

**ACTING IN CONTEXTS: BODY, PERFORMANCE AND THE
SYSTEMS OF ACTING TRAINING IN CONTEMPORARY
THEATRE**

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut for the award
of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THEATRE ARTS**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **ACTING IN CONTEXTS: BODY, PERFORMANCE AND THE SYSTEMS OF ACTING TRAINING IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE** submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the faculty of Fine Arts, University of Calicut, is an authentic record of the research work carried out by SREEJITH R, under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other purpose.

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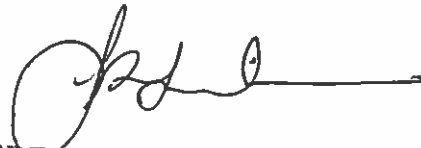
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Thesis titled **ACTING IN CONTEXTS: BODY, PERFORMANCE AND THE SYSTEMS OF ACTING TRAINING IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE** is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me, under the valuable guidance of **Dr. C. S. BIJU**, Research Supervisor, School of Drama and Fine Arts, Aranattukara, Thrissur. I also declare that this thesis has not been submitted by me earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title.

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A research study is made considerably convenient by the presence of an exceptional library and the relationship one shares with the custodian of such a library. The librarian at School of Drama, Mr. Santhosh played a crucial role in the fruition of my research. For my initial research and reading purposes, I relied much on the Library at the Vayala Cultural Centre, which is a dedication to the memory of my beloved guru, the late Vayala Vasudevan Pillai, by his wife, Valsala Teacher. Valsala Teacher's limitless love and her occasional tea and snacks will always be remembered fondly. I would also like to thank from the bottom of my heart, the library at National School of Drama, people who sent me relevant material for research, like Ramith Singapore, Pooja Mohanraj, Ramanjaneyulu, and my friends who have always encouraged me, Ranjith Janardhanan, Devendranath Sankaranarayanan, Ashley N.P., M.U. Praveen, Suresh Mecheri, Anilkumar M.S and Swetha. My dear student Aswin Varrier, who helped me in documentation and organization of research material will have a great future in theatre. I take this opportunity to thank both Aswin and his family for his efforts. Moreover, I would also like to thank Vindhya Sajeesh from Thiruvathira D.T.P. Centre, for promptly typing it out within the time constraints and Dinops Jose, D.J. Dot Net for their effective printing.

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CONTENTS

Chapter	Title	Page No
Chapter 1	INTRODUCTION	2-10
Chapter 2	PERFORMING BODY IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS:A STUDY BASED ON HIRSOHI KOIKE'S <i>MAHABHARATA</i> PROJECT AND PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S <i>ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE</i>	11-68
Chapter -3	PREPARATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ACTOR'S BODY BASED ON TWO DEVISING PROJECTS IN THEATRE SCHOOLS	69-156
Chapter 4	PERFORMING BODY IN SOUTH ASIAN THEATRE	157-180
Chapter 5	CONCLUSION	181-198
	WORKS CITED	199-206
	ANNEXURE	
	CERTIFICATE OF PLAGIARISM CHECK	

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Actor's body is the most important element in the visual art form called theatre. New trends and techniques are emerging in the field of theatre in accordance with the irruptions and changes in cultural practices around the world. The actor's body is lauded with the capacity to transfer these irruptions as shifts in emphasis to the spectators. In this context, contemporary theatre demands a new approach in training and a new body language to perform the cultural context. The possibility of radical and innovative training in theatre which needs to be explored and practiced within the context of existing acting training approaches is the main inspiration behind this dissertation. What happens when talent is merged with practice? This analysis is based on both the Eastern and the Western systems of actor training with special reference to various theatre forms in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Indian actors have realized the importance of practice, both artistic and technical, in acting, exemplified best in Bharatha's Natyasastra. But in the age of mechanization, one is shackled by constraints of expression of the body and psyche. Acting in theatre has become a project set against the increasing mechanization of the society, culture and body from the beginning of the 20th century. The discovery of modern psychology, like the notion that individual is treated as a bundle of psychic desires and the approach to acting as a way of consciousness orienting the unconscious, revolutionized theories of acting. The intelligence of an actor needs to draw from the unconscious and it happens when the conscious mind establishes a turbulent correspondence with the unconscious.

The importance of positioning an individual in his/her social sphere as an actor is discussed in detail in the coming chapters. Personal experience and the existing approaches to acting and acting methodologies

are used to substantiate these ideas in relation to South Asian and Western practice of acting. The central purpose of this dissertation is designed to (re)consider the questions of acting and actor training.

Though training has been proved to be inevitable for professional acting, some of the talented practitioners often tend to restructure the actor training systems to renew and revitalize traditions. My acquaintance with people in theatre made me aware of the need for such a radical rethinking of existing practices. Contemporary theatre is striving to get rid of the constraints of traditional modes to compose a new visual vocabulary. This demands innovations in training systems.

Practical sense is crucial to acting. After getting trained in acting for a while, one can learn how to move on the stage and how to control his/her body. But this remains more as practical skills, not as creative work. *Natyasastra* describes many exercises which can be used in the contemporary theatre. The Western theories of acting which always carved for perfection have consistently been obsessed with molding an actor's body and mind. Konstantin Stanislavski, regarded by many people as the master of modern acting who codified a way of acting combining the then prevailing acting forms and his own personal experiences. People such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov and Yevgeny Vakhtangov who came up with modifications in the method proposed by Stanislavski were his colleagues and disciples. Jerzy Grotowski, who believed in the self-sacrifice of the actor to reach sublime levels of the art-began where Stanislavski stopped. Drawing on the postulates from both *Natyasastra* and from the Western theories one has to rethink the methods of the training systems to make it adaptable to the contemporary circumstances and stage.

The shifts in human civilization and perception due to the new trends and scientific discoveries constitute a new society. The boredom, hatred and mechanization of the contemporary society are, and have to be reflected in literature, theatre and cinema. A theatre language that can depict crises on the stage has to be re-invented and needs to take a radical departure even from the Stanislavskian method. The contemporary realities are to be reproduced on stage by developing training systems that can create a psycho-physical ambience consciously.

This doesn't mean dispensing off with tradition completely. Rooted in a tradition, we can develop a new system which would consist of the good elements of the existing and the traditional. The work of an actor on the stage, whether it is self-expression, the expression of the world, exhibition of the emotions and feelings, creation and recreation of searches and findings, become important when it harnesses itself with the social and the historical context. Training methods create layers of meaning with reference to situations. Acting is not confined to characterization or even to self-expression. Be that as it may, the methods used in *Natyasastra* or Stanislavskian theories acquire relevance only when they are put into practice. For the methods to be natural and genuine the person who is performing these should have some qualities. His approach to the society which moulds him is also important. An actor has to view acting as an act of reconstructing and changing the world. Social injustices are to be a concern for an actor and the actor attempts to communicate with the society through his body and voice. Though this might consume most of the time of an actor's thinking and studies, this would help in developing critical thinking and establishing a sense of the society is the primary task of the contemporary actor. An actor needs to be familiarized with many aspects of the environment. Observing the surroundings and the people

around is one method which helps an actor in achieving this goal. This should be very selective and contextual. The aim is not to imitate, but to recreate.

The process of the acting is determined by practical, psychological and physical training systems. Theatre can shape human culture by waking up the creativity dormant in it. This calls for a new theater language based on the actor, making use of both the Eastern and Western traditions of acting by locating it within the socio-political and cultural ethos. The new approach should be rooted in the tradition, but at the same time, should also be viable to change and organic. The critique of consumer society, rather than being an object of it combined with the critique of mechanization has a pivotal role in defining a new theatre idiom. The scientific methods rather than being an end in itself should be used for the improvement of the process. An actor's energy can thus be used against the dominant ideologies in shaping and reshaping human bodies. An actor's duty in the contemporary world is to develop a life style that can explore the creative aspect of his body and mind through practice. This process is extensively helpful for the actors in the alienated social space in performing a character to the spectators.

It is the conviction that Indian Theatre is undergoing a period of mandatory reformation in the process of actor training that led me on the path of a research project that would help in re-examining the actors' body and reinvent styles and techniques. The revolutionary technological advancements happening all over the world have taken humanity and nature to new heights. The responsibility of serious theatre makers and practitioners to fulfill the historical mission - of reshaping the actors' bodies which serve as instruments to portray the complexities of humanity

in an artistic and creative manner on stage in our time - also served as an inspiration to this effect. It is my experience of three decades, working as a student, actor, director, teacher and technical specialist in various theatre institutions and companies that guides me through this process. The multiple opportunities which I have received so far to study in various internationally reputed schools of theatre, and to work with various international practitioners and directors, would definitely add merit to this research. It would be foolhardy and impractical to try and conceive a unified acting training technique in a culturally, linguistically and geographically diverse location like India. Rather, a wiser attempt would be to renovate training techniques that accentuate the pluralities of the nation and embrace the unique characteristics of each region. Noted theatre practitioner from Karnataka, Prasanna, immensely valued the Indian theatrical tradition. He regards the following as serious inspiration for his study:

India has a great classical tradition in theatre. But there has been a break with that tradition, and I feel we have not sufficiently explored the link between the past and the present. This has resulted in several misconceptions. Many modern theatre practitioners consider the past and the present to be separate entities and consequently, our urban acting style tends to look borrowed. The fact of the matter, however, is that the two are separate and yet not separate. So I wrote the book all over again and called it the Indian Method in Acting.

(Prasanna, 2013:8)

Despite all that we adopt and assimilate from Western practice, nothing can as successfully influence and transform Indian theatre like the theatrical traditions that are deeply rooted here. It is, in fact, imperative that Western approaches be modified to suit South Asian spectatorial

traditions and incorporated into contemporary practice. It is with these factors in mind that I wish to tackle the crucial chapters. Hence, the first chapter shall analyze and expound an actor's practice and performance techniques in an intercultural context. My experience as an actor under the three years of pedagogy at the Theatre Training Research Programme (now Intercultural Theatre Institute) is the subject of detailed analysis and study in the first part of this chapter. The fact that Inter Cultural Theatre Institute/ Theatre Training Research Centre are host to several distinctions that no other institution in world theatre can boast of, makes this institution a valuable subject of study for this research. The second part of this chapter intends to explore the various prospects of an actor who has undergone such intense training. This requires an in-depth examination of the production and rehearsal process of two internationally acclaimed productions. One of the subjects is the ITI/TTRP production of *Attempts on Her Life* directed by Phillip Zarrilli. Furthermore, to review the functioning of professional actors in an intercultural context, Hiroshi Koike's *Mahabharata*, which was part of his *Bridge Project*, has been subject to detailed analysis. All the actors involved in this project belonged to Southeast Asian countries. The primary goal of this chapter is to interrogate how the abilities acquired through a globally pertinent training methodology can be incorporated into future practice to augment the resulting theatrical experience.

The second chapter will look at my experiences and learning's from my stints as trainer and director at two major theatre schools in India, analyzing their long term theatre pedagogy and subsequent devising projects. The training and rehearsal processes of *Museum of Lost Pieces* by the Theatre Department of Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts and Mass Communication, University of Hyderabad in 2007 and *Misty*

Mountains of Mahabharata by the acting students of Bachelor of Theatre Arts at School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut in 2016 are the subjects of analysis in this chapter. To this effect, I also intend to describe the history, relevance, syllabus, functioning, and vision, purpose and training techniques of both schools and also elucidate and review, from the perspective of a trainer and faculty member, the various prospects of such a context and the different stages of their development. The primary intention of such a research study is to transform the valuable attributes acquired by contemporary actors through such profound processes into assets and raw material for future actor training techniques. In the final chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the Rasas and the acting practices formulated by the *Natyasastra*. Furthermore, this chapter also seeks to recommend how the South Asian actors' bodies should approach training methods, character development approaches and production techniques in this day and age of constant technological innovation, by citing examples of advancements in world theatre. The scientifically codified acting traditions are assets to the Indian classical arts. I presume that this research can also illuminate the path towards reaping the benefits of such assets while also embracing the transformations of the modern world. The actor's regional body language, its limitations and global prospects have all been explained with examples in this chapter. The final chapter also attempts to explain the role of comprehensive technological understanding and constructive awareness about constant connection with the society in shaping the contemporary actor. This research project aspires to play a role in moulding actors who can imbibe acting and its contemporary practice methodologies with an improved, heightened sense of societal awareness. This research project seeks to embark on a colossal endeavour of describing, modernizing and forging solutions to various issues like the redefinition of actors' objectives to suit the contemporary

context, understanding new genres and writing techniques, identifying problems faced by actors in the physical medium and learning the various methods of manipulating the core element of acting, that is breathe control.

Chapter 2
PERFORMING BODY IN INTERCULTURAL
CONTEXTS:
A STUDY BASED ON HIRSOHI KOIKE'S
***MAHABHARATA* PROJECT**
AND PHILLIP ZARRILLI'S ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

World theatre is constantly undergoing change, in its training, practice methods and writing styles. As a direct consequence of globalisation, the intercultural melding has led theatre too, on a path of novelty. Radical advancements in technology have helped break many cultural and geographical borders. This has helped actors to create art in otherwise unfamiliar circumstances and engage in different art forms and understand the physical, vocal, psychological and intellectual qualities of such performers, which has in turn given them a culturally hybrid identity. It is imperative for students and performers of theatre in an intercultural context that the political implications of the performing body are subject to re-evaluation by the new hybrid art form that has taken shape from the interactions with and training in different art forms from around the world. This new genre, Intercultural theatre, also has the responsibility to spread the possibilities of theatre to catch up with the fast paced changes in human trends and behaviours.

Intercultural Exploration of Actor Consciousness

The intercultural context gives birth to a significant new hybrid theatrical language, which can bring people together, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or gender. With this as the motif, this chapter hopes to thoroughly propound the following three strands.

1. Proper training in an intercultural context - Analysis of the training methodologies of the Intercultural Theatre Institute in Singapore.
2. Production process of a play that was shaped in an intercultural context at a Theatre Institute - re-examining the production process of *Attempts on Her Life* directed by Phillip Zarrilli at the Intercultural Theatre Institute.

3. Works of professional actors in an intercultural context - Study of the *Mahabharata* Project made as part of Japanese director Hiroshi Koike's Bridge Project.

With prime focus on Asian art forms, the Intercultural Theatre Institute/Theatre Training Research Programme (ITI/TTRP) in Singapore has developed a wholesome, distinct and significant actor training technique to become one of the most prominent institutions for contemporary theatre practice at the international level. As the official documents of the TTRP states:

The ITI programme is a unique, three year full time professional training programme for actors in contemporary theatre. It immerses students in Traditional Theatre forms from Asia and beyond, and juxtaposes these intense interactions, with both Stanislavskian and post-Stanislavskian actor-training techniques and programme is constituted basically by training modules involving acting, voice, speech, movement, technical theatre, Tai Chi, Theatre Theory and Humanities. The application of performance skills in the intercultural context integrated with the generation of original work in theatre and performance forms the through line that characterizes the ITI. The programme is inspired and informed in general by the experience of contemporary theatre in Singapore over the last 47 years and in particular, by the artistic vision and multicultural practice of its founder Kuo Pao Kun.

Before formulating the philosophy and tradition of practice for such a multicultural institution with students and faculty from all over the world, Kuo Pao Kun and his co-founder, T. Sasitharan made sure to visit various theatre institutes across the world and understand their pedagogical

systems. After detailed analysis of both Western and Oriental theatre practices, they decided to focus on Asian artistic cultures and traditions and develop a training system based on the models of Asian Classical art forms. Instead of completely disregarding the Western methodologies, they assimilated whatever they deemed necessary and juxtaposed them with the Eastern techniques and formulated a curriculum that has been hailed by many prominent theatre makers from across the world, as a system that aids the awakening of world theatre. A statement by eminent theatre person Richard Schechner which appeared in the prospects of TTRP elucidates this fact: "What is needed is what the ITI can provide: an actor training curriculum that synthesizes traditional and modern performance training systems.... in the workshop I conducted (at ITI) I sensed a deep and passionate dedication to art, to training, to the future." With a focus on Asian artistic traditions, the actor training techniques of the ITI stand out, when compared to other techniques of the world. This is evident from the quality of the artists that the institute has produced. Den Stan Lai says: "Nowhere else is there a programme like this, which incorporates traditional training from world cultures, and instils a contemporary sensitivity and mission."

Despite the fact that the language of communication is English, the students are given full freedom to work in their native tongue. Moreover, through the voice and speech practice methods of classical art forms, they also get to engage with and learn new languages. This intermingling of languages allows for a broadening of the actors' physical and mental capabilities and consciousness. What makes this course unique as compared to other traditional courses is the fact that unlike university theatre courses, there are no written examinations in this course. Instead, in order to review the program each semester, there is an evaluation meeting

that happens with all the faculty and external members who were involved in the teachings of the semester. The ITI has selected some of the world's most distinguished theatre makers as its evaluators. Santi Chintrachinda (Thailand), Anuradha Kapur (India), Kok Heng Leun (Singapore), Linke Huan (China), Nadiputra (Singapore), Ong Keng Sen (Singapore), Norbetus Riantiaro (Singapore), Sato Makota (Japan), Christina Sergeant (Singapore), Alvin Tan (Singapore), Tan Dawa (Singapore), Wu-Jing-Jyi (Taiwan), Danny Yung (Hong Kong) are some of the names in the panel. At the end of each semester, the students are given an evaluation sheet on which each trainer has scientifically reported in detail, the progress and shortcomings of the student in every department. For example, for movement classes, performers are evaluated on every aspect of their physical abilities. Various factors such as core support, flexibility, alignment, coordination, ease and grounding, awareness, adaptability, physical clarity are analysed and reported in detail, in the actors' evaluation sheets. Such detailed analysis is done for each section, thus broadening the scope for training and the consciousness of the actors. Often, this also leads to the actors developing their own methods of training that best suit their style. This quality can be compared to that which is acquired by actors following Eugenio Barba's theatre concept.

One of Barba's aims in making the actors of the Odin responsible for their own training is to make them autonomous, to allow them to create their own training without relying on specific techniques or particular teachers. Through this process, the actor is attempting to discover what Barba refers to as their own "personal temperature that is, their own rhythm, their boundaries, their abilities and what are unique about each of them as a performer. (Nascimento2009: 84)

Danish theatre director and trainer, Eugenio Barba has been working with intercultural actors for a long time, and researching and writing books about it. His thesis about engaging in an intercultural process that retains the individuality of every actor is widely recognised in the global arena.

The first two years are divided into four semesters of intense training in the curriculum. Each semester will focus on a particular traditional or classical art form from a particular Asian country. Primary focus in each semester is on the following art forms – Japanese Noh Theatre, Koodiyattam from India, Wayang Wong from Indonesia and Beijing Opera from China. Along with these, as part of contemporary acting approaches, movement, voice and speech, post modular lab, theatre making module, technical theatre, digital and media arts, humanities, aesthetics, critical theory, basic Tai Chi and meditation are also included in the curriculum. The faculty includes the world's best trainers to teach these methods. The ITI/TTRP gives a platform for its actors to not only interact with the masters of these arts but also to rise up to a greater level of physical and intellectual proficiency. The major deciding factor for Director T. Sasitharan, in the selection of faculty members, is their affinity towards, and ability to adapt to an intercultural multi lingual context. Such an organic process of discovery and creation requires the most careful and sensible guidance, the lack of which could lead to apprehension and insecurity in the actors. The acting trainer needs to have a complete understanding of each student's background – the geography of their homeland, their local neighbourhood, living conditions and circumstances, cultural and political atmosphere in which they grew up – when interacting with them. Failure to do so, could put the actors in a huge predicament as they try to manoeuvre through the course. The gestural patterns, body language and thought process are all different for people belonging to

different countries. Pedagogy in an intercultural context requires the nurturing of such plurality.

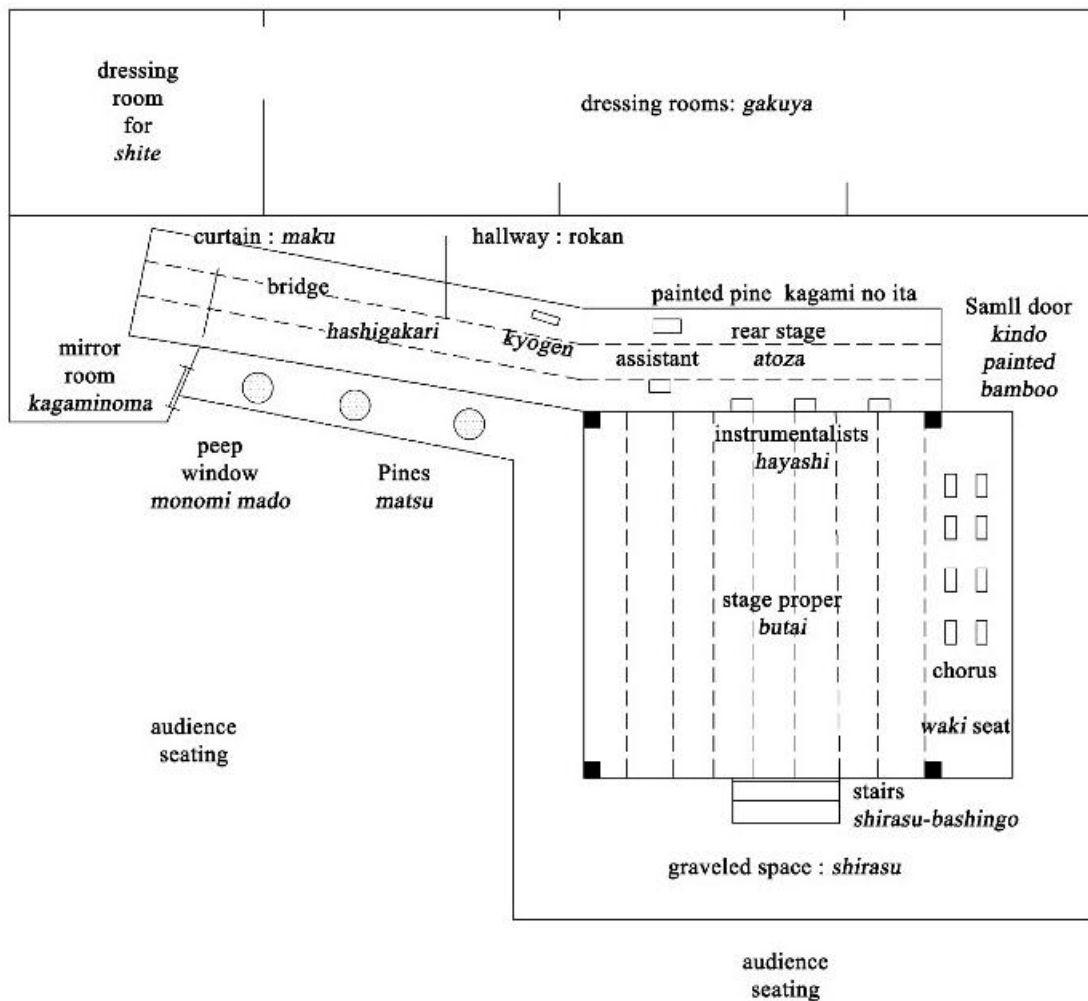
Through training, the actor's body becomes a "motivated body", to use another of Hastrup's term. It is true that the actor makes artistic choices, but part of what leads her to use her body or voice in certain ways is not based on conscious or intellectual decision but the result of the influences of the different cultures she hosts in her body. (Nascimento 2009:96)

The total expression of a creative performer is the union of many different factors. One's childhood experiences, thoughts, memories, travels and readings, physical intelligence developed through training, intense training in various acting techniques from different art forms and martial arts belonging to different nations. An aggregate of all these different elements is what makes up an intercultural actor. American director and deviser of the 'View Points' technique, Anne Bogart's theory about the creativity of an intercultural actor holds high significance. Director Anne Bogart is quick to acknowledge that "SITI Company is now a group of very strong and wilful artists and friends who have created their own identity and signature. Sometimes it is frustrating to me that I get credit for what they, in fact, do. We put our hands together and push. The nature of our collaboration is expansive. (Bogart2001:18)

The following sections will be elaborated upon the ITI/TTRP's efforts to understand the historical, social and cultural significance of their training methodologies to successfully implement them for the training of their students.

Japanese 'Noh'

Theatre in Japan works in many different levels. Statistics indicate the presence of more than two thousand theatre companies in Tokyo alone. The traditional forms like Kabuki, Noh, Kyogen, Bunraku are the most prominent theatre forms of Japan. The classical form of 'Noh' remains the most popular of these. The distinctive features of this art form are the wooden stage, masks, flooring, seating and the music.



Stage ground plan of Japanese Noh Theatre, Page 168

The presentation style of this traditional art form has been passed on through generations, starting from the 14th century. Hundreds of highly trained professional actors and musicians are helping keep this classical

form alive even now: Noh is written with a Chinese character meaning to be able. It signifies talent, hence an exhibition of talent, or performance.

(Arthur and Waley 1957:15)

It is one of the most refined dramatic arts in the world. It is the most complicated and aesthetic of all the stylised classical art forms in the world, one that gives importance to dynamic symmetry on stage. The training for Noh is spread over the whole lifespan of the human being. Between the ages of seven and twenty five, the training is based on the different changes that the actor's body and voice are subjected to. The period between twenty and twenty five years is of utmost importance. This is the time when the performer's voice and body get defined. This is the time in an actor's life when the art is born that will lead to the skill of his later years.

The most important artists credited for shaping Noh into the form we know today, are Kannomi (1333-84) and his son, Zeami (1363-1443). The Zeami Treatises, which expound the essence of the art and the significance of its practice, have played a huge role in taking the subsequent praxis methodologies forward.

As Zeami perceived it, training lasts a lifetime; it develops the person as well as the performer, giving him a level of discipline, concentration and mastery which improves his soul as well as his arts. By mastering his art, the actor develops his "self", his understanding of life and his ability to read with it.

(Schechner & Appel 1990:168,169)

Zeami's writings go into great detail to describe the different facets of the practice of Noh. The first stage of training is between the ages of

seven and eleven years. During this stage the children have full freedom in their practice. They are never told about any of their flaws or strengths by their masters. This method has helped keep their enthusiasm for the art buoyed up. The next stage is between eleven and sixteen years of age. This is the time when the students attain their proper vocal pitch. This is also the stage when the students are made aware of the different dimensions of the art. Through basic skill development and training, the students acquire very authentic methods of movement and chanting during this stage. Zeami uses the analogy of a blooming flower to describe this stage.

The most important period in the process of training, is the stage between the ages of seventeen and twenty three. This is the period when a performer tends to have major apprehensions and conflicts. The overt changes that one's body goes through tend to make the performer's movements seem rather awkward. The slightest of remarks by an audience or the masters or even their own colleagues may completely upset the performer and make them sceptical. Such a sensitive stage requires astute handling. The resolve to keep going and continue training despite adverse conditions can lead any performer to great success.

Between twenty four and thirty five years of age is the time in an actor's life when the art is born that will lead to the skill of his later years. The performer expands their horizons through relentless training and self-discipline during this stage. The most valuable asset of a Noh performer is the display of their stable voice and body. At this point in life and training, these attributes become well-set and established. Zeami uses the analogy of a freshly bloomed flower for this stage in the actor's training process. He reminds us that succumbing to the audience's adulation could lead to

the loss of this temporary flower and failure to find the key to sustaining the freshness.

Here is one point that must be considered carefully. If one has a true ability to understand his own level of perfection in his art, then he can never lose that level of the flower. If an actor thinks he has attained a higher level of skill than he has reached, however, he will lose even the level that he has achieved. This matter must be thought over carefully. (Rinner and Masku1984:7)

From the age of thirty five to forty four is when the actors have the opportunity to revive all their training and apply it in their work in its most optimal degree. This age represents the peak of perfection in our art. The performer in this stage stands a chance to be acclaimed by the audience as a great actor, with their ability to intelligently incorporate different aspects of their learning's in order to successfully portray a character and retain its authenticity. Failure in achieving this could lead the actor to be identified as not being able to discern the real flower. If the performer is unable to rise to the desired level of prowess during this stage, this could lead to a debacle in the latter parts of their career. This is the most ripe and fruitful stage in the career of any performer.

Forty five years and beyond is the most crucial part of a Noh performer's life. This is when their physical stamina begins to diminish and they gradually turn to less challenging characters. However, strong performers who have performed profoundly in the previous years, tend to still have potential to show immense prowess. Zeami likens the actor to a flower yet again, here.

Yet the beauty of performer flower was all the more striking for when an artist has achieved a real flower, then the art of Noh even if

the foliage is slight and the tree grows old, still retains its blooms. This is the very proof that, even in an ancient frame, the flower remains. (Rinner and Masku1984:9)

Zeami's detailed notes about the transition through intense training in different stages of an actor's life are invaluable for the modern practitioner and actor to study and analyse their own art and also that of their contemporaries. Another important contribution by Japanese Theatre is the concept of Jo-ha-kyu. The proper application of the sequence, Jo, Ha, Kyu, is what consummates a play or even an actor's performance.

The ITI/TTRP training for Noh in 2006 followed the style of the Kanze School and was led by prominent Kanze practitioners Kanze Yoshimasa, Kuwada Takashi and Hideacki Kojima. Primary focus was given to intense training in Utasi (singing), Shimai (Dancing), Kamae (Standing position), Sashikomi (6 step), Hirakki (3 step) and Nejru (Twist). After acquiring primary tutelage in these aspects, the students took up a small part of a Noh play for performance. This gave the actors an experience of being part of a Noh theatre performance.

These aesthetic units of a Noh drama may be roughly translated as introduction (Jo), exposition (ha) and denouement (kyu). These three sections move at an ever increasing pace and form the basic dramatic, rhythmic and melodic basis of the Jo. A more effective translation might be 'introduction' (Jo), 'breaking' (ha), and 'rapid' (kyu), suggesting some of these performance elements. There is no set of English terms that can encompass all the meanings, and so they have been left in the original in the translation. (Annexure 1)

A Noh performer is able to achieve novelty only when they give equal weightage to chanting, dance, gesture and expressive movement and perform all of these with equal and complete passion. The performer is able to attain complete power and control over the exceptional high energy that their voice and body demand, through persistent training in this art form. With focus on the physical centre (naval area) and the movement of one's feet, the acting style of a Noh artist may seem mechanical. Learning this style of acting will help actors to play characters that demand extraordinary energy with utmost naturality and sustain the energy throughout the period of performance. "The flower represents mastery of technique and through practice, achieved in order to create a feeling of novelty. When I wrote the flower blooms from the imagination; the seed represents merely the various skills of our art."(Rinner and Masku1984:55)

With a holistic understanding of Noh and its techniques, contemporary actors will experience a great sense of ease in their subsequent practices. Another unique trait of the Noh style that a contemporary performer should emulate, is the development of an internal disposition that is contradictory to the external expression. For example, if the character demands extreme anger, the internal disposition of the actor needs to be calm and composed while expressing the anger externally. Similarly, to attain strong and energetic footwork, the actor needs to be extremely light-footed. Actors can gain many such diverse, effective and significant acting devices through the practice of Noh. An ensemble exists within the single physical body and the single voice, where it is magnified by the other performers. This is a great and rare feature of Noh art.

Koodiyattam

The Sanskrit Drama form of Koodiyattam is the world's first art form developed on the basis of the principles of Natyasastra. Experts say that this form is 2000 years old, at the least. The written history of Koodiyattam in Kerala can be traced back to 800 years ago. Moreover, the contemporary independent version of the art form that exists today, was developed around 500 years ago. On the 13th of May, 2001, Koodiyattam was recognised by UNESCO as 'A masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity'. It is believed to be the most refined model of acting methods by many experts in the world of theatre. Based on this reverence to the art from many master theatre practitioners, many theatre schools in India and abroad have adopted Koodiyattam as a distinct discipline in their pedagogy. Most importantly, ITI/TTRP (Singapore), National School of Drama (Delhi), School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut, Theatre Department, Sree Sankaracharya University, Kaladi and National School of Drama, Bangalore Chapter has all adopted Koodiyattam as a discipline in their teaching methodologies. Under the leadership of one of Guru Ammannoor Madhava Chakyar's prime disciples and the founder of Natanakairali in Irinjalakuda, G. Venu, a team comprising of Kapila Venu, Rajneesh Chakyar, Suraj Nambiar, Kalamandalam Rajeev (Mizhavu), Kalamandalam Hariharan (Mizhavu), Margi Madhu and Usha Nangyar has been handling the tutelage of Koodiyattam in all these different institutions. Moreover, Koodiyattam performers have also played important roles in various intercultural acting workshops and projects across the world. The role of Desdemona in Singapore based director Ong Keng Sen's intercultural production of Othello was played by eminent Koodiyattam artist Margi Madhu from Kerala.

Koodiyattam was also the principal subject of the World Theatre Workshop that took place at Natanakairali in Kerala between 25th of December, 1998 and 15th of January, 1999. The aim of this workshop that was organised under the leadership of G. Venu, was to disseminate knowledge about the different aspects of Koodiyattam and also other traditional art forms of Kerala, to the participants who were attending from different corners of the world. Peter Oskarason from Sweden (Theatre Director), Inger Ziclfelt (Theatre History), Bent Holm from Denmark (Theatre Research) Donato Sartori from Italy (Mask), Bai Tao from China (Peking Opera artist), Manuvelz Soeiro from Mozambique (Theatre Director) and Producer Anna Thelin were some of the prominent names amongst the participants. Moreover, there were also a young group of actors and musicians from across the world who were attending this workshop. This workshop was valued as a monumental movement to bring world attention to theatre in Kerala. Even earlier than this, artists like Richard Schechner had conducted elaborate studies on the application of Koodiyattam practice.

Clearly nationalism, and its rivalries, armaments, boundaries culminating in the nuclear catastrophe of mass extinction is something we humans are going to have to learn to get rid of. Learn to be intercultural? More like unlearn what is blocking us from returning to the intercultural. For as far back as we can look in human history, people have been deeply, continuously, unashamedly intercultural. (Bharucha 2001:39)

Kramadeepika, Aattaprakaram, Nirvahanasloka, Vidooshakasloka, TamizhChollal, Arangu Thali sloka, Taalaprasthaanam, Akkittha are the different aspects that together form the Literature of Koodiyattam. The most important of these are the Kramadeepika and the Aattaprakaram, that

act as stage directions and director's notes for the performing Chakyars. But still, the Aattaprakarams are just parts of the whole, since the other elements like Nirvahanaslokas and Vidooshakaslokas help complete them. Aattaprakaram is a collection written descriptions in Malayalam, about how everything should take place and everyone should act, in order to perform the verses and prose of the play in their most effective form. Kramadeepika acts as the director's notes for a performer. Stage directions that are otherwise not described by the creator of the play, which will help the performer understand their entries and exits, costumes, etc., are part of the Kramadeepika.

The performance of a Chakyar is generally called Koothu. However, when the number of performers exceeds one, it is then called Koodiyattam. Aranganiyuka is a term for decorating the stage with a plantain tree with fruits, tender coconut branches, tender palm/coconut leaves, bunches of flowers. Covering the pillars, the Mizhavu, the lamp and the stool with cloth and laying a piece of cloth for the Nangyar to sit on, while she recites the slokas, are all actions that fall under this term. Thalayil Kettuka is the act of tying a red cord to the head before the performer wears their costume and make up. Mizhavu Ochchapeduththuka (Sounding the Mizhavu) is when, before the play begins, the Nambiar comes alone on stage and starts playing the Mizhavu. Goshti Kottukais the combined presentation of the Nambiar's Mizhavu and the Nangyar's cymbals and the hymn songs is called Goshti Kottuka.

'Aranguthalikkuka' is the initiation of the play by the Nambiar as he explains the essence of the story with the mangalaslokam. The recital of the panchavaadyangal (five instruments) of Koodiyattam, before the entry of a character is called 'Vaayikkal'. The five instruments being Mizhavu,

Edakka, Shankhu (conch), Kombu (Horn) and Kuzhiththalam (cymbals). Poinakham is a part of the costume that has been spread out in two layers over the front of the performer's waist. Poinakhamkuththuka is a term for when the actor takes up a female role. Gesticulation of the slokas instead of chanting it out, to communicate the meaning is an act that is called Artham Aadi Slokathine Kaikaattuka. The act of tracing the history of the character, from the moment of his/her entrance, in reverse order is Anukramam. Sankshepam is a short gist of the story of the character, from their genesis till where the Anukramam ends. Nirvahanam is the detailed acting out of the parts that Anukramam described, now in the correct order. Description of the physical appearance, from head to toe by the actor is called Panchaangam Aaduka.

Tharkkan is the pitching of the voice while reciting the slokas. Mudi Akkiththa is a section of instrumental recitation that implies the closing of the performance. The sloka that describes the costume, physicality, emotion and gait of a character in detail is called Aalaamaslokam. Kuruttumashi is what the collyrium used in Koodiyattam. Mizhaavina is the name for the enclosure for the Mizhavu. To chant the Maayamanthram before getting into costume and make up is a traditional and Chooruvaakyam is the act of speaking in verse.

Koothambalam is a space built inside a temple compound, especially for Koodiyattam performances with a stage made with blocks of wood. The architectural science behind the construction of such spaces is very particular to Kerala. The efficacy of the sound plans for such spaces is superior to any other theatrical spaces in the world. Around 1,531 temples still house a Koothambalam within their premises.

Koodiyattam training at ITI/TTRP

Four months of a semester were spent on the training of Koodiyattam. The students were trained by artists from G. Venu's Natanakairali in Kerala. Before the practical sessions began, students had orientation sessions about the emergence of Koodiyattam and other art forms in Kerala, and the sociocultural and political situations during the growth of these forms. Right from the point when they were still designing the course structure, founders Kuo Pao Kun and T. Sasitharan were determined that the students should be able to develop theatrical discernment about all different kinds of forms. They believed that in order to be able to make meaningful contributions to the theatre making process, the students graduating from this school should have technical competence, critical awareness, social engagement and artistic autonomy.

Six hours were set out for Koodiyattam every day. Initially, the focus was on building strength in the physical centre, building control over the body and increasing flexibility by doing daily exercises that are part of Koodiyattam training. The exercises to strengthen the body and legs were 'Vattaththil Nadakkuka', 'Vattaththil Chaadi Nadakkuka', 'Kalappuraththu Nadakkuka', 'Chollunthi Nadakkuka' and 'Pakshisthobham'. This was followed by eye exercises and Navarasa practice. Beyond the traditional navarasa practice, there were also different improvisational exercises based on the navarasas, that Venuji believed would be of use to the contemporary actor. According to Venuji, the term 'acting' is too weak to define Abhinaya. Abhinaya is rather the navigation through the universe of the angika (physical), vachika (verbal), aharya (ornamental) and sathwika (psychological) in order to reach the actor's goal/ the audience's heart. We have always pursued the sort of communication that goes beyond the vachika (verbal). The individual, through the actor in him/her, must have

the skill to use the character's sthaaibhaav (primary sentiment) to identify with the character through the symbolic and mythical language of stylised theatre. It is in fact the internalised sthaaibhaav of the character which imparts a worldly attribute to the Natyadharmi (stylised, larger than life) code. This cannot be effectively explained in the terminologies of the existing contemporary Indo-Western context.

According to Indian notions, regardless of whether Abhinaya is Natyadharmi (stylised and larger than life), or Lokadharmi (more pertaining to the realities of the world), it is rhythm oriented and symbolic. When western ideas of their theatre and even films became popular in India, these indigenous terminologies became irrelevant in the more modern theatre scene in India and even local theatre schools adopted western acting methodologies. It was only in the 1970s that modern experiments in theatre that used these Indian traditions came to the forefront. The realization that Natya is also Nataka (Theatre), led to the efforts to identify a modern theatre training method that is an effective amalgamation of both traditional and contemporary techniques. (Venu2006:101)

It was years of profound experience, especially with Western theatre, that helped Venuji bring this kind of an amalgamation into the Koodiyattam training as part of the ITI/TTRP pedagogy. In the final stage of their training, the students were trained in, what can be described as a very primal form of Koodiyattam, a small part of one of the stories, called 'Parvathi Viraham'. To culminate the process, in the last and fourth month of Koodiyattam training, the students underwent intense practice of 'Parvathi Viraham' with the accompaniment of the Mizhavu, and even performed in front of an audience. (Annexure 2)

Beijing Opera

It was around 2000 years ago, that the Beijing Opera came into existence, based on the Hui and Han operas. Hui opera belonged to the Anhui province, while Han opera belonged to the Hubei province. Some elements of the local operatic styles of Kungu and Shaanxi have also been assimilated by the Beijing Opera. It borrowed melodious singing, beautiful acting, strong melody, folk music and styles and mannerisms from the different local operas that visited Beijing in the 19th century. An amalgamation of all of these was what made Beijing Opera unique and brought it to fame. Late 19th century and early 20th century could be defined as the golden era of Beijing Opera. History tells us that around 1000 Beijing Operas were conceived at the time and at least 400 of them were performed repeatedly for many years. The plots of most of these operas came from classical novels, folk legends, historical stories and fairy tales. The artists at that time were blessed with high societal status, wealth and fame. The most popular of these were Cheng Changgeng, Tan Xinpei, Mei Qiaoling and Mei Lan Fang. With increased viewership, novel storytelling style and the talent of the actors, Beijing Opera soon became the foremost art form in China. During its developmental stages, this form saw major reforms in the singing, dance, music, characters, performing technique, costume and make-up to be shaped into a very distinct and fresh style that left all the other Operas a long way behind.

The four months of training in Beijing Opera at the ITI/TTRP was led by a senior professor at Shanghai Theatre Academy, Mdm Li Qiuping. Similar to other classical art forms, the initial training for Beijing Opera was also focussed on footwork, gestures and movements. Concurrently, the students were also trained in the singing methods of Beijing Opera. It takes long periods of intense training to be able to acquire the stylised speech

pattern and high pitched singing. Movements wearing the traditional loose costumes with sleeves that are double the length of the actor's arms are very complicated and strenuous. Short, flowing movements of the feet are a speciality of Beijing Opera. There are special high heeled shoes that are made for the performance of this art form and the actors are required to practice all their movements wearing these. The varied training techniques that involved the six foot long cane sticks were very instrumental in improving the actors' focus, balance and flexibility. After training the actors in singing, gestures, music, dialogue, mime, martial skills and acrobatics, a story was chosen to be performed for the open show. The traditional folk tale, 'The Valiant Fisherman and His Daughter' was chosen. A small chapter from the lives of Xiao En, a fisherman, and Xiao Guiying, his darling daughter was presented on stage.

Drums and Gongs are the main instruments used in this performance. The play starts with the daughter singing from backstage, about the high waves in the sea. In preparation to catch some fish, the father and daughter arrive on stage, carrying oars. The father is seen sporting a long, grey beard and a large round hat. The daughter is seen wearing a very colourful costume with her hair in a high bun. Both of them are holding rudders. The rowing movements are mimed. The girl suddenly breaks out of careful, brisk movement to start singing again:

The river water dazzles my eyes.

It is hard to paint the green mountains and blue water.

We make a living by fishing.

She places her oar down and hands the fishing net to her father. They are constantly swaying and trying to find balance, as they are in water. The old man, with his net, has his full focus on the movement of the

water. Suddenly, the girl notices a school of fish and shows it to her father. The net is immediately thrown into the water. In his efforts to draw the net back, the old man sways and is about to fall, when the daughter interferes and catches him. After a long breath, the man sings:

I am old and not strong enough for such work.

Daughter: Then let's stop doing this.

The old man replies: I think so. But how shall we live?

(Li Qiupings translations during the class)

Through this short 15 minute event, the character's lives, their perspectives and their emotions were portrayed quite effectively. The singing, dialogue, music, acting, movements and the costumes of these scenes in Beijing Opera are devised in such a way that even though the performance is stylised, the actors are able to both feel the emotions and also make them felt by the audience.

Usually a dialogue; singing and acting follow these rules: singing is always used to express people's moving feelings or when the opera plot reaches a critical moment; acting and singing are simultaneously used to fully express people's inner world; dialogue is used to tell ordinary plot turns and the background story. Of the four performing techniques of Beijing Opera, dialogue is most suitable for the expression of a person's gift of expression, quick-wit and humour. Body postures and gestures in Beijing Opera originate from life but are artistically enhanced. (Yongyao1990:10,11)

Even though the movements and gestures of Beijing Opera have emerged from life and nature, they have had an artistic propelling.

Wayang Wong

The traditional dance drama form, Wayang Wong, can be described as the aggregate of the Javanese artistic aesthetic. Comprising of dance, drama, music, visual arts, language and literature, this art form can be called ‘comprehensive’ theatre. The phrase Wayang Wong means ‘shadow of human’. This art form has been annotated as mankind’s innumerable shadows. The ideals, identity and emotions of the Javanese people are what led to the development of Wayang Wong. It became a symbol of the Javanese culture. Wayang Wong expert Claire Holt had this to say about the origin of this art form: May have developed from pantomimic war dances or chanted recitals of myths which were accompanied by illustrative dance mime. (Kam1987:30) Initially the performances were without the use of masks. It was later that it grew into a masked theatre format. The stories used in Wayang Wong were majorly derived from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Primarily there were two forms that gained most popularity – Wayang Wong and Wayang Topeng. It was in the 19th century that Wayang Wong came into its current form. During this time, the movements, dialogue, costumes, expressions and musical accompaniments of this form took a definite and valuable shape. It was the reign of Sulthan Hameng Kubuwan VIII (1921-1939) that gave Wayang Wong the most advanced and apparent changes. The Dutch invasion and the limitations to the Sulthan’s rule are what propelled him to encourage the growth and reinforcement of this art form. He believed that the revival of Wayang Wong would help keep up his prestige and reputation by having performances during special occasions. In the initial years of its revival, the performances happened majorly in the royal palace, on stages that were specially built for this purpose.

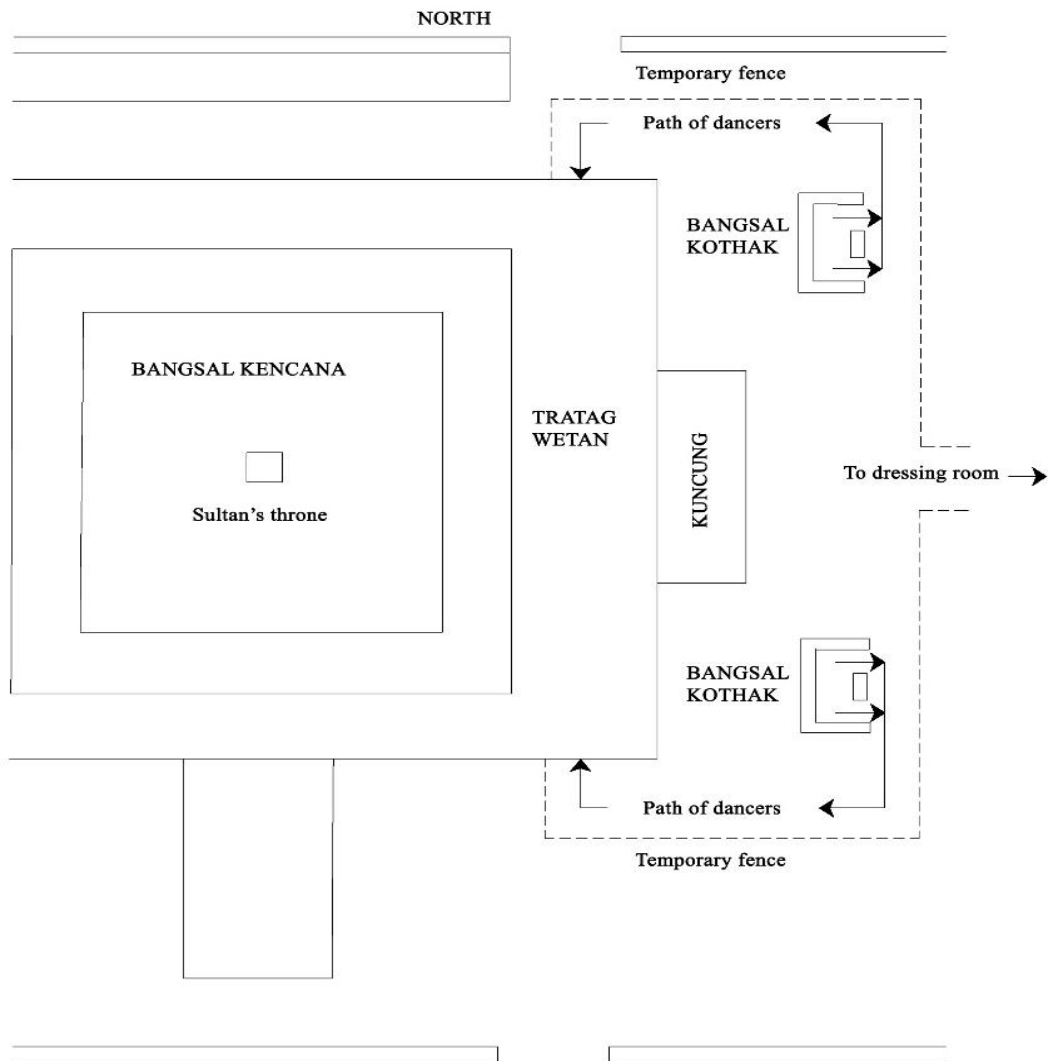


Diagram showing the Plataran Kedhaton of the Yogyakarta Kraton with the arrangements of Wayang Wong

Each performance usually lasted around four days. It would begin with an hour-long musical introduction at 5 a.m. in the morning. The music for such performances is by Gamelan, the traditional ensemble music of Indonesia. Though the first scene would start at 6 a.m. in the morning, no audience member would have arrived. Even then, the performers would play with the same energy and involvement that they would give a packed audience. From around 8 a.m. in the morning till the performance ends at midnight, the Sulthan would be present as the Dhalaang (puppeteer) who drives the entire show. Though the

performances were free to watch, formal letters of invitation were sent to important guests. The seating arrangement in the viewing area was divided and categorised according to the status of each viewer.

More than just a source of entertainment, Wayang Wong also acted as an expression of the fulfilment of societal expectations. The flexibility of the performers' bodies and their psychological harmony proved to be testimonies of the continual practice of their form. One of the most prominent performers of the time, Suryo Brongto, explains how the performer should engage, even in an extremely violent scene: Well controlled and the tension (was) conducted into the plasticity of graceful movement (Kam1987:34). Wayang Wong has been able to instigate many revolutionary changes in the society. After a deep study of the socio-political relevance of the art form, Xenia Zarina, illustrates in her books.

Wayang Wong promotes education in literature, poetry, language, history, and ethics by using the emotional impact of the theatre. Traditions and morality are ideally portrayed so that the philosophical and sociological content creates in the spectators the whole gamut of human emotions together (and the spectators) unconsciously creates among themselves a great social unity.

(Zarina1967:36)

Another crucial stage is that of selecting dancers to train in this art form. The most important elements that are considered while selecting dancers are character, disposition, facial features, and overall appearance of the dancer. Later on, these elements would prove critical in the casting of characters. Training usually begins at the age of ten or eleven years. After a mandatory period of intense training, when the dancers are to do a performance, around twelve to eighteen months are spent in the

preparation for that show. The dress rehearsal that happens prior to the show was considered extremely important. Adorned in the semi-formal attire for the show, this rehearsal was a true test of the performers' mental, physical and spiritual readiness.

One of the art form's unique features is the stance. The performer should be very rooted to the ground. With such calculated movements, where every step is accounted for, any kind of shuffling is avoided. The most distinct element of the body postures of these artists is the slight bending of their knees. Even in Koodiyattam and Japanese Noh, this rooted stance is very important. In such an art form, where the arms and legs are given equal importance, even the movements and positions of each finger are particularly defined. Javanese dance movements generally don't indicate any kind of storytelling. However, in the case of Wayang Wong, the gestures have a varied array of meanings. The gaze, stance, posture, gesture, movement quality and speech of each character has been defined precisely. It is the responsibility of each dancer to follow these rules with military-esque discipline. The influence of Wayang Kulit Puppet Theatre is very evident in Wayang Wong. The gestures, vocal expressions, costumes, make-up and physical appearance are all intended to simulate the puppets. To an extent, Wayang Wong can be defined as the prime specimen of Javanese shadow play. But exhaustive investigation into the form would tell us that many other elements have been carved out of the aesthetics of dance.

Wayang Wong employs a very controlled expression of emotions. Change in facial expressions is a rare phenomenon. This could lead to the misconception that this is an expressionless art form. Prominent performer Suryo Brongto has written about the facial expressions. "It would be very

odd indeed if a realistic (facial) element were allowed to enter..... because the classic Japanese dance is no copy of realism..... [The dancer] should be careful to keep within bounds under the control of [his] own soul. He may not get out of control.” (Kam1987:36)

The dancers do not respond to the audience or make eye contact with them in any way. The primary objective of Wayang Wong is not to display the skills of its dancers, but to portray the inner essence of the hero through the character. In order to fulfil this, the dancers should be able to completely purge themselves of their humanness and assume the identity of their characters. Suryo Brongto, also a former court dancer, recounts such an experience. “A dancer has to train himself so that his soul can receive and absorb all impulses from outside which are related to his role and his dance, so that his soul can fill expression of the movements with those impulses. The impulses are brought about by the sounds of the Gamelan music, the narration, the melody, the song, the dialogue, and the story” (Kam1987:37).

Japanese actor Yoshi Oida’s theory of the Invisible Actor and Wayang Wong’s approach to getting into character are similar in many ways. The general public believes that this art form is at the edge of extinction. There are many reasons for this. Most court members believed that performing Wayang Wong outside the court premises would demean the form. This led to the restriction of the art form inside a small circle of privileged members. The younger generation favours Western culture more than their own. The government has been devising methods to retain the splendour of the art form. This complicated art form has stood the test of time for thousands of years through history. Wayang Wong is not just

considered a symbol of cultural affluence, but also as a source of creative energy and Javanese identity.

Ten weeks of training are spent on Wayang Wong at the ITI. It is not just the art form that is in focus, during the time of training. Softness, slowness and flow, which are important elements of practice, are what the masters focus on, during this training period. The training develops the sensitivity and sensibility of the student, through a process of body pilgrimage. (Annexure 3)

During the period of training, the students undergo a twelve hour pilgrimage of the body. It is a method to master softness and internal flow in the body, by going through routine, everyday body movements in slow motion. While this process takes place (in any studio space), the participants are not allowed to interact with anyone else, in any manner. This is in order to develop a completely internal bond between the body and the mind. All aspects of training give major focus to the three elements of softness, slowness and flow. Such a method of training allows the students to explore the possibilities of the form of Wayang Wong. The objective of this training is to get the body, voice and internal movement and flow to blend in ceaseless harmony. The training at ITI is led by some of Indonesia's top Wayang Wong dancers, Sardono W Kusumo and Bombang Suroso Besar. Sardono, who is a choreographer, director, dancer and film maker, is also a visiting professor at Institute Kesenian Jakarta and University of California, Los Angeles. Besar has been a noted classical Javanese and contemporary dancer and choreographer since 1980. He completed his training from the famous, ancient Mang Kun Egaran Palace, in Solo. Just being in the presence of such eminent masters, by itself, could benefit students of theatre immensely. Fabrizio Cruciani's

words in *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* about traditional masters really ring true, in light of such training methods.

The practices and poetics of the great masters led to a different kind of theatre. The essential element: Pedagogy, the search for the formation of a new human being in different and renewed theatre and society, the search for a way of work which may keep an original quality and whose values are not measured by the success of performances but rather by the cultural tension which the theatre provokes and defines.(Barba1991:26)

The presentation at the end of the training period, which helps in identifying the students' growth and merits, was led by master Besur. The presentation included a small part from the epic Ramayana, along with other elements from the training.

Structure of Presentation

Silent Walking: Walking in slowness, observing the rhythm of the breath. The mantra "Oh" is initiated on the breath.

Flying Eagle: Together with the mantra, the movement of the flying eagle is added to open up the resonators while integrating the voice and body.

Snake and Eagle: Adding on the snake movement with the eagle, one expresses the different timbers of voice arising from the body.

Body Reading: How can two bodies dialogue? What are the different timbers arising from the contact with the other body? How differently the voice gets coloured in this discourse is explored here.

Mother earth: Here the exploration is on the dynamic and the drama arising from the body movement like rolling, spinning and jumping. Text is spoken by embodying this dynamic.

Mask: The students, then, transition into a circle. Characters enter the circle at different points of time. The students move embodying their masks. The movements of the characters emerge from the internal memories, inner rhythms and explorations through body pilgrimage. Text is also spoken embodying the mask.

Body Mountain: Similar to body reading, internal journeys between bodies are explored.

Song: The traditional Javanese song, “Minkar Minkuring”, is sung. This song was taught by the master as a sharing of the Javanese culture.

Wayang Wong Form: The presentation culminates with the students dancing in the Wayang Wong form. Texts used are from episodes of the great epic Ramayana. (Annexure 4)

Characters are cast based on body types and physical appearance. The attributes of hundreds of characters have been established beforehand. The styles of movements of many different animals and birds have also been codified. The sounds are tuned to the Gamelan music. The softer characters have monotonous low pitched voices while the more dynamic characters speak their lines in melodious high pitched voices. It becomes easier to let go of habitual movements and gestures for the actor, when dealing with such a form that is far from the typical body language. While consciously trying to explore the possibilities of different art forms with sincerity and passion, the body and the mind of the actor goes through a different, novel experience and learning. These memories remain rooted in the body and aid the actor in the creation of new characters, even subconsciously. There aren't fixed, calculated movements for each performance. Instead, there are well established movement motifs and phrases that the actors borrow from. This broadens the scope for improvisation for the actors of Wayang Wong. We can see both fixed and

improvised movements at all levels of this form. All aspects of presentation in this form use improvisation – especially music, movement and speech. Wayang Wong helps an acting student on many different levels. The scope for improvisation on such a large scale equips the actors with the ability to easily save their shows in emergency situations when things go down. Persistent training in Wayang Wong helps the actors acquire technical skills like strength of body, voice, mind, inner quality, physical discipline, softness and slowness amongst many others. Intense training in traditional Wayang Wong helps us broaden our imagination, imbibe new physical and psychological qualities and reinvent ourselves. The intercultural experience not only helps us on stage, but also to take our offstage life forward. More than creating great actors, ITI/TTRP's goal in offering such a course is to mould great human beings.

Prospects of training at ITI

Along with serious training in Asian traditional and classical forms and Western acting, the students also get to understand the socio-political contexts, geographical conditions and physiology in different cultures of the world. By interacting with prolific masters from the different countries and learning of their experiences, traditions and dedication to their art, the students are subject to both physical and psychological development and transformation. The vital qualities of self-discipline and intercultural consciousness that they build for themselves lead them on a path of lucrative change. Actors who undergo such training find it very easy to articulate with their body, even the most complicated lessons in theatre. By steadily prolonging this training, the actors will be able to grow into a state of physical and psychological transparency. The body will gradually transform into a medium of effective and wholesome theatrical communication between the actor and the audience. One of the biggest

merits of training in traditional forms is the possibility of assimilating traditional, ancient secret knowledge about acting and theatre, from the masters. Following is a small example of the same, from Zeami's writings.

Question: From what has been explained here, I understand that to grasp the nature of the flower is the most important element of Noh. Yet however crucial, the concept is difficult to grasp. In what way can I come to know the flower?

Answer: The flower represents the principle that lies at the deepest recesses of our art. To know the meaning of the flower is the most important element in understanding the Noh, and its greatest secret.

(Rinner and Masku1984:29)

Training is also majorly about earning great knowledge about the human body. This knowledge is an actor's biggest strength. With that physical power, the modern actor will be able to thoroughly articulate, share with the audience and portray any classical or contemporary character with great ease. Persistent and introspective training can take the actors' bodies into the past and acquaint them with the facts of the world and show them the successful path into the future. "Out of the necessity for a new organism" says Copeau in an interview in 1926 "arises the necessity for a school, something which is no longer simply a group of students directed by a single master, but a real community capable of being self-sufficient and of responding to all its own needs". (Barba1991:26)

More than just being a mode of entertainment, acting for an inter-culturally trained body is also about going to the depths of different cultures to understand one's own culture and body in a deeper context. This kind of training also puts forth an opportunity to explore the most profound prospects of self-expression for the actors. Group formation can

be described as the most complex component of global, urban, multi-inter-intracultural training. To dissolve the individual-centric cultural, regional rationale into an ensemble of heterogeneous people is a speciality of proper intercultural training and projects.

***Attempts on Her Life* directed by Phillip B. Zarrilli**

Revolutionary technological advancements in playwriting and performance are the order of the century. With this idea as a backdrop, this sub-chapter will look to analyse the unique playwriting form, actor training methods and the intercultural multilingual production process that international director Phillip B. Zarrilli adopted while working on British playwright Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* published in 1997.

In the same year it was published, the play was premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, London, under the direction of Tim Albery. This play that deals with the post-modern era has been translated into over twenty different languages. The play puts forth seventeen different scenarios which portray seventeen different faces and lives of Anne. She could be anyone - urban terrorist, tourist hostess, pornographic movie star, anyone. What the play deals with, through the various representations of Anne are various post-modern complexities. Not letting the play stick to one particular viewpoint, with a non-linear narrative that speaks about various substantial issues, this writing style is quite novel and fresh.

With topics ranging from pornography to strong violence to terrorism, unsafe sex, nameless characters, this play script with its unconventionally fast rapid rises and drops, tries to precisely reflect the current state of today's post-modern world. The theatrical form of *Attempts on Her Life* was a big challenge for the director and actors. Everything

revolves around ‘Her’, whose story is spread over seventeen seemingly unrelated scenarios, and ‘She’ doesn’t even appear on stage. Sometimes she is called Anne, but she could even be Anna, Anushka, or any other name.

The premiere of the play directed by Tim Albery, was presented at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London, on March 7th in 1997, the same year it was published. Even though there were many translations and productions of the play that happened henceforth, the production directed by Phillip Zarrilli, for the final year project of the acting students of ITI/TTRP in 2007, at Esplanade Theatre, Singapore, happens to be the most remarkable. Along with the director, Phillip Zarrilli, five actors from the Theatre Laboratory of University of Exeter and eleven international actors from ten different countries were part of this multicultural, multilingual production of the play. Alberto Ruiz Lopez (Mexico), Seng Soo Ming (Malaysia), Heycok Kim (Korea), Amy Tamka Man (Hongkong), Soldad Garre Rubio (Spain), Sajeev Purushothaman (India), Michael Stubblefield (USA), Heidi Love (Ireland), Claire Lindsay (England), Zachary HoTze Siang (Singapore), Sreejith Ramanan (India) were the different actors who were part of this collaborative project and made the novel rendition of the play possible.



ITI/TTRP's production of Phillip Zarrilli's *Attempts on Her Life*

The casting and linguistic heterogeneity of such international actors made it possible to bring alive different perspectives of the world beyond the theatre. By intelligently blending a variety of languages like English, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish and Malayalam that unfurled into a variety of scenarios, the director built the script into a globally relevant play. This play belongs to today. It attempts to portray through dark humour, a variety of complexities of the modern world, like the war against terrorism, globalisation of the media, the normalisation of pornography and objectification of porn stars through a very innocent 'Her'.

This performance was meant for an intimate setting. The director used unconventional stage dynamics, using different levels, platforms and spaces to depict the highly imaginative and linguistically charged performances through his visuals. Who is this 'Her' who is spoken of, in the title of the play? Is it Anne, or Anna, or Anushka? While some

scenarios were played live on stage, others were presented with the help of a live camera, some with just sounds and voices, and some others through 3D projections. These scenarios were also set in various different contexts like an art installation event, a holiday advertisement, around a famous band, the Spanish Salsa, an operation theatre, a media room, and many more. The show was developed in such a manner as to be exceedingly entertaining and depict horrifying brutality at the same time. We never clearly identify who 'She' is. But somehow, this visual experience helps us take ourselves on the path towards an answer to that question. According to theatre critic Dr Heiner Zimmermann, this play is a good example of post-dramatic theatre. All the different images of Anne make us sense the presence and the absence of 'Her' at the same time.

The speakers evoke reflections of Anne in various media such as photography, videos, film scripts, recordings on an answering machine, a commercial, trial proceedings, her suicide notes and personal objects such as her medicine bottles or her ashtray - in short an archive of the absent central character. (Sierz 2006:54)

All the actors who were part of the production at ITI/TTRP, Singapore, had already undergone some sort of contemporary theatre training from various places. They had all undergone some sort of training in traditional and classical art forms like Indian Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Kalaripayattu, Indonesian Wayang Wong, Chinese Beijing Opera, Japanese Noh Theatre, Korean traditional dance, Tai Chi, Yoga, Salsa, Commedia Dell Arte and even Contemporary dance. Being a group that thoroughly understood the importance of the influence of traditional art forms in the training of a modern actor, it became relatively easy for the director to initiate the actors into the world of the play. Training one's body in such art forms helped develop a cultural consciousness and

knowledge about other bodies, languages and psychologies of others, which were of great benefit while dealing with the multilingual, multicultural European play. The rehearsal process of this production, through the realisations, self-exploration and the give and take – reciprocity, was able to provide a novel experience to the actors and help them improve their craft.

Crimp does not even mention how many characters there are, in the play. For the director and the actors, the main step that led into the devising of each scenario was the title for the scenario. The title before each scene gives a comprehensive idea of the context of the scene. For example, titles like ‘Porno’, ‘Tragedy of love and Ideology’, ‘The Camera Loves you’, ‘The Threat of International Terrorism’, ‘Kinda Funny’ give the actors a good idea of the contexts of those scenes. There are very few and limited stage directions given by Crimp. Mostly, there are just dashes (-), to indicate a pause or silence or when the speaker changes, and front slash (/) for when there is an overlap of lines during a dialogue. Without any time specifications, this play doesn’t even have its lines divided between the characters properly. Hence, each production will be distinct and different from the other, according to the participating ensemble’s strength and gender division. Sarah Kane eminent playwright considered Martin Crimp remorselessly unsentimental and has very hard ends. His work doesn’t scream for attention but he’s one of the few genuine formal innovators writing for the stage, according to Sierz. She went on to the extent of saying that he has been constantly refining his language to find more accurate theatrical expression, marrying rhythm and skill with real beauty. (Sierz2006:55,56)

The central focus of the play *Attempts on Her Life* is the ‘Her’ from the title, of whom there is no clear identification throughout the seventeen different scenarios of the play. Who is this character that never even appears on stage? Often, this persona was more than just a character. People have often tried to contextualise ‘Her’, imagine ‘Her’, analyse ‘Her’ and even redeem ‘Her’ from these scenarios according to their knowledge and understanding. Phillip Zarrilli refers to David Edgar to illustrate the Martin Crimp craftsmanship: “Crimp’s purpose is not only to question whether we can truly know another human being... he does this not by a bald statement, but playing an elaborate and sophisticated game with the audience’s expectations of how scenes connect with narrative.” (Zarrilli 2009:200)

According to Phillip Zarrilli, the first hurdle to cross, was to find the aesthetic logic in the script along with his actors. A large number of days were spent on deep discussions and arguments that gave the actors more clarity about each scenario, followed by the rational division of lines between the actors. Since there were no character names or references, each line had to be read and reread, understood deeply and discussed and argued, before one would claim the line as theirs. Once this process was over, the whole cast had a good authority over the text. Being a text without character specifications of any kind, the actors had to unlearn their pre-set notions of character study and acting before approaching this script. The first task was to determine the context of each scenario by careful study and analysis of each line. Through respectful arguments, questioning, research and imagination, the actors arrived at the proper contexts and at their idea of ‘Her’. With each scenario, while telling the story of ‘Her’, the actors had to ultimately make sure to actively engage

each other and their audience, while trying to discover ‘Her’ identity. For example, this is how scenario 2 (Tragedy of Love and Ideology) begins.

Summer: A river. Europe. These are the basic ingredients - A river running through it - A river, exactly, running through a great European city and a couple at the water’s edge. These are the basic ingredients. (Crimp 2005:208) In this scenario, we see a group of three, engrossed in a serious discussion about a film they are writing. ‘Anne’ is the main character in the film. Three characters in the scenario, who seem to be imagining and rapidly re-imagining their story according to each one’s subjective biases. The first character puts forth the “basic ingredients” – “Summer, A River, Europe.” The next character adds to it, with his understanding – “And a river running through it.” To make things more clear, the third one adds – “A couple at the water’s edge.” In order to harvest each moment of Crimp’s dramaturgy with its full potential, an active and actual deep listening is very crucial. In order to attain deep listening skills and vast auditory awareness, the actors underwent sustained psychophysical training. To this effect, Zarrilli used special acting training methods that he himself had handpicked and devised from Yoga, Kalari and Tai Chi. His continuous instructions during training which activated and arose the sensory awareness and dynamic energy in each actor, brought significant change to the actor’s bodies and practice.

The next stage was structured improvisation. The structured improvisation began only once the context in each scenario had been read and analysed and lines had been divided among the actors and it was decided how many characters would play in each scene. This enabled the team to finish blocking all the scenes quickly and successfully. Then, there was time to break the scenes into units and fine tune each unit to perfection

and allot time for the Voice and Speech trainer to work on the actors' speech clarity. Due to the careful and complex choreography, the actors developed a collective responsibility with regards to properly identifying and maintaining the tempo, rhythm and phase of their lines and movements. The director's clear vision about his production process, incredible knowledge of the script and efficient handling of new theatre technology gave the participating actors an invaluable and unique production experience. 'She', whose absence on stage kindled the curiosity of the viewers, puts forth relentless questions into the world. Attempts on her Life is full of ironies. The lines that Crimp makes the art critics say, in the scenario 'Untitled (100 words)' are transformed into a reflection of 'Her' life that transcends any logic or reasoning:

With respect to you, I think she'd (Anne, the artist) find the whole concept of "making a point" ludicrously outmoded. If any attempt is made at all it is surely the point that the point that's being made is not the point and never has in fact been the point. It's surely the point that a search for a point is pointless and that the whole point of the exercise - i.e., these attempts on her life points to that.

(Crimp 2005:251)

The director and his actors were able to develop a wholesome global theatrical language, through the production of this play by bringing together modern writing techniques, technically advanced acting methods, diverse languages and cultures. It was the highly experimental writing style that Martin Crimp employed, which allowed such a collaboration of an intercultural cast to explore and utilise the various facets of intercultural theatre to their maximum capacities.

Mahabharata: Pan Asian Intercultural Project Directed by Hiroshi Koike

On careful observation, we will find a common thread that connects all seemingly individual strands of human classification like religion, lifestyle, language and culture. Exchange, as a concept, has existed from the ancient times, with merchants breaking geographical boundaries to trade their commodities. The process and route was called the Silk Road. Along with the various commodities, what got exchanged were arts religious practices and philosophy, language and technology, architecture and almost all aspects of civilization.

Until a few years ago, the study and history of theatre and inter cultural projects were all limited to the western world of performing arts. Once relegated as uncultured and ritualistic, the Asian forms of traditional performance and martial arts like Japanese Noh, Koodiyattam, Beijing Opera, Kathakali, Theyyam, Mudi yettu, Wayang Wong, Kalaripayattu and Tai Chi gained recognition only much later when their strength and dynamism were finally acknowledged. Through revival and creative innovation, the resurrection of such art forms has in fact made them inevitable constituents of contemporary actor training. From Bertolt Brecht to Phillip Zarilli, the research of many such eminent western theatre gurus have helped bring about this change. Kerala, known popularly as ‘God’s Own Country’, has made a significant mark on the map of world theatre. Many leading theatre practitioners of the world recognised the distinctions of the classical, martial and folk art forms and came here to study them diligently. Peter Brostiok, Peter Oskarson, Eugenio Barba, Richard Schechner, Satoshi Miyagi, Phillip Zarrilli, David Zinder are just some names from that extensive list. The latest name on that list is that of Japanese director Hiroshi Koike. Koike arrived in Kerala in 2015 to study

the art forms and work on his own techniques. There are many individuals in Kerala who have participated in various forms of inter cultural exchanges. Many of these individuals have helped make a name for Kerala in the international theatre scene. Kathakali artist Krishnan Namboothiri who worked with Eugenio Barba, Raju Naripatta, who went to Finland to work with Maya Tangeberg, G. Sankara Pillai, Murali Menon and Chandran Veyattummal, who worked with Tara Arts Theatre, London. Raghothaman (Abhinaya), Kani Kusruti, Gopalan, Sreelatha and Shaji Karyatt, who were part of a world tour conducted by Footsbarn Theatre, a touring theatre company from France, Jijoy P.R., Pappan and Thrissur Gopalji who were part of Tim Supple's Royal Shakespeare Company production, 'Indian Dream', Theatre makers who have gained international acclaim, like Dr. Abhilash Pillai, Royston Abel, K.K. Rajan, Deepan Sivaraman, Shankar Venkateswaran, Muhammed Kunhu Noushad, Jyothish M.G., K.S Sreenath and Devendranath Sankaranarayanan, and many others including Oorali Martin, Manoj Mathai and Prabhath Bhaskaran, who have worked with Chilean director Elias Cohen, are some of the people who have contributed greatly in making a place for Kerala theatre on the international stage.

The first person to put Kerala on the international map was G. Sankara Pillai. He had visited the Soviet Union as a member of the Cultural Delegation of the Central Government. He also toured the United Kingdom with the invitation of British Council. When he visited the U. K. a second time, he directed a play for the Asian Theatre group, Tara Arts in London. The play, '*Exile in the Forest*' participated in the Seminar that Sangeet Nataka Akademi conducted in Tashkent as part of the Festival of India series. Hiroshi Koike's directorial venture, 'Pan Asian International Project *Mahabharata* Chapter 2', in association with Theatre Connect,

Kerala, was part of the last leg of this series in 2015. Including this researcher, three Malayalis were involved in this project as actors and two in the technical departments.

Hiroshi Koike Bridge Project

Hiroshi Koike is a contemporary Japanese theatre veteran. He is also known for his works as a choreographer, writer, installation artist and a photographer. He founded the company ‘Pappa Tarahumara’ in 1982, and has directed fifty five different productions for the company and has presented them in thirty five different countries. He has held important positions in various committees. Artistic Director of Tsukuba Cultural Foundation (1997-2005), Member of the Culture Promotion Committee of Aomori (1999). Chair of the Asian Performing Artists forum in Koimawa, Specified Donation appointed member of Japan Foundation (2004-2011). After thirty years of operation, he discontinued the working of ‘Pappa Tarahumara’ to embark on a new project.

With a new mission and vision, Hiroshi Koike began the Bridge Project in June 2012. More than being just a production house, this project was aimed to bring together the inner forces of different art forms that unite all forms of media, like film, photography, installation work, writing, contemporary and traditional dance. The aim was to promote and educate those who think with their bodies and to build bridges to all parts of the world through an Arts Project.

Our mission as ‘Hiroshi Koike Bridge Project’ is to build bridges between various things through “production”, “education”, and “transmission” in means of “creation.” We want to learn from the past, connect between human and human, place and place, culture and society to triumph over the hardship that we are facing now to

be a platform to create the time that is to come in the future. Connecting each other, and building bridges.(Koike: 12p)

With a completely Japanese cast, the play ‘*The Restaurant of Many Orders*’, belonging to the genre of physical theatre, was the first project as part of the Bridge Project and it has been performed in various countries. After this, in 2013, Hiroshi decided to work with Asia Centre of the Japan Foundation, Tokyo, on the epic *Mahabharata* in four parts, with Asian actors. The first part was created and performed in Cambodia, the second in India, third in Malaysia and the final one in Japan. That is how he would proceed. The projects were envisioned with the actors in each host country getting most representation in their respective productions. It was after the terrible earthquakes of 2011 in Japan, that Hiroshi wanted to work on this project, and use the epic *Mahabharata* as the base. The scale of mass destruction that these earthquakes saw really shook the lives of the country’s people. All activities came to a standstill. Artistic activities had also completely ceased. On fearing the dangers of continued absence of artistic activity, Hiroshi decided to take the lead and work on this project.

The following is an effort to analyse and deconstruct the performing bodies and the production process that happened in Kerala, of the second chapter of this *Mahabharata*, on the basis of its social, political and cultural relevance in the Pan Asian context. It would be a wealthy addition to the future of theatrical acting practise to scientifically analyse the possibilities of such an intercultural project with very experienced professional actors. Hiroshi Koike has a very fresh style, which incorporates the full potential of physical theatre and aesthetics, which we see right from his works in the former dance company ‘Pappa Tarahumara’ to this *Mahabharata* Project. Thus, Hiroshi’s theatrical language gives the

audience an experience that is distinct from that provided by other directors.

It was a team of eighteen members, chosen through auditions from major Asian countries like Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and India that participated in the *Mahabharata chapter 2 project* that happened in Kerala. Eight of them were actors while the other ten were handling the technical aspects. The actors had signed contracts to participate in the rehearsal process between 19 November 2014 and 11 January 2015, and the tour that lasted between 12th and 25th January 2015. This was organised by Theatre Connect under the leadership of theatre coordinator Keshavan Namboothiri. Denny Paul (India), Moon Moon Sing (India), Sreejith Ramanan (India), Sumesh Chingu (India), Koyano Tetsuro (Japan), Lee Swee Keong (Malaysia), Sachiko Shirai (Japan), Waewdao Sirisook (Thailand) were the actors and Chandran Veyattummal (Music, India), Kensuke Fuji (Music, Japan), Shitamachi Kyoudai (Music, Japan) Loh Kok Man (Light, Malaysia), I Wayan Tangguh (Mask, Indonesia), Mandakini Goswami (Costume, India), Firos Khan (Stage art and Management, India), Ayako Araki (Assistant Director, Japan), Fumiko Sato (Management, Japan) were the members of the technical team that were part of the fifty day rehearsal process and the fifteen day tour under the direction of Hiroshi Koike. (Annexure 5, 6)

A study of the backgrounds of each actor would give us an idea of the kind of physical vocabulary they had to offer. The director's efforts were to completely understand, accept and provoke their styles in order to get them all into a method that suited the production. The theatre experience and creative background of actors are necessary for a better understanding of the project.

Denny Paul: Born in Kerala, Denny Paul holds a diploma in Movement Arts and Mixed Media Form from Attakalari, Bangalore. Trained in many art forms including Kalaripayattu, Ballet, Contemporary dance, Pilates, Kathak, Classical Jazz, Capoeira, Tai-chi, Feldenkrais and Devarattam, Denny had worked as a senior dancer at Attakalari for over 15 years.

KoyanoTetsuro: Although Japanese by birth, the lion's share of Koyano's training happened in Bali. With training and practise in Balinese Mask Dance, Koyano is also a propagator and patron of Indonesian Jukung music.

Lee Swee Keong: Malaysian Keong has been primarily trained in Butoh dance. Along with training in many other art forms, Keong was also instrumental in establishing the Butoh Company in Malaysia.

Moon Moon Sen: Actor and dancer Moon Moon trained for three years at the National School of Drama, with a diploma in Acting. With training in Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Ballet and Jazz, Moon Moon has worked with many prominent directors in India.

Sachiko Shirai: The eldest of the group, Sachiko started training in Classical Ballet at the age of 7. From 1989 to 2012, she had worked with Hiroshi at Pappa Tarahumara as a senior actor. Since 2012, she has been working as a freelance dancer, teacher, choreographer and actor.

Sreejith Ramanan: Born in Kerala, Sreejith has a Bachelors in Theatre Arts (Acting) from School of Drama, Thrissur, Master's in Performance Arts from Hyderabad Central University, M. Phil from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam and further training at Theatre Training Research Programme (ITI/TTRP), Singapore, for 3 years in acting. He is a practising Director, Actor, Teacher and Researcher.

Sumesh Chingu: From a very small age, Sumesh, from Kerala, has been attracted to dance. He has trained under eminent masters in Kalaripayattu, Bharatanatyam, Classical Ballet and Jazz. With a diploma in Movement Arts and Mixed Media Forms, Sumesh has worked as a leading dancer at Attakalari for many years, having performed both abroad and all over the country.

Waewdao Sirisook: Waewdao is a leading practitioner of the traditional dance form of Thailand. With an MFA in Dance from UCLA Department of World Arts and Culture and a BFA from Ching Mai University, Waewdao has represented Thailand in many cultural exchange programmes across the world.

Out of the eight performers who were part of the Koike version of *Mahabharata*, five were male and three, female. Diverse and distinct in all possible contexts like where they are from, the language they speak, food and fashion, behavioural pattern as well as thought processes, these eight performers united for the first time at 5 a.m. on 20 November 2014 in the black box at Kerala Sangeet Nataka Akademi. Rehearsals began after a formal introduction session. The ‘Vanaparva’ of the Mahabharata is what Hiroshi had chosen as the script for this 2nd chapter. (Annexure 7)

The intention was to use very minimal spoken text in English and use a physical form of storytelling. Each performer would wear a unique Balinese mask to play distinct characters. With the exception of a few main characters, every other character had a mask on, and this mitigated any complication that would otherwise arise with having one actor play many parts. Moreover, it became easier to bring non-human characters on stage by using the masks on the actors and letting them explore the

physicality of characters like birds or even Hanuman. Majority of the storytelling was through the bodies and their movements. This was accompanied by background music and subtitles. The choreography of each unit was developed in a way that it would provoke rethinking and re-evaluation of the concept of human nature. Unlike most other directors, Hiroshi had already worked with the music composer on some background scores based on the script, before starting rehearsals. This meant that the director had a clear idea of how each second of the performance should pass. Owing to the experience of making the first chapter in Cambodia, the director and his actors found it fairly less complicated to arrive at a suitable style of production. Each unit was blocked in a manner as to let the performers develop their characters and the group choreographies based on their own natures and persona. The fact that each second of the performance was carefully choreographed with musical accompaniment, was completely new to the Indians in the group. The fading away of boundaries both on and off stage while still maintaining the distinctive features of each unique identity was what made this journey quite memorable. The words of Kirill Lavrov, President of the Union of Theatre Artists of the USSR as part of his World Theatre Day message on 27 March 1990, about the mesmeric and magical qualities of theatre are quite noteworthy:

Nothing is more exciting, more dramatic, or more important than these movements (through which we are living)". He saw the political events of early 1990 as leading to humanity "making a new and spectacular breakthrough in the domain of freedom and democracy". In this process of change, he noted, "people no longer see national boundaries as a cause of division. Quite the contrary, today they are becoming crossroads for friendly contact. The whole world is discovering dialogue, a word which is in fact a theatre term.

“In this expansive mood of optimism, Kirill Lavrov urged the theatre to play its part in this process of dialogue and, by building the World Theatre House, “contribute to the triumph of freedom, human rights and the full growth of the individual.(Pavis 1996:248)

Rehearsals began at 6:30 a.m. every day. The fact that the eldest performer, Sachiko, would get to the space earlier than everyone else and start her preparations was quite an inspiration for everyone else. The warm up before rehearsals would be done by each performer according to their own personal methods. However, some moves and exercises were taught and exchanged between the performers every now and then. Stretching exercises were the most commonly followed ones. Voice exercises for vocal projection and clarity were led by Sreejith Ramanan. Every day of rehearsal saw the optimum usage of time. Each day would end with the feeling that the play had only grown more intense and beautiful. The already existing physical vocabularies of each actor, based on their own individual body conditioning and training in their respective art forms, were maintained and re-discovered, to favour the language of this particular play. The director created an environment for the actors to develop new patterns based on certain moods, feels, emotions and expressions contained in the different units. Although each body created its own distinct signs, postures and gestures, the director made an effort to find an outer thread of similarity that connected each distinct body. The bridging language used amongst the group was English. Although it was difficult for Hiroshi to communicate in English, it was interesting to see how he brought everyone on the same page every time. Hiroshi’s style of direction very effortlessly synced the movements and physical capabilities of different bodies belonging to different cultures. Though the language of communication was English, it was very interesting and fresh to witness

the fusion of different accents, dialects, regional peculiarities and the elusive clarity of speech. It was found through a conversation with music director Chandran Veyattummal that this concept of creating a ‘music map’ was previously used in Kerala by G. Sankara Pillai. The costume, lights and set and prop designers made this journey of the actors easier. The director moved ahead from one unit to another, only after running through each unit many times repeatedly and making all the necessary changes. Proper adherence of a precise schedule and the discipline of actors in maintaining their health were extremely crucial in the running of this intercultural work. The influence of various art forms like Ballet, Kalaripayattu, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Butoh, Balinese Dance, Tai, Kathakali and Tai Chi helped make this version of *Mahabharata* more radical and modern. Each actor’s years of intense training in various forms led to a flexibility in their bodies that gave them the skills to easily adapt themselves to the body languages of different cultures. But it also led to some physical and psychological difficulties while learning certain new movement techniques. One factor that distinguished this director from any other was the attention to detail with which he worked. He would only move forward to the next bit once every single moment of one bit was done to perfection. The director’s skills at creating beautiful compositions, perfectly aligning and positioning the characters on stage, appropriately and precisely consolidating different technical features to arrive at the desired results are remarkable. The director does not indulge in smoking or other vices during the time of rehearsals. He does not throw tantrums. There is no cursing, no word uttered or gesture expressed that is disrespectful to his actors. Neither is there any sort of lambasting or condescension from his side. He does not dress in a vulgar manner or gloat over his position as an artist and demand to be respected and acknowledged without any reason. At the age of 58, he is more active than

everyone else, and is constantly creating visual poetry. Newer, more complex, each time. He has been conserving his health for many years, perpetually working on plays and travelling. He doesn't run to the bar to drink, as soon as rehearsal gets over. Instead, he sits in the quietness of Sensation Café on Poothole Road, Thrissur, for almost three hours, slowly sipping a cup of coffee, preparing for the next day's rehearsal, updating on news about his home country and posting his views about various political and social issues on social media. The reason for sharing the behavioural habits of the director is because usually, while working in such an intercultural context, people tend to get quite riled up under much pressure. In such circumstances, it is vastly relieving to have such a calm, composed director.



A Moment from the play *Mahabharata Chapter II* by Hiroshi Koike

Crises and Drawbacks

It is debatable whether the play has been able to successfully build an ideological base, given the director's lack of complete and detailed knowledge of the Mahabharata. We also learnt through long discussions during our breaks, that some actors did not have sufficient knowledge about the characters and incidents in the *Mahabharata*. Mostly, they tried to understand and learn this epic by reading translations in English and through information on the internet. Rustom Bharucha has said that even Peter Brook, who had researched the Mahabharata for over seven years, could not gain sufficiently deep knowledge about the complexities of Indianness and the Indian epics. It is often difficult for non-Indians to understand the essence of this work of literature that has shaped and is shaped by rich Indian culture. A wholesome understanding of such a rich text usually demands that the seeker experience and believe in the Indian philosophy. For example, while Western philosophy believes that humans conquer nature, the Eastern counterpart is of the understanding that nature is instead, to be comprehended. Such works are often discerned from such contradictory perspectives by the director and actors. In such cases, the only solution is to give precedence to the political interpretations of the director's perspective. Often, it happened so, that the wishful thinking that all intellectual questions can be solved through democratic deliberation, had to be waived, due to the language barriers that such an intercultural group posed. The fact that the director and his actors have explored a whole new level of meanings beyond the apparent premise and character studies with their visual language, cannot be ignored.

Another pertinent concern was the contrast between the actors from India and those from the other countries, since the latter enjoyed the benefits of already having worked with Hiroshi or even having been part of

the first production of the *Mahabharata*, and hence finding it much easier to navigate through his production process. Their ability to place their movements in key positions on the stage with great ease due to their thorough understanding of Hiroshi's style of working did cause certain apprehension amongst their Indian counterparts. Hence, the Indian actors often found it difficult to harness the different strings of their bodies in the required manner to produce the desired results on stage. Instead, they were often obliged to follow the forms and movements put forth by the Japanese and Malaysian actors and move on. Another issue was that the director did not put in enough efforts to bring about clarity of speech in the actors, while speaking lines in English. Just like the actors, such a production obviously had an audience that also belonged to global, urban, multi-inter-intra cultural realities. Hence, it was imperative that the language spoken be clean and clear. Such problems have plagued all intercultural productions. Some cases more severely than others. Roberta Carreri, tutored extensively by Eugenio Barba at the Odin Theatre, has written about such experiences and it is relevant to what we are addressing.

I would wake up in the morning asking myself why was I staying and accepting to suffer in my body and in my spirit. But in spite of me, my body would move towards the door and would take me to the work room. A part of me was growing, it needed to stay, to learn to comfort challenges greater than itself, which would allow it to discover its true strength. (Nascimento 2009:153)

Students of acting are the ones mostly subjected to issues related to language. Actors working in an intercultural context are often faced with dilemmas like learning lines in languages that they aren't comfortable with, or even replying in their own language, to the lines of other actors in other languages. Although similar conflicts and limitations are faced by the

actors even in the physical exchanges, such mergers also open up new realms of experience and exposure. This is definitely a noteworthy quality of intercultural theatre.

After fifty days of intense rehearsals, the play premiered at the International Theatre Festival of Kerala (ITFOK) organised by Kerala Sangeet Nataka Akademi on 12 January 2015 in Thrissur. The next set of shows were - 13th and 14th January, at the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai, 17th and 18th January at Damansura Performing Arts Centre (DPAC), Malaysia, 23rd and 24th January at Komunitas Salihara Jakarta, in Indonesia.

The most enjoyable and joyous aspects of a production for an actor are repeated shows and continuous tours. Each city or country offered a distinct audience experience and stage experience. The most technically advanced venues at DPAC in Malaysia and Jakarta in Indonesia were unforgettable experiences for the actors. With technically advanced facilities and equipment, the actors experienced a newfound ease in delivering their lines without any vocal strain and even in effectively portraying each critical moment in the play and even the silences. By travelling and staying together at these different places, the actors developed a kind of bonding that helped in accelerating their performances on stage by bringing more meaning to their characters and relationships. Everyone acknowledged that by the end of the project, they had all gone through major transformations as performers and people. These transformations were most effectively seen in the performers' high standard of professionalism, work ethics, dedication and integrity. Moreover, they were also able to learn about the most modern movements in theatre all over the world and update themselves. The most important

mistake that older directors commit while working on intercultural projects is that they don't give the required importance to most aspects in the process of exchange. In such a context, it is commendable that this project was able to focus on many facets that helped uphold human values.

Most theories and analyses of interculturalism in theatre have focused on production and reception of iconic western performances directed by Brook, Mnouchkine, Barba, etc, more recent productions such as those of Singaporean Theatre works director, Ong Keng Sen. Insufficient attention has been given to many key processes of exchange, interaction and modes of 'interweaving' between individuals and / or theatre groups of techniques, embodied practices concepts/ discourses at a micro - level of exchange in the studio.

Zarrilly et al.2018

Another noteworthy feature of this tour was the set of acting workshops that were conducted by Hiroshi Koike as part of promotions and publicity for the production. This 6 hour workshop was keenly welcomed by the theatre makers in Malaysia and Indonesia. My notes as an observer during the workshops have been mentioned below.

'Self-Discovery through Body Expression' was the title that Hiroshi gave to this workshop. Amplifying the expressive qualities of the human body through slow movements, an exercise that helps connect more deeply to the inner self, is the special feature of Hiroshi's acting training. This exercise has various levels. In the beginning, the actor is asked to take a small object of their liking and place it three feet away from where the actor is sitting. Then, the actor is to pick the object up, in their own time. Hiroshi would play different musical tracks in various moods. Another variation involves the actor placing the object a little farther away. Before

taking the object, the actor has to throw their hands up in the air. After rotations of the neck, they pick the object up and come back to their position. The challenge is to do this activity as slowly as possible. The next variation is where the actors create a sort of performance space for themselves. A few desks and platforms are strewn around the performance space to act as obstacles for the actors. Then, the object is placed in the audience space. The actor is required to feel the presence of the audience in the room while performing the activity. In the next variation all the objects are piled up together and the actors are required to feel the presence of the group while moving. They are now required to connect with each other and allow the impulse to touch one another. Moreover, they are to attach any personal memory to the object and feel it throughout the activity. The actors are allowed to make any sort of sound, speak any word, sentence, poem, or even sing a song that comes naturally to them as part of this process. They are instructed to open and move their mouths and eyes in a strange manner. All this is to be done by the actor in their own time, without any hurry. Once this stage is arrived at, the performers attain a very intense and heavy physical state, and are subjected to a transformation that leads to the creation of organic responses, movements and sounds. When the body is in slow motion, they gain awareness of each joint in their body and every single movement they make. Besides, there is a development in their special consciousness and they are able to understand their object in the most exhaustive manner. The actors are pushed to get into the details of the object that may have missed their notice until then, like the weight, colour of the object. The actor, through this exercise, is able to achieve a physical state that allows for a very intrinsic experience with the most truthful responses. Hiroshi has conceived this exercise to allow the performer to use the achieved intrinsic

movements and possibilities to facilitate creation in the most productive manner.

Hiroshi Koike's interpretation of a reimagining of Mahabharata was devised with the bodies of its Asian actors at its centre. The Asian character that was developed in the style of production due to this particular treatment opened up an array of exchange opportunities. By working so closely with each other, each actor was able to understand and unite with the other actor's body in every way – scent, rate of breath, sweat, attitudes – and this is what really helped them take their own individual presence forward in the making of this production. Though there are quite a few works of the past that would fall into the same category, the most prominent model would belong to the greatest director of the 20th century, Peter Brook and his *Mahabharata*. After almost ten years of preparation, *Mahabharata* had its first show in France in 1985. He was the first person to present on stage the whole Indian epic, which is also the longest poem in the world. Although there have been many presentations of various parts of the Mahabharata in various Asian classical and traditional art forms, this was the first time the whole work was presented in one go. This intercultural production consisted of 21 actors from 16 different countries. The script was completed with help from Brook's peer and collaborator Jean-Claude Carriere. This production had a universal approach to the text that could be understood and related to any culture in the world. As part of research for this project, Brook and his team had visited India numerous times to study and understand Hindu scriptures, costumes, art and music. Right from the initial points of his career, Brook had always wanted to work in an intercultural context. Working in a company that comprised of people from the same culture with similar mind sets, Brook had a very different approach to theatre.

In the fragmented theatre that we know, theatre companies tend to be composed of people who share the same class, same views, and same aspirations. The International Centre of Theatre Research (ICTR) was formed on the opposite principle. We brought together actors with nothing in common - no shared language, no shared signs, no common jokes. (Drain 1995:320)

The risks that one tends to take by working in such projects helps one to achieve the peak of creativity. We can see the results of this in every production of Brook's. We can also see such high levels of risk and its results in Hiroshi Koike who works in Asian conditions.

An intercultural actor looks beyond and transcends, both physically and psychologically, various disparities and conflicts in the human world like diversity in food habits, language, religious beliefs, and differences of skin colour, climatic conditions, political and cultural viewpoints in order to find their own path in world theatre. If we are able to enable such transitions that help include diversified learning's and possibilities in the training methods of all theatre schools, we would be able to create a generation of theatre makers who can participate in the global context in the right ways. Cultural exchange has always existed in some form or the other; the technological advancements around the world have only made it a much faster process. Richard Schechner once said, that there is no culture in the world that is so pure that it has not been influenced by any other culture.

For contemporary actors, the current social conditions of the world are full of crises. Artist communities are currently going through a major transition period at both levels, national and international. The main

concern is the alarming rate of depletion in the usage and exertion of the human body. Actors and dancers are the few groups of people who have broken the shackles of the technological and corporate revolution that has taken over the world, reducing the capabilities of the human body drastically. The onus of keeping their bodies activated in a way that at any point of time, they are able to feel the movement of each joint in the body and the activity of each of their senses to their optimum levels, lies on actors and such artists. In a world where they have easy access to things beyond their immediate, local reach, if actors are able to imbibe such diversities in their bodies, they would be able to present wonderful spectacles to the human race.

Chapter -3

**PREPARATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ACTOR'S
BODY BASED ON TWO DEVISING PROJECTS IN
THEATRE SCHOOLS**

In this chapter the subjects of analysis are the training methodologies that the author had experimented as actor, director and theatre practitioner in two of India's prime University theatre departments, and the devising projects that were designed as the last legs of these training periods. The pedagogy employed in both cases involved a two year training programme which was followed by a full-length project at the end of the training period. What were the techniques taught to the students during this period? How effective did these methods prove to be, for these contemporary actors? How has this contemporary training methodology - that has been moulded from years of past training and experience - been formed in a manner that allows it to gel with modern attitudes? What were the problems faced when executing the new and varied physical and psychological techniques? Why were the projects chosen to be devised anew? Why not take up a text based play? The experiences of working in these two institutions have been included in this chapter in order to bring more clarity to the proposed actor training method by finding answers to various questions like the ones mentioned above. The production processes and actor training techniques employed during the two plays – *Museum of Lost Pieces*, 2007 for the Theatre department of Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts and Mass Communication, Hyderabad and 'Misty Mountains of Mahabharata', the 2016 World Theatre Day production for the School of Drama and Fine Arts, Thrissur Calicut University with their Bachelor of Theatre Arts students – have been subjected to analysis in the following pages. These two universities that were born out of two completely distinct circumstances have contributed many great names to the world of Indian theatre. They are both institutions that function under the University Grants Commission. Both these theatre schools run within the various limitations that the traditional education system puts forth. Even though such limitations often restrict the freedom of theatre practice

and training, these institutions have still managed to achieve remarkable feats in the world of Indian theatre. The major aspects that will be studied include the history of the institution, vision and practice methodology, acting training techniques, devising project, production process, performance/transformations/body.

School of Drama and Fine Arts

There was a proposition to start an institution for the scientific study and practice of Theatre during the 'Nataka Kalari' Movement during the 1970s. This led to the founding of School of Drama in Thrissur, as a department of Calicut University, in 1977. It soon rose to become India's leading theatre training institution under the able leadership of Prof G. Sankara Pillai. The proposal of the project to start Kerala's first theatre school was submitted before the Vice Chancellor at the time, Dr. M. M. Gani. Later, the institution came into being under the leadership of the Acting Vice Chancellor of that time, Sukumar Azhikode, who was one of Kerala's greatest orators and men of letters. School of Drama and the Department of Economics of University of Calicut started running at the Aranattukara residence of Dr. John Mathai, Independent India's first Minister of Railways and second Finance Minister, which was donated to the University by him. It was only later that the functioning of School of Drama moved to the unique and nature-friendly theatre studio that was designed and built by famous German-Indian architect Laurie Baker. This beautiful landscape, sprawling over eighteen acres, surrounded by Kole wetlands all around, became a fertile ground for nurturing theatre artists. What made this institution stand out from other schools of Theatre in India were the training methods, performance techniques and lifestyle that supported and encouraged the perusal and exposure to nature in all its glory. The teachers and trainers that joined School of Drama in its initial

stages, along with the erstwhile chairman of Kerala Sangeet Nataka Akademi and professor of Malayalam at D.B. College Sasthamkotta, Prof. G. Sankara Pillai, led Malayalam Theatre on a revolutionary path. The classes in the School began under the initiative of teachers and trainers like Prof S Ramanujam, Venuji, P. K. Venukkuttan Nair, T. V. Gopinathan, A. K. Nambiar, Krishnan Namboothiri. Moreover, experts from all over India and abroad frequently visited School of Drama as guest faculty members. S.P. Sreenivasan, N. Krishna Pillai, Ayyappa Panikkar, K.P. Narayana Pisharodi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Kapila Vastyanan, Bansi Kaul, Aravindan, M.V. Devan, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Alakananda, Sivaram Karanth, Kavalam Narayana Panicker, Michael Patterson were the leading names among them. The students of the first batch of the three year programme under these faculty members have by now revolutionized the theatre, film and television industry in Kerala.

Two plays directed by Prof. Ramanujam, *Pisukkante Kalyanam* and *Karuththa Deivathe Thedi*, became noteworthy productions at the time. The Greek tragedy, *Antigone*, directed by Finnish theatre person and director Maya Tangeberg-Grischin, was a path-breaking effort in Malayalam Theatre. The active presence and participation of theatre practitioners from across Kerala, inhabitants of the neighbouring area of Lalore and people from the social and political circles of Thrissur at all the theatrical presentations of the School of Drama proved to be a great asset to the institution. Subsequently, people like Dr. Vayala Vasudevan Pillai and Mokeri Ramachandran have led the institution through many transformations according to the changing times.

School of Drama has always been successful at the propagation of modern theatrical advancements from around the world and has kept

with the times until now. Music department was incorporated in the year 2000, thus renaming the department, School of Drama and Fine Arts. Belonging to a rich tradition of Indian Theatre, the Graduate, Post-Graduate and Research courses offered in this institution are composed in a manner to include even the latest advancements in world theatre. The speciality of this institution is the theoretical and practical education in all the various aspects of theatre like playwriting, acting, direction, children's theatre and also technical aspects.

The Bachelor of Theatre Arts course (BTA) has been designed as a three year residential programme. It comprises of three major options. After the completion of two semesters, the students get to choose one specialisation from the three – acting, direction and children's theatre. This course has been designed to give the students a complete understanding, both theoretical and practical, of all the various aspects of theatre. Playwriting, Acting, Direction, Children's Theatre, Technical aspects, Classical art forms, Folk forms, Music, Theatre History, Film & Television Production and Arts Management have all been added as subjects to the syllabus. (Annexure 8)

Classes in History of Dramatic Literature and Play Analysis would themselves give the students an understanding of the traditions of playwriting. This syllabus promotes the opportunity for the students to learn about the different folk and traditional art forms of Kerala and understand their unique acting styles and traditions. The syllabus has been amply provided with programmes that ensure the detailed learning of different methods and styles of Western theatre. This course puts forth an opportunity for each student to be practically trained in all the different technical aspects of theatre including set, costume, sound, light, music,

video projection and makeup. The multiple play productions that these students get to be part of, under the direction of faculty members, different famous visiting directors and also the students of direction, are great value additions to the learning that the students receive. The Film Orientation Programme and the Film & Television Production courses that are part of the final leg of the three year course are conducted with the help of other film making institutions. The final dissertation that the student submits, has been designed to be treated as a smaller version of a Ph.D., a preliminary thesis that helps increase the intellectual quality of the student. Moreover, various workshops conducted in coordination with the National School of Drama, various international theatre practitioners and foreign universities, really set this institution apart. The main goal of this course is to develop theatre makers who are experts in every aspect of play production process and can professionally lead their own theatre groups in their own native places with great competence. This they hope to achieve through the scientific teaching and training in both theoretical and practical methods. A repertory company, CULT (Calicut University Little Theatre) has also been successfully running, to give the students a professional work experience post the three years of education.

The training undertaken by the students of acting, as part of the syllabus, requires further elucidation. This course begins with a month-long orientation programme. The primary objective of the orientation programme is to familiarize the students with the different subjects that are in any way attached to Theatre. Different subjects that enrich the form of theatre in many ways, like painting, sculpture, film appreciation, poetry, novel, music, dance, arts management, fashion, new media, humanities and gender issues, screenings of films, plays and documentaries, presentations of folk and classical theatre are all part of this orientation programme.

Generally, the main classes happen between 7 a.m. in the morning and 5 p.m. in the evening. Sometimes, classes may extend till midnight, as part of a play production or a special workshop. Students need to be of sound and strong body and mind in order to be able to take full advantage of these classes. Each semester has both internal and external, practical and theory examinations that encapsulate the assessment.

Classes between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. are primarily focused on exercises that aid training in movement, voice and speech. To this effect, Kalaripayattu, Yoga, Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Theatre Music and Western Movement exercises are the different subjects that are practiced. Between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., various common courses and theatrical courses are taken up by the students, in both practical and theoretical forms, over the course of 6 semesters in 3 years. Common courses include Communication Skills in English, Academic Writing and Presentation skills, Literature in Malayalam, Sustainable environment and other contemporary issues, Reading prose-a selection of essays on Indian constitution and secularism, Communication skills in the languages other than English, Basics of business and management, General informatics, Basic numerical skills, Entrepreneurship development and Theatrical courses like acting exercise, History and development of Malayalam theatre, Fundamentals of design, Fundamentals of music, Traditional Indian theatre and folk theatre, Introduction to acting and direction, Theatre music, Introduction to World Theatre, Classical Theatre, Participation in play production, Theatre Technology I: Setting & Lighting, Introduction to Modern Theatre, Option (Acting/Direction/Children's Theatre), Theatre Technology II: Costume and Make up, Theatre in Education, Theatre Technology III: Property and Mask making / Sound Design for Theatre, Film Appreciation workshop, Creative play writing, Contemporary Trends and Movements, Television

and Film production work shop, Dissertation. Any student finishing this course is capable of gaining authoritative knowledge of theatre in all its aspects.

Above and beyond the syllabus, the students of the 2014-16 batch were trained with ample interlinking of the acting teacher's valuable knowledge and experience in the world of theatre. The main goal was to develop a psycho-physical approach that would prepare actors to be capable of a complete performance that aids the language of theatre in every way. Even though the training methods used with the students of the Theatre Department of Central University, Hyderabad were very similar to those used here, efforts were taken to distinguish the training here, according to the topography, socio-cultural environment and other characteristics of Kerala. The students that join Thrissur School of Drama tend to be more actively engaged in and knowledgeable about the political, cultural and intellectual environment around them, than the students in other institutions. Hence, all the techniques related to training are subject to a more critical approach here at School of Drama. So every subject is taught and learnt with a lot of detailed research and debate going into it. This requires the teacher or facilitator to be thoroughly prepared with whatever topic is being taught. Acting training and teaching is a lot more complex and vulnerable to a lot of insecurities and complexes, compared to the teaching and training of other subjects. Since every physical structure is different from the other and every mind is unique, one particular formula that might work for an individual cannot be successful while teaching a group of actors. There are hundreds of theories and methodologies of actor training across the world today. Any student studying this deeply will be faced with a lot of doubts and contradictions. Every acting method was developed based on the theatrical culture,

topography, psychological conditions and physical characteristics that were involved at that time in that instance. Thus, there is no point in using the exact same method to train a new generation of actors who didn't belong to that time or place. This has been explained in detail in Stanislavski's *Building a Character*.

You are here to study, to observe, not to copy. Artists must learn to think and feel for themselves and find new forms. They must never be content with what someone else has done. You are American, you have a different economic system. You work at different times of day. You eat different food and your ears are pleased by different music. You have different rhythms in your speech and in your dancing. And if you want to create a great theatre, all these things must be taken into consideration. They must be used to create your own method, and it can be as true and as great as any method yet discovered. (Stanislavski 1949:15)

The focus during first stage of training for any actor generally lies on different movement, voice exercises and theatre games. In the second stage, character work begins and so does the need for paying individual attention to each actor. How does an actor embody a character? Stanislavski believed that without discovering the external characteristics of a character, like the body type, voice, style of speech, movement and walking style, one would never be able to master the internal characteristics. The right psychological state to be experienced by an actor during the process of embodying a character has been talked about in great detail in the chapter 'Dressing a Character' of the book *Building a Character*. "I was happy because I had realized how to live another person's life, what it meant to immerse myself in a characterization." (Stanislavski 1949:18,19)

Many directors started conducting detailed studies about different acting training methods in an effort to realize their own interpretations on stage in ways unique to them. They also began conducting practices and writings that could lead to developing new techniques for the same reason. By the end of the 19th century, Stanislavski put his whole life aside for detailed research and practice that resulted in the development of a new technique – psycho-physical training process. This was just the beginning of many more experiments to come in the same field. Later, right from Vsevolod Meyerhold, Yevgeny Vakhtangov, Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, Jerzy Grotowski, Jacques Lecoq, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Michael Chekhov, to current practitioners like Tadashi Suzuki, Anne Bogart, Phillip Zarrilli, David Zinder, Richard Schechner, are some people who have developed new and original acting techniques of their own. With the help of all these different techniques, an attempt was made during the two year acting training devising project conducted at School of Drama, to develop new methods of acting and acting training that would most successfully accommodate modern theatrical vocabulary.

Since Theatre involves the body and mind working in unison, the first step of the student selection process was naturally to conduct a personal interview and get the applicants to fill out a form titled ‘Actor Prepares’ with their personal details in it. This form, photograph included, goes into the files of the acting trainer to be carefully studied and maintained. (Annexure 9)

The first level of acting training starts with understanding each student’s life history in great detail. During the interview the student is given an opportunity to open up about his/her family background, physical and psychological health background, hobbies, reading habits, travels, etc.

Conducting intensive physical and psychological training without such extensive knowledge about each student can prove to be unsuccessful, in fact, dangerous at times. Information gathered from such interviews can help give individual attention to students who have faced difficulties in the past, in movement classes or psychologically intensive exercises. The information filled out in the forms is valuable throughout the time period of the course. It contains all primary information about any actor, including their blood group, body size, height, shirt size, shoe size, age, and passport size photograph. Right from knowing the blood group of a student in case of any accident, to knowing the actor's physical dimensions that could help any visiting director who is getting the actor's costumes ready for a play, this form has all such details. By the end of this process itself, a healthy relationship can be formed between the actor and the trainer, which will prove beneficial for future interaction.

Physical re-conditioning - the most important requirement for any actor is the understanding of his/her own body. The first step is to realize all the possibilities and lack thereof, of their own bodies. They can realize their own body through certain exercises that ensure the movement and activity of every single joint from head to toe. Internationally acclaimed theatre maker and pioneer of Forum Theatre, Augusto Boal states: "The goal of the exercises is a better awareness of the body and its mechanisms, its atrophies and hypertrophies, its capacities for recuperation, restructuring re-harmonization. Each exercise is a 'physical reflection' on one self."(Boal 2002:48)

Students, especially in their teens, acquire certain habitual patterns which are either regional or borrowed from their urban lifestyle. These mannerisms can affect their body language and speech patterns. The

students, with the help of intense training, need to shake off these acquired patterns and make themselves into clay that can be moulded into any form. They are taken through various physical training practices in order to get to this stage. Some of the most important practices amongst these are Kalaripayattu, Yoga, Koodiyattam, Tai Chi, certain Western exercises, the seven basic Svaras of music and the rhythmic patterns. Like moulding clay, the students will be able to use their body to expand their physical vocabulary in order to suit the requirements of various types of plays and characters that they might encounter. Martial art forms like Kalaripayattu can be very useful foundations for such training. Phillip Zarrilli is a master theatre maker who came to Kerala, trained for several years in various Kalaripayattu institutions and used Kalaripayattu to formulate his own acting training technique. He has done a lot of research on this aspect of training which can be read in his books like *Acting (Re)Considered* and *When the Body Becomes All Eyes - Paradigms, Discourses and Practices of Power of Kalaripayattu, a South Indian Martial Art*.

In each context of its practice, presentation or representation the Kalaripayattu practitioner's body, practice, power and self are constantly being repositioned for the practitioner himself, (the teacher, and / or cultural consumers), thereby making available quite different images, discourses of power and agency, experiences, knowledge and meanings for them all. (Zarrilli1995:4)

When the student is put through various movements that are different from or contradictory to their own attitudes and habits, there is a natural evolution that takes place, which creates a new impression of one's body in their minds. The knowledge of the muscles, nerves, gravity, space, dimensions, volumes, weights and speed of one's own body to analyze their relationships with each other and with other bodies can be attained

through such training. Moreover, according to Zarrilli, ‘humans (should be able to) develop knowledge about themselves’. Only after the re-conditioning of their own body should an actor get into the next stages of training and practice.

Self-Reflexive Acts

The most important part of the approach towards playing a character is the full understanding of the text. When an actor reads the text of a play, he/she enters a completely unfamiliar world. The truthful portrayal of one’s character can happen only when the actor is completely immersed in the script and can wholly comprehend the events and characters that the playwright has written into it. The actors should be in a condition to really know all about the character and the events written into the play. By understanding and gaining complete knowledge about what exactly the playwright meant with each word, the character development is much clearer and turns out to be more real. The actors will find it very easy to approach and present a character once this complete understanding of the character and text are achieved. Self-reflexive act is an acting exercise that was developed to understand the fundamentals of this kind of approach. The acting students are asked to write either a letter to a loved one or about any particular event from their memory. Then they have to share this whole-hearted, genuine piece of writing with the other students. Here the favourable factor is that the students get to present a text that is about their own lives. Once the first stage is over, the students are required to perform the same text. For this, they are to tweak the text into a more dramatized form. They are required to raise the texts that they themselves have written, on to a level of performance. Then, with a certain amount of voice and speech training in order to bring the desired level of speech clarity and voice projection, they are asked to perform the piece in front of

the group, after a week of practice. This exercise helps the students understand the importance of being able to bring a completely unfamiliar text to the same level of familiarity and understanding that was achieved with their own text, and be able to think from the perspective of the character in the same way they could do with themselves.

The next step in the training is to introduce the actors to different exercises, improvisations and theatre games that help them understand the difference between a normal body and a performer's body. The world famous theatre practitioner Eugenio Barba has conducted extensive studies about the properties and possibilities of the performer's body. In his book *Theatre Anthropology*, he has defined the energy technique that an actor uses on stage, as 'extra-daily technique': 'The first step in discovering what the principles governing a performer's scenic bios, or life, might be, lies in understanding that the body's daily techniques can be replaced by extra-daily technique, that is, technique which do not respect the habitual conditionings of the body. Performers use these extra-daily techniques.' (Barba 1991:6) The foremost responsibility of an actor is to consciously recognize such possibilities that his/her body possesses. This recognition can make the rest of the process easier. The remoulding of the whole body for this purpose begins with certain exercises.

Tree/Mountain Posture: With legs close together and arms held close to the body, imagine that the body is full of water, and stand still with eyes closed, for about five minutes. This is an asana from Hatha Yoga. This is a good way to understand the nature of one's own body.

Tai Chi Standing Posture: The Standing posture in the Chinese martial art form, Tai Chi, is an exercise that can help actors analyze the energy

sources in their body. The stance involves the actor's feet separated at shoulder width from each other. The basic standing posture is achieved with slightly bent knees, palms placed on the thighs and elbows placed away from the torso. Even if the eyes are held open, the gaze is to be fixed slightly below eye level. The actor is to imagine that their feet have firmly sunk into the ground like the roots of a tree and that there is a thread is going up from the crown of their head into the sky, pulling and holding it up. Meditation is to happen in this position, with a straight back. For a minimum of fifteen minutes, the actor is to stay still in this position. The trainer should be able to facilitate flow of energy from the energy centre of the actor's body which is around the navel area, to all parts of their body. With continuous efforts in this practice, one can achieve a higher level of energy in their performing body.

Waiting: This is an improvisation sequence. The essence is that one is waiting for someone at the bus stop. The actor can develop the scene in any way he/she desires, without using speech. But it has to go on till the trainer/facilitator asks the actor to end the scene. This improvisation can help in expelling any false notions a beginner could have about acting and make students understand how to exercise their time on stage in the most genuine, truthful ways. In the beginning, the students might mostly resort to external display of emotions, overacting, imitation and the most common gestures and movements to show 'waiting'. When they run out of all preconceived notions and prepared gestures of waiting, they become still and then the real 'waiting' begins. That would be much more authentic and intense. This is when the actor's postures and mannerisms begin to get more meaningful, truthful, distinct and born out of true experience. A good performer's journey should begin from this very organic state of body and mind.

Object of Desire: This exercise has a very physical approach. This exercise deals with a completely physical expression of emotions, without using any speech. The actors have to choose any object from daily life and imagine how it would behave if it were living, and use their body to express its emotions and desires in ten minutes. It could be any object, ranging from a fan, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, bike, to a bulldozer, television or a telephone. An open show of this exercise could be arranged, with the use of appropriate costumes and some instrumental music for accompaniment. Such physically driven, intense training can help acting students to completely explore all possibilities of their bodies and even discover new possibilities. The main objective of this exercise is to make the students let go of the crutch of spoken word and use their bodies to explore the unending possibilities of theatrical expression. Strong, meaningful words and movements take birth from silence. An actor, who can breathe life into a dead object and try to understand its emotions, can be a huge asset to theatre.

Voice Performance: Optimum exploration of the potential of the voice is just as important as that of the body. Many vocal trainers including the former voice director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Cicely Frances Berry, have scientifically formulated exercises for the development of voice and speech. The different techniques used for training the students of acting at the School of Drama have been assimilated from the teachings of many voice and speech instructors like Leow Puay Tin (Malaysia), Jill Brown (Australia), Kirstie O’Sullivan (New Zealand) and Jarrod Benson (Australia), among others.

Voice Culture: Voice, which is the medium of expression for the innate essence of the self, is the tool through which our ideas and emotions are

communicated to others. It is the responsibility of the actor to develop his/her voice to be able to depict qualities like the socio-cultural status, disposition, values, objectives and thought process of the character clearly and convincingly. In order to successfully develop one's voice, one is dependent on the flexibility and nature of the body. The voice and emotions are directly interlinked with the state of the body. A person with self-confidence, a steady mind, and a healthy body tends to have a pleasant voice. On the other hand, since a weak, unhealthy person's emotions reflect in his voice, it tends to be unpleasant.

Voice is produced when air passes through the vocal chords from the lungs. This air makes the vocal chords pulsate, hence forming vibrations. These vibrations become sounds and reverberate as they pass through the resonating chambers such as the head, nose and mouth. The sound that is produced depends on the shapes formed by the resonating chambers due to the actions of the articulators - tongue, soft palate, uvula, lips and lower jaw. Hence, for proper speech and sound production, deep central breathing, an open and relaxed throat, flexible tongue and lips and a relaxed lower jaw are imperative.

Breath Control: In order to achieve vocal proficiency, a relaxed body and focused central breathing are highly essential. We have the correct breathing pattern while asleep or at full rest. Here, the durations of inhalation and exhalation are equal. On the contrary, when on stage, when in dialogue, an actor's breathing pattern is different. Here, the inhalations are shorter, while the exhalations are through the mouth, gentler, longer and in full control. Since the tone of the actor's voice is dependent on controlled breathing, breath control becomes highly essential for an actor.

Voice Characteristics: In order to use voice proficiently, the actor must successfully assume important voice characteristics like timbre, pitch, volume and rate. The produced tone that vibrates in the throat and through the resonating chambers like the head, nose and mouth, is called ‘resonance’.

Voice Quality: The individuality of a particular voice is called its quality. The beauty and richness of the voice can be preserved by properly maintaining the resonating chambers and ensuring that they remain open. One should never use a narrow throated voice in day to day speech. It should always be with a low pitched, clear voice. Normal breathing should be through the nose.

Pitch: The relative rise and fall of sound at any given point of time is the pitch of the sound or voice. Each person’s voice has its own particular level of pitch. It is the rate of vibration of the vocal folds that determines the pitch. This vibration depends on various factors like the length of the vocal folds, their elasticity, rate of tension and rate of inhalation. The modulation of pitch gives a musical quality to speech. Monotony in pitch can be considered a disadvantage.

Volume: The relative strength, intensity and sharpness of the voice is its volume. It is not merely the level of sound of the voice. When air from the lungs passes through the vocal folds, a pressure is exerted on them, which determines the volume of the sound produced.

Rate: The speed of the utterance of words during speech is called the rate of speech.

Vocal Warm Up: This process begins with various types of body stretches. Trikonasana or the Triangle Pose is very beneficial to this effect. This exercise is very helpful to increase breathing capacity because of the stretch that it provides to the rib cage area. Spinal Roll is another equally fruitful stretching exercise. Feet are to be placed at shoulder width from each other and a straight back is to be achieved. With the exhalation of breath, each vertebra of the spinal cord from head till the hip bone, are to be rolled down slowly and carefully. Once the whole torso has been hung down completely, feel the weight of the upper body and slowly roll back up from the hip. This time accompanied by inhalation. On repeating this exercise two or three times, the body develops suppleness and breath feels to be reaching even the lower part of the abdomen. After some stretching exercises like these, one may proceed to other exercises that can increase the flexibility and strength of the speech organs.

The first of these is to increase the flexibility of the facial muscles by tightening and loosening them repeatedly. Next is the jaw hinge massage. Starting from just above the jaw, use the lower palms to massage the jaw in a downward direction. Repeat this action three or four times. Now with the jaw split open slightly, move it in all four directions – left, right, forward and back. Next come the exercises for the most important speech organ, the tongue. Stretch the tongue in all four directions – right, left, up and down. Next, try to draw a circle with the tip of the tongue. Now repeat the action in the opposite direction. Then, move the tongue inside the mouth in an action similar to that of brushing. Now use the tip of the tongue to stretch the cheeks outwards as much as possible from the inside. Once the tongue, cheeks and jaw have loosened up enough, various exercises like horse lips, motorcycle lips, ‘shikk’ sound, various kinds of hums and lip stretches using the different vowels, Sheetal

and Seetkari pranayama can be taught in order to develop an effective voice culture. To improve voice projection and speech clarity, actors often adopt various exercises like the Alexander Technique, practice of the seven different Swaras of classical music in different patterns and rhythms, and chanting of percussion syllables (Konnakol) and tongue twisters as part of their routine practice. Such exercises can help enhance the voice quality to be able to speak extremely long lines very dynamically and in one stretch. Lowering the vocal pitch as deeply as possible and practising speech in such a state can help to easily transform the voice and speech style of an actor during stylised performances of classical characters.

As advanced level of training for more vocal clarity and precision, the students are trained in the 'From body to voice to imagination' technique formulated by Israeli director and vocal coach David Zinder. His main concept works on the premise that it is the moving body that gives rise to voice, and this voice, in turn facilitates the creation of moving bodies. To this effect, the warm up sequence that he included was a series of abstract movements. Zinder has very clearly elaborated on the different aspects of training that need to be given importance.

Body/Voice connections in daily life, our bodies and our voice are naturally 'connected' and we don't spend even a single second making any kind of conscious effort to fuse voice and body into one. But performance is not daily life, and actors spend most of their professional lives inhabiting bodies other than their own, and so these supposedly 'natural' connections cannot be taken for granted. How they work in the performance space has to be trained. And this is the object of the exercise trying to understand, through a structured model of behavior, just how different, yet alike, these two modes of expression - body and voice - are, what needs to be done

to make them interact creatively with each other in performance. So that they function as different aspects of the same thing. (Zinder 2009:159)

After a variety of such exercises, there would be open classes with the aim of improving voice projection, attaining voice relaxation and formation. The main focus during these classes would be poetry presentations and soundscape presentations. During this process, the students are to conduct field studies and research about natural sounds and then create a 10 minute long soundscape based on the five elements of nature (Fire, Earth, Water, Sky (Air), Wood or metal). By the end of this process, the students will have gained insight into various natural sound effects and the multiple possibilities of the human voice.

Tai Chi – Body and Mind in Harmony

Even though there may be various movement techniques that actors train themselves in, one that is unique and distinguishes itself from all others, is the Chinese martial art form called Tai Chi. This is especially very beneficial to Indian actors, since all the traditional martial art forms that are practised here are very aggressive, expeditious and highly susceptible to accidents. But Tai Chi, unlike all these forms, is accident-free, full of extremely slow movements and suitable for any age. Hence, for Indian actors who are used to aggressive, agile movements, the practise of Tai Chi will lead them through a completely opposite type of body motion and also enable them to employ acting tools like stillness wherever required to good effect. The observations of master practitioner and teacher of Tai Chi, Sophia Delza, about this art form that derives its techniques from the movements of nature, are very relevant.

The exercise - Art, the antithesis of the accidental, the unpremeditated, the blindly inspirational, is composed, ordered, figured out, and developed according to theory, thought, philosophy, science, mathematics and the laws of nature. The concrete material of this physical exercise correlates all of man's faculties as he puts his body into action, his mind into awareness, and his spirit into serenity. Compose the body and the mind is calmed, settle the mind and the emotions are composed. The thought, the feeling, the action, each can be the root, the link, the cause and the effect. Whichever the way, the result is a balance of the vital energy of body and mind.

(Delza 1985:184)

The positive effects and changes that continuous practice of Tai Chi brings to performers who seek to be very organic actors was quite apparent through the training at ITI/TTRP, Singapore. World famous acting trainer Phillip Zarrilli has included Tai Chi as one of the major aspects of his acting training technique. What Zarrilli defines as the reason for this inclusion is the organic body quality that Tai Chi lends to its practitioner. This has also been mentioned in Sophia's book. "One of the great advantages of Tai-Chi is that one can never be automatic when doing it. The body and personality are one in action. The benefit of this is perhaps obvious, since tai-chi has, as one of its goals, the development of awareness and consciousness, quickened reflexes, and an alert mind".

(Delza 1985:19)

The style of Tai Chi taught to the students of School of Drama was the same - Yang style Tai-Chi that was taught at the ITI/TTRP by Tai-Chi masters Sim Pern Yiau and Goh Lay Kuan. Tai-Chi consists of three different meditation techniques. Sitting, standing and moving meditations.

It takes a long time to learn this particular style, which is the longest and consists of 108 different movements. The movements and characteristics of this style have all been derived from the movements of nature. The Tai Chi sequences that have been formulated using the movements of birds, animals, wind, rain, trees and rivers, are not very easy to learn and remember. That is why it takes continuous training for a long time to be able to be a Tai Chi practitioner. The practice of Tai Chi is also great for health care and maintenance of the human body. Tai- Chi is capable of awakening the inner energy in the body and disseminating it equally throughout the body. According to Chinese philosophy, energy has been described as Qi and the energy that binds the opposite forces of the universes has been called Yin and Yang. Through scientific practice, actors can easily awaken the internal force within their bodies and transmit the Tai Chi energy into the required movements.



Photograph of the Tai-Chi training at School of Drama and fine arts

Standing meditation requires the time duration required for its practice to be increased on a daily basis. Standing meditation is to be practiced while the practitioner is in the basic standing position prescribed in Tai- Chi. To be able to stand in this position for a long time, it requires the practitioner to focus their complete attention and concentration on their physical centre. After this is the practice of the long version of 108 states of Tai- Chi. Each state is taught in great detail, with instructions about the proper kind of breathing that needs to be exercised while performing the movements. Breathing is of utmost importance, since all the sequences involve perpetual movement. In the first stage, the body should be allowed to undergo its natural breathing pattern. Once the Tai- Chi movements become second nature to the body, deep, controlled breathing can be consciously employed during practice. Goh Lay Kuan would always give a warning about the use of breath: Too much preoccupation with the breath makes one clumsy. The appearance of ‘lack of breath’ is real strength.

A high level of concentration is imperative throughout the practice of Tai- Chi in every stage. The instructions given below are extremely essential for the practice of Tai- Chi which involves the union of the body and mind.

1. Co-ordination: the root of the integration of the constant motion and the changing forms, challenges the mind’s attention.
2. Length of the exercises: gives mind ‘holding’ power, to preserve and to remain calm and stable.
3. Diversity of subtle changes: keeps mind alert and attentive.
4. Repetition: make mind aware of the ‘inattention’ of the body which will reverse into familiar patterns automatically.
5. Surprise sequences: shocks to force mind to use more effort (Yang) to attend.

6. Differences in slowed-up tempi: sharpen mind in coordinating and in connecting form with time in space.
7. Dynamic interchange - keeps mind on appreciation of gravitational and structural balances.
8. Intricacies of shape and movement. Sharper sensitivity to the aesthetic principle of form and function.
9. Physiological changes: alert minds attention to the body experience of the harmony of joint - muscle movement.
10. Simple and complex transitions give mind awareness of its own (Yin) 'rest' and (Yang) effort.
11. Ever-changing direction: makes mind able to relate to repeated forms differently.
12. Stillness in activity: sensitizes mind to the perception of the existence of the quiet centered in the action. (Delza 1985:182)

One gamble that faces Indian practitioners of Tai- Chi is that their body and mind may get attuned to the slowness of the art form. After years of practice, they might just slip into that type of body conditioning permanently. The correct way to tackle this problem would be to simultaneously practice another art form, which is more agility-inducing. Grotowski has written about similar effects being seen from long term practice of Yoga. "We began by doing yoga directed toward absolute concentration. It is true we asked, that yoga can give actors the power of concentration? We observed that despite all our hopes the opposite happened. There was a certain concentration, but it was introverted." (Schechner 2013:44)

Years of continuous practice and training in a particular classical or martial art form leaves the practitioner with a particular body shape that

may limit their capabilities outside that particular form. A contemporary actor who can deal with multiple forms, must not stick to being trained in one particular art form, rather he/she should be able to learn and unlearn various kinds of art forms with equal ease. Only then will they be able to maintain a natural body type. There is a particular way that has been described in Tai Chi for this cause.

Suzuki Method

Formulated by Tadashi Suzuki, Suzuki Method with its highly physical approach, is the most beneficial acting training technique for any contemporary actor. This method has gained popularity all over the world for its ability to help actors develop a very dynamic voice and expressive body. This method was spread all over the world and made known as a useful training technique for contemporary actors, by Japanese writer, director and practitioner Tadashi Suzuki and American practitioner and founder of SITI Company, Anne Bogart. Another technique that gained prominence along with this was the View Points technique developed by Anne Bogart. Tadashi Suzuki chose an isolated and naturally rich village of Toga in Japan for his theatre practice. Due to extreme weather conditions, the locals kept vacating this village. But the internationally acclaimed SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) found its home in this bountiful village of Toga with a mountain and a river in the background. The practical training in the Suzuki method received from the workshop in Singapore conducted by Fueda Uichiro, one of the most instrumental actors from Tadashi Suzuki's company and actors from the SITI Company, New York, was exceptionally wholesome and scientific. Having received this training from first hand original sources, it was possible to teach this method to the students of School of Drama with great clarity and accuracy. The series of movements in the Suzuki method can be divided into five

major parts. Basic, Ten Ways of Walking, Slow Ten Tekka Ten, Standing and Sitting Statues and Stamping Shakuhachi are the important acting training techniques.



Suzuki Method of Actor training at School of Drama and Fine Arts

A performance begins the moment an actor sets his/her foot on the stage. An actor's first sensation is when he/she firmly plants their feet on the ground. The next sensation is when a foot is lifted off the ground. Tadashi believes that an actor's feet are what determines whether the actor is good or not. Hence, all movements of the Suzuki Method, which has derived from art forms like Ballet and Kabuki, are based on the actions of legs and feet, like stamping, sliding and lifting. Tadashi firmly believes that the endless possibilities of physical expression can be unlocked by the movement of the feet. "What I believe I have added, however, is the idea of stamping the foot - forcing the development of a special consciousness based on this striking of the ground. This concept arises from my

conviction that an actor's basic sense of his physicality comes from his feet.”(Suzuki 1993:9)

He goes on to explain that not just the body, but even voice and its capabilities and strength can be explored in all its authenticity through the determined movements of the feet. “There are many cases in which the position of the feet determines even the strength and nuance of the actor's voice.”(Suzuki 1993:6)

The upper body tends to mostly stay rigid and still, while performing the exercises of Suzuki Method. Even the movement of the hands is limited. The parts of the body below the waist are what always remain in action. A special type of socks, called Tabi is usually worn. These Tabi socks can protect the feet when doing heavy footwork and stamping and also aid the sliding movements of the feet. A thick pair of normal socks would also suffice as an able substitute. The Suzuki Method of actor training, which demands extraordinary physical stamina and vocal strength is incomparable with any other method of training. The prolonged practice of this method can even push one to astonishing internal transformations. The exercises are intended as a means to discover a self – consciousness of the interior of the body, and the actor's success in doing them confirms his ability to make that discovery. The actor learns to become conscious of the many layers of sensitivity within his/her own body. (Suzuki 1993:12)

One of the primary objectives of these exercises is to eliminate from the minds of the actors, the sense that their body is a regular, normal body. The body that takes shape following this process will be one that can transform the stage and the environment around it. “The movement of the actor's feet

creates the expressive environment.”(Suzuki 1993:6)Among these different exercises, the most difficult one is the final one, called the ‘Stamping Shakuhachi’. This exercise enables an actor to establish a strong relationship between his feet and the ground, awaken the body and the mind and forge an impressive bond between the stage and the audience. ‘*The Way of Acting*’ by Tadashi gives a detailed description of this exercise which is based on the two extreme states of motion and stillness.

In training the actors in my company, I have one exercise in which I have them stamp their feet in time to rhythmic music for a fixed period. Stamping may not be the most accurate term, for they loosen their pelvic area slightly, and then move themselves by striking the floor in a vehement motion. As the music finishes, they use up the last of their energy and fall to the floor. They lie flat, in a hush, as though they were dead. After a pause the music begins again, this time gently. The actors rise in tune with this new atmosphere, each in his or her own fashion, and finally return to a fully vertical standing position.(Suzuki 1993:8)

The stamping Shakuhachi can strengthen breath support and optimize physical concentration of the body like no other exercise. This method must be taught with high energy being spent even by the trainer. During instructions and demonstrations the trainer’s words must reach the actors in high volume and energy. Another important thing to remember is that both the trainer and the actors should always visualise an imaginary audience in front of them, while engaging in the Suzuki Method of acting training. The Suzuki Method can reawaken the animalistic energy in the new generation of actors who live in a non-animalistic, technology-dominated world. It was to explore and employ such a possibility to its

optimum effect that this method was taught to the students of the School of Drama.

Monologues

The monologue series begins as the first step of character work. The first task would be to get the students to read various works by multiple renowned playwrights from different time periods. Even though the students have the freedom to choose any monologue of their choice, they have to follow all the instructions to get to the final selection. The first stage of this journey is to read 10 prominent plays from across the world and share with all fellow students, their synopses and character sketches. From these plays, after proper discussions about different aspects like the vivid character descriptions, flow of writing and the linguistic distinction, they are to pick monologues from three of the plays and then choose one that challenges the student but also follows the instructions of the trainer. It is after such an extensive process that the student finally settles upon a particular lengthy monologue of a character.



Monologue Exercise presentation by student actor Sumesh

Once the monologue has been chosen, the first thing to do is an analysis of the play from the actor's perspective. Primarily, the actor needs to understand, from various readings, the social, psychological and physical status of the character. Only after studying the playwright's background and a deep understanding of the script does the actor focus his/her attention on the monologue alone. Next, with a pencil, the actor is to mark the different pauses on the script of the monologue – pauses for breath and sentence pauses. Next, the actor is to identify the key words in each line. All this will help the actor understand the linguistic structure and the inner meaning of the monologue. The students are expected to present their monologues with minimum sets and costumes and without any paraphernalia like lights or background music and focus their complete attention on the acting alone. Focusing on the external factors like lights and music might take away the truthfulness of the performance.

The next step is to prepare an actor's notebook. This is to compile a wholesome collection of information about the character. The actor should write down, based on all the available information and also some imagination, the life history of the character, until the point when he/she sets foot on stage. Further on, the actor should also compile detailed notes about the playwright and the play. Another important section is answering a series of questions about the character.

Key question an actor needs to answer for any character.

1. Who am I?
2. What are the given circumstances?
3. What do I want?
4. Why do I want it?
5. How will I get it?
6. What must I overcome?(Annexure 10)

Along with this, the actor must also prepare a character analysis sheet and a costume and make up sheet to add to the actor's notebook. Primary information like race, nationality, age, health, temperament, physical structure, colour, skin, hair, willpower, dominating passion, background, social position and intellect are what need to go into the character analysis sheet. Such preparation before getting into rehearsal encourages the actor to approach the character with an insight into his/her psyche. The next step after collecting all possible information about the character is to give shape and expression to this character with the actor's physicality and body movements. Then the student is given the freedom to choose a place in or around the theatre studio where he/she can work on the character. The actor can use minimum set materials to transform the spot into the space that the character engages with. The trainer's creative instructions can guide the students through all these stages. Then the student, in this suitable space, goes through all the movements in the monologue in the form of a silent blocking without speaking the lines. This silent blocking method brings out all the inherent qualities of movement of the actor and lets him/her explore all the possibilities of physical expression of the character. After some work on improving the movements under the guidance of the trainer, the actor starts and keeps on practicing the monologue with the lines. The actors should get into rehearsing the monologue only after going through a series of exercises to improve their stage presence, voice projection and speech clarity every day.

During this process the actors will be introduced to various exercises that could help their body and mind facilitate an effortless and prompt flow of acting. Partner exercises like back to back pushing, shoulder to shoulder pushing and Columbian Hypnosis are just a few of such exercises. The most important quality to focus on during this phase is

the projection and clarity of voice and speech. In order to do that, the actors have to go through various exercises using the text of the monologue that they are engaging with. The most important of these exercises are sounding the consonants, sounding the vowels, mouthing the text, whispering the text, drawing on images, intone or chant the text, physical action on key words, speak the text whilst moving, words/phrases on support, energy through the line, separating the thoughts, word substance, clarifying the thought, engaging the text, mind space, running and crouching, image, being on the word, jostling, subject. Post such intense training in this respect, the actors are subject to an internal showing of the monologues after which they will receive constructive feedback on their presentations. This marks the end of the monologue exercise. By the end of this phase, the students will get an idea of how to approach working on a character, even in their future career as an actor.

Scene Work Exercise

This section helps the students to understand the nitty-gritties of acting with others. Usually small scenes with a maximum of three characters are chosen for this exercise. The same instructions followed during the monologue phase are to be repeated with this exercise. But this time, with certain factors included that will support the addition of multiple actors instead of a monologue. Mostly, the scenes chosen are from realistic plays. The reason is that in real life, we interact with things and people around us in different ways at different levels. It could be through sight, hearing, touch or a reaction. But if the actor is not able to do it the same way on stage, it will seem mechanical. It might seem like two people from two different worlds talking to each other. An audience would never believe it. Such flaws can be detected by any audience even in the first few minutes of performance. "Stanislavski believes that the actor should

establish a relationship with everything around him/her. There should be awareness of, and connection between you and objects, the setting, your clothes, other people, yourself and the audience". (Gillett 2007:75)

If an actor is able to establish a substantial bond with his/her co-actor, through thoughts, experiences, movements and silences, then the truthfulness that the actor brings out is what will also be reflected in the response and reactions of the co-actor. This organic quality will also let the actors draw their audience's attention to their performance quite effortlessly. Aristotle's commentary on the behavioral response of humans within their society, based on the inference that man is a social animal, is a valuable lesson for actors to help with character development. We relate and respond to each other according to our personalities, goals, relationships, social customs and taboos and crucially what they do to us. (Gillett 2007:74)

If the conversation in the monologue was with one's self, here it needs to extend to one's co-actors. In the initial stage, the same steps followed during the monologue exercise are followed here. After repeating play analysis, character analysis, actor's notebook and voice exercises, new exercises to help build an organic relationship with other bodies are added to the mix. The eyes can be described as the most important part of a conversation between two people. We can see and hear with our eyes and ears, and the build-up of such type of prolonged contact and energy between two people is what culminates in words, thoughts, movements and experiences between them. This kind of truthful interaction is what Stanislavski described as radiation.

The most dangerous situation in a play is when an actor is not seeing, listening or responding to what is happening around him/her. Early on, when stardom was considered highly important to maintain, actors would often attempted to draw all the attention towards themselves and as a result, only look out for cues and deliver their own lines beautifully in order to win applause. There used to be many actors in those times who believed it was important to do so, in order to remain focused on their own lines and acting. But this system saw a huge change in the era of Stanislavski. The audience started favouring the actors who delivered organic responses. This made the actors train their own bodies and minds to be able to react spontaneously. Various interaction exercises are to be taught during this scene work module that can help actors to maintain their sight, hearing and focus completely on the other characters while acting on stage. Some of the main exercises that were practiced by the students during the scene work presentation were silent reaction, adopting position, improvisation, word repetition, pinch and ouch, the knock on the door and reacting on text.

Group Scene Work

This module is seen as the last leg of preparation before taking on characters from a full length play. For this module, a scene with many characters appearing on stage at the same time is chosen. This exercise is formulated to help the student actors to understand all that is required to know while dealing with a scene that has many characters. Moreover, this exercise can help actors develop a deeper understanding about all the different facets of character development. The group scene work proceeds in a manner that would facilitate knowledge dissemination about various subjects like creating the physical life of the role, discovering the action, refining the role, acting ethics, working together. This module has also

been devised as an extension of the previous monologue and dialogue modules. The same character development exercises undertaken during those modules will be repeated once again, but this time in a more exhaustive capacity. For example, the development of the character's life history will be done after a complete study and analysis of the play and the background in which it was conceived. The most important details that the actors have to discover are given below.



Group Scene presentation by School of Drama and Fine Arts Students

Social	Psychological	Physical
Family background - What your parents, brothers, sisters, etc. are like	Ambition	Age
What your relationship is, with them.	Attitude to life - militant, resigned, optimistic, defeatist, etc.	Weight
Class - Original and present class status.	Disappointments and joys	Height
Marital status - or other intimate relations.	Complexes - obsessions, phobias, manias, Introvert, extrovert, ambivert(a mixture)	Complexion
Occupation - What it entails, suitability, income, etc.	Temperament - angry, balanced, neurotic, fiery, placid, etc.	Hair colour and style
Education - What, where, beneficial or not	Sex - amount, orientation, pleasurable or not.	Posture
Religion - What, and how serious	Intelligence	Appearance - neat, scruffy, fashionable, eccentric, etc.
Politics - What, and how committed	Skills	Hereditary features
Nationality - Where you were born, and current nationality		
Position in the community - Clubs, societies official roles		
Hobbies		
Sports		
Arts		

The collection of all this information can make it easy for the students to minutely interpret the character and develop the character both physically and psychologically. This may not be a viable solution for all plays. Another way would be to use the imagination to help develop the character. Such methods enable the actor to explore the inner life of the character. It is the inextricable blend of such external and internal information that stimulates the creation of the character.

Once the work on the inner life of the character, the text and the actions are under way, then the physical embodiment of the character will start to develop - assuming of course, that the actor's body is responsive to imaginative impulse. Stanislavski saw the development of the physical life as a response to the inner life and psychological and physical action, and not as the thing with which we start.(Gillett 2007:228)

The major focus of the group scene work is to practice the knowledge and the training methods which are individually gathered and internalized. The acting training method introduced to successfully implement this is the innovative acting training method developed by the internationally acclaimed director and writer Anne Bogart, called the 'Viewpoints' technique. A major feature of this method is that all questions and queries which are raised during the rehearsal time can collectively be addressed at the same time. The pressure to encounter all questions individually can substantially be nullified and the creativity of the actor can be invigorated through this method. This method also allows a collective practice to be brought forward by submitting completely to the physical environment thereby denouncing one's individual ego and imagination. The acting trainees who are trained in the Viewpoints method can achieve a sort of concentration which can awaken all their senses and

enable them to see with their whole body. This method enables the actors to communicate deeply even with the back of the body through its practice. Anne Bogart, in her book 'The Viewpoints Book', has explained how this philosophy can be transformed into an acting training method.

Viewpoints is a philosophy translated into a technique for

(1) Training performers; (2) building ensemble; and (3) creating movement of the stage.

(a) 'Viewpoints' is a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens on stage.

(b) Viewpoints are points of awareness that a performer or creator make use of while working. (Bogart 2005:8)

Anne Bogart devised the view points as an alternative actor training method in an effort to dismantle the conventions of acting, directing, playwriting and design. This method is designed in such a way that it cannot be experimented under any hegemony and can only be practiced as a collaborative venture. This is immensely helpful to those who step forward to theatre practice as novices and the actor training programmes in School of Drama incorporated this as part of their curriculum. As opposed to the psychological approach of Stanislavsky's method, the viewpoints and composition propose a novel approach to creating movement on stage, with its concentration primarily fixed on the play of time and space.

This training is mainly distinguished in two ways – first, physical viewpoints which is divided into nine categories and second, vocal

viewpoints divided into five. Physical Viewpoints being Spatial Relationship, Kinesthetic Response, Shape, Gesture, Repetition, Architecture, Tempo, Duration and Topography, and the Vocal Viewpoints being Pitch, Dynamic, Acceleration / Deceleration, Silence and Timbre.

As a preamble to viewpoints method there are some preliminary exercises which can be acquired only through training and practice. It is not possible to explain these with words. One of the major requirements is that the actor should always maintain soft focus during practice. “Soft focus is a physical state in which the eyes are relaxed so that, rather than looking at a specific object or person, the individual allows visual information to come to her/him. With focus softened in the eyes, the individual expands the range of awareness, especially peripherally.”(Bogart 2005:23)

The preliminary exercises comprise of various kinds of running, stretching, sun salutation, high jumps, five images, run to centre, the chase and peripheral vision. These are to be practiced collectively, standing in a circle and maintaining soft focus. The unity of the group is very important for this method. The fundamental principle of viewpoints is to hear, see and experience the breathing of the co-actors using the whole body and move forward as a collective. The peripheral vision exercise is the main threshold of physical viewpoints.

The students are asked to walk freely in the space with full awareness and presence. Presence is based on each individual’s moment to moment interest and not on any fake expression. All students are required to continue walking until the exercise gets over. Throughout the exercise soft focus is to be maintained, with bold steps and the mind completely open to the environment which inspires the actors extensively.

The next step is to choose one individual from the group and observe him/her indirectly, holding soft focus and maintaining them within the limit of the peripheral vision. He/she shouldn't be permitted to go out of the peripheral vision, but at the same time the observer should open themselves to receive information about this person. The approach is distinct because it does not follow the conventional pattern of the trainee seeking out information. Instead, the information seeks out the trainee. With the help of soft focus, the trainee is to identify and observe the colour of the person's costume, their unique shape, style of walking etc. The moment when the observer loses his/her interest in gathering information, he/she should stop receiving information and continue walking with presence. The trainer then directs the trainees to select another individual into the soft focus and receive information and note down the differences through observation. After a few minutes, another new individual can be added without losing the existing one. Now all trainees have two individuals within the limits of their vision and they shouldn't go out of their limits. A third individual may be included after some time. The observer is to continue observation and the study of differences with their subjects in their own postures and corners. This process can be extended to even four or five subjects according to the capacity of each individual. Finally the observer is to lose focus on all his/her subjects and regain the presence and momentary interest.

As the final stage a new individual is to be brought into the soft focus for observations and the observer is to move towards the selected person and get as close as possible. With this instruction, the group can be seen dividing itself into two or three sub groups. All trainees are asked to stand still and close their eyes. Then the group is reminded of the different sources of the body that can gather information beyond the visual, such as

touch, smell, sound and sensation of heat or coldness. Information starts to pass through various places into the body and the participants are advised to activate the parts of the body which were earlier inactive in order to receive this information. Eyes may be opened after enabling the whole body to receive information, without the eye sight preventing other senses from being active. All participants should walk away with an extremely open sense and extensively high sensory perception. This activity is repeated till the psychosomatic state may be maintained even when entering into group scene work.

The training methods and schedule are formulated with the objective of enabling the acting students to acquire enough confidence and competence to take part in performances of any reach. Character approach, proper behaviour with co-actors, approach and behaviour towards directorial and technical crew, play analysis and character analysis can all be accomplished creatively, effectively and professionally with the help of this method.

Devising Project: Why Devising Theatre?

The devising performance was formulated as the last part of the second year actor training project of the students of the School of Drama. The idea of replacing text based play with a devising project to equip students with the final stage of actor training was decided after a lot of discussion and deliberation. The devising theatre approach is popularly used in a wide variety of contemporary theatre companies for play making. Various theatre schools in US, Australia, and Europe have included this approach in their curriculum too. The theatre troupes which implement devising projects can only proceed by addressing the socio political and

cultural contexts that they belong to. Alison Oddey observes the significance of devising projects:

The preoccupations and changes in attitudes of contemporary society are reflected in the themes, content and form of devised theatre products. A group cannot devise in a vacuum; work originates and progresses within the broadest context of culture and society, the changing world and all its events. (Oddey 2010:2)

One of the specialities of a devising project is that it does not follow a specific style or formula. With different countries, states, groups or people, devising takes different shapes. In a devising theatre piece, all participants are involved in all sorts of activities such as rehearsal, physical training, cleaning, space making, technical activities, which aids in improving the ensemble quality of the group. The ITI/TTRP project in Singapore offers an immensely effective understanding of the various abilities of the actors. The Brazilian director Leela Alaniz and the participating actors have accomplished a devising performance entitled *The Divine Wind and Tears Lost in the Rain*. The project was exceptionally helpful in developing independent notions about acting and characterization. Leela Alaniz, being an expert of ‘Corporeal Mime’ marked this play under the category of physical theatre. This play was born out of diary entries and historical facts about ‘Kamikaze’. The various techniques used by the director during the process of formulating the theatrical language of the play were what inspired me to learn more about devising. This technique is exceptional in the sense that it brings together various actor training strategies to build up a play and the fact that various training methods can be interwoven into the same process. This is what inspired the further exploration into this process. A devising project begins without any sort of a written script or performance score. A complete script

will be in place only at the end of the completion of the devising process. Devising is a process for creating performance from scratch, by the group, without a pre-existing script. (Heddon 2006:3)

The devising project was perceived as a comprehensive actor training project which could bring out all the abilities of the acting students and build their confidence in performance and this was why it was introduced to the students of School of Drama. It was the same reason that led to the students having a full-fledged devising project as the final project of their two year programme and it was chosen as the perfect theatrical tool that would allow the students to create their characters with utmost freedom of individuality. One of the obstacles that acting students often face in many theatre schools is that the directors follow populist modes of casting simply to impress the spectators without even proposing a beneficial production process that could enable the learning of acting and direction to students. The mechanical and rapid process would never result in any sort of psychological or practical advantage or experimentation. Many efficient actor trainees lose their confidence by undergoing such kinds of manipulated production process. The devising project on the other hand is a precise alternative method which could offer equal importance to all. All participants would discover stories together and explore characters together. A theatre language would emanate from nothingness and the resultant vigour, fulfillment and happiness would be cherished by the students forever. Devising performance involves evolving a theatre language which ensures equal participation and contribution of all participants. Jane Milling had conducted research on the freedom offered by theatre companies through devising projects.

The idea of a devised performance being produced collaboratively meant, with all members of the group contributing equally to the

creation of the performance or performance script. Moreover, the ideology of 'collaborative' practice, equated it with 'freedom'.

(Heddon 2006:4)

The regulated frameworks of the process of text based plays often appear to limit the creativity of the actors. In opposition to this, devising a performance offers a transparent, novel and flexible rehearsal process in which all actors can take out their complete abilities and powers. Similarly improvisation technique enables the actors to bring out spontaneous responses. The acting trainer needs to design improvisations which suit the physical features, vocal capabilities and the socio-cultural contexts of the actors. Therefore devising performances require a more elaborate time frame compared to text based plays. Such practices are also designed to explore the possibilities of organic expressions of actors that are otherwise limited within the constraints of text based plays. The exponents of devising theatre, such as Joan Little Wood, Jerzy Grotowsky and Ariane Mnouchkine initiated the exploration of possibilities of actor training and actor-spectator relations in an extensively experimental way.

A devising theatre project has immense possibilities and can begin from anything: an idea, an image, an object, a concept, a poem, a piece of music, a painting, a smell or space. The language of devising theatre is extremely powerful and authentic because it is born out of the organic abilities and talents of actors and because the characters that they create come from their most genuine selves. The actors in a devising performance have an entirely different set of responsibilities compared to conventional theatre practice. There were many companies that sought out the creative and democratic process of devising in the 1970s. In Alison Oddey's opinion, "The collective grew out of a socio-political climate that

emphasized democracy, so that many groups were interested in breaking down the patriarchal and hierarchical division of the traditional theatre company.”(Oddey 2010:8) Rehearsal spaces should be locations where actors are trained with mutual respect and democratic attitudes. This aspect is extremely important for teenage actors coming on to the theatre institution with various doubts and confusions. It was to utilise this possibility extensively that the devising project had been employed as the final stage activity of the actor trainer programme.

Misty Mountains of Mahabharatha

Misty Mountains of Mahabharata was produced as part of a course for the students of the School of Drama, University of Calicut on the occasion of World Theatre Day, 2016. The rehearsal for this performance, which lasted for two months, was an attempt at finding a novel stage language/rendering based on the utilization of the possibilities of nature and the collective as against the theatre making practices usually employed in the academic spaces of theatre. The play was an attempt at filling the gaps of historical shortcomings, both in theme and presentation.

Misty Mountains of Mahabharata is a journey through the tales of the Indian epic. Formation of tribes, family fights, wealth distribution that sustains power, battles for this very wealth, treachery, rapes, racism and the paradox of human race is presented through the visuals of the ghost land in this play. It was an attempt to redesign *The Mahabharata* by bringing forward the hidden characters of this great epic. The possibilities of this theatrical language have been well expounded upon by theatre critic Biju C.S. in his article in the weekly, ‘Malayalam’. “By employing conflicting political ideologies as the underlying theme and exposing the challenges of power-play, this play promotes an intellectual integrity

which in fact interweaves this version of Mahabharata into the contemporary global perspective.”(Page 71, 19 September 2016)

Most of the characters had a sense of the play because it is part of the stories they picked up from parents and grandparents, reading in both schools and children’s literature and also through television shows. In that sense, this formed a certain folklore, coming from the heavily urbanized state of Kerala. The epic had a certain connect to the participants in the play, given it was their shared past around shared stories. While devising this scheme, I wanted to begin on this common point but then let them explore themselves in both the script they were developing from *Mahabharata* and the story they were unraveling to each other in the process of telling the story.

The participants had three aspects: one, they all knew a story and they all shared a tradition. Two, they had their own takes on the stories and moments of the epic, if they were given a choice. Three, there was a lot of theatrical energy by placing the common themes and the peculiarities of individual participants. There was a thematic concern to begin with: it has been believed over the ages that Mahabharata was a linear transformation towards a conflict. The focus of *The Mahabharata* is the war of Kurukshetra. As the epic, as a whole, has been viewed as a preparation towards this war, the myriad wars and conflicts outside Kurukshetra are often forgotten or looked through. When the attention gets confined to a family’s war for power, the vital aspect of power regarding how it is centered on that family, receives little attention.

The consecration of power built by tactfully avoiding Hidumbi, Ekalavya, Khadolkaja, Chandala, Dravida, etc. needed a critical re-look. It

was not the art of archery/ weaponry that was taken by Ekalavya but the inner secret of power itself which was the issue. If the ruled starts to take away these secrets from the ruler, the very subsistence of power will be in danger. The Kauravas and Pandavas are the propounders of the belief that power belongs to one particular race. After destroying the races that stood against or challenged one, the war to sustain power in one's race begins. Kurukshetra happens after making sure that power is secure within one's own race. This play talks about the extent of the abundance of the stories of heads and thumbs cut off even before the war. Here the performance has been shaped by freeing *Mahabharata* of Kurukshetra as its focus. The performance has been shaped as 'Ur- *Mahabharata*' which has humans and nature as participants of equal importance.

This thematic concern required a way of building this into the scheme of presentation and that is when the decision to go back to the journey of looking for roots, the one into the environment, was brought in. The forest, meadow, lake, paths etc. helped in this exploration of the self and elaboration of the character. In order to ignite the energy of the students and raise it to animalistic energy, they were given two months of tough training involving body and mind which transformed them into actors fit in physique and clear in speech at the time of performance. The training included classes in Tai- Chi, Kalari, Koodiyattam, African dance, etc. Within the financial constraints of the Drama School, it was impossible to realize the dream of using 'music of nature' alone as background score. But the usage of wind instruments like Kogul from Attapadi and Kerala's own Mizhavu gave a strong and local texture to the performance.

Along with physical training, manners of behaviour and the making of costumes, make up, decoration also started. In all these, the materials and colours closer to nature were chosen. Leaves, jute, cloth, coir were used as costumes. The stage language was determined by the combined effort of the actors which negated the conventional notions and accustomed visuals in costume designing, make up etc., like the usage of stones, seeds, fibres, bark of trees etc. as ornaments. The play which derives its energy from the floor of the stage is a reminder that the organic nature and creativity of the epic rest on its folklore. The critic who wrote about the production, went into great detail to explore the theatrical possibilities of this play.

During the process of training, theatre practitioners experience a creative awakening on the performance floor, identify the organic connection between their bodies and the natural habitat, derive traditional ritualistic energy from the fount of nature and manifest the same onto the stage through their physical activities. The appurtenances of theatre, like the training floor, vocal culture and modulations, lighting techniques, costumes and accessories and property arrangements, all evolve in accordance with the rhythm of the body which is in harmony with nature. (C. S. Biju 2016:73)

Misty Mountains of Mahabharata was an attempt at remaking on stage a primary form of the Indian epic, which took shape mostly through oral renderings, from the perspective of the youth. The play is a return to certain reminders through the early characters and pulses of life that resurrect on stage. It is a collective effort at re-reading based on the various oral traditions and writings of *Mahabharata* that took shape at various historical points and places through stage language showcasing the formation of clans, the conquest of wealth and power, treachery, rape,

caste, racial liberation, separation from nature etc. To sum up, the play is an attempt at visualizing in Indian context, the epics of the human world that have happened or are yet to happen- an exploration in memory, language and body. Through this process, the attempt was to explore the energies that both shared and singular memories have in contrast to each other, giving a certain energy that could be called 'folklore'.

Formation of the acting body

Misty Mountains of Mahabharata has been designed as a devising project in order to give vent to the creative spirit and a sense of community. The epic *Mahabharata* and KPAC Wilson's interpretation of the epic in dramatic form, called '*Ghatotkachan*' served as inspiration but nothing was intended to be exported directly from them. Jane Milling explores such a method in her devising performance.

Many companies use text as a stimulus for their devising: adapting short stories, poems or novels; using found texts; cutting up existing texts; using historical documents; and quoting, citing or parodying classic play texts. In some community - theatre contexts devising companies use verbatim, performance, reproducing exactly the words of witnesses and interviewees, reassembled and theatricalised in collage. (Heddon 2006:6)

The process began with no definite conceptual frames to present the complex riddles of contemporary life through modern theatre. The psychological states of epic characters share something in common with that of the modern man. That is why character studies commenced on the basis of the notion that the young actors could identify themselves with their characters.

The rehearsal process began on 10th February 2016 with thirty actors and eighteen technicians at the School of Drama studio theatre. The higher education scenario in India has considerably been shaken by the tragedy of the suicide of Rohit Vemula, a Ph. D scholar at the Central University of Hyderabad. The last letter and a poem by the Dalit student Rohit Vemula were read at the beginning of the rehearsal process with the hope that the actors would be able to feel and absorb the tragedy of Rohit's life into their own body and mind and let it reflect in the work that they were to embark upon. An intense ethical and political sensibility was indirectly induced into the actors and consequently the actors started to find time to explore and discuss the degenerations in all aspects of the contemporary society.

The first attempt was to erase from the minds of the actors, the *Mahabharata* stories, images, etc. received from the television series, Amar Chitra Katha, Sivakasi print and popular films on the epic. The next step for the actors was to interact with people from various backgrounds and record a version of *Mahabharata* from their perspective. The written text of *Mahabharata*, ascribed to Vyasa, is restricted to a single genius, while the oral traditions encompass community and tradition as resources. The oral traditions of *Mahabharata*, archived in memory in an unwritten form, are perennially subjected to reconstruction and innovation. With time, space, ethnicity and individual, the epic is continuously modified. Instead of using a single source, the narrative keeps shifting across multiple sources. The stasis of written text is not applicable to the oral tradition. That's why the actors were directed to go beyond the *Mahabharata* text of Vyasa to multiple oral and narrative traditions and subsequent deviations in search of the perceptions of *Mahabharata* by each individual. The theatre language which emanates from this process

could undoubtedly resonate with the contemporary times. The acting can be elevated to meaningful levels by the implementation of the actor's body right from the initial stages of research and discovery. Different oral traditions of the legend of *Mahabharata* have prevailed before and after Vyasa's textual version. The local narrative of *Mahabharata* has an extensive bearing upon the local cultures and experiences of life.

In order to recreate *Mahabharata* in a contemporary context, the actors need to be socially active and well-informed. It was in order to facilitate process of creating a physical and psychological condition befitting such a state that the students were asked to go out and discover the different versions of the epic followed or believed by different sects of people. By sharing all the gathered information with each other in the group, the students were able to learn about the plurality of the epic and the need to reconstruct it in a contemporary setting. This also gave them a good understanding of what their forthcoming practice and improvisations were going to be like.

Exploring words

The next step was for each actor to identify one word that they associated with their favourite version of *Mahabharata* and create various improvisations based on those words. For example, improvisations were based on words like ethics, authority, battlefield, war and deception. There were both solo and group improvisations based on such words. All these became the first steps towards identifying what sort of theatrical language should be employed for the play.

Dramaturge

Meanwhile, the students of direction, who were to handle all the technical aspects, were being allotted different responsibilities. One of the most important posts among these was that of the dramaturge. The reason for selecting one of the students to be the dramaturge was to help with any kind of research about all this information and also in order to disseminate information about the different versions of *Mahabharata* and facilitate conversations and discussions amongst fellow students even during the nights, in their hostel rooms. Many different works of literature based on the *Mahabharata* were read during rehearsals in order to inspire the creation of an original dramatic text. These included P. J. James's *Vyaathabharatam*, M. T. Vasudevan Nair's *Randaamoozham*, V. S. Khandekar's *Yayati*, P. K. Balakrishnan's *Ini Njan Urangatte*, Ulloor's *Vidurabhiksha*, Yashwant Sawant's *Karnan*, A. L. Bhasham's *The World That Was India*, Kutti Krishna Marar's *Bharatha Paryatanam*, J. H. Hutton's *Caste in India*, Sukumaran Muthukulam's *Mahabharathathilode Oru Manasastra Paryatanam* Koyikkal K. Jacob's *Mahabharata* (For Children), Velappan Alappat's *Karuththavarude NaattilNinnu*, K. Venu's *Prapanchavum Manushyanum*, Vijayan Vallikkaavu's *Arangubhaashayum AadimaMalayalavum*, P. K. Balakrishnan's *Ezhuthachchante Katha-Chila Vyaasa Bhaaratha Pathanangalum*, Sreemoolanagaram Mohan's *Abhimanyu*, V. Unnikrishnan Nair's *Draupadi*, Kannassa Mahakavi's *Paattu Mahabharatam Bhaarathachambu*, Plays based on the Mahabharata written by Bhasa, Dharamvir Bharti's *Andhayug*, *Yugant-The End of an Epoch* (A Documentary on Mahabharata) and Peter Brook's *Mahabharata – Film Version*, all of which were read and/or watched by the director and dramaturge in order to gather information and inspiration and relevant knowledge was passed on to the students. By running improvisations of different parts of the *Mahabharata* with the help of the

dramaturge, a rough structure of the play was arrived at. This new and original dramatic text was created in an effort to give voice to certain hidden secrets and silenced characters from the *Mahabharata*.

Preparing the Stage

The earth is the source of primal emotions. An open, forested area inside the campus was chosen to be the stage for this production in order to familiarize the actors' bodies with the beliefs and the energy of the soil and help them embody a primitive and organic culture. This developed as a piece of environmental theatre that made use of the vast backgrounds of the Kole wetlands, the sky, the winds, the bamboo fields, the highs and lows of water and soil erosion and the surrounding greenery. The aim was to have a pure form of presentation where the actors couldn't hide anything from the audience. Hence, right from the initial parts of the preparation of the stage, the actors became partners. Since the actors came together as partners to clear the forests, level the ground with soil and set up platforms, a very close bond was established with their performing area right from the beginning. Such activities helped the students come up with a new style of acting for the purpose of this play. Experience was given top priority while formulating all the staging techniques. A comprehensive presentation that involved all forms of visual experiences instead of relying on text was the thrust of the project. The stage was set up and arranged in a way that there seemed to be no distinction between the audience and the performers. The actors experience and implement a sort of freedom in environmental theatre because of how closely it is associated with nature, unlike other forms of theatre. Only if the acting and all other aspects of theatre came together in the perfect manner, would the beauty of the space add value to the production and take the audience to a new level of appreciation. Otherwise, the audience will see the space only as a forested, ugly, place

that is of no value or importance. The open skies, the tall bamboos, the high and low mounds of soil, trees, climbers and creepers, twisted, hanging branches, all added value to the play because of the creative physical and psychological activities and efforts of the actors.

Training

Certain special training techniques were introduced to the actors as part of this particular project. Precise instructions were provided to all trainers about all the aspects that they were to focus on. Under the tutelage of music instructor N. K. Madhusudhanan, the students trained primarily in vocal exercises and in order to establish basic rhythmic patterns, they engaged in learning certain percussion syllables, rhythms, verses of poems, Vedic verses. The students practised rhythmic patterns using the Kuruvadi (short stout stick) and also trained themselves to play the Australian aborigines' instrument, Didgeridoo. They also trained in animal and bird movements, basic movements of different male and female characters and techniques of warfare under Koodiyattam instructor Sooraj Nambiar. Under Kalari Guru Suvruthan Gurukkal, they learnt various footwork techniques, primitive combat movements and the use of weapons. They also worked with each other to learn physical forms of combat like wrestling. These trainings helped the students embody a very primitive style of movement and warfare. Paul Paul, who trained in Africa, taught African Mime and Movement and rhythm techniques to the students. Physical training in such a diverse array of traditions helped the students develop a novel body language that supported the format of environmental theatre. It was also decided that none of the movements that were learnt during the training would just be directly performed on stage. This pushed the students to develop their own fundamental and original body language that fit the language of the play.

Even though it is only an illusion of nature that is to be portrayed on stage, actors who have experienced varied habitats, seasons and natural phenomena will find it easier to portray the illusion much more convincingly on stage. Various different training techniques were implemented in order to inculcate a very primitive, tribal body language in the bodies of these actors who came from various geographical backgrounds. Several research oriented efforts were taken towards the formation of a new body language, like studying about various tribal cultures in Africa, especially the Maasai tribes and watching multiple films and documentaries about African tribal people and their cultures. The most fascinating parts of the training were the trips to the Kole fields and to Akhulamudissi hill in Nemmara. These trips played an important role in manipulating the diverse physical and psychological capabilities of the actors who had come together from different villages, towns and tribal settlements in a way that favoured the environment of this particular play. Long walks through the Kole wetlands at dawn and dusk greatly energised and enthused the students. Walking along the ridges between fields, enjoying the scenic landscapes, was a completely new experience for many of the acting students. The unity and enthusiasm of the group became stronger, after a journey of finding, touching, smelling and experiencing various flora and fauna that they had not discovered until then. John Gillett has written about theatre ensemble in his book, *Acting on Impulse*.

So, the existence of a company working together over a number of months is not in itself an ensemble. Even a company working over years may lack the vital ingredient to make it a true ensemble, and that is the development of a common set of values, goals, and artistic processes that are not just those of the director, but are created by

collaboration with a whole team of actors and other creative, technical and administrative staff.(2007:292)

It is not merely the acting skills that are important for the character's psyche is to be clearly portrayed to the audience. It is equally important for all actors to be on the same page, build a mutual understanding and respect through the process of the play. It was in order to facilitate this that a trip was planned to Akhिलamudissi hill in Nemmara, the geography of which is extremely similar to that of the play. A lot of measures were taken for this trip to be a sort of relief from the continuous, tiring rehearsal process. One day before the trip, a group travelled to the house of one of the students, Sumesh, who lived near Nemmara in order to prepare all the food that would be required. All arrangements for climbing the hill were also taken care of, with help from the local community. The next day, everyone enjoyed the travel to Nemmara in a bus and started the climb post breakfast. The spirit of youth let the initial stages of the climb leading to this vertical, dense forest being passed merrily, but later on the journey became progressively difficult. With help from people with experience and from each other, we kept climbing upwards. Some of the dangerous parts of the climb instilled some fear in everyone. But the scenery that could be seen as the climb progressed comforted everyone. Just as the troupe was about to reach the top of the hill, everyone was shocked when a forest fire started spreading. It became terribly hot and extremely difficult to breathe. The troupe immediately started trying to climb back down. Some even fell out of the group. But, leaving aside all conflicts and with one mind, everyone helped each other and managed to get every single person to safety, albeit with a few small injuries here and there. Although accidental, the changes and realizations that it brought to the group were remarkable. Everyone realized that if the actors were able

to bring such a genuine collaboration to their performance, they could do wonders on stage with the play. Often, most theatre companies find it difficult to achieve such a genuine quality of the collective. John Gillett has written about this in '*Acting on Impulse*'.

For there to be genuine collaboration between actors, without whom drama would not be brought to life, and the rest of the creative team; for there to be more collective control of material and process; for there to be common aims and a unified process of working, we need ensemble companies. Ensemble means together. (2007:292)

On reaching the foot of the hill, the group refreshed themselves by swimming and taking a bath in a pond in the village and sharing stories of dangerous experiences with each other and returned to the rehearsal camp with renewed vigour and excitement. Such physical and psychological stimulation and consciousness in the actors was foreseen when this trip was initially planned. Mechanized lifestyle and the modern environment pose a multitude of obstacles to the creativity of an actor, especially since humans are social animals. Today, actors lack concentration and are becoming more lethargic. There are many factors obstructing the actors from giving wholeheartedly dedicated performances. Such journeys back into the womb of mother-nature can help actors gain the emotional strength and alertness required to overcome these obstacles. Through such journeys the frailties, vices, anxieties and haughtiness of the mind can be removed without much special effort.

Being eighty percentage non-verbal, the speaking in this play was limited to the monologues of characters played by the senior students who had taken up acting as their specialization. This assignment was chosen in

order to give the students an experience of acting with speech. The instruction to the students was to identify from *Mahabharata*, characters that had mostly remained unnoticed or silenced. The students were challenged to identify characters with life experiences and social status that were similar to their own. Identifying characters in such a manner can make it easier for the actors to internalize their characters and also make it seem like they are opening themselves up to the audience with their performances. The acting students chose characters like Karna, Parasurama, Bhima, Hidimbi, Sanjaya, Ekalavya, Shikhandi, Shakuni, Abhimanyu, Vidura, Drona, Ashwathama and Ghatotkacha. The next step was to frame the monologues, linguistically and content-wise, in a manner that fit both the interpretation of the actor as well as the theatrical language of the play. With the help of the dramaturge, the texts of the monologues were modified and edited to suit the language style and the socio-political and personal perspectives of the actors. Such modifications helped the text to free its identity from that of classical characters and give it a contemporary context. For example, the monologue of Vidura's character has been added below.

Vidura: These are signs: Signs of a country masturbated by brutal rulers. A human race lived here who forgot their duties, loved ones, humanity and sought for lands and borders. Poor people had to suffer for this. They silenced the ones who questioned authorities. This country belongs to the people. (A monologue from the play)

Perhaps the most important trait for a good actor to possess, is an individual perspective of the society around him/her. Instead of just looking at theatre from one angle, as a work of art, it is important for the actor to be able to see the whole of society through theatre. It was with

such a perspective in mind that the acting students were directed to work on such monologues that could be added to the play.



Students rehearsing for *Misty Mountains of Mahabharata* at the venue that they themselves built into the stage

The collection of various data required to create the theatrical language of the play and the attempts to shape up the different scenes of the play began simultaneously. Different aspects of preparation were scheduled at different time periods each day as rehearsals began in a tight schedule. Since the rehearsals were to happen in an open space, day time was mostly set aside for technical work due to harsh sunlight and heat. The schedule for rehearsal days approximately resembled this order: Kalaripayattu, Tai Chi, Koodiyattam, Yoga and African Mime and Movement in the mornings, improvisations and discussions as part of scene work between 10 am and 2 pm, costumes, ornaments and sets

preparation between 2pm and 5 pm, and vocal training and background music preparation in the evenings. Interspersed into the schedule at various intervals, were different theatre games in order to improve the actors' physical alertness, focus, mutual relationship, spontaneity, understanding of the space, imagination, mental release, etc. John Gillett's writings about the Stanislavski approach describe how these qualities affect characterisation.

Whatever happens in performance derives from imagination and action we give particular qualities to places, people and relationship. Equally, we need to endow objects with physical and psychological qualities so that they become very specific to us as a character. We make them what they are actually not. We personalize them. When handling them we release psychological and emotional life that informs an audience more fully about who we are as the character.

(2007:127)

In order to familiarise themselves more deeply with the stage, audience and the environment, some of the senior actors built temporary huts using bamboo and other natural materials, where they could take rest, work on their characters and store all the costumes, ornaments and weapons they had chosen for their characters. It was a wonderful experience to watch these actors work so sincerely and be able to effortlessly show exceptional and matchless character portrayals.

By laying out the possibilities of improvisation for the actors, my experiment as director and trainer was to construct a fundamentally new impression about environmental theatre through acting. The primary challenge faced by the actors right from the initial stages of production, lay

in figuring out how to formulate each scene in a manner that the creative output generated a sensorial experience through its visuals and the actors' movements. The primary aim was to captivate the audience with the experience that was created through the acting, inclusive of the actor's movements, expressions and costumes, instead of focusing on the story, the ideologies behind it or the reflection of real life. The most essential features of the play were the unconventional stage where it was to be performed and the organic, authentic acting style. Hence, each stage of improvisation was constructed in a manner that suited the creation of a very unique theatrical language.

First, each student was asked to recite the story of *Mahabharata* as they knew it. By the end of this session, even the actors who hadn't read *Mahabharata* until then, got a rough understanding of the written version of *Mahabharata* that had been passed down from generation to generation. As the next step the students were divided into two groups and asked to improvise the story of *Mahabharata*, from beginning to end. This improvisation exercise was to be in a non-verbal format. This facilitated the beginning of the exploration of the possibilities of the actors' bodies. Prominent French theatre practitioner Jacques Lecoq has written about the importance of non-verbal improvisation.

We approach improvisation through psychological replay, which is silent replay involving reviving lived experience in the simplest possible way. Avoiding both transposition and exaggeration, remaining strictly faithful to reality and to the students own psychology, with no thought for spectators, students bring a simple situation to life: a class room, a market place, a hospital, the metro.

(Lecoq 2001:29)

All improvisations in the first stage were done in the non-verbal format. In the next stage, the students were divided into various groups and asked to perform certain major incidents from the Mahabharata in detail. Once almost all major parts of Mahabharata had been covered, the next step was structured improvisation. The director and dramaturge picked out certain scenes from the previous improvisations that could fit into this play's politics and interpretation and laid them out for structural improvisation by the students. Major episodes like the house of lac, the game of dice, the childhood and weapons training of Pandavas and Kauravas, life of Hidimbi and the Kurukshetra War, were all added within the frameworks of these scenes and improvised, based on the instructions given by the director. The final blocking took place only when the students and the scenes were taken through various levels of improvisation. These levels included – Improvisation based on each student's local ritual and folk forms, Improvisations that made analogies with current affairs of the contemporary world, Improvisations that seemed to happen in a child's world. The final instruction given to the students was that the body language to be used on stage was supposed to have been derived from the movements of primitive early men and the rituals and traditions of tribal people. Constant reminder about the requirement of a very primitive form of Mahabharata, given at every stage of improvisation, led to the development of a very primitive style of geography, farming, lifestyle, art of homemaking, costumes, ornaments, food habits, domestic tools, war techniques, weapons, body painting and other rituals. The contribution of the actors' improvisations was of great value in making this a family story, war saga and cultural heritage of epic proportions. (Annexure 11)

The first show of *Misty Mountains of Mahabharata* was on 27th March 2016 at the School of Drama and Fine Arts campus in Thrissur. The first presentation as part of World Theatre Day was followed by two more days of house-full shows at the same venue, giving the acting students a peek into theatre in the real world. The subsequent shows after the first one are what give the actors an opportunity to experience and identify the finest details of acting by themselves and refine their performances. In order to be able to deal effortlessly with the behaviour of nature during show-time, audience reactions and unexpected occurrences on stage, it is important for the actors to repeat the shows multiple times. That is why a few performances had been organized for limited audiences, four or five days before putting it up for open audiences. This helped the actors improve their self-confidence and develop a natural flow of events on stage. These continuous shows also helped integrate acting with all the other aspects of the production. The actors were able to develop a new, original style of acting, because of the use of natural elements like bamboo groves, trees, sand and water on stage. This method was able to shape these participants into dynamic actors with high animalistic energy. Poet and theatre critic Ayyappa Panicker aptly called this style of acting, 'Environmental Acting'. The environment around the actors exerted influence on the acting and the audience experience. The most explicit example would be the entrance of Vyasa. If he had entered from the wings on the side of the stage, instead of jumping in from the heights of the bamboo groves, it is highly doubtful whether the movement and expressions would have had as much impact, if any.

The most important characteristics that led to the success of the play were nature and the energy that the actors possessed and diffused. It was evident that the backdrop of nature had been saturated with the

nuanced emotional undulations in the play. The energy of the environment was most compelling primarily during character entrances. This energy also became the most important element of the production.



Actor Sumesh's entry as Vyasa in *Misty Mountains of Mahabharata*

Through the acting training that took place as part of this process, it was possible to establish a sense of self control in the actors. It is that sense of control from which the actor has to foster his/her freedom. It was because this production was approached as a devising project that such a sense of freedom was made amply available during its process and nature itself could play such a huge role in the play. In fact, the training and production process of the play mostly derived elements from our own folk and classical traditions. Any art form of Kerala has, as a constituent element, something we call 'ChiTTa' (Canons). Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Theyyam, Mudi yettu, Kalarippayattu – all have their own 'ChiTTa prakaarangal' (system of canons). Only after assimilating these canons can

any actor even think of his/her creative freedom. The two month acting training process as part of the production had been formulated in a way that the significance of 'ChiTTa' could be fully understood. Hence, it was possible for the production process of this play to proceed in a manner that allowed its actors complete freedom. Even though enough freedom of character interpretation had been granted to all actors based on their abilities, the director was still able to control or edit any of the movements that did not gel with the overall interpretation of the play.

The primary concern posed by both the students as well as the audience members who witnessed the initial shows of the play was whether such a play could be reproduced in any other venue. This project was initiated with the understanding that the play should be adaptable to even a proscenium stage. Even though the play was presented as part of the 9th International Theatre Festival of Kerala at the same venue on campus, there were subsequent shows at the Calicut University campus as well as in Kerala Kalamandalam as part of Nila Festival. Although there was no change in the basic structure of the play, each venue provided a different experience of the production to both the students as well as the audience. The fact that the actors were able to quickly adapt to every new setting was due to the camaraderie of the group as well as the special training methodologies that they had undergone. The actors were able to undergo some form of transformation at every venue as well as take the audience with them through each transformation. The invaluable experience of transcending beyond the boundaries of the theatre - that is the truth of theatre.

Sarojini Naidu School of Communication and Arts, Theatre Department, Central University of Hyderabad

The Sarojini Naidu School of Communication and Arts of Central University of Hyderabad was established in 1988 by the then Vice Chancellor Bhadriraju Krishnamurthi. The interdisciplinary Masters and Ph. D courses began to be offered in four different departments. These departments – Dance, Theatre, Fine Arts and Communication – began operation at the residence of Sarojini Naidu, called ‘Golden Threshold’. From 2002, operations shifted to the main campus. The Theatre Department runs a three-year Master’s program that focuses on practical and theoretical works. The department follows a syllabus that optimizes the manipulation of all contemporary possibilities. Production Process, Play Production, Basics of Design, Theory and Practice of Direction, Design and Direction, Basics of Acting, Styles of Acting, Acting in Play Production (Classical/ Traditional/ Folk/ Modern/ Western / Modern Indian/Contemporary approaches), Theatre and New Context, Community Theatre or Applied Children’s Theatre & Theatre in Education, Theatre Management were the different subjects that were primarily handled. Moreover, in their second year, the students get to choose a specialization from three options - Advanced Course in Design and Direction, Advanced Course in Theatre Studies, Advanced Course in Acting and Children’s Theatre. Under the leadership of prominent theatre practitioner V. S. Sharma, faculty members like D. S. N. Moorthi, Bhaskar Shewalkar, Dr. N. J. Bhikshu, Dr. B. Ananthakrishnan and Dr. Jolly Puthussery made immense contributions. (Annexure 12)

The training methodologies adopted to train the students of Hyderabad Central University were very similar to those used to train the students of School of Drama, Thrissur. Hence, those methods shall not be

elucidated a second time here. Nevertheless, some elements had to be modified and made different from those used at School of Drama, since the students here came from all parts of the country. The following parts will try to explain these elements and the devising project that took place towards the end of the course, in detail. It was such a diverse group of students with vastly varying perspectives and experiences that I had the chance to work with, during my initial years as a trainer. My primary goal during those times was to transcend the boundaries of language and culture and work towards the welfare of each student. The schedule that was followed included physical and vocal warm up exercises in the morning and acting theory and practice during the sessions before 10 am. Kalaripayattu, Yoga, Lecoq's 20 Movements, Suzuki Method, Tai Chi, Laban Technique and Monologue & Scene work were the different methods that were used to train the students. Some of the methods that differed from those used at School of Drama have been explained below.

'Real Life Character Recreation Exercise' was introduced to the acting students as a stepping stone into character acting. The goal is for the acting student to observe a chosen character from the neighborhood and try to impersonate the character and become that person in their own habitat. The student is given almost a week's time to observe and understand the character as much as possible. The techniques taught to the students for movement analysis of the subjects' bodies were derived from those of French theatre practitioner Jacques Lecoq. "I begin by analyzing the movements of the human body based on three natural movements which occur in everyday life - undulation, inverse undulation and eclosion." (Lecoq 2001:71)

The primary responsibility of the student is to interact directly with the character he/she chooses for observation and impersonation and gather enough information, then use similar costumes, properties and recreate the space they occupy in order to transform into the character as believably as he/she can. The student is to head towards the final performance only after collecting all relevant information, like the height, build, colour, posture, distinctive and hereditary features - walk, mannerisms, clothes, voice, smell, diction, etc. and sharing them with the trainer and applying all feedback. This exercise gives way to a very fun and yet profound characterization technique. This exercise also helps in identifying the possibilities of a complete transformation through a highly organic approach. John Gillett has expounded upon organic acting in his book *Acting on Impulse*.

With representational work the character is outside you, the actor. It is visualized with the conscious brain and then imitated, like holding up a drawing of a real person. The character is described and shown, represented at a distance. Organic acting involves recreating human experience using the actors own make up - mind, body senses, emotions, imagination, will, intellect, experience - as the raw material through which they will be transformed into the character. The real experience and processes we go through in everyday life are reproduced through observation, imagination, and recreation in rehearsal and performance, following natural, justified truthful steps.

(2007:4)

Once the actor has internalized the character completely and performed after careful observation and study, he/she will be in a place to use this technique to master any character, however difficult or strange.

After the final performances of all characters the students and the trainer are to conduct a careful analysis of the exercise.

Local Market Devising Exercise, based on the theme of a local market was introduced as part of the syllabus in order for the students to learn group dynamics and get a closer and deeper understanding of some of the more profound moments in life and a vast variety of different characters. This process had been systematized in a way that every single student in the batch could engage themselves in a compelling manner. This exercise, because of its devising-like nature, can also be seen as an initiation leading into the devising project which is the final leg of the acting training. Everything that actors need to know and every rule they need to follow while working as a group can be acquired through this exercise. South American theatre practitioner Augusto Boal has written about how theatre helps in developing new prospects for group dynamics.

Boal's method of working are useful for any group devising theatre. They enable an exploration of individual and group dynamics, relationships between people, sensitivity, trust, giving and taking, and listening skills. They can help establish those people in a group with a need to assert themselves, to be recognised, quick to intervene or criticise the work. Some techniques engage with the world of fantasy or imagination, whilst others encourage members of a group to become more open to new ideas, humble in opinions, observations or comments, to be able to distance themselves or stand back at times, to directly say what is felt, and to be more flexible or adaptable as appropriate. (Oddey 2010:176)

There were many reasons for choosing the local market as the subject for this exercise: The primary reason being the market's credibility as a meeting point for people from all over the country, from all walks of life. The market is a place that facilitates the buying and selling of any commodities that anyone produces, like farming products to home appliances. The market of a particular region reflects the financial, cultural and political scenario of that region in a unique manner. This lively setting that brings people from all strata of the society together, with no discrimination, is no less educational or entertaining than a theatre. When all the traders, customers and people of various dispositions, converging from diverse origins, disperse at the end of the day, even a lively marketplace seems like a deserted performance arena.

An acting student has plenty to learn and understand from a market. The market plays a major role in saving a particular region or society from exploitation. It is a lively place where people can interact with each other and buy or sell local and imported commodities at fair prices. Often, such markets also act as the birthplace for various social reforms. These were the main reasons for proposing the idea of a market as a stimulant for the acting students. The assignment given to the students was as follows: Observe the multifarious activities, characters and situations in the market at different times of the day and recreate a realistic version of the market with events that are similar to or have been inspired by these observations. The first step of the exercise was to visit the market multiple times at different times of the day. But for the first part of the observation, the time chosen was early morning, before the market had even fully awakened, rather than the busiest part of the day. The first task of the students was to observe and study how the market is made ready, how the

workers behave and interact at that time of the day, how they use their voices and get ready for the day's work. The reason for choosing this time of the day is because the high energy and voice that they use during the time when the market is alive and running has its origin early in the morning. Instead, if the students only observe the superficial aspects of a market during the busiest part of the day, their reconstruction of the market would be very shallow, heartless. This exercise also hopes to teach the students an important lesson in character work. Stanislavski had written about the approach to discovering the inner life of a character. "If you penetrate through the external facts of a play and its plot to their inner essence, going from the periphery to the centre, from form to substance, you inevitably enter the inner life of the play". (Gillett 2007:157)

Thus the students are to go and observe the market at different periods of the day in groups, under the supervision of their trainer, proceed to have discussions and take notes. Later, each student can visit the market at any time they prefer, for personal investigation, to create their own characters by meeting their subjects, communicating with them, observing covertly and gathering as much information as possible. Further, they have to pick out only the most relevant information and finally present the characters in class. It is not any kind of imitation that is sought through this process. Rather, the aim of the exercise is a very organic character development achieved by completely understanding the character in the market and infusing with this observation, a good deal of the actor's own essence. All characters developed in such a manner are then to be brought together with a central theme that has a beginning, middle and end. This devised piece is then performed in front of an audience in an open space to complete this exercise. By the end of this exercise, the students are left

with an impression of having performed a full length play and a clear understanding of how to approach a character. Another fact is that we see changes in the students' visual sense and their approach to and perspective of life. This exercise was certainly a very deeply impactful experience for the students with the market being an artistic setting involving multiple colours, commodities, instantaneous arrangements, distinct characters, obstacles in life, love and hate, all in their crescendo.

Study of Animal Behaviour

American theatre practitioner and pioneer of Method Acting, Lee Strasberg also developed an acting training technique based on animal study for character development. The influence of animal study can be seen in many famous characters played by various internationally acclaimed actors who learnt this technique. Marlon Brando spent many days observing and acquiring the movements of the gorilla and modifying them into human form for his character Stanley Kowalski from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Similarly, other actors like Lee J Cobb, Julia Roberts and Robert De Niro have all used animal study to develop characters that have earned them international acclaim.

The students of Hyderabad University's Theatre Arts Department were taken to Nehru Zoological Park, which happens to be India's largest zoo, as part of their Animal Study module. The primary goal was to study the characteristics of animals while also accomplishing a group tour with all members of the team travelling together. It is natural for every person to have similarities - both physical and internal, based on appearance and behavioural tendencies - with an animal or bird. Initially the students were given an opportunity to identify such characteristic similarities in people

around them. Then, the actors were asked to choose a particular character, find an animal similar to the character, study its body language, vocal qualities and expressions and juxtapose them in human form with the chosen character. Once the students had conducted an in-depth observation of the animals, they were asked to study and imitate the animals' characteristics, movements, time periods of activity, how they move, vocal qualities and expressions. Only after this process they would be instructed to transform these qualities into human form. This transformation is the stage that requires most attention. The adaptation of the animal quality into the human character needs to be very precise and subtle. If the actor is able to recreate animal characteristics in the character's human behaviour, the audience is sure to witness a whole new level of characterization. This exercise helps the actor in developing and experiencing behavioural qualities of the character in a much deeper fashion and also in getting rid of inhibitions and transcending boundaries of limitation. Although not exactly related to this exercise, Tadashi Suzuki, in an article, explains how the firmly rooted physical energy in human beings is definitely animalistic energy. "Animal energy here refers to the physical energy supplied by human beings, horses or cattle etc... where non animal energy refers to electric power, nuclear power and the like." (Suzuki 1995:156)

Such journeys and exercises were meant to be more than just training techniques. They were also meant to make the students better understand nature and the living beings inhabiting it and also to facilitate a deeper learning about humans and their deep connection to nature. As an acting trainer, I introduced such methods of training with the belief that only an honest person who has a lot of experience and is always open to every movement of the world can become a true actor. The fact that such

training methods could also impact the future endeavours and lives of the students was truly reassuring.

The next exercise was a Theatre Tour. Travel always leaves a lasting impression on human minds. Travelling, especially as a large group strengthens bonds and relationships. It also dissolves any malice from the minds of people. The end of a trip always leaves one rejuvenated. There are many reasons to why travel is imperative for theatre students. It is essential for the acting trainer and his/her trainees to share a bond that goes beyond one that is shared by normal teachers and students. Impediments posed by highly complex training techniques can only be overcome if such a deep relationship exists between the trainer and trainees. Stephen Wangh, whose book is inspired by the works of Jerzy Grotowski, has this to say about the qualities that an acting trainer ought to possess. “The most important thing about choosing an acting teacher is not the technique he or she teaches but whether you feel safe and inspired working in his or her presence”. (Wangh 2000:320)

The time after three months of joining a theatre institute is the most challenging for any student of acting. This is a fact that I have learnt from my experience of having both studied and taught in various theatre institutes. When the initial excitement begins to subside, each student’s individual interests and opinions start surfacing. I have also witnessed actors falling into psychological conflicts and each other’s egos, resulting from immature feelings like insecurities about one’s own capabilities, unnecessary opportunism or a tendency to overplay one’s own glories. An actor can display exemplary acting skills only when he/she is in a significantly congenial physical and mental state. However, we often come

across situations when even the slightest of tension between actors have ruined an actor's self-confidence or even the whole production.

A theatre tour was planned as part of the syllabus as a potential solution to such a constraint. Where the students should be taken? With the hope of remoulding the students' current mindsets, it was decided that they would be taken to Surabhi Natakalu Company, which happens to be the oldest theatre company in Andhra Pradesh. This company was founded in 1885 in a village named Surabhi in Kapada. Their first production was 'Keechaka Vadham'. This company used to comprise of approximately 3000 families. Although they split into various smaller fractions later on, R. Venkatarao managed to lead the largest of these groups. Currently it is being run by his grandson R. Nageswara Rao (Babji). Having performed at various venues all over the country and abroad, this company gives a lot of importance to music, dance and visual effects in its productions. Every family member joins the theatre merely days after birth and continues to do theatre related jobs till their last breath. This sight is sure to inspire any student of theatre and trigger introspection. Most members are likely to be highly skilled at theatre related jobs like acting, singing, dancing, playing instruments, set and prop design and lights. All plays that are based on mythological stories are filled with special effects. These staged wonders were what made the company so popular. One specialty of the group is the high population of extraordinarily talented singers. There are performances every single day with this group. This theatre tour enabled the students to meet this group, interact with them, witness their lifestyle up close and observe and study their theatre techniques. Having worked in association with acclaimed theatre practitioner B. V. Karanth, this company has also participated in various theatre festivals. Their dedication to the art, full-time theatre lifestyle and excellent planning of work are all great lessons to

learn for students of theatre. The destruction of pointless inhibitions and egos from the minds of the students after visiting such a theatre company that has been withstanding the onslaught of technology was evident from their change in demeanour and their later works. A good actor's mind should resemble a clean slate. The addition of such tours and learning to the syllabus of any theatre institute is essential for the reconstruction of the socially restricted mind of an actor.

Apart from the traditional university examinations and evaluations, the students were provided feedback sessions and evaluation forms at every interval to understand their progress and weaknesses in detail. This decision helped the students to understand their changes and correct weaknesses in different areas of study like movement, voice, etc. It also helped the acting trainer to understand the developments of each student and modify the training methods according to each change. The evaluation form of 2009's 1st semester student Ifra Kak has been included as an example. This was an opportunity to know the students' perspectives of how they wanted the following semesters to proceed. (Annexure 13)

The Museum of Lost Pieces

The Museum of Lost Pieces was a devising project that was produced as part of the acting training of the theatre students of S.N. School- Department of Theatre Arts, batch 2008-10. Esunath Rathod, Ram Mohan. T., Riteesh. V., Ramanujaneyulu D., Sanal N., Vengal Rao P. and Y. Venkata Balakrishna were the seven students who belonged to this batch. Belonging to a rural background, none of these students, except Sanal from Kerala, had any prior theatrical experience. The first one and a half years of their training was similar to the methods explained earlier as part of the pedagogy of School of Drama, Thrissur. This devising project

was the last leg of that theatrical training. Since the practice of devising has already been explained in the section about School of Drama, it shall not be repeated here. Multiple exercises that were part of the training process which required interaction between two genders had to be avoided, since this batch consisted only of male students. In order to overcome this hurdle during the devising project, two female students from other departments were included into this project. The selected candidates were Aditi C. from Department of History and Athmaja from the Painting Department. More students joined in from other departments to help out with the technical aspects. This play required a three month production process. Once the structure was ready, Ashley N. P was roped in as the dramaturge to help with various aspects.

The rehearsals for this play began with no preconceived notions. The assumption that a well-made text based play may not benefit the students as much as expected was what prompted the risky choice of a devising project. It was decided on the first day that the work should belong to a contemporary context and that it should explore the various dimensions of physical theatre. This decision was made since physical theatre would be able to bring the capabilities of the actors' various bodily skills and a vast variety of forms under one umbrella. Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich have written about the huge potential of using actors' bodies to facilitate a dialogue in their book *Theatre in Crisis* '.

This physical body is the meeting place of worlds. Spiritual, social, political, emotional, intellectual worlds are all interpreted through this physical body. When we work with our hands and body to create art, or simply to project an idea from within, we imprint the product with a sweat signature, the glisten and odour which only the physical body can produce. These are the by-products of the meeting

of worlds through the physical body. It is visible evidence of work to move from conception to production. Our bodies are both art elements and tools that communicate intuitively. (Murray 2015:12)

The actors' bodies were the starting point. Keen observation of the actors' bodies when they got on the studio floor for warm up was my first task as the director. The process began with movements that could distinguish the physical characteristics of each student. The distinctive lines, expressive qualities and presence of each actor's body saw improvement every day since these movements required the students to wear minimum clothing. In a short while, it became clear that it would be ideal for the play to be devised under the category of Post-Dramatic Theatre. While trying to figure out what format the play should be in, due to a linguistically and skill-wise diverse group of students, the memory of 'Cycle Yajnam's' from the 1970s in Kerala came to mind. Folk artist groups that travelled from village to village, living in tents and performing various art forms, magic and auctions were very common in Kerala in the 1970s. Astonishing audience members by performing film songs, dance, music, clowning, magic tricks, cycling and amateur circus tricks, these groups of people lived off the donations made by the audience members. The next set of days of production was spent working on taking a skeleton form of this tradition and developing it by adding contemporary elements.

The first part of this section was about giving the students really tough exercises. The first assignment was to identify and perform some sort of a special skill. Every student failed in this exercise. They decided by themselves, that they did not possess any special skill. They had to be clearly explained what would fall into the category of special skills and how to acquire them. This resulted in them discovering and showcasing

surprising skills from their childhood, some of which left even the director stunned. The actors displayed various astonishing skills like lifting a bicycle with one's teeth, chewing sharp blades, smoking a cigarette through one's nostrils, placing a large rock on one's stomach and breaking it with a big hammer, riding a bike over one's stomach, breaking tubes with different body parts, etc. All these skills were quite apt for a play that had a format similar to a 'Cycle Yajnam'.

As the next step the students were asked to perform improvisations to discover funny skills. The primary goal of this step was to discover students with clowning skills and also to develop comedic sequences for the play. The initial stages of this exercise were as disappointing as the first. Then, the students watched funny videos of Charlie Chaplin and Mr. Bean, and were also taught the movements and postures of some stock characters from Commedia Dell' arte. Before this, the students developed multiple entertaining sequences as individuals, in pairs and also in groups. Many of these sequences were worthy of being included in the play. Every time they came up with something, it had to be inducted into the contemporary context. To this effect, the students simultaneously attended sessions where they could discuss the current affairs of the world. The rest of the improvisations and exercises were all directed towards fulfilling any future requirement that this particular play format would pose. This was where the dramaturge came into the picture.

The dramaturge has risen to become a very important element of modern theatre production. The two terms, dramaturge and dramaturgy are closely interlinked. Dramaturgy is the study of the concept, form, structure and the essence of the play in production. A dramaturge is someone who helps a professional theatre group or director to bring a sense of cohesion

to the play by acting as an in-house critic during the production process. Although such movements started in the 1970s, the constant advancements in theatre-making have also led to innovations in the process of dramaturgy. This is especially true in the case of specific forms of theatre making like devising projects, which is evident from the works of certain contemporary theatre companies.

The dramaturge is expected to fulfill multiple tasks simultaneously for the theatre group and director. These include any and all intellectual exercises that would help the consolidation of the play - Research work, translation, cutting down irrelevant material, sourcing inspiration from literature, cinema, paintings, other art forms and contemporary experiences, acquiring material that can enrich the ideas developed by actors, rewriting/adaptation in case of pre-written scripts, etc. Some of the qualities that are highly essential for a dramaturge are deep scholarliness, scrupulous analytical skills, creative thinking and an ability to understand and connect with the artists' thought process. Various dramaturges who work for different international theatre companies make immense contributions to the growth of the company by performing a variety of tasks like preparing their programme material, liaising with and providing necessary resources to the marketing and technical departments. Realizing the potential of such a capacity, various international theatre schools have included dramaturgy as a module in their syllabus along with playwriting as a part of graduate and post graduate courses. Many colleges like Yale School of Dramaturgy, Leeds University's Bretton Hall, Queen Management University College Edinburgh, University of Kent, Goldsmith's College, London and Queen's College, Belfast offer dramaturgy as a major subject in their courses.

The first fifteen days of production were the most frustrating for the actors. They had to work with a completely unstructured, extremely fragmented collection of thoughts and ideas during that period. But a skeleton of the desired theatrical language had been formed in my mind, as the director, at that point. As an exercise to attain powerful and dynamic dialogue delivery, the students were asked to memories and present a speech by any eminent personality from current affairs or world history, whose personal ideologies matched their own. In order to understand the political ideologies of the actors and develop the language of the play according to this knowledge, they were asked to answer a prepared questionnaire. The following were the questions asked in the questionnaire.

1. One thing that makes you very angry about the way things are in the society?
2. Who is your hero/heroine in history?
3. What do you like about the person?
4. Name one favorite character from any movie? Why?
5. What do you like most about yourself?
6. What do you hate most about yourself?
7. What are you afraid of in yourself?
8. How do you think you can better the society?

The answers to the questionnaire gave a clear idea about each actor's intellectual quality and approach to life. It was according to all this knowledge that the scenes were prepared and characters assigned. The answers of History Department's Aditi and Theatre Department's Sanal have been attached in the annexure. (Annexure 14)

Initially the actors were asked to perform the chosen speeches in an imitative fashion. Then, after including the director's notes, they were asked to personalize the speech, deconstruct the text by adding their own

personal thoughts and give it a distinct final shape. Each of these speeches were then added to the text at crucial moments of the play. The most challenging part of my job as the director and trainer was to unite all the different scattered elements that had been developed, into one single thread, with a beginning, middle and end.

Clown-like characters, dance theatre, mask, mime, puppetry, magic, gymnastics, rope tricks, stick work, black magic, street theatre, speeches of eminent leaders from around the world were the different elements that were developed for the construction of the play. The next task was to weave a single storyline that consisted of all these different elements. Once this effort had achieved fruition the students gained a lot of self-confidence.

The synopsis of the play is as follows: A devising project of the students of the University of Hyderabad, *The Museum of Lost Pieces* begins with a number of pieces coming out from a museum: they become people and start entertaining the audience with their breathtakingly adventurous and hilarious special skills, which include breaking a heavy stone on the chest of an actor, smoking through the nose, chewing blades, breaking lighted tiles, standing on sticks and dancing with sticks and ribbons, dancing to a film song, a wrestling of the David and Goliath kind, caricature of an overgrown baby, decking up a woman with international brands and the live auction of a hen, which has the name Sati Savitri. Some of the characters fly down from the tree while some others are carried on sticks. All these museum pieces are providing all out entertainment for quite a while but slowly their essence starts getting revealed. These pieces come out of a historical museum and are going to shed the sense of complacency that has encircled them. The revolutionary speeches of Dr. Ambedkar, Martin Luther King, American woman suffragist Susan B.

Anthony, Anne Frank, Charlie Chaplin, Sahtin from *The Lower Depths*, Subhash Chandra Bose and Graylen Hagler come back live on stage, bringing out the essence of these performers. They are about to stage their dangerous performance: a play that challenges the complacencies of cool societies. The play was against the audiences, who have come wearing the badge of a smiley, the characteristic emblem of cool societies. The preparations are on. Just about when they are ready to begin, the play is banned for certain cooked up reasons and the properties are removed by black-cats of the government, who are from the audience. Fettered, the performers go back to the museum to become showpieces again. The play, that conducts itself in four languages, makes use of live music as well as recorded music and deploys a wide range of lights including ultra violet ones. (Annexure 15)

When this project was in production, the most daunting challenge was the creation of the sets. A space in one corner of the campus grounds was chosen as the venue because it was felt that an open space would suit the play better than proscenium. The scenography was made to include the huge tree and rock formation that were already part of the setting. The design had taken inspiration from many elements of the 'Cycle Yajnam' and circus tents. It was to exploit the interest and attention of the audience that the idea of having a partial tent was realized. Although all four sides of the space had been covered up, there was no roof, adding the sky as part of the aesthetics and also providing sufficient ventilation and aerial view. This provided a very special unique experience to the audience. The primary performance area was a raised platform in the shape of a semicircle. Attached to this stage was a much higher platform where the orchestra could play from.



Photograph of the set for *The Museum of Lost Pieces*

The live background music performed by a local wedding band, Sri Sai Ram Music Band, stimulated the actors a great deal, along with some recorded music. It was the years of experience of having watched various circus companies and ‘Cycle Yajnam’ groups that helped in understanding and conducting the various modules to stimulate the actors during production. The details about such processes had all been added in the play’s brochure.

The directorial note for the play was as follows: Circus, for me, was never about the smooth skills that they exhibited. Even when acrobats were busy performing or clowns were creating waves among the audience, I was looking at the wings... I always thought their task was an extreme one. They had to keep us on the height of anxiety and curiosity all the time. They would dissect moments further to do that. Later, when I went on to

become an actor, I also went through this. I understood that what an actor juggles with, time and again, is her/his life itself. It becomes history and history becomes the thing for us to juggle and have fun with. (Annexure 16). Both natural light and modern lighting equipments were used for this production. Since there were elements of circus in the play, there was great scope for colours and special effects in the light design.

It is not just the period of training and practice that aids the growth of the actor's skills, but also the repeated performances. In fact, only by repeatedly performing in front of an audience, can an actor discover the different ways of simulating physical and psychological transformation in a controlled manner. Often, most productions of theatre schools only get to be performed once or twice, even after spending a lot of time in production. This limits the possibility for the actors to understand and get accustomed to the harsh realities of theatre and acting. It was to minimize this limitation that six continuous shows of the same production had been scheduled, all inside the campus. There were five continuous shows between 29th March and 2nd April, 2009 and an additional show due to popular demand, at the Gurbakhsh Singh Maidan, University of Hyderabad, Gachibowli. Further, due to the requests of the Vice Chancellor and the student's community, there were four more housefull shows that were performed at the end of the semester. Moreover, this production also performed at National School of Drama, Delhi, as part of the 12th Bharat Rang Mahotsav in January 2010.



A scene from the play *The Museum of Lost Pieces*

Different audiences, multiple show days, a group tour for the cast and crew, performing in a different state, post-show acclaims and reviews and opinions, all play a huge part in taking the experience of a student actor to a whole new level of learning. The actors should be able to develop their senses in a way that they can adjust and modify their performing bodies according to the differing climates, audience qualities and atmospheres of different days and venues. That is why proper care was taken to provide the students twelve opportunities to perform the production and one festival tour. This whole journey aimed at giving the students a wholesome, both technically and emotionally fulfilling, form of acting training. Such projects have often made it clear that technical training alone is not sufficient for student actors. (Annexure 17) This process hoped to create committed actors who could make organic contributions to any style of production. Ultimately, what both Stanislavski

and Meyerhold spoke about, was the organic response that an actor's body should be able to create.

We summarize their statements, it turns out that the masters required from the actors body the ability and readiness to give 'instinctive', 'reflective', 'immediate', 'relevant' and 'bright' response to internal impulses and external assignments. But both impulses and assignments can be very different, almost infinitely different. Contemporary theatre is a very good example. (Droznin 2017:161)

The casting, scene making and design of the play, all happened in a manner that allowed a well-balanced, impartial treatment of all students. This did not mean that there were no leadership opportunities. In fact, the highlight of the production was the fact that every student was given a leadership opportunity at some point or the other. Such experiences are highly crucial at the developmental stages of an actor. It is not an easy task to create work of collaborative nature. This offers many roadblocks along the way. The actors should raise themselves to the level of being able to facilitate mutual give and take, constant negotiation and also develop the patience to be able to listen to and respect others' opinions. Every theatre school should develop training methodologies that accommodate and advocate such human considerations. In no way does this mean that one can never question or challenge the co-actor. As long as it is based on a foundation of mutual trust, questioning and challenging is always encouraged. None of this can be learnt by reading an acting textbook or theory. Rather, a healthy working atmosphere can only be founded upon the attitudes of actors and the virtues of the ones who give it importance. It is from such a place that actors can give birth to timeless theatrical moments.

Chapter 4

PERFORMING BODY IN SOUTH ASIAN THEATRE

Acting is a creative effort. Creation of something new from another is what every art form does. Acting is such a form where man is the most fundamental element. In this form, facts and truth are derived from the thoughts and actions born out of life. The wholeness of the art of acting is based on the perfection of the result of its own conditions. Ordinarily, we tend to be attracted towards individual characteristics of certain actors. Some of these individual characteristics are deceptive enough to have the audience perceive them as ideal traits of great acting. However these cannot be termed as acting skills, neither can they alone make one an artist. It is naïve to think that one can create illusion through acting. Such deception is not what theatre seeks to achieve. Theatre attempts to create real, yet modified versions of the truth. An actor who realizes that he/she is not just an artist, but also the most fundamental instrument of the art form, should develop skills like flexibility, fluidity, magnetism and imagination, that advance one's acting prowess, while still retaining his/her own individuality.

Although there are multiple doctrines based on the art form of theatre, and as many propagators of these doctrines, the Indian *Natyasastra* by Bharata Muni is one of the most popular and sought after works of literature. *Natyasastra* is a scientific text of epic proportions, about theatrical art forms. Written into thirty six verses, this text expounds the world of the stage and all the various facets of performance like dance, singing and music in great detail. An in-depth study of the text will prove to us that it is a treasure trove of universal knowledge. It contains all the knowledge one needs to gain about various art forms like music, literature, dance, acting and sculpting. Contained in multiple chapters, the book vastly discusses the realms of 'Rasa' and 'Bhava' and analyses 'Aangika

Abhinaya' -acting with the body, 'Vachika Abhinaya'-acting with speech and 'Aaharya Abhinaya' - acting with costumes and other paraphernalia.

The sixth verse explicates the most important factor of theatrical practice, 'Rasa Abhinaya'. It illustrates the eight Rasas, 'Shringara' (Love), 'Haasya' (Happiness), 'Karuna' (Sadness, Empathy), 'Roudra' (Anger), 'Veera' (Valour), 'Bhaya' (Fear), 'Beebhatsa' (Disgust) and 'Atbhuta' (Wonder). The 'Sthaayee Bhavas' of 'Rathi', 'Haasa', 'Shoka', 'Krodha', 'Utsaaha', 'Bhaya', 'Juguptsa' and 'Vismaya', from which these Rasas are derived, have also been described in detail in the chapter. The thirty three 'Vyabhichari Bhavas' that enhance the Rasas, followed by the detailed exposition of the conducive experiences underlying each Rasa are discussed at length. The ninth additional 'Shanta' Rasa has also been explained in the end. 'Shanta' initially had no part to play in 'Natya'.

Acting has been described as the science of imitation, by Bharata Muni in *Natyasastra*. Bharata Muni opines that Natya is an endeavour that attempts the chronicling of life which encompasses the behaviour, actions and emotions of the people of the world. Aristotle's view on Tragic plays is similar - 'Imitation of an action'. Similar reverberations of this idea can also be heard through the writings of Dhananjayan in his work, *Dasaropakam* - 'Theatre is the imitation of real life situations – Avasthaanukruthi Natyam (can be equated to the Greek term Mimesis)'. Ordinarily the term imitation means 'behaving like a particular person' or 'enacting a particular situation'. However, this is not what is meant by imitation in Theatre. In *Natya Sidhantham*, C S Biju explains with an example from Schechner's texts, that imitation is not just a mechanical repetition of actions.

“Performance does not follow a traditional stable path of action. Rather, Performance constantly undergoes rethinking and reworking

at every stage of its production. It is perpetually subjected to renovation and path change. Performance is not about mechanical repetition. Certain aspects get rejected while certain others find their place. Schechner has used the example of a trapeze artist from the Ringling Brothers Circus to elucidate the perennial evolution of Performance. This circus artist fails in her first few attempts to reach out and grab a bar, while hanging upside down from another. As each attempt results in failure, the background music ceases at a crescendo and the audience's excitement reaches a pinnacle. The relief and delight of the audience are satisfied by the trapeze artist as she swings her way to another bar. Schechner realised that none of this was coincidental, when he watched the subsequent shows. This sequence is repeated in a different style in each show. Such experiments and the resulting evolutions are regular phenomena in Performance.” (Biju 2002:55)

Imitation of character according to *Natyasastra* is not about copying external characteristics of a subject like his/her costumes, disposition, speech style, overt behaviour and distinct gestures and being unable to distinguish between the original subject and the copycat, because this does not require one to be creative.

Life experience is an internal phenomenon. An actor recreates this experience. He/she collates the overt aspects of this phenomenon to facilitate the experience he/she intends to recreate in a convincing manner. To this effect, the actor observes the various situations, contexts, emotions, gestures and mannerisms for the successful construction of the recreation. A creative, talented actor is able to assemble these different segments in the appropriate manner required for a realistic character development. In

this way, the actor presents a character worthy of audience consumption. That is, although the characters appearing in a play may seem similar to those in real life, they are not exact replicas that imitate reality. Generally, actors use different characteristics of different people in order to forge their own characters - outward appearance from one person, attitude and demeanour of another and gestures and mannerisms of yet another. All these are exercises that fall under Bharata Muni's definition of 'imitation'. It is the law of life that theatre offers. Bharata Muni's doctrines label this as 'Lokavrutthaanukarana' - the 'mimicry of actions and conducts of people'.

The first chapter of *Natyasastra*, 'Natyolpaththi' (Origin of Natya), mentions that it is the 'imitation' of life on all the three worlds (Triloka) that happens in theatre. 'Aangika Abhinaya' is the employment of different parts of the body to give rise to gestures and movements. 'Aaharya Abhinaya' is indeed the use of costumes. In many situations, the usage of costumes to depict intrinsic natures of characters can make the employment of other forms of Abhinaya much easier.

According to *Natyasastra* there are twelve forms of 'Vachika Abhinaya'. The different ways of using words, like sounds, speech and music are the primary forms of 'Vachika Abhinaya'. 'Satwika Abhinaya' has an indistinct definition. It is influenced by the psyche. The manipulation of 'Satwika Abhinaya' requires effort, even though Natya as a whole, exists within the 'Satwika' or the mind. In this case, the possibilities of Abhinaya have been divided into four types, according to the principles of *Natyasastra*.

It is Abhinaya that theatre is made of. Abhinaya (or acting) is what gives meaning to the words uttered on stage, for both the audience and the actors themselves. To act, is to deliver the whole essence of the play clearly into the minds of the audience. According to Bharata Muni, there are four types of Abhinaya: (1) Aaharya, (2) Aangika, (3) Vachika and (4) Satwika. There is another classification within this structure. 'Lokadharmi' (natural rendering) Abhinaya and 'Natyadharmi' (symbolic rendering) Abhinaya. Lokadharmi Abhinaya is based on the natural behaviour of man and derived from the reality of experience - what is called Realistic Acting in *Natyasastra*.

In ancient theatre, realistic portrayals were aplenty, considering the fact that theatre is an imitation of human conditions. It is rooted in the truth of human nature. Whoever the character may be, they ought to have a realistic, human manifestation. Moreover, their speech, behaviour and emotions have to be in human form. The performance should be realistic and believable enough to be able to influence the audience to experience the necessary sensation and react in the desired manner. When the costume, aura, style of speech, behaviour and gestures of a character are born out of recent, first hand observations and experiences of the actor, the performance becomes more natural, lifelike and truthful. Bharata Muni has written about 'Pravruthi' (Action) in acting in the Lokadharmi section. This includes local dialects, gait and costumes; this is why, Bharata Muni says, he has included Prakrit as one of the languages of performance.

On the other hand, distinct methods of rendition have been prescribed for the Natyadharmi approach. In layman terms, stylized, canonical rendition bound by traditions and conventions cannot be labelled as 'natural' or 'default'. Rather, it is scientific. However, both these

approaches are permissible modes of performance. The differences between these two approaches are for the audience to observe and utilize for an artistic experience.

Bharata Muni begins to describe the Natyadharmi style of acting by talking about historical and imaginative performance. A combination of an exaggerated narrative and highly aesthetic acting is termed 'Leela Angahara Abhinaya'. The creativity and talent of an actor can give new shape, meaning and emotions to any ordinary incident or experience, and distinguish the performance from other renditions. Moreover, this also pushes the performance to greater depths and imparts a flow to the narrative. Here, 'Natyadharmā' is at work. That is, 'Natyadharmā' encompasses symbolic and artistic acting, utilizing canonised and stylistic forms of performance. Stylization is of primary value in Indian Theatre. It is the Natyadharmi style of acting that satisfies the Indian intelligence. The recipe for Indian Theatre is not the superficiality of life, but the emotional wholesomeness of the inner conscious. That is why a scientifically stylized form of acting holds great value in Indian Theatre.

Bharata Muni, in *Natyasastra*, has explained how the different elements of Abhinaya, like text, movement, costume and emotions converge in equanimity. Text can be spoken or sung, movement, pure or interpretive, costumes can be ornamental or symbolic, and emotions can be an expression of the internal state. These four interlinked elements impart a strong framework for performance. This performance segment and its technical knowledge have been formed based on the sensory principles of using both the eyes and ears. Hence, *Natyasastra* stresses the fact that theatre is an audio-visual medium.

Besides being governed by the principles of ‘Aaharya Abhinaya’ (costumes, accessories, etc), ‘Angika Abhinaya’ (gestures, dance, etc) and ‘Vachika Abhinaya’ (sounds, spoken text, music, etc), acting is also influenced by the ways of the mind. *Natyasastra* contains only several incomplete accounts about this concept. While various complete chapters are dedicated to the other three forms of Abhinaya, the fact that ‘Satwika Abhinaya’ has not been subjected to similar detailed descriptive analysis has to be reflected upon. There is no chapter or segment with the title ‘Satwika Abhinaya. However, ‘Samanya Abhinaya’, the 24th chapter, provides a very similar lesson. It can be noted that ‘Samanya Abhinaya’ finds its origin in ‘Satwika Abhinaya’.

‘Sattwa Guna’ is the code or principle that controls and governs the expression of one’s internal emotions. It is one’s psychological superiority that becomes the sensory device for theatre. It is guided by subconscious activity. ‘Sattwa’ is awakened by centering the focus of the mind on the life that is created on the stage. This requires the ability to achieve a sense of harmony with the mind. The actor’s ability to identify with the character and attain a separate form that matches his/her own world of emotions becomes the foundation of this concept. The actor’s task is to imbibe and personalize the character’s emotional and intellectual experiences and depict them as physical sensory manifestations like sweating, horripilation, freezing due to shock, speechlessness, stuttering, going pale, shedding tears, fainting, etc. No one can shed tears without personally experiencing intense grief and deep sadness themselves. Similarly, without experiencing agitation, one cannot recreate the experience of sweating in consternation. Bharata Muni has described the various acting techniques required to reproduce such complex emotional circumstances and their modes of presentation, according to *Natyadharma*.

A more comprehensive description of 'Satwa' is a state that is achieved when a heightened sense of perception is transmitted through and enters all parts of the body. Although it is believed that the general habitat of 'Satwa' is the mind, it should be understood that the 'Satwa' is awakened in the muscles and cells of the body and its nervous system. The term 'Sat' denotes the state of 'being real'.

The following is an excerpt from C. S. Biju's *Natyasidhantham* about the unique approach prescribed by Stanislavski to incorporate the character into the actor's personality.

The character inhabits the actor's mind like a consciousness. But Natya does not transcend control. The actor transforms into another person. Stanislavski believed that it was possible for an actor to create and develop a distinct thought process and emotional disposition through appropriate training methodologies and exercises, both physical and psychological, in order to enter the inner world of another personality, while creating a character. Stanislavski would get his actors to live and experience the characters' lifestyles and perform similar activities in their lives in order to give more depth to the play and its characters. He propagated the idea that through constant practice and severe efforts, it was possible to amalgamate the personality of the character with that of the actor. (2002:59,60)

'Satwa' means to truly belong to the body. That is, to convert an idea or thought from the psychological phase into a fact in its physical state. In broader terms, 'Satwa' is a phenomenon that affects the overall physicality to instigate some form of transformation.

‘Satwika Abhinaya’ is the concept of rendering internal emotions into its physical form of Abhinaya/ acting. According to *Natyasastra*, there are eight ‘Satwika Bhavas’ - Freezing, cataplexy, fainting, horripilation, sweating, going pale, stuttering, losing voice, trembling and tearing up. When the emotions reach their climax, they become tender and delicate in their ‘Satwika Bhavas’. Thus, what is seen through this style of acting are the intricacies of Theatre. That is, they cannot be distinguished from compassion, which is the direct physical representation of any emotion. In short, ‘Satwika Abhinaya’ is the tangible, physical expression of the transitions that the inner conscious undergoes over time and the resulting involuntary manifestations. In other words, these ‘Satwika Bhavas’ originate when the emotion diffuses all across the body and thoughts perpetuate. Furthermore, when the mind decides that there is no alternative, sorrow overwhelms the body and the actor is compelled to fall into an almost paralyzed physical state. Otherwise, the mind starts to believe that it has been caught in shame, leading to the mind affecting the whole body and the person paling. The body enters a state where all the instinctive, impulsive reflexes of the body are encouraged to engage themselves in full capacity. At this juncture the actor’s ‘Angika Abhinaya’ is abated and he/she is in congruence with the mindset and psyche of the character, enabling the manifestation of the ‘Satwika Bhavas’. Bharata Muni gives equal emphasis to the different Abhinayas like ‘Satwika’, ‘Angika’ and ‘Vachika’, while defining the process of acting in the seventh chapter, ‘Bhava Vyanjaka’. However, he also declares in the 24th chapter, ‘Samanya Abhinaya’, that Natya is founded in ‘Satwika Abhinaya’. ‘Samanya Abhinaya’ generates ‘Rasa Anubhoothi’ (experiencing the rasa) through the consummate experience aroused in the audience. ‘Natya Siddhantham’ by C. S. Biju contains detailed notes about the transformation that the audience undergoes through this experience.

“The audience of the play also experiences a transformation and a ‘Natya Sancharam’. The audience that is centered around the hotspot of the play, its active participants, undergo a transition. Others only experience the ‘Natya Sancharam’. They get back to their lives, unchanged, after the play gets over. Transformations during theatrical performances happen within the audience. Such transformations can help distinguish between aesthetic drama and social drama. A technical difference is established between the spectator and the performer.”(Biju 2002:60)

An actor who produces ‘Samanya Abhinaya’ is akin to a cook who makes Rasam. The cook who makes Rasam, takes each mixture and flavour and grinds them. Step by step, following a proper procedure, he/she mixes each ingredient and cooks the Rasam. Just like the cook brings all the different flavours together and makes a paste, an actor has to combine all the different forms of Abhinaya and all other elements to present a homogenous performance. When the ‘Rathi’ Bhava stands out as the main fragrance, the ‘Sattwa’ of the performance is awakened and fills the space.

South Asian Body in Contemporary Performance

Many actors use a gesture, a walking style or a body type to get into or create a character. Using the physical body rather than going through intellectual or psychological analysis is a more efficient way of approaching storytelling. Character is one of the most important devices for a writer to use while creating a story. In order to bring out the essence of the play, he needs to create three dimensional characters. Since it is impossible to telepathically convey his ideas to the audience, the playwright uses text, subtext and implied meanings in the form of

character lines and actions. This is the character that the actor familiarizes himself with. The character becomes the main device and medium for the actor to exercise his creativity. Hence, a complete and detailed analysis of the character they are to portray, becomes imperative to enable the creative process of the actor. The first stage is the complementary exchange that should happen between the actor's body and the character's body. Stanislavski in his book 'Building a Character', talks about this. 'External plasticity is based on our inner sense of the movement of energy' (Stanislavski 1949:67) When an actor reads the script for the first time, a total image of the character that has been manifested in the script and which needs to be unraveled by the actor is formed in their mind. The playwright's propositions, both implicit and explicit, and the director's creative interpretations are important tools that help the actor to embody the character's soul effectively. The complete image of the character that is created with the help of these tools is now formed in the actor's mind. The actor uses his own attributes and identity to the optimum level in order to flesh out his character to completion. Stanislavski talks about famous actor Tommaso Salvini's experiences of developing characters.

An actor is split into two parts when he is acting. You recall how Tommaso Salvini put it: 'An actor lives, weeps, laughs on the stage, but as he weeps and laughs he observes his own tears and mirth. It is this double existence, this balance between life and acting that makes for art'.

(Stanislavski 1949:67)

Such realizations are of paramount importance for holistic character development for any actor. Living as a character and living in real life are two completely distinct elements. The daily life of an actor helps him in portraying his roles on stage. The emotions and emotional responses of a

character are for the actor to be explored and discovered anew, and not just replicated from other sources. What is necessary, is an investigation of how the emotions and emotional responses that the actor has experienced or witnessed, can be connected to those of the character. It is also the work of an actor to constantly practice and figure out how long it takes him to bring out an emotion and make it believable for an audience.

Acting is not just to make an impression upon the audience's minds but also to make them believe. It shows the audience the reality of the imagination. It is a discovery of how a human being would respond if a particular situation were to happen in real life. Stanislavski's proxy character in *Building a Character*, Tortsov, talks about this. "In order to express a most delicate and largely subconscious life it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus"(Stanislavski 1949:16) Hence, the actor's performance of the character's activities on stage should be able to emulate real life activities as closely as possible. It should give an impression of real life, while also being able to distinguish between the reality of life and the reality of stage. This can happen only when the actor is able to make his performance of the character's inner life as organic as possible. This means, an actor's job is not a mechanical process of imitation, duplication or showing off of skills. Such approaches are described as mechanical acting by Stanislavski in his book, *Building a Character*.

With the aid of his face, mimicry, voice and gestures, the mechanical actor offers the public nothing but the dead mask of non-existent feeling. For this there has been worked out a large assortment of picturesque effects which pretend to portray all sorts of feeling through external means. (Stanislavski 1949:21)

The duty of an actor is to discover truth in the character's emotions and expressions, and this requires serious effort. The only way to achieve this truthful experience of an emotion is through the actor's own emotions and expressions. This experience of an emotion that the actor needs to undergo does not necessarily mean overt display of the emotion. Here, Stanislavski seeks out the process of emotional memory recall. This method leads the actor to go beyond the surface and find the truth of his performance and emotional experience. Moreover, with artistic and creative treatment, this truthful emotional experience can enable the audience to see the character live and breathe. It is through the internal process of the actor's natural responses that the play moves forward. Each performance of each play should be new, authentic, believable and distinct from the other. The actor's technical skills, the director's talent, the playwright's specialization—none of these individual factors are more valuable than the other. The ability to give life to each character in a distinct, yet truthful manner can be achieved only through the actor's honed inner creative talent.

The Function of Improvisation in Acting

Improvisational exercises can improve the fundamental skills that an actor requires, like body movement, creativity, imagination, speaking skills, team work, etc. Improvisation is the prime cause for believability in an actor's performance. Situations are always imaginary. Stanislavski explains in his book *An Actor Prepares*, that every movement of an actor on stage is a result of his imagination.

Every movement you make on the stage, every word you speak, is the result of the right life of your imagination. If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you come from, why, what you want, where you are

going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination. That time, whether it be short or long, will be unreal, and you will be nothing more than a wound-up machine, an automation. (Stanislavski 1937:71)

Building an imaginary world is more of a team effort, rather than an individual accomplishment. It is the result of each member of the team trusting the other's abilities and making others believe in their talents. Organic, manual response to a situation or action is of top priority for such a process. The organic occurrence of such a condition is possible only through the effect of each individual's creative process and a social coming together of people who are able to accept facts. This helps the actor discover new information, create distinct characters and imaginary experiences. Improvisation is also a good method to segregate and explore actor's ideas. Many experiments are possible with this process. An improvisational exercise/performance can either be structured or structureless. Either one demands the actors to have clarity in their creative process. In an improvisational performance/exercise that is without a proper structure, there is a lot of scope for the exploration of individual acting capabilities. Improvisational exercises help an actor to balance and incorporate the ideas of the whole team. Improvisation puts forth two major challenges for an actor – to not negate even the smallest of ideas that are put forth, and to keep in mind the primary goal of the play throughout the performance.

Local Dimensions of Body Language

Theatre is an international language. More than sound and speech, the body is the prime conveyor of ideas in this form. Extensive analysis of the seemingly distinctive culture of contemporary Kerala will show that in

fact, it is an amalgamation of various distinguished cultures. Everyday cultural invasions have subjected local body language to constant evolution through the exchange of culture it has resulted in. Man is dependent on nature. Human thoughts, words and actions are directed by nature. Generally, according to different classifications, the human gestures only vary a little, according to different cultures and their psychologies. Human beings are not so different from birds and animals when it comes to reactions of fear and excitement. People from one region do not have the need to copy the emotions of sadness and happiness from those belonging to other regions. But differences in levels of intelligence may affect the ways in which the emotions affect the minds of different people.

In order to gain insight into the peculiarities of the body language pertaining to a particular region and the origins of that body language, it is important to delve into the depths of the culture of the region and understand human nature and the evolutionary stages it has seen. Understanding the ancient gestures of early men is very crucial to the study of the origins of body language. It can be seen that many theatrical forms of both the East and the West originated from different dance forms which may seem meaningless. Second only to food, shelter and clothing, dance was the main engagement for any uncivilized primitive tribe belonging to any region. In joy, in sadness, in enmity as well as mirth, in wedding pavilions as well as on burial grounds, dance was observed in some form or the other.

The tribal people from Kerala are enough testimony to this passion for dance. The wedding rituals of tribes in and around Wayanad like the Jainakurambar and the Kattunaikkar are noteworthy. Before the ceremony, the families of both the bride and groom dance together in the bride's

home. Post the ceremony, the bride and groom dance alone, and once they reach the groom's house, the groom's family dances with the couple. In short, we can see the topography, weather and the food habits of each region shaping the physical features of its inhabitants and thus affecting their religious rituals, societal practices and modes of entertainment. How this comes down to affect theatre can be seen in C. S. Biju's writing, *Natyasidhantham* based on the works of Richard Schechner.

The festivities of early men included Gathering, Livelihood (Establishing kinship, division of property, land and rights, religious ceremonies, entertainment) and breaking apart. These three divisions are still part of most performing arts. Gathering of people at the Theatre, participation in the performance, breaking away. There are so many forms of performance that happen all around us in this same order. (2002:52)

Dance is just the combination of movement and sound along with the rhythm that humans have been granted by nature. But how does the deconstruction of the body language which helps bridge gaps with other cultures take place? This is a question that requires deep analysis and research.

1. How do bodies, being urban, rural and with other cultural peculiarities, communicate with audiences from different cultures and countries?
2. How beneficial are cultural influence and training in a foreign physical vocabulary to an actor's process of creation?
3. Does an actor lose his individual identity through deconstruction of his body language?
4. How subjective is the interpretation of the body language that has been acquired as an amalgamation of different cultures?

5. How communication of ideas is made possible at an international level, for regionally subjective physical vocabulary?

Contemporary actors need to be constantly finding answers and rediscovering themselves with the help of the questions given above. These questions came to me while I was working on my character, that of Dasaratha in C. N. Sreekanthan Nair's *Saketham*, directed by N.S.D. graduate Abhilash Pillai, which was a major school production at School of Drama. That is when I also tried to find some answers. It was primarily when we travelled outside Kerala, to perform at the Bharat Rang Mahotsav in Delhi and for the Japan Foundation Asia Centre in Tokyo and Fukuoka that I had the need to make my character come alive despite the language barriers. The major challenge I faced at the beginning of the production process was how to take a character like Dasaratha from *Saketham*, which is written in a Malayalam that is influenced heavily by Sanskrit and make it understandable to audiences beyond the boundaries set by language. An actor, especially one playing a lead character needs to have enough physical presence that can fill the entire stage. Moreover, for the stage presence to be able to capture and mesmerise the audience, it is imperative to have a stylized body. Childhood plays a very crucial part in the foundation of an actor's physical vocabulary. The peculiarities of the topography of the place an actor grew up in, the traditions of the region, occupations, food habits, games the actor used to play, friendships, all play a very important role in shaping the actor's voice and physicality. By breaking out of the confines of regionalism through constant practice, an actor can take his physical vocabulary to greater levels. Such a physicality can be termed as a hybrid body or a universal body. Contemporary actors will be required to mould and re-mould their physical vocabulary and psychology into various structures, forms and guises of characters

belonging to various different cultures. The practice methodologies in acting schools need to evolve into being able to train actors to be able to mould their individual identity into that of any character with the help of different physical training techniques.

Hybrid Body

Various elements of body language that are similar in most parts of the world help the audience in understanding theatre despite language barriers. Certain human reactions to different scenarios, like certain expressions, movements, tempers, breathing patterns and states of emotion are found to follow a similar pattern all over the world. Especially the different techniques that actors learn through different physical training processes belonging to their own regions of origin, like physical balance, physical centre, weight shift, energy distribution can be found to follow similar traditions or formats as those from other parts of the world. This learning was what encouraged certain practitioners to research the meta-local possibilities of the human body. Such research was especially encouraged more in the Western countries. The book, *Crossing Cultural Borders Through the Actor's Work* has pondered over this movement.

From the beginning, the genealogy of twentieth century actor training points to the presence of elements and principles from eastern performing arts. As access to international travel became easier, western practitioners came into direct contact with various styles of eastern dance theatres and embraced such influences in their own theatre making. (Nascimento 2010:77)

For actors who are looking to explore the vast arena of possibilities that world theatre has to offer, such local physical vocabulary can at times prove to be limitations and at other times become a huge asset. Often, a

very rural, local physicality and vocal quality proves to be a disadvantage while trying to fully accomplish the rendering of a character written in a poetic, realistic and sensitive style. At other times though, a very local physicality can also pervade all linguistic barriers and leave any audience awestruck. The regional physical vocabulary of the Indonesian actors who were part of the 1997 production of *King Lear* by Ong Keng Zen in Singapore, contributed to the huge success of the play in many ways. The Intercultural Theatre Institute strives to create actors who can deconstruct their regional physical vocabulary and rebuild it into a hybrid, global physical vocabulary that can easily flow and fit into any style. The studies of world famous actress Roberta Carreiri are noteworthy in this aspect. “Whenever possible, I begin working on the new performance by learning a new technique in order to cleanse myself of the physical dynamics of my character in the preceding performance.” (Nascimento 2010:94) Actors who are able to transcend their own physical limitations through dedicated, constant practice of various traditional and modern performance art forms and martial art forms from all over the world will find it effortless to be able to adapt to the changing trends of Theatre in the future. World Theatre will soon witness an exchange of physical vocabulary across the world in a way that revolutionizes the viewing experience of the audience community all over the world with unusual acting methods.

Preparation of Performers in Technological Environment

Theatre has always had its place in the world as a reflection of society. It uses the actor’s mind, body and voice to reflect the history, culture, politics, ideologies and current affairs of the world. Theatre is made with the involvement of the society. Technological advancements have been constantly changing theatre and the environment around it. While any other art form takes several years to adapt to any change, theatre

alone has been able to constantly evolve every second, according to changes in trends and advancements in technology and grow to newer levels. Actors are the ones who need to identify these changes and instigate the changes in the art form. Cronenberg, who has studied the changes in the mind-sets of the audience according to advancements in technology, has written about this condition. “Your reality is already half video hallucination. Soon it will become total hallucination. You are going to have to learn to live in a very strange, new world.” (Causey 2006:15)

We can see these changes happening everywhere – villages, towns, drama schools, everywhere. Today, technology has the ability to aid our imagination at every level and in any proportion. Computer generated characters, Digital scenography, multimedia style of work, virtual reality dating game, Technological projections, Sensor technology, Digital technology, 3-D Projections, video designer, virtual reality mask, digital text, live video are all now being used effectively in this changing arena of theatre. Many theatre practitioners and enthusiasts are beginning to voice out concerns regarding the power of technology and how it might completely destroy the natural, organic quality of the actors. There is a lot of scope for the overuse of technology to dilute and destroy the actor’s crucial moments on stage. Mathew Causey’s research in this area is quite noteworthy.

The point I have tried to make in this chapter is that there has been a struggle between the material body and the desire for constructing stage illusions and perfecting the plastic art of the theatre. The technologies of the virtual continue the process of picturing the world. Current advances in computerized scientific visualization afford unique vision of the body and of the world. Now that most

everything can be transposed from analogue to digital and rendered geometrically, the process of perspectivalism accelerates.

(Causey 2006:90)

It is now very common to see many directors using technologically advanced theatre language to create quite an explosion on the stage. Some of the directors/companies who have very effectively amalgamated new theatre technology in their works are Rimini Protokoll Company (Germany), Simon McBurney (London), Robert Wilson (America) and Amitesh Grover (India). Rimini Protokoll Company created a new stage language with their project '*Situation Room*' that transcended all traditional techniques and formats of the theatre to give birth to a new consciousness in the audience. A highly complex play that uses the most advanced technology to tell twenty different stories from twenty countries that have first-hand experience of war in twenty different rooms. Twenty participants who simultaneously walk into these different rooms with iPads and headphones in hand. They themselves become the actors of the play. The participants move forward with the help of the instructions given through the iPad. The participants are to progress through the play by witnessing and experiencing first-hand the damages of the war, both physically and emotionally. The director very skillfully integrates real-life experiences of survivors of the war and also made the participants get involved in various situations of the war with the use of the most advanced technologies. What the participants take away with them as lessons from this play, could be a voice recording of an interview, any objects that were discarded during the war, video recordings obtained from CCTV footage or even photographs. The uniqueness of this contemporary play is that all of this becomes the 'text' of this play. The above information includes

facts based on the author's discussion with Kesavan Namboothiri who had completed a programme in Arts Management from Germany.

The devising project that new media artist Amitesh Grover facilitated for the BTA and MTA students of School of Drama and Fine Arts in Thrissur in the year 2012 was a complete deconstruction and rebuilding of the students' ideas of theatre and acting. Abandoning the narrative styles of well-constructed plays that followed '*Thrissur Illingix*' was created using the actors' own memories of their childhoods and their experiences in the Thrissur town marketplace. Beyond the overt settings, Amitesh gave more importance to the more internal preparation for the play. This resulted in very organic performances from the actors and was a special experience for the audience. Amitesh's style of direction and acting practice was able to develop a style of acting that aptly suited the current era of microscopic visual culture. It is important for drama schools to constantly encourage the implementation of such experimental works that are investigative in nature to be able to develop the kind of theatre and actors that this century demands. As opposed to some superficial works that just project some visuals over a random white cloth that has been hung behind the stage, the works of performance makers such as Amitesh Grover, who integrates technology in different meaningful ways into modern theatre are a welcome sight to contemporary theatre that will awaken a new consciousness.

The people most willing to accept and adapt to such changes are the youth. New generation performance makers are ready to use technology to help create very distinct theatrical experiences. Theatre critic Zachery Small at Howl Round wrote the following in this context. "Today's playwrights and actors need to embrace motifs such as the stock market,

drone technology in war, and digital communication to tell the stories of our time. We are a culture created through technology, and that needs to be depicted and explored on the stage.” (Ozobot & Evolve: 2019) This is an age when it is highly essential for actors to have in-depth knowledge as well as utilization of modern technology. Constant understanding and study of, and touch with different technological developments like Reflective blogs, YouTube, digital documentation, social networks and Whatsapp will help in developing and maintaining actors with bodies that are compliant to the requirements of the contemporary society.

New branches of theatre are taking shape all over the world as a result of the works of experimental theatre makers who integrate technologies like virtual theatre, Tele present performance, social gaming, digital theatre, cyber theatre, techno drama, computer generated characters in their works. The specialty that sets theatre apart from other forms of entertainment like cinema and television is the live nature of its performance. ‘Liveness’ is a word that should be subjected to rediscovery in this world that sees with cameras for eyes. There is no need to be wary of the arrival of technological liveness in the new branches of theatre. In fact, it is the amalgamation of the most active animalistic energy of the actors with the technological advancements in the world that are most necessary for contemporary theatre and its audiences.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The form or content of the evolving movements cannot be comprehended and defined at the moment because of the significant emergence of the post millennium theatre whose style, practice and form are incomprehensible in nature. As far as theatre practitioners and trainers around the world are concerned the wide variety of training conventions and practices cannot be brought together under one rubric. The preferable method is to recreate and reorient the potential acting training projects by taking into consideration the psychophysical potential of actors by maintaining the versatility of the theatre schools. The focus on distinctive features of each theatre school to be interlaced with the possibilities of technology is the need of the moment.

The predominant movement after 2000 is the rise of postmodernist theatre initiated by Heiner Muller, Robert Wilson and Ariane Mnouchkine. The emphasis on content and plot were ignored in favour of the direct interaction with the spectators, which has become the matrix of a new theatre practice and style. Innumerable revolutionary movements and experimentation have taken place in the structure of the play, acting and technological details. The conventional well-structured playwriting emphatically paved the way for initiating theatre practices in distinct, unconventional and heterogeneous ways. The collective experience of aesthetic emerged by dismantling the individualistic aesthetic structures which evolved through a single playwright ultimately results in the collective text in contemporary theatre. Specifically the performance text of a wide variety of projects such as devising project, site specific work, open air action and online theatre is formulated from the collective effort. The new generation theatre practice and playwriting strategically reject the well-structured conventions of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov and obliterate the plot, breaking the continuity and challenging the traditional

image of the protagonist. This theatrical style also must be incorporated in the actor training methods to contain prompt psychophysical deliberation and this is what must be shared with aspirant acting trainees.

One of the foremost features of contemporary Indian theatre is the innovations related to light design by a significant number of experimentalist directors. Exceptionally meaningful and rigorously beautiful stage craft, exploration of unending possibilities of music and multi meditational technologies have become key aspects of the emerging theatre. Such experimentations are frequently accomplished at the expense of novel, effective and lively acting. At times the exponents of the new theatre failed to incorporate the potentials of acting to the structure of the stage. Whenever the new movement in theatre are referred, scripting, direction and technology have been given importance. No proper discussions are carried out on the timely shifts in emphasis and prompt diversions in style of acting. Proper significance is to be given to the actor in all aspects of a theatre production and such an actor would forget the hard earned craft and technique and hide the mechanism during the exposition of the character. Such an actor is called as invisible actor. Renowned Japanese actor Yoshi Oida derives the notion of invisible actor as an actor who must disappear in acting.

For me, acting is not about showing my presence or displaying my technique. Rather it is about revealing, through acting, ‘something else’, something that the audience doesn’t encounter in daily life. The actor doesn’t demonstrate it. It is not physically visible, but, through the engagement of the onlooker’s imagination, ‘something else’ will appear in his or her mind. For this to happen, the audience

must not have the slightest awareness of what the actor is doing. They must be able to forget the actor. The actor must disappear.

(Oida 1998:17)

The growth of a character begins from the body. After the play reading the actor imagines character on the basis of age, social status, financial status, psychophysical states and image. These features of the character have to be in tune with the body, voice, articulation, movements of the actor. Study of the external features would inform the actor how to transport the inner life and soul of the character. One important aspect of getting into the shoes of the character is to take up completely the inner values and proceed to the building of the character. Another aspect is to find out the external features and proceed to the inner values. The external manifestation of a character can easily be done through intuition, intellect and organic sensibility for great actors. In another manner actors can also reach the same states technically and through continuous training. In this way different individuals can be chosen and adopt special features of their behavioural pattern in portraying a character. So many things such as their intimacy with the objects they handle, the distinct behavioural patterns and mechanized activities can be derived from actual life. Costume and make up would intensify the explicit transformations in the actor. In order to convince the spectators of the intensity of the character the actor cannot restrict himself to external features. The bodily expressions have a limited role in integrating the actor's body into the character and therefore the actor explores the intrinsically inherent features of the character. In order to cope up with inner features of the character the actor should select prompt physical acts. This process should be controlled not to become the mechanical representation but to give vent to the actor's creative inspiration. The physical process of acting is immensely helpful in understanding the character psyche and exploring the soul of the character.

Acting a Physical Art

The most important artist in the ever-changing visual arts form is the actor. Theatre is also subject to new experimentation, radical expression and abrupt shifts exactly the way changes takes place among humans around the world. These leaps to be brought on to the spectators are the full responsibility of the actors. The actors are entrusted with the duty of creating a body language in accordance with environment beyond his or her organic presence. This area is explored in this dissertation with an intention to enrich the future actor training projects in theatre training schools with my own experience and experiments and in an intercultural theatre context. Contemporary actors will immensely benefit from technologically intensified actor training in intercultural context. This dissertation also attempts to enquire the radical innovations when inborn talent is induced with intense training and how it can be practiced and what are the good and bad components in the psychophysical states.

The importance of actor training can easily be evinced by distinguishing the approaches of a systematically and formally trained actor from one who has not yet received any formal training in acting. All expressive arts need training and this training in the case of an actor is accomplished through extreme control over one's own body. All art forms, whether western or eastern, require extensive training and exercise for the actor to acquire complete control over his or her body to visualise the art form fully. The actor has to formulate a peculiar psycho physical structure so that he or she can become creative at any moment. If we study carefully it would be quiet evident that a flexible psychophysical state ready for expression can be developed essentially with practice in addition to inborn capacities. Without paraphernalia in theatre and mechanised infrastructures the stage actors are capable of communicating powerfully with the

emotional state of character through the medium called body. These factors have been proved by many theatre groups and all these facts hint at the truth that training the body is the most important aspect of actor training. It is inevitable for an inspired and creative actor. Indian theatre for time immemorial pronounced this fact emphatically and the western theatre follows it closely today. The most influential exponents of the idea of the seminality of the body in acting and in theatre such as Konstantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Antonin Artaud, Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Jaques Lecoq, Etienne Decroux, Tadashi Suzuki, Anne Bogart, Phillip Zarrilli, and David Zinder in their actor training projects have initiated scientific and analytical foundation for actor training and developed the actor's creative process in a powerful, vibrant and systematic manner.

Today's actor requires an essential quality of social perspective in spite of looking at theatre as merely a profession an actor should develop a perspective to look at society as a whole and incorporate this understanding as part of the training process. The actor trainer and the theatre school need to build an atmosphere for the actor to develop the social consciousness. The actor should empathise with the crisis of the humanity and establish human relationships. Above all the actor needs to build immensely flexible psychological states to delve deep into the world of actualities and the world of imagination. This does not imply that the actors of the previous generation had not owned such a social sensibility and consciousness, but the present moment requires a more essential and intense understanding of society and social consciousness. The excessive impact of technology evaporates everything humanistic; theatre has the capacity to raise greatest values of humanity in the exact sense and maintain principles and ethics of life through actors. This is the reason why

actors are in need of an extensive and truthful and inquisitive social consciousness in our time.

Mnouchkine's 'Theatre du Soleil' is one of the finest instances of social commitment in intercultural context and the approach of the artist to the world outside and their compassionate attitude and approaches were widely applauded. The actors of 'Theatre du Soleil' wanted to bring people from all races, ethnicities, religions and class under one umbrella and that resulted in an innovative bodily theatre practice with distinguishable features and privileges. The letter written by Mnouchkine sent to the Jerusalem theatre festival was witness to the power of this movement.

We, the writers, actors, musicians, technicians and director of the Theatre du Soleil originate from twenty two countries. We are Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and atheists. We are white, we are black, and we are yellow. We are from countries which, at different times in the course of their histories, have taken the roles of the colonized and the colonizers of the oppressed and the oppressors, of the occupied and the occupiers. We are from countries which have all known, and continue to know, their times of pride and shame, of progress and decline, of dignity and indignity, of humanity and inhumanity. That is who we are. ("You must know who we are, and what we believe")

(Nascimento 2010:12)

The exemplary position of theatre directors and group in society offers innovative lessons and strength to actors. Such orientations would definitely be helpful in sensible and meaningful shifts in actor's body. The actor who develops this philosophy, the vision of world naturally will be diverted from conventional acting styles in search of a simple, truthful,

organic and contemporary method of acting, simultaneously maintaining the best part of conventions.

The first chapter of this dissertation attempted to explain the actors body framed in the intercultural context with global possibilities and its scientific intense training possibilities and practices. The Singapore based ITI/TTRP's Asian centered three year actor training project was analysed to illustrate these aspects. The actor training strategies designed by ITI/TTRP is capable of finding direction to a futuristic theatre and actor training technologies for future. As an actor the potentials achieved through the intercultural theatre training have been successfully practiced through to immensely important intercultural play productions. The process and performance of these two world renowned theatre productions were analysed in details in this chapter. International theatre director Phillip Zarilli's *Attempts on Her Life* and Hiroshi Koike's *Mahabharatha* project were chosen to explicate the actor training in intercultural projects. The approaches of these directors were selected as exemplary works in world theatre for contemporary actor training methods and performance. The common features of body language worldwide would enable spectators in a globalized context to communicate beyond language.

The second chapter was an attempt to investigate and discover the kind of acting training techniques that need to be employed in the contemporary Indian social, cultural and economic scenario. To this effect, as an actor, director and trainer, I sought to elucidate and analyse the acting training techniques - and the production processes of their climactic devising projects - that I employed while training the students in two of the most prestigious theatre schools in India. In this chapter I have been able to explain how I successfully introduced, through the application of various

scientific methods of acting training, a very customized, contemporary, and precise system of acting training that involved a whole batch of acting students in each of the two theatre schools. The working conditions in both these institutions allowed me, by both affective and financial means, to implement wholesome, contemporary acting training systems. Young actors get into the world of acting training, full of doubts, insecurities and dreams. Through the processes in both the institutions, the eventually successful attempt was to create a democratic environment in which even the smallest of the actors' doubts can be resolved and acting is practised while nurturing and retaining respect for fellow artists.

The last chapter rethinks the Indian acting methods and performing bodies in connection with explanations of acting techniques in *Natyasastra*. This chapter also comes to explore how the body involved in the process of acting surfaces the psycho physical processes to the level of imaginative creativity. The possibilities of improvisation, the limitations and possibilities of local performing bodies, the body of the globalised actor and preparations of an actor in the context of technology are also put into enquiry in this chapter. One of the greatest concerns of a contemporary actor to acquire deep knowledge about the technology involved in the process of production of theatre.

A comprehensive and extensive outlook of the actor training methods has been constituted through these enquiries as an actor trainer. One of the major aims of this project is to incorporate the information and knowledge gathered from a wide variety of strands of theatre training and production to the continuing actor training projects. It is explicitly significant and important for the actor trainer and the actor to continue

inquiring, investigating and questioning the fundamental principles of how and what creates good acting.

- The ability of the body and voice to produce incandescent flow of emotions.
- Vivid imagination.
- The ability to decompose each and every single moment of human life and enter into one another easily.
- A healthy body.
- The capacity to enter into the deepest recesses of characters and texts.

The ability for the spectators to experience the intricacies of the character is evolved through a powerful use of breath. The rhythm of breath is the rhythm of life. It is through the rhythm of breath that the actor passes from his self to the character's body, the essence of the character. The movement and rhythm of breath is capable of creating huge and significant changes in the body of the actor. Japanese actor Yoshi Oida explains the journey of the actor:

This is not simply to help us say long speeches without running out of air, changes of breath have an inner impact. To see how this works, try breathing in, then stop the breath for a couple of seconds, then breathe out. Now do it the other way round: breathe out, stop the breath, and then breathe in. You will probably notice that the physical or emotional sensation is slightly different. (Oida 1998:88)

In theatre imagination and breath are intrinsically blended with voice. *Mano-sareera* meaning the psychosomatic implies the inner levels of psyche and its intricate connection with the exterior body and the result of the process of blending together. During the training of Kalaripayattu in

Kerala, Phillip Zarrilli illustrated how breath was effectively incorporated into bodily practices and training and how psychosomatic levels equalised with the energy of the body.

I have woven together a complementary set of psychophysical disciplines that begins and ends each day of training with a series of simple, breath control exercises. The training begins with the breath because it offers a psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind. Attentive breathing provides a beginning point towards inhabiting an optimal state of body mind awareness and readiness in which the “body is all eyes” and one is able to “stand still while not standing still. (Zarrilli 2009:25)

Acting ultimately can be called as body art. This practice is very close to the learning of music, dance and the modes of learning are intimately related. A contemporary actor is entitled to act in various strands of theatre. It requires a lot of expertise. In order to achieve this actor has to train him or herself in a controlled manner and various practices and training methods associated to that have to be part of the training right from the beginning.

When asked, which profession is most superior, the most common answer is ‘Acting’. In my opinion, it is completely true. Similarly, on being asked who has the toughest job in the world, I would without a doubt, say that it is the acting trainer. Teaching acting is a highly dreadful occupation, since the hundreds of diverse acting traditions and techniques that exist in the world, could ensnare actors who are just starting out, in an elaborate trap of doubts and contradictions. Yet, the need of the hour is not to bypass any opportunity to experience these diverse traditions. During my years of training, instead of an intellectual approach of understanding

these various forms and techniques, I sought a physical process of learning these diverse techniques in a short period of time and then disowning any particular style. This helped the actor in me to remain unconsumed by any one particular style or tradition. This is where the ideas of accomplished artists like American playwright, actor and director, David Mamet, are relevant. According to Mamet, Acting is physical skill, and not an intellectual exercise. (Mamet 2011:39)The work of an actor need not be joyful but joy must emanate from the script. The seminal beauty of an actor is to maintain consistency and confidence. Both qualities evolved out of good mental health. One of the major crises of the actor undergoes during actor training is when she/he receives too much information regarding acting styles which are almost always contradictory to that of other actor trainers and directors. The doubts gushing out of such information would make the actor guilty, inconsistent and dubious. It also shuts down the possibilities of open-minded approach to psychological, physical, movement possibilities. It would take many years for actors to get rid of such psychological hindrances. The actor on stage needs to create a context of sensible communication which incessantly takes the play to the spectators. This is the first and foremost duty of an actor. Exclusively for this purpose the actor needs a powerful voice, distinct delivery of dialogue, flexible but robust body and a clear cut concept of the dramatic text to be enacted on stage. The significance of the actor trainer is not in teaching how to act but in providing information and possibilities. An acting student with inborn taste for acting and common sense can develop the faculty of acting through continuous vocal and bodily training.

The actor's mind is not susceptible to firm instructions but qualitative directives and suggestions would encourage the actor to come close to the character. The director's command to the actor to become

extremely happy or to cry aloud would never bring out the actual emotional state of mind of the character nor the actor. A very strategic move is necessary to inspire an actor to establish the context and comprehend the scriptural thought. One year is the basic and necessary time span for an actor to become professional in acting after the fundamental training and an actor should closely observe eminent actors in theatre and cinema. The bodily training system to activate psychophysical structure and healthy practices are to be invented by the actor himself because such systems are rooted in a region, culture and language. The actor needs to search for exercises, activities and practices in his/her native cultural context. Therefore the actor should not be formulated on the basis of existing scholarship on acting. The spectator has a similar role in training the artist to act, write and direct. The disciplining of the class rooms most of the time seems to be dangerous for a creative actor and acting ultimately is a bodily practice and not a psychological exercise. Many instances of everyday life which are very simple and familiar may cause immense tension and difficulties when brought on to the stage to the spectators by the actor. The actors are trained properly how to walk, how to move, how to sit and sleep repeatedly in order to explore the maximum possibilities of the body. The body must become eyes. (A popular saying among kalari trainers). Eyes articulate the immense possibilities of human body. Phillip Zarrilli illustrates the transformation.

Govindankutty Nayar inhabited a state in which, like Lord Brahman the thousand eyed, “the body becomes all eyes”. (‘Meyyu Kannakuka’). From my perspective, when the “body is all eyes” one is “standing still yet not standing still”. This is the optimal state of readiness that the actor ideally inhabits. (Zarrilli 2009:24)

Envisaging the idea of body turning into eyes brings home the extensive possibilities of human body and presence to respond abruptly to situations through bodily exercises. Training is quintessential to theatrical expressions and eminent theatre personalities still strive to initiate radical changes in training practices. Outdated and expired acting training systems which are subjected to long term spectatorship should be revised and redefined innovatively as creative artists vibrant in theatre always insist. Old and familiar theatrical styles are to be redesigned in emancipatory ways so that the regime of a new set of visual images can take over. Novel actor training techniques and methods are to be invented to initiate radical visual images.

Practical skill is central to acting. An individual can train him/herself within a short span of time through intimacy or training in how to move, how to articulate and how to systematically represent, but these will remain mechanized skills and practices that will never indicate creativity in the work of art. For instance *Natyasastra* illustriously brought home theatre technologies and theatre skills which can be used even in contemporary theatre. Similarly the attempt to achieve the sublime levels of acting in the theatre world in the west also formulated many theories of acting. The exponent of modern acting systems, Stanislavski, has devised and comprehended certain explicit theatrical and practical formulations on acting based on his experience and experimentations. Later day exponents of western theatre, Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Vakhtangov, Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and Stella Adler were his disciples or collaborators and some of them were both disciples and co-workers. Immense rethinking is to be initiated in the light of western and eastern theories of acting especially on the basis of *Natyasastra* and Stanislavski system in order to explicate the theatre skills

in response to the philosophy, perceptions and thought of modern times. Phillip Zarrilli has devised an innovative actor training method known as post-Stansilaviskian approach by retaining all pre-existing actor training styles within the context of intercultural theatre. (Zarrilli 1998:8) A radical departure from the post-Stansilaviskian approach is to be envisaged in the contemporary theatre practice.

The practice of acting on stage whether it is self-expression, reflection of society, emotional expressions, creation and recreation, inquisitive exploration and innovations, it is only when it synchronises with the ultimate socio historical process that it would become honest. The finest expression of the actor training finds its nuances only when the practice of acting is intertwined with socio political historical context. Acting is not only emotional extravaganza, self-expression or characterization. But it's a cultural activity. Whether it is *Natyasastra's* acting technologies or the Stansilaviski system it would surface itself only when it results in acting methods or techniques as it becomes in apparent in practice. There must be spontaneity and sincerity but more importantly the actor must have a self-conscious approach to socio political contexts in which the actor emanates. An actor needs to reconfigure his art as a process to transform and recreate the world. Invoking the Marx's Eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, Brecht stated that philosophers would interpret in the world but does not alter it. Brecht wanted theatre to alter the world. Being a social being, the injustices, inequalities and violence should touch the actor because he/she employs the collective act known as theatre to interact with society. It is worth spending time to study and reflect in order to real tangible and critical thought within the limit of the actor's body. The whole gamut of training of a contemporary actor is nothing but the creation of a social consciousness.

Actors require apparent experience of the society and a familiarity with wide verity of discipline such as humanities and social sciences. The actor transforms him/herself as another individual through his own experience of life. The behaviour, speech pattern, movement etc. are kept in the actor's mind and practice and expressed as per the nature of each character. When the actor uses these gestures, voice and movement from his imagination, he/she should recreate and not imitate. An actor who has organic artistic qualities should go through the training process to enhance his/her eminence in various contexts of life in a wide variety of ways. Whether in theatre or in cinema actors learn a lot of lessons from directors who have expertise in shaping up the acting patterns and from co-actors who have excelled in exploring the possibilities of the body. The efficiency of the actors will apparently be improved through the actors physical intervention and intellectual innovation in understanding the dramatic text. Actor training at times unconsciously and unknowingly, as in the case of a child, creates movement in front of a mirror, imitating the life practices of elders. These are basic pedagogical practices to invigorate the individual as an actor. Conceiving a character without proper training is impossible in the world of theatre. Actor training is not a concept within a studio involving psychophysical training but it is also an informal learning process through enjoyment, playing, education, reading and everyday life.

Acting skills are inevitable in the making of every artist but expertise in practice alone would never accomplish the art. Art is a sublime expression of joy residing in the unconscious of the artist. The artistic and creative dimensions of life derived from various contexts of experience of life are to be made perfect and spectacular through training.

Theatre can reconfigure civilization and invigorate imagination through phantasmal manifestations and redesigned human life and acting method. The vibrant cultures of Kerala society envisage the influence of theatre exactly the way how technology reconstituted cultures. Theatre in Kerala has gone far beyond the initial crises and tribulations yet the spectators still strive for established frames and images in theatre which is partly imported and ideologically established from acting in theatre. The established systems of popular culture and mass media are to be interrogated through initiative and creative acting method is the seminal objective behind choosing a topic of research in acting. It is almost impossible and difficult to initiate original enquiries, approaches and conclusions from the limited context and situations. A search for a novel acting training method based on practice based illustration would effectively engage spectators and converse with them on radical and emancipatory grounds. Such a method should have an intense bearing on the socio politico cultural and economic transactions. This approach must evolve from explicitly original and vibrant acting methods through scientifically defined practical training. The proposed approach needs to distinguish itself from the superficial, the apparent and consumerist cultures by privileging the inner landscape of human psyche of every individual.

Theatre should not be a location of exhibitionistic manifestations of actor training though theatre communicates effectively through learned methods and styles. Training methods in theatre and acting need to be catalysts in the creative sojourn of characterization. A contemporary actor has to develop psychological states which can appropriate the new and inquire the unknown otherwise it would be difficult for a contemporary actor to engage in a novel and inspiring acting method. The choices of an actor to preserve and experiment with his body as a medium must be scientific, objective and rational in an age where mechanization and techno crazy

prevail. The actor is entitled to explore his/her energy to bring out a bang of the mass media maintained and manipulated consistently by hegemonic cultural practices and dominant ideologies in the world of art. The creative ambience in acting is to be reconsidered so that the actor can reconstruct the creative process through fashioning one's own body and psyche.

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ANNEXURES



Annexure 1

A Dream

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

General	:	Sooming / Sreejith
King	:	Zach
Noble	:	Jai
Court Lady	:	Amy
Robber	:	Beto
Girl 1	:	Jai
Girl 2	:	Amy
Enemy	:	Sajeev
Angel 1	:	Beto
Angel 2	:	Zach
Angel 3	:	Sreejith

Jiutai : 4 chorus people (by Senior Class Students)

Utai & Hayashi : Team Kanze(Y.KANZE, T.KUWADA, H.KOJIMA) song and music

SCRIPT

Prologue

General, defeated and narrowly escaped from a battlefield, he now run away to his hometown, calm and beautiful but poor little village. That is why an ambitious boy that he was many years ago, left and escaped from there.

The old man at last reached to the village and before entering in, he decided to take a break under a big tree. The tree, the villagers respect as a holly protector. Because the residents believe generous goddess sometimes comes down on this tree, and she blesses them.

He lay down under the tree, and he fell asleep. In his dream, his days in the court or in the battlefields were now flashback...

Reminiscence 1

On New Year's day, all the nobles gathered in the Court. General, as usual, proposed the King to order to a Noble and a Court Lady dance in order to pray for King's health and his governance continue forever. **"Chû no Mai"**

As King enjoyed a lot and delighted he also danced for his people. **Shimai "Tsurukame"**

Reminiscence 2

General admired King and swore his life-through royalty. He often guarded King at night. One night, a burglar broke in because he tried to steal King's treasure possessed from his ancestor ordering by neighboring country. General caught him after big fight. ***Shimai "Shari"***

Due to his activity, their enemy's scheme broke off.

Reminiscence 3

As time went by, more the king favored and trusted him, more he rewarded to him with a diligent faithful service. As a consequence, whole the court, except one Noble, admired him. This man were ambitious to plot to usurp the throne, he knew General was the biggest obstacle. He sent beautiful girls to King and ordered them to seduce him while General was leaving the Court for his duty. The Noble used this chance and when he came back, he saw the king seduced by them. ***Shimai "Momijigari"***

The king lost himself. The country had been ruined. General remonstrated, nevertheless, he lost the favor and nearly got the death.

Though he barely saved his life because of his long loyal service, the king did not allow him to stay in the Palace. General was now deprived his position, sent to the border where the war would soon happen.

Reminiscence 4

The war against the neighboring country was just like a seesaw game. But the general was a real hero. Once the general appeared on the battlefield, there were no-one who could stop him.

Shimai "Funa Benkei"

Shimai "Yashima"

However, the enemy existed in his own side. That Noble, cunning and ambitious, now tied secretly to the enemy. He intentionally held supply and sent the wrong command to General. At last, his army got a severe damage, and fled in disorderly retreat.

Like his soldiers, General must run away, but he has no place to go, except his hometown.

Epilogue

When he woke up from a long dream, he realized that he now had nothing, rather nothing than himself when left home. He stood up, but he lost the thought to return home. He was standing alone as if he could have someone to guide him where to go.

Hours passed, suddenly the beautiful light shined. He heard beautiful sound he never heard before. When he looked up, he saw the angels came down to the tree. They sang they loved this place because of its peace and danced with felicitating it. Angels

kept dancing and General forgot everything and just kept watching. Tears came down on his old and tired face. He now knew the village he abandoned was the real place to live. Its poverty, peace, silence and all other features he hated were much more important than his ambition.

He now knew that he was just a tiny piece of the world and also realized that a life is just like as a dream whoever it belongs to.

The verity he found gave him a force. He stood again, then, started to walk.

Annexure 2

Parvathi Viraham

Parvathy's Lament

Ravana - 'After beheading the audacious messenger sent by Vaishravana, I- Ravana proceeded to Alaka, defeated him in battle and was returning in the Pushpaka Vimana that I had seized from Vaishravana. Suddenly the vimana struck the peak of The Kailasa.

Alighting from the Vimana, I scanned the expanse of the Kailasa- and displacing the mountain I heaved it up and tossed it into the air...

Ravana – (First enacting a seated Lord Siva with Parvathi on his lap, next enacting Parvathy gazing up at her Lord- noticing Ganga ensconced in the matted locks of Siva)

'Parvathy: Dear Lord! Pray, what is it that I behold in your matted locks?

Siva: Dear Parvathy! Didn't you know that I bear water in my locks?

Parvathy: (pondering) But Lord, I can spy a face.

Siva: That is no face, it is a Lotus bloom.

Parvathy: But I can see ringlets of hair- what would that be?

Siva: Those are no ringlets, those are bees sipping nectar from the Lotus bloom.

Parvathy: However, I see eyebrows-How is that?

Siva: Those are no eyebrows, those are tiny ripples in the water...

Parvathy: I behold two eyes

Siva: Those are no eyes- but fishes...

Parvathy: I can see bosom- how come?

Siva: No dear, those are two Chakravaka birds (Swans/ geese)

Parvathy: (petulant) He is trying to deceive me, Let me leave him and go to my father's home

(So saying, she rises clasping the hands of her friends'- looks first at Siva in lovelorn anger, then up at Ganga with jealous rage.

As she steps down to leave, the mountain sways- Parvathy clasps her loosened tresses with her left hand, clutches her unfastened bodice/ corselet in her right hand, and holds fast her slipping garment- all the time her face expressions shifting between anger, jealousy and sorrow...terrified, she rushes back to Siva and embraces him all resentment forgotten.)'

Annexure 3 -Body Pilgrimage: The essence of Japanese art encapsulates the slowness, softness and flow. Body pilgrimage is the path towards arriving to the essence of the art in Java.

Annexure 4 - Ramayana is the story of prince Rama, whose wife Sita, was abducted by the demon king Ravana while serving an exile in the forest. Rama with his brother, Lakshmana and allies Sugriva, Hanuman (the monkey leader), and Vibheeshana (Ravana's Brother) confronts Ravana in a colossal battle.

Annexure 5

KIKH BRIDGE PROJECT & THEATRECONNEKT
presents

MAHABHARATA
Pan Asian International Project
Chapter 2

Dir: Hiroshi Koike



Produced by



Jan 12: International Theatre Festival of Kerala, Thrissur
 Jan 14: National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai
 Jan 17, 18: Damansara Performing Arts Centre, Kuala Lumpur
 Jan 23, 24: Salihara Theatre, Jakarta



MAHABHARATA PROJECT is a pan-Asian intercultural endeavor of KIKH Bridge Project, Tokyo, a group with Hiroshi Koike as Artistic Director. Envisioned in four parts, and created in Cambodia, India, Japan and Malaysia, the project primarily narrates the epic, Mahabharata. Hiroshi uses the language of physical theatre to tell the story. The first part of Mahabharata was produced in Cambodia in 2013 in collaboration with Amrita Performing Arts.

The present chapter, second in the sequel, is produced in India in collaboration with Theatreconnect Performing Arts Society, an accomplished theatre organization based in Thrissur, Kerala.

According to Hiroshi, the Mahabharata has common recognition throughout the Asian region and contains the most important essence of Asian philosophy and sensibility. Since time immemorial, Asian countries have been communicating with the world through the Silk Route and developed their identity through mutual integration of cultures. Inspired by this history, the inter-cultural Mahabharata project intends to discover fresh perspectives of this past and at the same time rediscover what these cultures presently share with each other.

HIROSHI KOIKE, one of the senior directors in contemporary Japanese theatre, is also an accomplished choreographer, writer, installation artist and photographer. He was born in Hitachi and graduated from Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, Japan. In 1982, he founded the internationally acclaimed performing arts company, Pappa TARAHUMARA. As the group's artistic director, Hiroshi created 55 productions that toured 35 countries and worked with many artists internationally. Ship in a View, Milky Way Train, Restaurant of Many Orders, and Odyssey of Wind are just a few of his internationally acclaimed productions.



In 2011, after the tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster in Japan, Hiroshi felt the urge to revisit his creative paradigm. He dissolved Pappa TARAHUMARA and restructured his artistic creativity through KIKH Bridge Project, which focuses on international collaborations. Through the present The Mahabharata Project and Kenji Miyazawa Series, he aims to keep extending his horizons further. "Listening to the Voice of BODY" is his published title. Hiroshi's theatre making is one part of the major study by Henry Johnson and Jerry C. Jaffe of Otago University, published as Performing Japan—Contemporary Expressions of Cultural Identity (Global Oriental, UK, 2008).

Hiroshi is a theatre-maker who defies conventional dance and physical theatre with the aim to bring about the most basic and essential in human physical movements on stage. His theatre is often a surrealistic world of human natures powered through infinite imagination created by bodies from different disciplines and cultures.

Hiroshi has held several important posts in various committees, such as Artistic Director of Tsukuba Cultural Foundation (1997–2005), Member of the Culture Promotion Committee of Aomori (1999), Chair of the Asian Performing Artists' Forum in Okinawa, and Specified Donation Appointed Member of Japan Foundation (2004–2011). He is the President of the Performing Arts Institute.

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THE PERFORMERS



DENNY PAUL
Born in Kerala, India, Denny Paul is a Diploma holder in movement arts and mixed media from Attakkalari-Bangalore. He has also trained in

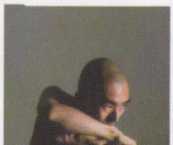
kalaripayattu, ballet, and contemporary dance, Pilates, Kathak, classical Jazz, capoeira, tai-chi, Feldenkrais, and Deverat-tom. As a performer of Attakkalari, until 2013, Denny performed in their productions, Purushartha, Tran's avatar, Chronotopia, Meidhwani, Adhaarchakra, For Pina, and Sanchari. Denny is a winner of the Robert Bausch young choreographer award in the year 2010. Swaatman, Uyire, Saga of a Second are his choreographies.



KOYANO TETSURO
Born in Japan, Koyano-Tetsuro is an exponent of Balinese mask dance. Founder and Artistic Director of Urotsutenoyako and Bayangans, he is also the Executive

Director of Jukung Music, a company preserving and promoting performing arts of Indonesia. Through his group, Potalaka, Koyano seeks collaborations with artists from various disciplines in search of new genres of performing arts. Koyano received high recognition from the Consulate General of Indonesia in Japan in 2005 for his work with Jukung Music to promote the art and culture of Indonesia.

Visit: www.shadowlightaynuproject.org



LEE SWEE KEONG
Accomplished Butoh dancer from Malaysia, Lee Swee Keong joined Hiroshi Koike's company Pappa TARAHUMARA

built up a diverse, multi-disciplinary body of work encompassing his own productions, collaborative projects and performances with other companies. He is the founder and artistic director of nyobaKan Butoh Company-Kuala Lumpur. He had worked with Copagnie Heddy Maleem (France) and took part in its Europe tour in the seasons of 2010 & 2011.
Visit: www.nyobakan.com



MOON MOON SINGH
Actor, Dancer and Director, Moon Moon Singh is an alumna of National School of Drama, Delhi, India. She has also trained in

Bharatanatyam, Kathak, ballet, and jazz, which gave her a sound foundation of rhythm and body kinetics. She has worked with several outstanding directors of India, such as Kirti Jain, Shantanu Bose, Sankar Venkateswaran, Robin Das, and Ranjit Kapur. She has attended several advance level workshops, including CZAR Theatre-Poland and Adil Hussain. Stroll, the piece Moon Moon Singh devised and enacted (2011), has won several accolades.



SACHIKO SHIRAI
Sachiko Shirai began dancing in classical ballet at the age of seven. From 1989 to 2012, she worked with Pappa TARAHUMARA of Hiroshi Koike, for which she was one of

the main performers. She also gives lessons to young performers. She gave an excellent performance in Pappa TARAHUMARA's "CINDERELLA" in the title role, and, in 2012, "SNOW WHITE" in Pappa TARAHUMARA Final Festival as the stepmother. Since the dissolution of the company in 2012, she has continued her career as a freelance dancer, choreographer, teacher and actress.



SREEJITH RAMANAN
Born in Kerala, India, Sreejith is an actor, director, researcher and theatre-trainer. He graduated from the School of Drama & Fine Arts, University of Calicut and

specialized in acting at Intercultural Theatre Institute (Formerly TTRP)-Singapore. He has done his post graduation in Theatre at University of Hyderabad, Andhrapradesh. He has had diverse training under numerous national and international theatre teachers, such as Phillip Zarrilli and David Zinder. Presently he is Assistant Professor at the School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut. From 2011 to 2014, he was the Technical Director for the International Theatre Festival of Kerala (ITFoK).



SUMESH CHINGU
Born in Kerala, India, Sumesh was initiated into dance since childhood. Later he studied Kalaripayattu, Bharatanatyam, classical ballet, and jazz under eminent teachers.

He joined Attakkalari Repertory (Bangalore) on successful completion of his Diploma in Movement Arts from the company. Being one of the primary performers of Attakkalari Repertory, he has travelled extensively within the country and abroad as performer of its milestone productions, such as Chronotopia, Sanchari, Meidhwani, Purushartha, and For Pina. Sumesh has also participated in advance workshops conducted by Daniellla Zehnader, Richard Siegal and James Mcgillivray and other masters.



WAEWDAO SIRISOOK
Accomplished choreographer, performer, director and designer from

from Chiang Mai University. As a professional traditional and contemporary dancer, Waewdao has performed worldwide and participated in numerous international cultural exchange programs representing Thailand in Europe, North America, and Asia. She is an artist-in-residence and teacher at the Institute of Southeast Asian Affairs at Chiang Mai University and, beginning in Fall 2015, Adjunct Faculty in Dance at the University of Iowa. Waewdao's choreography also appeared in the Black Eyed Peas' "Boom Boom Pow" music video.

Visit: www.waewdaosirisook.org

THE MUSIC



CHANDRAN VEYATTUMMAL
Born in Kerala, India, Chandran hails from a family of traditional folk singers. He joined School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut in

1982, where he studied music under the legendary singer, Neralattu Rama Poduval (1921-96). There he was initiated into theatre music by late G Sankara Pillai. Upon graduating he joined Tara Arts Group and National Theatre, London where he worked for about a decade before joining 'Footsbarn Theatre', France in 1995. An established music director for cinema as well, he has about 10 feature films and 200 odd documentary films to his credit. Chandran has won the Kerala State Award for film music in 2008 and 2011.



KENSUKE FUJII
Kensuke Fujii
Versatile Tokyo based composer and laptop musician; Kensuke's masterly notes take birth from the hearts of manual

Saundaji theater" pre-production (2008), Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival invitation works (2009) and more. He was invited to YCMF with his electro-acoustic work "Varfix", and its video version (Dir. Kotaro Tanaka) was nominated to DOTMOV FESTIVAL 2010.



SHITAMACHI KYODAI, Shitamachi Kyoudai, acknowledged rapper, djembe player, sound-producer and lyricist of Japan, is a charted artist in 'BANANA ICE's list of

credits. A child prodigy at 18, he began writing original rap songs and playing and rapping in Tokyo bands. After meeting the head of A&R of a major label, he was introduced to the arts of record producing and song-writing. In 1992, he established his own label, Shibaura Records. Meeting Hiroshi Koike in 2005, he performed rap on stage in Heart of Gold.

THE LIGHTS



LOH KOK MAN Leading lighting designer from Malaysia, KokMan is the Artistic Director of Pentas Project-Malaysia. He is also an established theatre director, actor, set designer and theatre

lecturer. His work usually integrated various theatrical elements such as visual imageries, lighting, sound, physical movement and interactions between dramatic structures of theatre, exploring rich development of space and time in theatre visuals. In 2005, Kok Man went to New York under a fellowship from the "Asian Cultural Council". He has traveled to Japan, Korea, Thailand, Shanghai, Macau, Germany, Taiwan, New York, Singapore. Visit: www.pentasproject.org

THE MASKS



I WAYAN TANGGUH Notable mask-carver I WayanTanguh is perhaps the most accomplished traditional mask creator in Bali. His name "Tanguh" is derived from the Balinese word meaning

"exceptionally skilled" He never claims he is a sculptor, but rather a farmer. Initiated in the making of masks Raavana, Raama, Rangda, and Banaspati for temple worships and rituals, his masks have been used worldwide by eminent performers and performance makers. The unique aspects about WayanTanguh's masks are the materials and colors that he sources from natural materials.

THE COSTUMES



MANDAKINI GOSWAMI Mandakini Goswami, an accomplished Indian actor and costume designer is an alumna of National School of Drama (NSD)-Delhi. As an actor, she has collaborat-

ed with stalwarts like Anamika Haksar, Anuradha Kapoor, Roysten Abel, Zuleikha Chaudhary and Shankar Venkateswaran. Her work has a strong presence and its ability to portray characters with unique depth and density is widely acclaimed. One of the sought after costume directors of the country, Mandakini has designed costume and clothes for many years and has dressed characters for numerous productions at the NSD Repertory Company and numerous national and international productions.

THE STAGE ART & MANAGEMENT



FIROS KHAN Born in Kerala, Firos Khan graduated from the School of Drama, Thrissur in 2007 having specialized in Direction. In 2010, he joined the National School of Drama, New

Delhi, where he specialized in Theatre Design and Techniques. He has the experience of working with renowned practitioners of the contemporary Indian theatre. His major area of interest lies in digital interventions in live performances.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



AYAKO ARAKI Ayako Araki graduated in theatre and film from Waseda University, Japan. At university, she joined English theatrical league, with Yoko Narahashias general director. In 2007,

she joined Pappa TARAHUMARA Performing Arts Institute of Hiroshi Koike and later his company as performer. She has worked with many Japanese performance companies and directors as actress, performer and choreographer. Physical theatre is Ayako's passion and obsession. She often appears in films, voice-overs, and audio books. She has acted also in the Indian (Tamil) movie, Aaaah (2014), directed by Hari Shankar and Harish Narayanan.

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Fumiko Sato (KIKH Bridge Project, Japan)
Kesavan Nambudiri (Theatreconnect, India)

MANAGEMENT STAFF

Shoko Yamauchi (Japan)
Rie Awazu (Japan)
Amruthlal (India)

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Costume:
Malavika Rao (India)
Sakshi Sharma (India)

Stage Art & Management:

Roy K G (India)
Sourav Poddar (India)

SUBTITLE AND VIDEO DESIGN

Visithyro Chea (Cambodia)

ORGANIZERS

SAI Inc. (Japan)

WE THANK

Asia Center - The Japan Foundation, Tokyo
The Japan Foundation, New Delhi
Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi (India)
International Theatre Festival of Kerala (Kerala, India)
National Centre for the Performing Arts (Mumbai, India)
Damansara Performing Arts Center (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Salihara Theater (Jakarta, Indonesia)
Haruka Matsunawa (Japan)
Michiyo Okada (Japan)
Michael Sakamoto (Thailand)
Accurate Media (Cochin, India)
Cameo Lights (Kerala, India)
Arun Rama Varma (Sound and Acoustics Consultants, Kochi, India)
YMCA International Guest House. (Thrissur, India)
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HIROSHI KOIKE BRIDGE PROJECT (KIKH) is founded by Hiroshi Koike, after dissolving his former organization, Pappa TARAHUMARA, in 2012, after 30 years of artistic excellence. Started afresh in June 2012, KIKH not only produces performing arts, but also applies various media, such as film, photography, installation works and writing. By means of events, lectures, workshops, and educational programs, KIKH aims at educating people who can “think through their BODY” and create a bridge between the world, time period and culture through artistic collaboration internationally.

To know more, visit www.kikh.com.



Hiroshi Koike Bridge Project

1-1-5 Arai, Nakano - ku,)
Tokyo, Japan
T: +813-3385-2066
F: +813-3319-3178
www.kikh.com

THEATRECONNEKT PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY, founded in 2013, is an organization based in Thrissur, Kerala. It believes in the power of art to challenge many of society's deepest assumptions. Among all art practices, theatre and performance art have proved to be powerful media of artistic expression capable of cutting through complacency and apathy, inspiring political actions, facilitating dialogues, empowering individuals and communities, and stimulating social change through critical thinking and increased consciousness. Theatreconnekt firmly believes in the role of intercultural and interdisciplinary artistic collaborations in cutting across the existing boundaries of different artistic expressions. To know more, visit www.theatreconnekt.com.

THEATRECONNEKT

Theatreconnekt Performing Arts Society

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M: +91 98471.88288

E: theatreconnekt@gmail.com

www.theatreconnekt.com

Annexure 6

Excerpts from the e-mail conversation with Hiroshi Koike about Mahabharata Project

1. To what extent is it possible to push the boundaries of physical actor training system which would enable an actor to work with any dramaturgical context, in the present time?

I think actors need a lot of physical training. All the actors must take a lot of dance training including traditional dance.

I think the following 4 kinds of training are important. Last year I published a book, 'What is Performing Arts' in Japanese.

- 1, Dance Training (Including Traditional training)
- 2, Singing Training
- 3, Martial Arts Training
- 4, Dialogue and Monologue Training (Theatrical Training)

2. What is your concept of interculturalism? What are the major components?

Of course we have different culture, but we can make the harmonizing space. We have difference and similarity, however frequently we tend to look at only different parts.

Our most important matter for the future is making harmony.

3. What aspects of your cultural context have you incorporated in the Mahabharata production?

Regarding my cultural context the sense of time is most important element. We can imitate and introduce different cultural visual images, but I feel strong difficulties to take the other sense of time as a Japanese.

4. How does the influence of a specific cultural background enrich the physical actor training in another cultural context?

This is very clear and I have already mentioned on No. 1's answer, especially inside Asian countries.

By training with the other cultural background artists, we can feel dynamic history of the world. This meaning is that we have differences and similarities.

For example, when I went to Hawaii Island, I could find a lot of old Japanese cultural elements we have already lost. At the same time I could find integrated culture and new one. I could find many kind of layers.

After that I knew what is Japanese and how to develop inside Japan and outside of Japan.

And the attendants feel there is no big wall among the countries and feel free to all the people.

Annexure 7 - Script Structure of Hiroshi Mahabharata Version.

1. The History of Sorcery & Jealousy and grudges
2. The suffering of the Kuru family
3. The Gamble and Draupadi's Misfortune..... Law and Grudges/Draupadi's contempt.
4. To the Forest
5. The Trepidation of Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana
6. 12 years of Forest living - Bhima encounters Hanuman
7. Arjuna's Trials and Tribulations and Life in Heaven
8. Dhritarashtra in distress / Duryodhana's Malice
9. Encounter with Yama, the king of death.
10. A year of hiding one's stature
11. Draupadi's calamity / Murdering Kichaka
12. Cattle Raid war
- 13.13. Prelude to war



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SCHOOL OF DRAMA – A PROFILE

School of Drama & Fine Arts, University of Calicut was established in 1977 is a prime institution in India giving academic training in the theatrical and practical aspects of Drama & Theatre. This institution offers B.T.A. (Batchelor of Theatre Arts), M.T.A. (Master of Theatre Arts), M.A. (Music) and M.Phil/Ph.D. The students get an opportunity to understand the glorious history of Theatre and different schools of Theatre Practice. The creative aspects of performing arts such as Play Writing, Acting, Direction, Technical Designing, etc. are the thrust areas in the teaching process. Our Classical and Folk traditions are explored here along with the present global trends in contemporary drama. The school organizes international placement programs with various universities world wide. The productions of the School as well as its Alumni now create a new visual idiom and sensibility in Theatre, Film, Media and Academics.

B.T.A.(Bachelor of Theatre Arts) consists of 6 Semesters. The course is basically designed to be a practical oriented one with necessary stress on theory giving adequate place for the study of Kerala's tribal, rural and sophisticated traditional art forms. The 1st Semester is completely devoted to the study of Kerala Theatre and the 'Natyasastra' traditional, which is practically taught by the Master Artists in the field. This is followed by European Theatre up to the 19th century, Malayalam, Theatre, Contemporary Indian Theatre and Modern World Theatre. There are 3 Optional offered from the 3rd semester. Direction, acting and Children's Theatre and the merit of the students decided mainly on the basis of their Play Production. We have a Film Appreciation course in the 3rd semester conducted with the assistance of the Film & Television Training experts and Film Training at the studio of the Kerala State Film Development. Corporation in the last semester. Each student should submit in the last semester, a Dissertation in any subject connected with his/her studies. Acting exercises are compulsory for all which includes Kalaripayattu and Yoga besides the generally accepted Eastern & Western Theatre exercises, which starts on 7 am every day and evening that make the course residential.

BTA has been accepted as one of the qualifications for appointment in Doordarsan, Akashavani and Song and Drama Division. Job opportunity include acting in theatre, films, visual media, technical designers in Lighting, Set Design, Costume and Make up and Music in Theatre and Children's Theatre teaching in Schools.

SUBJECT INDEX & SCHEME OF EXAMINATION

BACHELOR IN THEATRE ARTS
SUBJECT INDEX

SEMESTER I

Sl. No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	DRAM 100	Audit	Orientation	0	P
02	ENG1 A01	COMM 1	Transactions: Essentials English language skills	3	T
03	ENG1 A02	COMM 2	Ways with words: Literature in English	3	T
04	MAL1 A01 (2)	COMM 7	Malayala Bhashayum Sahityavum -I	4	T
05	DRAM 101	CORE 1	Acting Exercise I	3	P
06	DRAM 102	CORE 2	History and Development of Malayalam Theatre	3	T
07	DRAM 103	COMP 1	Fundamentals and Theories of Design	3	T
08	DRAM 104	COMP 2	Fundamentals of Music	4	P

11+9+4=23

SEMESTER II

Sl. No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	ENG2A03	COMM 3	Inspiring Expressions	4	T
02	ENG2A04	COMM 4	Readings on Societies	4	T
03	MAL2A02 (2)	COMM 9	Malayala Bhashayum Sahityavum - II	4	T
04	DRAM 201	COMP 1	Acting Exercise II	3	P
05	DRAM 202	CORE 5	Traditional Indian Theatre I: Folk Theatre	3	T
06	DRAM 203	CORE 6	Intro. To Acting and Direction	3	T
07	DRAM 204	COMP 2	Theatre Music	4	P

11+9+4=25

SEMESTER III

Sl. No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	DRAM 307	COMP 6	Creative Play Writing	4	T
02	DRAM 301	COMP 1	Acting Exercise III	3	P
03	DRAM 302	CORE 8	Introduction to World Theatre (Other than Indian)	3	T
04	DRAM 303	CORE 9	Traditional Indian Theatre II: Classical Theatre	3	T
05	DRAM 304	CORE 10	Play analysis	3	T
06	DRAM 305	COMP 1	Participation in Play Production	3	P
07	DRAM 306	CORE 12	Theatre Technology I: Setting and Lighting	3	P

12+10= 22

SEMESTER IV

Sl. No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	DRAM 406	COMP 3	Theatre in Education	3	T
02	DRAM 407	COMP 2	Contemporary Trends and Movement	3	T
03	DRAM 401	COMP 1	Acting Exercise IV	3	P
04	DRAM 402	CORE 14	Introduction to Modern Theatre	3	T
05	DRAM 403	CORE 15	OPTION I: Acting / Direction / Children's Theatre	3	T
06	DRAM 404	CORE 16	OPTION I: Participation in Play Production	3	P
07	DRAM 405	CORE 17	Theatre Technology II: Costume and Makeup	3	P

12+9= 21

SEMESTER V

Sl. No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	DRAM 501	CORE 18	Dramatisation of Non Dramatic Form	4	P
02	DRAM 502	CORE 19	OPTION II: Acting / Direction / Children's Theatre	3	T
03	DRAM 503	CORE 20	Theatre Technology III: Property and Mask Making/ Sound Design for Theatre	3	P
04	DRAM 504	Open	New Media and Theatre	2	P

10+2= 12

SEMESTER VI

S.No	CODE	COURSES	SUBJECT	CREDIT	THEORY/ PRACTICAL
01	DRAM 605	CORE 1	TV and Film Production Workshop	4	P
02	DRAM 601	CORE 21	Film Appreciation	3	P
03	DRAM 603	COMP 4	Participation in play production OPTIONAL III	3	P
04	DRAM 604	CORE 2	Dissertation	4	T
05	DRAM 602	CORE 3	Alternative Theatre Practices	3	T

14+3=17

Annexure-9

Sreejith R.
Asst. Professor



ESTD: 1977
E-mail: schoolofdrama@gmail.com
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SCHOOL OF DRAMA & FINE ARTS UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

DR. JOHN MATTHAI CENTRE, ARANATTUKARA, THRISSUR-680 618, KERALA

An Actor Prepares



Name : GOPALAKRISHNAN.K-M

Age: 23 Date of Birth: 28-08-1992 Sex: Male

Nationality : INDIAN Place: PALAKKAD

Driving License : Yes / No

Address : Maxuthachalam Nivas, Kavundikkal P.O
Agali, Attappadi, Palakkad Pin: 678581

Contact Number : 9539489747 Cell Phone: 9539489747

E-mail : gopalk863@gmail.com Blood Group: O+ve

Height: 160 cm Weight: 55 kg Shoe Size: 7

Chest: 83-86 Waist: 32 Hip: 38

Shirt/Dress: Medium Hair Colour: Black

Eye Colour: Black Skin Colour: Black complexion

Language(s) Spoken : Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, English

Special Skills : Singing, Dancing, Drawing

Signature:

Date: 23/9/2014

Annexure 10

Acting Questions

Key questions an actor needs to answer for any scene.

1. Who Am I?

- Inner and outer characteristics? psychological (thoughts and emotions) and physical (body and voice), also moral and social.
- What is my life history?

2. What Are The Given Circumstances?

(a) Who Am I With?

- What are my general and specific relationships with them?
- How do they change in the scene?

(b) Where Am I?

- How does the physical place, country, climate and social environment influence me?

(c) When Is It?

- How does the hour, day, season and period in history influence me?

(d) What Is Happening?

- What is the main event, activity in the scene?
- What precedes and what follows the scene?
- What changes as a result of the scene?

3. What Do I Want ?

- What is my **objective**, want, desire, need or intention?
- Expressed in terms of specifically affecting someone.

4. Why Do I Want It ?

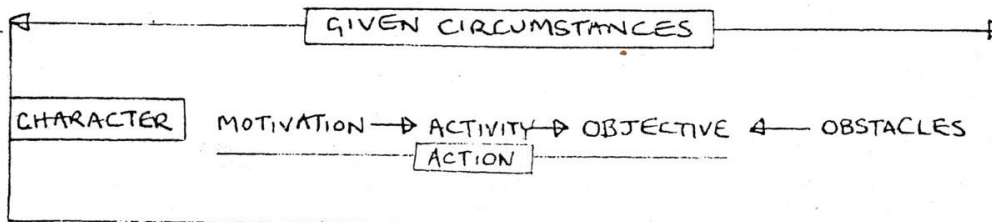
- What is my **motivation**, justification or expectation for the objective?
- Expressed in terms of how it makes you feel or be.

5. How Will I Get It ?

- What are my **actions**, tactics? psychological and or physical means of affecting or influencing other characters. (The means used to achieve the motivation and objective).
- Expressed in terms of a transitive verb, to specifically affect someone, by means of a certain strategy.

6. What Must I Overcome ?

- What are my **obstacles**? (people, things, circumstances, self)
- Are they physical or psychological?



Annexure 11

THE MISTY MOUNTAINS OF MAHABHARATA

Produced by

School of Drama & Fine Arts, University of Calicut, Thrissur, Kerala

SCRIPT

Scene 1

Few bodies that lie merged with the earth, slowly rise up, and they discover the ability to move and start exploring the world. They form a colony, start to build it. Bhishma crowned the most powerful among them and made him their leader. Engrossed in power, Vichitraveerya ascends to the throne (top of the building).

Scene 2

Screaming Vichitraveerya on the throne, Bhishma abducts three women to extend their blood line through Vichitraveerya. Amba, one among them refuses to go with him and runs away.

Ruling over the people and living on the flesh of two women, Vichitraveerya swells to death.

To save the blood line Bhishma invites tribal Vyasa, but he was not satisfied with the two women Ambika and Ambalika. Therefore he brings another woman from amongst the people and returns after satisfying himself. In the meantime Amba is transforming to take her revenge on one side.

Three births take place Pandu, Dhritarashtra, Vidura – They get married. Pandu marries Kunti and Mathri and Dhritarashtra marries Gandhari. Pandu rises to the throne first. Since Pandu was ill, Dhritarashtra rose to power. Pandu and wives go into exile. Dhritarashtra, Vidura, Gandhari, Bhishma remain at home.

Scene 3

Pandu has 5 sons from 2 wives during the exile. They lived by hunting and eating fruits.

Pandu and Madri die during an intercourse on a tree. Kunti and their 5 sons return to their kingdom.

Scene 4

Dhritarashtra and Gandhari have many sons. They grew up receiving guidance from Bhishma and Vidura and living a luxurious life establishing their power over the people.

Duryodhana and his brothers are engrossed in food and liquor. Kunti and her five sons who arrive at the Kauravas' home leads to their vendetta. Kauravas treat Pandavas as if they were there trying to steal from Kauravas.

Scene 5

Vidura and Bhishma teach Pandavas also. Drona is the supreme teacher on one side they teach about universe, architecture and politics on the other side they teach martial arts. Yudhishtira was the son born to Kunti from Vidura earlier when she was in the country. Vidura takes Yudhishtira also to teach politics of the country. Drona gave them small toys, later weapons and made warriors out of them. In between this small fight begins between brothers regarding intelligence and strength.

Scene 5-A

Ekalavya grows up as a valiant man in the jungle. Arjuna and gang come wearing masks and attack Ekalavya and his friends and cut off his finger.

Scene 5-B

At the same time Duryodhana and his team attack bheema and tie him up, while he was eating fruits alone in the forest. Vyasa who arrives at that time unties Bhima and carries Ekalavya. Vyasa takes the finger of Ekalavya and gives it to Drona who is sitting above.

Drona walks away with finger.

Scene 6

The festival of uncivilised people takes place at 'Varanavadhham'. Pandavas come to visit that place. Music, dance and other visual treats, intoxicated men coming to buy women.

Pandavas are also intoxicated and enjoying the festival.

Scene 6-a

Purochana is building the house of wax for pandavas to rest during the night. No sooner do they reach there than they find out that this arakkilam (house of wax) is a trap to burn them alive. Kunthi invites a group of hungry and tired people and gives food, wine and a place to stay. At midnight Kunthi along with her children escapes from arakkilam and passes torch to bheema. Bheema pulls in Purochana, who was going to burn Pandavas to death and ignites the arakkilam. Pandavas escape.

Scene 7

Dhuryodhana, Shakuni and other kauravas who are planning to invite Pandavas to defeat them in gambling. Dritharashtra and Gandhari do not get involved in this planning. Pandavas arrive for gambling, Shakuni and Yudhistira start to play. Dhuryodhana, Dushasana and other Kauravas are cheering around. Sanjaya informs Dhritharashtra every detail. Shakuni and Yudhistira are extremely excited in the game. Pandavas lose everything. Shakuni enslaves Yudhishtira and his brothers in the game. At last Dushasana brings Panchali and chases her along the gambling square but Panchali's valour defeats Dushasana and he falls. Vyasa comes along and carries Panchali from there.

Scene 8

As Vidhura watches, Pandavas, who were defeated in the gambling goes to exile. Deep forest, Hidumban and Hidimbi who are enjoying collecting honey and fruit. While walking through the forest Pandavas reaches there. While Bheema was offering flower to Panchali, Hidumban and other Pandavas come face to face. Bheema who reaches there and entraps Hidumban and beats him to death. They all defeat Hidimbi who tries to attack them with a big branch. Bheema carries her away. On the way he sees the flower that he offered to

Panchali.

Scene 9

Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra and other kauravas are planning a war against Pandavas.

Scene 10

Panchali persuades Pandavas to go to war and they go to war.

Scene 11

Deep forest, animals. Anjana is sitting in a bamboo forest eating something. Gadolgajan who comes to frighten her. They play. Pandavas comes in as a disturbance. Although Gadolgajan was about to attack Pandavas , they tricked him into helping them to climb the mountain.

Scene 12

As Ghaldogajan and his people were celebrating in the forest. Pandavas visit them and gifts them weapons. They teach them how to use them. Takes them along to the war.

Scene 12-a

Pandavas begin the war with tribalsinfront. Tribals die one by one. At the end Karna who comes out of the house kills Ghadolgajan by throwing fireballs. Ghadolgajan rotates with the fireball in his hands and eventually dies.

Scene 12-b

Everybody goes to war to sustain their family and power. Cries of death and blood everywhere. A great war. After the long war, the bodies lie dead merged with the mud.

Scene 13

Corpse rises up from the land of the dead. Opens their mouth, one by one they begin to talk. Silent cry of women can be heard in between.

Monologue

Aswathama

These corpses will decay. The smell of these decaying bodies will blend with flames of the war field and enhance its fragrance. I will remain here enjoying this sweet smell. For 3000 years anonymous, helpless, enslaved by the diseases, severely bleeding, wandering along in the deep forests and desolated places as a cursed man. Born as a Brahmin, brought up as a Kshatriya, betraying only the ones who betray. After 3000 years my time has come. Look around a whole generation of your blood is at my feet. I will destroy everyone, even the next generation to come. (Vidhurar removes the stone from his mouth)

Vidhurar

These are signs. Signs of a country. Masturbated by brutal rulers. A human race lived here who forgot their duties, loved ones, humanity and fought for lands and borders. Poor people had to suffer for this. They silenced the ones who questioned authorities. This country belongs to the people.

Abhimanyu

It was all my fault. I knew i will die soon and the chariots will run over my body. I was a warrior born for that, a samurai prepared only for war. Where is my family who pushed me to the Warfield. I was surrounded by the enemies, circles that I broke chained again.They gouged my eyes. Father, can I ask for one last question “was I just a samurai of this country?”

Sakuni

Births will take place to destroy 'Dharma'. Brahmins will do the karma of sudras. Yagas and dharmas will become nominal. People will be short-lived and ruled by barbarian kings. Disciples will lie on their masters, bed taste of the essence will change women will have to sell their flesh. Crows will increase. Years and years will pass without a raindrop, sins and cheating will rule over the people and will give way to crooked plans.

Shikandi

I, who am i? Man or woman? What the hell are you staring at eh? Weren't all of you using me for your needs? After that you treat me like a dog. People discuss about my body when they see me first. I was just a puppet in the war. Warriors have heroic death, what about me? Wasn't I a warrior?

Sanjaya

See, an elephant has been killed by four people. Blood flowing from its body. Some greedy people trying to drink its blood. Human organs scattered all over. Cannibals fighting with each other for the organs. War field turns to a lake of blood, war has declined to attacking helpless women. Kids crashed their flights in to the warships which could engulf the whole land from the sea. War in to the sea, tying whales and up in the air, war star war.

Bheema

For whom was all this. Bloody hands and cursed words. For whose all tears am I answerable? A wicked man who killed his own brothers. Just like pieces in a chess game. I sacrificed my own son. Cries of women

between power and treachery. I conquered everything. Whole country is stained with blood. Cries of the innocent. I merge with the earth.

(Karna and Parasurama starts their monologues and speaks alternatively)

Parasurama

Blood, blood, blood. War will come, you will forget your skills when you face your enemy. You lied that you are Brahmin. Sudra-Kshatriya, your chariot will fall, arrows will taste your blood. Acting as my favourite student you seized even the Brahmastra from me. I can feel it. The smell of stone-hearted Kshatriya. Remember one thing when you face your most powerful enemy you will forget everything you have learned.

Karna

Kingdom, Kingdom. Efficient, flourishing kingdom. Kingdom of the fearsome warriors. Kingdom of the great, blessed emperor. Life is a secret tunnel. I am not a charioteer, I am a warrior. Insults in the name of clan, brothers, friend, soulmate, son, death, betrayal, betrayal, pain, word, habit, the last...

Annexure 12

Three Year MPA programme in Theatre Arts Syllabus

The Theatre Arts discipline of S.N. school convened a curriculum planning meeting on 15th and 16th of March 2007 to redesign the course pattern and revise the syllabus with more professional orientation and academic rigor considering the present academic scenario of Theatre Arts in the country. The meeting was attended by Prof. Mohan Maharishi (Former Director, National School of Drama), Prof. Brian Singleton (Trinity College, Dublin), Mr. Anmol Vellani (India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore), Dr. Ravi Chaturvedi (University of Rajasthan), Prof. B. P. Sanjay (Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Hyderabad), Prof. P. Vinod (Dean, S.N. School), Prof. J. Anuradha (Prof. in Dance, S.N. School), Mr. Bharath Sharma (Reader in Dance, S.N. School) and the faculty of Theatre Arts Discipline.

The meeting discussed about the lack of under graduate programmes for Theatre Arts in India, which can nurture students for a post graduate course. The present two year post graduate programme is not sufficient to impart training from rudimentary level to the advanced.

The following ideas were discussed in the meeting:

1. Theatre as an art form in the context of globalization and technological development.
2. How to improve the quality of theatre training to generate professional artists and academicians especially in University theatre departments.

3. Building capable students to work in the context of emerging corporate world.
4. Keeping more vocational subjects in the curriculum.
5. Need to include course components to raise funds and theatre management.
6. Empowering the students to appropriate the art of theatre to new contexts.
7. Providing avenues and strategies to sustain the form and to generate further knowledge on the art of theatre.

Finally the committee recommended starting a three year M.P.A programme in Theatre Arts with an optional exit clause after one year, through which one can go out with a post graduate diploma in Theatre Arts. Those who would like to get an M.P.A. degree have to complete the three year programme. Precisely the first year will be functioning as a bridge programme as suggested by the UGC in the model curriculum for Performing Arts.

Further to the recommendation, the meeting discussed about the frame work of the syllabus and directed that it should not follow the conventional structures. As the cultural scenario and the field of cultural expression are rapidly changing in terms of practice and scholarship the overall structure of the syllabi has to be new; the members insisted. In continuation to all these deliberations the faculty of Theatre Arts drafted a tentative syllabus outline for the Three year MPA course in Theatre Arts. The draft course structure was submitted for approval of the school board and it was approved by the board convened on September 13, 2007.

Now the detailed syllabus is prepared and submitted for approval. The document is the detailed version of the draft course structure approved by the school board on September 13, 2007.

I Semester: Movement and Voice#

Objective:

To prepare the student's body and voice for performance and to develop understanding and awareness of physical and vocal possibilities.

Modules:

1. Physical exercises to develop flexibility, endurance and stamina
2. Physical exercises to develop understanding and awareness of muscle groups
3. Movement exercises for understanding rhythm and execution of simple movement patterns with grace and precision
4. Simple improvisations in movement based on nature and animals
5. Breathing exercises
6. Voice exercises to improve projection and range
7. Exercises in volume and pitch
8. Voice mechanism –humming, whispering and other vocal sounds
9. Vowels and consonants

Methodology: Above modules will be taught through various practical exercises, as far as possible early in the morning. Following the expert teacher and practicing to improve and explore will be the basic methodology.

Students will, from time to time performing the results of their learning in front of the whole school, which will be continuously evaluated as assignments.

I. Arts, Aesthetics and Society (Modern to Contemporary)

Objective: To expose and familiarize different genres of artistic expressions, their vocabularies and grammars, their contexts, and syntagmatic or paradigmatic relations with relevant theatrical expressions. To develop critical capacity to understand cultural politics.

Modules:

1. Appreciation of fine arts.
2. Appreciation of literatures - oral and textual.
3. Appreciation of performance cultures.
4. Introduction to visual culture.
5. Biographies/ Autobiographies of artists
6. Basic understanding of philosophical concepts in the light of artistic expressions.
7. Exposure to the social and political contexts that shape different artistic expressions.
8. Understanding culture in the light of class/ caste/ gender/ region, etc.

Methodology: Above modules will be taught, preferably by various experts in different arts, against the backdrop of cultural life and society, emphasizing on the socio-political as well as formal contexts. A faculty member will moderate the course to relate the teaching to theatre practice, incorporating practice components as and when needed.

Effort will be made to relate the study and discussions with the practical work happening in other courses, especially the production in Course IV.

Texts, study materials and artifacts will be decided in consultation with the teachers.

Suggested Reading:

John Berger –Ways of Seeing, About Looking, Sense of Sight

II. Production Process

Objective: To practically explore, experience and understand different stages of production process from an idea/theme/text to a concrete theatrical expression. To practically learn the planning and execution of a performance event.

Modules:

1. Improvisations based on self and identity- home image, home atmosphere, happy memory
2. Fantasy and imagination
3. Visual imagery to Scene
4. Verbal imagery to scene
5. Music to scene
6. Interpreting an observed fact to create a scene
7. Text to Performance- Non Dramatic
8. Text to Performance- Dramatic
9. Genres, Styles and Performance Contexts
- 10.Planning and executing a performance event

Methodology: Self exploratory method emphasizing on the audio visual expression will be followed under the guidance of the teacher. Theatre games and exercises will be used to stimulate the imagination. Free wheeling exploration of spaces, different relationships between audience

and performers and use of found objects in an imaginative manner will be the guiding principles. Students will be encouraged to use the exposure from Course I and the skills from Course III in their work.

Students will be exhibiting the results of their explorations in front of the school from time to time, where their work will be assessed.

III. Basics of Design

Objective: To give hands on training on basic design skills and to understand their function in the total performance structure in relation to other components.

Modules:

1. Sketching
2. Use of Colour
3. Masks: simple face masks using clay modeling, PoP and papier-mâché.
4. Properties: papier-mâché
5. Properties: Thermo-col
6. Properties: Foam, rope, etc.
7. Make-up: Mask make-up (as in Peking opera or Kabuki)
8. Make-up: Exaggerated characterization
9. Costume: Silhouette and colour
10. Costume: Simple drapes and using them
11. Lighting: Line, colour and mood (practical and in relation to paintings)
12. Lighting: Taking and relating to light

Methodology: Students have to do hands on work based on the demonstration given by the teacher on basic level and later they have to carry out projects exploring the different possibilities relevant to theatre.

The skills are developed in the context of the exposure they get from Course I and correlations are made with the explorations in Course II.

Students will be exhibiting the results of their work with these skills either in the form of showing the objects they make or performing scenes, using the objects.

IV. Acting

Objective: To learn and understand the basic elements of acting, stage presence and theatrical communication. To be able to follow direction and execute the director's interpretation of the text and justify acting design in relation to other elements of performance.

Modules:

1. Fundamentals of Acting: Entry and exit
2. Stage presence: Concentration, conviction and confidence
3. Stage presence: Energy and directionality
4. Stage presence: Completeness, clarity and precision of action (gesture/ posture/ movement)
5. Interaction: Eye contact and action-reaction with co-actors
6. Interaction: Relating to other elements of performance (set, property, costume, composition and light)
7. Diction and speech
8. Speech as action: Completeness and meaning of utterance
9. Play reading and analysis.

10. Performing an intense melodrama.

11. Production synthesis: Study of rehearsals, management and performance.

Methodology: Students will learn acting, diction and speech through games, exercises, improvisations and working on scenes. Students will perform scenes; using all the skills they are learning, in front of the whole School, to habituate them to the discipline of performance. As a culmination, they will work in a major production of an emotionally **intense melodrama** under an experienced director. Learning the discipline of performance, using ones' skills as a part of the given design and relating to other elements of performance will be given importance. They will be submitting an analytical essay on the process of the major production as their final exam.

The director will have the option of changing the casting or getting a professional actor to replace a student, who does not show the required discipline and motivation as a professional assignment would require. Such student will be considered as absent for the course.

II Semester : Movement and Voice#

Objective: To introduce the students to different styles of body movement, so that they can understand the different alignments and systems of limb usage in order to enable them to analytically understand and follow choreography using different styles.

To train their voices to identify and use natural voice.

To achieve fluidity and range in pitch and volume.

Modules:

1. Training in different systems of vigorous movement (like Kalari or Chau)
2. Training in Yoga.
3. Learning and performing structured movement (choreography) with grace and precision
4. Improvisations in movement based on a theme/ image/ mood
5. Breathing exercises (Pranaayaama)
6. Voice exercises to improve projection and range
7. Exercises in volume and pitch –chanting and singing

Methodology: Above modules will be taught through various practical exercises, as far as possible early in the morning. Following the expert teacher and practicing to improve and explore will be the basic methodology.

Students will, from time to time performing the results of their learning in front of the whole school, which will be continuously evaluated as assignments.

I. Play Analysis

Objective: To teach students how to research and analyze a given play from different angles, in order to create an intellectually rich and interpretatively consistent production.

Modules:

1. Original context: Historical
2. Original context: Literary
3. Original context: Theatrical

4. Original context: Visual/ cultural
5. Philosophical and political aspects
6. Structure and style: in relation to the author's contemporaries
7. Structure and style: in relation to the author's other works
8. Character analysis
9. Symbolic and other devices
10. Interpretative context: socio-political meaning and relevance for the present
11. Interpretative context: appropriation to the present cultural and technical values

Methodology: Students will be exposed to the cultural background of the original play in a comprehensive manner, covering the social, historical, political and aesthetic contexts, with emphasis on the performance tradition. Then they will explore the meaning and relevance for the present context, looking for equivalents and points of departures in terms of audio-visual elements, in relation to present cultural scenario and theatre practice.

II. Design and Direction

Objective: To lead the students to understand how to utilize imagination and research to design and implement the elements of a dramatic performance in the context of a given play with interpretation. To practically learn the planning and execution of a performance event.

Modules:

1. Visual design through research and freehand sketching
2. Technical drawing
3. Model Making: card board
4. Set/ Prop/ Mask making: fiber glass, latex, etc.

5. Make-up: realistic and no-makeup effect
6. Music /Sound equipment
7. Music /Sound design
8. Lighting: electricity
9. Lighting: equipment
10. Lighting: planning and operation
11. Visual composition of stage picture
12. Stage geography
13. Movement and choreography of scene

Methodology: Students have to do hands on work based on the demonstration given by the teacher on basic level and later they have to carry out projects exploring different possibilities relevant to theatre.

Students will be exhibiting the results of their work with these skills in the form of performing scenes, using the objects/ components.

III. Approaches to Acting

Objective: To introduce students to the skills and possibilities of improvisations, different approaches in modern acting through a series of scene-works.

Modules:

1. Acting in imitation of everyday life
2. Exaggerated emotional acting
3. Performing contradiction between action and suppressed emotion
4. Acting as doing rather than showing
5. Mime and establishing unseen elements
6. Making costumes/ props/ setting real
7. Acting as verbal narration

8. Acting as demonstration of character/ event
9. Acting as a status game
10. Acting with movement and music/ sound
11. Acting as abstract expression
12. Improvisations based on relationships
13. Improvisations based on situation
14. Improvisations based on theme
15. Improvisations based on a text
16. Developing a performance through improvisations based on a text

Methodology: Students will learn different kinds and functions of acting, through games, exercises, improvisations and working on scenes. Students will perform scenes; using all the skills they are learning, in front of the whole School, to habituate them to the discipline of performance. Exploring different kinds of performance, flexibility in using their skills as per different parameters will be given importance. They will be also be required to submit an analytical essay on the kinds of acting used in a prescribed play performance or a film.

IV. Play Production

Objective: To work with an experienced and professional Director on the given play, around which rest of the courses are done. To bring the understanding acquired through research and exercises into the particular director's interpretation to develop a professional performance.

Modules:

1. Play reading and audition
2. Professionalism and discipline
3. Disciplined approach to building a character

4. Visualizing the character/ action
5. Flexibility to follow direction
6. To design acting as part of the larger design of the play
7. Sharing responsibilities as a part of collective activity
8. Learning to cope-up with pressure and deliver one's best
9. Motivation and self-discipline

Methodology: Learning the discipline and professionalism of performance, using ones' skills as a part of the given design and relating to other elements of performance will be given importance. The director will have the option of changing the casting or getting a professional actor to replace a student, who does not show the required discipline and motivation as a professional assignment would require. Such student will be considered as absent for the course.

Students will be submitting an analytical essay on the process of the major production as their final exam.

III Semester

Movement and Voice#

Objective: To train students in a system of body movement, so that they can understand the language and style of that style of movement, so that they can use its vocabulary to improvise and express themselves.

To train their voices to identify and use natural voice.

To explore the possibilities of vocal sounds in stylized recitations, chanting and in creating atmospheres and sound pictures.

Modules:

1. Training in a system of vigorous movement.
2. Training in Yoga/relaxation.
3. Learning and performing structured movement (choreography) with grace and precision
4. Improvisations within the movement system, based on a theme/ image/ mood
5. Continuing search for natural voice.
6. Understanding of scale and singing.
7. Exercises in chanting narration.
8. Vocal improvisations in creating sound pictures

Methodology: Above modules will be taught through various practical exercises, as far as possible early in the morning. Following the expert teacher and practicing to improve and explore will be the basic methodology.

Students will, from time to time performing the results of their learning in front of the whole school, which will be continuously evaluated as assignments.

I. History, Theory and Text (Classical non-Indian)

Objective: To take the students into historical study of theatre practice; to make them understand the significance and multiplicity of theatre activities and their relationship to their contemporary history and culture; and to teach how different theatres emerged in different cultures and also how different theatre forms struggle for space within the same period and culture. Focus would be on the differences of performance practices and their cultural/ social/ political significances.

Modules:

1. Classical Greece: History, art and Culture
2. Classical Greece: Theatre architecture and performances
3. Classical Greece: Plato and Aristotle
4. Classical Greece: Tragedy and Comedy
5. Classical Asian: History, art and Culture
6. Classical Asian: Theatre architecture and performances
7. Classical Asian: Two significant drama texts
8. Medieval Europe: Religion, society and arts
9. Medieval Europe: Commedia del Arte, Mysteries and Miracles.
10. European Renaissance: Religion, society, arts and architecture
11. Shakespeare, Moliere and their contemporaries.

Methodology: Students will be exposed to different cultural backgrounds of theatre in a comprehensive manner through covering all major classical theatre cultures with a historical perspective. Reading plays and scene-study will happen in relation to the architectural space, social significance of performance event and acting style. Stress will also be on the alternative performance cultures to the established canons.

II. Theory and Practice of Scenography

Objective: To make students understand and practice Scenography as a fundamental aspect of theatre performance, that sets the tone and texture of the whole event, defining the quality of the performance event in terms of a particular kind of ritual. Approaches proposed by artistes like Appia, Craig, and Mayerhold; as well as alternative relations between audience and performance as proposed by experiments like Environmental theatre, Open theatre, Third theatre, etc will be studied.

Modules:

1. Modern Scenography: E.G. Craig and A. Appia (Eurhythmics and Symbolism)
2. Modern Scenography: Mayerhold, Piscator and Brecht
3. Modern Scenography: Reinhardt, Environmental theatre and Open theatre
4. Evolving a Scenic design through sketching –detail, mood, feeling, energy and movement expressed visually.
5. Principles and elements of Design
6. Plastique harmony
7. Scenographic distribution into different elements with detailed plans for execution
 - a. Set design
 - b. Costume design: authentic and imaginative
 - c. Costume design for a movement Style
 - d. Property design
 - e. Lighting design: realistic logic
 - f. Lighting design: interpretative –psychological, expressionistic, etc.
 - g. Sound design
 - h. Choreography

Methodology: Thorough discussion of the theoretical components with audio-visual aids as well as reading materials. The cultural/ political and artistic backgrounds and the aesthetic innovations are stressed upon.

Self exploratory work under the supervision of an expert-teacher, with necessary practical inputs in skills of preparing a final project

III. Children's Theatre & Theatre in Education

Objective: To prepare students for the fast growing field of Children's theatre, so that they can enter into the practice with understanding of the unique challenges, with responsibility and care for children, that comes out of the knowledge of the theory and practice available in the field.

Modules:

1. Child Psychology and understanding the unique needs of different age groups
2. Child rights and the understanding of the child's mental world in contemporary culture
3. Uses, purposes and different kinds of children's theatre
4. Theatre as therapy
5. Theatre for development of social skills
6. Theatre as a method of learning different subjects
7. Creative drama: games and exercises
8. Creative drama: structuring a performance/demonstration
9. Narrative theatre
10. Theatre by adults for children
11. Theatre by children: Structured training and unstructured approach
12. Understanding the nature and uses of fairy tales, allegories and fantasy

Methodology: Theoretical teaching with practical work in 'theatre by adults for children'. Researching for the material on relevant topics will be given importance.

Avenues will be explored to give students a practical experience of working with children in schools. Also, efforts to conduct workshops during vacation time will be encouraged.

IV. Acting & Play Production/

Objective: To expose actors to the ritualistic nature of classical/ traditional performance context and to encourage them to get in touch with the ritualistic and presentational elements within their cultural backgrounds. Precise handling of the external elements is emphasized along with the introduction of trance and possession.

Modules:

1. Chorus
2. Chants/ Invocations
3. Bringing Mask to life
4. Prosthetics
5. Animal energies
6. Creating modern Rituals
7. Performance as a Ritual
8. Classical play from Greek or Japanese or another foreign culture or any play with comparable structure and style of performance
9. Shakespearean play or a farce from Commedia dell' Arte or a Kabuki play or any play with comparable structure and style of performance

Methodology: Productions will be prepared and performed under experienced directors, with necessary inputs from different experts to train the actors or in design and execution of Scenography.

Effort will be to coordinate the requirements of these productions with other courses on movement and Scenography.

The director will have the option of changing the casting or getting a professional actor to replace a student, who does not show the required discipline and motivation as a professional assignment would require. Such student will be considered as absent for the course.

IV Semester

Movement and Voice#

Objective: To train students in Indian systems of body movement, so that they can understand the language and style of a certain kind of movement, so that they can use its vocabulary to improvise and express themselves.

To train their voices to identify and use natural voice.

To explore the possibilities of vocal sounds in stylized recitations, chanting and in creating atmospheres and sound pictures.

Modules:

1. Training in a system of Indian movement.
2. Training in Yoga/relaxation.
3. Learning and performing structured movement (choreography) with grace and precision
4. Improvisations within the movement system, based on a theme/ image/ mood
5. Continuing search for natural voice.
6. Understanding of scale and singing.
7. Vachakabhinaya
8. Vocal improvisations in creating sound pictures

Methodology: Above modules will be taught through various practical exercises, as far as possible early in the morning. Following the expert teacher and practicing to improve and explore will be the basic methodology.

Students will, from time to time performing the results of their learning in front of the whole school, which will be continuously evaluated as assignments.

I. History, Theory and Text (Indian Classical/ Traditional/ Folk)

Objective: To take the students into historical study of theatre practice in India; to make them understand the significance and multiplicity of theatre activities and their relationship to their contemporary history and culture; and to teach how different theatres emerged in different contexts and also how different theatre forms struggle for space within the same period. Focus would be on the differences of performance practices and their cultural/ social/ political significances. Study of Natya Sastra and analyzing its significance in the multiple and changing contexts of performance will be stressed upon.

Modules:

1. Arts of Indus valley civilization
2. Buddhism and its arts
3. Miniature paintings: traditions and schools
4. Natya Sastra: theory of performance
5. Natya Sastra: theory of acting
6. Natya Sastra: theatre architecture
7. Natya Sastra: Structure of drama
8. Classical Sanskrit drama and performance devices
9. Traditional Indian performance forms

10.Features of Indian folk performances

Methodology:

Students will be exposed to different cultural backgrounds of theatre traditions in India in a comprehensive manner with a historical perspective. Reading plays and scene-study will happen in relation to the architectural space, social significance of performance event and acting style. Stress will also be on the alternative performance cultures to the established canons and how traditional performance devices can be adapted for theatre practice today.

II. Theatre Management (theory and practical)

Objective: To prepare students to visualize and prepare professional theatre projects with a clear understanding of the budget, work division, human and financial resource management, presentation and marketing.

Modules:

- 1.Selection of play/ project
- 2.Articulation of its significance
- 3.Visualization
- 4.Value addition
- 5.Work division
- 6.Plan of Action
- 7.Budgeting
- 8.Powerpoint Presentation
- 9.Computer generated 3-D models
- 10.Sources of funding and their priorities

Methodology: Students will present one individual project each under the guidance of experts/ teachers.

III Theory and Practice of Direction

Objective: To practically explore, experience and understand different aspects of directing a play. To practically learn the process from selection, research, interpretation to the execution of the performance event through working on scenes from a given play.

Modules:

1. History of direction/ approaches to direction
2. Play analysis
3. Idea of Total Theatre
4. Research: historical background
5. Research: visual background
6. Interpretation: the idea
7. Interpretation: through visual and action
8. Genres, styles and performance contexts
9. Preparation and planning for rehearsals
10. Rehearsal process –games, exercises, improvisations, etc.
11. Planned inputs for actors and designers
12. Working with actors
13. Working with designers and technicians
14. Planning and executing a performance event

Methodology: Self exploratory method will be followed under the guidance of the teacher. Free wheeling exploration of spaces, different relationships between audience and performers and use of found objects in an imaginative manner will be the guiding principles.

Students will be exhibiting the results of their explorations in front of the school from time to time, where their work will be assessed.

IV. Acting & Production

Objective: To train and familiarize students with a codified language of performance, where the physical elements are meticulously choreographed while the inner impulse is allowed to improvise within the given structure.

Modules:

1. Mudrabhinaya
2. Uttamngabhinaya
3. Charis and Gatis
4. Vachikabhinaya
5. Ahaarya
6. Training in a particular classical/ traditional form
7. Production of an Indian Classical or Traditional play or any play with comparable structure and style of performance

Methodology: Students will perform a classical or traditional play within a given style of performance.

Stress will be on assimilating the stylistic demands into one's self-expression.

The director will have the option of changing the casting or getting a professional actor to replace a student, who does not show the required discipline and motivation as a professional assignment would require. Such student will be considered as absent for the course.

Students will be submitting an analytical essay on the process of the major production as their final exam.

V Semester

Movement and Voice#

I. Realism and After

Objective:

Modules:

1. History of Realism in different art forms
2. Critics of Realism
3. Truth and the real
4. Alternatives to Realism
5. Questioning the 'Real'

Methodology:

II. Community Theatre / Applied Theatre

Objective:

Modules:

1. Appropriation of Theatre Language and Methods for Theatre as an Agency
2. Theatre for Development
3. Theatre of the Oppressed
4. Ethnographic Theatre
5. Theatre to articulate reality
6. Theatre to articulate aspirations
7. Agitprop
8. Theatre as a community event

Methodology:

III. * a) Advanced Course in Direction

Objective:

Modules:

1. Conducting of and analytical selection from improvisation
2. Written text and performance text
3. Interpretation and extrapolation
4. Ritual
5. Multiple focus and multiple languages of elements of theatre
6. Contemporary approaches to direction
7. Multi-media
- 8.

Methodology:

b) *Advanced Course in Design

Objective:

Modules:

1. Theatre/ auditorium design
2. Exhibition design
3. Intelligent lights
4. Audio-visual Installation

Methodology:

b) *Advanced Course in Acting

Objective:

Modules:

1. Stanislavski System of Actor Training
2. Actor's Studio
3. Michael Chekhov
4. Alexander Technique
5. Mayerhold
6. Brecht

Methodology:

IV. Production of Modern Drama

Objective:

Modules: Production of a Modern play with Realistic approach to acting.

Or any play with comparable structure and style of performance

Production of a Modern play with presentational approach to acting.

Or any play with comparable structure and style of performance

Methodology:

VI Semester

Movement and Voice#

I. Indian Drama and Performance in Contemporary context

Objective:

Modules:

1. Modern Indian Drama in different languages

2. Modern Indian theatre practice –multiple approaches
3. Modern Indian theatre practice –theory and reality
4. Indian theatre in intercultural context
5. Major directors

Methodology:

II. Theatre and New Contexts

Objective:

Modules:

1. Human Resource Development
2. Public Events
3. Commercial occasions
4. Audio-visual Media
5. Documentation

Methodology:

III. * a) Direction Practicals

Objective:

Modules:

Independent production of a play with proper planning, project submission, budgeting, etc.

Methodology:

b) Design Practicals

Objective:

Modules:

1. Independent production of an Installation with proper planning, project submission, budgeting, etc
2. working with direction students on their production

Methodology:

c) Contemporary Avenues for Acting

Objective:

Modules:

1. Grotowsky and body-memory
2. Slow movement and Body/Mind
3. Impulse to movement and vice versa
4. Acting for Radio
5. Acting for camera: studio and out-door
6. Compeering and anchoring
7. Improvisation as performance

Methodology:

IV. Contemporary Play Production

Objective:

Modules:

Production of a Modern play with an experimental approach to acting.

Methodology:

* Major – Optional

Compulsory Non Credit- Require 90% attendance.

Annexure 13

Evaluation Form

Date: 19-11-2009

For 1st & 2nd-year theatre arts students

Name: Jaya Katak Year: 2009

Except where your comments are asked for, please answer by circling one of the numerals 1 to 5.

A. Movement

Q1. The learning objectives for this past five months of the past 1 semester were clearly communicated.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q2. Instructions and directions from the teacher(s) were clear.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q3. My knowledge/ability and understanding increased.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q4. Adequate consultation, feedback and evaluation were provided by the teacher.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

B. Acting

Q1. The learning objectives for this past five months of the past 1 semester were clearly communicated.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q2. Instructions and directions from the teacher were clear.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q3. My knowledge/ability and understanding increased.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q4. Adequate consultation, feedback and evaluation were provided by the teacher(s).

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Not sure 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Any suggestions or other feedback you wish to provide:

I really didn't know anything about acting and movement but was very fascinated about physical movements. Here only I find everything and eye-opening facts about acting and I am trying to do some things which are taught in the acting & movement class in the production which is going on. Sir, U don't need any suggestions specially from me, a person who don't know anything about acting. It was wonderful working with U and it had really worked a lot. Thank U Sir.

Prepared by

Acting Coach: SreejithRamanan

Annexure 14

Hypocrisy is an universal element in society which, I believe, needs to be acknowledged.

Being a student of history, one person I really respect and admire, is Sarojini Waidn. Her dignity always had an aura and made her what she was.

A movie buff that I am, it is extremely difficult for me to pick my favourite character. But, after some thought, I've realised that I love the character of the Joker from The Dark Knight. He justifies evil, and leaves you in a state of indecision — whether to love him or hate him.

Coming to myself, I love my ability to fight, survive and live. I believe I'm a fighter to the core. I don't hate myself. Rather, I dislike the fact that I can be arrogant at times. I'm afraid of the

fact that I am often naive. And, I
don't really know, as yet, as to
how I'll be able to contribute
towards betterment of society.

- Aditya
History

SANAL.

1. All sorts of discrimination [Economic, political, cultural, sociological, gender] and exploitation in the society.
2. Che Guevara.
But we can't call him as a 'hero' - Because the word 'hero' itself can create a kind of politics which he didn't want to promote.
He was a true revolutionary, who was really beyond the ideologies of a nationalist patriot. ~~He~~ He didn't fight for his own country - After the Cuban revolution he went to Bolivia to mobilize the people and he died while he was fighting. He never thought of his own life -
He is my ideal human being.
3. The grandmother from the movie 'Pather Panchali' -
We can feel the whole struggle of life and the innocence of true love from her face.
4. ~~My~~ ~~love~~ I can love people without considering their economic and cultural status -
5. My laziness -
6. ~~I always~~ I am always trying to hide myself in a euphoria to escape from the "Reality".
7. Through my ^{true} responses to the political ~~atmosphere~~ atmosphere through my ^{own} medium.
It can be any medium which I can express myself -

Annexure 15

THE SUMMARY OF ‘THE MUSEUM OF LOST PIECES’

Scene 1: Show Pieces Come Alive

Scene 2: Announcement of Ramappa Circus Company with live Circus music

Scene 3: First entry of the Characters: Entry with backs of the Actors facing the Audience and Smileys wrapped around their waist

Scene 4: Inauguration of the Performance by the Joker: Ring of Fire Scene

Scene 5: Entry on the Stick and Ribbon Work

Scene 6: The Masked Fool’s introduction of the Wrestler, followed by the Wrestling Scene (Umpire enters on a rope to the Ring) in which the powerful finally gets defeated.

Scene 7: Announcement of the next event by the comedian-critic character

Scene 8: Carnival skills by the Showman (smoking through the nose, chewing blades and lifting cycle with his teeth)

Scene 9: The Masked fool gets the tile and the Macho-man breaks it. Then a stone is broken on his chest by the Showman.

Scene 10: Baby Scene in which a crying overgrown baby killing a man and continues to be cute.

Scene 11: Flimi Dance to the tune of the popular Malayalam number, “Kasthuri”

Scene 12: Make-Up Scene- The make up man tells the lady of the house that she has one a free facial offer as part of a lucky draw and while she keeps her eyes closed, he and friends loots the house and takes away even the maid.

Scene 13: Announcement of the Cycle-Ride over a Person in Hindi and Malayalam.

Scene 14: Pub Dance and masked faces imitates and makes fun of it.

Scene 15: Auction Scene: Auction of a hen called “Sati Savitri” is conducted. Audiences are included in the auction. Constant references to Vijay Mallya’s bid for Gandhi’s properties and the source of income

Scene 16: Historical Speeches Scene- Speeches by Charlie Chaplin (The Great Dictator), Martin Luther King, Dr.Ambedkar, American woman suffragist Susan B. Anthony, Anne Frank, Sahtin from The Lower Depths, Subhash Chandra Bose and GraylenHagler

Scene 17: Preparations for the Dangerous Production with the voice over of a clandestine project.

Scene 18: Ban on the Play before it Opens by the Authorities for Violating the Entertainment Laws of the Land

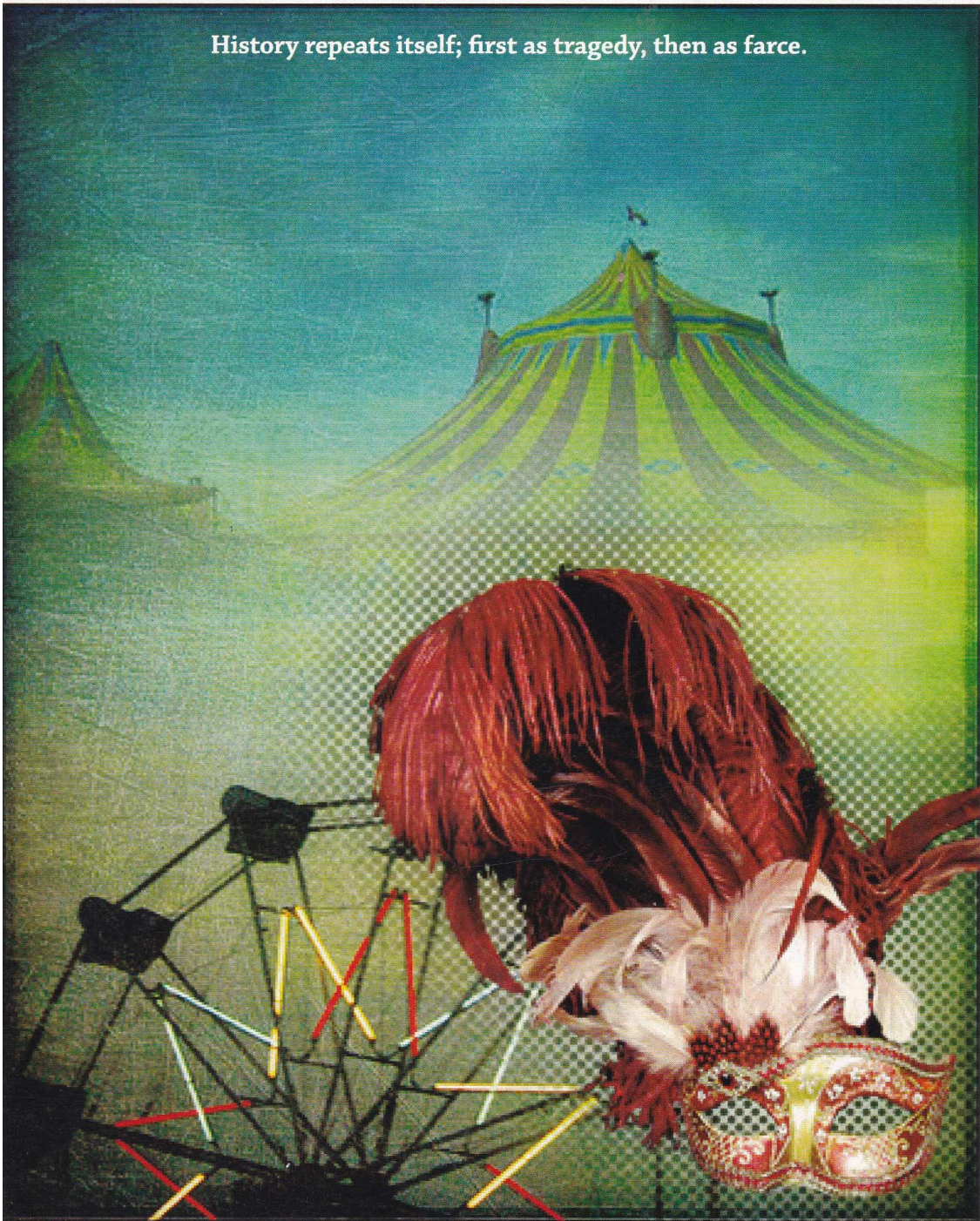
Scene 19: Black guards of Entertainment Industry goes to the stage and clears all the Props

Scene 20: Actors go back to become Show Pieces of the Museum after a violent, masochistic frenzy.

THE MUSEUM OF LOST PIECES

a play by Sreejith Ramanan

History repeats itself; first as tragedy, then as farce.



Presented by the Department of Theatre Arts, S.N. School, University of Hyderabad.

The Production

Where do things hidden-and-forgotten go? What happens to the lost-and-never-found? When memories get showcased, what do you expect them to do? Are the pain and fear of yesteryears scary, painful, immaterial or funny?

The Process

This is a devising project primarily by the students of the theatre arts department, for their course in acting. The process started off with the idea of staging a carnival show in which spectacular items and special skills that many of them brought along and went onto do a good deal of improvisation, which also made its way to the production. Joined by the students of English, fine arts and history, as dramaturg and actors, the play emerged organically...in many languages and colours....



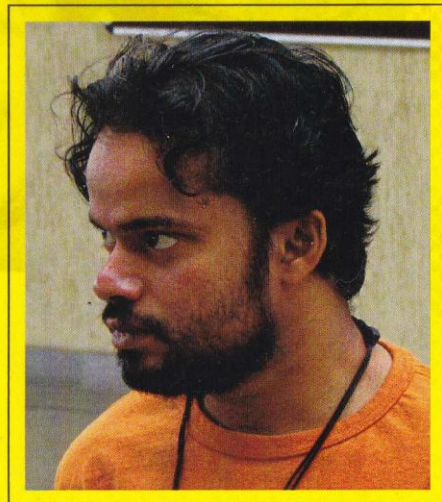
Directorial Note

Circus, for me, was never the smooth skills that they exhibited. Even when acrobats were busy performing or jokers were creating waves among the audience, I was looking at the wings...I always thought their task was an extreme one: they had to keep us on the height of anxiety and curiosity all the time. They would dissect moments further to do that...Later, when I went on to become an actor, I also went through this...I understood that what an actor juggles with is time and the time is her life itself! It becomes history and history becomes the thing for us to juggle and have fun with...



Device and Direction

Sreejith Ramanan is currently visiting faculty at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Hyderabad. He holds Masters and M.Phil degrees in theatre studies and has also finished a three year diploma in acting from TTRP, Singapore. He has been part of more than ninety productions, in the capacity of actor/director. Among his major roles, Saketham (Tokyo) deserves special mention. He has also won the Kerala state best actor award in 2004 for Chayamukhi.





Cast: Aditi C., Athmaja, Esunath (Rathod), Ram Mohan T., Riteesh V., Ramanjaneyulu D., Sanal N., Vengal Rao P.

Voice Over: Ram Gopal Bajaj.

Set: Hariprasad.

Music: Chanthu S.

Live Music: Sri Sai Ram musical band.

Property: Karthik.

Dance Steps: Girish Chandra and Vidya.

Announcer: Thushara C. Mohanan

Costume: Karthik and Athmaja.

Technical In-charge: Nagaraju. P.

Technical Co-ordinator: Shaik John Bashur.

Publicity Collaterals: Aswathy, Viju and Anoop for Increment Language Solutions.

Publicity: Murali Basa.

Stage Manager: Y. Venkata Balakrishna.

Light Design and Production Manager: Venkata Naresh Burla.

Dramaturgy: N.P. Ashley.

Device and Direction: Sreejith Ramanan.

Special Thanks

Prof. Ram Gopal Bajaj, Prof. B. Ananthkrishnan, All faculty, Department of Theatre, Sujith Sankar, Vikram, Second year students of the Theatre Arts Department, Department of Mass Communication and Department of Fine Arts.

March 29- April 2, 2009, 7.00 P.M., Professor Gurbakhsh Singh Maidan, University of Hyderabad.

Entry restricted through passes

Annexure 17

Feedback from Ramanjanelu Doosari from Theatre department 2007 batch,
University of Hyderabad

1. How was your overall experience working in the "Museum of lost pieces" production?

Being a novice actor, it's a new learning experience for me. Throughout the challenging process I got to know my abilities and limitations as an actor, in terms of my acting, body, voice and imagination.

I understood the process of how to devise a multilingual play, how one should communicate the hidden meaning of the play to the audience, how to use actors' abilities as a strength, group collaboration and body-oriented training has nurtured my performing qualities.

2. Did you enjoy the process and performances?

Absolutely, I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process. As an actor, entire process of "Museum of Lost Pieces" was a memorable experience for me. This is the first play where I gained my confidence as an actor. Starting from the six directional movements, Tai- Chi, Voice Exercises, improvisational skills, various acting exercises to the Final performance. Each and every step of the process we have developed and improved our acting skills.

3. What were the problems you faced working with acting coach and director?

I enjoyed the whole process! However, there were some problems, which would have enriched learning experience. Pedagogical approach could have been better. In terms of giving an overall aim of the session and where we were heading towards. Sometimes it was a bit unclear to me, but it might be my own problem.

I completely agree with the fact that, it's a very difficult as an Actor trainer and director to find the ending point or journey at the time of devising process. But As an actor, my contribution towards production would have been richer, if I would have got to know some journey process.

4. What's your view on the multilingual approach? Do you think it is successful?

It completely depends on the targeted audience. Multilingual approach could be one of the best ways to attract the diverse audience. In Hyderabad Central University students came to study from all over the world could easily understand in their languages and in New Delhi also we have got good response from the audience. However, there were several challenges in terms of the production as a whole, if it's not done effectively.

Yes, I think this was a huge successful production. Though it's a multilingual production, it has various elements to grab the audience attention. In terms of visual, entertainment, political, satirical, surprising, comical, musical elements in to it. So, audience has no chance to disconnect a single second from the entire production.

5. What did you learn from the production?

As an Actor I learnt the improvisation skills, approaching the text, group coordination, devising, developing the character, Tai-Chi, Michael Chekhov technique, Collaboration, Mask work, Stanislavsky's acting exercises, using my Martial arts Skills in acting, discipline, punctuality, commitment and dedication.

6. How was audience response and feedback about your acting?

It was an overwhelming response from the audience after successful completion of 10-12 performances. They remembered me as an actor with that character for later too. They said my performance was effective. s

CERTIFICATE OF PLAGIARISM CHECK



Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document: 01 Introduction and review - Sreejith R.docx (D51516731)
Submitted: 5/4/2019 11:13:00 AM
Submitted By: vinodvmvinod@gmail.com
Significance: 0 %

Sources included in the report:

Instances where selected sources appear:

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Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document: 02 Methodology - Sreejith R.docx (D51516732)
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http://docshare.tips/university-of-hyderabad-23672357235723522339-23462367236523252366-prospectus-_574f00d8b6d87fdd0f8b49b8.html

Instances where selected sources appear:

3

Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document: 03 Analysis and result - Sreejith R.docx (D51516733)
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Submitted By: vinodvmvinod@gmail.com
Significance: 2 %

Sources included in the report:

<http://soulamericanactor.com/spotlighton.shtml>

Instances where selected sources appear:

1