MONASH University

Hone: Rehearsal Frame Theory and the Principal Functions of Rehearsal

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Abstract

This thesis explores the exteriority and interiority of professional rehearsal in Melbourne. In response to the belief that collaborative inquiry should be an inherent component of contemporary practice, a model of rehearsal is presented that reconfigures the roles of the director and the actor. Rehearsal can be understood, I argue, as a process of delimitation and distillation. As well as managing the adventitious parameters that define a project, a director's work can be thought of as conceiving, and implementing, multiple artistic constraints to influence the actor's endeavour. I call this Rehearsal Frame Theory. It is through containing, honing and excluding various potentialities, with the actor centrally located in the imaginative process, that a performance is made. Conjointly, I propose that there are three Principal Functions of rehearsal activity - Positioning, Creating, and Affecting – and that these influence the nature of the artistic constraints in terms of directorial intention, and the mechanisms by which they operate. This original model and schema contribute to the field of Rehearsal Studies in several ways. They make visible the internal *modus operandi* of rehearsal tasks, de-mystifying the creative process by revealing rehearsal as a synthesis of choice-making, problem-solving, labour and craftsmanship. Rehearsal discourse is enhanced by noting the changing paradigm and shifting roles underlying collaborative inquiry in contemporary rehearsal. The thesis as a whole exemplifies the richness to be found in the intersection of the experiential voice (twenty directors, actors and theatre educators were interviewed) with creative, cognitive and dramatic literature.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Diane Gavelis

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Introduction

> The task of our generation is to liberate art from outmoded tradition, from tired cliché and
> to give greater freedom to imagination and creative ability.
>
> (Stanislavski cited in Benedetti 1999, p. 55)

0.1 Overview

The tradition of privacy in the twentieth century rehearsal room, combined with the sanctity
of rehearsal practices, has led to a problematic mystique.[1] The creative process, with all its
messiness, labour, and trial and error is hidden from public view.[2] The impression given is
that theatrical works are the result of inexplicable artistic inspiration rather than dedication,
training and toil. This 'secret world' of rehearsal is also obscure between colleagues
(Harwood cited in Trevis 2012, p. xi; Alfreds 2007, p. 27). Sam Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9
October), former artistic director of the Queensland Theatre Company and former director
of Melbourne Theatre Company, observes that a director works 'in a vacuum'. Matt Lutton
(2014, pers. comm 28 October), the artistic director of Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre
agrees that a director 'never [gets to] see other directors' rooms, or very rarely'. Isolation is
the 'nature' of the directorial profession (Brook cited in Giannachi & Luckhurst 1999 p. xii).

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[1] The mystery surrounding rehearsal, apart from the seemingly clandestine undertakings behind closed doors,
is an extension of the perception of theatrical endeavour as enigmatic. Director Gregory Hersov (cited in
Delgado & Heritage 1996, p. ix) observes that '[t]heater is frequently seen as a mysterious activity'. Directors
view directing as 'a mysterious business'; the work of individual directors is considered 'the subject of
mystification' (Harwood cited in Trevis 2012 p. xi). Actors, too, see their profession, and the intuitive work that
it involves, as 'myster[ious]' (Trengrove 1991, p. vii; Kemp 2012, p. 19). Director Peter Brook (1993, p. 119)
refers to the 'mystification' and 'spurious magical methods' of theatre practice. This perceived magic of
theatre-making can be, in part, attributed to its characteristic creativity: 'creativity [is itself] a mystique of
talent and intangibles' (De Bono 1977, p. 11).

[2] The secrecy of the rehearsal room is discussed by Brook in *There are No Secrets.* Brook (1993, p. 100)
explains he has been 'compelled' to say no to those wishing to observe his rehearsal practice due to the
numerous negative experiences he has had with onlookers impacting his actors' work. He feels that it is critical
that actors 'know that they are totally protected by silence, intimacy and secrecy' so that they can
'experiment, make mistakes, be foolish'. Brook comments that 'the presence of even one person is … a source
of tension'.

As a competitive field of employment, know-how is professionally guarded, with a 'weird secret pact' preventing discourse amongst colleagues (Grandage cited in Shepherd 2012, p. 191).

Concurrently, with the inherent busyness and intensity of getting a show up, rehearsal is not conducive to personal reflection. The economic realities of theatre see salaried directors working on multiple shows simultaneously (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October) whilst their freelance counterparts invest time in pursuing work. As a creative act, at times rehearsal can involve more intuition than conscious action on the part of the director; a director may '[not] really think about what [they] do. [They] just respond' (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October). These coalescent components impede the development of rehearsal methodology.

Concomitantly, what occurs within the rehearsal room is significantly shaped by forces from outside. In *Reading the Material Theatre*, Knowles (2004, p. 24) explicates that these 'conditions of production' – organisational, temporal, fiscal and cultural structures - frame and inform what occurs in rehearsal. Knowles (2004) argues that there is less creative sovereignty, and more circumstance, involved in the processes that produce a performance than duly noted by the theatre goer. The evolution of rehearsal practices, therefore, is at risk of being fashioned by factors outside of the rehearsal room as much as by the creative endeavour within it.[3]

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[3] An argument could be made that such shaping by external forces is not necessarily a bad thing. One may see the current, often conventional, approach to Melbourne mainstage rehearsal (to be discussed throughout this thesis) as a sufficient response to managing the challenges posed by external conditions; that expedient measures 'get the job done' and therefore further evolution is unnecessary. Over the course of this thesis I will provide reasoned argument that evolution of rehearsal practice is warranted. Supported by my data and cognitive and creative literature, I will demonstrate that the development of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practices is not only worthwhile, but is also sought by the practitioners involved.

The impact of external forces upon rehearsal is evident in Melbourne theatre. The 'disintegration of the company format', due to the 'economic rationalism of the eighties', fundamentally changed the practice of theatre and has truncated the growth of methodology in Australia, according to actor, director and educator Lindy Davies (1998, p. 5-7). The artistic agency of the actor is under-valued and under-utilised. Davies summarises that the Australian approach to rehearsal is frequently 'director-dominated', 'deductive, linear, separated' and bound by 'old formats'.[4] [5]

It is aspects such as these – privacy, busyness, funding, organisational and other aleatory constraints – that shape rehearsal methodology. To further rehearsal practice, and take deliberate, conscious action, we need to understand more about the exterior and interior facets of rehearsal. Through the investigation of current, and development of future, artistic processes, we may meet Stanislavski's (cited in Benedetti 1999, p. 55) call to action, made a century ago, to 'give freedom' to 'creative ability', and to break from 'outmoded tradition'.

In this thesis I explicate the beliefs and contextual factors that currently shape Melbourne professional mainstage theatre rehearsal. I argue that a rehearsal process is subject to numerous contingencies, and as such, can be conceived as a *series of delimitations.* Similarly, the choice-making process within rehearsal can be understood as a series of chosen constraints. I have called my examination of this *Rehearsal Frame Theory.* I propose that one way to further rehearsal practice in Melbourne, and perhaps beyond, is to design a

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[4] Davies (1998, p.5) insists that 'the gap' in our theatrical prowess can be addressed by developing our processes of making work.

[5] I understand Davies use of 'old formats' to be a reference to the conventional/traditional rehearsal process currently applied in Melbourne mainstage theatre. As mentioned at various times throughout this thesis, this fairly linear, logocentric practice involves sitting around a table analysing the play, often for several days or a week, and then blocking the play often through a quasi-improvised process.

more actor-centric model of rehearsal in which the director's role involves, proactively and reactively, designing and implementing an accumulative series of specific constraints. Each artistic constraint supports the actor's creative endeavour; each constraint hones the work, as well as the work process itself. The director's skilful fashioning of the parameters of each rehearsal task alters both the actor's work and the evolution of the play's interpretation. Building upon this proposition, I present a schema that I call the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal*, which examines the factors which can influence creative work in the rehearsal room. This original schema aims to articulate *how* different rehearsal activities work. I argue that the careful application of a specific and relevant *mechanism* can enhance an actor's authentic, creative response, and that incrementally, frame by frame, this can influence the originality of the emerging interpretation. This combined conceptual framework provides a way to understand the interiority of creative activity in the rehearsal room, and as such makes an original contribution to the field of Rehearsal Studies.

The framework presented has been developed from interviews with numerous actors and directors regarding contemporary Melbourne mainstage theatre rehearsal processes. I combine the practitioners' experiential insights with creative and cognitive theory, to explicate the reasons behind, and nature of, rehearsal practice in Melbourne.[6]

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[6] My research approach was initially inspired by Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006). I began with a systematic, interpretive analysis of the data to develop a middle-range theory, viewing the data as a co-construction made by the participants and myself as researcher (Charmaz & Bryant 2010, p. 409; Charmaz 2001). Due to some issues with the rigidity of the process, I moved to a more general qualitative approach. I was also influenced by Braun and Clarke's articulation of Thematic Analysis, in terms of the active position of the researcher and their process for coding and developing themes (2006; Braun, Clarke & Terry 2015).

Concomitantly, I present and demonstrate how the schema can enhance dialogue regarding rehearsal and direction in Melbourne and further afield.

0.2 Legibility of Discourse

Development of rehearsal terminology is important to enhance how we engage in rehearsal discourse. Refining the way we describe the activity of rehearsal helps to capture concepts, expose values and increase lucid dialogue.

Rehearsal practice currently contains a limited array of terms. In *The Myth of the Mysteriousness,* Forgasz (2011), drawing upon a range of interviews with Australian directors of mainstage theatre conducted between 2004 and 2005, remarks on the lack of incisive language used by the theatre practitioners in describing their process. Forgasz's fundamental assertion is that it is this lack of articulation that perpetuates the mythology of the practitioner as 'a mere vessel or conduit for an entirely external creative force' and positions their work as 'private, affective, unconscious' (p. 44). She proposes that this lack of explanation of the creative process contributes to an air of mystery embraced by mainstream audiences, the myth consumers:

> … through propagating the myth of the mysteriousness of their creative process, theatre makers present mainstream audiences with a second mythic – or doxic – representation, this time in relation to how such works of art come into being in the first place: through an intuitive and mysterious creative process. The refusal of theatre artists to reveal the nature of their creative process beyond the articulation of its mysterious quality effectively increases the cultural capital of their work among myth consumers; if it remains a mystery closed to interrogation and analysis, then the 'genius' of the work is emphasised. Furthermore, the symbolic capital of its creator increases too, since the very notion of creating art is reified.   (p. 50)

Forgasz concludes with a warning that the 'the impenetrable nature of the creative process' created by the lack of discourse may leave theatrical work 'open to unsympathetic mythic re-inscriptions' that could impact understanding of, and funding for, the theatre profession (p. 53).

Part of the issue of articulating rehearsal is the complexity of understanding, and expressing, the creative processes that occur within it. This is a challenge in fields besides theatre, such as design. Jon Kolko (2010), a design strategist, sees the synthesis phase of a creative process as especially problematic, as it tends to be an insular and internalised process occurring at a critical juncture in creative practice. The invisibility of synthesis can lead to the under-valuing of the much larger process that enabled synthesis in the first place; hidden from view, the moment the pieces come together and a new idea is formed can seem magical, not reflecting the complex process and toil that has preceded it (p. 15).

The inadequacies of the theatrical lexicon fundamentally curtail discourse regarding contemporary rehearsal. Twenty years ago Giannachi and Luckhurst (1999, p. xv) noted the absence of 'oral and written traditions in the articulation of the process' of directorial practices and how this impedes the theorisation of rehearsal. It has been argued that 'to understand the work of directors, a vocabulary needs to go beyond naming the obvious observable elements to focus on the essence of the director's craft' (Mitchell 1992, p. 52) and that 'perhaps the greatest challenge to any rehearsal research method is the issue of adequately descriptive language' (Sinnett 2003, p. 204). Our language, according to director Anne Bogart (2007, p. 24), needs to be dynamic: '[w]hen we … assume that the words we inherit are good enough rather than embarking upon a close examination of … vocabulary, we are cheating ourselves of a wide range of experience and expressivity'.

The insufficiency of current nomenclature to discuss the nuances of rehearsal activity impacts rehearsal practice. Australian director and theatre historian Julian Meyrick (2011, p. 23) stresses the importance of developing greater 'legibility' in our theatrical discourse if it is to be useful for theatre practice. English director Mike Alfreds (2007, p. 31) argues that developing a language would be advantageous for rehearsal:

> Unlike music and dance, which – as a bottom line of communication – do at least have concrete vocabularies, theatre has no common language … If I were to ask twenty actors and directors what they understood by, say, an action or beat, I'd be likely to get twenty different replies. Even a request for more energy isn't as precise as it might seem ... [I]t can take a long time before a group of actors show any semblance of coherence individually or collectively. The musical director at least has the starting point of a basic common language with the musicians. The director has to work out a separate way of communicating with each member of the cast or of initiating a language they all can share. And both take time.

This thesis aims to address the opacity of the rehearsal process through the development of a language, both conceptual and verbal, with which to discuss it.

The intention behind the schema to be presented is not just the explication of current rehearsal practice, but also the championing of the development of new ways of working. This endeavour, I propose, is important if we are to effectively rehearse theatre in the complex, and at times inimical, circumstances that both surround and inform it. As scholar and musician Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990, p. 13) observes: '[k]nowledge of the creative process cannot substitute for creativity, but it can save us from giving up on creativity when the challenges seem too intimidating'.

This research makes a unique contribution to the field in several ways. An original model and schema are presented, offering a new lens through which we may perceive, or conceive, rehearsal activity. The study design reveals how the combination of creative

theory, critical commentary and the experiential voice of directors and actors can enrich our understanding of the ways we think and go about theatrical practice. The relationship between the exteriority and interiority of the rehearsal room is partly revealed, including the reasons behind Melbourne mainstage rehearsal's tendency to draw heavily upon a century old, early-Stanislavskian 'traditional' model rather than embrace alternative, contemporary approaches. The juxtaposition of practitioners' thoughts and practices, placed against the circumstances that shape Melbourne mainstage rehearsal processes at a specific point in time, also provides valuable cultural documentation for the theatre historian.

0.3 Rehearsal Studies and Methods

Rehearsal methodology is a fraught subject. The application of particular rehearsal strategies can be so entwined with the specific contextual components of a theatrical project, as well as any specific rehearsal moment, that ascertaining the impact of any rehearsal activity is extraordinarily complex. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine the efficacy of a rehearsal approach given that the various stakeholders - the director, the individual actors, audience and critics, each with their own idiosyncratic objectives, preoccupations and propensities – view success differently. From project to project, person to person, and moment to moment, the effectiveness of any one rehearsal activity is, perhaps, incommensurable. For this reason, as will be discussed, an interpretivist lens is applied to this thesis, as the investigation primarily pertains to the thinking and beliefs associated with rehearsal activity. It is from this standpoint that perceptions regarding current practices are examined, and a new conceptual framework offered.

This thesis contributes to the field of Rehearsal Studies in a number of ways.[7] Through a precis of the issues, aims and methods cited in key examples of extant literature, I will demonstrate the significance of, and reasoning behind, this investigation's research design and presentation of findings.

A historically under-theorised area, there is growing academic interest in the rehearsal process (McAuley 2006, p. 7). The importance of Rehearsal Studies, at the very least, holds archival significance, as observed by Margaret Sinnett (2003, p. 21):

> Rehearsal time is part of the history of our art. The lack of documentation means that in some sense the history of theatre as it is currently unfolding is being lost because it is not being recorded.

The issue of comprehensive data collection is a pervasive and endemic challenge faced by rehearsal theorists. Rehearsal is a complex, dynamic system (Lutterbie 2011). Rehearsal work is, by nature, incomplete, partial and nonstable (Rossmanith 2008, p. 144). Rehearsal is comprised of diverse practices, textual demands and opportunities, individual practitioner propensities, embodied moments and creative practices that collide with the idiosyncratic, contextual parameters of each project. As discussed, limited shared terminology hampers dialogue, and creative endeavour can throw up events and notions unable to be defined by labels (Rossmanith 2008, p. 144). As Alfreds (2007, p. 27) observes in regard to rehearsal, '[o]ften, quite simply, it's difficult to explain what's going on'.

The most immediate source of data, the rehearsal room, is 'well-guarded' (Ginters 2006, p. 7). Efforts have been made to debunk the mysteriousness associated with the closeted

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[7] The development of the field of Rehearsal Studies is indebted to the scholarship of Gay McAuley and fellow academics at the University of Sydney, including Laura Ginters and Kate Rossmanith. The research methodology developed at the University of Sydney will be discussed shortly.

nature of rehearsal, evinced in titles by theorists such as *Directors in Rehearsal - A Hidden World* (Cole 1992), *There Are No Secrets: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* (Brook 1993) and *Not Magic, But Work: An Ethnographic Account of a Rehearsal Process* (McAuley 2012). There remains, however, the problem of access to the rehearsal room, and the theatrical facade of the polished performance product contributes to the opacity of what is actually done in rehearsal, for good art 'conceals art' (Alfreds 2007, p. 31). Approaches to data collection, and issues associated with rehearsal observation, will be expanded upon shortly.

Rehearsal literature tends to fall into two broad types regarding intention and audience: the accounts of rehearsal procedure written by individual contemporary directors, and academic works that document, analyse and theorise rehearsal of itself, or within works about the broader preoccupations of direction. The former texts are written with the intention of explicating processes and activities to assist aspiring directors. Katie Mitchell (2009, p. 1) shares her comprehensive approach to upskill the young director, so that their work is based on 'craft' rather than 'chance'. For circumspect application, Alfreds (2007, p. xvii, emphasis in original) presents his practical guide on directing and rehearsal as both '*modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*', with 'techniques and processes' entwined with philosophy 'of what theatre is'. Eugenio Barba (2010, p. xiv) explains that his text *On Directing: Burning the House,* a more philosophical than procedural text, was written '… to give back. Much has been given to me by masters who didn't know they were … Most of them had already died when I came into the world … I consider it a duty. I am simply in debt'. Anne Bogart's and Tina Landau's (2005) *The Viewpoints Book* provides rare

documentation of the philosophy, training and rehearsal technique of Viewpoints for fellow practitioners.[8]

More specifically, in the contemporary Australian context, original rehearsal practices have been developed and/or documented by director-educators Lindy Davies, Tanya Gerstle (Pulse) and Egil Kipste. Kipste's (2014, p. iii) dissertation is intended for 'postgraduate student directors as a codified guide to rehearsing a play using [his] Directing Experience (DE) Model'.[9] *Pulse: A Physical Approach to Staging Text* expounds the theory and application in rehearsal of Gerstle's (2008; 2020) unique actor-training system. For practitioners, Laura Ginters (2007; 2008) depicts the idiosyncratic process of Lindy Davies that seeks to bridge intuitive and rational approaches in rehearsal. As directors and educators, Kipste's, Gerstle's and Davies' work have theoretical underpinnings which are articulated, more or less, in the documentation of their practice. Collectively, these accounts of personal praxis sketch a picture of some of the current preoccupations within emerging Australian rehearsal practice, and of the Australian theatrical idiom, within which this investigation on Melbourne mainstage rehearsal is situated.

These particular works articulate specific directorial approaches. In contrast, the aim of this thesis is to identify a range of different practices undertaken in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room and, significantly, to find a way to explain what is going on by identifying the common intentions inherent within different rehearsal activities.

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[8] My examination of rehearsal, and Rehearsal Studies, literature is expanded upon in the forthcoming pages.
[9] Whilst teaching directing at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), Kipste has developed his original Directing Experience (DE) model which combines Stanislavski's Active Analysis with contemporary theories of visual cognition.

In the second category of rehearsal literature, the scholarship of twentieth and twenty-first century rehearsal methodology includes a number of pivotal texts that further one's understanding through the juxtaposition of directorial practices and more theoretical leanings. 'To elucidate … [and] to champion' the value of diversity, Mitter (1992, p. 5) compares and contrasts the practices of the significant directorial figures in *Systems of Rehearsal: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook.* He focuses upon the specific activities employed within particular rehearsal contexts to collate, and penetrate, the reasoning behind the practitioners' work, and articulates the correlation, derivation and emulation between these seemingly diverse practitioners. Maria Shevtsova and Christopher Innes (2009, p. 3) also note the 'network of links', 'personal and thematic', that emerge in their text involving conversations with nine directors. Similarly, Susan Letzler Cole's (1992, p. 2) observations of the rehearsal processes of ten different directors stimulates the reader to note the similarities and differences of each practitioner. From a different angle of comparison, Delgado and Rebellato (2010) compile twenty essays on directorial practice in *Contemporary European Directors*. Their text emphasises, as this thesis argues, that rehearsal practices are connected to, and formed by, the socio-political landscapes in which practitioners work.

Each of these aforementioned texts are monographs or edited compilations, arranged with one director per chapter, explicitly or implicitly prompting comparison between practitioners. In contrast, my investigation builds upon this practice of juxtaposition, but to create more immediate and particularised comparability between, and to enhance the focus upon, ideas, the chapters of this thesis are structured according to key themes. This literary arrangement helps the reader to appreciate the nuance contained within individual's

responses, alongside noting broader points of conflict and alignment through the accumulation of the practitioners' comments.

Additionally, as in the vast majority of rehearsal literature, the texts cited above focus upon the director. Numerous books have been written regarding an actor's process, but such works place emphasis upon their craft as an individual and provide little insight into their contribution to the rehearsal process and the broader evolution of the interpretation of a play as a whole. Similarly, the way that actors receive and negotiate direction within the framework of their own working method is an area of limited investigation to date. Sinnett (2003, p. 193) observes 'the near silence of the actor's voice as an author [in rehearsal]' documentation, pointing out that 'the lack of actors providing their viewpoint means that it is difficult to know what methods are effective in directing and leading them'.[10] It is significant, therefore, that the investigative gaze of this thesis encompasses both actors and directors. The counterpoint of actor-to-director perspectives is a step towards reflecting the shift in the creative politics of contemporary rehearsal.

In the field of Rehearsal Studies, key methods of data collection include interview, rehearsal observation and analysis of artefacts such as director's notes. Each method may be seen to access a particular type of knowledge.[11] Many essential texts to date utilise interview data, such as *On Directing: Interviews with Directors* (Giannachi & Luckhurst 1999), *In Contact with the Gods? Directors Talk Theatre* (Delgado & Heritage 1996), and *Directors/Directing:*

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[10] One notable exception is actor Antony Sher's personal accounts of rehearsing iconic Shakespearean roles. These texts include the *Year of the King* (2004), *The Year of the Fat King: The Falstaff Diaries* (2016), and *The Year of the Mad King: The Lear Diaries* (2018).

[11] In *Introduction: Towards a Genetic Study of Performance - Take 2,* Josette Féral (2008) discusses the merit of various data collection methods in Rehearsal Studies, such as director's notes, actor's notes, stage-manager's notebooks, video-recording, and field notes (in the event where access to the rehearsal room is possible). She argues that each data type provides insight into a particular facet of rehearsal, and refers to researchers using interview data to capture directors and actors 'motivations and beliefs' (p. 224).

Conversations on Theatre (Shevtsova & Innes 2009). These verbatim accounts concerning views, practices, ideas and past productions capture a certain type of information. In terms of artefacts, scholar Josette Féral (2008, p. 226) comments that directors' notes can also be interesting and beneficial, as one might be able to 'follow the [rehearsal] choices, observations, modifications and hesitations leading up to the final decisions'.

Rehearsal observation enables degrees of witnessing the moment to moment decision-making, and the accumulative impact of these decisions. As discussed, however, rehearsal observation is complicated by issues of access. Ginters (2006, p. 56) remarks:

> … access is always revocable. It is always open to directors and actors not to let us in, ever, at all; to interview us and then decide they don't want us there; to change their mind at the last moment; to eject us temporarily; to insist we leave altogether in the middle; to invite us for a dress rehearsal when we wanted to be there for the beginning … It is an ongoing challenge, as rehearsal and performance studies theorists, to gain access to the "hidden world" - to establish our legitimacy, our lack of threat ....

Provisional or denied access seems primarily driven by the threat, as perceived by practitioners, to creative practice (Cole 1992, p. 3; Féral 2008, p. 227; Ginters 2006, p. 56). Cole (1992, p. 3) writes that rehearsal observation is a 'delicate undertaking'; 'it can be perceived as an intrusion upon, and even a repression of, the conditions necessary for rehearsal (e.g. risk-taking, spontaneity, intimacy)'. Apart from privacy (Sinnett 2003, p. 201), there is also the problem of the time commitment needed to experience the entirety of a rehearsal process. A condition of access may be the researcher's constant attendance. This is an understandable requirement, for as Alfreds (2007, p. 27) notes '[t]he casual observer can never understand the full implication of [the] moment'. It is, however, an impediment to scholarly research, for 'not every potential observer has a schedule that permits maintaining such a regular presence' (Féral 2008, p. 227). There is the added complexity of

capturing the creative conversations pertaining to a rehearsal process that frequently

extend beyond the walls and times of the rehearsal room (Cole 1992, p. 3).

To circumvent these problems, academics associated with the University of Sydney,

including McAuley, Rossmanith, and Ginters, developed their own research studio in which

to conduct rehearsal, alongside an ethnographically inspired approach (McAuley 1998).

Comprehensive field jottings and notes reflected the occurrences in the rehearsal room as

experienced by the participant-observer, and McAuley's method of dual-camera recording

of rehearsals added accuracy and detail to the data collection (1998). In this methodology,

intense focus was placed on one specific rehearsal period, enabling the researcher to

contextualise their data, and embed their findings in, to use Geertz's (1983) term, thick

description. Such an approach, with its meticulous attention to the minutiae of the

rehearsal process, is evident in McAuley's text *Not magic but work* (2012).

In contrast, the research design of this thesis departs from this ethnographic approach of

current Australian rehearsal scholarship and employs, for several reasons, an interview

model. The key focus of this inquiry is the practitioners' experiences *of*, rather than

engagement *within*, the rehearsal process. The practitioners' experiential insights into

rehearsal reveal the residual notions that stick and the perspectives developed in hindsight.

The use of interview circumvents issues of privacy and temporality, enabling access to

data.[12] Participant-observation involves extended and prescribed periods of time typically

designed to attain depth; in comparison, the interview model in this study has enabled

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[12] It should be noted that, as with any research tool, there are particular, inherent issues associated with the interview method. The participant's comments in an interview may be imbued with the wisdom of hindsight, but may also be shaped by revisionism, omission and self-censorship. There is potential for aspects of the dialogue to be downplayed or enhanced by the interviewee. Some of these aspects will be discussed shortly in the section entitled The Benefits and Challenges of the Research Design.

contact with a range of artists within a flexible and finite time parameter. This assisted in the collation of a breadth of data touching on a variety of rehearsal scenarios that would have not otherwise been possible.

The intention of this research, to understand the exterior and interior landscape of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal, is realised through the significant sample size of eighteen actor and/or director interviewees.[13] A unique feature of this research is the web-effect of the data: directors and actors reflect, independently, upon the same play and the same process that they have been a part of. The inclusion of both actors and directors, of mixed levels of experience and age, has given further dimension to the data.

In summary, in relation to current literature, this thesis makes a unique contribution to Rehearsal Studies in its aim, method and presentation. The method of multiple interviews, with the articulation of the intentions, experiences of, and thinking behind, numerous rehearsal practices, provides a panoramic view of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice. The combination of the experiential voice of both actors and directors contributes to the distinctiveness and richness of the data set. The research captures aspects of the experience of each individual practitioner, whilst affording the reader a sense of the broader socio-political environment that impacts rehearsal practice. Moments of alignment and discord amongst the practitioners' views are highlighted through the thesis' thematic chapter structure.

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[13] Apart from the eighteen Melbourne actors and directors interviewed, two additional interviews were undertaken to add context to Section A of this thesis. These were with theatre-educators Richard Murphet and John Clark. As will be discussed, these interviews provided supplementary data to the main data set.

Having established the broader context of this investigation, I will now explicate the

particular details of the Research Design that have framed this study of Melbourne

mainstage rehearsal.

0.4 Research Design

This investigation sits within a constructivist epistemology.[14] I apply an interpretivist

theoretical perspective through the employment of interviews as my data collection

method,[15] my construction of categories from emergent themes in the data, and the

recognition that my findings are an interpretation of these themes. These actions recognise

the subjectivity and multiplicity of perspectives, and that knowledge is both socially

constructed and dynamic.

The research places emphasis upon the specific comments of the interviewees captured in

one-on-one semi-structured interviews. I have embraced the notion of the interview as an

event, with the researcher and participant building knowledge together (Galletta 2013).

The semi-structured interview format enabled construction of knowledge through a flexible

schedule of questions without set order or wording (Packer 2010).[16] This approach

enhanced reciprocity between the researcher and the participant, which in turn encouraged

rapport, greater nuance and specificity in the participants' responses. The transactional style

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[14] Constructivism maintains that our knowledge of the world is constructed, not discovered.

[15] An interpretivist perspective assumes that an individual's perception of reality is subjective, dynamic and constructed. It is recognised and valued that participants present their own viewpoint, and that the researcher brings their own lens and values to the research process (Cohen & Crabtree 2006).

[16] Galletta (2013) argues that the value of the semi-structured interview is the capacity for interaction between the researcher and the participant. The flexibility of the scheduled questions allows for clarification, extrapolation, and returns to topic within the conversation. These aspects enable the researcher to pursue lines of thought - of their own, or of the participants - to explore aspects of the narrative given, in greater specificity, and potentially discover and examine contradictions in the responses. The opportunity to 'creat[e] space within the interview for the participant to challenge, question, and discuss with you dimensions of the topic of study is invaluable to your research. It is central to the interpretive process' (Galletta 2013, p. 88).

is supported by Bogdan and Biklen (cited in Galletta 2013), who assert that the way in which an interview is conducted correlates to the richness of the data. A tone of ease contributes to the participant talking more freely about their points of view, which in turn produces utterances that more effectively reveal their perspective. For this purpose, questions were at times rephrased or discarded, prompts made and changes added during the interview. Primarily, the period in which the rehearsals discussed took place was between 2010 and 2015.

The length of approximately one hour enabled the interview to move from breadth to depth in the questions posed as rapport was built. The semi-structured interview model permitted 'both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions' (Galletta 2013, p. 45). As the purposes of the study into Melbourne mainstage rehearsal were essentially explanatory and interpretive, the interview questions, broadly speaking, prompted descriptions of the interviewee's theatre training and work history, and recounts of rehearsal experiences and observations regarding work with different actors and/or directors. Please see Appendix A for examples of interview schedules.

The parameters of the conversations were exclusively in regard to professional, mainstage rehearsals that involved the interpretation of play scripts and had occurred in Melbourne. The rehearsal rooms discussed involved Melbourne Theatre Company, The Malthouse Theatre and, on one occasion (when a particular production was rehearsed in Melbourne), Bell Shakespeare Company. The majority of the interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2015 in Melbourne. The supplementary interviews with Clark and Murphet took place in 2018 in Melbourne. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed, with two

exceptions where detailed field notes were taken instead. For brevity throughout this thesis, the data will be referred to as the Melbourne Interviews.

When choosing interviewees, I applied mix of two key principles advocated by Alvesson (2010, p. 46): (a) 'representativeness', an appropriate 'breadth and variation among interviewees' and (b) 'quality', a selection of interviewees with 'the 'right' experiences' who are 'highly qualified', capable of providing 'rich, perceptive and insightful accounts', and have the 'ability and willingness' to communicate these experiences. A combination of representativeness and quality in the selection of interviewees was applied as it can help increase balance and reduce bias in the data (p. 47).

I employed purposive sampling to target interviewees who would have relevant and 'information-rich' experience in the field (Palinkas *et al.* 2015, p. 534).[17] The main sample group was therefore comprised of practitioners who had worked as actors or directors in the Melbourne-based rehearsal of one or more professional, mainstage productions. Most individuals were contacted because they had recently participated in rehearsal for a Melbourne mainstage production, which enabled them to speak in detail in regard to one recent rehearsal experience, as well as being able to refer to other past experiences in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room. This constituted the main body of my data and is called Data Set A. Additional interviews were conducted with four graduate actors who, at the time, had not yet worked in the professional mainstage context, and two prominent, highly respected Australian theatre-educators. These interviews provide important additional perspectives on the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room, and are called Data

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[17] Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of interviewees who have the specific knowledge, experiences and/or expertise 'to best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question' (Creswell 2003, p. 184).

Set B. Overall, the sample list of interviewees was subject to the willingness and availability of the participants. In total, twenty interviews were conducted:

Data Set A   Directors: Sam Strong, Matt Lutton, Clare Watson, Leticia Caceres, Adena Jacobs, Pete Houghton (also an actor); Actors: Mark Leonard Winter, Johnny Carr, Steve Mouzakis, Edwina Samuels, Emily Milledge, Olivia Monticciolo, Josh Price, and one anonymous actor (throughout this thesis this actor will be referred to as AA).[18]

Data Set B   Graduate Actors (without mainstage experience at the time of interview): Tom Heath, Jesse Velik, Lana Meltzer, Jesse Rosenfeld; Theatre-Educators: John Clark, Richard Murphet

The details of these interviews, including the citation convention used throughout this thesis, can be found in Appendix B.

I am deeply grateful to each of these interviewees for candidly sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences so freely. Monash University Ethics guidelines were implemented throughout this study to protect the interests of the participants involved. The option of anonymity was offered, and this offer was taken up by one actor.

In general, transcripts were worked with in two ways. Unpredicted themes in the data, such as *time*, *parameters of rehearsal* and *inter-personal and intra-personal issues* were discerned through inductive analysis. Each of these themes contained subthemes. Pre-figured themes were explored through specific interview questions in a more theoretical

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[18] For the reader's interest, the directors trained at the following Australian tertiary institutions: Sam Strong (VCA); Matt Lutton (WAPA); Clare Watson (VCA); Leticia Caceres (QUT); Adena Jacobs (VCA); Pete Houghton (no formal director training – Houghton attended acting classes at the Drama Studio Sydney, formerly known as Nimrod Acting Classes).

approach. These themes included (a) *rehearsal processes* (b) *the emerging actor* and (c) *actor training*. In my analysis of the data I always worked with extracts that placed utterances within a larger section of text, so that they could be understood within the broader context in which they were spoken.

The findings of this analysis have informed Section A of this thesis, which explicates the contextual parameters that influence the way Melbourne mainstage rehearsal is undertaken. These findings contributed to my development of *Rehearsal Frame Theory*. Section B of this thesis moves on to investigate the nature of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal processes. To arrive at the findings presented in Section B, an additional step was involved. Initially I tried to divide up the interviewees' comments contained in the theme 'rehearsal processes' by grouping particular types of rehearsal activity together. I realised that this type of categorisation was reductive rather than illuminating. I then wondered if, rather than trying to put alike rehearsal activities together, I should take the converse approach and see if there were alike aspects *within* each rehearsal activity. It is from this analysis that I arrived at my schema of *The Principal Functions of Rehearsal*. Subsequent investigation of literature enabled me to consolidate my ideas and substantiate my schema, particularly in regards to contemporary creative theory.

Finally, I feel it is important to explain the paradox inherent in the argument and research findings of this investigation. I argue that Melbourne mainstage rehearsal tends to follow a common rehearsal approach, but then have written extensively about a range of different rehearsal techniques evident in the data. This is because the vast majority of the rehearsal activities that inspired my schema were highlighted in the data set not because of their frequency, but because they were unique points of difference. The interviewees

consistently referred to a common way of going about rehearsal in Melbourne mainstage

rehearsal, using language to describe it such as normal, conventional, standard and

traditional; they would deliberately point out specific occasions when activities departed

from this norm, and their language would infer that they felt such activities were infrequent,

unusual and/or unexpected. Forthcoming examples from the interviews, cited throughout

this thesis, will collectively support these assertions. Furthermore, it should be noted that I

recognise that the rehearsal activities that I accentuate as being different to the norm in

mainstage Melbourne rehearsal are not necessarily novel or unusual in other theatrical

contexts.[19]

0.5 Position of Researcher

As researcher, I am aware of the subjectivity inherent in my own position in this

investigation, for '[t]here can be no understanding without interpretation' (Angen 2000, p.

385). My interpretivist approach to data analysis was partly derived from Braun and Clarke's

(2006) outline of Thematic Analysis, which recognises the significance of the role of

researcher. The 'theoretical and conceptual frameworks, disciplinary knowledge and

research skills and experience' of myself as researcher, interacted and converged with the

data in the process of data analysis (Willig & Rogers 2017, p. 20).

My position as researcher therefore requires elaboration. My research design and

engagement with the data throughout the investigation has been informed by my

experience and knowledge as a director and theatre educator. I bring to this inquiry an

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[19] For instance, theatre-making processes for devising original work typically involve a range of embodied and imaginative rehearsal activities. Independent theatre companies in Melbourne also use a range of techniques when rehearsing text-based productions. More broadly and historically, there is a wealth of rehearsal activities from practitioners from the twentieth century and earlier. References to some of these points will be made throughout the thesis.

existing belief in the value of embodied pedagogy, embodied rehearsal practices, and my directorial training at the Victorian College of the Arts School of Drama in 2001.

I was inspired to pursue this investigation due to my previous experiences as an assistant director on three different productions between 2002 and 2003 at Melbourne Theatre Company and Playbox Theatre (now The Malthouse Theatre). I found it fascinating, and perturbing, that the directorial approaches applied in the three Melbourne professional rehearsal rooms involved a *uniformly traditional* way of working. By this I mean numerous days were spent discussing the text around a table, followed by blocking the work, scene by scene, with ideas suggested by the director, and some offers, either discussed or partly improvised, put forward by the actors. I had expected a range of different rehearsal practices, given my own development of directorial methods prior to my training, and then the various practices afforded me in my VCA directorial tuition. For this reason, a decade later I began this research project to contribute to rehearsal discourse and practice.

0.6 The Benefits and Challenges of the Research Design

The enthusiasm of the participants was a benefit of this Research Design. The interviewees were generous in regard to their time and sharing of personal history and experiences. Collectively, they were keen to be both comprehensive and measured, and provide relevant, useable information. Several actors, particularly graduate actors, commented on the enjoyment of being able to converse about their craft in detail, as they felt they had limited opportunity to do this in their daily lives. The interviews provided a considerable quantity and breadth of data.

This said, as a data collection method, interview can have its drawbacks. The act of interviewing can be complex. The interviewer needs to simultaneously build rapport and trust, manage the schedule of questions and pursue points of interest to encourage 'congruence and willingness for individuals to express their thoughts' (Alvesson 2010, p. 32). In this investigation I was fortunate to have similar language and points of reference from my own training and experience to navigate and facilitate the flow and depth of the conversation, and to build trust and understanding. I believe this enhanced the quality of the data gathered, as validity is dependent upon 'careful, concrete level interviewing' and 'a good interviewing partnership' (Weiss 1995, p. 126)

The application of the interview method can also raise questions about the validity of the data. It is recognised that a respondent may have 'gaps' in their memory, if not lie (pp. 124 - 125). To reduce the possibility of the 'vagaries of respondent memory' (p. 125) effecting the accuracy of the data, I have endeavoured where possible to interview actors and directors shortly after the close of a rehearsal period, so that their particular experience may be more easily and vibrantly recalled. The scheduling of timely interviews was a particular challenge of the research design that required delicacy and negotiation, particularly as individual theatre practitioners were consumed by the demands of the opening week of the show just rehearsed. The effort to navigate this challenge has proved worthwhile, however, as actor and director recounts have been relatively detailed. This may suggest, too, that the responses are less likely to involve invention, for as Weiss asserts, 'richly detailed accounts of vividly remembered events are likely to be trustworthy' (p. 126). Weiss challenges the notion that an interview may produce false data due to an interviewee fabricating information, asserting that a respondent lies 'less often than people who don't do

interviewing may imagine' because it is hard for an interviewee 'to maintain a counterfactual reality when being pressed to provide detailed descriptions of events' (p. 124).

What was evident in my experience of conducting the Melbourne Interviews, on a few occasions, was a respondent 'choosing' their words carefully. This seemed to occur when they were commenting about the work of a particular theatre practitioner. I feel that such cautious circumspection reflects not just professional etiquette, but also the interviewee's acute awareness of professional sensitivities. Similarly, sometimes respondents spoke of their colleagues in a highly respectful and positive tone even when the content suggested that there had been a negative experience or challenging working relationship. Unsurprisingly, when 'off the record', the commentary was more frank. It was also interesting that older and more experienced practitioners appeared to exercise greater caution in their responses.

As stated, all practitioners were offered the choice of anonymity prior to the interview and one interviewee accepted this offer, feeling it would enable her to speak in more depth and be less guarded. Clark was happy to be identified but felt compelled, despite his achievements, seniority and retirement, to overtly self-censor some of his replies. It was also intriguing that one very accomplished senior actor withdrew from participating in the interview altogether once she reviewed the schedule of questions. The actor felt that talking about rehearsal, and therefore the theatrical practices of her colleagues, was too risky. I surmise this response indicates the actor's fear of damaging her professional relationships with fellow actors with whom a trusting relationship is needed, and/or with the directors upon whom her future employment relies. Overall, despite this underlying prudence, there

was a wealth of information shared by multiple participants. This element of wariness does illustrate, though, how sequestered rehearsal practices can be, and affirms the need for a freer discourse to develop those practices.

Overall, the focus upon the practitioner's words, through the use of multiple, semi-structured interviews, has been beneficial in raising distinctive themes pertaining to mainstage rehearsal practice in Melbourne. To mitigate concerns regarding validity of the interview data a range of strategies were applied in the research design: the representativeness and quality in the sampling, the relatively large size of the data set, the timing of interviews, the use of interviewer language, the extended length of the interviews to elicit depth of responses, and my building of rapport and trust with each interviewee. I believe these strategies have enabled me to get 'closer' (Rosenblatt 2001, p. 894), to 'get at', 'truth, not *the* truth, but certainly a truth' (Rosenblatt 2001, p. 894, p. 905).

These shared perspectives give us an indication of the issues facing the profession. The insights demonstrate the valuable contribution that the experiential voice can make to the field of Rehearsal Studies.

0.7 Terminology

Throughout this thesis various significant terms are employed. For the ease of prose, I have often used 'rehearsal' and 'rehearsal room' synonymously to refer to the act of developing a stage performance from a play script. I have employed 'rehearsal practice' to denote the way in which the act of rehearsal is practically undertaken. 'Tools', 'activities' and 'strategies' refer to the means by which a director stimulates or alters the actor's work.

The investigation involves 'mainstage' theatre rehearsals that have occurred in Melbourne. 'Mainstage' refers to the high profile, major professional companies that receive government funding, and reflects the figurative and literal platform of these businesses. The rehearsals discussed are only for their major productions presented in their larger theatres, and does not include other aspects of their programming such as education and smaller, experimental works which operate under different constraints, and hold a different profile and consumer base.

Throughout this thesis 'creativity' is referred to. In extant literature, there has been an extensive conversation regarding the meaning of 'creativity' as a concept.[20] For the purposes of this paper, I employ 'creativity' to refer simply to the production of ideas that are novel, original, relevant and useful to the situation at hand. This definition acknowledges that what may be considered 'creativity' is highly contingent upon context, a point discussed at length by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (2013).[21]

At times I employ the term 'fragment' to describe a staged moment in time – an embodied section of the text. This term already has an emerging presence in Rehearsal Studies literature: Rossmanith (2006, p. 76) refers to the 'verbal and physical fragments' developed in rehearsal, whilst Féral (2008, p. 226) observes the 'discrete fragments (movements,

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[20] Creativity is a difficult term to define because its meaning is dynamic and dependent upon situation and context. Negus and Pickering (2000, p. 261) argue that 'the meaning of creativity is integrally tied to changing historical processes, technologies and social conditions'.

[21] Csikszentmihalyi (2013, pp. 24-28) observes that 'there is no way to tell whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards', and therefore creativity should be understood as 'the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context'. He argues that there are three inter-related parts that constitute the way we perceive what is creative: the domain, and the broader society within which the domain sits; the field, which involves the experienced individuals who decide what is new and valuable, and should be 'recognised, preserved and remembered'; and the individual, whose novel idea is accepted.

gestures, objects and so on)' that build a performance. I occasionally use the term fragment to distinguish between a section of realised, staged, embodied work *made in rehearsal*, from beats or units, which are terms aligned to Stanislavski, literary analysis of the text, and the playing of actions. A fragment can be understood as a section of varying lengths, from a moment to a much larger, longer piece of the staged work.

0.8 Thesis Structure

This dissertation begins with two preliminary chapters, and is then divided into two key sections: A and B. In Section A I discuss the challenges and contextual parameters specific to rehearsal in Melbourne, and through these, reveal the distinctive ways that actors and directors work and behave in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room. I argue that rehearsal is a complex process and as such, a directorial approach needs to be contingent and reflexive. I conclude that more conversation about, investigation into, and application of, a variety of rehearsal practices may support theatrical endeavour in Melbourne.

Born from the same Melbourne Interview data, Section B articulates some method of address to the issues raised in Section A. I build upon my *Rehearsal Frame Theory*, revisiting the notion of the director as the designer and enabler of artistic constraints and arguing that tailoring rehearsal activity is beneficial in countering the phenomenon of 'entrenchment'. I introduce my schema, *The Principal Functions of Rehearsal,* to understand the interiority of rehearsal activities. I argue that understanding these functions, and the mechanisms through which they work, is helpful in analysing and designing rehearsal frames and also adds validity to some more embodied, intuitive and/or alternative rehearsal activities. Throughout Section B, I endeavour to give greater visibility to the mechanics of the act of

rehearsal by examining its components, and in so doing, prompt the evolution of our rehearsal practices.

The first preliminary chapter, *The Director's Role in Rehearsal*, provides a brief exploration of the changing function of the director. I outline the various responsibilities and key tasks of the director, the nature of their relationship to the text and the actors, and examine the different ways this role is viewed in the contemporary rehearsal room. The final assertion is that, from chameleon to alchemist, the director is required to not only draw upon a range of rehearsal tools, but also to fashion the means by which they can meet the contextual parameters of the project at hand.

In Chapter 2, I explicate my conceptual model, *Rehearsal Frame Theory*, which views rehearsal as a series of frames, both situationally imposed and artistically applied. I argue that delimitation, as in other creative enterprises, is an essential part of the rehearsal process. The director's role in a collaborative, investigative rehearsal room, I propose, is the selection, design and application of rehearsal activities to support the actor's work in co-authoring the interpretation.

Section A begins with Chapter 3, *The Context of Melbourne Mainstage Rehearsal*. I explore Knowles' contention that any rehearsal is subject to an array of aleatory factors. I draw upon the Melbourne Interviews to reveal some of the challenges faced by Melbourne mainstage theatre. An argument is made that the truncation of the critical commentary of productions, alongside the reduction in the government funding of companies and the subsequent pressure to commercialise shows, encourages constancy rather than creativity in Melbourne theatre culture.

Continuing this theme of external factors, Chapter 4 *Time* delves deeper into the parameters of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal. I explain how temporal constraints, structures and perceptions sculpt the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal process. The compact timeframe of four weeks actuates tensions and a range of expectations regarding the act of rehearsal. I explicate specific ways of working that are the result of temporal pressure. I discuss the nature of design timelines and explore why practitioners perceive these as both beneficial and problematic. Melbourne's particular temporal constraints, I conclude, have significant influence upon Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practices.

In Chapter 5, *The Actor,* I expound Knowles' contention that inherited modes of working and thinking invisibly inform theatrical practice. A picture of the acting profession in Melbourne is sketched to reveal the significance of rehearsal for the actor. I reveal the contentious nature of dissimilar working styles in the rehearsal room, and trace these back to the different paradigms inherent in Australian actor training. It is demonstrated that the way an actor works, and is worked with, is influenced by their level of experience. A director's approach to rehearsal, I conclude, needs to be contingent upon the idiosyncratic needs of their cast.

I continue my argument for reflexive rehearsal practice in Chapter 6 *Creative Constraints: The Text.* The chapter involves a brief precis of some textual considerations, such as cast size, language and length. Drawing upon the Melbourne Interviews as well as critical reviews, I illustrate how textual challenges play out in rehearsal, prompting both adaptive and maladaptive behaviours, and the impact this can have upon the reception of the performance.

Section B of this dissertation builds upon the idea of rehearsal as a series of frames. Founded on a belief in the merit of collaborative inquiry, as voiced in the Melbourne Interviews, I explicate a new schema that in conjunction with Rehearsal Frame Theory provides insight into the creative process of rehearsal.

In Chapter 7.1. I begin with the argument that the creative process of rehearsal is complicated by the phenomenon of entrenchment, which refers to the inability to generate original ideas or alternative responses. With particular reference to the work by Edward De Bono and Stanford University's Design School, I propose that we can 'design' the structure of rehearsal activities to increase creativity. In Chapter 7.2, *The Principal Functions of Rehearsal,* I identify the three key functions of rehearsal activity as derived from the Melbourne Interviews. These are (1) Positioning: to situate the text, the process ahead, and the other practitioners, in relation to oneself, as a foundation that will enhance and/or guide the work ahead, (2) Creating: to realise the text on the rehearsal floor, to build the performance work and (3) Affecting: to change an actor's creative response through specific activity, with the purpose of increasing authenticity and originality. I argue that recognising these functions, and the mechanisms through which they work, makes visible the tools of the director's craft and empowers the director to design and implement impactful rehearsal frames to help circumvent entrenchment. The schema, I propose, provides a much-needed language to discuss rehearsal activity.

A triptych of chapters follows, each chapter exploring a range of rehearsal activities through the lens of one of the Principal Functions. An explication of what Melbourne practitioners are doing, and what they think is going on, is demonstrated through the voice of directors and actors, revealing the interiority of the rehearsal process. The contrasts and

contradictions that emerge in this discourse reflect the complexity of rehearsal, and reinforce the need for both a broader and more nuanced conversation about rehearsal practice.

In the first of these chapters, Chapter 8 *The Positioning Principal Function,* I begin by drawing upon the creative theories of Edward De Bono and the Stanford Design School. I argue that where you start, and how you start, matters. The function of Positioning, I explain, is to build the foundations that will enable and enhance the rehearsal activity to come. The director's skilful implementation of rehearsal frames is critical in Positioning, as it will skew the actor's work in a particular direction from thereon. Mechanisms include determining a way into the work, the rules of the world and the pitch of the performance; finding or developing a means of communication between the director and actor; facilitating the actor's development of empathetic relationships to the role, the world of the play, and the other actors; and supporting the actor's sensory imagining of the world of the play. I argue that beside the propositional knowledge gained in table analysis, greater consideration should be given to the application of embodied, haptic rehearsal frames, for it is these rehearsal experiences that build important sensory knowledge for the actor. To illustrate how each of the Positioning mechanisms operates in rehearsal, I draw upon the Melbourne Interviews, and provide creative and theatre theory to contextualise and deepen the concepts discussed.

Chapter 9, *The Creating Principal Function,* focuses on the way a director can support the actor's imaginative, embodied contribution to the development of the *mise en scène* through the implementation of various types of rehearsal frames. This includes mechanisms such as proposing specific parameters; compiling a 'palette' of explored ideas for later use;

applying a director's predetermined choices; and making a choice, or choices, stronger and more certain. It is from the accumulation of these artistic parameters, as possible interpretations are whittled away, that the performance work emerges. As in the previous chapter, Melbourne mainstage rehearsal data is entwined with current literature.

Chapter 10, *The Affecting Principal Function,* addresses the last group of actions in my schema. With reference to De Bono and other Creative theorists, I examine some more specific solutions to side-step entrenchment and the implications for rehearsal practice. I present the Affecting Principal Function as deliberate, interventional creative constraints applied to change an actor's thinking and/or behaviour on the rehearsal floor. I elucidate how the Affecting mechanisms can prompt a shift in the actor's work through a variety of rehearsal frames, such as placing focus onto an alternate task; perturbing habits and/or preconceptions to stimulate new choices; challenging the established sequence by rehearsing scenes non-chronologically; the use of repetition; and breaking a task down into simpler facets to be addressed one at a time. I argue that the Affecting Principal Function, whilst under-recognised in rehearsal literature, plays a vital role in bringing originality and reactivity to the work.

In the Conclusion, I summarise the challenges upon Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice cited throughout this thesis, including temporal, fiscal and employment pressures, variances in acting paradigms and differences in levels of actor experience. These factors explain the need for ease and expediency in the rehearsal room, and why there is reliance upon a more common, traditional approach. I observe that, given that there is also limited opportunity for directors to observe their colleagues practise, it is unsurprising that rehearsal practice is slow to evolve. At the same time, I reflect upon the Melbourne practitioners' desire to

enhance the way they work, and to produce original and truthful work, and their belief in the merit of collaborative inquiry in rehearsal. My *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema address, in part, these issues, and as such, make an original contribution to Rehearsal Studies. I explain that my new conceptual framework offers a starting point for the evolution of, and conversation about, rehearsal methodology, in Melbourne and beyond. The combined theory and schema help to demystify the rehearsal process, revealing that it is skill and toil, not magic, that creates theatre. Further contributions to the field are noted, including the worth of documentation of the assumptions, expectations and sensibilities of Melbourne practitioners of this era for the theatre historian. One final point made is that, as demonstrated in this thesis, creative and cognitive literature can prove valuable in the development of new insights in the field of Rehearsal Studies.

Chapter 1: The Director's Role in Rehearsal: Functions, Responsibilities and Methods

> When a director finds himself in front of a dramatic work, his role is not to say: "What am I going to do with it" – his role is to say: "What is it going to do with me …". (Copeau 1920 cited in Rudlin and Paul 1990, p. 124)

In this chapter I will draw upon established literature to examine the functions and responsibilities of the director in regard to the rehearsal process, and some of the methods through which these are enacted. Reflection upon the interpretation of the role of the director is important because it reveals differences in the intentionality of the interpretive approach, the selection of methods and the nature of work for the actors in rehearsal. This exploration is provided, in part, to show the broader landscape within which mainstage Melbourne rehearsal practice, and the director's role, resides. From this overview of the province of the director a broader discussion will also emerge regarding the need for variance in rehearsal methodology, and the argument made that, ultimately, the director's role needs to be both chameleon-like and alchemistic.

The director's role is tied to three of the key functions of the rehearsal process: to illuminate the meaning of the text; to determine how to represent this meaning through form; and to facilitate the actor's craft. Within these functions are implied responsibilities: 'towards the text, towards the director's co-workers, and towards the spectator' (Aston & Savona 2013, p. 144). The director must ascertain an understanding of the text and which aspects to expose, heighten or moderate. Entrusted with the governance of the creative process and the productivity of the rehearsal room, the director is responsible for facilitating an environment in which the creative spirit of actors can thrive, and charged with managing the semiotics of the theatrical frame to effectively communicate meaning to an audience (Aston & Savona 2013). The director's role is multifaceted, and as will be discussed, it is the

variance and complexity in the interpretation of each of these responsibilities that immediately suggests the necessity of a range of rehearsal methods.

1.1 Responsibility to the Text

The director's responsibility towards the text is a topic of ongoing conjecture. The perceived authority of the text is proportionate to their creative dominion. As 'a network of latent signs … a blueprint for an eventual performance' (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998, p. 91), the text may be viewed as an authoritative frame of reference, embedded with specific and intended meaning, or alternately, a springboard for departure, a guide with innumerable meanings to be discovered or exposed. In *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House*, Barba (2010, p. 123, emphasis in original) broadly differentiates these positions as 'working *for* the text', and 'working *with* the text'. The director may be placed anywhere upon this spectrum of artistic agency. They may adopt the conduit-like position of serving the text, with artistic choices based upon (what they believe) the playwright intended, or that of auteur, using the text to achieve their creative aims, or any degree or combination of these. The tension between the authority of the text and the creativity of the director can also be viewed as artistically beneficial. As Copeau (1990, p. 126) argues, great work can be born from the 'friendly conflict between a great creator and his great interpreter'.

At the same time, notions of control and authority of the director, in relationship to the text and also to their actors, have caused some practitioners to question the value and veracity of the director's role itself. In *Direction*, Simon Shepherd (2012, p. 95) observes that 'for centuries [theatre] had managed quite well' without the role of director, and that its emergence was not out of 'functional necessity'. He discusses the political sensitivity of the

position that emerged in the later part of the twentieth century, quoting director Declan

Donnellan's remarks in 1989: 'people are frightened of directing because it's bad, right-

wing, authoritarian. [new paragraph] "Director" has almost become a dirty word in theatre

and that's wrong' (cited in Shepherd 2012, p. 97, emphasis in original). Adding to this

theme is the argument that the director's role is counterproductive and should be removed

from the rehearsal process altogether. Scholar and practitioner Michael Zelenak (2003) sees

no value in the director as the mediator between text and audience, arguing that the role is

parasitic and in need of abolishment. He declares the integrity of dramatic works is

corrupted by martinet directors.[22]

Zelenak's objection to the role of director seems predicated on three beliefs. He suggests a

more equitable distribution of power in the rehearsal room, including significant agency of

the actor, produces better theatre (the director's responsibility to the actor will be

discussed shortly). He also infers that a text can speak for itself, as it requires no central

interpreter, and implies interpretive purism of a text is incongruent with direction. These

two points regarding the director's relationship with the text warrant examination.

I suggest the belief that plays have a correct or singular way to be presented places

performance as a mere reproduction of text. Such a perception, rather than bringing

integrity to the field, is reductive in its account of theatre. Theatre, by nature, is a

composite, multi-dimensional art form, which involves the contribution of multiple

individuals, and as such, cannot be bound by a singular understanding of a text, even if a

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[22] Zelenak (2003, p. 106) argues that the existence of the directorial profession creates a 'non-democratic', and at times fascist, model of rehearsal that is fundamentally flawed and 'morally bankrupt'. He blames the directorial profession for the demise of the dramatist and the marginalisation and trivialisation of theatre. Zelenak objects that the role of the director is 'now seen as the sine qua non of the theatrical event, replacing the playwright and actor as the arbiter and center of the dramatic creation' (Zelenak 2003, p. 107).

singular understanding was possible. Scholar Ubersfeld (2017, p. 31) warns against 'freez[ing]' or 'sacraliz[ing]' a work 'to the point of making performance impossible and thwarting the imagination of the interpreters'. Simultaneously, Ubersfeld also champions respect for the text. The trick lies in in-depth 'semiological analysis' of the play to provide authentic, rich possibilities to be realised in diverse, imaginative ways on stage (p. 214). The director's role in relation to text, then, is to mine a play's depths to find, and then realise, its potentiality on stage.

The director's role is necessitated too, at the very least, by the need to negotiate and communicate the connection between two media – the text and the lived theatrical experience, for the semiotics of the text and the semiotics of the stage, whilst interrelated, are not the same language (Ubersfeld et al 2017). The director as an interpretive agent makes creative choices to shape the work to affect the audience in some way. This involves the linking, to varying degrees, of cultural and socio-political factors of the written play with the spectator's own cultural and socio-political frames of reference. The performance of any given text involves constant cultural negotiation, as all texts, written or performed, are subject to the conditioned response of the receiver (McGann cited in Worthen 1997).[23] Directing can be seen, therefore, as a necessary act of translation.

1.2 Responsibility to the Spectator

The director has a responsibility towards the spectator. The spatial, temporal, visual and acoustic dimensions of theatre make it requisite to have a figure to facilitate coherent and unified communication in the theatrical frame. The director functions as the designer of the

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[23] For a comprehensive examination of how contextual elements propel diversity in performance reception, see Knowles' theory of materialist semiotics in *Reading the Material* (2004).

stage experience, a 'visual story teller', 'tuning [the] theatre for the needs of stage and

audience' (Pavis 2012, pp. 4-5).[24] Adding to the idea raised earlier that tension between text

and interpretation can prove advantageous, Pavis (cited in Aston & Savona 2013, p. 158)

comments that it is the 'confrontation of text and performance' that gives birth to a unique

and meaningful *mise en scène* for the audience. The director's role is to draw out the

potential and illuminate meaning, so that the text becomes characterised not by its initial

form, but by its 'ekstases' (Böhme 2013), its expressive forms. Kaiserburger (cited in Aston &

Savona 2013, p. 99) sees this view as fundamental, arguing that the semiotics of theatre

help 'avoid imprisoning the theater in the text'.

As first spectator, the director both devises and evaluates the interplay between the

ekstases and the performance reception. In *Theatre as a Sign System: A Semiotics of Text

and Performance*, Aston and Savona (2013) articulate the complexity and richness of

meaning than a director can encode in the stage picture. They argue that compositional

directorial choices do more than practically and coherently solve text requirements; the

mise en scène can communicate multiple, interdependent levels of meaning to the

audience: functionalistic, sociometric, atmospheric and symbolic (Aston & Savona 2013). An

intricate weave of design and staging choices can convey the key preoccupation of the text,

readily depict the alliances, status and agendas of human relationships, and reinforce the

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[24] The role of visual storyteller is entwined with the history of the director: Ancient Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles designed the chorus dance for their Tragic plays (Kauffmann 2003); in the sixteenth century, the 'master of the revels' attended to the spectacle of Tudor Court entertainment (Streitberger cited in Shepherd 2012, p. 110); in the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century star English actors, such as Garrick and Irving, controlled the aesthetic of the plays in which they performed, and at the end of the 1800s, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen developed the notion of a unified, sophisticated and appealing arrangement of actors and scenography on stage (Shepherd 2012, p. 123). In the twentieth century prime examples of the director as the *mise en scène's* auteur include Edward Gordon Craig's (1911) ideology of actors as 'Uber-Marionettes', and more recently, the work of painterly directors such as Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman with their tight visual aesthetic (Shevtsova 2007; Holmberg 1996; Mitter & Shevtsova 2005; Swettenham 2018). For a more comprehensive discussion of the emergence of the directorial profession, including the roles of the *regisseur* and the *metteur en scène,* see Simon Shepherd's text *Direction* (2012).

intended atmosphere by supplying the appropriate conditions.[25] A requisite function of the director is, therefore, to conceive of, implement, and orchestrate the myriad of choices that comprise the semiotics of the *mise en scène* to affect the audience in a specific way.

1.3 Responsibility to the Actor

To ensure the cogent and aesthetic communication of these multiple levels of meaning, the director requires effective methods for encoding the performance. Hodge and Kress (cited in Aston & Savona 2013, p. 154) argue that proxemics is key in the semiotics of the stage; the actor, in relation to others and the space, is central in this picture. Meaning is communicated to the audience by the actor. In order to do this, the actor must connect to the meaning of the text. The director's responsibility to the actor is, therefore, entwined with their responsibility to the text and to the spectator.[26] The director must implement methods that serve these conjoined responsibilities.

Given that the actor is a fundamental component of the semiotics on stage, and that they need to connect to the meaning of the text to effectively communicate to the spectator, it is worth exploring their degree of involvement in the development of the performance. One may reason that the primacy of the actor's work on stage should be matched by the primacy of their involvement and contribution in rehearsal. It makes sense that the director engages their creative capacities, beyond their immediate performance ability, to contribute toward

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[25] In *The art of the stage set as a paradigm for an aesthetics of atmospheres,* Böhme (2013, p. 4) argues that 'atmospheres are totalities', and as such, 'the making of atmospheres is therefore confined to the setting of conditions in which the atmosphere appears'. Böhme calls these conditions 'generators' (p. 10).

[26] We gain more nuanced insight into the director's responsibility to the actor and their work from Cole's catalogue of the various analogies that have been used to describe the role of the director: gardener, trustee of the democratic spirit, lover, leader of an expedition, and voyeur (1992, p. 5). Implied actions of tending, nurturing and keenly observing are placed against notions of leadership, navigation and bravery. These terms reflect the balancing act inherent within the director-actor relationship and the complexity of the human, and creative, transactions within the rehearsal process.

the evolution of the interpretation. This, I suggest, is partly achieved by the director

supporting the actor's cerebral, intuitive and imaginative connection to the text. In such a

view, the director's province becomes that of the helmsman steering the course of the

rehearsal process for their co-creators, the actors. Copeau, a century ago, adopted this

perspective of the director's work. Beginning with the 'actor's experience of the text', he

determined the *mise en scène* from improvisations his actors undertook, prior to the

dialogue being used, as he felt that speech could only occur after the 'felt life' of the role

had been experienced (Whitmore 1990, p. 85).[27]

Contemporary cognitive literature supports this notion of embodied exploration and

intuitive discovery.[28] The Cartesian split has been discounted, and mind-body dualism

championed, yet directorial practices that place the actor's experience centrally in the

interpretive process, such as Copeau's, appear to be under-represented in the

contemporary mainstage Melbourne rehearsal room.[29] [30] [31]

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[27] Inspired by his contemporary Adolphe Appia's vision of set design, Copeau began to work with a performance space that was open and bare. This enabled him to develop the spatial arrangement of actors without a 'premature hypothesis of the needs of the presentation' to encode the stage picture (Copeau cited in Whitmore 1990, p. 71).

[28] Developments in the understanding of human cognition in recent years has led to the valuable interdisciplinary study of cognitive science and performance theory, as seen in texts such as *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science: Body, Brain and Being* (Shaughnessy 2013) and *Toward a General Theory of Acting: Cognitive Science and Performance* (Lutterbie 2011).

[29] There are, of course, exceptions. Examples of directors with actor-centric approaches, viewing the script as a starting point or navigational tool with the discovery of meaning and interpretation driven by the actors' exploration, include Anne Bogart and Nancy Meckler (Bogart 2014; Meckler 2009-2020). Bogart (2014) champions the development of an active, rather than passive, culture of actors in the rehearsal room. 'Collaboration', she remarks, 'is emphatically not agreement', but rather, the collision and interweaving of disparate ideas (p. 107). Bogart notes that her approach to, and belief in, collaborative rehearsal, was inspired by Mary Overlie's practical rehearsal techniques, which 'could enable and empower performers to generate exciting work together efficiently and collaboratively' (p. 110).

[30] The value of cognitive literature in the development of how we conceive directorial practice is a theme throughout this thesis, as is idea of the actor's centrality and creative contribution in rehearsal.

[31] It is recognised by the author that improvisational, embodied and actor-centric practices abound in other rehearsal processes, including in theatre-devising and non-text-based work undertaken by independent companies in Melbourne.

1.4 Rehearsal Methods

The discussion so far has shown that the director's responsibilities are subject to conceptions of authority and artistic control. The way directorial functions are enacted is contingent, in part, upon these conceptions. At the heart of it, there is the juxtaposition of two fundamental views. On one hand is the belief that a director *creates the performance*, on the other, that a director *creates the conditions in which a performance can evolve*. As with most points discussed so far, these notions are not mutually exclusive, but the prioritising of one over the other, I argue, underpins why particular rehearsal methods are applied, and others discounted, by each individual director.

Each of these views impacts the nature of the director-actor relationship, and the way that each party goes about their work in rehearsal. Misaligned assumptions regarding the director-actor working relationship can therefore be a source of tension. The director who facilitates the conditions for performance, rather than dictates, may be perceived as lacking certainty or rigour; conversely the more autocratic director, more contiguously 'constructing' the performance, may be seen as stymying the creative potential of her/his co-workers. This thesis presents a conceptual model of rehearsal that broadly encompasses both modes of direction, but offers particular insights regarding the director as the *enabler* of the creative endeavour in the rehearsal room.

An additional perspective on the director's job is provided by scholar Tom Mitchell (1992, p. 53), who offers a particularly concise and insightful distillation of the role down to two essential tasks: 'extrapolation', to garner a body of knowledge from which to make decisions, and the application of 'perceptual intuition', to intuitively identify the alterations that will shift actors' behaviour and increase 'theatrical significance'. The director elicits

clues from both the text and from the work produced from their actors, whilst simultaneously assessing and altering the course of the investigation and/or creation. These two fundamental aspects of direction are inherent in my model of rehearsal as a series of frames, and my schema of the Principal Functions of rehearsal, to be discussed throughout this thesis, with particular focus placed upon methods of 'extrapolation'.

The most common approach for extrapolation in the rehearsal room of the twentieth century was, and possibly the twenty-first century is, text analysis around the table - the director, as sage or chairperson, leading discussion around a table at the commencement of the rehearsal process to raise questions and find some answers prior to getting up on the floor, or into the space.[32] The collective discussion is intended to make the parameters of the world of the play, the meaning inherent in the lines and the nature of the characters more clearly defined, thus providing a foundation for the physical work to come. This procedural, Cartesian division between thinking then doing can be considered a legacy of Stanislavski's early work, alongside a misunderstanding of his ideas, due in part to the unfortunate, complex circumstances surrounding the publication of his texts (Benedetti 1990, p. 276).[33] Such a position suggests that cerebral knowledge is a requisite point of

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[32] I borrow the term chairperson from Unwin (2004, p. 108), who argues that for productive, investigative discourse, the director must have the skills of such a role: 'to lead and shape the conversation, encourage … rein in … bring the group forward to understandings and agreements, know when to kick a discussion into touch, and when to allow it to ramble'. This perspective is juxtaposed with the view, arguably seen in more autocratic rehearsal processes, in which the director adopts the mantle of sage, who with omnipresent knowledge holds court and instructs.

[33] Stanislavski's ideas have underpinned rehearsal practice for a century. Jean Benedetti (1990) and Bella Merlin (2016) explain, however, that his ideas have been partly misunderstood for decades due to a sequence of unfortunate events. This includes how Stanislavski's original writing, due to size, was divided into two volumes - *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character* - the omission of Stanislavski's accompanying overview that explained how the books were two halves of the same whole (Merlin 2016, p. 7), and the 'fourteen-year gap between the [two] publications' (Benedetti 1990, p. 274). The time lapse had profound effects, with the psychological perspective in *An Actor Prepares* eclipsing the physical perspective offered in the later text, for 'it was already too late to establish in the popular and the professional mind the notion of a unitary, psycho-physiological technique' (p. 274). Scholarly investigation in recent years is enabling a fuller understanding of Stanislavski's work and the evolution of his ideas over his lifetime, including how Stanislavski's work moved toward a greater 'emphasis on the body' (Merlin 2016, p. 186). Stanislavski's growing focus on physical

reference to enable relevant, embodied choices on the floor. Practitioners who employ this widely accepted, century-old method reason that in-depth discussion frees up the creative facilities of the actor so that they may commit their energy and focus to finer details. This cerebral work can suit particular actors, texts and directorial intentions.

It is worth noting, however, the difficult cognitive shift actors must manage as they cross the threshold, often figuratively as well as psychologically, from *thinking* to *doing* as work on the floor begins. Perhaps in practices in which the director prepares blocking and instructs actors' movement, this transition is not as daunting for cast members. In the contemporary rehearsal room with at least a semblance of collaboration, however, the expectation of their own immediate intuitive and embodied input into the interpretation can be confronting for the actor. Australian Actor Terence Crawford (2011, p. 55) refers to this awkward shift, from a period of cerebral analysis around the table into an experiential, haptic, intuitive and kinaesthetic process on the rehearsal floor, as 'The Clunk'. It is an occurrence documented by others, including Michael Chekhov (1985, p. 95) at the Moscow Art Theatre:

> We were sitting at the table for months and months, speaking about our parts and characters, and becoming very clever and wise about the play, but none of us could begin to act! Then came the most difficult moment, the most difficult period, when we stopped talking and began to work, and we saw that nothing had come from all our analyzing of the part and the play. Our intellectual approach always killed the desire and ability to act until after several difficult days, when we remembered that we were actors.

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techniques makes sense given the dangerous political context. Under the Soviet regime, psychological and emotional approaches were frowned upon, whereas physical, 'doing' artistic processes held currency. The shifting focus of Stanislavski's practice from the psychological to the physical may have helped him 'survive Soviet censorship' (p. 186). The lack of emphasis on the physical aspects of Stanislavski's practice is also complicated by the fact that it was only during 'the last five years of his life', that he fully formed his Method of Physical Actions (p. 185), an approach that helped to 'divert the actors *away from the spoken word*' (p. 188, emphasis in original). He encouraged minimal knowledge of the script, even for the actors to not read the script at all, and began rehearsal with improvisation instead (p. 189).

If the director is charged with enabling the actor, and creating the conditions for the performance to evolve, then alternatives to an extended period of cerebral analysis (for the purpose of extrapolation) are worthy of consideration.[34] To deepen the actor's relationship with the text and to enhance their capacity as a co-creator of the performance, it is requisite to expand the range of investigative approaches and engage the embodied, intuitive and imaginative tools of the actor also. If we accept, too, the notion of mind-body dualism, and that 'there is no rupture in experience between such processes as perceiving, feeling, moving, and thinking' (Johnson 2006, pp. 48-49), then it is worthwhile to enhance not just how information is gathered in rehearsal, but also what form that information may take.

Billing (2012, pp. 386-387) argues that rehearsal is the 'incremental and developmental' combination of many processes to deploy three very different, yet interconnected types of knowledge - propositional knowledge (I know that); personal/experiential knowledge (I know of); and procedural (I know how to). Billing (2012, p. 387) champions that it is only through 'embodied combinations of different modes of understanding that anyone produces innovative or interesting responses to any literary play-text'. The level of industry involved in rehearsal is implicit in the word's etymology: 'to rake over, to turn over' (Harper 2001-2021).[35] Rehearsal involves effortful activities – cognitive, physical, imaginative and

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[34] Some practitioners have implemented measures to mitigate the problems created by extended cerebral analysis, aiming to create greater continuity and cohesion in the actor's process. For example, Alfreds (2007, pp. 158-161) proposes working on different facets of rehearsal each day, thereby dividing up, and containing the extent of, any one type of working. Similarly, Katie Mitchell (2009) aims to interweave analytical work with research, creative work and practical tasks. To avoid the 'wretched' experience of crossing the threshold into the acting space), Di Trevis (2012, p. 64, p. 67) seats her actors in a semicircle on the rehearsal floor for the initial reading and discussion, and has them enter and exit the enclosed space as required.

[35] The term 'rehearse' derives from the middle ages terms *rehearser*, 'to give an account of' (Anglo-French), and *rehercier* (Old French), which references the action of a harrow, a plough-like instrument, turning the soil (Harper 2001-2021). Cole sees this etymology as a useful metaphor, along with others, to understand the nature of the director's role in rehearsal (1992, p. 4). The use of the term *rehearse* itself, in regard to 'practic[ing] a play [or] part', is long-established and reputed to have begun in the 1570s (Harper 2001-2021).

emotional - to open up, delve into and move the text toward performance. Billing (2012) asserts that despite the brilliant skill of individual actors, auteur directors, and age-old tricks of the trade, it is the rehearsal process and the reflexivity to all the factors brought to play by a particular project that will, or won't, deliver successful theatre. Academic Mark Johnson (2006, p. 54) completes this argument with his assertion that 'the multidimensionality of the body-mind … explains why no single method or approach could ever capture the workings of the mind'.

The director may be aptly conceived, therefore, as the designer of the rehearsal process, who facilitates the actor's multiple ways of knowing to provide the conditions for the performance to evolve. Through the provision of the conditions for performance - working with the actor's inter-connecting types of knowledge to extrapolate an understanding of the text and its potential *mise en scène* – the director can fulfil their responsibilities towards the text, the spectator and the actor.

How this is achieved in practice may look quite different in different rehearsal rooms. One interesting example is the work of Australian director Lindy Davies. Davies' unique actor-centric process aims to bridge the intellectual faculty and subjective, intuitive imagination of the actor (Ginters 2008). Part of Davies' process, called 'Abstract', serves the actor in building a sensory and imaginative connection to the text.[36] The actor's sensory information and experiences gained from their interaction - abstractly, imaginatively and kinaesthetically - with a range of objects assists them in finding a deeper connection with the text from

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[36] Throughout this thesis, Adena Jacobs' method of abstract improvisation is referred to on multiple occasions. It appears that Jacobs, a VCA trained director, developed her method in part from Davies' *Abstract* and *Blue Print* methods, combining these two parts into a single step. Davies and Jacobs approaches share similarities, but there are also significant differences. In essence, Davies' *Abstract* is a discrete step in a larger process, and is fundamentally concerned with building the imaginative and sensory world for the actor, whereas a key factor in Jacobs' *Abstract* is the generation of *mise en scène* ideas for the director.

which to speak, and deepens their knowing of the text. Simultaneously, the tactile and imaginary exploration of the text lays down a degree of experiential memory which has the added benefit that lines more easily *stick* (Walter 1999).[37] The next step in Davies' approach is *Blue Print*, an organic blocking process (Walter 1999). The actors work on the set, responding to a confluence of internal impulses based on previous rehearsal work, and impulses reacting to the stage space, light and the other characters' presence. The *Blue Print* aims to support the actors' inner life whilst building a dynamic and metaphoric form on stage. Davies' approach is intended to support the creative facilities of the actor and places the actor's imaginative and sensory connection with the text as the cornerstone in the development of a performance for an audience.[38] Creating the conditions and opportunity for the actor implies the need to implement effective structures for the actors' purposeful investigation of the text, the space and interaction with others. Such investigation also requires the fostering of a spirit of spontaneity; embodied inquiry is reliant upon both the flow and unexpectedness typical of play.[39] The concept of readiness and receptivity – to respond instinctively and completely to the opportunity that is presented for action in the

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[37] This support for a basic but often arduous facet of the actor's role, memorisation of lines, appears generally not considered in mainstage Melbourne rehearsal methodology, but is extremely useful. Actors, according to acting teacher Anita Jesse (1989, p. 97), need a 'sticky surface' for lines to adhere to memory and be recalled easily. The actor's memorisation of lines has a significant impact upon the rehearsal process, and is therefore a reoccurring topic throughout this thesis.

[38] Davies unique approach is specifically designed to engage both the cerebral and the intuitive facilities of the actor. There are, of course, numerous other practitioners who have applied embodied inquiry and improvisation, and this is not just a contemporary notion. For example, Meyerhold's rehearsal diaries from last century reflect his interest in the entwinement of the physical and psychological in apprehending a text. Muza (1996, p. 22) explains that in scenes from *Hamlet* and *Woe to Wit,* Meyerhold used improvisation to assist the actors' visceral understanding of the intricacies of the scene: '[He] places them both in sharply uncomfortable physical circumstances … Hamlet wraps his freezing father in a cloak, and the servants warm up the frost-bitten Chatsky'. Meyerhold developed methods to realise the potential of the actors' 'reflex excitability' (Muza 1996, p. 22). It is the tapping into the 'reflex excitability', I suggest, that could be valued more highly, and feature more frequently, in contemporary directorial practice.

[39] Play - *le jeu* - is the foundation of Lecoq's methodology, and similarly Gaulier's, with lineage dating back to the methodologies of Copeau and Meyerhold (Murray 2003). Spontaneity and play are also pillars of the training and methodologies of numerous other practitioners including Augusto Boal (2002), Keith Johnstone (1981) and Clive Barker (1977).

present moment - resonates throughout contemporary approaches including that of Bogart, Meisner, Perceval and numerous others.[40] For example, Perceval specifically places emphasis on the actor's present (rather than the character's psychological past) to achieve a 'heightened sense of the real' (Harvie & Lavender 2010, p. 10). Joan Littlewood applied game structures to investigate text and '[to take her actors] right inside the play' (Callery 2015, p. 25). Australian director Tanya Gerstle's approach of 'Pulse', which aims to build responsiveness and connection between actors to enhance the aliveness of both rehearsal and performance (Gerstle 2008; 2013; 2020), is also underpinned by the notion of play as well as Lecoq's concept of 'complicite'. The reflexivity of play is fundamental in embodied investigation.

Implicit in the director's design of the rehearsal process to enable the actor, and fostering a spirit of play, is the act of relinquishing knowing to create the possibility of discovery. Director Mary Robinson (2012, p. 91) feels that it is important to 'allow' herself and her actors to be in a 'situation of unknowability'. Similarly, director Brigid Larmour (cited in Manfull 1999, p. 89) contends that playing a scene spontaneously opens up 'meaning in the play that you would not know existed if you sat down … and worked it out' as there is 'no accident, no chance, no spontaneity'. A playful environment prompts serendipity. Stephen Wangh (2000, p. xxxvii) observes in *An Acrobat of the Heart* that the process of ''stumbling around' is, in fact, an excellent way to proceed. It can lead us to discoveries we might never

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[40] For example, reactivity is a key objective of scholar-director Phillip Zarrilli's psychophysical training approach, 'to expand adaptability, creative imagination and flexibility in actors so that performance perspicacity can be realised' (Creely 2010, p. 219). For Jacques Lecoq (2000, p. 38), *disponibilité*, the ability for play and 'freedom to receive' is fundamental to the actor's engagement with a work. Despite the seeming rigidity of the exercise, Sanford Meisner's renown acting technique has been argued to be embedded in the spirit of play: it 'demands a deep playfulness' (Halba 2012 p. 134) and involves 'limitless attention' (Merlin cited in Halba 2012, p. 130). In sum, as Brook (1969, p. 102) states, 'the aim of improvisation in training actors, and the aim of exercises … is to get away from Deadly Theatre'.

have made if we had confined our explorations to those pathways for which we had maps'.

Bogart (2007) declares, '[y]ou do not lead the work. The work leads you'. The belief is in discovery through doing.

Taken a step further, to increase vitality and creativity, the director's design of the rehearsal process may involve fashioning the conditions for discovery by pushing possibilities and upending expectations. Bogart (2007) sees the province of the director as to challenge, to suggest, to ask *what happens if?*. The rehearsal practice of Viewpoints, she argues, is a question, not an answer, a way of thinking to investigate the text (Bogart cited in Herrington 2000, p. 166). Herrington (2000, p. 162) argues Bogart, by deliberately inverting the process of inquiry, adds depth and inventiveness to the work:

> The actors' onstage movement does not merely physically represent the text, it adds dimensions to the text … Once Bogart has a sketch of the physical, what she refers to as "scripted movement", she introduces the text, laying it over the choreography, working encounter by encounter or scene by scene. The result is often an apparent incongruity between the physical movement and the spoken word.

Here we see the director's role as creative antagonist, a position that Barba sees as essential to discover new meaning. In his rehearsal investigations with Odin Teatret, Barba (2010, p. 55) has devised a rehearsal approach founded in part on serendipity, 'the technique of finding that which is not looked for'. The action of the text is intentionally estranged, overlaid with other actions and therefore other possible meanings, so that the actors have to negotiate a 'jumble of obstacles' (Barba 2010, p. 68). Barba's intention to 'dupe rationality' is for the purpose of avoiding literal and mundane interpretation of the text (2010, p. 68). The importance of upending the actor's approach to work is a key aspect of the Principal Functions of Rehearsal schema presented in Section B of this thesis.

1.5 From Chameleon to Alchemist

To fulfil all of these responsibilities and functions, as well as address the contingencies of each particular project, the director cannot rely upon any one approach. Like a chameleon, the director needs the ability to adjust and adapt the use of rehearsal methods, including developing new ways of working. Over a century ago Stanislavski (2013, p. 206, emphasis in original) wrote of the importance of evolving one's practice:

> There is no *direct approach* to our subconscious, therefore we make use of various stimuli that induce a process of living the part, which in turn inevitably creates the inter-relationship and conscious or unconscious adjustments.

Despite being revered historically for their own unique approach to theatre practice, Stanislavski, Meyerhold and Brecht all married directing methods to achieve their aims. Brecht employed Stanislavski's 'given circumstances', and Stanislavski's directorial approach did not solely rest on the tenet that detailed psychology of a character underpins effective, realistic acting. Despite the primacy given to the *inside-out* paradigm that he is renowned for, Stanislavski acknowledged that 'sometimes it is possible to arrive at the inner characteristics of a part by way of its outer characteristics' (cited in Magarshack 1950, p. 46). Mitter and Shevtsova (2005, pp. 54-55) argue that Brecht, as evidenced in rehearsal archives, adopted and adapted Stanislavski's techniques. Brecht combined approaches of searching 'for the character's truth in the subjective sense … becoming one with it …' with the examination of the 'given circumstances' and somatic exploration of roles (Brecht cited in Mitter & Shevtsova 2005, p. 54; Weber cited in Mitter & Shevtsova 2005, p. 55). Stanislavski's protégé Meyerhold is remembered for a methodology considered to be in opposition to Stanislavski's psychological system, with a more *outside-in* approach and categorisation of characters according to their functional role in the play, 'the *emploi*' (Muza

1996).[41] Meyerhold's rehearsal journals indicate, however, that he was fundamentally and perpetually interested in the relationship between the interiority and exteriority of a role, and in his later work 'the notion of the *emploi* was internalized in the actor rather than externalized in the production' as he incorporated aspects of Stanislavski's approach into his rehearsal (Muza 1996, p. 19). The legacy of these directors as we remember them today can be attributed to their experimentation, adaptation and development of rehearsal methods of their time (and prior), and the subsequent evolution of their methodologies.

Throughout this thesis, therefore, I will argue that a multi-dimensional approach to rehearsal is needed today: a director needs to borrow and build a range of approaches to deconstruct the text to access meaning, to facilitate the actors' craft, and to construct performance. As Crawford (2011, p. 122) declares: 'as practitioners and artists [if we] define ourselves as 'disciples' of any one guru, we immediately limit ourselves, limit our terms of reference and our communication'. Director Peter Stein (cited Delgado & Heritage 1996, p. 246) reasons further that 'a unilateral approach to theatre can produce wonderful things, but it cannot produce a profession, and it cannot really produce continuity in an art'. Brook (1993, p. 119; 1988, p.22) maintains that 'a constantly changing process' is key, arguing that assimilation of others' work is an integral part of artistic endeavour: 'I believe we are here to receive influences. We are constantly being influenced and in turn we influence other people … we work in a field that must be one of free exchange'. Indeed, Brook's direction of seminal productions such as *The Mahabharata* can be attributed to his enviable capacity to collect, select and adapt methods from Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski. In Mitter's (1992,

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[41] Meyerhold's idea of character types was rooted in his familiarity of the theatre tradition of Old Russia, as well as the stock types of Commedia dell'arte. He was purposefully inventive in his use of 'types' to avoid cliché, at times suggesting challenging combinations, such as linking Gogol's comic mayor with the tragic Oedipus (Muza 1996, p. 21).

p. 5) words: 'Brook has an inimitable lack of individuality, a second-hand genius of formidable synoptic power'. One methodology is not enough. Ultimately, the director's role can be conceived not just as a chameleon of different practices, but rather, as an alchemist, adapting, melding and inventing rehearsal methods to accomplish the responsibilities of the role.

This chapter has served several functions. It has furnished the reader with a brief precis of the role of the director in relation to their interpretation of the text, their creative role in working with actors and the forming of the *mise en scène*, providing a foundation from which to contextualise and appreciate the issues raised in the examination of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice in future chapters. Secondly, the summary has exposed differing concepts and paradigms in what *directing* actually means. There has been reference to the director as conduit or auteur, as an interpretative agent, and actor centrality. I have noted contrasting beliefs that a director creates a performance or creates the conditions in which a performance can evolve. Phrases such as table analysis and cerebral work have been juxtaposed with terms such as embodied inquiry and play. These contrasting notions expose a perceived disjuncture between rehearsal methods, and hence I suggest, are central to a conversation about contemporary rehearsal practice. This rift, I argue, is an excellent prompt to examine more closely the similarities, differences and benefits of seemingly dissimilar practices. If one methodology is not enough to address the idiosyncrasies and contextual contingencies of rehearsal, we need to be well acquainted with the rehearsal tools we might wield. The Principal Functions of Rehearsal schema, explicated in Section B of this thesis, serves this purpose.

Thirdly, I have raised concepts that underpin the theoretical model of rehearsal that I will present in the next chapter and in Section B of this thesis. In particular, Mitchell's summation that directorial function revolves around *extrapolation* and *perceptual intuition* aligns to my assertion that a director's role can be viewed as the designer of a series of reflexive rehearsal frames. The type of knowledge garnered is inextricably linked to the way the director is able to perceive the work needed to be done, and their skill in shaping the actor's task accordingly. The role of the director in the contemporary rehearsal room, as I will argue in the forthcoming section, becomes the creator and/or enabler of a series of working frames.

Chapter 2: Rehearsal Frame Theory

Whom the gods wish to destroy, they give unlimited resources.

(Tharp 2003, p. 129)

Creativity can be understood as a 'boundary phenomenon' (Ibbotson & Darsø 2008, p. 548). Contextual parameters are part of all creative activities (Negus & Pickering 2004, p. 68) and as previously noted by Knowles, rehearsal is no exception. The nature of rehearsal is subject to the contextual parameters of the project at hand, with the creative trajectory of a work influenced well before a single step into the rehearsal room is made. Each aspect, such as funding, variance in actor training and levels of experience, design timelines, and so forth, can be viewed as frame that delineates possibilities in the creative process. Collectively, these parameters are like a stack of misaligned frames, excluding certain potentialities, and within which, the work of rehearsal begins. In Section A of this thesis I will explore how the management and mitigation of extrinsic, contextual parameters shape the creative potentialities of rehearsal.

In this particular chapter I explain how this notion of rehearsal as a series of frames can be taken a step further, introducing the argument that the creative act of rehearsal can be understood as the deliberate construction of one's own artistic constraints to unify and contain the artistic endeavour. Building upon the previous discussion of the role of the director, I will present a case that the director's function can be understood as governing these constraints; delimiting options, and directing the actor's point of attention and terms of reference, thereby propelling the work forward. This conceptual model of rehearsal as a series of limitations will be explored briefly here, and examined in greater detail throughout this thesis, with particular explication in Section B.

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of several beliefs and values inherent in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice. I explain how these beliefs and values may be addressed through the Rehearsal Frame Theory and the director's and actor's roles within in it. I expand upon the merits of delimitation with reference to creative literature and the Melbourne Interviews, and articulate how perceiving rehearsal as a series of frames benefits the creative process of rehearsal.

2.1 Values and Beliefs

The Melbourne Interviews indicated several values and beliefs regarding rehearsal.[42] [43] Firstly, collaboration is seen as desirable: it is generally perceived that collective, cooperative creative endeavour in rehearsal is to be expected, and is an effective artistic means to produce work.[44] Simultaneously, seemingly embedded in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal culture are the notions of investigation and exploration, faith in the 'organic' and suspicion of the 'imposed'.[45] Work is undertaken with the tacit belief that rehearsal is a progressive search, mining innumerable interpretations, with no singular, predetermined outcome to be aimed toward. The director is the '[l]eader of an [e]xpedition' negotiating a path through difficult, unmapped terrain (Cole 1992, p. 5). Thirdly, it is hoped that the rehearsal process will realise the aspirations of originality and integrity in the final theatrical

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[42] This claim is based on the Melbourne Interviews Data Set A, which involved actors and directors with experience of the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room. These values and beliefs are apparent in the citations interviewee's comments throughout this thesis.

[43] These values and beliefs are consistent with my own experiences in the rehearsal room in Melbourne, as well as anecdotal evidence.

[44] A belief in, if not expectation of, collaborative rehearsal work amongst many Melbourne practitioners could possibly be attributed to the significant performance-making aspect of the acting course at the Victorian College of the Arts, which produces numerous actors and director graduates into the Melbourne industry.

[45] The term organic reflects an artistic ideal, as Barba (2000, p. 58) comments: '[i]n artistic terms, the contraposition "organic" and "inorganic" distinguishes work that seems alive, credible, and coherent from that which appears forced, mechanical, arousing in us a reaction of rejection and annoyance'.

work. In sum, the Melbourne Interviews suggest trust in a *collaborative, investigative process* to produce *creative and authentic* results.

The problem is that these values and beliefs do not align well with the reality of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice. Collaboration appears more as an ideal than actuality, with rehearsal processes limiting actors' creative agency and degree of contribution. Investigation is limited both in time and in means. The rehearsal methods predominately used – table analysis then blocking through a quasi-improvised approach – sit poorly with both of these aspects. As will be explored in Section B, these factors may not induce the creativity and authenticity that is aimed for.

2.2 The Director as the Designer of Frames

I propose that we can address this incongruity by reconfiguring our concept of rehearsal and the director's role, developing the means for a more actor-centric, inquiry-based rehearsal process. To prioritise investigation, I suggest rehearsal activity can be perceived as a succession of experiments that propose, and test, ideas and embodiment, and the director's role conceived as *designing, enabling* and *editing* the ways creative inquiry is undertaken. The director gives the actor guidelines, rules or a focus that *frames* the parameters of the work that the actor will explore and create within. I use the term frame deliberately – alike framing a photograph, frame infers both how an actor's attention is directed, and a boundary of what is included or excluded.

Reconfiguring the director as the 'designer of frames' for the actor's work elevates the actor's creativity and intuition within the process. It provides the actor with greater capacity and opportunity to contribute, and, as will be discussed in depth in Section B, supports the actor's creative facilities. At the same time, the director maintains their position of

authority, including the editorial function as the outside eye, but with greater emphasis on their design, stewardship and sustentation of the process itself.

Identifying rehearsal as a series of frames, therefore, adjusts the way we think about the process, and provides an effective, alternative perspective on theatrical practice.[46] Rather than perceiving rehearsal as work that grows, adding and expanding from successive choices, my theoretical construct views rehearsal as a series of creative constraints that, in essence, delimit possibilities. Each frame encourages the actor working within it to investigate and create with a particular focus, to the exclusion of others. Choice-making accumulatively directs and shapes the potentiality of the work by excluding or reducing possibilities.

It is the reduction of possibilities that is the value of deliberately constructed rehearsal frames. It is worthwhile to consider the benefits of delimitation, of a 'merciful limit', as established in creative literature (Eaves 1982, para. 1).[47] The maxim 'there is nothing more terrifying than a blank page' reflects the condition of being overwhelmed by creative possibilities to the point of inaction, a state of mind popularly conceived to be the plight of the artist beginning a new work. In the Melbourne Interviews, actor Mark Leonard Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) observes:

> … one of the most frightening things when you sort of start a new work is "Oh God!", you're looking at a blank space. You're just like what are you supposed to do?

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[46] By 'we' I am referring to Rehearsal Studies scholars and, potentially, theatre practitioners.

[47] Literary and visual arts scholar Morris Eaves uses this term in his explication of William Blake's theory of art. Eaves (1982) explains Blake's view that the artistic process can be understood as a process of conscious division between inclusion and exclusion: 'Line is the fundamental dynamic principle in Blake's artistic theory … [for] making a line draws a boundary, and the result is a merciful "limit."' Line outlines and contains, and is therefore essential in the artistic act (para. 1; para. 12).

Throughout a task, too, artists can be 'faced with overwhelming choices and challenges' regarding what material to include (Hunter 2013, pp. 168-169). The anxiety resulting from 'choice overload' (Toffler 1970; Haynes 2008) can induce procrastination and decision-making paralysis (Schwartz 2004). This is a problem for rehearsal because too many possibilities can ultimately lead one to default to selecting the familiar option, for people return to habit and tradition in the face of too much choice (Schwartz 2000). This phenomenon has significant implications for how we go about the rehearsal process if we intend to develop original and engaging work.

Constraints can help to structure the response to a creative task by precluding and limiting the search for possible answers (Reitman 1965). With the focus of a creative activity narrowed, the scope of the task may be perceived as less overwhelming. '[O]ne of the most important things from a performer's point of view', according to Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August), is that 'coming into a work [] you want rules. Like you want boundaries … there's a net there'.

As will be explored in detail in Section B, implementation of a bounded yet open task allows for the emergence of original ideas and solutions (Ibbotson & Darsø 2008, p. 550). Constraints can direct attention (Stokes 2008), be motivational and result in inspired outcomes (Ibbotson & Darsø 2008). The perceived ease of the task at hand, alongside a sense of creative agency, is particularly relevant as, according to the Melbourne Interviews, both anxiety and satisfaction impact the nature of an actor's approach to rehearsal.

The efficacy of applying further creative limitation is contingent on the depth of understanding of the creative problem at hand, the skilful framing of a task to delimit options and focus the work, and the clarity of communicating to the actors the frame to

operate within.[48] Through perceptual intuition, the director's role is to sense the most pertinent creative constraints to delimit the creative task for the actors at hand.

The nature of these boundaries set by the director intrinsically alters the course of the work. It is the choice of which lines of containment we observe, and which we push against, that determines the artistic approach, and by extension, shapes the artistic outcome. The parameter, or point of focus being worked within, delineates what field of potentials can be entered into and explored in rehearsal, and what spheres of possibilities are excluded. This does not imply that the director assumes a particular outcome, but rather, from 'anything' being possible, the scope of the activity's investigation is made more achievable, relevant, pertinent or unexpected.

The director as facilitator of this creative endeavour, therefore, is charged with determining what type of constraint is applied, at what time and in what way, and by implication, what is left behind, pushed aside, or discarded. The exact nature of each rehearsal activity prioritises a specific type of attention, energy and creative response in the practitioner. Each activity, therefore, serves as a lens or frame that filters out or excludes the possibilities for that exploration. The director, in giving instructions, is designing a process based on boundaries. This delimitation prompts specificity in the way the work is made, and arguably, the specificity and uniqueness of the product produced.

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[48] My central argument - that the role of the contemporary director is to address the idiosyncrasies of a creative task by identifying the best tool to use - is supported by Ibbotson and Darsø's (2008, pp. 554-555) assertion: 'creative leaders need to be able to identify, articulate and express constraints that provoke the team to creative responses with the right path'.

2.3 Rehearsal Frame Theory

I present, therefore, a new theoretical model of rehearsal: rehearsal can be understood as a process of delimitation and distillation. A rehearsal process is the *accumulation of multiple frames* that, progressively and organically, reduce the scope of future possibilities. Theoretically, one may envisage each frame, of different nature, size and intent, overlapping other frames. For this reason, the model is entitled *Rehearsal Frame Theory*. Each frame, or boundary or filter, is defined or enabled by one or more mechanisms, to achieve one or more of what I will elaborate are the three 'Principal Functions of Rehearsal' (Positioning, Creating, and Affecting).

Thinking of rehearsal as a series of frames is helpful because it de-mystifies the creative process by revealing it as a synthesis of choice-making, labour and craftsmanship. It shows the complexity and reality of how rehearsal operates, from the external, contextual parameters that the director works within, and at times mitigates against, to the series of crafted experiments in the rehearsal room that progressively reduce the scope of the work from generalisation to specificity.

Perceiving rehearsal in this way prompts deeper consideration of how one starts, and how one sets up, work in the rehearsal room, for the frames started with preclude other potentialities and set the work upon a particular path. Through this conceptual model we can also understand the perception of an idea as 'organic' (typically welcomed and trusted by actors) or 'imposed' (cautiously received by actors), for if rehearsal work proceeds through a series of frames, there is a sense of the genetic history of how choices came to be, and the seeming inevitability and rightness as options are shaped by the parameters of the work that have preceded that moment. Perceiving rehearsal as the successive accumulation

of various creative constraints, I conclude, invigorates the way we view, and perhaps might go about, rehearsal practice.

This brief, introductory explanation of rehearsal as a series of frames has, so far, been theoretical and general. In Section A I will explore the specific ways that rehearsal activity is shaped by contextual parameters. Drawing upon the Melbourne Interview data, the argument will be made that rehearsal practice is informed and impacted by a range of factors set in place well before the director enters the rehearsal room. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the consequences of economic and temporal structures. The complex dynamic that results from variance in cast members' training, age, experience, perceptions and personal propensities will be examined in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 I consider how the text, too, poses constraints upon how the rehearsal process may proceed. From this foundation, in Section B of this thesis, I will explicate how rehearsal activity can be conceived as a series of chosen artistic constraints. I present the Principal Functions of Rehearsal, and their mechanisms, and explain how this schema can help define, or enable, rehearsal frames to enhance the creative process.

Section A

Chapter 3: The Context of Melbourne Mainstage Rehearsal

In *Reading the Material Theatre* Knowles (2004) contends that in professional theatre in the English-speaking world, rehearsal is subject to a myriad of forces well beyond the artistic choices made. From the training institutions that begin to mould actors' and directors' practice, to the organisational structures within which artistic work is made, there is less choice and more circumstance in the final form than the audience member might imagine. In Melbourne, these adventitious forces form an environment that may be seen to vitiate innovative artistic practice. The mainstage rehearsal room is subject to fiscally-driven temporal constraints and organisational timelines. Economic forces also propel the commodification and shaping of the theatrical product. Commercial pressures are visible in the programming, editing, casting and marketing strategies employed. The reduction in the quality of Melbourne's critical engagement with theatrical works, due to the restructuring of contemporary media, also plays a part. The limited space afforded to contemporary critical comment demands brevity, and this leads to judgement rather than discourse. As a result, reviews of theatrical works are harsher, and more innovative work becomes less accessible to the theatre goer due to the lack of informed, in-depth conversation.

In this chapter, I will examine how funding and critical culture intertwine to form the difficult setting in which Melbourne theatre is created and consumed. I propose these circumstances combine to promote a tendency for constancy, rather than creativity, in Melbourne mainstage productions. To mitigate these forces from without, I conclude, we need to activate change from within; dialogue regarding, and development of, rehearsal processes is required to prompt the evolution of theatrical work in Melbourne.

3.1 Critical Culture

Consider an outlier of the theatrical process – the theatre critic. On opening night a play is released for public, and critical, consumption. To the outside eye, the product stands alone: the culmination of limitless artistic choice. For the creative team, the production is the sum of innumerable contingencies, complexities and alterations that have shaped the rehearsal process. Critical reception rarely measures the success of the product against the arduousness of its creative development, however. This un-contextualised assessment of the director's and actor's individual work adds further pressure upon the creative process.

For some, the critic's role is not about evaluation and appraisal. Croggon (2004), a Melbourne theatre critic, asserts the role is to facilitate performance reception. The critic functions as a 'hinge between the artwork and its audience, opening the doors to possibilities of understanding' (Croggon 2014, para.17). She argues critical discourse builds a broader understanding of context for an audience, and 'welcomes the new and strange, inviting those who might feel hesitant to step confidently into the rewards of not knowing' (Croggon 2016, para. 21). Similarly, Mark Fisher perceives theatre reviewing as 'the beginning of a conversation' (2015, mins. 17:38). The value of criticism, he argues, lies in 'the interpretation, elucidation, explanation and sharing of *why* you had that opinion' (mins. 12:43, emphasis added). According to Brooker (2014), it is deep thinking and good writing, not evaluative criticism, that makes for effective theatre criticism. It is only through comprehensive discussion, informed by a sound perspective of both the historical and contemporary theatrical landscape in which the play resides, that theatrical innovation can be made more accessible, and perhaps more palatable, to audiences. In this way, theatre criticism has a significant role to play in assisting the evolution of theatrical practice.

Theatre criticism has a significant part to play, too, in mitigating Australia's 'cultural cringe' (Davies 1998, p. 5). Davies observes that ingrained cultural habits undermine creativity and experimentation in theatre:

> [An] obstacle [we face is] the 'can't do it' syndrome, a malaise that besieges us all in Australia. This is a cultural problem … we seem to have a need to keep each other down; it appears that we are imprisoned by the chains of mediocrity. I think this is particularly so in Melbourne … to me this indicates a parlous situation … This is our cultural albatross. It is yet another manifestation of the tall poppy syndrome.

In Australia there is a particular need to celebrate innovation and support audience understanding and appreciation, but unfortunately, the consensus is that deep, critical engagement in contemporary theatre criticism is limited (Brooker 2014; Croggon 2014 & 2016). Brooker (2014, para. 12) declares that 'the national conversation around new work is in danger of failing to match the rigour and enterprise often shown by the artists themselves'. Croggon adds that contemporary Australian media are complicit in the deficiencies of this conversation: 'media institutions seldom put a high value on cultural debate' (Croggon 2015, para. 5). Critics' work is marred by minimal opportunity, remuneration, and national tradition (Brooker 2014); Australia has historically lacked the same critical commentary as Britain and the U.S, in part due to limited salaries and only part-time positions on newspapers (Croggon 2015). Now, due to seismic shifts in journalistic practices and media distribution, a limited number of remaining and experienced theatre critics are straight-jacketed by strict finite word counts, with only 150-500 words per newspaper review (Croggon 2014; Brooker 2014, para. 18). These word limits create an almost impossible task. As Fisher (2015, min. 16:06) remarks: '… theatre writing is an act of translation … somehow you are translating that into … 300 words which inevitably are going to be a poor translation … an approximation, of this actual experience that you had'. The

opportunities for detailed, in-depth professional theatrical discourse are rarer than ever. There is little artistic education and translation for the public. The result is that newer, innovative theatrical practices are eclipsed by the more readable and familiar forms that the theatre patron can readily consume.

The situation is exacerbated by the digital age's decentralisation of critical commentary. The counterpart of the professional theatre critic, the internet blogger, is now responsible for a sizeable portion of theatre criticism (Croggon 2015). One may assume a limitless word count might enable the blogger to develop a more penetrating discourse. Their own positioning, however, is also problematic. In-depth explication within a theatre review requires knowledge, experience and time, all of which are unlikely within a realm that offers little to no remuneration. In an unpaid position, comprehensive knowledge and experience is doubtful. There is limited time to sustain the practice, let alone to develop professionally and pursue it as a career (Brooker 2014). Again, the quality of theatrical discourse is limited, whilst the digital platform allows the blogger a loud mouthpiece.

Be it professional critic or enthusiast, brevity tends to be the result: a lack of in-depth, informed public discourse about theatrical work and reception in Melbourne. In this landscape, it is difficult for critics to achieve the goal of enhancing performance reception by contextualising theatrical choices and extrapolating theatrical achievements. Rather than illuminating, demystifying and framing theatrical innovation for the public, reviews are more likely to involve short precis and simplistic evaluations. In her article *The Critical Gap - Alison Croggon on the dialogue between artists, ideas and critical responses*, Croggon (2014, para. 18) articulates her concerns with the negativity and conservatism that characterise theatre reviews:

In mainstream reviews, the ideas that drive shows, the dominant preoccupations of the artists that made them, endlessly discussed and worked over weeks or even years, often don't get even a mention. The focus is on judgment, rather than perception, contextualisation and discrimination: and that judgment falls too easily and too often, again by default, into the familiar, the known and the easily consumable. "Criticism" is considered a synonym for "negative", which leads some critics to think that they're showing their critical chops by slashing a show without the courtesy of argument; and again, often this impulse tends to the conservative. The very form of mainstream reviewing encourages and reinforces the safe option. And it's this form which dominates contemporary reviewing, whether it's mainstream or not.

This critical culture can have a significant impact on how practitioners feel about their work in rehearsal and the performance season. Judgement is based on the known and the familiar as a point of measure, reinforcing the status quo rather than advancing theatrical practice. The notion of judgement rather than informed discourse is borne out in the Melbourne Interviews. Several participants perceived the critical culture as unfair, expressing frustration with what they felt were unduly negative, and perhaps uninformed, critiques:

… they don't pay you enough, it's really hard work and then some pricks just come along and blog about it. (Winter 2015, pers. comm. 20 August)

If you screw up in Melbourne, it's a reasonably small city and our critical community can be a bit harsh sometimes. (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February)

Houghton's observation implies there is a penalty to be worn for a less successful performance. As an actor and director, he describes how critical discourse about a production can have an impact upon the stage, undermining the work built in the rehearsal process and swaying the actors' work:

> … sometimes in that first week, particularly, the second week, shows can get knocked around a bit by external conversations, either reviews or feedback they're getting from other people, and that's the thing … actors … they're just out there on their own, dangling in the breeze for a couple of hours every night, they don't have other reference points ….
> (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February)

In an environment where an actor's performance can be 'knocked around' by critical commentary, it is possible an actor may exercise a degree of caution approaching rehearsal work. This guardedness in rehearsal is reflected in Strong's (2014, pers. comm. 9 October, emphasis added) comment that his direction can be met by actors' '*appropriate* suspicion'. He recognises that the predictable question, '"why are we doing this?"', comes from a place of 'insecurity and fear'.[49] Interpretative choices and rehearsal processes can be perceived as damaging by the individuals involved. For instance, Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added) reveals the risk felt by a large ensemble cast in one unusually experimental mainstage production: 'So many people hated each other and hated the process and thought it was embarrassing ... a few of the performers *felt like we were in an absolute turkey …*'. Price's use of the preposition 'in' captures the actors' sense of disempowerment: the actors' perceived lack of agency is intertwined with distrust of each other, the process and the product. Collective fear does not bode well for the creative process nor the leadership of the director. As English director Di Trevis (2012, p. 60) warns, 'a group of actors intent on saving their skins can turn into a wolf-pack. A group can become toxic'.

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[49] An actor's suspicion or trust in the rehearsal process is interwoven, in part, with their level of belief in their director, for it is the director who governs the rehearsal activity and therefore what they are requested to do.

Wariness, and the accompanying reticence, may have a broader, invidious effect upon

Melbourne theatre as a whole. One actor (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September, emphasis

added) argues the need to cultivate a culture of permission in Melbourne theatre reception:

> [In Melbourne we are] a bit safe in terms of our choices … bit afraid to move … bit stripped
> back … our critical eyes making us work from fear. Sydney has such a supportive critical voice
> compared to Melbourne … I think Melbourne's become quite savage in terms of its personal
> attacks on the work … it's about creating an atmosphere of trust not only in the room, but in
> a culture, and *permission to fail*, *permission to try, yeah, to try and fail … permission to fall
> on your face and it's ok … there was one great thing that you did in that* … and I feel like
> that's really essential in our culture as well … MTC audience research [found that audiences]
> love that a week later at their dinner party [they can tear the celebrity on stage]… apart …
> [so] I don't see plays here very often that blow my mind.

This actor perceives a direct link between a culture that is solicitous to theatrical detail and

risk-taking, and the frequency of innovative, or impressive, theatrical work. An external

climate of judgement can breed a degree of practitioner conservatism in the rehearsal

room, she implies. As a director, Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September) notes that issues

of accessibility for a mainstage audience make less literal interpretations problematic, and

more risky for the actor:

> I'm interested in … a kind of formally abstract or unusual approach, which can make the
> actors vulnerable in a mainstage context too, because they know the audience may be
> confused or not knowing what's happening at times, hopefully not, but often that does
> happen … that unapologetic abstraction is unusual, I think, in a mainstage context ….

Jacobs' words highlight the difficulty of trying to transgress the theatrical status quo.

Perspicacious performance reception is needed to support theatrical experimentation, and

as argued, this is difficult due to the current deficiencies of theatre criticism in Melbourne.

3.2 Funding

This returns us to the adventitious drivers of conservatism in theatrical practice. Croggon's former assertion that theatrical conservatism is linked to the under-valuing of culture in Australia alludes to the fiscal component at play. Arts funding in Australia is at its worst in 50 years, despite the nation's relative increase in prosperity in recent times (Croggon 2016). A government and a culture that devalues the arts inhibits artistic innovation through the scarcity of funds. Artists, and companies, are compelled to work within the safety of that which is familiar and trusted. In Croggon's (2016, para. 33) words, 'the arts funding debacle is seeing a new conservatism rise on our main stages'. Drawing much needed attention to the direct link between reduced funding, superficial discourse and a growing conservatism in the Melbourne theatre sector, Croggon (2016, para. 33) adds 'our critical culture has returned to its default chitchat'.

Melbourne's grim arts funding is borne out in this comparison of State government funding to these east coast Australian State Theatre companies in 2015: Queensland Theatre Company $3.6 million; Sydney Theatre Company $3 million; Melbourne Theatre Company $480,000 (MTC 2015, p. 8).[50] In 2015, MTC received less than 10% of their income from government sources, relying heavily on subscriptions and philanthropy, and running at a small deficit MTC 2015, p. 12). Fiscal pressure is also evident in the year to year programming of the Malthouse Theatre, Victoria's second largest mainstage company, with progressively fewer shows being built and more product being brought in instead. Terry

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[50] It is the author's understanding that the figures cited in the 2015 MTC Annual Report are referring to the amount of funding each company received from their State Government. This understanding is supported by viewing financial statements in the QTC 2015 Annual Report and the STC 2015 Annual Report (QTC 2015, p.66; STC 2015, p. 28).

Moran (MTC 2015, p. 8), the chairman of MTC, notes that risk is fundamental to the

company, 'implied in its mission statement, locked into its DNA'. He explains that

programming is delicately balanced to manage the conjoined financial and artistic risks, with

more commercial shows financing the capacity to 'fulfil our need to do valuable and

interesting work' (MTC 2015, p. 8). In his Chairman's Annual Report, Moran (MTC 2015, pp.

8-9, emphasis added) directly addresses the issue of artistic integrity and innovation being

progressively compromised due to the lack of government funding:

> We have a duty to be a centre of excellence in theatre, to push the boundaries of the art, to
> lead our audience to new experiences and not always follow them to pastures that are
> known and safe … Our future is dictated by a simple equation: *as the revenue coming from*
> *government sources lowers, the greater will be our reliance on commercial factors, which*
> *adds up to fewer artistic risks being taken, less artistic vitality, a trimming of ambition*. Let's
> hope that it doesn't get to that.

MTC Executive Director Virginia Lovett (MTC 2015, p. 12) reiterates the financial threat,

warning that the company will be unable 'to invest in new writers, new directors, new

ideas, new audiences, tours or education programs as it will be near impossible for the

Company to take on any major risk'.

MTC Artistic Director Brett Sheehy (MTC 2015, pp. 10-11, emphasis in original) observes

that growing fiscal constraints over the past few decades have already whittled away the

integrity of the artistic process, with a truncation in the programming, reduction in

casting and sacrifice of artistic interpretation of shows across Australia:

> … across the nation theatre cast sizes are diminishing, actors have to double roles more and
> more often, and the wish by us (or indeed any state theatre company of Australia) to perform
> some of the greatest works of Shakespeare, Voltaire, Marlowe, Goethe or the best of
> American musical theatre *as written* is simply impossible.
>
> These require the slashing of huge slabs of text or even whole scenes, doubling or tripling
> actors' roles, and re-arranging music written for an orchestra to a band of five. Take just

one very simple example. In the 1980s it was *de rigueur* for major Australian productions of *Romeo and Juliet* to be performed with around 20 actors. Now it is presented by the major companies with around 10. Countless other examples abound.

The increased editing of texts to a shorter length erodes the artistic veracity of master works, 'denying the audience a good part of what the experience should be' (Clark 2018, pers. comm. 11 March). Programming, casting, editing, interpretation, and arguably rehearsal approach, are all influenced by funding constraints. Logocentric, naturalistic works currently prevail in MTC programming; and television and film celebrity-casting is engaged at times to increase ticket-sales. Actor Emily Milledge (2015, pers. comm. 15 July) compares the Melbourne scenario to overseas:

> [The European aesthetic] is work that's non-text driven, not relying on narrative and a linear storyline progression of characters or set in a naturalistic setting, so pretty much the antithesis of a lot of the traditional plays created in a more traditional manner that we might see at the MTC … that sell really, really well at MTC. Part of that is because they have half the cast of *Offspring* in that show so that sells out … [They have] a responsibility to keep themselves afloat and tailor the material towards the subscriber base ….[51]

Milledge draws a connection between the conventional programming of more naturalistic plays, the strategy of 'celebrity' casting, and a lack of experimentation and innovation in rehearsal. Australian writer John Romeril (1997, p. 19) shares his concern about the lack of progression, and the future, of Australian theatre:

> The theatrically-enervating, century-old triumph of realism is an obvious aesthetic … [that] we're still trying to shrug off … what an insult to our dwindling audiences and our theatrical forbears … be it classic or modern, the theatre's true allies are in delirium, danger, the unpredictable, the non-routine, and the fantastically skilled.

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[51] *Offspring* is an Australian television drama series.

A conformist, risk-reduction approach is indicative of Melbourne theatre practice at present according to actor Josh Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added):

> I think conservatism and safety is a big weakness at the moment … it's got to do with funding, and brands, and all that stuff, it's the *culture of fear at the moment*, there is no room to explode the parameters … having seen all the work overseas, and the risks which performers are allowed to take … there's just so much risk … with the safety of the finance … support for work over there [is] government[] funded … it's the knowledge for the whole theatre … places like MTC often become … very language based … never willing to explore beyond the boundaries for fear of upsetting the subscriber base. I think The Malthouse does a better job of exploding boundaries, and that's because they don't have a subscriber base.[52]

Price proposes that a broader cultural appreciation of theatre as a 'whole', rather than a focus upon the actor, encourages theatrical exploration. In comparison, Melbourne's funding model and limited cultural discourse leads to the programming of works likely to steer Melbourne theatrical practice, and possibly the nature of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal work, in a culturally-affirmative direction, reinforcing the familiar, traditional and known. Additionally, Price articulates a relationship between greater artistic innovation and less reliance upon a subscriber base. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) agrees with Price that the Malthouse is less affected by the constraints of keeping their subscriber base happy, but drily notes that as their subscriber base is so small, they are 'fucked' anyway. At the time of writing, the Malthouse builds only three to four shows a year and buys in the majority of their program.

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[52] The Malthouse does have subscriptions. Price's comment, as I understand it, refers to the subscriber base being relatively small.

3.3 Pre-Show Publicity

As government subsidies decrease, the pressure upon the marketing and advertising of shows increases. This carries a couple of immediate implications. Firstly, the media representation of a production primes its future audience. Knowles (2004, p. 91) argues that the audience's expectation of the production and its characters is planted before rehearsals commence, through pre-show publicity. This pre-show publicity, produced prior to rehearsal and active investigation of the text and its interpretation, may prime an audience with a skewed expectation that influences their performance reception of the theatrical event. This is potentially problematic, with the effectiveness of the actors' and director's artistic work critically measured not in its own right, but against the advertising and marketing spin.

Similarly, pre-show publicity may influence the actors' development of their roles, with actors working 'within the frame of pre-show publicity and the audience expectations that it creates long before any rehearsal exploration can take place' (Knowles 2004, p. 31). The actors and director enter the rehearsal room under the shadow of interpretive choices already made public. A case in point is Clare Watson's production, *What Rhymes with Cars and Girls (WRWCG)*. Johnny Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May), as the male lead, struggled with the interpretation of his role, which may in part be due to the publicity message:

> … like this is a product, and you hear that through people taking your photo and stuff, and going, oh, we need to get you guys looking hot, so these people come … and I'm like, I don't want to fucking hear that, you know, that has nothing to do with me, really, but it can't not filter in, so you hear that sort of stuff, so you do feel like this weird commodity or something.

Carr's comment echoes Moran's concerns of the invidiousness of commodification. As will be discussed in Section B, Carr's perception of being the iconic, clichéd romantic lead in a

love-story created a significant block for him in developing the role. Rehearsal time was spent with Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) working on shifting Carr's perception, and to realign it with the directorial interpretation, convincing him that he wasn't playing an iconic lover, but rather a fallible, everyday guy. Unburdened from the expectations of the 'hot' archetype, Carr was able to engage with and develop his role more effectively in rehearsal.

Finally, the contextual demands upon Melbourne mainstage theatre for a sure, sellable product have a broader implication: smaller, poorly-funded independent companies must carry the responsibility to evolve new ideas, practices and talents (Croggon 2016). This notion is epitomised by the germane self-promotion of Melbourne's La Mama Theatre as 'high artistic risk/low financial risk' (La Mama 2019, para. 1). If a company such as MTC, which is 'one of the largest theatre companies in the English-speaking world' and 'the oldest professional theatre company in Australia' (MTC 2019, para. 2), must relinquish innovation to its smaller brethren, we are called to action.[53] It is unequivocal that investigation is required for the evolution of Melbourne mainstage theatre practices.

To conclude, I have illustrated the difficult cultural and fiscal contexts within which Melbourne mainstage rehearsal resides. This setting is not conducive to the evolution of theatrical expression. Given the obdurate nature of these factors, we need to consider what we can, in part, control, which is the nature of activity in the rehearsal room, and nudge this along. The kernel of change must stem from what we do, and how we do it, in rehearsal.

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[53] As will be noted at times throughout this thesis, and supported by quotes from the Melbourne Interview data, innovation does seem to be the domain of the smaller independent Melbourne theatre companies. This work is often less visible than that of mainstage theatre, but makes an important contribution to Melbourne's theatrical culture.

In the next chapter, I explore how the economic realities of Melbourne theatre result in specific temporal constraints for the rehearsal process. Through the experiential voice of the Melbourne Interviews, it will be demonstrated that time has a significant impact upon how rehearsal activity is perceived and undertaken.

Chapter 4: Time

The use of time in creative pursuits has received limited attention to date. Given that people adapt their behaviour and processes in response to timeframes (Zampetakis *et al.* 2010, p. 30), applying a 'temporal lens' (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence and Tushman 2001, p. 645) to Rehearsal Studies is an area worthy of investigation. The need for research into temporality and rehearsal is augmented by Knowles' (2004, p. 28) argument that creative investigation in rehearsal is curtailed in most English-speaking theatre by economically driven delivery timelines. As will be discussed, many Melbourne practitioners share the belief that there is inadequate rehearsal time to experiment or depart from established processes, which in turn impacts upon the nature of the creative output. It is important, therefore, to learn more about how temporal perceptions and realities drive what we do in rehearsal. This investigation into temporality gives us the opportunity to dissect our assumptions regarding productive use of time, and to therefore develop our understanding of rehearsal processes.

In this chapter, I discuss various temporal issues that I have identified in the Melbourne Interview data, including the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the four-week time-frame of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal. An argument will be made that temporal constraints and timelines can lead to a range of adaptive and maladaptive behaviours, which impact the course of the artistic process and the work that results. I particularly demonstrate how some of the time-management strategies employed curtail the creative investigation and experimentation that practitioners believe is essential to develop interesting and detailed theatrical work. I contend that the limited growth of rehearsal practices in Melbourne is, in part, attributable to temporal constraints and organisational

timelines. I conclude that the amount of time may be fixed, but we have the capacity to vary how we perceive, and what we do with, the time we have.

To understand the context for this discussion, one should note that the rehearsal timeline of Melbourne mainstage production is usually four weeks long. An additional week is added for new, or newly adapted, texts to provide opportunity for dramaturgical work. Design timelines precede rehearsals, with the design phase usually completed six months prior. Production seasons are between five and eleven weeks long.

4.1 Temporal Constraints

One can argue that there are advantages to having limited time, and this was evident in some responses in the Melbourne Interviews. Time pressure can drive and energise the rehearsal process. Acting graduate Edwina Samuels found the brevity of her first professional rehearsal period taught her to focus her efforts. In contrast to acting school, where she had extended rehearsal periods to master skills as well as her role, her experience of *The Crucible* taught her the value of time in a four-week rehearsal block. She comments: 'I realised you really have to work hard while it lasts, while the rehearsal process lasts, then you're on your own' (Samuels 2014, pers. comm. 19 October). Another graduate actor (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September) recalls how her first experience of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal felt 'condensed' and 'intense'. She outlines the contrast between her training where 'everyone stays back for five hours after rehearsal and comes in on the weekend and obsesses about it in their private life' and the 'professional world [where] people commit one hundred percent in the room', where 'they are paid to do the work' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). Here, arguably, the time frame of the professional rehearsal engenders maximum efficiency and engagement through its intensity. Mouzakis

(2015, pers. comm. 28 October) describes the interplay of adrenaline, high stakes and creativity:

> With people coming together in a very short space of time, you've got all these different energies feeding very quickly, firing off each other, and creating this show, and there is an urgency about a show getting up, and being created in that way, and that in some ways is very good, like it's exciting, and in other ways, I guess it depends on the result ….

Actor and director Peter Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February) suggests that time needs are specific to the play at hand and is a 'case by case thing'. He feels, on occasions, additional time could be counter-productive:

> I actually feel with the kind of linear work that you more often see in our entertainment-slash-arthouses, you can get lost if you have too much time, you can start creating problems that aren't there … analysis paralysis, you can find yourself in a bit of a quagmire … you can get an actor who starts thinking too much and starts to un-think their performance ….

Houghton's suggestion that different types of work require different lengths of rehearsal is notion shared by numerous Melbourne practitioners, and will be teased out in more detail in a later chapter. He also observes the propensity for mainstage companies to program linear works, which are achievable within the time constraints. This observation raises the question to what degree programming is influenced by rehearsal time constraints. Houghton muses that perhaps one can think 'too much', implying prolonged discussion can be arduous and unproductive, a point that I will return to shortly.

Director Sam Strong (2014, 9 October) explains that the mainstage timeframe has forced him to focus on the ends rather than the means. He explains the subsequent shift in his rehearsal methodology, with the shedding of various activities to prioritise immediate, result-driven tools. This idea of developing a stream-lined, incisive approach is taken further by David Mamet in his controversial book *True or False*. He argues that a short rehearsal

period is not problematic if one has a specific, incisive means to fashion a performance (Mamet 1998). For Mamet, this tool is a strong preoccupation with the essential action of each character. Mamet's ideas are contentious in theatre circles (the subtitle of his book is *Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*) and his proposal that one device can unfurl a meaningful interpretation is too reductive for some, myself included.

The time constraint of four weeks may charge the rehearsal room with adrenaline and stream-line the creative process, but these aspects are largely not welcomed by Melbourne practitioners. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that time is a predominant preoccupation, source of anxiety and cause of artistic frustration for numerous actors and directors. Most practitioners interviewed referred to feeling time pressured and feel that their rehearsal work, and the final product, is impeded. [54] As temporal scholars Sonnentag, Pundt and Albrecht (2014, p. 115) observe, whilst time pressure is stimulating and invigorating, it does not necessarily induce optimum performance.

Melbourne practitioners report feeling time limited and that they would proceed differently if they had 'the luxury of time' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). Several artists referred to the longer rehearsal period some non-Melbourne mainstage companies have, and the consequent stronger and more innovative work that they could therefore achieve. Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October) weighs up the pros and cons of the time constraints:

> [The] strengths in terms of this short, focused, intense 4 week period [are] you breed a lot of diversity very quickly, bring in a play, bring in a group of actors, a director, that are new … give it all the resources and put it up [but] the weakness is [how this compares to] a smaller independent company [or] some of the companies overseas [or] festival shows [that are]

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[54] Time pressure is the perceived relationship between 'the amount of work … to be accomplished … [and the] given period of time' (Sonnentag, Pundt & Albrecht 2014, p. 114).

> presenting something that took eight months to make, or was 2 years in development – we
> don't get that in Australia.

The challenge is two-fold: the practitioners have a short timeline in which to develop a production, and little time to develop working relationships with a new ensemble. From Mouzakis' summation of the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal model, one gets a glimpse of this melting-pot approach to theatre making – a miscellany of disparate artists, with the heat of time constraints and limited fermentation of ideas, aiming to concoct the best possible theatrical outcome.

Arguably, these parameters suggest that there is less opportunity for experimentation in the rehearsal room than in some independent or overseas companies. I contend that such conditions drive a more risk-averse and product-driven process, and may have a broader impact beyond each individual show. With limited rehearsal time to investigate text, to build ensemble relationships and to develop an engaging interpretation, the cultural progression of theatrical work in Melbourne is hindered. That said, one may speculate that the work produced is digested by Melbourne theatre audiences who over time, perhaps, have developed more conservative tastes.

Another consideration is the longevity of a constructed piece. Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October) wryly observes that whilst a show can 'get up' in the current temporal formula of four weeks rehearsal, it is unlikely to have a 'life ever again after that'. He infers that the quality of a product, and its subsequent audience engagement, is reliant upon a greater depth of development that can be achieved in four weeks.[55] The reduction of in-house work

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[55] The relationship between the degree of development of a show and its reception is articulated by actor-director John Bell, in *Out of Character: Conversations with Australian Actors*. He reflects upon the downfall of one of his most ambitious ventures, an epic production called *History of Australia*. Bell notes the insubstantial five weeks of rehearsal in which the show was 'thrown together', undermining the integrity and longevity of

at the Malthouse, with more product bought in than made, is perhaps not an ideal investment scenario for an arts sector that is critically underfunded.

The reduction in the development time of work is also the reduction of interaction with fellow artists. In a profession that is essentially about communication and involves collaboration, rehearsal is the interface between artists. Stage opportunities are rare in Melbourne, with an actor fortunate to rehearse one or two mainstage shows per year, hence there is limited opportunity to maintain and further cultivate skills as an artistic collaborator. A longer rehearsal period has the advantage of not just enabling a fully realised, unique production but of facilitating the development of the artistic working relationships between artists. Arguably, too, there is greater opportunity for artistic development through more exposure to other practitioners. The development of a 'company ensemble' by a range of leading twentieth-century theatre practitioners suggests the efficacy and innovation that a constant group of actors can bring.[56]

It seems that mainstage rehearsal processes in Melbourne are so consistently streamlined that artists have little exposure to, and expectations of, other methodologies involving more embodied and investigative practices. This would partly explain Houghton's concern that extra rehearsal time may shackle productivity, if he imagines additional time only being used for more cerebral work. For many of the Melbourne actors and directors interviewed,

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the production. It is also telling that Bell remarks upon the nature of a mainstage audience: 'You could [only] just get away with it in subsidised theatre with a subsidised, tolerant audience' (Bell cited in Trengrove 1991, p101).

[56] Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre, Weigel and Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, Barba's Odin Theatre, and Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil are examples of the establishment of companies that have created the opportunity for experimentation and development. Anne Bogart recounts a conversation in which Ariane Mnouchkine remarked: 'you cannot do anything without a company … what are you going to accomplish without a company?'. Bogart shares that this prompted 'a personal epiphany in which I realized that every great performance … I had ever experienced, without exception, was accomplished by a company' (Bogart 2001, p. 15).

temporal constraints equate to a lack of investigation, experimentation and innovation.
Olivia Monticciolo (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) sums up many interviewees' responses: 'I
wish there was more time for investigation – I say that all the time'. Winter (2015, pers.
comm. 20 August, emphasis added) comments that it is both artistic fulfilment and
theatrical integrity that underpin his desire for more rehearsal time:

> In a perfect world, [I would] just [like] more time. More time. There's such a - I really like
> rehearsing. I really like the creation of a world. To me, that's the most exciting part of this. I
> could take or leave performing. But I really enjoy solving theatrical problems. That's where I
> feel like I am at my best … trying to help in whatever way I can to achieve an artistic picture
> that is surprising to all of us. So I think more time would be good. I just think of those –
> *everyone always*, I guess, dreams of those Soviet, Czech productions that they rehearse for
> three months. I just *imagine the detail* that – because, you know, when you work on big
> works that are good, you know it's endless. It's never going to end.

Winter's generalising phrase 'everyone always' suggests that it is an accepted notion that
Melbourne actors would find more extended rehearsal parameters as highly desirable.
What is sought is the opportunity to produce greater 'detail' than what is achievable in a
four-week parameter.

Director Leticia Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August, emphasis added) also proposes that
more time would enable her to use different approaches and techniques to open up the text
to greater artistic interpretation:

> DG: So, if you could rehearse any way … are there particular ways that you prefer to
> rehearse, or you'd like to rehearse, and are there things that make it difficult to do that or
> not?
>
> LC: Time. I think rehearsals should be six weeks.
>
> DG: And they're four weeks plus tech, aren't they?

LC: Yeah, plus tech. If you have a new work, it's five weeks … but if we could, obviously previews are the best, but by then you're so anxious and scared. Just every project is so different, but I think if you have an extra … oh, I always crave an extra week of rehearsal … *I'd be a lot more experimental with it*, and I think I'd be a lot more … I'd do drafts, and *I'd do weird things* like I'd have … and when this happens, and this never happens, I haven't done this in hundreds of years, but I'd love to when [sic] actors play each other's roles, and things come out of that.

DG: What sort of things come out of that?

LC: *New ways of interpreting the play, new ideas, new blocking, a new perspective*.

Caceres' comments directly reflect how the current temporal framework impacts upon her artistic practice. The fact that she refers to other processes as 'weird things' suggests that there are deviations from current practices that she would like to implement, but she senses that they will be viewed as different or odd. This is further evidence that despite the differences in projects and artists, Melbourne mainstage pieces are rehearsed in a relatively similar way. Caceres' tone of enthusiasm implies she believes such processes would yield valuable and artistically satisfying results. Of note, also, is Caceres' expression of the negative psychology associated with a tight time line; 'by then you're so anxious and scared' suggests the discomfort, if not counter-productivity, of time pressure. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September), too, feels more time equates to a calmer approach with more artistic integrity: 'The dream is long rehearsal periods, I would say. I would say double the rehearsal period … Because it would give you time to *really satisfy the text and not panic* …'.

The amount of time practitioners feel would be beneficial reflects the strain posed by the current parameters. Caceres would like an extra week. Price suggests an extra four weeks. In the middle ground, Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February) observes 'you'd probably

find a lot of directors arguing for an extra couple of weeks'. If we examine that contention, that 'a lot of directors' feel they need an increase of 40-50% of rehearsal time, we can appreciate just how curtailed Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice is perceived to be under current time constraints. Clearly, the four-week rehearsal parameter shapes rehearsal practice.

International and Australian directors voice similar beliefs in the correlation of rehearsal time with the quality of theatre produced, giving weight to the Melbourne practitioners' concerns. Alfreds strongly defends the need for ample time to fully investigate a text. For Alfreds, 'short rehearsals' are 'meaningless' as they curtail one's capacity to produce 'rich and complex, skilful and rigorous, beautiful and innovative' work (Alfreds 2007). Passionate about the value of rehearsal time, he advocates the preparedness to compromise on other areas of a production budget if such a negotiation will increase the rehearsal period beyond the four-week model. He argues:

> … how, in a month, can a group of people, without common language or shared vision, make creative sense of a play that most likely took the playwright a year or more to write, longer to conceive? Short rehearsals work (at a certain low level of achievement) as long as everyone involved implicitly agrees to take short cuts, make reasonably quick choices and relies on adrenaline to get them through the first few performances at least!
>
> It's not a question of talent whether or not you are able to produce something quickly. It's a question of absorption time. (2007, p. 145)

This notion of investigation and absorption is evident in Alfreds' directorial process, a three-strand rehearsal model that involves an integrated range of practical tasks to investigate the text. He comments that a very different mindset is required to depart from discussion and work 'on a text through exercises, improvisations and non-linear techniques', but the

benefit of this time investment is that 'the actors' techniques and discoveries become organically embedded in the development of the performance' (2007).

Lindy Davies prefers an eight-week period to guide her actors through her unique rehearsal process of 'Dropping in', 'Abstract' and 'Blueprint'.[57] The first two weeks are dedicated to 'dropping in' to enable 'people [to] immerse themselves' (Davies cited in Ginters 2008, p. 94). Davies sees this foundational work as fundamental. It enables the actor to build a bridge between the intuitive and the rational, and to be 'in the centre of the moment' in performance (p. 87). Her process aims to foster instinct and reactivity rather than pre-meditation: 'Theatre needs to be infinite; it needs to keep evolving, unfettered by the limits of the mind of the actor' (Davies cited in Ginters 2008, p. 87).[58]

Katie Mitchell also devotes a substantial portion of rehearsal in preparation and investigation. She divides her six to eight-week rehearsal process into two phases (Mitchell, 2009). The first 40% of the time is spent developing a sense of the world of the play through a combination of discussion, research, practical activities, improvisation and visualisation. In the second phase, the remaining 60% of the time is dedicated to analysing the action of the play, improvising and then blocking and rehearsing each scene.

The consistent theme across these three different practitioners is the significant time investment in the actor's investigation of the text - intuitively, analytically, imaginatively and physically - prior to the development of the performance. Exploration and experimentation

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[57] Dropping In is a process in which the actor, in a neutral, meditative state, is fed very short phrases of the lines, to find a personal and subjective connection to each part of the text. As previously mentioned, Abstract is a step involving the actor's sensory, haptic exploration of text through interaction with objects; and Blue Print is an organic, intuitive actor-centric process of blocking the play (Walter 1999).

[58] Anecdotally, I have been told by a close colleague of Davies that, as she has found it difficult to apply her process in the Australian context, she now predominantly directs overseas where her process is well-received.

are central in Alfreds', Davies' and Mitchell's carefully constructed, multi-faceted rehearsal methodologies, signalling their belief in in-depth investigation, and demonstrating the productive use of 'additional' time.

I have outlined how numerous practitioners perceive the Melbourne four-week rehearsal period as energising, but also stressful and limiting. It is apparent that the Melbourne practitioners interviewed wish to work in a way that enables greater investigation and experimentation, in order to produce performances that are interesting, surprising and more detailed. For this reason, we need to develop our discourse about, and our work practices within, the time we have in the rehearsal room.

A useful place to begin is to understand more about how the practitioners' experience and perceive this time pressure.

4.2 Temporal Perception and Expectation

Within the compacted time frame, tacit assumptions have evolved as to when various events should occur in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal process. This is consistent with literature on temporality that indicates that '… people have expectations as to when actions should be initiated, how long they endure, and when they should be completed' (Pierro *et al*. 2011, p. 1317). Working to deadlines is necessary for successful 'synchronised social action' (p. 1317) and the Melbourne Interviews reveal that a tacit temporal schema is at play in the rehearsal room. There are collective trends regarding the artists' expectations about when events should occur in the rehearsal process in different projects. The cultural expectations and background of a group – in this case rehearsing practitioners in Melbourne

- engender 'collective practices' and 'generative schemes', which inform presumptions about when different time events should occur (Larson 2004).

This is reflected by the phenomenon of a collective shift in the Melbourne practitioners' thinking approximately halfway through the rehearsal block. Particularly for the actors, the first two weeks of rehearsal seem characterised by a sense of temporal space and comfort, whereas in the second two weeks there was a marked feeling of 'hurriedness' with actors expressing urgency, discomfort and anxiety.[59] Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October) describes the cast's change in attitude to rehearsal in the new adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard* as opening night drew nearer:

> There was a lot of people who were really going, this is fun, but it's opening night in like two and a half weeks, is this … the clock's ticking and then suddenly it's like, oh my god, we're going up in front of an audience in a week and a half.

There is a sense of the passage of time moving faster and the performance deadline looming. This perception of temporality, as will be discussed shortly, impacts practitioner behaviour in the rehearsal room.

The Melbourne Interviews indicate that there are some similar expectations in the disposition of time and rehearsal process. This was generally based on a traditional rehearsal process. There is, however, also evidence in the data that individual actors and directors perceive the passage of time differently from one another in rehearsal. This is consistent with the contention that people have a 'temporal personality' and have an idiosyncratic experience of time (Ancona *et al.* 2001). Furthermore, a Melbourne cast is typically comprised of a disparate group of individual actors with different formative

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[59] 'Hurriedness', according to temporal scholars, is 'a construct that considers individuals' concerns with regard to the passage of time and whether some things are viewed as urgent' (Gilson, Litchfield & Gilson 2014, p. 152)

backgrounds, including training and other theatrical experience, that inform their internal

clock. This internal clock shapes practitioners' 'psychological time' influencing their degree

of 'hurriedness' at different points of rehearsal proceedings.[60]

This is important in a conversation about rehearsal because 'time-urgency diversity'

(Sonnentag, Pundt & Albrecht 2014, p. 119) informs differences in perception about the

rehearsal activity at hand. Perception of time impacts a practitioner's approach to rehearsal

work.[61] I suggest it also partly accounts for the degree of willingness or reticence of

individuals to embrace less accustomed rehearsal approaches. Rehearsal processes that

dispose time differently, and where the sequence of steps are less familiar, can be

challenging, if not distressing, to the practitioner who anticipates a particular timeline.

Regulatory Mode Theory may offer further insight as to why there are differences in opinion

in what constitutes effective use of time in rehearsal. Pierro *et al*. examine the relationship

between time, choice and action (2011). They posit that there are two different orientations

to action that an individual may take: assessment (aiming to make the right choice) or

locomotion (just 'diving in'). These tendencies are accompanied by different behaviours and

'motivational emphasis' (Pierro *et al*. 2011, p. 1318). 'Assessors' spend more time on

accuracies and details of tasks to achieve the best outcome, generating a larger number of

options to select from, but may take more time to complete a task and are more likely to

procrastinate upon a task. In comparison, 'locomotors' apply themselves to the task at hand

more smoothly and readily, persevere and are less distracted (p. 1329). The assertion is that

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[60] 'Psychological time' refers to the variability in a person's perception of time. A person's experience of time is subjective and influenced by environment, context, personality and social constructs (Shipp & Jansen cited in Shipp & Fried 2014, p. 2; Shipp & Fried 2014)

[61] Temporal scholars have analysed how individual's different senses of time urgency can alter behaviour and prompt relationship conflict in group settings (Sonnentag, Pundt & Albrecht 2014).

timelines are best met by locomotors, and precision is best met by assessors (p. 1330). In relation to my empirical data, it is logical to assume that actors and directors of each persuasion would perceive the usefulness and temporal position of rehearsal activities differently. One might surmise that the 'locomotor' Melbourne practitioner may wish to dive in and get started on the floor in rehearsal as quickly as possible, and/or lock in choices earlier, whereas the 'assessor' practitioner may prefer to collect information and weigh up choices prior to commencing practical work and/or cementing choices.

Due to their differing 'temporal personality', training, experience and 'motivational emphasis', individuals are therefore likely to perceive the efficacy of rehearsal approaches differently. Some rehearsal processes may be welcomed by particular individuals and shunned by others. For instance, as cited in the Melbourne Interviews, Monticciolo's rehearsal of an adaptation of *Phèdre* with director Peter Evans involved a gradual, investigative process of peeling back the interpretive layers of expectation brought to the text. As a recent Drama School graduate, perhaps with a different sense of time to the more experienced actors, Monticciolo embraced this embodied, investigative and collaborative approach. In contrast, she notes, 'other actors found this 'via negativa' approach a bit frustrating – a sense of not being able to lock down things … it gets scary … getting close to production' (Monticciolo 2014, pers. comm. 28 October).

The 'time-urgency' and 'hurriedness' felt due to the looming deadline of opening night is perhaps compounded when rehearsal and performance are seen as a binary, rather than a continuum. What happens to an actor's sense of 'psychological time' if completion of a role by opening night is not the expectation? This psychological gambit seems to dilute temporal pressure for Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October): 'my idea is that performance is an

extension of the rehearsal process, you haven't stopped rehearsing really, it's just that there's an audience there'. The solace found in this perspective, of course, needs to be squared against the obligation to be 'audience ready'. One may argue that the refinement of the actor's work once on stage is one matter, but their development of a raw performance is another.

This raises another aspect regarding actors' differences: an actor's level of comfort with improvisation and the nature of their interior score.[62] I suggest that, perhaps, there is a relationship between an actor's sense of time-urgency in rehearsal and the degree of exactitude they prefer in their interior score. Some actors can work with a looser internal framework in their role on stage, and/or can absorb variations in performance with greater ease, whilst others need an internal structure with minimal gaps.[63] It is reasonable to assume that an actor's propensity for certitude would increase the 'time urgency' they feel, and influence the way they receive various rehearsal activities posed by the director. Differences such as these amongst actors – what they personally hope to achieve in rehearsal, the level of detail they expect to have developed in their inner score prior to performance, and the subsequent perception of what is an efficacious use of time - complicate the rehearsal process for the director. The director's work becomes a

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[62] I use the term 'interior score' to refer to the actor's internal, multi-dimensional and complex understanding and experience of a role. This score is comprised of interconnecting components, including emotion, memory, kinaesthetic, imagination and so forth.

[63] The formation and function of the actor's inner score, and how reflexively this inner score evolves in performance, is discussed in detail by John Lutterbie in *Toward a General Theory of Acting*. Lutterbie (2011) argues that an actor's rehearsed performance is not a point of stasis that has been arrived at and presented. Instead, he argues, a performance is a dynamic system that unfolds and adapts. The 'internal logic' of a role, whilst encoded over the rehearsal period, is subject to numerous disruptions from the external environment in performance. The actor 'is open to variations, however subtle, in the work of the actors with whom she interacts … Variations give rise to fresh associations, which add nuances to the acting' (Lutterbie 2011, p. 219). The experiences of the performance can prompt the encoding of new information, changing the actor's inner score from performance to performance (Lutterbie 2011). The concept of the actor's score will be explored in more detail later in this thesis.

combination of dissipating tensions arising from individual's temporal expectations, and navigating actor assumptions of what is, and isn't, efficacious use of time, whilst moving the work forward.

The Melbourne Interviews indicate that rehearsal is often viewed and approached as a linear process. Initial in-depth discussion of the text builds a cerebral platform from which practical work ensues; it is this early cementing of significant decisions that can provide a sense of surety to the actor that they will not be challenged by weighty interpretive changes later on. One may assume that the use of alternative practices upends this temporal structure, causing upheaval that may be creatively illuminating, but also destabilising to the actor. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) describes such a turning point in the rehearsal of *Birdland* when, halfway through the rehearsal period, a decision was made to strip back the set design, leaving just a couch on stage:

> MW: There was a big breakthrough at the end of week two … You know, start it clean and then just slowly, it builds out. That is a scary moment for the cast. It's a scary moment for the director. It's a very scary moment for the designer … That was fabulous. That is a big, brave, creative move. That requires a lot of vision from everyone. Because the closer you get to having to put the fucker on, obviously the more self-protective you get, the more –
>
> DG: - Yeah, the more stuff you'd like to be hiding behind!
>
> MW: Exactly, exactly. You're nervous. You're like 'I still don't know what I'm doing. I would be hoping that in week three I would have an inclination.

Winter's feelings are clearly conflicted here, with a mix of excitement and nervousness. He refers to the collective need for stability, and the disconcertion felt by all when the assumed process timelines are altered, but ultimately celebrates the audacity and creativity shown in the room. Explicit in his utterance is the risk that accompanies creative leaps: there is a

sense that there is no time to rectify a poor choice made halfway through the process in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room.

Winter clearly has a sense of where he feels he should be at a certain point in rehearsal. In comparison, part of the director's role is to help wrangle the evolution of actors' performances in keeping with the rehearsal timeline. Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) notes that his work is to navigate, constantly, the timeline of rehearsal, seeing this as a 'dance' between 'where should they be and where are they'. It is noteworthy that this sentiment is expressed firstly with the expectation, and then followed by the reality, suggesting the primacy of the timeline also in the director's mind. It is also implied in Strong's statement that his own work, therefore, is to facilitate the actor's endeavours to meet the production deadline. This places the director not just as the painter of the *mise en scène*, but squarely in the position of coach, finding ways to promote the actor's growth in the role.

There was an accord amongst the practitioners interviewed that the emergence of both an actor's role and the overall production should occur gradually over time in the rehearsal room. This notion is reflected in the frequent usage of the term 'organic', which has become synonymous, if not platitudinous, with rehearsal process discourse in Melbourne.[64] The concept of gradual evolution is akin to Stanislavski's belief that a role, as all things in nature, should be encouraged to grow organically over time, and that an actor is charged with controlling the speed of this growth (Aquilina 2013, p. 231). Slower collective exploration at the start was viewed by Melbourne practitioners as a way to deeply root performances and

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[64] This is possibly in part due to its usage in the School of Drama at the Victorian College of the Arts for more than twenty years.

help roles develop at a similar cadence. To some degree the director, then, becomes a conductor, orchestrating the tempo of development of the individual actors and components to synergise the creative contributions in the room, ensuring everyone is moving together at a similar pace.

In summary, the time constraints of the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room have entrenched a mindset of assumed timelines, alongside perceived efficacy of particular activities. Practitioners' temporal expectations, planted by training and personality and embedded in the culture of a stream-lined rehearsal practice, include a linear view of the process with a bias towards a 'traditional', 'sequential' rehearsal approach. I contend that these assumptions make departure from a more traditional rehearsal process more difficult, because practitioners like to have a sense of progress: an actor is less able to 'plot' their own progress when the rehearsal process is less familiar.

4.3 Productivity: Procrastination, Priorities and Possibilities

The Melbourne Interviews show that a few rehearsal practices have emerged in response to manage the compression of time. A brief examination of these practices provides insight as to which activities are thought to be productive, and which practices can be counter-productive. The following discussion affords us an appreciation of the challenges inherently posed by a four-week rehearsal period, shows the need to develop our rehearsal strategies, and reveals one emerging practice that is challenging the traditional timeline of rehearsal activities.

An actor's memorisation of lines is a central requirement in text-based theatre for performance, and by extension, of rehearsal. Memorisation early in the process is seen as

desirable so that the actor can fully engage imaginatively, physically and emotionally in rehearsal, and importantly, with other cast members. The paradox is that it is through this imaginative, physical and emotional engagement that lines have the 'sticky surface' (as mentioned previously) to help them adhere. This makes the timing of line learning a balancing act of sorts: memorisation too late or too soon impacts the rehearsal process. The following conversation with Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August) reveals how the timing of memorisation influences the nature of direction and the work generated in rehearsal:

DG: At what point do they go off book, like is there …?

LC: Opening night. Look, when we did our company run, there were still some wobbly moments when we were still calling a lot of lines, it depends. Some actors are off book, like Susie was off book by week two.

DG: You don't say, you will be off book by this point?

LC: No, I mean, they're professional actors, if I have to say that, that's… KPI [Key Performance Indicators] - learn your fucking lines.

DG: And it doesn't affect the way that you work, they've got a book in their hand, or do you adjust to that?

LC: Of course it does, but I, yeah, I adjust, it's more frustrating for them than it is for me because they can't generate anything … I'd like to think that I'm past that stage now, where I have to remind actors, oh, you have to have your books down by … but it would be good to have it down by week three ….

Caceres' expletive indicates a heightened negative response, suggesting, despite her polite shift of focus to the actor's own frustration, that actors remaining on book impacts her directorial practice. She notes she is unable to work the way she intends, that she has to adjust and infers that earlier memorisation would enable the actor to be more productive. One can conceive that with the very late memorisation of lines by one or more actors, the

interplay amongst the ensemble is affected: the work of other actors is impacted, anxiety is increased and rehearsal process becomes less efficient. Caceres' suggestion that lines should be down by halfway through the process is consistent with the general feeling of the Melbourne practitioners interviewed.

The compressed four-week period compounds the challenge of learning lines and the potential impact upon the creative process. There were reports in the data of actors memorising text prior to rehearsal to mitigate the time constraints. Highly experienced actors like Houghton tend to pre-learn lines to meet the formidable task of accurately memorising the detail, depth and extent of language in heightened or period pieces, such as Shakespearean works. While this practice can be enormously beneficial, it can also prove problematic. The predicament is that some actors find it difficult to learn lines neutrally: it can be natural to fall into a musicality – a particular use of rhythm, intonation and emphasis – for the words to make them stick. The result can be a vocal patterning of the lines that becomes fixed, and which may impede the discovery of meaning and the collaborative evolution of the interpretation in rehearsal.[65]

In some instances an actor's prior memorisation of lines can upend the director's process and impact the way the interpretation of the text evolves. For example, Houghton notes the complexity encountered when his conscientious graduate actors arrived for 'Day One' of rehearsals with a large proportion of lines already memorised and conjointly, a number of choices made, already well along the interpretative path without him. As director, his options were to stick to his original vision and steer the work back, or to run with a new

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[65] One approach to memorising lines with neutral intonation is working *sotto voce*. This has been a common practice taught at the Victorian College of the Arts Drama School, with the purpose of preventing vocal patterning.

interpretation that wasn't as he had imagined. With his plans for the rehearsal process now askew, knowing how to proceed with exploring and constructing the work was complicated:

> [The actor] just stood up when we started on the floor and started doing massive slabs of the play, and I thought, oh … and he was good, so [there was] this kind of weird thing sitting there going, [I'm thinking] I don't know what to do … and so then you're in this strange situation where you're watching something and thinking, it's not quite what I imagined, I'd be purely working off my own instinct and probably thinking about what the character was, but I'm being given something quite definite which is terrific, which is different to what I thought, and so I'm in a little combat in my head about whether I'm going to work with what they're giving me or whether I'm going to go, no, no, no, what I wanted to do is ….
> (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February)

Houghton's dilemma is due to conflicting directorial responsibilities. In Chapter 2 I referred to Cole's catalogue of directorial functions: leader, navigator, gardener, trustee of the democratic spirit and so forth. We see Houghton wanting to nurture a new working relationship, to champion and invest in creative input, and to maintain his conceivably well-considered interpretative vision. I advocate for directorial reflexivity throughout this thesis, but it can be challenging for a director to navigate a cohesive, cogent vision when alternate interpretive choices are embedded unexpectedly by the actor prior to rehearsal.

The timing and duration of other tasks and activities, of course, also impact the rehearsal process and influence the course of the work. Directorial prioritising of particular aspects of rehearsal, in terms of sequence and amount of time, is of particular significance when we recall Billing's argument, raised in Chapter 2, that interesting work is borne from the interconnection between propositional, experiential and procedural knowledge. For example, the Melbourne Interviews indicate a prioritising of extended period of cerebral work on the text at the commencement of rehearsal, presumably to set down solid foundations upon which the embodied work could be built.

There is an argument by some that extended analysis of a play at the start of the rehearsal period, typical of a traditional model of rehearsal, is not necessarily an efficacious use of time. Alfreds (2007, p. 163) asserts that it is not cerebral work itself, but rather the length and distribution of conversation regarding the text and its interpretation, that renders it productive or not:

> Actors often want to leap into the depths and complexities of the play right from the start, to run before they can walk, which, early in rehearsal, results in too much uninformed chat … You need to work from the simple to the complex, from the surface to the depths.

Understanding and ascertaining information is as much a gradual process as is building the staging of the performance. A play script's complexity is unspun over time, incrementally, through the interweaving, or interleaving, of practical as well as cerebral activity. Alfreds implies that time is better invested in discussion throughout the process rather than in a large block at the start.

In the Melbourne Interviews it was evident that revisiting 'the table' was unlikely in mainstage Melbourne rehearsal. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) explains with delight his novel experience with *Birdland* of just sitting around the table 'again for a moment' around week three to 'reconnect with the ideas of the piece. That was great. *That's rare to go back.* But again, that came with trust and it came with creating a team that is *willing* to do that'. Winter's comment highlights the reticence that can be present in the rehearsal room to deviate from a linear process. This reinforces the significance of the director's role in cultivating a sense of cohesion and confidence in the room, so that actors might more trustingly 'buy in' to proceedings when deviations are made to their presumed rehearsal sequence. Returning to 'the table' is an acknowledgment of how the *integration* of experimental knowledge and practical experience can reshape and inform one's

understanding of the text and prompt new questions to be investigated. It also raises the point that there may be merit in 'reconnecting' with the ideas discussed at the outset – conceivably bringing greater cohesion and cogency to rehearsal choices. In this way, we can see that the redeployment of time, and challenging the 'linear' assumptions of rehearsal, may be of benefit.

The emphasis placed upon cerebral work at the outset of rehearsal can also create a difficult changing of gears for actors. Price (2015, 2 September) comments on how fatigued he is after sitting in discussion for three or four days. Consistent with Chekhov's and Crawford's comments cited in Chapter 2, Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February) notes, '... it does feel a bit scary when you stand up after a week, because you feel like you're stuck in your head so much that you're never going to get moving'. At the same time, despite the perception that the longer one talked, the harder it was to 'get up', and regardless of the prevailing belief amongst the interviewees that the 'real' work begins on the floor, embodiment was at times delayed by actors who could 'talk forever' (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August). This behaviour, not isolated to the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room (Alfreds 2007, p. 162), may be procrastination, driven by apprehension, to actually 'begin' the work. The desire to 'know' before 'doing' also suggests a lack of confidence or trust in embodiment as an investigative process. As embodiment in rehearsal has traditionally been aligned to staging and decision-making, rather than investigation, it is not surprising for there to be tardiness to proceed to the floor.

The validity of truncating initial conversation, and perturbing the assumed timeline, is also suggested by one specific trend in the data. Several of the Melbourne directors interviewed have developed approaches where they invite the actors to 'get up' and run the show in the

first few days, before actually 'making' the show. Traditionally a run of the play first occurs mid-process, functioning as a cumulative tool to demonstrate the sum of decisions made to date, the emerging rhythm and flow of the whole, and to provide a sense of what future work is needed. Other runs of the piece in the later stages of rehearsal are 'summative', appraising the outcome achieved from the product created in rehearsal, and with the advent of production week also serves a formative function, providing a guide for future improvements.

Upending this pattern, Caceres, Strong and Lutton now do a run of material in the first days, or within the first week, of rehearsal. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) uses this as a way to suspend discussion and 'break the seal' of the play by getting up on the floor. Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August) declares her need to limit conjecture and gives us insight that a sensory experience of the piece can be beneficial for the director as well as the actor:

> I try to get up as quickly as I can, I just need to feel it in my body … in the first few days … It's terrifying, and actors love to talk about how we are doing, but you know, I don't, I prefer to do it, and this was really effective, so we did that, we did a draft of the whole thing.

This improvised run of the play can be seen as a formative mechanism used to gather an understanding of, and raise questions about, the material. Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October) explains how an early run of *Death and the Maiden* was helpful for his work as an actor:

> … it certainly has its benefits, that, because you get a very quick sense of the overall arch of what you're doing in the piece, and what it is going to take, and you just get a sense of what the whole thing is going to be, even though you're completely not ready to be doing it yet … you get a sense of what you're going to be doing.

For the actor, there is reassurance to be found in having some assessment of the scale and nature of the task ahead. This ties into the earlier point that an actor feels more secure when they can plot their workload against their timeline. There are other advantages to running the work early. The shared, embodied experience of a first, improvised draft may also contribute to the fostering of collaborative working relationships which is integral to the rehearsal process. As an improvised run, onus is placed on the actors to make immediate choices which are simultaneously usable and disposable, paving the way for the collaborative mode of rehearsal to come. Furthermore, the heftiness of running the entire piece first up serves as a de-inhibitor, as the scope and flow of the task partly distracts the actors from the sense of pressure in making precise and effective choices – the immediacy shifts the focus from needing to make the 'best choice' to just '*a* choice'. Given these benefits, alongside reducing the length of table analysis and therefore minimising the awkwardness of getting up onto the floor, the trend of running material early in the rehearsal process seems an expedient measure. The employment of early runs may signal a gentle shift toward more embodied investigation practices that, according to the Melbourne Interviews, are a source of contention due to the four-week time frame.

The tendency to spend a significant portion of rehearsal time in discussion points to a predominant theme in the Melbourne Interview data; there is consensus amongst the practitioners that thorough investigation begets strong work, but given the time constraints, there is disagreement as to what form/s this investigation should take. As will be discussed shortly and throughout this thesis, some practitioners also invest time and effort in the

exploration of components besides the text, but intrinsic to the performance, such as the actor's relationship to the space.[66]

The Melbourne Interviews indicated different directorial propensities in the timing of blocking. At one end of the rehearsal process continuum was the practice of blocking the piece at the start of the rehearsal period, a practice one actor referred to as 'end-gaming' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) surmises that this is a directorial protective measure to manage the 'panic' of real, or perceived, time constraints. He asserts that this 'shortcutting' is driven by a desire for polish, but it is at the expense of depth. At the alternate end of the continuum was the, admittedly rare, practice of delaying blocking until the final stages of rehearsal. In general, blocking seemed to take place in the second and third week of rehearsal.

The Melbourne Interviews revealed that practitioners are in agreement that time spent working slowly and deeply in the early stages generated speed and well-informed choices later, but opinion is divided regarding how this depth may be achieved. There is a tendency for some practitioners to rely upon rehearsal strategies that they perceive to be direct and time-efficient. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) views warmups, character or physical

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[66] At this point it is worth considering that this initial conversation regarding the prioritising and productivity of rehearsal methods, while useful, is complicated by the limitations of current rehearsal nomenclature (a point made in the introduction of this thesis). Broad and ambiguous terms such 'activities', 'exploratory' and 'embodied work', one may fairly assume, hold different meanings to different practitioners. It is difficult to ascertain what activities are considered 'outside of the text', 'avoiding the work' or 'abstract work' – phrases to be cited shortly - given the spectrum of meaning associated with such phrases. Added to the opacity of such terms, as mentioned earlier, is the fact that directors rarely view each other at work. Limited points of reference inhibit nuanced articulation of differences and similarities in methodology. Building on this point, it is conceivable that there are variations and permeations within, and overlap between, what are conventionally termed 'traditional' and 'alternative' processes. Despite the dualistic, 'anti-activities' rhetoric of some practitioners, and what appears to be a perception of two opposing approaches, I suspect there are points of commonality. An excellent place to start in reviewing and developing Melbourne's methodologies it to recognise the dimensionality and similarities within those approaches perceived to be at odds with one another. Through this we may gain insight into ways to make the most of the rehearsal time available – a point that shall be explored at length in Section B of this thesis.

exploration as 'avoiding the work itself'. Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February), as an

actor and director, muses that other directors do sometimes use 'activities' as part of the

process,[67] but he feels too time-pressured in his own directorial work:

> You'll go fuck! Why did we do that thing with the ball? We haven't cracked it; this is
> an uncracked scene … if we hadn't done the ball thing … I often find myself in that
> situation, but again, it depends on the play.

In comparison, in some instances practitioners feel they can better manage the temporal

demands upon them, and enhance their directorial output, by working 'less directly'.

Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) comments that in the rehearsal of *WRWCG*

circumstances enabled her to observe actors working with the text, in the space, and with

some of the design elements, buying her time to witness artistic possibilities and think

about their own directorial choices:

> … because there was plenty of time in the rehearsal process that was spent on music, I got a
> lot of space in the rehearsal room to watch everybody doing things *when I wasn't having to
> be the leader in the room*, that was really good … it gives you a lot of imaginative playful time
> … I could sit there and watch all the people … interacting … on the set ... [which was] pretty
> great … [you can] *think through* blocking things in your head … *so it wasn't you who had to
> have all the answers.*

Watson's buoyant tone suggests that much more is going on here than a reprieve from

active leadership. There is a palpable sense of freedom as Watson's thinking time seems to

expand.

Caceres and Jacobs prioritise exploration of the text through improvisation. Caceres has

begun her rehearsal processes with actors exploring the potential of the space to garner the

visual possibilities (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August). Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10

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[67] Houghton's use of the term 'activities' is more specific than mine. I refer to activities as any activity
undertaken as part of rehearsal, whereas Houghton differentiates between explicitly and directly working on
the text, and doing any other activity that, in his view, less directly informs the realisation of the play.

September) uses extended improvisations to become accustomed to the actors, to the work and to start to sense what the show may be:

> … but what it does for me is it buys me a lot of time to watch them, and delays the process of any sort of traditional blocking, which I loathe … [it buys time] so that I could observe them and meet them and start to understand ….

There is a case to be made, therefore, that in the director's framing of specific activities early in rehearsal, they can facilitate the actors' engagement with the material, whilst providing themselves with opportunity and time to observe and reflect. Creating this time to see, feel and react to the embodied text is reminiscent of Copeau's notion that direction is about how the text influences you, rather than what you do to the text. The value of embodied and more abstract rehearsal activity will be discussed in Section B of this thesis, but as one approach to rehearsal, the extrapolation of possibilities, alongside the expansion of 'psychological time', conceivably supports more effective and less pressured directorial decision-making. To return to the premise of this thesis, rehearsal methods need to be contingent, hence direct, stream-lined ways of working have their place in a director's toolbox, but so too do ways of work that sit somewhere on the indirect, abstract, embodied continuum.

In this section, I have explored some of the ways that practitioners manage time constraints. I have discussed the impact of line memorisation, incorporation of embodied investigation early in the rehearsal process and intermittent use of analysis throughout. Methods directors have applied to buy time have been outlined, and a correlation between time pressure, anxiety and procrastination has been observed. The contentious issue of the nature of investigation has been broached, and some initial points made regarding different methods and perceptions of efficacy. The growing usage of early runs has been noted.

Finally, I have proposed that a lack of nuanced terminology could be a contributing factor to the somewhat dichotomous perspectives on rehearsal methods – traditional versus alternative - reflected in the Melbourne Interviews and which may, in turn, influence beliefs regarding what is, or is not, good use of time.

4.4 Design Timelines

Theoretically, in a contemporary, collaborative model of theatre that the interviewed Melbourne practitioners ascribe to, directors, actors and creatives share in the authorship of a production. The operational requirements of the mainstage institutional structure, however, including the significant timeline required for the conception, development and manufacture of the stage design, inevitably elevates the work of the director and design team that precedes rehearsal. In the rehearsal room, therefore, the actor's, and the director's, creative investigation is already framed not only by the text, but by the design work that has preceded it. In this final section regarding temporality, I will explicate how this chronology influences rehearsal, from the ways it impacts practitioner working relationships, to how it shapes the creative processes and the realisation of the play within the rehearsal room. A discussion of some of the issues that arise, and the directorial strategies employed to manage the impact of the design timeline, will follow.

In Melbourne mainstage theatre, the director and creatives 'sign off' on the design, generally six months before rehearsals begin. These production timelines are considered to be driven by the scale, complexity and economics of the organisational structures of mainstage theatre (Knowles 2004). The impact of this 'industrial construct' is that the process of creative investigation and development of a production is curtailed in multiple ways (Crawford 2015, p. 30; Knowles 2004).

The 'over-arching interpretive decisions' that underpin the artistic concept, and which will shape rehearsal and the actor's work, are made without the actor's involvement (Crawford 2015, p. 29). Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August) observes that there are a 'variety of reasons' 'why [we] don't, unfortunately, invite actors into the process early enough'. Reasons, conceivably, could involve casting timelines, financial implications, expediency and creative ownership of the design process. Crawford (2015, p. 29) particularly attributes this Australian practice to economic rationalism and 'industrial protocols': '[c]ompanies' universal response … [is] to not budget for such contributions from actors'. The result of the segregation of the actor from the development of the figurative and physical framework – a framework that will govern much of the future choice-making in rehearsal – is that the actor is 'disconnect[ed]' from the work from the outset (Crawford 2015, p. 29).[68]

The actor, for whom I suggest the creative process begins from the moment of casting, has envisaged their own sense of the play prior to the start of rehearsals. The design 'reveal' on the first day, therefore, becomes the dynamic intersection between the director and designer's vision, and each actor's own 'horizon of expectation[s]' (Jauss 1982, p. xii). The sudden reveal of the 'closeted work of the Creatives' can lead, 'disturbingly often, to profound disappointment and vexation' in the cast (Crawford 2015, p. 29). This has an immediate impact upon the rehearsal process, as Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February, emphasis added) explains:

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[68] Crawford (p. 30) argues that the current Australian practice is 'entirely avoidable', and that a more collaborative model is possible '[w]ithout threat to budgets or production timelines … without challenging the artistic agency of designers or directors … in a way that reflects [the actor's] sensitivity to, and highly attuned attendance of, the broader artwork'. In *Become the Change*, Davies (1999) also argues that Australian theatre needs to break from historic, organisational and 'antiquated' processes to become more vibrant and to develop the art form. She proposes breaking from the 'masculine', hierarchical and linear model of segregating production phases, and adopting a more 'integrative', collaborative and 'organic' working process, with 'a layering of material', indicative of a feminine' paradigm (Davies 1999, pp. 7-8).

[On the first day we] bring out the model for the actors to see what's been going on, and if you're working in a company like this, the set model will be quite developed, so, costumes and stuff like that, *introduce the first problems*, because the actors will no doubt go, oh, it's not quite what I imagined … that's why you do it early, so you just throw it up on the wall and there will be someone who doesn't love it, and then *you've got four weeks to sort of negotiate that through* … it's usually, actually, just the shock, I think, because everyone's been sitting with their own idea of what it is at home on their own, and then you come in and see an actual concrete rendering of what it's going to be, and that can be at odds with what you thought, and it can just be a bit of a surprise, so often it's just letting it cool down for a minute before … and bringing it out and saying this is how it works, and this is what is great about it and this is why, because sometimes actors can forget, too, that you have actually been thinking about the design for a year-and-a- half, so you have considered most things, or you've at least got a theory about why it might work.

Houghton articulates the knottiness apparent when the actor views the *fait accompli* design through the lens of their own antecedent, imaginative work. Aside from this, the actor's reception of the design is permeated by their own sense of spatial proxemics, their procedural knowledge based on past experiences, and their future conjecture in how their performance may be inspired or restricted by the given space. Directorial authority is insufficient in resolving this problem, for the cast needs to not just comply with, but also to understand and to engage with, the ideas implicit within the design if a cohesive performance is to emerge. The design concepts form the parameters of the world within which the actor must charter their own contribution to the rehearsal process (Knowles 2004). The director must 'sell' the course set to the actors. An adjustment phase ensues as the preconceptions that have gestated in the actors' minds since casting are dispelled, challenged or modified. As Houghton quips, it may take four weeks to 'negotiate' (implying to convince) others of the vision. The degree to which preconceptions linger and play a veiled role in the rehearsal room is perhaps a notion worthy of further investigation at another time.

Overall, it is an interesting scenario for both directors who, as seen in the data, like the cast to start the rehearsal process 'all on the same page', and for the actors, who must interpret their roles not just within the framework of the text, but also within the secondary framework of the design interpretation. Additionally, this delicate communication process is at the outset of rehearsal, when the director is seeking to establish trust and a positive working relationship with the cast.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that Melbourne actors gain much of their experience and develop their own work practices in Melbourne's independent theatre sector. These smaller scale operations provide greater opportunity for the synchronous development of the design and the performative elements of a production. For those actors who traverse the independent and mainstage sectors, one might assume some degree of creative tension arises from the separation of the design interpretation with the performance development, which in part accounts for Houghton's precis of the design reveal issue.

The asynchrony between the development of design ideas and the evolution of the performance can have a significant impact on the cohesion and creativity of a production. English actor Selina Cadell (cited in O'Kane 2012, p. 215) laments that the mainstage design timeline 'govern[s]… theatre with such destructive consequences'. Brook (1968, p. 92) notes the dangers of finding oneself trapped by a 'locked' in set design: 'the set is the geometry of the eventual play, so that a wrong set makes many scenes impossible to play, and even destroys many possibilities for the actors'. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) observes the constraint placed upon the theatrical work:

> MW: … in some ways, it's the curse of the big company. You know, like your major theatre companies – is that you have to design so far in advance. I think that's a real limitation

sometimes. Because you don't know what it's actually going to be. You never really know. You have a rough starting point and you go okay, this space could work. But then you're kind of like, just throw it all out …

DG: So if you didn't have it, your rehearsal might go in a completely different direction.

MW: Totally. But then you're negotiating with, well, this is what we've come up with and they've costed and all that stuff. So I've always found that a difficult aspect of the theatre world.

Frustration is not merely felt by the actors. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that directors are well aware of the interpretive leap-of-faith imposed by the design timeline. Not unlike the actors, directors are wary of being curtailed by the preconceived designs. Investigation of the text with the cast is highly ranked against their own considered input. The trick, it would seem, is to find a balance between the fixedness of a design so that architectural elements in the space can be worked with in rehearsal, but still with some 'wriggle room' to respond to the interpretive insights that arise from collaborative rehearsal. For example, Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) is conscious 'not to design [himself] into a corner'. Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July), whilst elated to work with the set in the rehearsals of *WRWCG*, comments that some flexibility with the design blueprint would be preferable.

To find the middle ground between the pre-rehearsal design phase and rehearsal investigation of the text, some directors do find ways to have at least a key actor privy to, if not contributing to, design. Caceres (2015, 19 August) feels that the centrality of an actor to a production should determine that they are part of such a conversation, implying that the evolution of design ideas may carry useful information for the actor. A sense of the visual world of the play, for instance, provides rich stimuli and delineates important creative parameters that aid the actor's interpretation of role. This is confirmed by Milledge (2015,

pers. comm. 15 July, emphasis added), who found it both time efficient and gainful to be

present at the design discussions for *Antigone* as an actor:

> EM: … because you don't have time to be making those decisions and having those
> discussions in rehearsal, and often, a lot of those discussions amongst the creatives happen
> without the actors present, but I was lucky enough to be able to be there to hear all those
> conversations, because they're often about the world that we want to create which will
> inform the costume, the sound design, all that kind of stuff.
>
> DG: And the performance.
>
> EM: Exactly, but often those discussions don't happen with the actors present … but I was
> able to be there for some of those discussion, so that is very, very helpful, just to have an
> idea of the *aesthetic of the world that I'm working in* ….

Milledge states that an understanding of the aesthetic as useful. Winter (2015, pers. comm.

20 August, emphasis added) concurs that such an experience is rare but profitable:

> MW: [Leticia Caceres] basically invited me to all design meetings, all creative meetings, well
> before rehearsals had even begun.
>
> DG: Yeah, that's pretty unusual.
>
> MW: Which is actually how I work though. Because I come from a background of creating
> work. So it always feels strange to me on the first day of rehearsal when you show up and
> it's like "this is the set and this is" – and you're like, okay. But … with Leticia … we were in
> constant discussion about how *we want it to feel*, *how we want the character to be*
> *perceived and the pitfalls* of where this production could go horribly wrong …
>
> DG: Yeah, yeah. Again, it's working out parameters.
>
> MW: Exactly, exactly. What type of world you're aiming for … It means that, already, we're
> all working towards the same thing … So being involved in those things was crucial to how
> we were going to work on it because we were already working together … in close and
> intimate dialogue about the world we wanted to create and how we wanted it to feel.
> You're also, of course, *gauging each other's responses to things and going okay, this is how*
> *you work, this is how you think*

DG: Versus walking in on day one …

MW: Day one and going hi. So trust is always deepening.

Winter highlights the cogency and efficacy of upending the usual design-casting chronology. He argues that arriving at a shared understanding of the parameters of the world of the production forms a common, coherent vision. Given the practitioner maxim of being 'on the same page' and 'at the same stage' as one another, this shared knowledge of the thinking behind the design enables at least a key actor and the director to proceed more efficiently and synchronously in the rehearsal room. Secondly, a more shared pre-rehearsal design phase may help sow the seeds for a shared understanding of the pitch or feel of the performance – an aspect that the data suggests is a key preoccupation for artists, and especially directors, in the early stages of rehearsal. Thirdly, Winter notes the worth of learning how one's fellow practitioners operate, and the trust that may result. One could reasonably assume that an understanding of others' communication and working styles is beneficial to the creative process in rehearsal. Adjusting the timeline of involvement, with the actor being a collaborative creative agent, or at least creative witness, prior to the rehearsal period might therefore enhance rehearsal practice.

The advance design timelines were seen to reduce interpretative options once in rehearsal, but paradoxically, actors and directors alike celebrated that these timelines enabled them to have the set, or a fair approximation, *in situ* in the rehearsal space. The presence of the 'bones' of the set empower the director to more fully perceive and manipulate the *mise en scène*. Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) delights in the immediacy and efficiency of being able to 'test ideas out straight away'. As an actor, Mouzakis (2015, 28 October) finds it both enabling and reassuring to know how the set is going to work, and to get a feel for the set

by working with aspects of it in rehearsal. Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August, emphasis added) regularly facilitates actor-exploration of the set:

> … and *the actors then feel like they've got ownership over the design as well*, because they're invited so late into the process that they then go right, okay, *so those are the limitations* … so that's basically what I've been doing now as a thing, is that I'll ask actors to respond as quickly as possible to the space without making any judgements or feeling they're doing it as their character, they're just doing it as an actor… so you can be responding as any actor, any character, you're just responding to the play that's in you, the things, and then the people, the architecture, and the shapes and bodies and the actual landscape.

This exploration of the set enables a geographic vocabulary to evolve that is of use to both the actors and Caceres. It is also an activity that forges working relationships in the space in an intuitive mode, in comparison to the nature of interaction in analysis and discussion of the text around a table. In this sense, the design-rehearsal chronology can be advantageous, as the provision of a set accelerates the actor's physical relationships with the space and each other. It also paves the way for interpretive decisions regarding the text and the *mise en scène*, and is another useful way to dissolve the psychological barrier of 'getting onto the floor'.

Given the time-benefit and usefulness of the set in the rehearsal room to inspire and govern choices, it is a logical extension that other aspects of design would be of value also. The occurrence of design elements in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room, however, is limited. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) notes that along with the set, in an 'ideal situation' one would be working with other design elements such as objects and light. He argues that all the design elements are as important as the performance of the text and that best practice would involve 'a lot more of the elements in the room more of the time'. As

other design elements do not tend to have the same advance timelines as set, this would appear to be achievable.

From a directorial perspective, Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September) found having her sound designer Jethro Woodward working 'live' in the space contributed to a dynamic, productive rehearsal room:

> I'm desperate to have sound designers in the room, improvising with the actors … and I think what happened with Jethro and the performers is they started to improvise off one another and things would be created on the floor, and then he would add and kind of shift the rhythm, and many of the improvisations couldn't have occurred without his presence at all … his approach is sort of like mine, where on one hand he's improvising and just feeding the actors and their work, in the moment, but at the same time he's building a palette, finding associations, creating his own map for the piece as well.

The immediate reflexivity that arises from concurrent development of design and performance can be seen as advantageous to the multiple different collaborators: designer, director and actors. Jacobs' directorial approach is clearly non-traditional, but even without such a concomitant process, having as many design elements in the rehearsal space as is feasible may hold other advantages, such as reducing the time pressure later on in the technical rehearsal. As Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) states: 'it means you can do a lot of the work that you end up having to do in two days in tech, throughout rehearsal'.

In this section I have argued that Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice is shaped by organisational timelines required to produce mainstage set design, and the segregation of actors from the early stages of the interpretive process. Several directorial strategies have been raised to manage the impact of the mandatory design-rehearsal chronology, including: inviting lead actors to design meetings to avert interpretive preconceptions developing; the inclusion of rehearsal activities in which the actor, and director, explore the potentiality of

the set *in situ*; and the aim within the design process to keep the concept open enough that the set doesn't limit possibilities in staging, and/or that some slight alterations may be made later in response to the rehearsal investigation.

From this discussion it has also become apparent that, whilst the primary source, the text is not the only frame which focuses, prompts and excludes, creative thought in rehearsal. The design interpretation, determined well before the collaborative inquiry of rehearsal begins, becomes an additional, overlaid frame. Consistent with my Rehearsal Frame Theory, the preconceived set design becomes another parameter which contains and directs the actor's work.

 In this chapter I have explored some of the ways time pressure and organisational time lines impact rehearsal practice in Melbourne mainstage theatre. Strategies have evolved in an attempt to mitigate these issues, although these are not always advantageous. The four-week timeline appears to make departure from more traditional rehearsal approaches difficult, with rehearsal processes stream-lined, and practices valued according to their familiarity and expediency. A perception of rehearsal as a linear process prevails. Actors have embedded expectations regarding the chronology of their role development, and this sense of where they 'should be up to' seems impaired when there is deviation from a traditional process model, causing consternation. Resoundingly, the temporal pressure felt by practitioners is implicated in the avoidance of more alternate, embodied and intuitive practices. Concurrently and most significantly, however, there is dissatisfaction with the level of investigation, experimentation and detail in the way work is currently rehearsed. In sum, the temporal structures of rehearsal and design production are parameters that

delimit, prompt, and focus specific ways of working in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room.

In the next chapter I will continue to expound the contextual parameters that inform Melbourne mainstage theatre practice with an examination of the circumstances of a critical member of the rehearsal process – the actor.

Chapter 5   The Actor

In Chapter 2 I argued that rehearsal can be understood as a series of frames that are both externally imposed and creatively chosen. In the previous two chapters I have explored a range of exterior factors that influence the rehearsal process: critical culture, funding, organisational timelines and temporal perceptions. In this chapter, I continue explicating the contingencies of rehearsal, this time exploring the impact of the capacities, propensities and expectations that accompany the actor into the rehearsal room.

The mind-set of the actor plays a fundamental role in rehearsal work. According to Knowles (2004), inherited modes of working and thinking invisibly inform theatrical practice. An actor's training has a significant impact not only upon what occurs in the rehearsal room, but also in the broader context of theatrical evolution, for as Knowles argues, it is difficult for theatre to transgress from the 'culturally affirmative' processes, and the resultant products, that it typically involves (p. 32).

I will add weight to this contention by elucidating, with reference to the Melbourne Interviews, how disparate notions of the role and work of the actor influence directorial practice in Melbourne. I will argue that an actor's training and experience informs not just their own preferred work practices, but also underpins the paradigm within which direction is heard and received, and the actor's engagement with various rehearsal activities. This has ramifications for how the director is able to conduct and shape the rehearsal process itself.

I reveal that rehearsal is as much a complex managerial process as an artistic enterprise. This examination of practitioner differences and inter-personal dynamics within the rehearsal room will evince why a 'one size fits most' approach to the application of rehearsal methods is inadequate, and the development of rehearsal discourse, and practice,

is necessary. To meet the complex differences and human dynamic of the rehearsal room, the director needs an array of tools upon which to draw.

5.1 Paradigm

Acting is often a pursuit that requires interaction and is dependent, to some degree, upon the initiation of others in the form of the director. Essential to the successful development of an acting performance is reflexivity to others in rehearsal. The actor must be able to respond to the catalyst of the lived moment between actors on stage, and to the parameters defined or feedback given by the director. It is in rehearsal that this process of negotiating, building and navigating a myriad of interpersonal transactions, both on and off stage, takes place.

I will begin with an overview of some of the career challenges faced by the actor. I argue that the inherent difficulties of the profession in Melbourne inform an actor's 'perceptual set',[69] and that this in turn may influence the way an actor works, and works with others, in rehearsal. Some of the specific behaviours that can result, and the managerial role the director must adopt as part of the rehearsal process, will be explored later in this chapter.

In regard to the following discussion, for the sake of brevity I will divide actors into the somewhat artificial divide of 'emerging/graduate/less experienced' and 'experienced'. This is intended to reflect a career continuum. These terms are employed to indicate an actor's

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[69] 'Perceptual set' refers to an individual's tendency to attend to particular information while ignoring other information. This alters and influences that person's perception of situations and events ('Perceptual Set' 2020; Cherry 2020, para. 1).

level of familiarity and confidence in the professional rehearsal room, alongside their degree

of proficiency in the rehearsal process.[70]

To appreciate the specific needs, behaviours and pressures upon the actor in rehearsal, it is

helpful to examine the nature of their employment. On the cusp of their professional life,

the actor has a career trajectory that is different to many other professions. In many

instances, on-the-job learning supersedes the novice understanding of the graduate, but the

employment structure of the theatre industry poses an unenviable challenge for the young

actor. In *Nurturing the Outstanding Actor* Rea explores the issue of mastery and the actor.

He examines Ericsson's proposition that it takes 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to

achieve a mastery of skill in different professions and examines how this fits with the skill

development of the actor (Ericsson cited in Rea, 2014). Ericsson found a strong correlation

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[70] I employ the term 'emerging actor', as well as young, graduate or less experienced actor, to refer to an actor who is practising their craft at an early stage of their career. The term 'emerging actor' is somewhat ambiguous within the industry. Whilst it is rarely used by theatre practitioners themselves, it has been in common usage by arts funding bodies in Australia, such as the Australia Council and Creative Victoria. Arts funding bodies typically define 'emerging' as 'young' (an age under twenty-five or, at most, thirty) or at the beginning of, or early in their careers (usually within five years of graduation) (Arts Hub 2012). In comparison, dictionary definitions suggest a slightly different connotation of what it means to 'emerge' based on visibility rather than time: 'to appear by coming out of something or out from behind something;
to become known or develop as a result of something' ('Emerge' 2020); [to] become gradually visible or apparent' (Pearsall ed. 1999, p. 466); or 'just beginning to exist or be noticed' (Rundall, M ed. 2009-2020). I see emerging actors as artists who are forming their own practices, and whose practices are informed by others. I suggest that they are in a transition phase, placing themselves on, or placed upon, the novice-expert continuum depending on whom else they are working with in the rehearsal room. 'Emerging actors' are those actors becoming more visible in the public arena, or within the paid 'industry'. It is this notion of visibility that is a sticking point in the definition of the 'emerging actor'. Its popular current usage places emphasis on the age and/or number of years since an actor has graduated from training, which may not be comparable to the growth of public prominence of the individual artist. Numerous actors could be considered to be emerging decades beyond youth or after their training was completed. In an article in *The Guardian*, Turney argues that the term 'emerging' is bureaucratic at best, quoting Haydon's quip that 'the definition of 'emerging' is anyone who still has to apply for funding themselves' (Haydon cited in Turney, 2012). In significant contrast to numerous funding references on the internet, The Jerome Foundation in the United Sates sagaciously acknowledges on its website that 'There is no exact and singular definition of an emerging creative artist. The Foundation seeks to support those artists who show significant potential, yet are under-recognized …' (2011). This definition, the level of public recognition of an 'emerging artist', seems the most realistic. Hence, I recognise that my use of this term is not fully resolved. For the purposes of this thesis 'emerging' will pertain, as previously stated, to early career actors.

between the age that deliberate practice of a skill was begun and the attainment of elite level performance (1993). The commencement age was seen to be linked to skill accumulation due to the number of practice hours accrued. Ericsson found that to achieve mastery, at least ten years, or 10,000 hours, of *focused and deliberate* practice was required (1993, emphasis added). He noted that natural aptitude played a part, but presented a strong argument that talent was not in itself a key to success. His theory of mastery specifically determines 'deliberate' practice and quality teaching as necessary constituents (Rea 2014).[71] Rea points out that this timeframe theory for mastery is challenging for actors due to the fact that, according to his research, actors commence training later than other performing artists. For the talented young musician or dancer starting to learn their craft at the age of four, mastery can be achieved by early adulthood. The actor's trajectory, however, does not conform to this model. Commencing their training later, and engaged in an activity that usually requires interaction with, and a degree of reliance upon, others, the actor faces unique challenges to achieve the proficiency of other performance artists. This is consistent with the Melbourne Interview data. The graduate actors interviewed considered the commencement of their training began with their education at tertiary institutions specialising in acting. Furthermore, due to high unemployment, and intermittent employment, Rea (2014, p. 233) contends that proficiency takes much longer for the actor to achieve 'because there are fewer chances of continuous practice or performance'.

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[71] In recent years the 10,000 hour rule has been mythologised – in part due to Malcolm Gladwell's popular book *Outliers: the story of success* (2008) - and then debunked. Ericsson has written multiple responses to his critics, explaining that his research findings regarding the acquisition of mastery have been oversimplified by others. He explains that it is the notion of *deliberate* practice *over time* that is the fundamental component in building expertise, not the *length* of time one practises (Ericsson & Pool 2017).

This delay in mastery matters. Anecdotally, the majority of students in acting schools graduate into their profession in their early to mid-twenties which is a similar, if not later, time to their non-acting peers. This is because prominent tertiary acting schools in Australia prefer to offer places to actors who have some maturity and life experience beyond their secondary education. It is common for a student to already have begun, or achieved, a first degree prior to attending acting school. Hence, acting students can begin, and finish, their degree much later than their peers. The graduate actor, with similar economic and social expectations as their non-acting graduating peers – to get a job - enters their field older and with less chance of employment.

Empirical research suggests, however, that for the graduating acting student, these expectations are often quashed by the reality of the 'real world' (Moore 2004).[72] Professional theatre in Melbourne is a highly competitive industry where the gateways to work are usually through securing a 'good' agent and successfully auditioning when opportunities arise, alongside building a strong public profile through one's positively reviewed performance work. A high level of capability is required to achieve most if not all of these aspects. Anecdotally, there is a significant attrition rate for actors in their thirties due to the lack of employment. For actors to remain actors, therefore, it is critical to develop proficiency to capitalise on the very limited opportunities for work.[73] This said, in an

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[72] In the Melbourne Interviews data, acting graduates refer to their attempts to enter the 'real world' after acting school as 'incredibly difficult' (Velik 2014, pers. comm. 14 October), 'a horrible, rude shock' (Heath 2014, pers. comm. 4 November) and 'hilarious and dumb' (Samuels 2014, pers. comm. 19 October). Emerging actor Tom Heath (2014, pers. comm. 4 November) describes the industry as 'incredibly insular, damning, damaging [and] confusing'. He observes the psychological impact this has upon the actor: '[there is a] world-weariness … of actors once they're past a certain point … as the reality of the industry sets in'.

[73] A five-year study of the employment of over 1000 Australian artists found that the project-based nature of the acting industry made actors more likely than other artists to suffer unemployment (Zawadski 2016, p. 85), and that unemployment 'was more likely among artists up to the age of 29' (pp. 83-84).

industry subject to the aleatory forces of which Knowles speaks, even mastery does not guarantee certainty of employ.

Given the competitiveness of the industry, it was not surprising that in my study the interviewed actors reported a dearth of professional rehearsal opportunities immediately following their graduate year. Some actors referred to their personal commitment to ongoing skill maintenance and development through personal voice, breath and physical exercises. Reading plays, analysing texts and seeking out further actor training and techniques were also seen as important. Rehearsal and performance experiences were much more difficult to achieve. Some actors had developed their own performance work, or rehearsed briefly for non-paid projects, chiefly to keep rehearsal skills up and build a profile. Anecdotally, this seemed to occur with peers at a similar level of experience. Rehearsal for profit-share, independent productions was complicated by inadequate space in which to work (due to a lack of funding), such as the actor's living room. Actors found this frustrating and felt it was reductive to the potential of their acting work (Monticciolo 2014, pers. comm. 28 October). This is the conundrum of the profession: an actor must retain and develop rehearsal skills to be competitive for future employment, and yet it is primarily through professional employment that these skills are gained.

Disenchantment impacts an actor's skill maintenance and development. Staying motivated enough to maintain skills throughout long periods of unemployment was seen as difficult by the graduate actors interviewed. Heath (2014, pers. comm. 4 November) notes the change he has observed in fellow actors over time: '[they become not focused] on improving as an artist or as an actor, but rather on serving this machine-like monster of industry'. He articulates the disillusion that sets in as the lack of work becomes apparent, and 'people ... [realise] that you are only hired because you're exactly that person that they want'. Heath

explains how these aspects reduce the actor's motivation to work on their craft: 'they kind of don't really care, so they'll rock up to rehearsal and know their lines and that'll be about the extent of what they would see as the work'.

An opportunity in the professional rehearsal room is therefore cause for celebration. The emerging actor enters this space infused with the public and personal expectation of what lies before them. The notion of the celebrity in contemporary western culture perpetuates the mythology that success can be instantaneous, with visibility unfairly equated to ability: '[t]he 'value of visibility' has become a commodity in *its own right*, quite independent from 'accomplishment ...'' (Redmond & Holmes 2007, p. 5, emphasis in original). At the same time, this thinking is at odds with the cultural perception of what it is to be an actor. As noted previously, the actor's craft is shrouded in mystique. Highly engaging performances are considered transformative, if not transcendent, promoting Moore (2006, p. 105) to quip that this cultural positioning of the actor is unattainably idealistic: 'a charismatic artistic figure with the magical capabilities of a changeling'. The publicly recognised actor is lauded and attains, to use Bourdieu's term, 'symbolic capital'.[74] This idealism of public perception is juxtaposed with the reality of the intermittently employed, or unemployed, graduate actor who faces substantial economic hardship. Moore's research found that the mean annual income of his sample of trained actors was only $10, 060 (2006). In a much larger study undertaken a number of years later - *The Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study: A Preliminary Report* - data results are similarly dismal, with approximately 60% of actors earning less than $20,000 in the financial year 2011-2012 (Maxwell, Seton & Szabo 2015).

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[74] Bourdieu's (1984) term 'symbolic capital' refers to socially and culturally perceived, or conceived, value and prestige.

An actor's sense of celebration upon entering the rehearsal room, the 'coal-face' of the profession, is therefore fused with trepidation. The impact of this heightened state upon the graduate actor's behaviour, and the subsequent implications for the director, will be discussed shortly.

Reconciling graduating into a career of financial hardship was complex for the graduate actors in the Melbourne Interviews. Artistic satisfaction of working and practising the craft was juxtaposed with monetary gain. One actor referred to a love gig versus a paid gig. Culturally, the concept of the struggling artist has been romanticised with the impression that the personal fulfilment of loving what you do exceeds the deprivation suffered. In *Longing to Belong - The Trained Actor's Attempts to Enter the Profession,* Moore (2004) discusses the complexity of the actor's situation with reference to Bourdieu's notion of 'illusio'.[75] He proposes that an actor's established belief system is both sustaining and destructive: '[their] illusio is both dysfunctional and resilient in that the high stakes involved simultaneously drive the actor on and repetitiously lead to the breakdown of belief' (2004, p. 69). For the actors in the Melbourne Interviews, the need for self-expression and self-actualisation contributed to the decision to pursue a career in theatre, and there was a need to achieve these specifically through artistic transaction with others. The actors voiced a need for connectivity with others in the artistic moment, and this seemed as prevalent and as heartfelt a need as to be identified and respected as an artist. Entering the rehearsal room was lauded as not just an opportunity to work, but to work *with* others.

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[75] Bourdieu's (1996) 'illusio' refers to the game or structure that a group, believing in its significance, collectively take part in.

In the discussion above, I have sketched an impression of the psychology of the emerging actor entering the rehearsal room. Given the vulnerable nature of the profession, alongside the uncertainty and sparsity of employment, it is reasonable to assume that similar needs are shared, to a degree, by more experienced actors. Rehearsal is an opportunity to commune in one's art form, to hone proficiency in one's craft, and to build and relish connections with fellow actors. The prospect of work, to be 'in rehearsal', is motivating and edifying; but, at the same time, the pressure to prove one's worth is significant. This backstory influences actors' behaviour and interaction in the rehearsal room, and therefore, the way that rehearsal and direction is undertaken. In the following section, I will examine another fundamental component underpinning actor behaviour in the rehearsal room - an actor's training.

5.2 Actor Training and Process

Actors have different processes and beliefs in what works – and works for *them*. These differences are largely due to their training. An actor's training, with its residues of influences, expectations and tacit knowledge, has a significant impact upon their artistry (Creely 2011). As Lutton remarks, it is impossible not to be affected by one's training (2014, pers. comm. 28 October). This 'sedimentation' (Creely 2011) involves and informs the paradigm through which an actor approaches rehearsal work, and is more profound than one may realise (Enright 2003). The processes and ideologies instilled in training permeate the professional rehearsal room. As I will illustrate, these differences complicate the way rehearsal practice is undertaken.

In this section I will focus upon the two key acting schools on the east coast of Australia, VCA (the Victorian College of the Arts) and NIDA (the National Institute of Dramatic Art),

which, anecdotally, train many of the actors employed in Melbourne mainstage theatre.

There is much common ground between these two schools in regard to contemporary

theatrical tenets of openness, preparedness and independence. I will argue, however, that

the different origins and emphasis of each school contribute, in part, to the complexity of

directing actors, with their different processes and paradigms, in the Melbourne mainstage

rehearsal room. There are, of course, actors from many other training backgrounds in

Melbourne, including those not formally trained. I draw upon these two institutions as

exemplars because they (a) represent a significant number of actors in Melbourne

mainstage rehearsal, and (b) demonstrate two quite disparate actor approaches.

In *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training*, Prior (2012) states that Australian

actor training places an emphasis on readiness and openness. In Australia, the term

'training' is often replaced with 'preparation' to reflect a growth mind-set rather than a

finite approach with a predetermined outcome. This concept is typical of contemporary

actor education with its roots in the theories of Jacques Copeau. Early last century Copeau

famously established his acting school *L'Ecole du Vieux Colombier* with the desire to de-

codify an actor's performance and promote an openness conducive to ensemble

collaboration.[76]

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[76] Copeau, disillusioned with the state of theatre and the professional '*bluffing*' of actors he felt was endemic of his time, established his theatre school to form not the '*great individualist*', but rather, actors who were playful and interactive in their approach (Copeau, Rudlin & Paul 1990, p. 26, original emphasis, p. 11, original emphasis). He aligned 'dramatic feeling' to 'the child's instinct for play', and believed that play was a key to 'making the actor, not only the medium, but the source of all dramatic inspiration' (p. 39, p. 12). In regard to the re-education of a group of actors for his company, just prior to the opening of his school, Copeau wrote:

> We shall always have in view the development of individual talents and their subordination to the ensemble. We shall fight against the encroachment of professional tricks, against all professional distortions, against the ossification of specialisation. In short, we shall do our best to re-normalise these men and women whose vocation is to simulate all human emotions and gestures. (Copeau, Rudlin & Paul, p. 26).

Similarly, a century ago Russian-Armenian actor-director Yevgeny Vakhtangov (cited in

Malaev-Babel 2011, pp. 118-119) articulated the need to prepare, rather than train, the

actor:

> Actor cultivation must consist of enriching the actor's subconscious with varied abilities: freedom, concentration, seriousness, stage intelligence, artistry, activity, expressiveness, gift of observation, quickness to adapt … The subconscious, equipped with such a supply of means, will forge a near perfect creation from the material it receives.

In twenty-first century Melbourne, in drama school and in the professional rehearsal room,

these attributes of readiness and adaptability are valued. Associated with these qualities is

the notion that 'openness' is requisite for the successful actor (Knight cited in Clark 2003, p.

44). The terms 'open' and 'closed' are in frequent use by actors and directors in the

Melbourne Interviews. Openness, the ability to be available to artistic opportunities, was

seen as highly desirable. Samuels delighted in feeling 'so open' once she conquered her

awe-induced nervousness in her first professional show (2014, pers. comm. 19 October).[77]

Monticciolo recounted her reaction to the director's brief to her on the first day of

rehearsals: 'He said, "I don't know how we'll do this" – it was the best thing I've ever heard!

I was quite emotional! It was open, about ensemble, the story, egoless' (2014, pers. comm.

28 October).[78]

Openness can be seen as the ability to embrace creative possibilities. For the actor in

rehearsal, it implies both a temporal readiness, and a personal capacity to enter into the

unknown. In Zarilli's view, this is the necessary pre-performative position:

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[77] Samuels is referring to the rehearsal of the MTC 2013 production of *The Crucible*, directed by Sam Strong.
[78] Monticciolo is referring to Peter Evan's direction in the Melbourne-based rehearsal of *Phèdre*, Bell Shakespeare Company, 2013.

> The optimal state is one of readiness. What does readiness consist of? It consists of being dropped in, being centered, being available, being ready to whatever is called for, being aware, being open. (Zarilli cited in Creely, 2011, p. 219)

Johnston (2011, p. 222) refers to this state as 'an 'attunement' to the possibilities of performance'. To achieve this attunement, there needs to be a sense that one is free from judgement as well as the capacity to be 'in the moment', to focus one's attention to the present circumstance. Lutterbie (2006, p. 155) defines this notion of being in the moment as 'the ability to bracket certain kinds of perception to the exclusion (however temporary) of others that tend to distract'. In rehearsal, the ability of the actor to focus and invest in the present moment enables greater discoveries to be made and choices to be more fully realised. On the floor, readiness requires the capacity for an embodied response. In Murphet's (2018, pers. comm. 21 March) opinion, an actor needs to be 'alive … in the space, they can't depend upon a text, they have to be mentally alive, emotionally alive, physically alive'.

There is also common ground between VCA and NIDA in their promotion of the independent actor. Actors of the past and current generation have been encouraged to develop an autonomous practice so that they may navigate the multiple challenges intrinsic to their career (Prior 2012). This independence is lauded by Ian Watson in *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures*. He sings the praises of the Australian trained actor whom he sees as in charge of their creative process, and equates this artistic autonomy with flexibility in the marketplace (2001). In the overviews of their acting courses, the VCA repeatedly use the term 'autonomous actor' (2014) whilst NIDA refers to the development of the 'individual' actor (2014).

It is here, however, that the artistic paradigms between the two schools begin to diverge, with self-sufficiency and self-reliance achieved by different means. NIDA actors have been 'encouraged' 'to find a personal technique' from 'many different acting methodologies' (Clark 2003, p. 103). This said, the Melbourne Interviews suggest that the predominant acting approach seems to be Stanislavskian-based. Speaking from four decades of experience teaching and directing at NIDA, Clark (2018, pers. comm. 11 March) explains how, and why, actors were encouraged to develop their own approach:

> … you're going to get some good directors [and] directors who have got not the faintest idea about how to deal with actors, so you've got to be independent … you've got to learn how to read a text, you've got to learn how to research a text, you've got to learn how to discover what's happening in a scene by working with people, as well as by reading, you've got to be able to understand the Stanislavski stuff … action, objectives … What am I doing in this scene? What am I trying to achieve? What's my main objective? What am I trying to do to this person? And when you are speaking to somebody, what are you trying to do to that person, so, get your mind off yourself, onto the person you are acting with.

In comparison, whilst educated in a number of acting approaches, VCA actors have been primarily trained in a specific approach developed by Lindy Davies. Murphet (2018, pers. comm. 21 March) explains how this training was intended to serve the actors:

> … the training was that by the end of third year actors coming out of the VCA could make intelligent physical choices out there in the space without waiting for the director to tell them what to do, so there would be no standing around at the beginning and the end of rehearsal waiting for the director's instruction, the director would set something up, they would go out there and through a whole process … Dropping in, Organics, Blue printing – there was a whole process that they learnt as actors that empowered them to translate, transform text into action in space.

Clark's and Murphet's reflections hint at the distinctions between these two training institutions. The intention of instilling actor autonomy is achieved through a different

emphasis in training and reflects different paradigms in regard to theatre making. These differences, as will be discussed, play out in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room.

Each institution is a product of its age: the timing of the founding of each acting school, I suggest, has significant impact upon its training lineage. NIDA opened in 1958 with funding from the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, and resources from the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The founding director, Robert Quentin, was an Englishman who had studied literature at Oxford University, and been a member of the Oxford University Experimental Theatre Club (Horne 2006-2020; De Berg & Quentin 1971). Quentin believed the study of theatre was a 'means of acquiring knowledge and taste' (Horne 2006-2020, para. 6) and hoped to 'develop a distinctly Australian style of acting' (Clark 2003, p. 21), to address the '"shadow of English understatement"' that he felt beleaguered the Australian stage (Quentin cited in Clark 2003, p. 21). Clark, the director of NIDA for thirty-five years, had studied theatre history with scholars HDF Kitto, MC Knights and Glynn Wickham in England, and developed his practical skills through university theatre and classical theatre with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in the 1950's (Clark 2018, pers. comm. 11 March; Clark 2003). Clarke's subsequent 'deep respect for the text' and a well-grounded understanding of 'the world of the play' informed the focus of training of NIDA graduates for decades (Clarke 2018, pers. comm. 11 March). The inclusion of ballroom dancing and stage-combat in the course, to develop movement skills and reflexivity, suggests a residue of a previous era. NIDA has its roots in a mid-century tradition of text, industry and English classical actor training.

In comparison, VCA was born in 1976, and its paradigm reflects the notions of its age. Established under the leadership of Peter Oyston, the VCA's actor training was inspired by

community-based theatre and the experimental, collaborative approach of the *Australian Performing Group* at The Pram Factory theatre.[79] From the outset, year levels were trained not just as actors, but as an ensemble of theatre makers. Whilst there was a period of more classical training with Roger Hodgman as Dean, and then an eclectic approach to training with a collation of experts under David Latham (Murphet 2018, pers. comm. 21 March), VCA training has retained it strong emphasis on collaboration. The current course purports to increase students' breadth of skills and vocational success by educating actors to make their own work, as well as to creatively collaborate in the creation of contemporary theatre (Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne 2020).

VCA is also recognised for its unique approach to actor training and rehearsal (Murphet 2018, pers. comm. 21 March). This idiosyncratic, highly intuitive and sensory way of working is the result of Davies exploration of a myriad of artistic and psychological practices that were evolving in the 1970s and 1980s. Her approach is developed from her work with Peter Brook, Kristin Linklater, Cicely Berry, and members of Grotowski's group, and through a web of influences (Joseph Chaikin, the mask work of Lecoq, the altered state of Balinese Theatre performers and Buddhism, Gestalt therapy, and the domestic gesture of Post-modern Dance) (Ginters 2007). The central aim of Davies' training approach is to enable the actor to work in an egoless yet associative state, open and present in the moment (Ginters 2007). Rehearsal involves text being imaginatively and emotionally investigated through personal association, imagery and sensory input, with the *mise en scène* of the performance discovered through improvisation in the space.

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[79] The Australian Performing Group had a 'seminal influence' upon Australian culture, and was '[u]nique in the history of the arts in Australia … It was very much of its time, and was at the cutting edge of theatre' (Ingleton 2018). Croggon (2006, para. 7) observes that VCA today is a 'direct inheritor of [this] radical tradition of Australian theatre that came to the fore in the 1970s'.

The VCA Drama School was also strongly influenced by Richard Murphet for more than two decades. Murphet's contribution was informed by his experiences with experimental theatre of the sixties, and his involvement in the Pram Factory and the Soap Box Circus. This personal history instilled a strong belief in improvisation, the mind-body connection, and 'theatre as a kind of montage of different elements rather than dominated by the text' (Murphet 2018, pers. comm. 21 March). VCA training has its roots in a tradition of intuition, embodiment and collaborative discovery.

NIDA and VCA each have a culturally embedded tradition and paradigm that persists despite the years that have passed since their founding. Given the breadth and complexity of actor training at each institution, it would be specious to suggest that these paradigms are diametrically opposed, but there is a sense of an Apollonian - Dionysian continuum between the two.[80]

These cultural differences are also not solely the domain of these two institutions, for there are multiple acting schools or pathways from which individual actors emerge. The discussion above, however, gives us a background to understand the complexities that play out in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room. The key issues can be seen in terms of two intersecting continuums - embodiment or cerebral, and concrete or abstract – and the processes by which choices in the rehearsal room are made.

In rehearsal these dissimilarities have a considerable impact upon the course that direction may take. The potential effectiveness of a rehearsal activity can be subject to the particularity of each actor. A combination of actors with vastly different paradigms can

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[80] The Apollonian-Dionysian comparison refers to different mindsets drawn from the depiction of Apollo and Dionysus in classical literature. Rational order is attributed to Apollo, and spontaneity to Dionysus. The first use of this concept is credited to Nietzsche in his publication on dramatic theory, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) (Blackburn 2016).

tether the director's ability to apply specific rehearsal methods. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that an intricate dance between the directorial approach, and different actor capacities, propensities and expectations, occurs in the rehearsal room. The rehearsal process as intended by the director, and received by the actor, is not always in alignment. The expectations and needs amongst actors can also be significantly at odds with each other. The way rehearsal unfolds, unsurprisingly then, can be a source of tension. Given that an actor's trust in the process, as previously discussed, is important for creative engagement and progress, the director is charged with managing these differences and underlying, if not arising, tensions.

The Melbourne Interviews indicate that actors, whilst maintaining a semblance of professional regard, find the different resonances of individual's training challenging. AA (2015, pers. comm. 4 September) articulates this issue:

> … what I find really challenging is every process is different, every director is different, every cast has different levels of trust and comfort and different needs, like some people like to talk a lot about super-objective, objective … Other people don't like to talk about that at all … generally, everyone's from different backgrounds, different training systems ….

The Apollonian-Dionysian biases embedded in training at NIDA and VCA play out in the professional rehearsal room. Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) comments that she finds other processes 'interesting', but her words convey her bias in the efficacy of physical investigation: 'Some actors talk. Some actors just need to physicalize. [Talk] can waste a lot of time'. Caceres (2015, 19 August), as cited previously, notes the propensity for actors to talk, in comparison to her wish to get up and do. In contrast, for the actor who is 'very action-y and objective-y, sort of linear', such as the NIDA trained cast member Price recalls working with, in-depth discourse is a fundamental component (2015, pers. comm. 2

September). Such differences in the rehearsal room create a 'really interesting tension' (Price 2015, pers. comm. 2 September). Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) recounts an experience of table analysis in rehearsal:

> JP: [I recall] just being really bored, *but that's because of the type of actor I am*, a lot of people thrive in that situation, but I don't, I need to be physical. If I'm just stuck at a table talking about textual analysis, my brain hurts, I just feel like it's fatiguing …
>
> DG: Yet there are other actors who would prefer that …
>
> JP: Yeah, oh, they would love it … the way we worked with Adena, no, that would be their hell….[81]

Price's comment reveals the disconnection that can occur for an actor when the rehearsal process doesn't match their own working style. This is consistent with Moore's (2004, p. 96) conclusion in *Rehearsal and the Actor Practicalities, Ideals and Compromise* that 'adapting to less ideal practices' takes 'considerable time and often involve[s] a deep sense of disorientation'. Given the tight temporal parameters of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal, and actor anxiety linked to the rarity of employment, the director's selection of rehearsal methodology is loaded for an actor. Directorial processes can therefore be curtailed by overt, or covert, resistance. A younger VCA actor surmises that a colleague, more than two decades older and with a screen career, would be enormously dismissive of the process she was trained in:

> DG: Because you're acting opposite …
>
> AA: He's such an intelligent man
>
> DG: I can't imagine him doing 'Abstract'

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[81] Price is referring to Adena Jacobs, and her use of abstract, embodied improvisation in the rehearsal of *Antigone.*

AA: No, I don't think he would want to, I think he would find it stupid.

<div align="right">(AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)</div>

Differences in preference may reflect training paradigms and employment experiences, but also indicate an actor's age. The three utterances above that favour embodied rehearsal approaches are made by actors less than 30 years old. There may be a correlation between age and the partiality to work in a more embodied way, suggesting perhaps a generational shift away from a more traditional, literary approach toward a more visual and kinaesthetic approach. As Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) remarks, 'one older actor really liked talking things through, [which] took up a lot of rehearsal time. I think getting on the floor is the most important part'.

The degree to which an actor is comfortable to work in a less literal, concrete way may support or constrain a director's intended rehearsal process. To return to Moore's comment above, a disconnection between an actor's and director's ways of working can result in perplexity and time-loss. Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August) comments that in rehearsal it took one particular actor a week to 'come to terms with the fact that she wasn't going to have a prop', despite being shown the abstract set design 'as early as possible'. The actor's perception of the piece, alongside their own haptic process, was challenged and took a substantial period of the four-week time frame to shift. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August, emphasis added) has also noticed the tension that arises in rehearsal due to actors' incapacity to work in a more abstract way:

> MW: Some people – and this may be a training thing. Some people are very comfortable thinking in the abstract and being performers in an abstract space and an abstract world. Which is quite often where contemporary theatre is sort of sitting. ... Whereas some people, some performers – you know, if it says it's around the kitchen table, you kind of need that

kitchen table. I think *a big thing I've noticed about directing and acting is finding a way to encourage literal minds* to – it's okay. We still get it …

DG: Encouraging literal minds as in the more literal actor?

MW: Literal actor, yeah, yeah … So I do find there's a lot of conversation about that.

This 'conversation' regarding more abstract rehearsal processes extends beyond the Melbourne Interviews. Referring to a broader context, Murphet (2018, pers. comm. 21 March) expresses the difficulty he finds working with actors who need concrete instructions before they can begin their work. Some actors, he explains, are not comfortable with embodied investigation and require certainty through tight, tangible parameters:

> A lot actors who are not trained in that kind of way resist that way of working, they need to know sure things, they need to be told, this is where my door is, this is where my seat is, I will be sitting down when I say those lines, and their argument back, if they are articulate about it, is once I know all that, once that's taken care of, then I can start understanding and filling the line with meaning, and if I am searching around for that, I can't.

This observation reflects different expectations regarding where one starts in rehearsal in terms of givens, and the capacity one feels to determine those givens. It is about the authority of, or agency in, choice-making. Additionally, it illuminates a perspective of the physical form of the performance: one actor develops their role through experimentation *with* form, whilst another actor develops their role in response *to* form. Both processes suggest a psycho-physical interconnectedness, but in terms of rehearsal activity, the processes are very different. The quandary is that the director may well have both actors in the same rehearsal room.

On the surface there is a common point of thought. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that *collaboration* is a cultural expectation amongst actors, an unsurprising assumption given the more egalitarian norms of contemporary society. The pronoun *we* abundantly peppers the

Melbourne Interview transcripts in regard to choice-making throughout the rehearsal process, and this outwardly suggests a collective mindset. It is perceived, too, that the power-relations in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room have evolved over past decades. Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February), one of the more senior practitioners interviewed, notes that when he started, '[I was] at the bottom of the pecking order' and 'the director was definitely the boss'. A hierarchical authority structure was seen in the terms of address used in rehearsal:

> PH: Back in the 80s … you still called people Mister, and Mr Ainsworth, and all that … it wasn't just here's John, here's Dave, and all this sort of thing, it was like …
>
> DG: In terms of the director?
>
> PH: The director, definitely, but also the older actors ….

One might assume that this social hierarchy would have impacted the nature of creative interaction within the rehearsal room at the time. Houghton surmises that the shift away from this hierarchical structure can be attributed to social, generational change. He suggests contemporary training schools such as VCA develop young actors with a greater sense of agency, who contribute more freely to the rehearsal process, with less emphasis on the 'British classical thing' and more focus on 'playmaking stuff' (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February). Again, we see the echoes of training institutions, and their approaches and origins here: VCA, borne from the experimental, collective agency of 1970's Melbourne independent theatre, sitting in contrast to the 'British classical thing', with form and hierarchy borne from centuries of theatre tradition and the British class system.

The 'playmaking stuff' is also significant. An actor trained to make their own work undoubtedly has developed skills and expectations that colour their approach to rehearsal. Winter observes that both his training and independent theatre work have required him to

be actively involved in decision-making processes. It is significant in a discussion regarding

collaboration, then, that Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) comments upon the

inappropriateness of voicing his opinions in a mainstage context:

> MW: I'm from a world where I go why would we ever do that? That's a really bad idea. Then
> we talk about it. Whereas you go into a professional context, that's not necessarily your
> conversation to have anymore.
>
> DG: As an actor?
>
> MW: Yeah, yeah … that was an interesting revelation for me.

Such an account suggests that the director-actor echelon may be more embedded in

Melbourne mainstage practice than is suggested by the frequency of the term

'collaboration'. This notion is reinforced by further musings by Houghton (2016, 18

February) that, despite some shifts in rehearsal hierarchy, there are still young,

authoritarian style directors working today. Anecdotally, too, that there are plenty of

hierarchical directors of all ages working in Melbourne mainstage theatre.

 In Melbourne mainstage rehearsal, then, the use of 'we' may *infer* a shared pursuit, but it

does not necessarily represent the *reality* of shared agency. Collaboration, too, is a matter

of perception: it means different things to different practitioners, and given its currency

with actors, that can mean the semblance of instrumentality. Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19

August), as a mainstage director, neatly sums up the actuality: 'I have a tendency to

basically say everything's welcome, but actually it's just [that] you've got to give the illusion

of collaboration'.

It is the *beliefs* concerning collaboration and authority, nonetheless, that partly inform the

way directors and actors engage with one another. We see the resulting discord play out in

Winter's comments above. The term collaboration also, significantly, suggests a *unity* of

process. The capacity to work together is dependent upon some commonality in the *way of working, and perceiving the way of working*. When we place the differences of actor mindsets, propensities and preferences discussed against this belief in unified, collective work, however, it becomes clear that there is a disjuncture here also.

Differences in expectations and preferences regarding working methods and collaboration can lead to conflict. A case in point is demonstrated in Price's (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) recount of the rehearsal of the Malthouse production of *The Histrionic.* In his recollection Price refers to: himself, a graduate actor; Daniel Schlusser, an experienced Melbourne independent theatre maker; Bille Brown, a seasoned Australian actor trained in a British tradition in the lead role; and Barry Otto, another acclaimed, senior Australian actor:

> … it was interesting to come in contact suddenly with established performers, and particularly Bille Brown [who was] working with a director whose particular way of working didn't match up with his, so that was a fascinating experience … encountering performers who were used to working in a more traditional way … Bille, particularly, coming from a background of English theatre and a sense of hierarchy and working your way up and all those sort of things and imposing that set of expectations on the room, and particularly the younger actors in the room who, perhaps, hadn't worked in main-stage theatre before … actors like Barry Otto, who's completely mad, but open, utterly open and willing to go on whatever ride [and] was willing to explore … I'd come from a world that was all about … exploration, and to see where Schlusser [took it], the parameters of there are no limits to the work, the work can go anywhere and do anything in a kind of amazing way, [in comparison to] one of the performers who [was] used to a certain set of rigid things, that have been created over centuries of performance.

This comment portrays the tussle of expectations regarding the frame that individuals expect to work within. Firstly, Schlusser's exploratory, open-ended work compared to Brown's more fixed, traditional way of working reveals a major misalignment of paradigms:

more contemporary artistic ideals of unknowingness, reflexivity and discovery clash with the certainty, structure and premeditation typical of an earlier theatrical tradition. Secondly, the status and hierarchy brought to the room by the lead actor, signatures of his training and esteemed, long career, are at odds with the collaborative tone of the younger actors, another senior actor and the director. Such conflicting artistic ideology and expectations of artistic authority, even if not as pronounced as the example above, impact the efficacy of a rehearsal process and reinforce the key arguments of this thesis: the director's work is framed by the unique contingencies of a project, including the particularities of different actors, and that therefore, an array of rehearsal methods is required.

Previously the difficulty of an actor adapting their process was raised, and this is a point worth exploring further. Common sense would suggest that, necessitated by occupational survival, an actor should adapt to the directorial process being employed. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added) outlines the actor's need to adjust:

> I think all the situations in which I've been in a piece where a performer hasn't been used to a specific way of working and has been *forced* to, they've always acclimatised. As performers there's this … and particularly in the industry in Australia, because we're all freelancers and every job is our entrance to the next job, you really have to make it work, you have to learn how to be, you have to *learn* how to make it work in the situation that you are in.

It is worth noting two of the operative terms at play here: 'forced', and at the close of Price's thoughts, 'learn'. At the outset, Price articulates the imperative to adapt. On one hand, in a profession where a shortage of work means there is limited opening to practice and refine one's skills, learning other ways of working may be seen as a positive, expansive opportunity for artistic growth. The necessity, however, of fitting into a significantly unfamiliar process, within a tight timeline and with an imminent public outcome, undoubtedly creates not just a level of discomfort for the actor in question, as previously

noted by Moore, but also adds to the intricacy of the rehearsal process. As graduate actor Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) succinctly put it, '[we need] a way to have a common language'.

From this discussion it has become evident that the role of the director is as much about managing actors' individual working styles, beliefs and expectation as the artistry of the stage. All of the directors in the Melbourne Interviews commented upon the need to juggle disparate actor processes and needs. This is a complex task. Lutton likens his directorial role to attending to the idiosyncratic needs of guests when hosting a dinner party (2014, pers. comm. 28 October). He notes that different actors want different degrees of structure. He 'frequently has both types of actors in the same show': the highly self-sufficient artist where, as a director, 'you need to get out of the way', and the actor who 'ask hundreds of questions, want[s] the most precise detail and character notes' so that as a director he 'almost choreographs' the work (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October).[82]

The quandary of navigating different approaches can be keenly felt by actors and directors alike. Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August, emphasis added) reflects upon the moil and struggle in the rehearsal process of *Birdland*:

> LC: That was very hard for some of them, even though they were great theatre makers … and they went with it, there were times when it was … we were … it was *very hard*. And that's sometimes to do with me failing them, because you're balancing a bunch of different processes, not everyone can speak the same language
>
> DG: And everyone's working in different ways and-
>
> LC: And *everyone working in a different way, and everyone needs different things*.

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[82] It should be noted that an actor's personal neediness of a director, or desire for verbal interaction, is not necessarily aligned to any particular acting methodology, but may be more indicative of the actor's own personal approach driven by their personality, propensities and vulnerabilities.

Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February, emphasis added), observes the disharmony that

can result from cast members with different processes:

> PH: I'm only *trying to help people with possibly quite different processes get to the same*
> *point*, I suppose, and as you get older that is something you get to, you just understand
> people more, and understand that people are different and they're after different things and
> *some of the more tricky terrain is actually when you've got two actors who are quite*
> *different from each other* and you're watching them wrangle a scene together, and they're
> coming at it from very different angles, that can be awkward … one of them may be
> someone who likes to carry a script around forever, and the other might be a person who
> wants to put it down, and he's just frustrated by the other actor who is still book-bound or
> whatever it is, like, *people have different processes* …
>
> DG: So how do you solve that … how do you work as a director when you've got people
> working in completely different ways?
>
> PH: Just patience, I think, yeah. I've never met an actor who doesn't want to be good on
> opening night, so you've always got that up your sleeve, you've always got fear on your side,
> fear and ambition are probably your greatest allies.

If the timing of being off-script can create significant difficulty between cast members, we

can appreciate the invidious impact of less visible differences upon the rehearsal process.

The tone of Houghton's down to earth comment, that patience and a reliance upon 'fear

and ambition' are the solution, reflects the practical realities of just *getting a show up*.

Houghton's quip, however, sits alongside his other comments regarding actors' resistance to

direction. We see this in his directorial frustration as he articulates a typical exchange that

can occur with an actor: 'will you *just fuckin try it!'* (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18

February, emphasis added).

Given the complexity arising from working styles, it is logical that casting is part of the

directorial solution to a more effective and/or expedient rehearsal process. The Melbourne

Interviews indicate that directors do partly cast not just for the role, but for *how* the show

will be rehearsed. Caceres and Houghton reveal that their casting can be as much about the actors as theatre makers as performers. Houghton (2016, 18 February) notes that in casting he looks for artistic contribution and ingenuity. Similarly, for the project of *Birdland*, Caceres (2015, pers. comm. 19 August) gave herself a self-imposed rule that the entire cast needed to be 'makers'.

This seems a valid approach to ensure some unity between the actors and the director, but it is not foolproof, as seen in Caceres previous comments regarding the challenges in her *Birdland* rehearsal. Casting for a similar approach may also inadvertently create a degree of nepotism, placing additional barriers to employment for the lesser known actor. Casting, too, is subject to its own aleatory and adventitious forces; timelines, finance, availability of actors and marketing strategies, such as the 'celebrity casting' of screen actors who bring their own particular processes, add to the complex mix of who enters the rehearsal room. Constraints upon the casting process are combined with the simple unpredictability of human interaction, as one actor sums up:

> … and it's so much for the director to make split decisions about how group dynamics works and I think there is a chemistry that you can't predict in groups, every group is going to work differently … [Also] there's no chemical casting anymore in theatre, which I find really strange … Like testing two actors together, and seeing how they work. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

In this section, I have explored and reinforced Knowles' contention that an actor's training embeds ideologies, propensities and preferences that impact rehearsal activity. It is clear that these differences can cause disharmony, disunity and difficulty in the rehearsal process, and that managing these differences is a significant challenge faced by the Melbourne director. In the next section, I will extend this argument to expound how different levels of actor experience also impact the rehearsal process. Drawing upon exemplars from the

Melbourne Interviews, I will elucidate how the career-stage of an actor can inform the nature of their behaviour, and contribution, in rehearsal. An actor's degree of experience adds further complexity to a director's role and the rehearsal process.

5.3 Actor Experience

As previously discussed, the emerging actor enters the rehearsal room accompanied by a heady concoction of cultural positioning, deep personal need and performance pressure. They stalwartly brace themselves with faith in their training and work ethic, their specific acting techniques at the ready. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that emerging actors have a tendency to read, and then respond to, the communication and occurrences of the rehearsal room in distinctive, and at times counter-productive, ways. On the other-hand, it appears that the experienced actor, whilst not immune to pressures nor without expectations, carries into the rehearsal room work practices, skills and perspectives that can enable them to approach rehearsal more effectively.

As discussed, 'openness' is an artistic ideal prevalent in the Melbourne Interviews. Whilst seen as a highly desirable state, it is difficult for the less experienced actor to achieve or sustain openness. More experienced actors tend to be more open to artistic possibilities whilst emerging actors are inclined to be less reflexive and close themselves off to creative opportunities (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October; Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). The paradox that graduate actors are unable to attain the openness they crave in rehearsal seems to stem, in part, from their zealous level of preparation outside of the rehearsal room. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) professes that emerging actors have 'a tendency to over-prepare, so they make prepared choices rather than spontaneous choices'. His concern is that an over-prepared actor's preconceptions prevent them from

fully responding to offers on the floor from other actors. This is problematic given the paradigm of much contemporary theatre practice: that acting is reacting to the variables of any given, lived moment, and that a key function of rehearsal is to pursue the emerging logic of the embodied scene. Each choice is a building block that serves as the foundation for the next; each choice needs to build upon the previous choice. In comparison, a preconceived interpretation can result in offers that do not sequentially build upon the logic of the offer that precedes it, and hence the work can become inconsonant, disconnected and unsound. Predetermined decisions can undermine flow and reflexivity. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October, emphasis added) explains how it can be necessary to intervene and redirect the young actor who is unable to respond to another actor: '*Just listen* to Barry, stop rehearsing, don't do that *by yourself'*. Ironically, the graduate actor's conscientiousness impedes what they desire, the communion of artistic interaction, and curtails what they value, collective discovery and evolution.

This has implications for the director. If artistic unity is to be achieved, and misinterpretation avoided, rehearsal must commence with the cast 'roughly on the same page' (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October). Previously I have cited the directorial dilemma Houghton faced when his conscientious young actor arrived on Day One of rehearsals with a fully formed interpretation. This scenario is consistent with Lutton's assertion that the emerging actor has a tendency to pre-learn a role without requisite neutrality, whereas the experienced actor is more likely to memorise the text flat, avoiding any predetermined intonation prior to exploration in rehearsal. As a result, the less experienced actor's assiduity can stymy the rehearsal process:

> Due to their anxiety, they do their process one hundred and ten percent, which means they rehearse outside the rehearsal room, then delve into what they've prepared, rather than responding to what's in the room. (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October)

It seems the notion of the 'autonomous' or 'independent' actor, instilled so diligently in drama school to help graduate actors survive an isolating industry, can undermine their capacity for connection, discovery and artistry in rehearsal. It is a delicate paradox: the emerging actor is compelled to prove their professionalism, garner confidence and compensate for their lack of experience through in-depth preparation, and yet remain somewhat unaffected to respond, *a priori*, to the moment at hand.

Preparation is also a logical strategy to manage the shift from Drama School rehearsal timelines to the condensed temporal constraints of professional rehearsal (Samuels 2014, pers. comm. 19 October). Moore (2006) asserts that this preparation is unavoidable: if an actor waits to develop their role in a four-week rehearsal period, they will not be ready for the opening of the season.

A young actor's sense of *time urgency* is coupled with fear. The Melbourne Interviews indicate that a graduate actor's debut in the professional rehearsal room is simultaneously exciting, terrifying and perceived as a critical moment in their career:

> You feel a lot of pressure. You don't want to fuck it up! You want to get another job! You want to meet the other people you are working with, you don't want to let the show down. (Monticciolo 2014, pers. comm. 28 October)

Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) concurs that nervousness can be crippling in the early stages of rehearsal: 'I was so bloody nervous – I didn't know if I was up for it … The exposure you have when you do a performance, there was no hiding!'. The psychological and emotional demands of rehearsal were evident throughout the data in the graduate

actors' turns of phrase in relation to rehearsal room practice. Their utterances such as

'thrown into' and 'flung' suggest a feeling of velocity and vulnerability. Monticciolo (2014,

pers. comm. 28 October) recalls the palpable toll of her physical and emotional investment

in her first professional performance. She describes being curled up in a ball on the dressing

room floor at the end of the show, adding: 'Opening Night … it's like a rollercoaster, the

rush, my lips were tingling. At the end I had to crawl off! I'd love to do it again!'. For Samuels

(2014, pers. comm. 19 October), her professional debut made her recognize the urgent

need for strategies to manage anxiety and pressure: 'I've learnt to self-nurture … not put

yourself down. In drama school I rarely thought about that'. In a telling summation of the

acting profession, she adds 'I've learnt that in the professional world everyone's insecure'.[83]

It is well recognised in theatrical discourse that fear and anxiety can hinder an actor's work.

Strong admires the courage of the younger actors he works with and sees it as part of his

directorial responsibility to help them manage their fear as part of the creative process

(2014, pers. comm. 9 October). This reduction of fear is important in the rehearsal room, for

anxiety can be 'the antithesis of creativity' (Trevis 2012, p. 62); when risk is avoided,

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[83] Concern for the psychological wellbeing of actors has been a quietly growing conversation in academic circles for more than twenty years. Less-experienced actors are particularly at risk. From a dissertation study into actors' mental health, Acuna (2016) concluded that actors frequently do not have the psychological and emotional resources to manage the stress specific to their profession, and that early-career actors are particularly vulnerable. A precis of literature in *The Australian Actors' Wellbeing Study: A Preliminary Report* exposes the potential deleterious psychological effects of an actor's work (Maxwell, Seton & Szabó 2015). This study highlights the impact upon a young actor, including the pervasiveness of the notion of vulnerability in training (Seton 2004); distress associated with the blurring of self and role (Burgoyne, Poulin & Rearden 1999); and the risks involved in affective memory technique (McFarren 2003). More broadly, literature reveals the psychological and emotional resonances of a role continue well after the work has ended, with actors of all levels of experience feeling the effects. Performance can be followed by an 'emotional hangover' (Geer 1993); whilst the actor traversing social and psychological boundaries in rehearsal and performance can experience symptoms of lingering trauma (Griffiths 2015a). The significance of the ongoing emotional and psychological impact of theatrical work upon the actor is discussed by Mark Seton in his aptly named article, *'Post-dramatic Stress': Negotiating Vulnerability for Performance* (Seton 2008).

inspiration is impeded. The pressure particularly upon the young actor can be severely

debilitating, according to Davies (1996, p. 4):

> [Young actors] find it very difficult to give themselves permission to explore, as they are
> highly judgemental of themselves and others, they have unrealistic expectations ... They
> stop before they begin, they are sometimes so frightened of failure that they are unable to
> start.

Bogart (2001, p. 83) observes that, at any age, an actor's levels of fear or trust felt in

rehearsal dramatically determines the creativity of the performance outcome:

> Are the choices made in rehearsal based on a desire for security or a search for freedom? I
> am convinced that the most dynamic and thrilling choices are made when there is a trust in
> the process, in the artists and in the material.

Bogart's observation that ingenuity is associated with agency is underpinned by research on

the impact that situation has upon creativity. Articulating Shaw's ideas, creativity theorist

Heinzen (1994, p. 129) explains:

> ...the entire creative process is overlaid with various degrees of both positive (intrinsically
> motivating, attractive and self-initiating) or negative (extrinsically motivating, repellent,
> crisis driven) situational affect.[84]

What is also interesting is that the effect of 'situational affect' reverberates *beyond* the

artistic moment at hand. In Heinzen's (p. 129) words:

> Both positive and negative external affect can produce creativity, but one tends to produce a
> creative product characterised by elaborate, ongoing productivity while the other tends to
> produce a creative product characterised by minimal, short-term, coping responses.

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[84] The term 'situational affect' refers to how 'affective characteristics of the external situation shape specific
features of the creative process and the eventual product' (Heinzen 1994, p. 128).

This theory resonates with the Melbourne Interview data. It seems that the harried, graduate actor is inclined to make more immediate and simplistic choices, in contrast to the self-assured, experienced actor who may construct a more complex performance, moment by moment. According to Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October), young actors in rehearsal 'give it everything' and make choices sooner: 'you see what you've got early in the process'. In comparison, he observes that more experienced actors tend to deliberately delay decision-making for as long as possible. Self-confidence, it seems, enables this deferment mentality, which in turn broadens creative extrapolation. Saturating themselves with creative possibilities through exploration enables the experienced actor to discover depths and nuances. They seem to have the capacity to withstand the anxiety of not knowing, a confidence in remaining open for as long as possible.

Experienced actors are more self-assured in making choices. Strong observes the graduate actor's propensity to second-guess their own instinct, and notes that this can undermine their artistry. In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* Dweck (2006) argues that our perceptions inform our behaviour, which in turn shapes our reality. This is the premise of Action-Specific Perception theory which proposes that an individual's view of reality alters according to their perceived ability to act (Witt & Riley 2014). The same task may be deemed easier or harder depending on the personal perspective of the individual at any particular moment. In the rehearsal room, the perceptual set of the emerging actor contributes to their perceived capacity to act, this perception affects their confidence, and in turn effects their creative decision making. This may explain the paradox emerging here: it seems the graduate actor is more willing to embrace less traditional rehearsal approaches,

and yet it is the experienced actor, with trust in their own capacity, who is prepared to defer and take risks within the development of their work.

The experienced actor is also more likely to make bold choices. Courage is allied to mastery according to Rea. He has found that 'the outstanding actor is inclined to take more and greater risks than the mediocre actor' (2014, p. 234). In the Melbourne Interviews, Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) suggests that in rehearsal the emerging actor does 'experiment and fail', but according to Lutton (2014, 28 October) and Watson (2014, 22 October), the level of experience of an actor has a significant impact on the boldness of their choices. Audacity, in turn, has a flow on effect to the work created. Watson's (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) comment reveals the dynamic play of situational effect in rehearsal:

> … a more experienced actor is more likely to trust the director when they are feeling uncomfortable to see where it [a moment, a scene] may go. There's more risk – to their career – when someone has less exposure….

Risk-adversity is concomitant with a preoccupation to 'get it right', according to the Melbourne Interview data. Monticciolo (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) comments candidly that she finds the accountability of rehearsal exciting but also frightening: 'Rehearsal terrifies me – it's really scary. You have to do something … you might get it wrong!'. Meltzer (2014, pers. comm. 13 October) seemed aware her belief in exploration and openness sat against a potent need for the *approval* of her choices: 'You want to get it right, but there is no right! The pressure will always be there … there is always better'. Velik (2014, pers. comm. 14 October) feels that it is a mix of passion, artistic integrity and discomfort, perpetuated by a particular directorial manner, behind his drive for a correct response:

> There is fear – to get it right, you don't want to get it wrong, you want to do well, you love it and care about it. I think the best work I've seen is when the actors aren't worried about

doing it right. What I don't like in rehearsal is when people are made to feel they have got

something wrong.

Perhaps this desire to please, to get it right, is perpetuated through actor training. Whilst

the intention of training is to build autonomy and agency, as previously discussed, the

actor's work in institutions is subject to assessment. Historically, in the case of at least one

institution, this assessment determines if the student actor will keep their place within the

course. Limited funding means limited places throughout the school, and a departing

student opens up an additional place for the next intake of first year actors. Whilst in class

the actors are encouraged to work 'to satisfaction' to develop their own inner artistic

barometer, [85] I suspect this funding structure creates a 'please or leave' mentality that could

undermine a growth mindset. Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) comments that at

her drama school there was a sense of everyone wanting to please the directors they

worked with, of 'everyone trying to get it right'. From maintaining a place at drama school,

the graduate actor then faces an industry where the gateway to work is audition. When

there are limited opportunities to demonstrate your potential, and the outcome is

determined by another, the actor is inevitably compelled to 'get it right'.

According to the Melbourne Interviews, directors adjust the quantity of feedback that they

give to an actor depending upon their level of experience. Interestingly, the amount of

feedback is disproportionate to the actor's level of performance skill. Based on their

perception of the capacity of the actor, the director determines the amount of feedback to

give. For instance, Lutton (2014, 28 October) may give twenty notes to an accomplished

actor when polishing work. In comparison, he observes that the emerging actor's need to

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[85] From my experience as a directing student (who participated in acting classes and rehearsal processes at VCA) 'working to a point of satisfaction' was a common instruction given to under-graduate actors by Lindy Davies.

'get it right' has a reductive effect on the way that actor is able to receive notes. He offers only a fraction of his thoughts to the graduate actor, perhaps five notes, because 'that's all they can get, because they take it as a failure, it lowers morale, when I'm (just) trying to detail'. Lutton's truncation of notes is to avoid undermining the surety of the role the less experienced actor has built. He asserts, 'they can't hold it all. They have to have the ability to hold their performance and add notes'. Such thinking is consistent with the views of Barba, who notes that due to insufficient skill, young actors have difficulty safeguarding the 'inner life of their scores' (2010, p. 66). A 'discovery' one day can be lost or diminished the next. When combined with the tendency of emerging actors to lock in choices early in, if not prior to, the rehearsal, this creates an interesting dilemma. The director is charged with assisting particularly the emerging actor to concurrently explore *and* secure their performance.

More experienced actors seem to manage better, and delve deeper into, the emotional intensity required in rehearsal. Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) appreciates the energy with which graduate actors '…throw themselves' into rehearsal but advises that they need to learn to pace themselves. In comparison to the short seasons of drama school, at the end of the rehearsal period the young actor needs to sustain a significantly longer performance season of six to ten week season (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). Additionally, both Strong and Lutton assert that young actors, whilst technically well trained in most areas, struggle with handling and sustaining depth and magnitude of feeling (2014, pers. comm. 9 October; 2014, pers. comm. 28 October). Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) proposes that experienced actors are more 'emotionally fluent', have greater 'access to emotion' and are 'happy to talk about emotion'. In comparison, emotional intensity tends to be more

difficult for the less experienced actor. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) declares that the emotional force from an older actor can challenge the capacity of the younger actor: '[y]oung actors can't hold the gaze of other actors, that is, the energy from other, older actors'. Incidentally, he makes the interesting remark that perhaps this aspect could be addressed partly within actor training. Rather than the sessional employment of directors to work with students at drama school, Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) suggests that it may be more advantageous for under-graduates to have the opportunity in class to work directly opposite experienced actors. This would enable them to experience greater intensity and learn from the emotional risk-taking of older actors. Given that a number of the young actors I interviewed keenly observed the work of their more skilled senior counterparts during their downtime in the rehearsal room, this may indeed prove a valuable addition to actor training to aid transition into the industry.

Finally, the Melbourne Interviews suggest that emerging actors can find the physical size of the professional stage problematic. The professional stage is seen to be significantly larger than spaces from the actors' training institutions. Similarly, the theatre spaces that characterise much of the Melbourne theatre landscape in which young actors pursue profit-share gigs are also idiosyncratically intimate. The spatial perception of the young actor is challenged on the professional stage: the parameters have literally changed. Samuels (2014, 19 October) shares that she was unsure of where to position herself when rehearsing in a mainstage space for the first time. She confesses that she was unable to adjust her sense of spatial proxemics within the short rehearsal period. The physical magnitude of a mainstage poses, too, the additional problem of vocal projection for the graduate actor. Monticciolo

(2014, pers. comm. 28 October), lamenting the lack of rigour in her vocal training, feels that

she was unprepared for the vocal demands of a large professional stage:

> Phèdre was a problem for me. I hadn't worked mainstage, a big space. In drama school we
> had an audience of fifty to one hundred. Mainstage, four hundred, is quite different!

Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) agrees that there are some technical issues that can

arise with the vocality of the emerging actor:

> … not having [enough] energy to the end of sentences, not taking a big enough breath …
> knowing when to breathe … They've done classes but can't apply it, or have forgotten it.

These issues of space and voice training warrant further investigation so that the emerging

actor is more effectively prepared. They also flag that the director's work in the rehearsal

room needs to be tailored to the experience, skill-set and needs of the actors within it.

In this section, I have explored how an actor's level of experience impacts the way that they

work, and are worked with, through the lens and context of the Melbourne mainstage

rehearsal room. In sum, less experienced actors tend to be hard-working, but their assiduity

can lead to a lack of reflexivity and experimentation on the floor. Graduate actors, however,

can be more open to different rehearsal processes than their older colleagues. More

experienced actors tend to delay choice-making, have greater emotional intensity, and are

able to receive and apply a greater quantity of directorial feedback. The seasoned actor is

also more adept at managing the vocal and physical demands of a large stage. It has become

evident that the actor's capacity to operate within the parameters of the rehearsal is, itself,

a skill. An actor's level of expertise in rehearsing informs their interaction with the director,

the way the director is able to work, and how rehearsal proceeds. The actor's experience,

therefore, may be viewed as another frame that contains, constrains and shapes the work of the director.

In this chapter, I have elucidated a number of the invisible and aleatory factors of rehearsal of which Knowles speaks. Underlying an actor's perceptions of, and reception to, activity in the rehearsal room is an idiosyncratic mix of elements: social expectations, financial pressures, and limited employment opportunities to develop proficiency in the profession; the propensities and preferences in how to work, often the residue of actor training; and levels of experience. These aspects inform, buffer and sway the nature of an actor's contribution to the rehearsal process, and subsequently, the way the director can proceed with their own work. The intra-personal and inter-personal components discussed expose the managerial province of the director, the parameters within which he/she works, and reinforce the argument that, due to the particular nature of each rehearsal project and cast, a reflexive, bespoke approach is required.

In the past three chapters I have explicated several external factors that influence rehearsal. In the next chapter I shift my focus to a fundamental aspect inside the rehearsal room, the text, and examine how it, too, places parameters upon the work of the practitioners. I will argue that these textual constraints delimit and effect the nature of rehearsal activity, as well as the performance product that results.

Chapter 6   The Text

> … the *play, maybe, should tell us how it should be rehearsed*, rather than a process being implemented, so that maybe the way we get to it is a negotiation with the material, and each other, and say, well, how are going to go about this? (Mouzakis 2015, pers. comm. 28 October)

Direction is a 'bespoke art form' that involves responding to the 'unique challenges' posed by the text (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). In this section, I add to my conceptual model of rehearsal as a series of frames, arguing that textual considerations are parameters that determine the potentiality of the work. I propose that these parameters, too, need to be met by reflexive, contingent rehearsal practice. This brief discussion intersects with, but goes beyond, my previous review of the authority of the text/director as auteur debate, to consider how several inherent textual elements – cast size, length and language – effect and affect rehearsal activity. With reference to theatre literature, the Melbourne Interviews as well as critical reviews of Melbourne productions, I will demonstrate how textual challenges can impact rehearsal practice and subsequent performance reception. I argue that a director's role is to manage, mitigate and capitalize on the particularities of the given text through the apt selection of rehearsal methods.

The argument that a rehearsal approach should directly respond to the nature of the script at hand is augmented by Terence Crawford's 'Theory of Dramatic Relativity'. In his text for actors*, Dimensions of Acting,* Crawford (2011) encourages the actor to approach their craft by determining the key 'dimensions' of the script, and then using these eight dimensions as navigational tools to determine which approach/es may be most beneficial – aesthetic, communication, environment, activity, dramaturgy, history, personalisation and/or

characterisation. Crawford guides the actor in applying the most apt tools to meet the particularities of each individual text.

Crawford's book is a unique contribution to acting literature: it is written from, and to specifically address, the Australian context, and argues that 'one size does not fit all' when it comes to theatrical process. Similarly, nearly two decades ago my directing mentor, Richard Murphet, would prompt in class, 'What are the specific challenges posed and methods required?' What is the predominant element of the text, or of each unit?' (Murphet, pers. comm. 2001). This shared belief in a contingent approach by two significant Australian practitioners, combined with Mouzakis' comment cited earlier, suggest that there is a perceived need to articulate the benefit in tailoring theatrical work more purposefully to meet the specific nature of the text in contemporary Melbourne theatre. The inference made, which is also borne out in the Melbourne Interviews, is that it is not, currently, *de rigueur* to significantly adapt the rehearsal process to the text at hand. It is therefore important to discuss how some core textual components impact the rehearsal process.

6.1 Length and Cast Size

Script length is a simple, but significant, place to begin a discussion regarding textual differences. Historically, scripts have been getting shorter. The length and structure of texts have shrunk from the five acts of classical works, via three act plays common to the nineteenth and twentieth century, to two act, and now often, one act plays. In the current era, scripts written by contemporary writers are shorter, with more succinct dialogue than ever before. This brevity and conciseness is undoubtedly attributable to a myriad of factors, but one may assume the writing and programming of theatrical works is influenced by an increasingly attention-deficit, time-poor contemporary audience, inculcated to the cultural

aesthetic of highly-edited, rapidly-paced television and film narratives with compendious dialogue and narratives. A lengthier text, I suggest, is more demanding upon the theatre patron and therefore requires significant craftsmanship to sustain audience engagement. At the same time, a lengthier text, I argue, places a constraint upon the way the rehearsal process can be undertaken to achieve that level of engagement.

In Melbourne, longer works of the pre-contemporary canon sit uncomfortably with the temporal framework of a four-week rehearsal period. The question of how 'to just get through' the show becomes a predominant focus of rehearsal activity. In the comment below, Houghton (2016, pers. comm. 18 February) contemplates his forthcoming rehearsal period for the comedy *The Odd Couple*:

> … most plays are about 90 minutes these days, but that is a full length, old style, three-act play, although it's quite nippy … it'll be interesting, just time management. I've been doing a Shakespeare … I think one of the reasons why state companies don't do them is because [of] the timeframe … doing a play that runs at three-and-a half hours is just not consistent with the four-week-rehearsal period ….

In retrospect, Houghton mitigated the length of the play by casting two experienced, comic actor friends in the key roles. This strategy saved him valuable rehearsal time as the connectivity, reactivity and repartee between cast members added speed to the work process. The trust Houghton had in the two lead actors' comic abilities gave him the confidence to hand over sections to cast members to develop, which freed up his time to work with other actors. These strategies were effective in terms of the play's reception: reviews of the production were consistently favourable, and praised the brilliant comic interplay, chemistry and timing of the two key actors, and the flow and ease of the comedy under Houghton's 'deft' direction (Boon 2016; Della Bosca 2016; Herbert 2016; Woodhead 2016; Solarsh 2016).

The length of *The Crucible* - nearly 40,000 words, which equates to 2 hours and 23 minutes reading time (Putnam n.d.) - combined with the density of the language, was foremost in Strong's mind from the outset when directing the MTC production. Despite his belief in not over-preparing for rehearsal, Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) felt compelled to increase his level of preparation of the text in an effort to combat the play's temporal and linguistic scale.

Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October), as a graduate actor, was astounded by the ratio of text to time in rehearsal of *The Crucible* production: 'I couldn't believe it was only four weeks to do such a huge play'. She divulges that her own performance 'didn't grow that much' given the sheer volume of text to get through in 'only so much time'. Samuels points to the crux of the issue, that gradual development is undermined by the pressure to produce product: 'there was always a sense of the end results'. Another cast member (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September) of Strong's *The Crucible* production reflects that there was 'some beautiful exploratory work, but just in 4 weeks with *that* play, it was just working out space and rhythm really'. Some critical comment of the final production also noted the magnitude of the text: 'The cast's stamina in such a demanding play must be acknowledged' (Graham 2013).

As a play *The Crucible* has the additional challenge, typical of older texts, of numerous characters. A larger cast creates an exponential increase in the number of relationships (actor to actor and character to character), and by logical extension, the time and attention required to develop the commune between characters, and between actors. Unsurprisingly, one cast member notes how 'crazy' it was trying to rehearse a cast of fifteen actors in the time frame (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). Given the limited time to develop

emotional complexity in the matrix of onstage relationships in this story, it is unfortunately understandable that the criticism levelled at the production was that it severely lacked the requisite emotional 'charge' and 'stakes' (Boyd 2013; Croggon 2013).

One particular review was especially damning of the production, declaring the production 'shit', laughable and embarrassing (Bache 2013, para. 3). It was noted that the director had 'kill[ed]' the production through 'unimaginative' staging, very limited blocking and little character interaction: '[y]ou could be forgiven for thinking they all rehearsed separately, only coming together for the first time [on opening] night' and '[e]very single actor is playing in a different direction' (para. 5-7). The critical expectations brought to this production are evident in the critic's use of, 'Miller's previously unwreckable masterpiece' and 'Miller's unimpeachable text', alongside frequent references as to what the production 'should' do (para. 2, 5-6). The critical commentary of *The Crucible* exemplifies the fraught relationship between the demands of the text, the circumstances and time pressures which inform how it is rehearsed, and the exacting lens through which a performance, especially of a canonical text, is viewed and judged.

In comparison, Strong's production of the contemporary script *The Sublime* was a three-hander. The shorter length of the play, and limited number of cast members and character relationships, was a very different frame for Strong to operate within. There was opportunity to facilitate his cast of three in connecting with each other and to the sporting premise of the show. To provide the visceral rehearsal experience that Strong prefers as part of his rehearsal methodology, his cast spent an hour each day jogging around the city park. It is worth noting that critical reviews commented on the pace, energy and articulateness of the acting (Woodhead 2014b; Craven 2014a) achieving it seems the

'emotionally charged trajectory' highlighted by MTC in their advertising (Melbourne Theatre Company 2014, para. 3).

6.2 Performance Aesthetic

A text contains, and proposes, a particular performance aesthetic that suggests the inclusion of particular aspects, and the exclusion of others. Rehearsal activity is both shaped by, and involves defining, the style and world of the play, as the director and cast work out the 'type of world you're aiming for…' (Winter 2015, pers. comm. 20 August) and 'find what belongs' (Crawford 2011, p. 117). For Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September, emphasis added), rehearsal is about 'creating a world on stage which is unto itself, which has its *own set of rules'*. Rehearsal is a process in which boundaries are discussed and/or embodied, declared and/or discovered. These rules form the parameters for character behaviour and direction. The consistent application of these 'rules' of the world becomes a point of measure to ascertain the relevance and effectiveness of the myriad of rehearsal ideas presented. According to Crawford (2011, p. 115), what is germane to the performance aesthetic is determined by investigating, 'What are the rules of this play? What is the style? What's the game?'.

To determine the rehearsal methods that may be most useful to define and build the world, it can be helpful to start with an appreciation of the performance conventions embedded within the writing, and the tradition from which the play originates, as these frames indicate the opportunities and pitfalls.[86]

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[86] Specific rehearsal tools may need to be applied in rehearsal to meet different textual components, such as the heightened physicality, and rapid, clearly articulated repartee of Molière's work; the literary conventions that furnish meaning in Elizabethan text; the sparse dialogue and loaded pauses of Pinter plays; the psychological depth of characters and complex social networks in Chekhovian works; and the musicality and 'specific, simple score[s]' of Beckett's texts (Zarilli, 1997).

The belief that the aesthetic of the text should inform the approach taken in the rehearsal room was voiced by particular practitioners in the Melbourne Interviews. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) comments upon the importance of adapting the process to the world of the play:

> … it's a case by case thing … each particular text requires a different set of rehearsal parameters … you have to acknowledge the actuality of the text, you've got to meet it in a specific way. If you're going to give an external treatment to *The Crucible* you're going to fail, but something like Moliere's *Tartuffe,* maybe that is what it needs, it needs the gloss paint, it needs the specific gestural movement on this line and the wink to the audience and the tilt of the head here and that actually serves the text.

Similarly, AA (2015, pers. comm. 4 September) observes the importance of the director's role in matching the rehearsal approach to theatrical style, to achieve the requisite specificity and nuance of the text:

> *The Crucible* is heightened naturalism … so often it is about detailing the tiny moments … those details are essential, and they're essential to map and to do delicately, so I don't know that an abstract experience of that would have been appropriate for that world … the director has to make that call … it's about size, so, in this 'abstract' [rehearsal activity of *Antigone*, my current show], the tendency with abstract is to go big, and to make big offers and crazy offers and wild and ugly and messy and messed up, whereas with naturalism … if you were to do an abstract, it's kind of testing the small, as well as the big offers, because the big offers, generally, you know they won't be kept in a naturalistic world, they're not going to serve [the text]. They'll serve an … experience of intimacy or rage or love or lust, but they don't necessarily serve discovery of blocking, but they might serve the filling of the text and the connection to text.

This actor begins with the contention that the value of more abstract, improvised and embodied approaches is dependent upon the style of the play. She notes that a single rehearsal activity may serve multiple functions, as in this particular instance 'abstract' may 'serve an actor experience' in relation to emotion, and/or 'the filling of the text and the

connection to text'. The idea that a rehearsal method can have a variety of functions, and assist practitioners in different ways, is an important and significant point that will be explored later in this thesis.

Determining the performance pitch and tone of the show was a key priority for Caceres and the cast in the rehearsal of *Birdland,* a story about the surreal, warped world perspective of a narcissistic, egocentric rock star. Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) comments that '[we were] in constant discussion about how we want[ed] it to feel'. According to Winter, a particular performance aesthetic is required to communicate the volatility intrinsic to the play's dramatic premise:

> *Birdland* [is] an anarchic and chaotic proposition that Simon Stephens, the writer, presented. It's loose. It's supposed to be filled with big, strange occurrences that you don't quite know how to deal with. You're dealing with an unpredictable character. I think we kept evolving that piece right to the end. It would constantly move. It would constantly change. It was in a constant state of flux. Which was great ….

Caceres and the cast employed self-imposed rules to try to evoke outlandish behaviour and departure from the norm: 'It's got to be weird, it's got to be weirder' (2015, pers. comm. 19 August). The nihilistic, chaotic performance aesthetic strongly featured in the production's critical reception. Varying opinions upon the prioritisation of the performance style were voiced, from praise of the 'tornado-like force onstage as the characters whirl and wreak destruction' (Harkins-Cross 2015, para. 6) to the stylistic take being dismissed as 'silliness' (Fuhrmann 2015, para. 9). The most interesting critical observation suggested that the degree to which style had been prioritised had been reductive to the content; the chaotic style came at the expense of losing 'dramatic control of the play' (Herbert 2015, para. 2).

6.3 Language

The linguistic structure and idiom of a text can also be seen as creative constraints that impact, and I suggest, should inform rehearsal practice. Language denotes meaning through form, and the written form provides numerous frames to be worked within. Identifying the language conventions at play, and focusing their vocal execution through rehearsal activity, enables the action and meaning of the scene to become more apparent.[87] The benefit of adapting practice to the text at hand is evident in the life-time pursuit of acclaimed voice teachers, Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenburg, who have developed various ways to capacitate actors, and directors, to meet the linguistic demands of text. Berry's body of work, including *From Word to Play, The Actor and his Text and The Text in Action*, makes a particularly compelling case that illumination of text is facilitated by the use of embodied, practical rehearsal activities (2008; 1987; 2001). She argues 'how we engage with the written text and make it active' can change 'our perception of … meaning' (2001, p. 5). The actor needs:

> … to be given time to explore the form and the sound of the text for its own sake so that other meanings and resonances can surface. This is not a luxury but a necessity, for it will inform character, plot and motive in unexpected ways …. (p. 77)

It is through imaginative and kinaesthetic activity that the meaning of text, inherent within the form, can be realised and communicated (Berry 2008). Berry asserts that rehearsal should incorporate techniques for exploring language, as this will add to the 'creative

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[87] It appears that there is a need to develop ways of enhancing the use and application of voice in Australian rehearsal. Despite voice classes in actor training at NIDA and VCA, and the use of voice-coaches at mainstage companies such as MTC and Bell Shakespeare Company, vocal delivery is a weakness of Australian theatre according to theatre critics, scholars and actors themselves. The Australian acting profession, according to critic Peter Craven (2017), particularly needs to develop mastery in speaking and apprehending Shakespearean text. Director and scholar Julian Meyrick (cited in Neill 2017, para. 6) sees the weakness in vocal delivery as part of the 'de-emphasis on language in the theatre', which he attributes to a 'switch of attention from the verbal to the visual'.

output' of rehearsal and, ultimately, increase audience engagement (2001, p. 72). She has developed numerous rehearsal activities to address the idiosyncratic language of texts, some of which will be explored in Section B of this thesis.

The rhythm of the text's language can be the key to meaning. The importance of capitalising on the rhythmic structure of the spoken text in rehearsal was commented upon in the Melbourne Interviews. One actor (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September) conveys how she has found that working within the parameters of the form – the rhythmic interchange between characters and the arc of the dramaturgical structure – enables a scene to be solved. Referring to her own work with the iambic tetrameter in *Antigone*, she observes:

> … you often discover the scene through finding its rhythm, and the blocking is something you experiment with, but that's sort of just based on instinct and trying different things … When something is written in verse, so much of it is about key words, not stressing too many words in one sentence, in the scene, finding where the pause is, where it needs to run on, where it needs to build, where the climax is, so the script analysis of the drive of the scene, or the call and response, what is happening between two people, that is driven by rhythm … *if you find the rhythm of it, you find the scene*.

For this actor, unlocking the meaning of a scene in verse occurs through the interleaving of analysis and exploration of the vocal delivery. In juxtaposition, when the rhythmic framework of the language is not prioritised, particularly in regard to plays written in verse, meaning and impact can be lost. This can have a significant impact upon the reception of the play as written and performed. In the Melbourne adaptation of *Antigone*, the director's propensity of applying an abstract rehearsal methodology enabled the development of a unique *mise en scène*, but did not realise the dramatic potential of the verse in terms of the rhythm and emphasis, and subsequent emotional trajectory and nuanced meaning. Criticism of the production noted bewildering interpretive choices, whilst the abundance of 'striking

imagery' and some 'powerful visual representation' was considered 'more decorative than dramatic' (Woodhead 2015b, para. 6; Weber 2015, para. 14; Woodhead 2015b, para. 7). The written form that had received minimal attention in rehearsal was noted as 'a limp, cold academic exercise' with 'the life sucked out of it' (Bache 2015, para. 2, para. 15). That said, other critics found it 'fascinating' and commented on the striking relevance of the adaptation, and the necessity of it for our times (Wieringa 2015, para. 2; Peard 2015).[88]

Regardless of the position taken on the adaptation, it is clear that the text itself, translated from the Ancient Greek with care and exactitude to preserve nuances, equivalents and the rhythmic iambic tetrameter, went unnoticed by both those who enjoyed and criticised the production; just as attention to this significant facet of the text had been under-prioritised in the rehearsal room. It would seem that the rehearsal tools applied on this occasion did not effectively respond to the specific creative constraints, or as one may concurrently argue, make the most of the specific creative opportunities, of the verse structure, rhythms and language of the written text.

This chapter began with outlining the view, held by three Australian practitioners, that there needs to be greater consideration regarding the relationship between the text and the rehearsal approach taken. I proceeded to argue that the text is a creative constraint that impacts, and should inform, rehearsal practice. A concise discussion comprised of several pertinent examples has demonstrated that text length, cast size, and language conventions are some of the parameters that shape how rehearsal can, or might, proceed. In turn, I have indicated that the way in which these constraints are, or are not, met by the rehearsal

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[88] The critical reception of this production also appears to have been influenced by gender: male critics hated the production and lambasted the adaptation of the text, whilst reviews by female critics were positive, and discussed the strength of the adapted text and the interpretation (Griffiths 2015b).

methods impacts the performance product; the chameleonic capacity of the director to adjust their practice according to the text is essential.

In Section A of this thesis I have argued that the contextual limitations, temporal considerations, the perspectives and propensities of the actor, and the creative constraints of the text, form an idiosyncratic matrix of requirements and potentialities that plays out in the rehearsal room. In my Rehearsal Frame Theory, these factors can be perceived as a series of accumulated frames that begin to shape the work, by excluding certain possibilities, even before rehearsal has started.

In Section B, I expand upon my model of rehearsal as a series of frames, arguing that each activity applied by the director in rehearsal can be viewed as a deliberate, artistic boundary or filter that focuses investigative and interpretive endeavour and delimits the potentiality of the work. To understand how rehearsal activities operate as a series of frames, an original schema will be presented: the Principal Functions of Rehearsal. These Principal Functions and their associated mechanisms, I argue, define and/or enable the parameters that the practitioner works within. I propose that appreciation of these mechanisms is beneficial in the effective selection or design, and implementation, of rehearsal activity. I will present an argument that these working frames, depending upon the pertinence of their design, may increase the creativity of the work.

Section B

In the Introduction of this thesis I expressed the need to demystify, examine and develop rehearsal practice. This included enhancing our current language to articulate in more detail what goes on in the rehearsal room. In Section A, I have explored the evolution of the role of the director, alongside the need to fashion rehearsal activity to meet the unique requirements of each project. I have argued that external forces impact the rehearsal room, including critical culture, funding, temporal constraints and actor training. I have introduced my *Rehearsal Frame Theory,* a model that understands rehearsal as being comprised of parameters, both contextual and creatively chosen, and asserted that these parameters influence the potentiality of the creative work. I have indicated that many of the Melbourne interviewees feel mainstage Melbourne theatre rehearsal practice is often 'traditional'. At the same time I have demonstrated that the practitioners interviewed in the Melbourne Interviews value collaborative, organic, embodied and investigative rehearsal practices.

Section B responds to these points. To enhance rehearsal discourse, I present my schema, developed from the Melbourne Interview data, which offers a way of understanding rehearsal activity.[89] The schema, called the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal,* works in tandem with *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and builds upon the Melbourne practitioners' prevailing belief in collaborative investigation. The director's role is re-envisaged as the designer and/or implementer of a series of actor-centric rehearsal activities according to the circumstances at hand. The nature of each activity is determined by The *Principal Functions*

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[89] It should be noted that examples of 'less traditional' rehearsal activities in Melbourne are limited. Those examples cited throughout Section B have been gleaned from the numerous productions discussed by practitioners in the Melbourne Interviews. The interviewees differentiated these activities as different from the 'normal' rehearsal process in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal (i.e. table analysis then blocking).

of Rehearsal and the mechanisms through which they operate. Each rehearsal activity is viewed as a delimiting frame that precludes certain potentialities in the actor's contribution to the work, thereby influencing the direction in which the performance will evolve.

In Section B I will argue that conceiving rehearsal in this way, with organic and collaborative investigation and development, supports the creative process. In Chapter 7 I will reason that to produce original, dynamic, interesting theatre, rehearsal practices need to mitigate the phenomenon of entrenchment. The subsequent three chapters outline the Principal Functions of Rehearsal and their mechanisms, and offer ways for the director to mitigate entrenchment, engage the actor's creative capacity and negate automatic responses.

To explicate and validate the Principal Functions of Rehearsal, throughout Section B I will intertwine original theory, extant literature and the Melbourne experiential voice. The intersection between Creative Theory and Rehearsal Theory, I contend, provides significant new perspectives on rehearsal. This coupling, as will be demonstrated over the forthcoming chapters, is an opportune area for future work in Rehearsal Studies.

Chapter 7   An Introduction to the Principal Functions of Rehearsal

7.1 Entrenchment

In rehearsal, the nature of each activity – that is, how it is set up and operates - is important because it directs the way the actor works, influencing the type of thinking and behaviour and, therefore, the ideas that emerge. Creative literature, I suggest, provides useful insights in how creative thinking, including idea generation, can be guided. Stokes (2014) argues that ideas are engendered from semantic and procedural knowledge. This 'knowledge' includes the information we have personally gained from solving problems on previous occasions, with past experience 'the most widely used idea-generation strategy: [f]aced with a problem we generate solutions by recalling relevant past experiences' (Smith 1998, p. 120).[90]

Knowledge is active even when the origin of one of our creative ideas is unclear to us, for knowledge is a significant element that shapes our intuition (Cropley 2006). This partly explains the myth of artistic intuition previously raised by Forgasz – it is not that the theatre practitioner is inspired by divine genius, but rather that they are unaware of the degree to which they are drawing upon and synthesising information from previous experiences.

This brings us to a paradox: creativity is a complex cognitive function, and whilst the creative process and intuition are facilitated by one's knowledge, they are also curtailed by it. Creativity is bounded by the things we are not aware of (Negus & Pickering 2004; Dweck 2007). This includes our suppositions, our moods and emotions, schemata and our own

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[90] For the purposes of this thesis, knowledge is defined here as 'the state of knowing about or being familiar with something; awareness, understanding, or information that has been obtained by experience or study' ('Knowledge' 2020). Dombrovski *et al.* (2013) propose that there are three types of knowledge, each of which has its own unique features as well as being inter-related to the other types: experiential knowledge, skills and knowledge claims.

idiosyncrasies (Ibbotson & Darsø 2008, p. 551), habits and work of others, and/or that of the Zeitgeist, 'the common-cultural presuppositions on which our field and often our world is built' (Sternberg 2018; Sternberg 2017, p. 290). When we have an overreliance on previous solutions, particularly 'inadequate solutions', idea generation can be truncated (Smith 1998, p. 120). *Apriori* knowledge that is not applied flexibly becomes an impediment to the creative process. The result is less original or apt creative solutions to creative tasks. This is called *entrenchment.*[91] In creative literature it is recognised, therefore, that creativity is an oppositional force (Lubart 2010; Sternberg & Lubart 1995), defying predicated, automatic responses (Sternberg 2018).

The phenomenon of entrenchment has implications for the development of a rehearsal process. If collaborative investigation is to produce original, authentic individual performances and stage interpretation, strategy is required to minimise the degree of habitual responses throughout the working process. An additional concern for theatre practitioners is that there is a body of evidence indicating that entrenchment tends to increase as one gains expertise (Kagan 2016; Stokes 2008; Sternberg 2018). Sternberg (2018, p. 54) contends that although the notion that 'experts potentially lose flexibility' has been challenged 'the fact remains that experts get used to seeing things in a certain way … it becomes harder to depart from past patterns'. Entrenchment and prior knowledge can lead to 'fixation' and 'structured imagination', both of which are impediments to creativity (Smith, Paradice & Smith 2000). Fixation describes the state of being in a 'mental rut'; we are aware that we are stuck in our thinking, but are unable to change to a better solution.

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[91] Dane introduced the term *'cognitive entrenchment'* in *Reconsidering the trade-off between expertise and flexibility: a cognitive entrenchment perspective* (2010, p. 579, original emphasis).

Structured imagination refers to a 'common tendency not to deviate from what is already known during creative effort' (Smith, Paradice & Smith 2000, p. 113).

To encourage creativity and productivity, a rehearsal approach needs to deal with the entrenchment effect of fixation or structured imagination. In an industry where authenticity and originality hold great currency, and an individual performance or production can increase the chance of future employment, the ability of the theatre practitioner to conceive and construct pertinent and artistic solutions in rehearsal is imperative.[92] It is through the application of pertinent, well-crafted rehearsal activities, I argue, that the actor's creativity can be directed, and fixation and structured imagination mitigated. A rehearsal frame may prompt embodied and imaginative responses, as the actor, adhering to the guidelines and rules of the activity, is less likely to draw upon previous solutions.

The concept of designing tasks to direct the type of thinking and response, and reduce entrenchment, is central to the work of both Edward de Bono, who has produced numerous books in the field of creative thinking, and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University, known as d-School. De Bono (1977) notes that entrenchment is due to the efficiencies of the 'pattern using system' (p. 10) and 'self-maximizing memory' (p. 13) of the human mind, and argues that deliberate cognitive strategies are therefore required for creative thought. Applying some 'means for restructuring … old patterns' (p. 13) can help us

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[92] As noted previously in the Introduction of this thesis, satisfactory production outcomes can result from embedded practices that allow the practitioners to 'get the job done'. Repeated processes can, conceivably, yield interesting and effective work. The argument made here, based on cognitive research, is that the creative faculties of a practitioner can be negatively influence by habitual patterns. Altering one's approach to creative work in rehearsal, therefore, is worthy of consideration and investigation to positively affect the outcome.

achieve '[l]iberation from old ideas and the stimulation of new ones' (p. 11). A number of De Bono's thought-directing strategies are referred to throughout the forthcoming chapters.

Stanford's d-school (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020) also recognises that specific tactics and structures are needed to facilitate creative thinking. The Design Thinking model of d-school involves a sequence of steps that can be applied to a variety of situations. A key aspect of the model is the notion that one needs to develop 'frameworks' and 'maps' as part of the creative process, to assist with synthesis of information (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020, para. 14). This resonates with my own argument, that specific rehearsal frames need to be fashioned and implemented to focus and shape the course of the actor's work. Similarly, too, d-school states that sensitivity and intentionality are necessary in the selection of tools needed, as well as intuition, the 'adapt[ion of] old tools' and the development of new techniques to develop a bespoke creative process (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020, para. 18). This position is consistent with Mitchell's (1992) previously cited argument that a key directorial function involves intuitively perceiving what is needed in the work. It also reinforces my contentions that to stimulate creativity, rehearsal techniques need to be contingent, and that our rehearsal processes need to evolve.

My rehearsal frames model is akin to the Design Thinking model in that it involves 'an iterative process [that] challenges assumptions' to 'identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent' (Dam & Siang 2020, para. 3). Design Thinking 'is extremely useful in tackling problems that are ill-defined or unknown' (para. 4), which is a

fitting description for the intrinsic ambiguity of the rehearsal process.[93] Both models propose a collaborative, investigative process to circumvent entrenchment and increase the fluency (amount) and flexibility (variation) in the creative ideas generated.

My Rehearsal Frame Theory, therefore, encapsulates key aspects of contemporary creative theory. The aim is to reduce entrenchment and promote original, creative responses by structuring creative endeavour. The fundamental premise is summarised in the words of creative theorist Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 1): '[i]t is easier to enhance creativity by changing the conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively'.

To fully realise this purpose, it is worthwhile to examine the structured conditions that we implement in the act of rehearsal – the function and nature of different rehearsal activities, and the impact they are perceived to have.

7.2 The Principal Functions of Rehearsal

I have argued that in a collaborative rehearsal approach, the director is responsible for crafting rehearsal frames within which the actor works. The assumed efficacy of this model is, in part, dependent upon the nature of the tasks offered by the director. This includes the activity's purpose, how it is defined by parameters, and the actions inherent within it.

In this section I will introduce my schema of the Principal Functions of Rehearsal. I propose that rehearsal activity is intended to serve one of three key functions, and that the rehearsal

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[93] I see 'ill-defined or unknown' as an apt description for the creative problem-solving of rehearsal, as every rehearsal project is unique. As exemplified throughout Section A of this thesis, each rehearsal project (including the rehearsal of canonical texts) is subject to innumerable contextual elements and contingencies. The combination of these elements and contingencies, with their subsequent constraints and opportunities, affect how actors and directors think and behave both individually and collaboratively. The 'problems' to be solved in rehearsal are therefore idiosyncratic and may not always be immediately apparent.

activity is defined and/or enabled by one or more mechanisms associated with this function. Key concepts will be presented, and the benefits of the schema argued, to pave the way for the in-depth explication that follow in the next three chapters. I will begin with a brief explanation of the origins and wider context of the schema.

The Principal Functions of Rehearsal schema was conceived via the intersection of my data and literature in the areas of theatre, creative theory and cognitive studies. In my inductive analysis of the rehearsal activities cited in the Melbourne Interviews, I identified that rehearsal tasks served distinct functions. Further scrutiny revealed that it is various *ingredients within these tasks* that propel and impact the way the actor works. It became apparent that many of these ingredients aligned with, and were substantiated, by various ideas in creative and theatre literature, and collectively, connected with and built upon other existing theoretical models. Specific parallels will be discussed in detail throughout Section B, including Stanford's Design Thinking model that includes tasks of empathising, connecting, defining, iterative experimentation and assessment (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020). De Bono's (1977, pp. 27-30) cognitive theories feature prominently, including his proposed strategies for counteracting the 'pattern-making', 'self-organising' and 'limited attention' default settings of the human mind that are associated with entrenchment.

Particular mention needs to be made of Crawford's *Dimensions of Acting* and his *Theory of Dramatic Relativity* that have been a specific point of inspiration for my schema. As cited earlier, Crawford's 'eight interlinked' textual components (for example personalisation, communication, environment and so forth) are primarily developed to assist the actor in determining the most apt acting approach to meet the requirements of the text (2011).

Crawford, however, argues that the dimensions of a text can also serve as 'the discrete focus of rehearsal', with 'the potential to be our chief motivation or security' and 'of providing the key to the scene, turning us on, making the scene play itself, or of being the arc that illuminates the whole circle' (2011, p. 70). Alongside the individual dimensions, it is this idea of attending to layers or aspects of the work at hand that has partly inspired my schema of Principal Functions.

My Principal Functions schema builds upon Crawford's dimensions, with three fundamental differences. The Dimensions originate from, and pertain to, components *within the text,* whereas The Principal Functions originate from, and pertain to, components *within rehearsal*, of which the text is one part. My schema is developed to assist the director in their governance of the rehearsal process, although by extension, it supports the work of the actor. Finally, The Principal Functions, and their associated mechanisms, sit within the broader model of my Rehearsal Frame Theory.

The three Principal Functions of Rehearsal I have identified and named in the Melbourne Interviews are: *Positioning, Creating* and *Affecting*. These Principal Functions of Rehearsal are an important aspect of Rehearsal Frame Theory, as they determine the nature of the frame – that is, the *design* of the rehearsal activity – that is employed by the director. They can be understood in the following ways:

Positioning activities refer to the director and the cast working out what they have, where they are, where they are going, and how to proceed, within the rehearsal process. In traditional rehearsal practice I suggest much of this function is achieved cerebrally, through table analysis, but the data and theatre literature indicate Positioning can also be achieved by more embodied and intuitive rehearsal frames. It is the nature, duration and perceived

effectiveness of embodied rehearsal methods to position the work that, I suggest, is at the centre of the controversy between traditional and alternative approaches. Positioning is a predominant preoccupation in the early stage of rehearsal, but it also plays an integral part in designing the forthcoming process throughout the rehearsal period.

Creating activities build the performance, usually through embodied activity. Rehearsal frames primarily involve choices being generated, trialled and/or selected during the rehearsal process. Contention can revolve around the degree of improvisation versus construction (that is, blocking or other interpretive choices predetermined by the director), and the degree of complexity, literality and inventiveness of the improvisational frames used. Improvisational frames may be concomitant with an Affecting function.

Affecting activities are used to significantly manipulate and impact the choice-making of the actor, to affect some kind of change in the actor's work. These types of frames typically involve a degree of invention and resourcefulness on the part of the director, and are usually applied in response to an idiosyncratic challenge encountered in the rehearsal process. The employment of Affecting activities is especially important in mitigating entrenchment.

A rehearsal activity is intended to achieve one or more of these functions. I propose that within a rehearsal task, there are one or more specific *mechanisms* operating. These components are integral 'active ingredients' (Smith 1998) or 'operational mechanics' (Prince 1967) of the creative process. For example, the Principal Function of Creating is activated by various mechanisms, including 'Proposition' and 'Generation'. In some cases, the mechanisms can be interconnected and concomitant. At times, one mechanism may serve as the *enabler* of another, and there is some overlap and slippage between these

components. These mechanisms, or ingredients, of rehearsal to be discussed throughout

Section B were drawn from the Melbourne Interview data. They are not intended as a

definitive catalogue, but rather as a starting point for conceiving the mechanics operating

within each rehearsal activity. Please see Appendix C: A Summary of The Principal Functions

of Rehearsal.

The Principal Functions of Rehearsal schema is a means of leverage to crack open rehearsal,

to penetrate beyond the surface and make visible the devices that are operating within

specific activities. This exposition of the interiority of a rehearsal task serves a number of

purposes. Firstly, it provides a deeper understanding of how different rehearsal tools

operate for the contemporary director who wishes to work reflexively to mitigate

contextual parameters and/or to prompt original responses from their actors. An

appreciation of the functions, and mechanisms, of rehearsal empowers the director in

selecting, crafting and implementing germane rehearsal frames.

Secondly, understanding the various mechanisms present within rehearsal activities enables

the director and actors to be more conscious of the impact that different activities can have.

Uncovering how particular rehearsal tasks work may open up a broader conversation

regarding rehearsal methods. Analysis of directorial practice using the schema can indicate

the prevalence of particular functions and mechanisms, reveal idiosyncrasies and

propensities, spotlight what is perceived as valuable, and expose what is driving the form

that rehearsal takes. A deeper understanding of the active ingredients within different

activities may validate some less traditional practices.

Thirdly, the nomenclature of this schema may in future serve as a neutral meeting point for

practitioners and/or scholars from different training backgrounds, as it is not drawn from

any particular acting tradition. Rehearsal Frame Theory and The Principal Functions of Rehearsal, and their mechanisms, are offered as a bridge between different approaches without championing any one technique or practice. The model and schema may therefore be of benefit in actor and director training, to create a shared paradigm regarding the processes involved in collaborative investigation.

Finally, and significantly, the schema may provide more accessibility to, and prompt greater interest in, what else could be tried or applied in rehearsal, and as such, may contribute toward the advancement of rehearsal methodology.

 In the next three chapters, this schema is implemented as a framework for an in-depth discussion of the interiority of Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice. I will attend to each of the three Principal Functions of rehearsal activity, Positioning, Creating and Affecting, and discuss the individual mechanisms that shape and enable the rehearsal frames through which they operate.[94] Through the experiential voice of the practitioners, we witness activity within multiple rehearsal rooms and glimpse into the minds of the practitioners, including their sometimes notably disparate perspectives regarding the aims and/or value of specific rehearsal activities. The Principal Functions schema focuses this examination onto why rehearsal activities are applied, how they are enacted, and what is perceived to be gained. As in Section A, occasional critical commentary upon productions will be included to contextualise and add further dimension to the discussion.

Before embarking on the forthcoming chapters, it is important to note that given the interpretive nature of the study, the discussion primarily involves explication of rehearsal

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[94] Please note that throughout the following chapters, the terms of Positioning, Creating and Affecting, as well as the mechanisms through which they operate, will be capitalised as proper nouns when specifically referring to the schema. When used in a more general sense, these words will appear as common nouns or verbs.

practice and how it operates, rather than an appraisal of the efficacy of specific methods. The interest lies in the interviewees' comments and the insights into the rehearsal experience that these inherently subjective, personal perspectives provide. In the experiential voice there may well be instances where there is a misalignment between belief and reality. For example, a director's voiced intention for applying a particular task may have not had the effect upon the actor that they think. As noted in the Introduction of this thesis, it is possible that the interviewees' comments may not be completely frank in all instances; individuals may have exercised professional etiquette and discretion when sharing particular opinions about specific rehearsals or practitioners. This said, the synergy of the experiential voice of numerous Melbourne directors and actors provides a unique and invaluable canvas to study the thinking that surrounds rehearsal practice.

In the forthcoming triptych of chapters, dramatic, creative and/or cognitive theory serve to enrich the dialogue, situate the examples of Melbourne practice in a broader context, and validate the Principal Functions of rehearsal schema. Chapter 8 begins with an examination of the director's use of Positioning in rehearsal.

Chapter 8   The Positioning Principal Function

'Chance only favours minds which are prepared'

Louis Pasteur (cited in Barba 2010, p. 84)

Where you begin matters. Creativity literature suggests that the aspects we attend to early in a project fundamentally determine the end result. In 'Appreciative Inquiry' from which Stanford's Design Thinking model emerged, there is the premise that one 'move[s] in the direction of what [one] inquire[s] about' (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly 2011, p. 74-75). The questions one initially considers have an immediate impact not only on thinking but also upon the behaviour that follows; 'inquiry and change … are simultaneous' (p. 72).

This phenomenon is explored by De Bono in his book *Lateral Thinking*. He explains that when addressing a problem or situation, the 'entry point' is fundamental as it 'can completely determine the final outcome…' (1977, p. 156). De Bono explains this relationship:

> … the entry point is the first attention area. Usually attention starts at this point but eventually covers the whole problem. Sometimes however important parts of the problem are completely left out. It is only when these parts are brought under attention that the problem can be solved …. (p. 160)

> There is no telling which entry point is going to be the best so one is usually content with the most obvious one. It is assumed that the choice of entry point does not matter since one will always arrive at the same conclusions. This is not so since the whole train of thought may be determined by the choice of entry point. (p. 168)

The finite nature of our attention precludes us from embracing all available information. With our attention naturally drawn to the 'obvious' we are likely to miss, and unlikely to revisit, information (p. 168). For the most effective process and outcome, attention needs to be consciously directed 'by providing a framework which will affect it' (p. 163).

Positioning is a self-evident aspect of the rehearsal process; indeed, a hallmark image of rehearsal is that of practitioners studying and debating a text around a table. What is worthy of examination, however, are the methods used, the specific aspects of the rehearsal process that are attended to, and the relationship of these to the contextual parameters of the project. Positioning, I argue, extends well beyond ascertaining a propositional understanding of the text to include developing the modes of communication, a performative language and affective associations that will inform the actor's creative contributions throughout the entire rehearsal process. Effective Positioning fosters purpose in the actor's work and engenders greater trust in the process. Positioning is not just important to make innovative, cogent work, but also because it can enable the practitioners to work in innovative, cogent ways throughout the rehearsal period. Positioning focuses the actor's attention and imagination and hones the potentiality of the actor's future creative offers. It is therefore fundamental to the final production outcome. The term 'positioning' implies a distinct placement of an idea, service or product in comparison to another to gain advantage.[95]

The mechanisms of The Positioning Function of Rehearsal that will be discussed in this chapter, Orientation, Communication, Connection and Immersion, can help prepare and prime the cast for future creative endeavour. They are, to borrow Smith's term, 'enablers' that 'facilitate, but do not directly provoke, idea generation' (1998, p. 126). That is, they build and deepen multiple types of knowledge that will assist, and perhaps expedite, the rehearsal work to come.

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[95] Positioning is a term in common usage in the field of marketing. Simply put, it is 'the ability to influence consumer perception' (Corporate Finance Institute 2015-2020, para. 1), to 'ensure[] messages resonate with target consumers and compel them to take action' (Richards 2019, para. 1).

The way that the rehearsal process commences, and the text met, is a complex balance between openness and specificity. The *nature* of the positioning work, implemented by the director, can have an enduring impact, and delicate handling is required if the rehearsal process is not to go awry, according to Alfreds (2007, p. 163, emphasis in original):

> The wrong sort of work on the text, result-orientated, decision-making, prescriptive, static, will kill off any imagination on the part of the actor. If, on the other hand, the director and actors ignore the specificity of the text so that it becomes about what everyone *feels* (unproved assumptions) rather than *knows* (proven facts), you'll end up with indulgence and incoherence.

This comment also captures something of the controversy between non-traditional and traditional approaches and the complex dance between the intuitive, sensory response and the cerebral standpoint in rehearsal work. There are conflicting perceptions regarding the approach to positioning. The differences largely involve the amount, type, and ways of accessing or accumulating requisite knowledge before you start work 'on the floor'. In a more traditional approach, the first phase of rehearsal time is invested in construing propositional knowledge regarding the text and its interpretation through in-depth discussion. This propositional knowledge serves as a foundation upon which to build. The dialogue between the director and the cast involves ways of understanding the text, as well as raising questions regarding the interpretation of the text and how it may be realised in performance. A number of choices may be ascertained or agreed upon prior to practical work, which places specific artistic constraints upon the next phase of embodied work. These constraints corral the nature of the ideas and embodied offers made later in the rehearsal process by the cast and director on the floor. In sum, the navigation is set primarily from a cerebral standpoint.

In contrast, in less traditional approaches, other forms of knowledge, and ways of gaining knowledge, are utilised.[96] These primarily involve improvisation, embodiment and sensory activities, with, at times, less emphasis placed at the beginning on propositional knowledge. Embodied work may commence with fewer choices made, more open parameters and more ill-defined questions to be investigated. Decisions may be made not to make a decision. Just as the *ill-defined* question is noted as a potentially useful launching point for creative endeavour in Stanford's Design Thinking Model, ambiguity in rehearsal can be met by active inquiry, rather than waiting 'to know' through discussion. In this way, the purpose of applying embodied activities in the investigation of the text can be, in part, to define and refine the questions to be addressed throughout rehearsal. It is through embodied activities, or rehearsal tools, involving perhaps Immersion and Connection (to be discussed shortly), that one might ascertain a more clearly delineated question, alongside working towards possible answers.

The merit of embodied activity to position the future work is supported by Kemp's examination of theatre practices in relation to contemporary cognitive studies in *Embodied Acting* (2012). Drawing on literature including Merlin Donald's proposal of the evolutionary relationship between language and mimesis, and David Mc Neill's research into speech and gesture, Kemp asserts that an over-emphasis on verbal analysis of a text is counterproductive to the embodied work to come. Kemp (2012, p. 144) explains how verbal analysis can impede the creative process, referring to Schooler and Engstler-Schooler's research into 'overshadowing' (verbalising eclipsing visual memory):

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[96] 'Less' is used deliberately to indicate my assertion that the differences in rehearsal approach should be seen as a continuum, not a binary. I consider that a dualistic perspective of rehearsal approaches, indicated in the traditional /non-traditional nomenclature, is reductive and perpetuates a misunderstanding and de-valuing of a range of rehearsal activities.

Schooler's findings suggest that this process would inhibit unconscious imaginative responses to the fictional world of the script, since it replaces the perceptual stimuli that might arise in the imagination with word-based, largely conscious thinking. The process of table analysis will also influence subsequent rehearsal, since actors mentally refer back to the verbal analysis of the script, rather than the images or sensations it provokes.

Regardless of the methods applied to achieve it, Positioning is important to build the foundations upon which future work can evolve.

8.1 Orientation

Orientation asks: '*where* are we going and *how* will we get there' and involves *choice making* regarding the aesthetic and artistic boundaries that will drive future navigation and govern decision making. Moments of Orientation are the junctures, both small and large, in rehearsal when choices are made regarding how time, energy and attention will be applied in future work. Activities that orientate are an investment in time and energy at the beginning of rehearsal, as well as throughout, helping the director and cast move closer to recognising the 'RIGHT challenge[s] to address' (Shanks 2020, p. 3, emphasis in original). There are a range of tools the director may employ to orientate the work ahead, according to the specific contingencies of the project.

One common practice in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room, for example, is to begin with the director presenting their directorial vision to the cast. This, of course, immediately functions as an artistic constraint that will contain and govern the offers and choices made throughout the rehearsal process. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) always begins his process with a 'super-structure' that provides immediate boundaries that the actor will work within: '[t]he superstructure would usually be a visual map of the work … it's a stenographic blueprint and it's a framework that needs to be filled in'. As mentioned

previously, the design brief presentation too, typically made to actors at the outset of the

rehearsal period, is a rehearsal frame that delineates the practical and aesthetic boundaries

of the labour to come. When Jacobs explains that she 'frame[s] the design' for her cast

(2015, pers. comm. 10 September), she is referring to a matrix of constraints already made

by the creative team. The mixture of anticipation and weight associated with these

rehearsal activities, I suggest, has much to do with this moment of critical intersection

between the actor's conscious and subconscious expectations and preoccupations of how

their work, and the piece, will proceed, and the interpretive boundaries that will now

govern their work.

In contrast to Lutton's regular process of offering a framework of visual moments as

markers to work within, Watson is more unusual in her approach, with variability in how her

opening interpretive parameters are arrived at. Exemplifying the standpoint that 'framing

the *right problem* is the only way to create the *right solution*' (Shanks 2020. P. 3, emphasis

added), Watson began her rehearsal period of *WRWCG* with an 'entry point' conversation

with her cast that strongly influenced the successful final interpretation:

> I asked people to talk about their top five, or two, three, love songs, and I asked people to
> talk about moments in film, and/or theatre, that had had some truly romantic resonance for
> them, and what came out of that was a series of moments in film – and some in theatre, but
> it was mainly film – in which people didn't quite get to satisfy a romantic urge … there were
> lots of moments in films which were about not satisfying, and suggestion of, but never
> actually getting to have that satisfaction as an audience member, and therefore a kind of
> sense of yearning. (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July)

This notion of yearning prevailed throughout the rehearsal work, impacting blocking and

character interaction, leading to a highly successful, unexpected antithetical reading of the

text. The final interpretation of the two-hander romance was defiantly at odds with the

playwright's intention which he had indicated by the multiple romantic physical interactions proposed in the written stage directions of this new play. Watson deliberately worked against the text, avoiding any physical interaction between the characters until the final moment of the show. In this instance, Watson began the rehearsal process by orientating herself and the actors as audience members themselves, identifying the desired emotional impact, and using this association as the primary point for shaping the piece. The choice of entry point influenced the rehearsal tool applied, which led to the interpretive frame chosen, which in turn governed decision-making throughout the process. On this occasion, this sequence organically led to the emergence of the director as 'auteur', even though the directorial process had begun with a close reading of the text and no intention to subvert the playwright's intention. This exemplifies the complexity of the question of ownership of the text.

Texts may require activities to increase the sense of attainability for the actor embarking on building a role, and this can be particularly the case with new or renowned works. In the rehearsal of new plays, the 'authority of the text' is nebulous and inchoate, making it complex to situate the text as the compass for the directorial process. The impact of the writing itself, and the script's applicability to stage performance, are trialled. Watson investigated the practicability of the *WRWCG* text through activity. As actor Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) explains, 'a lot of it was up on its feet, really, quite early on [as a] new work of having to just read it and make sense of what it was, as a document, and then also try to find it, what's it going to be in a performance'. Carr differentiates here between understanding the text as propositional knowledge – what it is – and its visceral, visual, lived interpretation – what it could be.

In comparison, more renowned works seem well-tested and are accompanied by a wealth of information surrounding the text's previous interpretations and performances. Such works can be curtailed and constrained by preconceptions. The anticipation of tackling iconic texts can also increase actor anxiety because of the perceived gravitas and magnitude of the task. For example, the 2,500 year history of *Antigone* foregrounded the work of the Malthouse's production in the practitioners' minds, despite the text being a new adaptation. Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September) was conscious of the questions triggered for an actor approaching this classical piece: 'how will I meet this mountain? This language? This extremity?'. Hence, in the early stages of rehearsal, Jacobs assisted the actors in working through an abstract improvisation on the piece, providing a guiding, verbal commentary of the key events of the plot, and tried to focus particularly on the relational aspects between characters where possible. The aim of a basic embodiment of the plot line was to make the task ahead seem more achievable for the cast:

> [It was] just a way of mapping through the whole, to feel the whole piece, so that there is a strand of that in their bodies, not just their brains ... making that feel manageable in size, [it] feels useful just for anxiety purposes … it's the suggestion that, oh, one day you will actually do the whole piece, I know you feel like you won't now.

Jacobs intended this activity to create a sense of containment of the scope of the work to be embarked upon. Defining the parameters of the plot, through a somatic experience of the arc of the piece rather than a cerebral, hypothetical discussion, it is suggested, helps combat the overthinking and procrastination that could mar an actor's approach to the work.

The Positioning mechanism of Orientation can help determine the pitch, and the artistic language, of the performance to come, and in doing so, help create cohesion and specificity in the embodied work. Building upon the previous boundaries applied, Jacobs employed

multiple embodied inquiry frames to develop a sense of 'otherness' in the work. Each improvisation served as a draft that helped herself and the cast '[create] a world on stage that is unto itself, which has its own set of rules that all of the performers understand' (Jacobs 2015, pers. comm. 10 September). The pitch of the performance and a 'form or language' became increasingly felt, seen and heard by the cast and the director which supported the work to come:

> [It helped the actors to] find their ways in, but also so I could observe them and meet them and start to understand what the performance style might be like, what the pitch might be, and start to make associations with them about the work which could hopefully lead to a more organic formation of the piece ….

Developing a shared performative language was also evident in Evan's employment of Meyerhold warmups in the rehearsals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* as Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May, emphasis added) explains, 'it wasn't like a physical-theatre show or anything, but it was very present in the work … [it helped] physical specificity … and *getting a common language* really quickly, that everyone goes, oh, okay, so it need this and we all speak the same language'.

For Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July), a key aspect of directing is conceiving and implementing rehearsal activities that specifically meet the challenge of the text: 'I guess it's the thing of how do you find a way of dropping in, what's required for this particular world'. In *WRWCG* she felt that 'what was required was this integrity of the relationship to song for these characters'. Watson employed activities to help normalise song as a language, so that actors could slip easily between dialogue and lyrics, and to create a performative quality that would be consistent across both.

In *Private Lives*, to ascertain the requisite pitch of the actors' performances, Strong conducted a series of practical experiments. Through a series of iterative, 'framed' run-throughs of a scene he and the cast 'grope[d] towards a shared understanding' of the size and tone of the performances required (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). Explorative parameters such as '[l]et's play this for maximum comedy … let's play this for maximum drama – The West Wing …' support the orientation of the piece. This enabled Strong's cast to discover the heightened physical language that significantly informed the direction of *Private Lives*. The way to proceed was sought through physical inquiry and experimentation. Similarly, Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July, emphasis added) used a variety of different parameters to work out the pitch of the performance:

> … whenever you get to a character or a voice, it just has to be extreme … *just* bring it right down … sit up nice and close to me and *just* tell me … do it all from the back corner of the room, or do it *where you're never allowed* to be on the same level *… you give a parameter …* [to find] a couple of things worth pursuing … going to the extreme, pushing things to the extreme … it's never going to be that, but actually the 10% version of that is quite interesting.

In an investigative, collaborative model of rehearsal, the director needs, I propose, to orientate the actors to their intended *modus operandi*. Familiarizing the cast to the work process is important in building the belief and 'buy in' of the cast for the directorial vision. The nature of rehearsal activities undertaken early in the rehearsal room may establish the cast's expectations for the way the process will unfold, instil a sense of the nature of the actor-relationship in the room, and therefore influence the way the actors respond to activities later in the rehearsal process. Drawing on our understanding of De Bono's notion of 'entry point', we can appreciate that the way the forthcoming process is presented primes the cast to respond in a particular mode. As a more 'traditional' rehearsal approach

is common, the director intending to use more alternative rehearsal tools needs to be particularly mindful of how the cast is introduced to the intended working style of the room. Orientating actors to the intended rehearsal approach is apposite given, due to their varied training and irregularity of employment, the Melbourne actors' individual propensities and assumptions about rehearsal practice. The cast's induction into the directorial approach may be overt or implicit.

Cognisant of this, Watson prefers to avoid 'table analysis' at the start of a project. She wants the actors to view the rehearsal room as 'a great creative space', and suggests that sitting down to do a read in the early phase can be counterproductive to the actor's future collaboration, playfulness and readiness to contribute offers '[as it] feels too much like school' (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July). This comment references the power-structure, orderliness and the binary of a right-wrong mentality that is associated with school. Watson asserts that the way work is commenced can help position the receptivity of the actor, as well as support the director's familiarization with the cast: '[By] not sitting down and reading, what you do is frame the work for everybody … and [you] also get a sense of perspectives in the room, and knowing that they're the things that you call on throughout the process'.

Similarly, for Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May), the Meyerhold training sessions strongly positioned the work ahead in his mind: 'it was a big upfront injection of what this is going to be'. In Carr's opinion, the training helped instil a collective performance aesthetic of exactitude in the cast that then manifested in the actors' approach to both the physicality and the heightened language: '[Pete] sees a similarity between the precision of the bio-

mechanics and the precision needed for Shakespeare … I think it added a real energy to the piece'.

Orientation is important because a lack of groundwork can undermine future work processes and destabilise the actor's trust in the director's governance of the process. Actors' doubts as to the effectiveness of the directorial aims (such as the world of the play, or the pitch and style of the performance) reduces rehearsal efficacy and productivity. Concerns may particularly come to the fore midway through the process, when the increasing sense of hurriedness can exacerbate actors' underlying anxieties, as was the case with *Birdland*:

> [At the] end of week two, beginning of week three, one of the actors went, no, *I'm not working like this.* I need you to tell me what's going on, I can't find my character, I don't know what I'm doing … because they kind of felt like … what if she's crazy? What if she just wants us to look like idiots? (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August, emphasis added)

To move forward, Caceres had to return to orientating the cast to her vision by focusing on the individual 'building blocks' and how they contributed to the lucidity of the interpretation. This involved returning to the table, mapping out the whole play according to the function of each scene, and linking this to the political and social framework, to substantiate her directorial vision and regain the actors' trust in the work (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August). This scenario reinforces the importance of clear and effective Positioning at the beginning of the rehearsal process, and that this may require tailoring and adjustments according to the needs of different cast members.

Orientation, therefore, plays an important part in positioning the work to come to reduce anxiety, and increase efficacy, cogence and creativity of the artistic outcome.

 8.2 Communication

The capacity to 'communicate deliberately' is necessary to achieve effective, collaborative

innovation (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020, para. 17). Part of

the contemporary director's role, therefore, needs to include the deliberate finding of, or

developing of, the means of communication; the provision of the safe 'passage'

('Communication' 2020) for ideas to be imparted, conveyed and exchanged, between the

director and the actor. If we accept that directing is about setting up rehearsal frames to

facilitate the imaginative work of the actor, with the nuances of each investigation

potentially impacting the next, then 'directions' need to be expressed in such a way that the

particularity of the proposed frame can be completely, and deeply, understood by the actor.

This is consistent with Bella Merlin's (2016, p. 182, emphasis added) thoughts:

> [T]he more the director can talk the *same* language as the actors, the *more options* they will
> have at their disposal, with the result that the final production may be potentially more
> *detailed and captivating*.

When we also recall the erratic and irregular sessional employment of Melbourne actors,

the temporal pressures of the short rehearsal periods, and the different training regimes

and experiences that bring actors into the 'rehearsal room speaking many different

languages about their craft' (Mitchell 2009, p. 125), we appreciate the necessity to quickly

form a working language to, at the very least, ensure a level of productivity.

Rehearsal activities being implemented for the purpose of developing modes of

communication should have more limelight. Deliberate activity to establish this language is

not, it seems, a predominant concern in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice, according

to the limited examples in the data, nor are the ways to do this significantly cited in

literature. Mitchell (2009, p. 175) notes that rehearsal efficacy is dependent upon the director's capacity to educate themselves regarding the most apt modes of communication: '[d]uring rehearsals you will learn how to translate the intention you want played into the vocabulary or syntax that suits each individual actor, and that gets you the results you want', but the means of this is opaque.

The most apt method to refine and improve the transmission and exchange of ideas is contingent upon the individuals and circumstances at hand, with both cerebral and embodied activities potentially playing a part. For example, the table work of a more traditional approach can serve, depending upon how it is applied, as a starting point for synthesising communication modes between practitioners. Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) notes that the act of completing research homework on *The Crucible* and then presenting it the next day, enabled the director 'to understand us as people', and conceivably one might imagine that this could extend to the cast building an understanding of one another. Theoretically, with the focus of the task on the information presented, the gentle revelation of individuals' personalities, and personal styles of communication, can discreetly emerge and be absorbed. Anecdotally, however, on this occasion this particular task did not assist in unifying the company of fifteen actors and mitigate against other contingent challenges, showing that no one method is foolproof. It also reinforces the reflexivity required on the part of the director; some adjustment to the approach taken with Communication may have been worthwhile. For Lutton (2014, 28 October), discussion in the early days of rehearsal enables him to inconspicuously learn what the actors' vocabularies are, and therefore what vocabulary he is going to adopt in communication with each individual. Discreetly noting and collating the phrases of individuals provides Lutton with a

bank of language, as well as indicating, to a degree, the interpretive position and perspective inherent in the words used by each actor. He draws upon this idiosyncratic phrasing when needed in later weeks to support each actor's process. He explains, 'because they said it, it's something that resonates with them and I can sort of start to use their own vocabulary as a way to help them' (Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October).

This chameleonic approach to verbal interaction is supported by communication specialist Judy Apps (2014, p. 36, emphasis in original), who suggests that trust can be engendered by adopting a comparable mode in discourse:

> People feel like you are on their wavelength if you use a similar *kind* of language. Moreover, different people use one sense more than another, and it tends to show up in their language. So one person says, "I *see* what you mean", while another says, "that *sounds* like good sense", and a third remarks, "I *get* it". If you then respond using similar visual, auditory or feeling language, they naturally feel comfortable with you.

The director's development of a mode of communication, therefore, must include awareness of an actor's thinking style and mode of operating. Apart from understanding the most effective way to give directions, this engenders trust in the relationship, which, as previously discussed, has a significant role to play in rehearsal. When Caceres used her written contract to reassure her actors, she hoped it would communicate her directorial intentions clearly enough to evoke their belief so that work could resume more productively (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August).

In *Antigone*, Jacobs opted for taking photographs of what she felt were interesting, visual compositions during rehearsal on the floor. These were shared with the cast to communicate and support their recall of embodied moments after long, extended improvisations. As one cast member comments: 'that was really useful actually … because

sometimes as an actor, you just can't see … what works … sometimes on the inside you're

going, errr …' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). The photographs served as a bridge

between the lived experience, and the conscious composition, of the scene.

The deliberate development of modes of Communication, I contend, can augment

productivity and creativity through the accurate and detailed transfer of information when

tasks are framed. Conceivably, more effective communication can also enhance depth and

trust in the director-actor relationship. As such, the mechanism of Communication makes a

valuable contribution to the Positioning Principal Function of rehearsal.

8.3 Connection

I propose that theatre can, in many instances, be perceived as a series of transactions

between characters.[97] Compelling performances, I suggest, are imbued by the communion

between cast members.[98] Rehearsal involves forming relationships – actor to actor, actor to

the world of the play, and the actor to the language of the text. To arrive at an engaging

interpretation, in a collaborative model of rehearsal the director needs to implement

activity that supports the actor in developing and strengthening these pivotal links.

Consciously building such connections can increase actor engagement, and prompt greater

immediacy and reflexivity in the work. Greater specificity and depth in the relationships

between components (such as the actors, the text, and the world of the play) expands the

potentiality of rehearsal activity entered into. Furthermore, actors crave and seek a sense of

communion through their work, according to the Melbourne Interviews, with inter-personal

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[97] This perspective is attributed to my directorial training with Richard Murphet at VCA. We studied
transactional-analysis as part of the course.
[98] I use the term 'communion' here as inspired by Stanislavski's phrase, discussed at length in *An Actor
Prepares* (2013).

connection contributing significantly to their sense of satisfaction. As such, rehearsal frames that develop Connection in the rehearsal room may not only support cast inter-relationships, and add detail and authenticity to the interpretation, but may conceivably enhance actor wellbeing, fulfilment and motivation.

The application of rehearsal tools to foster actor inter-relationships is important, as despite a common desire to inter-connect with peers, and a prevailing belief in collaboration, an actor's connection to others and to a collective process can be impacted by circumstance. Multiple factors can disunite a cast: the stress associated with time pressure, the discord of different working styles, and career pressures. There can be much at stake for each actor, and as touched on previously, fear and anxiety, given the conditions, can result in a divided cast and actor self-protectionism.

Melbourne interviewees raised such individualism as an area of concern. Speaking from experience, Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) observes that a rehearsal process can disintegrate into 'the sort of self-protection mode' that he 'loathe[s]', with 'people only looking after themselves and their performance'. He argues that a self-preservation mindset, 'I'll get a good review', 'is death' and erodes the 'theatrical fabric and tapestry' of rehearsal. Samuels (2014, pers. comm. 19 October) recalls how even rehearsal of an unprovocative interpretation of a renowned text, by an eminent Melbourne director, resulted in problematic incertitude and disquietude amongst the cast: 'I think a lot actors in that cast were protecting themselves, didn't trust themselves, and they blamed other people … There wasn't the same safety'.

Multiple, disconnected relationships – the director, the actors and the text - had a deleterious effect upon the rehearsal process of the 2014 Malthouse production of *The*

Good Person of Szechuan. The lack of effective communication from the director (due in part to language problems, but also the director's idiosyncratic communication style and extended absence during the rehearsal period), resulted in a highly stressful and ad-hoc application of rehearsal activity. The very limited direction within the process also meant there was little structure to support the actors' engagement with one another on stage. It was only by the actors rallying together to take turns leading a warm-up each day, in an effort to salvage some control, that some degree of cohesion was forged (Milledge 2015, pers. comm. 15 July).

The reductive impact of disconnection is two-fold. Firstly, there can be a perceived lack of permission, and/or unwillingness, by a cast member to take risks to find something perhaps more resonant, interesting or innovative. Secondly, the synergy of collective endeavour begins to breakdown as one becomes more self-focused.

In contrast, building connectivity within a cast, I suggest, can lead to trust and a self-perpetuating belief in a more successful outcome. The degree of security felt amongst the actors in the room can produce an ascending, or descending, spiral that impacts the creativity of rehearsal. The Positioning mechanism of Connection is, therefore, important. Cast connectivity requires work, and deep engagement on stage between particular actors requires specific strategy. Whilst a play can be seen as a series of human interactions, and human relationships are at the core of drama, as Merlin (2016, p. 211, emphasis in original) notes:

> … it's curious that so few actors genuinely commit to establishing real CONNECTION between each other. Probably because it's actually quite hard work, and going through 'theatrical motions' can be much easier.

Referring to the perpetuity of the problem of disconnection, and Stanislavski's own

frustration with this phenomenon, Merlin (p. 212, emphasis in original) continues:

> … it's not always the actor's fault. Even one hundred years later, very little conventional
> actor-training seems to focus on developing a sense of 'communion' or CONNECTION
> between actors. If you haven't had the opportunity to experience it in your training, how can
> you do otherwise in your professional practice than 'replace real communion by ordinary
> imitations of it'?

This comment regarding training is consistent with Lutton's previous comment that under-

graduate actors would benefit from acting opposite seasoned actors as part of their training

to experience their intensity. He was, I suspect, referring to the need for younger actors to

develop the fortitude to 'meet' the rawness of that encounter. This said, connection

between actors of any age can be elusive and requires deliberate summoning in rehearsal.

Merlin proposes that an elementary step to combatting disconnection is fostering eye

contact – a notion shared by William Ball (1984, p. 104, emphasis in original) three decades

ago in his advice to directors in *A Sense of Direction*: 'In the *sitting rehearsal* the most

important thing is contact between actors … Try to get them to lean across their scripts to

establish eye contact with the person with whom they are talking …'. Merlin also advocates

improvisation as a useful rehearsal tool to build connection between cast members due to

the requisite demands of attentiveness on the actor (2016).

To create inter-connectedness, a deliberate, daily device was employed by Watson to

facilitate the sense of ease required in the romantic onstage relationship in *WRWCG*:

> I just decided that every single day we would all sing … and it became a fun way of
> communicating. So we got a projector and we made this huge, huge projection and … we
> basically did love-song Karaoke every day … which was really, really fun … I think it would
> have been easy to have kind of walked into the room and viewed that as being *just* fun … it

was a bit like … [a] sort of a 'dropping in' process, but [there are] ways of doing that are not explicit, and this was one of those …. (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July).

The sensorial experience of singing, combined with the shared nostalgia of past pop songs and humour elicited from the accompanying old music videos, helped to engage and unite the cast. Watson also observes that less 'explicit' ways of working can be trivialised and dismissed as inefficacious; an intention of the Principal Function schema is to expose the merit of less-traditional ways of working such as this.

The act of sharing helps the transition from being an individual to being a collective. In multiple rooms, the purpose of table analysis does not just provide opportunity for an analytical engagement with the text, but also the occasion for individuals to reveal their own history and personality through story-telling. With the focus of the task safely situated on the text, the act of recounting personal experiences discreetly weaves points of understanding and empathy between cast members. This interleaving between reading and talking is common place in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room. Mouzakis (2015, pers. comm. 28 October) notes that this 'standard' approach involves the director prompt of 'what does the play bring up for everyone'. He explains that this rehearsal method supported the connectivity of the cast of *The Cherry Orchard*: 'we'd talk about things … there was storytelling … getting to know you'. Stone, the director, recognised that supporting the emergent relationships between cast members was comparable to building the relations of the characters: 'he mentioned … this is like bonding, everyone's getting to know each other, we are playing a family … this is all part of it'.

Connection can also be facilitated by more alternative embodied methods. For instance, the director can utilise improvisational frames as a way to build actor-actor relationships, with

the act of sharing inter-personal space and/or making physical contact contributing to inter-connectedness in onstage relationships. Within Jacobs' use of abstract physical improvisation in *Antigone*, opportunities spontaneously arose for the cast to challenge and subvert socially dictated proxemics between characters. In turn, the breaking down of socially bound behaviours in the frame of the exercise partly impacted actor connectedness. As the focus of the activity was placed on an exploration of the world of the play or language of the text, there was less conscious deliberation and social negotiation at play. Conventional physical boundaries were trespassed and new kinaesthetic, haptic and spatial relationships between actors were formed. A cast member explains how this abstract improvisation supported the development of tacit understanding in the onstage relationships:

> [That] is what I love about abstracting, because it links two actors tighter in a physical way … it's like you share something on a deeper physical level, and then when you break it apart, and you have to stand opposite each other, you're not two strangers being polite … sometimes abstracting can bring a fearlessness, because you've contacted that person, and then you separate, so it's about connection and it's about permission … I think abstracting is about trust and permission. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

The transgression of the normal rules of social interaction, via the incidental physical contact and receptivity demanded in an embodied, abstract improvisational framework, can promote both actor security and audacity. In this sense, the lived experience component of 'abstracting' may be a useful rehearsal tool for redefining social parameters and developing, to borrow Lecoq's term, 'complicite' amongst cast members.[99]

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[99] It should be duly noted, however, that the transgression of normal social and physical boundaries also carries with it a level of risk to the personal rights and safety of individuals. The director's role includes an implicit duty of care to their cast, including outlining and overseeing safe practices, but until recently there has been limited conversation regarding how to achieve this. Now, with the development of anti-harassment training in the Australian workplace, and following a couple of high-profile sexual harassment cases in the

The dynamics of character interrelationships are at the core of theatre. To promote reactivity and veracity in an actor's representation of character interactions, a director may shift the focus and intention of the text off 'the self', and onto 'the other'. Two examples from the Melbourne Interviews illustrate the different ways that this may be achieved. Watson applied the strategy of actors reading each other's lines. Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May, emphasis added) explains how this helped him to relate to the other actor and character:

> … so now I actually *have to listen to you and engage with you* as a performer, rather than acting my bits, which happened, which does happen … it's just really about being in the moment, that just helps you play with what is there *in the moment*.

Carr found the activity demanded of him a present-ness, immediacy and an outward focus. The enforced listening provided an opportunity for him to appreciate the impact of the language and intentions of his role from an alternate perspective. Voicing the lines of the opposite role drew his attention more carefully to those speeches he would usually be responding to. By not playing his own role, Carr was relieved of the perceived performance pressure, assumptions and patterned responses he may have held. Encountering the material in this way increased his sensitivity and sensibility to the moment-by-moment transactions within the scene. By gaining a deeper understanding of the interaction within the scene and therefore establishing a stronger sense of his own role, Carr was well positioned to make more effective future choices.

Australian theatre industry in recent years, the Melbourne Theatre Company has instigated specific practices and an Intimacy Co-ordinator (Sheridan 2020). The Intimacy Coordinator works with the relevant cast and crew to choreograph intimate moments such as sex scenes, nudity, and simulating birth, whilst protecting the practitioner's emotional, mental and physical health. Safe work practices include arriving at an 'agreement of touch' that clearly articulates the permissions and boundaries each actor is comfortable with (which can be altered by the actor at any point), and the use of pictures, wooden art dolls and other devices to collaboratively design the physical interaction (Sheridan 2020, para. 12, para. 14).

Jacobs used a different rehearsal tool to increase the relationship dynamic between characters in the rehearsal of *Antigone.* Drawing upon Stanislavski's actions, she employed a frame that involved 'actioning' to place greater focus upon the specificity of character interaction. The actor articulated the connection between the language of the text and intention by speaking the action aloud (eg 'I need to convince you') and then played the line (eg 'think!') (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). In this version, the actions are not predetermined but are chosen and spoken in the moment as the actors face one another on the floor. Previous to this, other rehearsal tools had been applied to help the actors forge an understanding of the given circumstances and the nature of the transactions. From here, they could improvise and riff upon a range of actions, trialling and exploring to determine the most effective choice. This nurtures connectivity by making the text '*active'* and getting 'the action *off the self'* (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September, emphasis added). One actor comments how imperative this activity was in her transitioning from a personal engagement *with the text* to an engagement *with others* in the scene:

> … then it has to move back into what we're doing to each other, otherwise there's no scene, there's people operating on their own … I found that every night when I come to that scene that we've actioned, I'm aware of what I'm trying to do and I feel her action on me … I think that's a really essential part of the process. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

Both Watson's and Jacobs' rehearsal activities place specific parameters upon the actor to explore intention, and experience reaction, to arrive at a more particularised transaction. Watson's frame is more open to variation, and prompts an intuitive, playful response requisite with the romantic, wryly comic tone of the interpretation; Jacobs' frame involves a more overtly articulated and structured process that befits the gravitas of the subject

matter of the play. Each of these frames, in these ways, has also supported the pitch of the performance and the world of the play.

It is generally accepted that establishing the world of the play is important. Mitchell (2009, p. 147) warns against delaying or undervaluing rehearsal work on the world of the play: 'if you leave it too late, then [the actors] will have a strong imaginary picture that can be in conflict with the reality'. In more traditional approaches, research at the outset of the rehearsal process is thought to root the work in the relevant parameters. Director Ralf Richardt Strøbech (cited in Shepherd 2012, p. 73) explains that research is not for the knowledge itself, but rather, 'to induct[] [one] into a specific way of thinking'. That way of thinking focuses and contains the actor's future choices once on the floor. For some, cerebral research should precede embodied investigation, so that the actor's inspiration is more directed by, and relevant to, the world of the play. As Alfreds' (2007, p. 163) remarks: 'actors are working in a somewhat chaotic mélange of intelligence, imagination, imitation, instinct, habit, experience, emotion, body, voice, ambitions and fears, it's easy for the work to detach itself from the text'. Melbourne actor Milledge agrees. In preparation for her title role in *Antigone*, Milledge (2015, pers. comm. 15 July) undertook her own research into Ancient Greek style theatre and read *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Oedipus the King* 'to understand the backstories and the world'. Implying that propositional knowledge can create an effective frame for intuitive, improvisational choices (thereby mitigating entrenched habits) and hone the specificity of choices, Milledge says:

> [W]hen you're improvising on the floor, you've got to understand are these physical choices and things that I'm exploring coming from me and my own intuition … responding to this idea, or am I being informed by my ideas and research … And that's when it becomes important, when you're doing that kind of improvisational free-form work, to have a bank of

knowledge and understanding of the material that you're working with first, so that your

offers and things that you're doing, don't just become general, and just about you ….

The position of research in connecting the actors to the world of the play is worthy of some

examination. The actor's understanding of the contextual parameters *within* the text, it is

broadly thought, is enhanced by information from researched information, often factual,

outside of the text. The premise that research aids 'really knowing the play … has a long and

revered history' (Shepherd 2012, p. 42). The undertaking of research and/or the discussion

of research in the contemporary rehearsal room is predicated on the assumption that this

will connect the actor into matrix of social, cultural and political aspects of the role, thereby

enabling authentic creative choices in the ensuing work. The belief that research can 'take

you subjectively into a different place' (Shepherd 2012, p. 44) is evident in Milledge's

comment above, and other examples from the Melbourne Interviews. Quantities of historic

subject matter were read and watched for several days in rehearsal of *Death and the*

Maiden to make the actors' performances as 'as truthful as possible' (Mouzakis 2015, pers.

comm. 28 October). Similarly for *The Crucible,* rehearsal initially revolved around sharing

information regarding the factual roots of the play (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September).

The positioning of the actor's imaginative mindset - the perspectives of, and the pressures,

upon the character – is intended to forge an empathetic relationship to the text and the

circumstances.

It is, of course, imprecise to refer to rehearsal research as a singular activity. Shepherd

(2012, p. 43) observes that research 'becomes slightly different things in different situations'

and is subject to the 'parameters within which it is conceived and carried out'. There is

variation in the approach to, nature of, and degree of adherence to, the facts, which drive

directorial preoccupations and aesthetic (p. 43). For example, Mitchell applies a meticulous

fact-finding process that serves her 'commitment to Realism' (Shepherd 2012, p. 43), '[to]

ensure[] that [her] actors build a shared, concrete and detailed picture of time and place'

(Mitchell 2009, p. 145). As a rehearsal activity, research is predicated on a belief that

assumes a directorial level of control in guiding the actor's connection to the world of the

play. Shepherd argues that the 'method of research derives from, and reproduces,

ideological assumptions … about text [and] about acting', noting that 'research is shaped or

coloured by the assumptions of the people who are doing it' (Shepherd 2012, p. 43, p. 44).

He observes that a neglected but important question to ask concerns the play's specific

relationship to reality, and if the play seeks to 'misrepresent or distort that reality' (p. 45), in

which case, the artistic benefit of factual research is debatable. Research, he speculates,

may actually be more about effecting 'coherence' within the cast, an 'organisational tool' to

'bring[] the company together' (p. 46).

This brief discussion into the relationship between research and the actor's connection to

the world of the play indicates that research is chiefly valued because of the belief that it

will help define the imaginative frame that the actor will operate within, and therefore focus

the future offers that they will make. The reasons, and the ways, research is undertaken are

underpinned by assumptions and intentions, and hence these, too, can be considered

parameters that covertly effect the potentiality of the actor's work. Fundamentally, much of

the usefulness of research is dependent upon the actor's conversion of propositional

knowledge into an imaginative, personal and affective association with their role and the

world of the play. In a collaborative, investigative model of rehearsal, this cognitive shift is

important for the actor's contribution to the making of the performance. The contemporary

director could therefore play a greater part in facilitating such a process, and from a *quid*

pro quo perspective – if the contemporary actor's role now includes helping develop the

mise en scène, traditionally the director's task – this would seem a fair and logical redistribution of roles. The way the director applies frames and mechanisms, such as Immersion to be discussed shortly, is part of this equation to support and manage the individual actor's evolving relationship to the world of the play, to achieve a unified interpretation.

There was indication in the Melbourne Interviews of a belief in the importance of activities to foster a shared connection with the world of the play.[100] There was also evidence, however, that actors had numerous reasons, including career stresses, time constraints, and navigating non-preferred approaches, to forge their own imaginative connections. For example, Price has felt compelled, in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal, to adopt a unilateral, self-reliant approach to invent imagined, propositional knowledge to connect to a play (2015, pers. comm. 2 September). At the same time, Price senses that this is not an ideal scenario due to the likelihood of interpretative fissures occurring due to an actor's independent work. He explains he would prefer the greater provision of activities in rehearsal to enable an embodied, shared experience for the cast, a point that shall be expanded upon shortly.

Rehearsal activity that evokes the actor/s deep connection to the world of the play positions the actor/s to a particular *reality*, and in doing so, increases the specificity of the creative offers made, intellectually, emotionally and physically. Forging a delineated and fleshed-out world, to precipitate more detailed, decisive and/or resonant work by the actor, may not

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[100] The idea that rehearsal activity can be employed to support a cast's 'collective fantasy' in the world of the play is hardly new (Carnicke 2000, p. 32). In the rehearsal of *Tartuffe* a century ago, Stanislavski had actors immediately on the floor improvising the situations of different scenes (p. 32). The intention was to 'engage the actors in the fictional environment of the play, and stimulate a shared imaginative response to the play' (Kemp 2012, p. 148).

necessarily involve time-consuming strategies. For example, given the romantic content of *WRWCG*, Watson favoured embodied, sensorial and associative shared experiences to serve the dual function of bringing the cast together and supporting their imaginative connection to role. For instance, very early on Watson asked the two actors to walk around the block outside, without her present, arm-in-arm, whilst they ran through lines. Later in the process, when on a tea break, Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) surprised the actors with a 'different flavour ice-cream each so it [kind of became] a date'. In each case, sensory experience helped prime and trigger imaginative association. From these seemingly incidental and transient experiences, Watson hoped to summon the actor's affinity with the romantic premise of the play: 'it's funny that sometimes these little things actually make a really big difference to people's engagement with the whole imaginative world'.

Another time-efficient, effective strategy to help a cast connect with the world of the play is seen in Strong's rehearsal of *Private Lives.* Strong (2014, pers. comm. 9 October) consciously applied creative constraints upon the cast to help them meet what he identified as the primary challenge posed by the text, '[to] inhabit that elegant and formal universe' of the characters. To facilitate this he declared the rehearsal room an 'RP [Received Pronunciation] only zone', so that all cast and creatives in the rehearsal room spoke with the accent at all times. Leith McPherson, the production's voice coach, notes how pivotal the use of the socio-cultural accent was to communicate the context of the play: '[the] characters are people who should dress impeccably, act impeccably (whether they do is a big part of the play), and also speak impeccably' (cited in Stephens 2014, para. 16). To normalise the social mores of the period, and hone the embodiment of the characters, the cast was asked to 'dress up' for rehearsals (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). This assisted with reducing the degree of 'physical gesticulation' typical of the contemporary Australian interaction

(Craven 2014b, para. 8). *Private Lives* actor Leon Ford (cited in Craven 2014b, para. 8) explains:

> Even though we're not very huggy, we use our hands a lot more than when the play was written. You have to be careful not to use your hands to reinforce what you are saying. So much is taking place with the voice that you have to know what and what not to do with your body. You have to keep it to an absolute minimum ….

It was Strong's skill in supplying these frames to work within that supported the actor to link propositional understanding with imaginatively and physically inhabiting the world. The result of this ongoing, collective experience within the rehearsal process created a cohesive manner of performance which was observed to be 'charming' and 'elegant' in its critical reception (Woodhead 2014a; Neutze 2014).

Price (2015, 2 September) suggests to build the necessary connections and associations within and about a play, 'abstract' group improvisations, such as those used in the rehearsal of *Antigone,* can be a shortcut. Rather than the actor having to transform conscious, propositional information into a psycho-somatic application, the actor begins with an associative framework that already lends itself to an imaginative, feeling state:

> Working in a lot of rehearsal rooms you end up having to go and say I'm making a choice to, I've been here, I've done that, these are my given circumstances, or it's cold outside, so what does that mean? You're having to give yourself a whole lot of information …. (Price 2015, pers. comm. 2 September)

Price suggests that the group-nature of the improvisations also has merit: 'because we worked collectively, we have common information'. An argument against this type of abstract, physical improvisation is that such work does not define the specific boundaries and details that delimit the world clearly enough, and therefore may not always be the most

efficacious use of rehearsal time. The key message remains, however, that the actor's affective, associative work can be activated to a greater degree through haptic, sensory embodied experiences rather than solitary reliance upon cerebral input. There is benefit to be gained in directors opening themselves to the possibilities afforded by such practices, rather than relying solely upon their entrenched *modus operandi*. This notion of affective, sensory input will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

It is also worth considering the way the director may shape the actor's connection to the world of the play through the time parameters given to tasks. Traditionally, rehearsal is a temporally fragmented, stop-start process. Text sections of various lengths are explored, interspersed with the prompts, ideas and reflections from the director. One may assume this is to develop specificity in the work in a time efficient way. This fragmentation means, however, that the actor is required to move quickly between the subjective, affective state of being in role, and the more objective, cerebral state as the actor in their discourse with the director. Arguably, the cognitive demand created by this rapid shifting between the subjective and objective may impact the depth of the actor's intuitive work. An alternative approach is to reduce interruption and distraction for the actor so that they may delve more deeply into the role, staying 'inside the work', for longer periods. This notion correlates with Csikszentmihalyi's theory of 'flow' state, which he argues is requisite for creative discovery and achieving optimal experience (1991; 2013).

Davies is an advocate of this strategy, and aims to work in longer, sustained sections to avoid frequently disconnecting the actor from their imagination. In her rehearsals, she also voices questions and prompts to the 'character' - rather than the actor - to direct their actions and reactions whilst helping them sustain their connection to the world of the

play.[101] By avoiding interrupting both the flow of the work and the flow of the character's

imaginative work, Davies intends to make the actor's task easier, and their imaginative

connection to the given circumstances deeper. This notion of sustaining subjectivity is also

evident in the 'long-sweep work' of extended improvisations, some 60 – 90 minutes in

length, used in *Antigone* rehearsals. For Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September), this work

enabled him to 'really go into something, [to] go into the textures of the world, and [to] get

lost in a way that you can't if you are constantly coming out of it and going back in'. He

acknowledges, however, that on a conscious level it is difficult for the actor to retrieve

specific impulses and images after a long period of time. The inevitable contraction back to

'real time' to fit the structure of the text can be problematic in terms of what is consciously

retained (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). If we accept the notion of flow state, and

that there is benefit of work at a subconscious level upon future output, then greater

exploration of the length of activities to support the actor's affective cognition in rehearsal

is warranted.

Connection involves the way the actor's encounter with the language of the text forms

and/or fuses with their own associative pathways, bringing more dimension to the

understanding to the text, and resulting in greater resonance in the delivery. In cognitive

terms, this may be seen in the light of Amy Cook's theory of 'conceptual blending' – the

complex combining of different inputs, such as one's own experiences and associations with

the language of the text, to arrive at a new understanding or creation (Lutterbie 2011, p.

174; Cook 2013, pp. 87-88). Meaning is contingent, and a deeper, more personal connection

to the words spoken - grounded in the world of the play and governed by the boundaries of

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[101] In the classes I attended with her at VCA, Davies explained that she addresses the 'character' so that the actor can remain in a subjective, imaginative state in role, rather than moving in and out of reality.

the interpretation - is likely to expand the scope and resonance of the offers and choices made in rehearsal, as well as increase the perceived authenticity of performance. Furthermore, the greater the connection made with language through imaginative or personal association, or embodied experience, the more likely the text will be embedded in memory. This allows easier retrieval and may possibly reduce vocal patterning.

Berry (1987) believes that it is through the combination of the richness of meaning and the immediacy of the spoken word that change is genuinely realised on stage. Connection to the text is realised by the actor constantly practising and questioning his/her response to the spoken word: '[w]e must first allow the words to act upon us – this asks for inner stillness – and then we must touch them out, let them free' (p. 30). Furthermore, she argues that the delivery of language is often too consciously constructed, and requires instead a freer, more primitive approach: '[w]ords are so often much rougher and more anarchic than we allow them to be' (p. 23).

Specific rehearsal frames can help achieve this end, although as with many aspects of Positioning, the nature and means of Connection have a complex relationship. Jacobs' abstract improvisations are an interesting example. Similar to Berry's proposition that the actor needs to freely experience and explore the multi-dimensionality of the language, Jacobs (2015, 10 September) asserts that the actor needs to have their own subjective relationship with the words, often through an embodied experience of the text. She contends that her abstract improvisation involves 'free associating in an abstract way around language'. With *Antigone,* it involved working slowly through the script, 'approaching each word and each sentence in a kind of psycho-physical way, where the cast was asked to find an abstract embodiment for that text' (Jacobs 2015, pers. comm. 10

September). For the actor, playing with the spoken words within this frame of free, abstract association can allow a 'filling [and] exploration of language, and variation and dynamic and scale, intimacy and size' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) notes that it is the 'physical release' of this rehearsal tool that helps him to get 'the language in' and find authenticity and 'a crystallisation of language'.

Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September) justifies her process with the argument that the language must be experienced subjectively before it is intellectualised:

> … about halfway through the process, we would start having conversations about what is your intention here … technical work … more heady work, we definitely laced that throughout the process as well, and it is really important, but my instinct is that it should come after you've met the text, or encountered it yourself, rather than imposing something upon it.

This post-Cartesian perspective challenges the early-Stanislavskian model that begins with comprehensive text analysis, and partly addresses Berry's other concern, that effective delivery of language can be curtailed when analysis of character intentions are prioritised. Jacobs' use of improvisation, and the lived experience it affords the actor, may help align the internal intention and the vocal delivery. One actor comments how affective memory informs the delivery of text:

> … I think the *physical informs the energy of the speech*, and the way we reflect on our experiences or the way we chat about our mother or the way we talk about our boss … there's always a slightly different weight or a feeling … it affects the taste of the language, you taste it differently if you have had a lived experience of it …. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

As is the premise of this thesis, however, rehearsal methods should be contingent upon the parameters of the project at hand, and the use of a particular rehearsal activity, traditional

or otherwise, may not necessarily be meritorious. The use of some rehearsal methods may require counterbalancing with alternate strategies. For example, in relation to the actor's connection to language, Berry (1987, p. 18) warns that the thoughts that the actor has invented can become more prominent than the way the words are actually spoken. She explains that in that case, the energy of the thought and the words are not linked. Furthermore, in written verse, an emotional, personalised connection to the utterances may be counter to the clarity and resonances of the rhythmic structure and heightened language of the text, as raised previously in regard to the rehearsal of *Antigone.* The type of connection that 'should' be prioritised is contingent upon the nature of the language, directorial intention, and the perceived authority of the text.

A particular mechanism of the Principal Function of Positioning that works concomitantly with Connection, defining and enabling the work of the actor, is *Immersion*.

8.4 Immersion

Uta Hagen is said to have insisted that only 'actual set pieces and props' were used in rehearsal, declaring, 'I want to have opened and closed that refrigerator door a hundred times before I set foot on that stage' (Hyde Pierce cited in Hagen & Frankl 2008, p. ix-x). Daniel Day Lewis is renowned for 'immersing himself in the physical circumstances of the roles that he plays' (Kemp 2012, p. 150). Michael Chekhov (1991, p. 169, emphasis in original) advises actors to: '[*m]ake friends with the set'*, as through touching, sitting and interacting you 'begin to get something from them, invisibly as well as from the physical feel of them'.

These are examples of the application of Immersion: the provision and manipulation of a sensory environment to facilitate the actor's imaginative engagement with their role, the circumstances and the world of the play. A director's framing of the environment in which the actor works may focus the actor's awareness and enhance their imaginative belief, prompting more specific interaction. Working in this way can build an associative memory that helps contain and direct future choices to be relevant to, and of, the world of the play. As Alfreds (2007, p. 163, emphasis in original) notes, '[t]hings learnt in the sweat of doing go deeper and last longer'.

The value of providing sensory input to assist the actor's work is supported by a growing body of post-Cartesian literature that examines the intersection of theatre and cognitive science.[102] For instance, given that research indicates that only 5 percent of brain activity is available 'to conscious reflection' (Kemp 2012, p. 86), it is reasonable to assume that rehearsal may be well served by attending to the other 95 percent.[103] If we also consider that our intuitive brain responds rapidly to sensory input from our surroundings (Gigerenzer 2008; Gladwell 2005), it is logical that the sensory environment of the rehearsal room can be manipulated to help enliven the actor's imagination to the fictitious world of the play. When Hagen insisted upon interacting with the objects of the performance, she was exploring and growing a somatic score. The tactility and heft of opening and closing a specific refrigerator door imprints a particular version of the fictitious world upon the actor – and Hagen saw 'particularization' as an essential aspect of rehearsal (Hagen 2008, p. 44-

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[102] This include the comprehensive compilation of *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science: Body, Brain and Being*, and texts such as John Lutterbie's *Toward a General Theory of Acting* and Rick Kemp's *Embodied Acting*, amongst others.

[103] Kemp (2012, p. 86) is referring to Lakoff and Johnson's research indicating that a person is unaware of the vast majority of their 'brain's activity'.

45, emphasis in original). The haptic nature of that experience is also significant because touch is reputed to be ten times more powerful than other forms of contact, such as verbal (Field 2001, p. 57). An embodied, kinaesthetic association, it may be argued, increases the depth of the actor's inhabitation of the role and, conceivably, may foster greater sensitivity and reactivity to the moment.[104]

A director's specific choices shape the sensory environment of the rehearsal room, potentially influencing the atmosphere, tone and pace of the work to come; an associative framework that simultaneously unites the cast as they work within the same parameters, and arouses the individual actor's own associative responses, providing a way for individuals to find their own connection to the material.

There are some interesting and useful examples of the use of immersion activities cited in the Melbourne Interviews. In *WRWCG,* Watson's daily use of singing as a warmup has provided a sensory stepping-stone to help the cast transition into the rehearsal work. Watson hoped that, for this piece, the music would set the 'emotional tone' and make the 'music feel natural' (2015, pers. comm. 17 July). Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) notes how the singing triggered interactive movement: 'Sophie and I would normally sort of do some weird, bad dancing, if it happened, and then we'd just jump in and do scenes'. This playful activity, in which the dancing was not prescribed but prompted by the environment that has been created, helped position the actors for the work to come through their shared, physical engagement. More specifically, Watson (2015, emphasis added) asserts that the

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[104] The external environment also adds to the richness of the actor's imagination by linking present and past. In *Facts and fictions: landscapes of memory, imagination and the brain in performance making,* Melbourne scholar and practitioner Kate Hunter (2012, para. 18) draws attention to the way that an actor's perception of the immediate external stimuli, in the present moment, is immediately synthesised with images (of any sensory kind) held in the actor's memory.

use of this informal act of singing functioned as a form of 'dropping in' to help the actors to be '*inhabited'* by the world.

It is evident that Watson perceives the director as responsible in supporting the actor's idiosyncratic connection to the work, and that she designs her rehearsal approach accordingly. In this case she determined, 'what was required was this integrity of the relationship to song for these characters' (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July). Watson admits that working in a reflexive way, inventing rehearsal frames to respond to the project at hand, is not without risk. She reveals that her use of song warmups 'was a bit of a gamble … it could have felt really awkward … it's not something that I've done for a work before'. Nevertheless, she applied this rehearsal tool in keeping with her belief in a reflexive rehearsal process.

Environmental conditions of the room, such as the application of music and sound, as well as the manipulation of the lighting state, can evoke a specific atmosphere that supports the actor's immersion in the mood, quality and/or imaginative world of the play. Creating a mood in the space may help the actor in two ways. Firstly, an altered environment assists the actor in 'blotting out' the real world. One actor argued that manipulating the environmental factors of the rehearsal room helps 'to make it a more private space or unconscious space' rather than 'all the lights on, windows open, and everyone watching' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September). This more private atmosphere induces a greater sense of security and freedom in the actor, conceivably adding to the depth of exploration and creative risk-taking in the process. Secondly, the aural and visual environment can facilitate a more affective state and spark the actor's imaginative engagement with the world of the play. This can serve as a shortcut of sorts, as one actor explains:

It sometimes supports you because there's a mood that you don't have to construct, there's a feeling state or the stakes or the world that you don't have to generate in terms of you don't have to emote your own images, because there's something that's there already, and so there's something, you can maybe be more simple when there's something else complicated in the space, I think. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

Apart from the ease articulated in this utterance, it is interesting to note the actor's reference to their subsequent simplicity in the space. The sensory environment serves as a parameter or creative boundary, focusing and refining the imaginative task for the actor, and possibly prompting clearer, more pertinent offers in the space.

The improvised score created an aural frame that affected the actors' work in *Antigone*. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) found this created 'an immediate otherness … an immediate tap or access into another world', providing a bridge into a different reality. He explains why, for him, the application of sound is useful in rehearsal:

[It is] very helpful if you immediately have a sonic reference point … because a lot of the work Jethro's done in *Antigone* is very bass flavoured … it's very physical, the sound has a physical effect, it literally shakes the room, it gets into your bones ….

The vibrational, visceral impact of the sound is a felt stimulus that usefully takes focus off the self. The sensation of the sound is a constant trigger for engagement in the 'other' world being imagined and constructed by the actor.

The tactility of objects, as raised earlier, can support the actor's work at a less conscious level. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added) asserts that the provision of objects and other sensory items to interact with enables him to bypass conscious thought processes and respond more instinctively and specifically to the offers within the rehearsal space: 'it's not necessarily a thought-based thing … you can find a way of being by giving

over to a *tactile sensation* … [which] will then lead to particular *way of being* in the theatrical space'.

It is this act of *being*, rather than *thinking* or *showing*, that is often the desired aim of dramatic acting performance, and it is significant that it is through surrendering to sensory experience that, for Price, this sense of being is achieved. It is worth noting that this connection between *sensing* and *being* is consistent with meditation and mindfulness practices that heighten sensory awareness, reduce extraneous thought and promote being (Williams & Pennyman 2011).

Tactility was an active ingredient in Strong's rehearsal approach for *Private Lives*. Actors spent each rehearsal day in formal attire to help them inhabit the 'elegant, formal universe' required by the world of the play (Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October). Strong explains that his intention was to give the actors an 'imaginative, visceral entry point' into a world dictated by social etiquette and propriety. Arguably the physical restriction and tactile experience of wearing the formal attire fostered an immediate sensual understanding of the restraint inherent in the lives of the characters. The consistency and repetition of this may have enabled the actors to become more familiar with these sensations, and to adjust their own physical behaviour accordingly, thereby building a greater connection to role. Visually, all of the cast wearing the attire served as a collective and constant reminder for the actors of the world being inhabited. This rehearsal approach also added an element of novelty and playfulness to the rehearsal room suitable for the tone of a Noel Coward play.

 The sense memory gained from an immersive rehearsal experience can create a kind of associative shortcut to access the actor's interior world in rehearsal, and also in the performance season, as an actor explains:

It was about creating, generating cellular information for me, anyway, that your body just knows about being in that world, creating the world … it *generates associative material* … It's just about creating *little things that your brain can just subconsciously flip to, images or physical sensations*, the physical sensation of stress or tension that you don't necessarily have to go through in the moment, but *your body has a knowledge of, or your mind has a knowledge of*; you're imaginative world is led by these things and *it allows you to go deeper* into the work … *you don't have to conjure it*, because we did so much exploring of that world, *you can tap into it immediately*. (Price 2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added)

These examples have demonstrated that Immersion can be of assistance in the actor's transition from a point of propositional *knowledge* of the text, to a more subjective, visceral and affective *understanding* of the text. It is interesting, therefore, that Immersion activities are not featured more frequently in the Melbourne room. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September, emphasis added) attributes this, in part, to way theatre is perceived in Australia:

There is a sense … in Australian theatre that language …, or the actor, or great acting, is the most important thing, but actually *theatre is a total thing*, it's not just one thing … And I think you'd have a lot more of the elements in the room more of the time, including lights … it's so important, it's so painterly … that really has a huge impact ….

In this chapter I have argued that the Principal Function of Rehearsal of Positioning is critical in laying the groundwork for the actor's work to follow. The various mechanisms that define and/or enable Positioning rehearsal activities have been discussed. I have proposed that various aspects of Positioning can be achieved by more experiential processes in concert with, or more effectively than, the more traditional practices of table analysis and research. The director's role, I have argued, is to conceive and implement the *ad rem* parameters of tasks to provide their actors with advantageous 'entry points' in which to not just understand the text, but also to establish the *modus operandi* of the room and the

practitioners within it, and the creative work ahead. Positioning creates clear frames of reference to begin work on the piece.

In the next chapter, I will explore the active ingredients of rehearsal frames involved in the Creating Principal Functions and how, in rehearsal, they contribute to the development of the *mise en scène*.

Chapter 9   The Creating Principal Function

In this chapter I will argue that the application of the Creating Principal Function

mechanisms can enhance the originality of the staged interpretation of a play. In an

investigative, collaborative model of rehearsal, in which the *mise en scène* is developed

collectively on the rehearsal floor, supporting and guiding the actor's imaginative response

is paramount. The Creating mechanisms support this purpose, prompting and honing the

actor's work, and guiding their thinking. The mechanisms of Proposition and Generation

support experimentation and the stimulation of ideas. A case shall also be made for the

occasional use of the mechanism of Construction, dependent upon the specific

circumstances of the rehearsal process. The final section will involve a discussion of

Consolidation, and how the implementation of particular frames may support the actor's

memorisation of their role as part of the rehearsal process.

To more fully appreciate the Creating mechanisms and how they operate as ingredients

within rehearsal activity, it is helpful to consider two types of thinking that are required in

rehearsal: convergent thinking and divergent thinking. Each involves the manipulation and

production of knowledge, but each produces different outputs (Cropley 1999). For rapid and

expected results, convergent thinking is useful as it 'emphasises speed, accuracy, logic and

the like and focuses on recognising the familiar, reapplying set techniques and accumulating

information' (Cropley 2006, p. 391). It is most suited to providing the 'single best answer (or

correct) answer to a *clearly defined question'*, particularly when there is a 'readymade

answer that just needs to be recalled …. or worked out …' and 'usually generates *orthodoxy*'

(p. 391, emphasis added, p. 392, emphasis in original).

In comparison, in divergent thinking a range of answers stems from the information given, with often unanticipated, unique results. Divergent thinking involves 'making *unexpected combinations*, recognising links among remote associations, [and] transforming information into *unexpected forms'* (p. 391, emphasis added). It promotes '*variability*', can stimulate excitement in the participant, and proffer 'a surprising answer' (p. 392, emphasis in original).

The directorial process of creating the embodied performance involves the interleaving of both these types of thinking. If we are to work through the ambiguity intrinsic to the rehearsal process together, in a spirit of collaborative investigation, divergent thinking does, however, offer particular utility. To arrive at more innovative and unexpected interpretations and staging ideas, the director needs to prioritise and shape rehearsal tasks that will prompt the actor's divergent thinking. The mechanism of Proposition assists with this type of thinking.

9.1 Proposition

'What if…?' is a question synonymous with the creative process of rehearsal. The proffering of an idea, by a director or a cast member, is often followed by the actor's embodied response. The enquiry regards the relationship between the text and the interpretive form. The proposition – 'what if?' - is about seeking: it is a *physical means of investigation to discover ways to embody and stage the text*. It involves (a) a defined fragment of the text (a moment, a unit or scene), (b) a suggestion that serves as a frame and (c) a spontaneous, embodied, exploratory response. The offer may be spatial, physical, psychological, emotional or temporal in nature. Procedural and practical information regarding the staging and the actors' embodied performances is experienced, observed, and considered.

In a collaborative rehearsal model, effective Positioning (with knowledge gained, offstage and onstage relationships built, and the *modus operandi* of the room established) paves the way for Proposition. The actor can enter into the process of Creating with confidence, relevance and inventiveness.

The term Proposition refers to an offer or suggestion ('Proposition' 2020). As a mechanism of the Principal Function of Creating, I use it to connote *running with* an offer to yield an artistic response. It is a prompt to 'make something happen' ('Prompt' 2020), a setting in motion of action and imagination on the rehearsal floor. 'Provocation' has similar resonances in regard to setting up rehearsal experiments, and is in growing usage in artistic parlance (for example by Jacobs, et cetera). I suggest, however, that there is subtle distinction here. 'Provocation' has a more authoritarian and oppositional flavour – it is a challenge *to react to*, rather than the invitation *to work with* that Proposition suggests. Significantly, the term Proposition captures the improvisational (go along with) and provisory nature of *what if* in a process of collaboration, and this, I contend, is the stuff from which the embodied performance is made.

The director's role includes proposing – or collecting from the cast - clear, concrete, purposeful offers to stimulate or shape the actor's embodied inquiry. The ideas proposed by the actor, and/or the cast's activation of these ideas on the floor, may be considered the most collaborative aspect of current rehearsal practice. That is, actors put forward an idea to be tested, but also have a creative investment in embodying and discovering possible answers. This trialling of ideas is improvisation, if we accept Lutterbie's (2011, p. 162) definition of improvisation as an 'open-ended exercise, set within limits that define a situation but do not determine an outcome'. In this way, interpreting the text is not a

dissimilar process to devising work. As noted by the founder of Théâtre du Soleil, Ariane Mnouchkine (cited in Delgado & Heritage 1996, p. 183), invention and experimentation of the embodied form is needed to arrive at understanding: 'The actors have to improvise anyway. They have to improvise because, who knows what they are doing or why they're saying that. I don't know'. The amassing of formative information enables a greater understanding of the fragment at hand and how it may be embodied. It is through trial and error, as Brook (1993, p. 111) says, that meaning surfaces.

In the rehearsal room Proposition is useful because it acts as a bridge between cerebrally held knowledge and embodied, procedural understanding. Kemp (2012, p. xvii) observes that '[t]he brain processes written language in a different way than speech. This specifies the challenge that actors face in converting the words of a script to apparently spontaneous action'. The requisite epistemological shift explains why '[o]ne of the hardest things' an actor has to do is 'to start, to take that first step into the space' (Walter 1999, p. 87). If the Positioning work has been more table-based than somatic, then carefully constructed, 'doing' propositions are especially important to realise the actor's imaginative capacity on the floor. The 'what if?' suggestion put forward in creating the work, I argue, serves both as an immediate *stimulus* to engage the actor's imagination, and a *constraint* or *lens* that informs the domain of thought and purview of the actor's physical task on the floor.[105] The specific framing of the question can make the 'doing' easier by reducing the range of possible choices and focusing the actor's mind upon a specific task to achieve. Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) observes that, ultimately, the role of the director is to give the

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[105] The notion of proposition is already rooted in acting technique due to the legacy of Stanislavski's *Magic if*. The *Magic if* prompts the actor's imagination toward a specific set of circumstances, and in doing so, directs the nature of their response (Stanislavski 2013).

actors clear, 'concrete things to do'.[106] This physical doing is important, for when an interpretation evolves from the actor's body, work is more likely to be remembered, trusted and owned. Watson (2014, pers. comm. 22 October) proposes 'if [the staging] comes from the actor's body, and it has been their choice, then it's something that is easy for them to stay engaged in and identify with and remember why'.

Proposition is useful in rehearsal because it can be motivating. The Melbourne directors interviewed often expressed a high level of enjoyment in the period of rehearsal that involved embodied investigation. Directors found this practice of trialling ideas joyful and energising. For instance, Watson relishes the phase of 'not knowing' that drives experimentation on the floor, and Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) comments on his 'love [of] the process of trying out ideas'. Actors, too, commented that they found this process of testing possibilities extremely satisfying and engaging; some actors remarked that they enjoyed this experimentation even more than performing. This pleasure within artistic endeavour, according to literature, is important for the personal wellbeing and professional capacity of theatre practitioners. Brook (1993, p. 71) argues that this enjoyment, borne from exercises and improvisations, is especially vital for the professional actor to regain vigour and avoid the 'stultifying efficiency of professionalism'. Similarly, in his book *Freeplay,* Nachmanovitch (1990) remarks upon the intrinsic satisfaction that can be found in the creative act, a state known in German as *Funktionslust*. He posits that it is the pleasure and fulfilment of searching, more so than attaining, that drives artistry, play and creativity: '[c]reativity exists in the searching even more than the finding or being found' (p. 45). In this light, Propositional frames, as part of the rehearsal, can have an autotelic

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[106] This said, a directorial strategy may be to deliberately not give the actor direction of 'what to do', as in more free, open improvisations.

function, motivating and stimulating the practitioners, as well as serving the creative

process itself.[107]

Proposition is aligned to play: it prompts agency, spontaneity and reactivity, all of which are

beneficial in a collaborative rehearsal model for the effective creation of the *mise en scène*.

The Melbourne Interviewees frequently used *play* to describe experimentation on the floor.

Winter (2015, pers. comm. 20 August) explains that the production of *Birdland* 'was

basically born of a lot of play … just sort of … experimenting with different things … let's just

try things'. Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) comments on the way that Evan's starting

offers of a spatial location created a framework to play within: 'Pete … was like … you take

that point, and you take that point, and oversaw that, and then there was all these little

moments within it that he encouraged us to play with'. He emphasises the interactivity

between the director and cast, alongside the feeling of spontaneity and freedom in the

process: 'Pete was really up for what you got, *very playful, [he] very, very, much allows you*

to play' and '[not] show me a version and do that, but he was much more like, okay, *now,*

what would happen if … more throwing ideas at you, I guess' (Carr 2015, pers. comm. 13

May, emphasis added). The sense of permission and freedom that Carr expresses, and the

energy and volume of work this playfulness seems to engender, is much of the point of

applying Proposition.

It is also the provisory nature of Proposition - that 'everything is useable, everything is

disposable' that encourages inventiveness.[108] The perception of trialling, rather than

making, can unfetter the actor's approach. When an actor's choice does not need to be the

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[107] Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 121) also discusses the 'autotelic experience' of creativity in his text *Creativity*.
[108] This was the catchphrase of director/teacher Tanya Gerstle that I experienced in her classes at the VCA.
(2001, pers. comm. 5 August). Gerstle's classes included activities that were part of her original improvisational
training process, 'Pulse'.

best choice, when a moment is played in rehearsal without expectation, offers are less likely to be careful and constrained. Whilst not always practicable given time restrictions, the use of multiple propositions helps support a feeling of spontaneity, flexibility and disposability – all components of play (the notion of *multiple* experiments I have called Generation and will be explored later in this chapter). When the pressure to 'get it right in one go' is removed, the actor is emboldened to push artistic boundaries and hence is able to work more deeply and broadly. Clive Barker (2010, p. 139) asserts that this was a key belief of Joan Littlewood, evident in her directorial approach: '[the] purpose of playing is not to make things happen but to let things happen'.

The effectiveness of Proposition to create the performance is dependent, in part, upon the director's skill in how it is undertaken; there is much in the *design* of the experiment put forward, and the intention behind it. The nature of the question posed, in terms of scope and importance, impacts the degree of imagination, relevance and resourcefulness of the solution (Sawyer 2013; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi 1976; Shanks 2020; Sternberg & Lubart 1995).

Proposition can involve creating a task to achieve, or an immediate problem to stimulate and focus the attention of the actor; conversely, it can involve diverting actor attention (a concept that will be discussed in detail in the following chapter).

A frame for exploration commonly used in Melbourne tends to revolve around spatial organisation. Caceres (2015, 19 August) asked her four actors in *Birdland* to explore playing a scene entirely confined upon a small couch. Lutton's (2014, 28 October) device of beginning with a super-structure can be seen as a series of proposals for spatial organisation

that inform various experiments in staging the play. Strong (2014, 9 October) posed multiple

spatial offers in his staging of *The Crucible.* One actor comments:

> [We were] constantly testing what is possible in the world. It's so much about location, it's
> so much about spatial relationship, whether we need to be distant or close, when we need
> to get close … how does space create meaning, how does gesture create meaning? (AA
> 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

The actor goes on to explain how trying different proposals is a form of analysis in action.[109]

In this case, the spatial proxemics of the fragment are being explored and the impact upon

herself and the work as a whole assessed:

> … experimenting, exploring, pushing boundaries, pulling back within the blocking [] so you
> push it and you bring it back … it's *like script analysis, but physically*, and in a very restricted
> space it's like what is possible in terms of tension of distance, tension of intimacy, which is
> most main stages, it's that to and fro, it's text analysis around the table and then it's almost
> script analysis on the floor physically … So, it's not free, like abstracting takes you into free-
> form, anything goes, but most main-stage processes won't do that. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4
> September, emphasis added)

It is interesting to note the correlation the actor sees between the *tighter* frames involved in

testing blocking ideas and the *broader* frames used in 'abstracting'. Both approaches begin

with some form of initial offer to define the parameters of the improvised response, and

involve the investigation of the text fragment at hand. Both approaches demand creative

and psycho-physical input from the actor, and produce an embodied fragment for the actor

to experience and the director to observe. Whilst the nature of the work is less confined by

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[109] This is distinct from, but not entirely unrelated to, Stanislavski's Active Analysis. Based on her own Russian
training and the work of Maria Knebel, Merlin (2016, p. 197) explains Stanislavski's Active Analysis as a simple
5 step process that is repeated numerous times: reading the scene, discussing the scene, improvising the
scene, discussing the improvisation, and comparing the improvisation to the actual text. It is a specific,
structured process involving improvisation, followed by analysis of that improvisation in relationship to the
text, in an iterative cycle; the actor's comment here is in regard to a deeper understanding of the text that is
arrived at through improvising and experimenting with activity to block the scene.

the world of the play in 'abstracting', I contend it is helpful to recognise the parallel

between these two different rehearsal methods. This, in part, reinforces the merit of

abstracting as a rehearsal activity and prompts consideration of the usefulness of other, less

traditional rehearsal processes. This actor's words suggest that trialling possibilities is

common-place in the mainstage rehearsal room.

Thematic image was another frame employed to instigate creative material. For the

Melbourne cast of *Antigone*, this involved Jacobs providing a prompt:

> [I started] by setting a provocation, a line from the play, or a kind of theme or image … find
> six images of grief in the space, you're all in the space together, but just work solo, a whole
> lot of props and objects there, go … it was just sort of a free form approach, and I set them a
> few tasks like that. (2015, pers. comm. 10 September)

Jacobs explains that the purpose of this type of 'provocation' is to challenge the actors to

find a theatrical image through 'a kind of expressionistic response to that idea', a response

that is influenced by body shape and relationship to clothing, architecture, and objects in

the space.

Proposition can help create work by suggesting a specific link between the interiority and

exteriority of the actor's work. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) explains such a frame

given by Jacobs: '[means that you] internalise the physical action, so imagine you're doing

the action while you're doing the text, but don't actually do the action, or do a smaller

version of the action'. In this particular case, the impact is not dissimilar to Michael

Chekhov's process of Psychological Gesture, in which the final performance of a fragment is infused with the energy and intention of the larger physical version that preceded it.[110]

If proposition is beneficial, the lack thereof can be detrimental. The absence of, infrequent, or ill-applied provisory work caused discontent and insecurity for the actors according to the Melbourne Interviews. Despite Carr's overall sense of being able to play under Evan's direction in *A Midsummer Night Dream*, he was rattled when an initial point of entrance was immediately cemented. Note Carr's internal dialogue:

> I think because it was so early in the process, I was like, oh, shit, I felt like whatever choice I made was going to stick, and so I was, oh shit, and it did really, from this first time we did it, it stuck, and I was just like, oh, well, maybe I would have done something different … (Carr 2015, pers. comm. 13 May)

Carr's anxiety due to his only choice becoming immediately embedded into the performance could, conceivably, impact the way he approaches future tasks.

According to the Melbourne Interviews, actors were less likely to trust staging ideas that had been selected by the director without some experimentation by the actor. Such directorial choices felt *imposed* - a clearly objectionable state – and resulted in wariness, unease and reticence. Given the tightly woven fabric of an embodied interpretation, it is reasonable to understand an actor's concern that a poor choice may have ongoing ramifications on future fragments and the interpretation as a whole.

A lack of parameters, resulting from a lack of Proposition, can also make an actor's work more difficult. Returning to the example of *The Good Person of Szechuan*, Milledge

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[110] Chekhov's process involves the actor considering the desire of the character, and then, creating a gesture to symbolise that desire. Following this, the gesture is expanded to involve the whole body. Once the full body gesture is developed and refined, the actor works toward internalising the gesture (Chekhov 1991).

articulates the frustration and insecurity that the cast felt in part due to the limited testing of ideas. She asserts that the lack of constraints made the actors' work on the rehearsal floor difficult:

> He didn't give us any parameters at all, to start with …. he gave us a kind of tone to inform everything … don't be scared to do anything … those were the kind of limited instructions that we were given. (Milledge 2015, pers. comm. 15 July)

She continues, explaining that the director would 'kind of impose a scenario that the scene would play out'. The lack of sequenced Propositions, and the looseness of the artistic constraints, made it difficult for Milledge to develop the internal logic of her role, piece by piece:

> … sometimes it became hard to make the links between the character and that action … it became those character bridges … the things you would normally do if you were working on character … why would my character do this, and it doesn't make sense to me … what I'm doing right now doesn't make complete sense to my character ….

Milledge comments that this process had a significant impact upon herself and the cast that continued into the season: '[we had to be okay] not knowing for a lot of the time … a lot of us felt that way even through the season, to be honest … it's not necessarily a great thing to be onstage and feel unsure of what you're doing in certain moments'. These remarks, alongside our understanding of the importance of ownership and the precariousness of the actor's employment, indicate the importance of the Proposition in securing the actor's confidence and trust in the process and the performance.

I have argued that the design of each investigative frame on the rehearsal floor is important, for each lens alters the purview from which the actor improvises. Each improvisation contributes to the embodied work's creation, either through the direct inclusion of

particular choices, or conversely, the choices immediately dispensed with and the understanding that they bring. The provisory nature of Proposition helps activate a mindset of spontaneity and play, increases motivation and enhances trust in directorial choices. The Creating Principal Function is realised through Proposition, as the mechanism helps the actor move from cerebral to procedural, embodied knowledge, and once this work is pieced together, can supply the actor with a cohesive, interior logic for their role.

In the next section I will discuss how exploring a range of possibilities, through the application of numerous rehearsal frames, contributes to an accumulative and evolving understanding and interpretation of the created work.

9.2 Generation

> Seventy-five percent of what we do at rehearsal does not enter the performance. If we could retain a hundredth of everything which we find during rehearsal, then in a hundred rehearsals we would have a splendid performance. But, to our regret, it does not always work that way. Don't be afraid to tell an actor, "Rehearse this way today, but I want you to know that you will not play it this way". (Stanislavski cited in Cole 1992, p. 7)

In this section I will make a case that besides Proposition in its own right, it is the *multiplicity* of embodied experiments that makes a specific contribution to the creative evolution of a performance work. Numerous, embodied Propositions allow the director and cast to amass information. I have named this mechanism of collecting and comparing ideas through the use of multiple propositions, *Generation.*

Generation helps the director and cast to understand better the nature of the subject at hand so that they can determine an appropriate course of action. This process of extrapolation, the gathering of knowledge from which to make decisions, can be likened to

the artist's sketch pad, a collection of rough renderings to build an understanding not just

of the *subject matter* itself, but also the *required technique or approach* to best represent

the subject. Creativity literature supports this '[m]ass [p]roduction', quantity principle: 'to

generate good ideas, generate lots of ideas' (Smith 1998, p. 127). Stanford's d-School

advocates the importance of the 'fluency' (volume) and 'flexibility' (variety) of

ideas (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University 2020b, p. 4). De Bono

advises that when addressing a task one needs to ask '[w]hat else is there?', for

considering alternative viewpoints broadens one's perceptions, and therefore, one's

conceptions (De Bono 1992, p. 107). He calls this 'parallel' or 'lateral' thinking, and argues

that it plays a critical role in avoiding an over-reliance on a single starting point and a

singular course of thought (1992; 1977). I propose that in the rehearsal room, it is through

implementing a multiplicity of different rehearsal frames, with different

parameters or points of focus that catalyse a variety of embodied responses,

that you are more likely to arrive at interesting staging ideas, 'uncover

unexpected areas of exploration' and 'get obvious solutions out of your head[]' (Shanks

2020, p. 4).

Parallel thinking affords one tacit permission to 'delay judgements in order to allow

information to interact' (De Bono 1977, p. 258). Working through multiple propositions

means judgement and choice are postponed, and it is this deferral of decision-making that is

also beneficial for innovative thought (Shanks 2020, p. 4). This is consistent with Alfreds'

(2007, p. 279) rehearsal advice:

> … if you become impatient and start pruning too early, you may nip some buds that are still
> some way from blooming. Process demands patience. I wait as long as I can before
> exercising any editorial function.

Delaying decision and overproducing material also increases the opportunity for '*felix culpa*' (Nachmanovitch 1990, p. 92, emphasis in original) - the happy accident - to occur. One is more likely to stumble upon an unexpected idea that may push artistic boundaries, and upturn fixed habits. Perhaps it is this notion of labour begetting luck that has Robinson referring to this aspect of rehearsal as 'mining for gold' (2012, p. 89). The metaphor aptly depicts the combination of labour, strategy and happenstance.

Juxtaposed iterations lead to a greater dimensionality in understanding; to borrow a phrase used by Davies, you know what something is, by what it is not.[111] The accumulation of experiments enables a more resonant understanding of the nature and staging of each fragment or scene to evolve, as exploring a range of possibilities enables one insight to build upon the next, propelling the actor forward. This correlates with the notion of an 'insight cascade', discussed by Jackman (2016, p. 118, emphasis in original) in *Theatre, Performance and Cognition*:

> … John Vervaeke and Arianne Herrera-Bennett propose a refined model of creativity in flow that places intuitive insight at the very heart of the experience. They suggest that in one's experience of flow, each insight propels us towards perceiving new problems and insightful solutions in a positive feedback loop. Vervaeke and Herrera-Bennett refer to this feedback loop as an *insight cascade* (2013). This cascade is evident in performance as "each new gesture" and each new insight "thus apprehended-comprehended becomes in turn the support, the materials, the tool that makes possible the discovery and thence the assimilation of the next" (Wacquant, quoted in Lizardo 2009: 720).

It is through the various embodied iterations that the actor builds a complex psycho-physical memory with insight building upon insight.

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[111] Davies used this phrase frequently in my classes at VCA in 2001.

Multiplicity can also assist the director in assembling a cogent sequence of choices to form a cohesive interpretation. Different iterations create inter-connected knowledge which help *'find the map'* (Winter 2015, pers. comm. 20 August, emphasis added). Accumulating various options helps the director and cast to experience the relationship between those options; to contemplate how each alters the overall interpretation and impacts performance reception. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) notes how Jacobs' observation of various long-form improvisations was necessary to understand the inter-relationship between fragments:

> … in this process it is very important for her to see the effect that one particular way of doing something, or approaching something, had on something at the other end, that knock-on effect … what that particular tone of performing a scene, this way, had on this scene, the scene that comes next, and how that energy transfers to the next scene and the next scene.

Generation provides the opportunity to consider how one interpretation of a scene informs another and connects with the broader matrix of interpretive choices. Through comparison and contrast versions may be assessed to check their viability and practicability.

Generation develops a bank of ideas upon which to draw throughout the process. The d-School refers to this as the 'Ideate' mode: 'pushing for a widest possible range of ideas from which you can select' (Shanks 2020, p. 4). Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) employs multiple rehearsal frames when tackling a difficult scene:

> I would rather spend a whole day on five pages at the beginning and try it fifty different ways, and end that day confused but also feeling like there's three approaches that we've found the most attractive ….

Lutton appreciates the value of finding numerous 'answers' for a scene, acknowledging that it is through over-producing, that one moves closer to the best choice. Watson (2015, pers.

comm. 17 July) likes to stockpile ideas for later use. She explains, 'you kind of create a sort of *palette* and then we'll start to work with that palette'. For example, Watson's use of game structures early in the rehearsal for *WRWCG* prompted physical activity between her two cast members that proved useful later on. Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) comments that generating the 'shared physical language that a couple have, [the] sort of playful gestures' was 'good because … that's a little tool that we have to use at some point … [you] fill up your bank of things you can use'.

Similar to Proposition, Generation can support the actor's ongoing engagement with the rehearsal process. The perception of exhausting all possibilities through the breadth and depth of investigation can particularly embolden the actor's trust in the choices made, as this actor explains:

> … you feel like you've *tested everything*, you haven't just been doing one blocking or one version of it for four weeks and you're not sick of it, you don't feel like you're just repeating and imprinting it or – you feel like you've *tried a billion different things*, so when it settles on something, you're like, I've offered everything else I could, *I trust that this is the one that works the best.* (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September, emphasis added).

Investigating a range of options can heighten an actor's intentness and curiosity in the work. Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 350) notes that variation and exploration are necessities for connection with creative work: '[you cannot] enjoy the same activity over and over, unless you discover new challenges, new opportunities in it. Otherwise it becomes boring'. For Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September), the experience of the multiple possibilities fine-tuned his attention to aspects of the work as well as his approach to the season:

> It means that there's a million different variations within thought, in my attention, in anything … having explored that depth, you realise there's so much more depth, there is so much more to mine, so the work never finishes … and there is never finality, I think maybe

that's what's most interesting … while … there's parameters there's never, 'and then you inflect on this word in a specific way', you're working within the structure of the verse, but there are so many different possibilities that you are never bored with it.

It is evident that Generation and Proposition are beneficial in the creation of performance work. The effectiveness of these mechanisms in producing the *mise en scène* can, however, be compromised if one or more actors are still 'on book' in this phase of rehearsal. The impact of line memorisation upon other aspects of rehearsal practice have been raised several times across this thesis, and the effect upon the development of the *mise en scène* adds to this growing list. When lines are not secure, the actor's cognition is split and their ability to imaginatively respond to the parameters of the task, curtailed. With book in hand, the actor's capacity to fully engage in movement and gesture is stymied, and the actor's use, exploration and development of gesture is important. Citing the work of cognitive linguist David McNeill, Kemp (2012, p. 66) explains that gesture builds a deeper relationship to the spoken text and has a significant role in the actor's conversion of written to spoken language. He asserts that 'gestures are shown to be active participants in both speaking and thinking. Gesturing has a dialectical relationship to language, and both participate in formulating meaning'. The multidimensional, global nature of gesture plays a role in the actor synthesising the segmented, hierarchical aspects of written text. Kemp (p.66 emphasis in original) sees a connection between limited development of gesture and ineffective acting:

> Bad acting, I suspect, often arises because the actor hasn't made the mental leap from the linear structure of written language into the gestural image of spoken language. *Given that about 90 percent of spoken utterances in daily life are accompanied by gesture, acting that does not incorporate gesture (both physical and vocal) will appear stiff and unexpressive* [sic].

The real worth of Generation and Proposition can only be realised if the actor is cognitively and physically unfettered. This viewpoint returns us to the perpetual conundrum of the timeliness of line memorisation: on one hand, an 'openness to interpretation', as discussed earlier, may be achieved by not pre-learning lines, yet on the other hand, the actor has more physical 'freedom to explore', and a reduced cognitive load, if lines have been memorised. Given that line-memorisation (or the lack thereof) appears to have a significant and multi-faceted role in shaping the ways rehearsal can be undertaken, one may speculate that attending to this dilemma could expand the range of rehearsal methods at a director's disposal, and help progress the development of rehearsal methodology.

With this in mind, it is interesting to note the Melbourne Interviews revealed two 'work-arounds' that have been implemented to manage actors on book with embodied exploration and creation of scenes. Watson (2014, 22 October; 2015, 17 July) used the simple device of music stands to hold scripts, freeing up the actors' use of gesture and embodiment, and this seemed to work well given the limited amount of blocking required in this intimate, story-telling two-hander. Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) notes how this choice created ease and promoted the sense of story-telling inherent in the production:

> [It] was an attempt to free us up that we're just telling a story … I think it was good, because it was new … you can walk up and walk away and it does free you up a bit, and it's also not the thing of going, get your lines down.

'Feeding' lines to the actor is another strategy, and is documented in literature. Merlin (2016, p. 190) writes that Stanislavski 'carefully fed the actual lines of the script to the actors during improvisations like a football coach'. Barker (2010, p. 138, emphasis in original) notes Littlewood's rehearsal method of providing lines to actors through onstage prompters:

> Littlewood at times has resorted to a German technique known by the French term of the *siffleuse*, the whistler. Each actor is allocated a prompter who moves behind him or her, speaking the lines half a line before the actor as a conscious prompt. The actor is not only free to explore the situation, free of having to remember the lines, but learns the text in the functional, communicative manner in which it is delivered by the prompter ....

This quasi-state of being *off book* can afford the actors more physical agency and imaginative energy as they can commit to the immediate moment rather than recollecting their lines or thinking forward to their dialogue to come. One may surmise that there is also benefit in the fragmentary nature of the text being *fed in*. The small bite-size sections may help focus the actor's attention upon the minutiae of the immediate utterance. As an alternative to the 'functional, communicative manner' cited above, if lines are fed in with neutral intonation, without vocal colour, the actor can experiment with vocality and intention.

The practice of feeding lines seems to be infrequent in Melbourne, but was used at times by Jacobs in rehearsal for *Antigone*. Price (2015, pers. comm. 2 September) talks about the benefit he found in this method, which includes the aforementioned notion of deferring decision making:

> It gives you a sense of freedom … but it also gives you license to not make a choice, which I think is very important … there was never a sense of panic, there was never a sense of fuck, I've got to learn lines, I've got to impose upon the text, I've got to bring my ideas, I've got to bring my A game, it was never like that, it was let's just work this out together ….

Price's comment implies that line learning is tantamount to making interpretative choices, placing stress upon the actor and reducing their capacity to experiment. I have discussed similar issues previously, such as the pre-learning of lines prior to rehearsal can lead to vocal

patterning and/or fixed interpretations that the director may need to unpick and/or the actor unlearn to work creative and collaboratively in the space.

Price's contention reflects his VCA training, where text memorisation and embodiment are encouraged to evolve simultaneously for the purpose of enhancing creativity and authenticity.[112] This, however, is only one school of thought, and is predicated upon the belief that line memorisation is indelibly tied to interpretation. Other training approaches, and other actors, have processes in which lines are learnt neutrally prior so that there is immediate readiness for embodied exploration when required in rehearsal. The issue playing out in the Melbourne mainstage rehearsal room, and one may presume elsewhere, is the tension between actors in these two very different states. Whilst one actor may be supported by the strategies such as music stands and the feeding in of lines, another actor, with the text memorised, is stymied in their own creative process due to the constraints that support the former. Anecdotally, these different practices cause significant frustration between cast members. For the director trying to work in a collaborative way to physically investigate options, an actor still *on book* makes the approach much less fertile. The variation in actor's degrees of line memorisation, and the use of Proposition and Generation, creates complexity for the director's design and implementation of specific rehearsal frames.

 In this section I have explored how Generation realises the Principal Function of Creating. The production of a pool of possibilities helps the practitioner to arrive at a pertinent way to stage the text. Multiple experiments that approach a fragment of text with a particular

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[112] When acting as an assistant director to Lindy Davies at VCA, I learnt her strategy of projecting the actors' lines on a screen at the front of the stage in rehearsal, so that the actors could work through the embodied, sensory process of Abstract unencumbered. Simultaneously, this strategy enabled the actors to memorise their lines gradually whilst connecting their lines with physical action and sensation.

focus, or with specific parameters to be worked within, amass insights that inform the development of the *mise en scène*. By undertaking this process, choice-making is deferred, increasing the opportunity for unexpected discovery and building a stockpile of ideas for later incorporation. There are particular times, however, when actor-centric experimentation is contraindicated by the circumstance at hand. In such cases, Construction may be required.

9.3 Construction

Construere, the Latin derivation of Construction, means to 'heap together' and implies a mechanical act ('Construct' 2020). I use the term Construction to refer to the rehearsal mechanism of the director instructing an actor where and when, and perhaps how, to move within the space according to their preconceived plan.

Historically, Construction is wedded to the nineteenth century emergence of the role of the director. It may be argued that the origins of the director's role as the constructor of the stage picture trace back to the *Metteur en Scène* in 1830s Parisian theatre, where commodification and technical advances led to a heightened preoccupation with the stage aesthetic (Fordyce 2002). Even Stanislavski, at the end of the nineteenth century, began his work at the Moscow Art Theatre with a dictatorial operational style (Merlin 2003, p. 1), planning 'every move, gesture and vocal inflection' the actor would make (Braun 1982, p. 63). His directions in the 1898 rehearsal of *The Seagull*, 'were followed to the letter, so even personal idiosyncrasies … were dictated not by the actor's conception of the part but by the director's master-plan' (p. 64).

The liberalism that emerged in the 1960's saw a change in rehearsal approaches, including Brook's permanent dispensing with planning stage-movements (Brook 1968, p. 97). The

notion of the director as the constructor of the stage picture, nevertheless, lives on in

rehearsal practice (Frick, 1974; Lyon 1982; Crook 2016). Almost forty years ago, Eleanor

Lyon (1982, p. 77) described a traditional approach as one in which 'the director exercises

total control – requiring the actors to conform to an image he/she developed before

rehearsals began', and compared this to an increasing body of literature that promotes an

alternative, 'more flexible and collective' approach in which directors act as 'facilitators and

editors'. Lyon warned that this less authoritarian way of blocking could be misinterpreted by

the actors as directorial indifference, and could have an adverse impact on cast morale. She

advised that '"the good'' director ... must achieve a balance' (p. 78). Exemplifying that

construction is still commonplace in directorial processes today, Crook's (2016, p. 136,

emphasis in original) text, *The Art and Practice of Directing*, discusses 'pre-blocking' and

outlines two approaches to blocking, neither of which, I suggest, offer great latitude to the

actor:

> There are generally two schools of thought on blocking. One involves being ultra-
>
> specific and dictating every single move to the actors; instructing them, for example:
>
> "Enter stage left on this line, cross down- right four steps, look over your left
>
> shoulder and say your line at that point." The other type is more *laissez faire*, and
>
> sounds like this: "Enter stage left here. By the time you get to this line, just make
>
> sure you're in the down-right corner. You figure out how you get there."

Construction, of course, sits uncomfortably within an actor-centric, collaborative conceptual

framework of rehearsal. Construction is also an infrequently applied mechanism in

contemporary Melbourne mainstage rehearsal, according to the Melbourne Interviews.

Directors often propose one or more blocking ideas, but these tend to be offered as possibilities to be trialled rather than a fully conceived map for physical action:

> … often directors come in with an idea of the scene and they think, I imagine you there and I imagine you entering from this door, and the actors test it and the director responds … . (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

The relationship between Proposition and Construction might be best understood, then, as a weighted, sliding scale that is dependent upon the degrees of exactitude and latitude explicit (and implicit) within a blocking direction, as well as the degree of finality inferred. Actors in the Melbourne Interviews viewed constructed blocking as *imposed* and at odds with the expectation of collaborative discovery. Mitchell (2009, p. 179) argues against pre-planned movement on the grounds that telling an actor stage movements can shift their focus to a greater awareness of the audience, thereby reducing their connection to the character and situation. She suggests that the process of blocking leaves a visible imprint upon the actor's performance, with the awkwardness that can arise from imposed movement resulting in inauthentic stage action.

I propose a case can be made for Construction in specific circumstances. Tight timelines, the choreographed passage of large casts and the technical challenges posed by stagecraft design, may warrant less breadth in trialling ideas, and greater direct, concrete input from the director. Caceres was the only Melbourne director interviewed who explicitly employed pre-planned blocking, and in both instances this was driven by technical design concerns. In rehearsal of *The Effect* she felt pre-planning the movement was requisite to manage the 'steady stream of stage effects and transitions' (Fuhrmann 2014):

> [It was] a necessity because of the *amount of visual language* that we were using … with a *very limited time* in the actual tech, so we *had* to do it that way, it was paramount, there was

no time for experimenting. And we put all that up, and they knew, and it helped them because they knew where they were …. (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August, emphasis added)

This approach seemed to successfully address the needs of the project, but Construction was less successful when Caceres applied it to manage a revolving stage in *Death and the Maiden.* Caceres and the set designer prepared detailed blocking plans for the entire piece, using a storyboard format, photographing the set model and writing 'exactly how' the blocking would unfold (2015, pers. comm. 19 August). Rehearsal proceeded with Caceres dispensing the blocking and directions for each particular line (Mouzakis 2015, pers. comm. 28 October). Her covert intention was to keep this 'storyboarding' undisclosed from the cast, which suggests both that she anticipated a negative response and the infrequence in which Construction is used to entirely block a show in Melbourne. As it came to pass, it was immediately obvious to the actors that Caceres had prearranged the blocking, so she revealed her plan from that point (Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August). In the ensuing production, critical commentary noted the physical restrictions the actors had to work within as a weakness. There was also comment regarding the need for stronger emotional stakes and complexity of character relationships (Woodhead 2015a; Peard 2015b). On this occasion, the authority of the design drove directorial decisions regarding how to rehearse the piece. The use of Construction for the entire production, it might be construed, negated opportunities for the investigation of spatial relationships within the text, and impacted the nature of the character relationships depicted.

Theoretically, a combination of organic and choreographic processes might mitigate the issues cited above. In practice, however, this can also be problematic. Robinson (2012, pp. 109-110) comments that when she has allowed 'some staging to be fluid', to add greater

spontaneity to the performance, her 'actors have balked'. Mitchell (2009, p. 179) feels that the aesthetic of the *mise en scène* can also be affected. She counsels that care be taken when combining pre-planned with organic blocking approaches, for the resulting inconsistencies in fluidity and theatricality in the movement can be visible to the audience and negatively impact performance reception.

Construction may be of particular benefit in other specific circumstances, such as to stimulate an alternative response from an actor. As will be discussed in Chapter 10, if used judiciously, a constraint can compel an actor to work outside their normal pattern of action and break their habitual responses to movement. If we accept that an actor's external body shape influences their affective state, an 'imposed' exterior form or movement can prompt a requisite internal shift for the actor.[113] As such, Construction could be useful in prompting alternative, less idiosyncratic and/or more creative work in rehearsal.

Ultimately, if Construction is necessitated by circumstance, its success is dependent upon the actor's capacity to work imaginatively within the physical and spatial outlines given. A particular type of acting skill is required to work within rehearsal frames defined by the detailed parameters that Construction brings. Jackman (2016, p. 121), in *Theatre, Performance and Cognition,* asserts that prescribed movements call upon the trained capacity of the actor to respond mindfully and expansively to the tightly bound physical frame:

> … where that the acting score is set, an attitude of affordance consonant with qi phenomena
> allows the actor to enter into a dynamic relationship with the dramaturgy, made present to

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[113] Kemp (2012) argues that as 'proprioception is linked to conceptual thought and emotional attitudes' (p. 138), movement is fundamental to the imaginative process. The actor's somatic experience in rehearsal is important because 'different gestures and postures … create a different sense of self' (p. 112).

her in a perceptible structure of words, actions and environments with which she might engage.

In sum, the historical practice of Construction tends to be avoided by directors, and poorly viewed by actors, in contemporary rehearsal in Melbourne. It can, however, serve a purpose in specific temporal and technical circumstances depending upon the actor's capacity to develop their own internal score within the given physical boundaries.

Proposition, Generation and Construction are the mechanisms by which the Principal Function of Creating is achieved. Whatever the mechanisms that frame the actor's endeavour in the development of the work, there is one more accompanying and integral ingredient of the rehearsal process – the mechanism of Consolidation.

9.4 Consolidation

A performance is, generally speaking, a collection of specific choices that have come to be expected and enacted by the performers (Lutterbie 2011, pp. 183-184). Part of the rehearsal process, therefore, must involve methods to cement these choices. As a performance is built in rehearsal, the many decisions that constitute the actor's role - physical, vocal, linguistic, spatial, psycho-emotional information and so forth - need to become preserved in the actor's memory. In this section, I will argue that *Consolidation* can be supported by the director through the application of various rehearsal tasks. Given the temporal pressure of rehearsal, I propose that the application of specific activities to support the actor's memorisation merit greater exploration and theorisation.

On a basic level, one may break the process of consolidation down into a series of steps: attention is deliberately brought to selected choices; effort is made to commit these choices

to memory; and the sequence and pattern of these choices integrated into a unified, synergistic schema. To recall the specific, curated parts of a performance the actor draws upon the schema, which is comprised of a complex matrix of sensory, emotional, linguistic and associative information. Lutterbie (2011, p. 182) refers to the schema as the actor's score.[114] The development of the score sits in symbiotic relationship with the process of memorisation, accumulating over the rehearsal period (pp. 182-184). The resulting cohesion of this schema is intrinsic to the strength of the actor's recall.

The eternal paradox of live theatre is that performance, crafted from rehearsal, is usually expected to have a constant form, and yet this form needs to be, and by nature is, unique for each presentation to a new audience. In *Toward a General Theory of Acting* Lutterbie provides one of the most thoughtful discussions of this phenomenon in existing literature. He explores the relationship of an actor's memorised score to the lived experience of performance. Drawing upon cognitive science, Lutterbie explains in detail the complex process demanded of the actor to negotiate a path between the constants and variables of performance. He observes that in performance the retrieval of an actor's score requires specific triggers or cues; yet, as a dynamic system, at the same time the actor also 'responds to the changing information' in their surrounds (p. 225). The multiple dynamic systems at play in a performance add further complexity: '[e]ach member of the cast is a dynamic system, undertaking the unfolding of a score and responding to changes in the environment' (p. 220).

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[114] Lutterbie (2011, p. 184) explains the use of this term: '"[t]o score" means to etch a mark onto a surface. In acting, the scoring is done on the actor's memory'.

To memorise a role, an actor must pay attention to a specific pattern of behaviour, enact this behaviour, and then repeat this process multiple times. From a cognitive perspective, each time a fragment or fragments of the performance are run through, the actor's recollection of the required physicality/behaviour reactivates the nerve cells that first encoded the memory. When this activity is repeated, the connections between the nerve cells are strengthened and the memory of the actor's score is consolidated (Hemmings 2018, p. 30). Lutterbie (2011, p. 201, emphasis in original) explains this process:

> Learning a piece of action … means drawing on neural associations from earlier experiences and discovering the rhythm that allows the neurons to fire in the correct sequence to repeat the action. This is *encoding* … [T]he starting point is relatively simple (a cross, a phrase, a motivation) and requires a considerable amount of attention.

Lutterbie (p. 202, emphasis in original) explains that over the course of the rehearsal process, links are built between each small fragment – words, actions and so forth - so that each piece becomes inter-connected, and '*recoded*'. From this recoding, a 'single activation will initiate the sequence of neural firing for each [aspect]'. This means that retrieving the memorised information is faster and easier:

> … Recoding allows a lot more to be done with considerably less conscious effort. The process continues as more discoveries are made: through rehearsals, relationships between characters and between actors are grasped; the role of the action in the overall scheme of the production becomes clearer. These, too, are integrated, increasing the size of the chunk until what was a simple action becomes a very complex and wide-ranging conglomeration of neural patterns that allows the actor to execute a specific moment in the production. (p. 202)

Lutterbie's explanation details how the cognitive activity behind the memorisation of a score is an ongoing process throughout rehearsal. This course of encoding and recoding reinforces the argument for a multiplicity of interactive, sensory and embodied experiences

in rehearsal. The forging of numerous and diverse connections contributes to the development of an intricate schema that forms the actor's score. Supporting the actor's process of developing this score is important because the more richly woven the schema, the more rapidly an actor is able to retrieve information, and the less cognitive effort is required. With the schema consolidated, the actor is able to move into autonomous processing of information, which is desirable because it allows the actor to be optimally engaged in the moment of performance. Once on stage, the actor's impulse and the execution of actions become simultaneous, the risk of error is minimised and self-consciousness reduced (Jackman 2016). This depth of engagement creates the potential for greater reflexivity, and perhaps, authenticity, on stage.

This encoding and recoding process can be supported by specific rehearsal tasks. Traditionally, repetition has been used to secure a common understanding of 'corporealised dispositions and working practices' in the performance (Rossmanith 2003, p. 197). I propose that given our understanding of cognitive literature, there is more that we can do with the creation of conditions that support the actor's process of developing an integrated schema. Throughout the past two chapters I have explicated a range of exploratory and embodied rehearsal frames that Melbourne actors and directors have found useful. There is a strong link between these embodied, actor-centric practices and the capacity of cast members to recall and *lock in* their performances. Consolidation is supported by, and present in, embodied rehearsal processes because we remember through the body; the 'act of memory is a physical act' (Bogart 2001, p. 22). Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October) agrees, noting that when his actors recall the accumulated mass of material, it is the 'muscle memory', the

'physical map' that 'is remembered most'. He considers that the depth of the score equates to its longevity:

> [T]he strength of your run will rely on the strength of your rehearsal room. I think if the work in the rehearsal room is thorough enough, penetrating enough that it actually goes into the body enough … that provides a circuitry that will last a long season.

Lutterbie proposes that the tractability of the actor's performance is dependent upon the somatic component of their score. According to literature, embodied rehearsal practices are helpful as the physicality of an actor's role – the movements, blocking and gestures – not only constitute the information to be remembered, but also act as prompts for memory recall. Drawing on a body of research on gesture and cognitive science, Utterback (2013, p. 171, p. 173, emphasis in original) argues that 'gesture is [] a holistic embodied and contextualized cognitive process' that serves as a '*cognitive prop*' to encode memory. A rehearsal strategy that enables the generation of gesture, movement and interaction, such as Watson's use of the music stands to free up the actor's hands and embodiment, can support the actor's retrieval of both text and physical action:

> Memory … is a process of interaction, a fluid interplay between the body and the environment. Actors who can self-generate gesture (and arguably other physical activity such as blocking) have a greater ability to recall text or physical activity because they had to proactively engage in their environment. They had to use their bodies to make sense of their relationship to the world. (Utterback 2013, pp. 165-166)

Utterback's research supports the premise that embodied, experiential rehearsal frames enhance Consolidation. Working upon the different facets of a performance, through varied means, helps to build dimension in the actor's score, and helps secure its longevity. The director's role in framing of tasks is therefore important, as these frames not only refine the creation of the work itself, but also impact the development of the actor's internal score.

Similarly, a director's feedback also helps consolidate choices by drawing the actor's attention to particular aspects of the work just undertaken. Effective directors give cogent, incisive and cohesive feedback. Directing the actor's attention, according to Lutton (2014, pers. comm. 28 October), is about 'clarity': 'I just start offering notes. The notes I give are usually small. It's often about physical details or musicality'. These incremental adjustments, which can also be conceived of as a series of creative constraints that gently shape, curate and refine the actor's choices, build the performance and support the encoding process.

Lutterbie (2011, p. 184) notes that the 'circuitous route to creating a performance means that an actor has as much forgetting to do as remembering'. As work is refined and reworked in rehearsal, information may be added and/or specific choices discarded. The actor may be required to shed - to let go of - extraneous material, or to learn new versions and therefore 'deliberately forget' previous choices. For instance, in the final week of rehearsal for *Antigone*, Jacobs pared back the blocking to a more simplified form. She explains '[the actors] had such a good understanding of the world that they were making … inside they were able to just *shed off* a whole lot of layers …' (Jacobs 2015, pers. comm. 10 September). This shedding can be seen as distinct from unlearning which, as discussed in Chapter 4, can be a hindrance and time consuming in rehearsal practice. This is another reason why generating information and delaying decision-making in rehearsal may be helpful; hypothetically, the more material you have, the more likely you are to arrive at the 'best' version, and the less likely a previously selected, encoded fragment will need to be discarded and/or unlearned.

Given the importance of Consolidation, rehearsal activity that assesses how material has been learnt, and tests how external stimuli has been integrated into the actor's schema,

may be of value. For example, as a director who frequently employs music in the rehearsal room, Watson likes to play an unexpected, juxtaposing music track to appraise how well embedded the actor's performances are:

> If you do something and you've got some blocking down and you have tended to use the same piece of music, then at some point I will change it to something completely different as well … and go, no, keep doing it … so you just make sure it's *not too locked* into the track … [if] they've used the music as part of the *bed of the blocking*, I don't want them to become too *reliant* on the music alone in advance of getting into performance, so I'll use [a very different] track just to go, *is it in your body or not*, or is it just still in the music? (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July, emphasis added)

For Consolidation to occur, the actor requires the opportunity to retrace their sequence of actions, multiple times, to reinforce the neural pathways. The Melbourne Interviews indicated that this was typically achieved by *running* (acting the material from start to finish) some amount of the embodied work. Ball (1984) argues that it is the continuity of running that is integral for memorisation. Multiple, uninterrupted run-throughs leads to consolidation of the actor's memory and their emotional connection to the play (pp. 123-124). The experience of the emotional progression of the role, I suggest, is important in the process of encoding – and then recoding – the fragments in succession and as part of a synergistic whole. Experiencing the inter-relationship between each section reinforces the actor's memorisation of not just the sequence, but also the sections themselves by increasing the web of neural bonds.[115] Ball contends that it is the pressure of not stopping that is essential for the actor to feel, and find, a sense of the continuousness of the show. This may be partly due, I posit, to the attention the actor gives to the task without the

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[115] It should be noted that ultimately, the responsibility of the development and memorisation of their own internal score resides with the actor. My argument in this section is that whilst in the rehearsal room, the director's choice of activity may augment the actor's memorisation process.

distraction of interruptions. Additionally, the pressure (of not stopping) is consistent with a body of evidence that indicates that stress hormones can enhance memory processes, particularly when there is a high level of emotional arousal (McIntyre & Roozendaal 2007). The emotional content of a role, which may be experienced more deeply when the actor is uninterrupted in their work, may also constitute this arousal that helps consolidate memory. Running can imbue the actor's confidence in their memory, and this confidence enables the actor to meet subsequent demands, such as the technical rehearsal, which could discompose the actor's work (Ball 1984, pp. 123-124). As such, the 'running' of material involves a combination of the actor's unbroken attention, emotional arousal and felt pressure that may support the actor's memorisation of their performance.

In this section I have addressed a central issue of theatre rehearsal, that whilst fixedness is pursued, a live performance is (often) expected to be dynamic and reflexive. It has been argued that a richly developed internal score can help the actor respond authentically to the performative moment whilst maintaining the integral components of the expected performance. The development of the actor's score is supported by the director's mindful framing of tasks throughout the rehearsal process, and through a variety of methods including the embodied and sensory.

I have argued throughout this chapter on the Creating Principal Function of Rehearsal that the artistic nature of the final performance is progressively shaped by the particular constraints that contain and focus the actor's imaginative work. In light of this, I have proposed that the director's role in a collaborative rehearsal process is to fashion the parameters and/or point of focus of tasks to stimulate, and at times consolidate, the actor's creative, embodied response. In the final chapter of my Principal Function triptych, I will

introduce the Principal Function of Affecting, arguing that this is an under-recognised but

vital component of contemporary rehearsal design.

Chapter 10:   The Affecting Principal Function

Over the course of this thesis I have argued that rehearsal can be conceived as a series of frames that accumulatively hone creative endeavour. The director's role, I have proposed, involves the skilful formulation of these frames to guide the imaginative work of the actor via the delimitation of possibilities. Rehearsal activity involving Positioning mechanisms play a critical role in determining the parameters that will inform and anchor future choice-making, as well as forging the *modus operandi,* of the project. Creating mechanisms help to frame and fundamentally influence the nature of the actor's imaginative, physical and vocal contribution, and therefore progressively shape how the work evolves.

In this chapter, I propose that in a collaborative, investigative model there is a third function of rehearsal: to support the actor's work in *addressing and problem-solving specific aspects* of interpretation, acting and staging. An argument will be made that deliberate, *interventional* creative constraints can be applied to either proactively address an aspect of the work from a specific angle at the outset of a project, or more acutely, to induce change to solve a particular problem at a particular moment in rehearsal. I refer to this function as Affecting, for the primary intention is to engender *a change* in the actor's work. The Affecting mechanisms often work in tandem with the Creating mechanism of Proposition, as a proposed frame to operate within is offered, but unlike Proposition, the aim of these mechanisms is to *adjust, overturn* or *enhance* specific aspects of the actor's creative enterprise.

The Positioning and Creating Principal Functions include a number of well-recognised constructs and time-honoured applications, such as the notion of experimenting and trialling ideas. In comparison, the Affecting Principal Function involves less apparent

ingredients of rehearsal, with its underpinning concepts currently under-represented in rehearsal literature. I speculate that this limited theorisation is because these particular mechanisms are employed in an impromptu, ad hoc way to serve a specific purpose, and operate within less traditional and less frequently applied rehearsal activities. These rehearsal strategies are afforded greater legitimacy, however, when we view them through the lens of creative theory.

Countering entrenchment has been a keystone of this thesis. It has been established that we are often unaware of our idiosyncratic patterns of thinking and behaviour. According to Stokes (2008, p. 223), this is because of our 'operant conditioning': we can only think inside our experience and techniques. For De Bono (1977, pp. 232-233), the impediments to creative thinking come from three origins: 'a gap' in our information, an 'obstacle' and, akin to Stoke's position, our ready acceptance of 'the adequate' solution. To address and dissolve these impediments, De Bono recommends beginning with a 'periodic assessment' of one's work (p. 54). Once the issue is observed, with the curtailing, tacit core belief or idea recognised, one can challenge the necessity of that idea and move toward a new solution (Smith 1998, p. 121; De Bono 1977, p. 109).

Stokes (2014) suggests that to increase our capacity for such an assessment, we need to continuously expand our own toolbox, for it is our knowledge of our toolbox of techniques that directs our attention, enabling us to notice what is needed. From this assessment, then, it is possible to construct a 'solution path' (Stokes 2014, p. 277). To this end, the Affecting mechanisms are offered to expand the director's toolbox, prompting awareness and assessment of rehearsal issues, as well as being the actual tools to address particular rehearsal problems.

These rehearsal tools chiefly involve some way of challenging or distracting one's usual pattern of response, to prompt an alternative viewpoint or behaviour (Smith 1998; Darsø 2001). It is through some 'new arrangement of information' that 'some effect' can be produced, as restructuring material leads to a fresh way of looking at things (De Bono 1977, p. 131, p. 119). Altering the way information is presented creates a degree of unfamiliarity, which reduces the impact of prior knowledge and can destabilise automatic responses (Sternberg 2018; Darsø 2001). Even a shift in attention can 'restructure a situation', and therefore our assumptions (De Bono 1977, p. 168). De Bono proposes a variety of 'attention directing tools' to manipulate focus and therefore propel alternative thought. As will be discussed, several of these strategies underpin the Affecting mechanisms. These include ways of working 'within the idea' to re-pattern one's thinking, and/or the introduction of external input to the creative problem to 'act[] on the idea from the outside' (p. 169).

In sum, the Affecting mechanisms are creative constraints employed in response to a perceived gap, obstacle or adequate, but uninspired, aspect in the actor's work, and involve restructuring information, redirecting attention and/or adding external stimulus to produce a *change*. This notion of *re*direction and *re*structuring is important, for a number of the Affecting mechanisms work by precluding or limiting a more expected response, whilst stimulating the search for an alternate response. Stokes (2008, p. 223) refers to the implementation of such creative parameters as 'paired constraints', and argues that it is the dual action that 'increase[s] the variability on which creativity depends'.

The Affecting mechanisms are, essentially, something of a first aid kit for a collaborative, investigative model of rehearsal. To attend to some of the artistic problems that inevitably

arise in a creative process, the mechanisms can be employed to deflect, upturn and adjust an actor's embodied interpretation toward a new trajectory.

10.1 Perturbation and Permutation

> When does art happen? The art happens in the midst of flight. It does not happen from a state place of equilibrium or balance…. (Bogart 2007, p. 39)

The challenging, disrupting and restructuring notions of De Bono's approaches to stimulating creative thought are echoed in Anne Bogart's belief about theatre-making: that the moment of creative inspiration and realisation, 'art', requires deliberately venturing beyond the known and trusted. In creative enterprise, 'uncertainty and ignorance seem[s] to trigger innovation' (Ibbotson & Darsø 2008, p. 551). I refer to this strategy of purposeful disorientation or destabilisation of the actor's automatic response as *Perturbation.* It may be applied as the salve for the merely 'adequate' response, as noted by Carr (2015, pers. comm. 13 May) who advocates the need to animate the unexpected and the unpredictable:

> … I think in order to find really potentially interesting things in a work, it is good to throw things at it that you wouldn't expect, and push people off balance so that they're under-prepared, in a way.

Carr's perspective is informed by his recent training in Le Jeu with Philippe Gaulier, in which a state of discomposure was used to prompt immediate attention and reaction:

> … and it was all just like pushing you off balance, everything was, so you fall into something, and then you're there and then you have to do it, rather than going, okay, here's my bit, so I think that really comes into rehearsals, in particular when you don't have to get things right, in fact, it's not your job to get things right, I think. (Carr 2015, pers. comm. 13 May)

A rehearsal frame involving Perturbation may increase an actor's present-ness, and it can also upend perspectives and provide new insights, such as the simple task of having an actor

play the role opposite in a scene. Caceres and Watson both aim to shift their actors'

conceptions of their own roles in this way, with the belief that when actors play the

opposing role, a new viewpoint is gained. Carr finds reading each other's lines assists him to

be more present and responsive in rehearsal. He observes the change in perception is

helpful: 'just to hear *your stuff through someone else,* and go, oh, *what's it like* to be

receiving the thing that I'm giving them' (Carr 2015, pers. comm. 13 May, emphasis added).

Carr admits this close listening deepens his understanding of his own role, and notes how

perturbation can lift the authenticity and creativity of the final product beyond the

adequate:

> … I think it's so easy to learn a role by yourself, in your living room, and then come in and do
> that version through the rehearsals and do a show like that, and you could be quite good,
> but I just think it's sort of uninspiring and uninteresting, and so I think those sort of things
> where you go, oh, okay, now I read your part, well I haven't prepared for this, okay, so now I
> *actually* have to listen to you and engage with you as a performer, rather than acting my
> bits, which happens, which does happen…I think it's just really about *being in the moment*,
> that stuff just helps you *play with what is there* in the moment. (emphasis added)

Perturbation can be achieved by adding unexpected information or stimulation into the

actor's work. This is in keeping with De Bono's concept of 'random stimulation', which

involves adding an external stimulus to restructure thinking: 'one uses any information

whatsoever … [t]he more irrelevant the information the more useful it may be' (1977, p.

169). The effect is that the mind, having initially moved between the two points of

attention, will quickly move to try to link the original item and the external stimulus in some

way. New and unexpected insights are prompted due to the mind inevitably connecting 'any

stimulus whatsoever … with any other' (p. 180). De Bono (1977, p. 172, emphasis in original)

explains this occurs because the mind is a 'self-maximising memory system [with] a limited

and *coherent* attention span' and hence the items of attention, in spite or because of their incongruity, are brought together in some way.

Davies' 'Abstract' activity, explained previously, can be understood as a type of random stimulation. The actor vocally and physically explores a section of text by interacting with, and responding affectively to, arbitrary items brought into the rehearsal space. The actor's idiosyncratic habits, both internal and external, may be upturned by the interplay between the imaginative information drawn from the text, and the incongruous, sensory information resulting from interaction with the random materials and items. Jacobs applies a similar frame with her version of abstract improvisation, but also uses the temporal duration of her long-form improvisation to agitate change in the actor's work. She contends that the onerous duration of one and a half hours or more, physically and mentally demanding upon the cast, serves a beneficial purpose in the cast: 'through the sheer exhaustion of it, you all come up with things that you just wouldn't have come up with, with your first instinct' (Jacobs 2015, pers. comm. 10 September).

Another strategy to upset the actor's predicated response, I propose, is to alter the order in which the task is approached. One of De Bono's thinking tools, 'reversal', redirects one's attention by beginning at the end. This involves a deliberate disturbance of the *sequence* of information to prompt an alternate way of thinking:

> To start at the wrong end and work backwards is quite a well-known problem-solving technique. The reason why it is effective is that the *line of thought may be quite different from what it would have been had one started at the beginning*. There is no need to actually start at the solution end. It is convenient to do so since the solution is often clearly defined. But *one can start at any point.* (De Bono 1977, pp. 157-160, emphasis added)

There are limited examples of this notion in theatrical literature. One exception is David Ball's *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*, in which he contends that our presumption of inevitability prevents us from fully appreciating the sequence of character thoughts, choices and events in a script. He suggests that one should examine a text backward, for the reverse order will facilitate a deeper understanding:

> *Going forwards allows unpredictable possibility. Going backwards exposes that which is required*. The present demands and reveals a specific past. One particular, identifiable event lies immediately before any other. But who can say what comes next. (Ball 1983, pp. 15-16, emphasis in original)

Ball goes on to say, '[e]xamining events backwards ensures that you will have no gaps in your comprehension of the script', for the '*[s]equential analysis of actions is most useful when done backwards: from the end of the play back to the start. It is your best insurance that you understand why everything happens*' (p. 16, p. 18, emphasis in original). Adopting a Brechtian-like lens, we gain a richer appreciation by witnessing 'how' events unfold, rather than 'what' inevitably occurs. Whilst Ball's proposed method is primarily for the reading of plays, in reverse order, it raises the question of what benefit may be gained in rehearsal by interrogating a text, and creating the embodied performance, non-chronologically.

Accepting the logic of De Bono's and Ball's theories, I suggest that a rearrangement of the order in which scenes are rehearsed, albeit not necessarily in reverse order, is worthy of greater consideration. I have named this notion of rehearsing non-chronologically, such as the organising the sequence of rehearsal by *scene significance* rather than *plot order*, *Permutation*.[116] Deliberate, non-chronological work in rehearsal is akin to perturbation in

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[116] This term is borrowed from mathematics and refers to 'any of the various ways in which a set of things can be ordered' ('Permutation' 2020).

that it provides a fresh angle from which to conceive the work. It can prompt alternative perspectives, draw attention to specific aspects, and challenge and/or broaden the way individual scenes, and the play as a whole, might be understood and interpreted.

In the Melbourne Interviews, Watson is the only director who intentionally rehearses work non-sequentially. Her approach is perhaps influenced by her background as a theatre animateur, for the devising of new plays can be less linear, and more patchwork in approach, as an original work is pieced together. The distillation process involved in devising theatre includes closely identifying the function and significance each scene. This, I suggest, may contribute to Watson's belief that there is insight to be gained in approaching a script non-chronologically:

> I won't start at the beginning and go to the end … when you place things out of order you see different connections with them, like putting moments side by side that will end up linear is useful … you see different connections … and I think actors can as well … you can't help but compare and contrast and find similarities …. (Watson 2014, pers. comm. 22 October)

Watson says she takes inspiration from Roland Barthes' theory of photography, beginning her rehearsal process by identifying the 'punctum' (2014, pers. comm. 22 October).[117] The 'punctum' is Barthes' term for a component within a photograph that elicits a personal, subjective response from the viewer. Barthes (1981) proposes that whilst we initially read an image based on the elements that create immediate interest, it is the punctum, the small, unexpected and perhaps difficult to explain element, which has the facility to completely reconfigure and overturn our original understanding. Watson (2014, pers.

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[117] Watson completed similar directorial training to myself under Richard Murphet at VCA. Murphet introduced us to Barthes' theory of the punctum as part of our studies in visual composition.

comm. 22 October) sees the punctum as the 'thing that draws the viewer's eye'. She believes that in theatrical practice the punctum can 'enrich and elaborate the world in some way for the viewer', magnifying one's understanding. Watson (2015, pers. comm. 17 July) commences the rehearsal process with the scene that she feels is the 'most difficult entry point' as she feels this serves as the kind of 'punctum' of the play. From here, she rehearses the plot out of sequence, taking bits from different areas and then slowly puts them together: 'I will pull out motifs and themes that I particularly find interesting, and then … present … the text in a certain way'. Her reasoning is that, '[by] working on little bits and pieces, in a predetermined order' she is able to wordlessly highlight significant connections, whilst the actors will also place their own logic upon the scene order, which in turn will affect their perception and the nature of their contribution:

> [I]t always becomes … a kind of foundation point for the work, so that you've always got to find your way back to it conceptually, or you've got to find your way back to it emotionally, when you're working on every other part of the script or a play, and it also … means that when you get to that point in a performance … you can feel the understanding of that scene when you get to it …. (Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July)

The 'entry point' scene becomes the linchpin, informing choices throughout all scenes, rather than being but one step in an accumulative chain of events. This reconfiguring of the way the dramaturgical information is approached may be viewed as a cartwheel, with the entry point scene placed centre and other scenes as the spokes that radiate out from this critical point. By presenting and interacting with this restructured information, Watson is affecting change in the perceptions of her cast consistent with De Bono's theories.

Carr experienced this approach whilst working with Watson. He notes that sequential scene-work can help him get the '*run of it*', but the benefit of non-chronological rehearsal is that

the actor has to be more attentive to the given circumstances and the performance pitch of the scene. The perspective gained from working out how the scenes relate prompts Carr to engage differently with the text, and encourages him to ameliorate his choices:

> … what information do I need to fill this in, to the right marks or whatever … it's a good way to mix it up … it makes you think about the next time you rehearse it … once you have a whole pass on the script you go, the way I pitched that last time was way under and I need to be more energised or more desperate or more whatever. (2015, pers. comm. 13 May)

As with any rehearsal strategy, the usefulness of Permutation is contingent upon the nature of the text at hand. For instance, Houghton comments that, from his own experience as an actor, some texts are more suited to non-chronological work than others. He explains that remembering and feeling the 'continuity of emotional events' is more difficult in large, complex plays with an accumulative sequence of actions, so a text such as *Hamlet,* is more suited to a more sequential approach (Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February). In contrast, one may speculate that the staging of a play in which the narrative and character arc are less densely written, and/or the plotline less linear, may benefit from some out of sequence rehearsal. Alternatively, if we return to Ball's contention that the examination of a text in reverse order is the best way to ensure that we notice why each event occurs, then there may well still be a place for Permutation in the early stages of rehearsal of a play such as *Hamlet.* This use of Permutation to aid analysis could then be followed by a more traditional, sequential ordering of scenes, for the actor to further develop their role. It is also worth acknowledging that non-chronological scene work is standard practice in the film industry. Actors are well accustomed to preparing and performing scenes based on the order of shooting, rather than narrative sequence. These skills and techniques, one might assume, could be partially transferable to the rehearsal room.

I suggest the infrequence of Permutation as a rehearsal strategy in Melbourne theatre can be attributed to the fact that, in part, it has simply not been considered. As a strategy to challenge automatic assumptions, though, I argue it is worth a place in the director's Affecting Function toolkit next to Perturbation. If we take on board De Bono, Ball's and Barthes' theories, Permutation may help to invigorate the practitioner's perception of the information in the text, support the practitioner to find links and details between scenes, and potentially lead to greater intricacy, nuance and surprise in the interpretation. Re-ordering, if only for part of the rehearsal process, may help 're-frame' the way a text is understood.

10.2 Diversion

Diversion is an Affecting mechanism to deflect, refocus or circumvent the actor's automatic responses, by shifting the actor's focus off the key task and onto another. Alike its dictionary synonyms, deviation and digression, diversion suggests the use of a different route than what is expected. This tends to involve some form of distraction, with the actor's attention being deliberately split or misdirected, to ultimately support their own and/or the director's work. This distraction helps to reduce the degree of conscious thought by the actor as they attend to more than one task.

There are multiple examples of this concept in theatrical literature. From extensive research into Stanislavski's praxis, Merlin (2016, p. 188, emphasis in original) concludes that Stanislavski's growing interest in 'physical actions' in the early stages of rehearsal was to intentionally 'divert the actors *away from the spoken word*'. In *The Active Text*, Callery (2015, p. 124) explains how an alternate task can enhance an actor's vocal delivery in rehearsal:

> … concentrating on another task or playing a game whilst speaking allows the conscious brain to take a back seat; focusing on something else releases rhythms and inflections so words adopt different patterns independently.

Cicely Berry has extensively explored ways to shift an actor's focus away from their primary task, and has come to refer to this strategy as 'displacement'. In her chapter entitled 'Displacement Strategies' in *From Word to Play: A Handbook for Directors*, Berry (2008) crystallises years of exploring and applying this principle in her work as a voice coach. She articulates the conundrum of embodied investigative practice, '[the text] will never come to life until we speak it aloud: but how do we really hear what is there in the text without colouring it with our own assumptions and values and meanings?' (p. 105). For Berry, the redirection of focus in 'Displacement Activity' assists both the actor's work on their role, and the interpretation:

> [T]he benefit of this work lies in the fact that because part of [the actor's] mind is on another activity, or involved in another purpose, they are freed from the responsibility of speaking the text how they think it *should* be spoken, and making it clear; this then *allows other possibilities to emerge which can both enlighten and free the imagination*. The activity has to be one which can be done fairly automatically, and without too much creative thought. (pp. 107-108, emphasis added)

Berry's displacement exercises include actors undertaking physical tasks, such as stacking chairs or precisely folding paper, to prevent the actor 'over-controlling' the delivery of the text (p. 109). She explains that these activities are about 'finding and clarifying … thoughts … [for it] is those initial thoughts which give rise to … feelings' (p. 138).

In the Melbourne Interviews, this notion of diverting focus to free up vocal expression was evident in Watson's efforts, early in rehearsal, to prevent the actor's vocal patterning. She explains that whilst the actors are becoming familiar with the words, she uses some sort of

task, such as a specific spatial arrangements (such as close proximity or significant distance), 'so they don't get stuck in one rhythm and [so they do] not get … stuck in any particular intonation' (Watson 2014, pers. comm. 22 October). Watson's proactive use of games, such as having the actors playfully trying to kick one another's backsides throughout a scene in *WRWCG*, diverts the actor's attention so that vocal delivery is affected by the immediacy, effort, rhythm and distraction of the physical frame.

Redirecting attention impedes an actor's conscious attention upon the original task of the scene-work, potentially circumventing the entrenched response, whilst the additional task serves as random input, promoting alternative understanding and embodiment. Diversion may therefore be applied to enliven, enrich and unlock meaning within vocal and physical delivery. As such, it plays a valuable role in realising the Affecting Principal Function of rehearsal.

10.3 Iteration and Simplification

An alternate approach to restructuring and redirecting one's attention to enhance the creative response may be found in acutely applied *Iteration*. The etymological roots of 'rehearsal', of course, infer that repetition is an implicit part of the process, and traditionally repetition has been used to consolidate and polish work. I propose that it is worth reconsidering the way in which repetition may be applied in rehearsal. A relatively consistent point of attention, when combined with repetition, may expose the possibilities of variability and complexity within the interpretation. In *Theatrical Repetition and Inspired Performance*, Zamir (2009, p. 369) argues that iteration of a text can expose the dimensionality of a text, revealing 'the hidden thickness of the present':

> … discovery occurs within the rigid boundaries posed by repeating the same interpretation of a line. It relates to a qualitative spectrum that opens up through repetition. This spectrum concerns *how* one inhabits the same possibility. Differences in intensity, from the mechanically distant and empty to the fully absorbed, make up this domain, which—to iterate—is not about the *content* of a lived possibility but about one's *attitude* to it. (p. 369, emphasis in original)

Sanford Meisner's Repetition Exercise, used in actor training, involves the repetition of one or more phrases to encourage 'the actor's attention away from a self-conscious regard and assertion of self towards an awareness of and responsiveness to the acting partner' (Durham 2004, p. 153). Meisner believed that this use of repetition would help eradicate the 'intellectuality' and 'head work' of acting, helping the actor to 'get to where the impulses come from' (Meisner & Longwell 1987, p. 36). Meisner spent a lifetime developing and teaching his approach in the belief that reactivity and truth in acting would grow from the attentiveness summoned through a non-taxing, repetitive framework.

It was a bidirectional, iterative rehearsal frame, akin to Meisner's exercise, that was of particular use in addressing an issue in the rehearsal of *Birdland*. The reflexive activity of repeating the delivery of a short section of dialogue between two practitioners, 'just sort of bouncing the ideas more and more', helped Winter to stumble upon an understanding of a previously perplexing and incongruous line of text (2015, pers. comm. 20 August). Winter feels the rapid repetition and intensity enabled the breakthrough, which involved not just the logic behind the particular line of dialogue, but also gave insight into his character and the nature of his relationship with others.

Another application of Iteration can be the exploratory paraphrasing of a phrase, in which the same idea or phrase is repeated in multiple ways, to bolster an understanding of meaning and intention. Jacobs employed the rehearsal tool of paraphrasing in the rehearsal

of *Antigone*, having actors *riff* on words. One of the actors explains how one can riff to explore the text: '"I followed him", so you're like, "I, Antigone, me, I followed, I walked through the desert", you expand and you come back to the text in a way that is more in your vocal register or your emphasis … Jenny Kemp uses it a lot' (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September).[118] The actor finds this approach helpful as she feels it helps her to see where the word 'actually sits in [my] voice'. She sees it as a less private version of 'dropping in' and 'a wonderful way of personalising but still keeping with the text'.

Iteration, therefore, can provide both a macroscopic and kaleidoscopic view of the fragment at hand, assisting the actor to penetrate the immediate moment and explore the ideas contained within the language. Rapid, successive repetition builds intensity, alters rhythms, and changes vocal intonation, potentially inducing a shift in the interpretation. The reduction of intellectuality and complexity that comes with the frame of repetition, too, can enhance the actor's sense of security, familiarity and ease of execution.

Ease for the actor has been a running theme throughout this thesis. Actors and directors have voiced numerous ways that they try to manage or mitigate the contextual and temporal pressures faced in the rehearsal room. The final Affecting mechanism, *Simplification*, relates to rehearsal strategies that reduce the number, and/or size, of physical or psychological aspects, that an actor needs to attend to at any one time. Simplification carries the intention to promote clarity and ease, and shares its name with the mathematical procedure that involves reducing the complexity of an equation.

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[118] Jenny Kemp is a Melbourne writer, director and theatre educator.

Outside the rehearsal room, this notion of needing to reduce a task, or the way a task is perceived, is hardly new. The contemporary maxim K.I.S – *keep it simple* – is advice that recognises the necessity at times to lessen the load of a mental or physical task. There is a growing body of evidence that, despite the manifestation of multi-tasking in everyday life, the amount of attention available in a human brain is finite. At the very least, when too much is demanded of our attention, our task accuracy drops (Rekart 2011). Multiple points of attention can impair the quality of task completion and impact our capacity to 'flexibly' apply that information (Foerde, Knowlton & Poldrack 2006, p. 11778).

The value of making things less obscure, less taxing and easier to understand or do are explored at length by De Bono in his book, *Simplicity: Be A Sharper, Faster, Clearer Thinker* (2015). He argues that complexity serves no purpose, whereas simplicity saves time and energy. Simplification does not happen of its own accord, however. A task needs to be reconfigured, and that requires motivation, effort and strategy.

One tactic is to break down the undertaking, so that one may attend to a single aspect at a time. This is a common strategy used by instrumentalists learning a new piece of music, in which the musician approaches the score as a series of components or layers. For instance, they may first attend to the rhythm, then the melody, then dynamics and so forth, before the layers are recombined. The process is intended to make the immediate work less complex, but the overall outcome highly refined, by temporarily reducing the cognitive load of the musician. As a result, undivided attention, effort and energy can be placed upon the task at hand.

One strategy cited in the Melbourne Interviews for simplifying the involvedness of rehearsal was the separation of the delivery of the text from the physical action. Jacobs (2015, pers. comm. 10 September) likes her actors to work without verbal language at the start:

> … I'm quite interested in dealing with images and text as layers, at times, and also intrinsically linked at other times. I think sometimes it is very hard to do both things at once, and sometimes you can find an extraordinary visual image, a physical image, if you are just dealing with that world, and then you can speak from that image and that creates a tension or dynamic that's often more interesting than if you are trying to find an embodiment for both at the same time.

Jacobs' approach is reminiscent of a graphic designer constructing a digital image through the manipulation of multiple layers. The *mise en scène* is developed one component at a time. Working with separate layers enables closer scrutiny and greater detailing of the piece. Diminishing involvedness in rehearsal by separating layers or aspects of an existing task, and dealing with these one at a time, increases the actor's capacity for attention whilst alleviating pressure. The temporary deconstruction of the work through Simplification can be applied to help the actor achieve clarity and detail, or as a motivator and de-inhibitor to support the actor's involvement in the work.

Simplification includes reducing the psychological load on the actor, such as 'downsizing' the actor's expectation by emphasising finite parameters.[119] The need for this type of reduction was evidenced by the frequent usage of the word 'just' by actors and directors in the Melbourne Interviews. The use of this adverb implies a small stepping stone to help find a way to proceed, such as Watson coercing her actors on the first day of rehearsal: 'c'mon,

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[119] Of course, the notion of reducing the parameters of an actor's task is inherent in various acting theories. For example, Stanislavski's use of units and objectives simplifies and refines the immediate work of the actor. It may be argued that an important, but sometimes unacknowledged, aspect of Stanislavski's system that has shaped the evolution of acting practice, is the concept of breaking down, containing and focusing the imaginative work of the actor.

let's go, we're *just* going to sing' (2015, pers. comm. 17 July). Watson's use of 'just' suggests

that the multitudinous layers of acting, and the associated complex choice-making, are not

yet required. We see a similar feeling of release in Winter's response to Caceres' invitation

in *Birdland*: '"Let's *just* try things. Let's *just* do things". You're like, okay, cool. Well alright.

I'll try things' (2015, pers. comm. 20 August). 'Just' suggests minimal expectation, the

disposability of the work, and a reduced sense of pressure. In *WRWCG* Watson recognised

that her actors were daunted by their love-interest roles in the romantic, heightened

language love-story. She deliberately reduced, in their minds, the gravitas of the characters,

and what was required of them as actors: 'you're *just* going … you're *just* telling us … you're

just a couple of dickheads… [and] suddenly [the actors] felt a whole lot more likeable'

(Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July). Stripping back the perceived task of interpreting a pair

of archetypal lovers to a pair of fallible individuals, decreased the pressure felt by the actors,

focused their attention upon the detail of the role, and helped them connect more

genuinely with their parts.

Consistent with the aphorism that less is more, the mechanism of Simplification is an

attention-directing tool that can restructure the actor's perception of, and creative

engagement with, their work.

In this final chapter, I have presented the Affecting mechanisms as additional means to

nurture a creative response. Previously I have argued that skilfully applied rehearsal frames,

operating through Positioning and Creating mechanisms, can anchor and prompt creative

responses and mitigate entrenchment. It is the Affecting mechanisms, however, that

support the director in addressing the problems, challenges and blocks that inherently arise

in any rehearsal process. A first aid kit for rehearsal, the Affecting mechanisms can be drawn

upon, and selected from, according to need. The application of these creative constraints, either by working within the material by restructuring information and redirecting attention of the actor on the rehearsal floor, or working from with-out by adding external information, alter one's perspective and attitude to the material at hand to arrive at a new or deeper interpretation. The examples from the Melbourne Interviews may be few in number but are significant in that they demonstrate the very real, ad hoc, and make-shift activity associated with creative problem solving in rehearsal. This theorisation of strategies to address the gaps, obstacles and assumptions encountered in rehearsal is intended to make these currently under-recognised, but vitally important, mechanisms of rehearsal more accessible, intelligible and valued as part of the rehearsal lexicon.

Chapter 11:   Conclusion

> I think theatre has to be about surprise because when we apply our logical brain to it, it can just be on a straight path … it doesn't necessarily deviate … humans are so contradictory and surprising … we're just not operating on a predictable path. (AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)

This thesis has offered a new way to conceive the rehearsal process. I have argued that if our theatre is to engage and inspire, and to communicate and illuminate the truth of human nature - that we are complex, contradictory beings - then ways of developing work that are as surprising and unique as ourselves warrant consideration.

Rehearsal, however, is difficult. I have made evident the impact and interplay of the contingencies present in Melbourne mainstage rehearsal practice. A case has been made that these contextual constraints inform what actors and directors do, and don't do, in rehearsal, and influence a range of adaptive, and maladaptive, behaviours. In the rehearsal room, short-cutting and end-gaming manifest because of the temporal pressure of a four-week rehearsal period. The graduate actor, anxious and desperate for a foothold in a tenuous industry, over-prepares for, then under-reacts on, the rehearsal floor. Undercurrent tensions, borne from the dissimilarities in theatre training paradigms, complicate both the application of directorial strategies and the ease of the actor's work.

This thesis has demonstrated the difficult context of theatre-making in Melbourne, and the subsequent challenges to the evolution of theatrical practice. Limited employment opportunities for actors and directors impact their capacity to refine and develop their craft through practice. The truncated formats of critical commentary curtail the depth and breadth of theatrical discourse, compounding conservatism rather than igniting curiosity and supporting understanding of newer offerings. The reduction in government funding and

greater dependence upon box-office returns necessitates a performance product's reliability, rather than variability and progressiveness.

When we complete this picture with the universally closeted, busy nature of the rehearsal room, alongside the finite number of opportunities for directors to observe and share practice, it is unsurprising that Melbourne's mainstage theatre falls back upon a simple, common-ground, traditional rehearsal approach rather than extensive use of more progressive strategies.

Concomitantly, this investigation has demonstrated that Melbourne directors and actors would like to enhance their working practices, and work differently, in the rehearsal room. The practitioners value developing authenticity, creativity and originality in their work. Actors are inspired by communion on the rehearsal floor with other actors. Actors and directors alike aspire to deeper investigation of the text and its means of interpretation.

This thesis has addressed these intertwined issues: how to enhance the exploration, and onstage depiction, of the authenticity, incongruity, and unpredictability of the human condition, and support practitioners' imaginative contribution and interaction in collaborative inquiry, whilst working within the existent contextual parameters.

To this end, I have presented a new conceptual model of rehearsal, *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and its associated schema, *The Principal Functions of Rehearsal*, as guides for the director to work within.

The model and schema are predicated on the belief, by both Melbourne actors and directors, in the potency of collective inquiry. The Principal Functions capture the next step in the historical evolution of the director, with the role re-envisaged as a creative facilitator

who designs the rehearsal process. In turn, the agency and capacity of the actor as an imaginative collaborator is amplified; their role becomes central to both the unfolding creative investigation and the evolving interpretation.

Rehearsal Frame Theory conceptualises the rehearsal process as the accumulation of a series of delimiting frames. This begins with acknowledging the aleatory, external limitations that any rehearsal is subject to, and must operate within, but additionally, robustly embraces the notion of constraint as a creative catalyst. The director is charged with skilfully designing and implementing parameters to guide the actor's investigative work. A timely, well-drawn and clearly communicated creative boundary fires the actor's imagination and guides their point of attention and effort. Each creative constraint prompts particular potentialities whilst precluding others. The nature of each frame informs the practitioners' resulting experiences, knowledge and material, and in turn, influences the nature of future frames. As such, the application of a succession of creative constraints gradually hones the work being made toward its genetic eventuality.

The mechanisms of *The Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema assist in the design of each rehearsal frame. The schema serves to clarify the creative intention behind each task, and the mechanisms through which these intentions may be realised. The Principal Functions are constant and necessary irrespective of the circumstances of rehearsal, but are achieved through a variety of directorial rehearsal tools, according to the genre and dynamic at work. Developed from the perceptions and observations of numerous practitioners in combination with creative, cognitive and dramatic literature, the schema is intended to support the creative responsivity of the actor, mitigate entrenchment and reduce artistic pressure.

This thesis makes an original contribution to the field of Rehearsal Studies in several ways. The investigation opens up a dialogue about the need to evolve our practice, how we currently rehearse, and throws much needed focus onto why we use specific activities.

The *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema presented reconfigure the way we perceive actor and director responsibilities and provide an accessible and practical means for collaborative inquiry. Significantly, they strengthen our understanding of ways to increase creativity and reactivity in rehearsal. The combination of craftsmanship, toil and skilled choice-making within the rehearsal room is made visible, and the interior machinations of rehearsal activities exposed. As such, *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema help to demystify the creative process of rehearsal.

The nomenclature offered contributes to the current rehearsal lexicon, enhancing legibility in rehearsal discourse. As a combined conceptual framework, although conceived through the Melbourne Interview data, the theory and schema afford a valuable point of reference for the evolution of rehearsal strategies both in Melbourne theatre and further afield.

This thesis has demonstrated how looking outside the field of Rehearsal Studies can enrich our perspectives of theatrical practices. The integration of contemporary cognitive and creative literature, entwined with rehearsal data, has provided insight into practitioner behaviour and ways to work through creative hurdles. This knowledge of human cognition and creativity also provides legitimacy to some less traditional, embodied and intuitive rehearsal activities by revealing the reasons behind them and the benefits to be gained. The combined discourse has clearly upheld my position of the benefits of a multi-tooled, contingent and reflexive approach to rehearsal.

This investigation has also provided a historical snapshot of the Melbourne practitioners' thoughts, feelings and perspectives at a specific point in time. The combination of views from actors, directors and tertiary educators has captured the myriad of contextual parameters that invisibly shape the way theatrical work is produced by mainstage Melbourne theatre. This documentation of their expectations, frustrations, values and interests paints a unique portrait of the artistic sensibilities and assumptions of the Australian idiom in the early twenty-first century for the theatre historian.

The research design of this investigation has made a unique contribution to the field. I have demonstrated the richness of the experiential voice in Rehearsal Studies. Interviews with twenty practitioners and theatre educators, each speaking from different angles and roles within the rehearsal experience, and commenting on their work in multiple rehearsal rooms, has provided a panoramic view of the issues, practices and beliefs surrounding Melbourne mainstage rehearsal. The accumulative impact of these juxtaposed viewpoints is that we start to comprehend both the relationship between the exterior landscape, and the interior experience, of rehearsal.

This investigation has foregrounded the individual utterances of its participants, and in doing so, has placed value upon the subjective perspective of the participants. This is a strength of the inquiry, but also flags the study's limitations. The knowledge produced is based on the quality and genuineness of the participants' responses, of which there is no point of measure. At times throughout the thesis I have also drawn attention to the fact that a participant's view may not be consistent with that of others. For instance, what a director claims as the benefit of a specific activity may not be agreed with by their cast members. It is difficult to arrive at an objective assessment of the worth of the rehearsal activities

discussed. This quandary is consistent with the central argument of the thesis, that the efficacy of any one rehearsal activity is highly contingent upon the text, practitioner and the moment at hand.

A positive outcome of this investigation would be that expectations of what constitutes effective rehearsal practice may be broadened; and that our developing understanding of human cognition and creative theory informs and supports our rehearsal approaches, opening the way for more innovative practices. The *Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema offers a starting point for this evolution, and of itself may hold opportunity for future exploration, development and application. Whilst the Principal Functions are drawn directly from data pertaining to theatrical practice, the scope of this investigation has been limited to identifying and explaining these concepts, and locating the ideas within a contemporary creative and cognitive context. Deductive analysis of new data sets from Melbourne and further abroad would allow the schema to be refined and/or broadened, and presumably a greater range of rehearsal activities documented.

The ideas raised suggest the adoption of a new paradigm in regard to conceiving rehearsal practice. Future studies could investigate how rehearsal frames, the schema and its mechanisms could be used in practice by practitioners. An aim may be to develop a rehearsal toolkit based on the Principal Functions schema – a director's manual for use. This would involve the development of a catalogue of the type of activities involving specific Principal Functions. Such a task would require the testing of the schema by applying specific activities in practice, in a range of rehearsal scenarios. Consideration would need to be given as to how the impact of each rehearsal activity could be assessed. Potentially such a study

may differentiate between activities that may be of particular use to the director or different actors.

Finally, *Rehearsal Frame Theory* and the *Principal Functions of Rehearsal* schema may be of use in director and actor training and development. Given the disparate forms of training and expectations that collide in the temporal heat of the rehearsal room, the schema may help bridge differences, or at least encourage an appreciation of alternative modes of working, in theatrical work. For this reason, it may be worthwhile in actor and director training. At the core of the model and schema are intrinsic values: variability, experimentation, the challenging of entrenchment and collaboration. These values, and the process of working through various well-designed rehearsal frames, are conducive to the ongoing professional development of the individual practitioner. The resulting enhanced skill sets could conceivably increase an actor's or director's employability and support career sustainability. The shared vocabulary, too, may foster a stronger sense of ensemble in a fragmented, difficult employment field, and improve the prospect of future collaborations.

With a more reflexive approach to rehearsal, underpinned by a contemporary understanding of creative theory and human cognition, the director of tomorrow is well positioned to develop theatrical work for the twenty-first century.

> … the most important resources we have for … construct[ing] … change or improvement are our collective imagination and our discourse about the future.
>
> (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly 2011, p. 73)

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Appendices

Appendix A: A Sample of Interview Questions for Actors & Directors

ACTOR QUESTIONS*. Please note that these questions are a rough guide to the type of questions that may be covered. The interview is intended to be informal and organic in nature.*

1. What is your personal background in terms of training, experience and work in theatre as a theatre practitioner? How do you feel your background has informed your work?
2. Can you describe the various rehearsal processes of shows you have experienced - how are they similar? Different?

3. What do you 'normally' do in the rehearsal process? When do you 'break' from the normal?

4. Re Your most recent show: Can you describe the way it was rehearsed?

5. Re Your most recent show: Can you describe one or more memorable moments from rehearsal – why is it/are they memorable?

6. What have been some of the specific challenges of different shows you have been in? How were these challenges addressed in rehearsal by the director and yourself/others?

7. What do you see as the challenges of different stages of rehearsals – staging/blocking – etc. Which rehearsal strategies have you found to be effective?

8. What ways have you experienced of getting into/entering the work?

9. Does it matter <u>how</u> we rehearse?... why?

10. What has changed in your approach to acting and rehearsal since you began?

11. What do you find to be the differences in working with different directors?
12. What aspects do you find the most enjoyable/exciting about the rehearsal process? What aspects do you most value from the rehearsal room process? What aspects do you find challenging? Why?
13. In the ideal world, how would you like to rehearse? (what would you change?)
14. What training/experience do you feel would enable effective and expedient rehearsal for emerging/graduate actors?
15. Why do you act?
 Any final comments or feedback?

DIRECTOR QUESTIONS*. Please note that these questions are a rough guide to the type of questions that may be covered. The interview is intended to be informal and organic in nature.*

1. What is your personal background in terms of training, experience and work in theatre as a theatre practitioner? How do you feel your background has informed your work?
2. What are the key principles/ideas that underpin (a) your personal approach to theatre making and (b) your specifically, your rehearsal approach? Ie what contributes to an effective rehearsal? And how would you define an effective rehearsal?
3. How do you rehearse? Ie what do you "normally" do? When (why) do you break from what you normally do?
4. How does this compare, in your opinion, to how fellow directors rehearse?
5. What aspects do you most value from the rehearsal room process? What aspects do you find challenging? Why?
6. In regard to a current or recent performance, could you discuss your preparation and rehearsal experience? Any memorable moments from the rehearsal period? Why are they memorable? What were the challenges? How did you go about addressing them?
7. How would you typically begin the rehearsal process? Ie how do you enter the work, enter the text etc
8. What are the similarities and difference in how you sequence/structure your rehearsal process (eg for instance, whole rehearsal period, specific rehearsal day) etc? Do you proceed chronologically through the play in rehearsal- why?
9. What do you see as the parameters that you work within? What hinders or helps you about the parameters that you work within? In the ideal world what would you change to help your artistic process?
10. Which rehearsal strategies have you found to be effective in developing heightened, physical/visual forms of theatre? Why? What do you feel are the key differences in directing/rehearsing more realistic forms of theatre versus more heightened, physical/visual forms of theatre?
11. Why do you direct?
12. Has anything changed in your approach since you began directing?
13. Does it matter how we rehearse? Why?
14. What type of theatre do you find exciting/engaging?
15. Is there a difference in the rehearsal of emerging/graduate actors vs established actors? Do you alter your process or communication in any way…?
16. What training/experience do you feel is needed for directors?
17. What training/experience do you feel is would enable effective and expedient rehearsal for emerging actors?

Any final comments or feedback?

Appendix B: Interview Details

Name	Year	Date	Citation Used
Anonymous Actor	2015	4 September	(AA 2015, pers. comm. 4 September)
Johnny Carr	2015	13 May	(Carr 2015, pers. comm. 13 May)
Leticia Caceres	2015	19 August	(Caceres 2015, pers. comm. 19 August)
John Clark	2018	11 March	(Clark 2018, pers. comm. 11 March)
Tom Heath	2014	4 November	(Heath 2014, pers. comm. 4 November)
Pete Houghton	2016	18 February	(Houghton 2016, pers. comm. 18 February)
Adena Jacobs	2015	10 September	(Jacobs 2015, pers. comm. 10 September)
Matt Lutton	2014	28 October	(Lutton 2014, pers. comm. 28 October)
Lana Meltzer	2014	13 October	(Meltzer 2014, pers. comm. 13 October)
Emily Milledge	2015	15 July	(Milledge 2015, pers. comm. 15 July)
Olivia Monticciolo	2014	28 October	(Monticciolo 2014, pers. comm. 28 October)
Steve Mouzakis	2015	28 October	(Mouzakis 2015, pers. comm. 28 October)
Richard Murphet	2018	21 March	(Murphet 2018, pers. comm. 21 March)
Josh Price	2015	2 September	(Price 2015, pers. comm. 2 September)
Jesse Rosenfeld	2014	13 October	(Rosenfeld 2014, pers. comm. 13 October)
Edwina Samuels	2014	19 October	(Samuels 2014, pers. comm. 19 October)
Sam Strong	2014	9 October	(Strong 2014, pers. comm. 9 October)
Jesse Velik	2014	14 October	(Velik 2014, pers. comm. 14 October)
Clare Watson	2014	22 October	(Watson 2014, pers. comm. 22 October)
Clare Watson	2015	17 July	(Watson 2015, pers. comm. 17 July)
Mark Winter	2015	20 August	(Winter 2015, pers. comm. 20 August)

Appendix C: A Summary of the Principal Functions of Rehearsal and their mechanisms

Principal Function	Mechanism	Concise Definition
Positioning:	Orientation	Working out the way in which to proceed, including the aesthetic boundaries that determine future navigation
	Communication	Finding the means and process of communication between actors and director
	Connection	Developing an empathetic relationship to role, the world of the play and the other actors
	Immersion	Supporting the actor's sensory imagining of the world of the play
Creating:	Proposition	Putting forward an idea to be trialled: "What if…?"
	Generation	The making of various interpretations. Building a 'palette' for the director and/or the actor
	Construction	The applying of a director's predetermined choices to create the exterior form
	Consolidation	Making a choice or choices stronger and more certain
Affecting:	Diversion	Shifting the focus of a task onto an alternate task to achieve a particular result
	Iteration	Use of repetition
	Permutation	Challenging the established order or sequence, for instance rehearsing scenes non-chronologically
	Perturbation	Challenging habits and/or preconceptions to stimulate new choices
	Simplification	Attending to one component or layer at a time to reduce the complexity of a task