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Dynamic Conditioning:

Preparation of actors for the delivery of dynamic performance

A thesis

submitted in **partial fulfilment**

of the requirements for the degree

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ABSTRACT

This thesis represents an attempt to establish, and develop, a methodology for the preparation of actors for delivery of a physically and vocally dynamic performance, informed by the fact of theatrical immediacy. Specifically, this can be understood as a systematised collection of exercises and principles that are conducive to such an intent. The effectiveness of the conditioning exercises engaged in were tested through the preparation and staging of *The Best Thing!*, a full-length play, for public audience.

A structural division has been made in this document between theoretical research and practical elements. In Chapter 1 can be discovered the progression of theory that informed the development of exercises engaged in, as well as stylistic intentions. The paradigmatic state of the modern theatre is discussed, in relation to the new performative mediums of film and television, concluding that a formal shift is required in theatre if it is to continue to be justified as a relevant artistic medium in contemporary culture. This is formed with reference to the prior work of a range of theatrical practitioners and theorists of the past century.

In Chapter 2 the successive stages of practical research undertaken are discussed. Beginning with the training investigations, continuing into a discussion of rehearsal processes, and culminating with an analysis of *The Best Thing!* in this specific staged form, with attention given to its success with respect to the performance Dynamics identified in the research previously enacted.

Documentary material, regarding investigative processes and theoretical development may be found within the Appendices. This includes a detailed dramaturgical analysis, a narrative deconstruction of *The Best Thing!*, and a complete elaboration of the activities and exercises engaged in during the research process. Several videos are also included, providing practical demonstration of events discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS & DIAGRAMS.....	vii

INTRODUCTION.....	1
-------------------	---

CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Groundwork

1.1	Modes of theatrical presentation.....	6
	• <i>Objective Theatre</i>	6
	• <i>Subjective Theatre</i>	12
	• <i>Reflective/Didactic Theatre</i>	18
	• <i>Modern Theatre</i>	21
1.2	Researching the Immediate Act.....	22
1.3	Dynamic Discovery.....	34
	• <i>The Viewpoints</i>	35
	• <i>Augusto Boal</i>	42

CHAPTER 2: Training for Performance

2.1	Training for <i>The Best Thing!</i>	49
	• <i>1st Conditioning Session</i>	54
	• <i>Identifying the Dynamised Body</i>	63

	• <i>Moving On</i>	68
	• <i>Work Presentation 1</i>	69
2.2	Development and Rehearsal of <i>The Best Thing!</i>	75
	• <i>Character Development</i>	75
	• <i>Blocking & Rehearsal</i>	78
	• <i>Work Presentation 2</i>	83
2.3	Performance and Reception of <i>The Best Thing!</i>	87
	CONCLUSION	108
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	111
	APPENDICES	
	Appendix I: Dramaturgical Analysis of <i>The Best Thing!</i>	113
	• <i>Narrative & Structural Breakdown</i>	116
	• <i>Characters</i>	120
	• <i>Character Descriptors</i>	122
	• <i>Symbols and Themes</i>	125
	• <i>Significant Dialogue</i>	130
	• <i>Deconstruction/Reconstruction</i>	135
	• <i>Pre-rehearsal Scenic Design</i>	142
	Appendix II: <i>The Best Thing!</i> Performance Script.....	149

Appendix III: The <i>Viewpoints</i>	195
Appendix IV: Performance Dynamics	197
Appendix V: Initial Training Guide	199
Appendix VI: Active Training Guide	209
Appendix VII: Games for Dynamic Composition	225
Appendix VIII: Training Notes Example	234
Appendix IX: Work Presentation 01 Feedback Notes	235
Appendix X: Vocal Score Development Example	236
Appendix XI: Budget Submission	237
Appendix XII: Scene-by-Scene	237
Appendix XIII: Final Stage Plans	243
Appendix XIV: Make-up Design for <i>The Best Thing!</i>	246
Appendix XV: Auditions Poster	247
Appendix XVI: Performance Poster	248
Appendix XVII: Cult Pamphlet	249
Appendix XVIII: Programme	250
Appendix XIX: Selected Journals and Notes	255
Appendix XX: Training and Rehearsal Timetable	285
Appendix XXI: VIDEO: <i>The Best Thing!</i> Full Performance	Disc 1
Appendix XXII: VIDEO: Work Presentation 1	Disc 1
Appendix XXIII: VIDEO: Work Presentation 1 Feedback	Disc 2

Appendix XXIV: VIDEO: Work Presentation 2.....	Disc 2
Appendix XXV: VIDEO: Work Presentation 2 Feedback.....	Disc 3
Appendix XXVI: VIDEO: Character Scores.....	Disc 3
Appendix XXVII: Killing Machine Ballet Original.....	Disc 3

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS & DIAGRAMS

<i>Opposition & Isolation.</i> Photograph by Michael Smith.....	65
<i>Precarious Balance & Problematised Motion.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	66
<i>Blood & Chalk.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	92
<i>Make-up Example.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	95
<i>Accumulated Chalk Messages.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	97
<i>Full Abstraction in the Classroom.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	99
<i>Differentiated Presentation.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	100
<i>Characterisation of Brian.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	101
<i>Dynamic Posture in Jane.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	103
<i>Inter-relational Dynamics.</i> Photography by Michael Smith.....	107
Stage Concept 01.....	142
Stage Concept 02.....	142
Stage Concept 03.....	143

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to address the necessary differentiation of the theatrical performative medium from that of film and television. Theatre's advantage lies within its immediacy. Theatre is intimate and personal, where film and television are forever held at a formal distance by the mechanical fact of the screen. The physical reality of the body, present in space and time, sharing a location with its audience, is the heart of theatre. In deference to this assessment of theatre's value, it becomes necessary to discover a new kind of actor – one that is as much a performance athlete as they are an entertainer, capable of achieving 'feats' of theatricality in real time. Their ways of moving must be dynamic, clear and decided. The question is diversified at this point: how may we define the skills of a theatre athlete? How does one develop a theatre athlete? What is necessary to maintain peak theatrical athleticism?

An athlete is defined as “a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina”¹. Similarly a skilled tradesman is someone who has received (and often continues to receive) training within their field. A professional artist will continue to train daily, creating warm-up sketches, colour studies and composition thumbnails as a matter of course, simply to keep themselves fresh and to continue the development of their skills. This practice has been standardised in most fields, because skill does not remain static and can be lost as easily as developed. This ethos does not however, tend to extend to the acting community. Training for actors is reserved instead, for show-specific exercises during a rehearsal period, rather than a more general and sustained personal development. With reference to professional athletes and fine artists, a new system was sought for the conditioning of actors to

1 *Athlete*, Merriam-Webster Incorporated, updated 2013, < <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/athlete> > [accessed 5 April 2013].

perform in theatrical conditions, external to the rehearsal process and with a view towards long-term continuation and development.

In seeking such a system, a host of theatre practitioners have been encountered. Key figures include Konstantin Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Augusto Boal, Robert Wilson and Anne Bogart.

Stanislavski's connection between the physical and the mental formed an important part of the training process's pedagogy, as did the informal discussion-based method that was utilised in his training sessions. From Artaud has been taken much terminology, an aesthetic, and fragments of a vision. His theatre of cruelty has been re-interpreted as a theatre of the internally-passionate performer, linked inherently to the principles of excess energy that have been identified by Eugenio Barba and his contemporaries.

Meyerhold, Grotowski and Barba have each demonstrated a specifically scientific methodology for the observation and extension of theatrical principal. Eugenio Barba and his mentor Grotowski have been significant in the development of the methodology in this study, as have discoveries made by Barba's ISTA organisation. Augusto Boal's re-invention of the relationship between performer and audience has proven useful, both in terms of developing exercises for the actors, and in priming them for an engaged and reactive audience. Robert Wilson has represented an aesthetic indicator. His theatre represents a strong alternative to the common, narrative approach to theatrical performance. Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints* system for actor choreography is the framework around which early stages of theatrical investigation were mounted.

Each of these directors mentioned is notable for an approach to theatre that engages the body, mind, and voice of the actor in non-cliche forms. Further, they are important for their adoption and investigation of training techniques, specialised to their own particular forms of theatre.

This study has made a divergence from this particular aspect of the pattern established, excepting Eugenio Barba, as it is not the aim to prime the actors for a specific style of performance, but rather to prime them for performance in general.

This research has been conducted in several distinct phases that have informed the development of this specific approach to the preparation of actors for live performance. The first phase was focused on theoretical research and sought primarily to answer the first question: how can the skills of a theatre athlete be defined? The key goal during this initial discovery period lay in the identification of practitioners from the past and present whose own work could prove relevant to the research that would be undertaken in this study. The purely theoretical focus during this period allowed time for the discovery and consideration of several important tools and exercises that would be instrumental in the successful operation of the practical research that would be undertaken.

The following phase of study, whilst still research oriented, would be a detailed analysis, in practical terms, of the specific skills necessary for the successful mounting of a live theatrical presentation. This would also represent the study's most detailed and intensive phase. With the aid of 6 female actors, aged between 18 and 27 years old, two months were spent conducting intensive research into the theatrical dynamics of the *body*, the *voice* and the *group*. This investigative process was delivered as an experimental training system for the delivery of physically dynamic performance. The system, as it has been developed, is designed to cater to the specific needs and bodies of the performer(s), whilst actively pushing them to extend their boundaries. Feedback and observation was consistently requested of the participants during presentations and training, providing multiple informed, external viewpoints from that of the facilitator. At the conclusion of this phase, a work presentation was held, during which the actors gave a 'performance' of one of their training routines. This displayed

pure physicality and *aurality* devoid of any narrative or context. Following this, feedback was requested from the spectators, who were universally unfamiliar with the exact mechanics of the work undertaken. This allowed a better understanding of the meta-theatre that operates between audience and performance during such a situation and in observation of such abstracted presentation. Finally, development of a play for public performance (*The Best Thing!*, written by Christopher Butler, staged in 2012) was undertaken, with its cast drawn from those who had participated in the initial period of study. This would function as a kind of test for the training and a means of identifying points that had been lacking in its coverage.

Though the system has been developed without reference to the specifics of acting technique, many aspects of this have naturally filtered through as a result of the specifically *theatrical* methodology for physical and vocal training employed. Several satellite benefits to this process have been observed, some of which were expected, others a happy surprise:

It became immediately obvious that this system is an effective means for an actor to develop physical fitness within a specifically theatrical context, priming them as theatre athletes with a broad spectrum of movement and strong sense of time. Tying into this aspect is an increased field of balance and flexibility. The aerobic, and sometimes acrobatic, nature of the exercises can be thanked for this. It should be added that this feature is only as true as the individual participant desires it to be, due to the system's reliance on voluntary participation and self-motivation.

The system has also revealed itself as being an excellent tool for the simple development of stage confidence and for the manufacturing of 'presence'. The idea of manufacturing presence may seem somewhat provocative to those who prefer to mystify the act of performance, however this investigation has led to the clear conclusion that by incorporating several conscious and semi-conscious techniques into one's delivery it is

possible for any actor to gain that point of electric difference that snaps an audience's attention to them.

With its clear structure, and methodology involving consistent, collaborative feedback, the system instils in its participants a strong sense of discipline and respect that is crucial to the operation of both the rehearsal room and the backstage.

Even more crucially it encourages participants to regard each other (and themselves) as colleagues and mini-experts able to both receive and provide useful, creative feedback. A strong level of camaraderie can be observed to develop between actors who take part in a period of this training together. The physically demanding nature of the work can require a significant degree of dedication from its participants. By sharing this experience with each other and emerging at the end of the introductory phase (after which supervision and facilitation ceases to be necessary), a strong level of familiarity and *communitas* is established within an ensemble. In reference to its more punishing aspects, this system is most useful for those who have made a conscious choice that they wish to dedicate themselves to developing their skills as actors, rather than for those who are only just beginning their theatrical career or are uncertain of their desire to be involved in theatre.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL GROUNDWORK

1.1 Modes of Theatrical Presentation

Any study of 20th Century theatre will inevitably encounter three names in particular: Konstantin Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht. Each of these practitioners developed a unique approach to theatre production, that continues to define the approach taken to theatre and art, right up to the present day. Their styles are often presented as polar, and designed with specific, non-transferable genres in mind. However, many of the most successful practitioners of the past century have incorporated techniques and attitudes from more than one of these sources in their search for profound performance, rather than favouring the techniques of one. It is necessary to form an understanding of the goals, methods and forms of each of these systems and aesthetics.

Objective Theatre

Though the theatrical/psychological integrity and wisdom of modern Method acting may be questionable, it would be an error to begin any study into actor training without at least paying some attention to the father of

modern actor training: Konstantin Stanislavski. Stanislavski's System² for the preparation of a character-driven performance is, perhaps, most famed for its translation into the American “Method” style of performance and performance preparation. This connection is often responsible for skewing understanding and recognition of what can be most effective about the System, as it is generally the Method that people are more familiar with (albeit on a superficial level). On close reading of Stanislavski's narrative, in *An Actor Prepares*, it becomes clear, that his ideas, techniques and practice were far more intricate than the reproduction of historically calculated behaviour against a contrived, emotive connection between character and actor.

Quite apart from Stanislavski's theories regarding the nature of theatrical presentation and the relationship between the psychological and physical, the pedagogy that defines the structure/format of his classes is uniquely appropriate to effective performance preparation, because it is a distinctively theatrical methodology. In the training sessions that Stanislavski's narrator describes there is a common pattern: first a student will be asked to perform a [seemingly] impossible task, with little preparation. They will next be asked to perform a personal critique of their performance, after which the facilitator would open up the discussion to the other actors-in-training, and perhaps, offer artistic and/or pedagogical suggestions of his own, tending towards either cryptic provocation, or clarification of principles already identified in discussion. Finally (and this may occur in a subsequent session), the performers will be again asked to perform the task and will discover that it is in fact quite possible, after having re-framed their approach or extended their physical/psychological repertoire. This methodology extends to the format of the literature; the narrator (an actor in the class) continues to develop their own intellectual

2 I will distinguish Stanislavski's work from that of the American school by applying the word “System” to Stanislavski's original work and “Method” to the American derivation.

understanding of the process alongside the reader's development, via a narrative format of conversational analysis. Stanislavski's approach bears a striking resemblance to a Socratic dialogue, wherein a facilitator of discussion provides provocation and guiding questioning that allows a participant to discover *for themselves* either an answer, or a better question.

Stanislavski's technique works on a diverse array of levels: the initial [and repeated] exercise functions as physical practice, the benefits of which are clear; subsequent self-reflection encourages active/fully-conscious performance and, as well as this, helps to clarify principles employed at a subconscious level into a conscious understanding and decisive [as opposed to fortuitous] employment. The reception of external feedback that is both critical and constructive primes actors for the reception of directorial feedback, as well as giving the performer the benefit of multiple external viewpoints, afforded greater objectivity by distance from the act of performance. Complementary to this, is that contriving and delivering constructive critique aids in the deliverer's own development of theatrical reasoning and principle in a way that is directly proportional to the observational discipline demonstrated by the feedback. By participating in each other's development, the group create a shared language that they may then go on to use as a means of quick communication within the rehearsal room.

Stanislavski's theatre is shaped by the empirical method of scientific observation³, interpretation and conclusion, as well as [then] recent developments in the understanding of human psychology, particularly the relationship between the conscious mind and the subconscious. Stanislavski's character, Tortsov, explains the importance of this relationship

3 Many of the practitioners researched during this study have modelled their practices after various scientific models. This includes Stanislavski, Grotowski, Barba and – to a lesser degree – Anne Bogart.

to his pupils when one questions why the subconscious would be dependent upon the conscious:

'It seems entirely normal to me,' was the reply. 'The use of steam, electricity, wind, water and other involuntary forces in nature is dependant on the intelligence of an engineer. Our subconscious power cannot function without its own engineer – our conscious technique.'⁴

Of particular importance to Stanislavskian performance is a deep understanding of any character's psychological state, moment-to-moment and over the course of a play – this can also be extended to what we know, or can suppose (by use of a technique termed 'the magic if'), of the character's life, external to the script. Stanislavski frames these concepts in terms of the 'Objective'⁵ and the 'Super-objective'⁶. These ideas are tempered by the adoption of character-specific behavioural or postural 'ticks'. These are similarly discovered through use of the 'magic if' technique, whereby an actor seeks to directly and personally identify with their character, primarily on an immediate level or, secondarily, on an historical level. In explaining the necessity for this deep identification between actor and character in Stanislavski's theatre, Tortsov also provides an insight into the goals that are implicit within this style of performance:

[The actor's] job is not to present merely the external life of his character. He must fit his own human qualities to the life of this other person ... The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this

4 Constantin Stanislavski, Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood trans., *An Actor Prepares* (Great Britain: Methuen Drama, 2006), 15.

5 In the moment, what does the character want?

6 A character's over-all goal within a narrative.

inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in artistic form ... we begin by thinking about the inner side of a role, and how to create its spiritual life through the help of the internal process of living the part. You must live it by actually experiencing feelings that are analogous to it, each and every time you repeat the process of creating it.⁷

It is the above exercise in particular that was fixated upon by the American Method actors as “Affective Memory”, and [I believe] misapplied in their psychologically anchored approach to theatre, as it seems to ignore the importance of other, fundamentally physical, aspects of Stanislavski's system, which Tortsov goes on to explain:

*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.*⁸ [Italicised in original text]

Contrary to the American method, it is this second relationship that Meyerhold and Grotowski have taken to heart in the development of their own approaches to the preparation of actors for performance. Both practitioners represent a strikingly alternative interpretation [to the American Method] of Stanislavski's intent when describing the relationship between the psychological and the physical. The aesthetic argument between the American Method and Meyerhold's *Biomechanics* (or Grotowski's *Poor Theatre*), each developed from Stanislavski's System, may be reduced to a matter of simple etymology. In the American Method this relationship can be explained as 'performance physicality is informed/defined by psychological state'. This is a linear relationship,

7 Stanislavski 14, 15.

8 Stanislavski 16.

where it is necessary to focus on the latter in order to elicit a desirable presentation of the former. Meyerhold and Grotowski interpret the relationship between the physical and the psychological, alternatively, as being reflective, and therefore mutually defining. This second relationship seems nearer to Stanislavski's own understanding of the dynamic that exists between the psychological and the physical. The following excerpts support this analysis:

[discussing the proper formation of objectives]... limit yourself to what is simple and physical. In every physical objective there is some psychology and vice versa. You cannot separate them.⁹

and,

Do not try to draw too fine a line between physical and spiritual nature. Go by your instincts, always leaning a little toward the physical.¹⁰

also,

When you are called upon to experience a tragedy do not think about your emotions at all. Think about what you have to *do*.¹¹

Each of these expresses the idea that, implicit within all physical actions, is psychological information, and that all psychological behaviours are connected to a physical action. It seems clear that Stanislavski's theatre was one in which psychological information was communicated through the physical act – that this version of the act of theatrical performance is one in which psychological processes are interpreted by a performer [through techniques of empathic identification] into physical behaviours and

9 Stanislavski 121.

10 Stanislavski 121.

11 Stanislavski 151.

pragmatically guided actions. Acknowledging this context, it can certainly be said that Stanislavski's theatre was one driven by intellectual interpretation – the manipulation and investigation of psychophysical triggers. It is possible therefore, to identify Stanislavski's system as being an *Objective Theatre*¹², defined by an empirical approach to the elaboration of character behaviour. This practice is rooted in the concept that human behaviour can be understood and reproduced scientifically.

Subjective Theatre

Artaud's abstracted theatre stands in stark contrast to the Naturalist theatre produced by Stanislavski. Similarly, the theory that informed his practice was significantly divergent. It is important to note that although Artaud wrote many manifestos, critical essays, letters, dialogues and plays, he did not in fact produce any kind of explanation, elaboration or direct method for his ideas. Artaud's book, *Theatre and its Double*, therefore serves less as a guide, and more as a vision – defining Artaud as a prophet of the theatre rather than a researcher or director.

Despite this, Artaud's vivid description of his vision for the modern theatre is of such a visceral and illustrative nature that his literature is easy to follow and strongly provocative. It is perhaps true that his vision is clear, specifically because of his manner of relation, which makes greater use of metaphor and analogy than it does of precise observation and reflection. For example, by relating the transmission of narrative and thematic content to the spread of plague, and the role of the actor on stage as being akin to that of Christ on the cross, submitting to a public sacrifice. This prophecy is defined by an emotional, primal response to performance, standing in opposition to the analytical approach that had been de rigueur for the

12 It should be noted that the use made of 'objective' here should be interpreted in the scientific sense, rather than in terms of Stanislavski's own established jargon.

Naturalists – who held Stanislavski in great esteem. Even when Artaud's understanding of what he observed was empirically wrong¹³, close reading of his writing is able to reveal many potentially rich ideas for theatre.

Artaud's attitude to theatre can be viewed as something of a reaction to the [then] new mediums of mass radio, film and television. Prior to their invention, theatre stood as the primary venue for the presentation of narrative performance, however it was replaced in this role by mediums that are arguably more effective at the communication of psychological detail, the establishment of setting, and maintenance of verisimilitude. Theatre must, by necessity, abstract itself to fit the conventions of a live performance, whereas film – especially in the digital age – can truly inhabit any location imaginable. It seems clear that theatre must acknowledge that it has been superseded as a naturalistic medium if it is to maintain any place within artistic and social culture. Currently, theatre appears to be at risk of permanent relegation to the fringe media, as it is so often treated by supporters and critics alike as being merely an alternative to filmed & digital media, rather than as a legitimate and distinct medium in its own right. Artaud, in *Theatre and its Double*, has prophesied this moment where theatre must evolve its motivations and mechanics, or die:

The damage wrought by psychological theatre, derived from Racine, has rendered us unaccustomed to the direct, violent action theatre must have. Cinema in its turn, murders us with reflected, filtered and projected images that no longer *connect* with our sensibility, and for ten years has maintained us and all our faculties in an intellectual stupor.¹⁴

13 Such as his misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the behaviours being displayed by Balinese dancers, which nevertheless led to an important observation regarding intensity and the language of physicality.

14 Antonin Artaud, Victor Corti trans., *The Theatre and its Double* (UK: Oneworld Classics Ltd, 2010), 60.

Theatre can find its artistic purpose in the very fact of its being live, an innate potential for abstract and sensorial rather than narrative and character-driven communication. Artaud acknowledges that it is this immediacy that is of prime importance:

Above all we intend to base theatre on the show and we will bring a new concept of space into the show; all possible levels, all possible height and depth of sight lines must be used, and a special notion of time coupled with movement will exist within the concept.¹⁵

It should be acknowledged that this represents a fundamental modification to the generally accepted purpose for the staging of theatre – to tell a story. Instead the purpose of this new theatre is to present an aesthetic, elicit an effect, establish an environment, and frame an experience.

Artaud proposes that theatre is the perfect venue for profound experience, which may mirror the transcendental properties of religious ceremony, without requiring indoctrination into a specific set of beliefs. From an ancient perspective, theatre appears to have served a spiritual purpose – an example of such a practice would be the ancient Greek theatre, performed annually in reverence of Dionysus, and generally framed around a locally important social or moral issue. An application of Artaud's vision might therefore, be considered a return for theatre to its function, rather than as a modern deviation. In the Greek theatre, focus was given to thematic content and artistic effect rather than an in-depth exploration of character and narrative [as tends to be the case in Naturalist theatre, which remains dominant in contemporary, Western performance practice]. Representation in classical Greek theatre therefore, tended towards the archetypal, rather

15 Artaud 89.

than the psychologically complete/complex. Performances were further abstracted by the requirement that plays be limited to only three actors, supported by a chorus who sang and danced. This is what Artaud called a 'Fundamental', or 'Primal' theatre.

The 'theatre of cruelty' is a paradigm that is often referenced, but (in parallel to Stanislavski's ideas regarding naturalised performance) is often misunderstood (or at least misapplied). There is a sadomasochistic connotation that is inseparable from Artaud's language. However, whilst the violence and angst implicit in his specific choices of terminology is undeniably intentional, spending too long focusing on this aspect of his dialogue can serve to distract from the more theatrically useful elements. The word 'cruelty' could easily be replaced by 'intensity', 'passion', 'power', 'rage', 'love', 'hate', 'energy', 'violence', or any number of other analogous concepts. It appears that the most apt translation of Artaud's 'cruelty' could be, "a violent/passionate intensity". Within this context, 'violent' and 'passionate' can be treated as synonymous, though – purely to minimise sadomasochistic connotations, all too easy to focus on – the tendency of this study is to lean towards the term 'passionate'. A further misunderstanding is commonly attached to the term "cruelty", with the assumption that this *can only* imply a dramaturgy of horror, disturbance and discomfiture for the audience. Whilst such is not absolutely excluded, Artaud is clear in applying this paradigm of *theatrical cruelty* to the actors specifically, and furthermore in a very particular manner:

... as soon as I said "cruelty" everyone took it to mean "blood". But a "theatre of cruelty" means theatre that is difficult and cruel for myself first of all ... it has nothing to do with the cruelty we practise on one another ... but the far more terrible, essential cruelty objects

can practise on us. We are not free and the sky can still fall on our heads. And above all else, theatre is made to teach us this.¹⁶

In the above excerpt, Artaud's reference to “myself” can be interpreted as being from the perspective of the performer – therefore theatrical cruelty is practised primarily upon the performer rather than the spectator. Artaud goes on in this passage to refer to a different kind of cruelty to his *theatrical cruelty*. This other cruelty is not something that is enacted by actor upon audience, but is instead an existential and thematic cruelty, conceptual rather than physical and an activity therefore, of the narrative rather than of its manner of performance.

Artaud's interest is in the facilitation of a moment of catharsis between his audience, and his actors. The *Theatre of Cruelty* seeks to be a fundamentally therapeutic, and ideally curative, paradigm:

I suggest theatre today ought to return to the fundamental magic notion reintroduced by psychoanalysis, which consists in curing a patient by making him assume the external attitude of the desired condition.¹⁷

Artaud's vision for the theatre was one in which a group, in an environment, together, share an ultimate communal experience, achieved by sensory enervation. This can equally be an experience that is defined by horror, as one that is defined by a kind of group therapy, leading to a vast array of possible implementations. This therapeutic possibility is the effect that Artaud grapples with when describing theatre's unique potential as a

16 Artaud 57.

17 Artaud 57.

place for the Holy and for revelation, despite his often grotesque and psychologically terrifying imagery. Informing this interpretation is the basic supposition that very few artists set out specifically to create pain by their art. It may be possible that pain is required for their aim to be achieved, however pain as an end-goal, in and of itself (as opposed to a process that informs reception), is unlikely to form the intention.

Artaud acknowledged that, to achieve his vision, he would require a new kind of actor, not just a new kind of theatre. This new kind of actor must necessarily be a 'theatre athlete', capable of performing specifically theatrical feats. He also acknowledged that these actors would need a specialised kind of training and continuous conditioning that could facilitate their ability to perform such physically and psychologically demanding acts:

One must grant the actor a kind of affective musculature matching the bodily localization of our feelings.

An actor is like a physical athlete, with this astonishing corollary; his affective organism is similar to the athlete's, being parallel to it like a double, although they do not act on the same level.

The actor is a heart athlete.

...

The actor relies on the same pressure points an athlete relies on to run, in order to hurl a convulsive curse whose course is driven inwards.

... in anything to do with breathing, for instance, an actor's body relies on breathing, while with a wrestler, a physical athlete, the breathing relies on his body.¹⁸

18 Artaud 93.

Unfortunately Artaud's vision is an incomplete elaboration. With its focus on emotion, sensation and immediacy, rather than analysis and reproduction, it is easy to place Artaud's theatre in opposition to Stanislavski's, deeming it a 'Subjective Theatre'. This is a theatre that relies on individual perception/interpretation within the moment, and could be considered a less contrived, more primal form of theatrical presentation in that it aims for sensory effect rather than narrative affect.

Reflective/Didactic Theatre

The Epic Theatre was developed between Bertolt Brecht and several collaborators within Eastern Germany during the revolutionary period¹⁹ of the early 20th Century. It is an innately Political theatre, that seeks to frame specific moral/political ideals in as compelling a manner as possible, and also to inspire its audience to action rather than to contribute to escapism. It stands both as a stark divergence from Stanislavski and Artaud, as well as something of a bridge between the two practices.

With Stanislavski, Brecht's theatre shares an objective intent and method (though this has led to starkly differing results, and emerges from opposing intentions), it shares also the abstracted and overtly theatrical manner of presentation that is tied to Artaud. In opposition (and it should be added that this was a conscious opposition) to Stanislavski's methods:

19 This period is indicative primarily of the Soviet Revolution, which began in 1917 as a series of communist-driven revolutionary uprisings in Russia that led to the overthrow of the ruling Tsarist regime, and ultimately the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the USSR, in 1922. a primary element of the revolutionary theory was Trotsky's idea of 'permanent revolution', which extended to a world-wide agenda. These movements were ideologically founded in Karl Marx's Communist theory, though most represented deviations/developments from his initial concept, informed by revolutionaries and philosophers such as Trotsky and Lenin. During the 1920s Bertolt Brecht and many of his fellow practitioners became increasingly interested by, and involved in, such Communist and Socialist workers' movements in Germany.

[in response to a Naturalist exercise, in which a rat is imagined in full]
 This might be thought to be a course of instruction for conjurers, but in fact it is a course of acting, supposedly according to Stanislavsky's method. One wonders if a technique that equips an actor to make the audience see rats where there aren't any can really be all that suitable for disseminating the truth.²⁰

It is clear from the above that Brecht's focus was on truth, as was Stanislavski's, however they were different kinds of truth; where Stanislavski's truth is a fictive truth, Brecht's is tangible. Reflecting this, the Epic Theatre is consistently self-conscious *as* theatre, its staging seeks at all times to call attention to the very fact of its being a staged, rather than true, presentation – making room for all the implications of fiction and artifice that this connotes. Similarly, the actors of Epic Theatre are required to maintain a consistent distance between themselves and their character, in acknowledgement of the divorce between their psychologies, that allows conscious reflection – by the actor – upon the character's behaviour and the presentation of this reflective relationship to the audience. In this way the actor displays both the character's psychology as well as their own. This distance between actor and character, audience and play, performance and narrative, is achieved by a technique named the '*Verfremdungseffekt*' (by Brecht), which is often translated loosely as the 'distancing effect', or 'alienation effect', though a truly meaningful translation to English does not exist. This anti-immersive mode of presentation is also the most important thing that separates Epic Theatre from Theatre of Cruelty, which seeks not only narrative immersion, but full psychological and sensory immersion also.

As much as the Epic Theatre differs from that of Stanislavski's, it differs even further from the American Method – it would not be inaccurate

20 John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 142.

to describe it as its opposite. Where the Method states that psychology informs physicality, the Brechtian approach tends to imply that psychology is relevant only insofar as it informs our interpretation of the physical – the adjective to a verb – rather it is the action and manner of performance, that is of primary concern. Brecht argued that the development of a sufficiently refined physicality could communicate more of the theatrical and political importance of a moment than any level of empathic identification with character. Furthermore he disputed the tendency of actors to fall into the function of hypnosis, as seen in this excerpt from 'A Dialogue about Acting':

The actors always score great successes in your plays. Are you yourself satisfied with them?

No.

Because they act badly?

No. Because they act wrong.

How ought they to act then?

...

Demonstrating their knowledge ... Of human relations, of human behaviour, of human capacities ... Consciously, suggestively, descriptively.

How do they do it at present?

By means of hypnosis. They go into a trance and take the audience with them.²¹

A tool named the '*Gestus*' was used for the establishment of these socio-politically charged presentational forms. Like *Verfremdungseffekt*, this

21 Willett 26.

is a term with an actively ephemeral, non-specific frame. It carries connotations of gesture and attitude and can be interpreted as a theatrical interpretation/presentation/representation of the social, cultural and political place/role of a character within: its sociopolitical context, the play as a whole, and the given moment. This is often similar in effect and form (though not in method) to the Body Masks of Grotowski's Poor Theatre, though the Epic Theatre tended towards a less abstract mode of presentation.

On all levels, Brecht's Epic Theatre presents to its audience a dialogue. It is a theatre of active communication and conscious didacticism. The core tool that facilitates this politically charged communication is Brecht's multi-faceted incorporation of the principle of reflection on every level of theatrical preparation and presentation.

Modern²² Theatre

It has been proposed earlier in this chapter that a successful modern theatre must artfully incorporate elements of each of these methods of theatrical communication into its core practice. The structure given to training sessions within Stanislavski's System and the conversational method of presentation is a highly successful pedagogical device. Similarly, his identification of the relationship between psychology and physicality is an important dynamic for both director and actor to maintain an awareness of during the developmental process. Artaud's vision for theatre's role is deeply compelling, as are his concepts regarding the sacrificial nature of public performance. Artaud's analysis of the relationship between performance, performer and audience is one that continues to redefine the nature of the theatrical event. Brecht's and Artaud's shared denial of the lie

22 This is not intended as a reference to the Modernist style. The term "Modern" is used instead, in its linguistically correct sense as synonymous with 'current' and 'contemporary'.

implicit to Naturalist theatre and the Neoclassical Unities is an important move towards such deeper, sensory theatre. Brecht has provided modern practitioners and researchers with several unique tools by which to achieve this differentiation in the *Verfremdungseffekt* and *Gestus/Gest*. It is important to note that, within this study, all these means of communication have been treated as complementary, despite their more normal treatment as diametric opposites.

1.2 Researching the Immediate Act

During the past century, the West has enjoyed rigorous attention to the theory and investigation of aesthetics and dramaturgy. This artistic explosion can be observed especially in the rapid promulgation of art movements around the onset of the 20th Century and onwards, into its middle. These include Naturalism, Symbolism, Expressionism, the Bauhaus, Constructivism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Absurdism, Post-Modernism, etc ... Of particular note is how often these aesthetic systems existed in connection to a local, political/cultural necessity, subsequently enjoying jazz-like reflection as the new theory expanded geographically, and points of inter-connection, and difference, were discovered. The same process can also be traced through its noteworthy practitioners; Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht have been dealt with in the previous section. The following section will investigate the practices of Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba. Between them, Grotowski and Barba have developed an effective format for the investigation of theatrical principle and technique that is also itself founded in dramaturgical principle.

Grotowski did not begin his career as a director of experimental theatre or conductor of theatrical research. In fact, Grotowski's early work

is marked by a clear commercialism. Around the early middle of his career however, Grotowski's theatre made a clear divergence into specifically experimental territory, with a focus on research, development, extension and elaboration of the physical and vocal properties of theatrical performance. He treated this work as a continuation of that begun by Stanislavski, also drawing deep influence from Meyerhold's²³ *Biomechanics* and the practises of [often] codified Asian and Middle Eastern theatres. Like Meyerhold before him, Grotowski observed the structure of the nuclear physics laboratory and made a decision to model the structure of his own *theatrical* research against that demonstrated by the Niels Bohr Institute. Its processes and its physical design were uniformly defined by the inherent necessities and processes of direct research, investigation and practical testing - the observation/isolation of specific processes. There are two key components to this idea that work in tandem to establish an ideal setting for theatrical investigation: the first is a disarmingly simple idea, the application of scientific conditions to a performance situation; the second is to divorce theatrical development from theatrical production, and by default, a profit motivation. This investigative/developmental format has revolutionised the study of dramaturgy both in terms of possible method and of understanding. In so doing, the doors not only for the investigation of dramaturgical principles, but subsequently the open investigation of potential extra-theatrical application for dramaturgical principles discovered, have been opened.

The act of performance and observation, in a *Theatre Laboratory*, is limited to those directly involved with the exercise being performed, or necessary to its operation - at times this may be extended to the invitation of

23 Meyerhold was himself one of Stanislavski's most gifted students, who later established a new kind of theatrical practice termed *Biomechanics*, that involved the isolation, mechanisation, development and artistic reinterpretation/representation of theatrical physicality. Primarily it was a system of exercises that actors and directors could draw upon in order to prime an actor's body and mind for performance. Unfortunately little but fragmentary records remain of his work due to its historical and geographic location behind the U.S.S.R.'s "Iron Curtain". However, students of Meyerhold have since interacted with practitioners of [more] Western theatre and as a result some of Meyerhold's practices have survived. Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba have both had the opportunity to work directly with students of Meyerhold.

an audience for observational, critical or inter-relational purposes. This investigative format embraces the subjective nature of art and makes use of the benefits that scientific objectivity can bring. Through the investigations undertaken in the *Theatre Laboratory*, Grotowski was also able to develop a refined approach to performance physicality and aesthetic presentation. Idioms such as the body-mask and face-mask are handed down from this pioneering work and many of the ideas developed in the research undertaken in this study into Dynamic Conditioning can be said to have their roots in Grotowski's *Poor Theatre*. Quite beyond Grotowski's investigation into the art of the actor, he also developed a particular approach to the transition of a script from its given form to its ultimate staged form that has proven exceptionally useful as an attitude to text. Grotowski would routinely re-compose scripts into a pastiche of affective material, treating the script as a tool just like any other, rather than as a holy document – this strongly recalls Artaud's call for “No More Masterpieces”. This attitude to text, taken in concert with his abstracted approach to physicality and voice has often drawn such [fairly reasonable] comparison with Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, though this connection has been consistently refuted by Grotowski himself – who seems to disregard Artaud's *Total Theatre* as little more than an over-compensatory circus. However, the aims and premise that Grotowski outlines at the beginning of *Towards a Poor Theatre* certainly appear to align with those expressed by Artaud:

Our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship.²⁴

And, further ...

Here everything is concentrated on the "ripening" of the actor which is expressed by a tension towards the extreme, by a complete stripping down, by the laying bare of one's own intimacy ... The actor

²⁴ Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba ed., *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Methuen Drama, 1991), 15.

makes a total gift of himself. This is a technique of the "trance" and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of "translumination."²⁵

And ...

Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I had begun: What is the theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theatre, and performance as an act of transgression.²⁶

Like Artaud before him, Grotowski was in search of a means to redefine the actor-audience relationship. Grotowski's ideas regarding the *Total Act* and the actor as a gift echo Artaud's vision of the actor's sacrificial role within the *Theatre of Cruelty*. When this is presented, coupled with a focus on instinct and transgressive behaviour that reveals something of the inner self, it is difficult to shake the obvious connection. Grotowski and Artaud differ, however, in their aesthetic approach. Both attribute the development of their aesthetics directly to having sought out that which is essential to theatre. Their individual investigations within this have however, lead to starkly differing views on this point. Artaud calls for a 'total theatre' that makes full use of technological and mechanical possibilities as well as those of the actor, including:

... differing intensities of colour, light or sound, using vibrations and tremors, musical, rhythmic repetition ... We want to have the same material means, lighting, extras and resources at our disposal for a stage show, as are daily squandered on reels of film, where

25 Grotowski 16.

26 Grotowski 18 – 19.

everything that is active and magic about such a display is lost forever²⁷

Grotowski's fundamental theatre is alternatively one that is stripped down to the essentials of actor and action in space and time:

(b)y gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion ... it challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines.²⁸

It is this isolation and investigation solely of those principles that can be deemed *inherent* – and ideally exclusive – to theatre that Grotowski uses to define his *Poor Theatre*. This *Poor Theatre* is presented in opposition to the *Rich Theatre* that:

depends on artistic kleptomania ... By multiplying assimilated elements, the Rich Theatre tries to escape the impasse presented by movies and television²⁹

27 Artaud 91.

28 Grotowski 19.

29 Grotowski 19.

Grotowski's argument against the rich theatre is concise and difficult to argue with³⁰:

No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television.³¹

On objective reflection, both approaches could be deemed somewhat reactionary. As with many of the theories investigated in this study, developed by their authors as polar to alternative practises, it becomes clear that a temperate approach, acknowledging the benefits and weaknesses of each is the most likely to prove fruitful. To do this, it is necessary (like Grotowski himself with theatre as a whole), to look at that which is essential to the theory and that which is simply dogmatic. This confusion of system and aesthetic is something that Grotowski criticises in other practitioners, with their interpretation of Stanislavski's methodology.

Grotowski's isolationist approach is ideal for the investigation of specifically actor-based theatrical principles and has shaped the structure for investigative processes in this research project. However, his disavowal of the possibilities of technical innovation and refusal to incorporate such into dramaturgical practice seems informed more by a pre-formed ideological approach than by anything that could be deemed the “true” or “ideal” theatre. Whilst it is true that theatre *can* exist without such mechanical and artistic accoutrements, this does not mean that it *must* exist without them. Where Artaud's sensory and mechanical assault may at times serve to distract from that which is truly theatrical about a performance, Grotowski's ascetic approach can be justly accused of being reductive, mistaking itself

30 It is a strong possibility that the passages quoted here were intended by Grotowski as a direct criticism of Artaud's Total Theatre, the terminology employed in Grotowski's argument would seem to support this.

31 Grotowski 19.

for religion rather than art, in its monk-like treatment of the actor. It has been argued, and Grotowski himself has made similar comment, that towards the end of his career Grotowski was in fact no longer involved in the production or even investigation of theatre, but of the extra-theatrical investigation and application of theatrical principle and technique. If this is so, then it brings his later work, and that of his actors, closer in line with that of a martial artist than of a performer. The actors participated in a regime involving the development their skills through the repetition of forms, routines and exercises, analogous to the martial artist's Kata, and daily meditative activity.

There is however, a problematic element in the idea that all theatre exists in the human alone. Such reduction does not account for circumstantial, animal, historical and natural theatres. As well as these it does not account for already existent mechanical theatres, such as the puppet theatre. It is arguably true that the theatrical encounter relies on the participation of a sapient, Human, audience. It is necessary for a moment to go on a tangent: Earlier in this study it has been suggested that the contemporary point of distinction for theatre is not solely in the fact of the performer and the audience in relationship with each other (as this niche is fulfilled also by film and television), but also – and *primarily* – in the fact of the performer and the spectator being present in both space and time together, as it is this fact that justifies theatre as a contemporary art-form, in distinguishing it from film and television. It has also been acknowledged that this is a change in focus for theatre from its previously accepted form, as described by Peter Brook:

A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.³²

32 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (England, USA and Canada: Penguin Classics, 2008), 11.

This modification is a subtle but distinct one, and can be observed to reflect more closely the defining elements of theatricality as identified during this study's investigative process. A modified definition would run thus: 'A performer walks across a space, observed by a spectator who shares that space'. During experiments into stage architecture in the training period prior to rehearsal for *The Best Thing!* an interesting observation was made, that it was as possible to infer theatrical relationships, character, narrative, energy and action, from the distribution of objects in space (moving or still), equally as well as one could infer such from the distribution of a human actor in space. This theatricality is compounded by placing a human actor in relationship to the architecture and vice versa. Such theatricality can be imbued within props also, such as is often done with the skull in *Hamlet*.

The distinction then, that this study would like to make, from the generally accepted, defining points of theatre is that a performer need not be human. It should also be re-iterated that such theatre exists already in the form of Puppet Theatre, where mechanical objects are utilised to *represent* humans and human interactions. Granted, one might argue that these puppets are operated by a human performer, however this performer's role is simultaneously that of a technician. It is therefore more appropriate to compare this person's role to that of a lighting operator, who – though present in space and time – is not the object focus of the performance. Certainly it is necessary for a human to be impacted upon in some way for theatre to be said to occur, however it is the audience, not the actor, that *must* be impacted upon. The actor is simply one of the [many] tools that may be utilised in this action and happens to be a particularly effective one. The investigations of theatrics carried out during this research have generally indicated that all *things*, *actions*, and *indications* on a theatre stage (however formal or informal the stage may be) are theatrical. This understanding of theatrical manifestation is supported by Artaud's Total

Theatre and finds related expression in the experimental theatres of Robert Wilson and Samuel Beckett. The logic that informs this conclusion is one that draws upon questions initially asked by Eugenio Barba regarding the Occidental distinction between theatre and dance, and expands its base to question the distinction between theatre and installation art. Ultimately it has become clear that there *is* a distinction between installation art and theatre, however this distinction is not in the presence or lack of presence of a, non-spectator, human element (as installation art too can incorporate human elements). The distinction between the two can be found in the idea of *action* (existing also in inaction); the fact of performance, or non-performance. Where a piece of installation art has an environmental focus, theatre's focus is on the fact of transformation. It should be made clear that this is a distinction of intent on the part of the art's author (writer, director, sculptor, actor, etc...) rather than a distinction that relies on the audience's understanding/recognition of the experience.

Theatre *can* exist without a *human* actor equally as well as it can exist without make-up or any of the multiplicity of other mechanical additions that are applied in support of the theatrical experience. Indeed, it would appear that what is necessary for theatre is not an *actor* and an audience, but an *action* and an audience, a simple but profound distinction. It is this idea that Samuel Beckett explores in his play *Breath*, where the actor is implicit in the action (a combination of rising and falling light and sound) rather than the opposite relationship, which is more generally recognised. Robert Wilson too deals with this paradigm, in particular with his recurrent use of chairs³³, which are frequently imbued with inherent theatricality through their scenographic treatment, often facilitated by mechanical devices. Most notably, Wilson approaches this idea in the play *Monsters of Grace*, staged in concert with Philip Glass, which consisted primarily of 3D projections in

33 A profound fascination with the shape, function and idea of chairs can be observed in Robert Wilson's work, which often features extended moments where the audience's attention is directed towards a chair in one way or another. It is likely, given the context of Robert Wilson's greater body of work, that this is both a deeply meaningful and directly meaningless symbol, which is repeated largely because it simply gives Robert Wilson himself pleasure.

place of actors and scenery. It should also be acknowledged that such an understanding of architectural elements and stage properties as possessing an inherent theatricality has historical precedent in the Renaissance Machine Plays, which themselves found justification in earlier traditions of the Classical period:

Continuing and elaborating on medieval practice, the Renaissance machinists arranged seemingly magical transformations, and made gods, monsters, and mythological creatures appear on the sea, in the air, in Heaven, or in Hades. Just as playwrights turned to Classical subjects, the machinists found justification for their work in Pollux's list of machines and Aristotle's inclusion of spectacle as one of the six basic parts of drama.³⁴

This fascination with the theatricality of scenic elements reached its pinnacle of excess with the construction of the French *Salle des Machines*. This theatre possessed a 140 foot³⁵ deep stage, specifically designed to allow the operation of highly elaborate scenic transformations, which themselves could become the focus of performance. Again the idea of the theatrical relationship as being borne by the live observation of *action* rather than *actor* can be observed in this focus on the transformative properties of scenic elements.

This understanding of the theatrical relationship, as extending to all things on stage and all sounds in the space has informed every aspect of staging for *The Best Thing!* Bearing this in mind, the initial research³⁶ for

³⁴ Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, eds., *History of the Theatre*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc, 2008), 168.

³⁵ Approximately 42 metres.

³⁶ Conceived of as a training period prior to the blocking and rehearsal for *The Best Thing!*

this study was bent towards the uncovering and elaboration of dynamics that could be said to reflect this performative universality, the property of transformation, rather than necessarily requiring human enactment. This treatment for the staging of a performance might be defined as 'Richly Poor Theatre', in that it seeks to use whatever tools present themselves, without abusing them³⁷. What technology that was available, was incorporated if it was useful to the establishment of the intended dramaturgical effect. On the other hand if an employed device appeared distracting or gimmicky then it was modified or removed³⁸. Whilst costume, set, and props were stripped back to a minimalist presentation, they did not leave the entire job of characterisation up to the actor and instead sought to establish a visual language which functioned in support of the actors themselves and the action of the play's narrative. Again, it should be stated that the understanding of theatre that can be found in this study does not exclude the human actor, and in fact the human actor is treated as the primary theatrical tool due to its inherent versatility, however this understanding also acknowledges the value of extra-human theatrical elements and proposes that non-human actors are possible. In this context an actor may be defined as any object (human or non-human), on stage that performs an action/enacts a transformation. Because theatre already treads in the realm of fictive presentation, it is not necessary for an object to possess a psychology or pathology in *truth*, it is only necessary that the audience interpret such. In staging *The Best Thing!*, the stage itself could be observed to enact this transformative principle, in its accumulation of chalk messages, food-debris and other such markers.

37 A useful measure of use vs. abuse is that if a device is utilised three times or more during the course of the performance then it is justified, however if it only occurs once or twice it is likely a narrative crutch at best and a gimmick at worst. This is not a universal rule given the subjective nature of all art, however it's useful to keep in mind.

38 An example of such was our replacement of the projection screen and Overhead projector (for the ongoing visual presentation of the phrase "I Love You") with chalk words, written directly into the stage and stage furniture. This was added to over the course of the performance with a mess of figures, equations, graphs and ideas. This manner of expression was found to possess a greater inherent theatricality due to its more active and additive means of operation and the temporary (and therefore transformative) nature of a mark made in chalk over that made in ink.

Grotowski's laboratory format for theatrical research was further developed by Eugenio Barba, who spent much of his developmental years as a collaborator and pupil of Grotowski – interspersed with trips to Asia and India, where he was exposed to Oriental theatre practices such as the ancient Indian tradition of Kathakali. Barba's continued investigations into dramaturgy eventually led him to the identification and elaboration of a new field of research, which he termed *Theatre Anthropology*. This field of study employs the term 'Anthropology' in its scientific usage, as the objective investigation of any type of behaviour (for example the behaviour of atoms in nuclear physics), rather than the common usage where the field of 'Cultural Anthropology' is abbreviated to simply Anthropology. This distinction is important because Theatre Anthropology is not the study of 'the culture of theatre'. It is rather, an investigative field of research that seeks to observe and reflect upon specifically theatrical behaviour in performance, at a pre-expressive and pre-cultural level. The concepts, theories and observations developed as a result of Barba's research have contributed greatly to the theoretical groundwork around which the mechanics of Dynamic Conditioning have been developed.

Research into the field of Theatre Anthropology has been conducted largely by Barba himself as well as his direct collaborators and is centred around the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), an itinerant institute for the investigation and demonstration of performance principle, that seeks to gain coverage of as diverse a range of world performance models as possible. By providing this broad array of performance mediums to treat as research material it is possible to draw observations, and sometimes conclusions, regarding points of similarity and points of difference or deviation between performance modes that may contrast widely in all other aspects – even to the point of the reason for their enactment.

Several important concepts have emerged from Barba's research that have proven important to this study. These include Pre-expressive behaviour, the scale of daily/extra-daily/virtuosic behaviour, form, weight and balances, dilation of physical and vocal elements, the principle of excess energy, and far more. Due to the depth of Barba's own research it is impossible to truly cover such valuable material in any complete sense within this context, however these principles will continue to appear and to be dealt with in context, throughout this study.

1.3 Dynamic Discovery

The *Viewpoints* system – developed by Anne Bogart (Theatre) and Tina Landau (Dance), based on prior work by Mary Overlie (Dance) – for performance choreography has been the primary tool employed in the devising of the training exercises used in structuring the practical research that informs this thesis. Anne Bogart's suggested structure for an actor's development has also informed the framework for the parallel investigation of performance technique undertaken in this research. It is important to note however, that the way in which this system has been used is a significant deviation from the purpose that it was developed for. The system, as devised by Bogart and Landau, has been treated as a 'grab-bag' from which to pick and choose useful elements and ignore (in the training room) those with less pertinence to the study's given aims, as this is not an attempt to emulate the *Viewpoints* process. Similarly, exercises developed by Anne Bogart have been married to exercises developed by other practitioners, in particular Augusto Boal, when this has proven useful. At times during the process it became clear that new exercises needed to be devised 'on the spot', as new needs arose and particular solutions became apparent. The application of this revised or amended process was dependent on a

familiarity with and understanding of the systems and mechanics being employed in the practical training research undertaken. This chapter provides an explanation for the *Viewpoints* system as well as this study's specific application of it. It will also cover the useful tools gained from Augusto Boal's practice, whose research into therapeutic theatre, meta-theatre and post-theatre has proven enlightening in regards to the exploration of the performer-performance-audience relationship and how this can be related to personal development, both within and external to a directly theatrical context.

The *Viewpoints*

The *Viewpoints* at their most simplistic level are a set of principles which can aid an actor or director in the devising, development and presentation of performance choreography. In its most common form this system is used to create abstracted choreography in a post-modern pastiche. This is not however, its limit, as the *Viewpoints* can equally aid in the development of tight, controlled, behaviour in less abstract performance modes. I have personally observed, during my own practical training experiences, the *Viewpoints* being used to establish the choreography for an effective delivery of Shakespearean text³⁹.

Anne Bogart describes a practitioner's initial interactions with the *Viewpoints* as being:

39 During the second year of the Theatre major programme at Victoria University of Wellington in 2008, students were required to attend a weekly, early-morning, physical training session that incorporated elements of Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints* system. One of the exercises engaged in during these classes was the use of *Viewpoints* in the initial stages of scenic development. After some deeply confused first approaches we discovered that it was possible to establish the *meaning* of a *movement* retroactively (after conception), just as easily as with the normal approach where the *movement* of a *meaning* is devised retroactively.

... like learning to juggle. First there is only one ball in the air, then a second ball is added, then a third, a fourth, and so on.⁴⁰

It can be very easy in the early stages for an actor or director to lose sight of one viewpoint in favour of another, at which point all the balls drop. For this reason it is necessary within the *Viewpoints* system for all participants to understand the principles that they are working with on both an intellectual and instinctive level – this relationship is comparable in form to that between the subconscious and the conscious mind in Stanislavski's approach. Anne Bogart's response to this is to insist on the necessity for continual actor training, she makes a clear argument for this that is in alignment with the aims of this research:

The theatre is the only artistic discipline that does not encourage or insist upon the ongoing training of its practitioners. The result: rusty or inflexible actors who often feel unsatisfied or uninspired. // ... Training forges relationships, develops skill and provides an opportunity for continued growth ... daily practice keeps the artistic juices flowing, creates cohesive ensembles and allows individuals and groups to practice speaking the language of the stage.⁴¹

Anne Bogart expresses a similar observation of the mistakes of the American Method [to those made by this study], which she describes as a:

... misunderstanding, misappropriation and miniaturization of the Stanislavsky system.⁴²

40 Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 36.

41 Bogart & Landau 17.

42 Bogart & Landau 16.

Bogart expresses in the text's preface that her intention behind the elaboration of the *Viewpoints* system is not that it be considered a static bible, instead asserting:

... we both stand firmly by the notion that Viewpoints is an open process rather than a closed methodology ... Our wish is not that these pages be read as a prescriptive instruction manual, but rather as an array of possibilities, a call to further examination and personalisation on the part of the reader.⁴³

Anne Bogart is not herself the originator of this system. Hers is instead a development from an earlier system for the choreography of abstract dance, created by Mary Overlie, a member of the Judson Church group in New York; an organisation that included many pioneers of post-modern art, including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, John Cage and Lucinda Childs. Overlie's system was termed the "Six Viewpoints", and included: Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement and Story. This system was developed without theatre in mind, for dance. However, on being exposed to this structured approach to the articulation of the dynamics of performance, Bogart immediately understood its value for theatrical choreography. The *Viewpoints*, as presented by Bogart and Landau, are a stark departure from the more simplistic Six Viewpoints of Overlie's system. In their work Bogart and Landau make reference to nine Physical Viewpoints, divided into the 'viewpoints of space' and the 'viewpoints of time' and a further twelve Vocal Viewpoints. These are elaborated in full under 'Appendix III, The *Viewpoints*'.

It is immediately obvious how a deep appreciation for each of these dynamics (or as Bogart terms them 'viewpoints') would be a useful tool for

43 Bogart & Landau X.

any performer to draw upon. However, the sheer quantity of moving parts tends to obscure the beautiful simplicity of Bogart's concept – that theatrical behaviour can be broken down and described in terms of a clear set of mechanics/dynamics. This strongly harks back to the earlier work of Meyerhold and Grotowski, as well as the more contemporaneous work undertaken by Barba. It could be said with a great deal of accuracy that the individual streams of investigation that Barba and Bogart have chosen to investigate are indeed reflective and, quite probably, interactive.

Whilst each one of these Viewpoints certainly represents an important theatrical concept/principle, it is not necessarily beneficial to deal with each explicitly in a conditioning practice, and the terminology that Bogart has chosen to use leans towards the technical/jargon-based dialect of an experienced practitioner rather than allowing for newcomers to gain an immediately clear understanding of her intent. There is also a level of tautology in the map that Anne Bogart has elaborated – for example, the viewpoint “Spatial Relationship” may be considered an implicit component of “Architecture”, “Shape” and “Gesture”; similarly "Silence" might be considered an implicit component of "Dynamic". It has therefore been expedient within this study not to reproduce Bogart's method as a potential training framework, but instead to utilise it as a malleable tool and to develop from/upon it in an attempt to uncover its core values.

The decision was made to refine the quantity of dynamics at play and, wherever possible, to establish a clear reflectivity or interactivity (of mechanical function) between the physical and vocal dynamics that the actors and the conditioning itself operate within/upon so that one can more rapidly be related to the other. The reasoning for this decision was partially informed by the time limitations imposed on the research project and also based on the same principle that has informed the non-didactic approach to the actors' theoretical development – that discovering these principles or performance mechanics themselves, rather than having them laid out by a

teacher through a prescriptive, exercise-based format, should have more long-term value for the individual actor-trainee. The Dynamics of specific importance that were chosen to work with are elaborated in full under 'Appendix IV, Performance Dynamics'.

As well as these performance dynamics/mechanics, several theatrical principles which were considered important enough to encourage an on-going conscious awareness of were identified. These included: Isolation, Reflection, Repetition, Jo Ha Kyu (a principle of Japanese origin that all things, from the microscopic to the monolithic - both corporeal and incorporeal - possesses a beginning, middle and end), pre-expressivity, daily behaviour versus extra-daily behaviour, and Improvisation (in this context, any spontaneous action – analogous to Anne Bogart's Kinesthetic Response). These principles may in some way be considered Directorial Dynamics, and enjoy a clear reflectivity with observations made by the ISTA.

It should be immediately clear that there is nothing within these dynamics that deals specifically with psychology, character or narrative; this is in keeping with Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints*, however it is a significant departure from Mary Overlie's *Six Viewpoints* which deal with the dynamics of story in a more direct manner. This point of difference is largely due to the difference in the aims that were identified earlier – Overlie's Six Viewpoints were developed as tools for performance composition, whereas the Dynamics identified by this study exist specifically as a means for actors to think about and to describe their identifiably 'theatrical' behaviour within a training/conditioning context. This is also a departure from Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints*, which are attempting to fulfil two roles – both a training road-map and a tool for composition. By eliminating composition as an aim it is possible to focus on the pure mechanics of how movement (or sound) is produced, and how the range of motion (or sound) can be expanded, without needing to deal explicitly with the necessities of the stage and the specifics

of acting technique. The goals of this study are therefore pre-theatrical and operate upon areas of pre-expressive technique. With the same justification in mind, a choice was made to simplify the language used such that it may be more readily digestible – for example a person who has not had musical training may not be aware that 'Dynamic' in this context means 'Volume'. Since there was no expectation that the actor-trainees involved would be musically trained, a more directly communicative term was employed – 'Volume'. This linguistic simplification also prevents a confusion of terminology due to the most notable deviation in basic jargon that was made by this study. “Viewpoints” as a title, has been replaced by the term “Dynamics”, as it more accurately describes the activity undertaken. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition for Dynamic:

adjective

- **1**(of a process or system) characterized by constant change, activity, or progress.
- *Physics* relating to forces producing motion.
- *Linguistics* (of a verb) expressing an action, activity, event, or process.

...

noun

- **1a** force that stimulates change or progress within a system or process.⁴⁴

Furthermore, within classical mechanics, 'Dynamics' is a field of physics dealing specifically with the effect of forces and torques upon motion. Where the Viewpoints seek to observe these forces, this study is seeking a means to directly manipulate them and to expand an actor's range within them. The term's scientific grounding also serves to further distance

⁴⁴ *Dynamic*, Oxford University Press, updated 2013,

<<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dynamic>> [accessed 27 February, 2013]

this work from that of direct presentational theatre-for-an-audience, as the work in the training room was necessarily divorced from the distraction factor of an audience, freeing the actors to experiment physically, without needing to maintain a deep artistic engagement at all times.

A further linguistic deviation was to use the term “Aural” in “Aural Dynamics” instead of “Vocal”. This was a conscious choice to expand the scope of observation for the dynamics of performance, as it was not merely sounds emitted by the throat that were dealt with, but any sound that occurs within the theatrical context – including those made by an actor's voice and body or those, that were completely external to an actor but still existed within the theatre space (possibly created by musicians, technicians, audience or even the architecture itself). Another important distinction that must be made between this system and those systems upon which it is based is that, where previous systems have attempted to relay concepts of acting technique, this system is intended to precede or to support such activities without delving into them directly. This approach was adopted in order to provide a functional simplification of potentially complex ideas, in deference to a necessity for clarity and specification, taking Barba's idea of “learning to learn” as the key. By simplifying and specifying scope in this way, a greater understanding of the material covered is possible.

Finally, where Bogart and Landau have divorced the mechanics of space and time from one another in their *Viewpoints*, a choice was made instead, where possible, to identify Dynamics that can be observed to operate in both space and time. This embraces the nature of live performance, which can only ever be enacted within the confines of a specific space and a specific time – thus for a holistic treatment, space and time must be understood as being fundamentally bound to each other. The dynamics and relationships identified above have formed the measure against which all exercises, games and activities undertaken during this research process have been devised, performed and judged. The specific

exercises and activities elaborated later in this text all operate on at least one of these dynamics, and often several at once, to stimulate, strengthen and expand an actor's creative potential.

Augusto Boal

Second only to the *Viewpoints* in influencing the content and structure of the research exercises undertaken in this study were the practices established by Augusto Boal in his 'Forum Theatre' as well as other complimentary techniques discovered in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002⁴⁵) and *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995), also by Boal. His unique viewpoint on theatre and its socio-political role in culture have informed the development of a genuinely unique pedagogy that extends the traditional functions of theatre and theatres into venues from which it had previously been held alien. As well as this, we can see in Boal's work a clear link between of the psycho-theatrical investigations undertaken earlier by Stanislavski and the political/didactic⁴⁶ purpose of Brecht's Epic Theatre that had previously been understood as diametric:

I say real and not realistic, since realistic is a word over-charged with connotations of theatrical style. The goal to be aimed for in improvisation is reality, not realism. The protagonist and the other actors must aim for truth rather than likelihood, verity rather than verisimilitude.⁴⁷

45 First published in 1992, a 2nd edition was released in 2002 including a post-script that deals with the theatrical implications of the World Trade Centre attack on September 11th 2001, termed the *Theatre of Fear*. Overall however, this book should be considered a precursor to *The Rainbow of Desire*, despite its apparently later publishing date.

46 In particular, the condition of the audience as active participant in the event rather than empathic observer.

47 Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 1995), 58.

Boal's theatrical innovations have been driven by a particularly developed understanding of the role of the spectator within the theatrical setting. In the conventional theatre the approach to narrative delivery, characterisation and thematic elaboration is by empathic engagement. In contrast to this, Boal has developed a setting for the theatrical encounter where the traditional spectator is transformed into what he terms a "Spect-actor" and is asked to directly engage with the scene on a creative level. This spect-actor is provided with agency⁴⁸ within the setting to modify (or in some exercises to define) narrative, character and stylistic presentation – this agency is given definition by exercise-specific rules, however these are structured in such a way as to stimulate creativity rather than to stifle unexpected lateral connections. This theatre and theory is inherently connected to the consistent political upheaval of 20th Century South America, during which period one fascist government was followed quickly by another over and over again. The purpose of this study is not to focus on the historical circumstances of Boal's work except inasmuch as they shaped his ideas, it should be noted however, that Boal's theatre took on a specifically Leftist political stance, and – due to personally held revolutionary feelings – he sought a means for conscious didacticism within the theatrical setting. This was not an intent towards the delivery of any specific message, but rather an attempt to open a more permissive dialogue than was otherwise available. His goal was to produce theatre that served as a call to action, rather than to act as a means of catharsis – thereby ridding the body of the *need* to rebel. As well as requiring this active participation, rather than empathic absorption from the audience, the method of communication had to be efficient and highly mobile⁴⁹. These goals bring Boal's work in close proximity with that of Brecht, whose Epic Theatre sought a similarly active audience within a politically defined narrative.

48 It would perhaps be more accurate to state that the spect-actor enacts agency which had previously lain dormant within the spectator, and that this process from dormancy to active participant is facilitated by Boal's techniques for meta-theatrical presentation.

49 Theatre had at this time been subjected to anti-gathering laws in much of South America, as such actors would at times have to spontaneously abandon a performance if it was broken up by police or militia.

Augusto Boal's solution to the problem of an intellectually passive audience is however, clearly distinct from Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (though undoubtedly this has had some influence on Boal's practice), which as a whole maintains the integrity of the traditional theatrical process – the presentation of a specific performance to an audience who observe, but do not directly participate. Boal's solution, the *spect-actor*, establishes a new paradigm for theatrical activity to operate within, an audience who is an intrinsic element not simply of the experience/event, but of the performance itself. The Forum Theatre, as well as Boal's further developments (Theatre of the Oppressed, the Rainbow of Desire, Legislative Theatre, Etc...), is a tool for changing the relationship of play-actor-audience into a reflective pattern, where each is influenced by the other. Boal's exercises typically play out a scene, series of frozen images or a 'dynamised image' that elaborate a specific – and more importantly *real* and current/recent – problem, conflict or oppression that either a single spect-actor is experiencing or that is common to the entire group. Through a series of inter-relational exercises the protagonist (the spect-actor who defines the narrative) is able to discover a solution to this oppression and to play out the physical processes of enacting such.

It is not the history, context or even explanatory theory of Boal's work that this study has made use of. Rather, it is specifically the practical, mechanical aspects of his practice that are of importance to the study - the manner in which Boal's meta-theatre is operated. Boal's methods for encouraging direct interaction between actor and observer have proven most useful in the development of the techniques used in Dynamic Conditioning, specifically the rules that he uses to define these interactions and the way that they are approached by all parties engaged in the exercise. Of particular importance to this research's practice was a method of interacting on a physical level that is a component of the technique named “The image of the images”. During the first stage the protagonist sculpts the other

performers using a purely physical language, as described by Augusto Boal here:

He is not allowed to speak during the construction of this image. To make himself understood by others, the protagonist can use *mirror language*, himself making the gesture or facial expression he wants to see reproduced, or *the language of modelling*, manipulating the actor with his hands, like a sculptor with a statue.⁵⁰ [emphasis original]

Whilst the decision was made not to exclude *mirror language* as an option in the communication of physical feedback, it was *the language of modelling* that would become the primary vehicle for interaction. This method of communication has a multiplicity of benefits that apply both to the practical discovery of skills and theory (both actor and spect-actor physically explore range of movement, distribution of weight and balance, as well as concepts of aesthetic interest within physical form) and to the development of a healthy, cohesive theatrical ensemble, comfortable interacting with each other in a direct manner, without the awkwardness that can often prove disruptive during early blocking sessions for a play. Complementary to this, another tiny mechanic of one of Boal's techniques has been identified as a useful method for the establishment of physical interaction. This mechanic comes from Boal's technique "The 'Stop and Think!' Mode". Boal describes the function of this technique thus:

... once the improvisation is properly in gear, the director says 'Stop!' whenever she suspects that a gesture is shielding something hidden. The actors must freeze their movements mid-action. If an actor is caught in the act of walking, his foot in mid-air, he must stay like that.

⁵⁰ Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* 77.

If another is stretching out his hand towards a third, their hands not yet touching, they must not touch. If the 'Stop!' surprises an actor looking at something he particularly wanted to avoid looking at, he must keep looking. And all the actors stay motionless.⁵¹

These two mechanics have been married together within the research undertaken into Dynamic Conditioning to form a singular exercise⁵² within the overall regime that became fundamental to the system's operation. This exercise was named *Stop!* and involved participation from a performer(s), and at least one observer. In the version of this exercise that was used initially, the performer(s) would present a routine (developed by methods derived originally from the *Viewpoints* system), during which the observer(s) would watch for any moments that they felt could be more physically interesting/powerful. When these moments appeared the observer(s) would call “Stop!” and make a physical modification to bring the performer's physicality (this exercise was used in a slightly modified form for vocal work also) closer towards the observer's personal vision of 'interesting' or 'powerful'. The importance of maintaining silence during this process and using solely physical methods of communication was stressed. After the conclusion of the performer's score all spect-actors who had provided physical modification would be asked to explain their logic/idea. At this point in the research the Dynamics of performance had yet to be fully identified and such exercises were instrumental in their elaboration as they established a setting in which subjective values could be objectively identified. This exercise was further developed during the course of research, such that observers were watching for physical difficulty and problematised states of balance rather than purely for interest/aesthetic purposes. In this form the exercise's purpose is shifted to focus on the

51 Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* 61 – 62.

52 Commonly within the rehearsal room I would refer to these exercises as “games”. A state of play is to be encouraged, as it provides more scope for experimentation and a context for imaginative/lateral connection. *Game*, as a term, helps to subtly reinforce this behaviour.

expansion of potential range of movement, balance and the development of strength in the actor.

A further technique from Boal that has influenced the exercises incorporated into the Dynamic Conditioning system was “The 'Playing to the Deaf' Mode”. In this mode the actor who has become too reliant upon words to create their scene is instructed that they must re-present their improvisation in '*Playing to the Deaf' Mode*, during which they may no longer use their voices as vehicles for communication. The idea is that the actor must successfully communicate their narrative, character and thematic content to a deaf person. This concept was applied to an exercise that for the purposes of discussion was named “Divorce”. In this exercise the actors were divided into groups of between 2 and 3. These groups were instructed to devise a scene. Each was provided with character, place, and individual goals within the scene. After initial presentation of their devised scene the actors were returned to their groups and instructed to re-devise the scene such that they could produce a fully-communicative physical performance, a fully-communicative vocal performance and a performance that contained each element in simultaneity (as per normal). When a performer is forced to rely solely on one medium for communication, they are put into a situation where they must discover lateral and creative solutions to the elaboration of specific elements of an idea where, under normal circumstances, this solution might be taken for granted – as Boal himself explains:

The gestures become more significant, denser, stronger. Without the prop of words, the actors attempt to communicate through the senses everything that was previously expressed verbally ... When we cannot use words our bodies become much more expressive.⁵³

53 Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* 66 – 67.

The logic that informs this can of course be extended in the inverse to say that 'without the prop of their bodies, the actors attempt to communicate through the voice everything that had previously been expressed physically ... When we cannot use our bodies, our voices become much more expressive.' By treating the physical and vocal components of performance as both disconnected and fully-integrated elements an actor is able to explore their range of expression in ways that are often inhibited by natural, mental blockages, derived from the repetitive nature of daily behaviour.

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING FOR PERFORMANCE

2.1 Training for *The Best Thing!*

Rather than deal explicitly with each session of training and investigation that was undertaken during this study's initial practical research phase (to do so would fill an entire volume in itself), this chapter will instead explore important moments during the exercises undertaken. This element of the research sought to identify and enact useful practices that could be incorporated into a training methodology. The research also sought to investigate the nature of performance training itself: what is it that is necessary for the development and extension of the performer's apparatus?

The question of what exactly it is that the performer's apparatus consists of has been addressed prior to this study, and is discussed in Chapter 1, with relation to the body/mind/voice and the live, transformative process. A step-by-step elaboration of the exercises engaged with during this process is available under 'Appendix VI, Active Training Guide'. The investigative element of this study culminated in a work presentation, during which the participants presented a group training routine to an audience, that was invited to provide structured feedback on what had been observed. This event will be explored in greater depth later within this chapter. The audience was composed of people who would be involved in the production of *The Best Thing!*, and people entirely disconnected from the production.

Similarly, there were people in the audience with a theatrical background, and people who had had little exposure to the medium. The training score that the participants presented had been refined, developed and composed primarily as a means of personal development (for the actors), but secondarily with the active intention of presentation to an audience, since this was a given condition of the activity. This meant that their scores were required to perform both an aesthetic and a developmental function, which was – strictly speaking – outside the bounds of their normal intention, however *necessary* in order that this specific exercise be fruitful. It was hoped that such an exercise could tie the more abstract work, previously engaged in, more closely together with conventional theatre for the participants, by superimposing the two. It was also thought to be useful to gain external perspectives on the performers' activity.

Prior to the first training session a plan for the over-all goals and structure of each of the sessions was devised, this plan can be seen in 'Appendix V, Initial Training Guide'. Within this can be observed the first indications of the developmental arch that was sought for and a sequential elaboration of the areas of theatricality that were intended to be explored. The process would be begun by exercises that sought to establish a sense of *communitas*⁵⁴ in the ensemble, and ended with the development of a combined physical/vocal score for presentation to an audience. Between these points a combination of *Viewpoints* exercises, and others taken directly, or theoretically derived, from Eugenio Barba and Augusto Boal, were employed in the continuing developmental process. The second two sessions would be designed to get the actors used to working within the structural aesthetic and jargon of *Viewpoints* work, such as referring to an extended, choreographed piece of movement (physical or vocal) as a 'score'. It was also intended that these two sessions would develop the actors'

54 A sense of togetherness/oneness, shared by members of a group, generally following a unifying experience.

comfort in working within an abstract rather than contextualised mode of performance.

The following four sessions would utilise the *Viewpoints* mechanics as a tool for the generation of (relatively) randomised physical and vocal choreography, used for the exploration of performative physicality and vocal dynamism. This investigation involved the individual presentation and subsequent group analysis and discussion of randomly devised physical, and eventually also vocal, choreographies. These discussions were framed around the question 'what did you see?' - this question was further broken down into 'what was interesting in the presentation?' and 'what was boring/disinteresting⁵⁵/problematic in the presentation?' The spectators' answers to these questions would subsequently be dissected, such that core principles might be identified. These questions would be presented first to the performer themselves, and subsequently to each individual spectator, finally the question would be opened to the entire group for unstructured discussion. Often suggestions and clarification would be offered by the facilitator also, once the feedback of the actor-participants had reached a clear conclusion. Such-facilitator provided feedback was however, kept to a minimum as it was necessary to maintain an objective distance from the investigative discussion in order to facilitate a non-biased reading and dissemination of subject feedback and of the actors' physical and theoretical development. This process makes use of the actors as both instruments of research and objective observers by enacting the pedagogy identified within the structure of Stanislavski's actor preparation process. It was hoped that through this method involving observation and critical discourse, theatrical universalities/core principles identified could subsequently be consciously worked upon by the actors themselves rather than requiring the direct intercession of a facilitator. An interesting phenomena was the degree to which the core performance principles identified by the actor/research-

55 Which is not to say 'uninteresting', instead this term should be understood to imply a removal of previously held interest.

participants in this study mirrored those identified by Eugenio Barba and his colleagues in *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*.

The eighth training session was intended to more specifically explore principles identified within Eugenio Barba's work in the field of *Theatre Anthropology*, as well as returning to the scenic devising exercises engaged with in the first training session – this would function as a kind of test of the actors' development. The final two training sessions were to be devoted to the devising and presentation of combined physical/vocal scores for a public audience and open feedback.

This original plan was treated as a guideline for the structure and purpose of each training session individually, and the training process as a whole, rather than as a mandate. Such was especially the case given that at the time of its conception, theoretical research was incomplete, and thus it was necessary that its structure remain malleable. It proved necessary to extend the process to fourteen sessions in total, rather than the initially planned ten, due to conflicts in participant schedules, that required splitting the group into Monday and Saturday streams – with full ensemble training held on Wednesdays. In acknowledgement of this necessarily malleable structure, a more in-depth guide⁵⁶ would be developed immediately prior to each individual training session, that examined the previous plan critically, and deviated where necessary, in response to new developments within the research process. These were geared to cater to any areas of interest, strength or weakness that had been identified in previous sessions, or to incorporate useful new discoveries made in theoretical research. An important development in this version of the training plan is the incorporation of the game *Stop!*, based on techniques discovered in Augusto Boal's *Forum Theatre*. In *Forum Theatre* an audience is asked to re-define the narrative of performance in order to enact alternative, and hopefully ideal, solutions to problems put on display. To enact this modification they will call “Stop!” and then make the changes that they wish to see,

56 Appendix VI.

establishing a theatre that ultimately becomes a kind of debate. This debate is held using either *mirror language*⁵⁷ or *the language of modelling*⁵⁸.

After discovering this technique, it was incorporated into the training methodology as a means for the enactment of direct feedback regarding techniques for establishment and development of physical interest/dis-interest that spoke directly in the language of the body, rather than having to be interpreted through a verbal filter – the language of modelling was found to be a *particularly* effective tool for this. As well as this, it created a situation in which the observers were forced to remain active and in participation during performance. This had the benefit of sharpening their attention, and forced them to think and to provide feedback in a manner that they were previously unfamiliar with, helping the observers to engage in deeper consideration of the performer's behaviour, their own behaviour, and that of the other *spect-actors*⁵⁹. This practice would often be wed subsequently to the previously described discursive method. In this modified form, each performer would initially be asked to provide feedback on their understanding, experience, and appreciation for the modifications that they had been given, and each spect-actor would be asked to provide feedback regarding the logic or instinct/impulse that had informed the specific modifications that they had given. Finally, this would be opened to an unstructured group discussion in which areas of interest could be freely discussed by the whole. The *Stop!* exercise also proved highly successful as a tool for the rapid establishment and development of choreography that incorporated strongly dynamic physicality.

These guides⁶⁰ were the basic skeletons that informed the structure at the outset of each training session. As previously stated, these guides were

57 Showing/displaying the change desired for the performer to attempt to replicate.

58 Personally, and directly, enacting a physical modification in the performer.

59 An audience member who is simultaneously witness and participant. Term introduced by Augusto Boal.

60 Appendix VI.

treated as active and developmental rather than static. They were structured to embrace this treatment, by including more possible activities within each guide than it was deemed likely to achieve within the time allotted for each training session (generally three hours). This meant that if, by chance, the actors did manage to speed through their work, then there was facility to continue into deeper work, whilst maintaining structure. This allowed choices regarding appropriate, impromptu exercises to be made actively within the training sessions themselves, in response to specific needs that became apparent as a result of the investigative processes employed. Guiding the process in such a way also mirrors standard Directorial practice in play composition, where a Director will enter a rehearsal with a seed of an idea and the Actors will leave the rehearsal having developed an entire scene from that seed. Fundamentally the developmental act (just as much as the act of theatrical composition) in a system so devised, is seated within the Actors themselves rather than the facilitator/Director. Such a relationship, ties together personal and ensemble responsibility, which is a further measure that aids in the preparation of performers to work within the theatrical context.

1st Conditioning Session⁶¹:

At the initial training session, prior to rehearsal for *The Best Thing!*, five actors made themselves available. Recruitment efforts included a Facebook campaign, an advertisement on *The Big Idea*, audition posters, a casting call through the University of Waikato theatre department mailing system and speaking to two theatre classes taught by Gaye Poole – one of first year undergraduates and the other of third year. Nine actors had been in contact, confirming their attendance, prior to the initial training session, however prior experience with casting calls had indicated that this would not necessarily be reflective of actual attendance, especially given the controversial⁶² nature of much of the script.

61 Conducted on 25/04/2012.

The group was subsequently joined (on the second full ensemble training session) by a further participant⁶³, to make a total of six. For the sake of discussion, these participants will be referred to as actor A, B, C, D, E, and F.

The first session was consciously light-weight and more directly associable with standard theatre rehearsal techniques than the subsequent sessions would be. It was desirable that the actors not be overwhelmed with unfamiliar concepts in their first experience with the work, and therefore a soft approach was adopted to ease the actors into it. However, it *was* still designed to be both physically and intellectually stimulating and to challenge the actors – in particular, highlighting areas of weakness that might indicate a pre-existing necessity for training. This was for the benefit of the participants themselves as well as the facilitator – as this information could be useful in the re-consideration of subsequent training guides. Due to uncertainty regarding the number of participants that would attend the initial session, the session's structure was itself far looser and more relaxed than the following sessions' structures would be. This fact was communicated to the actors at both the beginning and end of the initial training session, with the reassurance that initial abstraction would subsequently coalesce into something they were capable of confidently, and *productively*, discussing. The first exercise engaged in was one called *Truth*⁶⁴. Each actor – and the facilitator – in turn tells the group something true about themselves, that they feel is important to who they are as a person. There is no comment or discussion about this, the offers made are

62 A genuinely ridiculous on-stage representation of God, drug use, foul language, and masses of political propaganda.

63 The play's author.

64 First encountered during study at Victoria University of Wellington in 2009. This game was employed during actor auditions by a fellow student named Daniel Brown, prior to the onset of his final Directorial study for a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Theatre. Brown was in search of actors willing to reveal their psychology on stage. It was noticed that this was an effective means also of identifying actors who possessed a responsible attitude, and of establishing trust and *communitas* in an ensemble.

simply accepted and the actors are thanked for providing them. This game was run through twice, with the actors also stating their names prior to offering their truths, both times. This allows the actors and the facilitator, who may have never met previously, to become familiar with each others' names. This game was followed by a quick discussion about the play, *The Best Thing!*, the production of which – for the actors at least – formed the ultimate goal of this work. The actors had been sent digital copies of the script several weeks prior to the beginning of training, however they were also told that there was no significant urgency in reading the script at the time as it would not be directly worked with for several months. A level of familiarity with the script was encouraged prior to the beginning of character development however. Three of the actors had read at least part of the play and each expressed a very positive reception to its characters, narrative and style. One participant reflected that in the first scene, where Ted convinces Man to commit suicide, she experienced a strange sensation where she knew she ought not to like it, but did; and more than that, by the end of the scene she *agreed* with Ted's argument, in light of Man's apparent weakness and irrelevance.

At the conclusion of this brief discussion (approximately 5 minutes), a physical warm-up was initiated, followed by stretches. The warm-up game used was one called *Die!*⁶⁵. In this game the actors walk around the room, attempting not to fall into a predictable pattern. They must perform this activity either with none of them wearing shoes and socks or with all of them wearing shoes and socks, for obvious safety reasons. The director calls out semi-random instructions and the actors must respond instantly by interpreting these into movement. Importantly, this warm-up exercise allows the facilitator and actors to play directly with many of the performance Dynamics identified in Appendix IV, by creative introduction

65 This is a game I first encountered during study for my Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and English Literature at Victoria University of Wellington in 2008. The game was taught to me by a Chilean director named Jaime Dörner (an MTA student enrolled in the Toi Whakaari/Victoria University Theatre Masters programme at the time), who was a tutor during one module of the Paper THEA204 Classic Theatre Workshop.

of behavioural conditions from the facilitator. This exercise is designed to bring the actors to a peak of productive exhaustion, that liberates their creative faculties from reasoned inhibition. It also operates on a mechanism utilised by Anne Bogart in *Viewpoints* training called *soft focus*⁶⁶:

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.⁶⁷ [Italics in original]

This is achieved by a necessity for the actors to maintain an awareness of the physical location, distribution and speeds of all other actors in the room, at all times, as a matter of both safety and courtesy, due to the chaotic nature of the exercise. *Die!*, of course, takes its name from one of the most important instructions that the facilitator can give during the game: when the facilitator cries “Die!”, the actors must instantly fall to the ground, like rag dolls, no matter their state of balance or motion/non-motion at the time. Carefully timing calls of “Die”, “Get up”, “Jump”, “Run”, and “Faster”/“Slower” forces actors to work decisively and with conviction by not allowing the opportunity for consideration prior to action. This creates a situation where extra-daily balances and new states of dilated form are experimented with as an automatic necessity, defined by the impossible rapidity at which new directions are called and by the many possible contradictions that can be created by delivering cumulative behavioural conditions rather than a progression of conditions that cancel those that precede them. By the end of this warm-up, if it has been run effectively, the actors will all be panting, a bit sweaty and quite rosy-cheeked. It is

66 I have personally found, in my own experiences with performance that, beyond Bogart's initial intention for the practice, soft focus can be a useful manner of looking and seeing on-stage, under strong lights, minimising any necessity to squint that may be instinctively produced. It is also a useful tool for the tracking of behaviour from other actors on stage who may not currently form a point of focus, but nonetheless share the space.

67 Bogart 23.

generally unnecessary to continue with further *warm-up* exercises as the actors will be more likely to either cool down or possibly even overheat rather than gain any productive value from continuation. This warm-up exercise should instead be followed immediately by full-body stretches (starting with the head and shoulders, finishing with the ankles and toes) and breathing exercises. Carefully timed breathing exercises can also have an effect of bringing an ensemble to a point of oneness/*communitas* that is highly productive. Though it is important that the facilitator lead the first two or three stretching sessions, it is not healthy to stretch without warming up first – which is not an element of the facilitator's role – and thus their stretches should be demonstrative rather than participatory. As the actors gain confidence, each should instead be asked in turn to lead stretching sessions, such that each has performed the task a vast number of times by the play's closing night. This also instils a sense of responsibility and confidence in the actors, who have been entrusted with the physical health of themselves and their compatriots.

After warm-ups were concluded, the first session's 'exercises' were commenced. The actors were split into two groups and asked to devise a scene each, based on given characters, character-specific goals and a specific prop that must be incorporated. The scenes were also required to present a clear beginning, middle and end, and for one character to clearly achieve their goal. Although initial work with this was structured in a manner comparable to traditional scenic experimentation – actors were given 15 minutes to develop their scenes, after-which these were presented for group reflection and feedback – the exercises were developed to take the actors out of the range of the normal, their natural comfort zones, in a progressive manner. It was interesting to note the difference in behaviours between the two groups during this: Group 1 were seated in a cluster, debating narrative, amongst other things, for a full 10 minutes of the exercise; on the other hand, Group 2 spent all but the first 2 minutes of the exercise on their feet, working out their performance practically. Each

group was visited once during this process by the facilitator, who offered a unique piece of advice. To Group 1 the suggestion that they consider defining *where* they are and how they can make their location clear was offered. This was intended to push them towards considering their physical experience, rather than simply 'what is said', which all too often becomes the sole focus of theatrical presentation, in lieu of 'what is done'. To Group 2 was offered the advice that they consider a floor-plan of movement in the devising of their scene, to facilitate clearer action and stronger, more decisive, presentation. This suggestion was offered to expand upon the already successful physicality that they had incorporated into their scene.

The results at the end of the 15 minutes were predictable, Group 2's presentation was the stronger of the two due to its clear physicality – in particular one actor managed an excellently convincing mime of climbing through a window, that needed only heightening to achieve its effect more fully. In contrast, Group 1's scene lacked physical dynamism, and therefore the attention given by spectators waned, making the delivery of feedback problematic. This issue was identified during reflective discussion by the group themselves, who suggested that perhaps they might increase the scene's mobility by standing rather than sitting. Interestingly, the observers in this case (Group 2) had been unable to interpret the archetypal construct of several of the characters in the scene due to their static portrayal, and mentioned that their narrative conclusion was confusing as a result of this. Whilst Group 2's presentation was undoubtedly the stronger of the two, it was not without its problematic elements. In particular, they had utilised a scenic device wherein time was rewound and the scene was played out with alternative options. This was an interesting effect to play with, however they had presented the associated physicality with a self-conscious lack of conviction that made the performance difficult to watch. They also did not rewind far enough to effect strong changes within the scene that would justify use of the device. During reflective discussion it became clear that two of the members of Group 1 (the spectators) had not been aware that the

rewind device had actually occurred due to these issues. It was suggested by the facilitator that Group 2 would need to significantly modify/heighten their physical mannerisms during performance of the rewind for this idea to be read clearly by an audience. It was asked by a member of Group 2 if they should do away with the device entirely due to its problematic employment, however this was deemed reductive and it was instead reiterated that they should attempt to seek a means of making the device successful, rather than backing away from the challenge. The actors were given a further 5 minutes in which to fine-tune their scenes, after-which the complexity of the exercise was increased.

This complication was of the facilitator's own invention, designed to encourage the actors to heighten the expressive qualities of their bodies and their voices, it is discussed briefly in Chapter 1.3, and a full elaboration of its mechanisms may be found in 'Appendix VII, Games for Dynamic Composition: *Physical Extension*'. Again, each group was visited by the facilitator once during the 15 minutes they had in which to develop their three new threads of performance. Group 1 expressed a great deal of difficulty in communicating complex concepts and relationships through physical language rather than vocal, again displaying a tendency to over-discuss. As a means of dealing with this they were encouraged to think in terms of showing and displaying *things* and *behaviour*, establishing implicit connections rather than attempting to communicate these complex concepts and relationships directly. Interestingly Group 2 were having nearly the inverse issue, where they were struggling to communicate power relationships vocally. It was suggested that they think in terms of tone, pitch, volume and inflection and how each of these can shape the impressions that an audience will draw of a character.

Each version of the scenes was presented by the groups at the conclusion of the allotted 15 minutes of rehearsal. After each group had presented all three versions of their scene, discussion was opened in the

same structure as previously employed. It was observed that Group 1's physical scene was constrained by 'natural' behaviour, consisting of abstract, conversational gesture. This prevented any understanding of narrative, due to its lack of heightened physicality, and indicative or demonstrative gesture. Similarly, relationships between each of the characters, and the characters with the environment were indecipherable. Their vocal scene was similarly constrained by conservative, naturalistic tendencies. Whilst it succeeded in communicating their narrative, it lacked tonal dynamism, and therefore failed to communicate emotional and spatial relationships successfully. The combined physical/vocal scene, of course, made sense of the previous two, however this was not the point of the exercise, as was observed by the performers themselves, who noted that their behaviour had been stuck in Naturalistic behaviour due to their discomfort with abstract presentation, when in fact the exercise demanded a more directly communicative physical presentation. Group 2's presentations again displayed an inversion of Group 1's issues, where their physical scene was highly successful at communicating necessary concepts, relationships and narrative, but their vocal scene lacked clarity and impact. Their re-wind also remained unclear in both the physical and vocal scenes, making sense only within the combined physical/vocal scene. It was observed during this process that, whilst dialogue often forms the framework around which a performance is built, the actual content of the dialogue diminishes in importance within the performance context, in deference to how effectively the concepts it seeks to *convey* are communicated to an audience. The audience does not *listen* to a play; it *watches*, it *hears*, and it *absorbs* the play. Because of this it is far more important that the manner in which dialogue is delivered and the physical context in which it is presented be clear, than that the actual words delivered be so, themselves (though these *should* still be considered). This allows the spectators to more readily absorb the information that is being communicated to them than a phonetically accurate, but tonally monotonous presentation will allow. This is less true of the elite theatre audience, who are more practised in the live

interpretation of dialogue, than of people who are unaccustomed to theatrical presentation.

The two groups were given a further 5 minutes to fine-tune their scenes, they then presented 'final' versions, after-which the membership between groups was altered. One actor from each group was swapped to the other and all actors were required to play different characters in the scene to that which they had played earlier. The new members of each group were defined as the group leaders, justified by their increased objectivity, informed by a repeated external viewpoint. These leaders were given the freedom to make absolutely any changes that they wished to the scenes, no matter how abstract or arbitrary. Their absolute power in this respect was consciously stressed to all. Interestingly, both leaders chose to maintain the already established narrative content and structure of the scenes, focusing instead on physically demonstrated power relationships. Between this exercise and the previous, the actors' behaviour had undergone a profound shift: all groups were now on their feet and working in the medium of presentation (performance) rather than spending excess time debating concept, narrative and dialogue content. During presentation of these re-vivified scenes, it was universally true that each actor performed their new role with more successfully heightened physicality and a greater diversity of vocal expression than the former actor had succeeded in creating in the same role. It was reasoned that this was due to the same external objectivity that had previously been noted. Several of the actors expressed a great deal of difficulty in simply 'taking on' another actor's role, however all acknowledged the general success with which this had been achieved. It was noted during this discussion that the degree to which an actor was invested in/committed to their actions was directly tied to a spectator's willingness to accept this behaviour. This is an idea that clearly echoes the *Decided Body* of Barba's theory. This discussion represented the end of the first session of practical investigation into Dynamic Conditioning.

Identifying the dynamised body

The rehearsals that immediately followed dealt with the basic practices of *Viewpoints* training and introduced the new mechanic of *Stop!* to the regime's repertoire. Initially it was necessary to begin this work with a conversation, in which the basic theory that informs the *Viewpoints* was explained, coupled to a justification for their employment as a training mechanism. These exercises were defined as a system for understanding the mechanisms of movement, through space and time. The goals established for this study were to make use of this system, and other supportive elements, as a tool for the investigation and extension of the actor's personal performance technique at a pre-expressive level.

Just as with *Viewpoints* training, the investigation of performance dynamics was initiated by the development of physical scores – detailed pieces of [generally] abstract choreography. The goal of these sessions was to bring the actors to a point where they were confident working within the mechanisms of score-work, and ideally, closer to a point of successful improvisation⁶⁸ within these mechanics. A complete rule-set for the establishment and development of a Dynamic Score can be found in 'Appendix VII, Games for Dynamic Composition'. Whilst each of the rules delineated were employed during the overall progress of the study, not all were used in the development of every score. Similarly, the order in which the rules are ordered here – though a useful guide for a successful compositional work-flow – was varied during training investigations. Many of the exercises listed have been named for the primary Dynamics that they have been observed to work upon. Once all or some of the listed steps have been completed, the actors should each be in possession of a unique physical composition that is ready to be presented to the group for feedback and subsequent development. Whilst the presentation will inevitably be rough due to the unfamiliarity of the material that they are working with,

⁶⁸ Improvisation in this context implies composition-in-the-moment rather than creation-without-preparation.

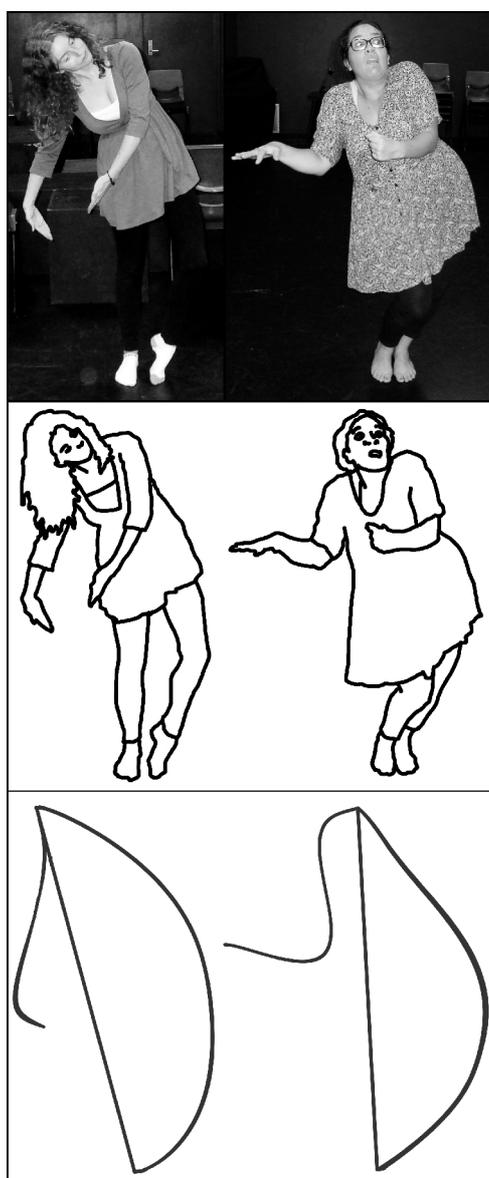
they should be capable of delivering their scores with confidence and focus due to their many repetitions, aimed at building muscle-memory. The initial steps outlined benefit many of the dynamics identified in Chapter 1, including *Topography*, *Speed*, *Distance*, *Duration*, *Rhythm*, and some aspects of *Shape*. They do not however, enact a complete consideration of *Shape*, and neither do they deal with *Architecture* or *Inter-relation*. Subsequent development of these scores was focused on expansion and development of those elements already engaged with, and the complication of operation through the introduction of mechanically problematised movement/behavioural conditions. It was decided that it would be prudent to leave *Architecture* and *Inter-relation* to be dealt with later in the process, once the actors had had more opportunity to become comfortable with the methods of interaction employed, and capable in their own personal delivery. In developing their first scores, the actors involved in the research prior to *The Best Thing!* were instructed (sequentially, rather than all at once) to utilise the following compositional mechanics: *Topography*, *Distance*, *Speed*, *Height*, and *Rhythm*.

It was noted, during the feedback session that followed the initial round of presentations, that elements of movement which displayed oppositions and isolations within the body formed important points of interest for the spectator. This was expressed particularly by the fact that different parts of the body, moving at different rates, during an element of one actor's score were commented on as being captivating by all spectators. The opportunity was taken by the facilitator at this point to introduce the mutually supportive theories of pre-expressive behaviour, as expressed by Eugenio Barba in *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* and discussed in Chapter 1.2, and Jo Ha Kyu⁶⁹. In the image pictured over the page, actors (from left) B and F can each be observed to display very similar manifestations of the principle of opposition in their bodies. The diagrams

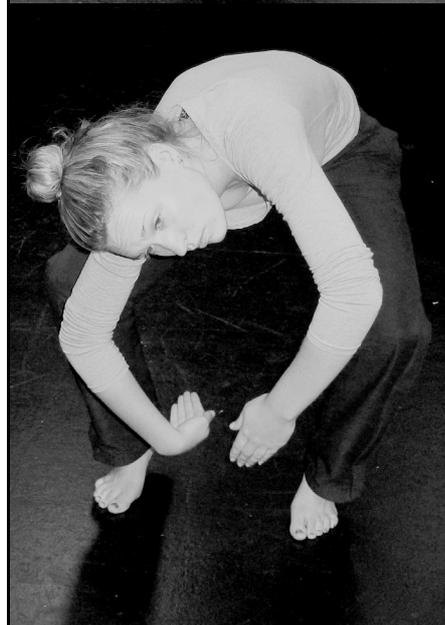
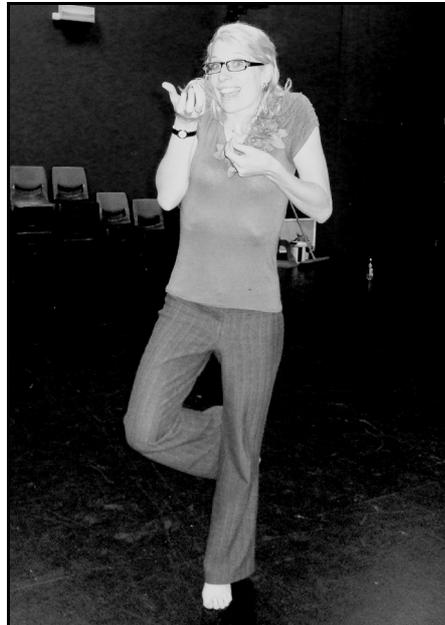
⁶⁹ The Japanese principle that all things and all actions possess a beginning, middle and end. Can be related also to the metaphor of the actor as an iceberg.

below the photograph show simplified representations of their form, followed by the lines of spatial operation created in the spatial distribution that they have given to their bodies. In B's we can see a single point from which her body opposes, at the apex of the curve between her hip and her knee. F on the other hand has established a physicality that utilises two notable points of opposition, one that is centred in her hip, and another that falls between her elbow and armpit.

The newly developed exercise *Stop!* was introduced after the initial round of presentations for verbal feedback. The spectators were told that they must each make at least 3 physical modifications to each of the scores presented, and that these modifications must be designed to increase their own interest in the physical aspect of the performance that they observed. Once each performance had been concluded, but prior to the beginning of the next, the performer would be asked to comment on their experience and understanding of the modifications given. The spect-actor/s would next be asked to explain the logic or instinct that had informed the modifications that they had provided.



It was notable that the modifications provided universally fell into only a handful of categories: the first and most obvious had to do with spatial expression and proportional dilation, shown by the spect-actors as a desire either to expand or to constrict elements of a performer's physicality. There was a tendency amongst the spect-actors to push the performers into positions of precarious balance and/or total imbalance. Performers were also often manipulated into contorted poses, not necessarily for the spacial relationship that they expressed, but for the way in which they mechanically complicated or practically disabled potential methods of movement. The pictures shown of (from top) actors E and A, each display a spatial distribution that incorporates the principles of opposition, reflection, dilation and precarious balance into their presentation, as well as possessing constricted form and mechanical complication. In E's body can be observed a vertical opposition, centred in her hips. This opposition has established a clear, vertical dilation also. The upper quadrant of E's body is displaying an isolated constriction, with all elements being pulled towards the base of her neck/top of her chest. E's balance and mechanical means of movement are complicated by being restricted to a single foot for movement and balance. Indeed, she is balanced only on her toes. A displays a clear horizontal opposition and reflection in her spatial distribution. The tilt of her head and the shape



described by her spine push her body's weight to favour a single side. Her body is constricted towards her knees from above and below, leading to a complication of balance and mechanical means of movement similar to E's in terms of how it has been achieved (by limiting point of contact with the floor, and manipulating the body's centre of gravity by a change in form), but with distinctly different dynamics at play around it. It was apparent from these exercises that positions which established, and effectively displayed, extra-daily tensions within the performer's musculature were sought after by those observing. These motivations for the modification of a performer's physical distribution and means/method of movement in space and time are tied together very clearly by a principle, identified in *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, that performative power can be established from the excessive expenditure of energy in the enactment of stage-tasks and theatrical behaviour/movement.

While daily behaviour is based on functionality, on economy of power, on the the relationship between the energy used and the result obtained, in the performer's extra-daily behaviour, each action, no matter how small, is based on waste, on excess.⁷⁰

Due to surprising efficiency on the part of the participants, it was necessary to discover an interesting method for the further diversification of each actor's gestural behaviour during development and presentation of their scores, on the spot. Several exercises that had been intended for subsequent sessions were incorporated into the night's training, with slight modification, to fit their new context. There are many exercises that are useful in establishing diverse physicality, exaggerating that which already exists, and for problematising physical operation. The exercises used most frequently during the Dynamic Conditioning investigations for the exaggeration and problematisation of physical behaviours are listed and described in 'Appendix VII, Games for Dynamic Composition: *Physical*

⁷⁰ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, eds., *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, 2nd edn. (USA and Canada: Centre for Performance Research/Routledge, 2006), 53.

Extension'. Within these early sessions the *Stop!*, *Inter-relation*, and *Animalise* exercises were put to use. It became obvious, during the presentation of these scenes and the actors' responses, that the scores that had been the most successful with the *Animalise* activity were those which had incorporated minimalistic, yet highly exaggerated (dilated, constricted or combinations of the two, operating in isolation), behavioural ticks, rather than detailed and logically elaborated scenic behaviour. This simplification made the performances easier to engage with on a purely aesthetic level, due to the greater extremes of physical expression that they incorporated. It was often also the case that the animals being represented were more successfully interpreted with accuracy by the spectators in these contextually simplified representations, whereas those displaying more complex patterns of behaviour were generally mistaken for human.

Prior to the conclusion of these training sessions the actors would spend 10 minutes on self-modification. Self-modification was a period of the training during which the actors were encouraged to work freely upon their scores – seeking to exercise those areas that had been specifically identified as weak, to build upon those identified as strong, and to experiment with areas of more general physical interest that they themselves had discovered. The actors were encouraged to push themselves to extremes as much as possible, to the edges of balance, into physical contortions that left them barely capable of maintaining their mobility. This exercise was a continuation of the daily exercises that they were also each encouraged to perform, which included: Three repetitions of their training score every day, with a specific, significant development in each repetition.

Moving On

These early investigative sessions were highly informative. Unfortunately, the next few were disrupted by various factors, that had a cumulative effect on progress. One such factor was the unsuccessful

auditioning of potential participants, discussed in the training journals included within the appendices. The shyness of one such potential participant was allowed, regrettably, to contribute to a slowing and a dulling of progress that, combined with subsequent sickness in other participants, put the research process behind schedule. The first Work Presentation was delayed by two weeks as a means of dealing with this unfortunate situation, as it was deemed inappropriate to defer research in favour of a performance, given the pre-rehearsal focus of the study.

After having dealt with participant and health issues however, the study was essentially back on track, though it was necessary to simplify the scope of investigation so as to allow sufficient time for the preparation and rehearsal of *The Best Thing!*, the dead-line of which was less mobile than the nights that the work presentations should occur on. Investigation and development of vocal performance was simplified to purely an investigation, without time for subsequent development, the exercises engaged with in this endeavour are listed under 'Appendix VII, Games For Dynamic Composition' under the sub-headings *Aural Composition* and *Aural Extension*. Group dynamics were similarly incorporated into subsequent training sessions where possible, however the physical dynamics of the singular actor-in-space would form the true focus for the remainder of this investigative phase. Specifically, the remaining training sessions, prior to Work Presentation 01 introduced the actors to Architectural Dynamics, aural composition and abstraction, the *Face Mask*, musical response, elements of inter-relation, and the further development of their score-work.

Work Presentation 01

Unfortunately not all of the actors were available for Work Presentation 01, B and E both had prior commitments. These two took part in the majority of developmental work prior to the Presentation itself, however the work shown was devised in such a way as to be capable of performance with or without any single one of the actors if necessary, due to

absence, injury or sickness. It was decided that this presentation should directly display the work that the participants were taking part in (abstract physical/vocal performance), rather than attempt to interpret this work into a scenic context, as such was deemed to be outside the scope of the process at that point. The actors would therefore engage in the live performance of physical/vocal scores, developed according to the rules that had been previously established within the training regime. This work would be brought into a performative aspect by the fact of the audience, performative simultaneity (the actors working in unity), and the presence of music to support, frame, and to inform the ensemble, and each individual, performance.

Initial development of their individual scores was begun by introducing the actors to music as an element to inform performance, during training sessions late in the training process. The music primarily used for this was a ten minute piece, composed specifically for this purpose by Sam Cameron, that consisted of ambient noise, semi-rhythmic progressions and improvisational glitches, the copy used was a digital recording, captured and produced by Cameron himself. The actors were initially exposed to this music during warm-up exercises as something to either respond *to* or *against*. After they had become familiar with its sound, style and structure they were returned to earlier work in the composition of a combined physical/vocal score. The actors were instructed to rapidly develop two scores, one of five lines and four turns, the other of three lines and two turns. They then chose their [subjectively defined] best five lines and four turns to develop further. These scores were developed through rounds of presentation and feedback, *Stop!*, and self-modification. The actors were again told to reduce the elements of their score, down to their [subjectively defined] most interesting three lines and two turns. These scores would also incorporate two face masks, with one moment of transition between them. The actors rehearsed their new versions, with a final additional exercise that involved the massive dilation of each element, in time rather than space,

such that their elements were measured in minutes rather than seconds, hugely slowing movement. It was felt that this pace would best display the physical control and precision that had been sought after in training exercises undertaken. It was acknowledged however, that fast speeds must be incorporated also, as this too had formed an aspect of the training. The actors' scores would be composed of two 1 minute elements, one 2 minute element, and two 3 minute elements, for a total of 10 minutes of performance. This timed choreography was rehearsed by repetition, in concert with the music. During rehearsals, a minute-to-minute clap was provided by the facilitator as a means for the actors to keep time. In such a manner the actors developed an innately timed recognition of the music, that informed their performance. During rehearsal it was found that there was no moment of genuine speed within their scores, the actors were told therefore to replace one of their one minute elements with an element in which they attempted to perform their entire score, four times through. The video of this presentation is available on Disc 1 of the DVDs provided, labelled 'Appendix XXII Work Presentation 1'.

The performers succeeded in maintaining a strongly felt presence and performative tension throughout the presentation. Their maintenance and decisive presentation of face-masks in particular was at times questionably managed, however where successfully employed and rigidly maintained, such as in F's performance, these were highly effective. Her transition from one mask to the next (achieved gradually over the course of three minutes, in an extended turn) was commented on by multiple audience members as having been particularly affective and psychologically surprising. There was a strong sense in the performance that several of the actors were lost within their own performance, lacking any real inter-relational sense. There *were* moments of inter-relation between actor and audience, however very little – if any – between actor and actor. The distance between actor and audience was a predictable, and in many respects desirable, manifestation of the type of work that had been engaged in by the actors so far. As well as a

focus on pre-expressive technique, this work targeted pre-*theatrical* mechanisms and *consciously* did not deal with the technique of 'acting', instead aiming towards performative universalities. The distance evident between performers, commented on by multiple audience members, was however, less desirable. It is likely that this was symptomatic of the areas that had been covered in less depth due to the troubled middle period of investigation.

The audience present were asked to provide feedback on the work that they had observed, framed by several distinct questions – these included: 'What did you see that you thought was interesting?', 'What did you see that you found alienating?', and 'Generally speaking, how did you feel about the performance witnessed?'. Audience members had been briefed to a minimal degree prior to the presentation about what to expect, however true explanation was reserved until after the performance. This allowed the audience members to view the performance from whatever aspect they were comfortable with when interacting with theatrical presentation, rather than pre-framing their view. It is interesting to note that, as a quirk of the compositional mechanisms employed, the actor who moved quickly first was interpreted by all audience members as being the main 'character', or the protagonist, of the performance. None could explain this sensibility except as a point of instinct. This can be related to the principle of isolation, identified during earlier training sessions and reflective of a performative principle identified with Eugenio Barba's *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, where an object that moves in dissonance with the normative patterns established by other objects around it, becomes a point of focus for a spectator. This isolation principle is a powerful tool for the establishment of intensity and focus in all of the Physical Dynamics that have been identified by this study. This strong identification may also have been accounted for by the dominant, centrally located, searching position that D adopted once she had slowed her movement, as it was found to be inclusive rather than exclusive, with its outwardly directed focus. On the other hand,

it was noticed that A's performance was primarily directed inwards, and could be interpreted as an act of 'shutting out' rather than 'letting in'. This was, in fact, identified as a feature that created interest, however as its impact was discussed it became clear that the interest that it created was one born from frustration and a desire (within the audience) for the behaviour to be modified. Perhaps, in the right context, this type of behaviour could be incorporated into the patterns of a character whose behaviour the audience is meant to question, in a piece of Brechtian Epic Theatre for example, however within *this* context it had a distracting and dissociative effect. It was suggested that if A had begun her performance in such an inwardly directed manner, but concluded it with – or allowed it for one moment to embrace – an inclusive gaze, then this would have established a far greater relationship between her and the audience. It was similarly noted that eye contact between the actors might have gone a long way in establishing a semblance of scenic unity (a semblance only, given the formal nature of this particular presentation). It was commented on as very exciting when A suddenly began to jump, as it suggested – for brief flashes – an inclusive possibility. It is important to note, that it is purely in the activity enacted within the eyes that this distinction between the performances was seated, and that the degree to which the audience desired to be let in was indicative of general success in the other aspects of physicality being displayed. The lesson here is that eye contact has a profound impact upon reception, and understanding, not only of narrative and power relationships (as is generally understood), but also of the nature of the character portrayed.

C's performance incorporated an interestingly serendipitous moment, in which her dialogue consisted of a whispered repetition of the word “Creepy”, whilst she slunk backwards, with weight lowered in her knees, simultaneously making a strange gesture with her hands. An audience member (who was most surprised to learn of its fortuitous, rather than active, composition) suggested that her physicality directly supported and reflected her dialogue during this element of her performance. This was, of

course, not a feature of conscious design, it was instead an element of physicality that had developed a life of its own based on the context in which it was placed. Whilst the physical and vocal scores presented were developed and refined initially in isolation from each other, it is highly likely that the subsequent synthesis of the two streams established a, subconsciously seated, mutual reflectivity. It is also likely that *Stop!* Modification, provided during development, contributed to this heightening of literal interpretation. Despite such likely developmental routes, the initial connection between voice and body was one seated in serendipitous discovery rather than conscious design.

Another audience member, noted that he became increasingly interested by behaviour that was repeated, without deviation. The longer it continued, without such deviation, the greater the anticipation became for the inevitable deviation to come. He also noted that he spent a significant amount of time attempting to identify rhythmical/musical patterns within the behaviours of the performers. This was true to a point where he had managed to identify a pattern in the behaviour of one actor, incorporated into the sound of their feet hitting the floor, that had not been *intentionally* devised by the actor herself. It was also noted that, despite the often minimal actions in which the actors were engaging, a level of frustration was felt by audience members at potentially missing aspects of one actor's performance while focusing on that of another. Arguably, this is a successful kind of frustration, as an audience that desires to see more is preferable to one that feels it has seen enough.

Two further audience members, also noted that the alienating elements of the performance – it's lack of narrative, the unfamiliar aesthetic style, abstraction of body, voice, sound and meaning – created, conversely, a great deal of interest in each of them. The first commented that she had spent much of the performance attempting to decipher meaning from the randomly generated phrases that the actors delivered, and that this action

created a kind of internal narrative for her as an audience member. The second too, had built up a narrative that involved strange creatures in an unfamiliar environment, he described their behaviour as discomfoting without being directly threatening. He mentioned that, similarly to others, he had spent much of the performance seeking patterns and behavioural ticks that he would then continue to look for. It is interesting to note that, due to the lack of shared physicality between elements in this particular presentation, the patterns and behavioural ticks identified by audience members were likely to have been those of the performers themselves rather than of the performance that they were [intentionally] presenting and had [actively] devised.

2.2 Development and Rehearsal of *The Best Thing!*

Character Development

Structure for Character Development in *The Best Thing!* was defined by the necessity for multiple actors to perform many characters, yet still be recognisably definable as the *same*. The idea of the Body-Mask was adopted as a means to create a uniform physicality for each character. These body-masks were developed initially by one actor, through the devising of an in-character physical score since such was already a familiar mechanism to the actors. This would subsequently be taught to the other actors playing the character by use of a tool for the incorporation of interpersonal relationships, employed during the conditioning process, named *Swap*. In this exercise the actors go through several specific routines⁷¹, intended to transmit the precise details of presenting a pre-developed score. In the Conditioning process, this exercise is used to facilitate the development of a shared physical language between actors, it has in fact been used for an identical purpose in this context, but with a performative

71 Appendix VII, Games for Dynamic Composition: *Inter-relation*.

goal rather than developmental. Initially, the physicality for Headmaster and Miss Zazel had been developed by D, however it was at this point that her personal circumstances became compromised and she was forced to pull out of the production. After redefining the cast list, the order of development was as follows: *Brian* by B, *Carlotta* by A, C and E working as a group, *Class* by C, *God* by E, *J* by F, *Killtronia* by A, *Molly* by B, *Ms Zazel* by E, *Sam* by F, *Ted (Jane)* by A, and *Troy* by B.

The character scores each consisted of four lines and three turns. A variation on the *Animalise* exercise was incorporated to aid in developing character specific mannerisms. This variance was based on supposed⁷² daily behaviours for the characters being developed, rather than animal behaviours. In this exercise a singular, stationary posture was developed for each character. An expressively contorted face was developed to compliment this. The actors were required to explain why they had contorted their faces in specific manners and where in their faces they experienced tension or looseness. The actors now put their face-mask and body-mask together to establish a total-mask. This posture was defined as the 'neutral' position for each character. Each character's physicality was further diversified by an extension into four different, basic emotions/behaviours. These were happy, sad, sneaky, angry. Each was required to be based upon the neutral total-mask, but to be defined by a distinct and clear differentiation that communicated the desired intent. Each character was now in possession of five distinct total-masks. These masks were applied to the actor's scores, which consisted of a total of seven elements. The active emotions were applied to four elements of the score as postures to inform manner of movement, and the neutral mask was applied to three elements of each character's score. The actors rehearsed this choreography for as much time as was necessary for them to feel confident in its performance. Generally these scores were also treated to *Stop!* modification and two rounds of feedback, prior to finalisation.

⁷² *Magic if.*

By the conclusion of these exercises, a routine of movement, incorporating specific behavioural mannerisms, mechanisms, and rules of mechanical operation for each character had been developed. This was achieved with great efficiency due to the level of familiarity that the actors had gained with the mechanisms being engaged with. One example of a behavioural mechanism discovered in this process, would be the incorporation of heightened posture, in the form of heels being divorced from the ground, during moments in which the character Brian became emotionally unhinged (in any extreme). This compositional decision was made in response to behaviour displayed in the 'sad' and 'angry' elements of his character score.

The actors were encouraged to engage in daily, private drills for each of the character-scores that they would need to use during performance and rehearsal, that included the performance of each of their scores in succession, without rest. This exercise was intended to make the mannerisms implicit within each system of movement instinctive rather than contrived, such that the actors could become comfortable, not simply with wearing the postures as static masks, but treating them as active and mobile, dynamic masks. This *active* intent is the reason for developing the masks as dynamic scores rather than as static images. These masks would inform character behaviour throughout the development, rehearsal and performance process, and created a point of reference between each of the actors playing them. In the few cases where characters were only played by one actor, the actors were allowed a greater degree of freedom, although this tended towards an intensification of abstraction rather than an increased naturalism. A notable exception to this was the manner in which *Man* – and the first scene as a whole – was staged. This scene had been, for the most part, left uncut. As a result, it was one of the longest scenes in the play and was staged in a largely naturalistic manner, with only subtle behavioural dilation. As the scene progressed however, the abstraction increased. This scene was designed to ease the audience into the play's eventual *total*

abstraction by slowly mounting the layers of absurdity that the audience were asked to accept.

Blocking & Rehearsal

Immediately prior to the character development discussed above, the play was given a second reading in its re-cut form. A further, third reading, followed character development. This third reading was a deviation from the initial plan, important however, due to the substantial re-writes necessitated by the loss of an actor. The play, in its new form, was briefly discussed by the cast and new relationships were identified, such as *Ms Zazel's* modified behaviour (in relation to the original *Miss Zazel*) towards her students. *Ms Zazel* was a noticeably more aggressive and threatening character than the previously comedic and, at times, pathetic *Miss Zazel*. Once this conversation had found a natural conclusion, the first blocking session for *The Best Thing!* was commenced. Scene 2 of the play, set in the office and staged between Brian and Carlotta, formed the focus of the remainder of the rehearsal. It was the intention to hold a second work presentation, this time showing work from blocking, on the 11th of July at 8pm. This would, again, be a presentation with a focus on the reception of feedback subsequent to performance, and would include William Farrimond (supervisor for this thesis), Gaye Poole (a lecturer in the University of Waikato theatre department), and Christopher Butler (the play's author), amongst others, in the audience. This occasion was taken also as an opportunity to discuss decisions already made, and potential directions for the future with the play's original author, Butler.

The overall structure of the rehearsal process was divided into several distinct phases. The initial phase was of pure blocking, during which time a minimum of one hour was spent in the devising of physical and vocal presentation and choreography for each scene and/or distinct moment within the play (the multiple extended periods of pure physicality within the play tended to have entire rehearsals devoted to their devising,

complimentary to the scenes that they existed within). For particularly complicated scenes up to 3 hours in total were allowed. Work Presentation 02 was set to occur at approximately the middle of this stage of development, so that any information learnt from this exercise could be applied in subsequent blocking and development. Once this initial formative stage had been completed, what was termed a 'stumble-through' was attempted – where all that currently existed was performed in order, irrespective of sense. This exercise is particularly effective for the highlighting of areas of weakness and technical deficiency. Unfortunately, due to the play's length prior to its final, highly cut, form, this first attempt at a performance of the narrative's full scope was unable to be completed during the time available (three hours). The script was refined prior to the rehearsal that followed, a run of the play staged primarily as an introduction for the musicians. Fortunately this second attempt was able to be completed, though it did still run over-time slightly. In response to this the play had all remaining material, that could be deemed – even vaguely – as 'extraneous', excised, this process is discussed in 'Appendix I, Dramaturgical Analysis of *The Best Thing!: Textual Deconstruction*'.

It was briefly considered that a plot-line (the 'love' story between God and Sam) be removed from the script entirely, however this idea was dismissed by the author as having too heavy an impact upon the script's narrative integrity. Subsequent rehearsals would follow a basic pattern of six hours of developmental work to every three hours of run-through. Developmental work was focused primarily on the performance of each actor and the ensemble as a whole, as well as the precise refinement and scoring of physical and vocal presentation/characterisation. On the other hand, focus during run-throughs of the entire play was given to technical aspects of production, such as the relationship between the performance and the music, the management of scenic/character transitions and of costume changes. Ultimately, the necessity for actors to regularly change costumes *as well* as change the scenery, was one of the largest contributions to the resulting performance's length. As much as possible the impact of this was

minimised, however the reality of this particular performance was that there had been no stage crew available and no costume manager to aid in the quick-changing of costume either. As a result of this situation, set changes took place over a greater amount of time than could be considered ideal.

During this developmental process several notable discoveries and changes were made to individual characters and to the play itself, which will be discussed here. Leading up to Work Presentation 2 one question in particular had become increasingly prominent – was it truly necessary for Ted to be male? It was the feeling of the director that the content of the script did not create any necessity for Ted's character to be male, and that little – if any – narrative contradiction would be created by re-gendering. It had also been noticed in rehearsal that when A was allowed to present an exaggeratedly feminine character, her performative presence was immediately intensified, this was accompanied by a recognisably dynamised physicality. It was necessary, as a matter of respect, to present this question to the author prior to any final decision being made on the issue. It seemed clear that Work Presentation 2 should be the natural forum in which to ask this question, given Butler's anticipated attendance at the event. Unfortunately the actor playing Ted was unavailable during the work presentation and, as Butler lives in Wellington, Butler would not be available for discussion on any other occasion prior to the play's staging. Another means of presenting the question to him was necessary. To this effect, prior to the conclusion of each session of blocking or development, videos were shot of the current state of the scene, or moment, that had been rehearsed. These videos served multiple purposes, functioning as documents for retrospective review by the Director, an efficient means for the documentation and formalising of blocking notes, and also an effective means for the sharing of ideas between director and author.

Selected videos were shared with the author via a web-service named Dropbox that allows the direct sharing of specific files between users. Butler was able to review this footage himself and provide feedback if he so

desired. Multiple films of Ted's scenes had been shot by this point in the process (Work Presentation 2) and these were reviewed in series by the author and director together, including alternate portrayals of the same scenes. In some of these A had been allowed to portray Ted as a woman, rather than attempting a forced masculinity in her performance. It was agreed by the director and author that these versions of the scenes were by far the stronger, it was also agreed that the re-gendering of Ted as a female would have no negative implications within the play's narrative or thematic life⁷³. 'Ted' was immediately replaced in the script by 'Jane'. This had a profound impact on A's performance, allowing a far greater sense of ownership between her and the character that she played.

E (like A and F) played [three] characters that were unique to her. These characters were God, Ms Zazel and the CEO. She also played Killtronia, a masked character that she shared with B and A. Unlike A (who also played Class 2, Molly and Carlotta), E did not play any shared characters (excepting Killtronia, whose face was fully obscured). This was not originally intended, as E had initially also been cast as Carlotta (and had blocked a scene as the character already), however it was decided that her characters, God in particular, should be highlighted as focuses of power – instantly recognisable – due to their noticeably archetypal presence within the script. It appeared that this effect could be established most profoundly by limiting her performance to these singular characters, within a cast of kaleidoscopic character changes. This creates a strange link between the characters, and frames them as outsiders to the narrative presented, creating a stronger level of connection and familiarity between the character and the audience. As well as this, it is a formal enactment of the theatrical principle of isolation. The relationship established here allows the characters to talk and interact directly with the audience, a feature that was utilised actively as an element of performance for both God and Ms Zazel. It was decided that

73 Ted has now been permanently supplanted in the script by Jane. Butler ultimately found this feminine character to possess far greater inherent interest than the original masculine version.

E should play CEO primarily because she was the performer who had the least work to be doing at the point of the play in which s/he appears. Despite this grounding in technical necessity, it was also viewed to be thematically appropriate to identify the CEO figure with the semi-magical characters of Ms Zazel and God. The psychology apparent in E's portrayal of God was significantly simplified in comparison to its original form. This was a conscious decision, tied to the idea that God not only *shouldn't* grow as a character but *can't*. During rehearsal it became increasingly clear that the character's developmental arch, its psychological growth, simply wasn't believable. The idea was fixed upon that God is *not* a transformative entity in itself, but instead one that enacts external transformation. This new understanding of God's behaviour allowed previously 'serious' lines to be delivered as though light-hearted and comedic, and apparently silly or simplistic lines to be filled with dark meaning. The relationship of *transformer* to *transformed* allowed a clearer dramatic distinction to be drawn between God and the Mortal characters, and established a Naturalistic justification for God's bizarre mood-swings. This could also be viewed as a meta-theatrical device, given this study's previously stated focus on theatre as an occasion for the enactment of live transformative events.

It became increasingly apparent as blocking progressed, and the length of each of the scenes was tallied up that the play was far too long. In its initially devised form it added up to approximately three hours and forty five minutes. As such, an important agenda during development was the identification and elimination of extraneous material. Such material included two extended physical set-pieces, an entire scene, and the condensing of several other scenes together. The final scene of the play was excised prior to rehearsal, however several of the office scenes were condensed into one over the course of blocking, and one of Jane's cult speeches was moved from its original location to the middle of the final office scene, acting as a 'dream' sequence.

This created an opportunity for the audience to enjoy a narrative relief from the psychologically disturbing relationship that Brian and Carlotta share. It was also thought appropriate that this relief should be provided by something as innately cruel as Jane's propaganda. The game being played here is with the audience and exists in the paradoxical identification of the 'cruel' with a positive emotion, such as 'relief'. Such cult-like mind-games link the play's presentational style with its thematic content. In essence, the game demands of the audience that they identify their preference from a range of universally disturbing choices. It was believed that by aligning presentational form and structure with thematic content in this way, that the play's ideas could be most effectively expressed. For this reason, the audience were themselves encouraged to 'drink the Kool Aide'⁷⁴ by Ms Zazel prior to intermission, where Kool Aide, hot dogs and popcorn were made available to the audience.

Work Presentation 2

Unfortunately, as with the previous work presentation, not all of the performers involved in the play were available for the event. Which actors were available (taken in concert with which scenes had so far been blocked) was, as a result, the primary determining factor for the material that would be presented. This would take the form of an [approximately] 20 minute performance, demonstrating scenic work that had thus far been engaged in. The scenes would be presented out-of-order, so that scenic continuity did not form the focus of audience feedback following performance. This decision was made as it was felt that continuity was an issue better left for a later stage of rehearsal, when the performance existed (at least mostly) as an entire piece. Bearing this in mind, it was requested that the audience provide feedback in terms of the technical aspects of the actors' performance(s), rather than in terms of the transmission and understanding of narrative, as it is implicit in presenting a fragment of a greater narrative that the greater narrative will lack the context in which to properly express

⁷⁴ Genuine Kool Aide was used for this.

itself. It was also stressed to the audience that the work they were about to witness had been only minimally rehearsed, and should therefore be treated as 'raw' material, rather than a refined, or complete, presentation.

Several scenes in their entirety, as well as fragmentary elements, were included. These pieces were drawn from scenes that had been blocked using the actors C, E and F. The incorporated scenes were presented in the following order: Scene 03, a fragment of Scene 02, parts of Scene 05, a very small fragment of Scene 10 (presented in concert with the very beginning of Scene 07), and the final scene in the version that was staged (Scene 17) – God's apology to Sam⁷⁵. The performance itself was directly reflective of the point of development that the scenes were at, this meant that some elements demonstrated a significant degree of polish, whereas others were apparently under-developed. Similarly the costumes were representative at best, and the scenic design consisted of purely functional elements, with little thought yet given to aesthetic design. Again, this was a conscious decision as the intention was for feedback to be focused on individual and ensemble performance, rather than issues of style and design. An important deviation made subsequent to this presentation was the re-devising of God's dialogue at the end of the play (in which it apologises to Sam). In the Work Presentation, this dialogue was delivered with a sincerity that lacked dramatic power. Quite apart from this theatrical emptiness, that sense of a forced conclusion, it made little sense when placed in contrast with God's previous behaviour throughout the performance. Ted/Jane's big reveal of the cult hoax, and God's subsequent elimination of the character did not seem to adequately explain – due to the complete separation between the two narrative strands – God's sudden change of attitude. It was however, written with a sense of sincerity in the original text, and initial staging was guided by this. Ultimately this portrayal of God continued to

75 Scenes numbered by order in original text, as elaborated in the Dramaturgical Study, rather than as represented in the final Performance Text.

prove problematic, and was modified. Feedback received during the second Work Presentation contributed significantly to this decision.

There was a game that was achieved with particular effectiveness during this presentation. It emerged spontaneously during blocking exercises and was eventually incorporated, as a choreographic mechanism, into the performance. This game involved Carlotta aiming to always keep an element of furniture between her and Brian. At moments of particular intensity, the stakes in the game would be magnified and Brian would attempt to rapidly remove obstacles between himself and Carlotta. This would of course be reflected in Carlotta by the rapid attempt to place objects between herself and Brian. This game had been thoroughly rehearsed in preparation for the presentation and was delivered with a truly effective level of precision, energy and timing. It was of course, never quite as alive again after this event, which can be taken as a perfect example of the dangers inherent in polishing an element of performance too early in the process. This is not to say that its performance within the eventually staged play was unsatisfactory, simply that its enactment within this early context had a greater sense of immediacy to it, than the more rehearsed version that the process ended with.

It was indicated to the audience subsequent to the presentation's conclusion that, due to the absence of two of the play's cast, scenic changes took more time than they ideally would and that such should be minimised by a full cast. In truth, this would continue to be an issue for the play even onto the stage, as the lack of stage crew acted in concert with the complexity of the actors' more directly performative work to levy a heavy tax on time during scenic transitions. It was noted by multiple spectators that the actors had demonstrated confidence and strength in their personal physicality. Moments of simultaneity, where two characters would perform opposing/reflective activities, were commented on as having been particularly interesting. One of the spectators found that her interest had significantly waned during the conversation between God and Sam over

cake. Her explanation for this related her apathy to the scene's distinct lack of physical action, in comparison to the other scenes within the performance, combined with a constricted vocal range that failed to make complete use of expressive possibilities. It was suggested also that deeper work be engaged in around Carlotta's high-heels, as the actor who walked in them had yet to develop confidence in her performance of the action (walking in high-heels). A useful suggestion was the incorporation of the sound from the heels as a theatrical device – indicative of her character.

The most useful comments given during feedback following this demonstration were universally framed around the overall weakness of vocal delivery, when placed in contrast to physical delivery. It was commented that much of the aural content was on a uniform level, with little experimentation in range and tone, to add texture and depth to its reception. Several spectators found it difficult to hear pieces of important dialogue. As well as this, in contrast to its physical context, the vocal delivery was given little abstraction from daily levels. It was noted also that there was a general dropping off in the delivery of lines, where they would be initiated with performative intensity, but this energy would wane as the lines reached their conclusion. An audience member suggested that the actors engage in technical exercises designed to explore volume, pitch and tone, such that their range of expression be developed and that their vocal expression be delivered with strength – even during moments of quietness and intimacy. In response to this feedback, an exercise⁷⁶ learnt from Eugenio Barba's practice with Odin Teatret was adopted into the warm-up exercises of subsequent rehearsals. This exercise, 'Catch the Hand', involves one actor moving their hand in space, in relationship to the other actor. The other actor meanwhile uses vocal modulation as a tool to 'contain' the hand, as it is moved through space and changed in form. This modulation is achieved subjectively, rather than by any specifically defined rules.

76 Artfilms 07, *Odin Teatret – Vocal Training Screener*, uploaded 11 June 2009
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvdepoSpjIQ>> [accessed August 10 2012].

2.3 Performance & Reception of *The Best Thing!*

In its staged form, *The Best Thing!* ran for approximately two hours, plus a fifteen minute intermission. This was half an hour longer than had been considered ideal, however it was decided that no more of the play could be cut without removing entire narrative elements, something that Butler had specifically requested not be done. Scenic transitions had also remained problematically lengthy. There was some effort made to theatricalise the changing of scenery, with the incorporation of black masks on actors performing set changes and repeated use of stage boxes in various formations from scene to scene. This practice sought to highlight the architectural theatricality discussed earlier. The actors incorporated a stylised manner of movement into their performance during these transitions also.

Unfortunately, costumes – despite an actively simplistic and emblematic style – took far longer to change than they should have done for the facilitation of rapid character transition. Perhaps the costumes were slightly too detailed, however detail elements such as God's suspenders and tie were deemed necessary additions for the establishment of a complete aesthetic, and would have been manageable had non-actor back-stage assistance been available. This lack of assistance meant that, where possible, the actors would help each other, but for several scenes it was necessary for *all* of the actors to be getting changed. In these situations, the costume change would be inevitably drawn out. A further issue was that scenic transformations were not lit brightly enough in the actual performances for the audience to be certain that they were intended to see the behaviour that the scenic-changers were engaging in (which they were). Unfortunately our lighting operator had not been available for a technical run or cue-to-cue prior to staging (due to an unknown emergency on the night that it was set to be held on), and the lighting was therefore largely improvised from night to night. Such issues with lighting transitions and states that felt mistimed, or incomplete, were the inevitable result of this,

however it is also true that the lighting was highly successful in supporting the majority of performance. Had costume changes and set changes been able to be operated simultaneously, with more consistency, then these issues would all have been minimised. However the small size of the cast, in combination with the number of characters in the play, and the other factors mentioned, meant that most actors were required for most scenes and could not therefore manage all of the changes in simultaneity with performance or costume change.

Where this was managed well, it was highly effective; where it wasn't, it was highly obvious. All importantly, the first transitions in the play were managed with efficiency. The transition between scene 1 and 2 needed no architectural set-up as scene 2's set items had been pre-set prior to the play's beginning, much of scene 1's furniture is removed by characters during the scene, and what was left could be removed rapidly or – if necessary – during the next scene. The only element that established any degree of delay was the necessity for Sargent, the actor playing Man, and [at this point] Brian, to change from one blazer to another. Similarly, the transition between scene 2 and 3, and scene 3's internal transition, from interior space to exterior space were efficiently managed, in simultaneity with performance. Scene 3's transitions were manageable largely due to the limited number of actors who were engaged in performance at the time, this meant that transitions could be successfully managed during active performance. Such simultaneity was especially possible due to the split-traverse stage design, consisting of two, clearly distinct 'halves' of the stage.

From scene 4 onwards, the script increasingly begins to incorporate full (or large) ensemble scenes into the narrative, and with this increase of bodies-on-stage, scenic transitions became increasingly unmanageable. As well as this, the scenic design for the school scene – though minimalistic – involved a degree of fiddling in order to set properly, due to the high level of specificity with which each block needed to be placed, in order that the tightly choreographed performances in this scene be navigable.

Unsurprisingly, the transition between scenes 3 and 4 was the first in the performance to be genuinely problematic. For many in the audience this may only retrospectively have been too long, when observed in concert with other similar, [overly-]extended transitions in the performance; at this early point in the play though, the length of this transition may have been excused as a narrative function – allowing the audience a contemplative moment.

The first scene established several important narrative and thematic frames. These include introducing the character of Jane, as well as establishing her near demonic charisma. The play's first gun death occurs in this scene, and the imagistic game around this action was initiated. An unsettling, carnivalesque tune, based on combinations of almost-familiar guitar riffs taken from assorted 90s pop tunes (played live, by the in-performance band 'Goddess') welcomed the spectators into the New Place Theatre as they found their seats. Man, was seated already on his chair, with a tumbler of whisky and a crossword puzzle, in his slippers. This moment had an approximately 15 minute duration (on two nights this was extended to 20 minutes, to allow for stragglers), while audience members were welcomed in from 7.15pm onwards with the play set to begin at 7.30pm. During this time, the actor playing Man (F) genuinely *was* doing crossword puzzles, her concentration on this activity established a point of theatricality and a formalisation of the fictive atmosphere that the spectators were entering into, without being insistent or overtly demonstrative.

Each of the actors began their performance with strength and clarity. F's time spent in front of the audience, doing her crossword puzzle as the audience entered the theatre, allowed her to settle into her role by taking part in a sustained, *passive* performance activity. 'Man', alone amongst the characters without a name, had not had a character score developed for the performance. As much as possible, it was attempted to have Man perceived by the audience as being a worthless sack, filled with nothing but wind; the tragedy of his death was to be absolutely marginalised, to the point of

treating it as dramatically trivial⁷⁷. It was felt that this scene would read most profoundly if Man was presented in a totally average – and even theatrically imprecise – manner, in comparison to Jane's more directly stylised, and strongly measured, presentation. Indeed, all characters in the play were presented with a greater degree of stylisation than Man. It wasn't intended for the audience to like Man, but they weren't meant to hate him either. The intention was for him to be perceived as simply pathetic, irrelevant, and uninteresting. His plainness would even more profoundly highlight Jane's terrifying charisma, it also *theatrically* (not morally) justifies his death. This is especially true for the generations who have grown up, used to the characteristically replaceable personalities of modern, episodic entertainment – primarily the television; if a character is uninteresting to the audience, then the simplest action is often to kill it off. With its clear dramaturgical relationship to the television format, this closeness of narrative logic was interpreted as an implicit directive within the text. F was instructed specifically to emphasise this aspect of Man's behaviour, and did so effectively. This success read clearly in the reactions of the audience each night, immediately following his suicide, when several moments of scenic comedy were incorporated into Jane's exit-blocking and Carlotta's response to Man's death. The audience felt quite comfortable chuckling, giggling and outright laughing at these consciously silly jokes, despite Man's corpse being sprawled immediately in front of them – in some cases within arm's reach. These little moments of comedy included Jane's looting of Man's corpse on her departure (the comedy here is found in Jane's evident hypocrisy, when she takes his wedding ring and empties his wallet on her way out, after having decried the value of money, cheques and credit cards throughout the scene). This joke was extended further when she decided to also take the whisky, which she had been helping herself to throughout the scene, and then further when she decides to take the other bottle as well, and again *further* when she decides to also take Man's shot

77 Some small degree of this tragedy was expressed by Molly's confused and disturbed reaction to her father's suicide, this was however nullified by the scenic comedy engaged in.

glasses. Jane's final moment, on her way out of the first scene, is to bump into Molly (Man's daughter), whom she treats to a smirk.

The idea of looting the dead as being a point of comedy is finally extended still further by Carlotta's reaction to the discovery of her dead husband, initially expressing a half-hearted kind of horror, but composing herself with little difficulty and offering Molly, at best, the bare minimum of comfort before looking around the room for anything of value that she can take with her. Ultimately, given that Jane had taken all of the money and whisky, Carlotta settled on the furniture that the whisky had previously sat on⁷⁸ and carried it out the door with her.

The tragedy implicit in death is consistently undermined by comedy throughout the play. This treatment aids the play's shockingly abrasive conclusion to resonate more profoundly, as a smear of Jane's blood and illegible symbols in chalk are all that is left as the audience exit the theatre, to remind them of what they have witnessed. This effect was highlighted by a stylistic affectation that was adopted as a result of technical discoveries during the rehearsal process, regarding the practicality of the use of fake blood, and subsequently incorporated as a thematic element, that places the play's first three deaths in relationship with each other through an inherently symbolic/abstract treatment, whilst establishing its final death (Jane) as clearly distinct through its Naturalistic treatment. Of the four deaths that occur during the play, three are gun deaths, with Class2's death being the only exception (although Ms Zazel's is from a *laser* gun). Due to the nature of each actor's performance in this play (playing multiple characters throughout, and therefore being consistently active), it was not considered efficient to use a liquid to represent 'blood' for these first three deaths, as it would result in F and/or E having to wear a sticky costume for the rest of the show. Due to the actors sharing emblematic costume elements, this

78 This particular element of blocking was introduced during rehearsal as a means to increase the efficiency of the transition between the first and second scenes. It was felt however, to be a particularly successful character behaviour, and was therefore adopted as more than simply a technical necessity.

would also not be limited only to F and E, but spread from shared costume to shared costume. As a practical measure, it was instead decided to use an overt theatrical device – a red silk scarf – to indicate blood and 'death', in the death scenes for which it was intended for the audience to react with humour or acceptance. This simple device seemed perfectly adequate for a minimalistic/abstract presentation of the 'fact of death', without necessitating the 'gore of death', and did not feel jarring within the play's style as a whole, due to the increasingly abstract aesthetic that the performance adopted.



On the other hand, Jane's death was intended to have an entirely different kind of impact. It was desired that in this moment, the audience's horror be compounded. Whether or not Jane is evil, and the script certainly

does present her as such, she is great, and she is powerful – her suicide is shocking, and by definition *tragic*. The desire was to push the spectators to reflect on those elements of the performance that [ethically] *should* have been perceived as shocking, but due to the context in which they were delivered, were perceived as acceptable, and at times even comedic. The audience, in this moment, are confronted by the reality that, during this play, they have laughed in the face of three previous deaths, and multiple horrific acts.

This was intended to be a formal realisation of the play's thematic interest in indoctrination and culpability. As well as these considerations, it was a given factor that the actor playing the part (A) would not have to wear any *other* costumes for the moments of performance that followed her death (in fact her corpse being dragged off by black-masked figures was the play's concluding image), this minimised the amount of cleaning that would need to be done between performances if fake blood *were* to be used.

Given these circumstances and thematic directives, the decision was made to incorporate a fake blood substance into Jane's death. This blood was created from a mixture of golden syrup, water, and red and blue food colouring. It was contained within plastic, zip-lock bags (three of them, to maximise the quantity of blood) that were taped, and sewn to the inside of Jane's jacket, under her arm-pit, between her torso and arm. As Jane fell from the bullet, the actress would angle her body in such a way that the bags would burst under pressure when she hit the ground, aided in this by having already been marginally pierced when the bags were sewn in (during the intermission). This process was something that had not been experimented with as much as might have been ideal and so the exact results each night were somewhat unpredictable, and potentially surprising. On one night in particular, the effect wasn't truly noticed *until* the black figures propped up Jane's body to drag her off stage, at which point the blood flooded out of the bags in streams, making an audible “splat”, followed by loud “drips”, “drips” and “dribbles” that seemed to echo through the space. This effect

lead to several of the audience members gasping with genuine, uninhibited shock. On another night the blood pooled out massively, but only on one side of A's body. The result of this was that the audience seated on one side gasped, whilst those seated on the other were not fully conscious of what was to come until Jane's corpse was dragged out of the space. These audience members were however, held in an obvious anticipatory suspense, developed in response to those members of the audience on the other side of the stage who could be seen reacting. On each of the three nights that the play was performed, many in the audience went immediately to the trail of blood left on the ground and stand around it, looking at it, and each other and initiating discussion about what they had just been witness to. At times this discussion was focused on the confusing nature of the play's abstract presentation, however more often than not, it consisted of audience members actively *discussing out* the ideas that the play had brought forth for them. This was a satisfying thing to observe as, if there was one overarching goal, extraneous to the scope of this study, in the manner by which this play was staged, it was in the aim to cause the members of the audience to think. Not in any specific way, or even necessarily about specific things, but simply to engage in the act and exercise of thought.

The performance was consciously crafted in such a way that it would grow into its abstraction, rather than racing to the full extreme immediately. The symbolic content of the performance was staged in terms of frames. An example of this is the whisky that Jane drank throughout the first scene and took with her on her exit. It's consumption punctuates the audience's introduction to Jane at the play's beginning, and is again introduced in the moments that lead up to Jane's suicide, at the play's conclusion. Jane does not at this point, explicitly, know that she will die, or in fact have any intention of killing herself. However, her cult has crumbled and she is left with nothing but the whisky that she stole at the start of the play, some fruit bursts, pamphlets and a gun. The end seems inevitable, and needs only the directive of God's will. The aesthetic manner of presentation for blood,

discussed earlier represents a reversal of this relationship, wherein the play's manner of presentation in fact becomes *more* naturalistic as it progresses. Many copies of the programme were handed to audience members as they entered, containing pamphlets of propaganda, taken from text in the script [original] around Jane's cult and the U-Spend corporation. This established a narrative context, and gave the audience a means of engaging in the play's fiction, other than watching F perform 'Man doing a crossword', while they waited for the audience to finish entering and for the play to begin. These were not put in all programmes, as it was hoped that this would spark an element of surprise in audience members and that they would be prompted to share with one another – thus already engaging in the act of sharing Jane's cultic propaganda, and becoming [fictively] complicit within her campaign. It was also hoped that this would establish an element of recognition between the audience and Jane, once she had begun to speak more forcefully about her ideas and her cult.

It is likely that make-up design⁷⁹ was the first indication for many in the audience of the play's abstract nature. The make-up was highly stylised, incorporating thick, 'Ivory' coloured foundation and powder, exaggerated eyebrows (drawn on approximately two centimetres above



their true eyebrows) created with thick eye-liner and exaggerated by a frame of vibrant, blue and white eye-shadows (cream variety). The actors' lips were powdered a darker blue, and their cheekbones and eye-sockets were

79 Appendix XIV

strongly emphasised. This aesthetic was developed from a synthesis of the expressionist style seen in such films as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, with the cleaner and more surreal make-up styles of Robert Wilson's performers – particularly in *The Black Rider: the casting of the magic bullets*, written by William S. Burroughs. Whilst wearing this make-up, the actors were in clear masks, even when expressionless, and could never genuinely represent themselves, or even really *people* in any Naturalistic sense. This distancing effect confirms the characters as archetypal representations, intended therefore for interpretation and consideration of thematic, rather than narrative, values.

In Scene 2, set within Carlotta and Brian's office, more directly abstracted movement was introduced into performance. This scene also introduced the scenic device of chalk, applied, in ever-increasing quantities, to the set as the play progresses. Scene 2 was the first occasion in which the actor playing a character was changed during the performance, with A replacing C. Approximately half-way through the scene Carlotta (played by C) leaves the stage to get coffee – as she deems that provided by Brian to be inadequate. When she returned later in the scene with fresh coffee, she was played instead by A. The two actors managed to align their physicalities to such a complete degree that, in discussion with audience members after the performances, it became clear that many spectators had not actually been conscious of the fact that a change had occurred on this particular occasion, believing the first character swap to have been later on in the play, during Scene 4, when the change was presented in an overtly theatrical manner, on-stage.

It is still unclear whether this lack of recognition had a positive or negative impact upon the performance, as those who had noticed the change had expressed taking a great deal of enjoyment from the subtlety with which it was executed, whereas those who didn't notice were arguably not impacted upon by its fact at all. However, what can certainly be identified in this is a clear indication of the success with which each of the actors had

managed to internalise the definitive minutiae that informed external physicality, and vocal mannerism also.

In the performance, chalk replaced the script's over-head projector as a scenic device, linking together the narrative threads of the office, the school, and God. This decision was made for chalk's tactile value as a theatrical instrument, it's transient – and therefore transformative – nature, and the unnecessary complication that using a device which requires cable-supplied power entails when incorporated into live staging.

Over the course of the performance the stage itself would be covered in chalk, both readable designs and clouds of trampled-in dust. The actors too would pick up this dust, and their costumes would be marked by it, imprinting them with tangible evidence of the performance. This transformative aspect was thought to be an attractive formal metaphor for the theatre being engaged in. As well as this, chalk was identified as a symbol that reminded actors (and, hopefully, by extension, the audience also) of childhood, and their early years of school, when their teachers would have them perform abstract activities (such as calling 'hands on heads' to settle a group of noisy children) as a means of enacting control, through indirect behavioural triggers. This association is



heightened further still by the incorporation of instruments, such as a cheap, toy xylophone and maracas, into the play's aural composition that further indicate this specific, early-childhood association. Chalk is introduced first by Brian, in the Office scene discussed. It is interacted with and attributed to God by Gary and Sam in the scene that follows. Eventually, it is used in a manner that is directly recognisable in Scene 4 (the first part of the 'School' narrative), externally confirming the associations that the spectators should ideally have been producing internally already.

The Best Thing! takes an opportunity at this point to poke fun at some of the stranger practices incorporated into child education by producing a series of exercises that make no logical sense in connection to each other. This mental abstraction was emphasised physically in performance by the actors performing genuinely abstract physical behaviour when setting-to these tasks, rather than behaviour that was defined by the normal manner of enacting the goals identified, or even necessarily enacting the identified goal at all.

Initially this was established by a minimally abstract performance, presented in association with the school's rules and code of conduct. Whilst this *does* represent an abstraction, it is one that can be explained naturally, as it is a common memory exercise in childhood education to connect vocally expressed ideas with wrote physical behaviours that are repeated to a point where a child should be capable of repeating them from instinct rather than from thought. An on-stage character swap occurred during this piece that was intended to emphasise its logically dissonant construction. This abstraction was taken slightly further in the delivery of the alphabet that followed, which was provided with accompanying body positions that *did not* spatially reflect the letters that they were attached to. Finally, the performance was allowed to become fully abstract when the students began their lesson on gene-splicing, staged as an extended piece of abstract physical performance, something like a dance.



On top of this physical presentation, the vocal performance given by E as Ms Zazel was abstracted to the utmost. The meanings of the words that she delivered were subsumed in the aesthetic impact that they effected. Thus, the 'purpose' of the exercise was also ignored in favour of its means of presentation. E's delivery during this sequence was established in a pattern that began obtusely slowly, and then all of a sudden transformed into an extremely high-pitched and rapid vomit of words. The scene ended with, perhaps, the most absurd moment in the play up to this point; Ms Zazel punishes Molly for being concerned by the death of one of her fellow pupils during the gene-splicing dance. Ms Zazel views the death more as an imposition, an inconvenience, and asserts that it is due to the student not having followed the instructions that she is now dead. This idea is even more absurd, given the manner in which the exercise is presented, as a dance, that has been both presented and composed entirely in the abstract. The student's body falls in the same place Ms Zazel's will eventually fall when she dies and is dragged off by the remaining students in the same way that Ms Zazel's will be dragged off by scene-changers. This small detail creates a scenic unity between the two events, and serves to highlight the

natural justice that allows the audience to accept her death without feeling immediately disturbed by this very acceptance.

Physical presentation during performance was generally highly successful. In particular E managed a strong portrayal for both God and Ms Zazel, that maintained a clear differentiation between the two in her physical mannerism and vocal delivery, not just in her costume. This differentiation was further clarified by a genuinely rigorous maintenance of a clearly delineated total-mask for each character that emphasised specific, emblematic aspects of her characters' behaviours. Ms Zazel was presented with a psychotic energy that spoke as much of fear and nervousness as it did of power and aggression. Her knees drawn ever inwards, feet – awkwardly placed – forever taking millions of tiny steps to get anywhere. Her face was contorted permanently into horrid scowls and her form was consistently caved inwards, towards the centre.



On the other hand, God's physicality was clownish and overtly emphatic, constantly threatening to explode upwards and outwards. God's mannerism ranged from entirely relaxed to hyper-active, however fear was never a component of its behaviour and the face, rather than scowling, wore

a fixed grin, deranged by glee. Both of these characterisations were behaviourally reminiscent of the contorted physicality – and personality – native normally to characters such as arlecchino and capitano from the commedia dell'arte tradition (though it was not an intention to directly incorporate the archetypal personality traits and behavioural patterns traditionally associated with such). As well as these distinctive physical traits, E had connected her characters' vocal performances to specific restrictions in her throat's mechanical operation that served to further emphasise the performative differentiation between roles.



Brian too, was a character whose personality was best displayed in the physical performance by which he was presented. The clear incorporation of indicative behavioural elements, such as his heels being raised from the ground during moments of stress, hopping on one foot when excited, and a vacant grin that threatened to turn to despair at any moment, allowed a pair of actors (Amanda Wallace, and Sophie Sargent), each with markedly different body-types, to play the same character without such becoming a point of confusion for the audience, as is evident from the images pictured on the previous page. Note that two actors (A and C) can be seen playing

Carlotta between these photos with convincingly established physical unity also.

A's portrayal of Jane was so striking, and convincing within the narrative and performance context that the author has subsequently replaced his original character Ted, with Jane, in what he considers to represent the primary copy of the script at this time. Whilst this portrayal had sufficient narrative justification to be acceptable and understood, arguably it was the dynamic strength of A's performance that made this character one that resonated as a memorable figure. Her delivery was composed of a dominant attitude, and an evil charisma, communicated most clearly in her highly refined physical performance. This performance was framed around principles that A had interpreted from the training process prior to rehearsal, in concert with the conscious incorporation of behavioural mechanisms found within her character's developmental score. Jane's smiling face-mask was genuinely terrifying, especially when placed in contrast to the character's violent, scowl. Similarly, her dynamised posture consistently demonstrated an understanding and conditioned utilisation of theatrical principles including isolation, reflection and modified balances, furthermore she made productive use of dilated body-shape in her performance. A spent a significant amount of time prior to performance, training in the act of walking in her [very] high-heeled shoes, the noise of which became an indicative quality of her character – indeed the sound of her heels striking the floor were the first things that the audience knew of her, beyond the pamphlets that some received on their way into the space.

In the photographs shown on the following page, examples of Jane's dynamic posture can be observed. A's spatial distribution in the image on the left incorporates a modified centre of balance, visible in a slight lowering of weight in her hips. This very minor abstraction imbues her body with an evident decided energy and a more general sensibility of potential action, note also the extra daily contortions of her hands, a factor

that was extended as an expressive factor throughout her performance. The central image is a demonstration of highly abstracted behaviour, as opposed to the more subtly modified behaviour shown to the left. A has dilated her body massively by expanding her arms, shoulders and gut; her face is similarly dilated in the eyes, eyebrows and mouth as an expression of Jane's smiling face-mask. A's weight has been modified by several irregularities in her posture, including an unusually contorted knee, the absence of a central trunk to her overall position, a contortion in the relationship of her feet, and the throwing forward of her upper body, in opposition to her lower body. It is not evident in this photo, but Kennedy is also leaning to the left with her upper torso, to the right with her hips, and then to the left again from her knees down, establishing a sinuous pattern in space. The image on the right is demonstrative of the way in which Jane's power was shown in performance, through a conscious manipulation of the properties described above. Also evident in this photo is the scowling face mask that had been developed as the counterpart to Jane's alternatively charming smile.



During Goddess's concert, a scene leading up to the intermission, God makes hot dogs appear, due to a spontaneous whim, spawned by discussion. In the performance, real hot dogs were used, and these were shared with audience (prepared freshly each night, the products were purchased earlier in the day of each performance to *ensure* freshness). These consisted of a

long roll of bread/bap with an American style hot dog sausage in it, cut in half. The decision to share these was made with several ideas in mind. Initially, the concept had been discovered while watching another play, *Strange Resting Places* by Taki Rua Productions, during which several food-stuffs⁸⁰ were prepared, and shared, in full acknowledgement of the audience's presence. On a purely experiential level, this had been enjoyable and increased my willingness as an audience member to engage with the performance.

Creating situations in which the audience unquestioningly consume what they have been given was also observed to tie in nicely with the play's thematic interest in indoctrination and complicity. This was, naturally, connected to the presence of Kool Aid in the School Ball scene, and the idea of food that the audience were invited to eat was extended beyond the hot dog scene into other parts of the play. It was noted during development that Jane comes off sometimes as being a motivational speaker, and so she carried fruit bursts⁸¹ with her that she threw liberally about the stage, and gave directly to audience members as 'motivational aids'. Prior to the Talent show, scene-changers emerged with brooms and swept away any fruit bursts that littered the stage. This was done as a matter of safety, since A would be dancing in the space during the following scene. On one night, an audience member leapt up while the sweeping was taking place and grabbed a fruit burst before it could be taken away. This spontaneous action precipitated a general scramble for fruit bursts from amongst the audience. Such an event suggests, at the very least, that they enjoyed the fruit bursts, but more importantly it represented a complete break-down of the normal, formal isolation between stage and audience. This experiential immersion, as opposed to narrative immersion, was the exact effect that had been sought after in the performance's aesthetic design, as discussed in Appendix I. It

80 In this case espresso coffee, and bread served with a dipping sauce that consisted of garlic and rosemary, seared during performance in olive oil.

81 Fruit Bursts were chosen due to the slogan on the packaging "You Chew", which was thought eerily close to what the corporation "U-Spend" would want their candy's slogan to be. It was also the most universally enjoyed candy of the cast as a whole, that came with each individual piece in its own wrapper.

should be noted that the person who made the initial grab for a Fruit Burst in this instance was a person familiar with theatre and performance, however this was not the case for the many that followed him.

Jane's fruit bursts [and whisky] were not the limit to this pattern of interactive consumption during performance. Prior to the talent show, a table of hot dogs, mustard, tomato sauce⁸², napkins tropical Kool Aid and popcorn was brought onto the stage. At the scene's conclusion, the cast – excluding Ms Zazel – left the stage and Ms Zazel invited the audience to “drink the Kool Aid”, an obvious thematic indication for those paying attention. The band, *Goddess*, were invited to break the stage separation also and to join the audience in eating and drinking during the fifteen minute intermission. As well as this, during one of their scenes together, Sam consumes the majority of a sponge cake that has been made by God out of dust. She did this *whilst* delivering her dialogue. There was also the game around coffee, played by Carlotta and Brian, where she claims to have hated the coffee he made (which was perfect) and to love the coffee that she made (which was foul). These cups of coffee were dropped, with a splash, into Carlotta's rubbish bin, marking the stage with its first elements of food-related debris. It was noted that every story-line dealt with the consumption of food products in one way or another, and as such the decision was made to allow these food products to contribute to the ongoing transformation of the stage. This play became a very messy performance, with the stage itself covered, by the conclusion, in chalk, Kool Aid, Fruit Bursts, hot dog buns, hot dog meat, popcorn, coffee, and fake blood from Jane's suicide. It was thought that this accumulation of filth, junk and sugary treats was a fitting visual metaphor for the collection of cultural references and paradigms presented and played with by the text.

There remained in the version of the play that went to stage an unnoticed, problematic element within its narrative construction, that would

82 Mustard and tomato sauce were unavailable on opening night.

and should have been modified had it been identified earlier in the process. There was an anomaly within the original script's narrative where, in one scene, Carlotta tells Brian not to love her anymore, and in the very next scene tells him that he must again. This gives no space for narrative development or for the conflict to play out. The awkwardness of this construction was heightened rather than alleviated by a conjunction of the two scenes into one (though separated by a speech from Jane) in the staged form. A very simple solution to this problem would have involved the re-shuffling of dialogue and plot points. The script spends a lot of time establishing that Brian loves/is-obsessed-with Carlotta, when it is in fact simple to establish this within moments, simply by the physical relationship that the characters show towards each other and in their characteristic mannerism. It would have been far more efficient to use this early scene time to establish the drama between Brian & Carlotta – that he may no longer love/adore Carlotta, despite his evident devotion. And then to have this play out, ultimately culminating in Carlotta's marginal relinquishment of control, in their following scene together. What occurred in performance however, was a scene that emphatically established Brian's obsession, followed by another that demonstrated its own self-contained narrative, rather than contributing to the development of the play's greater narrative – except by means of the *deus ex machina* of the CEO character, who – it turned out – is in fact a member of Jane's cult, and liquidates the company. Whilst this conclusion to their narrative *is* appropriately, and delightfully, absurd, it would probably have been better received, and more clearly understood were the plot played out in a broader arch.

The Best Thing! was a highly effective demonstration of the depth to which the actors had developed their individual skills as virtuosi of the body during the training period that had preceded its rehearsal. Their physical presentation was energised, expressive of a degree of contained energy that went far beyond daily levels. The actors also managed to demonstrate notable, if not uniformly so, skill in their vocal management, indicative of

the success of measures taken during the rehearsal process in response to feedback given during Work Presentation 2. Also in response to feedback from the Work Presentations, a particular focus of the blocking process had lain in establishing the actors in *relationship* with each other, both physically and vocally, as opposed to in isolation from one another – as had been the case very noticeably in the first Work Presentation. This attention was evidenced by the strong sense of dynamism that existed between cast members during performance. Most clearly, this dynamic inter-relation was expressed during Molly's demonic possession, during which the actors' bodies and voices all moved in dis-harmonic simultaneity:



CONCLUSION

In this study, consisting of the investigation and elaboration of an exercise-driven methodology for the promotion of physical and vocal expressivity in the actor and ensemble, can be observed a theoretical evolution. It was identified initially to be necessary for theatre to evolve into a new artistic niche (due to the technological phenomena of film and television), that is no longer focused specifically upon the transmission of narrative, but instead the *fact* of performance. It was proposed that actors must receive some form of specialised training if they were to be adequately prepared for this new paradigm. The investigation of such specialised training represents the catalyst for the ideas encountered in this study, however it is not the end. As practical research progressed, it became evident that, as well as its clear value as a tool for immediate theatrical preparation and theoretical development, there was evident potential in its form and content as a system for long term theatrical *conditioning*, as opposed to *training*⁸³.

Investigative exercises engaged in during this study have demonstrated that, for a performer who possesses the internal drive to enhance their skill-set, the processes elaborated in relation to the training and rehearsal periods prior to staging *The Best Thing!* could form an effective, long-term conditioning practice that both maintains theatrical condition and develops upon that which is already present in the actor. It is due to the system's foundation in the actors' individual bodies, as opposed to the consistent repetition of pre-elaborated forms (common to many codified theatres), that this continual extension – as opposed to simple maintenance –

83 Distinguished by the terminal nature of a training program, in contrast to the implicit continual activity of conditioning.

is possible. Excluding those training scores actively intended for public viewing, performative elements were kept in a consistent state of roughness during the investigative process. If any element of a training score appeared overly refined, or too successfully performed, then it would receive mechanical complication, either through the feedback-driven pedagogy that was enacted or by *Stop!* modification. This instability ensured that the actors were consistently engaged in developmental activity, rather than in the act of refinement or fine-tuning – which represents the *application* of previously developed skill, not the *development* of skill, despite the possibility of development that is inherent to practice. Such can create an ideal situation for a system that is enacted continuously, and therefore also continues to evolve. 'Conditioning', inclusive of both its theatrical and athletic connotations, is therefore more accurately reflective of the purpose and form of the investigations that have been engaged in during this research process. The exercises elaborated aid the actors in the expansion of their own, pre-existing and self-defined, performative capabilities – incorporating physical, aural and theoretical spectrums. Similarly, the performance Dynamics identified can serve as useful points of reference in the observation, preparation and composition of performance for both actor and director.

Such study necessarily opens several questions that have yet to be answered, but appear promising fields for further investigation. These questions are, of course, related to the effective realisation of the possibilities that are opened up, by actors who are prepared – conditioned – in such a way, within the context of public performance. What shape would such a non-narrative theatre appear in? Does it already exist? Is it possible to have meaning without plot, and connection without identification? Such are external to the scope of this study, however the two primary components of the research engaged in (training, and performance) have each contributed to the groundwork that is necessary for the future investigation

of these questions. The initial process, consisting of practical, physical exploration, allowed the identification, development and connection of an effectively systematised collection of exercises that can contribute to an actor's theatrical condition. The Dynamic Conditioning was then tested as to its efficacy as a system for actor preparation by the staging of *The Best Thing!*, a performance that demonstrated notable physical dynamism and effectively incorporated theatrically (rather than Naturalistically) justified, vocal abstraction.

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Performance

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Appendices:

Appendix I: Dramaturgical Analysis of *The Best Thing!*

The Best Thing! was written between September 2010 and February 2012 by Christopher Butler, a Wellington playwright. Butler has a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Philosophy and English and is an active participant in the Wellington performance scene.

The play is a contemporary pastiche of genres that includes Surrealism, Absurdism, Dystopian Fiction, and also elements of the television SitCom format. There is also a clearly post-modern element to the play's narrative and structure. However, this does not appear to be a conscious element of the play's construction. Instead, it would appear to be a natural result of the play's mix of influences. The 'tone' of *The Best Thing!* is dark, bleak, shocking, hateful and ugly; it is also absurd, ridiculous, whimsical, hopeful and beautiful. *The Best Thing!* is an unconventionally structured play that seeks to present a broad montage of ideas through its staging. This 'simultaneous' montage provides a challenging dramaturgy in realising the page-to-stage process. Every line of the play is so filled with ideas and concepts, which create a rich excess of meanings and connotations, that it runs the risk of becoming overwhelming at times. Conversely, this also means that it is ripe for artistic interpretation. There are many moments in which the structure of this script seems geared towards filmic presentation rather than theatrical, it also contains many clear (and less clear), references to pop culture tropes, especially those that refer

to entertainment media. The play's narrative design, symbolic composition and thematic content are driven by this consistent abundance of pure 'concept'.

The form in which the script was initially received, prior to the beginning of training and rehearsal was without Act, Scene or Unit breaks, in a flowing style that is reminiscent of the manner in which television and film are presented. However, there were several clearly distinctive locations within the script, and Butler had written television-style cross-cuts into the narrative. There were also several distinct story-lines that existed within these specific scenic locations. Locational changes in the script were therefore used to define scenic transitions in the text that was subsequently presented to the actors. This modified version contained Act, Scene and Unit-of-Action breaks. The major story-lines covered within *The Best Thing!*'s narrative are as follows:

Ted's story – Cult, the corporate takeover.

LOCATED: *Man's House, Corporate Headquarters, Goddess Concert, Cult Rally.*

Molly's story – Educational Oppression.

LOCATED: *Man's House, The School, Cult Rally*

God's story – Love.

LOCATED: *Psychologist's Office, The Street.*

Brian & Carlotta's story – Business/Repression.

LOCATED: *The Business Office, Cult Rally, SitCom style lounge.*

There is a further sub-narrative that involves the band 'Goddess', who play the musical accompaniment for the performance. This creates an interesting meta-theatrical relationship that it is important when considering the play's dramaturgical composition. It does not however, form a truly developed narrative arch over the course of the performance and neither do the characters in the band display any in-depth concept of character – with the exception perhaps of Gary. These individual plot-lines play out in a montage, where the audience is treated to brief slice-of-life vignettes, displaying moments important to the development of the play's overarching plot, and to a spectator's understanding of the characters' behaviour. The framework for narrative progression is built primarily around the foundation, triumph and fall of Ted's cult, with all narrative paths converging into this particular story.

As indicated earlier, despite the script's initial presentation without structural divisions, it was deemed necessary to divide the script into smaller parts, both to facilitate efficient discussion and in order to better understand the play's narrative drive. Act, Scene and Unit-of-Action breaks were established in the text. The script was divided into a tripartite structure based on the conclusion of important narrative functions: Act I deals with character and narrative *establishment*; Act II provides thematic clarification and narrative *development*; Act III contains narrative, character and thematic *resolution*. It was a further aim in the devising of this tripartite structure that each Act contain approximately one third of the play's content so as to provide the performance with a 2:1 ratio between the first half (prior to intermission) of performance and the second (after intermission). Scenic divisions were identified based on a shift in the narrative's location rather than using the French Scene convention⁸⁴. Unit division was made somewhat subjectively, informed by a shift in character objective (in the

84 Wherein a scene change is identified every time a character enters or exits the stage. This convention was instead used as one of the defining elements for the establishment of units of action.

Stanislavskian sense), character presence, power relationships or thematic intent/content. Butler has formatted his script in a manner that clearly reflects the film-montage, with quick changes between scenes and a majority of scenes that themselves only reveal brief windows of behaviour. It is true however that there are several important '*anchor*' scenes that take more time over their internal narrative development. These scenes define the true ebb and flow of the play. The following is an elaboration of the divisions given to the text that was used at the beginning of the rehearsal process⁸⁵.

Narrative & Structural Breakdown

ACT I

Scene 01 – Ted (PROLOGUE): Units 01 to 18. Anchor.

PLOT: Ted approaches Man's house as a door-to-door salesman and convinces Man to let him in. It slowly becomes apparent that Ted isn't actually selling a product but an idea. He convinces Man to kill himself and leaves. Molly and Carlotta discover his corpse and Carlotta makes it clear she has no intention of continuing to care for Molly.

Scene 02 – Brian & Carlotta: Units 19 to 24

PLOT: Carlotta is unsatisfied by Brian's work, who cannot fathom why. He's sure his work was perfect. He has a minor break-down and writes "I LOVE YOU" on a projector.

Scene 03 – God: Units 25 to 30

PLOT: Gary plays the violin for Sam in one of their therapy sessions, which Sam ends at completion of the demonstration. Gary notices "I LOVE YOU" written in the sky and tells Sam that it's a message for her

85 It should be noted that the structure of the final product deviated significantly from that which the process began with (elaborated here).

from God. Sam continues this conversation briefly with Belinda. Sam is possessed by God, who professes his love for her, she establishes that she'd really like to just be friends first.

Scene 04 – Molly: Units 31 to 43. Anchor.

PLOT: Molly is introduced to her new school and class. They recite the school rules & code of conduct, then learn their ABCs in a strangely prescriptive manner – described as “Whole Brain Learning⁸⁶”. They follow this with some gene-splicing during which one student dies. Nobody except Molly really cares.

Scene 05 – God: Units 44 to 48

PLOT: God and Sam share a picnic. They discuss each other, their relationship and the universe. During this discussion it's made clear that the only really defining feature of God's personality is that he loves Sam. Sam tells him he needs to live a little before she'll be interested.

Scene 06 – Ted: Units 49 to 53

PLOT: Ted gives a presentation to his corporate bosses where he elaborates on his plan for world domination and the actions that he has so far taken to secure this goal. This scene has echoes of a Nazi hate rally.

ACT II

Scene 07 – Brian & Carlotta: Units 54 to 60

PLOT: Carlotta continues her oppressive behaviour towards Brian. He cannot handle it and screams.

Scene 08 – God: Units 61 to 66

⁸⁶ Whole Brain Learning is in fact a genuine pedagogical system, though it differs from what is presented in this play on all but shallow levels. This system attempts to engage a student's entire brain in the act of learning (this is measured physiologically in terms of cluster activity).

PLOT: God meets Troy, J and X at a Goddess concert. He discovers that he really likes marijuana, really likes Goddess, really likes hot dogs and really doesn't like Hitler. He also decides that all schools should have school balls and talent shows. Upon making this decision, it becomes reality. After God's departure, Troy, J and X stumble into Ted who gives them pamphlets and invites them to join one of his cult rallies – they seem quite interested.

Scene 09 – Molly: Units 67 to 72. Anchor

PLOT: A talent show. Killtronia dances a killing-machine ballet and Molly sings a song poorly. Goddess wins the talent show.

Scene 10 – Brian & Carlotta: Units 73 to 75

PLOT: Carlotta – with cruelty – tells Brian to stop loving her. He obeys.

Scene 11 – Ted: Units 76 to 78

PLOT: A cult rally, where Ted elaborates upon his ideas regarding pain and transcendence. It's never quite clear whether Ted personally believes his dogma or not.

Scene 12 – Molly: Units 79 to 84. Anchor

PLOT: School Dance. The students are encouraged to drink Kool Aid. Molly has the bowl of Kool Aid tipped over her, this sparks a Demonic possession which is supported by Goddess's violinist Gary. Molly kills everyone in the room (although they don't remain dead for the rest of the play) and then dances a dance of love with Killtronia.

ACT III

Scene 13 – God: Units 85 to 92

PLOT: God interrupts a conversation between Belinda and Sam, then uses his God-powers to cause Belinda to leave. Sam gets frustrated and accuses God of not being real. She rejects him definitively and clearly. On his way off the stage he is stopped by Troy, J and X who introduce him to Ted's cult and invite him to the next rally, God seems interested.

Scene 14 – Brian & Carlotta: Units 93 to 99

PLOT: Brian is busy going about his office work and actively hating Carlotta. She corrects a perceived error in his spreadsheets and he snaps at her aggressively. This behaviour horrifies her and she realises that she would prefer it if Brian loved her instead. Things return to “normal”.

Scene 15 – Molly: Units 100 to 105. Anchor.

PLOT: After an initial re-establishment by the Headmaster the class begins an almost exact repeat of the Gene-splicing experiment. Molly interrupts this however and begins a rebellion amongst the children. Miss Zazel panics and seeks the Headmaster's aid when her command phrases prove ineffective. He rushes in with a gun and threatens to shoot the children, but is shot in the back by Killtronia. Troy leads the children out of the classroom and into the next scene, Ted's last rally.

Scene 16 – Ted: Narrative convergence: Units 106 to 116. Anchor.

PLOT: Ted's last rally. Ted delivers his final elaboration regarding the cult's principles and goals, encouraging the followers to give up all of their possessions – even their personalities – to the corporation that he serves. There is a brief vignette where the CEO fires Brian and Carlotta inserted into the middle of this scene. The stage is transformed into a television at this point, Brian and Carlotta sit and watch events unfold. Ted reveals that it was all a trick and that he simply wanted to manipulate and torture his followers, but they refuse to believe him. God suggests that Ted is in fact making the ultimate sacrifice by sacrificing his own power for the good of the cult. Ted gives in and tells the followers to make a better world, but it

seems like too much work for the rest of them and they abandon him. God and Ted have a final interaction where, in a reflection of the first scene, God causes Ted to commit suicide.

Scene 17 – God: Units 117 to 119

PLOT: God apologises to Sam for coming on a bit strong, and seems to have a grown as a person. Sam forgives him and seems to suggest that there might be hope for them as a couple after all. They end things as friends.

Scene 18 – Brian & Carlotta: Unit 120

PLOT: Without any expressive or emotive qualities Brian and Carlotta say goodnight to each other, turn off the television and go to bed.

Characters

In order of appearance

MAN: An average man named Tom. Father of Molly, husband of Carlotta. Persuaded by Ted to commit suicide.

TED⁸⁷: A charismatic door-to-door salesman, turned cult leader. Employed by U-Spend Corporation. Ted's cult forms the framework for the play's narrative progression.

MOLLY: Man's daughter, abandoned by Carlotta (her stepmother) after Man's suicide. She is transferred to a new school, with strange practices and policies. Falls in love with Killtronia.

⁸⁷ Ted was later replaced with the character Jane, this was done in discussion with the author. His name had initially been informed by the web-show 'Ted Talks', in which semi-guru figures deliver informative lectures about new ideas. Jane's name is similarly informed by a particular presenter from Ted Talks named Jane McGonigal who delivered a lecture on the possibilities of the game-ification of daily activities. The specific Lecture may be found at this web address <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfBpsV1Hwqs>>

CARLOTTA: 2nd wife of Man, Stepmother of Molly. Brian's boss. Cold and calculating.

BRIAN: Carlotta's underling. Infatuated with her. Cannot effectively express his love due to the oppressive atmosphere that the office, and Carlotta herself, produce.

SAM: A compassionate mental health worker. The object of God's affection, though she's not sure that she reciprocates.

GARY: Violinist⁸⁸ for the band Goddess. A troubled musician, Sam's patient.

BELINDA⁸⁹: A friend of Sam's.

GOD: God. Possibly. Infatuated with Sam and profoundly enthusiastic about life, though with a hint of darkness.

HEADMASTER⁹⁰: The Headmaster of the school the Molly is sent to. Overbearing, with strange catchphrases. Seems interested in Miss Zazel. Associated with Darth Vader.

MISS ZAZEL: Molly's teacher at her new school. A very strange woman who seems simultaneously to revel in the power she has over her students and to be terrified of their response.

TROY: The school dux, inventor of Killtronia. He seems to be basically a regular kid however, rather than being particularly “geeky”.

CLASS: The other students in Troy and Molly's class. They form something like a chorus.

88 In the staged version this character was a pianist due to issues of instrument access and artist skill-set.

89 Cut from the staged version of the text.

90 Merged with Miss Zazel to create Ms Zazel in the staged version of our text.

KILLTRONIA: A killing machine that also dances. Invented by Troy, falls in love with Molly, kills the Headmaster.

J⁹¹: A “stoner” friend of Troy's. Always seen with X.

X: A “stoner” friend of Troy's. Always seen with J.

CEO: Brian and Carlotta's boss.

GODDESS: The band that provide the play's musical accompaniment. Within the narrative's fiction, they are the most successful band in the world who have recently sold their souls to Ted's corporate sponsors, U-Spend. Possibly responsible for summoning a Demon into Molly's body.

Character Descriptors

The following represents a compilation of all descriptions made of each character – by any character, including themselves – within the original, given text of *The Best Thing!* These descriptors were used to inform the pre-rehearsal interpretation/understanding held by the director, and as a point of reference during discussion in rehearsal. Each actor was encouraged to perform this same exercise themselves, for every character that they played.

Man: A man in his home. Reads the newspaper. Named Tom. Wants to use money as moral fodder. Has a wife, and kids (Carlotta, Molly + 2 children), only one child [Molly] lives with him. Being encouraged to commit suicide by Ted, neighbours have already done so. According to Ted bullies pushed Tom down, he cut his knee and his dad called him a faggot when he was a kid. Is not content, satisfied or fulfilled. Is a bad person.

91 J & X were merged in the staged version of the play to form a single character named J.

Dad succumbed to senility/alzheimers. Commits suicide by shooting himself in the head at Ted's suggestion.

Ted: A salesman with plans for world domination. Or Something. Works for U-Spend. Smartly dressed. Doesn't want money. Wants a functional world or community, believes this requires lowering the human population. Very outspoken and opinionated about “world issues” without actually suggesting solutions. Encourages individual suicide. Has encouraged Tom's neighbours to kill themselves already. Steals Tom's wallet as he leaves. Starts his very own cult of personality, focused on himself. Lamb of God.

Molly: A young girl, daughter of Man. She starts at a strange new school. Is sent to live with her biological mother after Tom's death. Is slow to respond to Miss Zazel's commands. Molly is a quick learner. Is taught alphabet, gene splicing and robotics in school. According to her new class Molly is slow. Is shy, young and unpopular. Is possessed by a demon and ransacks the ball. Starts a rebellion in her classroom. Romance with Killtronia?

Carlotta: A woman, wife of Man. She works for a company that manufactures powerful lasers. Sends Molly to live with her biological mother after Tom's death. Hates how Brian has organised her desk. Drinks coffee. Brian she knows something he doesn't.

Brian: A perfectionist, and Carlotta's underling. According to Carlotta organising her desk is not part of Brian's job, however spreadsheets and getting coffee are. Draws interesting patterns on spreadsheets. Believes he can never be perfect. Is perfectly attentive to Carlotta's needs. Loves Carlotta. Brian has a nervous breakdown and declares his love to Carlotta. At her behest, Brian begins to hate Carlotta. Doesn't get enough sleep.

Sam: A social worker. Has a brighter and nicer workplace than Carlotta and Brian. Counsels Gary. Sees a message from God in the clouds saying “I LOVE YOU”. Doesn't know if she believes in God. Is beautiful,

wonderful and caring according to God. Is God's favourite part of creation. Wants to be friends with God, but not lovers. Would prefer water to wine. Understands why God might not want to answer people's prayers. Is technically one of God's children.

Gary: A musician, disturbed by hallucinations. Plays [violin] beautifully according to Sam. A patient of Sam's. Is temporarily possessed by God. Has Kool Aid spilt on him, causing Goddess to stop playing. Summons a demon with music that possesses Molly's body.

Belinda: Sam's co-worker & friend. Ending a troubled relationship.

God: A powerful being with a crush on Sam. Is literally capable of doing anything, except perhaps see into the future (though this is ambiguous). Attractive and well-dressed. Made everything, used dust. Knows an awful lot. Doesn't like talking about politics. Didn't answer any prayers. Doesn't usually talk to people. Is nice enough and cute according to Sam. Is like a bad character in a TV show according to Sam. Likes Goddess. Wills a bigger venue into existence. Wills hot dogs into existence. Enforces mandatory talent shows and balls at all schools. Likes dancing and hot dogs, thinks Hitler was a dick. Is pretty rad according to X. Hasn't developed or grown up as a person because everything always goes his way.

Headmaster: A man in a sweeping black cape. Bears a passing resemblance to Darth Vader.

Miss Zazel: A teacher with an unusual control over her students. Has total control over her students, able to elicit precise responses by gesture alone. Puts a mark in the 'sad square' when students misbehave. Puts a mark in the 'happy square' when the students please her.

Troy: The top of class in robotics and alchemy. Is taught alphabet, gene splicing and robotics in school. Calls Molly a slow girl. Likes Goddess. Is given credit for the classroom rebellion.

Other Students: Also go to school. Miss Zazel says they are very good. Filled with slogans. Are taught alphabet, gene splicing and robotics in school. One of them [Sally] chokes on smoke and dies. Call Molly a slow girl.

Killtronia: Troy's robotics assignment, a killing machine with a flair for dance. Wears a red dress, the colour of passion. Kills Headmaster. Romance with Molly?

J and X: Two concert-going stoners, friends of Troy. Like Goddess. Need a bigger venue. Get high and start craving hot dogs.

Brian and Carlotta's Boss: The CEO, appears briefly.

Goddess: A band who sell out [to U-Spend] and play the soundtrack to this play. Their members include Gary and three to four others.

Symbols and Themes

The Best Thing is overflowing with symbols, to a point where almost every object and interaction within the play takes on a clear thematic importance to the ideas and archetypes that are being played with. Whilst it is not necessarily important, or in fact, relevant to highlight each of these in the actual staging of the play, it is important that each is acknowledged during preparatory stages as a potential tool to work with or against in composing the performance narrative.

Of immediate and obvious importance to the play's thematic content are the characters themselves, who all contain clear archetypal elements in their design. Ted is the evil emperor, Miss Zazel the inept teacher, Headmaster wishes he was the evil emperor but really isn't, Molly is the awkward and shy new girl, Carlotta the corporate man-eater, Killtronia the death-machine that also dances, Goddess the sell-out Pop band, etc. Each

of these is an immediately recognisable character that an audience is able to understand and attach to without having the need for a convincingly developed back-story for each character, as their individual constructions each represent a specific element of universality. As such they should be treated as symbolic elements of the play's thematic construction every bit as much as they are treated as necessary elements of the play's narrative construction.

It is possible to identify four clear thematic groups that these symbols can be grouped within. In a couple of examples a symbol can be thought to reflect several of these groups if viewed from a particular perspective or definition and, where this is the case, they have been re-listed in multiple groups. To some degree, though not entirely, these groups reflect the narrative definition of the play also – the symbols of finance and business tend to be reflected within the Business narrative, though it is also clearly reflected within Ted's narrative. Symbols of Education are probably the most easy to distinguish as being tied to Molly's narrative path, though certainly this too bleeds into Ted's narrative. The symbols of politics and culture are littered throughout the play, however they are most strongly reflected in Ted's Cult narrative. More obviously, symbols of religion are tied to God's narrative most immediately and yet, again, they are strongly tied to Ted's narrative. The overall structure of the play is arguably the process of each of these thematic groupings collapsing into a religiously/fanatically elaborated Dystopian horror that is focused on Ted's cult narrative.

SYMBOLS OF FINANCE & BUSINESS

These symbols include: the corporation U-spend itself (which may be considered another example of archetypal design), Cash, a wallet, cheque book, credit cards, 'Zero' as a value

and a figure, Franchising, Office Desks, spreadsheets, coffee , the trade of self (soul selling), Corporate Iconography (U-Spend logo etc...), Brian's scream. Man, Ted, Carlotta, Brian, Goddess.

SYMBOLS OF EDUCATION

These symbols include: School desks, Blackboard/Whiteboard, Alphabet, Sad Square/Happy Square, Whole Brain Learning (its physical realisation in the script as opposed to the intellectual concept), Chemical Scissors, School Dance, School Talent Show, hot dogs. Molly, Troy, Class, Headmaster, Miss Zazel, Killtronia, Sam, God.

SYMBOLS OF POLITICS & CULTURE

These symbols include: The division of the stage in two halves (in particular, the door that divides the halves), the act of suicide (the gun, the trigger, the voice, the decision, the result), Blood, tidying, 'Zero' as a relationship or as a sense of self/another, the phrase 'I Love You' as a visual image, the trade of self (soul-selling), Darth Vader, Slogans, Catchphrases and Manifestos, confetti, Cake (popular media: gaming⁹²), television, adult/child relationship, the joint, hot dogs, Kool Aid, Killtronia's Red dress, Headphones, Gun Holsters (related to filmic cowboy tropes), Utopian/Outopian/Dystopian discourse, Brian's scream, Adolph Hitler. All Characters.

92 From KnowYourMeme.com: “**The Cake is a Lie** is a catchphrase popularized by the game *Portal*, and is often used to convey the message that a promised gift is being used to motivate without any intent of delivering” (<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/the-cake-is-a-lie>)

SYMBOLS OF RELIGION

These symbols include: the Violin, Hallucination (Shamanic experience, Demonic Possession), Evangelism, Confetti, Wine & Water, prayer, Kool Aid, the cult – the host, legion – infinity. Ted, God, Sam, Headmaster, Miss Zazel.

Within the symbols of finance and business there are a collection of items that each represent the concept of fictive value⁹³. These items display the script's first indications of its interest in obsession, where we see Man consistently referring to such objects throughout the scene in his attempt to placate, bribe and plead with Ted; meanwhile Ted consistently dismisses each as being valueless and meaningless. Also found within this group are symbols that communicate ideas of corporate hierarchy and oppression – the symbol 'Zero' as it relates to Brian's role within the narrative is one that is particularly resonant in this respect, the corporate oppression that he has actively bought into has triggered an internal repression within his own behavioural patterns. The relationship between repression, oppression and expression is one that is extremely important to both the form and content of *The Best Thing!*

The Symbols of Education represent a genuine pastiche of images. School desks and other such items exist both to set the scene and to act as triggers for memory, creating connections for the audience between the scene they are watching and their own memories of experiences at school. The ideas of a School Dance and a Talent Show within the narrative serve a similar function in this respect. Apart from these, the play presents a

93 An item of fictive value *represents* its value rather than actually possessing this value inherently – as a physical property in and of itself; cash (plastic/paper notes or modern-day coins) may be said to possess fictive value, whereas gold possesses inherent value due to its rarity, unique chemical properties and (in transference of this uniqueness) use as a tool in mechanics, chemistry and computing [and decoration].

mismatched collection of seemingly misaligned educational exercises (learning the alphabet alongside genetic engineering), this concatenation of contradictory methodologies efficiently represents to the audience the idea of an experimental, “modern”, education-system-run-mad.

Of all the groups the Symbols of Politics & Culture is the largest. *The Best Thing!* Is absolutely overflowing with pop-culture references and many symbols in this list reflect this, for example: Darth Vader, Cake and Hot Dogs. Other symbols, such as the Kool Aid, whilst remaining a pop culture reference, take on a specific resonance due to the element of culture that they reference. In this case, the play is indicating the common phrase “drink the Kool Aid”, which is a direct reference to the Jones' Town cult, who committed suicide by drinking poisoned Kool Aid during the late 20th Century, and generally is applied to gullible/easily indoctrinated people. In *The Best Thing!*, this interpretation can be applied both literally and figuratively, as the play both explores cult behaviour as a narrative element, and indoctrination as a thematic issue. Superimposed on this, the many images of food (hot dogs, cake etc...), drugs, violence (suicide, guns, gun holsters, Adolph Hitler, Darth Vader) and lust (KILLTRONIA's red dress⁹⁴, “I Love You” in the clouds) relate back again to the recurring theme of obsession.

The final thematic group that these symbols have been divided into is Symbols of Religion. These tend towards the fantastical, absolutely placing *The Best Thing!* outside the bounds of naturalistic/realistic presentation. The Religious icons presented again are representative of religious behaviour's more fanatical extremes, which are defined by their obsessive qualities. Some events within the play, such as Molly's demonic possession serve to locate this text as existing firmly within the Magical Realism narrative format. The symbols of religion that are presented within this play, excepting (although this arguable) God and God's miracles, nearly

94 Troy establishes during the School Dance that Killtronia's dress is red because red is the colour of passion.

universally present strongly negative – even Satanic – connotations. Despite this, the script does not appear to be delivering a direct criticism of religious behaviour, so much as using religion as a whole as an example of an efficient metaphor for oppression and obsession. A criticism of religious behaviour is almost taken for granted in the narrative's manner of presentation. Perhaps this fact, that religion is so unquestioningly presented as oppressive that it appears to be considered not truly worth dealing with within the script, is in itself significant.

Without a doubt, the key dramatic principle presented by *The Best Thing!* is obsession, in its various realisations. It is interesting to note the degree to which relationships between one character and another, one character and the group, one character and the narrative, the group and the narrative can all be related back to this recurring theme. Supporting this, the majority of the symbols presented can also be related to this concept by thematic association. Alongside this overall narrative theme is a consistent presentation of the 'inter-personal relationship', as being based generally upon an interplay of oppression and repression.

Significant Dialogue

In the following passages significant pieces of dialogue from the text have been identified. These will be briefly discussed in relation to their symbolic, thematic and narrative importance.

ACT I, Scene 1:

“TED: ... I wouldn't ask you for gasoline if the world was on *fire*, now would I?” (5)

– Delivered after Man has offered Ted money. Ted has identified Money as being analogous to gasoline for the world's problems, useful only to make it burn faster.

“TED: ... *Cost* isn't a real problem.” (5)

– This line establishes a concept that is dealt with often during the text, the distinction between a problem based on fundamental elements/experiences (food, shelter, companionship) and a problem that is inherent only within the structure that society has woven itself into (money, traffic congestion, stream buffering).

“TED: ... Nobody wants to be the one though. Nobody wants to pull the trigger. Trust me, Tom. Your life is meaningless, it doesn't matter.” (7)

– This line is important because it displays the ease with which Ted is able to convince Man to take that final step. It is as though Man were simply waiting for someone to tell him that it was an option.

“TED: The guilt you feel, *every day*, Tom. It's because you're a bad person. Those kids bullied you at school because you're a bad person, Tom.” (8)

– Man is presented as being the absolute average man. If *the* average man is a bad person, then in fact, the majority of men must be at least partially bad as a mathematical truth.

ACT I, Scene 2:

“BRIAN: The desk was perfect. How could her standards be higher than mine? I... I understand *everything*! These spreadsheets are perfect, no-one doubts that!” (10)

– This is an early, clear, indication of Brian's obsessive behaviour. In particular he is obsessed with cleaning, figures, graphs, spreadsheets and Carlotta.

ACT I, Scene 3:

“SAM: ... not all demons that visit us are evil” (11)

– Foreshadows Sam's encounter with God and Molly's demonic possession. Of particular interest is the use made here of the term “demon”, as it throws into light a question that is never really answered within the play: God claims to be God, but never offers up any quantifiable evidence that this is true or even a reason to believe its word beyond the mere fact of its supernatural powers⁹⁵. Given that it is also established in the play that it is possible to be possessed by a demon there is no genuine reason to believe that God is not in fact a demon claiming to be God.

“GOD: ... I want you to love me back so much it *aches!*” (14)

– The above is another demonstration of the clear importance of obsession in *The Best Thing!*'s dramaturgical make-up.

ACT I, Scene 4:

“HEAD: ... Generate consensus! // CLASS: By obscuring difference!” (15)

⁹⁵ A conversation between the Author and Director on Facebook some months after closing production for *The Best Thing!* provided some further insight into this issue. From Christopher Butler: “Mary's "god" is just some omnipotent fuckwit. the real god is Atumm-Ra the beginning and end of all light.” (from a Facebook chat 30/10/2012). After receiving a request for permission to use this quote Chris elaborated further, again through Facebook, on 08/04/2013: “the character of God in *The Best Thing!* started out being an alien hive mind, but evolved into God because that was a simpler idea that required less exposition. Atumm-Ra is probably going to be a character in the sequel, called 'Hell.'”

– Reminiscent of slogans chanted by children and citizens in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*.

“MISS Z: It's not important what you do or don't know, Molly. We know what works here. We teach your WHOLE brain here and this is what works.” (18)

– A demonstration of the apparently contradictory logics that inform the pedagogy of Molly's new school.

ACT I, Scene 5:

“GOD: [on being asked if it ever answered prayers] So many of them contradicted each other ... Plus, some of them were really unhealthy, and – where do you draw the line, you know? I didn't want to be an enabler... (23)

– A sly joke, and a moment where we can develop some empathy for the strange character that calls itself God⁹⁶.

“SAM: ... I still don't know *anything* about you except that you love me. I don't think there *is* anything else to you but that. You're like a bad character in a TV show, sorry.” (24)

– Another indication of God's potentially fallacious claims to divinity (God as presented in the script is indeed a caricature of an archetypal image of the Messianic God. In the staged version this 'cartoonification' was emphasised). With its reference to television, this also reminds the audience of the fact of their participation in a performance, breaking the illusive qualities of the theatre.

⁹⁶ This line was shortened in the staged production to a simple and brutal “Nah”. God as presented in the staged version was an unredeemed and unidentifiable creature. This decision was made in reference to its cartoon-like characterisation and as a way of dealing with its strangely sudden change of character in its final interaction with Sam – essentially we made the decision to treat its closing dialogue as being insincere.

ACT II, Scene 7:

“CAR: ... Your job ensures the company runs smoothly. So, if it doesn't run smoothly, you may as well not have a job at all.” (28)

– This line is very effective in its communication of Carlotta's character and attitudes. She is precisely defined to personify the archetypal oppressive corporate boss. This is tied to a masculine fear [and fetishisation] of female domination. She is withholding in every respect and expects absolute service from Brian, without providing anything but continued oppression in return.

ACT III, Scene 15:

“MISS Z: That is an unauthorised slogan! Stop that at once!” (53)

– This line is interesting as it both highlights the tongue-in-cheek manner in which a lot of *The Best Thing!* is presented and further establishes the relationship between systemic oppression and personal freedom that is dealt with in the narrative.

ACT III, Scene 17:

“GOD: ... Sorry I came on so strong before. I can be a bit of a zealot.” (61)

– This line is important partially due to its location towards the end of the play. It serves to remind the audience that they've seen a comedy rather than a political/spiritual rally. It is interesting also in that it could be said to describe the play as a whole, which at times may be accused of over-emphasising the obvious – becoming overtly political and turning to pure oration as its means of conceptual delivery. However, but its overall construction, design and characterisation ultimately counters this for the

most part, encouraging a tolerance of such emphatic statement as an entertaining point of interest, and possibly a stylistic affectation/indication rather than necessarily a hindrance to spectator engagement.

Deconstruction/Reconstruction

It had been necessary to cull some degree of content from the script right from the beginning of the process. This was in order that the performance fit within the proposed 90 minute format. On initial reading the script's length, combined with the number of moments of extended physicality that the script explicitly requests, implied that it's length would be between 120 and 150 minutes if staged uncut. This hypothetical length was in fact also minimised by the assumption of a full cast and crew to facilitate rapid scenic transitions, meaning that without such the play would be likely to extend to closer to 180 minutes (three hours) – double its desired length. Therefore, it would be necessary to cut at least a third of the script's content in order that it conform to the desired time-scheme. This cutting was undertaken with the author's consent and, at times, input.

The initial parsing of the text was designed to remove anything that could be deemed “filler” (excess banter, non-meaningful dialogue, narrative red herrings) or non-essential to the narrative and/or thematic content, nothing more than this was removed or modified in any way. As it turned out, there was very little filler to remove which (although indicative of quality writing) unfortunately meant that the play at its first reading⁹⁷ was definitely still too long (128 minutes), however the active intention was to – as much as was sensible – maintain the scripts original integrity until the rehearsal process, at which point its development could be achieved as an organic response to issues and ideas encountered during the rehearsal process rather than as a mechanical or overtly intellectual exercise. This initial cut was the version originally presented to the cast in digital form as

97 Commenced at 5pm, 11/06/2012

a pdf⁹⁸, however the script was further developed prior to its first reading due to technical issues that arose.

A constant constraint on staging *The Best Thing!* was an unfortunate lack of interested or dedicated participants⁹⁹. It had been the hope that a minimum of 7 and maximum of 16 actors would take part in the process, as the script has a large cast of characters. In discussion with Butler, it had been agreed that 7 should be the minimum number of actors in order that the show be stageable in any semblance of its original form. Unfortunately, although initial response had been promising (with 9 people confirming their attendance at the first training session), only 5 people actually turned up to the first training session. Fortunately these 5 people continued to attend and formed the core group whose personal performative development formed the focus for much of this study. Ultimately another actor joined the group also, making a total of six to work with during the training period, play all 17 characters in the play, and facilitate all scenic transformations.

Further complicating the issues about character that had begun to crop up was the script's male dominated character roll, compared to an entirely female cast. Due to the play's narrative and thematic content, this risked inserting a strange semblance of a feminist agenda into a play that could already be accused of being overloaded with such politicism, sometimes risking – in a few of its more lengthy speeches – tipping over the edge from theatre into lecture. Further to this, whilst a feminist agenda is not necessarily undesirable, it could also serve to overshadow the ideas that the play actually did seek to deal with. Several options were considered, including staging a different play – one built for a female cast or structured in such a way that contravening the non-female character role might be productive. Ultimately however the decision was made to continue as

98 It is also the version of the script referred to in the Dramaturgical Analysis found in Chapter 2.1.

99 In retrospect it is likely that this was due to my unfamiliarity with the local theatre scene prior to the mounting of this project rather than due to a local lack of demand.

planned, with an important caveat. There were three characters in the initial version of the script that served no purpose other than to be talked to, these were Belinda, J and X. Belinda was entirely excised from the script along with the majority of her dialogue. This had a minimal impact upon the text and its narrative, with the only notable difference being that there were now a few occasions where Sam talked to herself instead of to another person. This did not feel problematic in the least given the stylised aesthetic already established in the play. Rather than cutting J and X entirely (as this would reduce options in certain scenes, such as the Goddess concert), their characters were merged into one character named J. Several of their lines were merged where possible, cut where not possible or re-attributed to Troy if they were necessary to facilitate conversation but couldn't be worked into J's dialogue.

An initial impulse (driven by obvious necessity) to have each actor play multiple characters was extended to also having many of the characters played by multiple actors¹⁰⁰. In the device's initial conception all characters were played by multiple actors and it was considered at one point to have every actor play every character at least once during the course of the performance, these character swaps would occur at regular, scripted intervals throughout the narrative. Ultimately this was refined¹⁰¹ to a point where several characters (Ted/Jane, God, Ms Zazel) actually were only played by one actor, the characters that cycled actors cycled only a specific cluster of actors rather than all of them, and these shifts occurred less frequently, at irregular intervals throughout the script. By taking this necessary mechanic (given the limited number of participants) and expanding upon it, it was felt that the mechanic could be made an interesting and exciting meta-theatrical game rather than an issue of pure

100 This idea occurred during a discussion about David Lynch's film *Mulholland Drive* (2001), which uses a similar convention, as does his earlier film *Lost Highway* (1997).

101 This refinement did not occur in a single step, but instead happened as a cumulative process as the character development and subsequent blocking & rehearsal process progressed. As such it would be accurate to state that this refinement took months.

practicality that might risk distraction or confusion otherwise. These character changes were often defined by which actor had the best opportunity to make a successful costume change in time to go on stage rather than any given actor's 'ability'¹⁰² to play a role. This small new piece of the puzzle ultimately had a profound impact upon the methods employed in character development.

It was hoped that this method of presenting the character by highlighting the fact of its fictionalisation (through the changing faces of the actors presenting the character), would prevent the audience from attaching to the actors as people, as this would necessarily gender the characters based on the actors' gender unless we employed pantomimic artificial devices, which were deemed to clash too much with the generally minimalistic¹⁰³ aesthetic approach that had otherwise been employed. Instead the audience would be encouraged to interpret the actors as being vessels/bodies to carry (rather than inhabit) character and behaviour – this is a kind of *Verfremdungseffekt* in that it forces the audience to consider, rather than simply to absorb, as a result of a distance that is established between the narrative fiction and the theatrical reality. A further benefit to this approach to character representation was that it established a systemic game within the performance dramaturgy, this became especially true with the establishment of the robotic Killtronia as being a masked character. The interested audience member was invited implicitly to make a game of working out which actor was inhabiting the Killtronia suit at any given moment. Whilst such an affectation may be described as anti-immersive in that it pulls the audience out of the narrative, it can in fact add to an audience member's overall engagement with the event as an experience rather than simply a show. This is again making use of Brecht's

102 An observation I have made is that our assessment of an actor's ability to play a role is general linked more closely to our perception of the actor's natural synchronicity with the character as we have read it. Given the developmentally focused nature of the work, this manner of judgement was deemed to be irrelevant at best and constituent of an unfair test at worst.

103 Arguably there was a kind of grotesque excess to the play's actual staging, however its aesthetic was definably minimalistic within this.

Verfremdungseffekt by erring in favour of experiential immersion over narrative immersion – the audience are present in their current, corporeal experience rather than within the fictionalised narrative that is being presented.

Adding to these changes was the decision to cut the very last scene of the play, in which Brian and Carlotta turn off the television and go to bed. This scene was cut fairly subjectively, based on a general consensus between director and cast that it was conceptually forced and simply caused the play to drag on; it in fact, felt as if the play's narrative had concluded two scenes earlier with the death of Ted, further to this it did not really add anything to Brian & Carlotta's narrative. The decision was made therefore to favour a tight structure and snappy ending over a drawn out conclusion. It was this version of the script that was presented for the play's first reading at 5pm on 11/06/2012 prior to the beginning of character development.

The next major script development emerged out of a sudden necessity that came up near the beginning of character development. Due to an unfortunate change in her personal circumstances, one of the actors was forced to pull out of the production. This left the show and study with 5 actors rather than 6. To cope with this a call had to be made. After gaining the author's permission a massive, and ruthless, deconstruction of the text was undertaken, after which the pieces were reconstituted into a new whole.

First, the individual narratives were entirely divorced from each other, into their own documents so that their individual narrative progressions could be identified, analysed and refined. Doing this threw into light several problematic elements within the play's narrative progression, where a relationship would suddenly develop into a new kind of relationship without any real narrative conditioning/logic by which to justify this transformation. Whilst the script's Absurdist nature does justify some level of logical abstraction, this shouldn't be accepted as a narrative crutch. This can be observed to occur in Carlotta's sudden change of heart towards

Brian, where she asks him to love her again, and in God's sudden understanding of Sam's reticence and resultant apologetic approach at the end of the play, in comparison to absolutely every single other interaction that the two characters have. Such elements were, as a rule, separated by restructuring of the units of action that had been established, where possible. Where such restructuring was impossible without simply writing new dialogue, it was dealt with theatrically instead – as with God's final dialogue, where it was delivered with an overt theatricality and a distinct lack of sincerity over Jane's bloody corpse¹⁰⁴. Sam's dialogue, wherein she accepts God's apology, was delivered as though attempting to pacify a psychotic while she reached for her cellphone and hurriedly attempted to dial the emergency service. This culminated with God chasing her off-stage, arms spread wide like an angry child demanding a hug, while Sam fled in a panic.

The narratives were separated into 4 groups: The School, The Office, The Cult, God. Each of these smaller scripts was cut of any dialogue that was deemed unnecessary and their scenic divisions were re-defined. After this refinement had occurred, the four individual narratives were re-constituted into a greater piece. This re-constituted narrative attempted, as much as possible, to retain the original compositional integrity of the *The Best Thing!*, though no actual limitations regarding what could and couldn't be touched were established. The script was simplified from a tripartite structure to the clearer two act form, though a balance of two thirds, to one third was maintained between the 1st and 2nd Acts, with a 15 minute intermission between – for an ideal run time of 105 minutes. Where the School narrative and the Office narrative both remained largely intact, the Cult narrative was cut and broken into significant snippets that were peppered throughout the play, inserted for their thematic impact, to create

104 It is clearly indicated within the text that Jane's death is caused by God, who then goes on to immediately profess his regrets to Sam regarding his obsessive treatment of her. This stunning personal growth, if we are to read the play by its narrative progression, is directly caused by murdering Jane.

more of an aesthetic effect than a narrative progression. God's narrative was similarly minimised and reduced to a sub-plot that contained a thematic resonance with the main plot lines and prevented the character God from being a pure *deus ex machina* as he is established as a corporeal entity within the plot rather than emerging suddenly to invoke change.

Despite remaining largely untouched, the School narrative does display one significant and obvious deviation from the original script. After losing an actor during character development the decision was made not to seek a new actor, as an element of this study relies upon the actors involved in the performance having been involved in the training process also. At this point the training process had concluded and there was absolutely no time to give to its continuation. The actor who had to pull out was cast in the roles of Headmaster and Miss Zazel, it appeared that it would be necessary either to add to the list of characters each actor was playing or to cut one of the two characters – to avoid over-burdening the actors. On close reading it became clear that there would be little complication involved in merging Miss Zazel and the Headmaster together to establish the new entity of Ms Zazel, the play's archetypal representation of systemic oppression within the education system, and a passive aggressive, behaviourally schizophrenic, psychopath to boot.

Ms Zazel became one of only five characters in the play that were played exclusively by one actor. These five include Ted¹⁰⁵, Man, God, Carlotta & Brian's Boss. Ted, God, Ms Zazel and Carlotta & Brian's Boss were chosen as single-actor characters to act as a highlight to their status. Each of them is a nexus of power, oppression and obsession within the narrative; limiting each of these to one actor establishes a thematic resonance between them, and in fact an even stronger thematic resonance was established between God, Ms Zazel and Carlotta & Brian's Boss as they were all played by the same single actress. The decision was made not to

105 Later Jane.

have Ted also played by this actress for both narrative and thematic reasons. Firstly, it was necessary that Ted and God have a confrontation at the play's conclusion – whilst this could potentially be achieved by one actor, the decision was made that the staging would be more interesting with two. Secondly, having Ted and God played by different single actors placed the characters in aesthetic and thematic opposition, rather than reflection – it was felt that this would be a better representation of the dynamic between the two characters.

The script, developed as described above, was the version of *The Best Thing!* That was engaged with at the beginning of the blocking and rehearsal process. This represented the blueprint for the final staging and few structural modifications were made after this point, instead modifications appeared in the form of slight shifts in dialogue based on in-rehearsal actor feedback.

Pre-rehearsal Scenic Design

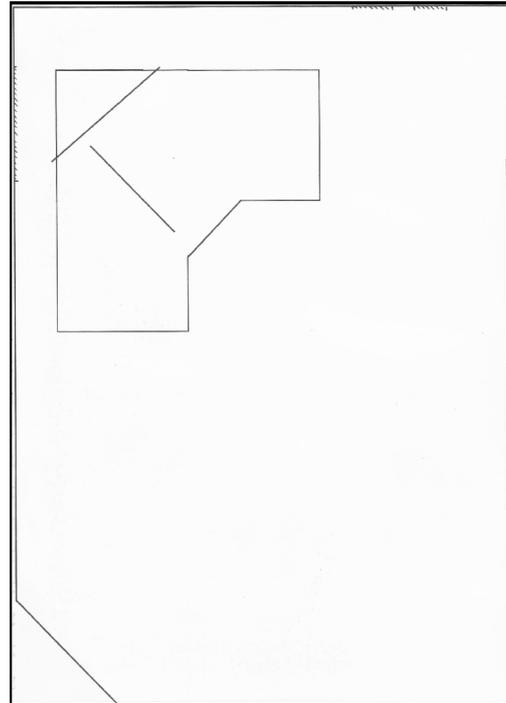
The Best Thing has several key concepts that define staging conventions. Initially apparent is the division of the stage by means of a screen with a door, this represents both a complication and a boon to staging. A clear architectural form for the stage is defined by the presence of features such as this, that establish clear spacial definition. This same device however, adds potentially great complication to technical issues such as sight-lines, light-lines and scenic manipulation (as this divider is described as being moved during the course of the performance several times, people who fill the roles of stage-crew/hands become necessary). Overall it is a useful scenic device despite these complications, that adds to the script's dynamism and expresses a frank observation regarding the fictitious nature of 'performance space'. Related to this is the fact that the two distinct zones that are delineated by the presence of the stage-divide both serve multiple scenic functions throughout the course of the play's

narrative, sometimes simultaneously (at the very beginning of the play one side of the stage can be read both as 'outside' and as 'office' – each interpretation being equally accurate). Such versatility can lead to efficacious scene changes if these can be performed in simultaneity with performance. There is also a third zone implicit within the text, though no specific indication is given regarding its placement. This zone is the location in which 'Goddess', the band, perform. There are several factors that define where they may be placed:

- First there is consideration for the audience, if the band are placed too near the audience then their music will over-ride the audience's ability to hear the play – therefore the band must be distant from the audience.
- As the band are actually in the play, they must also be fully visible to the audience *on-stage*.
- Their position must be such that it is accessible for interaction within the school-dance scene, Ted's diatribes, and the class-room scene towards the end of the play.
- They perform a miniature concert during the play, their location must be appropriate for this type of situation.

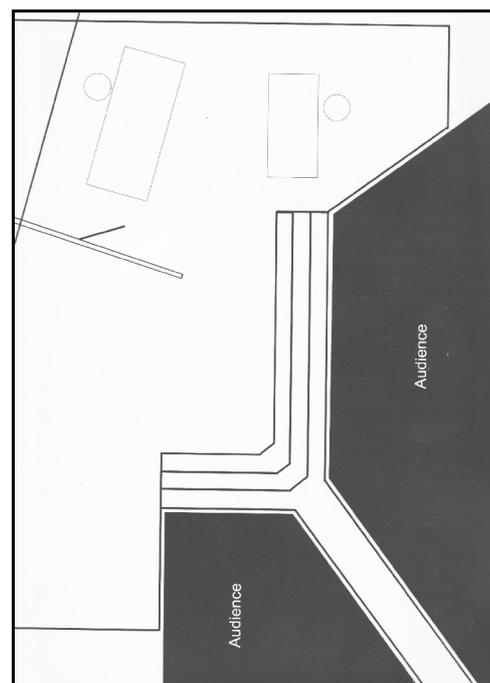
Initial thoughts on stage design had extended from 'most obvious' to least obvious, beginning therefore with a simple end-stage divided in half by a screen. It was immediately apparent that this would be insufficient as it would necessitate the presence of the band actually *in* the stage, creating a nightmare of complications when needing to deal with equipment cables,

aesthetic balance and composition. It also creates difficulty with sight-lines when it comes to the projection of the phrase “I Love You”, along with other projections that may have been desired. As a result it was possible to dismiss this design in its conceptual stage as being ineffective for this particular play's purposes. The idea of staging the play in-the-round was briefly toyed with, however this also was dismissed.



The projected phrase “I Love You” Implies a necessity for, at minimum, one wall in the scenic design (to be projected against). This phrase is of fundamental importance to the play's aesthetic life and as such cannot be omitted.

The possibility of a non-conventional L-shaped design was next investigated. There are several advantages implicit within this stage-shape for *The Best Thing!* in particular. It allows a total of 4 zones on the stage, 5 if a stepped front-stage area is added to the central portion of the stage. This creates room for Goddess without restricting movement on-stage and without their presence intruding into the action of scenes unless it is



desirable for this to happen. The design feature of a front-stage, allows an 'outside' space to be presented, without muddying the locational specificity of the office. The stage divide can be placed such that it doesn't block sight-lines for any of the audience – this in particular is a very useful feature. However, the quantity of audience becomes limited to what can fit within the stage's arms – potentially very limiting – and it is possible that the band could still be placed too closely to the audience with this stage design. There is also a danger implicit with working on a raised stage in a piece that involves a high degree of heightened physical movement set-pieces, as indeed *The Best Thing!* does. Actors (in fact most people) will tend to instinctively avoid the edges of the stage, for fear of misplacing their feet, falling and injuring themselves. One might argue that this instinct is indeed justified. As there are a minimum of two dance sequences within this text, and justification for far more it was decided that such issues should be avoided altogether by staging the show on the New Place Theatre's perfectly adequate floor. Also in deference to the two dance sequences mentioned it was necessitous that there be a maximum of floor-space to magnify the potential for inventive and dynamic choreography.

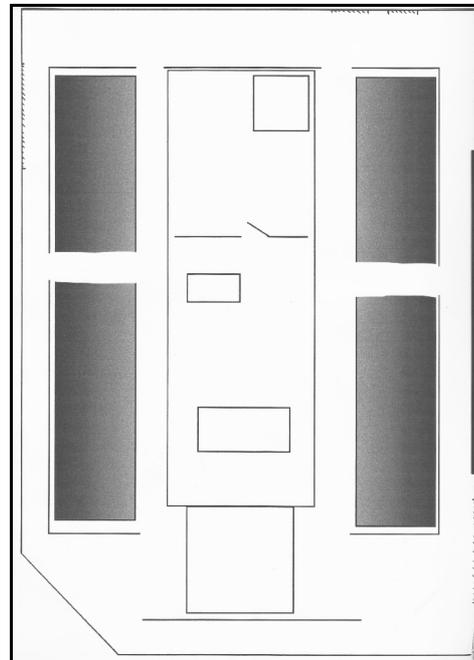
Rationalising these issues required a reconsideration of the relationship that was desired between actor and audience within the performance. Was this a play that hid its artifice behind illusion? No, it wasn't. If anything *The Best Thing!* highlights its artifice, celebrates it. Why then, should this play be staged in a format specifically designed to enhance a sense of illusion? It shouldn't. Theatre in-the-round as a possible staging convention was re-examined, not necessarily as a viable staging option but rather in terms of what features it was that created its interest and utility. The shape itself was one that appealed on an aesthetic level, however the value of the round is more than this. Its theatrical value is that it establishes the audience in relationship with each other as well as with the actors and the play – it is impossible for the audience to forget that they are

witnessing a fiction, because they are in constant visual contact with other witnesses. These witnesses each respond to *all* of the communicative stimuli that surrounds them not simply that which occurs on stage. All focus is directed inwards, towards the heart of the performance and, more importantly, the centre of the experience. This reinforces the desired state of experiential immersion over narrative immersion. Use of this device helps to create a meta-theatrical (or perhaps proto-theatrical) state wherein all those who bear witness are also participant, they are actors, without needing to move from their seat or even to vocalise their thoughts. Their response to the fiction that surrounds them is communicated to those that can observe their reaction by body language and facial expression. This reaction is then parsed through the second witness's sensorial and interpretive equipment, to be communicated on to another witness.

Of course, whilst this appears excellent in terms of thematic communication, it had already been established that other conventions with the script prevented the round from being a viable stage option. Fortunately the round is not the only stage design in which the audience are arrayed such that they may see each other; there are also the thrust stage and the traverse. A thrust stage was dismissed readily as it relegated Goddess to awkward placement at the rear of the stage, or somewhere else out of the way. Traverse on the other hand possessed the immediate benefit of using the New Place Theatre's already existing architecture more effectively and efficiently than any other form that had been considered. The bars normally used for the rigging of lights could equally have been used to rig a projection screen, which in the traverse format would have been naturally aligned with the rigging to begin with. This avoids the jerry-rigging that would be the inevitable result of a diagonal positioning within the room. The traverse form also allowed nearly the entire length of the New Place Theatre to be used in stage design and choreography. This distance meant that placement for an Over-head Projector (to project "I Love You") became

less of a mechanical consideration (throw distance for projection vs. clarity of picture and physical obstruction of light passage etc.), and instead an aesthetic consideration. Natural entrances through the audience could also be considered, rather than actors emerging solely from behind the stage, to create a significantly more experientially immersive environment (which is not to say fictitious). Goddess were able to be positioned at one extreme of the stage, where they formed a wall of sorts, and the projection screen could potentially be mounted above their heads.

There were however, also two readily identifiable problems with the traverse format. First, was that the positioning of audience and stage became quite rigidly formal rather than inclusive (one of the benefits of the round), the second was sight-lines. Specifically, the stage divider returns to being an obstruction. As the traverse format was deemed to be otherwise the most effective that had been considered it became desirable to discover a theatrical means around



this problem rather than to back away from it. On consideration of the text's already abstracted scenic (and narrative) conventions, it became apparent that the stage divide did not actually need to be physically present, merely indicated by the performers. Initial ideas around this ran to the idea of excessively large windows cut into a moveable panel. This would ground the scenic manipulation in a natural explanation which has its benefits, however it did not feel contextually appropriate. Glad wrap and glass walls were also considered, however glad-wrap distorts light (destroying visual clarity) and a large sheet of glass is expensive, dangerous and more likely to

be broken than to *not* be broken. The answer was, of course, an obvious one: as long as the audience knows it's there, then there need not actually be any corporally present divide. The scenic device of a doorway makes this conceit possible. By consistent use of, a fictive (imaginary) door-handle and frame, the idea of a wall connected to it is created. If entrances and exits occur through this fictive frame regularly and each can be readily identified as following the same rules of operation, then the audience will accept the theatrical fiction. This convention also breaks the formality of presentation to a large degree, forcing the audience to creatively engage in the act by using their imaginations to create scenery. The formalist presentation may also be broken by off-setting stage and audience elements (such as by locating the fictive divide off-centre rather than in the precise middle of the stage), creating an asymmetrical aesthetic that is actually more engaging visually anyway.

The traverse allows for a maximum of floor area, whilst maintaining physical and locational clarity. On top of this it potentially heightens the audience's dissociation from narrative immersion in favour of experiential immersion due to its inter-relative format. A traverse structure, with a fictive stage divide formed the premise and basic shape around which *The Best Thing!* was rehearsed. The stage design was ultimately modified during rehearsal and lost elements such as the projector and projection screen along the way, replacing them with conventions that emerged from the particular staging that was devised. This natural mutation is discussed as an element Chapter 2.

APPENDIX II *The Best Thing!* Performance Script

The following is a transcription of *The Best Thing!* This is the final version of the script, worked with in the rehearsals that immediately preceded the play's staging. It should be noted that this version of the script represents a significant structural and character deviation from the version originally delivered by the author, prior to the beginning of the rehearsal process. The reasons for these deviations and the specific details that defined how and where these deviations were made is discussed in Appendix I.

The Best Thing!

Written by Christopher Butler

Directed by Nicholas Sturgess-Monks

September 2012

Characters:

Man (Tom): A man in his home.

PLAYED BY: Sophie Sargent

Jane: A Salesman, with plans for World Domination. Or something.

PLAYED BY: Alice Kennedy

Molly: A young girl, daughter of MAN. She starts at a new strange school.

PLAYED BY: Alice Kennedy, Amanda Wallace

Carlotta: A woman, wife of MAN. She works for a company that manufactures powerful lasers.

PLAYED BY: Alice Kennedy, Charisse De Bruyn

Brian: A perfectionist and Carlotta's underling.

PLAYED BY: Amanda Wallace, Sophie Sargent

Sam: A social worker, loved by God.

PLAYED BY: Amanda Wallace, Sophie Sargent

Gary: A musician disturbed by hallucinations.

PLAYED BY: Charisse De Bruyn, Sam Cameron

God: A powerful being with a crush on Sam.

PLAYED BY: Mary Rinaldi

Ms Zazel: A teacher with an unusual control over her students.

PLAYED BY: Mary Rinaldi

Troy: The top of class in Robotics and Alchemy.

PLAYED BY: Amanda Wallace, Charisse De Bruyn, Sophie Sargent

Other Students (Sandy & Joel): Also go to the School.

PLAYED BY: Alice Kennedy, Charisse De Bruyn, Sophie Sargent

Killtronia: Troy's robotics assignment, a killing machine with a flair for dance.

PLAYED BY: Alice Kennedy, Amanda Wallace, Mary Rinaldi

J: Concert-going stoner, friend of Troy.

PLAYED BY: Amanda Wallace, Charisse De Bruyn, Sophie Sargent

Goddess: A band who sell out and play the soundtrack to this play.

Their members include Gary and two others.

PLAYED BY: Christopher Allie, Deborah Lanning, James Graham.

ACT I

Scene 1.

THE FIRST APOSTLE

Jane (Allie) & Tom (Sophie), Molly (Amanda), Carlotta
(Charisse):

ACTORS OFF: Charisse

Unit 1.

A MAN sits in a chair, Stage Right doing crosswords. He does this as the audience sits. When the audience are seated, JANE, a smartly dressed woman knocks on the door. It should not appear as though she is entering from the office.

Unit 2.

The MAN gets up and answers the door.

JANE: Good afternoon! Jane Berringer, U-Spend. How are you mate?

MAN: Oh, I'm fine, how are you?

JANE: I'm fantastic, thanks for asking. Now, it's Tom, isn't it?

MAN: Yeah, how did you know my-

JANE: Haha! I work for U-Spend, Tom. We're committed to your community.

They shake hands uncomfortably, for far too long.

Unit 3.

MAN: Oh, you want money, do you?

JANE: Oh, Tom, that's not what you think of me is it? (laughs)
You're a real champ! You'd love to *just* write me a cheque wouldn't you?

MAN: So, what do you want?

Unit 4.

JANE: Do you mind if I- can I come inside for a bit?

MAN: (*As JANE steps inside*) sure.. (*spin around, circle*)

JANE: I just want what we all want, Tom. You can help you know, Tom. It won't cost you any money.

Unit 5.

MAN: No money?

JANE: I know money is a big concern. It's huge. And everyone wants your money too, don't they Tom? (*sitting*) Well not me, Tom. I want a world that works. A community that works.

(*beat*)

JANE: Pollution, poverty, famine. War, disease, hatred. Just think, Tom. Just think Tom.

Unit 6.

MAN: (*quick sigh*) Look- U-Spend, sure... I trust you guys. I'll give ya a couple hundred bucks. (*Rifling through cabinet*)

JANE: Tom! Money's the problem here! I wouldn't ask you for gasoline if the world was on fire, now would I?

MAN: Well, no. (*they switch places*)

JANE: No Sirree! (*pause*) All these people, everywhere – Everywhere, Tom. All thinking about money, their money. Money, money, money, money, money, MONEY! Here I am, at your door, ready to change your life, ready to save the world, and you just want to know how much it will cost. No, Tom. I'm sorry. Cost isn't a real problem. We don't need your money, Tom – we need action. One action, Tom. The real problem, you see – The issue – it's not money, Tom. It's people.

Unit 7.

JANE: Too many people. It's never. Been. This. Bad. War, poverty, over-crowding; too many people vying for the same bits of dirt. Too many people... We can't throw money at this problem, we need something else. (*MAN fumbles through his wallet nervously, JANE reacts to this with violence*) Really, Tom, put your credit cards away. I don't want you to spend anything. Ever. Never again.

MAN: (*stammering, he's guessed*) What are you talking about?

Unit 8.

JANE: Kill yourself, Tom.

MAN: I- What?! Look, absolutely not! No! Of ... of course not!

Unit 9.

MAN: I have a wife! (*beat*) and kids for crying out loud!

JANE: Exactly, Tom. Three kids. You've more than replaced yourself, Tom. These franchises, Tom ... you have been busy.

MAN: But-

JANE: If they can't survive without you... Well, then that's even better, Isn't it?

Unit 10.

MAN: Why don't you bloody kill yourself if it's such a good idea you joker!

JANE: Mate, friend, champ. (*pause*) If I had killed myself yesterday then your neighbours would still be alive right now. (*hovering over, too close*) (*forceful*) Please don't ask me to leave, Tom.

Unit 11.

MAN: No... I don't believe you...

JANE: Yes, Tom. You do. You know it, I know it, we all know it. Nobody wants to be the one though. Nobody wants to pull the trigger. Trust me, Tom. *(sitting on his lap)*

Unit 12.

JANE: I know about your guilt. I know. The bullies when you cut your knee. When you cried. It's all justified, Tom. It's fair. You know it is.

Unit 13.

JANE: I'm going to give you my gun, OK Tom? *(she draws it)*
Please, Tom, don't ask me to leave. *(gets up off lap. Confronting speech standing in front of sitting)*

MAN) *(pause)* Use it, Tom. Do the right thing.

Unit 14.

MAN *is confused, weirded out, afraid. Unsure, he points the gun at JANE.*

(beat)

JANE: I asked you not to do that. *(firmly)*

He points it away.

Unit 15.

JANE: You're a bad person, Tom. Trust me.

MAN *contemplates, silently, slowly he comes to a decision. He shoots the gun at his head. His skull is clearly still in one piece and nothing has happened. He looks, confused, at JANE.*

JANE: It worked. You're dead. (*MAN chokes and falls back dead*). (*Jane gathers stuff, walks off with a pleased expression*)

Unit 16.

JANE takes her gun back from the corpse before leaving. She casually takes Tom's wallet as well.

Unit 17.

Lights back up. The scene is unchanged. MOLLY comes onstage.

MOLLY: Dad? Dad! Oh my god! Oh my god!

CARLOTTA comes onstage. (*rushing*)

CAR: (*Over the top*) Tom! Christ, how could this be happening?

CARLOTTA and MOLLY hold each other, in grief, for a little while. Then CARLOTTA lets go, suddenly cold and distant.

Unit 18.

CAR: Molly, you're a lovely girl, but raising the youngest child from my newly deceased second husband's previous marriage simply isn't what I need to advance my career.

MOLLY: (*empty*) Oh... okay... (*then, to herself*) Dad...

CAR: Oh, look at the time. Call your mother, dear. I must get over to work. (*storm off dominantly*)

THEME SONG

Neutrals (Allie, Mary) come on-stage and clear it, Sophie and Amanda exit.

Scene 02.**PROFESSIONAL DEATH**

Brian (Sophie) & Carlotta (Charisse, then Allie) :

OFF ACTORS: Allie Amanda Charisse, Amanda, Charisse,
Mary

Unit 01.

BRIAN, finishes tidying a desk and gives a sigh of satisfaction.

Unit 02.

At that moment CARLOTTA enters through the door and he turns to greet her he hears the door slam. Neutrals (Amanda, Mary) set up stage for Sam's Office after CARLOTTA's entrance.

CAR: Oh Brian. (*STOMP*) I hate how you've organised my desk!

BRIAN: What -what would you like me to cha-

CAR: Don't argue. This isn't even your job. Finish your spreadsheets, (*switch sides of the room*). Is my coffee ready?

BRIAN: Absolutely, Miss Mayhew. (*Both work at desks in tense silence*)

Unit 03.

BRIAN hands CARLOTTA her coffee and rushes to do his spreadsheets. CARLOTTA sips her coffee, she doesn't like it. She tips it out and throws the cup in the bin. She leaves for a new cup of coffee.

Unit 04.

BRIAN talks to his spreadsheets. He draws on a clear sheet that is being projected on the wall so we see what comes up as he draws. Interesting patterns.

BRIAN: The desk was perfect. How could her standards be higher than mine? I... I understand everything! These spreadsheets are perfect, no-one doubts that! What can't I... ? Her desk...

BRIAN spins around room. He looks at her desk like it is an unsolvable math problem. BRIAN fucks up a spreadsheet a little and throws it away.

BRIAN: I can never be perfect... *(Slouching back into desk chair) (as he fills out his spreadsheets) Zero, zero, zero... zero... (he draws a large dot at the zero-point that connects the x axis to the y.)*

He writes 'I LOVE YOU' in big letters across the floor.

Unit 05.

CARLOTTA returns, she is now played by ALLIE. BRIAN hands her the letter opener, knowing she'll need it. She accepts it wordlessly as this perfectly attentive behaviour is the status quo.

CAR: *(very pleased) Brian, (Brian hovers ready to pounce up from his chair) Brian, you seem upset. (pounces forward in a rush of communication)*

BRIAN: Very sorry, Miss Mayhew. The spreadsheets will be complete before the deadline, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: See that they are. Do them twice. *(she says while leaving again) (Both exit)*

(Goddess playing piano as Gary with Sam sitting at piano)

BRIAN and CARLOTTA office cleared by neutrals (Amanda, Allie & Mary)

Scene 3.**I LOVE YOU**

Sam (Sophie), Gary (Charisse) & God (Mary):

ACTORS OFF: Allie, Amanda

Unit 01.

'I LOVE YOU' is written across the stage. SAM is in her office, listening to GARY, a dishevelled looking man, play a beautiful piece on the piano.

SAM: Thanks for coming in, Gary. Now, remember, if you have any more hallucinations, come see me and we'll manage them together. In the meantime, keep focussing on your piano, OK? The piece you showed me today was beautiful.

GARY: OK missus. I mean, Sam.

SAM: OK, great. I'll out with you.

Unit 02.

They walk through the door to Stage Left.

GARY: Ummm, Missus? God's written you a message... with dust...

"I LOVE YOU."

(beat)

SAM: Oh, so he has. Thank you, Gary.

GARY: Bye missus. I mean, Sam.

SAM: See you later.

Unit 03.

Actors in Neutral (Allie & Amanda) clear the stage behind SAM.

SAM: I was worried for a second when he told me he saw writing. But it really is there, written with dust. A message from God.

Unit 04.

SAM stops, sensing a presence.

SAM: Who are you?

GOD: *(From offstage)* Uh... God. Hi!

SAM: And what do you think you're doing, hm? *(spins around to find the voice)*

GOD: You're so amazing. *(beat)* I love you, I want to be with you! I want you to love me back so much it aches!

Unit 05.

SAM: Right. OK well, that's awfully sweet of you, really. But, I don't know anything about you. I, mean, sure – I've heard stories... but, well, I don't really know you do I?

GOD: But I LOVE you, Sam. You are my favourite part of all of creation. I would do anything for you!

SAM: Really? Anything?

GOD: Well...

SAM: ...can you tell the future?

GOD: *(awkward)* I was hoping you wouldn't ask about that.

Unit 06.

SAM has a small weird chuckle to herself.

SAM: Hey, look, you seem nice and all but we've only just met.
- Let's just slow down and be friends, yeah?

(Creepy Music)

Actors in Neutral (Allie, Amanda, Mary)

Scene 4.**NEW GIRL'S A SLOW GIRL!**

Ms Zazel (Mary), Molly (Amanda, Allie), Troy (Sophie, Amanda) & Class (Charisse & Allie, Charisse & Sophie):

Unit 01.

Students walk in casually and sit down. First TROY, then CLASS 1, then CLASS 3. MOLLY & MS ZAZEL are last on stage. MOLLY stands at the front of the class with MS ZAZEL, an imposing figure in a black gown, like Darth Vader, might wear.

MS Z: *(walks in in a weird position with her nose in the air)*
Molly will be joining us this term. Please make sure she fits in. Say “hi” to Molly, class.

CLASS: Hi Molly

MS Z: Very good – you’ll enjoy it in this class, Molly. These children are very good.

Unit 02.

MISS Z: Right! *(all stand)* You shall recite the school rules and codes of conduct *(all stand on their desks)*

Music starts.

MISS ZAZEL has absolute control of her students. The slightest of gestures on her part elicits a perfect response. By gesturing alone we get the impression that she is almost conjuring the words from out of the students’ mouths. They speak perfectly in response to her prompts.

CLASS: Obey Your Thirst, Obey Your Teacher! Just Do It.

CLASS: Schoolwork, I'm Lovin' It!

CLASS: Excellence.

(awkward beat)

Unit 03.

MISS Z: Right! The code of conduct!

Still controlled by MISS ZAZEL, the students stand up and deliver parts of this speech, changing speakers at random times, even mid-sentence. Emotion, delivery, volume, speed, number of speakers and so on can change drastically from part to part, as long as it is clearly and entirely in deference to MISS ZAZEL's controlling influence. There can be one, a few, or many speakers at a time. During the delivery of this piece the actors switch costumes and characters between each other. By the end of the piece the characters are as follows: MISS ZAZEL (Mary), MOLLY (Allie), TROY (Amanda), CLASS (Sophie & Charisse)

CLASS: In the classroom obey, work hard and wait to be called on. In the classroom, wait to be called on, work hard and be obedient. *(moving around on desk tops. Three change their uniforms while one recites rules)* Bullying in any form is to meet the regulations laid out in the school charter. All mockery is limited to the victim's most obviously recognisable flaw and all physical violence is to be committed against only children demonstrably less popular than the aggressor.

All social groupings are to be clearly differentiated from one another and must be easily visually identifiable by all staff. The

requirements for any group are the same; one leader, one lackey.
(*moving around table tops*)

School Spirit is mandatory. A genuine interest in sports is mandatory. Participation in voluntary, extra-curricular bonding-exercises- is mandatory.

Above all; everyone is equal. We are one. Respect yourself, respect your school.

Unit 04.

MISS Z: Okay, now, “Hands In Ice”

This is a command phrase that results in the students immediately sitting cross-legged in rows, clasping their hands together and resting their clasped hands in the crook of their crossed legs. MOLLY follows.

MISS Z: Very good. -Molly, a little slow that time. Now! The first lesson today is to practice the alphabet. The first seven letters are A! B! C! D! E! F! G! (*each letter is accompanied by a big gesture of some sort*) Teach Your Partner!

The students all turn to face each other in pairs and repeat the letters, with their gestures. MOLLY joins in as best she can.

CLASS: A! B! C! D! E! F! G! (*all stand and show their shapes*)

MISS Z: Thank you, class. Thank Your Partner.

Some kind of quick synchronised handshake is performed, along with the next line.

CLASS: Thank you, thank you, thank you, pardner. (*shake hands and chant*)

Unit 05.

MOLLY: But Miss, I already know my full alphabet.

MISS Z: Oh no! Oh dear Molly, you've spoken out of turn. I'll have to put a tick in the sad square now.

CLASS: (*singsongy*) Oh no, oh no, oh no, in the sad square we must go!

Unit 06.

MISS Z: It's not important what you do or don't know, Molly. We know how the brain works here. We teach your WHOLE brain here and this is what works. (*happily*) Your Dad just died didn't he?

MOLLY: Yes.

MISS Z: Do you think he'd prefer the sad square-
The CLASS boo and hiss like filthy animals.

MISS Z: Or the happy square?

The CLASS cheer uproariously, shout "Hallelujah" or "Glory! Glory!" or something else evangelical, throw confetti and then neatly return to their rows, Hand In Ice.

MOLLY: The happy square?

MISS Z: Hm?

MOLLY: The happy square.

MISS Z: And say that one more time for me please.

MOLLY: The happy square.

MISS Z: Excellent! So, we won't need to speak out of turn anymore.

MOLLY: No, miss.

Unit 07.

MISS Z: The next 19 letters are H! I! J! K! L! M! N! O! P! Q!
R! S! T! U! V! W! X! Y! Z!

The same as before, big gestures accompany each letter.

MISS Z: Teach Your Partner.

The same as before, the children turn to face each other in pairs and repeat the letters and their gestures, somehow MOLLY is able to do this almost in unison.

CLASS: H! I! J! K! L! M! N! O! P! Q! R! S! T! U! V! W! X!
Y! Z!

MISS Z: Thank Your Partner.

The same handshake accompanies the same line. MOLLY is a quick learner.

CLASS: Thank you, thank you, thank you, pardner.

Unit 08.

MISS Z: Very good class. *(all scramble to their chairs)* Now, for some more self-directed learning, we'll pick up where we left off with our gene splicing lesson yesterday. Molly, if you partner up with Sandy you can learn as you go.

Ms Zazel attempts to manipulate the class into the correct seats, this breaks down into an extended moment of abstract movement with Ms Zazel delivering dialogue over top

(SPACEY MUSIC)

MISS Z: Gene splicing involves cutting out part of a gene's DNA and adding in new DNA. The cutting is not done with any sort of blade, but with restriction enzymes, called "chemical scissors."
Don't run with chemical scissors!

Unit 09.

When suddenly a burst of smoke and a loud bang come from one of the chemical baths. The student working on that bath (SANDY) chokes on the smoke and dies.

MISS Z: Oh dear, an improper reactant was used. Clearly Sandy wasn't doing what the rest of you were doing. And now she's dead. Tsk tsk tsk. I'll have to put another tick in the sad square.

CLASS: (*jumps up on the desk, performing synchronised actions*) Oh no, oh no, oh no, in the sad square we must go!

Unit 10.

MOLLY: (*horrified*) -is she really dead?!

MISS Z: (*reproachingly*) Molly, how do you feel about the sad square, really?

MOLLY: Well, I-

Unit 11.

The CLASS interrupts with even worse animalistic booing and hissing than before.

CLASS: Slow girl! New girl's a slow girl, new girl's a slow girl!

CLASS 1: "I already know my full alphabet."

Silence. (Students drag off dead girl)

Actors as Neutral (Allie, Amanda, Charisse) clear the stage.

Scene 05.**PICNIC**

God (Mary), Sam (Sophie)

Actors Off: Allie, Amanda, Charisse

Unit 01.

GOD enters the stage (played by MARY) with a delicious cake.

Offers it to SAM.

SAM: It... it doesn't have any meat in it does it?¹⁰⁶

GOD: No, ah... should it?

SAM: No...

Unit 02.

SAM: Mmm, this cake is good! Did you really make this?

GOD: Yeah.

SAM: What's it made with?

GOD: Just... dust, actually.

SAM: Really?

GOD: Yeah.

SAM: Everything?

GOD: Uh-huh. Even this- (*pinching oddly at his own hair*)

SAM: That's pretty good! I mean- you don't look dusty at all!

GOD: (*laughs*) Thanks. You look great.

Unit 03.

SAM: Oh, thanks. (*pause*) So, um, what kind of music do you like?

GOD: I, well ... Wine? (*he brandishes a bottle of wine*)

SAM: Just water, thanks. (*GOD, with slight disappointment, pours water from the wine bottle.*) What do you like to... do..?

¹⁰⁶This line was added during rehearsal. The actor playing the character was a vegetarian, and in fact did ask that the cake not have any meat in it – we all found this quite absurd, as did she herself immediately after saying it. And so, the line made its way into the actual play.

GOD: Well, this picnic is really nice. It's my first one, too.

SAM: Have you got any other friends?

GOD: No. I really, really like you though.

SAM: ... political beliefs? ...any?

GOD: Um, I- ...do you like politics? Do you like talking about it?

SAM: (*getting cagey*) Do you know who Adolph Hitler was?

GOD: I do. I know an awful lot.

SAM: ...Do you think he was a good, or a bad guy?

GOD: Most people don't like him.

Beat.

Unit 04.

SAM: Do you have any interest in humanity at all?

GOD: Yes! I LOVE you Sam!

SAM: Well, what about all the rest? It's all your creation.

GOD: To be honest, I don't really remember creating the world. I have dreams about it sometimes - if I choose to sleep - but all my memories before a certain point are a bit hazy. The only thing I really remember before falling in love with you is being woken up by all these voices talking to me. Human voices with joys and sorrows, living here.

SAM: Prayers.

GOD: Yeah.

SAM: Did you answer any?

GOD: Mm ... ? ... Nah.

SAM: Fair enough. We'd probably be a lot worse off if every prayer were answered than none at all. See, you're nice enough. But you don't know you love me. You haven't even spoken with anyone else. You seem to think I'm special, unique. Like I'm different. I'm not.

Unit 05.

GOD: So, then, what can I do?

SAM: Whatever you want, really. Just something. Anything.
Live for a bit.

GOD stands up slowly and walks away with some hesitation.

Scene 06.

THE U-SPEND WORLD

Jane (Allie):

ACTORS OFF: Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie

Unit 01.

JANE: *(standing staunchly atop a podium)* Everything is going perfectly. People are becoming feeble-minded and weak. We've championed fast food's popularity to an all-time high. Our patrons pay us for the benefits of addiction and ill-health. There is a new famine, ladies and gentlemen, and the sufferers are obese. Their bodies and their minds are the tranquillised Canvasses of Oppression. And Oppress them we shall. *(strong hand gesture)*

Unit 02.

JANE: Our factories block out the sun. Our employees sell us their waking lives to buy useless, flimsy, brittle and toxic baubles and trinkets and snacks!

AND THEY LOVE US FOR IT!

(steps down from the podium and walks around, touching faces and sitting on laps of the audience, giving them candy) We are not stigmatised by our success.

Unit 03.

The urge for rebellion has been anticipated and catered for. Goddess, the band I'm sure you all know and despise are taking the world by storm.

JANE gestures towards Goddess.

They are the most popular and controversial band on the planet and have happily sold their souls to us.

JANE proudly brandishes a contract.

Unit 04.

(walks slowly but strongly back up the steps to the podium) It has been a pleasure to be a part of this ambitious and powerful organisation. Your progressive and empowering management style has shown me the value of taking initiative. I am pleased to announce my newest project to you. I have developed my personality and my identity into a powerful -and marketable- tool. Using this vehicle I will be starting my very own Cult of Personality. A mind control cult. *(body gesture)*

They will commune and consume.

They will work, they will buy.

Their homes, families, dreams, thoughts – their entire lives! – will

be our possessions.

(proclaimed with joy)

This is the U-Spend WORLD!

Ugly and arrogant guffawing, cheering and laughing.

Scene 07.**HOTDOGS**

God (Mary), J (Amanda, then Sophie), Troy (Charisse, then Amanda) & Jane (Allie):

Unit 01.

(Band playing a live song)

GOD is speaking with a small group, all bopping along to the music of Goddess. One boy, TROY, is recognisable as a student from MOLLY'S school. They are passing around a joint.

GOD: You guys like this band?

J: Yeah man, they're awesome. Listen...

GOD closes his eyes, bops along for a bit, smiles.

J: Like 'em?

GOD: Yeah, Yeah! I do, *(bopping in enjoyment)* these guys are great!

TROY: What other bands do you like dude?

GOD: Mm, no other bands.

J: ...heh. I know what you mean. When I'm listening to Goddess, they're- they're- they do it all for me man. I could just listen to nothing else. Shit, they could play here more often if they could sell more tickets. Problem is, we need a bigger venue.

TROY: Yeah.

Unit 02.

GOD: I never thought about it. *(pause)* But... Yeah! Absolutely!

They all begin dancing immediately and GODDESS plays something punchy in celebration of their bigger venue.

The crowd and GOD dance for a while.

Unit 03.

TROY: (*puffs joint*) Man... sweet.

J: Yeah. Bro. I, am hungry. Hot. Dogs.

GOD heads back to his group

GOD: (*still amped from dancing*) Hot dogs? Yeah!

Neutrals (Allie & Sophie) bring hotdogs on stage, give to cast & audience.

J: Oh man, awesome! (*rhetorically*) Dude, where are these from?

J passes the hot dogs around and they tuck in.

TROY: Life is sweet, man. (*sitting down*)

Unit 04.

J: Remember the hot dogs at school? They're shit, man. Not like these. Shit. They're still cool though. Like, when we have talent shows; we just play in our bands, don't go to classes and eat bad hot dogs all day, yeah.

GOD: Oh, awesome.

TROY: I wish we still had something like that at my school man. We've got no talent shows anymore.

GOD: No way, dancing is awesome! Every school should have a talent show! ...right?

J: Yeah, yeah- and dances, man.

GOD: YES. *(he slaps his hands on his thighs emphatically. The Universe Changes Slightly.)*

Unit 05.

(SOME KINDA WEIRD MUSIC)

The actors change characters: GOD (Mary), TROY (Amanda), J (Sophie), JANE (Allie).

Unit 06.

(beat)

J: *(puffs the joint)* So...Hey, um, Troy. Isn't the talent show coming up soon?

TROY: Hey... yeah... dude- that's right.

J: What are you going to do?

TROY: We've all been making robots. I'll have mine put on a dance routine.

J: You go to a weird school.

GOD: That sounds great, Troy. Dancing. Yeah! I really liked dancing. And! Hot dogs! *(thinks)* And Hitler, Hitler was a... a dick!

Unit 07.

GOD gets up and goes dancing again, invigorated by his newfound personality.

J: He was pretty rad.

They continue to sit and chill. Shortly, JANE enters, polishing the nose of her pistol.

JANE: Hey guys, *(gestures to GODDESS)* amazing, right?

TROY: Definitely, man.

JANE holsters her pistol and shakes their hands one by one and gives out some little pamphlets and starts chatting with J, X and TROY, but the music gets really loud so we cant' hear their conversation. They walk offstage together while talking.

Neutrals (Mary, Charisse) drag in table for talent show, pushes actors offstage.

(Band stops)

(Gary moves to piano for Ballet music)

Scene 08.

TALENT SHOW

Troy (Sophie), Killtronia (Allie), Ms Zazel (Mary), Class (Charisse) & Molly (Amanda):

Unit 01.

CLASS 1 is the first on stage, she counts to 10 very poorly. TROY walks on-stage accompanied by KILLTRONIA. MS ZAZEL enters and pushes CLASS 1 offstage. The CLASS 1 moves briskly to the opposite end of the stage with a pout.

MS Z: And what will Killtronia be doing for us this afternoon, Troy?

TROY: I've programmed a dance routine into it. It's more of a killing machine, but she dances too.

MS Z: Well, I'm sure we're in for a treat. For those who don't know, Troy is top of robotics here. And Alchemy if I'm not mistaken?

TROY nods

MS Z: Well, take it away; Troy!

Unit 02.

The band plays and KILLTRONIA dances some kind of killing-machine ballet. When she finishes, everyone applauds.

Unit 03.

MS Z: Brilliant Troy, thank you very much! And speaking of killing machines, we have ordered in a fantastic amount of extremely sophisticated lasers for our Robotics Lab this week. (*knowingly*) I'm sure Killtronia will be most excited.

Unit 04.

MS Z: Well, we've had a lot of great acts today; everything from counting to ten- thank you, Joel- to creating a mini black hole here on stage. We have just one more act before a winner is announced. (*others walk awkwardly offstage*) Our newest student (*quickly checks her notes*) Molly will be singing a very beautiful song for us. Thank you, Molly.

Unit 05.

MOLLY cannot imagine why she would have signed up to do this. She walks to the performance area. GODDESS start playing and she sings, very softly so that she won't be heard. This song could be anything, possibly a nursery rhyme.

(BaaBaa Black Sheep song)

Baa baa black sheep have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir three bags full:

Two for the Master; one for the Dame.

None for the little girl who lives down the lane

(Repeat x3, quieter each time)

MOLLY stands there mortified. It is an awkward silence. MS ZAZEL throws her off the stage.

Unit 06.

MS Z: You may run off stage embarrassed now Molly.

The band play her offstage as MOLLY runs away, embarrassed. There are a few cheers from the crowd. MOLLY bumps into the intimidating KILLTRONIA. They have a moment and look into each other's eyes.

Unit 07.

MS Z: Thank you Molly... And the winner is... *(pulls a name from an envelope)* Goddess. That seems very strange.

(BAND STARTS PLAYING SONG)

It doesn't seem strange to anyone else, they cheer unrestrainedly, Goddess start playing again.

INTERMISSION 15 minutes

Audience are invited to help themselves to Kool Aid, hot dogs and pop corn by Ms Zazel

ACT II

Scene 09.

DANCE

Molly (Amanda), Ms Zazel (Mary), Troy (Sophie), Killtronia (Allie), Class (Charisse), Goddess:

Unit 01.

Mz Zazel shoos the audience back to their seats.

Whole Stage. The School Dance. Disco lighting. Goddess dressed nice, playing something romantic. Everybody is dolled up. There is a table with some red punch in a bowl and some cups.

MS Z: Hello Molly. You look lovely tonight.

MOLLY: Thank you. I don't feel too good though. I haven't spoken to anyone all night. I'm still embarrassed about the Talent Show.

MS Z: I bet. *(pause)* I don't know what to do at Talent Shows either. Certainly not Dances. I can't remember the last time we had a dance here... Who knows what will happen? And with you here? ...a new student... Clearly unpopular...

MOLLY: OK, I'm going to go ... hmm, get some punch ...
(weirded out)

MISS Z: *(distractedly)* It's Kool Aid...

Unit 02.

MOLLY walks to the punch table, grabs some red Kool Aid. Then leans against the table.

TROY: Hey, Molly. You look nice tonight.

MOLLY: Oh, thanks. You do, too.

TROY: Thanks. Everyone scrubbed up well. Even Killtronia's having a good time.

MOLLY: (*Eyeing the robot up*) Mmm ... She is! She looks great, too.

TROY: Hey thanks. Do you like her dress? She made me get her a red one. She says it's the colour of passion.

MOLLY: Yeah, it's really nice.

Unit 03.

Some STUDENTS pour the red Kool-Aid all over MOLLY.

TROY was perhaps not aware this was going to happen, or he was a reluctant participant.

(some parts in unison, some parts one at a time)

TROY: There you go! Now you look just like her!

CLASS 1: New girl's a slow girl, new girl's a slow girl!

Unit 04.

DEMON POSSESSION DANCE.

Neutrals (Amanda, Charisse, Mary) clear stage.

Scene 10.

SILENT SCREAM

Brian (Sophie, Sophie & Amanda, Amanda, Sophie, Sophie & Amanda) & Carlotta (Allie, Charisse), Jane (Allie), CEO (Mary)

Unit 01.

BRIAN is at his desk as the scene begins. CARLOTTA enters and assumes a recognisable position on her desk. BRIAN interprets this immediately to mean she requires a shoe buffing and moves to do so. BRIAN performs a detailed polishing of CARLOTTA's shoes.

CAR: Did you finish that report?

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: Did you vacuum after the cleaning lady left?

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew.

Unit 02.

CAR: This company will not operate if everything is not done exactly right. Your job ensures the company runs smoothly. So, if it doesn't run smoothly, you may as well not have a job at all.

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew. (*beat, more office busywork*)

Unit 03.

CAR: Did you make my lunch to my exact specifications?

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew, exact.

CAR: And your own?

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew. Exactly to your specifications, Miss Mayhew.

Unit 04.

CAR: You're incredibly privileged, Brian. This company produces the most sophisticated lasers in the world. We expect a lot from our employees.

BRIAN: Thank you.

CAR: Who on Earth are you thanking, Brian?

BRIAN: Th-th-thank you, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: That's never happened before. See that it doesn't affect your conduct.

Unit 05.

They go back to doing stage-business-office-busywork and the abrasive music from the start of the scene starts up again. BRIAN screams in the cacophony of the music and the actor playing him is

replaced by AMANDA. and CARLOTTA doesn't notice. The music stops and BRIAN screams again and CARLOTTA still doesn't notice.

Unit 06.

Then, seemingly taken over, BRIAN drops to his knees and goes to CARLOTTA.

BRIAN: I love you! It will never be enough, but everything I am is utterly yours. Miss Mayhew!

(tense pause)

CAR: Thank you, Brian. That's... lovely. This second breach of conduct will result in reduced pay, you are aware.

BRIAN: *(stupidly)* Miss Mayhew.

CARLOTTA points to BRIAN's desk insistently. BRIAN gives her a pleading look. No, he must obey. BRIAN removes his desk from the stage. BRIAN is gone only briefly. When BRIAN leaves CARLOTTA smiles, stands and exits through the office door. She returns momentarily, played by CHARISSE, she bears a messy pile of papers.

Unit 07.

BRIAN'S papers and such are on the floor.

CAR: *(handing BRIAN a messy pile of papers)* Brian, fill these out in triplicate. It will be quite boring. You must do these perfectly.

BRIAN: Absolutely, Miss Mayhew, happy to.

CAR: Good. We shipped a record number of lasers last week. Did you file the invoice numbers, graph the new projection trends and recalculate the financial analysis algorithms?

BRIAN: Absolutely, Miss Mayhew. This morning. Thank you Miss Mayhew.

CAR: Put up the figures.

Unit 08.

BRIAN jots one final thing on the paperwork he had been working on, apparently completing it just in that moment. He happily jumps up and posts up what he had been working on. CARLOTTA is visibly upset by BRIAN'S good mood.

CAR: Do you enjoy working here?

BRIAN: I love y- I love working for you Miss Mayhew, absolutely.

CAR: Yes. Well. You're hardly subtle about that are you? I know you love me Brian, and it's inappropriate.

BRIAN: Sorry Miss Mayhew.

CAR: You'll do as you're told.

BRIAN: Absolutely Miss Mayhew.

CAR: Stop this love business at once.

A stroke of cruel genius strikes CARLOTTA

CAR: In fact, I'd like you to hate me, Brian. And do hate me properly, you understand? Immediately.

(Beat)

Unit 09.

BRIAN: *(during the next three words the actor playing BRIAN is replaced by SOPHIE)* Yes. Miss. Mayhew. *(seething, he really does hate her)* What a horrible thing for you to do to me, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: *(happy and smugly satisfied)* Have you finished putting up the figures?

BRIAN: No. Miss Mayhew. At once. Miss Mayhew.

CAR: Mm.

BRIAN goes about his office work in silent fury while the scene hangs, accompanied by tense music. There is a big contrast in his body language to how it was before. Now he's angry and miserable, whereas before he was thrilled to be performing menial tasks. He is working through severe exhaustion.

Unit 10.

He falls asleep on his work.

Unit 11.

Lights up on JANE's podium.

JANE: Pleasure ... pain? It's natural – human! – to lust for pain and cruelty. ... because it frees us from responsibility. But you are everything! Every problem has its solution in people! The most significant thing about life is that we share it.

Unit 12.

You! YES! You, all of you! Each one of you is special and important. YOU with me here tonight have been chosen! Everything you've got, everything you've ever had –everything worth having – has required pain. Why do people avoid and hide from pain, when it is simply the necessary fuel that powers the machine of fulfilment? You will be empowered by pain! I will give you pain. Guaranteed! Mankind is approaching a spiritual evolution and you lucky few will all be prepared!

Unit 13.

JANE: (*Softer. Calm.*) We are the pinnacle of creation and have Never. Been. So close. To enlightenment as now!

They cheer and keep cheering as JANE shouts her last lines over the cheering.

Welcome to your world, your future! A complete system upgrade!

Unit 14.

BRIAN wakes up and continues working.

CAR: You look absolutely terrible, Brian.

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: Awful.

BRIAN: I'm sick with my undiluted hatred for you, Miss Mayhew.

Unit 15.

CAR: (*pleased*) I see. (*CARLOTTA casually picks up some of BRIAN's work.*)

CAR: These spreadsheets are... (*searching for the right word*)

There is a tense pause, BRIAN stops cleaning the floor and is still. CARLOTTA does not finish her sentence. She looks quizzically at BRIAN.

Unit 16.

The following line is delivered by AMANDA and SOPHIE. Each actor portrays differing elements of BRIAN's overall behaviour:

BRIAN: These spreadsheets are PERFECT!

He says this while leaping to his feet and sends paper and office supplies flying everywhere. BRIAN looks at CARLOTTA. BRIAN is surprised at himself. CARLOTTA is shocked. She does not give an order. BRIAN goes back to cleaning the same spot on the floor.

Unit 17.

CAR: Brian... (*she picks the desk up slowly, BRIAN makes no move to help.*)

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew?

CAR: You can- if you like you can- Can you still love me,
Brian?

BRIAN: Are- are you ordering me to?

CAR: No.

Beat.

Unit 18.

BRIAN: ...I still do I think? I don't think I ever really stopped.

CAR: Yes you did. You did just what you were told. So, love me
again, Brian. Adore me. Give me everything.

BRIAN takes her hand.

CAR: *(she does not pull away)* Start by cleaning up this mess.

BRIAN: Yes, Miss Mayhew!

*He starts to happily pick up the scattered papers and office
supplies from CARLOTTA's desk. Just as all seems settled, their Boss
emerges – played by MARY.*

Unit 19.

BOSS: You can cut that out, it's over. I've liquidated the
company, you've been made redundant.

BRIAN & CAR: What?

BOSS: *(on his way out, putting on a cult shirt)* Tell the others
will you...

*BRIAN and CARLOTTA dejectedly clear the stage as the next
scene begins.*

Scene 11.**PAIN**

Sam (Amanda), God (Mary), J (Charisse), Troy (Sophie):

ACTOR OFF: Allie

Unit 01.

GOD wanders by. When he notices SAM, he goes straight to her.

GOD: Oh hey! Sam! How are you?

SAM: I'm good. How have you been?

GOD: I've been great! Made some friends, discovered some great music, and I really don't like Hitler!

SAM: Oh.

GOD: Love hot dogs though.

SAM: Great.

GOD: I still love you, Sam. Truly. This is our spot.

Unit 02.

SAM: Yeah

(GOD shrugs)

Unit 03.

SAM: So, you've been good then?

GOD: I have! And I've taken an interest in humanity. I've got a bit of a personality going.

SAM: You made some friends?

GOD: Yeah some guys I met at a great concert

SAM: Heh... you're very enthusiastic...

GOD: Yes! I love life and I love you, Sam, we should be together!

SAM: This is weird. Sorry, but your approach is very strange.
You just assume I want to be with you too?

GOD: I- don't you? I'm a real person. I- I want-

SAM: No... I don't want you. We're not on the same page. We
can still be friends, but, I'm sorry, I just don't feel the same way.

GOD clicks his fingers a few times. Nothing happens.

Unit 04.

GOD: Damn.

SAM: Everything always goes your way

GOD: This didn't.

SAM: Sorry.

GOD: I'll see you later OK

SAM: Hey, are you OK?

GOD: I have to leave- OK. *(he starts to walk away on 'OK')*

SAM: This is pain! It's part of being human!

Unit 05.

GOD is already walking away and putting his headphones back on. GOD bumps into his friends from the concert. TROY has a bandaged head or some other obvious injury from the Ball.

J: Hey! *(pause)* You OK, man?

GOD: It hurts. I've never felt this.

TROY: It all hurts. It's part of being human.

GOD: Yeah, I know that now.

Unit 06.

TROY: It sounds like you don't have a very empowering
relationship with pain.

GOD: What?

J: He doesn't know what you mean, buddy. It's not like he reads minds!

GOD: Nope.

TROY: Are you busy tonight, dude? There's something amazing you should come along to. *(They give him a pamphlet and walk offstage together.)*

Scene 12.

THE CHILDREN'S REBELLION

Ms Zazel (Mary), Molly (Allie), Class (Charisse), Goddess, Killtronia (Amanda), Troy (Sophie):

Neutrals (Allie, Mary, Amanda) set up class scene.

CLASS 1 enters first. Followed by TROY and KILLTRONIA, then MOLLY and finally MS ZAZEL.

Unit 01.

New scene. Stage Right. The classroom again.

MS Z: It will be back to business as usual this term. We weren't used to having School Dances, although *(begrudgingly)* of course all schools should have a School Dance. But, you kids got a little Carried away: Goddess played for us again and, well, a demon was summoned into Molly's body. It was bound to happen, really. It must have been that solo... We've had to ban contemporary music I'm afraid.

(pause)

MS Z: So! It's all fun and games when we're getting high on Kool-Aid but now I expect you to give your studies your full attention once again. Are there any questions? No. OK, good.

Unit 02.

MS Z: Since we've been doing Sowell, we're going to get deeper into our work with gene splicing.

The CLASS performs the exact same synchronised actions as the first gene splicing class we saw.

MISS Z: Gene splicing involves cutting out part of a gene's DNA and adding in new DNA. The cutting is not done with any sort of blade

Unit 03.

MOLLY: But someone DIED the last time we did this! We can't run that risk!

MISS Z: *(aggressively)* Oh! Dear! Sad! Square!

CLASS: Oh no, oh no, oh no. In the sad square we must go!

MOLLY: *(interrupting)* I Don't care! *(beat)* It doesn't matter. We can't let someone be killed for fear, of a square!

Inhales determinedly.

MOLLY: Won't be killed! Square gets filled! Won't be killed! Square gets filled!

GODDESS, although banned, subtly back the chant with some rhythm. The CLASS join in!

Unit 04.

MISS Z: That is an unauthorised slogan! Stop that at once!

MOLLY: So fill your square! We don't care!

CLASS and MOLLY: Fill your square! We don't care! Fill your square! We don't care!

MISS ZAZEL ticks frantically. The CLASS continues the chant while MOLLY and MISS ZAZEL have a small exchange.

MOLLY: There, it's full! Now what?

MISS ZAZEL falls to her knees.

MISS Z: You- you can't!

MISS ZAZEL races off-stage. Re-enters, that was quick.

MS Z: Stop this at once! Stop this immediately! Hands In Ice!

There is no reaction, MOLLY and the CLASS keep chanting.

MS Z: Alright you little fuckers!

She draws a gun and points it at the students.

MS Z: Now, let's see.

MOLLY and the students are frightened of her intimidating words, actions and weaponry. Their chanting is broken.

Unit 05.

Suddenly, MS ZAZEL spits up blood, reminiscent of the MAN from the first scene. Possibly there is a sound effect that represents KILLTRONIA's lazer. KILLTRONIA is standing behind MS ZAZEL. She has her fingers pointed like a gun.

KILLTRONIA: Bang.

TROY: Yes! Great work Killtronia.

The students cheer and congratulate TROY.

TROY: Let's get the hell outta here! *(He pulls out some of JANE's pamphlets)* I know where we can go.

TROY leads them out, MOLLY is the last to leave.

KILLTRONIA takes her gently by the hand and smiles, they exit through an alternate route.

Neutrals (Charisse, Mary, Sophie) clear the stage. JANE (Allie) takes her place on her podium as it is constructed around her.

Scene 13.**LAST SUPPER**

Jane (Allie), Neutral (Amanda Charisse Mary Sophie), Brian (Sophie), Carlotta (Charisse), Molly (Amanda), Killtronia (Mary), Troy (Sophie), J (Charisse), God (Mary), Sam (Sophie)

Unit 01.

JANE: There is a body! The body is tired and sore! The body is sick and hungry! (*calmer, intense*) Your pain is your salvation.

The CROWD cheer!

Unit 02.

JANE: There were homes! Possessions! Businesses! Now there is a community! A community of evolving super-beings! We are everything strong and nothing weak! Your body prevents you from giving in to your pain. You are not your body!

The crowd cheers.

You are your commitment to the community!

Unit 03.

JANE: What have you given up for this community!?

AMANDA: My home! My family

Cheering.

CHARISSE: My passion!

Cheering.

MARY: My health!

Cheering.

SOPHIE: MY IDENTITY!

Cheering

Unit 04.

JANE: Quiet!

The crowd hushes. Long pause.

JANE: It has all been for nothing. You have been lied to. There will be no enlightenment. The pain you feel serves no purpose but my amusement. I only want to hurt and control you. It was easy. You've fallen for my slogans and devoured my circular philosophies. Because you're weak, and stupid. IT'S ALL MEANINGLESS! Your families have been torn apart. *(to the students)* Your parents have been killed or enslaved. Your lives have been senselessly and irrevocably ruined, for the sake of a giggle and a smirk. *(evil fucking laugh)*

(pause. Long pause)

Unit 05.

MARY: To transcend, we must give it all up. Truly give up everything. Even our great leader! We must suffer under her scorn and experience the pain of her abandonment. Jane. At last. Jane is sacrificing herself. She is dismantling the last vestiges of consumption in our community. In this new paradigm – directionless, leaderless, hopeless *(exultingly)* – we can truly be enlightened.

The crowd issues a horrible mixture of cheering and hammy-sounding, despairing groans.

JANE: No ... seriously! You're all miserable and doomed. Really, I screwed the lot of you.

AMANDA: *(Joyfully)* We are doomed! Powerfully doomed! *More ridiculous cheering.*

JANE: Why did I even bother to enslave minds so feeble!?

SOPHIE: She rejects our devotion to save our souls!

JANE: No!

CROWD: Yes!

Unit 06.

This is perhaps the first time JANE has failed to make a situation go her way.

JANE: Fuck... fuck... *(pause. Then, defeated)* OK. Fine. You're ready, fuck it, you're all ready. You're ready. In fact, look into each others eyes. They may look the same, but if you're enlightened you'll be able to tell if the person next to you is too.

The CROWD turn in, into pairs, look each other in the eyes and then announce:

CROWD: Yes!

The CROWD embrace each other, tearful and elated. This is a huge moment of joy, relief and love for them.

Unit 07.

JANE: Great. How perfect. So. I guess with this commune free of conflict we can use our enlightened, peaceful, co-operative mindset to study science and build a new society. You're all resilient, resourceful people. Go ahead. Whatever.

MARY: Umm... Go ahead?

JANE: A perfectly harmonious society. You guys work together well, come from a huge variety of backgrounds, possess many skills. You seem to actually love each other and prefer this to the lives I stole from you. So... eternal happiness... enjoy it. We actually have almost unlimited funding, I guess just do whatever you want...

CHARISSE: Us?

SOPHIE: That's a lot of responsibility... Is it –it's not too late to- can I pull out, actually?

JANE: *(sighs)* Yeah, piss off then.

Unit 08.

JANE is left alone on the stage. Most of the characters from the play file past her in a procession.

Unit 09.

BRIAN (Sophie) and CARLOTTA (Charisse) return to the stage together. They both look strangely pleased.

JANE: You! I sent your company into liquidation. I destroyed your careers, zeroed your incomes. Surely ... surely! Your lives have lost all meaning?

CARLOTTA: Hm? Meaning?

BRIAN: Oh! We stopped worrying about that a long time ago sorry.

CARLOTTA: One mustn't focus too much on the trivialities of daily life.

Unit 10.

MOLLY (Amanda) and KILLTRONIA (Mary) return, KILLTRONIA carries MOLLY.

JANE: *(to MOLLY, desperate)* You! I killed your father! Surely your life is ruined!? What about that horrible school? That was me too!

(beat, MOLLY sizes JANE up, she is not afraid of him and she is not angry)

MOLLY: Don't worry about it. I'm fine.

Unit 11.

TROY (Sophie) and J (Charisse) return to the stage.

JANE: What about "whole brain" learning? That was my idea. I caused that. That must have had some kind of lasting impact!

TROY: Yeah... I've been thinking about that – I mean, sure the alphabet is still a bit confusing – but I can build fully functional robots, so it can't have been all bad.

J: Yeah man... wish I could build robots.

GOD returns to the stage.

Unit 12.

GOD comes back on stage and approaches JANE.

GOD: I'd still like to stay Jane. I don't want to imagine any kind of life without you.

JANE: Ah, it's not much of a cult with just one member. I'd rather zero. Just, go away. Go back to your life.

GOD: I didn't really have one.

JANE: Not my problem. Go see an exit counsellor or something.

GOD: You...

(long pause)

Unit 13.

GOD: I don't really need you.

JANE: *(proud)* No-one does!

GOD: ...you're right. *(The Universe Changes Slightly)*

GOD walks away.

Unit 14.

*JANE has a long and odd moment to herself. Then she is convinced to kill herself. (How? Does the gun work this time?)
BLAM!*

Unit 15.

After an extended moment GOD sneaks up to JANE's corpse and steals her shoes. SAM catches GOD in the act...

Unit 16.

GOD: Oh hey, Sam. I was hoping I'd bump into you here.

SAM: (*SAM looks around, they don't appear to be anywhere in particular. She is not overly fazed by this however and tries to appear happy to see GOD.*) Oh, hey, how are you?

GOD: Fine. Sorry I came on so strong before. I can be a bit of a zealot.

SAM: (*Checking JANE for a pulse*) Oh, it was kind of endearing. I just didn't feel comfortable entering a romantic relationship.

Unit 17.

GOD: I hadn't really thought it through anyway. I still think you're amazing, but who was I kidding with that "I love you with everything" stuff. Love isn't so simple. I don't think anyone can be so sure as I thought I was.

SAM: (*Trying to surreptitiously dial 111 on her cellphone and backing away from GOD*) It's not so simple. But I don't think anything's as complicated as we make it out to be either.

Unit 18.

GOD: I was hoping you could refer me to a good counsellor. I just got out of a pretty destructive cult. (*over JANE's corpse*)

SAM: Sure.

GOD: I was hoping we could still be friends.

SAM: Of course.

(*GOD chases SAM off the stage creepily*)

.END.

Appendix III The *Viewpoints*¹⁰⁷

PHYSICAL VIEWPOINTS

VIEWPOINTS OF TIME

TEMPO: Speed at which an action, movement or event occurs on stage.

DURATION: The length of time for which an action, movement or event continues to occur on stage.

KINESTHETIC RESPONSE: A non-contrived physical response to external stimulus.

REPETITION: The act of repeating an action, movement, event or form on stage.

VIEWPOINTS OF SPACE

SHAPE: The form (contour or outline) of a body/bodies/a part of a body in space. This can be viewed in terms of the object alone, the object in relation to architecture and the object in relationship with other objects.

GESTURE: A motion with a beginning, middle and end that can incorporate a part of a body, an entire body or multiple bodies. This can be further broken down into what Anne Bogart terms “Behavioural Gesture” (in Eugenio Barba's terminology this would be termed “daily behaviour” and can be broken down still further to a Private or Public Gesture), and “Expressive Gesture” (which would incorporate both “Extra-daily Behaviour” and “Virtuosic Behaviour” in Barba's theory).

ARCHITECTURE: The structure that is being performed in/on/around and the relationship of the body (or bodies) of the actor(s) to it in space and in time.

107 Anne Bogart & Tina Landau.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP: the distance, quantity and quality of space between objects/bodies on stage and objects/bodies to the architecture of the stage.

TOPOGRAPHY: The floor-plan that describes the pattern of movement for a body or bodies on stage.

VOCAL VIEWPOINTS

TEMPO: The speed at which a vocalisation or collection of vocalisations is emitted.

DURATION: The length of time for which a vocalisation or collection of vocalisations continues to be made

REPETITION: The repeated uttering of a vocalisation or collection of vocalisations.

KINESTHETIC RESPONSE: A spontaneously created vocalisation, emitted in response to external stimulus.

SHAPE: I find this Viewpoint somewhat amorphous however, approximately it refers to the *feel* of a sound; is it soft? Hard? Round? Jagged? Etc...

GESTURE: Analogous to Physical Gesture, the Vocal Gesture is a vocalisation with a beginning, middle and end. This can also be broken down similarly into the Expressive and the Behavioural (Public/Private) gesture.

ARCHITECTURE: The way in which a vocalisation is impacted upon by the architecture and vice versa.

PITCH: The frequency at which a vocalisation is emitted (how high or low it is).

DYNAMIC: The volume at which a vocalisation is emitted.

ACCELERATION/DECELERATION: The rate at which a vocalisation's Tempo is modified and the pattern this creates.

TIMBRE: The quality of sound produced by an actor's unique body and through a conscious use of the body's resonators.

SILENCE: *The absence of vocalisation.*

APPENDIX IV Performance Dynamics

PHYSICAL DYNAMICS

TOPOGRAPHY: Identical to its Viewpoints analogue.

SPEED: The speed at which an action or sequence of actions is performed, inclusive of acceleration and deceleration.

DISTANCE: The length in space for which an action or sequence of actions is continued.

DURATION: the length in time for which an action or sequence of actions is continued.

SHAPE: The physical distribution of an actor's (or multiple actors') body in space. This can be broken down into height, form and gesture and is similar to Brecht's *gest* though without the sociopolitical association.

RHYTHM: a pattern created by the changing rates of movement and non-movement and through the transition of Shape in any given action or sequence of actions.

ARCHITECTURE: Identical to its analogue in the Viewpoints. Implicit in this relationship is a consciousness of the space *between* the body(ies) and the architecture.

INTER-RELATION: The way in which one body relates to another – the group dynamic. Implicit in this relationship is a consciousness of the space *between* the bodies as well as direct physical interaction.

AURAL DYNAMICS

PATTERN/TEXT: Analogous to Topography within the Physical Dynamics, this is representative of the order of letters that inform the sounds to be made – whether they be words or otherwise.

VOLUME: Analogous to Dynamic within the Viewpoints.

SPEED: Analogous to Tempo within the Viewpoints.

DURATION: Identical to its analogue within the Viewpoints.

PITCH: Identical to its analogue within the Viewpoints.

RHYTHM: The pattern that is created by manipulation of silence/sound, speed, volume, duration and pitch – directly reflective of its counterpart in the Physical Dynamics.

INTER-RELATION: Directly reflective of its counterpart in the Physical Dynamics, this refers to the relationship between multiple voices. Implicit in this relationship is a consciousness of the space *between* the voices as well as their immediate inter-relation.

ARCHITECTURE: Again, clearly reflective of its physical counterpart, this refers to the relationship between a voice (or multiple voices) and the space in which performance occurs. Implicit in this relationship is a consciousness of the space *between* the voice(s) and the architecture.

APPENDIX V Initial Training Guide

OBJECTIVE: Liberating body and voice from context/narrative. Primary physical/vocal technique.

REHEARSAL 01.

Wednesday 25/04: 7 - 10pm

Focus: Introductions. Communitas games. Quick devising, divorcing the word and the body.

Activity:

- Circle, name + reveal (truth game).
- Warm Up, run/die/jump/torro.
- Stretches.
- Free-writing (1 minute), seeking interesting connections for the next activity.
- Prop, character, intention – 5 minutes, devise a scene.
- Show scenes, send out with new direction to compose the same scenes again such that they are able to display the scene entirely by physicality, without voice and entirely by voice, without physicality. Each should communicate the other without requiring its presence.
- Show scenes, reflect. Discuss the relationship between the body and the voice.

REHEARSAL 02.

Saturday 28/04: 11 - 2pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Composition & Balance – Line-work, duration, speed, rhythm.

Activity:

- Warm up, run/die/jump/torro.
- Stretches.
- Introduce the idea of the viewpoints: a system for a understanding the way that we move or can move through space.
- Explain contextual use: we are using this system as a framework to our work at expanding the performers' physical and vocal potential. It is a way not only of thinking about movement, but also of talking about movement – this is why it is useful.
- After each of the following steps each actor must show their work and be offered the opportunity to comment on it themselves and to hear feedback from their companions.
- Topography: Creating a floor plan – 2 straight lines, 1 curved line, 1 tight turn, 1 broad turn.
- Duration: Experiment with varying durations of each element of movement. Make 1 line very fast, 1 very slow, and 1 of a middling speed. Make 1 turn very slow, and 1 very fast.
- Rhythm: Rather than speed this is focused on the performer's “how” of movement: is movement sudden and jagged, or long and measured – does the performer perhaps stop and start frequently, or is their movement fluid? Each element of movement from their composition must now possess a unique rhythm. Two elements of movement must have rhythms that

reflect each other in some way, and one must be remarkably different to the others. Remind actors that the turns as well as the lines constitute elements of the overall score.

REHEARSAL 03.

Monday 30/04: 4 - 7pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Composition & Balance – Line-work, duration, speed, rhythm.

Activity:

- Warm up, run/die/jump/torro.
- Stretches.
- Introduce the idea of the viewpoints: a system for a understanding the way that we move or can move through space.
- Explain contextual use: we are using this system as a framework to our work at expanding the performers' physical and vocal potential. It is a way not only of thinking about movement, but also of talking about movement – this is why it is useful.
- After each of the following steps each actor must show their work and be offered the opportunity to comment on it themselves and to hear feedback from their companions.
- Topography: Creating a floor plan – 2 straight lines, 1 curved line, 1 tight turn, 1 broad turn.
- Duration: Experiment with varying durations of each element of movement. Make 1 line very fast, 1 very slow, and 1 of a middling speed. Make 1 turn very slow, and 1 very fast.

- Rhythm: Rather than speed this is focused on the performer's "how" of movement: is movement sudden and jagged, or long and measured – does the performer perhaps stop and start frequently, or is their movement fluid? Each element of movement from their composition must now possess a unique rhythm. Two elements of movement must have rhythms that reflect each other in some way, and one must be remarkably different to the others. Remind actors that the turns as well as the lines constitute elements of the overall score.

REHEARSAL 04.

Wednesday 02/05: 7 - 10pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Group dynamic/Spatial awareness – Soft focus, kinaesthetic feedback - animalism, gestural/vocal communication.

Activity:

- Warm up, run/die/jump/torro.
- Stretches.
- Present current physical scores. Comment, discuss.
- Introduce idea of soft focus. Actors walk around room, slowly introduce relationships between them that modify their manner of locomotion *in relation to each other*.
- Pair up actors (or possibly threes) and have them re-compose their physical scores in relation to and through each other. Reinforce that each element should remain fundamentally the same, yet subtly modify itself to facilitate (or perhaps hamper) the progress of the other. Whatever the action, it must be both a conscious and a physical response. Display and discuss.

- Bring all groups together and have them perform the prior feat as a full ensemble. Discuss what worked and didn't work, encourage performer's to identify areas that require conscious focus and areas that seem more automatic. Stage same activity again, this time encouraging actors to work on those specific areas of weakness that have identified in conversation.
- Have actors perform their newly modified physical scores, now in isolation from each other, but retaining the formal modifications established in the prior work.
- Discuss what can be appreciated in the actions being displayed. Identify elements of balance, form, reflection, poise.
- Ask each actor now to choose 5 animals at random. Each animal must now be applied to one element of their physical score, such that we can understand by mannerism the animal being displayed, yet retaining the integrity of the score. Encourage actors to consider those elements identified.
- Display and discuss. What worked/didn't work. Areas requiring investigation.
- Actors may now modify their score as much or as little as they wish, such that it encourages them to work on the areas that they consider their weakest. This may not be an improvisational modification however, it must be conscious and reproduce-able.

REHEARSAL 05.

Saturday 05/05: 4 - 7pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Architecture/Spatial awareness. Free-writing into free-talking. Vocal/Physical Pastiche.

Activity:

- Display and discuss current physical scores. This will be done in a different area of the rehearsal space to what they are used to. Comment on how their movement is subconsciously informed by their bodies' relationship to the architecture that surrounds them.
- Introduce architectural complications. Actors must now recompose their scores (focusing on areas identified as weaknesses) in relationship to the architecture that surrounds them (block garden). Display and discuss.
- Modify the architecture and repeat exercise (once or twice).
- Now display each actor performing their score individually and discuss. Modify architecture and repeat, this time without providing opportunity for rehearsal. Their architectural relationship must now be defined in the moment.
- Have each actor produce a page of free-writing within the space of a minute. Read each out to group and discuss points of interest. Repeat exercise several times. For the first exercise director reads each piece, for the second repetition each actor reads another actor's piece, for the third repetition each actor reads their own. Discussion between each.
- Have actors move through the space, using soft focus to retain awareness of each other. They will read words at “random” from their accumulated pages, attempting to maintain their voices in relation to each other rather than in competition. Periodically pause and discuss areas of interest. During this process phase out the use of the pages and encourage the actors to instead produce their words and sounds in direct relation to those that exist around them.
- When the actors are successfully producing an in-the-moment vocal score have them now integrate this with their physical scores, such that their

vocalisations are produced in relation to their physicality. These vocalisations may be words, sounds or a combination of both.

- Display new combined vocal/physical scores to ensemble. Discuss, areas that need work. Allow free-modification as necessary.

REHEARSAL 06.

Monday 07/05: 4 - 7pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Architecture/Spatial awareness. Free-writing into free-talking. Vocal/Physical Pastiche – textual sources.

Activity:

- Display and discuss current physical scores. This will be done in a different area of the rehearsal space to what they are used to. Comment on how their movement is subconsciously informed by their bodies' relationship to the architecture that surrounds them.
- Introduce architectural complications. Actors must now recompose their scores (focusing on areas identified as weaknesses) in relationship to the architecture that surrounds them (block garden). Display and discuss.
- Modify the architecture and repeat exercise (once or twice).
- Now display each actor performing their score individually and discuss. Modify architecture and repeat, this time without providing opportunity for rehearsal. Their architectural relationship must now be defined in the moment.
- Have each actor produce a page of free-writing within the space of a minute. Read each out to group and discuss points of interest. Repeat exercise several times. For the first exercise director reads each piece, for the second repetition each actor reads another actor's piece, for the third repetition each actor reads their own. Discussion between each.

- Have actors move through the space, using soft focus to retain awareness of each other. They will read words at “random” from their accumulated pages, attempting to maintain their voices in relation to each other rather than in competition. Periodically pause and discuss areas of interest. During this process phase out the use of the pages and encourage the actors to instead produce their words and sounds in direct relation to those that exist around them.

- When the actors are successfully producing an in-the-moment vocal score have them now integrate this with their physical scores, such that their vocalisations are produced in relation to their physicality. These vocalisations may be words, sounds or a combination of both.

- Display new combined vocal/physical scores to ensemble. Discuss, areas that need work. Allow free-modification as necessary.

REHEARSAL 07.

Wednesday 09/05: 7 - 10pm

Focus: Vocal level/tone/resonance (Barba, catch the voice). Revising training improvisations – reintroduce ideas of duration, speed and rhythm. Game-play/Objectives – complication/rules.

Activity:

- Allow actors to spend half an hour working on their physical scores. Present as ensemble and as individuals. Discuss. Identify areas of performative value. Extend.

- Vocal tone/level. Eugenio Barba game: Catch the voice.

- After exploring vocal range through catch the voice for some time, allow the actors 10 minutes to recompose their scores to reflect their full range of vocal expression. Discuss.

- Discuss the relationship between competitive games and interesting staging. Introduce rules, complications and disruptions that inform behaviour during the performance of their combined scores. Individualise these rules for each actor such that they are in conflict with that of another actor (though perhaps indirectly).

- Split actors into groups and have them compose a scene that integrates a physical and vocal score in relation to the other performers. Each group is given a specific set of rules that inform their behaviour.

- Display and discuss. Theatre or dance? Why?

REHEARSAL 08.

Saturday 12/05: 4 - 7pm

Focus: Active composition (improvisation & pastiche). Daily behaviour, extra-daily behaviour, virtuosi behaviour. Expansion & retraction. Poise, tension, balance and breath.

Activity:

- Provide actors with half an hour in which to perform, practice and refine their combined vocal and physical scores (henceforth known as the training score).

- We will return to an exercise from the first rehearsal: Prop, character, intention – 5 minutes, devise a scene. Include an architectural element also. Encourage actors to embrace the full range of body and voice that has been explored over the course so far.

- Once again, after presentation and discussion, have the same groups go off and reproduce their scenes with voice, but no body, body but no voice, and with both elements together.

- Discuss types of behaviour and how these concepts may inform our own behaviour on stage. Daily, extra-daily, virtuosi. What is the point of each? How can we define/identify each? Discuss the thread of actions.
- Allow the actors as individuals 10 minutes in which to modify their training scores so as to magnify their performative/theatrical qualities. Present and discuss.
- Present performance scores as an ensemble. Re-present as an ensemble in relation to architecture.
- Modify structure of groups from improvised scenes but retain the scenes. Examine these scenes with the new principles identified in mind.
- Present and discuss.

REHEARSAL 09.

Monday 14/05: 4 - 7pm

Focus: Preparing presentation for Work Presentation 1.

Activity:

- *Impossible to truly plan in advance, however this will consist of the devised composition of a performance routine based on the training that has been undertaken so far. It is likely that the product will more closely resemble a dance than theatre, given the non-narrative focus to training until now. This rehearsal represents the last part of the first element of the training regime, dealing with the release of the body and voice from daily restraint.*

APPENDIX VI Active Training Guide

The following training plans were re-developed from those elaborated earlier, in response to specific needs that arose during the training process for *The Best Thing!* Some developed plans have been omitted due to their repetitious nature. This repetition was a result of the necessity – due to timetable clashes – to split the actors into a Monday and a Saturday group, with full ensemble training occurring on Wednesdays. As such Monday plans have been omitted, where they are identical to their Saturday counterparts. It should also be noted that, whilst the following is a full elaboration of the structured plan that had been developed going into each rehearsal, such was not necessarily the exact process that occurred. Deviations from the plan were often made, in response to running out of time in the training sessions, specific issues appearing that could benefit from additional attention or, in the worst cases, due to missing actors.

REHEARSAL 01. Training programme

Wednesday 25/04: 7 - 10pm

Focus: Introductions. Communitas games. Quick devising, divorcing the word and the body.

Activity:

- **Truth.** Have actors seated in a circle, encourage them to make themselves comfortable. Ask actors to each in turn introduce themselves and then tell us a true story about their life. Stress the importance of *truth* in this exercise.

- **Die.** Warm-up exercise (also prepares the actors to use soft focus). Have actors wandering around room aimlessly. They must pay attention to director's voice and obey instructions instantaneously. The actors will be moving forward at all times, "if I say 'jump', then you jump, and continue to

walk. There are two directions I may give that will allow you to stop moving forward, these are 'stop' and 'Jump'. If I give you a direction that seems obtuse or abstract, it is your job to interpret and respond *instantly*.” This exercise *must* be followed by stretches.

- **Stretches.** Take actors through a guided sequence of stretching and loosening exercises: Biceps, shoulders, neck, Back, hips, thighs and calves.

- **Quick Devising.** Separate actors into groups of no more than 5 and no less than 2 (4 is ideal). Provide actors with characters/archetypes drawn from *The Best Thing*: Father, Salesman, Motivational Speaker, Guru/Cult Leader, Daughter, New-Girl-at-School, Businesswoman/man, Secretary, Mental Health Worker, Troubled Musician, God, Headmaster, Teacher, School Dux, Killing-machine, Dancer, Stoner. Each character is also given a goal/intention that relates to the archetype that they represent. Finally each group is provided with a prop that must be incorporated into their scene in some way that it is made “important”. Stress that these scenes should aim to provide a clear beginning, middle and end. They have 10 minutes to compose their scenes, which are subsequently to be presented to the group for observation and critique.

- **Divorce.** Each group is sent out once again to recompose their scenes (not new scenes), with the new direction that they must be capable of showing the scene with body and voice, with only body and with only voice. Each version of the scene must be identifiably the same as the other versions and should aim for an equal level of clarity. The actors are provided 10 (possibly more) minutes in which to rehearse this, after which they re-present their scenes. This is to be followed by a discussion about the nature of the body and voice in theatre, what their roles are and how we can use each to enhance the other.

REHEARSAL 02. Training Programme

Saturday 28/04: 11 – 2pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Composition & Balance – Line-work, duration, speed, rhythm.

Activity:

- **Die.** Warm-up exercise (also prepares the actors to use soft focus). Have actors wandering around room aimlessly. They must pay attention to director's voice and obey instructions instantaneously. The actors will be moving forward at all times, “if I say 'jump', then you jump, and continue to walk. There are two directions I may give that will allow you to stop moving forward, these are 'stop' and 'Jump'. If I give you a direction that seems obtuse or abstract, it is your job to interpret and respond *instantly*.” This exercise *must* be followed by stretches.

- **Stretches.** Take actors through a guided sequence of stretching and loosening exercises: Biceps, shoulders, neck, Back, hips, thighs and calves.

- **VIEWPOINTS.** Introduction: a system for understanding the way that we move or can move through space. In this context Viewpoints gives us a framework for the expansion of the performers' physical and vocal potential. It is a way not only of thinking about movement, but also of talking about movement – this is primarily why it is useful.

- After each of the following steps each actor must show their work and be offered the opportunity to comment on it themselves and to hear feedback from their companions. This should be less a discussion, and more an opportunity for commentary and observation.

- **Topography.** Each actor is instructed to create a floor plan. Step 1: Choose a beginning point and an end point in the space. Step 2: Devise a means of walking from one point to the other incorporating 2 straight lines,

1 curved line, 1 tight turn and 1 wide turn. Stress that all we are interested in at the moment is a clear floor plan.

- **Distance.** Instruct actors to make 1 line very long, one very short and 1 of middling distance. The difference between each must be clear.

- **Duration.** Experiment by varying the durations of each element of movement. Make 1 line very fast, 1 very slow, and 1 of a middling speed. Make 1 turn very slow, and 1 very fast.

- **Rhythm.** Rather than speed this is focused on the performer's "how" of movement: is movement sudden and jagged, or long and measured – does the performer perhaps stop and start frequently, or is their movement fluid? Each element of movement from their composition must now possess a unique rhythm. Two elements of movement must have rhythms that reflect each other in some way, and one must be remarkably different to the others. Remind actors that the turns as well as the lines constitute elements of their overall score.

REHEARSAL 04. Training Programme

Wednesday 02/05: 7 – 10pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Group dynamic/Spatial awareness – Soft focus, kinaesthetic feedback - animalism, gestural/vocal communication.

Activity:

- **Warm Ups.** Die!

- **Stretches.** Full Body.

- **Present.** Actors each present their physical scores as they currently exist. This is followed by group comment and discussion. Physical scores

are now re-composed, in an entirely new form – this may be done several times. Begin next exercise during this one.

- **Soft Focus.** Explain concept. Actors walk around room, slowly introduce relationships between them that modify their manner of locomotion *in relation to each other*. This is best achieved by establishing spontaneous rules that define behaviour.

- **Group Dynamic.** Pair up actors (or possibly threes) and have them re-compose their physical scores in relation to and through each other. Reinforce that each actor's score should remain fundamentally the same, yet subtly modify itself to facilitate (or perhaps hamper) the progress of the other. Whatever the action, it must be both a conscious and a physical response, with established rules that define encounters. Display and discuss – what rules did we perceive, how effectively were they shown?

- **Large Group Dynamic.** Bring all groups together and have them perform the prior feat as a full ensemble in the improvisational mode. They will require clear rules and objectives for this to be effective. Discuss what worked and didn't work (and more importantly *why*), encourage performer's to identify areas that require conscious focus and areas that seem more automatic. Stage same activity again, this time encouraging actors to work on those specific areas of weakness that have been identified in conversation, or anything else that seems important.

- **Divorce.** Have actors perform their newly modified physical scores, now in isolation from each other, but retaining the formal modifications established in the prior work. Present. Discuss what can be appreciated in the actions being displayed. Identify elements of balance, form, reflection, poise.

- **Animalism.** Ask each actor now to choose 5 animals at random. They must define for each animal three specific physical mannerisms/ticks that may be used to physically identify the animals. Display, adjust. Each animal must now be applied to one element of their physical score, such that

we can understand by mannerism the animal being displayed, yet retaining the integrity of the score. Encourage actors to consider those elements identified. Display and discuss. What worked/didn't work? Areas requiring investigation.

- **Self-modification.** Actors may now modify their score as much or as little as they wish, such that it encourages them to work on the areas that they consider their weakest. This may not be an improvisational modification however, it must be conscious and reproduce-able. These scores are to be presented. Actors must explain their weaknesses and strengths, and how they are approaching them with-in their score.

REHEARSAL 04. Training Programme REVISED

Wednesday 02/05: 7 – 10pm

Focus: Viewpoints. Mechanical action vs. Emotive action. Group dynamic. Viewpoints in composition.

Activity:

- **Warm Ups.** Die!
- **Stretches.**
- **Re-rehearse.** Give actors 5 minutes to refresh their most current physical score.
 - **Present.** Actors present scores. Once through with verbal feedback. Once through playing *Stop!*
 - **Re-rehearse.** Actors are given 5 minutes to fine-tune their scores.
 - **Present.** Actors present scores. Once through without comment. Once through with observers providing verbal description of the mechanics

they observe in action. Once through with observers describing their own thoughts in relation to what they see.

- **Composition.** Actors are given 5 minutes to create entirely new compositions. These are presented, and then another 5 minutes is given to once again create an entirely new composition. Change the rules. These are also now presented.

- **Scene Work.** Actors are now split into two or more groups. Each group is given a location and each actor is given a character. The actors' challenge is that they must use the individual scores that they have devised to compose their scenes, they may make any necessary modifications to their scores as long as its basic form remains identifiable. They *must* modify their score's mannerism such that it reflects a possible physicality for their character. They must devise their scene such that one character is identifiably successful, which causes another character to identifiably lose. Actors are given 20 minutes in which to do this.

- **Divorce.** Each actor is now asked to perform their personal score in isolation from the rest of their group.

- **Re-score.** The actors are given 5 minutes to produce entirely new scores.

- **Scene Work.** Actors are placed in new groups, with new characters and tasked to compose new scenes, using their new scores. Each group is also given a new location. This time the scene must be silent, yet still convey its narrative.

- **Present.** Each group presents their new scenes three times through. Once without interruption. Once with observers describing witnessed mechanics. Once with observers describing witnessed story.

REHEARSAL 05. Training Programme

Saturday 05/05: 4 – 7pm

Focus: Viewpoints, Architecture/Spatial awareness. Free-writing/free-talking. Vocal/Physical Pastiche.

Activity:

- **Warm Ups.** *Die!*
- **Stretches.** Full Body.
- **Physical Training.** Half an hour, actors work intensively in Viewpoints score work. Somewhat self-directed.
- **Present.** Actors present current physical scores. *Stop!* Game is played.
- **Architecture.** Using New Place Theatre's blocks, actors are asked to construct an architectural space. Each actor gets up – one at a time and arranges one object in relation to those already there. This continues until all objects are used.
- **Re-arrange.** Each actor takes a turn modifying the position of a singular object. Discuss decisions. Repeat.
- **Compose.** Actors compose physical scores in relation to architecture. 5 minutes.
- **Present.** Actors present scores. Observe, discuss.
- **Modify.** The architecture is modified and the exercise is repeated (once or twice).
- **Scene.** Actors are given characters and are told to construct a scene that is composed around and using the architecture. Encourage experimental relationships. If there are enough people compositions should

be in groups, however with limited numbers the actors must compose solo-scenes. In this case they should be given *two* characters to play/present/imply within their scene.

- **Present.** Actors present scenes. Observe, discuss.

- **Free-writing.** Each actor produces a page of free-writing within the space of a minute. To prepare actors for style/expectation director reads out a page of self-produced free writing. Before commencing free-writing, director instructs actors to meditate upon a particular suggestive word/phrase for one minute. They must follow this by writing without cease for one minute. They must attempt not to think or consider while writing, but to simply *do*.

- **Present.** The actors each read another actor's page aloud. Discuss. What interesting connections/ideas/symbols/oppositions/comparisons can be made?

- **Re-write.** The previous two steps are repeated twice through.

- **Roving Dialogue.** Actors are now directed to walk through the space, carrying their 'scripts'. They are directed to choose words/phrases at random between their accumulated pages and to speak them in a never ending torrent. They are encouraged to experiment with tone, pitch, volume and shape, or any other technique they may use to modulate their vocal sound. Keep them working like this for some time, interspersing vocal suggestions with physical directions. This maintains a relationship between the two.

- **Vocal Composition.** The actors are now given rules around which they must construct their vocal scores. They are no longer allowed to move, they must instead maintain perfect stillness and eye-contact between each other. They must construct the sound of their voices (and if they so choose, the content/context of their words, though this must be identified subsequently if it *does* occur) in relation to each other. The director should

establish a relationship between the actors and a location. Example: Actor A is being stalked by Actor B in an abandoned city. During this exercise they should at some point have their 'scripts' removed from them, being directed to instead attempt to produce their words spontaneously.

- **Connect.** When the actors are successfully producing an in-the-moment vocal score have them integrate it with a physical score. The physical score used should be one established during training session earlier. Both physical and vocal score should be taken into improvisational territory. Maintain earlier relationship and context so actors have a 'story' to build on for improvisation. Discuss results with actors.

REHEARSAL 07. Training Programme

Wednesday 09/05: 7 – 10pm

Focus: Vocal level/tone/resonance (Barba, catch the hand). Revising training improvisations – reintroduce ideas of duration, speed and rhythm. Game-play/Objectives – complication/rules.

Activity:

- **Warm-up.** *Die!*
- **Stretch.**
- **Viewpoints.** Actors are split into twos and threes. They must each compose two five line, four turn scores that interact with and relate to the scores composed by the others in their groups. This is not a narrative exercise, however if they find that it helps it should not be forbidden either.
- **Architecture.** Each actor takes a turn placing an object in the space. Each actor takes a turn modifying an object in the space (this may or may not be repeated). Actors are divided into new groups and told to

compose physical scores that create a relationship between the stage and each other.

- **Present.** Each group presents. Audience responds afterwards.

- **Re-compose.**

- **Re-present.** In this presentation *Stop!* Is played.

- **Free Writing.** Each actor is asked to meditate on “hotdogs” for one minute. They then have one minute to write continuously; aiming to write without thought. These passages are then read aloud to the group. (this exercise should be performed several times with new symbols, perhaps swap pages each round.)

- **Vocal Composition.** Each actor chooses every fourth word from the page she ends up with. This represents her pattern-of-words. Write these on a separate page. The actors now walk around the room, bearing their 'script' and attempt to compose their use of the words in relation to those they hear from other actors. Encourage them to explore a range of vocal affectation.

- **Vocal/Physical.** The actors now have 10 minutes in which to compose a vocal score that relates to a physical score developed earlier in the evening.

- **Present.** Actors present combined vocal/physical scores.

REHEARSAL 09. Training Programme

Wednesday 09/05: 7 – 10pm

Focus: Architectural relationships, Group composition, Vocal range.

Activity:

- **Warm-up.** *Die!*

- **Stretch.**

- **Viewpoints Training.** Actors are split into twos or threes. Each actor must compose one five line, four turn score and one three line, two turn score. They should then re-compose their scores in concert with the group, considering simultaneous motion versus singular motion. Each actor must perform their 5 line score once and their three line score twice, they may choose the order themselves and they may choose who is moving and is stationary at any point during the entire composition. This is not a narrative exercise, however if they find that it helps it should not be forbidden either. Actors receive 20 to 30 minutes to perform this task.

- **Present.** Each group presents their score, followed by discussion.

- **Architecture.** Each actor takes a turn placing an object in the space. Each actor takes a turn modifying an object in the space (this may or may not be repeated as many times as is desirable). Each actor defines an image that they identify the space as representing. Actors are divided into new groups and told to compose physical scores that create a relationship between the stage and each other. Each group is given a location from the prior discussion. Again, this is not a narrative exercise, however if they create one this should be discussed.

- **Present.** Each group presents. Audience responds afterwards.

- **Stop!** Actors play stop with each scene.

- **Free Writing.** Each actor is asked to meditate on “hotdogs” for one minute. They then have another minute to write continuously; aiming to write without thought. These passages are then read aloud to the group. (this exercise should be performed several times with new symbols, perhaps swap pages between actors each round. Symbols could include: School, cults, robots, God, guns, euthanasia)

- **Vocal Composition.** Each actor chooses every fourth word from the page she ends up with. Eliminate words until each actor has approximately 8 words; this represents her script. Write these words on a separate page. The actors now walk around the room, bearing their 'script' and attempt to compose their use of the words in relation to those they hear from other actors. Encourage them to explore a range of vocal affectation.

- **Catch the Hand.** Actors are placed in pairs and guided through an exercise where-in one actor moves their hand in relationship with the other's body and the other attempts to contain/hold the hand using their voice. Each takes a turn within each role in the exercise.

- **Vocal/Physical.** The actors return to their groups from the architectural scenes and are asked to now recompose their scenes such that they integrate a vocal-score which exists as a conversation between their voices, their bodies, the architecture *and* each other into the original scene.

- **Present.** Each group presents combined vocal/physical score, followed by discussion.

REHEARSAL 11. Training Programme

Monday 21/05: 4 – 7pm

Focus: Vocal level/tone/resonance (Barba, catch the hand). Physical Training. Creating Character.

Activity:

- **Warm-Up.** *Die!* Actors incorporate dynamic body and dynamic voice into their behaviour.

- **Stretches.** Have an actor take everyone through stretches.

- **Facial Distortion.** Actors spend 3 minutes standing in front of mirror, experimenting with facial contortion. Encourage them to manipulate as many different elements of their faces to as many extremes as they are able to do. This can be done using both facial muscles and extra-facial manipulation, such as moving with hands. Afterwards each will present a non-clichéd image of “happy”, “sad”, and “in pain”.

- **Physical Training.** Actors spend 10 minutes composing physical scores. 5 lines, 4 turns. No medium/average speeds – only very slow, fast and very fast.

- **Trade-based Character.** Each actor is given a profession from: Teacher, Nun, Soldier, Politician, Mechanic, Musician, Salesman, Pirate, Hobo. They must think of a daily activity for their character and show how this would affect the character's body. Perform for three activities, combine and incorporate into a physical score. Rehearse for 10 minutes.

- **Architecture.** Actors compose architecture, followed by identifying locations based on the results.

- **Composition.** Actors are placed into two groups, given a location and a conflict. They have 20 minutes in which to compose a scene using all of the work so far carried out.

- **Present.** Actors present, followed by discussion.

- **Re-compose/Re-present.**

- **Free-writing.** Before beginning exercise the director should read an example of free-writing. Actors meditate on a subject for 1 minute, then write freely for another minute. Papers are passed to the person next to them and each is read aloud. This is repeated until everybody has written on each page.

- **Script creation.** Every 3rd word on each page is circled. Now underline every second circled word. Write the underlined words freshly in

a clear list. Each actor is now given a fresh page and told to compose an vocal score using the words they have, in the order in which they are listed. Their vocal compositions should include:

- 5 Lines: A line may consist of a syllable, a word or a string of words.
- 1 line must be very fast, 1 must be very slow.
- 2 lines must be very high-pitched, 2 must be very low-pitched.
- 1 line must be very loud, 1 line must be very quiet.
- They must write their composition on the new pieces of paper, they may notate their instructions any way that they feel will communicate clearly their intention. Prior to rehearsing, each actor shows and explains their script. After the scripts are clear and full the actors are given 5 minutes in which to compose their vocal scores.

- **Present.** Each actor now presents their composed vocal score. This is followed by structured discussion founded in the question “what did you hear?”

- **Catch the Hand.** The actors are split into pairs. Within each pair, one actor is the hand and the other is the voice. The Hand must move their hand in relationship to the Voice's body, this should be experimental but the aim is not for one person to *trick* the other, rather it is a supportive exercise. The Voice must attempt to use vocal modulation to “hold/capture” the hand, they may use words, gibberish or pure sounds as the content is not important, rather it is the modulation. Ie: What sound relates to which distance, speed, rhythm, attitude? Each actor takes a turn in each role, spending three minutes on each.

- **Physical/Vocal.** The actors now compose a 5 line, 4 turn, 2 face physical score. This is subsequently connected to their vocal score from earlier. Allow 5 minutes for physical composition and 10 minutes to rehearse combined physical/vocal scores.

- **Present.** Each actor presents their physical/vocal score. If there is time, play *Stop!* Otherwise simply discuss.

REHEARSAL 12. Training Programme

Monday 21/05: 4 – 7pm

Focus: Aural Response. Physical/Vocal Composition. Character.

Activity:

- **Warm-Up.** *Die!* Actors move using improvised dynamic body scores. Possibly encourage them to speak as well.
- **Stretches.** Have an actor take everyone through stretches.
- **Facial Distortion.** Actors spend 3 minutes standing in front of mirror, experimenting with facial contortion. Encourage them to manipulate as many different elements of their faces to as many extremes as they are able to do. This can be done using both facial muscles and extra-facial manipulation, such as moving with hands. Afterwards each will present a non-obvious image of “moronic”, “genius”, and “sleazy”.
- **Present.** Actors present combined physical/vocal scores. Discuss briefly.
- **Physical Training.** Actors spend 10 minutes performing an improvised score, acted in response to a piece of music composed by Sam Cameron for this specific purpose. It is minimalistic, rhythmic and at fleeting moments melodic.

- **Trade-based Character.** Each actor is given a profession from: Teacher, Nun, Soldier, Politician, Mechanic, Musician, Salesman, Hobo, Scientist. They must think of a daily activity for their character and show how this would affect the character's body. Perform for three activities, combine and incorporate into a physical score. Rehearse for 5 minutes.

- **Aural Response.** Actors are told to choose their best/most interesting three lines and two turns from their physical/vocal scores. Their scores now consisting of 5 elements each, they are instructed to compose their elements' lengths (duration) in terms of minutes now rather than distance. It will take each of them a total of 10 minutes to perform their complete score. One minute is the shortest unit of duration for each element of their score, 3 minutes is the longest. There should be: two 1minute lines, One 2minute line, and two 3minute lines. Planned prior to commencing exercise. For the purposes of rehearsal, Director should clap/make a loud noise every minute for actors to keep time by. Repeat rehearsal three times.

- Present. Actors present aural-response scores. Feedback.

Appendix VII Games for Dynamic Composition

Physical Composition:

TOPOGRAPHY: Actors develop a floor plan consisting of lines, curves, zig zags and turns. It is generally useful to ensure that the combined total of lines, curves and zig zags, exceed the quantity of turns by one. For the sake of ease all lines, curves and zig zags are defined as 'lines' during discussion. In initial work one line, one curve, one zig zag and two turns is a useful place to start as it avoids over-complicating the compositional elements at play. They must walk through this topography three times after having developed it.

DISTANCE: Actors are instructed to vary the distances covered by each element of their score. One line must be very long, one must be very short, one must be in between. One turn must be very tight/acute and the other must be very broad/obtuse. This must again be walked through three times after development.

HEIGHT: The actors now vary their vertical spatial distribution between compositional elements. One line must be as high as the body can go, another as low as the body can go, and the third of a middling height. One turn must move from high to low, the other turn must move from low to high. Actors walk through this three times following composition. Height is an aspect of Shape in the *Physical Dynamics*.

SPEED: The rate at which the actors' bodies move is now varied between compositional elements. During one line an actor's movements must be as fast as possible, during another their movements must be as slow as possible whilst still moving and the third must be of an 'average' speed. One turn must accelerate and the other must decelerate. Actors move through this three times following composition.

DURATION: This mechanic is often confused with speed. It is common for actors to express an initial contradiction or confusion between the two. The variance between the two mechanics is however clear and simple: where speed refers to the rate of movement in the actors' bodies, duration refers to the overall length in time that each compositional element takes to complete. So, whilst the speed of action in an actor's body may be defined by many tiny, rapid steps (and therefore deemed fast), their overall progression could be minimal, resulting in an extended duration. Actors are instructed that one line must take a very long time to complete, one line must take a very short amount of time to complete and the third must be of an average duration. One turn must take a very long time to complete, one turn must take a very short time to complete. Actors move through this three times following composition.

RHYTHM: This mechanic is difficult to explain with words and far easier to demonstrate practically, however essentially it refers to patterns

that can be established by a conscious, and to some degree timed, variance in speed between moments of movement and non-movement within a singular element of a score. The actors are instructed that each of the five elements of their scores must incorporate a distinctive and definably different rhythm. Actors move through this three times following composition.

Physical Extension:

STOP!: Described in Chapter 1.3. This game continued to be the most effective tool for the dilation of interesting behaviour throughout the study's development.

INTER-RELATION: Actors take scores which have been composed previously and perform them in simultaneity. They are instructed that rather than avoiding each other they must seek moments of conflict and are provided with behavioural rules to govern their response, such as: "Stand up straight, spin around on the spot, and shake hands politely". Whatever the behavioural rule established, it is important that it represent a significant disconnect from the performers' rehearsed behaviour. After they have performed this scored improvisation the actors are asked to re-present the scene in isolation from one another, but maintaining the new moments of conflict discovered in the previous demonstration.

ANIMALISE: Actors walk around the room as with *Die!*. It can be useful in fact, to run this exercise as a game of *Die!*. Have the actors choose an animal and a daily activity for that animal. They must go about this activity, experimenting with its physicality and any substantial, indicative elements. As a rule, the facilitator should instruct the actors to magnify, enlarge and exaggerate their performances, such that the behaviour on display by the actors is of an eccentrically dilated variety. Repeat this with new animals for as many different mannerisms as it is desirable for the actors to wear in the performance of their scores. For example, if it is desirable that a mannerism be repeated, use fewer animals than elements; alternatively, if it is desirable that each element be strongly

distinct then it is best to have one animal for each element of the score. Each of the mannerisms developed must now be applied as a manner of action and behaviour within the elements of the actors' previously developed scores. A variation of this exercise is to incorporate behaviours specific to a profession, archetype, or even the actors' own daily behaviours, rather than animals. Actors should be encouraged to move through this three times following composition.

CONTACT: Actors are told that if they come into contact with the floor with a body part in one element of their score, then they may not do so with the same body part again in any other element of their score. In a large, group score, where the contact rule is shared between members, this exercise can become exceptionally complicated – in one example the actors involved had been obliged to invent near 50 different ways to support their weight, maintain their balance and maintain their ability to move forwards. This exercise is specifically useful for establishing and exaggerating behavioural and spatial diversity in performance. It also forces the actors to actively invent new methods of locomotion that had previously lain unconsidered. Actors must move through this three times following composition.

RE-ARRANGE: The individual elements of an actor's score are given unique names which are written down on separate pieces of paper and put in a hat, to be drawn at random. The actor's score is re-composed in this new, randomised order. The effect of this is to force an actor to reconsider their transitions, it is often effective to apply this exercise in concert with a modification of other previously applied rules, to speeds or heights for example. Have actors move through their modified scores three times following composition.

DYNAMIC BEEP-TEST: Actors produce improvised dynamic scores, given a specific beginning point, end point, and quantity of lines and turns. This should be repeated many times over.

NARRATIVE BODY: Actors produce improvised scores, given quantity of elements desired, a character and a situation/scenario.

DIVORCE: This exercise builds upon a previously developed element of scenic work, whether scripted or devised. The actors are instructed to redevelop their scene in three specific streams, one that is solely physical, one that is solely vocal and a third that incorporates both physical and vocal expression. The physical scene must attempt to communicate physically all the vocal information within the vocal scene, and likewise the vocal scene must attempt to communicate vocally all of the physical information communicated in the physical scene. The scene that incorporates both body and voice is to be a simultaneous presentation of the physical and the vocal scores, rather than a distinct scene in its own right. This exercise is listed under 'Physical Extension', however could equally be listed under 'Aural Extension' and 'Inter-relation'.

Aural Composition:

FREE-WRITING: Each actor produces a page of free-writing within the space of a minute. Prior to writing, participants spend one minute meditating upon a given topic, following this they must write continuously and without censorship or active intent until time is called. Pages may be swapped between participants, and the exercise repeated, as many times as desired.

SCRIPTING: Take a page of free-writing and reduce it to the number of words desired by utility of random selection. For example, eliminate every third word, or seventh word. The remaining words should be composed in a similar manner to a physical score, that makes use of single words, combinations of words, and parts of words. If this is to be connected to a physical score, ensure that each have the same number of elements. So, for a three line, two turn score – consisting of seven words – the following rules might be applied:

- Two elements use half of a word each.
- One element uses five words.

- Two elements use one word each

SPEED: Establish a diversity of speeds between elements such that they range from very fast, to very slow. Remember also to incorporate acceleration and deceleration.

DURATION: Establish a diversity of duration between elements. (This duration is often defined by the duration of the physical element that it is to be connected to) Aural duration can be achieved by two means, vocal extension/compression and repetition.

PITCH: Establish a diversity of pitches between elements. Some should be as high as possible, others as low as possible and some should move from high to low, or low to high. It is also important to establish a 'medium'.

VOLUME: Establish a diversity of volumes in the score. There should be at least one element of loudest volume, one of quietest, one that moves from loud to quiet and one that moves from quiet to loud. It is often useful to have a 'middle' also.

Aural Extension:

CATCH THE HAND: Done in pairs. One actor is the voice, the other is the hand. The hand moves their hand through space in relation to the actor who is 'voice', they must aim to vary their rates of movement, their spatial distribution, the distance between voice and hand, the relationship between voice and hand. The voice must attempt to use vocal modulation to 'hold' the hand, this may be interpreted as a, subjective, vocal reflection of the spatial relationship between hand and voice, in the moment. The Hand should provide the Voice with three random words to use as their operative mantra during this exercise. Each should take up to four minutes in their roles and then switch. This can be repeated multiple times.

SOUNDSCAPE: Actors group together, in a huddled circle, with their eyes closed. They are given a subject, a place, a time, a character, an objective, or any combination of these. Each must use their voice to reflect this circumstance, in relationship with the voices of the other actors. Maintain the closed eyes and physical contact between participants. This can be reduced to as low as two participants, or expanded to as many as the room allows for.

STOP!: Very similar to its physical counter-part, in that specactors are called on to make in-performance modifications to an actor's behaviour by calling "Stop!" and providing direct feedback. However, in aural *Stop!* the modification provided must be given in the *language of the mirror*, not the *language of modelling*, which in this case means that the specactor must directly demonstrate – with their own voice – the modulation desired.

CONTEXT: Actors are given a context for the delivery of their vocal score (developed in the abstract, from free-writing). Without modification of their text, actors must attempt to use vocal modulation to communicate its context.

Inter-relation:

INTERRUPT: Two or more actors present a physical, or combined physical/vocal, score in unison. If they come into proximity with each other they must perform a pre-determined behaviour (such as spinning in a circle, snorting, and shaking hands like gentlemen), that interrupts their planned choreography, then continue on as though nothing had happened.

SWAP: Actors teach each other their scores by going through a specific series of steps:

- Demonstrate once for learner to observe. This is a demonstration, not a teaching opportunity.

- Walk through at 50% speed, for student to follow. Three times through.
- Move through at full speed once, for student to follow.
- Walk through at 50% speeds, giving vocal description of activity, for student to follow. Three times through.
- Move through at full speed once, with vocal coaching, for student to follow. Once through.
- Student performs score for teacher's observation, who provides verbal feedback at the end.
- Student performs score twice through for *Stop!* modification from the teacher.
- Student and teacher perform score at full speed together.
- Teacher and Student swap roles, and the process is restarted.

GROUP SCORE: After a pair of actors have taught each other their scores, they will share a physical/aural language with each other that can be used to develop a combined score. If each actors initial score consisted of three lines and two turns (five elements), then their end product will consist of ten elements (six lines and four turns). The group score should be composed in terms of simultaneity and isolation. The following assumes a total of ten elements, and two performers:

- **COMPOSE:** Re-order the elements using the Re-arrange exercise.
- **DYNAMISE:** During four lines and one turn, actors both move. During two lines and two turns, only one actor moves. Each actor must be moving for at least five, and frozen for at least two, elements. Similar rules regarding

silence and sound can be incorporated into vocal composition.

CONTACT: This exercise contains as an implicit element, the further diversification of movement between actors and a reduction in visual repetition between them as a result. It may be applied with specification as a composition rule, for public presentation, however as a conditioning tool it is best applied uniformly. If any actor comes into contact with the floor with part of their body during performance of an element, they may not do so again in any other element, and other actors may not do so at all.

SUPPORT: Actors must insert a moment into a group score, during which each is only able to maintain their balance due to contact with the other.

BREAK: Actors insert one or more moments into a group score, during which each will only move when it is apparent to them that the other is also about to.

MICRO-IMPROVISATION: Two or more actors present a physical, or combined physical/vocal, score in unison. Without deviating from their set choreography, they should modify their behaviour and posture in response to that which they observe in their fellow performers. This can include both reflective and contrasting response.

DYNAMIC IMPROVISATION: Two actors present improvised physical, or combined physical/vocal scores, in which their behaviour must always contrast that of their fellow performer, but can never remain static. This exercise is concluded when both actors acknowledge an end-point. The exercise can be given focus and precision by instructing actors to focus on specific Dynamics, or by providing with context/character.

Appendix VIII Training Notes Example

② ~~Thy~~ - robot?
Floor-plan.

Don't look at me ✓
Physical contrasts

re-wind re-best
What's Amanda doing at start?
- Vocal

Invest in motion

① relationship
physicality

Defining obsession ✓
God-clownish
Communicative bodies.
faint v. death.

- Natural gesture x
God?
How do you feel?

- like God's snotty behaviour
Distance...

localisation
must match body
in intensity

Amanda too balanced

Charisse - exag.
Dynamic station Allie
Intensity - muscles.
Tight-rope ✓

Greater extremes - slows slower
Enjoy tension backcrawl
Hair Muscular tension arms, shoulders

following eyes!!! Back shuffle, feet up ✓
Balances - extremity.

Appendix IX Work Presentation 01 feedback

notes

Performance

Interesting & Alienating

focus: stares. Look in the eyes.
 Look around the room more. Chest out.

Building anticipation.

Creepy - good.

Keeping strength in vocal for long time -
 Sounds for movements - Steps w/ sounds

Not enough collaboration, linking. TO each other (or the music?)

Relationship between characters - individuals well-made, more reaction between.

Patterns intriguing - looking for interaction
 speech alienating - can't tell what saying.

Dance reflected broken music
 creatures - not from this world -
 somewhat uncomfortable.
 Watch to see what they do.

Lead actress - movements chosen seem dominant

Bubbles - 'affair w/ the floor'

Range vocally - articulating words

Change in tone - change in desire to understand vocal

Narrative? - searching for something, discovery
 Journey, looking for something.
 Actions (hand shielding eyes) presume

Detail. facial expression.

floor space usage - back ~~corner~~ corner

Appendix X Vocal Score Development Example

way story (Andy) Buzz Space (Star) Sun, Black,
 (Cactus) Spice, green, (Thorn) desert, sand (beach),
 sky, seagull, (icecream), towel, pier (salt), sea, glass,
 (liquid) drink, alcohol, (party) town, bird, (heels) disco,
 world. (creamy) liquid soda (rajan) my friend (car) boot
 police (drive) hill rd (on my way) (secret) time now
 (back) and always (in car) 2L (at my place) (sideway),
 math so (ANNOYING) mother movie
 (now) time to go back with (blah) blah
 blah (creaming) no thanks (creaming) no
 way (ink) pink lip (head) thigh cheek
 (fizzy) oh my (what?)

Home invasion (Sian) Pearl Going (pathological) liar med
 student and law student tumour on the cerebellum,
 cerebellum, (hypothalamus), brain, frontal (lobe) lobotomy
 crazy (psychiatric) bubbles fizz (brain) dead Peter
 (Jackson) Lord of the Rings Gandalf (Sir) Ian McKellen
 (genius) amazing Shakespeare (sillology) speaking reciting
 acting theatre life (green) leaf high (Fairy) Brando
 getting high (Andy) Bunnings Warehouse (Chloe)
 searching for mushrooms (making) tea tea cup
 (nighttime) security guards (safety)

Star	them	beach	icecream	and	liquid	heels	rajan
drive	secret	in	sideway	now	blah	creaming	
head	what???	pathological	student	hypothalamus	psychiatric		
Jackson	Sir	sillology	green	high	for	nighttime	

1	loud	2	high	pitch	1	fast
1	quiet	2	low	pitch	1	slow

Appendix XI Budget Submission

BUDGET

Costume	\$250
Audience items	\$50
Set & Props	\$100
Posters	\$100

TOTAL: \$500

Appendix XII Scene-by-Scene

Scene 01.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Man, Jane, Molly, Carlotta:

Slacks, slippers, scruffy shirt/jersey. High heels, pencil skirt, nice blouse. School-girl uniform. High heels, pencil skirt, blazer (x2).

SET & PROPS

Cabinet, Doorway, liquor bottles, crystal set/whiskey glasses, magazines, newspaper, crossword, chair, foot-rest, side-table, gun, Wallet, credit cards, cheque book, cash, wedding ring, Blood Scarf.

Scene 02.*COSTUME & CHARACTER*

Brian, Carlotta:

Worn suit jacket, slacks, a scrappy tie (x2). High heels, pencil skirt, blazer (x2).

SET & PROPS

Desks x2, big & small, Chairs x2, Doorway, Overhead Projector, OHTs, OHT Marker¹⁰⁸, Papers, multiple stacks, Filing stack (inbox/outbox style), Coffee Machine, Mugs, Teaspoon, Sugar, Milk, Pens, Memo pads, Spreadsheets, Projection screen.

Scene 03.*COSTUME & CHARACTER*

Sam, Gary:

Something a bit hippy-ish? Grungy bogan kid.

SET & PROPS

Couch, Chair, side table, doorway, overhead projector, Piano, Satchel, note-pad, pen, projection screen.

Scene 04.*COSTUME*

Ms Zazel, Molly, Troy, Class (x2):

108 Overhead projector and all related items were ultimately replaced by chalk in the play's staged form.

gay cowboy shirt, chaps, holsters, academic robe. Schoolgirl uniform. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Schoolboy uniforms.

SET & PROPS

Long Black box x2, Small Cube box x4, Chairs x 4, Doorway, Killtronia Head, Notes/schoolbooks, Pens/pencils, Pointer, Sad, Square/Happy Square board, Teacher's Table, Ms Zazel's bag/things.

Scene 05.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Sam, God:

Something a bit hippyish. Technically Nice clothes, but in a bizarre combination.

SET & PROPS

Clear stage, Plate, Cake, Wine bottle with water, Glasses/Cups.

Scene 06.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Jane:

High heels, pencil skirt, nice blouse.

SET & PROPS

Bare stage, Carpet Bag, Candy (Fruit Bursts).

Scene 07.*COSTUME & CHARACTER*

J, Troy, God, Jane:

Trendy stoner, 3D Glasses. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Technically Nice clothes, but in a bizarre combination. High heels, pencil skirt, nice blouse.

SET & PROPS

Bare stage, Hot Dogs, Joint, Gun, Carpet Bag, Pamphlets.

Scene 08.*COSTUME & CHARACTER*

Class, Ms Zazel, Troy, Killtronia, Molly:

Schoolboy Uniform. gay cowboy shirt, chaps, holsters, academic robe. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Robot Suit, Red Dress. Schoolgirl uniform.

SET & PROPS

Large Table, Punch Bowl (Kool Aid), Snacks, Hot Dogs, Pointer, Remote Control.

Scene 09.*COSTUME & CHARACTER*

Class, Troy, Killtronia, Ms Zazel, Molly:

Schoolboy Uniform. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Robot Suit, Red Dress. gay cowboy shirt, chaps, holsters, academic robe. Schoolgirl uniform.

SET & PROPS

Large Table, Punch Bowl (Kool Aid), Snacks, Hot Dogs, Pointer, Remote Control.

Scene 10.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Brian, Carlotta, Jane, Boss:

Worn suit jacket, slacks, a scrappy tie (x2). High heels, pencil skirt, blazer (x2). High heels, pencil skirt, nice blouse. Suit.

SET & PROPS

Desks x2, big & small, Chairs x2, Doorway, Overhead Projector, OHTs, OHT Marker, Papers, multiple stacks, Filing stack (inbox/outbox style), Pens, Memo pads, Spreadsheets, Projection screen¹⁰⁹, Shoe-shining kit.

Scene 11.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Sam, God, J, Troy:

Something a bit hippyish. Technically Nice clothes, but in a bizarre combination. Trendy stoner, 3D Glasses. Schoolboy uniform, glasses.

SET & PROPS

¹⁰⁹Removed from final production.

Bare Stage, walkman, joint, Pamphlets.

Scene 12.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Class, Ms Zazel, Molly, Troy, Killtronia:

Schoolboy Uniform. gay cowboy shirt, chaps, holsters, academic robe. Schoolgirl uniform. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Robot Suit, Red Dress.

SET & PROPS

Long Black box x2, Small Cube box x4, Chairs x 4, Doorway, Notes/schoolbooks, Pens/pencils, Pointer, Sad Square/Happy, Square board, Teacher's Table, Ms Zazel's bag/things, Gun, Blood, Scarf.

Scene 13.

COSTUME & CHARACTER

Jane, Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie, Brian, Carlotta, Killtronia, Molly, Troy, J, God, Sam:

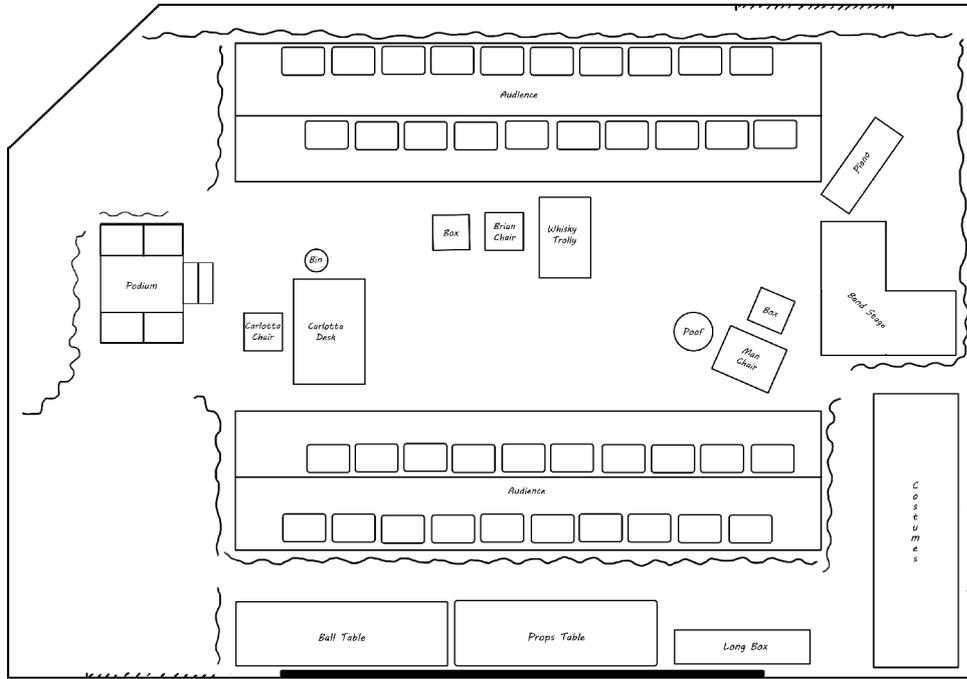
High heels, pencil skirt, nice blouse. Worn suit jacket, slacks, a scrappy tie (x2). High heels, pencil skirt, blazer (x2). Robot Suit, Red Dress. Schoolgirl uniform. Schoolboy uniform, glasses. Trendy stoner, 3D Glasses. Technically Nice clothes, but in a bizarre combination. Something a bit hippyish.

SET & PROPS

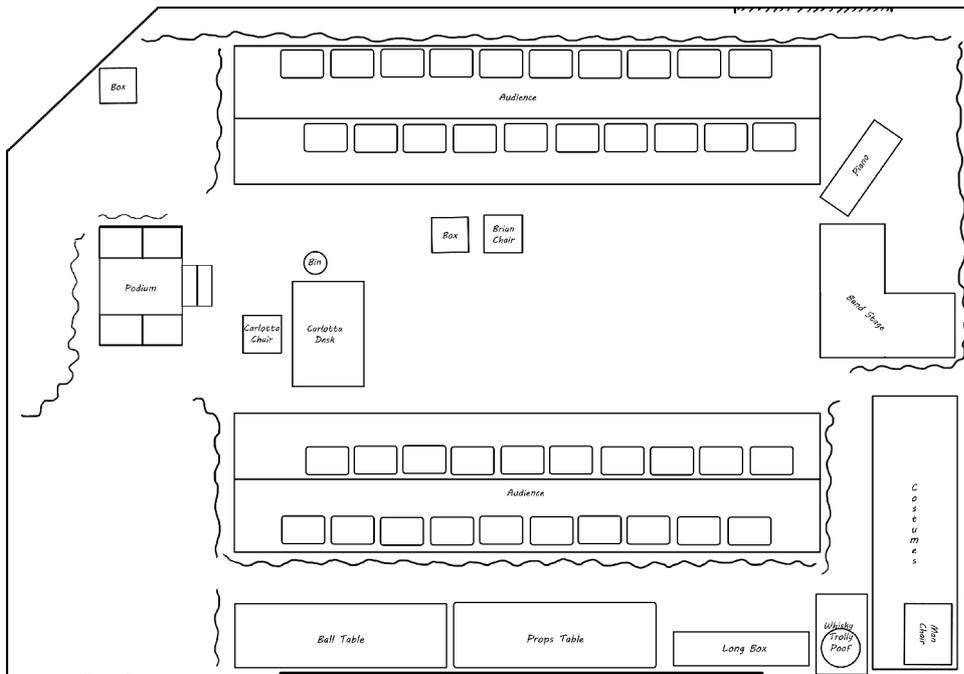
Bare Stage, Gun, fake blood.

Appendix XIII Final stage plans

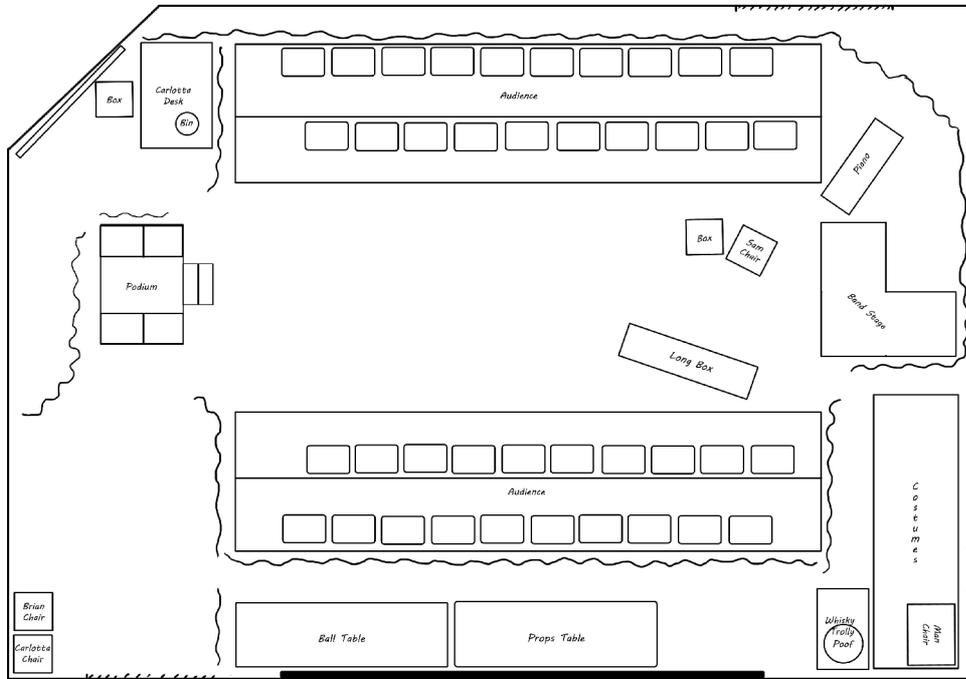
SCENE 01:



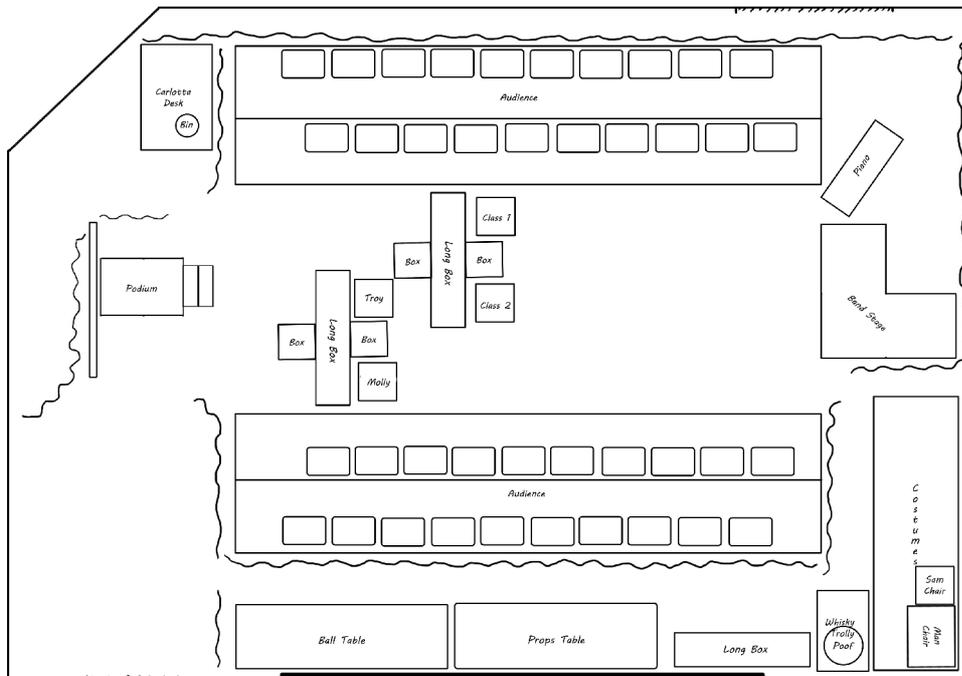
THE OFFICE:



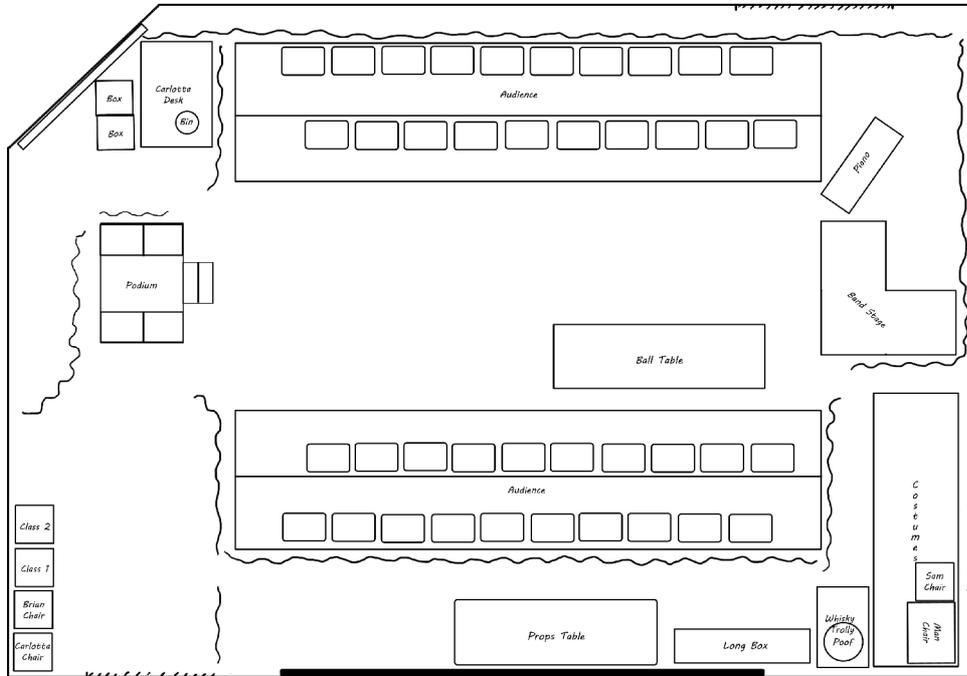
SAM'S OFFICE:



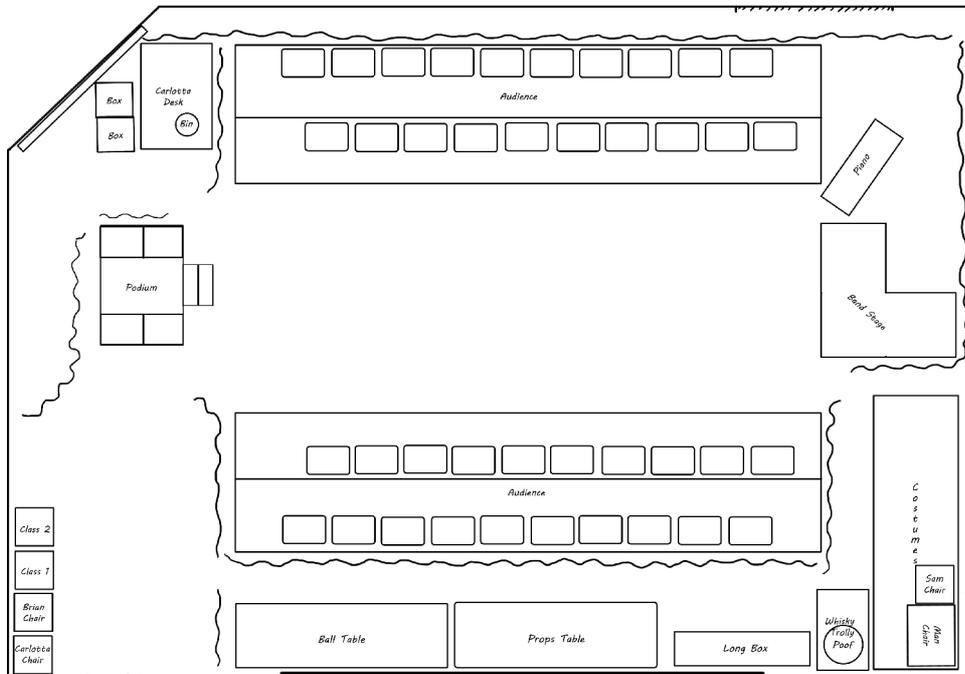
THE SCHOOL:



TALENT SHOW / SCHOOL BALL:



CULT RALLY:



Appendix XIV Make-up Design for *The Best Thing!*

Make-Up Design



V 0.1

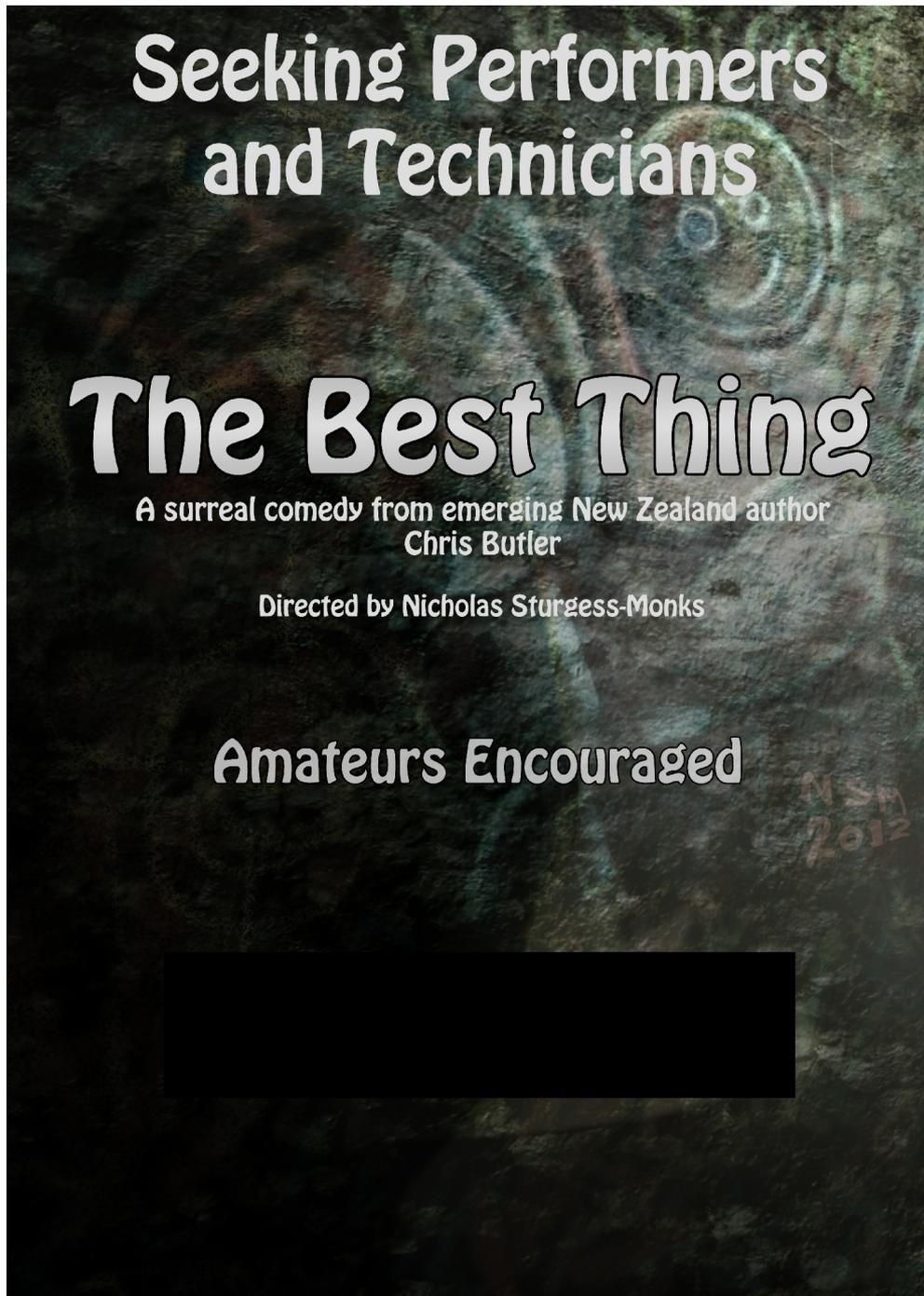


V 0.2



V 0.3

Appendix XV Auditions Poster



Appendix XVI Performance Poster

THE BEST THING

A SURREAL COMEDY, WRITTEN BY EMERGING NEW ZEALAND PLAYWRIGHT
CHRISTOPHER BUTLER

DIRECTED BY NICK STURGESS-MONKS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
THEATRE MASTERS PROGRAMME

7.30PM 20TH, 22ND, 24TH AUGUST

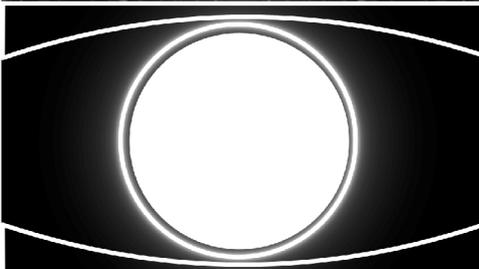
FREE THE NEW PLACE THEATRE
LAW 6.0 1 GATE 8, THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

ENTRY EMAIL STURGEMO@GMAIL.COM FOR BOOKINGS
DONATIONS ACCEPTED

Appendix XVII Cult Pamphlet

FRONT

ETERNAL LIFE
SOLUTIONS



SPONSORED BY
U-SPEND
 INCORPORATED

YOUR WORLD
YOUR FUTURE

BACK

There is a body

The body is tired and sore
The body is sick and hungry

YOU ARE NOT YOUR BODY

Your pain, is your salvation

It is natural, human, to lust for pain and for cruelty
Sometimes we lust even for annihilation
Because it frees the annihilated from responsibility
But everything you've got - everything you've ever had
everything worth having

has required some pain to achieve

So why do people hide from pain, when it is simply the fuel
that powers the machine of fulfillment?
You will be empowered by pain. You will be given pain
You will use pain, control it, and attain everything
you have ever dreamed of!

Together we will end the fear of pain and the pain of fear

Within each of your minds exist barriers and obstructions to
your awakening. Dogmas, mantras and morals. Cerebral junk. There
There is no you, no moral, no truth; only your commitment to
the community. Every problem the world faces has its solution
in people. Each one of you is billions of years in the making.

Each one of you is special and important
Mankind is approaching a spiritual evolution and only the Chosen
Will be prepared!

The capacity for life is infinite. There is a fullness and a life in
everything. The most important thing about life is that it is
shared. We need a world that works; a community that works!

It is now time to create our own community

Our world - Our Future

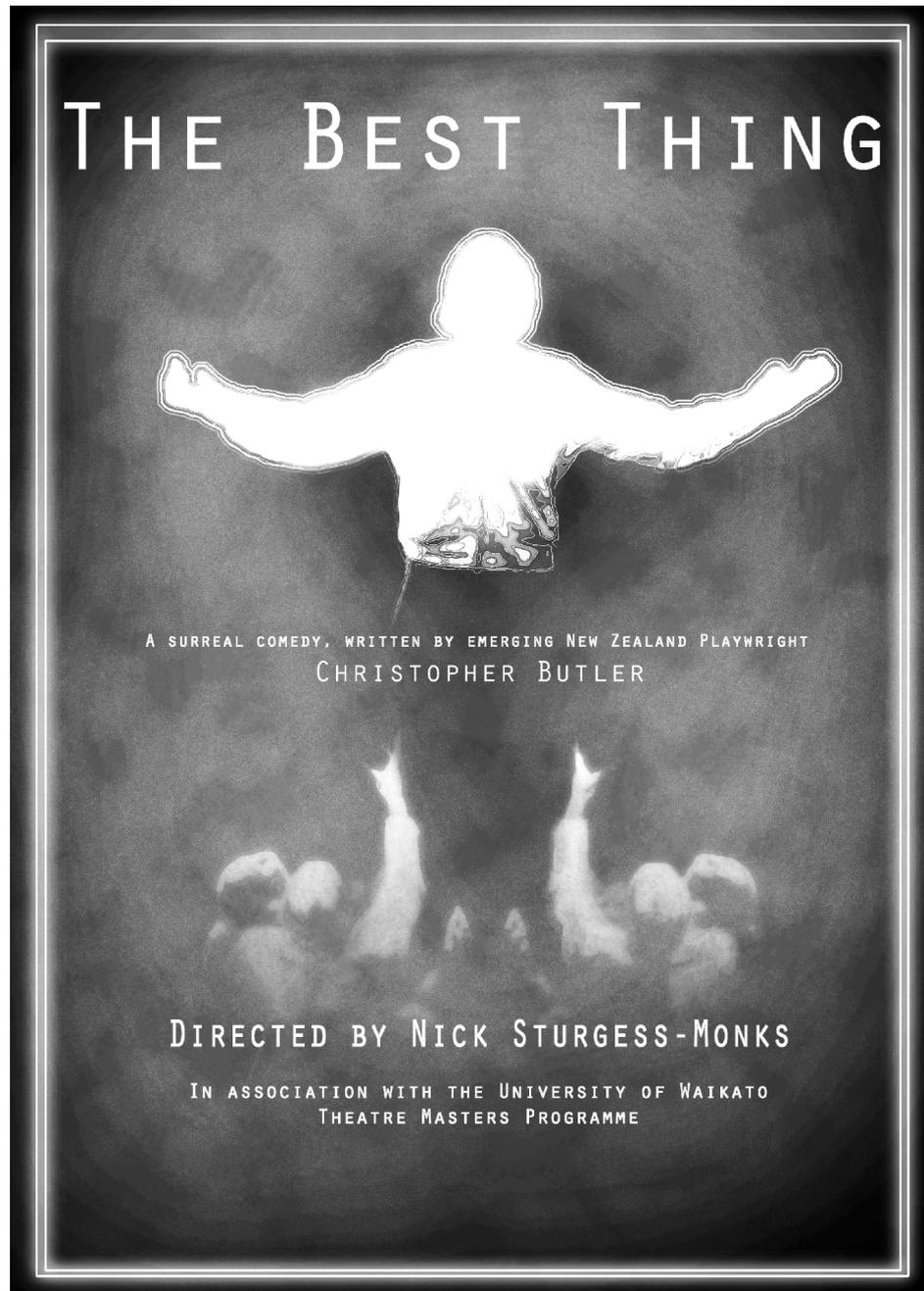
By coming together, living together, working together, as a
community - we will be joined in ecstasy

To learn more about 'Eternal Life Solutions' simply
 approach any member at your nearest rally.

Jane Berringer is proud to acknowledge her partners U-Spend Inc.
 originators of 'Whole-Brain Learning' and sponsors to Goddess, the
 world's most loved rock band.

Appendix XVIII Programme

COVER



PAGE 01: Director's Note**DIRECTORS NOTE**

I've been working on *The Best Thing!* in one way or another since late last year - Initially as an editor for an early version of Christopher's script, and Since March as the Director.

The Best Thing! appeals to me for many reasons. It's dark, witty, insightful and senseless. At times it is disturbing, but scratch the surface and you reveal a spirit that is surprisingly - sometimes shockingly - optimistic. There's an almost juvenile sense of glee that underscores every moment, even at its darkest I can sense the joke hidden just underneath.

The play follows three stories that orbit a fourth, ultimately collapsing inwards. God falls in love, a girl goes to a strange new school, an employee and his boss nurse an unhealthy obsessive relationship and a door-to-door saleswoman tries to take over the world. *The Best Thing!* may be absurd, but that doesn't mean it's not true, in fact it might indicate that it is.

I have staged this play as an element of my research for a Masters Degree. This research has focused specifically on the training of actors, with the intention of transmitting to them the skills necessary to devise physically dynamic performance. In creating my training regime I have been greatly influenced by Anne Bogart, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Robert Wilson and Antonin Artaud. Each of these directors incorporated into their praxis strong elements of discipline in the preparation of their actors for performance and in performance. Of particular note to me has been an increasingly clear correlation between the skills and discipline native to dance, and to dynamic performance.

Prior to the beginning of our rehearsal period, each of the actors took part in a three month long training regime that consisted of between two and three 3 hour sessions a week. The structure of the regime was developed using Anne Bogart's Viewpoints system as a framework. Our use was necessarily different however, as rather than using the system to devise performance, we used it as a means to develop muscular strength, skills in the manipulation and management of weight and speeds, and the creative ability to devise dynamic physical performances rapidly. This last aspect has perhaps been the most important skill to transmit, it's certainly been among the most useful!

We hope you enjoy the show,

- Nick Sturgess-Monks

PAGE 02: Cast List**CAST LIST**

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

MAN	Sophie Sargent
JANE	Alice Kennedy
MOLLY	Amanda Wallace, Alice Kennedy
CARLOTTA	Charisse De Bruyn, Alice Kennedy
BRIAN	Sophie Sargent, Amanda Wallace
SAM	Sophie Sargent, Amanda Wallace
GARY	Charisse De Bruyn
GOD	Mary Rinaldi
CLASS 1	Charisse De Bruyn
CLASS 2	Alice Kennedy, Sophie Sargent
TROY	Sophie Sargent, Amanda Wallace, Charisse De Bruyn
MS ZAZEL	Mary Rinaldi
J	Amanda Wallace, Sophie Sargent, Charisse De Bruyn
KILLTRONIA	Alice Kennedy, Amanda Wallace, Mary Rinaldi
CEO	Mary Rinaldi

MUSIC & SOUNSCAPE BY **GODDESS**
(Deborah Lanning, James Graham, Chris Alley)

LIGHTING DESIGN & OPERATION BY
Alec Forbes

PAGE 03: Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Debs, my parents and any friends that have contributed in some small way to the realisation of this project. A special thanks to Charlotte Atherton for your work during training. Thanks to William Farrimond and the staff of the University of Waikato Theatre Department for giving me the opportunity to get this show off the ground, and providing a forum in which to conduct my research into actor training. Thanks also to Alec Forbes for your technical assistance and for dealing with my multitude of timetable changes. Thanks should also go to any of the generous people that attended our work presentations, the play would not be what it is today without your input. Of course, thanks must also go to Christopher Butler, first for writing the play and second for trusting us to deal with his script on our own terms.



PAGE 04: THST at the University of Waikato**THEATRE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO**

Theatre has been practiced by many cultures for thousands of years and it remains as the heart of much artistic expression today, searching for new ways of creating meaningful relationships between actor and spectator as well as re-presenting the stories of the past.

The live encounter at the centre of a performance makes theatre unique, perhaps more so at a time when film and television media are so enhanced by technological advances, and it is this uniqueness which shapes the nature of Theatre Studies at the University of Waikato. The Theatre Studies Programme has established the study of performance as its primary objective in both teaching and research.

The Programme of study uses a theory-through-practice approach to teaching and learning to enable students to gain an informed understanding of theatre. A Major in Theatre Studies is a rich and challenging pathway to an undergraduate Arts degree which can have a wide range of vocational applications. Many papers offer the opportunity for a focused practical study of performance while others offer analytical approaches to the theories which have informed theatre practice over the centuries, including the work of contemporary practitioners in Aotearoa and other countries and cultures. Three papers have public performance seasons as the principal outcomes, and their study programmes are closely linked to the process of page-to-stage or idea-to-stage which creates a performance.

Programmes of Graduate and Postgraduate studies are also available, leading to Honours, Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The practical tutorials, seminars and rehearsals which are at the centre of the teaching and learning take place in a fully-equipped theatre laboratory space, The New Place Theatre/ Te Tapere Hou, and in The Playhouse Theatre of the Academy of Performing Arts, the venue for most of the public performances.

Further information about study opportunities is available from Gaye Poole, Theatre Studies Convenor (gpoole@waikato.ac.nz).

Appendix XIX Selected Journals and Notes

First Journal, Notes on Stage Design 05/04/2012:

The Best Thing has several key concepts that define staging convention. The first of these that is apparent is the division of the stage by means of a screen with a door, this represents both a complication and a boon to staging: the clear architectural form that it establishes is useful in to the consideration of actor behaviour and simple stage structure, however it complicates technical issues such as sight-lines and scenic manipulation (because the divider is moved during the course of the performance several times, people who fill the roles of stage-crew/hands become necessary). Overall I believe it is a useful scenic devise, that adds to the script's dynamism and expresses a frank observation regarding the fictitious nature of 'performance space'. Related to this is the fact that the two distinct zones that are delineated by the presence of the stage-divide both serve multiple scenic functions, sometimes simultaneously (at the very beginning of the play one side of the stage can be read both as 'outside' and as 'office' – each interpretation being equally accurate).

There is a third zone that is implicit within the text, though no specific indication is given regarding its placement, this is the location of 'Goddess', the band. There are several factors that define where they may be placed:

- First there is consideration for the audience, if the band are placed too near the audience then their music will over-ride the audience's ability to hear the play – therefore the band must be distant from the audience.
- As the band are actually in the play, they must also be fully visible to the audience *on-stage*.
- Their position must be such that is accessible for interaction within the school-dance scene, Ted's diatribes, and the

class-room scene towards the end of the play, they also perform a miniature concert.

My initial thoughts on stage design have extended from 'most obvious' to least obvious, beginning therefore with a simple end-stage divided in half by a screen. It was immediately apparent to me that this would be insufficient as it would necessitate the presence of the band actually *in* the stage, creating a nightmare of complications when needing to deal with equipment cables, aesthetic balance and choreography/composition. It also creates difficulty with sight-lines when it comes to the projection of the phrase "I Love You", along with other projections that they may occur. As a result I was able to dismiss this design fairly quickly as being ineffective for our purposes. I toyed briefly with the idea of staging it in-the-round, however dismissed this too, the projection screen's importance to the text means that the stage must have at least one 'wall'.

I toyed next with an L-shaped design. There are several advantages implicit within this stage-shape for this text in particular. It allows a total of 4 zones on the stage, 5 if a curtain is added to the central area as in my first design, which means that there is room for Goddess, without restricting movement on-stage and without their presence intruding into the action of scenes unless it is desirable for this to happen. The design feature of a curtain, allows an 'outside' space to be presented without muddying the locational waters of the office. The stage divide can be placed such that it doesn't block sight-lines for any of the audience – this in particular is a very useful feature. However, the quantity of audience becomes limited to what can fit within the stage's arms – potentially very limiting – and it's my feeling that the band will still be placed too closely to the audience with this stage design. I have also managed to remind myself of a significant issue that I experienced while working with a raised stage for *The Blind*, where the actors were [perhaps justifiably] afraid of the edges of the stage – instinctively so. Because there are a minimum of two dance sequences within this text I feel it best to avoid such issues altogether, by staging the

show on the New Place Theatre's perfectly adequate floor. Also in deference to the two dance sequences mentioned it is necessitous that there be a maximum of floor-space so that we can create a more diverse choreography.

With these issues in mind I began to rethink the relationship that I'm attempting to establish between actor and audience. Is this a play that hides its artifice behind illusion? No, it isn't. If anything it highlights its artifice, celebrates it. Why then, should I stage this in a format specifically designed to enhance a sense of illusion, or theatrical reality? I shouldn't. Coming back to my thoughts regarding theatre in-the-round, I considered what it is about the round that interested me. The shape is one that appeals to me on an aesthetic level, however the value of the round is more than this. Its value is that it establishes the audience in relationship with each other as well as with the actors and the play – it is impossible for the audience to forget that they are witnessing a fiction, because they are in constant visual contact with other witnesses. These witnesses each respond to *all* of the communicative stimuli that surrounds them not simply that which occurs on stage. This then brings us to a meta-theatrical (or perhaps proto-theatrical) state wherein all those who bear witness are also participant, they are actors. They communicate their response to the fiction that surrounds them, to those that can observe their reaction, this reaction is then parsed through the second witness's sensorial and interpretive equipment, to be communicated on to another witness. Ruefully, I thought to myself “this all sounds great, but I've already established that this text *can't* be in-the-round”. What then, how then to achieve an equivalent relationship of meta-theatrical communicative relay without adoption of a round stage? There are two staging conventions that come immediately to mind when I think of inter-audience communication (excluding the round): the first is the thrust stage, and the second is the traverse stage. I was able to dismiss the concept of a thrust stage fairly easily, as it relegates Goddess to being awkwardly put somewhere out of the way, rather than their placement being an active design decision, and so I began to investigate the possibilities of a traverse.

An immediate benefit of the traverse is that it allows me to utilise the architecture of the New Place Theatre more effectively than any other form considered thus far – the bars used for the rigging of lights may equally be used to rig a projection screen, which in the traverse format is naturally aligned with the rigging to begin with, avoiding the jerry-rigging that would be the inevitable result of a diagonal positioning. Because the traverse allows me to use as much of the length of the New Place as needed, placement of the Over-head Projector becomes less of a mechanical consideration (throw distance for projection vs. clarity of picture and physical obstruction of light passage etc.), and more of an aesthetic consideration. I'm also able to include natural entrances through the audience rather than from solely behind the stage, creating a significantly more immersive environment (which is not to say fictitious). I can position Goddess at one extreme of the stage, where they would form a wall of sorts, and the projection screen can be mounted above their heads. There are also two readily identifiable problems with the traverse format though. First, is that the positioning of audience and stage becomes quite rigidly formal rather than inclusive, the second is sight-lines. Again, rearing it's ugly head. Specifically, the stage divider returns to being an obstruction. Because I'm very keen on the traverse format in general I have begun to formulate a concept that should hopefully (we'll need to experiment with this in practical terms to see how well it works) allow the stage divide to have near enough to zero impact on visibility. It occurred to me, that the stage divide does not actually need to be physically present, merely indicated. And so I began to think about how much of this stage divide we could physically cut out of it. My initial thoughts ran to the idea of excessively large windows, seating our scenic manipulation in a natural explanation, this solution seemed to me to not be enough though. I then wondered if perhaps the wall could be see-through, maybe made of glad-wrap or glass. Unfortunately my decision in this respect was framed by the knowledge that glad-wrap distorts light, therefore destroying visual clarity and that a large sheet of glass is expensive, dangerous and highly likely to

be broken. I was skirting around the obvious answer of course: as long as the audience knows it's there, there need not be any physically present divide. The scenic device of a doorway makes this conceit possible. With a moveable doorway that *is* physically present we can create a wall that need *not* be physically present, because its presence will be made implicit by scenography. This convention also breaks the formality of presentation to a large degree, forcing the audience to creatively engage in the act by using their imaginations to create scenery. The formalist presentation may also be broken by off-setting stage and audience elements, creating an asymmetrical aesthetic that is actually more engaging visually anyway.

My currently preferred stage design, what I will consider the working design, embraces this logic and results in something that appears as a sort of compromise between theatre in-the-round and the traverse. It allows for a maximum of floor area, whilst maintaining physical and locational clarity. My primary concern with this design currently is whether we will be *able* to position the projection screen above Goddess' heads, if not then I will have to rethink the positioning of Goddess, the projection screen, or both.

PRE-TRAINING reflection 12/04/2012:

I have been aware from the outset, specifically after my experiences last year when seeking cast for *The Blind*, that casting will not be an easy process. To this end I have allowed myself a significant period of time (approximately a month and a half) to gather together interested parties, as well as to prepare rehearsal schedules and to perform my initial dramaturgical study of the script and to devise a malleable plan to be followed during the training regime. In acknowledgement of Hamilton's dearth of performers that are able to make the time commitments required I have chosen to target students and amateur performers for the ensemble. I have also chosen to eschew the traditional audition process in favour of adopting an "all comers accepted" approach, where actual casting will be

relegated to the end of the training process rather than preceding it. It is my feeling that this will allow me to make better, more informed decisions about who will work best in which role rather than making on-the-spot decisions with little information about the performers' presence on stage and rehearsal creativity. I have found it is often the case that a performer will audition well, and then display very little progression beyond this initial offering – my method here seeks to circumvent this risk.

My plan of attack for the assembly of an ensemble is a multi-pronged approach. I have created internet advertisements on *www.thebigidea.com* <<http://www.thebigidea.co.nz/work/jobs-opportunities/music-sound/115011-performer>>, and on *www.facebook.com* <<http://www.facebook.com/events/368638639825564/>>. The *Facebook* page has been shared to 'HAG', the Hamilton Actors' Group as well. Beyond this I have had the opportunity to make quick presentations to Gaye Poole's 1st and 3rd year theatre classes at the University of Waikato. If these measures don't meet with the desired level of success by the middle of April then I will follow up with a poster campaign. These posters will be liberally spread about the University and Polytech campuses.

The creation of these ads and presentations has necessitated the devising of blurbs, which have succeeded in helping me to frame my own thoughts about the play and the process that I'm undertaking. Following I have included the blurb created for advertisement purposes, and my presentation plan for my recruitment speeches in Gaye Poole's classes:

ADVERTISING BLURB, TheBigIdea & Facebook:

- Actors, dancers, musicians and technical crew wanted! Amateurs encouraged, no prior training required.
- 'The Best Thing', a surreal comedy by Wellington author Christopher Butler. Directed by Nicholas Sturgess-Monks.
- I will be staging this in September as a part of my Masters Degree research project, through the University of

Waikato theatre department in Hamilton, New Zealand. I'm currently seeking cast and crew, if you're interested send me a message ASAP. Rehearsal begins April 23rd.

- This is a full-scale play with a lot of moving parts: it's strange, a bit twisted and a lot of fun. To prepare for this we will first engage in an experimental training regime wherein we will seek to identify a tool-set for the expansion of your physical and vocal performance range. This is a perfect chance for any young actors and students that are keen to experiment and to expand their skills, but I would also love to have any more experienced actors that might be interested join our cast. I'm also looking for people interested in the technical aspects of play production, stage-managers, lighting-board operators (or people interested in learning), scenographers, and musicians are all encouraged to apply. In fact, anyone who is at all interested in contributing in any way, should absolutely apply.

Please get in touch with me at [REDACTED] or on

[REDACTED].

Thanks for your time, I hope to hear from you soon.

– Nick.

PRESENTATION PLAN:

INTRO: Name, training – Hamilton + Wellington.

PROJECT: Masters Thesis – research into training methodology.

THE PLAY: Title + Author. A bit about Chris.

The Best Thing is a surreal comedy; a twisted exploration of our modern corporate culture. It's deep, insightful and filled with moments of chuckle-worthy comedy.

FORMAT: Extended rehearsal structure. Experimental. Two month training period during which participants will develop their physical and vocal performance technique according to a methodology inspired by 20th century theatre greats such as Grotowski, Barba and Anne Bogart. Development of an individualised training regime that can continue to evolve beyond this exercise.

BEGINS: April 25th

ENDS: August 24th

CONTACT: Nick at [REDACTED]

I expect to gain a few more actors prior to the beginning of rehearsals, but I would also not be surprised if a few were to drop off as well. It's looking increasingly unlikely that a poster campaign will be necessary. Informing this is a conversation which I have had recently with the author where-in we decided that 7 actors + Goddess (the band) will suffice. I also have the feeling that casting actors in multiple roles could have quite a beneficial aesthetic impact, serving to reflect the malleability of the set which is written into the script – a limited cast mandates the adoption of 'theatre magic' in this context. Goddess needs a minimum of four members, currently I have one confirmed member and another person that's definitely interested, but may find themselves out of the country at performance time – so it's a bit of a wait and see in his case. The forming of the band is far less urgent than the casting of performers however, so I'm not terribly concerned at this point about whether we'll manage to put together a full band or not.

Reflection on first rehearsal, 26/04:

As I had somewhat expected, not everyone that had expressed interest actually showed up. This was disappointing, but I had already decided that

if such a thing were to occur, then I would simply roll with it and begin work training regardless. I'll continue to seek interested actors, but who knows what will happen on that front really. Five actors *did* turn up, and I was fortunate enough to have a group that appeared enthusiastic and engaged. Those who were present at the first rehearsal were [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I began our first training session by introducing myself and our work. I proceeded to run a round of truth, where each actor revealed something true about themselves and told us their name. I ran this through two cycles, explaining that I'm terrible at remembering names – which is entirely true: I'm terrible at remembering names. I nearly never manage to maintain the knowledge unless I'm meeting with the person on a regular basis. I think it's very important as a director that I *do* remember each individual's name and face, simply as a matter of respect, so I tend to go to special effort to lock people's names to their faces in my mind when I'm working in the theatrical context. I asked the group if they had managed to read the play we'll be working with (mostly just out of interest). [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had read the entire play and [REDACTED] had read the first scene. I stressed that it wasn't terribly important at this point if people had read the play or not as we wouldn't be dealing with it at all for a while, but also stated that when we do come to use it, it would be useful if everyone was familiar with the script. I asked the people that had read some or all of the play how it had hit them and the response was universally positive, they were all specifically engaged by the first scene of the play (a good sign generally) in which Ted encourages a Man to commit suicide by shooting himself in the head, for the good of the world. [REDACTED] commented that she experienced a strange sensation where she knew she ought not to like it, but she did; and even more than that, by the end of the scene she *wanted* Man to kill himself

– *for the good of the world*. I'll have to tell Chris (the author) about this as I'm sure it'll gratify him greatly to hear, I imagine he's experiencing a bit of separation anxiety over letting his baby go.

After this conversation I got the actors on their feet, told them to take their shoes off and began the warm-up to get ready for the first evening of training. The warm-up routine I took them through was *Die!* A very simple routine, designed very specifically to leave the actors panting and sweaty – which it did. After this was done I took them through some stretches, after which I split them up into two groups and explained that we would begin our training with some improvised scene work. The exercises that we ran through have been threaded together by me quite specifically to be difficult. Essentially I'm asking them to do things that they haven't been trained to do yet, and then taking them through a series of quite simplistic steps that result in greater physical and vocal dynamism almost by default. So, the exercises show the actors both that they can't [presently] and that they can [in the future, with work] be physically and vocally dynamic – they require rigorous process and focus to achieve this dynamism however, and so they are introduced to the value of training in that this intensification becomes a more readily available resource to be drawn on in rehearsal.

Because there were only two groups rather than three (as there were not enough people for three groups) we were able to go a lot further in depth with this exercise than we would otherwise have been able to, however the dynamic of a larger group tends to be more intense and this can lead to faster creative processes, so there is a give and take of value between working with a larger group and a smaller one. The first group was composed of [REDACTED]; the second group was composed of [REDACTED]. Each group was given a prop with the instruction that it not be used for what it obviously *is* but for some other more inventive purpose: I gave Group 1 a stage knife with a retractable blade, and Group 2 were given an eight-ball (for billiards). I gave each actor an archetypal character (drawn from the play, indirectly) and an

intention/goal (thought of on-the-spot, no relation to the play whatsoever). ■■■ was God, who wanted to find the perfect hot dog; ■■■ was the School Dux, who wanted to prevent God finding the perfect hot dog; ■■■ was a Mental Health Worker, who was certain somebody in the room was crazy, and just wanted to work out who; ■■■ was a Motivational Speaker who just wants people to dance; ■■■ was a killing machine, that needed to find some money. Each group was given a further instruction that their scene must have a clear beginning and a clear end and that at least one character in each scene must achieve their goal. Each group was given 15 minutes in which to complete this task, more than is generally given for an improvised scene however I wished for them to be able to compose something relatively clear and 'complete'.

I observed during this time that the behaviour between one group and the other was markedly different. Group 2 were on their feet, working out their scene physically, whilst Group 1 were seated in a cluster discussing ideas for a full 10 minutes of the time allotted. I visited each group once during this time and interjected with a unique suggestion: to Group 1, I suggested that they consider defining *where* they are and how they can make that clear; to Group 2 I suggested they consider a floor-plan of movement in the devising of their scene. Once the 15 minutes were up, I brought everyone in for presenting and requested a volunteer to go first. After a few uncomfortable moments of deafening silence, ■■■ volunteered Group 1 to go first. Their scene (unsurprisingly) lacked any real physicality, largely because they spent the entire scene sitting on the ground, in a circle, having a chat. There were elements of the narrative that were successfully conveyed and ■■■ interpretation of God as a depressed hot dog obsessive with no sense of taste was an interesting take. However their location was unclear, and the other two characters were somewhat confusing as to their roles in the scene.

[ABRIDGED]

Even though we still had about half an hour left of our rehearsal time, I made the decision to end the rehearsal here. I didn't wish to overwhelm them in the first session, and felt it would be better to leave our next work – the development of a regime – to its own rehearsal slot, so as not to rush it. I told the actors that our next rehearsal would be more abstract, focused on the development of said regime and established who would be able to make it. I will be seeing [REDACTED], and possibly [REDACTED] on Saturday. I've been given the opportunity to run a training session with another troupe of actors this weekend, so I'm hoping that I'll be able to win some more converts through that.

Reflection on second rehearsal, 28/04:

We managed to get through a *tonne* of work on Saturday. I think that this was due to having a limited number of participants – it meant we could keep the pace up and nobody had too much time to cool down before they were stuck right back into working. The actors were very receptive to the methods we were utilising, and managed to pick up on the dramatic principles being examined/displayed without me needing to push too hard. All in all it was a very rewarding experience. We worked so quickly in fact, that we managed to cover the majority of ground that we would have covered in next Wednesday's rehearsal (the next time most of the actors will be together instead of just a select few), so I will have to reconsider my plan for how to approach Wednesday – it will be interesting to see how quickly we are able to progress at Monday's training session, as we will be dealing with the same subject matter but with a different selection of actors.

The plan for Saturday was to get through as much of the ground-work of the viewpoints training [that I feel is useful at this point] as we could in three hours. Because of our focus on viewpoints the process was very mechanical and nearly entirely abstract. The main observation to make is probably also the most obvious: by the end of the training session they were

displaying far stronger physicality and they were able to construct entirely 'new' physical scores within the space of ten minutes rather than an hour and a half. This is exactly where I hoped they would be at this point, if anything they're picking up on things far quicker than I had anticipated.

The actual programme of exercises that we followed varied in significant ways from the training programme that I had planned. I feel that it is necessary to maintain the choice of not doing what's on the programme, it doesn't represent a set of laws so much as a guide that identifies necessary principles that must be absorbed and techniques that must be utilised, in an order that seems appropriate.

TRAINING REGIME FOLLOWED:

- **Die.** Warm-up exercise (also prepares the actors to use soft focus). Have actors wandering around room aimlessly. They must pay attention to director's voice and obey instructions instantaneously. The actors will be moving forward at all times, "if I say 'jump', then you jump, and continue to walk. There are two directions I may give that will allow you to stop moving forward, these are 'stop' and 'Jump'. If I give you a direction that seems obtuse or abstract, it is your job to interpret and respond *instantly*." This exercise *must* be followed by stretches.

- **Stretches.** I asked if anyone had dance training, Mary announced that she had and so I asked her to lead the actors through a series of stretches. This is a part of the training, more and more I will have the actors direct their own exercises – acting in the role of facilitator and guide rather than dictator.

- **VIEWPOINTS.** Introduction: a system for a understanding the way that we move or can move through space. In this context Viewpoints gives us a framework for the expansion of the performers' physical and vocal potential. It is a way not only of thinking about movement, but also of talking about movement – this is primarily why it is useful.

- **Topography.** Each actor is instructed to create a floor plan. Step 1: Choose a beginning point and an end point in the space. Step 2: Devise a means of walking from one point to the other incorporating 2 straight lines, 1 curved line, 1 tight turn and 1 wide turn. Stress that all we are interested in at the moment is a clear floor plan.

- **Distance.** Instruct actors to make 1 line very long, one very short and 1 of middling distance. The difference between each must be clear.

- **Duration.** Experiment by varying the durations of each element of movement. Make 1 line very fast, 1 very slow, and 1 of a middling speed. Make 1 turn very slow, and 1 very fast.

- **Rhythm.** Rather than speed this is focused on the performer's “how” of movement: is movement sudden and jagged, or long and measured – does the performer perhaps stop and start frequently, or is their movement fluid? Each element of movement from their composition must now possess a unique rhythm. Two elements of movement must have rhythms that reflect each other in some way, and one must be remarkably different to the others. Remind actors that the turns as well as the lines constitute elements of the overall score.

- **Present.** What followed were a series of presentations, observations, and re-rehearsals. Some presentations were structured along the lines of perform-feedback, whilst others utilised the forum theatre technique wherein specta(c)tors call “stop” and physically modify behaviour/position/posture.

- **Re-compose.** The actors were given 10 minutes in which to compose entirely new scores following the process they had just been guided through.

- **Present.** What followed were a series of presentations, observations, and re-rehearsals. Presentations were structured in the order of perform/self-critique/group-feedback.

- **Group Dynamic.** Have the actors re-compose their physical scores in relation to and through each other. Reinforce that each actor's score should remain fundamentally the same, yet subtly modify itself to facilitate the progress of their fellow performers. I provided the actor with the rule that when they encountered another body in the space they must stand bolt up-right and bow, then turn 90 degrees. Ask actors for physical observations.

- **Divorce.** Have actors perform their newly modified physical scores, now in isolation from each other, but retaining the formal modifications established in the prior work. Present. Discuss what can be appreciated in the actions being displayed. Identify elements of balance, form, reflection, poise.

- **Animalism.** Ask each actor now to choose 5 animals at random. They must define for each animal three specific physical mannerisms/ticks that may be used to physically identify the animals. Display, adjust. Each animal must now be applied to one element of their physical score, such that we can understand by mannerism the animal being displayed, yet retaining the integrity of the score. Encourage actors to consider those elements identified. Display and discuss. What worked/didn't work? Areas requiring investigation.

- **Self-modification.** Actors may now modify their score as much or as little as they wish, such that it encourages them to work on the areas that they consider their weakest. This may not be an improvisational modification however, it must be conscious and reproduce-able. These scores are to be presented. Actors must explain their weaknesses and strengths, and how they are approaching them with-in their score.

- **Present.** Each actor now presented their modified physical score, providing an explanation afterwards of what modifications they made and why.

ACTOR NOTES IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:

Example 01:

MOLLY

Standard Arm position
 = Left hand fist extended,
 Right hand holding imaginary pen
 in front of body.

- 1) Normal height line Happy Face
 Fast speed Straight posture, bent knees
 This direction = ↓ standard hand position.
 Normal distance
- 2) High height turn anticlockwise 120°
 Slow speed Neutral Face
 Left arm down, right arm up → holding position.
- 3) Normal height line Sad Face
 Accelerating speed. Standard hand position.
 Direction: ↘
 Long distance
- 4) Fast turn 90° clockwise Neutral Face
 Low height
 Standard hand position.
- 5) Low height line Cheeky
 Decelerating speed Sneaky Face
 Normal distance Left hand behind body
 Direction: ↓
- 6) Accelerating full turn going from low to high.
 Neutral Face
 Standard hand position → going from low to high.
- 7) Normal height Angry Face.
 Slow speed
 Short distance
 This direction: ↖
 Legs go out wide to each ~~side~~ → demon like



Example 02:

BRIAN Hands =
 Left = stars (typing hand).
 Right = planet.

1) Fast, Normal height, happy, elbows up, hopping.



2) Turn: fast, low, neutral, hopping.



3) Slow, low, short distance, sad, leaning backwards, feet turning inwards (pigeon feet), right hand on head.



4) Turn: high, decelerating, neutral



5) Decelerating, high, long distance, angry



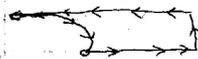
6) Turn: slow, normal height, neutral



7) Accelerating, normal height, sneaky, lean back, left hand front of face, ~~lean~~ right hand out, head turned to right.



Floor Plan:



NOTES PRIOR TO 1ST RUN, 22/07/2012:**General Notes:**

Voices: aim for volume over subtlety in all cases

Props & Costumes: Where possible use the full props and costumes as they currently stand.

Physicality: Push bodies to edges of balance, seek full extension.

Performance: Use the audience members you've got, the band members are the audience, so use them as you would the audience in the show. If you are on stage you are acting, this means you must always be performing as your character – not waiting for your next cue. I want to see responses, reactions and behavioural tics emerging that show your engagement from moment to moment.

As important as total performance is on stage, it is total silence that counts off stage. If you are off stage you are silent, watching, listening and waiting/preparing.

Establish one direction door opens in.

Act 1.**Scene 1:**

Allie, use the glasses provided for shots etc... steal these as well as the bottles when leaving.

CHANGEOVER BY Allie & Mary

Scene 2:

SAM's office set up by Amanda & Mary after CARLOTTA's entrance.

Charisse, remember that Carlotta does a lot of things purely because she enjoys hurting Brian. The coffee is a case of this, Brian's coffee is perfect – Carlotta tips it out anyway.

Allie, Carlotta hates the coffee she comes back on stage with but drinks it anyway to spite Brian.

Sophie, remember to make the I LOVE YOU as big and clear as physically possible on the stage.

B & C OFFICE CLEARED by Amanda, Allie & Mary

Scene 3:

SAM's OFFICE CLEARED by Allie & Amanda as soon as SAM leaves office.

Charisse, Make sure you are sitting at the piano before this scene begins.

Sophie & Charisse remember that all references to I LOVE YOU being written with clouds are to be replaced with it being written in dust. It's also not in the sky anymore.

Scene 4:

Classroom set up by Allie, Amanda, Mary. Cleared at end of scene by Allie, Amanda, Charisse.

Scene 7:

Hot Dogs. Neutrals Allie & Sophie bring on Hotdogs. Neutrals Mary & Charisse drag in Ball table at end of scene

Act 2.**Scene 9:**

School Dance.

Charisse, instead of dumping a whole bowl of liquid on Molly, prepare a cup of it, Call out “Hey Molly!” to get her attention and then splash it straight into her face & chest when she turns to look at you.

Sophie, Troy was in on this and immediately calls out “There you go, now you look just like her!”

Charisse, Class 1 begins chanting (TROY joins in): “New girl's a slow girl, new girl's a slow girl”.

Amanda, Molly screams or makes some kind of angry sound, beat of silence then begins dance.

Everyone, take their time for starting off Amanda.

STAGE CLEARED BY Amanda, Charisse, Mary.

Scene 10:

STAGE SET BY Amanda, Charisse, Mary.

Sophie, whenever you're on your heels make sure that your attention is entirely, directly and intensely focused on Carlotta – not your work.

Sophie & Amanda, during silent scream wait for a count of 6 heel strikes on the floor from Carlotta. (Amanda, judge the second one for yourself)

Allie, accentuate strikes of heels during this time and also the space between the strikes of your heels.

STAGE CLEARED BY Brian & Carlotta, dismally.

Scene 12:

STAGE SET BY Allie, Mary, Amanda.

Everyone, in the second classroom scene we have an interrupted repeat of the Genetic engineering dance. Begin it from where you are instead of getting to the “right” place. Perform it exactly as previously except for this detail – Sophie will have to perform what Amanda had performed in the earlier scene, but can't do this tonight as she still needs to learn it.

The cue to begin this routine is the dialogue from MS ZAZEL: “Since we've been doing Sowell, we're going to get deeper into our work with gene splicing.” As soon as word “Splicing” is over begin dance.

Allie will stop the dance spontaneously with the dialogue “But someone DIED the last time we did this!” As soon as this happens return to your seats in perfect student formations. This is an action filled with panic and is therefore performed as quickly as possible.

Amanda, when you say Bang try to make it sound feminine.

STAGE CLEARED BY Charisse, Mary, Sophie as JANE takes her place on her podium. Pillars are first items cleared.

Scene 13:

Allie, really space out your dialogue at the start of this scene. Take it slow, chew it over. “There ... is ... a ... body!” “The body is tired ... and sore. The ... body ... is sick ... and ... hunngry. your ... *pain* ... is ... your salvation.”

At end of scene instead of having JANE just “get up”, Amanda and Charisse come on as neutrals and drag JANE off between you. Make a fairly big deal about it, but in total silence – draw out the moment as much as possible.

Notes for 1st FULL Run:

- In general I felt like the Monday run went very well, it was certainly looking great for a first run. Thanks for your effort in getting through it, hopefully next time we run it things will be even smoother.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FINAL WEEKS:

Wednesday 08 August 7 – 10pm: Act1 Stumble-through

Saturday 11 August 11am – 2pm: Act2 Stumble-through

Monday 13 August 5 – 8pm: Run2 (Lighting Observation)

Wednesday 15 August 7 – 10pm: Run3 (Photoshoot, lighting run)

Saturday 18 August 10am – 2pm: Pack-in, tech.

Sunday 19 August 7pm – LATE: Cue2Cue. Final Dress Rehearsal.

Monday 20 August 5:30 – Finish: Opening Night

Wednesday 22 August 5:30 – Finish: Middle Night

Friday 24 August 5:30 – Finish: Closing Night

PS: I'm not sure yet if we'll be doing pack out straight after closing on Friday or if we'll do it on Saturday morning, I'll have to get feedback from Alec on that one. Also take note, the times for Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th have been confirmed, we'll be working from 10 till 2 on Saturday and from 7 until we're done on Sunday (Don't plan anything else for immediately after this as I can't give any real guarantee about when we'll

finish, the same should probably apply to our Wednesday and Saturday rehearsals as much as is practical from this point onwards – we'll attempt to keep within the schedule, but could potentially wind up running overtime if we don't manage to get through everything that we have to get through).

GENERAL NOTES:

- Voices need to be louder
- I'd like to hear more diversity in your vocal presentations. In our next few rehearsals please have the courage (and it does take a bit of courage to do it the first few times) to try strange and dynamic vocal abstractions in your delivery. Concepts to play with include pitch, speed, duration, rhythm and stress. Play with this, experiment, try things on impulse or plan it out in advance, or both. Break up your sentences in non-logical and totally-logical patterns. The next few rehearsals are our opportunity to really see what level we can take this performance to, the spit and polish stage, and we get there by saying goodbye to the comfort zone basically.
- On a similar note to above I would be interested to hear each of you experimenting with character specific voices. Some of you are already doing this to some degree, but it could stand to be played with further. Don't worry too much about trying to sound like the other actors playing your characters and instead try to think about how *you* specifically feel the character sounds. Again, be daring.
- I had told you all to move slowly when you're being the scene-changers. This was wrong, do it relatively quickly instead (not max-speed, but brisk). I'd also like to see more weight underlying the movement generally.

- There are a lot of gaps in the dialogue that we don't need, try to close them up where you can – if we're able to find the time we'll do some lines runs.
- There are several costumes that require help to put on quickly. The GOD costume, the KILLTRONIA costume and the JANE costume seem to be the most difficult. If you're backstage when any of the actors are getting into any of these costumes, help them. Do this instinctively at first and a useful pattern will form.
- I've been looking at our backstage set-up and I'm thinking that we should make a long space on the floor for the costumes, with each costume given a specific location on the floor that it always lives in unless it's being worn. We can just lay down a sheet to keep them from picking up ground filth.
- On that note, costume changes need to be faster and entrances need to be more snappy.
- I noticed that the make-up had largely come off by the end of the performance, this will be even more pronounced under lights (because of added sweat from heat) so we'll probably need to use a hairspray cloud as fixative. Does anybody have an issue with this (allergy or such)?
- Please wear black underwear as it will be less visible under lights through leggings.
- We've got a plan for the KILLTRONIA costume that we'll hopefully be able to try out on Wednesday night (if not then, then Saturday), but the tights underneath the silver leggings aren't working sorry – it's too bulky for dancing in and we can see it bunching as you all move. You'll need to just wear the silver leggings on your legs, no black tights underneath.

SPECIFIC NOTES:**ACT I****SCENE 1**

- **SOPHIE:** Hold the wallet and credit cards out an unnatural distance from your body when you're fumbling with man's wallet. Make a really big deal of the fumble, make it physically big and open, we want as much of the audience as possible to see and understand what you're doing.
- **ALLIE:** Check to make sure the gun isn't in a holster before going on-stage.
- **SOPHIE:** When moving your arm to point the gun at JANE, move it slower. Similarly we need a longer, more intense build up before you actually kill yourself.

SCENE 2

- **SOPHIE:** Remember to really draw out the speaking of the phrase "I LOVE YOU". Each work should actually take literally the same amount of time to say as to write.
- **SOPHIE:** Nice reaction to the fallen cup.
- **SOPHIE:** Remember to drop back to work relatively quickly after coming up to attention.

SCENE 4

- **ALLIE, AMANDA & MARY:** When you're setting up this scene bring on the chairs in stacks of two, with the chalk sitting on them. Try to make this changeover as quick as you can without losing the intensity of your physicality.

- CHARISSE: Nice work in adapting to a mistake in dialogue during the Code of Conduct.
- EVERYONE: Still a bit shaky on the alphabet, keep at it.
- MARY: Great work keeping up with the high-pitch high-speed part of the Genetic Engineering dance.
- AMANDA & CHARISSE: Good timing with “New Girl's a Slow Girl” taunt at the end of the scene. When you guys move from your seats to drag off the corpse, walk over the desk rather than around.

SCENE 5

- SOPHIE: Sam needs something to do while she's waiting for GOD (Who I don't think she's expecting). Taking notes, collecting specimens, feeding hobos, exercising, singing an operetta. Have a think about it and see if you come up with anything to take a crack at.
- MARY: When SAM doesn't want wine it makes GOD a bit grumpy I think.

SCENE 6

- ALLIE: We'll put a snip in the fruit bursts pack that you open so that you can literally tear it apart. Do this, let them spill everywhere in a fountain of candy. We'll have more already open bags in your carpet bag that you can use to feed the audience from.
- ALLIE: with the final word of this speech soften sharply: THIS ... **IS THE U** - **SPEND** *world*.

SCENE 7

- EVERYONE: In general this scene needed to be significantly faster and louder. You guys have the tone and lilt of the stoned voice, now lets make it not slow without losing that sense. Remember, you're at a concert, fighting to be heard over-top of a band.
- AMANDA: When you're giving your dialogue “Goddess, they're – they're – they do it all for me man... “ and you're talking in between tokes on the joint, it's like you're thinking hard, searching for the right word and you need tokes on the joint to help make your brain work. They succeed.
- CHARISSE: Cut off a fair bit of dialogue that introduced the talent shows.
- AMANDA, CHARISSE & SOPHIE: Faster during the character change dance.
- AMANDA & SOPHIE: When GOD seems to say that he likes Hitler, J and Troy need to have a more extreme reaction – not much more, but add a vocal component and make your physical reactions more pronounced.
- MARY & CHARISSE: After you drag the table on as scene-changers can you please also sweep away the fruit bursts that will inevitably be littering the floor, this is to prepare for the Killtronia Ballet, which looked very dangerous to me with fruit bursts everywhere.

SCENE 8

- ALLIE: And speaking of fruit bursts in the Killtronia Ballet, your management of them was very successful on Monday, nice work.

[ABRIDGED]

The Best Thing Opening Night NOTES:

All: Opening night went very well. I was super-stoked, you were all fantastic and the moments where you played with your roles and invented behaviour were universally awesome. That said, there were some moments where the pace was a little bit slow

Allie & Sophie: This may just have been an element of working into the swing of things, as you both picked things up further into the scene, but the start was a bit slow. Try to keep the pace up right from the outset. I will give you a signal when I'm on my way to my seat on Wednesday night if this helps Allie.

Allie: I'd like to see a stronger build up to the intensity of "look at me Tom".

Charisse: When you're playing Carlotta remember to maintain perfect posture; shoulders back, chin up, and an air of satisfaction.

Sophie: With the dialogue "her desk was perfect" etc... I'd like to see less fidgety movement. Your level of intensity is good, but I would love to see stronger and more stable posture, with more certain gestures.

Sophie: It might be an idea to run through the character score for Sam a few times to refresh yourself on her faces and postures, things were a bit uncertain physically during the therapy session with Gary.

Mary & Sophie: There was a great moment in the picnic scene where I got the impression that Mary managed to actually surprise Sophie. Sophie, you jumped and said "fuck". This was hilarious. Mary, could you please continue to attempt to genuinely surprise Sophie; Sophie, could you please continue to give a relatively genuine reaction to this.

Mary: Writing Troy in the happy square was a nice touch.

Allie: Jane is best when she appears quietly smug, with a subtle, arrogant smile. Play up on this quiet arrogance, and use the more sultry

aspects of her behaviour as a manipulative tool. You could probably stand to pick up the pace a hair during her two big speeches.

Mary: I think I would like you to come out as Ms Zazel at the end of the Intermission and tell the audience to get back in their seats, in much the same way that you tell the students to get off the stage prior to the intermission.

Amanda: Nice scream in the Demonic Possession dance.

All: The Demonic Possession dance was rad. I think that last night was easily the best I've seen it.

Allie: Thought the shoe kiss was very amusing.

Amanda: Instead of writing HER on the floor when you're Brian, write HELP.

Charisse: I can see you preparing to jump on the seat when you're delivering the line "Brian. these spreadsheets are..." This action needs to be a reaction to Brian's line "These spreadsheets are perfect!", so we don't want to see you being aware of the action prior to performing it. Remember to visually reference the work that the two Brians actually are doing when delivering the line.

All: In the final school scene the front desk was slightly misplaced, remember to check this.

Sophie: Don't forget that there is an invisible door between you and the classroom that you need to use before you can go inside.

Mary: Timing for getting God on-stage in last scene was very good last night and it didn't concern me that your hair was loose, so if that's what it takes to get you on-stage promptly in that last scene then go for it. I think the audience will understand.

Allie: When you die as Jane, roll onto your back rather than your front. This give us the best chance of getting splatter that's visible to both sides of the audience. Fundamentally last night's blood was successful, now we just need to maximise its effect.

In-Script Notes Example:

(as he fills out his spreadsheets) Zero, zero, zero... zero... (he draws a large dot at the zero-point that connects the x axis to the y.) *Nice zero placement*

He writes 'I LOVE YOU' in big letters across the floor. *say it more hollow*

Unit 05. *don't return to desk for Carotta entrance*

Saying and writing should take same amount of time

CARLOTTA returns, she is now played by ALLIE. BRIAN hands her the letter opener, knowing she'll need it. She accepts it wordlessly as this perfectly attentive behaviour is the status quo.

CAR: (very pleased) ~~Brian~~. (Brian hovers ready to pounce up from his chair) Brian, you seem upset. (pounces forward in a rush of communication)

BRIAN: Very sorry, Miss Mayhew. The spreadsheets will be complete before the deadline, Miss Mayhew.

CAR: See that they are. Do them twice. (she says while leaving again) (Both exit)

*Nice reacting to cup Sophie ***
*Remember yo-yo game speed ***

(Playing piano as Gary with Sam sitting at piano)

BRIAN and CARLOTTA office cleared by neutrals (Amanda, Allie & Mary)

Neutrals need more weight.
Scene 03 needs to be set up while scene 02 is happening

Appendix XX Training and Rehearsal Timetable

Week	Day	Date	Rehearsal Times	Calls	Purpose
1	Wednesday	25/04/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Mary, Allie, Charisse, Sophie	Introductions Words vs. Action
1	Thursday	26/04/12			
1	Friday	27/04/12			
1	Saturday	28/04/12	11am - 2pm	Mary, Allie, Thomas	Viewpoints: Composition, Balance
1	Sunday	29/04/12			
2	Monday	30/04/12	4 - 7pm	Charlotte, Amanda, Charisse	Viewpoints: Composition, Balance
2	Tuesday	01/05/12			
2	Wednesday	02/05/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Mary, Allie, Charisse, Sophie	Viewpoints: Group dynamic/Spatial awareness
2	Thursday	03/05/12			
2	Friday	04/05/12			
2	Saturday	05/05/12	4 - 7pm	Amanda, Mary, Allie	Viewpoints: Architecture & voice
2	Sunday	06/05/12			
3	Monday	07/05/12	4 - 7pm	Charlotte, Charisse, Sophie	Viewpoints: Architecture & voice
3	Tuesday	08/05/12			
3	Wednesday	09/05/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Allie,	Viewpoints: voice, gameplay,

				Charisse, Sophie	improvisation
3	Thursday	10/05/12			
3	Friday	11/05/12			
3	Saturday	12/05/12	4 - 7pm	Amanda, Mary, Allie, Charlotte (?), Charisse (?), Sophie (?)	Architecture, Voice
3	Sunday	13/05/12			
4	Monday	14/05/12	4 - 7pm	Charlotte, Amanda, Sophie	Architecture, Voice
4	Tuesday	15/05/12			
4	Wednesday	16/05/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Mary, Allie, Charisse, Sophie	Improvisation, Devising
4	Thursday	17/05/12			
4	Friday	18/05/12			
4	Saturday	19/05/12	4 - 7pm	Amanda, Mary, Allie	Viewpoints: Composition, form
4	Sunday	20/05/12			
5	Monday	21/05/12	4 - 7pm	Charlotte, Charisse, Sophie, Allie, Amanda(?)	Viewpoints: Composition, form
5	Tuesday	22/05/12			
5	Wednesday	23/05/12			
5	Thursday	24/05/12			
5	Friday	25/05/12			
5	Saturday	26/05/12	11am - 2pm	Mary, Amanda,	Gestus, Body- mask/Face-mask

				Charlotte	
5	Sunday	27/05/12			
6	Monday	28/05/12			
6	Tuesday	29/05/12			
6	Wednesday	30/05/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Allie, Charisse, Sophie	Synthesis. Devising a Scene
6	Thursday	31/05/12			
6	Friday	01/06/12			
6	Saturday	02/06/12	11am - 2pm	Amanda, Mary, Charlotte	Composition in the moment
6	Sunday	03/06/12			
7	Monday	04/06/12	5 - 8pm	Charlotte, Charisse, Sophie, Allie	WORK PRESENTATIO N 6pm
7	Tuesday	05/06/12			
7	Wednesday	06/06/12	7 - 10pm	Charlotte, Charisse, Sophie	Training Review
7	Thursday	07/06/12			
7	Friday	08/06/12			
7	Saturday	09/06/12			
7	Sunday	10/06/12			
8	Monday	11/06/12	5 - 8pm	Charlotte, Mary, Amanda, Sophie, Allie, Charisse	1 st Read-through
8	Tuesday	12/06/12			
8	Wednesday	13/06/12			

8	Thursday	14/06/12			
8	Friday	15/06/12			
8	Saturday	16/06/12	11am - 2pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Charisse	Develop Physicality: Molly, Headmaster, Troy
8	Sunday	17/06/12			
9	Monday	18/06/12	5 - 8pm	Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Charlotte, Mary, Sophie	Develop Physicality: Killtronia, Belinda, J, Miss Zazel, God, X
9	Tuesday	19/06/12			
9	Wednesday	20/06/12	7 - 10pm	Amanda, Charlotte, Sophie, Allie	Develop Physicality: Ted, Carlotta, Man, Brian
9	Thursday	21/06/12			
9	Friday	22/06/12			
9	Saturday	23/06/12	11am - 2pm	(11 – 12) Mary (12 – 1) Allie, Charisse, Mary (1 – 2) Allie, Amanda	(11 - 12) Mary develops MISS ZAZEL (12 – 1) Develop CARLOTTA (1 – 2) Allie Teaches KILLTRONIA
9	Sunday	24/06/12			
10	Monday	25/06/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) Charisse, Mary, Sophie (6 – 7) Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie (7 - 8) Amanda,	(5 – 6) Charisse teaches CLASS (6 – 7) Sophie teaches J (7 – 8) Amanda teaches BRIAN

				Charisse, Sophie	
10	Tuesday	26/06/12	6 – 7pm	(6 – 7) Allie, Mary	Allie teaches KILLTRONIA
10	Wednesday	27/06/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) Allie, Amanda, Sophie (8 – 9) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Sophie (9 – 10) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Sophie	(7 – 8) Amanda Teaches SAM (8 – 9) Amanda teaches MOLLY (9 – 10) Charisse teaches TROY
10	Thursday	28/06/12			
10	Friday	29/06/12			
10	Saturday	30/06/12	11am - 2pm	(11 – 12) ALL (12 – 1) ALL (1 – 2) Charisse, Mary	(11 – 12) 2 nd Reading (12 – 1) 2 nd Reading (1 – 2) Scene 2
10	Sunday	01/07/12			
11	Monday	02/07/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) Allie, Amanda, Sophie (6 – 7) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie, Sam (7 - 8) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie, Sam	(5 – 6) Scene 7 (6 – 7) Molly & Ktron Dance (7 – 8) Molly & Ktron Dance
11	Tuesday	03/07/12			
11	Wednesday	04/07/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) Allie, Mary, Amanda, Sophie	(7 – 8) Scene 1 (8 – 9) Scene 5 (9 – 10) Scene 9,

				(8 – 9) Allie (9 – 10) Allie	unit 11 – 13.
11	Thursday	05/07/12			
11	Friday	06/07/12			
11	Saturday	07/07/12			
11	Sunday	08/07/12	10am – 4pm	(10 – 11) Charisse, Sophie, Amanda (11 – 12) Amanda, Sophie, Charisse (12 – 1) Charisse, Sophie, Amanda (1 – 2) LUNCH (2 – 3) All (3 – 4) All	(10 – 11) Scene 9 (11 – 12) Scene 9 (12 – 1) Scene 9 (1 – 2) LUNCH (2 – 3) Scene 6 (3 – 4) Scene 6
12	Monday	09/07/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) Sophie, Mary (6 – 7) Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie (7 – 8) Amanda, Charisse, Mary Sophie	(5 – 6) Scene 3 (6 – 7) Scene 3 + 13 (7 – 8) Scene 13
12	Tuesday	10/07/12	10 – 4	(10 – 11) Charisse, Mary, Sophie (11 – 12) Charisse, Mary, Sophie (12 – 1) Charisse, Mary, Sophie	(10 – 11) Devise (11 – 12) Devise (12 – 1) Show Presentation (1 – 2) LUNCH (2 – 3) Rehearse

				(1 – 2) LUNCH (2 – 3) Charisse, Mary, Sophie (3 – 4) Charisse, Mary, Sophie	(3 – 4) Rehearse
12	Wednesday	11/07/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) Mary, Sophie (7.30) Charisse (8 – 9) Charisse, Mary, Sophie, Sam (9 – 10) Charisse, Mary, Sophie	(7 – 8) Presentation Prep (8 – 9) WORK PRESENTATIO N (9 – 10) Presentation Review
12	Thursday	12/07/12			
12	Friday	13/07/12			
12	Saturday	14/07/12	11 – 2pm	(11 – 12) Allie, Sam (12 – 1) Allie, Sam (1 – 2) Allie, Sam	(11 – 12) Killtronia Ballet (12 – 1) Killtronia Ballet (1 – 2) Killtronia Ballet
12	Sunday	15/07/12			
13	Monday	16/07/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie, Charisse (6 – 7) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie, Charisse (7 – 8) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie	(5 – 6) Scene 4 (6 – 7) Scene 4 (7 – 8) Scene 11

13	Tuesday	17/07/12	5 – 7pm	(5 – 6) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Mary, Sophie (6 – 7) All	(5 – 6) Scene 12 (6 – 7) Scene 12
13	Wednesday	18/07/12	5 – 10pm	(5 – 6) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie (6 – 7) Allie, Amanda, Mary, Sophie (7 – 8) All (8 – 9) All (9 – 10) All	(5 – 6) Scene 7 (6 – 7) Scene 8 (7 – 8) Scene 10 (8 – 9) Scene 11 (9 – 10) Scene 11
13	Thursday	19/07/12			
13	Friday	20/07/12			
13	Saturday	21/07/12	11am - 2pm	(11 – 12) All (12 – 1) All (1 – 2) All	(11 – 12) Stumble-through (12 – 1) Stumble-through (1 – 2) Stumble-through
13	Sunday	22/07/12			
14	Monday	23/07/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) All (6 – 7) All (7 – 8) All	(5 – 6) 1 st RUN (6 – 7) 1 st RUN (7 – 8) 1 st RUN
14	Tuesday	24/07/12	5 – 7pm	(5 – 6) Allie (6 – 7) Allie, Sam	(5 – 6) JANE (6 – 7) KTRON Ballet
14	Wednesday	25/07/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) ALL (8 – 9) ALL (9 – 10) ALL	(7 – 8) Re-working (8 – 9) Re-working (9 – 10) Re-working

14	Thursday	26/07/12			
14	Friday	27/07/12			
14	Saturday	28/07/12	11am - 2pm	(11 – 12) Allie, Amanda, Mary (12 – 1) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Mary (1 – 2) Allie, Amanda, Charisse, Mary	(11 – 12) Filling Gaps (12 – 1) Filling Gaps (1 – 2) Filling Gaps
14	Sunday	29/07/12			
15	Monday	30/07/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) ALL (6 – 7) ALL (7 – 8) ALL	(5 – 6) Run through (6 – 7) Run through (7 – 8) Run through
15	Tuesday	31/07/12			
15	Wednesday	01/08/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) ALL (8 – 9) ALL (9 – 10) ALL	(7 – 8) Re- working (8 – 9) Re- working (9 – 10) Re- working
15	Thursday	02/08/12			
15	Friday	03/08/12			
15	Saturday	04/08/12	11am – 2pm	(11 – 12) ALL. (Allie NA) (11.30 – 12) All + Allie (12 – 1) ALL	(11 – 12) Musical Rehearsal (12 – 1) Musical Rehearsal (1 – 2) Tightening

				(1 – 2) ALL Sophie NA	
15	Sunday	05/08/12			
16	Monday	06/08/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) ALL (6 – 7) ALL (7 – 8) ALL	(5 – 6) Musical Rehearsal (6 – 7) Musical Rehearsal (7 – 8) Tightening
16	Tuesday	07/08/12			
16	Wednesday	08/08/12	7 - 10pm	(7 – 8) ALL (8 – 9) ALL (9 – 10) ALL	(7 – 8) Technical Rehearsal (8 – 9) Technical Rehearsal (9 – 10) Tightening
16	Thursday	09/08/12			
16	Friday	10/08/12			
16	Saturday	11/08/12	11am – 2pm	(11 – 12) ALL (12 – 1) ALL (1 – 2) ALL	(11 – 12) LIGHTING REHEARSAL (12 – 1) LIGHTING REHEARSAL (1 – 2) LIGHTING REHEARSAL
16	Sunday	12/08/12			
17	Monday	13/08/12	5 - 8pm	(5 – 6) ALL (6 – 7) ALL (7 – 8) ALL	(5 – 6) MUSICAL RUN (6 – 7) MUSICAL RUN (7 – 8) MUSICAL RUN

17	Tuesday	14/08/12			
17	Wednesday	15/08/12	7 - 10pm	(7 - 8) ALL (8 - 9) ALL (9 - 10) ALL Allie NA	(7 - 8) FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL (8 - 9) FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL (9 - 10) FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL
17	Thursday	16/08/12			
17	Friday	17/08/12			
17	Saturday	18/08/12	10am - 2pm	ALL	Tech Day
17	Sunday	19/08/12	10am - 4pm	ALL	Cue2Cue + Full Dress
18	Monday	20/08/12	5pm +	ALL	Opening Night
18	Tuesday	21/08/12	5 - 7pm	TBD	Modify
18	Wednesday	22/08/12	5pm +	ALL	Show
18	Thursday	23/08/12	5 - 7pm	TBD	Modify
18	Friday	24/08/12	5pm +	ALL	Closing Night
18	Saturday	25/08/12	10am + ?	ALL	Packout