

The Return of Spiritual Body: a Study of the Practice and Theory of the Actor's Body in Training and Performance

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Abstract

My research integrates the physical training methods developed by Jerzy Grotowski, Tadashi Suzuki, and Theodoros Terzopoulos to enhance actors' external energy and expressiveness. My own multifaceted professional identity in theatre, as a performer, director, playwright and acting teacher, serves as the research context.

Since 2017, I have participated extensively in international workshops and ultimately selected the training methods developed by these three theatre masters to form the core of my research. My objective is to explore how physical training can enhance actors' expressiveness and help them attain balance and coordination between internal emotion and external physicality in character creation. These training methods have effectively improved actors' physical expression and stage performance by emphasising the importance of the actor's body in contemporary theatre performance.

The research combines body philosophy, performance theory and training techniques to form an effective training method that transitions from theory to practice, offering a new perspective for the rehearsal and performance of theatrical works. First, I analysed and compared the training methods of Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos to identify their commonalities and differences. Second, I explored how these methods might be integrated into actors' physical training and character development to enhance the depth and authenticity of their stage performances. I also assessed the methods' impact on actors' emotional and physical balance as well as their role in promoting the spirituality and vitality of character portrayals.

Through its comprehensive application of Grotowski's, Suzuki's and Terzopoulos' training methods, my research confirms the importance of physical training in contemporary theatre performance. These methods not only improve actors' physical expression but also promote the harmonious integration of emotions and the body, allowing characters on stage to become more spiritually and vitally alive.

Furthermore, my research demonstrates how different body philosophies and theatrical concepts may serve as starting points from which to validate and reflectively evaluate

theatrical rehearsal and performance. Ultimately, my research provides a new and effective training method that combines theory and practice for theatre performance training.

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Acknowledgements

In reviewing my completed project, I am confident that my professional knowledge has been enriched and that my skill as a researcher has been enhanced. I have benefited considerably from my drive to identify, contemplate and resolve problems. The writing process entails moments of laughter, tears, pride and frustration that I recall as I review the finished paper. I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all who have helped me throughout the research process. Mike Bernardin and Richard Hand, both kind and knowledgeable, have offered me guidance, encouragement and assistance, carefully considering the paper's literature background, content and grammar. Their assiduous and dedicated academic spirit has deeply influenced and inspired me. Aside from my teachers, I have had the most occasion to contact Clare Thornett from the Graduate Office from the outset. She has afforded me patience and assistance, and I am grateful for her companionship and support. Without such kind and friendly support and help, which afforded me warmth and peace of mind amid the rigorous research atmosphere, the process would have been considerably more difficult.

The leaders and colleagues at my workplace, the Anhui Professional College of Art, have provided invaluable support in terms of training and performance venues, personnel and funding for practical research, volunteering to shoulder many of my responsibilities so that I could focus on writing since December 2021.

In addition, my son, my husband, and my parents have made considerable sacrifices so that I could focus on my studies without worry.

Time has flown by, and I want to thank all of you again for all your support and help.

Introduction

As a theatre practitioner, actor and acting teacher, I have become increasingly driven to find a means of harmonising the body with the inner emotions in theatrical performance. The actor's external body and internal emotions must complement one another and become integrated so that stage performances can attain greater vitality.

Physical training for actors in contemporary theatre should be designed to support performers in building body and self-awareness, exploring the body's potential and improving its capacity for performance and self-expression. The 'actor's body training' of the famous Polish contemporary dramatist Jerzy Grotowski, the 'Suzuki Method of Actor Training' of the Japanese drama master Tadashi Suzuki and the 'Attis Method of Actor Training' of the Attis Theatre of Theodoros Terzopoulos in Greece have inspired my work and explorations.

I participated in workshops under the direct guidance of Suzuki and Terzopoulos and completed my physical training and research on Grotowski in the United States. One of my instructors had studied extensively under Grotowski himself, while the other had studied under an instructor who had received direct guidance and help from Grotowski. I began to learn to use and pay attention to my body and gradually awakened the bodily capacities of common performance states. Through my own study and training, these three methods have afforded me practical and effective assistance with physical expression and characterisation in stage roles.

All three practitioners have made remarkable contributions to performance theory and practice in contemporary theatre and are unanimous in acknowledging the importance of the actor's body in contemporary theatrical performance. However, their training concepts and methods differ in multiple respects. Both Terzopoulos' and Suzuki's approaches to physical training emphasise the energy of the lower body, but the two practitioners' training methods and concepts show several divergences. Grotowski's training philosophy emphasises upward bodily movement. In terms of specific training methods, Grotowski's training revolves around the ascent of the body and overcoming gravity. Grotowski believes that when engaged in coherent physical movement, the actor's body should appear weightless and be as rich in resilience as the clay used to produce statues; and when it is used as a bracing force, it should be as hard as steel as

though it could overcome even the law of gravity (Grotowski 2002, 135). Grotowski's training is also relatively free flowing in contrast to Suzuki's and Terzopoulos' more prescriptive methods.

I led a cohort of student actors in comparing and integrating the three training methods, which differ considerably in key respects – in their approach to breathwork, for example. Grotowski's approach emphasises enhancing the actor's bodily flexibility and lightness, allowing for a greater expressive range. By contrast, Suzuki and Terzopoulos place greater significance on harnessing the energy that emanates from the actor's lower body, emphasising its pivotal role in performance dynamism. I guided the young actors in synthesising the three distinct physical training regimes, training them in selected strands of all three practices to determine what combination might yield enhanced value for their subsequent performances.

In the process of my practical research, I taught the student actors the training methods in the following order: the Terzopoulos approach, the Suzuki method, and the Grotowski approach. The movements in the Suzuki method are more stylised, while Terzopoulos' methods and movements are more easily grasped, making his method a more appropriate starting point for student actors. The plastique element of Grotowski's training was reserved for the final stages of the project, in view of its detailed emphasis on the internal sensations of individual body parts as well as the close connection between the body and the text.

I led the student actors in a six-month continuous training programme and subsequently through rehearsals and performances of theatrical works. I applied and used the three different training methods effectively to address problems that arose in relation to character creation and to find the most effective means of tapping into and harmonising the characters' external physical and internal emotional energy.

The progression from training to application is challenging. The training process was implemented in different combinations – for example, collective, group and individual – and the student actors were both participants and observers. Their assumption of these two discrete identities allowed them to attain clearer, more specific learning outcomes from different perspectives. I believe that consistent physical training is vital

for the actor's expressive and energetic capacities and that this increased physical capacity is somehow connected to the actor's inner life. Training stimulates and develops the actor's external energy and expressive power, making the body increasingly flexible and sensitive and thus better positioned to cooperate with the mind. Consistent physical training is conducive to the harmonious development of external and internal energies in stage performance. The actor's performance reaches a state of psycho-physical balance and coordination, so that the character is rendered full of spirituality and vitality on stage. The training's ultimate goal is application in actual theatrical performances, which are the actors' priority, and to provide acting teachers and theatrical practitioners with appropriate practical experience and methods to better teach/direct performers.

Grotowski's concept of 'poor theatre' emphasises physical training for actors, in line with his belief that the actor's body serves as the foundation for expressing emotions and shaping characters. Suzuki emphasises the 'animal energy' of the actor's body in the belief that the actor should manifest the power of the human soul through the performance of the body and mind. Suzuki affords particular attention to the actor's control of their energy, breathing and bodily centre of gravity, and this approach supports actors' mastery of their bodies and enhancement of their perception and expression. Terzopoulos' method centres both physical and inner psychological training, emphasising that actors require a profound understanding of their characters' inner worlds to allow them to mould these characters through emotional experiences and physical performances. In my own practice and research, I am working to develop a more comprehensive actor training that helps actors better utilise their bodies and inner emotions to shape characters on stage, thereby achieving a balanced and harmonious performance state.

Contemporary research throughout the Western world has witnessed a significant increase in practice-based techniques in recent years with the formation of practice as research as an additional branch of academic enquiry in the humanities and the arts. Many practitioners and academics have turned their attention to practice-led research to address issues that are difficult to explore through traditional qualitative and quantitative methods. Otherwise, they have chosen to use practice as a research method to explore and identify better research areas from different perspectives (Nelson 2013, 3–4).

For this reason, I chose to prioritise practice and conducted a comparative study grounded in the actual learning and experience of the different training methods. I led the student actors in studying, practising, exploring and comparing the three different methods of physical training to appraise the methods with respect to their usefulness and capacity to drive change. I then applied the results of the physical training to character creation in rehearsals for theatrical productions. Ultimately, the results of the physical training manifested in a fully-fledged stage character in theatrical performance. I decided to approach my project from a practical perspective based on my own extensive physical training and practical experience in acting, directing and instruction, which allowed me to organise training sessions and rehearse theatrical productions for professional student actors.

The progression from bodily training to this training's practical application in theatrical performance is a process that many beginner and young actors find confusing. As such, this research explores how the trained body might best be shown in performance, how the selected training methods may be used in the theatre and how the methods and effects of the physical training may be linked to the character that the actor creates. Practical research methodologies emphasise concretising exercises rather than merely imparting concepts in the interest of guiding student actors in acquiring methods and skills for physical training. This process divides naturally into two integral parts: physical training and performance application. As a pioneer in the exploration of contemporary theatre and actor performance art, Grotowski, alongside practitioners such as Barba, contributed significantly to the development of Western training systems. However, as Grotowski explicitly stated, 'The goal of training is not application, at least not direct application' (Barba and Savarese 2006, 817–19), a statement with which I wholeheartedly concur.

Grotowski's, Suzuki's and Terzopoulos' training systems all centre on the profound excavation and enhancement of actors' physicality and expressiveness. These trainings not only fortify actors' physical capabilities but also endow them with rich layers of expression. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that the methods and techniques that these methods employ are not intended for immediate stage deployment. Rather, they serve to nurture inner strength and promote the profound exploration of the essence of performing art. Taking Suzuki as an example, although several familiar physical

exercises may be observed in his theatrical productions, this may be attributed to the fact that those exercises themselves originated from the productions. After the performances, Suzuki ingeniously incorporated the exercises into his training curriculum. These exercises thus stem from the productions' inherent needs, attesting to performance's capacity to enrich training content. Suzuki's deft integration of stage-inspired elements into his training fosters a virtuous cycle between training and performance, which work in tandem to advance actors' artistry. This philosophy encourages us to transcend superficial technical imitation and embrace the intrinsic value and boundless potential of performance. As practical research methodologies undergo constant innovation, we can provide actors with a more comprehensive, profound and fruitful training experience, empowering them to portray vivid and engaging character personas on stage.

In applying the methods during performance, I explored the relationship between physical training and characterisation in a bid to find a means of linking the body and the mind through the theatrical work that my students were rehearsing: Shakespeare's tragedy, *Hamlet*. Renowned for its complex character psychology and profound exploration of human nature, *Hamlet* offered an ideal platform for exploring how physical training can help actors to understand and portray their characters' inner emotions. Many of the play's scenes and lines also touch on the relationship between the body and emotion, offering opportunities to examine how physical training can enhance actors' control over body language and physical expression, thereby allowing them to better convey their characters' emotional states. In addition, Shakespeare's works occupy classic status in the history of theatre, and *Hamlet* holds particular esteem. The selection of *Hamlet* as the subject of the present research thus facilitated a connection with a significant milestone in theatrical history, imbuing the study with greater academic value and impact. Therefore, in using a classic play such as *Hamlet*, theory and practice may be combined as a means of probing the relationship between physical training and character shaping as well as how the disconnect between mind and body in performance may be overcome through physical training and how actors may be supported to achieve a harmonious unity of mind and body in their performances. This is also the central goal of my practical training and research.

I have also introduced the method of physiological stimulation that was inspired by Grotowski's work to develop the actor's creative work on characterisation. Mind and body are indisputably inseparable, but they often undergo a disconnection in the acting

process, creating an insurmountable gap that separates the actor's mind and body. Therefore, it is the central goal of my practical training and research to re-establish a harmonious mind–body symbiosis (Lugering 2013, 4).

In contemporary theatrical repertory performances, both Suzuki's plays and the stage productions of the Attis Theatre exhibit strong external forms of expression, particularly for forms created through the actor's body. Grotowski's training method emphasised pushing the body to its limits with the aim of awakening the actor's inherent potential, thereby rendering the performance more authentic and impactful. Training methods encompass strength, flexibility and coordination. Strength training is performed through pushing, pulling and pressing to enhance muscle power, balance and body control; flexibility training utilises extensive stretches to elongate the body's joints, improving pliability and range of movement; and coordination training refines the reflexes through a series of movements that require high levels of concentration.

At its core, Suzuki's physical training for actors centres on strengthening the breath, controlling the centre of gravity and expending all energy. Suzuki instructs the actors to focus on the lower body by grounding their energy from the floor, enhancing their performance through their breathing and by exerting control over their centre of gravity. His method places considerable emphasis on the sensation of the feet in contact with the ground, utilising ground step control and abdominal breathing to regulate the actors' own strength balance and elicit emotional responses.

Terzopoulos' training method not only attends to the actors' physical attributes but also underscores the importance of inner emotional expression. Terzopoulos' body training for actors focuses on the waist and abdomen with the aim of enhancing the actors' breathwork, voice, concentration and acting awareness. Terzopoulos' training requires students to remove their shoes and socks so that their bare feet may fully touch the ground.

Each of the three practitioners – Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos – espouses distinctive training methods that underscore the importance of integrating physicality and emotional depth in performance. They provide invaluable practical insights and

theoretical underpinnings, ultimately aiming to guide actors in utilising their bodies and inner emotions to breathe life into the characters that they portray on stage.

These three practitioners have consistently emphasised that their work constitutes a deeper inquiry and development based on Stanislavski's theories of acting and that their aim is not to negate and reject realist approaches to acting but rather to complement and expand them. Moreover, they assert that their ultimate goal in both research and practice is to assist the actor in accomplishing a characterisation that is based on human logic. In Suzuki's theatre and the Attis Theatre, the expression of actors' characterisation does not begin from daily actions but rather requires the actors' performances to be 'de-lived' – that is, the inner levers of motivation and intention, or inner action, are still present, but their outer forms are often more stylised and not representative of observable daily behaviour.

Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos have each consistently explored how theory may be optimally combined with the practical application of realism, and each has developed Stanislavsky's acting system with respect to both theory and practice. The excellent integration of their training methods lies in their shared goal: to enable actors to better utilise their bodies and inner emotions to shape the characters they portray. Terzopoulos' emphasis on the waist, abdomen, coordination and breath lays a solid physical foundation for actors; Suzuki's focus on breath control, centre of gravity and energy projection allows actors to more holistically mine their inner potential; and Grotowski's emphasis on physical training – particularly shaping exercises – empowers actors to express emotions freely during performances. In guiding my student actors, I integrated these three practitioners' approaches, ensuring a holistic physical enhancement as well as a new level of emotional expression. I led the students through Terzopoulos' method to establish a strong foundation, followed by Suzuki's methods to amplify their inner strength and, finally, Grotowski's physical training techniques to help them articulate their inner emotions. This combined approach to training fosters the student actors' confidence and ease in utilising their bodies to portray characters and convey intricate emotions in theatrical works, ultimately bringing the characters to life on stage with vividness, animation and dimensionality.

In my practical work, I have studied and analysed in depth the theories and different training methods used by these three practitioners, and these multiple approaches have provided a broader space for my acting, teaching and research.

Thesis Structure

This paper comprises five primary chapters. Chapter I unveils the fundamental trajectory of the body concept within the evolution of performance theory systems over the course of a century, emphasising the significance of the body in theatrical theory and practice, encompassing philosophy art, theatre and performance. It also outlines the context and motivation that underpin the present research project. Chapter II details my method's theoretical basis, the utilisation of the actor's body in contemporary theatre and three influential dramatists' distinct actor training methods and theoretical underpinnings. Chapter III introduces my research questions and methodology, forming a robust theoretical and practical foundation for the physical training and practical applications that I implemented with the student actors. Chapter IV details how I translated theory into practice by guiding student actors through the learning and exploration of training methods. I provide a detailed training design plan that encompasses the preparation, practice, application and evaluation phases.

The discussion of dramatic work in the final chapter combines specific physical training methods, the correlation between the effects of the student actors' training and the results of their practice to construct my conceptualisation of and approach to the application of bodily movements in contemporary theatrical performance. This helps to reveal the close relationship between the actor's performance and the body and supports my exploration of the outcomes ensuing from the rehearsals of the actual productions in the study's final part. All of my practical research work centred on the relationship between the methods used for actors' physical training and character portrayal in the staged performance of theatrical works. I also wish to provide a reference for researchers and practitioners in pursuing similar research by practising and comparing three specific methods of physical training for actors as well as exploring these methods' application to the creative work of characterisation.

My research demonstrates that the staging of *Hamlet* validated the effectiveness of physical training in enhancing actors' psycho-physical coordination and emotional

expression. The integrated training significantly enhanced the student actors' physical control and expressiveness, underscoring the central role that physical training plays in actors' performances. The research combines theory with practice, offering new perspectives and teaching methods for theatre performance education and providing technical support for performance practice with a long-term impact on the future development of student actors.

Chapter I – The Body in the Theatre

Introduction

Theory and practice in modern dramatic performance increasingly emphasise the importance of actor physical training. The actor's body and mind are an integrated whole, interdependent and interacting with each other. Descartes' philosophical views on the relationship between mind and body exerted a profound impact that permeated the field of drama (Descartes 2008, 110). While Konstantin Stanislavski's method emphasises the importance of the actor's internal experience, he also values physical training, as is evident from his long-term yogic practice. Physical training not only enhances the actor's flexibility, strength, and endurance, but also helps them better express their inner emotions, adding depth and nuance to their performances. Stanislavski believes that the integration of an actor's mind and body serves as a creative tool, and that the combination of their thought, will, and emotion can mobilise all the elements within themselves, thereby creating characters that are authentic, vivid, and highly believable. His work reflects the inseparability of mind and body in actor training (Stanislavski 1989, 261).

In the early twentieth century, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's 'embodied cognition' theory subverted traditional philosophical views on the body, emphasising that the body is not merely a container for the mind but also an active participant in mental activities. The integration of mind and body is realised in the movement of existence at every moment (Merleau-Ponty and Jiang 2001, 125). This theory exerted a profound impact on dramatic performance, prompting a re-examination of the physical training offered to actors. Dramatic practitioners such as Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Jacques Lecoq and Phillip Zarrilli began to focus on the actor's body, addressing mind-body dynamics, the relationship between actor and audience and the body's spatial and temporal dimensions in theatrical experience, which has significantly influenced Western theatre. These practitioners' research is based on a deep understanding of performance's psychological and physical elements, leading to the development of diverse terminology and concepts throughout the twentieth century.

Contemporary theatre requires that actors possess a more diverse range of physical expressiveness. The physical training methods developed and implemented by Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos complement one another, together constructing a comprehensive system for actor physical training. Their training methods constitute not only a continuation of traditional training methods but also a new exploration and expansion of actor physical training.

Jerzy Grotowski

Grotowski maintained that the use of excessive lighting, costumes, make-up and scenery actually stifles the most important elements of the theatre. The guiding principle of Grotowski's 'poor theatre', based on that which he conversely calls 'rich theatre', is the notion that actors should abandon a series of decorations that cover the body and instead show the true face of people through physical skills and skills training (Phillip, Peter, and Barba 2009, 20).

On his return to Poland from the Soviet Union in the 1970s, Grotowski began leading his actors in the applied study of Stanislavsky's 'Self-study', Meyerhold's 'Biomechanics' and French and Polish mime in addition to yoga, tai chi (hexagram boxing) and other modes of original movement. He also reported having been particularly inspired by training in Oriental theatre techniques, especially the Chinese Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, and Japanese Noh Opera (Grotowski 2002, 16). Grotowski created a primary training system based on the development of the actor's potential and developed his own actor training method using thirty-two movements.

Grotowski held that the actor's training should begin with the body in recognition of the body's potential to be expressive before turning to various other elements, including desire, emotion, imagination, understanding, etc. Grotowski's approach is highly comprehensive and attaches great importance to the actor's physical training. His system thus implements very strict requirements for the actor and maintains that a good actor must have excellent body language (Wu 2021, 51–52).

Tadashi Suzuki

In *Culture is the Body*, Suzuki suggests that modern life has cleaved the actor's mind from the body and that targeted training is necessary to help them recover primal

unity and to allow them to use their bodies to convey emotions during stage performance. Suzuki devised a wide range of physical exercises with the aim of helping the actor regain what he refers to as ‘magical powers’. In addition, he fused Greek material with Japanese theatre forms to uncover the latent power within the actor. Suzuki’s training is physically demanding, particularly for the feet and legs, and the actor was also required to possess extreme concentration and willpower during the training (Kumiega 1987, 96). Suzuki’s system is founded on his belief that actors can create inner worlds and characterisations in stage performance through awareness of the body and by mining the primal energy of humankind. He also believes that actors can successfully complete character switching by altering their bodily sensations in addition to the ways in which energy is conveyed. Suzuki further emphasises that actors who merely inhabit a mundane, everyday state are unable to realise their full potential with respect to bodily expression and energy transmission in stage performance (Kumiega 1987, 97).

Theodoros Terzopoulos

Drawing on Grotowski’s ‘holy actor’ paradigm and the necessary principles of French theatre theorist Antoine Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty’, Terzopoulos created a unique training system designed to guide the performer’s body. In the theatrical theory of Theodoros Terzopoulos, ‘the transgression of madness’ refers to an actor’s ability to transcend daily rational constraints, entering into a primal instinctual state akin to spiritual ecstasy. It aims to pierce through the self and express the deepest, often repressed aspects of the individual. This state, carefully guided, enables actors to portray characters more authentically and powerfully, delivering a profound experience to the audience. Terzopoulos’ approach to performance creation emphasises difficult and strenuous physical movements, expressive vocals with a variety of breaths, and skill training for the actor’s body, breathing, speech and singing (Wang 2019, 10–11). Terzopoulos renders the theatrical experience holy for both actor and audience, and it is within this holy exchange that the presentation of art is embodied (Li 2012, 106–11).

The Use of the Body in Acting

Actors' physical performance is the first theatrical element on the empty stage (Brook 2019, 44). Screenwriters use words to create, directors use images to complete their work, painters use brushes and canvases to paint and musicians use musical instruments to present their artistic work. However, theatrical performance art is distinguished by the fact that actors create their work using their own bodies to shape a variety of stage characters; the actor's body thus constitutes the material and tool of their artistic creation and, simultaneously, the medium in which the work is presented. In other words, the actor's performance is an artistic creation that is accomplished using the body. The actor must continue to polish and refine their creative 'tools', just as artists working in other disciplines do, so that they may become fully attuned to their body. If the actor learns to listen to their body in a stage performance, they will realise that the character's intentions and goals for action appear organically in the work. Thus, they can determine what is needed without sitting at a desk. Crucially, the method of working with the body in performance does not constitute an abandonment of the inner technique but rather its extension and expansion. Moreover, the two methods proceed in the same direction in pursuit of a common goal: to free the actor from the obstacles that prevent them from embodying their own emotions. To achieve this, they must discover the resistance and obstacles to their own creativity and identify solutions to these obstacles through practice

From the 1980s onwards, many theatre performances began to use multimedia technology as a means of expanding the creative space of the stage and enhancing the visual spectacle. Some practitioners have incorporated film and image effects into their theatrical work, claiming that they are establishing a new performance mode that is in dialogue with the theatre and that they are happy to create and express themselves using technology rather than with the actors themselves. Various modes of expression and artistic styles have appeared consecutively in the theatrical space and stand in opposition to and rebellion against the traditional performance that relies on the actors themselves, who no longer appear to be the most important element.

Against this backdrop, Grotowski voiced his new perspective on the body: it was no longer possible for people to create a new universal spiritual consciousness through

language, and the only way was to return to the ancient body, to the source of energy from the language of the human body and to awaken man's inner spirit (Issuu 2002). In his theoretical work *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski maintained that the actor is the most important and indispensable element in theatrical performance and that the actor's body is the most important tool in this milieu. Grotowski emphasised poor theatre's necessary exploration of theatre's essential elements, focusing on the actor's performance, the audience's reception and the actor–audience relationship, which lay at the core of Grotowski's thought. He drew on this concept to define his own experiments with the actor's body.

Inspired by Grotowski's ideas, I linked the concepts of 'poverty' and 'holiness' as part of my guidelines for practical training and rehearsal work of theatre productions. 'Poor theatre' requires that the actor undergo systematic physical training, self-dedication, self-awareness and characterisation without fear of exceeding the limits of that which is normal and acceptable to achieve inner harmony and spiritual peace. Grotowski uses the term 'holiness' metaphorically – not in the religious sense but rather in the sense that a 'holy' actor should train themselves and use their body and voice as creative tools in the process of stage performance to portray their characters in a psycho-physical manner that resonates with the audience in the moment of total dedication to themselves (Grotowski 2002, 44–45). In my research and study of physical training with student actors, I invariably encouraged them to pay attention to the actor's physical training and to give free rein to their subjective consciousness as actors in their work on the stage so that they can create an arresting theatrical experience for the audience through their creation of characters that are replete with inner emotional energy and outer physical energy.

Grotowski's work was characterised by a variety of practical theatrical explorations, and the conclusions that he drew from his own practice include the notion that the body is the prime source of energy, and one must begin with the body to tap into an individual's inner state. Despite their diverse cultural backgrounds, actors' bodies are similar. Suzuki said, 'Acting is the actor's deliberate presentation of his body to the theatre audience' (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 31). The actor's body has come to be recognised as the most important element of theatre and is emphasised by both theorists and practitioners in contemporary theatre. Suzuki emphasises, 'Theatre has made widespread use of "non-animal energy", and human bodily functions and physical senses have been dismantled for individual and specialised research. Consequently, modernisation has completely dismembered our bodily functions' (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 8). The term 'non-animal energy' here refers to energy sources such as electricity and nuclear power, as opposed to animal energy, which refers to the energy supplied by the bodies of humans, horses or camels. Most contemporary theatres have been modernised to make full use of non-animal energy sources, such as electricity for lights, lifts and turntables. 'Modernisation has completely dismembered the human body, and what I am trying to do as a contemporary practitioner is to restore the human body in its entirety in the vein of the theatre', said Suzuki. Suzuki's method emphasises the 'foot' in line with his belief that when the actor's body reaches a sense of communication with the ground, they can awaken the awareness of his entire bodily function (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 7–9).

According to Terzopoulos, the actor must mobilise the body's vitality in training, expand its limits, constantly tap into its potential, utilise its own primal inner energy and transmit energy through the body. Thus, the body can constantly adapt to all manner of change, accept stimulation, transcend its own limits, transcend the ego that binds the mind and allow the unconscious image to emerge, freely expressing the soul in the space of the unknown. Terzopoulos places particular emphasis on concentration, which is embodied in the mind, the breath and the body, and the energy of the body as well as the total mind permeates this concentration (Wang 2022, 10–11). The actor must perceive their body as a tool for expression and strive to achieve harmony and balance between the body and the mind in their performances. Some actors can feel

their characters deeply and understand them clearly, but they can neither express nor convey inner feelings to the audience, and those wonderful thoughts and emotions remain locked up within their own undeveloped bodies. Rehearsal and training constitute the process of the actor's agonising struggle against his own overly solid flesh, which must be systematically physically trained if it is to overcome and triumph (Chekhov 2019, 12)

The soul aspires to coexist with the body, and it can neither act nor feel without its physical component. The notion that an actor's training should begin with the body is neither new nor revolutionary; such training is echoed in the work of Michael Chekhov and others. Chekhov and Meyerhold were both vehement supporters of psycho-physical actors, with Chekhov saying, 'In all methods of training the actor there is no purely physical training, and such training is futile. Among all actor training methods, there is no purely physical training, as such training would be futile; the primary purpose of training is to infiltrate the subtle, psychological aspects of stage performance into every part of the actor's body. This process enables the actor's body to sensitively receive inner impulses and convey them expressively to the audience in a performance state; thus, when an actor undergoes physical training, they are also undergoing psychological training (Chekhov 2019, 12). The mind cannot exist apart from the body; likewise, when the mind does not exist, the body ceases to be a normal body, and the physiological-psychological unity is cleaved asunder (Zhang 2006, 32). Thus, the supreme state of stage performance is one in which the actor's exterior and interior become one and complement one another as the actor's body and mind influence and interact with each other. These notions are closely related to my research and the 'harmony' that I have been pursuing. In the practical actor training and guidance workshops led by Grotowski, he made extensive use of physical techniques to stimulate the actors' potential, such as rolling, jumping and other motor skills, but also included the flexible use of voice, body shaping, rhythm, sense of space and other abilities that he believed should be a necessary condition for working as an actor. Inspired by Grotowski, many performing artists began to rethink the ways in which the body could exist in the performance context of contemporary theatre. The body should be regarded not only as a tool but also as the actor's most important asset in theatrical performance practice.

The long-standing and widespread implementation of Stanislavski's experiential and nature-stimulating training has led to a problematic lack of physical expression in actors' training. Consequently, contemporary theatre actors and acting teachers have considered new training methods that place greater emphasis on the actors' physical training. Through my practical research, I hope to find a means of combining excellent physical training methods for actors in pursuit of the harmonious development of mind and body. In the second chapter, I shall analyse and compare the training methods developed by Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos.

Research Motives

The rapid development of modern theatre, particularly the 'overwhelming' stage design in terms of sound, light and electricity, has seriously weakened the physical elements of actors in theatre performances. The impact of multimedia technology on theatre is no longer limited to that which lies above the visual surface, owing to the development of visual technology, the cult of technology and the emphasis on fulfilling the audience's sensory needs. To a certain extent, the main body of the theatre has been sacrificed as the over-pursuit of sensory stimulation and the creation of party-style carnival entertainment have stripped away theatre's true nature, causing it to lose its core charm (Gan 2016).

In theatrical performance, actors should find ways of accurately externalising their inner emotions. The actors exhibit immense energy through bodily expression but are disconnected from the characters' inner hearts. Consequently, the audience may experience a shock but will not understand what the actors really wish to express. If the audience merely perceives what the actor is doing without understanding their internal motivations, they will be unable to enter the character's emotional world, breathe with them and share in their fate or feel their joy and sorrow.

If external expressions on the theatrical stage lack inner stimulation, justification and inner calling, they cannot strike at the heart but are merely entertainment for the eyes and ears, and only physical creations founded on inner activity are meaningful. Meanwhile, the actor must maintain their artistic desire throughout the creation of the character's persona to evoke creative experiences on stage so that the corresponding

inner longings can be aroused, which, in turn, generate the corresponding challenges of action. Finally, these inner calls to action will find an outlet in the corresponding outer and physical actions (Drain 1995, 253). Thus, if the actor's creation lacks inner feeling or external expressiveness, it will affect the completeness of the actor's characterisation, and it will also affect the relationship between the actor and the audience. To achieve a qualitative leap in performance creation, the actor must receive professional and systematic physical and performance training. Movement on the stage may be misconstrued as outward expression. However, acting does not consist exclusively of walking around the stage, gesturing or moving the arms, legs or body. Rather, it consists of the actor's inner movements and impulses. It is not anything external that the actor pretends to present but an inner, immaterial and spiritual activity; it stems from successive and independent processes, and each act is interwoven with desires or impulses in pursuit of a certain goal; it is a movement from the soul to the body, from the centre to the periphery, from the interior to the exterior, from the actor's senses to his own body (Drain 1995, 253). Therefore, good actors require not only excellent physical performance ability but also abundant psychological support.

For the actor, the ideal state is one in which their mind and body are merged in creative stage performance. The actor is obliged to dig deep into the character's inner world while also performing external bodily expression, which not only completes the external character design but also follows the character's internal logic to complete their real emotional experience. However, my practical research also centres on the question of how the actor's inner emotional energy and outer physical energy may be balanced to afford the audience a high-quality theatrical experience that includes emotional satisfaction.

Why Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos?

I perceive a 'gap' in current acting practice and instruction that must be filled by an effective system, and the purely physical hand position and dance-based body training cannot be effectively linked with the characters' creative work during performance. Admittedly, the realistic approach to acting instruction is effective, but it is both necessary and crucial to supplement the teaching methods used with theatre

performance majors to improve the actors' physical performance and expressive ability through targeted and systematic training and to help the actors awaken their physical and spiritual energy so that they can enjoy a broader career development space with performances of various styles in contemporary theatre.

I chose the physical training methods of Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos not only based on their uniqueness and innovativeness but also in recognition of their considerable depth and intensity, which can provide actors with a broader range of physical techniques and mental preparation to adapt to performances of different styles and requirements. Meanwhile, the integration of these three methods provides actors with a comprehensive, in-depth and diverse physical training system that is of considerable importance for actors' personal development and the enhancement of performing arts.

Grotowski, Terzopoulos and Suzuki have all successfully combined their physical training with theatrical productions from the training methods to the application and transformation of the characters in the stage productions. For instance, in Suzuki's adaptation of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, the 'Suzuki Method' was utilised to showcase the actors' physical energy and expressiveness, making their physical expressions on stage increasingly agile. Terzopoulos' training methods and stage works, such as *Prometheus Bound*, focused on the body, pushing actors to surpass their limits and become conduits for explosive energy. Grotowski's actor training methods, along with his dramatic work, such as *The Constant Prince*, demonstrated how actors harnessed their physical training to unleash their body's energy, embodying the 'poor theatre' aesthetic.

The work carried out during my practical phase was arranged in accordance with the physical training schedule in the early stage and the rehearsal of theatrical works in the late stage. I would study and summarise the changes and enhancement of student actors, as well as the coordination and unification of internal and external energies of the stage characterisation of roles. Their stage productions had high requirements for actors' physical movements, which was a great challenge for actors who had lacked physical training for a long time. Through systematic physical training, actors broke

through the limitations of their own thinking and physicality, which further enhanced their performance abilities. The purpose of insisting on physical training is to ensure that the actors understand their own bodies and that they expand the expressiveness of their bodily movements so that they can move their bodies more flexibly on stage.

Why Me? (A Personal Quest)

Richard Hornby pointed out that, ‘Realism is not without style, nor is it the basis for any other style, but it is one of many styles of performance’ (Drain 1995, 338). All art has a form, and realism should have its own form – otherwise, it is reduced to slice-of-life naturalism and is not art at all (Lewis 1986, 124). Terzopoulos, who was invited to give lectures and academic exchanges at many prestigious colleges and universities around the world over the years, also noted, ‘Theatre colleges and universities around the world are trying to figure out how to break through the boundaries of realism, but the problem is that they lack a concrete and feasible method of operation and a set of training methods for keeping perfecting and outdoing oneself through the perception of the body and the mind’ (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 185). It is risky for an actor to rely on the use of emotions to recreate a scene during lengthy performances.

As an acting teacher of some twenty years’ experience, I have traversed China, the UK, Europe and the United States for advanced training and exchanges. In China as well as in the UK and the United States, drama schools largely adhere to Stanislavski’s method of realism, which emphasises internal skills over physical expression. This approach fosters brain-driven acting and curbs bodily creativity despite students’ innovative minds. The concept of the ‘psycho-physical’ was introduced by British actor Bella Merlin. She trained as an actor at the State Institution of Cinematography, Moscow, and engaged in systematic and in-depth study, practice and reflection on the Russian performing arts. Having achieved a renewed understanding of Stanislavski’s principles of acting, she wrote *Beyond Stanislavsky: The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training*, which clearly articulates the Stanislavski system itself and the system that has evolved into the present day.

If one has not experienced systematic physical training in the context of daily professional acting study, then the 'body' may be the 'flesh' only in the state of vital signs and life, and such bodies may struggle to express and create stage art. For actors, especially in contemporary theatre, systematic physical training is thus of paramount importance. The actor's body constitutes something of a 'trinity' – creator, creative material and creative result. The body is an important tool with which the actor engages in creative work on stage. Only through continuous training and polishing can the actor be ready for the stage performance in the theatre. The concept of the 'psycho-physical' has inspired me to lead my student actors in physical training and rehearsals for their performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

The fallacy of physical training in the acting curriculum derives from the early study of formalised actions in traditional theatrical styles, such as Oriental theatre or ballet, which do not give the student's body adequate and appropriate practice. Meanwhile, such study often tends to create a closed physical circuit in the student actor's body, hindering later modifications and adjustments. This is particularly common among young actors, who are often taught an aesthetic form that is unsubstantial. Similarly, actors who have studied Oriental theatre or ballet will habitually carry the 'action paradigm' of stage performance when they raise their hands and stamp their feet on the stage, as exemplified by Chinese opera performers: when the female character extends her hand, she will always unconsciously extend the orchid finger (a specific hand gesture associated with female characters in Chinese opera), and it is the same with ballet dancers, who unconsciously elongate their necks and straighten their bodies when they are standing on the stage and expressing themselves through movement. However, the body, which is repeatedly referred to in the theoretical writings and practice of contemporary practitioners, is not a composition of dance-like physical movements in contemporary theatrical expression but rather is the bodily expression that should dramatically encompass bodily changes, and it is the actor's primary responsibility to concretise these states of the body in stage performance (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 19–20).

Chapter II

A Comparison of Grotowski's, Suzuki's and Terzopoulos' Training Methods

Introduction

Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos persevered in their contemporary theatre performance practices, and each developed a comprehensive and systematic actor training method based on drilling and exploring. It is precisely because of the emphasis that they placed on the actor's physical expressiveness that they were driven to identify techniques, means and methods of bodily expression through training methods that would stimulate the actor's energy and physical expressiveness on stage. Their study of the actor's body, their training methods and their application in performance are evident in the stage performances of contemporary theatre and are therefore worthy of further exploration and study.

Here, I shall examine their exercise and training regimes in more granular detail to extract components that might be usefully combined in new ways. The questions of how the methods and effects of physical training should be applied to the creation of characters in stage performances and how the actor's own physical energy may be mobilised into their characters' actions have emerged as key issues for actors and are central to my practical research.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the three actor training methods developed by Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos, which provide a solid research background and theoretical basis for my practical work.

Grotowski's Actor Training Method

Grotowski's approach to physical training seeks to allow internal resistance in the body's midsection to be cleared by means of various training methods, thereby reducing resistance and maximising the external display of inner emotions (Yang 2021, 67–69).

Grotowski believed that each aspect of movement training played a distinct role with respect to, for example, the training's content, focus, methods and purpose, as well as the

requirements for the actors. He further maintained that actors' development should be the result of considerable experimentation and that plastique training should be grouped under the 'psychophysical' exercises, whereby an absolute unity between psyche and form was achieved (Grotowski 2002, 252). Grotowski perceived no contradiction between the actor's inner technique and the means of expression (Grotowski 2002, 17). and said that 'The elements of training are the same for all, but each individual must proceed on his own terms, and the observer can easily see the differences between each individual on the basis of different personal conditions' (Grotowski 2002, 210).

Grotowski holds that the body operates like a brain, registering patterns of movement and emotion and apparently responding instinctively when stimulated (Wylam and Schechner 1997, 352). He believes that a thorough performance creates truth and that an actor's body could be open only if he is extremely truthful in his stage performance. To be able to fulfil Grotowski's demand for a 'total performance' in the theatre, a total dedication to himself, a good actor must undergo rigorous training, coaching themselves to react so swiftly to any impulse that touches the deepest core of their being that the mind has no opportunity to intervene. The actor can feel the energy of vibrational movement throughout their body, and the exercise's key purpose is to awaken the actor's innate physical power through various physical and vocal exercises. Consequently, the actor's awareness, sensitivity and perception on stage are enhanced (Wylam and Schechner 1997, 355–56).

Grotowski believed that the body has unlimited potential, and that the actor should transcend their limitations to project boundless energy on stage. Grotowski's systematic physical training was designed to build up the actor's physical strength, endurance and flexibility while emphasising the use of body expression and requiring the actor to use more time and energy to construct body language and strengthen muscle memory. His main argument was that scientific and effective training should be adopted to ensure that the actor could complete the extreme experience. He also believed that the actor should be guided by the principle of consistency between behavioural action and emotion and achieve a resonance between their artistic spirit and training practice through the stimulating effect of action training on emotion (Wang 2021, 124–25).

Grotowski considers physical action to be almost innate, and bodily impulse precedes physical action. In real life, if bodily movements are not initiated by impulse, then they become routine, almost like gestures. Stanislavski was also aware of the idea of impulses

towards the end of his life. He argued that the actor might ‘stimulate and intensify the impulses within the action’, but he related these impulses to the body’s periphery, such as the eyes and facial expressions. Grotowski argues that the fundamental difference between his and Stanislavski’s ‘methods of physical action’ lies in the impulses. Stanislavski studied bodily behaviour in the context of everyday life relationships, whereas Grotowski sought physical behaviour that was neither social nor from daily life (Richard and Grotowski 2006, 59).

Grotowski’s training for actors is intense, and he divided his daily training into three components: physical training, plastique training and muscle training. In physical training, the first thing to do is to prepare for the action, and most of the foot training is based on the rotation of the ankle, side walking and heel walking, etc.; the preparatory action includes warm-up training, muscle relaxation training and physical training. The main training methods include various types of walking – fast, slow and alternating fast and slow – jumping, running and various combinations of body shape changes. For instance, the performer may begin from a curled position and jump forward with small steps; when landing, the performer must maintain their curled position and place their hands beside their feet. The performer must also perform inversions, flights and cartwheels. While basic physical training primarily targets energy and flexibility, shaping training involves rapid back-and-forth rotation of the joints, head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands, fingers, shoulders, hips and torso as well as exercises in which the joints move in opposite directions – for instance, the head may move in one direction while the shoulders move in another.

Grotowski emphasises that these exercises are simply a means of guiding the actor to identify their own physical urges (Wangh 2010, 163). He once said in an interview, ‘Our theatre takes actor training very seriously, and all the actors do two to three hours of physical exercises every day in addition to rehearsal work’ (Zhou 2008, 1006).



Headstand



One-Armed Roll

Grotowski insisted that the actor's vocation should be the ability to control everything about themselves freely on stage. The spine is the centre of the actor's expression, but impulses with driving force originate in the lumbar region, even if it is outwardly unnoticeable (Grotowski 2002, 191). While training, the body should appear weightless and as malleable as the clay used for statues. When training for support, the body should be as hard as steel, as though it is not subject to the laws of gravity. For example, the 'cat pose' exercise, which is

based on the observation of an awakening cat as it stretches its body, can support muscle and spine relaxation; or the actor might imagine a metal band wrapped around their chest and use their upper body to stretch it taut. Actors also perform handstands similar to those practiced in hatha yoga and train in flying, jumping and flips. The training also includes combinations of exercises programmed using ideographic gestures from ancient and mediaeval European, African and Eastern theatre traditions, such as the opening and constriction of the body (Grotowski 2002, 135–42).



Cat Stretch



Forward Fold

The actor must also develop their own special body structure, identify the different centres of concentration in the body to adapt to different methods of performance and determine the parts of the body in which they feel the source of their power – typically, the lumbar region, the abdomen and the area around the solar plexus (Grotowski 2002, 38). Using high-intensity movements, Grotowski trained and stimulated extreme experiences of self-sacrifice and non-religious piety, dug deeper into ‘animalistic’ movements and unlocked the actor’s primal instincts and inner impulses. He also focused on training the actor’s power centre and the sensitivity of the organs, believing that actors rely on the direct stimulation of speed and rhythm, the vibration of the human body’s internal structures, and the elevation and transformation of energy. This can help them eliminate obstacles and engage in self-disclosure. Grotowski emphasised that clutter and a lack of training pose the greatest threats to the actor. The actor cannot express himself amid clutter, and a lack of training or lack of spontaneity of movement hinders truly creative attempts in his body (Grotowski 2002, 209). Grotowski himself always insisted that his training was not easily replicable. This refers primarily to the fact that the application of physicality in performance cannot be replicated. He stressed, ‘Exercises can be troublesome if they are fixed in a pattern, because acting is not supposed to be set’. Grotowski’s physical and plastique training for actors can help them connect their physical and emotional lives. However, how to help actors translate this into words and works is an obstacle (Wangh 2010, 18–19). While actors may attain a certain emotional state through physical training, the accurate transformation of this emotional state into written descriptions or theatrical works that audiences can understand and perceive requires additional skills and effort. Grotowski’s method focuses more on the actor’s inner experience and expression. However, the effective communication of this inner experience to the audience necessitates that actors not only undergo physical training but also pay attention to their use of language and words as well as considering how they might convert their inner emotional experiences into compelling theatrical works.

Suzuki’s ‘Method of Actor Training’

Based on his understanding of traditional Japanese culture as well as his observations and summaries of theatrical performances in other countries worldwide, Suzuki has rigorously created his own unique performance system. This method combines the physicality of the traditional Japanese ‘Noh’, ‘Kabuki’ and ‘Joruri’ theatrical styles; focuses on the body’s lower centre of gravity and breathing; stimulates the performer through rigorous physical

exercises; and emphasises the actor's inner energy. His system has attained international popularity.

Suzuki's perspectives on the actor's inner energy and the body as the subject of performance echo Grotowski's approach. Moreover, his training methods emphasise the awakening of the actor's animal nature, which is also in line with Grotowski's goals. The spiritual commonality between the two practitioners consists in their shared emphasis on the actor's body, and they both coincidentally capture the fundamental and central element of theatrical art – that is, the actor's body (Yang 2019, 47–59). However, the two dramatists' approaches and respective pursuits also differ in important ways. The actor's body in Suzuki's theatre training tends to be in a static state, with a focus on the lower body as the body's central driving force by virtue of its supportive strength.

Suzuki focuses on borrowing and absorbing the kagura dance, kendo and other traditional Japanese art movements and materials in his own exploration and training methods. For instance, the shaping style used in slow walking training came from Japanese traditional dance art and the theatre stage modelling of Noh; training music used much of the traditional Japanese style of musical compositions; training props used the Japanese traditional footbag; and the bamboo sword in kendo became a tool for rhythmic instruction in training. In the long-term training practice, Suzuki also formed more than ten kinds of walking training methods by imitating traditional Japanese body postures, such as heavy stepping, sliding step, side-sliding step, squatting sliding step, pigeon toes step, bow-legged step, padded foot marching, inner eight sliding step, lateral sliding step, and so on. He continued to change, and the changes culminated in the ongoing practice, which was replete with the symbolic nature of the Japanese stage and inherited the approach to expressing the human body used in traditional Japanese theatre (Yang 2019, 47–59). While Suzuki has always emphasised that his training is non-Japanese, it is widely believed that traditional Japanese theatre provided crucial nourishment for Suzuki's theatrical thought in the Western academic community (Zou 2021a, 35).

Suzuki has consistently insisted on the fusion of modernity and tradition in explorations of theatre and stage performance, which also confers a unique aesthetic connotation and performance philosophy on his theatrical productions. The actor's energy can be shocking to the audience when their body is highly energetic, irrespective of whether it is engaged in dynamic movement or occupying a static position. Energy has become the common pursuit of

outstanding contemporary practitioners worldwide. It is synonymous with an actor's overall ability in the Japanese context, and whether an actor has a sense of theatrical presence and sufficient power is determined by their ability to harness their energy (Barba and Shawalisi 2006, 237–39). Ilan Rachel, a form studies instructor, said, 'There is also energy that enables a human being to stand, in addition to the feet and skeletal muscles. Energy flows in a healthy body all the time. If there are only muscles and bones, it is not enough at all to just keep breathing. Absorbing the energy from the earth allows the fallen body to stand'. Actors must release an energy that draws the audience in, and it is necessary for them to be able to control the flow of this energy in their bodies (Sanlunhuilihua and Zhang 2018, 32).

Suzuki believes that theatrical performance entails the actor's deliberate display of their body for the audience. The actor's body is an important tool and is the material used to produce stage performance. The actor must thus enhance their sensitivity and body awareness, irrespective of the level of training that they attain. The Suzuki method implements a standardised movement system with strict requirements for the actor, as every movement must be performed in accordance with strict standards and steps. This is particularly true for the training of basic movements that depend on elements such as the size of the feet, the height of the knees, and the curve of the back when squatting, as well as the specific movement requirements for various dynamic and static combinations. Aside from physical training, the Suzuki method incorporates the actor's heart and their control over the environment and themselves. The training prioritises maintaining the body's centre of gravity and keeping the body balanced and the breath steady, and the actor should concentrate their gravity, strength and attention on their waist, which forms the core position of their energy.

Suzuki's training also affords particular emphasis to the foot in the belief that communication between the body and the ground awakens awareness of the entire body's function. The gate of the actor's inner strength is gradually opened through 'Foot Grammar', 'Sculpture Exercise' and 'Centre of Gravity Training', which include such exercises as stepping on the ground from left to right, T-steps, slow walking, standing sculpture, ground sculpture, turns to step, feet in turn step, inside eights, parallel tiptoe rubbing the ground, sideways walks, small broken steps, puppet line breaking and falling to the ground.

Walking	Step Name	Essentials	Training Effects
	Step	Maintain body stability while stepping with a steady rhythm and force, advancing forward with the feet lifting and landing.	Exercises the actor's leg muscles and rhythm sense, cultivating good stage presence.
	Pigeon-toed Step	When walking, the actor's toes are turned inward, forming a pigeon-toed shape.	Exercises the actor's balance and inner thigh muscles, while presenting a unique aesthetic on stage.
	Outer-edge Step	This step requires the actor to place their body weight on the outer edge of the foot when walking, pushing the body forward through the outer edge.	Exercises the actor's ankle strength and stability, enhancing flexibility on stage.
	Inner-edge Step	Opposite to the Outer-edge Step, the Inner-Edge Step requires the actor to place their body weight on the inner edge of the foot when walking, pushing the body forward through the inner edge.	Exercises the actor's ankle strength and stability, with a greater emphasis on exercising the inner muscles.
	Ballet Step	An elegant step where the actor lifts their heels and walks on their toes, forming a ballet dancer-like posture.	Exercises the actor's leg muscles and ankle strength, while enhancing elegance and expressiveness on stage.
	Side Slide Step	When walking, the actor slides their feet to one side, forming a side slide movement.	Exercises the actor's leg muscles and flexibility, while presenting a dynamic aesthetic on stage.
	Cross Step	Requires the actor to cross one foot in front of or behind the other when	Exercises the actor's balance and coordination, enhancing expressiveness

Walking	Step Name	Essentials	Training Effects
		walking, forming a crossing movement.	on stage.
	Cross Step with Rotation	This step adds rotation to the Cross Step, requiring the actor to rotate their body while crossing their feet.	Exercises the actor's balance, coordination, and rotation skills, enhancing the visual effect on stage.
	Sideways Step	When walking, the actor steps to one side, forming a sideways movement.	Exercises the actor's leg muscles and flexibility, while helping the actor better navigate spatial positioning on stage.
	Shuffle Step	A quick and light step where the actor rapidly alternates stepping with both feet, forming fragmented steps.	Exercises the actor's agility and rhythm sense, enhancing dynamism on stage.
	Crawling Step	The actor moves by crawling on their knees and toes.	Exercises the actor's leg muscles, ankle strength, and body coordination, while adding diversity to stage performances.

Walking Table

For instance, 'step' and 'slow walk' require that the actor's centre of gravity be horizontal and that they maintain a constant speed of continuous movement. The difference between slow walk and step is that slow walk does not require instant strong explosive contact between the sole of the foot and the ground. When stepping at a constant speed, the feet move gracefully, resembling a wheel, and the footwork remains soft. In this process, the actor can acutely and delicately perceive every moment as the heel, the sole and the tip of the foot glide over the ground, making contact with it.



Walking – Step



Walking – Pigeon-Toed Step



Walking – Outer-Edge Step



Walking – Inner-Edge Step



Walking – Ballet Step



Walking – Shuffle Step



Walking – Crawling Step

Suzuki's actor training method is highly integrated in that it revolves around the elements of centre of gravity, breath and energy – all of which are common to humans. This approach focuses on the relationship between energy and breath and seeks to address the problems commonly experienced by the human body by focusing on the inner body. In principle, all exercises entail inhalation and exhalation through the nose. Suzuki believes that the more the body can burn calories, the more it can fully absorb oxygen to maintain breathing, the more it can maintain the body's centre of gravity and the more it can keep the body stable.

The basic training that the Suzuki method offers comprises multiple elements, including eleven different steps in walking alone, such as stepping, slow walking and statue exercises, which are the preliminary basics for the trainee. Suzuki advocates the elimination of all non-animal energy factors from theatre, relying solely on the actors' bodies to interpret stage works. His methods aim to activate the 'animal energy' within the actors' bodies, stimulating their instinctual perceptions and strength potentials and achieving the psycho-physical. The awakening and acquisition of the actor's physical energy requires their dedication and perseverance. Actors must set aside their impatience and channel all their physical and mental strength into simple and plain technique practice. It is the actor's state of 'psycho-physical unity' that can truly open up the 'animal energy' that the body provides and that can truly improve the body's motivation, initiative and concentration so that the actor can prepare optimally for their stage performance.

Terzopoulos' 'Attis Method of Actor Training'

Like Suzuki, Terzopoulos emphasised the role of the feet, believing that the body's connection to the earth activates sensation in the body's pivotal points. Terzopoulos developed a new conception of Suzuki's method, transforming the 'grammar' of Suzuki's feet into an 'epistemology' of the feet (Terzopoulos, Varopoulou, and McDonald 2000, 101). In the context of contemporary theatre, Terzopoulos found a special way to connect stage and actors, theatre and life through the research and teaching of the Attis Theatre's actor training system. The system offered a pathway towards the exploration of extreme and shocking theatre with a return to nature and simplicity. He trained his actors to dig deep and tap into their energy while showing their strong sides (Terzopoulos, Cai, and Lin 2018, 201).

Terzopoulos was particularly interested in the genre of tragedy, especially ancient Greek tragedy, and considered tragedy to play a key role in actors' training by virtue of the high demands that it placed their emotional and physical energy. Through training in tragic performances, actors can learn to empower themselves rather than confining themselves within the limitations of 'realism'.

Terzopoulos likened the actor's body to a car, whereby the body's muscles and bones are the parts of the car, while the abdomen is the engine, and the air is the fuel. The air powers the abdomen, and the abdomen transmits power to the body. Throughout Terzopoulos' entire system, the breath, waist and abdomen occupy a central role in a unified, harmonious and natural process. Abundant muscular strength is required to succeed in this training so that the actor can utilise all parts of their body as they should wish and can perform several diverse exercises of varying intensity in conjunction with breathing. The training targets not only the actor's body and muscles but also their inner spiritual will through their physicality, empowering the actor to freely utilise and control their body and to achieve the desired psycho-physical state on stage. The training's requirements share some similarities with the Chinese philosophical tradition of Taoism, which emphasises the unity of heaven and man and advocates an ethereal, harmonious and natural state with unique characteristics (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 192–93). Taoism promotes a harmonious unity between humans and nature, pursuing a transcendent, ethereal and harmonious state known as 'the unity of heaven and human'. In this state, an individual's inner disposition and outer expression both appear smooth and natural without any artificiality or constraint. Therefore, this training not only focuses on the enhancement of external skills but also emphasises inner cultivation and harmonious coexistence with nature, striving for a realm of both internal and external refinement in which authenticity flows naturally.

Based on this training system, Terzopoulos implemented long training hours, extending from morning until night, in his workshops. He believed that the actor's psychological and mental tension naturally disappeared amid conditions of extreme weather and exhaustion (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 4). He explained this view as follows:

As the body tires, the neural pathways in the cerebral cortex shut down, and the various axes of the bodily movement relax, giving rise to a wide variety of basic rhythmic elements. This is neither a linear nor a hyper-material process. The actor gets in the state in a very slow way. In fact, he gradually enters the

process, and gives his body more and more time and space. Then, he could perceive the birth of the basic rhythmic elements. During this process, the actor should avoid the intervention of reason and try his best to keep up with the rhythm to let the rhythmic element be part of the rhythm, so that the actor can enter the field of expression of the ‘psycho-physical’ through this element. The performer needs to highly focus on his mind and body, fully open his senses, push his or her ability of perception to its peak in each stage of creation. This process requires the actor to have extraordinary physical abilities and good mental toughness; if the actor can tolerate pain and fatigue at the level of the mind, he or she will be able to overcome it at the level of the body as well. (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 129–30)

The rhythm of the actor’s performance runs through his body during the training, while their movements – which include breathing, shouting, stillness, the occurrence of different beats, the tension and relaxation of the limbs and the contortion of the body – do not directly convey the meaning of the text. The actor’s bodily movements assume a musical quality in their presentation, and the rhythmic body can acquire an objectivity that transcends the individual. Divorced from its individuality, the body will experience a reawakening of the desire for collectivity that allows the actor to return to their ‘rituals’ that have long been lost; the body that has undergone special training is a powerful instrument that can assist the actor in developing an effective means of expressing both body and soul. ‘Ritual’ is a performance element with profound significance and multiple functions, playing a crucial role in the training method of Terzopoulos. It is not only an important part of actor training but also a bridge connecting actors with audiences, and individuals with the collective. Through physical action, it conveys the profound connotation and emotional power of theatre.

Terzopoulos’ training teaches actors to stand with relaxed and slightly bent knees and with the feet deeply planted on the ground so that they might develop a dynamic unit from the pelvic centre to the centre of the foot that will allow them to remain alert and ready.



Ready Position

This bodily position with the knees slightly bent and the pelvis engaged is evident in many images of warriors, athletes and dancers from ancient civilisations, whose bodies are primed in a state of readiness and activation under extreme restrictions (Barba and Savarese 2006, 659–73). Actors develop their sense of a triangular bodily zone that includes the diaphragm, spine, and body axis. The diaphragm, located between the thoracic and abdominal cavities, is the primary muscle for breathing; the spine, as the central axis of the body, supports the entire body structure; the body axis is the vertical line from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, serving as the core support line of the body. This triangular zone is crucial for an actor's breath control, body posture, and movement fluidity, and it is the core area through which actors enhance their body awareness and performance capabilities via focus and breath control. Essential to breathing, the pelvic floor muscle serves as the basic structure of the breathing movement. Irrespective of the kind of pressure to which the pelvic floor muscle is subjected, it can adjust the muscular tension during the process of inhalation or exhalation so that it is neither too tight nor too relaxed. In some expiratory movements, the pelvic floor muscle serves as the basis for guiding the abdominal wall's muscles to 'rise' and contract (Carle-Germain and Liu 2012, 199).

The triangular zone that is central to Terzopoulos' training is not a specific geographical location or geometric shape but rather refers to a particular area within the actor's body. This area is typically located at the base of the spine near the anus, the genital region and the lower part of the diaphragm, forming an area that resembles a triangle. This area is involved in the improvement of breathing training, physical endurance and psychological resilience. Terzopoulos' training emphasises achieving the optimal state of the body and breath by 'sinking the qi' into the pelvis. This training method requires actors to focus their attention on the core area of the waist and abdomen while engaging in complex limb movements and demanding physical exercises to enable the breath to move freely and the force to circulate throughout the body, thereby enhancing their physical endurance and psychological resilience.

The actor gradually attains awareness of the body's centre of gravity during training. This centre is known as the pelvic nerve lobe and is located in the centre of the lower abdominal pelvis, connected by multiple nerves to all surrounding vital organs. Through conscious breathing that engages the diaphragm, the actor can liberate the three main energy triangles

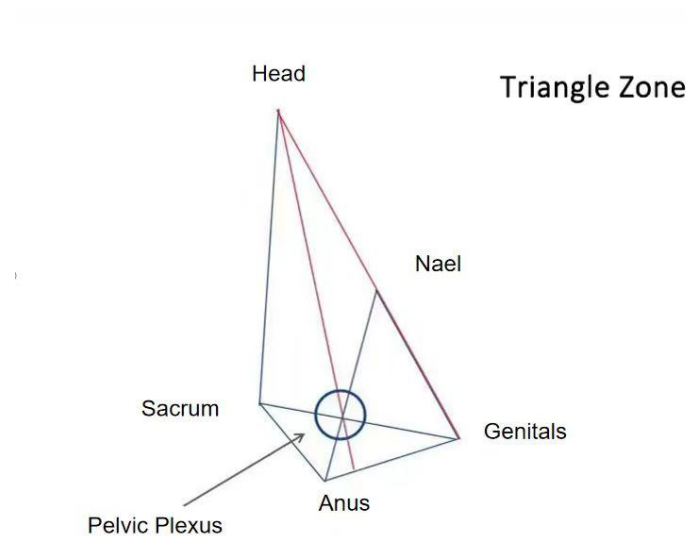
that lie at the intersection of the pelvic nerves. The following form four energy triangles: sacrum, anus, genitals; sacrum, navel, genitals; anus, navel, head; and anus, genitals, head.

These triangular areas are closely tied to the body's foundation and vitality. The triangle formed by the sacrum, navel and genitals is linked to the body's energy centre and deep emotional expression. The navel serves as the body's central point, symbolising the concentration and balance of energy. Training in this area allows actors to establish a more profound connection to their inner energy centre, enabling them to explore and express emotions more profoundly. The triangle that comprises the anus, navel and head connects the lower and upper parts of the body, representing the vertical flow of energy and spiritual elevation. The anus represents the body's base, the navel is the energy hub, and the head is the seat of spirit and consciousness. Training this area helps actors to achieve a vertical energy flow that promotes spiritual enhancement and emotional transcendence in performance. The triangle formed by the anus, genitals and head facilitates the connection between bodily instincts and the spirit. The anus and genital areas embody the body's instincts and life force, while the head is the domain of the spirit and consciousness. Through training in this area, actors can better integrate their bodily instincts with their spirit and attain harmonious unity between the physical and spiritual realms.

The pelvic cavity can be strengthened by training, and it provides the actor with a solid anchor to enable them to assume difficult body positions. Meanwhile, it also supports the actor's vocal and respiratory mechanisms so that the gases produced by respiration can flow throughout their body without restriction provided the actor relaxes their pelvis. (Terzopoulos, Varopoulou, and McDonald 2000, 44). Through daily training, the actor can develop a respiratory mechanism that is easily controlled, and the body will expend only the energy it required to move without straining or creating unwanted tension in the muscles.

By engaging in difficult body movements and demanding physical exercises, actors can achieve the optimum state of mind and body, producing a sense of freedom and pleasure and liberating creativity and imagination. When the actor's body is fully activated, they can breathe freely through the triangle, and energy will flow freely (Terzopoulos, Varopoulou, and McDonald 2000, 129–30). Through regular and consistent training, the actor's body will establish the perception of relaxation and tension, the endurance of the body and mind will be expanded, and the body's potential will be continuously explored.

Terzopoulos' body training encompasses seven energy zones – distinct areas within the actor's body that collectively constitute the internal energy source on which they draw during their performances.



Adapted from Terzopoulos, Cai, and Lin 2018, 45.

Rather than specific physiological structures, these zones constitute seven distinct energy centres that actors must mobilise and integrate while performing. They are highly influential in the actor's physical expression, emotional release and creativity. The seven energy zones are distinct from the triangle zone, which is merely an important component of these seven zones. Other energy zones include areas associated with the head, chest and limbs. Actors undergoing Terzopoulos' training are required to mobilise and integrate these seven energy zones to form a coordinated and unified energy system. This allows actors to fully realise their potential and achieve the optimal psycho-physical state during performance. During the integration process, actors must pay close attention to all bodily sensations, feeling the movements and changes in each energy zone. Meanwhile, they must also infuse their movements with their emotions, thoughts and creativity to achieve a state of precise coordination between mind and body. Below, I outline these energy zones.

Zone 1 – from the anus to the base of the spine (sacrum): The utilisation of the areas extending from the triangular zone plays a decisive role in adjustment to a proper bodily posture; human balance is dependent on gravity, and the location of the centre of gravity determines the force required to maintain balance when adopting various postures; the

triangle zone encompasses three primary energy areas: the sacrum and anus, the genitalia and the lower abdomen/lower part of the diaphragm.

Zone 2 – genitals: The actor's understanding of the genital area's significance helps them to perceive the body as an open energy channel in which the limitations, guilt and fears associated with physiological gender gradually dissipate; this body, devoid of any fear, becomes an open energy conduit, creating a rich repertoire of physical gestures and symbols.

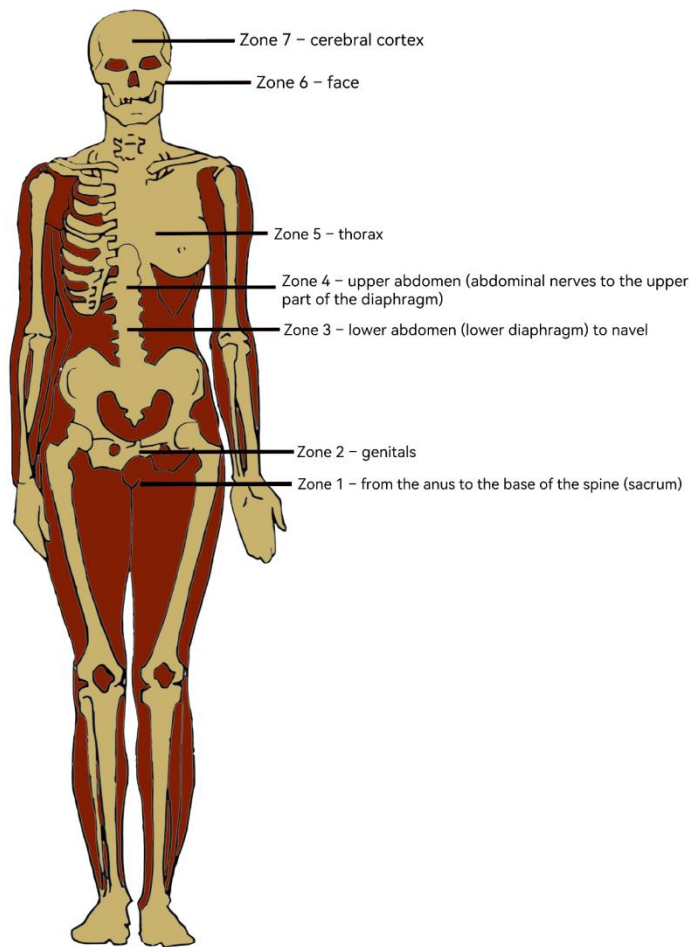
Zone 3 – lower abdomen (lower diaphragm) to navel: This zone is a key area that supports the body's centre of gravity. Strengthening this zone allows the actor to adopt difficult and unusual body positions confidently and steadily without restlessness or anxiety.

Zone 4 – upper abdomen (abdominal nerves to the upper part of the diaphragm): This refers to the respiratory pathway through which inhaled air reaches the genitals, passing through the body's various layers and generating vibrations with which we are largely unfamiliar.

Zone 5 – thorax: The actor becomes aware of the fourth and fifth energy zones, recognising the body as an energy channel and thus developing the perception that the body is simultaneously activated and relaxed.

Zone 6 – face: The training required for the face is similarly dual-mechanism – that is, the actor must relax the facial muscles to release the non-essential tightness caused by daily life while simultaneously activating the muscles in the same zone so that they can expand or contract in response to the character's needs.

Zone 7 – cerebral cortex: The cerebral cortex is barraged by an abundance of both useful and useless information, causing the distance between mind and body to grow increasingly wide. The brain constantly erects barriers in a bid to thwart the generation of bodily dynamics, hindering the liberation of the senses, intuition and imagination. The mind and body become a coherent unit of power, and the actor physically exists in each present moment, as the brain no longer dominates the body, and energy becomes its own partner and friend by means of concentration techniques and breath control. Consequently, the actor can reinforce their control over and coordination of their limbs (Terzopoulos, Cai, and Lin 2018, 50–51).



Actors require a significant level of energy to create a character on stage, whether in tragedy or in other genres. They must be able to control their bodies freely over lengthy periods, maintaining a relaxed state as well as high energy and capacity for movement to fully ensure their physical strength, skills and emotional impact in high-intensity performances.

The Suzuki method is typically implemented in workshops that take place over a short cycle of two weeks, during which the trainee can achieve an initial understanding of their body and learn the basic movements. At least three months of training are required to achieve a more significant improvement in technique and skill following this method, and it is necessary to dedicate two to three hours per day to training. In Terzopoulos' training method, ten days typically constitute a short cycle, and thirty consecutive days of study can be neatly divided into three phases. The basic movements and techniques involved in Grotowski's plastique training can typically be learned within a week, but significantly more time is required to integrate them into character training.

My research focused on the student actors' physical reactions and changes during the phased physical training under my guidance as well as tracking how these changes influenced and aided their creative work with their characters in their theatrical productions. Their feelings, experiences, progress and gains were all centred in my research. In addition, the dynamic process and concrete performance of the student actors in all specific training and rehearsals were also key to my research process, both in practical training and in directing theatrical productions.

While guiding the student actors in their study and exploration of physical training, I could easily observe improvements in their physical ability and stage characterisation and expression. Of course, the enhancement of an actor's physical ability is reflected not only in increased muscle strength but also in the holistic improvement of physical flexibility, coordination and endurance. The comprehensive evaluation of stage performance improvements entails a combination of audience feedback, professional evaluations and the actors' own self-assessment. Furthermore, by video-recording and analysing the actors' performances, we can more intuitively observe the improvements in their ability in emotional expression and role building in addition to other aspects of performance.

Chapter III

Research Questions and Methodology

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the theoretical and practical grounding of this thesis and detailed the core characteristics and important components of Grotowski's, Suzuki's and Terzopoulos' respective theories of theatrical performance and actor training methods. My research seeks to evaluate a synthesis of their three distinct training regimes. Student actors who integrate the study and practice of these three approaches will enhance their capacity for physical control, expressiveness and emotional and physical connection, as well as their overall aptitude as performers. The metrics of success encompass assessment of the student actors' technical proficiency, their depth of emotional expression, the comprehensive quality of their performance and, ultimately, the feedback received from the audience. I apply the results of my physical training to the rehearsal of my theatrical productions by combining physical ability with emotional expression and striving to harmonise and balance the process by which the actor portrays the character's persona.

The implementation of my practical methodology has been challenging while also presenting opportunities for study, training and rehearsal. My work is based on a specific theoretical foundation that I shall explore to reveal how my selected training model contributes to my research, illustrated by examples from practical training. Practice is central to my research methodology. In the arts, practice (theatre performance, etc.) is acknowledged as substantive evidence for research purposes. Indeed, the proposed research necessarily involves practical knowledge, which may be primarily evidenced in practice – knowledge is an actual presence rather than an abstract conception. A simple example of practical knowledge is 'knowing' how to ride a bicycle; to know how to ride a bicycle is to ride it. David Pears, a philosopher in the Heideggerian tradition, said, 'I know how to ride a bicycle, but I can't say how I balance it because I don't have a method. I may know that certain muscles are involved, but the truth is that the knowledge comes later, and it is difficult to use in teaching, if at all' (Nelson 2013, 9). Practitioner-researchers do not merely 'think' about solving problems; they also seek to address them through 'practice'.

In the course of my practical research, I explored the changes that the actor's body experienced after the three body training methods were implemented in combination and how these body training methods were effectively translated and practically applied in the actual rehearsal and application of stage productions. The design of this approach to working would help me to observe, discover, compare and summarise the student actors' actual training work so that I could argue the differences among them and their unique benefits for the trainee.

Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos each created their own physical training method and systematically trained their actors while also effectively implementing their training methods during production rehearsals. To date, however, no theatre practitioner or acting teacher has combined all three methods to train their actors nor comprehensively applied and transformed them in their stage productions. My own practical training and rehearsal experience have thus facilitated more possibilities for student actors with respect to their training targeting physicality and expressiveness in contemporary theatre. The specific training and coaching that the student actors in this study received, in addition to the eventual live performance of *Hamlet*, afforded both me and the student actors experiences that differed from those associated with traditional methods of teaching and rehearsing realism. These experiences, along with their intuitive physicality and improved stage presence and characterisation, were the most valuable aspects of my practical research project.

The student actors' outstanding performances were clear to the audiences in the theatre, and these specific performances also served as the criteria and outcomes of my practical research, providing a basis for the assessment of student actors' ranges of physical and stage character expressions as well as their improvement in expressive abilities and confidence. At the same time, this joint approach to practical training and rehearsal allowed me to better study, summarise and refine the differentiation between the three methods with the aim of providing specific inspiration, reference and lessons for other colleagues, research scholars and performance teachers.

The characteristics of each of the three methods' specific techniques were demonstrated by means of training videos during my practical research; the effects of the student actors' training and the transformation of their application in the process of portraying specific characters were embodied in the performance videos of the stage works. My reasons for selecting *Hamlet* were as follows: first, it is a classic work of the great British playwright Shakespeare and second, tragedy is more conducive than comedy to explorations of the balance between the actors' deep inner emotions and outer physical energy from a practical perspective. It also has greater research and exploration value in applying the skills and methods of physical training to the transformation of the character. In addition, I staged a public presentation and performance based on the student actors' physical training and the final theatre performance components of my practical research, after which I conducted interviews with the audience, which included general student audiences and the students' theatre arts peers, to obtain their visual impressions of the training presentation and performance.

As noted in Chapter I, my research utilised different theoretical elements and training methods: when different training methods were used in combination, the study of the body as a concept would become practical and clear, and significantly more effective. My approach is the result of continuous explorations and study of directing and acting for the theatrical stage as well as my experience of teaching acting. These studies have helped me to conduct my research more comprehensively while exploring the balance and unity between the actor's outer body and inner emotions.

Practical research in the arts entails a degree of risk, given the inherent difficulty of using qualitative and quantitative methods. The expected results cannot be easily obtained, and it is also difficult to rely exclusively on the literature for discrimination and elaboration; it requires the researcher to invest painstaking efforts, and to analyse and elaborate with difficulty in writing at the very beginning. However, I am still firmly standing on the shoulders of giants and continue to pursue practical research and exploration, and it is precisely its inherent difficulty that renders its value and significance more evident.

Research Questions

I established the relevant questions for my practical training and performance work prior to the commencement of the training class so that I could begin within the framework of the established research questions and consistently strike at the core of the research. My aim was to avoid wasting time without any goals or foundation. After all, completing this part of the work in the limited time was challenging for both me and my students.

The questions that I set are as follows:

How can I better lead student actors to achieve my practical research goals within a set timeframe?

How can I mobilise the student actors' enthusiasm to make them more invested in and willing to cooperate effectively with the training?

How can I interpolate or combine several different training methods for the purpose of practical training research?

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic's impact, how might I ensure the smooth implementation of the practical research?

In what ways do students who have received the same training differ with respect to mastery and performance? Why do differences emerge in students' understanding, acceptance and mastery of training methods?

What challenges or questions do students face during training?

Setting these questions allowed me to duly consider and organise the entire research schedule and clarify the project's focus before carrying out the work while simultaneously remaining alert so that I could observe, compare, reflect and adjust in a timely and controllable manner to ensure the project's smooth progress.

This is a practical research project in which I further developed my expertise as a researcher, practitioner and acting teacher. The exercises and methods are developed for actor training, and they do not constitute a pedagogical or belief system that operates outside the rehearsal space (Mitter 1992, xii). I led the student actors in professional physical training and guided them in rehearsing *Hamlet* as a test of the physical training results and a summation of the training methods. Creative practice is constant and ongoing, and the practitioner–researcher solves problems not only through thinking but also through practical action (Nelson 2013, 10).

My research process consists of physical training and the rehearsal of theatrical works. The physical training was primarily aimed at supporting the student actors in mastering movement while the rehearsal of the theatrical works was mainly based on my judgement of and responses to their ‘psycho-physical’ creative performance and characterisation.

Taking as an example the traditional approach to acting pedagogy used in Chinese theatre, most colleges and universities espouse Stanislavski’s ‘experiential model’, which emphasises the actor’s daily life experiences and trains them to perform using conscious ‘cycle techniques’. The four core courses of professional teaching – the training of ‘voice, line, physical body, and performance’ that students majoring in theatre performance must study – appear to be comprehensive. However, in-depth research reveals that these courses are not implemented as they are designed to be. Lecoq, Bogart, and Barba all emphasize the importance of integrating actors’ physical training with performance. Through different methods and perspectives, they help actors enhance their performance abilities through physical exploration and training. Lecoq’s improvisation and mask training, Bogart’s Viewpoints method, and Barba’s cross-cultural performance practices all offer rich theoretical and practical guidance for actors’ physical training.

Especially for frontline teachers like me, who have been teaching drama performance at professional colleges, the sentiment is particularly profound. For example, acting is taught separately to physical training. Most theatre professional colleges and universities now offer courses in ballet and folk dance for students majoring in theatre performance, but many of the skills that the students have learned in the acting classroom are misaligned with their bodies (Wu and Su 2024). Moreover, dance courses do not link the work of the body with performance, with the result that the body and the emotion are separated in a way that is not in accordance with the requirements of theatrical physical expression. The design of the physical course is also far from perfect, and most professional colleges and universities have transformed the physical classes offered to acting majors into ‘dance classes’ without any grounding in scientific research or guidance on the design and development of teaching materials for actors’ physical training (Wangh 2010, 168).

Methodology

Prior to commencing my instruction of student actors in physical training, I needed to make it clear that I chose third-year student actors majoring in theatre performance and that my method was more suited to those who already had some basic acting training. Despite my belief that students without a professional foundation stand to gain a lot from the method provided that they wished to study performance and were willing to participate sufficiently in physical training, my research was more oriented towards actors, practitioners, learners and trainees with a certain professional foundation. The rehearsal practice centred on a script chosen in advance, and well-trained student actors may need less time to adapt themselves to the rhythm of rehearsal to meet the new work needs of these works. Gradual guidance allowed student actors to engage in more creative play and achieve excellent performance.

I organised twenty student actors to practice the physical training methods in stages in addition to rehearsing and staging the production of *Hamlet*. I settled on twenty as a quantity that would ensure appropriate division of labour as regards the characters in the script in addition to planning for emergencies or unexpected events during rehearsals. In the event of illness or other factors beyond our control, we would have student actors to fill in to ensure that the research work could continue to run smoothly. In addition, the student actors came from the same class, and I did not screen them because I wanted everyone in the class to be able to participate in the training and because one of my primary goals was to identify the differences that the individual actors exhibited throughout the training sessions and how they might react differently to the training. The group contained an appropriate proportion of male and female student actors: nine males and eleven females. Their similarity in age made it easier to establish consensus and understanding while also imbuing the rehearsals with the youthfulness and vitality that the physical training consistently demanded. To document the dynamic collection of their training status and physical responses, I photographed and videorecorded the training process and the ultimate on-stage presentation of the theatre production.

Following much deliberation, I elected to conduct the practical research work at a specialised arts college in Hefei, Anhui Province. I made this decision at the height of the global Covid-19 pandemic when all mobility-based work was facing serious challenges, and many arts performances and organisations were facing closure and disbandment. I was living in the capital city of Hefei, Anhui Province, which offered me the most available resources as well as psychological security. This double guarantee allowed my practical work with the student actors to run smoothly, and we could still work together despite the pandemic rather than facing disbandment and programme interruption. It transpired that I made the right decision, as our work became more focused and concentrated as a result of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. China's pandemic policy protected those within the confines of the campus, temporarily depriving them of socialisation and 'freedom' but ensuring that they could live safely on campus, which provided an excellent opportunity for creative and hands-on work.

I believe that artistic creation should be a wholehearted and stable team exploration that encompasses learning, training, experiencing, honing and creating in a visible body space and an invisible mind space. The concentration of time and space made our work more focused and efficient, and the school itself had an excellent research environment and creative conditions. It had a dedicated training and performance space – a professional black box theatre accommodating an audience of two hundred with professional and comprehensive lighting and sound equipment. The student actors began their physical training phase by working in this professional theatre space, and these professional experiences and dedicated work environments were conducive to the student actors' physical and mental coordination and focused creative development.

I guided the student actors in a 'long journey', the aim of which was to explore how the body is used in contemporary theatre performance practice and how the body and inner emotions might best be integrated and harmonised in the creation of characters. This aspect of the work explored the methods and pathways of the psycho-physical performance state while helping the actors to make better use of their bodies in creative performance.

Terzopoulos argued that:

Audiences today come into the theatre with the desire to see something different from naturalism, and actors need to use a more internal rhythm to create rather than a naturalistic approach. He should feel as if there is a flame of electricity inside the body, and it keeps flowing through the body on the stage. Resultantly, the actor's voice and body open up, and his energy also opens up. (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 166–67)

The actor's goal on stage is to create the ultimate theatrical experience for the audience. The ways in which actors use their bodies to express themselves on stage is not made up of dance-like movements. When the actor speaks, it should constitute a dramatic encapsulation of the changes that body undergoes for the purpose of expression (Wangh 2010, 116). If the actor belittles the essential relationship between the theatre and the body, the theatrical space will become their greatest and most fundamental obstacle.

Physical movement can trigger emotion, particularly when linked to intention (Wang 2010, 168). In other words, when an actor is portraying a character on stage, their body can serve as a pathway to their emotions. Both deep sadness and pure joy require a vulnerable and open mind, and it is thus important to identify patterns that serve as signposts on the way towards physical and emotional connection.

Research Planning

My aim in effectively integrating the actor training methods of Suzuki, Terzopoulos and Grotowski and incorporating them into the rehearsals for *Hamlet* was to enhance the student actors' physical expression and comprehensive stage performance abilities. The practical training and production rehearsal would span six months, organised as follows: half a month for basic preparation, one month for Terzopoulos' approach, one month for Suzuki's method, half a month for Grotowski's techniques, and three months dedicated to the staging of *Hamlet*.

Foundation Phase Preparation (Half a Month)

Prior to commencing specific training methodologies, it is crucial to establish a common training and learning foundation for student actors. This encompasses setting basic goals, cultivating body awareness, and enhancing cognitive learning. Through foundational training, students can better acclimate to the demands of subsequent high-intensity training. In addition, assisting students in adapting to the training environment and rhythm helps to mitigate initial discomfort and anxiety. The foundation phase of training aids students in adjusting their mindset, preparing mentally for the upcoming training. Moreover, by enhancing rapport and trust among team members through foundational training, a solid base is laid for subsequent training and rehearsals. In the performance of dramatic works, team collaboration is of utmost importance, and the training during the foundation phase can provide strong support for subsequent team cooperation.

Terzopoulos Training (One Month)

Lecoq's training method is relatively intuitive and easy to understand and master. Through breathing and physical training, student actors can quickly perceive changes in their bodies and their own progress, thereby enhancing self-confidence and laying a solid foundation for subsequent training.

Suzuki Training (One Month)

Although Suzuki's training method is of high intensity, its training movements and rhythm control are relatively intuitive, allowing student actors to quickly grasp them through repeated practice. This method not only helps students enhance their body control and strength in a short period but also strengthens their ability to manage performance rhythm and dynamic changes on stage.

Grotowski Training (Half a Month)

Grotowski's training method is more abstract and introspective, but through simplified training content, student actors can experience the original movements of the body and improvisational performance in conjunction with script lines. This method helps students find a more essential way of performing, enhancing the naturalness of performance and preparing fully for the upcoming stage production rehearsals.

Hamlet Rehearsal (Three Months)

As a complex classic play, *Hamlet* requires student actors to invest sufficient time in in-depth rehearsals to fully understand and grasp the complexity of the characters. The three-month rehearsal period allows students to delve into the inner world of their characters, enhancing the depth and complexity of their performance. Through this period of rehearsal, student actors can apply the skills and methods learned in the previous four months to actual performance, achieving an organic integration of theory and practice.

Through the above phased time arrangement, student actors can gradually enhance their physical expression and stage performance abilities at different training stages. Ultimately, through the rehearsal of *Hamlet*, the learned skills and methods are integrated and applied. This phased training method not only helps students better grasp different training methods and performance skills but also effectively avoids physical and mental fatigue caused by excessive training intensity, ensuring that students maintain their best state throughout the training and rehearsal process.

Throughout the rehearsal period, the student actors would continue to engage in physical training, incorporating it into the rehearsal schedule to ensure that they were continuously working on their physical skills. Moreover, I would focus on the relationship between specific bodily and emotional expressions tailored to individual scenes and characters within the play. Following each session/rehearsal, the student actors would engage in reflection and debriefing and would receive timely, constructive feedback, prompting adjustments to the training/rehearsal plan as necessary.

Over the six-month period, the student actors' growth and progress were documented by means of video recordings, summary feedback, written reflections, peer evaluations and audience feedback. Selected student actors served as stage managers during the production rehearsal phase, meticulously recording the successful application of training techniques and areas requiring further improvement. The effectiveness of the training methods in practical research were evaluated by analysing peer and audience feedback. This written thesis summarises the key findings regarding the efficacy of the chosen training approaches in enhancing the students' performances in *Hamlet*.

Documentation

Written records: Student actors' training impressions and self-reflection reports were collected regularly to document their experiences across the various stages of the training.

Video recordings: Videos of training and performance segments were captured to facilitate the comparative analysis of student actors' advancements in physical prowess, emotional expression and other aspects.

Questionnaires: Surveys were designed and implemented to assess the student actors' self-awareness, teamwork capabilities and acceptance of the training methods.

Rehearsal Analysis

Rehearsal plan: This detailed the script interpretation, role assignments and rehearsal progress, with an emphasis on how the training outcomes are integrated into the staging of *Hamlet*.

Quantitative analysis: Scores were assigned based on metrics such as clarity of dialogue, physical expressiveness and emotional delivery through video analysis, expert evaluations and audience feedback.

Qualitative analysis: Evaluations were collected from the students themselves, experts and audiences through self-reflection and group discussions, exploring how the fusion of training methods affects performance quality.

My overall aim was thus to summarise the training programme and evaluate the effectiveness of the practical research, analysing the student actors' specific improvements in performance and skill during the physical training and *Hamlet* rehearsal process.

As Robin Nelson has stated, practice-based research comprises a theoretical component – the methodology – and a practical component – the method (Nelson 2013, 98). In my research, I evaluated the student actors' training and their rehearsal and characterisation in theatrical productions based on real-time observations during training and coaching, video clips, and feedback from experts and audiences. I summarised the experience, lessons learned and methodology by collecting questionnaires from student actors, feedback from acting teachers and industry peers and post-performance feedback from audience members.

The questions that I set for the audiences are specified below:

- Did you find the performance compelling? Why?
- Was this version the same as any that you have seen before? How did it differ?
- How did you understand the emotional expression of the play's characters?
- Were you able to empathise with the characters?
- What impressed you the most?
- What did you think of the actors?
- What did you get out of it?
- How did you feel about the director's stage treatment and presentation?
- What details have stayed in your mind?
- What did you understand and feel about the director's and the actors' exploration of the body?
- How would you evaluate the performance?

Although these questions may appear to be highly subjective, they are aligned with the research objectives. They are not maths problems that can be easily answered, but the audiences' live responses and the percentage of textual feedback are good indicators of whether I have achieved the set milestones. Comparisons between actor training and rehearsal goal attainment, as well as the collection of audience feedback, are an essential part of my research process. After all, the actors engage in creative work in service of the audience.

The creative research work performed during training and rehearsal is an important process that must be established together with the creative elements. These creative elements include the music and sound that aligned with my directorial vision and the production's staging style, the style, colour, and material of the costumes, the style and colour of the props, and the appearances and movements of the characters in specific scenes, such as the actors in the play and the king and queen in the play-within-a-play, and so on. I needed to effectively record some key elements or new technical discoveries during the research process and the experiences of students as actors in training and performance practice. Meanwhile, I photographed and videorecorded the training classes to assemble data for my research. On the whole, however, I did not produce a complete video record given that it is neither possible nor desirable to record each rehearsal. Moreover, the presence of cameras would probably have been intrusive, and recording everything would have produced an excess of footage that would have been impossible to sift through and edit (Nelson 2013, 30–31). The camera's presence would probably have distracted the participants in the training class, particularly when they were just beginning to learn a new movement during the early stages of their training. Meanwhile, in accordance with the requirements with respect to the supervision and review of the research project, I edited and explained the contents of the footage. I also needed to proofread English texts, which added a language conversion component to my work. Therefore, in line with the working characteristics of my practical research project, I needed not only to record the footage but also to make reasonable time arrangements and content selection to make specific arrangements for the progress of the training class and the learning content.

In my practical work, I focused on collecting and preserving all archival material pertaining to my research process and results. This material included – but was not limited to – theatre programmes, brochures, flyers, photographs, videos and recordings, press releases and clippings, details of marketing strategies, ticket sales figures, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, descriptions of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage property and so on (Nelson 2013, 86). Among the materials pertaining to the production of *Hamlet* were posters, promotional leaflets, cast makeup photos, performance stills, performance videos, performance recordings, performance music and sound, self-promotion links, masks that were made exclusively for the performance, ticket sales figures, performance sets, costume design, prop making, etc. (Nelson 2013, 42). The task of collating this archive was part of the research project plan but was nonetheless challenging, because the work was both creative and tedious and each detail had the potential to determine the production's smoothness and success.

A further goal of my practical research is to stage a tragedy – not the Greek tragedy that Terzopoulos favours but one of Shakespeare's four tragic plays – to serve as the carrier of theatrical actors' performance creation and practical research. The selected play is held in high esteem internationally, and audiences and theatre practitioners are familiar with it, which makes it more conducive to my working methods and to the realisation of my research objectives. I also believe that *Hamlet* creates greater space and possibility for student actors than other tragedies do in terms of exploring physical and emotional relationships. *Hamlet* allows student actors to perceive the intimate connection between body and emotion through the intricate inner worlds of the characters and undergo the nuanced shifts in the characters' bodily expressions as their emotions fluctuate, thereby achieving a harmonious state between body and emotion as they shape the characters' images. After all, the intense emotions experienced by the characters in the tragedy are particularly suited to allowing student actors to develop their physical expression and performance ability while also aiding them in linking and balancing the body's internal and external energy.

The practical training and rehearsal work took place over a six-month period to ensure that the student actors had sufficient time to adapt to and master various training methods while also ensuring a reasonable schedule. In the process of practical training and learning, I rationally arranged the order of exercises in accordance with the characteristics and training objectives of the three methods: first, Terzopoulos' 'Attis Theatre Actor Training Method' followed by Suzuki's 'Suzuki Actor Training Method' and, finally, Grotowski's Training Method for Actors. This arrangement ensured that the advantages of each method can be fully leveraged while avoiding mutual interference.

I also established clear evaluation criteria, such as the student actors' physical coordination, flexibility and the energy that they expressed through their bodies during training, as well as the degree of internal and external coordination, emotional expression and physical control during character performance.

In the process of rehearsing Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the student actors were gradually guided to apply the search and training methods that they had learned to the actual shaping and portrayal of their roles and characters. The training effect was further tested through performance practice, specifically in terms of the student actors' ability to coordinate and synchronise both internally and externally. The student actors were also provided with opportunities to showcase their achievements through their performance on stage. Concurrently, during the research process, I fully respected the actors' requirements and rights, ensuring that they participated in training and research in a safe and comfortable environment. Furthermore, I adhered to the relevant ethical norms and research guidelines to uphold legitimacy and impartiality.

Following the rehearsal period, I documented the stage presentation of *Hamlet* on camera. I hoped to record each moment of the character on stage in its entirety, and I worked in such a way as to create more possibilities for observing and documenting the actors' experiences and performances. The footage and photographs captured allowed the student actors to observe their own performances through a retrospective lens in addition to being used as a reference for visualisation of the visuals, which is a key aspect of the research and a challenging task, as it is not easy to describe an artistic experience in detail. As such, I used a retrospective lens to help them to find image references that could be easily described.

To ensure that my work progressed smoothly during the training and rehearsal stage and that I could focus on the research and practical work, the technical process of shooting was followed by graduates of the film director major, and the later stage was edited by a professional video production company whose process I could still supervise and guide. Their shooting and editing work was coordinated and adjusted to align with my research requirements, including shots, pictures, subtitles, and so on. These filming and post-production workers assisted me in the actual recording and editing of the research process, for which I retained full responsibility, to ensure the validity of the camera record. Simultaneously, it allowed me to focus my time and energy on training and rehearsal. The work that I needed to accomplish was complex and fragmented during this time, and the comprehensive consideration of this work in terms of managing the risks during execution (the cameramen and editors failed to fully understand my work's intention and focus, with the result that the footage captured and edited was both inefficient and ineffective) during the schematic design phase has allowed me to be more focused once the practical work has begun and also enabled me to switch freely and fluidly between directing the filming and the trainees (Nelson 2013, 47). Only by making a good plan and communicating deeply and clearly at the beginning can we ensure that the work proceeds smoothly so that the cost of communication does not increase again when the work officially begins, wasting everyone's time and energy for each other and delaying the research process.

I discussed in depth with the student actors all their experiences after each stage of the process, utilising open dialogue techniques and prompts. These conversations took place at the end of the training, where all the student actors involved either sat in a circle to summarise and give feedback or communicated and exchanged reflections on a one-to-one basis with me via WeChat. I provided reflective guidance during this process, asking, for instance, ‘I see that you don’t move quite the same way in that moment as you did in previous rehearsals, and is there anything in particular that you feel? Do you feel the change in yourself and what kind of change is it for you?’. Meanwhile, after each on-site exchange, I would ask the student actors to record in writing the differences and changes that they experienced – for example, ‘How is today’s training different?’, ‘What is the difference between the you of today and the you of yesterday or the past?’ and ‘What new experience did you have today?’ Through such collective activity, everyone could digest and communicate about the day’s performance in a timely manner, and if any questions arose, they could also raise them at this time. After everyone had exchanged, summarised and given feedback, they would proceed to the following day’s training in a relaxed state.

I did not place any restrictions on their answers or writing skills, and nor did I place any restrictions on my questions. Rather, I encouraged free expression, provided they responded authentically. I simply reminded them to honestly convey their actual thoughts as much as possible without affording too much attention to grammar and sentence formation. Much of the training in the third stage was improvised; I did not wish to set the work in advance, nor did I want the student actors to be thinking and imagining how they would perform while in the middle of the work.

As envisioned and planned, before each new training phase began, I invited my peers to attend and observe as I led the student actors in presenting aspects of the training process as well as some excerpts from our theatrical work during the practical research phase. These invited observers were either outstanding young teachers or experts in the field, but none of them was aware of the goals, processes and progress of my research. It was not that I intended to be secretive but rather I hoped that these observers would be able to intuit my aims and processes on the basis of their unconscious observations and provide us with genuine feedback, which I invited them to do after the on-site observation. They noticed that the training and guidance that I imparted to the students was markedly different from the traditional realist approach that I adopted in my previous work, and they evaluated the performance of actors from the perspective of the audience with their intuitive and real feelings on the scene.

The questionnaire survey was aimed primarily at accurately capturing the student actors' comprehension, feelings, and learning experiences towards the training content as well as the observers' overall sentiments during the rehearsal/performance process, encompassing the student actors' performance, comprehension of stage expression and experience of stage effects. Although closed-ended questions facilitate easier statistical data compilation, I insisted on using open-ended questions in the questionnaire to encourage freer expression and capture more personalised sentiments.

Many scholars in psychology, sociology, market research and other fields have considered the respective merits and drawbacks of closed and open-ended questions, and concepts such as constructivism, phenomenology and creative thinking theory provide robust support for open-ended question designs from various perspectives. These theories emphasise the advantages of open-ended questions in promoting deep thinking, understanding individual experiences and cultivating creative thinking, thereby furnishing a solid theoretical foundation for the application of open-ended question design in practical research and teaching. Specifically, closed questions facilitate quantitative analysis and allow for the rapid collection of large amounts of data, whereas open-ended questions can capture richer information, contributing to a deeper understanding of respondents' perspectives and feelings. Constructivism holds that knowledge is constructed through interaction between individuals and their environments; therefore, open-ended questions can encourage respondents to answer based on their own experiences and viewpoints and thus offer a more authentic reflection of their inner worlds. Phenomenology emphasises the direct description and understanding of individual experiences, and open-ended questions can guide respondents to describe their experiences, feelings and perspectives in detail. I designed the questionnaire based on my clear research objectives. Given that I wished to understand the individual respondents' personal perspectives, I deemed open-ended questions to be the most appropriate option. The design of the questions balanced clarity, specificity and openness, ensuring that the questions could stimulate respondents' thinking while encouraging them to provide detailed answers. During the data analysis phase, the responses to the open-ended questions were categorised and edited to extract valuable information and viewpoints. Due consideration was consistently afforded to ethical issues throughout the research process, ensuring that respondents' informed consent rights were protected along with their privacy.

The target respondents for the questionnaire were categorised into three groups: (1) my fellow theatre professionals, (2) the student actors themselves, and (3) the general audiences who attended the live performance. The student questionnaire focused on their learning trajectory, teamwork, personal challenges and similar aspects, such as ‘What is your biggest takeaway from the training and play rehearsals?’ Conversely, the audience questionnaire emphasised their viewing experience, indirectly assessing their evaluation of the performance and student actors by focusing on whether the stage performance was captivating and whether the actors’ deliveries were adequate. Meanwhile, my fellow theatre professionals, as experts, would be more concerned with the student actors’ training effectiveness, stage presence, stage design and other professional aspects. Questionnaire feedback was primarily collected during the mid-to-late stages of the training and after the performance.

Owing to the risks associated with the pandemic, most theatre events were temporarily suspended in 2021. The official performance of *Hamlet* was scheduled to take place in a professional theatre at an art college. China’s university campuses offered a more stable space than that provided by social performance venues. Although the social audience could not enter the school, the students and teachers who were confined to the university campus could still conduct professional practice and performance with crowd-control measures in place.

Management reserved the right to completely shut down China’s university campuses at any time, and each university has its own security wall and entrance. With the exception of students who had specially applied to live outside the campus residences, most other students would live in the on-campus dormitory. For example, the students I led all lived in on-campus accommodation, which was central to ensuring the smooth progress of my practical research work.

A total of five consecutive performances were arranged, and the feedback collected from audience members and professionals (theatre, director, acting, art teachers) served as a measure of analysis and comparison. The experience derived from this practical phase of physical training and the directorial conception and artistic design and presentation of the rehearsed stage production provided material on which I could reflect with the aim of summarising the relationship between actors’ physical training and their performance and presentation.

Throughout the rehearsal process, the physical training proceeded as usual without interruption, and I drew on the experience that I gained during the physical training phase to assist the students in the design, direction and formal performance of *Hamlet*. The process of directing and performing with the student actors yielded abundant material for analysis and discussion.

Chapter IV

Doing the Work: Actors in Training

Introduction

The practical process of the workshop comprised four different phases: (1) training; (2) practice and training; (3) performance; and (4) evaluations and assessment. I used different methods for each approach to reach my desired research goal.

During the first phase, I worked with the student actors to determine objectives and established strict discipline and organisational rules to enhance efficiency and team harmony. Particular emphasis was placed on personal preparation, including the maintenance of mental and physical well-being and the avoidance of unhealthy habits. Students were required to wear black, logo-free training clothes without makeup or jewellery to minimise external distractions. The training content was arranged on the basis of difficulty level, student characteristics and role-shaping needs, with an emphasis on the fun of training and guidance. Meanwhile, the overall training process and schedule were planned assiduously so that each session introduced new elements to maintain the students' enthusiasm and effectiveness.

The work's second stage focused on the synthesis of the physical training methods developed by Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos, with the aim of exploring the three methods' differences through practical training and comparison, identifying the combination's advantages and enhancing the student actors' physical abilities and stage expression skills.

During the third stage, I guided the student actors through the production of *Hamlet* to apply and transform their learning from the previous two stages. This is the principle of learning through application – to digest, blend and integrate the core of the methods mastered during the physical training stage and fully apply the essence of all methods experienced during the preceding stage.

The final stage entailed evaluating the research and the student actors' individual performances during the first three stages and then making reflective discoveries that would serve as a reference for a wider range of colleagues. These four phases of research were completed in six months:

1. Phase One – two weeks' duration;
2. Phase Two – two and a half months' duration, wherein Terzopoulos' method accounts for one month, Suzuki's approach accounts for one month and Grotowski's training method accounts for half a month;
3. Phase Three – three months, dedicated to theatre rehearsal;
4. Phase Four – organisation of research work and writing of the thesis.

Phase One – Training

During the actor training, the schedule would be manoeuvred in line with the total length of the training class, and if time permitted, it was deemed best to practice each movement in depth; for example, I participated in Terzopoulos' workshop at the Attis Theatre in Greece, with ten days each allotted to his three phases in daily five-hour sessions. However, when I later participated in the training at a workshop during the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Zhejiang Province, the training's duration was compressed owing to time constraints, and many of the movements could be mastered only by grasping the essentials of the movements on the spot and then practising them alone after the programme. Suzuki's method is similar, whereby the movements can all be basically learned in one week, but it may take up to three years to truly master the method, as he himself acknowledged. Grotowski's stylistic training has a small coefficient of difficulty, but it is only through cumulative training that one's muscles can form the memories that will allow them to alter their basic physical abilities and stage expression techniques. Therefore, I followed my own research programme to allot specific periods of time to training and rehearsal.

All training sessions were conducted in the morning, afternoon and evening, with each half day lasting three hours with a 15-minute break in the middle of each half day, which was not counted as part of the three-hour training period. The morning session commenced at 8.30 a.m., the afternoon session at 1.30 p.m. and the evening session at 6 p.m.

Prior to beginning each training session, I focused primarily on introducing and interpreting the plan, the implementation process and the expected goals of the training class. It was also important to introduce the class's rules and requirements, which I would state at the beginning of the session in the belief that discipline is the guarantee of good work, which aligns with Suzuki's concept of the acting troupe as analogous to a strong army capable of keeping pace with the performance. Meanwhile, I would also warn students that training would largely consume the physical body and so each participant should focus on and master the basic fitness exercises. This phase was the initial phase of the practical training and research, and thus, it was particularly important to establish common working goals for myself and the student actors as well as the relevant requirements and rules on the first day of the six-month long training course. A good start is the foundation of success, and rules are a means of guaranteeing that projects stay on track. Although our work is highly artistic and creative, strict rules and organisational discipline were necessary to improve and ensure harmonious coexistence for a team of twenty-one people. Discipline must be prioritised: it is imperative that everyone arrives at the rehearsal space on time, refreshed and energised. Grotowski said, 'The actor has the duty to take care of his body in his daily life, so that he is always ready for his task. Neither must the actor work in exhaustion without sleep for his personal pleasure, meaning come to the theatre distractedly. And the rules of the work not only compel an actor to arrive at the workplace on time, but also prepare the body for the creative activity' (Grotowski 2002, 260). These rules and conventions are crucial for allowing each student actor to engage in the work with a sense of collectivity and to prevent them from hindering the team for personal reasons.

The next step is personal preparation, which includes internal mental preparation and attendance to one's external appearance and clothing. Ample high-quality sleep is also imperative to ensure the success of the daily training, which takes place in the morning, in middle of the day, and at night. Meanwhile, self-care of one's body, the tool of artistic creativity, is an essential pursuit that young actors should cultivate, protecting their inner spirit as they train to become professionals. The student actors were also advised to take certain precautions: given that they were required to engage in physical fitness exercises every day for half a year, they were advised to pay attention to the food and nutritional supplements that they consumed and to refrain from smoking and drinking alcohol, if possible. I did not propose a prohibition in this regard, given that total prohibition is difficult to achieve for those who consume such substances habitually.

Turning now to the individual's preparation in terms of their appearance and dress, I agree with Grotowski and Suzuki regarding the requirements in these respects. In the hands-on training workshops that Grotowski led, he insisted that all men wear only shorts on and all women wear only gymnastic uniforms. He believes that clothes, jewellery and hairstyles have long been extensions of the self for many people, and that the removal of a ring that one has worn for years, flicking one's hair back from one's eyes or wearing a veil may cause one to feel strange. However, acting training is in the first instance a process of revealing hidden elements of emotional intent within, which includes the self, and external dress is simply one of the many means by which the trainee asserts those selves. To remove one's necklace may mean to be stripped of one's coolness, and to shrug off one's baggy sweatshirt may be akin to crying in public. However, the exposure of vulnerability is the very essence of performance. Thus, the baggy sweatshirt becomes an obstacle, and its removal thus leads to 'freedom'. In a deeper sense, it is not the physical clothes that the trainees remove but the cloak of fear and the veil of scrutiny that they wear on their bodies, which limit their definition of the real and constrain their state (Wangh 2010, 76). Suzuki required trainees to wear all-black outfits consisting of short-sleeved T-shirts and shorts that leave the knees exposed. He also required trainees to remove all accessories during the training. One of the reasons for this approach is to allow the instructor to monitor and verify whether the trainee is using their body appropriately during the training – particularly the knees, which are especially significant in Suzuki's method. The purpose of removing the clothing and accessories is to allow the trainee to concentrate during the training process without distract themselves or others, in addition to nurturing the 'self' that Grotowski emphasised.

I asked the class to wear black tracksuits without logos, long pants for the basic preparation stage, and shorts that did not go past the knee for the Suzuki method. All student actors were also asked to enter the training class without makeup or accessories. This would allow me to observe how the student actors changed during the training process. Below, I shall detail the training process and methods using illustrative examples. Of course, I shall not discuss all movements and exercises that were used, but I shall provide sufficient detail to illustrate how the process unfolded step by step.

To commence the training and establish a benchmark starting point, I selected and composed a series of exercise drawn from a range of training regimes. I used these as an introduction to physical discipline and as a general mechanism for warming up the students and preparing them for the work to come. This enabled them to make gradual breakthroughs and improvements while also building their confidence. The physical training did not consist merely of exercising muscles and bones; it also constituted a profound mental exercise. In describing the training, I prioritised teaching and correcting the basic movements to ensure that the students assumed the correct posture and moved correctly. I considered the correlation between the training content and the actor's role and selected exercises to be appropriate to each role's characteristics. This would enable the actors to use their bodies to better immerse themselves in the role during training, laying a solid foundation for their performance. I also prioritised the fun and appealing aspects of the training content, acknowledging that training can be tedious. I aimed to focus the students' attention by means of engaging exercises while maintaining their enthusiasm and ensuring effective results. Moreover, I incorporated the preparation for *Hamlet* into the process, beginning with role shaping, and I designed specific physical training content to assist the student actors in expressing their inner emotions more profoundly. During the rehearsal process, students were guided to convey their characters' emotions and inner state through body language, in pursuit of harmonious internal and external development.

I did not rush the students through multiple exercises at once, as this would simply have exacerbated any stress or tension that they were experiencing. Rather, I progressed through the exercises in a gradual, rhythmic and sequential manner, making sure to introduce new elements into each session to prevent burnout associated with a lack of 'freshness' in the early stages.

Phase Two – Practice and Training

Phase Two involved the physical training methods of Terzopoulos, Suzuki and Grotowski. Not all student actors exhibited the same aptitude, and their differences will be discussed in the evaluation section of the fourth phase.

I went through the process to make it easier for the student actors to learn and practice. Rather than using a hybrid training method, I elected to adopt a sequential approach. Owing to their inexperience, the student actors struggled to grasp the training's core concepts. The combination of the various methods made it difficult for the beginners to distinguish and master the essentials of the movement. In accordance with the characteristics of the three training methods and the demand for several training methods, I chose the most direct and effective core of each of the three regimes to achieve the research goal in terms of combining and arranging but also to help the student actors to familiarise themselves with and master the movements and essentials of the training within a relatively concentrated timeframe. Meanwhile, I clearly explained each training method to clarify my specific working methods at this stage. I also demonstrated specific movements for the students.

Terzopoulos

The first actor training method used was that of Terzopoulos, which focuses on strengthening lower limbs, enhancing the kinetic energy of the body's core – the waist and the feet below – while improving lung capacity and enhancing breathing awareness. I selected this training method for the first part of this stage in light of its attainable training movements and 'mass' style relative to Suzuki's approach. Moreover, the action in the Suzuki method is more Japanese in style, and the student actors were required to improve their understanding of the training's action and aesthetic as the training progressed so that they could better understand and master Suzuki's method.

The sequence and content of the Terzopoulos training method are as follows:

1. Essentials of Balance Jump
2. Essentials of Vertical Jump
3. Essentials of Going Forward Along the Oblique Line

Terzopoulos' training is extremely intense, and so it helps to develop actors' physical expressiveness. I emphasised the training requirements while leading the student actors through the process, focusing on abdominal breathing, the rhythm of movements, the degree of body relaxation and the relationship between limbs and body circumference as well as the collaboration between the joints and muscles while moving. Concentration is fundamental to the training as well as relaxation and looseness. Each body part should be loose yet ready to move naturally. Student actors should perceive their bodies to be as soft and fluid as water yet powerful during training. Only when the body is relaxed can energy flow, unifying a set of relationships within the body. During training, student actors should focus on their bodies and achieve harmony, synchronisation and tacit understanding with their team and environment. In addition, they should exclude distractions, empty themselves and focus on their training.

Breathing in Terzopoulos' method requires actors to work through difficult body movements and intense physical training to achieve mental and physical freedom, allowing the breath to originate from the pelvic 'triangle', akin to the Chinese concept of 'qi sinking into the *dantian*' (*dantian*, originally a Taoist term for cultivating essence and qi in the internal elixir, now refers to the body part located on the golden section line of the body). Once the breath moves freely, actors feel a sense of freedom and pleasure, with their bodies ready to release unknown energies and create new expressions, expanding their vocalisation methods. When the body is fully activated, and breath flows unrestrictedly through the 'triangle', the body becomes a natural resonator (Wang 2022, 10–11).

Essentials of Balance Jump: Stand with feet together, bend the knees slightly, keep the upper body upright, and use the core of the waist and abdomen to maintain balance. Look straight ahead, spread arms flat parallel to the ground and naturally relax the hands and shoulders. Relax the eyeballs and facial muscles and stay focused. While jumping forward alternately with feet, keep the focus in front of your eyes. When landing, focus on body balance and the waist–abdomen core strength. Simultaneously, use the waist–abdomen core strength to voice 'shi' rapidly and forcefully. Voice one sound per full breath. Each jump forward is an inhalation process, with an intake of breath, while landing firmly is an exhalation with the forceful voicing of 'shi'.

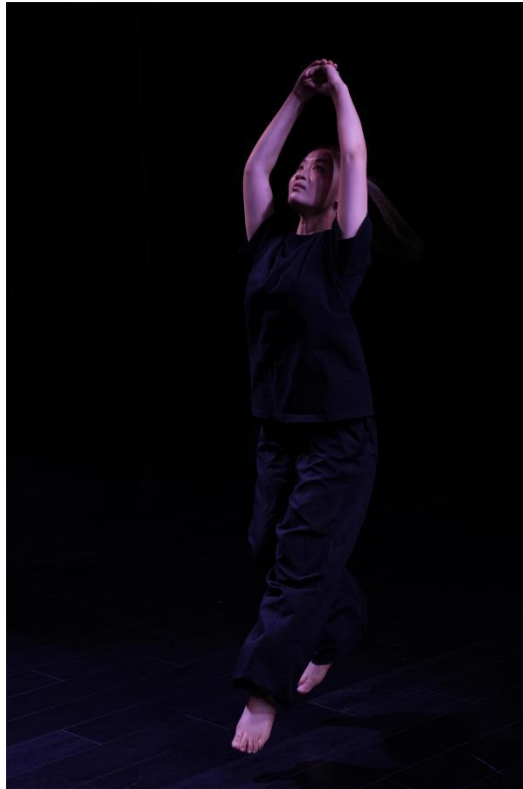


Essentials of Balance Jump

Essentials of Balance Jump (Video)

Essentials of Vertical Jump: Position the left foot behind, bend the left knee; right foot in front, tiptoe and slightly bend the right knee. Place the right heel in front of the left toe, bend the upper body slightly, stack the hands in front of the lower abdomen, bend the elbows, relax and lower the shoulders, tilt the upper body slightly forward, and use the waist–abdomen core to maintain balance. Look straight ahead, bend the knees slightly, relax the eyeballs and facial muscles and stay focused. Alternate the legs to jump forward with hands up, then return to the original position. Always follow the direction of the hands, and when landing, focus on body balance and waist–abdomen core strength. Use this core strength to voice ‘shi’ rapidly and forcefully. Voice one sound per full breath. Each jump forward is an inhalation process, with an intake of breath. Landing firmly is an exhalation with the forceful voicing of ‘shi’.





Essentials of Vertical Jump

Essentials of Vertical Jump (Video)

Student actors appeared to struggle with vertical jumping, with poor coordination between hands and body. When the body settled, the hands sometimes failed to synchronise with the body's cessation. Some actors had weak body control, failing to stabilise and energise the body after stopping. Others were unable to rotate their feet well when jumping forward. In addition, the physical training was always synchronised with breathwork, but the student actors could not breathe correctly in the interest of enhancing body energy, resulting in weak and powerless voicing in the Attis Actor Training Method. Repeated practice formed body memory, solving emphasised body part problems in the training phase.

Breathing is fundamental to actors' on-stage life and is the source of their energy in performance. The body's organic capacity and the quality and level of body movements can be improved by using appropriate breathing techniques, which enhance the effects of training. (Angelo and Hu 2013, 44–46). Terzopoulos' training requires trainees to breathe through both mouth and nose simultaneously to collect energy, inhale deeply into the abdomen, with the waist and abdomen forming the core of the entire body movement process, transmitting power throughout the body.

The power generated by the actor's body and voice on stage must be accomplished through the combined harnessing of breath and body. I provided timely corrections and demonstrations for the student actors' repeated practice, which was particularly necessary during their initial training. Their bodies could not yet stably master movement skills, and doing so enhanced the training's effectiveness and correctness. For instance, movement articulation should be consistent and smooth; look forward consistently; breathing should follow body rhythm; maintain deep breathing state; take every breath deep into the abdomen; extend the focus point of every movement from the waist and abdomen to the side waist and back waist area. Training is a process of constant repetition, and it is through this repetition that actors can better recognise their own bodies, constantly break through and transcend the ego, thus enhancing their bodily energy, consciousness and capacity for awareness (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 192–94).

Essentials of Going Forward Along the Oblique Line: Stand with feet together, slightly bend the knees, keep the upper body upright, use the waist–abdomen core to maintain balance, look straight ahead, spread arms flat parallel to the ground, and naturally relax hands and shoulders. Look straight ahead, relax the eyeballs and facial muscles, and remain focused. Lift the left thigh and rotate towards the right leg direction, then rotate back to the far left when close to the right leg. During rotation, use knees to drive the lower leg and ankle. When landing, the left leg's tiptoe should be at a 45-degree angle to the left. Movements in this process must be fluid, and the landing foot must stomp decisively on the ground. When landing, focus on body balance and waist–abdomen core strength. Use waist–abdomen core strength to voice 'shi' rapidly and forcefully. Voice one sound per full breath. Each time the left and right legs move forward is an inhalation process associated with an intake of breath. After the body lands firmly comes an exhalation and the forceful voicing of 'shi'.



Essentials of Going Forward Along the Oblique Line

Essentials of Going Forward Along the Oblique Line (Video)

Body awareness is of paramount importance during training. The body should be stable, maintaining its rhythm, and every movement should be executed cleanly and without delay (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 162–63). Movement is not the sole purpose of training for student actors, who develop and reinforce many skills. Gradual digestion and assimilation are crucial at the beginner stage.

Young student actors yearn for the world outside the training room, rehearsal hall and theatre space and require help to relax and achieve a more sustained focus. Only when they are able to concentrate and fully immerse themselves in their training and their bodies can they explore and discover their own bodily sensations and rhythms, building their own body maps on stage. Terzopoulos' training method for actors is never merely technical and movement training but prioritises the constant experience of the body's sense of self on stage, feeling how the body works and how one uses their own body while training. It entails constantly experiencing the role of the waist and abdomen in creativity, causing the actor's body to naturally relax and become freely controlled even after a prolonged energy release. Meanwhile harmonious and natural training heightens the actors' muscular awareness, allowing them to constantly transcend and perfect their own athletic abilities, slowly forming the concept of creation and achieving a sense of the psycho-physical in the creative process (Terzopoulos, Huang, and Xu 2011, 129). Only through flexibility and vitality can the body establish a good connection with the inner emotions, and only when body and emotion are unified can spirituality return to the stage.

Suzuki

During the first part of the second phase, I guided the student actors in Terzopoulos' method and subsequently led them in trialling Suzuki's method.

The Suzuki method follows the following sequence:

Essentials of Stepping

Essentials of Slow Walking

Essentials of Statue (Standing)

Essentials of Statue (Sitting)

Terzopoulos' and Grotowski's approaches both require actors to train barefoot to enhance the connection between the feet and the ground in a bid to energise the body. Suzuki also emphasises this connection in the belief that shoes restrict foot movement and impair actors' focus. Suzuki's method requires actors to wear a special footbag designed to improve balance and prevent slipping, similar to Terzopoulos' barefoot method. The split-toe footbag enhances tactile sensation, which is crucial for exercises that require foot-ground friction (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 11–12).

The Suzuki method is typically implemented in two-week workshops, with significant improvement requiring at least three months of daily training. The method includes various steps, such as stepping, slow walking and statue exercises, with a focus on breathing techniques that differ from Terzopoulos' methods. Trainees in the Suzuki method employ nasal breathing techniques with the mouth closed to cultivate a conscious awareness of the breath.

Essentials of Stepping: Bend knees slightly with feet together, and relax the upper body, shoulders back and chest out. Look straight ahead and maintain focus; allow the arms to hang naturally, with both hands held as though grasping a sword with its tip pointing downward; the thumb is placed on the second joint of the index finger. Bend the knee to lift the right foot at ninety degrees to the body; the hooked foot's surface should be level with the ground and close to the knee, with the body's weight forward. When stamping the foot on the ground, travel forward for half a foot's distance and shift the centre of gravity to the front foot; the right and left feet rotate forward to maintain the body's energy.



Essentials of Stepping

Essentials of Stepping (Video)

Suzuki asserted that, owing to their limited physical engagement with the ground, modern actors lack the presence and focus of animals. The footbag used in Suzuki training is intended to help actors develop this connection, initially causing discomfort but ultimately protecting the foot joints (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 62).

Essentials of Slow Walking: Bend the knees slightly with the feet together, and relax the upper body, with the shoulders back and chest out. Look straight ahead and allow the arms to hang naturally by the sides. Imagine that both hands are holding wooden swords (tipped down), and then gently place the thumb on the second section of the index finger; beginning with the right foot, bend the knee and lift to form a ninety-degree angle with the body. Hold the foot level with the ground and press it as close to the knee as possible. Shift the body's centre of gravity forward and then put one foot onto the ground to change the centre of gravity, marching forward about half a foot's length. Meanwhile, the centre of gravity is shifted to the front foot. While stepping towards the ground, remain at the same height and move your centre of gravity horizontally. Then repeat the same movement with the other foot.





Essentials of Slow Walking

Essentials of Slow Walking (Video)

After stepping and slow walking, the actors proceed to the statue exercises, which focus on speed, pausing and explosiveness. These exercises, which include standing and sitting positions, are intended to train the voice and enable the practice of the spoken lines of the script while strengthening body control. Vocal and physical power are derived from the body's centre and supported by focused breathing, which exerts both physical and mental influences. Actors' bodies thus become more precise in relation to the surrounding space. (Allain 2009, 116).

Essentials of Statue (Standing): Stand with the feet apart, slightly wider than shoulder-width, stand with the toes at a 45-degree angle, keeping the knees and toes at the same level, and then squat. Before reaching the lowest position, use the thighs and hips to maintain the centre of gravity at a certain height so that the body is not wholly relaxed. Bend the back naturally, lower the head, and allow the arm to hang naturally at the outside of the knees. Maintain the hand position as though stepping and avoid touching the ground as far as possible. The high, medium and low positions should be repeated in sequence. Furthermore, incorporate add various arm shapes and maintain the shape, remaining still while standing.





Essentials of Statue (Standing)

Essentials of Statue (Standing) (Video)

Essentials of Statue (Sitting): In preparation, sit on the floor with the legs together and bend the knees. Place the feet on the floor and keep the legs as close to the body as possible, wrap the hands around the knees and put the head down. Upon hearing the command, quickly lift the feet off the ground into whichever position, height or distance is desired. The legs may be asymmetrical, hooked or stretched. Tighten the belly to maintain balance, and lean back slightly with the arms in a free pose. Pay attention to the chin and neck and take care not to tense them; relax the shoulders and upper body. The breath should be coordinated with the movement, with a focus on the abdomen and permission to vocalise or speak at any time. Upon hearing the command again, quickly return to the starting position. Repeat in turn, changing the posture and movement each time.

During training, I focused on observing the student actors' acceptance of and interest in the training methods. I reminded them of their goals and the importance of applying the practices. Suzuki emphasised that the purpose of training should extend beyond physical skills, helping actors to control and dominate their bodies. Actors should train to improve abilities and find commonalities in different performance styles (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 19–20).



Essentials of Statue (Sitting)

Essentials of Statue (Sitting) (Video)

Grotowski

Grotowski's method is not only a technique but also a key that unlocks the connection between an actor's inner emotions and their physical expression. Through this training, actors can better translate their inner feelings into outer, vivid and lively performances, making their acting more authentic and touching (Yang 2021, 67–69). The corpus of methods that he established emphasises the stimulation of humankind's primal nature. However, Grotowski's method was not intended to train actors in the gymnastics sense, the acrobatics sense, nor in the sense of dance or gesture. In a form of work that is no different from rehearsals, the actor should be confronted with that which constitutes the seed of creation. The 'freedom and flexibility' that Grotowski's method offers partly accounts for my decision to teach this to the student actors last. However, the discipline and norms of the training class and movement practice must be taken into consideration. When these have been established, the student actors may be permitted greater freedom.

As the final part of this phase, I led the student actors through Grotowski's plastic training, which constitutes a systematic approach along with his physical, expressive and vocal training. Grotowski's method seeks to direct the actor's internal impulses to an external output.

Plastic training distinguishes the parts of the body, breaking it down into a system that works with a specific range of details. For instance, the head can move in only nine different directions, and the shoulders in six directions, and the chest in five directions. These details become the body language through which actors communicate with one another. The rhythm and intensity of an actor's movement creates a physical conversation that is influenced by his desires, emotions and the interpersonal energy that is created in the moment. The goal of plastic training is to help the actor perform and react purely on their physical impulses rather than analysing the mind. The voice that ultimately emerges from this process will produce an authentic expression of the text that is free of other influences.

The plastic exercises include predetermined forms or details in the actors' physical movement. First, a certain number of details must be established with precision. Then, the actors must rediscover those personal impulses that may be incarnated in these details – that is, changed but not destroyed. Initially, actors improvise only the order of the details and their rhythms, changing the order and the rhythms and even the details' composition. This must not be premeditated but should be dictated by the flow of one's own body. Actors must find this spontaneous line of the body, which is embodied in and goes beyond the details while simultaneously maintaining their precision. All authentic reaction begins inside the body, before being presented externally. The so-called detail of gesture in the exercises is the only outcome of the process. If the external reaction is not born inside the body, it will always be false, dead, artificial and rigid. If one retains the precision of the details and allows the body to dictate the different rhythms, continually altering them, taking another detail as it from the air.

I first presented specific training methods and objectives to the student actors during the plastic exercises, through which they could create a physical, non-verbal dialogue with their own bodies and with one another. The exercises were performed in groups, individually and in pairs, and the student actors observed, compared, referred to, self-reflected and evaluated one another. My role was to observe and obtain the results of their interactions in a series of given 'details'. The different approaches were based on the notion that all student actors in the workshop could be observers and could contribute experience-informed feedback from different perspectives. The use of mirrors is not recommended in any of the exercises in my practical research, but the trainers' own care and awareness of their own movements and the observers' feedback to the practitioners are all 'invisible' mirrors. Meanwhile, the subgroup work is intended to provide theatre practitioners, actors, acting students, or theatre companies, groups, etc., with a more comprehensive experience that can help them gain new perspectives on the training that they are seeking so that they can reinforce their individual performance abilities and/or the vitality of their groups.

Grotowski's marked emphasis on the body in his training and his distinction between association and thought is an attempt to eliminate consciousness as an obvious concept or analysis of the process. Association is something that originates in the emotion, in the body, and is a return to accurate memory. When rational analysis is left aside, memory is always a physiological response (Wangh 2010, 185–86). Plastic training applies a unique approach to character creation, and this aspect of the practice diverges from Terzopoulos' and Suzuki's approaches.

During this phase, I developed a specific framework for the student actor's study and practice, within which a 'staggered spiral' of training objectives could be seen. Suzuki's physical training is not text-specific, and the third part of the Attis Actor's Training Method remains highly stylised when it is integrated with the text, although the third part of the Terzopoulos training method is also integrated with the text to support characterisation. While leading the student actors in physical training and in the final stages of applying and translating it to their rehearsals, I did not intend to implement the Attis Theatre's staging style or Suzuki's acting approach, particularly with young student actors, lest the combination of text and training cause them to develop stereotypical physical and expressive memories. Grotowski's stylistic training, by contrast, is considerably freer, although it is also combined with the text, and the influence of a specific style on the students presents no cause for concern. Therefore, Grotowski's plastic training was suited to the final part of this phase, based on my training experience, research goals and the student actors' professional qualities and abilities.

The student actors began combining the body-specific exercise with the text following their experience of targeted training in body fitness, balance, centre of gravity, energy and awareness. The actor's body is only as excited as it is trained to be at its rehearsal best, and all physical training is geared toward creating a stage characterisation that is powerful and remarkably alive.

Grotowski called these forms 'details' in plastic exercises in which he tasked the actor with discovering the personal impulses that could change the details in the training and with changing rather than destroying them (Slowiak and Cuesta 2010, 139). The precise details that the student actor uses in the exercises, including changes in tempo, intensity, etc., are related to life and inner experiences as well as feelings. Bodily memory, which relates to certain life experiences, is at work (Wangh 2010, 133).

Grotowski's plastic training divides the body into nine parts, as follows:

1. shoulders
2. arms and elbows
3. hands
4. arms
5. head
6. chest
7. hips
8. legs
9. fingers

Essentials of Plastic Practice: Find a comfortable spot in the training space to initiate movement. Stand relaxed and choose a body part with which to begin, such as the head. Perform a sudden, powerful head movement, and then stop abruptly. After a brief pause, continue the movement, creating a cycle. Although brief, this movement is significant as it involves awareness of resistance and its breakage. Move the head in any direction – front, back, left, right – and observe the mental effects that it exerts. The rest of the body remains relaxed. If using other body parts, follow the same pattern. When using the shoulders, hands, or elbows, start with one and then combine movements, noting the psychological effects.

Essentials of Plastic Practice (Video)

For example, on a very simple level, certain details of the hand and finger movements will, while maintaining the detail in all its precision, transform themselves, evoking for the actor the experience of touching or caressing someone who is particularly important to them. If the reaction is alive, it will begin within the body and finish in the hands. The actors themselves do not know how this happens, but it is the body's memory that dictates it in relation to certain experiences or cycles of experience in the actors' lives. The body does not have memory: it *is* memory. In the physical exercises, actors must make the elements concrete in the same way that one aims at precision in the plastic exercises. If the elements are not concrete, the actors are not being authentic.

Group exercise: Once the basics have been mastered, begin with group exercises. This requires the actors to be both physically and psychologically prepared for new approaches. All student actors should find a comfortable spot in the training room. The practice begins with body parts, with instructions and supervision. The actors should focus on each moment and detail, remembering what they bring to the body and psyche. They should identify the resistance in each movement and feel the connection between physical changes and inner feelings.

During the group exercise, the student actors stood still, preparing lines from *Hamlet*. On the command 'Begin', they began engaging in detailed movements of specified body parts. These movements activate the body's perception and expression, creating conditions that are conducive to line integration. Once the body movement patterns have been initiated, an internal impulse arises, prompting the actors to incorporate the lines. Should the impulse fail to arise, the body movements should be continued until it does.

This process emphasises the natural connection between body movements and emotional expression, encouraging the actors to bring their inner emotions to the fore through physical exploration. Once the lines have been integrated, the fusion of body and voice brings new stimuli and developmental changes, enhancing the actors' expressiveness and emotional depth.

Observation and guidance: During group training, each trainee should be observed and their changes and issues noted. Outstanding performers should be asked about their feelings and guided to describe specific details and images. Students unable to focus should be instructed in specific movements, guided through the exercise and advised to quietly observe the others.

Solo exercise: A 'demonstrator' for solo exercise should be selected from the group training. The demonstrator completes the exercise under joint supervision, with guidance when it is required. The goal is to build intimacy that is based on inner impulses rather than confrontation. This public improvisation can be powerful, but some student actors may experience discomfort with focus and confidence. For such students, the group environment may be adapted before individual practice.

Partner exercise: One male and one female student actor should be selected for partner exercises, preferably students who have a good grasp of the training method and physical performance ability. Each prepares a line and stands facing the other. Beginning with body movements, they integrate lines when impulses arise. Unlike in the group practice, they also feel the stimuli from the other's lines, reflecting reactions back and forth. They must pay attention to their own movements and the stimulation that they receive from their partner, receiving and reflecting on it authentically. Time should be allotted for interaction to build trust. Before the exercise, the students should be requested to pay attention to each other's physical stimuli and intentions, emotional authenticity and formation of relationships based on current emotional states. Cues and guidance should be offered during the exercise, and the student actors should be questioned afterward about authenticity and desires in relationship formation.

Confrontation and tolerance should be emphasised. Confrontation involves emotional or action collisions, uncovering deeper character emotions and enhancing skills. Tolerance entails mutual acceptance and understanding and the creation of a supportive atmosphere. Actors shift between acceptance, confrontation and tolerance, exploring these states dynamically.

Grotowski's method emphasises holistic body liberation rather than partial exercise. Actors are encouraged to abandon rigid control and to allow their natural strength to emerge. This liberation fuses emotion and body, making the body an emotional medium. Consistent practice helps the actors to express themselves freely, with each session bringing new discoveries.

Encourage bold creation within movement essentials to develop physical creativity and imagination. This training helps the actors to uncover their physical potential and expressiveness, making their bodies more vivid in free creations. However, some may experience awkwardness and require guidance in the effective use of their bodies.

While applying Grotowski's plastic training, I discussed and elaborated on three different working methods in detail, aiming to help the student actors establish a more comprehensive perspective. The plastic exercises helped the actors to find a way of acting, reacting and speaking. Grotowski's approach aims to help actors to identify the authentic, uninhibited impulses that originate within their bodies rather than in their analysis and thinking.

To compare the three methods carried out at this stage, I selected highlights rather than detailing all exercises of each training method with the aim of highlighting the differences between the methods and the student actors in addition to the experiences, presentation and variations of the different training methods they have gone through. The reason for this is also to help the readers to better switch clearly among the three methods rather than being immersed in a particular method unable to detach. In the actual work and training of the training class, the exercises through which I led the student actors for each method were tedious and intensive, beginning in sequence but increasing in content on a daily basis as their bodies became more familiar with the movements and mastered the techniques, making their learning and training always challenging.

I expected to create changes in 'repetition' to ensure a constant 'momentum' in the student performers' growth and progress. Given that this was a six-month long training programme, it was also crucial to provide them with mental and psychological support. In light of their youth, they needed guidance not only technically but also mentally and psychologically, and the integration of the training in the latter part of this phase established a solid foundation for the programme's next phase: the transition from training to actual performance application.

Terzopoulos (Basic Training)									
	Movement (Latitude)	Movement (Intensity)	Movement (Difficulty)	Breath (Nose and Mouth)	Energy	Consciousness (Body and Mind)	Gravity	Balance	Application (Text)
Zero	✓								✓
Weak						✓			
Middle		✓	✓						
Intense				✓	✓		✓	✓	

Terzopoulos (Basic Training)

Terzopoulos (Systematic Training)									
	Movement (Latitude)	Movement (Intensity)	Movement (Difficulty)	Breath (Nose and Mouth)	Energy	Consciousness (Body and Mind)	Gravity	Balance	Application (Text)
Zero									
Weak						✓	✓	✓	
Middle	✓		✓						
Intense		✓		✓	✓				✓

Terzopoulos (Systematic Training)

Tadashi Suzuki (Systematic Training)									
	Movement (Latitude)	Movement (Intensity)	Movement (Difficulty)	Breath (Nose and Mouth)	Energy	Consciousness (Body and Mind)	Gravity	Balance	Application (Text)
Zero	✓								✓
Weak									
Middle			✓						
Intense		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Suzuki (Systematic Training)

Grotowski (Plastic Training)									
	Movement (Latitude)	Movement (Intensity)	Movement (Difficulty)	Breath (Nose and Mouth)	Energy	Consciousness (Body and Mind)	Gravity	Balance	Application (Text)
Zero				✓			✓	✓	
Weak		✓	✓						
Middle	✓				✓				
Intense						✓			✓

Grotowski(Plastic Training)

	Cloth/Style	Footgear	Accessory	Training Tools	Training Music	Training Content
Terzopoulos	Sport/Loose	Barefoot	Removal	None	None	Basics/Text/ Applications
Tadashi Suzuki	Black Short T-Shirt and Shorts (Above the Knee)	Foot Strap (Japanese)	Removal	Short Knives and Bamboo Swords	Rich	Basic/Advanced
Grotowski	Tights and Shorts	Barefoot	Removal	None	None	Body/ Shape/ Expression/ Sound

Contrast

Chapter V

Doing The Work: Actors in Performance

Introduction

Prior to undertaking the six months of practical work, I led the student actors in desk work that focused solely on the text of *Hamlet*. As student actors, their own literary backgrounds and accumulated life experiences and emotional experiences were somewhat more limited than they might have been in older actors, for instance. It was thus necessary to examine the text in detail, particularly given their lack of familiarity with the script. However, once they entered the rehearsal hall, I asked the student actors to devote themselves to the rehearsal, setting aside their rational thought and analysis and trusting in their own physical reactions and emotional judgement. While this may appear to be a somewhat ‘anti-intellectualist’ approach, my intention was to emphasise the importance of authenticity and intuition in performance. Reliance on intuition and emotional judgement can stimulate an actor’s creativity. When student actors can quieten their analytical minds and tune into their physical responses, they can better use their bodies to convey their characters’ emotions and inner worlds.

In the context of theatrical work, the extent to which the participants understand the same verbal instructions is important and this is a fundamental safeguard for my methods. While rehearsing a piece for performance, timely guidance and demonstration remain necessary. At least during the early stages of this new method’s development, I sought to ensure that each participant was familiar and connected with the instructions and any guidance that I might give.

In my practical training research, I examined the student actors’ physical expression in their respective characterisations. I focused on the variations of the different methods that the student actors learned and practised with the aim of revealing the different methods’ characteristics and limitations as well as the specific assistance that these actors received in terms of the use of their bodies in the characterisation of their roles and the effective transformation from training to performance.

Phase Three – Performance

This phase of the research differed substantially from the previous two. During the first phase, I collaborated with the student actors to set goals, emphasised discipline and personal preparation, and ensured the training was both engaging and effective. In addition, I guided the student actors to establish a sense of perception as regards their own bodies, including a belief in space, teamwork and their fellow peers. The second phase focused on guiding the student actors to learn and practice the three practitioners' respective body training methods and on observing and comparing the three methods. In the specific practice process, I helped the student actors to appreciate each method's core essence, master the essential movements and simultaneously pay attention to and enhance their own bodily, spiritual and self-awareness to refine their concentration and reinforce the link between their bodies and their inner feelings.

The student actors applied the lessons of the first two phases of physical work to their creative acting in this third phase, specifically through our rehearsals of *Hamlet*. The *Hamlet* script served as my vehicle for exploring the relationship between the actor's body and their role characterisation, discovering how the effects of different bodily disciplines can be effectively elicited and applied by focusing on the student actors' different experiences and performances across a range of creative applications as well as on their specific bodily presentations. I selected *Hamlet*, the epitome of Shakespearean tragedy. Based on my research, I made selective cuts to the play. My aim was to guide the student actors in exploring the connection between their bodies and their characterisation of the role, and those sections of *Hamlet* that were retained would be those that we would have to use. I would encourage, guide and direct the student actors to use their bodies to make bold creations of characterisation in my hands-on rehearsals of theatre productions. Next, I shall detail my rehearsal plans, designs and guidelines. Both the first and second stages constituted necessary and useful preparation. This third stage introduced new guidelines for a new approach to rehearsing theatrical works, and I selected several fragments for the purpose of demonstrating and discussing the methods but refrained from describing the entire process. The selection of specific fragments was useful in delineating a clear scope.

During the third phase, I began by selecting characters and scenes from *Hamlet*. The actors completed several tasks individually, such as King Claudius' soliloquies and the segments that reveal Ophelia's inner world. Other parts were presented as duet scenes, focusing on key character relationships and scenes, such as the interactions between Hamlet and Ophelia and between Hamlet and his mother. Next, I guided the student actors through an in-depth study of each segment, primarily adopting a method of guidance and instruction. Although they had previously undergone various physical training methods, the integration of these earlier trainings with their current rehearsals remained challenging for them. My focus was on helping them find ways to incorporate their physical training into their performances, making their acting more natural and vivid and better at conveying the characters' emotions. Through this approach, the student actors were not only able to enhance their acting skills but also equipped to deliver performances that were more profound and moving.

As noted above, young student actors in particular struggle to transform and apply training in production. Grotowski accomplished this brilliantly because he not only trained his actors but also provided them with specific guidance as they went through the process of rehearsing the work and creating their roles. My work with the student actors in this stage was intended to accomplish such transformation and application.

Video of Hamlet (1)

The rehearsal process was guided by theory-based practice, and the discussion that follows begins with a specific performance of Ophelia in the production of *Hamlet*. Although Ophelia makes few appearances in the play, she undergoes an immense change from innocent fantasy to love, depression and obsession, and she ultimately drowns in silence. Although the script affords Ophelia little exposure, it nonetheless provided sufficient space for this character's performance. In addition to providing guidance to Ophelia's character in terms of her lines and inner emotions, the most important thing we did was to apply and transform the physical training that we had completed.

Without an illustrative body position or gesture, little emotion can be transmitted, and all human emotions are linked to the body's movement. In this sense, human emotions are the result of complex movements that link the body's mental and physical movements (Nair 2007, 40). The actress who portrayed Ophelia in our production of *Hamlet* had some background experience in Latin dance, and so her physical foundation and ability met my expectations regarding Ophelia's emotional expression amplified through her body. It is worth emphasising that it was precisely because of the accurate search for the inner rhythm and rhythm of emotions that the student actor not only used her body and external expression to create Ophelia's emotional colours but also stimulated and conveyed the sincere emotions inherent in Ophelia's lines and performances. Not only was the student actor highly satisfied with her own performance but the observer in the team was also impressed by her stage presence and emotional sincerity.

When the rehearsals commenced, the performer who portrayed Ophelia was confused. She did not know how she was going to express her character's feelings or how her body was going to work. She could not do anything other than say her lines. Although she could experience her character's emotions, she did not know how to 'act' her character on stage. When rehearsals/performances make demands on the actor that lie beyond their capabilities, the actor will likely experience insecurity unless someone can point them towards a viable solution (Barker 2010, 7). This was this particular actor's most desperate moment, as she felt powerless and unable to move. I began with interventions and specific coaching to focus on creating a 'safe' environment for her. Grotowski said, 'The actor's work is dangerous, because he has to endure constant supervision and observation, an atmosphere and a system of work must be created to give the actor the possibility of working safely, which makes the actor feel that he can do anything and will be understood and accepted. When the actor understands the situation, he can reveal himself' (Grotowski 2002, 211). The development of this work is not only a means to address the issues faced by actors but also requires actors to have a clear understanding of the techniques and methods required in rehearsals and performances. Only in this way can acting work become more objective and clearer, thereby further enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the performances. Grotowski went on to emphasise, 'Actors must be cared for, trusted, and free, because the work of the stage is to maximise what the actors themselves can achieve' (Grotowski 2002, 25). On this basis, I left her alone after the regular rehearsal work and 'protected' her creative process so that she could express and try out various approaches without any concerns until she was sufficiently confident to show it in public in the training class.

During rehearsal, the actor needed to learn how to activate full and free movement of all parts of her body, to apply all techniques learned during our previous body work in combination without having to think about which individual practitioner's method she was applying. Essentially, the actor needed to remember her body's strength, energy, power, speed, centre of gravity, balance, control and flexibility together rather than simply remembering the Suzuki method or the Terzopoulos method. If the body is permitted to actively participate in the rehearsal, it will naturally give the actor the most positive response and feedback. Meanwhile, in addition to the vitality and various physical adaptations brought about by the actor's own physical training, I used not only the emotional stimulation of plastic training to help the student actors with their character creation but also Grotowski's method of physiological stimulation, giving the actor a living, tangible and palpable point of physiological stimulation and drawing on external means to use physiological feelings to drive emotional feelings. Grotowski often used physiological stimulation to motivate actors to perform, an approach that he developed on the basis of his in-depth grasp of actors' emotional engagement and performance state over several years, a technique that required the instructor to have keen observational abilities and abundant stage experience (Li 2021, 17). Both keen observation and rich stage experience required us to focus on the rehearsal, and only in this way could we capture, discover and give accurate instructions.

To help the actor who was playing Ophelia, I had tall student actors surround and approach her so that she would feel as though she was always trying and failing to escape. This physiological stimulation helped the actor to better understand the character's predicament and inner helplessness and despair. The experience of 'suffocation' helped her to feel and appreciate Ophelia's emotions, allowing her to resonate with the character, creating a more profound experience. I reminded the student actor to feel the inner emotional experience and the changes in their physical details brought about by the change in breathing, while also offering advice on physical expression and presentation – the bold and free creation within the conceptual framework of this training, and the opening of the body and imagination in the empathy for Ophelia. It did not matter if it was exaggerated, because the priority was first to guide this student actor to feel deeply the inner emotional experience brought about by changes in their breathing, as well as the subtle physical changes that accompany it. At the same time, my aim was also to provide prompts for physical expression and presentation: to encourage the student actors to create boldly and freely, to fully open their body and imagination while deeply empathising with Ophelia. What matters most in this process is to first find that feeling.

The performer gradually learned to 'express' thanks to her physical ability and the solid foundation that she had laid early on in the training. The principle of Ophelia's body presentation in this clip was that the body's softness and flexibility should be as though it were wrapped in water; movement has energy, power and pause; the body should be wholly in control, maintaining the centre of gravity and balance in every change.

Video of Hamlet (2)

These core concepts were consistently emphasised during the initial physical training, though we did not mechanically apply the specific movements from any particular training method directly to the stage performances. For instance, we did not directly adopt any particular movements from Tadashi Suzuki's acting training method; nor did we copy specific actions from the methods of Jerzy Grotowski. Instead, building on the physical state cultivated during training, we fully mobilised the body's energy, control and flexibility to achieve a more substantial and natural expression. This approach allowed the actors to portray their characters more freely on stage rather than being confined to a fixed training pattern.

In this phase of the work, I provided specific guidance to the student actors in the form of improvisational rehearsals and explorations. For example, I would instruct the student actor playing Ophelia to run quickly from offstage and then to suddenly stop and tightly embrace herself, followed by a half-squat, controlling her body's posture, stretching her neck to look into the distance and, during the rotation, to engage the core to maintain kinetic energy. Although these movements were static, her body was filled with energy. These instructions were not created arbitrarily but were based on a deep understanding of the actors' physical state and energy. I determined that these instructions were useful because they could help the student actors to better express their characters' emotions and inner drive. These movements are aimed at activating the student actors' physical memories, enabling them to express the characters' emotions more naturally in their performances. Although these instructions are adaptations of the training methods of Suzuki, Terzopoulos and Grotowski rather than 'pure' applications, I believe that they most closely approximate Suzuki's training method.

Suzuki's method emphasises control and the use of energy on stage, which is similar to the quick movements, sudden stops, and control of body posture in my guidance. Student actors can thus maintain a dynamic stillness on stage, a state that reflects the character's inner world and meets the overall requirements of theatrical performance. Therefore, these instructions not only help student actors improve their performance skills but also enable them to deliver performances that are more profound and moving. Through this adaptation and application, I hoped to combine the training concepts of Suzuki, Terzopoulos and Grotowski with the actual rehearsal process, providing student actors with a more comprehensive and effective performance training method.

This demonstration of creation and use enhanced the ability of the actor portraying Ophelia to express herself physically, and she created character-specific body movements to better ‘express her meaning’, rendering her character more powerful and substantial. Her physicality and imagination were keenly focused during the play’s most stirring moments, and the confidence that she derived from her use of her body inspired her conviction and courage to merge her body with the performance. The formal choices of external techniques can trigger emotional truth, and the corresponding emotions will naturally arise by focusing on the detailed changes in the body (Chekhov 2019, 22). With the help and stimulation of body technology, the actress uncovered the channel to the character’s inner emotion and comprehensively created the voice, script, performance and body that she carried out in terms of the character, presenting the image of Ophelia from inner emotion to the expression of the outer body in a more realistic and infectious way.

Video of Hamlet (3)

The actor's work depends not only on physical fitness and flexibility and the ability to control physical activity but also on imagination, the ability to translate imagined intentions into tangible effects and the ability to interact spontaneously with others (Barker 2010, 11). The demonstration of the working methods continues below with an account of the rehearsals of this duet between Hamlet and his mother, the queen, in her chamber.

A male student who had performed well early in the training class played Hamlet. Initially, his body was stiff, and this was particularly noticeable in his daily life. He walked with a slouch and was unable to open his shoulders, appearing listless, like an old man, from afar. When training began, I reminded him of his lack of bodily awareness. He was unaware of the physical demands of stage performance, believing his intact limbs to be sufficient. As training progressed, through practice and observation of his peers, he realised that he did indeed have many issues. Although he acknowledged that his body did not meet movement standards, he had yet to fully grasp the importance of an actor's body in creating a stage character. He began to focus on training, aiming to catch up with the group's excellent actors. His efforts yielded rewards as he exhibited gradual progress over time.

I helped him by breaking down and practising the movements with him. He also continued to correct himself and improved after each regular class. Eventually, he happily told me that he had succeeded. As an actor, he embraced the spirit of perseverance and self-transcendence. He increased his training efforts, gradually moving from the back to the front row.

The student who played the queen opposite Hamlet had inconsistent training, particularly at the beginning. She was lethargic, slow and breathless, and lacking in energy. Although she was initially unaware of the importance of physical training, her comprehension evolved daily. Her latent energy began to emerge, and she made steady progress in physical training, building on her foundation.

During the first rehearsal, neither actor could fully engage. They understood their characters and the play realistically but could not evoke sincere, passionate emotions. We sought a breakthrough through physicality. The scene began with Hamlet entering the queen's chamber, focusing on a specific interaction. The queen tried to leave, but Hamlet stopped her, holding her firmly by the shoulders and pushing her towards centre stage. His hands were strong, his feet quick, and his gaze firm as he confronted his mother's flaws. Using Grotowski's plastic techniques, the actors' bodies were in constant dynamic detail, stimulating inner feelings through physicality. During rehearsals, all states were amplified, and the breath was deepened. The actors were required to control their bodies' centres of gravity and maintain balance. Hamlet chased the queen until she was ashamed, hiding her face and weeping. Finally, as Hamlet pleaded with his mother to leave the throne, he fell to his knees. In this action, the queen and the performer portraying Hamlet performer experienced intense mutual emotion, supporting and fulfilling one another until Hamlet exited the chamber.

Video of Hamlet (4)

This scene serves as a focal point for our exploration of the relationship between the body and the characterisation of the role. Without having completed the series of training sessions in the physical stage, the actors may not have been able to accomplish the amount of work they did using the body as a trigger, and would have been far less likely to successfully apply Grotowski's method of stimulating the inner psyche and emotions through external actions. The entire scene was long and incredibly detailed, and the two student actors were drenched in sweat but immensely satisfied; in their own words, they felt exhilarated and fulfilled. Grotowski asserted that the perfect reproduction and external manifestation of a certain passion would cause an internal reflex; the emotion must be extremely abundant to attain an intense level of physicality (Wangh 2010, 18).

Video of Hamlet (5)

Video of Hamlet (6)

The discussion below uses Claudius' monologue to explore the body's specific application and the embodiment of the training's outcomes in the rehearsal, focusing holistically on the actor's breathing, voice, lines, body and emotion. While the training maybe partial or targeted, this system will be stimulated once the actor begins the role characterisation work. Grotowski once said, 'Every part of the actor's form, including movement and body plastic, gestural movements, and expressions made by the facial muscles, should be fully utilised' (Grotowski 2002, 36). According to the actor, Se Aya, 'The actor must empathise with the audience through his physical level, the rhythm of speech and breathing, or the rhythm of every move. What the actor must be careful is to use his body to sense the audience's reaction to his own performance, forget about the audience, and act so obliviously that he alone belongs to that lonely world' (Suzuki, Lin, and Liu 2012, 105).

The scene under discussion here involves the actor who portrayed Claudius and who needed to forge a link between body and motion, forgetting his surroundings and entering the depths of his own being to reveal the secret that cannot be told. The new king's anxieties, entanglements, and confessions are a tangible demonstration of his true inner world. I cast the same student actor as both Claudius and the old king's ghost in Hamlet. He had expressed concern that he would be unable to perform well, but he accepted the challenge with my encouragement.

This actor who portrayed Claudius and the old king's ghost was among the class's better performers and, like the actor who portrayed Ophelia, had some previous physical education training. He was able to master the essentials of the required movements relatively quickly and to a high standard. Eventually, in addition to occupying the core position during training, he would also step forward individually to demonstrate the movements. I cast him in the two roles in view of his good performance during training. However, his performance resembled that of other young actors. Despite their good performance in training, they did not know how to use their bodies during rehearsals to help and develop themselves and appeared to be deploying the realist method only while remaining wholly unclear as to how to apply their physical training in rehearsal.

During rehearsals, Grotowski would naturally switch between the roles of performance instructor and director, effectively guiding the trainees from physical and shaping exercises to specific text-based rehearsal work. For example, while rehearsing for *The Constant Prince*, Grotowski would have the actors engage in a series of physical exercises, such as lying on the ground, embracing, rolling and humming, to release the energy from their bodies. These exercises helped the actors to strip away the masks of everyday life and enter a more authentic, raw state. Then, he would guide the actors to bring this physical state into their characters' emotional expression. When the actors needed to portray the character's despair, they could draw on the energy accumulated during the physical exercises, rendering their performances more genuine and moving.

During the initial stages of our rehearsals, the actor who portrayed Claudius was merely 'speaking' the lines; his body was not yet awakened, and emotional expression was out of the question. The actor was only mechanically reciting the lines. To overcome this impasse, I implemented a series of physical interventions with the primary aim of guiding him to reconnect with his body and inner energy. I devised a set of movements, such as stepping back and turning, as 'stimuli' to activate his bodily awareness. I also arranged for other student actors to work with him, creating a dynamic relationship of pursuit and evasion within the rehearsal space to ensure that his body remained in a state of constant motion.

The introduction of these intervention measures is based on my in-depth understanding and practical experience of Grotowski's training methods. Grotowski emphasises the foundational role that physical training plays in performance and asserts that only when an actor's body is fully awakened can emotions be genuinely expressed. My intervention measures drew on this concept, attempting to trigger the natural expression of emotions by activating the body. To judge from the results, these intervention measures yielded a positive outcomes.

Having engaged in dynamic physical exercises, the student actors gradually became capable of transforming their physical state into the emotional expression required by their characters. For instance, when portraying Claudius' guilt and anxiety, they could draw on the physical energy that they had previously accumulated to render their performances more genuine and touching. This demonstrates a close connection between physical training and emotional expression; by awakening the body, a bridge can be built for emotional expression, thereby achieving a state of psycho-physical unity in performance.

Video of Hamlet (7)

The approach to physical work requires actors to disconnect from their thoughts so that they can allow their bodies to be completely free and allow physiological stimuli to naturally evoke their emotional energy. The extensive physical training previously accumulated provides student actors with a solid foundation, strong support, and valuable 'capital'. The physical exercises significantly improved the student actors' coordination and flexibility. These exercises not only enhanced their physical control but also helped them to use body language more freely when performing. Dynamic physical exercises allow actors not only to better control their bodies but also to convey their characters' characteristics and emotions through body shapes and movements. My guidance during rehearsals helps actors transform the results of physical training into specific performance effects. Through this synergistic effect, actors are not only more at ease physically but are also capable of more authentic and moving emotional expression. This process bridges the gap between physical training and performance, also validating the significant role that physical training plays in enhancing performance quality.

Phase Four – Evaluations and Assessment

Here, I assess the training process' outcomes for the student actors, summarising their progress and observable improvements in performances, as well as their personal feedback. In guiding student actors to apply the physical training methodologies developed by Suzuki, Terzopoulos, and Grotowski, I developed a teaching approach tailored to art academy student actors, integrating physical training with rehearsal and verifying the integrated training's effectiveness. The six-month training and rehearsal process, despite being challenging owing

to the student actors' youth and occasional complacency or slackness, promoted significant improvements in their physical coordination, flexibility, control and emotional expression. The integration of these training methods enhanced the actors' depth and impact in their stage performances.

The training and rehearsal techniques in question are artistic experiences that are not easily quantitatively comparable or evaluative. Acting knowledge resembles tacit knowledge that requires practice and experience to master. The research discusses the actors' training and rehearsal experiences in the context of theatre and performance theory and practice, proposing key avenues to exploring the relationship between the actor's body and their inner emotions. The effectiveness of the actor's physical training is justified based on a discussion of theatre and performance theory (Ramacharaka 2022, 163).

My primary approach to assessing the student actors' improvement during training was to observe their performance in training sessions, monitoring aspects such as eye contact, facial expressions and physical movements. Comparison of the actors' performances before and after training revealed that they improved with respect to concentration and physical energy. In addition, feedback from student actors and observations by other teachers and industry experts yield insights into their strengths, weaknesses and areas that require improvement. Individual differences and the actual circumstances in which the training process was delivered are fully considered when assessing a training programme's effectiveness.

The practice includes basic rules, methods comparison and application in rehearsal. Student actors who excel in one stage of training continue to exhibit e as long as they maintain efforts and concentration in other stages. Notable progress is also seen in students who, despite not moving particularly accurately, maintain a positive attitude and make their own progress through repeated practice. For example, the student actor who portrayed Hamlet's mother exhibited significant improvement in body flexibility, action transitions, and coordination through repeated practice. A few student actors never 'woke up' during training, expressing regret after the final production rehearsal for not having been active enough or realising the importance of physical training. This realisation is of particular significance to the present research. The Suzuki method imparts to student performers that far from being purely physical, training in fact encompasses multiple elements, with external body movements closely linked to inner emotional expression (Molin and Lin 2020, 27).

Terzopoulos' training method emphasises the psycho-physical, cultivating a rhythmic sense and enhancing adaptability and expressive power. Through continuous learning and training, student actors can master complex movements and poses, improving body flexibility and coordination. The training also places considerable emphasis on breath and voice, considering breath to be the bridge connecting an actor's body and emotion. Through scientific breathing exercises, actors can more effectively control their bodies and emotional states.

Grotowski's plastic training, which focuses on nine discrete body parts, was implemented in conjunction with the text. Student actors who were more successful in their physical training appeared to be more comfortable with the plastic training, capable of switching movements in response to specific instructions and reacting realistically to external movements. Student actors who exhibited sluggish physical responses or insufficient motivation and energy experienced weaker effects from the training and were unable to effectively stimulate their opponents, with other observers commenting that the fire and energy were lacking.

In addition to effectively linking the trained body and inner emotions, it is important that the actor balance and harmonise them in their creative work when portraying a character on stage. The concept of the 'spirituality body' is proposed, emphasising that body movements are just mechanical if the inner emotion is not involved in the actor's creative work. When the body and emotion are united, internal and external energies reach a harmonious symbiosis, making the actor's stage expression vivid, infectious and luminous.

The purpose of the training is to assist student actors with stage performance and role characterisation in recognition of the fact that inner feelings and the external body are intricately connected and that characterisation must be guided by acting teachers or instructors in rehearsals. Only in this way can the results of the student actors' physical training be applied to the acting and performance pedagogy.

The present research centres on two stages of the actor training process: practical training and performance application. It integrates three distinct training methods and emphasises the importance of individual differences, psychological construction, performance application and feedback loops. Practical training allows student actors to experience and integrate various training methods, while performance application tests the training's effectiveness. Adaptive training based on individual differences and psychological construction during the training process are key to enhancing overall performance and intrinsic motivation. It is essential that the instructor have a comprehensive understanding of the training methods, precise guidance, and the capacity to demonstrate key techniques. The feedback loop involves obtaining feedback from performances to guide the improvement of subsequent training.

Practical Training and Performance Application: These two stages form the core structure of my practical research and training. Practical training allows student actors to experience the differences in various training methods and to integrate and apply these methods in the interest of self-training and improvement. Performance application, meanwhile, involves applying that which has been learned in actual performances, which is a crucial step in testing the training's effectiveness.

Individual Adaptation and Psychological Construction: The importance of adaptive training is based on the individual differences of student actors as well as the necessity of psychological construction during the training process. These two factors are key to enhancing student actors' overall performance and intrinsic motivation.

Professionalism and Feedback Loop: As an instructor, I have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the training methods, including the ability to deliver precise guidance and feedback and the capacity to demonstrate key techniques at critical moments, all of which are key to improving training outcomes. The feedback loop involves obtaining feedback from performances and applying it to improve subsequent training programmes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the core aim of my practical research was to scrutinise the performers' physical expression techniques during character development with the aim of intensifying and refining their emotional depth in performance through structured physical training. The study uncovered the ways in which physical training could forge a strong link with modern actors' performance creation and inner feelings, yielding fresh insights for performance instruction. The present research's primary value lies in its potential to enrich actors' performances and improve acting pedagogy strategies.

The first chapter underscored the body's centrality in dramatic theory and performance practice and clarified my project's grounding in the perspectives of practitioners and educators, pursuing a practice-based research trajectory to explore the concept of the body in performance. It articulated the project's main objective, which is to implement all insights and outcomes ensuing from the research and practice for the purpose of investigating contemporary performance and to refine and elevate performance teaching methods in addition to articulating my scholarly and research outcomes in a manner that will be beneficial to both practitioners and researchers in the field.

The second chapter detailed the theoretical framework that underpins this research, encompassing the physical training methodologies developed by Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos. The chapter focused on the interplay between these methods and the ways in which they collectively amplify student actors' competencies with respect to bodily control, expressiveness and emotional articulation. The project further sought to illustrate the interplay between theory and practice and to establish a solid theoretical groundwork for subsequent practical explorations.

The third chapter delineated the study's guiding research questions and methodology. Employing a mixed-methods strategy, the research amalgamated qualitative and quantitative methodologies to ensure the findings' comprehensiveness and reliability. The methodologies encompassed literature reviews, observations, interviews and case studies, providing a robust theoretical and practical foundation for physical training delivery with student actors and their targeted applications.

Chapters IV and V detailed the project's practical phase, which entailed a series of physical exercises designed to put the theoretical foundation into practice and to investigate the application of physical training in dramatic performance through targeted training and rehearsal activities. These chapters meticulously chronicled the student actors' training process and involvement as well as their targeted applications in the production of *Hamlet*. In dissecting the challenges and solutions encountered during practice, these chapters facilitate an in-depth understanding of actor training and performance theory.

Integrating the training methods of Grotowski, Suzuki and Terzopoulos, my practical research aimed to bolster the competencies of student actors in bodily control, expressiveness and emotional articulation, achieving harmony and unity of the actors' bodies and emotions in a theatrical production of *Hamlet*. An assessment of the practical research's efficacy revealed that student actors exhibited notable improvements across various dimensions following the integrated training. Specifically, their endurance, coordination, expressiveness and emotional articulation capabilities were enhanced, as they were able to employ body language more freely and convey their characters' inner emotions through physical expression, crafting vivid and multifaceted character portrayals.

These outcomes directly substantiated the practical effectiveness of my research, with specific points as follows:

The importance of physical training: The body is a vital medium through which emotions are expressed and characters are shaped. Training in breathwork, centre-of-gravity control and energy release can help to activate student actors' emotional and physical instincts.

Effectiveness of training methods: The integrated approach significantly enhanced the actors' fluidity of movement, strength control and emotional expression, as evidenced by video analyses before and after training.

Psycho-physical coordination: Systematic training helped actors to harmonise their emotions with their movements so that they were supported in achieving a psycho-physical state. This was evident in *Hamlet*, in which the actors' body language and emotion breathed life into the characters.

Theory and practice integration: The combination of theory with practice provided a strong foundation that equipped the students with intellectual understanding and practical skills.

Personalised training: Tailored programmes addressed individual physical and personality differences, ensuring targeted development.

Reflection and collaboration: Students reflected on their performances and identified their strengths and potential areas for growth in a process that fostered teamwork and enhanced collective progress.

This ‘customised’ training and teaching method has proven beneficial for art academy student actors, facilitating their effective training, growth and improvement. To achieve this goal more efficiently, internationally renowned training methods, such as those of Suzuki, Terzopoulos and Grotowski, should be integrated into compulsory or elective courses to construct a step-by-step learning path that progresses from basic to advanced levels. Under ideal teaching arrangements, each training method should be allocated approximately one month for in-depth study and practice, ensuring that students have sufficient time to comprehend and internalise these techniques. Naturally, the longer the study period is, the more solid and profound the skills that the student actors master will be. It is of particular importance that, after undergoing this systematic training programme, student actors should be provided with opportunities to participate in stage performances, applying their learned knowledge and training results into practice. Such practical opportunities are undoubtedly invaluable exercise and testing grounds for student actors, greatly enhancing their acting abilities and stage presence.

As guides for the student actors, instructors must have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the training methods. This requires instructors not only to provide precise guidance and corrections to the student actors’ movements but also to demonstrate for student actors at crucial moments, showcasing correct acting techniques in an intuitive manner. Only in this way can instructors lead student actors to consciously apply these training methods while rehearsing and switch flexibly between different training methods, skilfully mastering various acting techniques and thereby creating more compelling theatrical productions.

Experts should be invited to deliver workshops as a convenient means of instructing theatre professors and student actors in specific training techniques. Faculty members should then be encouraged to guide their students in applying these techniques on stage, thereby consolidating learning outcomes and enhancing the students' professional competencies.

I have clearly detailed the specifics methods and processes of each phase of my research. In addition to exploring creative character work using Grotowski's shaping exercises and physiological stimulation methods, core skills from Terzopoulos and Suzuki's actor training methods have been continuously integrated, transformed and applied. These include aspects such as physical strength, energy, kinetic force, centre of gravity, balance, control and flexibility.

Although I have not explicitly stated which parts of the process utilised Suzuki's or Terzopoulos' methods, the skills that the student actors developed through the use of their training methods have already exerted an impact on their bodies, prompting physical transformations. Although student actors often lack clear methods or guidelines for working with their bodies, under my guidance, their bodies have been able to participate actively in rehearsals and proactively cooperate in character creation and development. These methods of working with the body have not strayed from expressing and representing the inner emotions of the characters. The rehearsal examples I provided earlier have been specifically described in text, and the student actors' performances in rehearsals have consistently aligned with my research interests – the harmonious unity of a character's inner and outer energies.

Whether it is Grotowski's physical work methods or Stanislavski's method of physical actions, both are essential practical references and working methods in our rehearsal process. As Grotowski said, 'doing' is the most important element for actors; whether in training or rehearsal, the body provides the answers. The physical training's impact on performance is also evident, as illustrated below.

The integration of Terzopoulos and Suzuki's training methods significantly enhanced the students' physical awareness. Suzuki's centre of gravity and balance exercises support actors in controlling their bodies more freely on stage, maintaining stability even in complex movements. This enhanced physical awareness not only improves their precision in performance but also provides a more solid foundation for emotional expression, and theatre audiences can clearly sense that the actors' every movement on stage is imbued with control and confidence.

Grotowski's plastic exercises and physiological stimulation methods help student actors to strip away the masks that they wear in everyday life so that they can enter a more authentic, raw state that allows them to resonate more easily with their characters' emotions, leading to more natural emotional expression.

The training in physical strength, energy and kinetic force emphasised by Terzopoulos' and Suzuki's methods enriches and diversifies the students' body language. For example, by engaging in dynamic physical exercises, student actors can better control every part of their bodies, conveying their characters' characteristics and emotions by means of subtle movements and postural changes. Audiences can clearly see that student actors use more body language in their performances, rendering the characters more three-dimensional and vivid.

Integrating these training methods enhances the students' ability to react spontaneously during rehearsals and performances. They are more sensitive and perceptive as regards changes on stage and can respond more swiftly. The student actors thus achieve a psycho-physical state in their performances as a result of the training. They are not only more at ease physically but are also more genuine and touching in their emotional expression. These training methods not only improve the actors' physical and emotional expressiveness but also enable them to deliver performances that are more profound and moving.

My research is valuable in the following respects:

Advancing performance teaching methods: My research introduced systematic and scientific physical training techniques, enabling student actors to achieve greater psycho-physical and emotional expression on stage. These methods also offered fresh insights into how theatre education practices might best be refined.

Enhancing actor training theory: The study has facilitated a deeper understanding of actor training, providing more structured and effective approaches to physical preparation and performance theory in theatre education.

Comprehensive actor development: The integrated training approach improved the students' physical, emotional expression and character portrayal skills, thereby enhancing their overall performance quality.

Long-term impact on actors: The sustained physical and psychological training fostered the student actors' self-confidence, teamwork and self-reflection, thus laying a strong foundation for their future careers in performance.

Future application and promotion: In my teaching hereafter, I shall persist in cultivating the student actors' body coordination and expressiveness, applying the outcomes of my research to the exploration of teaching methods and strategies in performance majors, offering references and technical support for their practice and training.

I employed the training methods of Tadashi Suzuki, Theodoros Terzopoulos and Jerzy Grotowski, and the integration of these methods formed the core of my practical work with the student actors. Through actual rehearsals and performances, the students exhibited significant improvement in terms of physical control, expressiveness and emotional expression, attesting to the integrated training approach's effectiveness. The fusion of the three methods is of considerable value. First, the student actors' physical control and expressiveness were significantly enhanced, and their emotional expression capabilities were rendered more profound. The benefits of integrating these three methods further became evident in several aspects as, in combination, they provide a comprehensive training programme that encompasses physical control, physical energy and emotional expression, allowing actors to develop evenly across all aspects. Second, the integration of discrete training methods enables actors to better adapt to various performance demands, and they can negotiate everything from physical challenges to profound emotional expression with ease. Finally, innovation is a significant benefit of the programme, which encourages student actors to innovate and explore and enables them to express their understanding and feelings more freely so that they can deliver performances that are more individualistic and compelling. In summary, my research, through actual practical training and the stage performance of Hamlet, has validated the effectiveness of the integrated training methods. The student actors have shown significant improvement in physical control, expressiveness and emotional expression, proving the training methods' practical effectiveness, and these methods' integration has led to notable improvements. From a training standpoint, the fusion of these methods is of considerable value, not only enhancing the actors' performance capabilities but also providing new perspectives and highlighting new approaches to the development of drama education. It is hoped that these findings can help drama practitioners, performance teachers, actors and students of performance majors, and provide references and technical support for the exploration of teaching methods for drama performance majors of professional colleges.

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Appendix 1

Hamlet Rehearsal Schedule

July 15–August 15

1. Read the script in your own time: the script must be read for the first time in a single sitting.
2. Collect problems: record and collect the problems you encounter in reading the script.
3. Consult the relevant information necessary to solve problems: consult the relevant information to answer your own questions.
4. Label rarely used Chinese characters with Pinyin: look up any Chinese characters with which you are not familiar or that you are unsure of and label them clearly with Pinyin.
5. Look up the meanings of unfamiliar words: search for words and phrases that you cannot fully understand while reading the script and record them.

August 15–September 15

1. Read the script in roles: read the script for your character in a group for a sub-scene.
2. Script analysis: engage in a general overview and detailed analysis of the script.
3. Characters analysis: analyse all characters in the script.
4. Deletion of the script: delete parts of the script to preserve only the main plot line of Hamlet's revenge.
5. Adjustment of expressions: adjust the expressions of the actors in the script without corrupting the original work's meaning.
6. Study the specific expression of the character's lines: mark the character's lines with the basic elements of stage language expression (accent, pause, intonation).
7. Specific arrangement of roles sheets (AB group): assign characters based on the student actors' performance while reading the script.
8. Read the script according to the assigned roles and characters: read the script with the students reading their assigned roles and characters in sub-scenes.

Cast Sheet

Claudius——
Hamlet——
Horatio——

Polonius	████████
Laertes	██████
Rosencrantz	████████████████████
Guildenstern	██████████████
Osric	██████████████
Clergy	██████████████
King	██████████
Queen	██████████████
Attendants	██
Gertrude	██████████████
Ophelia	██████████████
The ghost of Hamlet's father	████████████████████
Men in Black	██████████████████
Ministers	All the student actors

September 15–October 15

Rough rehearsal in the theatre: Conduct a rough framework rehearsal on actions and actor positioning on stage.

1. Begin designing and selecting costumes, props, music and sound: preliminary design and trial of costumes, props, music and sound.
2. Behind-the-scenes division of labour and schedule: determining the division of labour behind the scenes to ensure that the rehearsals progress smoothly.

Labour division list

Log keeper	██████
Costume	██████████████████
Props	██████████████
Small Props	██████████████
Music	██████████
Sound	██████████
Lighting	██████████
Stage Supervision	██████████████
Reception	██████████
Backstage	██████████████

Stage manager—

Split Rehearsal of Act I: roughly rehearse the three scenes in Act I completed in the first and second weeks.

Joint Rehearsal of Act I: roughly rehearse Act I on the last day of the second week. Rehearsal of Act II: roughly rehearse four scenes from Act II during the third and fourth weeks.

Joint Rehearsal of Act II: roughly rehearse Act II on the last day of the fourth week.

October 15–November 15

Determination of costumes and props: choose costumes and props for the performance prior to making and purchasing them.

Split Rehearsal of Act III: roughly rehearse the four scenes of Act III completed in the first three weeks.

Joint Rehearsal of Act III: roughly rehearse Act III on the last day of the third week.

Split Rehearsal of Act IV: roughly rehearse two scenes from Act IV completed in the fourth week.

Joint Rehearsal of Act IV: roughly rehearse Act IV on the last day of the fourth week.

October 15–December 15

1. Decide on the music and sound to be used in the production.
2. Plan the design and production of publicity posters and leaflets.
3. Split Rehearsal of Act I: rehearse in detail three scenes from Act I – to be completed in the first week.
4. Joint Rehearsal of Act I: rehearse Act I in detail on the last day of the first week.
5. Split Rehearsal of Act II: rehearse in detail four scenes in Act II – to be completed in the second week.
6. Joint Rehearsal of Act II: rehearse Act II in detail on the last day of the second week.
7. Split Rehearsal of Act III: rehearse in detail four scenes of Act III – to be completed in the third week.
8. Joint Rehearsal of Act III: rehearse Act III in detail on the last day of the third week.

Split Rehearsal of Act IV: rehearse in detail two scenes from Act IV in the fourth week.

Joint Rehearsal of Act IV: rehearse Act IV in detail on the last day of the fourth week.

December 16–December 21

1. Joint Rehearsal: conduct a detailed joint rehearsal of the play each day, ensuring that problems identified are addressed in a timely manner, including the specific operation of music and sound, the removal and replacement of props, the use of small props and methods, as well as the specific arrangements for the costumes in the scene and other specific work.
2. Stills: shoot the student actors' makeup photos and stills.
3. Promotional video: select clips for filming for the production of promotional videos.
4. Public account and invitation: determine the publicity text and produce a version of the public number and the graphic content of the paper version of the invitation.
5. Exclusive version of the mask: determine the mask's specific design and place orders for customised purchases.

December 18 and 19: lighting design and synthesis

Afternoon of December 20th: Rehearsal (B group)

The Night on December 20th: Rehearsal (A group)

December 21: Performance of Dress Rehearsal (A group)

December 22nd–December 25th

Formal Performances: December 22nd (Group A), 23rd (Group B), 24th (Group B), 25th (Group A)

December 26th– December 31st

Feedback and summary: collective discussion and feedback on the performance

Collecting and organising: collecting and organising the summaries of the student performers.

Appendix 2

Feedback on Training and Performances

Feedback from Student Actors

The following excerpts represent the words of the student actors who participated in the training and rehearsals and their feedback, which details their own authentic experiences and reflections.

The Player of Laertes

The smooth rehearsal of *Hamlet* is inseparable from the physical training we have been consistently undergoing. Such training emphasises several key elements: the body's centre of gravity must remain stable, the core must have sufficient strength, movements must be swift, and there must be excellent control over pauses in movement. It is precisely this training that has laid a solid foundation for the smooth rehearsal of *Hamlet*. The training included Suzuki training, Greek Attis Theatre training and so on, all of which helped us considerably in portraying the characters.

In the performance of *Hamlet*, we carried a long black umbrella, under which we moved forwards together. This movement required us to maintain intense energy in our bodies, exercising physical control in the march. We had to be swift of foot, and we had to maintain the body's stability, without lurching or shaking. When the five of us were on stage, some of us did not move enough, while others could move up, down, left, right, high, middle and low. Moreover, our bodies were highly expressive and energetic, and we maintained coordination and unity with the stage space and the other actors while also maintaining independence in our movements. These were inseparable from our physical training.

I felt that my energy was released and transmitted to my opponents and the audience, released to the whole black box theatre during the performance on the stage. The energy in rehearsal was less vital than that which emerged during the formal performance. Perhaps the presence of the audience contributed to my body's state of excitement.

The Player of Ophelia

With seven emotions and six desires, people are the most complex animals; human emotions are also the most difficult to deduce. I played Ophelia in the play, and the director guided us to identify these feelings and expressions in every rehearsal. The accuracy with which we understood the characters was directly related to how we created the characters on stage. Both language and action could be used to express a character's personality. Only when a role is fully understood can it be shaped appropriately.

Each day in acting class, we performed body exercises to improve our fitness and concentration. Physical fitness is essential to the actor's profession. Our bodies made progress gradually. Of course, we not only needed to deliver our lines, but we also learned to express our emotions with our bodies. There were physical representations of Ophelia's love for Hamlet as well as of the character's nightmares and madness, and our physical training laid a solid foundation for these. The presentation of the body endowed the characters with abundant emotional externalisation in different scenes, which was conducive to the shaping of the dramatic characters and made the theatrical performance more infectious on the stage. Now, I fully appreciate the role of physical training in shaping the characters on stage to imbue them with more expressive energy.

In rehearsing the emotional scene with Hamlet, at first, I could not feel anything. The director asked one of the actors to hold my hand while another actor stood beside me to create a sense of pressure. When I returned the gift to Hamlet, the teacher asked me to keep my eyes fixed on Hamlet to have an actual conversation with him. When Hamlet says, 'I did once love you', only then could I immerse myself in the play, empathise with the character and hug him. I believe that communication with one's opponent is essential in rehearsals and must be repeatedly adjusted. In addition, the lines should be thoroughly in line with the body, and the characters' inner desires should be identifiable through the body's movements to infect every audience member present and to achieve unity between actors and roles, creating a fully immersive experience.

The Player of Hamlet

In the beginning, when I knew that I was going to play Hamlet, I was more nervous than shocked. *Hamlet* is one of Shakespeare's four tragedies, and I was not at all confident. When I first learned that I was going to perform in *Hamlet*, besides shock, I was mostly filled with self-doubt. After all, *Hamlet* is one of Shakespeare's four great tragedies, and its depth and difficulty are extraordinary. I had almost no confidence in my ability to play the role. But since the director had chosen this script, I believed that they possessed sufficient wisdom and the ability to train and guide us to excel in this performance.

The lines could not be read flexibly when the roles were being assigned, because *Hamlet* is an English-language play, and many lines were difficult to read after translation. So, the director began to adjust and modify them. Our rehearsal began with four people walking under umbrellas. Despite the movement's simplicity, it impressed on me the importance of refining certain basic skills. The physical training played an important role in keeping the pace rapid, powerful, balanced and steady.

The first emotional scene was that with Ophelia. Initially, I struggled to get into character, and the feeling of grief was beyond my understanding. The director asked us to finish our lines as we chased one another, from walking to running to crawling on the ground. I suddenly found that this step-by-step approach worked, and then the emotion just burst out. At that moment, I suddenly realised how refreshing it was to express the characters' feelings.

Another problem I encountered during rehearsals was the transition between character states, from grief-stricken in one scene to pretending to be mad in another. It was not easy to play the fool. I could not relax my body and voice completely. The continuous tense breathing made respiration unnatural. The director began to make some adjustments to the way I acted. While rehearsing, I ignored the state of my voice and relaxed my body to finish my lines. After several days of rehearsing, I felt much better.

The opening of the play had more words for the ghost and fewer lines for Hamlet, so I mostly listened to the play at the beginning. It is challenging to convey a character's emotional state accurately through the body and facial expressions without lines. During the soliloquy, the director gave me physical 'stimulation' to evoke my emotional expression. Then, I held myself tight at first to seek the feeling of 'being bound' and then slowly elicited the character's status.

I did animal simulations in the show – lizards, whales, weasels and camels. Among these animals, the camel was the most difficult to simulate. I learned from Di Yang's camel facial expressions and some body features about belly dance. There was no prototype for a whale, so I tried a different approach, imitating a stranded whale flopping on the ground. The weasel was created following Suzuki's knee-jerk exercise. The shape of the lizard was good, but its facial condition was complex, so, I mainly looked at the TV programme *Animal World* to observe the expressions of this animal. Only in this way could I freely express my body movements on the stage.

The Player of the King and the Ghost

The monologue of King Claudius' confession consistently failed to make sense initially. The director first asked me to walk to the end of the stage and speak this line backward with my back to the audience. However, the effect of the first time was not good, and it was still patterned and superficial. Then, an actor was arranged to chase after me, and I kept dodging, thinking of the kind of crimes I had committed, and it was natural for me to get into the character. After the last outbreak, in particular, Claudius' unwilling and tangled heart is expressed by kneeling bit by bit.

The opening scene with the ghost was also a complex problem for me. I said the three words 'listen to me' thirty times but failed to satisfy the director, who said that these were the first three words to be heard by the audience, which was very important. I memorised the gist of what the director had told me: pay attention to the state of my breathing and use a false voice but with an increased strength, and body movements should be with a great rise and fall but with more power and body movements to create the atmosphere of a ghost's appearance. I practised in accordance with these standards every day. While taking a shower, walking or rehearsing in the waiting room, I also kept practising. Fortunately, the performance was also calculated as a perfect presentation.

The Log Keeper

I spent more time making detailed records for the director during the rehearsal. I also gained a lot from this process. For instance, body control is essential for stage performance. Stage actors should use and control their own bodies well when creating characters. Meanwhile, the characters' emotions should also be natural to attract the audience's attention from outside and inside. Actors and actresses have to produce energetic communication, influence and confrontation on the stage. Energy is invisible, but it is fundamental in our bodies.

While the actor controls their body, they should also pay attention to other details of expression – the eyes, the breath and consciousness – that should not be ignored. In daily physical training, every movement has its training essentials, and at the same time, there is common. The purpose of physical training is to enable actors to better understand, control and use their bodies. When performing on stage, actors can use their bodies to generate more energy to influence their opponents and infect the audience. Every character should act logically, whether through the external body or internal emotional expression.

Although actors undergo countless rehearsals, when they perform on stage, they should create authenticity in that very moment. Otherwise, audiences will find going to the theatre meaningless. Over time, audiences will be unwilling to pay for performances that lack authenticity, as the performance will lose its meaning.

Feedback from Professionals

The selected texts below come from some young acting teachers and industry experts who were invited to observe the classroom presentations during the training course and evaluated the student actors' performances on the basis of their own on-site experiences and reflections.

The first young teacher: On entering the black box, I saw the student actors neatly lined up, crouching on the ground with white towels in their hands, silently awaiting the teacher's instructions. Although they were just crouching there in silence, they gave me a special feeling. Each of them was very focused, with a clear goal or direction in their eyes, and their expressions were confident and relaxed. I wouldn't guess what they were thinking; I was fascinated by their state of concentration and eager to know what was on their minds and what they were focusing on.

When they began to mop the floor, the action was completely different from mopping in daily life. In daily life, the goal of mopping is very clear: to clean the floor, and the process of mopping is not the main focus. However, here, each mopping action seemed to contain some deeper meaning, and I was curious and eager to see more through their actions.

The mopping performed by these student actors on this black box stage showed me a different state of mind among the student actors. Their movements looked very relaxed and fluid, they could always stay in a straight line, and their eye focus never changed during the march. This should require unity and coordination of body, awareness, and focus in order to reach a point at which the viewer felt that they could do it with ease. Inevitably, that which appears effortless on stage is likely to represent the result of consistent training behind the scenes.

What impressed me the most during the whole observation was the concentration of the student actors and the fact that their movements were brisk and efficient throughout the entire training process. In our acting programme, student actors often unconsciously displayed their own real-life habitual small and trivial movements when portraying their characters, which were not in line with the identities and traits of the characters in the play. The physical training helped the student actors to organise and regularise their body movement system, allowing their bodies to form a set of memories, and stage movements should be distinguished from life's habitual and trivial movements.

The training combines breath, voice and body exercises to positive ends. Actor must learn to use his breath on stage to support both vocal and physical techniques, and correct use of the breath can help the actor to deliver their lines more effectively. Meanwhile, it can also help the actor adapt to different ranges and timbres and better accomplish the shaping of roles with different vocal characteristics. Effective breathwork while on stage will render the portrayal of the role more delicate and textured. The character image will be more three-dimensional and real.

I found the use of the stick to be effective in training the balance of the student actors' bodies, as they could place the stick on the palms of their hands, the tops of their heads, and the soles of their feet, maintaining the balance of their bodies while keeping the stick stable. Throughout the process, their expression remained fluid, and their bodies appeared loose but energised; their energy and looseness were not diametrically opposed. The goal of physical training should be to pit flaccidity against stiffness and to unify flaccidity with energy.

Another thing that should be noted is how the focus changed in all the exercises. The student actors could control the focus to follow their bodies as they moved, and this shift in focus enhanced their physical energy and refined their concentration. The word 'core' is mentioned repeatedly. The core is located in the waist and abdominal area— more accurately – three fingers below the navel, and control of one's core affords good control over the body as a whole. Various training exercises involve standing, sitting, and non-stop marching; some only engage the lower half of the body, while others require the simultaneous use of the hands and feet. However, the core training of the body has always been emphasised and paid attention to. The student performers were able to control their bodies in both partial and full body exercises, while maintaining stability and a relaxed and upright shoulder and back area.

The second young teacher: The five student performers were excellent, not only by virtue of their physical flexibility, which was full of energy and a sense of rhythm but, more importantly, because of the harmony between the five of them, who demonstrated different physical states in two completely different pieces of music. In the first piece of music, they mainly presented the coordination and control of their limbs as well as the control of their bodies when they alternated between different angles and heights. The explosive power was formed when they maintained a stream of energy and then instantly released it. The explosion at that time also inevitably generated a powerful body energy again. The second the music was changed, the style and melody became freer, and the performers' bodies also changed. They stretched their bodies freely in response to the music, and utilised the entire stage space to make different body changes to create different shapes. Their bodies were in perfect harmony with the music and the space, and each of the five student performers' movements were improvised, spontaneous and harmonised.

One of the student actors, a male performer, stood out from the rest of the cast today, both in terms of his performance and his physical training. He had played the role of Eugene O'Neill's the Emperor Jones in the classroom teaching of the line class. Because his body had undergone professional training, he exhibited a high degree of accuracy in his grasp of the 'sneaky' and 'cautious' body in this clip. Clearly, the students who had and had not experienced professional physical training had different physical energies to grasp the characterisation of a special person in a special situation.

The bodily performance of the girl who acted opposite this male student was slightly inferior, and it was clear that her power and energy were weak. The students with good physical training were considerably more outwardly expressive in their characterisation than the students with average physical training and, above all, were better able to convey the characters' energy. If the inner emotions could be perfectly combined with the outer physical expression, then the audience must surely be better able to empathise.

Another student actor was also impressive, most notably in the way she utilised her body for external portrayal, especially in her several sittings, which were so well controlled that one could feel her true inner emotions through her body at that moment. She may not have consciously used her trained body at that time, but her body participated unconsciously in the creation of her stage characterisation and complemented and harmonised with her emotions owing to her body's foundation in training. One student had to rehearse the simple action of sitting down repeatedly because of the lack of professional systematic and targeted training of the body, for the simple reason that his body could not accurately and powerfully express and present his inner emotions at that time. Therefore, the physical training was very helpful for the character's emotional externalisation.

The third young teacher: My main thought based on my observation concerns the change in teaching mode, which differs from how acting majors are traditionally taught. My other thought is that the student actors exhibit strong concentration and physical energy on stage and are very dedicated and have a strong sense of conviction in portraying their characters on stage. In fact, it is still difficult for student actors to master the characters in traditional repertoire. In addition to the sense of age and historical factors, most characters are complex and experience a lot of inner drama, particularly the rich subtext contained in the lines, which requires the actors to have good comprehension skills and both verbal and physical expressiveness to perform accurately on stage. As we can see from the report of the play's excerpts and the demonstration of physical training, the stage dispatch can be handled freely and flexibly; loosely, not rigidly, with good physical control. Without adequate physical training, actors can only recite their stage movements by rote on stage and are unable to naturally integrate these movements into their body language or deeply fuse them with the emotions of the characters they portray.

The fourth young teacher: These methods are well known in the world, but they are rarely integrated into the teaching of drama performance in professional colleges in China, so they will feel very novel. Of course, that's one of the values of my research. Whether it is Ms. Li's own original body foundation training or the Attis Theatre and Suzuki training, these training methods all share one thing in common: they particularly emphasise control over the lower half of the body and over the body's core. Such training methods are very demanding in terms of the breath that enhances the balance and control of the body. The physical training strengthens the breath, and the body and the breath go hand in hand. The key reason that student actors who have undergone physical training are able to portray their characters with both focus and energy is that the body has a memory, and the consistent training allows the body to strengthen its energy and expressiveness.

One female student in the repertoire clip presentation exhibited particularly impressive physical movements. Aside from the fact that her movements were highly energetic, I think it was also because of the way in which she connected her movements to her character's emotions. I saw more than just a simple body movement, and her eyes, expression and even her breathing were so real. I believed that her emotions at that moment were naturally infected by her empathic performance in which the performer and the viewer could empathise with one another, and a strong energy flowed through the theatre. The performance is a good way of connecting the actor's inner emotional energy with their outer physical energy, which is the level of stage performance we should pursue.

The fifth young teacher: After observing the performance, my greatest feeling is that although it was a repertoire segment performance, the physical training was very neat and orderly, and sitting in the audience of the black box theatre, I could clearly feel the immense energy that filled the entire space, and this energy was not restricted to a certain place owing to the high degree of cooperation among everyone. This energy was the result of collective cohesion, which could never have been achieved in a mere day or two, and persistent efforts were sufficient to create a high degree of collective harmony. Consistent energy is essential to the performance of theatre pieces, and it is essential to the integrity of the performance that the director or acting teacher constantly adjusts the actors' energy to a state of harmony over the course of several rehearsals.

Observation of the physical training was sufficient to verify the student actors' composure during their performance. They were unflappable, confident, focused and full of energy on stage, and the viewer could appreciate the delicate emotions of the characters through special stage movements. One of the female students in particular stood out. Although she was carrying a bit more weight than the other girls, both the display of her physical training and her handling of the characters were not affected at all. On the contrary, her flexibility and bodily control were better than those of some thinner girls. The viewers could feel her sincere emotions through her physical expression, particularly in the characters she portrayed.

If she was merely anxious inside but did not express herself physically, the viewer would surely feel that something was regrettably missing. This girl used her body well in her characterisation, with the result that the viewer could experience her inner emotions while witnessing her physical presentation.

Expert 1: When observing snippets of the theatre performance, I noticed that the student actors' bodies were firmly grounded on stage, and their performance state was very energetic. Both their physical energy and the emotional portrayal of their characters were intense. The performance style was highly distinctive. Although it was a realistic theme, there were no other extra props on the stage, which was arranged with ultimate simplicity, in addition to a few block props for the actors to position themselves on stage and the characters' necessary hand-held props.

Despite the simple props and the relatively empty performance space was relatively empty, the audience's viewing experience remained unaffected. On the contrary, the viewers were able to focus their attention on the actors within this minimalist space, as distractions were greatly reduced. Meanwhile, the student actors, particularly those who exhibited high energy on stage, were particularly adept at capturing the viewer's attention, and they portrayed the characters with a strong sense of agency. Even if the stage was free of sets and props, the viewer could forget space and time and be led by the actors, who took the initiative and became the dominant actors in the theatre.

It is worth mentioning that the actors exhibited no superfluous, inappropriate or unflattering stage movements that did not fit with the characters portrayed by these student actors; every move they made matched their characters' bodies. It is worth noting that the characters portrayed by these student actors are devoid of any extraneous, unsuitable or incongruent stage movements. Every gesture and move they make perfectly aligns with their characters. Moreover, owing to their professional physical training, it is evident that they exhibit great stability on stage, as if their feet are firmly rooted to it, displaying remarkable poise and expressiveness.

Expert 2: The observation of the physical training was exciting, particularly witnessing some student actors who had been less visible in their usual line classes. Undoubtedly, physical training of this nature is particularly helpful to the students when acting on the stage as well as to the shaping of the characters, and such a training course should be implemented comprehensively as a mandatory programme for all acting majors in the department.

Expert 3: The student actors' performance during the physical training class is highly commendable. They were fully engaged and active, and through rigorous and consistent training, they have made significant progress and gains in terms of physical fitness, coordination and stage presence. It was clear that they had taken the initiative to use their bodies in the characterisation of their roles following their experience of professional and systematic physical training. The body is a crucial tool for actors, and if it has not been developed well, it will surely affect their characterisation and overall performance on stage. Only by achieving both internal and external unity and harmony can actors build a solid foundation for their character creation.

Audience Feedback

The texts below represent the feedback of several audience members who were invited to observe the *Hamlet* performance and to evaluate the student actors' performances with their own on-site experiences and reflections.

Audience 1: After watching *Hamlet*, I was fortunate enough to receive an exclusive *Hamlet* mask at the end. Back in my dormitory, I examined the mask closely: its main colour was black, with a prominent red skull pattern printed on it. The skull's eye sockets were deep, as if conveying endless sorrow and grief. Below the skull, a trace of bright red blood flowed, adding a hint of horror and tragedy to the design.

What caught my eye even more was that the shape of this red skull was designed like a throne-like chair, with smooth and dignified lines on the back, symbolising supreme power. This inevitably reminded me of Prince Hamlet's struggle for the throne and his path of revenge in the play, as well as his profound and complex reflections on power and morality.

The overall design of the mask not only cleverly fits the theme of the *Hamlet* performance but also conveys the complex and profound emotions and ideological connotations of the play through the ingenious combination of colours and patterns, making a lasting impression on the viewer.

Each actor aimed to show his or her best aspect, respected the stage and faithfully believed that they were indeed the characters themselves. Their bodies were also very coordinated and in control. For example, when Hamlet was crazy in the hall, his body seemed upside down, making his character vivid and powerful. Some actors even played several roles and presented every role to the full, which is worth learning as an example in my future study of stage performance.

Audience 2: The long-awaited performance of *Hamlet* finally opened last week, and it has lingered in my mind ever since. It was a pleasure for me to see them acting on the stage. I admired the beauty of the dance, the lighting, the costumes, the props and the speed with which the actors changed the props. I attended all four of the five performances with the exception of the video. When I watched them, I felt that the time passed quickly as though I myself were in the play. The actors were telling stories to us, and I was wholly enthralled. After the performance, when I returned to the dormitory, I also imitated the way in which the actors walked with the umbrellas, crookedly, which seemed easy but was actually difficult. In the whole performance, the scene between Hamlet and his mother touched me the most, and while the mother cried on stage, I cried in my seat in the auditorium. This scene made me so sad that I felt bereft when the show ended.

Audience 3: The director of this production of *Hamlet* evidently intended to adopt a minimalist aesthetic. Only three different colours were used for the costumes – black, white and red – which not only contrasted sharply with one another but also attracted the audience's attention to the actors' performance.

Many body movements were involved in the performance of *Hamlet*, which tested the actors' physical quality of the actors and the physical training in the classroom. When I saw their sweat on the stage, an indescribable admiration for them emerged in my heart in the cold December days. Although they engaged in high-intensity movement on the stage, their voices never weakened. And the power with which they delivered their lines remained as clear and loud as when they first appeared, full of power. The actors displayed all the emotions embodied in the drama's characters and details of expression. It was clear that a lot of sweat and effort had gone into the show. In other words, the two-hour performance represented the fruit of numerous rehearsals.

Audience 4: When I entered the black box, a very dark theatre, on the stage stood a high-backed chair painted in bright, eye-catching red. During the opening scene with the funeral, the actors held long black umbrellas and a bunch of chrysanthemums. These emblems of Chinese and Western funerals appeared on the same stage, which made me feel like I've discovered a new world.

Only three colours – black, white, and red – appeared during the performance, lending the show an air of mystery. After watching the show, I contemplated these colours' different meanings. The play I saw this time differed from those I had seen before, and thus I felt as though I had discovered a new world.

Audience 5: After watching the drama, I had a lot of feelings. First of all, physically, the actors who played Hamlet gave the richest performances, and the actors who played the king and Polonius were also expressive. What surprised me most was the funeral in the opening and closing scenes in which the musical rhythm of the actors, their control of their bodies, and many adjustments made a great impact on me.

In the processing of Ophelia's nightmare, the actors' unique physical movements conveyed the psychological state of fear. The actors' performance state is also worth learning. Regardless of whether they have lines or not, as long as they are on stage, they remain fully invested in the play with exceptional focus. Their eye contact, movements and even every subtle expression change closely around the plot development, as if they have merged with their characters. This professionalism and dedication are admirable. I have seen *Hamlet* four times in total, and each production elicited different feelings in me.

Audience 6: When I saw *Hamlet* on stage, I could think of only one word to express the impression it left on me: amazing. First, what impressed me most was the actors' use of their bodies in the funeral scene in which the actors were holding long black umbrellas while keeping their bodies motionless except for their decisive steps, which provided a glimpse of the strict physical training in which they typically engage. I also appreciated the significance of daily physical training upon watching the performance.

The second element is the director's ability to control the stage. She removed all unnecessary props and focused the audience's attention on the actors and their performance. Each lighting change reflected the actors' inner feelings in the moment and their current situation. The changes that I witnessed by myself were more shocking than those seen in movies.

The actors' lines were also effective as they allowed the audience members in the last row to feel their emotions without the assistance of a microphone. Moreover, their state of mind had always been highly focused so that their performance certainly gripped the audience. After watching the performance, I recognised more clearly the gap between myself and them, and it also allowed me to establish a clear learning goal for the future.

Audience 7: *Hamlet* requires its actors to have a high physical quality in multiple respects. First among these is their use of breath. Hamlet appeared frequently and had many lines, but the actors handled it well and remained energetic. In addition, the actors deployed multiple techniques to convey crying and laughing, which require abundant breath. The second is the strong sense of immersion that the performance provides. However, every time I perform on stage, my body movements and footsteps are more fragmented, so I paid particular attention to the actors' steps of the actors and found that their movements were very agile.

I also noticed that each actor would leave the stage and go behind the scenes while remaining in character until the audience was out of sight. Moreover, they removed and changed props swiftly and their cooperation was very tacit, all of which were impressive. I still have many things to improve and a long way to go.

Audience 8: Watching *Hamlet*, what impressed me most was that the actors' bodies were very robust. Although the movements were seemingly simple, if I were to do them myself, I would be unable to stand steadily. Hamlet looked extremely relaxed while lying on the slope, but in fact, his core strength was very stable. I could see his abdomen moving when he was lying down and talking, which impressed upon me how necessary physical training is in daily life.

I was also impressed by the actors' moods, which switched at high-speed with a sense of harmony. The stage effect was also potent, and I had never seen such a performance style. *Hamlet* is a classic, and the actors were excellent. I myself want to improve my body and basic skills and learn more professional knowledge.

Audience 9: After watching *Hamlet*, I had a new understanding of theatre and knew that theatrical performance was not so simple as we understood it; the actual physical performance was so important. The characters that the actors created were highly three-dimensional, which both moved and shocked me.

During the whole performance, I witnessed the energy of the actors' bodies as they moved on the stage. Their bodies were full of energy, which made their characters more powerful.

Throughout the performance, I did not see many props, but each item of clothing, each handkerchief and even the clothes' colours had specific meanings. After watching the performance, I understood the importance of the lines in which the stress, speed, tone and intonation of each sentence drew me deeply into the plot and allowed me to feel the characters' emotions. Furthermore, their reverence for the stage is also a valuable quality that I urgently need to learn and strive to emulate. They treat every performance as if it were a sacred mission, respecting the stage, the audience and their own identity as actors. This attitude and spirit deeply touch me.

Audience 10: In the performance of *Hamlet*, I saw the combination of traditional Chinese drama and the director's physical training methods, and the stage presentation was also outstanding. Each character's portrayal was highly specific, and each character left a deep impression on the audience, who responded with strong empathy.

The most incredible thing was the actors' body control, which was a highlight of the show. Apart from these aspects, I also saw a lot of new elements, from the stage modelling to the actors' performances and costumes. The stage's layout was simple, which allowed the actors to be more engaged and command the audience's attention. The actors' performances and the physical expression were agile and flexible, making the audience feel very natural and comfortable.

The actors' body expression was characterised by a combination of Chinese tradition and Western modernity and reflected both the interconnectivity and differences between cultures. The actors' performance skills were a reasonable interpretation of the character's personality characteristics so that they and their characters integrated with each other perfectly.

Audience 11: The performance of *Hamlet* completely broke my original cognition. The director incorporated numerous physical expressions, which was eye-opening. In the production, the actors wore traditional Chinese tunic suits. Numerous other Chinese elements were also integrated. In the treatment of the play within the play, the actors' performances were integrated with the physical elements of the traditional Chinese dramas that had initially seemed impossible to integrate. However, it had been well 'sublimated' through the delicate touch of the director and the actors.

I had never seen anything like it before, so my first feeling at the first performance was one of shock. When I watched the play for the second time, I paid special attention to several specific performance techniques. For example, the actors did not utter a word in the courtship scene between Hamlet and Ophelia. However, the actors' bodies were sufficient to express the intimacy and sweetness between them, which fully stimulated the audience's imagination.

The simple stage allowed me to see the vast imagined world – the throne, the minimalist aesthetic and the implication of blank space filled the stage. The actors were barefoot throughout the show, but this did not bother me. I would still have trusted the actors on the stage even if they did not exhibit magnificent choreography; I would still have believed in them if they were not wearing elaborate costumes. The actors, with their incredibly strong sense of belief, completely drew me into the unique setting of the script, making me feel as if I were experiencing each scene firsthand. At the same time, they led me into the rich and delicate emotional world of the characters, allowing me to genuinely feel their joys, sorrows, anger and happiness. Moreover, I thought the director was highly successful in their casting of the characters, and the actors' precise positioning also provided a good basis for the production's success.

Audience 12: At the beginning of *Hamlet*, several actors held umbrellas and marched forward to the beat of a drum. Their body control ability was powerful, every movement was compelling, and each actor's eyes shone. The aesthetic impression made by the stage reflected the director's design and conception.

Aside from these points, numerous minor but surprising details in the show were particularly impressive, including the funerals at both the beginning and end of the show, which served as counterparts to one another. As the saying goes, 'There are a thousand *Hamlets* for a thousand readers.' The production was highly creative, particularly the innovative acting style and the actors' use of their bodies.

The actors' lines, particularly Hamlet's, were delivered so explosively that I could hear and understand everything very clearly despite being seated in the second-to-last row. Each actor possesses distinct language characteristics and performs with great accuracy, vividly portraying the individuality of their characters. Meanwhile, every actor demonstrates a strong sense of belief during their performances, deeply exploring their inner true experiences and sincerely expressing their emotions, thereby establishing a close connection with their roles and the plot. It is this profound sense of belief that enables them to fully devote themselves on stage, delivering performances that are convincing and touching.

Audience 13: *Hamlet* can take place in Denmark, in China, or anywhere in the world. Setting aside all the external details, what matters most is the people involved in the events, their humanity and the choices they make in the face of entanglements. This version of *Hamlet* was equipped with simple props and simple costumes, but it is precisely because of its simplicity that the play's dramatic conflicts are accentuated and amplified. During the performance, several details particularly impressed me, including the funerals at the beginning and the end, the group of actors holding black umbrellas for the dead and, above all, the echo at the end that almost made my heart stop. All sorrows and joys are ultimately savoured only by oneself; all the hurts are ultimately covered by a black umbrella, and one cannot help but ask: were the things that I fought for worth fighting and even sacrificing my life for?

The actors' physical movements clearly conveyed their emotions, as did the Chinese theatrical elements in Hamlet's duel, the physical expression of the male and female actors as their characters fell in love, the actress' depiction of Ophelia's descent into madness, and so on. If movement serves as the inception of the entire performance, then the director and actors do not merely stop at that; rather, they further unify the delivery of lines, the presentation of lighting and the design of stage aesthetics into a harmonious and orderly integrated system, allowing all elements to complement each other perfectly.

The above excerpts exemplify feedback from a selection of audience members, attesting to the outcomes of the training class and providing more references and bases for my reflective discoveries and summaries.

Appendix 3

Training Photos and Videos



Standing



Horse Stance Squat



Essentials of Frog Jump



Essentials of Forward Somersault



Essentials of Prescribed Movements



Essentials of Non-Prescribed Movements



Supporting the Stick Overhead while Walking (on the top of the head)



Holding Two Sticks with Two Hands Between Two People