgers. They have worked in the development of theatre and arts education, at the highest level, for many years.

The platform is overseen by a creative learning panel of experts from across education and the arts including: Indu Rubasingham, Artistic Director of the Tricycle Theatre; Carol Chillington Rutter, Professor of Shakespeare and Performance Studies at the University of Warwick; and award-winning British playwright of theatre and radio Fin Kennedy. They ensure that the most pressing arts and education issues are brought to the fore, challenging us to push the boundaries.

The Digital Theatre team is also in constant collaboration with leading theatre and performance practitioners, to develop new formats of work, as well as working with some of the world's leading academics, to bring rigor and established thinking to the development of the site.

5. Is it expensive? And can't schools just get all of this for free on the Web?

There are lots of free resources online but the vast majority of it is unhelpful and unreliable for students at best – it can give them an inaccurate and distorted impression of the work their teachers want them to understand. It's crucial for students to have access to properly curated and

authorised materials which they know their teachers endorse.

Teachers are time-poor and don't have the hours needed to seek out the nuggets of gold amidst all the poor quality and misleading free material out there – that's why teachers in over 1,000 schools, colleges and universities already subscribe. They tell us that DT+ saves them 4-5 hours of time per week! And that's one key reason why over 92% of institutions renew year-on-year.

6. What are the industry's views on DT+? Has it been well received?

Don't take our word for it, see for yourself..

"We chose DT+ to provide access to theatre productions for our students. The difference live performances make is enormous, and it is worth the investment to get this level of quality."

Libby Tilley, Head of Arts and Humanities and English Faculty Librarian, University of Cambridge

"Digital Theatre Plus is immensely

valuable to teachers and their students, opening up high quality performances to audiences where they may not have been accessed before. The teaching resources provide invaluable support for teachers in this time of education reform, changing performance measure and often falling budgets. Providing access to professional theatre makers through this service gives many students an unparalleled understanding of the process of theatre making and the skills required for creating, performing and analysing drama and theatre."

Karen Latto, Subject Specialist for Theatre and Drama OCR

"The resources available for teachers from Digital Theatre Plus are extremely useful for teachers of the AQA A-Level and GCSE English specifications. Immediate access to very high quality performances, cleverly indexed to allow teachers to access precise speeches or scenes, lends itself to a wide range of dynamic teaching and learning approaches. This, as well as the wider range of resources and guidance that accompany the performances, empowers teachers to lift the text off the page and make the play come to life for their students."

Ruth Johnson, Qualifications Developer for English at AQA

As a valued member of ISTA, we're delighted to offer you a 10% discount on a year's subscription to this innovative and useful resource. To purchase a subscription with this discount, visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com/subscriptions and use discount code: **ISTA10**.

Alternatively, email enquiries@digitaltheatreplus.com and reference the discount code in your email.

To find out more about Digital Theatre+ visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com.



“If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.”

Shylock - Merchant of Venice

Speaking without words

By Anna Andresen

Human beings resemble one another in fundamental emotions. Happiness, sadness, anger or woe. All of these and so many more are understood universally and without words. We can understand the inner lives of others despite different upbringings, backgrounds and culture. Smile and everyone everywhere across the world will know you are happy. Cry and people will often offer comfort, even if they don't speak the same language.

Why is this? Well, my ISTA friends, it is because most of our thoughts, intentions and feelings are expressed by physical behaviours - such as facial expressions, body postures, gestures, eye movement, touch and the use of space. In fact, several studies have proven that at least 70% of the communication that takes place between people is through body language and tone of voice. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian believes that when it comes to expressing feelings 55% of the communication consists of body language, 38% is expressed through tone of voice and only 7% is

communicated through words. If this is true we express 93% of our emotions in a nonverbal way.

With this in mind, everyday life words can often get in the way. How often have you misinterpreted a text message, an email or a telephone conversation because of the person's choice of words and the tone we think they give off? Perhaps a message comes across as cold and abrupt and it truly isn't meant that way - the person was just in a rush. Or perhaps a message sounds joyous and filled with love but the sender is crying as they write it. Facial expressions and body language really are key when it comes to communicating. We need a visual, a picture of the person to accurately decode and judge how that person is feeling.

One of the best plays I have ever seen was Complicite's *The Street of Crocodiles*. A show based on the life and fictions of Bruno Shultz. I watched the play 17 years ago and it still makes my blood tingle when I think about it. Complicite are a visual and

movement based theatre company and the artists who make it up are from all over the world. A company after ISTA's own heart. The multicultural aspect is heavily embraced and you will often hear two or three languages spoken throughout one of their shows.

“Complicite have created a beautiful interaction between music, visual theatre, physical theatre and words. Their contribution is to open up the horizons of audiences who don't need to be constantly obsessed with the idea of coming to listen to words, words, words. They have shown us that stagecraft is a form of authorship.”
Pierre Audi

In *The Street of Crocodiles* the actors rely more on the use of props, instruments and their bodies to tell the story. For example, to represent the rare birds that Schultz's father raised in the family attic, the actors flutter the pages of books and strut like peacocks. To suggest the boredom of a family dinner, two actors perch on the wall, their legs swinging like pendulums. A large piece of fabric is used as a tablecloth one minute, a beachlike expanse the next and then the covering of the father's death bed. Toward the end, the white cloth unravels to fill the stage with billowing waves. Live music is forever present and echo's the inner life of Shultz's mind.

The small amount of script that was used was spoken in a number of languages,

“...70% of the communication that takes place between people is through body language and tone of voice.”



including German and Polish - two languages I don't speak but because of the intention and the gestures that followed I understood exactly what was going on in a more fundamental, profound and emotional way. That is theatre to me. That is what theatre represents. Creative storytelling that builds a connection between the players and audience, an emotional connection that just flows into us.

All theatre has its place and I do not for a minute want to take away from the works and words of playwrights like Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov or Churchill. What I do want to do is highlight the importance and purity of expressing ourselves through other means.

Let us take a moment to think about music, dance and art. The dancer and choreographer Akram Khan famously quotes: "The way I communicate best is through my body, that's my language and if that's taken away from me words are not enough". With art, well, what do the three images below express to you, how do they make you feel? For me, the first stirs up certain feelings of melancholy. The colours are muted, bleak. The shadows and smudged brushstrokes suggest a certain sadness, loneliness. The mood is dark. The second image is filled with joy. The colours are bright. There is movement, dancing. The figures arms are outstretched, embracing the sea and sky. Open to all nature. The final is an abstract piece. The hard, erratic brush strokes express a deep rooted anger and frustration. We don't need words to understand these images - we understand the language. The emotional language. We feel it. We feel the artists anguish or joy, we process it. Perhaps we empathise with the artist or we turn it into a relevant emotion to us. We attach it to something we have



felt before. An experience, a memory that made us feel a certain way. This is also how music works - the sounds, rhythms and beat just seep into our bodies. No work has to be done.

I have performed in and directed a few pieces of devised theatre work where the most powerful moments have been silent. A good example of this is in a play where a couple are struggling to come to terms with the fact that their child has gone missing. The father is trying to comfort the mother by holding her. At first she rejects his embrace, he persists. He keeps trying to wrap his arms around her and she throws them off. This action happens six or seven times until she at last relents and collapses into his arms. She gives into her pain. The effect is heart breaking and I believe more powerful than if there had been a script - which could have been:

Father: *Let me hold you, why won't you let me hold you?*

Mother: *Don't touch me, leave me alone.*

Father: *She's gone. Our daughter's gone. You must let her go now.*

Mother: *I can't.*

Father: *Please let me hold you.*

If these words had been spoken I feel the intensity of the scene would have been lost. The actors would have been describing their actions as well as performing them. The actions are enough. We often think everything has to be explained but as long as the objective is there, we can more often than not - strip back the script and what we are left with is a more intrinsic and pure piece of theatre.

One simple exercise I like to use when working with actors in this way is



Facial Expression - Hot Seat. This game encourages the actor to use their face and body to express their given emotion. Place four volunteers in chairs in front of the class. The performers bow their heads and close their eyes. The teacher will call out a situation, emotion or expression. On the count of three the performers will raise their heads with a facial expression they feel best communicates the given emotion. The class can then vote which actor they believe has conveyed the emotion in the clearest way and why.

When working with text I often ask my actors to read through a given scene, discuss their characters and their intentions. Once they have a good grasp of the situation I will ask them to rehearse and perform the scene first with words and then without. The world is their oyster when performing without. I encourage them to use movement, music, dance, random objects - whatever they can get their hands on and wherever their imagination takes them, as long as they are expressing the character and scenes objective. It is quite magical what people can come up with and incredibly freeing for the performer.

At the end of the day the most important thing here is freedom of expression. To realise we are not limited by words or language. ISTA prides itself on the fact that it builds cultural bridges through creative means. Painting, drama, sculpture, music, dance, puppets, masks - you name it. We communicate beautifully through all of these forms and many more. It doesn't matter where we come from, my friends, emotionally we all speak the same language.

“The way I communicate best is through my body, that's my language...”

Akram Khan, dancer and choreographer



Our bilingual friends: producing Kobo Abe's *Tomodachi (Friends)* at ISS International School, Singapore

By Kevin Burns

Play: *Tomodachi/Friends* by Kobo Abe, translated by Donald Keene

Cast: 14 (8 male, 6 female, with some flexibility of number and gender)

Genre: Absurdist dark comedy

International school theatremakers all grapple to varying degree with the limitations faced by our EAL students. Theatre is a great way for our bravest non-native speakers to improve their language skills and confidence but in our marquee school productions they are inevitably consigned to supporting roles. What to do when the numbers and ambitions of our aspiring EAL actors grows? We faced this situation in Singapore at ISS International School where there was a growing number

of Japanese students who were eager to perform but whose language skills were not yet ready for first billing. Some had already taken smaller roles in our main stage productions and they were eager to more fully explore and showcase their acting talents.

As the numbers grew, I began to wonder: why not put on a major production

*“Call me naive;
I call it optimism.”*

in Japanese? We had the students: dozens would audition, some of whom had already acted with me. We had an audience: the Japanese community of Singapore within and outside our school was large and would welcome a theatre production in their own language. We didn't have a script but then, it's always hard to find the next script. (We also had a theatre teacher who spoke not a syllable of Japanese but I chose not to let my dreams be punctured by so trivial a detail.) My main concern was that I didn't want to disenfranchise my non-Japanese students who also wanted to put on a play. My solution to all these problems: if I directed a Japanese play and its English translation (and how many of those could

“Come performance time it was no surprise that we had two very different plays to present.”

there be?) simultaneously in both versions, I would get to know the script so intimately that I would be able to “understand” and direct the Japanese version as well. Call me naive; I call it optimism.

It was more challenging than usual to find a script, especially during these dark, pre-internet days. I spent my holidays trawling bookstores in London and across Asia, to no avail. I didn't want to go to the Kabuki canon. And then it appeared! It turned out to have been right under my nose all along: a faded mimeograph of Kobo Abe's absurdist dark comedy *Tomodachi* (*Friends*) in Donald Keene's translation. It had been hiding, vanishingly thin and perfectly camouflaged, among stacks of other such forgotten treasures of suggestions, gleanings, tips and cast-offs, photocopied, passed on and picked up during my travels and carried around the world in the antediluvian version of the pen drive: a cardboard box. I still don't know who gave it to me, so let me take this opportunity to say to every theatre teacher I have ever met: to you who enabled this excellent adventure, thank you.

The internet would have made ordering the original script a snap - or a click - but at the time I had to track down a Japanese librarian in Singapore and deploy my students to charm her out of one. Finally armed with both texts, the fun work could begin. I knew I would need native-language assistance directing the Japanese version and I selfishly promoted not one but three of my brightest students into that role. If I worried at the eagerness with which they abandoned the stage for the power of the director's chair, I am glad I hid it. Whatever their motives, they proved excellent at directing and critical to the success and character of the final production. Their first task was to cast the play. I reluctantly left this entirely to them. I believed that I was fully capable of casting the Japanese production with no language knowledge, based only on physical attributes and my understanding of the characters from the English version; that old naivete! Luckily I turned it over to them so that we could run both auditions simultaneously. In the end, their casting turned out to be quite

different from my own. This became the first of many significantly different features of the two performances that enriched our experience enormously.

I felt I needed to take ultimate directorial control of the full production of *Tomodachi* in order to help my assistant directors navigate both the technical and interpersonal challenges of that role but I also gave them independent time alone with their rehearsals and free rein to express and implement their ideas. I also relied heavily on their bilingual skills, of course, and on the translation itself which allowed me to closely follow the rehearsals in Japanese. As their confidence grew, and mine in them, I left them increasingly in charge.

The two casts rehearsed separately of course but we did make an effort to create some social time together, do group warm-ups and to give the actors a chance

to discuss their roles and the play itself. Weekend rehearsals were most effective for these purposes. Aside from the story and, arguably, the words, there was really only one consistency between our two productions: the set. The language of the play, already differing by nuance, idiom and imagery, diverged further in the actors' (and directors') individual interpretations, one of the most fascinating aspects of watching the two productions unfold.

The set, though, was by necessity identical because we were going to share the stage between back-to-back performances. I had planned to make the costumes consistent too, but the actors' varying sizes as well as my lack of interest or skill in the sartorial arts meant that I left costuming to the individual actors. On the English language cast side (a cast that included actors from the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia as well as from Poland, France, Malaysia and Hungary), this resulted in a colourful array of individualistic choices that seemed to announce each player's character. On the other hand, the Japanese language production's costuming was darker, more formal and more uniform. I suspect that this difference was due mostly to my three powerful co-directors who imposed a more actively aesthetic choice but possibly also



“Theatre is a great way for our bravest non-native speakers to improve their language skills and confidence...”

an expression of differing cultural attitudes toward the balance between individuality and social conformity that is a major theme of the play, a balance with which this group of students were themselves grappling as developing young adults in an international setting. Thus did costume provide a neat example of cultural context and of divergent interpretations of one of the most central themes of the play.

Come performance time it was no surprise that we had two very different plays to present. We ran the English language play first so that the predominantly non-Japanese-speaking audience of our school community could get to know the play in English in order better to follow the Japanese production when they came out to support their friends and students. Supertitles would have been helpful but the venue was not equipped for those. A vigorous promotion helped bring the Japanese community of Singapore out in force for the play, eager to experience their own culture and language on the stage, for which many specifically expressed their gratitude and delight.

Both performances were a big success (thank goodness!). Those who saw both commented on how different they were but few could delight in and appreciate as my co-directors and I the full scope and impact of those differences. The English language version, partly reflecting my own interests and likely a more North American take on the individual v society balance, was more unabashedly silly, with broader physical humour devolving into slapstick, absurdity and chaos. The Japanese language version was more controlled, more nuanced, with a quietly disconcerting and creeping maleficence and a subtler



sense of humour. It had a more sinister impact with its stylised use of uniformity in costume and choreography, normalising and empowering the threat posed by its characters. They were a tighter family unit, more threatening as a group than as individuals, working together toward their ultimate goal, unstoppable as a tsunami.

Perhaps the most evident and noteworthy example of the difference was the contrast between the two actors playing the everyman role at the centre of the play. The Hungarian actor in our English language production was an enormously free-spirited, emotionally explosive actor with a long, angular face, a distinctive head of long hair and a lanky, pliable frame who could turn positively apoplectic with frustration and rage. The Japanese actor in the everyman role was softer and gentler than this angular Hungarian. He was ordered, neat, obsessively detail-oriented, seemingly inexhaustible in his efforts to bring some control and logic to his situation and to hide rather than vent his rising panic and fear. Instead of rage and manic action, his response to the absurdity was an unheeded insistence on calm, punctuated with nervous laughter growing in frequency of interval and wavelength: an increasingly unmoored and futile attempt

to understand and defuse the situation.

The Hungarian actor's suit and demeanour presaged a Silicon Valley entrepreneur aghast at the improbable victory of an abandoned paradigm; the Japanese actor's suggested a keiretsu middle manager, used to control and uniformity, confronting an incomprehensible and unstoppable force bewilderingly both conforming to and upending his values.

And that was just one role. With untold many such wonderful details to dissect and enjoy, a crew of assistant directors with whom to discuss and appreciate them, and not one but two full casts of actors to delight in and whose performances to admire, this was certainly one of the most unusual, delightful and rewarding directing experiences I have enjoyed. My lead co-director Yoko recently reminisced: "What I remember most is how two sets of casts came together as a team so beautifully at the end. There was a funny bond between the two actors of the same role. That was a very special thing to see for being an international school and it was the first time for some of the Japanese students to get to know/become friends with non-Japanese students."

We both recommend enjoying your own bilingual friends.



“What I remember most is how two sets of casts came together as a team so beautifully at the end.”



http://chunkymove.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CHUNKY-MOVE_247-DAYS_1569.jpg

<http://blurandsharpen.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Muller1>



A case for theatre without language

By Simon Bell

It is a slight misnomer to say that this article is about theatre without language. In fact it is quite the opposite. It is about the most powerful language of all in theatre: movement. There is a cross cultural expression available in movement which is unrivalled in any other form of communication. Movement obliterates notions of class, gender and race, unless one chooses to highlight them, in a way that text cannot. When you remove verbal language and let the body alone speak, you begin on a level playing field and as a teacher the opportunities that allows in a diverse environment are really exciting.

Practitioners through the ages have understood the importance of nonverbal communication. Certainly when we look at Eastern theatre traditions, we see

how, for example, gesture becomes a codified language in Indonesian and Indian traditions. Theorists such as Artaud spoke of using symbolic language to transcend the limitations of the spoken word. But beyond finding a way for movement to merely replace spoken word, the use of the body as a communicative tool also provides another angle for the creator and performer; the body as subject.

In the work of Pina Bausch the audience is addressed through our first instinctive language, the language of emotional response, transcending any learnt notion of language. It needs no translation from culture to culture and relies solely on the audiences' instinctive response.

Interestingly, in her work the performer's body is not just the vessel for

narrative, theme and character but it is the subject itself. The body is the embodiment of the experience. So then, for Bausch, movement becomes the language of all human experience. There is something too precise and almost too complex (the process of idea understood, thought processed, verbal response spoken) about expression through words. Instead there is an instinctiveness available to the body that at times just cannot be accessed through words. "There is no way to express how I feel" or "I was completely speechless" are common phrases and highlight that there are moments of human experience when words are simply not enough. Yet the body continues to move. This is the language that is captured in Bausch's work. Bausch centres her work on the emotional context of humanity but presents it with a political view in mind. Her work takes cues from Brecht's idea of Gestus in its form. Through repetition and movement motif she highlights an action of the body - she is literally showing it to the audience. In this way she exposes the political and social realities behind everyday actions. The body itself becomes the site for political discourse.

The idea of movement as the answer to experiences beyond our verbal expression also lies behind the development of a movement form such as Butoh.

In a country reeling from the atomic bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Butoh's founders Hijikata and Ohno sought to find a new form as there was no performance practice they knew of that could express what they had seen and felt, and which could describe the

new world which they saw around them. In response, they created a theatre of pure instinctive movement where the transformative power of the body was the key to expression

Lloyd Newson (founder of DV8) - like Bausch and Hijikata - links movement with subject and form. "I am drawn to things that people don't want to be talking about", he states in an interview with the Brighton Argus found on DV8's website. This is true in terms of the subject matter of many DV8 shows but also in terms of the form itself. Even in their later verbatim pieces, DV8 have continued to pair text with a devised language of movement which provides a level of subtext and contextualisation which affects the spectator on a subconscious level. In one of their career defining pieces, *The Cost of Living*, we see another example of the body itself as subject.

The piece forces the audience to reconsider social preconceptions about movement and the body. Here the disabled body becomes the object of scrutiny. We see in a memorable scene the central character, a double amputee, enter a ballet studio and swaying side to side on his arms, approach a stretching ballet dancer. In an intricate sequence they roll, twist and slide around each other creating a visual representation of the central questions posed by the piece on social conventions in relation to the perfect body and what we define as beautiful movement.

I recount a time when I was leading a workshop in London with a group of young people exploring Laban's movement analysis as a way into devising movement. The students were from a wide range of backgrounds and one young boy had recently arrived in the country from Sierra Leone. He spoke virtually no English but

was an exquisite mover. Over the course of the workshop his friend translated my instructions but I felt like my intent wasn't coming across correctly. In the end I began to demonstrate what I wanted to the boy using a mixture of movement and my own created sign language. I would indicate something to him and he would respond. All in a wordless dialogue. By the end of the daylong workshop, the piece he created was a work of beauty. He couldn't have even begun to express himself properly in the way many of the others in the group were able to using words. However, his movement solo spoke more powerfully and with greater clarity than anyone else's work. This not only proved to me the power of movement as a communication tool in performance but also reminded me of the importance of my own physical communication to him. In our wordless dialogue he understood everything I wanted and in fact he understood better than the others because we had spoken on a subconscious level through signs, symbols and the understanding of the body. This is a powerful lesson that I have not forgotten as a teacher.

It can be scary to approach physical work as a teacher, especially if it is not an area you are trained in. The rewards for a student, however, are vast. In another workshop I held at an international school, I remember a student, less academically able than many at the school, really standing out in the quality of his movement and creativity of his expression. I pushed him and the work he created clearly made him proud. At the end he told me that he had never felt that he had done anything well before. He went on to study physical theatre at drama school. And this is the case for many, many students. There is

something surprisingly freeing about being asked to create with your body alone. But why is that? I am taken back to a quote from Tim Etchells about DV8's work:

"The aesthetic of DV8... is a kind of back to basics of the body... the self here is elusive. Located in the body and desire but always shifting, disappearing, out of reach: the body observed, the body in struggle, the body blindfolded, the body in exhaustion, the body thrown, the comfort of the catch, the fear of the fall, the rejection of the drop, the body itself as witness, the body as dead weight."

Tim Etchells (1994: 116), "Diverse Assembly: Some Trends in Recent Performance" in Theodore Shank (ed.) *Contemporary British Theatre*, Macmillan.

All of this is conversely relatable. Our students are at a stage of life when they are forming their identities. Identifying the "self". So who would not want to explore the language of movement and the communication of the body when put in these terms?

What is interesting is that the performance of the body comes with imposed perceptions from society and from different cultures, as we have seen in some of the work by the artists described above, which add an additional layer of meaning and attitude; the body is political, the body is sexual, the body is ideological. When we communicate with this form of language there is a secondary layer of communication happening making it all the more complex. This is what makes it the most powerful of all forms of communication and why it should be an integral part of the theatre classroom. Resources - which include practical exercises - that might be of use:

The Intercultural Performance Handbook by John Martin

Actor Movement: Expression of Physical Being by Vanessa Ewan and Debbie Green

Movement Training for Actors by Jackie Snow

https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Beh_cpVCUAARDtC

<https://socialrhythms.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/dv8.jpg>





Thai ghostbusters - Phi Ta Khon

By Clynt Whitaker

Thailand is a country of regional contrasts and one could argue that you really need to exit stage left from the mega-city of Bangkok in order to truly experience the beauty of the country, the warmth of the people, the out-of-this-world food and the rich history and traditions which are captured in a variety of festivals and celebrations. The so-called "Land of Smiles" is also a land of dance, music and song as the performing arts, sustained as they are by a strong sense of nationalism and royal patronage, run deep with the people - people from all walks of life, from the Royal court masked pantomime or Khon to small town Likay.

The formal "high art" of Khon often

depicts scenes from the *Ramakian*, the national epic of Thailand which is an adaptation from the 5th century Indian *Ramayana*. Originally performed only for the Royal court, Khon evolved into one of the most elaborate forms of Southeast Asian dance-drama. The narrative of the drama - a variation of the hero's journey, is conveyed through expressive gesture with (sometimes) a cast of hundreds (all men) - including monkey and demon figures and a singing chorus in the background.

In stark contrast the Likay is a local-countryside performance characterised by a mixture of spoken and sung text, bawdy - even slapstick comedy with flamboyant costumes performed by both men and

women. These performers were risk-takers. Often showing a willingness to explore contentious local political controversies - "issues never far from the minds of most Thais" (tatnews.org).

Classical dance and dance-drama have been integral parts of Thai culture from the beginnings of its history to the present day. Once confined to the royal palaces, over the last century it has expanded beyond that and is now enjoyed by a wider audience and in a less controlled form. It has been fascinating to see the birth of small-studio based theatre companies in Bangkok over the last decade as a new generation of theatre graduates and actors take to the streets. The modern day manifestations

"It is one way of understanding what the IB means by international mindedness; sharing, celebrating and respecting world cultures through theatre. What a privilege and responsibility to be part of."



of Thai theatre are more varied than one might presume - in addition to traditional dramatic forms, Thailand is home to puppet theatres, Western influenced cabarets and a multitude of festivals and dramatic celebrations. One such festival takes place in my family's province of Leoi - in Dansi to be precise - known as "ghost follows person" or Phi Ta Khon.

There are two theories about where the name Phi Ta Khon comes from. One is that it evolved from the phrase Phi Tam Khon which in English means "ghost follows a person". A long time ago, the Dansai villagers believed that ghosts came out of the forest to follow the Lord Buddha's last great incarnation before attaining enlightenment. In Buddhist accounts, it is said that when Prince Vessandara, the Buddha's penultimate incarnation, returned to his city, it was such a joyous occasion that the village spirits came forth to join the welcoming parade. This very colourful and vibrant Phi Ta Khon procession is the central focus of the celebrations.

Another theory is that because of the similarity of Dansai's ghost masks with that of the Khon masks of Central Thailand, they came to be called Phi Ta Khon (Barrow). The Phi Ta Khon performers wear a mask and a unique costume made by each villager. Over the years, these masks have become very intricate in design and also colourful. In years gone by, the masks were thrown into the river at the end of the festival. But nowadays the people use the masks as decoration during the year and then reuse them during the next festival. Every Phi Ta Khon has a weapon such as a sword, which has a tip that looks like a penis. They also wear cowbells which make

a noise as they do a kind of a rain dance.

In addition to the Phi Ta Khons, there are also others taking part in the procession. For example the giant Phi Ta Khon. Unlike the regular sized ghosts there are only two giants. They must be male and female giant Phi Ta Khons. The male giant has a large penis which he teases the crowds with. Models of buffaloes also take part to remind people the importance of farm animals. Other participants include groups of men to represent villagers who lived long ago in the forest. They darken their skin and carry short bamboo poles which they bang on the ground to make a noise. There are others carrying bamboo trays with mulberries or leaves used for herbal medicines. Quite a few people in the parade have symbolic sexual objects which they use playfully with the crowd, especially with young females. In an agricultural society, the sex organs are the symbol of fertility. Villagers believe that playing with the symbolic sexual organs causes sufficient rain to fall in the rainy season. Some people also believe that this also helps to expel bad spirits.

Richard Barrow (thaivillageblogs.com) captures the day-to-day elements of the festival: *"The Bun Luang Festival takes place over three days. It begins with the ceremony to invoke Phra Uppakut. It is believed that this is the spirit that will keep the festival free of trouble. The ceremony is led by men dressed in white who are attendants to the spirit leader called Jao Por Guan. They go from Phon Chai Temple to the Man River where they dive into the river looking for the stone that symbolises Phra Uppakut. This is then brought back to the temple. A little while later, everyone will come together at Jao Por Guan's house for the Bai Sri ceremony which is the tying of white sacred threads around the wrist of the two spiritual leaders, Jao Por Guan and Jao Mae Nang Tiam, to wish them happiness, good health and good luck. After this ceremony has finished, the spiritual leaders will lead the procession to Phon Chai Temple where they will walk around it three times. The Phi Ta Khons also take part in this.*

At dawn on the second day, local people dress up as Phi Ta Khon and cheerfully dance around the town. In the afternoon there is the Phra Wet worship procession. The parade is led by the leader of the Por Saen holding the Bai Sri tray. Next comes a sacred Buddha image, which is followed by four monks. Jao Por Guan is also in the procession sitting on a bamboo rocket. Bringing up the rear of the procession are the villagers wearing white.

Later that day, bamboo rockets are



launched into the sky with the hope of bringing sufficient rain for their crops. There is also a competition to see whose rocket goes the highest. The day finishes with the throwing of the costume and masks of the two giants into the river. They believe this will rid the villagers of any bad luck. The third and final day is spent back at the temple where they listen to sermons about the 10 lives of the Lord Buddha."

The Phi Ta Khon is a major attraction to the otherwise quiet village of Dan Sai, nestled in the mountains of Leoi province in northeastern Thailand. Having just built a house in Leoi I can vouch for its beauty and quietness. The event takes place on the first weekend after the sixth full moon but check out any reputable Thai Tourist agency closer to the time, end of June or early July.

Phi Ta Khon is a wonderful example of Thai cultural heritage; a dramatic masked and costumed festival that explores and gives meaning to the life force of the local people, an understanding of which still lives in the bloodstream of Thai people today - it may not be as epic as the *Ramayana* or as grand as a Khon performance in the royal court but it is atmospheric, it draws you into the essence of the place - much as working with Rucina Ballinger in Ubud, Bali, did at the ISTA festival she hosts - the experience creates a spiritual awareness of the island - the Phi Ta Khon creates a oneness with the local Thai people and their beliefs. It is one way of understanding what the IB means by international mindedness; sharing, celebrating and respecting world cultures through theatre. What a privilege and responsibility to be part of.



Kantor clearly visible as an "invisible actor", more a conductor on stage during Wielopole.

Witnessing theatre as education

By Mhairi MacInnes

I have always been a friend of silence. The growing silence in a conversation with a stranger that some feel awkward reveals whether I have found someone new to coexist next to simply, without words. John Cage's book of the same name was a powerful influence during my years studying music; he taught me to see the spaces between the words. Read any of his work and you will understand what I mean.

"It is the silence between the notes that makes the music; it is the space between the bars that cages the tiger."

The first half of this Zen saying has been attributed to numerous composers throughout the ages. The second half could be used by creativity gurus to demonstrate how ideas flow because of the limitations we impose, the tiger in this case being the ferocious idea.

How many names do you remember from your ISTA ensemble five years ago? It's not surprising if you can't. You haven't asked your brain to rehearse, recall and remember them because you didn't need to. At the ISTA TaPS in Chiang Mai last October I wanted to experiment with an unpredictable opening. It's usually an immediate goal to make students feel comfortable, have fun and relax in a group

of strangers. Normally at ISTA events we play at least one name game. It's always a challenge and a delight to remember and use the names of all the participants in the room as quickly as possible. The information goes into our short term memory - for most of the students this is probably the same. It becomes semantic memory and unless repeated and rehearsed and used, it will most likely decay quickly. However, episodic memory that remembers specific sometimes unexpected events like the first time you broke a bone is longer lasting. Episodic memory is memory related to things that happen specifically to you. The hippocampus is the part of the brain that creates new memory but it would go into overload if it had to retain every stimulus it receives every moment of the day so it is highly selective.

"The hippocampus will prioritise those (things) that have been rehearsed repeatedly in the short-term memory, or those with a strong emotional component."

www.theguardian.com/education/2015/sep/16/what-happens-in-your-brain-when-you-make-a-memory

But what if students met each other first, worked together in silence, learned about one another without the ease of

verbal communication or facial recognition? What if they felt thrown out of their comfort zone from the word go? After all, these were higher level IB Theatre students and had come to learn as much as they could about themselves, devising and working collaboratively.

They lined up outside the entrance and I asked them to enter the room silently and stand still anywhere they wanted. Before entering or seeing the room, I handed them a blindfold and asked them to put it on. It was forbidden to talk. I had placed screens to prevent collisions with furniture in the room. There were theatre boxes at one end, intentional obstacles to be negotiated and the curtains were drawn to enclose the space like a black box.

Walk the space; a familiar exercise most of them probably rehearsed frequently with their eyes open.

Discover the space.

Be aware of the other people around you.

Seek out every corner of the room.

Discover the obstacles or opportunities in the space.

All of a sudden these commands required heightened sensory learning for all involved and as facilitator working with a co-facilitator our eyes were on stalks

watching for potential collisions.

Move slowly with ease. Take your time. Feel comfortable. Work within the limitations.

These commands flowed out from my recent training in the Feldenkrais Method, a totally different context but completely appropriate.

Then I threw in a story - straight from a Europe flooded by refugees fleeing war torn and economically impoverished regions of the world. Could they create three images in the space that depicted that?

Slowly the images were formed.

More detail.

Where is the focus of the image?

Are the relationships clear?

Heighten the message!

Make it more abstract!

Pull it out of reality and stretch it into something more grotesque! Use your faces.

These commands resulted in more connectedness and expression as strangely or not so strangely (like dancing in the dark, another great physical warm up) the students worked with more abandon, less inhibition and fuller commitment.

The next challenge was to create a short scene (still blindfold and silent).

I told it first, before they enacted it.

On a high cliff top on an island family members are waiting to receive the next boatload of refugees. They are hopeful, fearful, excited, impatient.

In a moment, show me this image on top of the boxes which represent the shoreline. Most of you now know they are positioned to the left of my voice.

In the sea (situated diagonally opposite the shore, to the right of my voice and near the entrance to this space) there is a small boat jammed with people lurching and rising on the waves. They huddle together at the mercy of the sea. One boat! You are in one boat on the same sea.

Can I hear the sounds of the sea? I don't hear the people as the sound of the sea is so loud.

The landbased families watch in dismay as the boat is hit by a huge wave and it overturns.

As one, the occupants of the boat are thrown into the water.

The families on the cliff top react.

Some of the boat people grab parts of the boat in a desperate attempt to hang on. Others can swim and start to struggle towards the shore. Others are swept under and do not make it.

The families on the shore make a human chain to reach the people attempting to swim to shore.

Now show me the scene from the beginning...

Be clear.

Reveal each part of the unfolding narrative in detail.

Work together to tell the story.

All the normal coaching. Dramatically different work.

The room is moved by the power of the story.

I ask them to remove their blindfolds and return to the place where they formed their first image and to show me the grotesque version of the image as a statue.

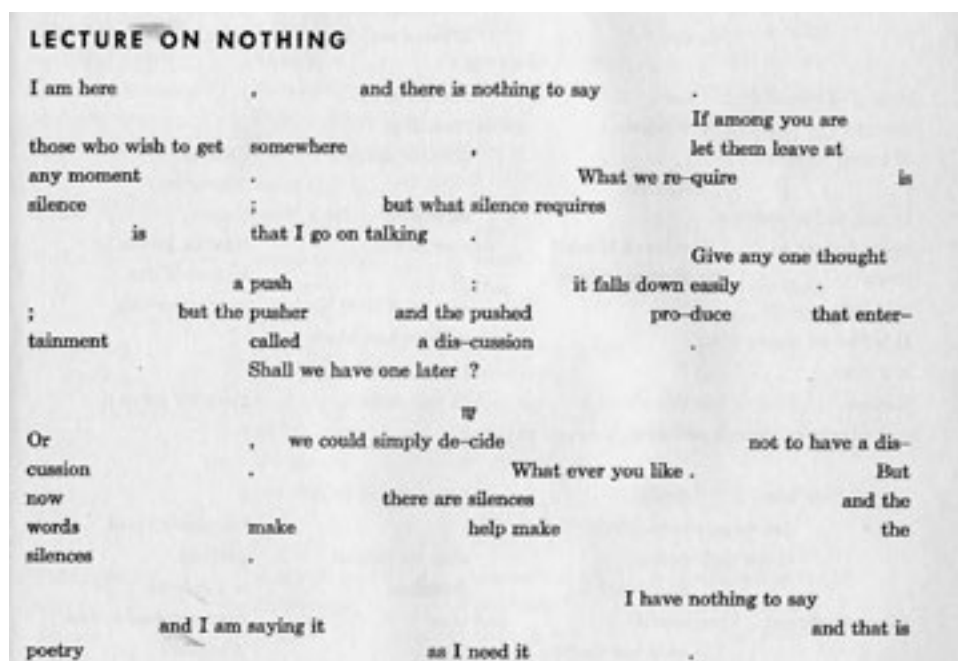
They can talk now and there is disagreement and bewilderment as some of them have no idea where the images were in the room. They recreate something less powerful, silently shaped into more of what they think the image should look like. It is far less intense but I say nothing.

I could have chosen for them not to have seen anything, to leave the exercise as one of their own personal discovery. What they share now is what it felt like to be working with strangers without knowing or seeing who they were. What changes when the power of sight is taken away? How does the space and their orientation within it change? Can they introduce themselves to their working partners now that they can see them? How do they know? What did they have to become aware of during the work and what did they discover? How did their handling of themselves change as the exercise progressed? The answers are fascinating and will be every time. Walking blindfold in itself is a learning experience. Creating work without talking or seeing is definitely worth the effort. What about creating theatre for those who cannot hear?

Maria Ciunelis is a powerful actor, director and social activist working in Warsaw, Poland. We became friends

there in the early 1980s as I studied, worked and made my life in *Solidarność* and post *Solidarność* days. In the late 80s, she played Sara Norman in Mark Meddow's stage play *Children of a Lesser God*. This play was originally written for a deaf actress but the director at the Teatr Ateneum in Warsaw wanted a "professional" actor to play the part. Maria prepared meticulously, learning to sign all the lines required although she had no previous knowledge of sign language. Her performance was so convincing that one deaf audience member who came to the play wanted to meet her after the show. They started up a conversation in sign language and she was lost. She could not follow their colloquial, spontaneous signage as she had only memorised the signs she needed to deliver the role. Ashamed and feeling like a fraud, she took it upon herself to set up a theatre group for young deaf actors in Poland later producing plays both with and for deaf audiences. Her work has been and continues to be visionary in breaking barriers that many of us do not even realise exist when we try to create inclusive art. I was thrilled at a recent ISTA festival in Glasgow at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to discover that they will introduce their first BA course later this year in Performance in British Sign Language and English (www.rcs.ac.uk/courses/ba-performance/).

The next section of my article is immediately lacking because you, the reader cannot hear it or smell it. Neither can you feel the atmosphere of the time it writes about between the words. Perhaps if I am a lucky writer, I may touch you metaphorically speaking but you as reader will fail to touch any of the actors





From sketch to realisation, Tadeusz Kantor

who brought these ideas to life or shake the hand of any of the creators of these forgotten genius productions. Attend live theatre often. That's all there is left to say.

These productions tackle the core focus of this issue of *Scene*. Produced at a time when existential questions about life, art, literature, music and language abounded in an atmosphere of annihilation and destruction, they are valuable for us to appreciate as makers of theatre and as shapers of the creative lives of young people.

In post-holocaust Polish theatre, was language a barrier or a tool? What was it necessary for theatre to communicate to the audiences of Tomaszewski, Kantor and Grotowski? How could theatrical language be sculpted, fragmented or transformed to create new associations in the minds of an audience whose memories were filled with atrocities? And what was there left to say and how could it be said in a way that would reignite some trace of connection?

There are several possible extended essays in the paragraph above. I hope some of your students will write them. My purpose is to tell a personal story and through it discover why as a practitioner I have chosen to focus so heavily on movement, music and image to tell stories.

Arriving in Poland in 1981 was golden. A golden autumn to be precise (*złoty jesień*) aptly named because of the beautiful fall of the trees during an extended long summer. The *Warszawska Jesień* (Warsaw Autumn) is also the name of an annual contemporary music festival and one of the reasons I was drawn to Poland in the first place. As a young composer fresh out of the University of Leeds Music Department I wanted to learn more about Lutosławski and become a contemporary performer. Enrolled at the Academy of Music in October, I was immediately able to access student tickets (astonishingly cheap - less than 50 cents

entrance and even less if you did not mind standing) to the extraordinary festival of contemporary music, the opera, the ballet and the theatre. How would I follow any of it in Polish?

Brought up in a household where poets sat silently in corners and politicians debated loudly over dinner, where canvases took precedence over television screens and education seemed to be 80% outdoors, orthodox thinking had not been encouraged.

I remember an early experience watching a travelling Shakespeare production on the remote Scottish Island where I was born and brought up when I was about 9. I turned to my father after the first hour of really not having a clue what was going on, during the *Mechanicals* scene where suddenly I could understand everything and I said: "Did Shakespeare write this bit as well?". "Shakespearean" was my first foreign language. I loved the sound, the rhythm, the vocal colours, the projected voices, the words I could not understand and from that point on I was hooked. It never crossed my mind not to attend a play because I would not understand its content. And I decided learning languages was key to understanding context. Before Polish language became fluent, my attention was drawn to everything that communicates intention; the proxemics of the actors on stage, sounds other than text, intonation, tempo, vocal delivery, intensity, music, design, costume, lighting, colour and the immensely intriguing connection between what was happening on stage and the audience reaction. My landlady insisted I attend a famous underground cabaret because of its highly ambiguous, political content. She had to translate not only what was being said but why it was so risqué and funny. What absorbed me was the

energy in the room, the chemistry between the players, their exquisite timing and their astounding intimacy with an audience who were literally egging them on to be more outrageous, half an eye on the door to check that no unwelcome guests entered the space (it was martial law at the time). I was caught up in laughter. Thinking about what was causing it, I was left with dozens of answers to what makes theatre funny and how laughter once achieved needs to be nourished; speed, pause, eye contact, intonation, brilliant anticipation, using improvised moments, interacting with the audience...

I witnessed performances of numerous Polish classics, Russian classics, Western European and American classics, mostly in Polish although one of the most memorable productions was in Russian, also a Shakespeare. I can still hear the music used in the transitions, such was its ability to transport me to a different theatrical world. Just as strong images are etched in our memories from significant theatre pieces we have watched, that music remains embedded somewhere in my aural memory. I immersed myself in contemporary music, theatre, art, dance and performance practice. The most transformative experience of movement theatre work I watched in the 1980s in Warsaw was *Syn Marnotrawny* or *The Prodigal Son* scenario conceived, directed and performed by Henryk Tomaszewski and the Wrocław Pantomime Theatre. It should be noted that this form of theatre has nothing to do with the English pantomime, rather it is a fusion between mime, movement, dance and acting without words.

Theatre director Lupa wrote about Tomaszewski's *teatr pantomimy* that "the words were so completely replaced that they could not exist within this theatrical form". There was an "impossibility of words, not the impossibility of sounds". His choice of music was an art form in itself and left an indelible impression on me about the importance of getting the music right as a director. In *teatr pantomimy*, reality is magnified and the actors' expression is

heightened. Tomaszewski told enormously complex stories without utilising text: *Pan Twardowski, King Arthur*, Shakespeare.

The scenario evolved as an integrated whole fusing music and movement to tell story. A Japanese concept but totally unlike Noh to watch. Tomaszewski would most often play the leading role in his own work but what emerged around him was highly intricate image theatre; removing one actor from the picture would disturb the balance, ruin the focus, change the narrative. Scenes moved in a strange, disjointed stop-motion-animation way as if some frames were missing, one to the next like great painted canvases.

Physical theatre companies could all take a leaf from Tomaszewski's focus on body awareness, thinking and discipline. He did not have a method, he was the method. Witnessing his work taught me how to watch closer, to analyse movement, study it in detail, to search for connection, for the story unfolding through gesture, juxtaposition, phrase, head movement. He studied Hogarth's prints to learn how characters might sit; he recreated the authenticity of movement from its history. Rather than choreograph, he looked for the truth in images and brought them to life in movement. His performances felt as if you were watching the movement behind the painted images from a forgotten past. Fascinated by classical form and mythology, his work now appears excessive, over expressionistic but when I watched it in the 1980s, it was extraordinary.*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsiBU1IOUcg
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKHrfwaRC94
www.youtube.com/watch?v=24eWl-XiszM

Unlike Grotowski's punishing training on physical actions, Tomaszewski would intervene to shape detail in the bodies of his actors, believing that with time, they would "feel" the interior emotion and spirit of the pose. Contemporary neuroscience would tend to back up his experiments. Workshops with Tomaszewski would focus on the breath and the discovery of the solar plexus, the centre of all movement, all intention. Artistically somewhat of a dictator, he took many lead parts in his work. In this, there is a similarity to another Polish genius of the time Tadeusz Kantor; however, Kantor was more of a conductor than a performer. I was told that Kantor refused to perform his work at established theatres in Warsaw because before he had become internationally renowned, established theatres had not been interested in staging his work. Truth or myth, I queued along with hundreds of other students to get into the student

stodoła ("stable") an open art space run by the student union to watch a performance of *Wielopole Wielopole* in 1983.

To say that there has not been another theatre piece that has come close to that experience would be true. At that moment, I understood how and why Kantor did not allow others to share in the creation of his vision - why he controlled everything. Professional actors were not recruited for Kantor's creations, he handpicked interesting looking people and told them what to do, where to stand, when to move, how to pose. Established actors and friends at that time also questioned this departure from the norm and were often openly critical about his work stating that it had nothing to do with "acting". In a way they were correct. Kantor treated his "actors" like chess players made of putty. The brutality and intensity of the physical images entangled with the music, the props, the space, Kantor's "conducting" of the entire experience transported me into his artistic world; a painter who thought with images and used actors and props instead of paint. There was no question of misunderstanding this piece because of the language. I was in need of a complete crash course on Polish culture, history, music and politics to grasp all the subtleties juxtaposed here. Language was just one more ingredient, fragmented, sung, spoken, repeated. What remains today of this memory is again the music, the sense of identity and feeling evoked in the audience and the extraordinary movement of the ensemble on stage for this was ensemble work at its finest. This was also one man's devising process; IB students attempting their solo projects would do well to study any of Kantor's drawings, filmed conversations and writing and watch excerpts of the work available here, just to

get a grasp of what it means to express yourself through theatre.

On the photograph is just one example of how a sketch from Kantor's imagination was translated into a scene on stage.

Perhaps Tomaszewski is the reason I now find myself studying to become a Feldenkrais practitioner. Certainly writing down these Polish memories has helped me understand the development of my own theatre work and realise that my next project to bring arts into the lives of Tamil speaking village children in Chennai is not so far fetched after all.

Sources of the images.

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*The author is now pursuing this study of movement further, in training to become a Feldenkrais practitioner at the Feldenkrais Institute in Vienna. For more information about Feldenkrais and his work see www.feldenkraisinstitut.at/index.php/en/method.





A language all its own

by Katy Bingham

One of the aspects I love most about theatre is its potential to capture and portray the truths of humankind: our passions, dreams, longings, struggles, heartaches, failures and successes. As Oscar Wilde said: *"I regard theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being"*. While I feel this quote is undoubtedly overused, I find myself drawn to it time and time again. For within theatre, I have found a great love, empathy and compassion for the human race. And something that we all have, regardless of where we're from, is the ability to communicate and express ourselves to one another = language.

Five years ago while living and teaching in Ankara, Turkey, I sat through a theatre production that was performed in Turkish, not my native tongue. Throughout the performance, the friend I attended the play with continually checked my attention to the piece. While I was not able to understand the nuance of the spoken language, I was captivated by the performance and was able to follow the overall storyline, connecting with the characters and their circumstances. Why was it that I could understand and follow the storyline, even though I missed the intricate meaning of the spoken word? One answer I can come up with is that my training in theatre has given me the ability to read the subtleties of the human experience and this exists regardless of the spoken or unspoken language. While I am not a master by any stretch of the imagination, this training has given me the ability to read people, their expressions, physicality, vocal intonations etc. I am aware that the meaning of physicality and

vocal emphasis is completely cultural but there is something that we all share as humans that enabled me to engage with the performance piece in another language.

Something I have found interesting is that while teaching theatre to both middle and high school students, when I have given the task of speaking in gibberish during an improvisation or clowning lesson, a majority of the students refer to a language they are familiar with, most likely one that is either their native tongue or one they have studied in school. I have heard either a whole word or syllables in an attempt to speak a made-up language. What I gather from this is our innate tendency and longing to communicate with what we know, whatever language we are raised with.

When I attended graduate school, one of the first books I read was *Seeing Voices* by Oliver Sacks. In this study, he explores the deaf culture and the significance of sign language within that culture. He begins the text with an exploration of a young deaf boy who was raised without language and as such he was not able to think and process information, or to relate and connect with others. Once he moved to a location with other deaf individuals and was able to learn sign, his social and mental skills drastically improved and he was able to build lasting relationships with others. This text completely altered my schema of

the importance of language within human society. I had never before contemplated the impact language has on our ability to make sense of the world around us. To expand, Sacks writes *"that much of what is distinctly human in us – our capacities for language, for thought, for communication, and culture – do not develop automatically in us, are not just biological functions, but are, equally, social and historical in origin; that they are a gift – the most wonderful of gifts – from one generation to another"*. Languages, both spoken and non-spoken, have been passed from generation to generation, and as Sacks says, they are *"the most wonderful of gifts"*. They enable us to identify, process and engage with others and the world. Merriam-Webster defines language as *"the system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other"*. Based on this definition, I would argue that the theatre arts are a language all their own, for it is a system in which people on a stage are expressing thoughts and feelings to each other and the audience.

Theatre has existed in multiple cultures with multiple languages for generations, and as a performance art, every performer uses the tools he or she has available – namely our bodies and voices. It is with exposure, training and willingness to use and develop what we naturally have that the universal language of theatre exists.

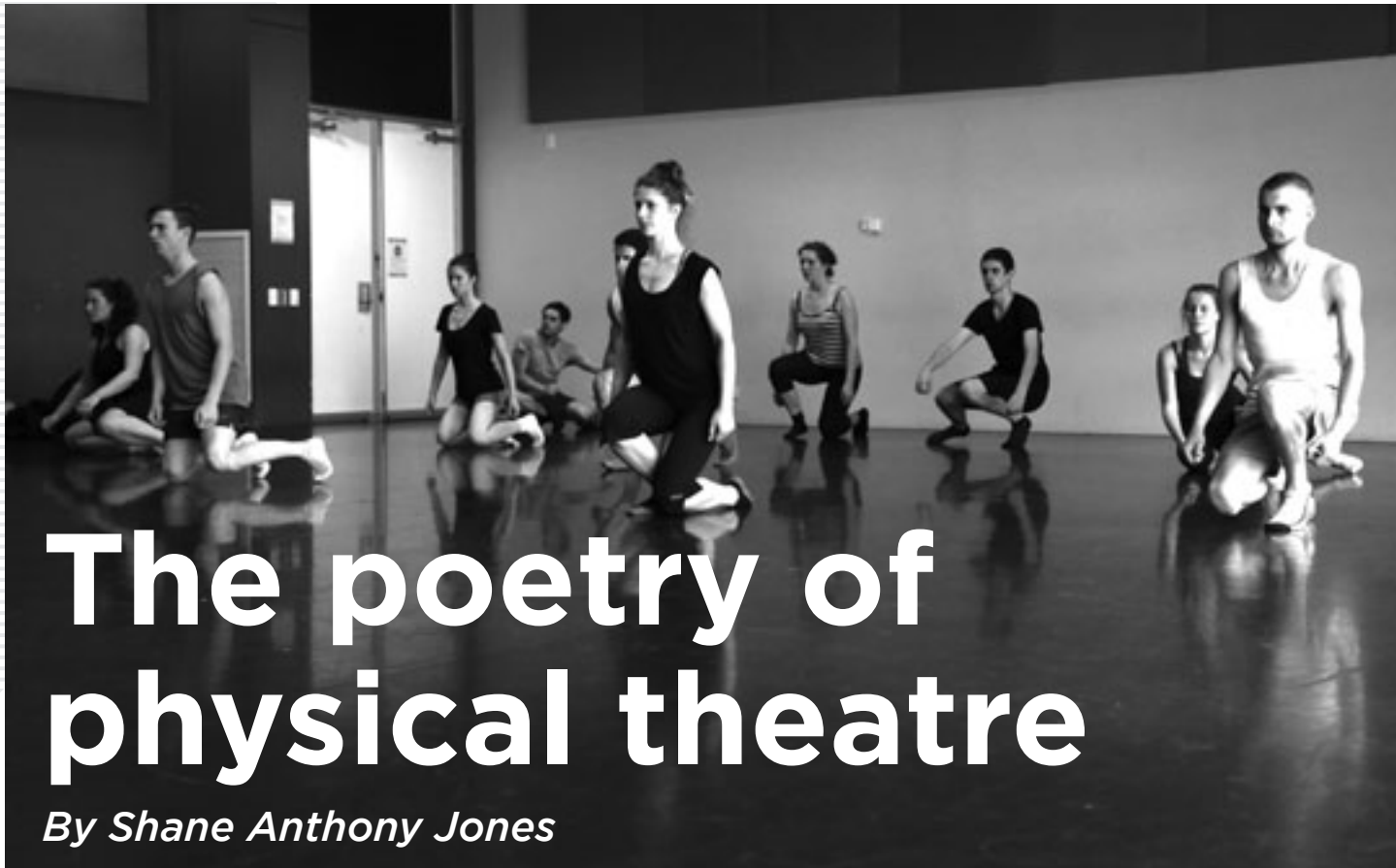


How visual are you?

By Georgina Christou

This lesson plan is suitable for grade 7 and onwards and could easily fit into a unit on physical theatre and/or mime.

Introduction / objectives	Starter	Development
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Can we really communicate without any words? This lessons seeks to explore just that.</p> <p>Learning objectives</p> <p>To be able to demonstrate thoughts and feeling through nonverbal communication.</p> <p>To be able to perform a well-known fairy tale without dialogue.</p> <p>Key words</p> <p>Nonverbal communication Physical theatre Body language Facial expressions Suspense Gesture Sound environment Sound effect Still image Mime</p>	<p>Pete Piper tongue twister - (with a twist)</p> <p>Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked; If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask students to repeat the tongue twister after you. 2. Make sure it is in unison. 3. Consider articulation. 4. Consider projection. 5. Replace the word "Peter" with a clap. 6. Replace "Piper" with a finger click. 7. Replace "pickled" with a jump. 8. Replace "peppers" with a 360 degree turn. <p>Bodies as objects (physical theatre)</p> <p>Work together in groups to create the following objects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sofa • The letter T • A lampshade • A pirate ship • A car <p>Create the following objects using sound and movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A washing machine • A food blender • Popcorn popping • A door that opens and closed 	<p>Task one: (in pairs)</p> <p>Teenager and parent improvisation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students label themselves either the parent or the teenager. 2. Improvise a scene whereby the teenager has missed their curfew. As a parent how might you feel? How can you set the scene i.e. what might the parent be doing while they are waiting? 3. Spotlight some of the scenes. 4. Ask students to re-do the scene but with no shouting or physical contact. 5. Spot light a few examples. 6. Discuss: what do we mean by suspense? When in your life might you feel suspense - think about at home or at school? E.g. waiting for test results, going to speak to a teacher after getting into trouble. 7. Ask students to re-do their scenes again but each actor is not allowed to say more than 3 words each. 8. Spot light examples and discuss how the lack of words encourages us to communicate our feelings through facial and body language. Can you give specific example of what our arms or eyes might be doing to communicate feelings? <p>Task two: (in groups of 5-6)</p> <p>Fairy tale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorm well known fairytales that you all know (e.g. <i>Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty</i>). 2. Choose one fairytale and re-tell the tale using little or no dialogue. How can you set the scene? 3. Create an audience and show performances. 4. Plenary: what techniques did you use in the absence of dialogue? Did you still understand what was happening? How? As you watch the next performance give an example of a specific moment in the performance that was most successful for you as an audience member? Describe what the actor / actors did to convey meaning.



The poetry of physical theatre

By Shane Anthony Jones

Physical theatre is an elusive genre and can mean various things to different people. At its heart is a style of performance that focuses on the physical act of communication, with significant weight given to the language of the body signally in space. Emphasis is shifted to less traditional and less literal approaches to storytelling, importance is given to the visual and exploration of metaphor is often central to the form.

As a director I am passionate about creating theatre that integrates text with a heightened visual landscape. I'm inspired by the visual poetry of physical theatre where actors rely on the body as the first tool to carve meaning. I'm excited by the way physical theatre encourages the imagination of the viewer and shifts the focus away from words or text as the prime signifier. I find theatre exhilarating when experience and theatrical magic are given equal weight to logic.

Given that physical theatre can include so many different styles and forms a useful

but sufficiently broad definition is handy to continue. The Oxford Dictionary suggests *"a form of theatre which emphasizes the use of physical movement, as in dance and mime, for expression"*. I would like to go into a little more detail in this exploration of physical theatre. In rehearsals and workshops I often reference the following three-part definition:

1. The body is primarily the means of communication.

This is not to say that other textual layers are excluded from performance but the body is the focus.

2. This "body" is highly trained in specific physical disciplines or forms to develop skills relevant to the vocabulary of genre.

For example; dance, clown, circus, martial arts, European traditions of physical theatre (mime, Commedia dell'Arte, Le Coq), traditional and contemporary forms of Asian performing arts (The Suzuki Method, Butoh, Noh, Kabuki, Kathakali).

3. This "trained body" is involved in

communicating some kind of narrative.

Physical theatre is more than just a display of skills or tricks, rather there is some kind of narrative in performance. Unlike an athlete working to perfect a sport or skill, or a circus performer aiming to refine a trick, physical theatre artists aim to create meaning through their physical language.

The work I stage ranges widely across form and genre. One month I'll find myself directing a flamboyant and hilarious musical, the next an intricately detailed work of absolute realism and then a month later an acrobalance influenced piece of physical theatre. However, all the works I direct or create have at least one thing in common; I'm always looking for unique physical and visual staging possibilities that transcend the everyday, appeal to a greater theatrical poetry and speak to a certain kind of theatre magic. I am inspired by the work of several companies and artists whose work I consider physical theatre: Pina Bausch, DV8 Physical Theatre, Forced Entertainment, Frantic Assembly, SITI Company and Punch Drunk to name a few. Many of the artists involved with these companies have training and experience in physical theatre. Throughout my study as a performer and director I have trained in the Suzuki Method of Actor Training, Butoh, Viewpoints, neutral mask, Laban, acrobalance and dance. I'd like to focus on two of these forms for the remainder of this article: the Suzuki Method of Actor Training and the Viewpoints.

"The best performances tend to affect their audiences viscerally and proceed from instinctive rather than intellectual motivation."

Physical Theatre by Marc Bauman

What is the Suzuki Method of Actor Training?

The Suzuki Method draws from such diverse influences as ballet, traditional Japanese and Greek theatre, and martial arts. It aims to train actors to perform demanding physical and vocal styles of performance.

"The Suzuki Method is a rigorous physical and vocal discipline for actors, created by renowned theatre artist Tadashi Suzuki and his company. The method is designed to regain the perceptive abilities and powers of the human body. Drawing on a unique combination of traditional and innovative forms, that strives to restore the wholeness of the body as a tool of theatrical expression."

SITI: Why We Train - A conversation between Anne Bogart and the SITI Company, compiled by Will Bond

Tadashi Suzuki is a theatre director who developed an actor training method called the "Grammar of the feet". Suzuki created the system as a reaction against naturalistic performance which he felt had increasingly neglected the use of the entire body in the act of live performance. He wanted to create a style of work that was powerful and epic, both in the use of the body and voice, but also in the use of space and time.

Through trial and error, during some of his early productions, he realised he needed to create a series of training exercises for his actors to be able to cultivate the levels of strength and energy he demanded in performance. Suzuki's approach to training the actor seeks the union of the body and the mind. Through the exercises of his system - "Grammar of the feet" - Suzuki constantly encourages a relationship between the actor and the ground. His training in the Japanese theatre forms of Kabuki and Noh have influenced his approach to actor training. Many exercises within the cannon of the Suzuki Method focus on carefully focused use of the feet and the centre of the body, placing the body through a sequence of demanding physical forms

Repetition is central to Suzuki's approach, as it is to many other disciplines where mastery rather than creativity or originality is prioritised. It is the repetition of these exercises that drills these movements into the memory and then into the physical body of the training actor. Through that repetition the actor is to be scrutinised and corrected by the teacher. The repetition also builds up the required stamina to maintain the commitment and energy levels while working. Repetition also teaches precision and respect for the craft, as you understand the complexity contained within small details.

What are the Viewpoints?

The Viewpoints are a philosophy of



movement translated into a technique of improvisation for

- training performers,
- creating movement on stage and
- providing a useful framework for the analysis of live performance.

The Viewpoints are a set of names given to certain basic principles of movement; the names constitute a language for talking about what happens or works on stage. This language is one that is simple and efficient. The Viewpoints are points of awareness that a performer or creator has while working.

The Viewpoints was first articulated by choreographer Mary Overlie, who broke down the two dominant issues performers deal with - time and space - into six categories. Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI) Company Artistic Director Anne Bogart came into contact with Mary Overlie at New York University in the early 70s. In the 1980s Anne started to collaborate with fellow director Tina Landau to investigate these six Viewpoints and relate the ideas to actor training and performance more broadly. Anne, Tina and members of the SITI Company have since expanded the work radically and adapted the Viewpoints for actors.

The Viewpoints can allow a group of actors to function together spontaneously and intuitively and to generate bold, theatrical work quickly and efficiently. It develops flexibility, articulation and strength in movement and creates an atmosphere that can foster and support ensemble playing. The Viewpoints encourage:

- the performer to become articulate with the body, space and time;
- a strong ensemble awareness;
- a developed sense of play, impulse and imagination;
- an awareness of our strengths and

weaknesses as a performer/creator;

- an efficient framework for analysis, allowing us to understand why a great moment on stage is working.

Other important skills encouraged by training in the Viewpoints include increased levels of observation and listening, a developed sense of taking interest in your environment, a freedom from hesitation, a commitment to clarity and recognition of your emotional and physical impulses and an understanding of the value of positive, active physical energy.

Select exercises

The following outlines a selection of several exercises I use on a regular basis, either in the training of actors or when working with an ensemble towards the development of a new physical theatre work.

Introduction to the centre

Connecting to the core of our body, the seat of our instinct, emotions and movement.

Ask students to stand in neutral, facing the front of the space. Feet should be hip distance apart and knees should be slightly bent so as to engage the core. Soft focus is to be adopted.

As students hold this position encourage them to work to be still and avoid yielding to any physical distractions. Next, ask students to imagine a basin of water placed inside their centre, full to the brim. They are to retain the water throughout the following exercises at all costs.

Focus your mind on the centre of the body, students must move their core from standing to the lowest possible point squatting, whilst still having their heels on the ground. They must do this over a sequence of counts. For example, over a consistent count of 10. Students must take their centre to the lowest possible point but work to avoid spilling any water from this "basin".

Change the count and move the centre to back to standing.

Repeat this process several times, extending and shortening the length of the count and each time encouraging students to work with greater precision, control and presence in space. Ensure the image of a basin full of water is active throughout.

What happens as we do this exercise? Are you able to hold water in this imagery basin? Do you start to move your body differently? Has anyone become more aware of his or her core? What happens at the most difficult point of the journey up and down?

It is possible with this exercise to divide into two groups; one up working on the floor and one sitting watching. Alternate this often and elicit feedback from the students watching.

Slow ten

Energy and presence in stillness and controlled, slow movement.

Separate students into two equidistant lines at opposite sides of the room, facing in towards the space. During this exercise students are asked to adopt the basic Suzuki neutral and carry their centre across the space at a constant, slow pace. This is to be done with precision and energy.

Starting in neutral remind students that they must keep their centre at this height throughout the exercise. They will be tempted to come back to a position that is comfortable and that is "everyday".

Define for your students where the audience is.

Students must cross the space at a slow controlled walk, staying in line with the rest of the group on their side. It should take around 2 minutes to cross the space, depending on the size of the room you are working in and the focus should remain on moving the centre at a constant pace. The intention is to eliminate all side-to-side and up-and-down movement.

After the first "lap", when students arrive at the wall on the opposite side of the space, instruct students to slowly turn (at the same tempo as walking across the space) towards the audience, so that they finish facing back into the space. They should be looking back towards the direction they have just come from.

Again, instruct the students to cross the space to arrive at the point that they first started. However, to conclude the exercise they will be facing away from the centre of the space. The end position is to finish back in the Suzuki neutral, so that the exercise finishes clearly and with punctuation.

This exercise is best performed to a percussive, regular beat.

As with many of the other exercises students should repeat this exercise several times and each time, work to focus on attaining better form. After several repetitions students should be encouraged to focus on more challenging concepts like energy, connection to audience, breath, staying present, having strength and power in simple, slow movement in stillness.

After each repetition encourage students to reflect on their observations during the task. Initiate a group discussion. Were students able to control their core? What happened to your breath? What are the challenges of moving slowly and working to radiant presence and energy?

Viewpoints

Warm up

Twelve sun salutations.

Standing in a circle teach the group the simple form of Salute to the sun – it's important that everyone in the group executes the same form so clarify any confusion before starting the exercise.

Ask the group to move through twelve Sun salutations, with only a single breathe

between each one. It is essential that the group stay together. It's both a warm up activity but also an ensemble task. There should be a slight increase in speed towards a climax of pace with the last three salutations. There is to be no breath between the last three salutations.

Students should aim to engage soft focus and active peripheral vision throughout the exercise. Ask students to refrain from looking around to keep up and stay together. Rather, encourage awareness through the whole body, seeding the idea that we can "listen" with more than just our ears and eyes.

Introduction to flow

Connecting to impulse and listening through the body, while reacting kinesthetically to other actors in space.

Ask students to stand scattered throughout an empty space and to take a moment to observe their breath, the group and the space. Begin walking.

As students start to move throughout the space let them know that you'd like them to work with a vibrant interest in the world around them and to encourage a rich observation of their own impulses and the actions of others.

"Point out that this sensibility of alertness, quickness, availability and openness to one another, and the sense that anything might happen, is necessary in each instant of Viewpoints."

The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition.

As students continue walking around the space and become more connected to the group and aware of the space introduce the following key rules or instructions one at a time:

- Fill the entire space with bodies evenly, there are to be no large gaps throughout the space but you must keep walking. If need be, increase your speed to fill the gaps. Heighten the urgency to complete this task by suggesting it is a life and death scenario. Watch the energy and commitment build in the room.
- Dart between the spaces that open as people pass by one another. Ensure the space is large enough to move through without colliding with anyone else.
- Introduce stopping and starting. Ensure this is always only in response to another action or movement from someone else in the space.
- Add dynamic changes in tempo. As a reaction to other movements ask students to change the pace of their movement around the space – either very fast or very slow. Encourage bold and dramatic choice and avoid the everyday. Encourage the group to react kinaesthetically to each other as they move

around the space. Urge students to listen through their body and to engage soft focus to see other actors.

The addition of music to this exercise will help to heighten the energy, focus and commitment in the room.

Up and down

Developing awareness of a group.

In groups of five, participants stand in a line facing out towards the "audience" watching.

After practicing the simple physical task of moving up and down while standing on the same spot, a cue (a clap) is given and students then have to work together as a group ensuring two people are down in the line at all times. Only two students can be in the down position, no more, no less.

It is important that students look forward, activating their peripheral vision and not try to cheat by looking to the side.

At a certain point in the exercise students are asked to close their eyes and continue.

The audience should feedback how successful the group was at maintaining two down at all times and will be asked to give feedback on how they could "sense" when a group was working together.

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“The body knows things about which the mind is ignorant.”

Jacques Lecoq

The truth of matter

By Noa Rotem

This article speaks of the training process rather than the performative outcomes of physical training methods for theatre - exploring the significant paradigm shift that occurs when the body is placed as the focal point for creative expression. For physical training not only aids in the creation of a more articulate and dynamic performance but also establishes pathways for the development of an inner anchor which manifests as self-esteem and confidence.

Our society has a very strange relationship with matter. On the one hand, we are seemingly haunted by it, as suggested by our obsession with the accumulation of material possessions, the acquisition of “beautiful” bodies as well as the fear of our own mortality, to name but a few examples. However, any scratching at the surface reveals a profound discomfort,

even distrust, of matter. This is undoubtedly a part of the legacy inherited from the Judeo-Christian split between spirit and flesh, the former deemed superior to the latter. In giving the body a central role in theatremaking, one is on some level directly challenging this ancient dichotomy. For in honouring the body’s innate knack for meaning making, connection and poetry (and, well, life), one is not only making space for the synthesis of these previously held opposites but is also challenging their assumed hierarchy.

To dare to trust in one’s own matter (otherwise known as our body) rather than to view it as an unruly and often unsatisfying instrument that one must will into submission or into some socially accepted form - is a process more meaningful and radical - than words may suggest.

An integral aspect of this process of reclaiming the body’s inherent wisdom is the changing of a reference point - from the external to the internal. The initial terror of daring to listen to one’s own body carries within it its own reward, as just on the other side of this same experience lies unprecedented freedom and joy. This process typically entails a deconstruction of previously held ideas and physical habits that is potentially disorientating and embarrassing leaving one feeling awkward in one’s own skin. This is a thoroughly transformational track that ultimately gives rise to an inner anchor.

Even in very young children it is possible to observe the ways in which bodily expression, in its nature authentic and full of contact with the world, becomes associated with “performing” - trying to entertain some imagined or real audience.

This self-consciousness that most bodies become riddled with over a lifetime is the one that effective nonverbal theatre methods aim to slowly dissipate in order to uncover that which lays underneath.

I recently taught a movement for performance workshop for 15-year olds in Australia. As a litmus test, at the very beginning of the workshop, I asked the students to dance to a popular song as a part of the warm up. Inevitably most

“People have complex views about the moving body; it is respected and ignored, craved and forbidden... It challenges convention, threatening the status quo. Who knows what will happen when the body speaks?” Andrea Olsen

“I am more interested in what moves people, than how they move.”

Pina Bausch

of their moves were externally dictated - and by that I mean that they executed predictable moves mimicking those prevailing in music videos and films. Then we plunged into a deep exploration designed to access the body's innate impulses. At the end of the workshop, I played the same song and the students were once again asked to dance. The transformation was astonishing. The students moved with such truthfulness, ease and inherent theatricality that their teachers could hardly believe it was the same bunch of young people. Their own verbal reflections were equally moving (*one cannot escape such puns). One reported with glowing eyes that this was the first time she felt a sense of confidence and trust in her body. Another with flushed cheeks said that he never knew what to do with his body onstage and that he felt he now unlocked a treasure chest he could carry with him wherever he went.

Yet another poignantly spoke of the sensation of surfing a wave of information traveling throughout her body, and being delighted to discover that this also provided a nonverbal meeting point with her ensemble. In fact, every single one of the 40 young artists felt the need to share some deeply personal insight that left both their teachers and I truly inspired.

From teaching to the development of one's own praxis

Of course, the same richness of process that can be witnessed in teaching is also experienced in the development of one's own praxis in relation to performing and/ or creating theatre works. And while the adrenalised rush of opening night is indeed inimitable, it is without a doubt the training and creation processes themselves that sustain and nourish us on our professional path. For inherent in many nonverbal training methods **is the actor's renewed relationship to their own training**. Director Anne Bogart speaks of how in most other art forms, technique is recognised to be a function of continual practice. This is a given aspect in any artist's life. Impossible to imagine musicians who stop practicing their daily scales and arpeggios or dancers who stop attending regular dance classes once they complete their formal education. And yet, for some reason, many theatre artists, out of



laziness, arrogance or fear stop training once their official studies are completed.

Many physical training methods for theatre contain within them a focus on regular and continuous practice for the development of both awareness and technique. Not only is this commitment to training pertinent for individual artistic growth but it also provides a gateway through its employment of preverbal vocabulary for the creation of **theatrical community** - another key feature of nonverbal theatre.

From personal praxis to a community of practitioners

This offers what can sometimes be a pronounced contrast to prevailing attitudes whereby the individual's process, role and glory are placed at the expense of the creation of collective ensemble spaces where true collaboration is made possible. An example of this is in some acting schools where despite an atmosphere of individualism and competition, the students, when onstage, are somehow expected to cultivate generosity and deep listening without having been given the skills to deal with the actual hesitation or downright animosity that pops up during the rehearsing process.

It is clear that without the constant flow of inspiration and dialogue with other artists who share a common vocabulary most artistic paths would reach a dead end. And while most theatrical endeavours inevitably have a collaborative component, a key element of physical training methods is a distinct "global" flavour that emerges as one taps into raw layers of being human that transcends any linguistic or societal forms. It is as though one gains access to a global artistic passport. No matter where one is in the world, there is a homecoming to be experienced in the stepping into a studio.

It's an intimate and terrifying act of stepping into a new studio, in a new country, filled with hitherto unknown artists and preparing one's system for the possibility of a genuine encounter through what can only be described as moments of grace. In these moments of grace previous cultural and linguistic barriers gradually - or sometimes instantly - melt away in a gaze, a gesture, a twinkle in

the eyes, the poetry of multiple human bodies magically finding a sudden stillness together. These are moments which can never be manufactured and which offer insight about an aspect of **aesthetic** and theatricality which extends **beyond the culturally specific lens**, to encompass a more universal perspective of what it means to be a human being.

From community to political significance

And while this homecoming often has the markings of an intimate and personal experience, it is in fact **a deeply political act** in a troubled world whose collective trust is so strongly in the direction of consumerism and separation.

For in every moment where we choose to open to the lived experience of not only our own body but also to that of others, we tap into a level of human experience where any historical ideas of separation become defunct and we become actively engaged in a radical bridge-making process across cultures and between individuals. The compassion we find in ourselves and others when we come from the truth of our own matter, accepting that we matter - from that place, any notions of competition or comparison acquired through the individualistic track of society become obsolete. This enables the unfolding of a new internal confidence as well as the generation of a different type of trust between players. This isn't achieved once but through repeated praxis.

Thankfully, however, this is a thoroughly meaningful, humorous and playful track, and one that enables the emergence of cultures of deep listening, authenticity and an awareness of the interconnectedness of variables in the surrounding world - all of which are, of course, much needed qualities in our times.

“To break through language in order to touch life is to create or re-create the theatre.”

Antonin Artaud

Drama: the Esperanto of the world of education and the arts

By John Somers

The overarching title of this issue implies, perhaps provocatively, that there are forms of theatre which have no “language”. This presumably refers to a “spoken” language for there are many dramatic forms which communicate in unique, nonverbal ways.

Verbal language has been a major theatre ingredient since ancient Greek and Roman times but that approach is predated by the theatrical representations employed in older cultures with little or no speech, to capture aspects of the mysterious, the unknown and the spiritual. The human body has always been an expressive tool whether represented in graphic form such as cave paintings or in ritual activities which employed humans to represent the forces which were thought to govern existence. People have also used dramatic form to model life; to capture the past and explore the future.

There appears never to have been a period when dramatic representation did not exist. In fact, the arts generally predate every other study form which comprise our educational vistas in schools and beyond. These uses of the dramatic language were developed in myriad forms worldwide and held a uniqueness which survived until the impact of colonisation and the widespread imposition of Western values and beliefs which suppressed and weakened them.

During my international work I have witnessed many theatre forms. Where the communicative medium is mostly verbal in the actors' national language, without fluency in that language it is difficult to absorb much beyond the basic meanings transmitted by speech rhythm, tone and volume, and the body language of the actors. Thus, although one may detect the aggression signalled by the speech tone and *physical* expressions of an actor, the motivation and subtleties may be indecipherable. However, where the



Ancient Egyptian ritual.

reception of dramatic messages relies on physical expression – mime and dance, for example, the messages may travel clearly to a multi-national audience. This is most effectively achieved when the physical dramatic language can be “read” successfully by audiences. If the language is culture specific – e.g. Kathakali – the difficulties of understanding it may be experienced much as it is with a verbal form.

When working with groups in countries where the participants did not understand English – and I did not understand the native language e.g. China and Lithuania – workshop leadership required a translator fluent not just in English and the native tongue but also in the complexity of the dramatic language. Rather like a written script is handed to actors who take the words of the playwright and discover the life-context in which the lines can reverberate, if the practical and creative frameworks conceived by the workshop leader are effectively translated and passed to the participants, challenging and quality practice results. Although the subtleties

of the drama may have been denied to me, there were many body and associated “languages” which I could understand and which informed me of the progress of the work, the engagement of the participants and, if intended for performance, the potential audience impact. These experiences, mirrored in the many other countries in which I worked, convince me that, unlike other subjects/activities – appreciation of science or history, for example – drama taps into overarching and universal forms which, if selected appropriately, fly above the demands and limitations of verbal communication.

As theatre and drama are multi-dimensional media, those who are responsible for initiating people into theatremaking should possess a wide-ranging understanding of the language forms. Without such knowledge the expressive drama languages available to participants will be less comprehensive. This is particularly worrying at this time in England as, quite apart from the curriculum side-lining of the arts, our Conservative



Complex make up and costume of a "Pacha" character from Kathakali, Kerala, Southern India.

government has mooted that "free schools" should be able to employ teachers who have no teacher training. I regard this apparent belittling of the teaching profession as an insult to the highly skilled and committed teachers our profession needs. If I set up as a medical doctor without the requisite medical education I would be prosecuted, yet the United Kingdom government regards teaching as so simple it requires no specialist preparation. We must resist this simplistic appreciation of teachers' roles. In the United Kingdom it has been created by the formalisation and over-structuring of the curriculum where government openly refers to the teachers' job as "delivering the curriculum", a phrase which equates more with the pushing of unopened mail through a letter-box rather than the complexity and subtlety of effective teacher skills and functions and effective learning.

If we regard theatre and drama as a "language" it matters how fluent and proficient our students become in its use. Whilst, to maximise their creativity in that language's use, the contexts in which it is employed need to be varied and challenging, the aim should be to pass the initiative to the student and to provide a variety of dramatic circumstances in which the language can be used. In the same way that visual artists use a sketch book to explore ideas, drama participants need to be able to learn, explore and manipulate dramatic languages in attempts to capture ideas in the medium. Drama's focus on "cooperative creation" is one of the outstanding characteristics of the medium. It is very exciting to provide the creative

framework within which you witness groups of students using a combination of discussion, dramatic media and reflection, selection and consolidation in exploring a concept before building a dramatic statement which can be shared.

The principal aim of the workshop leader/teacher should be to lead the participants to a state of dramatic fluency and independence where, as with the competent musician, they are able to call on wide-ranging artistic language forms to represent their creative impulses. A careful blend of effective instruction is necessary, balanced with the participants' use of the new ideas, often in combination with those already at their disposal. The boy in the picture, for example, had taken part in a daylong puppetry workshop at a youth drama workshop and was about to use the puppet he had made in an improvisation process which led to a devised "sharing" with an informal gathering of family members and friends.

The drama impetus which motivates participants derives from skilful leadership, monitoring and guidance by a workshop leader or teacher who must possess a wide-ranging knowledge of the drama languages and be able to employ them in educational frameworks which lead to participants' confidence and competence in using their expressive potential. The emphasis must be on skilling participants so they become independent users of the dramatic media. In a secondary school, for example, although teacher input of new approaches and skills will continue, by the age of sixteen students should be able to draw on the drama language to represent and transmit their creative imaginings. This mirrors the effective teaching, for example, of a foreign language, where students feel confident to communicate freely in that language whilst the teacher still adds to their knowledge and competence. One of the most satisfying experiences for a teacher of any subject is to have structured and delivered a curriculum which leads to student independence.

The forms of drama and theatre we teach and create in educational contexts and beyond have the great advantage of employing accessible skills and practicality. The basic media are our own body and voice which are amazingly flexible in their representational use. These can be

supplemented by non-complex media such as percussion music, projected visual images, simple costume, lighting and easily manipulated rostra. Unlike creating within film and video, there is no demand for learning to use complex technology. Dramatic media provide an immediacy; the live work is untrammelled by demands such as the framing of video shots to include long-shots, close-ups or other POV. There is also the positive dynamic obtained from the immediate availability of feedback from student colleagues and staff. The progression, development and adaptation of ideas has a reliable dynamic with built in critiques, rewards and the certainty of true learning. As the individual's body, often in cooperation with those of other participants, is the main medium of expression, modifications to expressive forms are immediate and within the control of the participants. As group activity, there is scope for inter-student support and the employment of developing specialist skills – the inclusion in a scene of mime or projected visual images contributed by students known to want to extend their skill-base in those areas, for example.

I do not denigrate other dramatic forms such as film and video but one of the joys of teaching drama is the great flexibility achieved through intensive use of human aesthetic resources and the potential energy and immediacy of the medium. I end by echoing that the leader's job is to be able to equip their charges with the elements and usage of the dramatic language and to aim to interest and excite them in ways which allow participants to be enthusiastic and competent in using it. One of the great satisfactions for the teacher is to view effective student work and to say inwardly: "They did that but my knowledge and skills as a drama educationalist allowed it to happen so successfully".



George Rosewell and puppet.

"If we regard theatre and drama as a "language" it matters how fluent and proficient our students become in its use."



The cast of Norske Folkeeventyr

A multilingual stage

By Nadya Shahd, photographs by Matt Lulu

I spent the last five years as a student in an international school where multilingualism is the norm and a classroom of fifteen students can have more than twenty different languages between them. Of course, many rich experiences arise from being in such an environment but there are two things in particular I have always found most fascinating about this multilingual and intercultural landscape. The first is how many concepts - specific aspects of behaviour or action or life - have no way of being articulated in one language but are given life in others. Ideas that seem hazy or abstract in one tongue can have a clear, definitive expression in another. In other words: there are entire realms of human experience lost in the chasm of translation and hidden within each distinct language. The second thing is that despite this, despite the amalgam of mother tongues and colliding cultures and conceptions of the world, there are always moments of unspoken understanding, of shared experience and common truths.

In theatre, too, multilingualism makes for a richer landscape. Not just bilingual actors/characters or texts in foreign

tongues but multiple dramatic languages: the language of music, light, space and motion are languages in their own right, and no less important to theatre than the spoken word. There are no words that could say, quite as well as the thing itself, how light can fall across fragments of a face, leave the rest shrouded in shadow and pull on something strange inside those watching, that desire to see and understand the body before us. Just as concepts intangible in one tongue can find articulation in another, the “unwritten” dramatic languages can reveal hidden truths and elusive ideas that shy away from the concreteness (and even violence, as theatre practitioner Anne Bogart might say) of spoken language.

It was both these concepts - the truths lost in translation between spoken tongues and the importance of the unwritten languages of theatre - that I sought to explore when writing and staging *Norske Folkeeventyr*, or *The Norwegian Folktales*, last year.

Norske Folkeeventyr

Everything about Norwegian folktales captivated me from when I first encountered them. Not only the vividness

and life of the folktales themselves but also the history surrounding them. In the 19th century, two men - Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe - walked across Norway, collecting stories from the many people they encountered (a wonderful story in itself) and compiling the first collection of regional folk and fairy tales. Since the storytelling tradition was oral, not written, and the stories themselves were dying out in places, Asbjørnsen and Moe saved substantial aspects of Norwegian storytelling and culture from extinction. Their collected folktales were also significant for the kind of language



Inger/Huldra in Norske Folkeeventyr

“In theatre... multilingualism makes for a richer landscape.”



Antonia's hardingfele

they were written in - colloquial Norwegian.

For around 300 years until the 19th century, Danish rule of Norway decreed that all published works were to be in Danish, vastly different from the various Norwegian dialects actually spoken by the people. Asbjørnsen and Moe understood the importance of using the vernacular of the original storytellers since the folk stories were (and are) so deeply intertwined with the land and language of Norway. However, even this could not have truly preserved the stories as they may have been originally told. As a result of Danish influence and geography, many semi-isolated settlements were formed and the Norwegian language developed an incredible range of dialects and variations. A tale traveling just within Norway itself would have been adapted and translated across region-specific dialects and culture countless times. By the time these tales reached me, three centuries after they had been first transcribed, edited and published, and - since I don't speak Norwegian - translated into English, how much would have changed? Reading my book of Norwegian folktales, I already had in my hands very different stories to what they began as when they were first told over the fire to two travellers tucked between mountains and fjords.

The play *Norske Folkeeventyr* follows the travels of Asbjørnsen and Moe as they collect and recount stories, and encounter Inger, a *felespiller* (folk music fiddler) who bears uncanny resemblance to a fairytale creature Huldre - a kind of siren of the woods. As Inger and Huldre begin to blur together, and the lines between Asbjørnsen and Moe's reality and the folk tales they tell begin to

dissolve, the audience is left to consider where a nation's stories end and its history starts (and just how different the two really are). The question that intrigued me when playing with the gaps between dialects and languages in this context too was: if stories twist and turn and change, how does our history and identity do the same?

Two tongues

My first brush with the world of *Norske Folkeeventyr* wasn't with the folktales themselves. It was instead a chance encounter with the *hardingfele* (Norwegian folk fiddle), and the fellow student and *felespiller* Antonia Dyvik (later to be the character of Inger/Huldre) who played it. I had never before witnessed an instrument that seemed to be saying so much at once - with its sound, with its very presence on stage. Norwegian folk music, it turns out, tells just as many stories as the folk tales, of the land and of creatures like Huldre. I knew when I heard her play that I wanted to tell the stories she and her fiddle were singing. It was only when I approached her afterwards to express this that I was pointed towards the Norwegian folktales. But just as Asbjørnsen and Moe preserved the language the folktales were originally told in, I wanted to keep the language of folk music in which I first heard these stories too. And so music became a fundamental part of *Norske Folkeeventyr*. From the play:

Musician: *Folk music is full to bursting with stories of Huldre. There are so many songs written in her spirit - only we tell our tales in a different tongue to you, that is the difference.*

Asbjørnsen: *A song for a story. A song for a story. But aren't they the same, Inger, your music and my words? Don't we sing*

for the same reasons?

Along the process of writing the play, I had the fortune of hearing (perhaps experiencing is a better word) Antonia play the *hardingfele* much more often - and even playing with her, on occasion, with my decidedly less fascinating instrument, the guitar. An important insight about the way *Norske Folkeeventyr* had to be brought to life was revealed to me along the way. "There are no rules to music!" Antonia exclaimed to me one day, almost exasperated with my desperate attachment to the safety of stock guitar chords and familiar song structure as I tried to play the folk music. "If it sounds right, it is right."

She talked about music like it was alive. She didn't say what she wanted out of the music in words; she let the music speak for itself. She understood that translating free sound to spoken language would force that sound into a kind of structure it didn't have and didn't need, shackling it. To folk musicians like her, music is wild, loose and she refuses to tie a wild thing up. It was this that made me realise that I had to do the same for the Norwegian folktales if I intended to stage them with truth. I had to keep them wild, keep not only the part of the stories that were transcribed by Asbjørnsen and Moe and immortalised in ink but the living, breathing parts between the lines - the breadth of the mountains they were told under, the warmth of the fires they were whispered around, the primal desire to share something with another, to connect with the land and the people that impelled them to be told in the first place. These were the parts that could only find a voice in the unwritten tongues of sound, light, space, movement and shadow.

Sitting down to write *Norske Folkeeventyr*, then, I sought not to write the play so much as - in the way Simon McBurney has referred to scripts - write a text that could function as a map of the play-to-be. I wanted to use the written English as a scaffold and as I did so create the space for each other language. I wanted to leave room for the two Norwegians in the cast to speak in their mother tongue, for the phonetics and lilt that first held these folktales to be heard. Room for *hardingfele* music composed in hymn to the sheer, breath-taking fjords to redraw those landscapes in sound along our stage. Room for the shape and weight of actors' bodies, for their limbs and skin to lend spirit to the forests and elements and creatures and very land itself. Room for the things at the very heart of these stories, all far too wild and alive to be locked into the truth of only one tongue.

Using home languages and Ways of Knowing in drama

By Nita Dewse

An IB student stands in front of the class searching for his clowning moment; he is waiting for inspiration from the clowning gods. He fiddles with his hat – a Turkish fez – twirling the tassels to try and get a better reception as he fears the gods might be out to lunch. Then, all of a sudden, in frustration, he curses them in Finnish – the audience roar laughing and his clown is born.

This idea comes from a clowning commandment taught by Matt Godfrey at an ISTA workshop we attended a while back. The idea is simple and terrifying – stand up in front of the class and perform an improvisation with a prop without pre-planning it. Students need to have “faith” (one of the Ways of Knowing in TOK) that something creative will happen even if they don’t know what it will be yet. That idea of stepping into the unknown without planning is the opposite of what we often teach students in schools where they are rehearsed and prepared within an inch of their life. But the point really is that the answer for this student came in a moment of honesty, using his home language.

Ever since then, whenever I teach clowning, I have encouraged my students not to use English to express themselves. They can speak in their home language or, if English is their only fluent language, they can speak in a form of gibberish with some occasional onomatopoeia key words being identifiable – a bit like Grammelot that the Commedia artists would use when they toured around Italy and Europe performing to audiences who spoke different languages. The comic capacity this brings to the moment is incredible. Not only does it make students pay more attention to their body language and gestures to



help communicate what they are saying but by using a home language the clown can’t help but be true to who they are. In clowning it is incredibly important that the clown is honest. It is no good if they try to pretend – the audience smell a fake and the comedy falls flat. Clowns need to be vulnerable and truthful and the honesty of the home language somehow transfers to the clown persona they have created. The rhythms and tones of the language become the focus of attention instead of the words. A Finnish clown answering a phone call from the gods has a very different personality compared to a German clown or a Japanese clown for instance. In a classroom, it also celebrates the idea of international mindedness and helps to promote the home language within the classroom – a sort of celebration of the students’ skill in knowing another language.

Another example of using a home language was in a year 9 lesson a few years

ago but this time the effect was not a comic one. We were studying immigration and refugees crossing borders. The students were in pairs and had to do a piece of spontaneous improvisation between the refugee and the border guard. It was the refugee’s job to convince the guard as to why they should be let across and the border guard had to stand their ground and remain impersonal to their pleas. The drama was poodling along but there was a falsity to the whole exercise that wasn’t working. Students were having trouble empathising with their characters, they didn’t know what to say or how to act. Eventually, I got an EAL student to perform in her home language of Turkish – the difference for everyone in the room was remarkable. She spoke with such passion that the room was silent as everyone turned to watch her pleas. The boy playing the border guard turned to me with such emotion and said: “Am I allowed to let her through? I don’t know what’s happened to her but she needs help.” The raw emotion that was in focus when the language was stripped of its meaning was a very powerful factor in helping to empathise with the human condition of this moment. It also opened up discussions about the guard’s role and the type of person you would need to be in that role. Do you need to make decisions with your head or your heart? What level of control does the guard ultimately have in the decision making anyway?

Ultimately this use of home languages or MFL has permeated a lot of my other work outside of the classroom as well. Earlier this year I directed a promenade production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and we based our production on the four

“...whenever I teach clowning, I have encouraged my students not to use English to express themselves.”

“...using languages other than English can be a rewarding and liberating experience...”

elements: earth, wind, fire, water. The lovers were air, the Mechanicals the earth and the two warring factions of the fairies were water and fire. The water fairies belonged to Titania and sang their lines and took most of the songs and lyrical passages from the play. The fire Fairies however took longer to find their personality as a group. Puck was a part of their gang so they naturally became a bit more mischievous and acrobatic, flicking and rolling from place to place in contrast to the elegant flowing water fairies. They didn't have much to say or do however except for hanging around the playground forest and watching the antics of the lovers and Mechanicals. It wasn't until we decided that they would help to move the audience from place to place that their identities began to form. Rather than just tell the audience to come and follow them I got them to speak in their home languages – suddenly we had the most bizarre array of languages bombarding the audiences senses – a mix of Hindi, Flemish, Hungarian, Tamil and Thai calling “Come! Come! Follow me!”. The effect was Brechtian and strange – the transitions became part of the dreamlike atmosphere of the rest of the play. Everything was clear and not clear

at the same time. Also, each fairy suddenly became a clown of sorts and had their own personality and a sense of individuality within the chorus. And the kids in the audience loved them – the English language was not required to communicate the essential clowning commandment “The Audience is your Friend” – body language and gesture was all that was needed.

So using languages other than English can be a rewarding and liberating experience for students and the effects it can create can be powerful ones. When I started teaching drama I also taught English and the thing that gripped me were the words – the eccentric and comic language of e.e. cummings' poems, Lady Macbeth's “unsex me here” speech, the brutality of words in a Berkoff play – but I realise now it wasn't just the meaning that was created from the language that was the hook, it was the emotions and drama that came out of the rhythms and structure of the language that were something I felt as an actress and reader.

This was never more evident than when, about ten years ago now, I went to see Tim Supple's multilingual production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where only one of the lovers spoke English. It didn't

matter. The play was the most sensuous, exotic and rich version of the play I have ever seen. Sitting in Stratford upon Avon you could almost feel the heat and spices of India embrace you in this interpretation. As humans we are programmed to try and make meaning out of the world – we constantly look for symbols to interpret. The meaning of the play for me was a richer one because my eyes looked for clues in staging, body language, gesture and proxemics to make up for the deficit of my ears. It was a Peter Brook acid moment and we need to share and celebrate this power of language in all its guises more often when we teach.

Having recently taken part in two days of TOK training in my school, I was introduced to the eight Ways of Knowing – reason, sense perception, emotion, faith, intuition, imagination, memory and language. Talking to other teachers from other subject areas, I quickly realised how much of what students know is taught primarily through reason, memory and language – emotion was most definitely the poorer cousin. As drama teachers we have the wonderful ability to use all the areas of knowing and give them equal billing. We naturally incorporate the other areas of “sense perception, emotion, imagination, faith, and intuition” in our work and using a different language can really help to highlight some of these lesser recognised ways of knowing and thereby give students a wider access to knowledge and understanding in all its guises.





Alternative mask performance – a duet for a mask and a flute

By Avital Manor Peleg

Imagine a dialogue between two strangers that have never met before. Imagine a new, innovative language, crystallising with dedication to communicate and collaborate, despite any differences. This is the story of an artistic journey of mutual respect and tolerance which shaped itself into a meta-language of sound, movement, tone, vibration, eye contact and visual elements. A dynamic conversation between two artists of different cultures and practices: an Israeli theatre artist and a Spanish musician who met in the United States and started

collaborating. Together they created a duet of visual, physical mask theatre and experimental flute music.

Last year I took part in a unique performance project in Boston entitled *Music in Motion*. Outstanding instrumentalists team up with puppeteers to translate a wide array of contemporary compositions into intriguing works of visual and object theatre. The project was led by Juventas New Music Ensemble's Artistic Director Lidiya Yankovskaya and Puppet Showplace Theatre's Artistic Director Roxanna Myhrum. Quoting

Lidiya Yankovskaya from an interview to the online journal *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*: "*Musicologists generally mark the year that World War I began (1914) as the beginning of the contemporary music era.*" The *Music in Motion* project represents 100 years of musical development, through what she refers to as "an extreme range of styles, from Minimalism to the most complex examples of post-Tonalism, to neo-Classicism." This diversity of new music was interpreted by different independent puppeteers, showcasing different styles and techniques of puppetry such as

“The mask represents the “naked self” a unique state of being that can facilitate honesty, openness and true understanding.”

marionettes, hand puppets, masks and table-top puppets.

I was invited to create an original, nonverbal, theatre piece using my method of mask performance, to be inspired by Edgard Varèse's *Density 21.5* - a flute solo, composed in 1936 for the premiere of the first platinum flute. The piece of music was chosen by the musical director Yankovskaya and a challenging one for me as I was unfamiliar with this style of contemporary music. The first time I heard *Density 21.5* I felt physical discomfort as the music vibrated sharply into my ears and through my body. Furthermore, working with real-time live instrumentalists whom I have never met before was also a challenge, especially when such technically-difficult music was involved. On top of that, it has been more than a decade since I performed on stage myself. For over 10 years I had dedicated my artistic attention to teaching others while I developed a variety of academic programmes, including my original **Alternative mask performance (AMP) acting method**.

It was time for me to put on my student mask again. Starting from scratch, I had to learn all that I could about contemporary music and to brush the dust off my acting skills. I was extremely lucky to be working with Orlando Cela, a brave and incredibly skilful musician

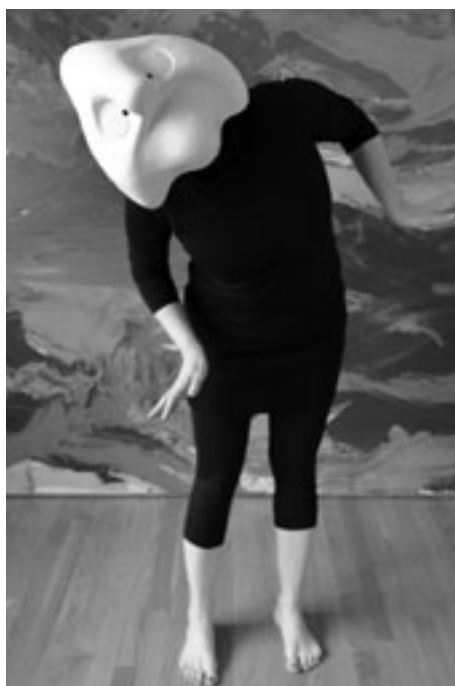
who willingly took his eyes away from the music sheets, to together seek a way to interact and integrate the music and the mask. Naively, lacking understanding of what it takes, I asked Orlando to memorise the whole piece by heart. An insane goal, I realised later. Amazingly he nailed it by the next rehearsal. As it turned out he had played *Density 21.5* 20 years before our meeting, always following the notes with full concentration. It is an intensive solo, considered to be one of the most challenging pieces for flute players. But now he had to communicate with me - live on stage. For us to be able to create a new form of stage life, with absolute attention to each other, we had to maintain eye contact and keep a complete open mind. Orlando says that our work together changed the way he will play *Density 21.5* forever.

Listening to the music over and over, trying to find inspiration and an inner connection to it, I used the tools provided by my own acting method, AMP. For years I have been teaching students around the globe how to work with masks to bridge cultural gaps and raise awareness of different art forms. This time it came to my aide and paved the way for me to go back on stage as a performer, overcoming my initial alienation from contemporary music.

The AMP method is based on three systematic stages, each using a different

kind of mask. I started with the 1st stage, using the white neutral mask. The use of this mask is inspired by the theory of Jacques Copeau. The mask represents the “naked self” a unique state of being that can facilitate honesty, openness and true understanding. It allows me to be in a mindful balance of discovery through silent and economical movement. Gradually, while using and exploring the white neutral mask, I felt how the music directed me towards a haunting journey of a character, reflecting the composition of reversal rhythmic music, chaotic motive and its complex tonal range. Suddenly, the plot was born and it was clear to me that the theatre interpretation of the music is about a woman haunted by her memories and dreams. During rehearsals the flute became not only a musical instrument but also a symbol of inhaling and exhaling - the sound of life that the mask was unable to produce. Thus we merged each other's techniques and aesthetics and a duet for a flute and a mask was born.

Fate brought us together and we wanted to continue beyond the *Music in Motion* project. To further develop our newly found nonverbal language of two art forms; expanding its “vocabulary” and formation. I invited Orlando to join me in the next two stages of my AMP acting method, integrating it with experimental





music and the sounds of the flute. I promised myself to be my own dedicated student while also taking the role as a teaching artist - a paradoxical situation. But theatre strives on paradoxes. The mask is a visual vessel of inherent conflicts, a paradox between the human body and the artificial face object. The mask covers the human face and changes the mechanics of our everyday perception and communication to a nonverbal universal language.

Orlando and I worked in the studio for a few months, learning and discovering our own forms of expression as well as the artistic dynamics of each other. In a positive, collaborative and nurturing setting AMP acting method encourages the creative work in progress created in a laboratory environment while using improvisation techniques. In time we were ready to jump into the 2nd stage of the AMP method, exploring the playful and liberating technique of acting with the Larval masks. The use of these masks is influenced by the theory and practice of Jacques Lecoq. These large face masks allow me to become aware of my stylised theatrical movements alongside Orlando's experimental improvised music, using a variety of different types of flutes. Together we discovered how to portray a range of compelling, comic characters through movement and sound.

To assist in my double role as

the instructor as well as the student, we recorded and documented the experimental improvisation on video. Analysing what was happening in the studio showed me that sometimes the movement came first, inspiring the music while sometimes the sound was the trigger to a new body expression. The most magical moments happened when the music and movement merged organically, speaking out as a whole.

As more and more of these magical moments occurred, we were ready to move into the 3rd stage of the AMP acting method: the self-specific mask - introducing this original part of my theory and practice. Coining the term "self-specific mask" I am referring to the mask as an active tool, integrating the emotional, physical, cognitive and visual aspects of identity. This mask is personally designed and acted by the actor wearing it. As an artist I continuously aim to explore new ways of expressing the uniqueness of the mask and to combine aesthetics with social awareness. With the self-specific mask I wish to address a new concept of mask and its acceptance. In the process I wanted to examine my own self-specific mask. I was passionate about stretching the limits of the mask as an action tool and an object. I challenged the elements that are inherent to the mask:

- a mask covers and conceals the face -

so I looked for a transparent material that would expose my face;

- a mask is a static object - so I wanted to find a dynamic material that would allow the mask to move;
- a mask requires front acting, to preserve the illusion - so I was seeking 360 degree acting with mask opportunities;
- instead of "behind the mask" - I wanted to be in the front, exposing the fragile and sensitive moment of meeting the audience eye to eye;
- a mask is a finely designed theatre object, sculptured by professional artists - I wanted to place the magic of art in the hands of "ordinary people", using a ready-made object, manipulating its purpose.

I chose to use a ziploc bag as a mask... and the story and interaction with Orlando and the audience became both comic and dramatic. Using the self-specific mask encouraged me to move further with my expressive form of art, allowing my identity - unique, dynamic and diverse - to be exposed and to come alive on stage. Alongside me, Orlando was thrown into the wild experimental music and sound. As a result of this nonverbal artistic journey he started to *act* his music - not only play the music - and I started to conduct with my body.



“The most magical moments happened when the music and movement merged organically, speaking out as a whole.”



Where do words go when we have said them...?

By Joachim Matschoss

...maybe in one ear and out the other? That applies in real life more and more as multiple conversations happen in everyone's life 24/7, a whats app call in one ear, a phone call in the other, Facebook updates left hand, a quick text with the right. But in theatre? The poor writer has slaved over crafting a cacophony of words for the audience to hear, analyse, be moved by... Pinter has even chiselled his pauses into an art form so that the words can shine. But there are other ways, particularly for young people to explore... I would like to encourage fellow artists/teachers that

work with young people to create original work that believes in the power of visual theatre/nonverbal theatre/physical theatre (whatever "label" you might want to use) that at its heart has storytelling.

Have you ever sent a text message or even an old school email to a friend, only to have the person you are sending it to misinterpret the emotional content of that message? One of the problems of digital communication has to do with the lack of context that body language (or, more accurately, nonverbal clues) those messages have. We are using emoticons to

indicate what we are "feeling" because we have realised we are missing the layers of communications with which we surround the actual words we speak. The nonverbal clues we send and receive from others are vital: eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture, touch, intensity, timing, pace and intensity are all elements of nonverbal communication we use to interpret the emotional content of a communication exchange.

Eye contact

Is this source of connection missing, too intense or just right in yourself or in the

“One of the problems of digital communication has to do with the lack of context that body language those messages have.”

person you are looking at?

Facial expression

What is your face showing? Is it masklike and inexpressive, or emotionally present and filled with interest? What do you see as you look into the faces of others?

Tone of voice

Does your voice project warmth, confidence and delight, or is it strained and blocked? What do you hear as you listen to other people?

Posture and gesture

Does your body look still and immobile or relaxed? Sensing the degree of tension in your shoulders and jaw answers this question. What do you observe about the degree of tension or relaxation in the body of the person you are speaking to?

Touch

Remember, what feels good is relative. How do you like to be touched? Who do you like to have touching you? Is the difference between what you like and what the other person likes obvious to you? (This includes firmness of grip during handshakes, pats on backs and hugs.)

Intensity

Do you or the person you are communicating with seem flat, cool and disinterested, or over-the-top and melodramatic? Again, this has as much to do with what feels good to the other person as it does with what you personally prefer.

Timing and pace

What happens when you or someone you care about makes an important statement? Does a response - not necessarily verbal - come too quickly or too slowly? Is there an easy flow of information back and forth?

Sounds

Do you use sounds to indicate that you are attending to the other person? Do you pick up on sounds from others that indicate their caring or concern for you?

What if we delete the words in a theatre piece and concentrate on the above?

Like portraiture framed by a string of lucid vignettes, Peter Handke's *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* offers a momentary view into the beauty of the lives steadily passing by us, all without a word of dialogue. In lieu of serious discourse, inner monologues come to light through actions and words transcend into an abstract language that still manages to speak volumes about the human dynamic.

Handke formed the initial concept of the production after watching people through a cafe window as they sauntered by. "I would see people as they pass by and from that brief moment, I would write stories on what I saw," Handke said. "I let that experience fold into other ideas but my inspiration

“Physical theatre (or living theatre) exists at the intersection of the performing arts.”

was always rooted in that basic human experience.” It is widely accepted that the Austrian dramatist intentionally left the floodgates open for different interpretations when writing the play.

The play touches on the meaning of alienation and the concepts of individualism versus community. It has become a matter of convention how productions place reliance on speaking as the primary means of connecting with audiences as well as the characters with another. This play has essentially turned this idea inside out by having hundreds of characters connected only by the town square of which they pass through. With such a large collection of characters, it's come as a quite a surprise when it is revealed that a mere 13 actors complete the ensemble.

The United Kingdom company DV8 states in its artistic policy that their work is about taking risks, aesthetically and physically, about breaking down the barriers between dance, theatre and personal politics and, above all, communicating ideas and feelings clearly and unpretentiously. It is determined to be radical yet accessible and to take its work to as wide an audience as possible... The focus of the creative approach is on reinvesting dance with meaning, particularly where this has been lost through formalised techniques... (The) work inherently questions the traditional aesthetics and forms which pervade both

modern and classical dance, and attempts to push beyond the values they reflect to enable discussion of wider and more complex issues.

Movement is the central organising principle in visual theatre. Performers communicate information, relationships and emotions primarily through movement such as traditional mime, various forms of dance, sign language, gesture or the circus arts. Other visual theatre choices include puppetry and masks. Naturally visual theatre is not necessarily completely silent or nonverbal. It may contain spoken word, music or other sound. It may also contain multimedia elements such as video or projections. However, the essential meaning of any visual theatre piece transpires through its visual vernacular.

Physical theatre (or living theatre) exists at the intersection of the performing arts. It draws on traditions that are universal and blends techniques, styles and themes across a spectrum of theatre, movement and gestural art.

Lyn Gardner states in *The Guardian*:
“Theatre is a physical and visual medium but the play's not always the thing. There is a strand of theatre - the physical and the visual - that speaks a completely different language from the traditional well-made play and spans theatre, puppetry, dance and visual arts. This work uses the language of gesture, an area of theatre that in the past was dubbed mime and thought of



as entirely silent. Nowadays such pieces frequently include spoken text, but the body speaks as eloquently as the voice, and one of the great strengths of this form is that it can often mine the emotions that fall in the silences between words. Much of this work is devised not scripted, and although many of the UK companies working in this area have been influenced by European traditions, increasing numbers of young companies are developing their own distinct and excitingly high voltage styles."

In 1978 Pina Bausch changed her working methods. Invited by the director of the Bochum theatre Peter Zadek to create her own version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, she found herself in a difficult situation. A large portion of her ensemble no longer wished to work with her as there was little conventional dancing in her pieces. She thus cast the Bochum guest performance with just four dancers, five actors and a singer. With this cast she was unable to deploy choreographic steps and so began by asking her performers associative questions around the themes of the play. The result of this joint investigation was premiered on the 22nd of April 1978 in Bochum under the lengthy title *Er nimmt sie an der Hand und führt sie in das Schloss, die andern folgen* (He takes her by the hand and leads her into the castle, the others follow) and was almost drowned out by the storm of protest from the audience. Yet in making this unusual move, Pina Bausch had finally found the form her work would take, its dreamlike, poetic imagery and bodily language justifying the worldwide success she soon achieved. In taking people's essential emotions as its starting point - their fears and needs, wishes and desires - the Tanztheater Wuppertal was not only able to be understood throughout the world, it sparked an international choreographic revolution. The secret of this success may lie in the fact that Pina Bausch's dance theatre risks taking an unflinching look at reality, yet at the same time invites us to dream. It takes the spectators' everyday lives seriously yet at the same time buoys up their hopes that everything can change for the better. For their part, they are required to take responsibility themselves. All the men and women in Pina Bausch's pieces can do is test out, with the utmost precision and honesty, what brings each and every one closer to happiness, and what pushes them further from it; they cannot offer a panacea. They always, however, leave their public in the certainty that - despite all its ups and downs - they will survive life. Bausch's theatre is a great



example of nonverbal theatre and worth exploring by students that are serious about telling stories in other ways than merely saying words.

Donna Perlmutter ("Reviews" Dance Magazine 58, no. 9 (1984): 28,34-35) writes: "Obsessive, mindless self-flagellation takes over in this psychiatric back ward. A man in a rumpled suit (an attendant?) desperately crashes chairs to clear a pathway for an impulse-ridden woman careening through the room. Her kindred spirit, a catatonic male, enters, and another man, a sort of therapist, tries to alter their behaviour. Appearing intermittently is a woman in a red fright wig who observes the scene as would a paranoid - agitated, fearful, and mocking. Finally, at the blackout, she makes the leap from her own to the others' bedevilled inner world."

Aristotle stated that six elements compose drama. They are plot, theme, character, dialogue, music and visual elements. All these elements except dialogue can be illustrated to the audience through theatrical nonverbal communication. The theatre depends heavily on nonverbal communication to inform and move its audience. Acting, blocking, costume, lighting and set design can all help achieve that goal.

At the most individual level, nonverbal communication takes place through the actor onstage. Though her character may have dialogue, she communicates just as much with her physicalisation and movement as her words. The way she carries herself, walks, sits and performs any physical activity tells the audience plenty about her character. For example, a nervous flighty character may move quickly, play with her hands or tap her toes while sitting and shrink back when confronted by another character. Nonverbal communication can even contradict the spoken dialogue to add complexity and tension to the character and her interaction with others. It is important to consider

that the blocking, or placement of actors onstage, also acts as a significant form of nonverbal communication. Where characters stand onstage and how they move about can tell the audience much about their relationship with each other and their environment as well as a type of hierarchy of characters. For example, the protagonist is often placed in visually eye-attracting positions onstage. The audience sees the story through her eyes, so she must be the visual focus of much of the action so the audience can relate to her.

A further example of why and how nonverbal theatre should play an important role in the canon of performances created by young people is the story of Sophie Volkhonskaya. She was raised in a family of actors, her father and mother met in a university theatre, so as a child, she was spending all her free time among actors - learning lines and running around the stage. "I participated in theatre productions in school, every year we had a New Year staging and I was there. At the American University in Bulgaria I decided to try a bunch of different things, I took courses starting from history to theatre just to try it out. I took one acting course and I got hooked, so I have been doing it ever since. There hasn't been a semester when I didn't participate in any play productions." (as noted by M. Doshanova) Volkhonskaya normally directs plays and believes that everyone has some talent in acting. Some though require more work than others: "Some people are just more natural on stage or at reading the script than others, that's why once we introduced the notion of auditions here. I do think that all people have talent concerning this, but if it's measurable, some have more than others. At the same time it is possible to teach people some basic things which are very easy but you don't think about it in real life." Volkhonskaya is in charge of Russian play productions. She says she loves to produce Russian plays that involve people that speak Russian but it's not their native language. Intonations, voices make the play more interesting and vivid.

"It's amazing how Moldovans speak one Russian, Georgians speak other Russian, Turkmen speak another Russian and it's all different intonations and wordings and you can use it and manipulate it to your benefit." In many environments non-native speakers are mixed with people with accents or even little understanding of the language at all. But all have a story to tell and they should be given the chance to tell their story in whatever way possible so we can hear that story even if we just see it.

Biographies



Anna Andresen

I am an actor, writer and director based in London. Since graduating from both the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Drama Centre London I have worked extensively across the industry. From West End theatre, television and film to writing, producing and performing a one woman comedy show for Edinburgh, coaching students applying for drama school and leading workshops in London and New York.



Simon Bell

I have worked on education programmes for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Battersea Arts Centre and Royal Court, and am currently a teacher of MYP and DP Theatre at Atlanta International School. I have been a workshop and masterclass leader for ISTA and am thrilled to be a part of such an incredible community of theatre artists.



Katy Bingham

Born and raised in Los Angeles my exposure and passion for the performing arts was early and immediate. I have been performing for 15 years and am a director, singer, yogi and teacher of theatre and yoga. I have a BA in Performance Theatre and Masters in Teaching. I currently live in Washington State, and have taught middle and high school in Kenya and Turkey.



Kevin Burns

I have taught IB Theatre for 15 years and have been involved with ISTA as a teacher, artist, host and Rep for two decades. I love the challenges and rewards of this wonderful and unique artistic experience that is an ISTA event. This year I look forward to celebrating my 20th ISTA festival experience, my 8th as Rep.



Georgina Christou

Originally from London I have been the middle school drama teacher and musical director at Taipei American School since 2011. I hold an undergraduate degree in Drama and English literature, a post graduate certificate in Education as a Drama Specialist and a master's in Education. I have taught KS3, GCSE, IGCSE and IB Theatre.



Nita Dewse

I am currently the head of drama at Bangkok Patana School. I grew up in Australia but have spent my adult life living and working abroad. Despite this, I can't speak any other language proficiently and am constantly in awe of how many languages some students speak - it's a skill worth showcasing through drama.



Shane Anthony Jones

I have worked as a freelance director, dramaturge, choreographer and producer of theatre and film for the past 15 years. During this time I have developed new works, adapted classics and rehearsed contemporary texts. These projects have seen me work for professional theatre companies, youth theatre companies, universities and with extensive national and international touring.



Mhairi MacInnes

Pursuing a passion for music, I graduated in Composition from Leeds University Music Department in 1981 and Performance at the Frederic Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw in 1984. Currently retraining as a Feldenkrais® practitioner, I volunteer in between ISTA at an arts based school for underprivileged children in Chennai.

**Avital Manor Peleg**

I am an international artist, director, educator and social justice advocate. Originally from Israel, I received my BA and MA degrees with honours from Tel Aviv University and later joined the theatre department as an instructor. I currently work as the Cultural Attaché in the Consulate General of Israel to New England.

**John Somers**

I am a drama and theatremaker working in a variety of contexts including communities, schools, youth and seniors' settings. My aim is to maximise the engagement and creativity of participants, including audiences, through the use of a wide range of drama approaches and techniques.

**Joachim Matschoss**

I was born in Germany and now live in Melbourne, Australia. I am a playwright, poet and theatremaker. My company Backyard Theatre Ensemble (BYTE) presents diverse pieces of theatre all across Melbourne and internationally. I have created performances in many countries and my poetry has been published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

**Clynt Whitaker**

I am from Auckland, New Zealand, and have worked in Malaysia, Taipei, China and now reside in Bangkok, Thailand, where I have been exploring the various practices of Thai performing arts. I have enjoyed working as an examiner and as a member of ISTA where I have worked with such talented individuals. As head of the English department and solo theatre teacher at the Concordian International School my time is precious - but after 50 you just sleep less anyway.

**Noa Rotem**

I am a performing artist, director and teacher equally based in Australia, South East Asia, Portugal and Israel. My work often reflects my love of unleashing the body's innate poetry as a primary tool of expression. I am also passionate about the role of theatre as an instrument of unification in a world that fosters anonymity and disconnection.

**Nadya Shahd**

I am a student at Barnard College, embarking on theatre adventures in New York after five years at UWCSEA in Singapore studying IB Theatre, directing student-led productions and devising work. I am particularly interested in exploring intercultural stories on stage and using multiple theatrical and spoken languages to find common truths.

Manchester IB workshop

DP Theatre Category 1 and 3 (CCOT)
29th June - 1st July 2017

Atlanta IB workshop

DP Theatre Category 1, 2 and 3 (TT&P) and Film Category 3
26th - 29th June 2017

Singapore IB workshop

DP Theatre Category 1 and 2
8th - 10th September 2017

Stratford TaPS

5th - 7th October 2017

London (1) TaPS

5th - 7th October 2017

Bangkok TaPS*

6th - 8th October 2017

Bangkok IB workshop*

6th - 8th October 2017
DP Theatre Category 3 (IA) and Film Category 3

London (2) TaPS

9th - 11th October 2017

Beijing TaPS*

12th - 14th October 2017

Beijing IB workshop*

12th - 14th October 2017
DP Theatre Category 3 (CCOT)

2017-2018

TAPS AND IB WORKSHOPS

Manchester TaPS*

12th - 14th October 2017

Manchester IB workshop*

12th - 14th October 2017
DP Theatre Category 1 and 2 and Film Category 3

New York TaPS*

12th - 14th October 2017

New York IB workshop*

12th - 14th October 2017
DP Theatre Category 1, 2 and 3 (CS)

**TaPS and IB workshop taking place at the same event.*

Registration is now open for all IB workshops.

Booking will open for TaPS late January/early February 2017 pending the launch of the new website. We'll make an announcement confirming dates in the New Year.

DP Theatre training - Category 3

IA - Internal Assessment
CCOT - Collaboratively Creating Original Theatre
TT&P - Theatre Traditions and Practices
CS - Creative Settings (this workshop will take place in collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History)