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Exploring Moments of Transcendence in Devised Theatre: Implication for Practice

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**Exploring Moments of Transcendence in Devised Theatre:  
Implication for Practice**

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*Wholehearted gratitude*

*To Dr Christine Edwards-Leis, Dr Michelle Paull, Prof Anthony Towey, for all patience, attention, support, help with big and small ideas and being kind to my non-native way of writing sentences.*

*To the actors of Tiger Lady and creative crew (Dr David Hockham and Tina Bicât) for all words of encouragement when things got tough.*

*To all who have been involved in this research and especially to my dear friends and colleagues: Annabel Arden, Jozef Houben, John Wright, Mick Barnfather, Simon McBurney, Joyce Henderson, Julie Neshor, Francesco Gabriele, Mark Griffin, and Paul Stowe.*

*To my family (Alex Byrne, Nadja Zaremba-Byrne, Dr James Byrne) and my polish family (Hanna and Andrzej) for support, understanding and love.*

*And to Misia for always being with me.*

# TIGER LADY

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL  
FEMALE TIGER TAMER

The FINEST PLACE OF AMUSEMENT at the EDINBURGH FRINGE

★★★★★

HILARIOUS AND  
HEART-WARMING  
EDMONTON JOURNAL

★★★★★

"DEEPLY THEATRICAL,  
STRANGE AND WONDERFUL"  
12TH NIGHT CA

"EXCITEMENT,  
DANGER  
AND  
VERY SHARP  
CLAWS!"

PRESENTING  
A MENAGERIE

OF  
TRAINED TIGERS  
EAGER ELEPHANTS  
& Other Such Animals

THE ACROBATS

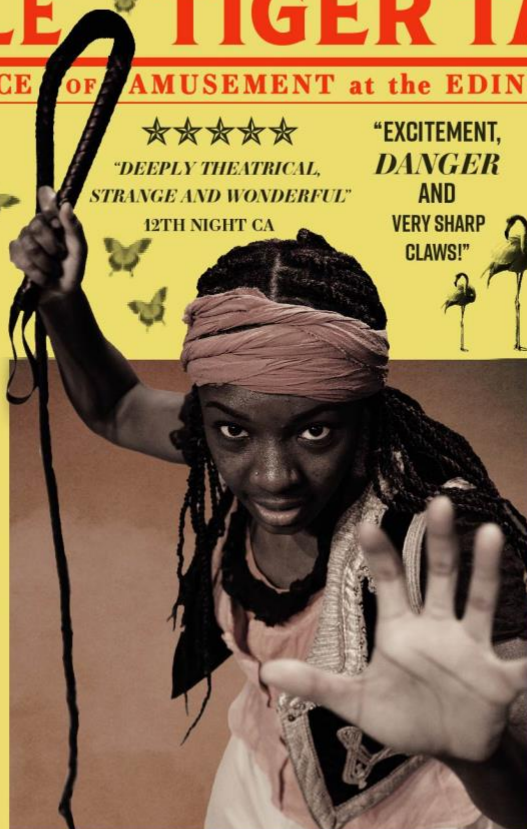
— PERFORMING —  
AS BEST THEY CAN



A Laugh Every Minute

33

PLEASANCE  
COURTYARD



MUSICIANS

A RIOT OF FUN



3-29 AUG 13:05  
(NOT 17, 22)

TO BE SEEN TO-NIGHT AT THE PLEASANCE COURTYARD (ABOVE) !  
60 Pleasance, Edinburgh EH8 9TJ

Photograph 1 Edinburgh Flyer designer: Laura Blackhall



Photograph 2 The most significant moment from the *Tiger Lady* show – [Ladders progression](#).

<https://vimeo.com/677273876/7475b3c9d8?share=copy>

Recordings 1 Short Video of *Tiger Lady* performance

*I began this enquiry by seeing the ordinary become conspicuous and sublime in daily life. I wanted to explore how these moments formed an inexplicable awareness of time, my perception of reality and the impact and change they created. They are always in my memories. In these moments, I found what Fischer-Lichte (2008: 206) terms as renewed "enchantment with the world". Once I became involved in theatre, I noticed these moments were part of theatre creation, and they happened on stage with more frequency and power. The momentary instances seemed like magic; they transcended the ordinary understanding. Caliban's lines in *The Tempest* speak of a similar sentiment: "and then in dreaming... the clouds methought would open and show riches ready to drop upon me, that when I waked, I cried to dream again" (III.ii.130–138). (Caliban's speech in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). Progress in science confirms to us that even though most observable events should be explicable, the vastness and the depth of our world and ourselves hold, at the same time, the*

*mystery, and the unpredictability of our world in its essence. There is always room for surprise, curiosity, and enchantment. These moments re-fresh our comprehension of being in the world. The decision to undertake this journey was not to pin down the mystery and make it scientifically explainable but rather to involve me in looking closer, with a squinted painterly eye, at the mystery of our world and simply marvel.*

*August 2023*

*Canada, Edmonton*

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## Abstract

This thesis concerns moments in theatre where the audience and the actors have an embodied, emotional shift of experience. Previous researchers (for example Dolan, 2005, Fischer-Lichte, 2008, Heim, 2020) claim that because of a phenomenon's ephemeral nature, its emergence is inexplicable and unmotivated, and meaning is generated unintentionally by the perceiving audience. I would argue, however, that because the moments of transcendence are perceived from the observer's perspective 'from the outside', these claims form a rather limited knowledge of how these moments are generated, constructed, and perceived by the ones who create them. This research aims to bridge this gap between the limited academic knowledge and the wealth of experiential knowledge generated by those participating and creating theatre. The research questions establish an original understanding of the phenomenon's structure and that the moments can be developed intentionally. In this thesis, I construct a formal structure (*three-stage model*) of pedagogy to create such a phenomenon. The absence of academic practical research instigated various methods to capture the experiences to investigate the many-faceted nature of the phenomenon. This research used the socio-phenomenological approach during the creation of a new performance, **Tiger Lady**, by my company, **Dead Rabbits Theatre**. The research consisted of three phenomenological phases. The Phase One (interview phase) involved Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) interviews with the theatre experts; Phase Two (rehearsal phase) involved Stimulated Recall Method (SRM) interviews with actors and recorded observations of the three weeks rehearsal period; and Phase Three (performance phase) contained SRM interviews with ten audience members and actors during two weeks of performances.

This novel research argues that the phenomenon can be intentionally constructed through a *three-stage* process that requires the *Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)* of surprise, vastness, and disturbance. It proposes a pedagogy for constructing the model in live events. This research's significance lies in making the first steps of gathering experiential knowledge and offering the first pedagogical model for constructing and re-creating the phenomenon of moments of transcendence. It also demonstrates the phenomenon's importance as a transformative and deeply engaging experience in people's lives.



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# Introduction

This section familiarises the reader with the thesis' central precepts and the study's direction. This enquiry explores *Moments of Transcendence* that ensue in theatre performances. *Moments of Transcendence* ensue when an embodied, emotional shift of experience happens through which the audience feels a deep engagement, transformation and opening. The audience's senses are suddenly 'arrested' or exceedingly focused at that moment. The phenomenon acquired a range of theoretical acknowledgements from Koestler (1964) whose definition is the closest to what I, as a researching professional (Burnard et al., 2018), am trying to describe: "a double-minded, transitory state of unstable equilibrium where the balance of both, emotion and thought is disturbed" (Koestler, 1964: 35). The disturbance between the intellect and the emotional centres is often described by Koestler (1964: 35) as a "psychological shift". Others like Carlson (2003: 211) describe the phenomenon as "epiphanies that dazzle the senses and liberate the minds and sharpen the intellect". Dollan (2005) generates a new term identifying them as 'utopian performatives', and Heim (2020) discusses the phenomenon's qualities as electric air experiences. Fisher-Lichte (2008) observes the moments of enchantment where the ordinary suddenly turns into the sublime. The re-enchantment of the world is achieved through the linkage of art and life and brings a sudden, deeper insight, a refreshed understanding of our situation in the world.

Interestingly, only recently have there been several academic studies (Dolan, 2005, Fischer-Lichte, 2008, Heim, 2020) that also explore the inner characteristics of this phenomenon. Heim (2020) acknowledged very limited academic literature about how the moments of transcendence happen. Fischer-Lichte (2008) called for further enquiry on the more experiential level of research in the theatre territory. This research begins to address the gap in theoretical knowledge on the subject and simultaneously recognises and utilises the plethora of experiential and tacit knowledge in the theatre industry. Furthermore, this research contextualizes the phenomenon through its phenomenological, practice-based enquiry. It brings forth the significance of the phenomenon in theatre as a transformative, deeply meaningful and engaged experience for the spectators, performers and creatives involved. The originality of this study lies in its practical methodology feature, as the moments of transcendence were examined not only from the perspective of spectating

(outsider perspective) but also, most significantly, as it was experienced and constructed in rehearsals (insider perspective).

This enquiry was conducted in three phases: first, acquiring experiential knowledge from ten experts in devised theatre who could speak from experience of being all three: a creative (director, pedagogue, designer), performer, and knowledgeable audience member. The second and third phases of the research consisted of enquiries based on practical rehearsal settings of my professional company (30<sup>th</sup> August-18<sup>th</sup> September 2021), **Dead Rabbits Theatre**, and two weeks of playing **Tiger Lady** in different venues across the UK (20<sup>th</sup> September -3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021). Information about these can be found in Appendix Two.

## **The summary of the main findings**

This thesis determined four main findings: first, that *Moments of Transcendence* are experienced differently by the audience and by the performers. The distinction is important because the type of experience of transcendence differs and should be looked at from different perspectives. Therefore, I define the phenomenon from the audience' perspective (outside perspective) and determine how the phenomenon is experienced by the performers (inside perspective). Second, this research proposes an original *three-stage model* of the phenomenon, *Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*, which offers the outline of *Moments of Transcendence* being constructed in rehearsals and re-constructed in live performances. In the thesis, I illustrate each stage and the mechanisms that I uncovered, by what I call 'Imaginative Wonderings', artistic images which attempt to capture the essence of the phenomenon for the reader. Third, this research produces a framework for the pedagogy behind creating and re-creating the moments founded on the experience of the performers and the researcher-director during the rehearsals and performances.

Finally, this research uncovered two outcomes of the phenomena, for which there is currently no theoretical term in pedagogy and practice. I have coined the phrases 'Deep Presence' and 'State of Becoming' to further codify my practice.

*Deep Presence* is a state that is experienced by the audience, and it is a sudden re-awakening of our own existence, which causes an abrupt confrontation of reality here and there. This

experience, at the same time, stirs people to be open, to change, and to perceive the world to the fullest extent of its variety and richness. The second outcome of the phenomenon is a *State of Becoming* that is produced in actors or ensemble groups while performing the *CITE*. In my practice, I witnessed that these experiences were transformative for the actor, me as a director and the audience. Those were the moments where the actors observed feeling of a deep connection to themselves and a sensation of being in both worlds, reality and fantasy at the same time, and having a sense of being in a meta-conscious state. In my own experience, it was seeing that something changed in the actors, that they were operating on another scale, which can be compared to them being in an alternative world. Seeing the actor in such a state, gave me access to enter that world. It was a metaphysical experience. What was transformative about it was that the people changed afterwards; they knew that something extraordinary happened to them, and it created an opening in their lives. For some of the actors, it became a profound moment of falling in love with performing; for the observers, for the audience and for me as a director, it became a point of memory that they witnessed the ordinary turn sublime.

# Summary of the Thesis

## Part 1

### Chapter 1 The theoretical framework

Chapter 1 contextualises the ontological and epistemological background of this enquiry. It introduces the Bakhtinian concept of the split between seriousness and play. It draws attention to the concerns about the current polarisation between imagination and the drive of neoliberalism for productivity. Furthermore, it localises my professional and experiential expertise as a theatre director. It contextualises the ontology of the devised theatre territory as distinct from more mainstream, psychologically driven theatre and draws on historical traditions exploring the fundamental concepts of ‘theatrical truth’ and ‘play and playfulness’ in devised theatre. The chapter concludes with a reflection on Fischer-Lichte's (2008) inspirational words about *Moments of Transcendence* that create a re-awakening of our essence and that begets ‘enchantment with the world’ by entwining the epistemology of the research with what the chapter proposes to offer.

### Chapter 2 Literature review and the conceptual framework

This chapter presents the literature review and identifies the gap in experiential, practically driven research enquiries in the academic field. First, it reviews the current understanding of the phenomenon described and analysed by the academic observers, which is termed an ‘outside perspective’ in this research. Next, it presents a conceptual framework for this research to outline the main concepts that create the *three-stage model*. This conceptual framework of the research encompasses the understanding and explanation behind the main concepts in the research. These are the foundations of the three stages of the *CITE* model that this enquiry instigated. It explains that I am thinking of imagination from the point view of Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Bachelard (1971); it follows onto explaining Coleridge's (1817) and Grainger's (2008) term of ‘suspension of disbelief’; ‘contract process’ with a foundation in Kennel's (1999) ‘joke transaction’ theory and Fischer -Lichte's (2008) term of an ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ which is the foundation of the *Tuning* process for the audience.

In this chapter, I explain the construct of the *World of Imagination* based on understanding how imagination is an active part of consciousness. I also outline the Incongruity Theory and theories of ‘disturbance’ through schema incongruity (Taylor and Uchida, 2019). I

also explain the understanding of Maslow's (1997) transcendent experiences of peak experience and peak performance, which are the foundations for *Deep Presence* and the *State of Becoming* that can occur during the moments of transcendence. Based on these concepts, I create a framework for this innovative research when analysing the phenomenon from the experiential perspective. I then explain the web of connections between these concepts and how they create a foundational framework for the *three-stage model* of *CITE*.

### **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This chapter draws on the literature review findings, which determined the lack of robust experiential research in the live process of creating performances. This three-phased, qualitative, phenomenological enquiry was conducted during the creation of an original performance, **Tiger Lady**, by my company, **Dead Rabbits Theatre** and generated in-depth experiential analysis. Phase 1 (interview phase) involved Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) interviews with ten devised theatre experts; Phase 2 (rehearsal phase) involved Stimulated Recall Method (SRM) interviews with actors and recorded observations of the three weeks rehearsals period; Phase 3 (performance phase) again involved SRM interviews with ten spectators and three actors during two weeks of performances. This chapter also discusses the enquiry's aims, purposes, and methods. Last, I explore the use of professional expertise, appropriateness of sampling and supervisor's mentorship conducted during this research.

## **Part 2**

### **Chapter 4 The initial findings of the research**

This chapter outlines the difficulties with the nomenclature formation of definitions and outlines two perspectives of perception when discussing and analysing the phenomenon. It identifies the difference between the audience's and actors' perception and mode of experiencing the phenomenon. This chapter also outlines the moments in the **Tiger Lady** performance selected by the participants. Each moment is illustrated by a short description and accompanied by photos and footage of the performance.

### **Chapter 5 Structure of the phenomenon.**

This chapter proposes the *three-stage model of Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*. First, I outline the formation of STAGE 1 of the phenomenon as entering the *World of Imagination* and explain the three tenets of oscillation between the imaginary and the real.



Next, I explain how STAGE 2 is created by initiating a mechanism called elicitors and activating at least two triggers, subsequently generating STAGE 3 and the sense of transcendence. The experience of STAGE 3 is first analysed by the category of interpersonal sensations, which I divided as transcendence felt as an individual and then as a collective. Next, I outline the three types of transcendence based on the type of trigger used in STAGE 2 and elucidate on the main finding of the state of *Deep Presence*.

### **Chapter 6 Analysis of the four moments from Tiger Lady's performance**

This chapter analyses the application of the *three-stage model* theory in live research with the audience. It demonstrates how the different triggers at STAGE 2 activated STAGE 3 of the phenomenon and charts the type of transcendence based on the generation of these triggers.

## **Part 3**

### **Chapter 7 Pedagogy of STAGE 1**

This chapter explores the principles of pedagogy and analysis of creating STAGE 1 in rehearsals and performances. First, I demonstrate the conditions governing the initiation of the phenomenon between the audience and the actors. Consequently, based on the specified research conditions, I determine the pedagogy for creating STAGE 1 in rehearsals. Next, I explore the process of *Tuning*, which is the action of transposing the *World of Imagination*, STAGE 1, from the rehearsals to the live event with the audience.

### **Chapter 8 Pedagogy of STAGE 2**

This chapter explores the pedagogy and the construction of STAGE 2 from the director's and actors' perspectives. I outline the precepts of constructing STAGE 2 in rehearsals and the methods of disturbance when constructing triggers through collisions. I also explain the construction and stabilisation of *CITE* and determined that more research in this area is needed.

### **Chapter 9 STAGE 3 as experienced by actors: State of Becoming**

This chapter discusses the actors' experience of STAGE 3, transcendence. First, I discuss actors' experience of transcendence in rehearsals. Next, I outline these experiences in a live performance when connecting with the audience. Finally, I outline the discovery of what I termed a *State of Becoming* when the actor passes through the threshold into STAGE 3, a profoundly spiritual moment of fulfilment and self-actualisation.

## **Chapter 10 Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the thesis by outlining the contributions, limitations and future recommendations of this research. Fischer-Lichte (2008) suggested that the emergence of the phenomenon during a theatrical event is inexplicable and unmotivated. My research here argues, however, that the phenomenon can be intentionally constructed through a *three-stage model* and examines the critical stages of the process. It elucidates that the main contribution apart from creating the *three-stage model* of *Cite* lies in gathering experiential knowledge and offering the first pedagogical model for constructing the *Moments of Transcendence*. Next, I clarify the limitations of this research based on the lack of other experiential enquiries in this field and the novelty of methods. Finally, I outline future recommendation that can come out on the basis of this enquiry, and I conclude with a personal, professional reflection, how the research triggered a change within myself.

This research establishes and validates the *Moments of Transcendence* phenomenon's importance as a transformative and deeply engaging experience in people's lives.

## List of New Terminology

This thesis creates new theoretical terms to codify my practice, therefore I am adding new language to theatre practice and to pedagogy. All the new terminology will be consistently written in italics throughout the thesis.

*Auxiliary, progressive Elicitor*

*Bicycle Chain Looseness*

*Collisions: Incidental and Stimulated*

*Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*

*Deep Presence*

*Deep Transcendence*

*Disponabilité for Play*

*Extreme Transcendence*

*Fundamental Elicitors of Intensity and Complexity*

*Foundational Incongruity Trigger by Disturbance*

*Foundational Incongruity Trigger by Vastness*

*Hovering Stillness*

*Indirect Vision*

*Imaginative Wondering*

*Moments of Transcendence*

*Preparedness: Openness, Alertness, Touch, Focus and Presence*

*Primary Trigger by Surprise*

*Soft-Open Focus*

*State of Becoming*

*State of Risk*

*Three-stage model of Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*

*Touch*

*Tunnel Vision*

*Tuning*

*Uncertainty*

*Vast Transcendence*

*Via Negativa*

*World of Imagination*

Names of theatre companies and theatrical shows will be therefore signalled in bold, and the four significant moments from **Tiger Lady**'s performance will be underlined for the purposes of clarity and consistency in the thesis.

I illustrate the different stages of the phenomenon and the different process that it is governed by a special kind of imaginative drawings which I call 'Imaginative Wondering' which mirror the ephemeral nature of the phenomenon and my search for going beyond simple illustration of the point. They are the artistic means to come closer to the ephemeral essence of the phenomenon. Please see the List of Imaginative Wonderings for content, at the end of the thesis.

# PART 1

## Chapter 1 The Theoretical Framework

This chapter contextualises the ontological and epistemological background of this enquiry. The first section introduces the Bakhtinian concept of the divide between seriousness and play. It draws attention to the concern about the current polarisation between imagination and the drive of neoliberalism for productivity. The discussion then localises the professional and experiential expertise of the researcher as a theatre director and pedagogue. The chapter concludes with a proposition that the *Moments of Transcendence* can create a re-awakening of our essence.

### 1.1 Background and Purposes of the Research

This research is aligned with recently published creativity enhancement reports by the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education Report (James, Newton, and Morgan, 2019) and the Arts Council of England's (ACE) mission statement: *Let's Create* (ACE: 2020). Both reports were produced to alert educational policymakers to the rising lack of creativity in the schooling system. The Durham Commission Report (James et al., 2019) maintains that the lack of creativity and curiosity in young people reflects the way they are educated, saying, "Our current, knowledge-based system only goes part of the way towards equipping young people with the skills that will give them the confidence and resilience to shape their future" (James et al., 2019: 7). The reports analyse factors underpinning an individual's wellbeing and seek to locate methods for improvement through more foundational work within the community and aspiring to give a creative voice to all. The proposal of a cultural shift in investing in culture (ACE, 2020) is aligned with my professional values as a researcher and further supports this enquiry's aims. As an educator at the university level, I observed the decrease in freedom of expression and creativity in newly arrived students over the years. However, the central issue of decreased creativity levels may lie in another factor: increased anxiety and stress to achieve high grades rather than to learn. The culture of accountability in schools created by the imposition of measurable standards serves the purpose, as Sachs (2016) reminds us, of influencing secondary school teachers to adopt a teach-to-the-test mentality within an increasingly limited curriculum. The acting students also seem to fail to recognise that the short-term

goals of academic grade attainment will not likely result in an acting job in the professional industry. The values of Althusser's (1971) hidden curriculum cause the participants not to see the world more creatively and freely: they achieve good grades but fail to learn. This research investigates an aspect of the phenomenon that creates an instance of sudden perception of 'being present' or being taken out of the habitual rhythm of life, which I termed as *Moments of Transcendence* and an ensuing state of *Deep Presence*. It is a sudden re-awakening to our existence, and this causes us to confront reality. I argue that experience invites people, such as these repressed students, to be open, to change and to perceive the world to a fuller extent of its varied richness.

### **1.1.a Objectification of Art.**

Bourriaud (1998) warns of the fragmentation of contemporary life and the need for human relationships and relational art. He argues that the value of relational co-creation is that theatre can help us to maintain our relational humanity in the world where "transience, speed and fragility reigns" (Bourriaud, 1998: 270). This enquiry originates from the need to re-evaluate the direction of humanity's progress as voiced by Foucault (1984: 350), who observed, "What strikes me is the fact that in our society, Art has become something which is related only to objects...". His critique points to society's tendency to disassociate itself from creating Art and Art itself. Art has become a commodity that has turned into "a desirable object that can be bought, sold, and owned for the sake of it" (Foucault, 1984: 350). It is 'a thing' that is attended to rather than being a part of us. Brown (2015) assigns this tendency to the power of neoliberalism and its profit-driven ideology and asserts that neoliberal ideology transforms people into human capital. Althusser (1971) directs his critique towards Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) secreted in the fabric of daily life: in schools, universities, churches, and family units. The role of ISAs is to preserve and reproduce the order of the ruling classes. The power of the hidden curriculum prepares children and young people to obey and follow instrumentalization to create profit. It also creates a barrier to who can be perceived as an artist and who cannot. It teaches children to follow the instrumentalization of profit rather than to take time to develop spiritually and emotionally.

Brown (2015) also argues that neoliberalism produces incurious, future-orientated, and calculating members of society. Neoliberalism leads society to abandon the community and its values (Brown, 2015) in favour of competition and profit-making.

This enquiry investigates the phenomenon that triggers the opposite tendency: it prompts people to perceive the ‘enchanted’ world anew, to open up to creativity and imagination and the possibility of personal conscious change. Dolan (2005) argues that an embodied, emotional shift of experience happens during *Moments of Transcendence*, through which deep engagement, transformation, and opening are experienced by the actors and the audience (Heim, 2020). Additional findings of this work suggest Foucault’s (1984) underpinnings of the idea of ‘ethical subject’ and Brown’s (2015: 43) notion that we need to insist on “the cultivation of expression of distinctly human capacities”. The *Moments of Transcendence* generate a double insight on our own human condition and our ability to sense and connect to the world communally. This research also proposes to re-direct the actors’ training approach as well as expose the audience and the actors to the moments that lead towards Maslow’s (1997) ‘self-actualisation’.

## **1.2 Significance and Purposes**

This phenomenological enquiry explores participants’ perceptions of the *Moments of Transcendence* and aims to enhance the knowledge of how the phenomenon is constructed. The values of communal unity, pleasure, play, and the wellbeing of the actors, students and audience members are the foundation of this research and, therefore, carry the values of enrichment and inclusivity in people’s lives. At the same time, art, and theatre, especially, have a role in becoming advocates for cultivating human connections and collectively driven practice. We must stay connected in the physical sense of the word. As a research professional in this field, I am uniquely positioned to propose new knowledge of how the arts can improve the bond of connectivity and the wellbeing of others. This enquiry seeks to enhance theatrical practices through the knowledge about the experience of *Moments of Transcendence* that open, alter, and shift people’s system of beliefs. Through such enhancement, theatre experiences subsequently transcend people’s lives. Art and culture create the channels to make meaning in our social world. Rather than perceiving art as a

commodity, which Althusser (1971) is wary of, the process of creating art is the way we make our lives meaningful and fulfilling.

This research investigates the Bakhtinian (1984) notion of ‘play’ and how its dialogical balancing act with seriousness could help to give pleasure and fulfilment to the lives of some of my students, actors and audiences who visit my shows. Perhaps it sounds utopian and naïve, but in our times where we lock ourselves increasingly into the technological worlds, this simple, practical work through play can develop confidence and playfulness, break silences, bring trust in each other, and create empathy and understanding. Crucially, people discover how to laugh, how to laugh with others and how to laugh at themselves without fear and constraint. It can connect people in a visceral, embodied way. The experience becomes ‘something else’. It is means to understand the self from a different angle. It is an embodied engagement in seeing yourself anew, to see the part of oneself that is not connected to a pre-formed concept of identity. Derrida (1978) speaks about the anxiety, fear, risk, and danger that stops us from playing on the frame of life. Here there is a possibility to ‘play’ the frame of life in a safe setting, just as children do. In training and through this research, in a safe environment, I endeavour to share how to embrace those qualities rather than fear them, thereby developing a new pedagogical approach to creating *Moments of Transcendence* in devised theatre and actor training.

## **1.2.a The gap in the literature**

Heim (2020) acknowledges that there is a limited volume of academic literature about the phenomenon. The answer to this limitation could be what is observed by Shon (2011: 45), who states that there is a gap “between professional knowledge and the demands of real-world practice”. The gap in academic knowledge on the subject is contrasted by the plethora of experiential, tacit knowledge in the theatre industry (see Gaulier: 2012, Lecoq: 1990, Murray: 2010, Wright: 2006). However, there is an antipathy towards the academic research and documenting methods. Many practitioners, along with Gaulier and Pagneux, are not very forthcoming towards the academics and their analysis of their work. Kendrick (2011) observes how Gaulier obscures the complexity of his process, while Murray (2010) comments on how Gaulier and Pagneux defend from assigning them a method. These practitioners often refuse to answer the academic-driven enquiry in their workplaces. The



negative attitude towards such academic enquiry and academia may be due to the historical humiliation many practitioners received and still receive for expressing knowledge differently. I witnessed other practitioners being treated with this bias, and I also experienced humiliation and criticism for working differently. The offence is to express the knowledge in a way that is not primarily intellectually or academically driven. There is a deep divide between what is practised as research at university Drama Departments and Drama Schools, a situation exposed by Murray and Pitches (2011: 18), who argue that “there can be a world of difference between the delivery of professionals to the stage and the researcher’s de-construction of what goes on”. The research in Drama Schools is achieved through embodied enquiry that does not correspond neatly with mainstream academic methods.

As an External Examiner and a consultant for several Drama Schools and universities, I observed this divide personally, noticing how different professional values impacted both sides of the divide. Cara (2015) lists examples of other factions within arts-practice-based research. She poses a counterargument against professionals who want this side of the study to be conducted by recognized artists (Smith and Dean, 2009). Cara (2015: 22-23) records alternative forms of arts-based research where the experts are viewed as unnecessary, and their absence gives a stimulus for the academic researcher to “learn more art-based skills; help to express their feelings or invite the artists to co-operate”. These examples of inclusive art-based practices through research create a diverse environment for developing more practice-based research. In my own professional view, I find that the divide between academics and artists requires a careful and sensitive resolution by supporting more professional artists in documenting and analysing their own practice first. At the same time, the types of creative activities should propagate the invention of new methodologies and methods that better support the practice. If arts-based research is to be recognised and given credibility in its area, the professionals and artists must lead the way.

### **1.2.b My positioning**

My professional identity consists of many layers. I am an artistic director of **Dead Rabbits Theatre**. The Arts Council of England regularly supports this award-winning, international touring theatre company. I am also a movement director and a creative collaborator with **New International Encounter** and **Complicité** theatre companies. I am an Associate Professor in Acting and, up to very recently, was a Subject Lead for BA Acting at St Mary’s

University, London, where I have worked for the past nineteen years through practical, embodied pedagogy.

This research is designed to enable bridging the gap between industry and academia, a space I occupy. A significant part of this research consists of interviews with experts from the same territory as mine - that of devised theatre. I have known these professionals for over twenty years; many were my teachers before becoming professional colleagues. However, the core of this research lies in investigating the process of my own rehearsals while creating **Tiger Lady** by my professional company, **Dead Rabbits Theatre**, its premiere, and a few subsequent playing days of the show. Please see Appendix Two for all information about the company.

### **1.2.c Devised Theatre Territory**

*The Moments of Transcendence* occur in every form of theatre, but for this research, I will narrow it to the field of my professional expertise, devised theatre. My devised theatre territory follows the European tradition of physical theatre by emphasising playfulness, visual imagery, and the use of physicality and theatricality. Performances are created collaboratively through the devices of ensemble work, storytelling techniques, playfulness, music, puppetry, and theatricality. The representatives of this type of theatre in the UK are **Complicité** (1983), **Kneehigh** (1980), **Spymonkey** (1998), and **New International Encounter (NIE)** (2001), amongst many more. I have also collaborated with artists from **Complicité**, with especially close connections to Annabel Arden, Marcello Magni, Jozef Houben and **NIE**'s artistic director, Alex Byrne. Their master-teacher status is confirmed in the professional world as educators to many famous actors and companies<sup>1</sup> as well as affirmed by academics such as Murray (2010), Kendrick (2011), Amsden (2017), and Purcell-Gates (2017). This research enables me to draw on their professional expertise and insights in an exploration of *Moments of Transcendence*.

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<sup>1</sup> Amongst many others: Emma Thompson, Steven Berkoff, Toby Jones, Simon McBurney, Marcello Magni, Annabel Arden, Sacha Baron-Cohen, Jozef Houben, and Devised theatre companies: **Complicité**, **SpyMonkeys**, **Told by an Idiot**, **New International Encounter** and many more.

### 1.3 The Ontology of this research: The world of Play, Playfulness and Laughter

The ontology of my practice is underpinned by the term 'make-believe', pretending for the pleasure of it, like a kid who imagines themselves as somebody else, never entirely forgetting their identity at the same time. The main concern of this research is underpinned by playfulness, imagination, make-believe, playing with the audience, being free from the control of others, being free from ideological or political constraints, and being free to imagine and create.

One of the ontological foundations of this research is underpinned by Bakhtin's (1984) notion of two worlds: 'play' and 'seriousness' being in equal dialogical discourse. He posits that balance must exist for human beings to thrive. As I outlined earlier in this chapter, by focusing on profit-driven ideology and teaching children to implement instrumentalization of profit whilst inducing anxiety by escalating the importance of test results rather than knowledge, the balance between seriousness and play has tipped catastrophically towards the paradigm of seriousness. The question then arises as to why play was once acclaimed as a necessity for humans to thrive and considered to be the main constituent to offset the weightiness of seriousness.

Huizinga (1949) re-discovered and celebrated the notion of 'play' as a momentary suspension of 'real life' fanaticism, 'utter seriousness' and 'utter competitiveness. Huizinga's (1949) cultural interpretation of play mechanisms revealed the influence that play once had.

Rabelais (1534), in his many works on *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, shares the importance of medieval laughter and its function of levelling against the seriousness of life. Bakhtin (1984) extended and completed this line of thinking by focusing on the role of laughter in our culture and its subversive meaning. He observed: "Laughter purifies from dogmatism; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion" (Bakhtin, 1984: 122). Laughter creates a comprehension that our understanding of the world is often small and ignorant, and things can be viewed from many angles. The world is often not what it seems, and flexibility of mind, lightness to our spirit, empathy and cheer will help us along the way. Huizinga (1949) claims that because play rests on absolute and supreme order, it tends to be beautiful. He asserts: "It casts a spell over us as it is

invested with the noblest qualities we can perceive in things: rhythm and harmony. Play may rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leave seriousness far beneath” (Huizinga, 1949: 8). However, the quality of enchantment and beauty that play possesses and instals in us is very much feared to this day and often understood as something that is frivolous, silly, and simply ‘bad’.

## **Bad Play**

Uncovering the theoretical underpinnings of ‘play’ led me closer to a phenomenon of ‘bad play’ in society, culture, and education. Carnes (2015) noticed a historical division of the concept of play. He argues that the sober and disciplined ‘good play’ is the one that is accepted by the state and is instilled as ‘noble’ in society. The provocative, unruly, and free ‘bad play’ is unavoidable with children but must be subordinated and controlled. The underpinnings of that division began with Plato, who in *The Republic* accentuates that play is for making us better prepared to be adults in society, and it is a stage in life that goes away as we mature. He also advocated that all ‘make-believe’ activities are innately destructive. Carnes (2015: 386) explains that “by transforming social and political life into competitions, by pretending that their selves contained glorious multitudes, by undermining the natural social order, and by accepting nonsense as the truth, Athenians were hopelessly caught up in a world of bad play, or so Plato contended”. This notion of ‘bad play’ has already been observed by Bakhtin (1984) as the irreversible and irreconcilable split between folk culture and academic institutions. My ontology follows the folk culture identity; therefore, it is irrevocably in crisis with the academic identity. This crisis emerges from me being a researching professional in my field where the orthodoxy of research, can at times, challenge my ‘playful self’ and vice versa, my ‘playful self’ contests some of the rigidity of the ‘academic form’.

It is vital to bring up the subject of games and play in public schools at this point to create a broader context for the discussion. Mackintosh (1968) outlines the development of the popularity of games at public schools in the mid-eighteen-fifties and –sixties. The value of games showed itself by serving the ruling classes, especially by instilling in young boys’ discipline and reliance (Mackintosh, 1968: 42). However, Mackintosh (1968) observes the other reality of playing games; he points out that the critics were afraid of giving games aesthetic value and what that may lead to. The games were also criticised because “they

ceased to be mere amusements” and became “something between a battle and a sacrifice” (Mackintosh, 1968: 44). It is worth drawing a parallel with Huizinga's (1949: 8) observation that “frivolity and ecstasy are the twin poles between which play moves.” The educators and privileged classes intuitively felt the power of ‘free play’ and ensured the games were infused with routine discipline. They trained moral qualities like self-reliance, patience, endurance, and self-control; in a nutshell, all the values “to which England owes so much of her greatness” (Macintosh, 1968: 45). Once more, the emphasis is on the greatness of the institution and not in aiding people to be fulfilled individuals. The displacement of the centre of true human values points towards Sartre's (1948) notion of *bad faith*. What are the consequences of such military inculcation and how is it connected to the reluctance of adults to play as a result of this behaviour learned in childhood? Is the reluctance to fail or overzealous competitive streak exhibited sometimes by my students a sign to further attest of the imbalance that we are currently experiencing?

In my own practice, these two complementing analyses of play and laughter made me reflect deeper on the system of beliefs in my personal and professional lives. My own ontological understanding of the function of play is to create a rehearsal environment that resonates with restoring the Bakhtinian world of ambivalence between laughter and seriousness by creating conditions that incorporate them through playfulness and creativity and touching people's hearts with the depth of the story's humanity. I make sure that I follow the construct of playing with people. I always suspend the ‘real life’ fanaticism, the ‘utter seriousness’. However, when I work with students and professional artists, the level of construction becomes much more advanced. I still play, but I play seriously, all-out, and lose myself as a child loses themselves in a game. In a sense, I follow Bakhtin's (1984: 122) precept that “the true ambivalent and universal laughter does not deny seriousness but purifies and completes it”. I find a different kind of seriousness; the aim is for Derrida's (1978) ‘authenticity’ which he explains that the notion of being authentic in life is ‘to play’ upon the ‘structures’ of life. The structures according to Derrida (1978), are created when we are trying to avoid anxiety in life and by ‘play’ he means all the risky, uncontrollable variables that we encounter. I understand it as directly confronting things that hold us back though laughter, joy, and play.

This other level of seriousness through play, poetry and metaphors creates a feeling of purpose and importance that is not self-important but directed at others within the community

in which I am working. The need to communicate and connect with others bears a deeper meaning for me.

## **1.4 Traditions of play and playfulness in the theatre**

Traditionally, in the theatre industry play and games are treated as a ‘warm up’ time at the beginning of the rehearsals. McCaw (2007) observes that the traditional function of play is the preparation for the ‘real’ work or something more ‘noble’ or more serious. McCaw (2007) points out the lack of understanding of how play functions and the lack of academic research on play in theatre studies. However, there has been a recent development in academia (Amsden: 2017, Kendrick: 2011, Purcell-Gates: 2017, Murray: 2010) where play and these practices are being discussed. I would argue that this tradition of thinking is still ingrained in an academic research angle, and further practically driven research into the function of play in training and rehearsals could be very impactful.

My expertise in European devised theatre tradition where play and playfulness are the core of its practice is based on the European legacy of Commedia dell 'Arte (1545), which in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was once again resurrected by Meyerhold (1874-1940) in Russia and Copeau (1879-1949) in France. Copeau (1938) was the first to establish the concepts of play and playfulness as powerful constructs in theatre. He observed that when actors are involved in a game, they are completely inside the world of play. Copeau (1938), moreover, noticed that the bystanders also become entirely enveloped by what they see. It is seeing the actors being engaged in play or seeing that the narrative structure rests on the game's ‘vehicle’ that immerses the observers in the fabric of the imaginary world. This phenomenon makes the actors seem entirely truthful or believable. The engagement of the audience and the actors in the fabric of the game generates a psychological shift in how the fictional world is perceived. This is a fundamental shift in how ‘the truth’ in the theatre can be perceived. It is also the foundation of this thesis.

I need to clarify, therefore, how the understanding of ‘traditional’ truth in acting processes in training and rehearsals differs from Copeau’s (1938) discovery of authenticity and believability through immersing in an imaginary world of play.

## **1.4.a Differences between Realistic (psychological) and Devised theatre pedagogy: Truth versus play**

In realistic or psychological acting, the task is to emulate life, to be truthful. The actors and the director make conscious choices and studied decisions when creating this mimetic quality. In simple terms, actors investigate their memory and their experienced emotional responses to different stimuli and situations. This process is what the principal founder of the contemporary Western acting method, Stanislavski, called an Affective memory. The actor studiously recollects their experiences and memories of how people behave in certain situations and the reasoning behind their behaviour, and subsequently, they try to re-create it. The focus here is on reconstructing the ‘truthful’ or true experience. Kandel (2006: 313), a Nobel Prize laureate in the field of memory, points out that our ‘explicit’ memory tends to focus on things worth remembering. Does ‘worth remembering’ mean something that was emotionally stimulating? Do the emotions influence the memory? To what extent? It could be, therefore, claimed that an actor who tries to recall their memories can only access them from the conscious, analytical side of their understanding. What about all those moments in human behaviour that one cannot explain and, therefore, perhaps cannot categorise? What about memories that escaped our rational mind? What about more complex emotional processes that require quick switches from sadness to joy, from awe to horror? A person can remember perhaps some of it but is often unable to comprehend the mechanism that triggered it. I would argue that the actor needs to work simultaneously through their body and with emotional centres and respond to a visual and aural stimulus that constantly changes when performing. However, these are the questions I will be going on to address throughout the thesis.

### **The dissonance between the senses**

There is a profound difficulty when an actor is working with all the senses at once. Koestler (1964: 56) claimed that when “the emotional, intellectual, and physical centres work concomitantly, there is a dissonance in the time frame between the centres”. The intellectual understanding is slower than one’s physical and emotional sensations. This line of thinking is similar to Feldenkrais’ (1972) investigations into understanding our physical responses.

His idea was that movement should be performed as slowly as possible to comprehend the movement intellectually. This is the concept of the brain's old system overriding anything performed at a habitual or 'skills' speed. The improvement, therefore, can only be made by lowering the speed of action.

The dissonance between the centres was exploited in the theatre events by Meyerhold (1922), who observed: "The theatre is an unnatural combination of natural, temporal, spatial, and numerical phenomena that necessarily contradicts our daily experience" (Hoover, 1974: 43). He searched for methods that magnified how our life is full of strangeness and ambivalence. Normality is an inauthentic concept that generalises us and our existence. Meyerhold criticised the naturalistic search for truth: "The naturalistic theatre teaches the actor to express himself in a finished, clearly defined manner; there is no room for the play of allusion or conscious understatement. It knows nothing of the power of suggestion ..." (Hoover, 1991: 25). Meyerhold was fascinated by the 'theatrical truth' (exposing the reality of theatrical events) that he first encountered in the street puppets shows in circuses and buffooneries that he had watched as a child. The principle of exposing the nature of theatre (self-reference in theatre, often referred to as meta-theatre) created a somewhat different, more intense, and visceral connection with the spectators. This 'theatrical truth' concept was not sought by searching for realism but for incongruities in our existence.

Similarly, by investing in research in play, Copeau proposed a different mode of accessing authenticity and believability by 'being in the moment' through the structure of games and play. Therefore, Stanislavsky's concept of 'emotional truth' through psychological analysis of the character, so popular even now, could be substituted by the proposition of being authentic by being immersed in a game. A famous director and performer, Call McCrystal, commented: "The only real truth is that there are a thousand people in the room, and if you are pretending that they are not, you are not being truthful" (Amsden, 2015: 69). Copeau declared the actor's role that could be re-iterated as: 'I am here for pretending, look at me, how I play the role'. This idea of declaring a game, declaring that one is pretending, removes a lie that, in realistic acting, serves to build a character. At the moment of the declaration, the audience member has the freedom to spectate but is also absorbed by the 'play for pretending'. A state of the theatrical doubleness of the world commences: the audience member is here in the real world, watching someone playing a game that at the same time



takes them into a fantasy world to see what is there to be believed. At the same time, if the actor enjoys themselves pretending, curiously, this declaration of ‘this is all for pretending’ becomes authentic and believable. Here, the audience member is following the narrative through the game's structure and by choosing to believe in the game of immersing in the imaginary world. The rules of the imaginary are often not logical but often follow the sensory experience. This is the world where different incongruous ideas begin to appear. The concept of incongruity in theatre throws the method of meticulous character construction into disarray. The ‘incongruous’ lives much closer to the ‘authentic’ perception of reality than logically produced reconstruction. This sense of contradiction and juxtaposition to what is expected and the incongruous combination of what we perceive on stage interests me most in theatre. In my practice, I observed that by creating incongruity on stage, audiences often experienced a sudden shock, a sudden state of alertness, being in awe or simply disturbed. I was fascinated by the reactions, which sparked my passion for this research.

#### **1.4.b Conveying meaning versus triggering the spontaneous generation of sensual impressions.**

The questions of ‘truth’ versus ‘authenticity of play’ were first initiated by significant revolutionary changes in the political, social, economic, and cultural milieu worldwide at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. In theatre territory, the primary transformation was rejecting literary theatre and abandoning the importance of interpreting a meaning for the audience. Artaud, Meyerhold, and the Surrealists, amongst many others, encouraged this trend in favour of producing an effect on the audience. Theatre was called upon to focus on the spirit of ‘the festival’ and the effect generated between the players and the spectators. Its function was to overwhelm the senses. Variety and Circus Theatre were the alternatives to realistic theatre with a mission to produce an immediate effect on the audience. The ‘new’ theatre’s objective was not to transmit meaning but to generate meaning based on the materiality of what the individual perceives. Materiality, Fischer-Lichte (2008: 140) explains, was developed “through the repeatability of patterns, movement or gestures devoid of interconnections or infusion of meaning”. Seeing these isolated phenomena for what they were triggered a wealth of associations, memories, and emotions that created visceral, physical sensations in the audience. This kind of theatre tradition sought to affect and actively generate sensual impressions in its audience. This legacy is embedded in my theatre

tradition and training. The devised theatre territory and the *Moments of Transcendence* manifest themselves through gestural and poetical patterns, non-word play of meanings and sensations, which are not easily translatable for the intellectual demands of language and cerebral understanding. The images and sensations are sometimes hidden in our unconscious mind; they have a dream-like quality, are just as present in our lives, and ring just as ‘true’ with the audiences experientially and viscerally.

## **1.5 The Epistemology - Gaulier’s tradition**

My theatre epistemology is founded on the pedagogy of three French master teachers: Lecoq (1990), Gaulier (2012), and Pagneux (2014), who developed their practice in the mid-twentieth Century. I advanced my practice and professional knowledge by repeatedly studying and re-visiting them over the last 25 years. For the introduction of this thesis, I will only explain Gaulier’s tradition as I am the most influenced by his practice in my directorial practice.

The experiential shift that originated in Gaulier’s teaching triggered my professional educational journey. Gaulier’s teaching practice, which receives no government funding and runs independently, inspires what the Neoliberalist system tries to suppress: “the cultivation and expression of distinctly human capacities for ethical and political freedom, creativity, unbounded reflection, or invention” (Brown, 2015: 43). The French theatre master’s teaching undermines the power of biopolitics by uncovering students’ mindless indoctrination. Gaulier’s approach reflects Bakhtin’s (1984) philosophy on laughter. Carnes (2015) points towards a hidden curriculum at the university level, which often undermines or restricts the use of play, fantasy, or imagination in favour of the hegemony of seriousness and profit. Gaulier battles what Derrida (1978) calls ‘structures’ by disrupting his students through ‘play’. According to Derrida (1978), ‘structures’ are created when one is trying to avoid anxiety in life and by ‘play’, he denotes all the risky, uncontrollable variables that we encounter. Derrida’s (1978) concept of ‘authenticity’ and the notion of being ‘authentic in life’ denotes that one needs to play upon the structure of anxiety in life. Gaulier states on his website:

The school will change you. This change will not come from the knowledge accumulated during the different workshops. Rather, it is a result of subterranean forces which the teaching unleashes. These undermine and explode received ideas,

certainties, and inhibitions. At the end of the journey, you are lighter and free. (ecole Phillippe Gaulier website page, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022)

Gaulier asserts that the prevailing cultural ideology impoverishes us in our quest to find ourselves. His teaching of the subversive and freeing methodology of play goes beyond the actor's training and enters the realm of the personal. Gaulier taught me to look beyond words for poetry, unpredictability, and the strangeness in people's imagination. I learned that when working in an ensemble on stage, the sensuality of the images and the interplay of voices created something more extraordinary and more immense than the sum of the people in the group. He teaches through 'the angle of aberration', of trying to see something through a squinting eye technique, or *Indirect Vision*, which implies looking for something whilst eyes are directed at something else. Calvino (2016: 19) touches gently on the hidden 'truth' of the quality of lightness sought by Gaulier in his pedagogy, suggesting, "Lightness for me is related to precision and definition, not too hazy and haphazard. One must be light like the bird, not like the feather". Calvino (2016) notes here on the technical competency of Gaulier's hidden rules within acting and pedagogy of disturbances, which I will further discuss in Chapters 7 and 8. Gaulier's pedagogy of disturbances supports his students' perception of 'authenticity'.

The pedagogy of disturbance holds a significant place in this research. Its understanding becomes the foundation of everything that happens in the rehearsal room. I seek to create the dichotomy between seriousness and play and declare through play a *World of Imagination* that people can believe in. The pedagogical approach rests on re-inventing the world of imagination created between actors and me and transporting it to the audience. The audience is the most crucial element in creating the performance. The work is always done for the audience; the most essential aspect is connecting with the spectators. This is why I turned to my rehearsal practice to experience it phenomenologically as a researcher to clarify how this relation is developed.

The theatre of images, memories half-remembered, dreams and imagination are what I understand and represent in devised theatre. Through my pedagogy of inventing the *World of Imagination*, I aim to encourage people to look at life and its beauty and work on finding a way to understand and communicate with each other through theatrical poetry and

playfulness. But my question to myself was ‘To what extent is this approach to performance analysed and reflected upon in current scholarship?’.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review and the Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the literature review and identifies the gap in experiential, practically driven research enquiries on the subject in the academic literature. This chapter also builds on the previous chapter by outlining academic and experiential knowledge about the research. The theoretical literature primarily comprises of writing as a general description and analysis of the spectators' view of the phenomenon. The knowledge of how the phenomenon is constructed and how the actors experience the *Moments of Transcendence* exists only in the fragmented form of critical analysis of short-term training workshops with the master teachers. This literature review, therefore, is separated into two categories. First, I review the current understanding of the phenomenon as described and analysed by the academic scholars with the understanding that they are observers (audience perspective). Next, I outline the conceptual framework and main concepts of this research.

### 2.1 The academic observer-outsider perspective

The phenomenon has yet to find a common terminology in the academic literature. Terms like 'utopian performatives', 'epiphanies', 'electric air', 'moments of intoxication' or 'enchantment with the world' are all terminology that encompasses the ephemeral definition of the phenomenon. The definition needs to be harnessed for the *Moments of Transcendence* to become more present in the academic literature. Dolan (2005) tackles the definition of the experience of the phenomenon by generating the term 'utopian performatives', which she defines as:

Small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and inter-subjectively intense (Dolan, 2005: 5).

Being 'lifted above the present' can have many meanings, and her definition encompasses the many facets of the phenomenon. In this respect, it also leads toward Murdoch's (1970: 71) thinking that great art is evidence; however, it is tentative that "there is more than this". By having these experiences of transcendence when looking, for example, at art, we can reason that there is something greater than the normal and that we can rise above the ordinary.

Dolan's (2005) definition was also a reason why I started to think of the *Moments of Transcendence* as a 'phenomenon' which the Cambridge Dictionary describes as: "something that exists and can be seen, felt, tasted, especially something unusual or interesting" (Cambridge dictionary, Accessed 21.12.23). Dolan's (2005) phrase of being lifted above the presence resonated strongly with my own sense of the phenomenon, and it was very close in meaning to what the participants of this research described as the *Moments of Transcendence*.

Dolan (2005) specifies further its qualities and compares its function to Brecht's invention of 'gestus', claiming that the phenomenon is a "received moment of gestus" (Dolan, 2005: 7). According to her, it is a sensation that is received by being in the presence of a highly symbolic moment that carries a range of meanings about the narrative and the character. Brecht's precursor and undoubtedly a source of inspiration, Meyerhold, practised construction of what he called 'aggressive moments', which had the function of awaking audiences' imagination and activating their conscious engagement in the theatre. These moments were also termed 'ostranenie', which translates from Russian as 'making ordinary things strange and unfamiliar'. This term is also known as the 'de-familiarisation effect' or 'alienation effect', a term first coined by a Soviet formalist, Shklovsky (1917). These terms directly relate to Brecht's 'gestus' and prominently to the 'verfremdung effect', which has a similar meaning to the one sought by Meyerhold. Dolan's (2005) analysis of the effect of 'gestus' was indispensable in investigating Meyerhold's findings, which led me to undertake this research. My professional fascination with Meyerhold's work was his use of incongruity, grotesque and exaggeration in his work and actor training. Meyerhold and Brecht worked on *mise-en-scene* by starting with actors' bodies in training to create an uninhibited chain of impulses visible to the audience. The process relied on transferring this 'electric energy' of meanings and associations onto the audience in order to awaken their senses and alter them. Meyerhold's creation of *Moments of Transcendence* was based on dramaturgical and choreographical devices that aimed at creating a highly charged symbolical instant that was the precursor of 'gestus'.

However, Dolan's (2005) primary interest lies in the phenomenon's ability to create unity within the audience. Her writing carries social values and is politically charged with the hope for change that the *Moments of Transcendence* illuminate. She reasserts that we, as the audiences, are more allied and socially equitable through those moments. Dolan (2005: 15) inspires "to share experiences in meaning-making and imagination that can describe or

capture fleeting imitations of a better world”. Dolan's (2005) contribution to the body of research is her quest to define the multi-faceted nature of the *Moments of Transcendence* and to outline its social function. In my understanding, however, I am driven by the phenomenon's autotelic quality that reverberates between the audiences and the performers.

Moreover, Dolan (2005) asserts that the phenomenon is generated spontaneously. This thesis will argue the contrary. The fact that the two prominent theatre directors were experimenting with the phenomenon's constructs more than 100 years ago signals that the moments can be generated by prior practical and analytical knowledge. However, my thesis is also inspired by Dolan's (2005) contribution to the collective experience of transcendence. I am indebted to Dolan (2005) for her comprehensive analysis of that facet of the phenomenon.

The next academic analysis bears even more parallels with my own insights. Carlson (2003: 211) alerts us to the existence of “the moments of such intensity that they might be called epiphanies”. Carlson (2003) points towards the cultural function of creating an opening of the minds to the experience of being present and directs the outcome of these ‘epiphanies’ towards empathy. More crucially, he focuses on the communal sense of empathy. The cultural aspect of the phenomenon that unites the participants in the experience through empathy and a better understanding of people's behaviour has a unique and very significant value in my research and understanding of professional practice. The sense of empathy between the participants in theatre is the core of my work and gives purpose to my professional and personal life. Carlson's (2003) ideas and observations stirred this research and my imagination to investigate further the categories of transcendence that embrace the interpersonal and communal aspects of this experience.

The next scholar paves the way towards a greater understanding of the mechanism of the moments. Heim (2020) discusses not only the definitions of the phenomenon but also contributes significantly to the debate about the nature and elements of the *Moments of Transcendence*. Heim (2020: 30) is one of the first academics to construct a map of qualities, or what she terms “undercurrents”, responsible for creating “the atmospheres” in the theatre. She contextualises her phenomenological inquiry as a conversation between the audience and the actors, which happens through “the utmost decrease of distance without disappearing” (Heim, 2020: 4). She posits that there is a symbiotic relationship where the ‘thought’ conversations happen. Her claim of the importance of relational dialogue between actors and

the audience directly contributed to the knowledge that is ‘on the inside’ of the theatre and not ‘backstage’ or ‘off-stage’. Heim’s (2020) analysis of this territory contributed to my better understanding of the need for precision in nomenclature that defines the angle of perception from which the phenomenon is viewed. Heim (2020) observes the lack of academic enquiry in discovering more about “to whom we are making meaning and what it means to them” (Heim, 2020: 12). I also observe the lack of a body of research from the point of makers and the point of heterogeneous audiences. Heim (2020) gives agency to the participants’ perspective, which follows the principles of phenomenological enquiry. She persists in using metaphorical terms as multiple individual audience members and actors used them during the interviews. She also notes differences in understanding and usage of terminology.

Heim (2020), moreover, analyses the atmospheres in the theatre, a phenomenon that is physically felt even though often used in symbolic or metaphorical meaning. She cites Bohme’s (2017) definition as an example of academic writing that considers the ephemeral and transient nature of what she terms as ‘the electric air’ that has a physical quality. She notes Bohme’s (2017) critical investigation into the atmospheres which are “a space-filling phenomenon that emotionally radiates in between objects and subjects” (Heim, 2020: 8). Bohme (2017) defines them as “something spatial and at the same time something emotional, a certain tone of feeling felt by people” (2017: 5). In the professional domain in theatre, it is an acknowledged fact, that sensing and feeling are terms that are used in tangible terms. The atmosphere can often be felt, and that sensation alerts intellectual comprehension. Heim (2020) recognises this process and that loaded terms like ‘electricity’ create suspicion in the scholarly domain (Kolesh and Knoblauch, 2019: 260). However, she insists that adding metaphorical terms supports phenomenological research and reflects Bakhtinian heteroglossia rather than creating a dialectical argument. Her agency in phenomenological enquiry clarifies my apprehension about my linguistic positioning in academic research. It encourages using novel terms consistent with the professional theatre domain but not yet in line with the scientific side of academic research.

Fischer-Lichte (2008) is another scholar who influences the debate on the phenomenon’s qualities that are hard to express in academic writing. She observes that in the time of Enlightenment, we detached ourselves from the world of magic, enchantment, phenomena, and openings that happen through us sensing them. The science goal is to be able to explain



each element of the world. The scientific world, however, also declares the existence of undiscovered knowledge and our inability to explain every detail in systematic terms. Interestingly, there lies a ‘mystery of things’, a term used by Fischer-Lichte (2008) and one of the theatre experts in my interviews. This ‘mystery of things’ draws on the curiosity of artists, discoverers, and scientists, causing the same desire to understand the world from different angles. Such curiosity brings not only a desire for discovery but also an understanding that mystery surrounds us everywhere. It creates a specific hierarchy and puts a measure of perspective into our lives, reminding us of our smallness, mortality, and what we mean in this world. I am, however, most enthused by Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) viewpoint that these mysteries create an ‘enchantment with the world’. Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) legacy is her quest to reposition the drive in the arts with the ‘enchantment with the world’, to see things anew, to look for the mysteries that surround us, and to enrich our lives. It starts with the arts, in the act of creating moments where people have one small epiphany, perhaps awakening, and they begin to seek this feeling of ‘enchantment with the world’. Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) observation and analysis of the function of ‘autopoiesis’, ‘multi-stable perception’ and ‘oscillation’ are invaluable to my understanding of the topic. I used them recurrently throughout this thesis to support the creation of a conceptual framework and when setting out the *three-stage model of Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*.

## **Expanding the Paradigms**

There are, however, specific arguments where my phenomenon’s enquiry differs from Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) and Heim’s (2020). First, this thesis focuses on constructing the transcendent moments from the ensemble’s perspective, not as in Heim’s (2020) study, within the individual actor’s practice. I am therefore investigating the process of making the moments between the ensemble cast, which differs from when an individual actor is a recipient of the directions.

Heim (2020), moreover, explains that the factors governing the phenomenon are “unpredictable and uncontrollable” (2020: 46) and expounds that the cause is the phenomenon’s ephemeral and transient nature. Fischer-Lichte (2008) also posits that the phenomenon has an enigmatic quality that is random and erratic. Drawing on the experiential knowledge in my professional theatre domain, I posit that certain processes can be installed

in rehearsal that can support specific constructs to be controllable and re-activated for the phenomenon to occur with a live audience. In the next section, I created a conceptual framework to provide foundations for my *three-stage model of CITE*, which outlines the framework for how the *Moments of Transcendence* are constructed.

## **2.2 Conceptual framework -The insider perspective.**

This section establishes a map of concepts that are the foundation for this thesis. Each concept is a distinct cornerstone to understanding the fundamental principles behind creating the *three-stage model of CITE*. The five concepts outlined below are the research's conceptual framework from the experiential and professional angle. The below table also explains how they support each stage of the phenomenon.

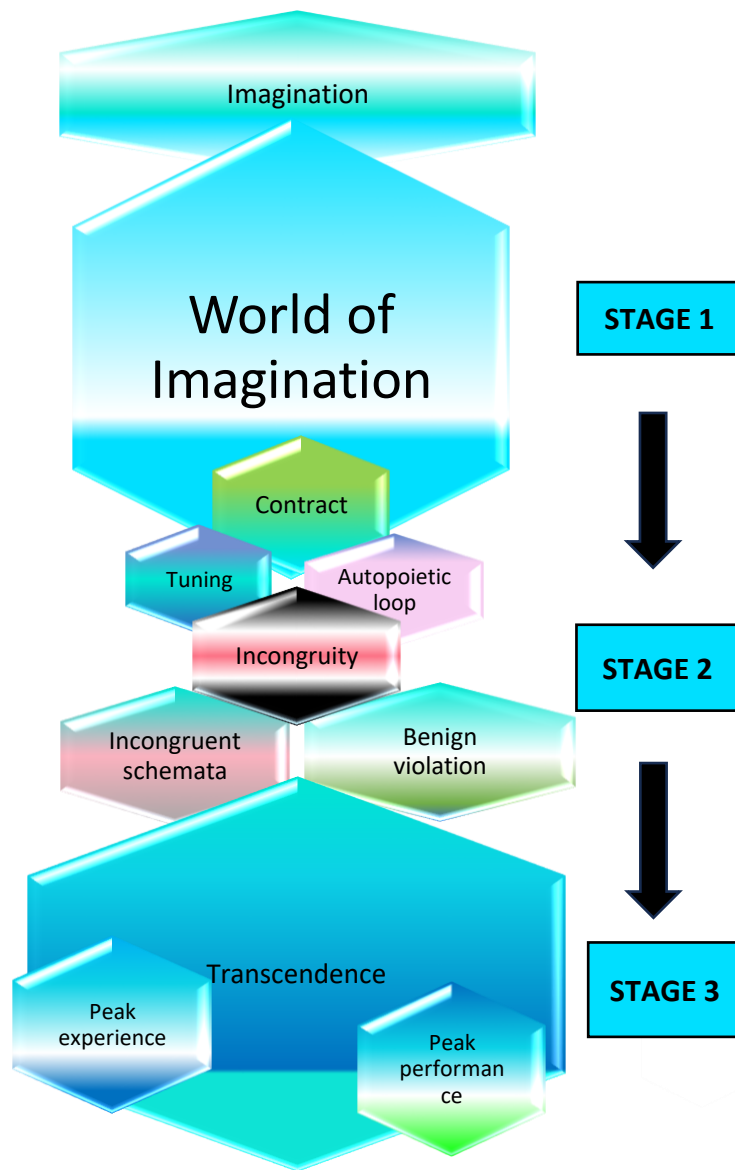


Figure 1 The list of concepts that are the foundation for the three-stage model of the Compound Incongruity Trigger Event

## 2.2.a Imagination

What intrigued me was that the audience interviews pointed out that STAGE 1 of the phenomenon was called ‘slipping into’ or ‘entering’ ‘the world of imagination’. What is this realm that we call imagination? And how is it created? The creative theatre team created the world of fiction. Still, the participants meant not only seeing the world of the play but also that something else was created/ channelled/transferred from rehearsals to the performance simultaneously. Baum (2017) writes about atmospheres pervading the theatre, and Heim (2020) writes about electric air. I became intrigued by how our imagination works in rehearsals and performances and how we enter the phenomenon of the moments of transcendence. (Director’s/ Researcher’s notes)

Imagination is understood today as part of our consciousness (Kearney: 1999), and more precisely, imagining is an intentional act of consciousness. It is now acknowledged that imagination carries transformative rather than representative power. Historically, according to Platonian tradition, imagination was treated with suspicion as something harmful and detrimental to the progress of civilisation, as imagining was perceived as creating worlds that were not true. In the Aristotelian tradition, imagination was to have a function to reproduce images in the mind as inner copies of sensory perceptions. This gave a relatively passive role to the imagination. Later, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, imagination began to be defined as something much more proactive: as a negation of perception, according to Sartre (1948), as something that is, in its essence, invisible and opposite to what we perceive as real. Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Bachelard (1971) further emphasised the dialogue intertwining of the real and imaginary (the existing and the non-existing).

For this thesis, I will be concerned with imagination as a mode of consciousness that creates sensations, feelings, and mental and aural images, jumping between what is perceived in reality and the ‘invisible’, creating a plethora of gaps (spaces) where meaning is created. I am looking at imagination as a creative force that searches for meaning or patterns in the gaps of the perceivable world. It is a transitory state. It is a state where we let ourselves wonder between what we sensually perceive and our imagination. When this state is created in the theatre space, I termed it that we enter the *World of Imagination*.

## 2.2.b The theatrical *World of Imagination*

I am talking about the dancing imagination of play of doubleness of meaning that leads us to the essence of things (Director's/ Researcher's notes).

The term I use in this thesis, *World of Imagination*, was frequently mentioned in the interviews with the experts, audience, and actors. Some participants also referred to it as the 'world of dreams' (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3). A similar connotation has the term 'suspending our disbelief' that Grainger (2008) uses when referring to theatre academic literature. Coleridge (1817) invented the term 'suspending our disbelief' for the use of prose and poetry, referred to as being emotionally involved in the narrative and letting our mind freely travel with the fictional characters even though we know it is 'only a story'. Fischer-Lichte (2014) refers to this state as 'the state of intoxication'. *The World of Imagination* is a state of 'suspending disbelief' by creating a space for letting the imagination of the audiences, performers, and creatives merge and enter a world similar to the world of dreams and fantasies. Basing the understanding of imagination that I outlined above on Merleau-Ponty's (1969) concept of 'visible merging with invisible' and Bachelard's (1971) idea that something is being created between the object and our imagination, I term the *World of Imagination* to be the temporal space, a vehicle for creating the visible with copious amounts of invisible.

What happens when we go into the *World of Imagination*? What happens when one valid order of perception is disrupted, and another is not yet established? Fischer-Lichte (2008: 88-89) observes: "The perceiving subjects remain suspended between two orders of perception, caught in a state of 'betwixt and between'". What is created by perception and imagination is a moment of suspension in the mind that also gives a sense of delay in our intellectual comprehension. In the mind, things become open and unsteady. Kounios and Beeman (2006) observe the time before insight when the brain suddenly is flooded with 'Alpha waves'. They are called 'slow waves' that break the barriers and connect all the different concepts and associations. The images created on stage (visual and aural) unleash the invisible (our imagination) into a physical manifestation that demonstrates itself in our bodies, in our physical sensation of psychological shift. The audience sometimes focuses on the transition and notices the disruption. "In such a moment, they are conscious of their

perception as ‘emergent and elusive’ (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 149). The audience members become wanderers between two worlds. They sometimes become aware that they cannot control these transitions. They cannot prevent the unintentional shifts and are fluctuating against their will. The art touches the audience, and, in the process, the audience connects back, creating an ‘autopoietic loop’. This research focuses on the conditions and the fabric of the making of that phenomenal state rather than on any specific technique. The essence of this research is in how this state is created in the theatre and with actors during the rehearsals.

### **2.2.c Contract and an autopoietic loop**

In the audience’s interviews, an observation was made that the audience members felt they were “part of the gang”, that they felt “loved” by the troupe of actors, and that there was a sense in the theatre of “an unconditional protection of the people” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3) and that this made them feel safe. This is evidence that ‘a contract’ with the audience has been established. However, this contract is established on the basis of another contract that must have been established first between the actors and the director in rehearsals. This special ‘contract’ is a set of negotiated and agreed social rules for each particular group. Cundall (2007) observes that in humour theory, a bond needs to be established, a sense of shared understanding, in order to understand a joke. Cohen’s assertion (1999: 211) about the theory of ‘joke transactions’ is that “humour is enhanced by social settings where others help create the material for creative witticism”. The contract is a social bond generated through sharing, laughter and playing so the actors and the director can be creatively free, safe and, at the same time, ready for the risk and unexpected challenge. This is the state of being in the *World of Imagination*, which allows the actors to enter a phase of what Fischer-Lichte (2008) terms as an ‘autopoietic feedback loop’. ‘Autopoiesis’ was first utilised by Maturana and Varela (1992) to describe the unique self-reproducing operations in living systems and it is a process where the organisms possess self-generating qualities and processes. Therefore, the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ self-generates a state that feeds on responses between the actors and the director or the audiences.

In my theatre practice, it is often an instinctive act through the contract and autopoiesis that the *World of Imagination* is created for the actors and the director, which is then transferred

organically onto the stage and introduced to the audience. This contract is re-established and re-negotiated through a process I term *Tuning* during performance with the audience. *Tuning* is responsible for the initiation of an ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ in performance between the actors and the audiences.

I will explain the *Tuning* process and the transference of the contract into a performance setting, in Chapter 7.

## 2.2.d Incongruity

Why incongruity?

I have often been perplexed in my experience as a theatre director or watching theatre at the apparent absurdity, bizarreness and the same awe that triggered me to feel the rising sense of transcendence (Director’s/ Researcher’s notes).

The concept of *Incongruity* outlines the main precept of the construction of the phenomenon. Meyerhold (1955) researched the *Moments of Transcendence* by looking at principles of the forgotten style of *Commedia dell’Arte* (1545). He observed that the incongruity between the physical, emotional, and intellectual perception of the action on stage caused the observer to experience an altered state when watching. Incongruity on stage was created by grotesque, disturbance, exaggeration, or juxtaposition. Meyerhold (1955) elucidates that: “the grotesque mixes opposites, consciously creating harsh incongruity (...) The basis of the grotesque is the artist’s constant desire to switch the spectator from the plane he has just reached to another which is unforeseen” (Meyerhold, 1955: 226). This desire to shift the realm of experience for the spectator was why I became a theatre director and was the stimulus for starting this research. I wanted to find a way to create incongruity between the scene's content, form, or emotional outcome, which would make a physiological shift in everyone involved. This thesis's focal component of transcendent moments is built on triggering incongruity in the spectators.

Incongruity theory is a part of laughter theory and has been the most dominant in the last 30 years. It evolved from and replaced the superiority and relief theories which suggested that we laugh at others as we find ourselves in a superior position. An example of this is in Bergson’s (1900) use of the banana skin fall and represented by Freud’s (1905) acknowledgement of laughter as a means to relieve pent-up emotional energy. However, the

Incongruity Theory has recently established itself as the most favoured and successful theory (Forabosco: 2008, Kulka: 2007) when trying to understand how and why we laugh. It can be traced back to Aristotle, who did not use the word incongruity. However, in his definition of comedy and comics, he employed a similar term that meant surprise and deception at the same time. The Incongruity theory proposes that we laugh because we encounter two concepts that are not logically connected. Here is one example:

Chamfort tells a story of a Marquis at the court of Louis XIV who, on entering his wife's boudoir and finding her in the arms of a Bishop, walked calmly to the window and went through the motions of blessing the people in the street.

'What are you doing?' Cried the anguished wife. 'Monseigneur is performing my functions,' replied the Marquis, 'so I am performing his.' (Koestler, 1964: 33)

The unexpectedness of Marquis' reaction in this very emotional and full of tension moment is, at the same time, perfectly logical. Koestler (1964) explains that different behavioural and social codes govern the situation. One is the division of labour, and another is the expected behaviour of a husband who encounters an affair. The expectation was that Marquis would behave according to a different set of rules. There is an element of surprise and an element of incongruity. A resolution often follows the surprise or astonishment about the incongruity; this is by understanding (often slightly delayed) how the two concepts fit together and, therefore, an adjustment to a previous understanding. Incongruity in the comic world causes people to laugh. It is one of the strongly argued theories behind the reasons for laughter. It is the delayed sense of resolution that creates laughter. In the story of Marquis, the rules are also only implied: were they to be made explicit, the laughter would certainly cease.

However, I was drawn to a broader sense of the term, where something can be incongruous and not funny. McGraw and Warren (2016) point out that the definitions of incongruity are not precise enough. There are four definitions of incongruity: surprise, juxtaposition, atypicality and violation, and it points out that some of the incongruity does not create humour. I am investigating incongruity not only for its aspect of making people laugh but also from the premise proposed by Cundall (2007), Cohen (1999), and Latta (1998), where they observed that some incongruities make us laugh but are not funny or do not make us laugh. The incongruity can leave the observer confused, perplexed, and sometimes disturbed. One may laugh out of embarrassment or a sense of pity or empathy. Most crucially, incongruities steer many sets of emotions, especially visible through Awe and Horror sensations (Taylor and Uchida, 2019). In my professional practice, I discerned that



sometimes people's first reaction is the mechanism of laughter when they do not understand how they feel or are perplexed by the incongruity.

The Incongruity plus theories, which investigate these 'not-funny' incongruent moments, added that there needs to be a 'safe setting' for the incongruity to be perceived as funny. McGraw and Warren (2016) outline the idea of a 'safe setting' through their theory of 'benign violation', create more specific settings, and correlate much more closely with my research because violations are not typically perceived as humorous here. They often cause anger, fear, disgust, confusion, or other negative emotions (Rozin, Lowery, Imada & Haidt, 1999). The 'benign violation' hypothesis proposes that humour occurs only when the violation is simultaneously appraised as benign: "A benign appraisal occurs when a person feels that there is nothing to worry about. People might simultaneously appraise a violation as benign depending on how the violation threatens them" (McGraw & Warren, 2016: 410-411). In my understanding, considering McGraw & Warren's (2016) research on 'benign violation' theory indicates that in the theatre domain, if the violation is set up in 'safe settings', it creates the same sensations as the 'real' violation but without actual harm and with the participants' knowledge that they cannot be harmed.

I return, therefore, to the previous concept of this framework, where I established the need for a 'contract' and safety settings. The incongruities I observed in the theatre settings often did not resolve the incongruous dissonance. The resolution was left to the audience and their meaning-making processes. The audience was left in a state of suspended incongruity that created a plethora of sensations, some of them of a sense of being overwhelmed or awe, but some of profound disturbance or violation. The 'benign violation' theory with safety setting here operates at a slightly different angle. By making sure that there is an established 'contract', the incongruity can be experienced as real and create real sensations.

Furthermore, Taylor's and Uchida's (2019) 'Emotional Incongruity Schemata' theory propose that the overwhelming or disrupting emotions created by incongruity ('Awe' and 'Horror') are emotions that cause our beliefs and models of behaviour (the schemata) to be subjected to a change/disruption and accommodation processes rather than assimilation.

## **2.2.e Cognitive schemata and Emotional Incongruity schemata**

Emotions are created by cognitive schemata (models), which are “patterns of cognition that organise knowledge and conceptual relationship” (Fiske & Linville, 1980: 544). They are generalised beliefs about us and the world that help us understand and classify our experiences. Cognitive schemata often function unconsciously and can be activated by external stimuli (Fink, 1977; Wilson, 1977). They are often resilient against ‘disconfirmation’, which denotes that a piece of information that does not fit is usually discounted, ignored, or revised to be consistent with creating a consistent worldview (Piaget: 1950). Taylor and Uchida (2019: 1549) expound that “If a situation is consistent with our worldview (cognitive schemata), it confirms and advances our ‘adaptive behavioural responses’. It confirms, reinforces our beliefs, and incorporates additional structures through which we understand the world. This is called ‘Cognitive Assimilation’, and it enhances the functioning model of beliefs from “top to bottom” (2019: 1549). ‘Cognitive Assimilation’ adds to the peripheries of the model, enlarging and enhancing the experience.

However, Taylor and Uchida (2019) also theorise that some events and phenomena violate mental representation of the world and elicit ‘schema-incongruent emotions’ that influence and motivate behavioural responses and cognitive understanding of the world (Piaget: 1950). These experiences contradict person’s core beliefs and concepts, as for example their worldview, belief in how they think of themselves or others. These events cause ‘schema incongruence’ and they trigger intense sensation of Awe or the opposite of Horror. Experiencing these intense events calls for process called ‘Cognitive Accommodation’ and is driven from “bottom to top” (Taylor and Uchida: 2019: 1549). The schema (our beliefs, patterns of behaviour) is disturbed and need to be re-ordered, accommodated, changed from their core. Lodge and Taber (2000) propose that emotional responses to schema incongruence help in ‘Cognitive Accommodation’ by increasing neurocognitive plasticity and weakening beliefs and attitudes that typically facilitate assimilation. This is experienced as a “need for cognitive accommodation” (Taylor and Uchida, 2019: 1549). According to Kelthner & Heidt (2003), one cannot assimilate schema incongruent schemata into existing schemata and, therefore, should modify one’s understanding of the world to make sense of it. Schema-incongruent emotions are often stimulated by volatile mental representations that range from spiritual sensations of Awe to disturbance through Horror. A sudden incongruency (or disturbance or violation) of what we see in the performance and what we perceive as incongruent creates this violation. In theatre settings, where a ‘contract’ has

been established, and the audience feels they are being protected by the actors, the violation should be perceived as benign.

### **2.2.f Peak experience and peak performance in the *Moments of Transcendence*.**

In Chapter 1, I explained that this research leads towards the audience and actors more often experiencing the *Moments of Transcendence* and that this enquiry is closely linked to Maslow's (1969) theory of 'self-actualisation'. Maslow (1997) illuminates that the hierarchy of needs and places self-actualisation at the very top of the pyramid, where the state of self-actualisation represents a person realising their individual potential. Maslow (1997) explains that transcendent experiences support Self-Actualisation. Self-actualisation, however, does not happen often. He categorised the moments of self-actualisation into 'Peak Experience' and 'Peak Performance' states. He elucidated that transcendent experiences could happen to anyone; they are often not mystical and do not require a person to be 'self-actualised'; rather, they initiate a deeper and often memorable experience in a person's life.

Peak Experiences are often likened to a moment of pure joy and elation. Privette (2001) observes that they involve a heightened sense of wonder, awe, or ecstasy. Peak experience has resonance with the findings of my research, a state of *Deep Presence*, however, the phenomenon does not only encompass the experience of awe or wonder. My theory is founded on the concept of incongruity; therefore, it deals with triggers that bring on profound sensations of disturbance and cause accommodation of previously built systems of beliefs. Therefore, some of the experiences do not fit with the experiences described by Maslow's (1997) theory. I will explain this further in Chapter 5, how juxtaposing triggers that ensue 'Awe' and 'Disturbance' simultaneously create the state of *Deep Presence*.

The second phenomenon discovered by Maslow (1997) was Peak Performance, which is realised through actions. He asserts that a person might sense a moment of self-actualisation or an instance of the fulfilment of their potential in the middle of an athletic activity or in the creative act of performance. Peak performance bears many similarities to the description of the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) and draws many similarities to what I termed a *State of Becoming* as a definition of a state of a performing actor during a *Moment of*

*Transcendence*. This state has a profound spiritual dimension, which I will analyse in Chapter 9.

### **Summary:**

This Chapter encompasses an academic literature review that identifies the gap in experiential, practically driven research enquiries. The conceptual framework of this research encompasses the experiential and practical understanding behind the main concepts in this research. These are the foundations of the three stages of the CITE model that this research instigated. It explains that I am thinking of imagination from the point view of Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Bachelard (1971), Coleridge's (1817) and Grainger's (2008) term of 'suspension of disbelief', contract process with a foundation in Kennel's (1999) 'joke transaction' theory and Fischer-Lichte (2008) term of an 'autopoietic feedback loop' which is the foundation of the *Tuning* process for the audience. I explained the construct of the *World of Imagination* based on the understanding that imagination is an active part of consciousness. I also outlined the Incongruity theory and theories of disturbance through schema incongruity (Taylor and Uchida, 2019). I also explained the understanding of Maslow's (1997) transcendent experiences of peak experience and peak performance, which are the foundations for *Deep Presence* and the *State of Becoming* that take place during transcendence. Based on these concepts, I created a framework for this original research when analysing the phenomenon from the experiential perspective. I then explained the web of connections between these concepts and how they create a foundational framework for the *three-stage model of CITE*. A new framework creates the need for a new methodology, so I went on to examine how to create a new practice to reflect this pedagogical need.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter outlines this research's aims, methodology, and methods based on social constructivism with a socio-phenomenological approach. This enquiry's foundation lies in the researcher's practical experience. The lack of academic literature, as outlined in Chapter 2, and the contrasting wealth of experiential knowledge necessitated an experienced practitioner/researcher enquiry within rehearsal and live performance environments with audience's and in-depth actors' and experts' data. This chapter also outlines the three phases of the research, the methods used, and the ethics enacted.

The methodology of this research is based on the qualitative Social Constructionism paradigm. Cohen et al. (2018: 23) explain that "Social Constructionism places importance on how people collectively construct the phenomena and understand their social world". This research uses the socio-phenomenological approach and is grounded in socio-phenomenological enquiry. The primary questions of this research are directed towards phenomenological materials: they are focused on people's experiential understanding. I investigate the 'object of concern' (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2012) through the 'experiential claims' of the participants. Moran (2000) observes that phenomenology seeks to reveal what is perhaps hidden by the entity's mode of appearing. The research investigates what is latent or disguised and what could show itself in a particular mode (Smith et al., 2012: 24). The complexity and difficulty of capturing such phenomenon directed me towards subjective, real-life descriptions of the phenomenon, which create a richer understanding of its vitality and unpredictability. This enquiry responded to the limitations of the current academic literature and concentrated on illuminating insights about the phenomenon of transcendent moments.

The lack of academic writing about the topic prompted me to seek various methods to qualify the many-faceted nature of the phenomenon. Phenomenology felt like the most suitable approach as it required me to search for subjective, real-life descriptions of the experience. I wanted to investigate things as they are. Husserl (1927) advocated the return to looking at things as they really are without existing preconceptions. Conrad (1987) considered that phenomenology's function is to research the immediate experience and the insider's perspective.

## Phenomenological approach in practice-based research

As a practitioner, I realised that the phenomenological approach is the most suited for research that is based on my practice, which is why I have built this thesis on the original research I have conducted with practitioners. I am recognising that the artist in performance is the most valuable source of evidence for how to create the moments of transcendence. This research investigates the phenomenon through its observers (audience - outside perspective) but also through the 'doers' (actors- inside perspective). This methodology captures meaning in actions and interactions in social and cultural situatedness, which fits so well with my professional and research context. Kierney (2015: 98) asserts that "the phenomenological nature of an enquiry requires that the participants' exact words are used in the analysis of the enquiry". I observed the wealth of this phenomenological enquiry in the interviews and concurred that the words of the participants and the nuances they expressed are the most crucial in capturing the phenomenon's essence.

This thesis, therefore, is built on the premise that incorporating the interviewed voices is the best method to generate authenticity and truthfulness when considering the analysis. I will bring many of these voices to strengthen my argument and also demonstrate that the *Moments of Transcendence* have many aspects, qualities, and layers. I will sometimes use longer extracts from the interviews when the experts or participants tell a story or an anecdote, often speaking through metaphors, poetry, images, and footage of the performance to make a point in the most suitable language for theatre, through a theatrical language of metaphors, images, and sensations. These quotations are an invaluable source of 'catching' the many-faceted and ephemeral nature of the phenomenon in the Husserlian tradition of seeing 'things as they really are'.

At this point, it is also important to discuss the dynamics of 'catching' of the practice and the relationship between creative practice and theory. In theatre and performance studies, there are currently many debates about the nature of this relationship which is investigated in Practice as Research (PAR) enquiries. The issue for these debates is based in finding the type of methodology that does not follow traditional research demands but expresses and incorporates the 'disorderliness' of creative process into the research. Trimmingham (2002)

offers the ‘spiral model’ as understanding how the theory and practice envelops each other and demonstrates how the research itself develops within this confined structure. She explains that in that three-dimensional model, the spiral represents on one level the circular mode of investigation intertwined with analysis as well as once one circle is completed, another one is initiated as progression. In that mode, Trimmingham (2002: 56) claims ‘as one part of understanding changes, the whole changes too’. This model elicited deeper understanding of my own experience as a researcher and an artist. I found the image of the spiral relatable to my own experience of being in practice and then investigating as a researcher. Once I understood a certain stage or element of the phenomenon during my research, it felt like a circle, or a plane has been completed and I needed to ‘rewind’ or ‘fast-forward’ to other elements and adjust them accordingly to the newest discovery. The three-dimensional spiral model supports the understanding how this research is held together. The spiral causes structural entanglement between the theory and the practice, entry and exit points as well as developmental structure.

### **3.1 Aims, research questions and purposes.**

#### **Aims**

This research's four main aims encompass the experiencing, the conditions, the construction, and the pedagogy of creating the phenomenon.

The first aim is to explore and establish how the *Moments of Transcendence* are experienced by the audience and the creatives during rehearsals and performances and to gather the evidence in real-life circumstances of the practical research.

The second aim is to determine the specific conditions for the phenomenon to occur. This aim intends to establish the variable and non-variable conditions experienced by the audience, the actors, and the director in order to establish the phenomenon.

The third aim is to generate experiential knowledge of how the phenomenon is constructed in rehearsals and re-constructed in performance with the audience and what its elements are.

The fourth aim is to translate the knowledge from the experts, the director, and the gathered knowledge from rehearsals to create a pedagogy of the moments.

## **The research questions:**

My main research question was:

How are the *Moments of Transcendence* created in devised theatre?

My subsidiary research questions were:

1. What are the specific conditions for the phenomenon to take place?
  - a. How do people experience the transcendent moments in devised theatre?
  - b. How do people describe specific conditions when the phenomenon occurs?
2. What are the elements that construct the phenomenon, and how do they interact with each other?
  - a. How do actors and creators of devised theatre describe and analyse the elements of the phenomenon?

The research questions established the thesis' boundaries of what is being investigated in a concrete and specific way. Cohen et al. (2018: 165) indicate that "framing the research questions focuses, centres, steers and shapes the entire research". My analogy of primary and subsidiary to a scaffold echoes Cohen et al.'s (2018) assertion that the primary questions seem to create an overarching structure that gives freedom for incorporating main findings from academic literature and data collection and leaves space for more focused secondary questions. In this case, the questions' main purpose was to investigate the correlation of the pedagogy of the actor training in rehearsals, the bond between actors, the bond with the audience and the experience of incongruity and transcendence.

## **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research was to explore the possibility of transcendence of the audience members and find ways to construct, stabilise, and enable more frequent, scientific, and organised construction of the phenomenon. This possibility was explored by a thorough investigation of a personal, phenomenological experience and understanding of the audiences', performers', experts', and director's perception of the transcendent moments in devised performances, as well as building the broader professional community's knowledge of how the phenomenon and the interplay between the elements were constructed. There is evidence of partial knowledge about the transcendent moments and their constructs in the current conservatoire and university-led actor training (BA Acting, Rose Bruford: 2019, Acting and BA in Collaborative and Devised Theatre at Central School of Speech and



Drama: 2019). The additional purpose of this thesis was to establish a unified approach to devised actor training by creating a pedagogy of constructing the moments in rehearsals and re-creating them in performance with the audience. It also aims to contribute to new knowledge about the phenomenon in the actor training, devising, and making domain that will help acting students, actors, directors, devisers, and teachers of drama recognise their creative strength, inspire their imagination, and understand the value of shared creative experience and pedagogical findings explored here. The values of communal unity, pleasure, play and well-being of actors and students are the foundation of this research and, therefore, carry the values of enrichment and inclusivity in people's lives.

## 3.2 Ephemerality

### **Ephemeral and oblique for a reason**

Shon (2011) suggests that the mechanism of discoveries cannot be only investigated in a traditional, intellectual way but needs to emulate our physical and emotional alterability. With a phenomenon that is not static, another way of thinking needs to be involved. In Theatre and Art disciplines, the more closely we look, the less we see; the more oblique and non-frontal in our seeing, the more we can sense and understand. When this complexity of sensing is dissected without holding onto the various vital inter-relations within the phenomenon, it loses its unique essence. The difficulty with precision needs not to be underestimated but affirmed as one of the qualities defining the phenomenon. Therefore, the design of this empirical enquiry has an exploratory nature (Gray, 2009) and will result in conclusive theoretical considerations. I tested a theoretical model of hypotheses with my data. More accurately, I used a socio-phenomenological approach to generate theoretical/conceptual insights for future studies. The socio-phenomenological enquiry posits that people interpret signals through actions. The researchers further interpret these interpretations. Burnard et al. (2018) explain that we, as researching professionals, need to look for that shared and generalised sense-making. These generalised sense structures can be characterised as 'objective' in qualitative enquiries with the phenomenological understanding that there is no 'objective' facticity; as such, there is only the subjective understanding of consciousness and sense-making. The socio-phenomenological enquiry is not a description of prominent or visible facts. The *Moments of Transcendence* are obtuse for a reason, because of their complexity, as they are not static. Thomas' (2014: 3-4) proposition of a

hunch, intuition and “moving through a maze of confluences of circumstantial evidence, through a curious juxtaposition of events” is aligned with the need for the metaphorical language (Gaulier: 2012) that exists in my professional practice. The interpretation in the research was attained through what Bolt (2011) frames as Double Articulation, Heidegger (1966) as Handleability and Carter (2004) as ‘Material Thinking’. The interpretation of data encapsulates a search through metaphors that expand our vocabulary and instigate our comprehension to be more embodied. The ephemerality and elusiveness of the phenomenon is always in the foreground of my thinking in this research.

### **3.3 The methods and the design**

This research consisted of Three Phases: Semi-Structured Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (SSI) interviews with experts from devised theatre, filmed recordings, researcher's notes, and Stimulated Recall Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis interviews (SRI) with actors during rehearsals period and filmed recordings, Stimulated Recall Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis interviews (SRI) with actors and audiences during the performance phase stage.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an experiential, qualitative methodology that explores how individuals experience the world or the phenomena around them. It is centred on experience of the individual who interprets their experience through their senses.

I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Interviews, which were 45-90 min long and semi-structured. The interviews sought to find the individual interpretation and their own definition of what they sense. The semi-structured IPA interviews are the best method to scope the experiential knowledge in the way that is rigorous, as all the participants answer the same questions, and at the same time the questions are open-ended to generate different angles for interpretation from the individuals. Cohen et al. (2011: 512) suggests that in semi-structured interviews with a few set questions “the interviewer should prompt and probe, pressing for clarity and elucidation, rephrasing and summarising where necessary and checking for confirmation of his/her understanding of the issue, particularly if the issues are complex or vague”. The interviewer can then follow the perspective and direction of the participant. The semi-structured interviews bring therefore a wealth and richness of data. In my research, the interviews with ten experts from the devised theatre domain were audio-

recorded. Moreover, I used observation as a phenomenological method for this research, and had the rehearsals recorded on camera. I kept my research diary and carried out systematic, in-person observation over three weeks of rehearsals and two weeks of public performances. I combined the Stimulated Recall Method (SRM) interviews with the IPA interviews during Phase 2 and Phase 3 which I called Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRI), where I interviewed three actors from the company and ten audience members. This research design was founded to reflect the participants' experiential knowledge role at each enquiry stage.

There were three different, purposefully sampled groups: the experts of devised theatre, the performers and creatives, and the informed-devised theatre audience. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that purposive sampling is used to access 'knowledgeable people' and that 'there is little benefit in seeking a random sample when most of the random sample may be largely ignorant of particular issues or unable to comment on the matter of interest to the researcher' (2018: 219). Therefore, the participants of this research held a unique function at each phase in the research design. The purpose of these functions was constructed to mirror the participants' role when creating any performance: the theatre experts' experiential knowledge was used to establish the main concepts and framework for this research; the actors and creatives pointed me towards a deeper understanding of the process governing the making of the show; the actors and the audience function was to share the immediate experience after playing the live shows.

## The Design

Phase	Instrument	Participant	Researcher
Phase 1 Interviews	IPA interview	10 Experts	Reflective journal//diary/notes
Phase 2 Rehearsals Tiger Lady	SRM	3 Actors	
	Recordings	Researcher	
	Observations	Researcher	

<b>Phase 3</b>  <b>Premiere and Performances of Tiger Lady</b>	<b>SRM</b>	<b>10 Audience members</b>	
	<b>SRM</b>	<b>3 Actors</b>	
	<b>Recordings</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	
	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	

Figure 2 The three phases of the research.

## Phase 1

In Phase 1, the function of the experts was to provide a structure by which the experience could be investigated. I chose ten participants because of their practical expertise and status as experts in the field. The participants of this enquiry were a homogenous, purposively sampled group of devised theatre practitioners, actors, directors, and creatives who shared the same training tradition. Yardley (2000: 217) explains the principle of sensitivity to context as “choosing purposive samples of participants who share a particular lived experience and sustained engagement”. They shared their perception of the experience of transcendent moments and how they experienced its construction in the professional domain. The data collected from the interviews enabled me to verify and alter secondary questions utilised in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of this research.

## Phase 2

In Phase 2 (the rehearsal stage), the participants' group consisted of three actors from the rehearsing company, the researcher (myself), and the project's artistic director. The participants were selected randomly from the group of six professional actors participating in the show's making. The function of the participants was to share their immediate experience of the phenomenon and insights from the world of creating.

## Phase 3

In Phase 3 (the performance phase), the research continued with the insider perspective, but in altered circumstances, when the sharing with the audience happens. This is a significant change as the phenomenon extends between the audience and the actors, and the circumstances of who is in control or the role of different constructs may come to the forefront. This phase also investigates the outsider perspective of the phenomenon. A homogeneous, purposefully sampled group of ten audience members was used for the

stimulated recall method (SRM) interviews (five on each night of the performance). The only criterion on which the participants were chosen was their knowledge of devised theatre. This outsider perspective also enabled me to explore the role of the audience in creating the transcendent moment and evaluate if it can change to an insider position as the bond is created that perhaps enables the phenomenon to occur.

### **3.3.a The analysis of the three phases of the research**

#### **Professional expertise, appropriateness of sampling and supervisor mentorship**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) clarify that validity in qualitative research is sought in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Yardley (2000) includes the imperatives of sensitivity to context and fidelity. This qualitative, small-scale research centred on in-depth data and fidelity to the process. The in-depth data was ensured by the amount and quality of data from the interviews, recordings, stimulated recall interviews and diary notes throughout the enquiry. The fidelity was ensured by a test interview with my supervisor at each interview phase, where I would check for the purposefulness of the semi-structured interview questions and my interview process. There was also an initial triangulation of analysis of the first and second levels of coding with my supervisor. The other method to ensure fidelity was the process of my self-reflective diaries throughout the research.

#### **Phase 1**

Phase 1 demonstrated the research's purpose of identifying how the phenomenon was perceived professionally. I conducted 10 IPA semi-structured, face-to-face, audio-recorded (45-90 min each) interviews. The number was ample for the IPA method, as Smith et al. (2012) indicate that three to six participants and a novice researcher can be overwhelmed by the amount of data generated. However, that number, I anticipated, would enable me to generate extensive and in-depth data. This research carried a large amount of data that came all together from 26 interviews, a personal journal, three weeks of rehearsal recordings, and recordings of performances. The interviews took time to be transcribed, analysed, and systematised into pattern constructs and then re-analysed from different angles.

This enquiry was consigned to experiential, interpretative activity that demanded rich data, thick description (Geertz,1973), and rich, content-bound socially situated data. Geertz's (1973) 'thick description' is a term that characterizes in-depth observations of the participants on their experience of actions or phenomena in relation to themselves and others. The findings are a result of the analysis of the materials, concepts, or persons, that of what was 'thickly described'. Saldana (2016) recommends two-level coding that begins through various open coding techniques and advances to the second level (axial or pattern coding), followed by theorising strategies. As a researching professional grounded in a phenomenological stance, I was committed to examining 'the thing itself', and even though there is no single prescribed method of data analysis in phenomenological enquiry, there is the principle of commitment to the understanding of the participant experience and a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in a particular context' (Smith et al., 2012: 79). I, therefore, followed the IPA methodology, which, as Smith et al. (2012) indicate, has its processes. Smith et al. (2012) produced a comprehensive step-by-step method for transcribing and coding the IPA interviews for research professionals (2012: 79-106):

1. *Reading and re-reading of the transcript.*
2. *Initial noting with a clear phenomenological focus. This step contains descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual noting, and it can be compared to the first level of coding (Saldana: 2016).*
3. *Development of emergent themes.*
4. *Searching for connection across emergent themes (such as abstraction, subsumption, polarization).*
5. *Moving on to the subsequent cases.*
6. *Looking for themes or patterns across cases. Saldana (2016: 244) focuses on the second level of coding here through axial coding.*
7. *Levels of interpretation.*

In the initial analysis stage, I employed an equivalent of two-stage coding to interpret the data from the research instruments. Interviews were transcribed and used as the basis for narrative analysis. Data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously as the constant comparison method was used to establish the emerging themes and constructs.

I decided to work through the data by myself as in some qualitative research data collection, the understanding of the self-reflexive professional is more valuable and discerning.

Researching further the phenomenological enquiry methodology, I understood that the citations of interviews are central in making sense and meaning of the interviewed people, and their own words were closer to 'the thing itself', as I pointed out in Chapter 1 than my

rendition of their meaning. Therefore, the unusual for thesis length of the quotations serves as phenomenological evidence of richness and variety in the perception of the many facets of the phenomenon.

This research is embedded in my professional domain of devised theatre, in which I have been involved for over twenty years as a professional director and a teacher. Cohen et al. (2018) indicate that the reliability of the research shows itself through the researcher's ability to demonstrate long-term involvement and being a part of the researched world. As a research professional, I have established trust with each participant working in a professional capacity for over two decades. IPA interviews were the best method to emphasise the focal point of the study because, as Smith et al. (2012: 36) suggest, they provide a vehicle for “personal sense-making of the phenomenon for people who share this particular experience.” Smith et al. (2012: 36) also note that “IPA interviews ... operate on a double Hermeneutics principle” with the researcher aiming to suspend their preconceptions and adopt a “centre grounded position that combines empathy with a questioning” (Smith et al., 2012: 36). I needed, therefore, to undergo a thorough examination of my preconceptions (Smith et al., 2012), and bracket my positioning because the focus is on the experience and sense-making of the participants. Consequently, the first IPA interview was appraised by my doctoral supervisor to support the research’s diligence further. Afterwards, there was an immediate discussion about our respective observations as well as the conduct and the process of the interview. I was frequently double guessing myself, anxious not to 'lead' the interviewees in any way. I feared that I was subconsciously seeking an answer. Dr Edwards-Leis reassured me that my sense of self-reflexivity was present and that I could conduct the interviews independently and confidently. She recommended that I write out the particulars of each interview as the interview is taking place so I can ask additional questions. That was very helpful as it gave an additional angle to each semi-structured interview, keeping them simultaneously on track. Moreover, the supervisory audit process aided transparency and kept a trail during the research.

## **Phase 2**

Phase 2 aimed to investigate the phenomenon from the inside of creation – during rehearsals. It explored the training and rehearsal techniques and how they aid the construction of the

phenomenon. This phase lasted three weeks and consisted of full-time rehearsals with six actors. SRM interviews (45-90 min) took place with three randomly selected company actors. They were professional actors who trained in devised theatre. Their individual and professional experience of the phenomenon was central to the enquiry as they were constructing and, at the same time, witnessing the phenomenon occurrence. The role of the researcher was to co-devise and direct the show collaboratively. At the same time, the researcher (I) kept a self-reflective diary to aid the fidelity of the enquiry.

The rehearsals were observed by filmed recordings and the researcher's diary entries. The method of filmed recordings captured a large amount of in-depth data, triangulated with the researcher's diary, which also aided the process of self-reflexivity and fidelity to the enquiry. Cohen et al. (2018) note that observational data must be acquired from a natural, undisturbed setting with participants speaking on their terms and behaving naturally. This research was based on actors' and directors' professional domains, and the filmed recording was considered part of the natural set of expectations. This part of the research turned out to be unexpectedly revelatory as it produced one of the main findings of the enquiry and led me to a much more explicit focus on the pedagogy of the *three-stage model of Compound Incongruity Trigger Event* and how it is created from the inside of the rehearsals.

There was also a substantial limitation in this phase regarding the sensed interference from the camera. The experience for me was that I felt an extraordinary level of uncomfortableness setting it up and switching it on. It felt like someone was observing us, which created a presence that the actors and I sensed. I sometimes forgot to switch it on, and things would flow slightly freer. What felt uneasy was that this is recorded, documented, and archived as opposite to a free, unobstructed play. I guess I am sensitised to it by my work with Pagneux, who never let her work be recorded. I find that some level of performativity comes out of people. For me, the first immediate sensation of the process being stilted in time as opposed to what should have been passed through time. The feeling of being observed was not helpful to this process. I do not let people watch my rehearsals. This is a space for being vulnerable and open – and when we are not open, it becomes a closed space.

This enquiry proceeded by small-scale research in the field of devising and guided this research method's choice towards the Stimulated Recall Method (SRM). SRM was first used by Bloom (1954), and this research technique has been associated with introspective



information processing, where recall of thoughts can be enhanced by video. Bloom (1954) proposed that the method works very well when shown video or audio recording to 'reactivate or refresh the recollection of cognitive processes so that they can be accurately recalled and verbalised (Gass and Mackey, 2000: 53). Edwards-Leis (2010) also emphasises that the immediacy of the interview after the event, unambiguous instructions for pausing the video replay, straightforward question prompts, and non-directive questioning are central to maximise the validity and reliability of the responses (Edwards-Leis, 2010: 75). I knew that the phenomenon would not occur every day of rehearsals. However, the rehearsals needed to be filmed throughout. The recordings that capture the *Moments of Transcendence* needed to be selected for SRM interviews. For this research, the first stimulated recall method interview was tested on the researcher herself by the supervisor. This was to implement familiarisation with the correct procedure and to fully understand the process from the participants' perspective. It also verified inter-rater validity and transparency through working with my doctoral supervisor. This process helped to determine validity through triangulation of the methods. The inter-rater validity was at 81%-85% and a sample can be found in *Appendix Three*.

There was also a crucial realisation whilst doing a test with my supervisor. I was testing how SRM works on me and realised that I cannot select the moments for the interviews. The selection method was discussed with my supervisor very urgently, right before the first interview with the participant. I realised that if I am seeking data from the participants, I cannot choose the moments for them. The participants must choose themselves. The supervisor agreed, and we re-directed the SMR interviews to give 100% agency to the participants. This was the only authentic way to find out what the participants experienced and if participants experienced the same moments.

One further limitation of this research was already anticipated in my thesis proposal: a very short and intense period where the phenomenon has to be experienced, recorded, located on the tape, and the interview has to be conducted within 48 hours from its occurrence. As rehearsals lasted all day, finding time and energy to work through all the material and schedule the interviews was difficult. The process would benefit from having gaps to accommodate the amount of work. However, having gaps in the rehearsals could mean losing momentum and intensity of the process. I would recommend further studies in this area to find an optimum research process in rehearsals.

### **Phase 3**

This final stage of the research was also a final stage of the performance-making as the creation was shown to the audience. The performance making is not finished as the rehearsals come to an end. In the process of the first performances, audiences play a crucial part in creating the structure of the show. In this phase, I conducted ten more interviews with the audience members and another three interviews with the actors.

There was a limitation to this phase, which I realised after doing the Phase 3 interviews. I had no issue with transcribing and analysing them, but I found the SMR interviews extremely emotionally draining as I felt being completely exposed to the judgement of the audience and the actors. The process of live interviews brought many distressful sensations and feelings because the method felt 'too raw' and too exposing to me as an artist. The anticipation of what the participants said was not a very healthy sensation. Typically, this would be the part that I protect. I think, in hindsight, for the wellbeing of the creatives, it would be recommended that there was someone else who would undertake the interviews. On the other hand, I am not sure if another interviewer would have the depth of knowledge to encourage the participants to be as revealing open and honest as they were with me. It could also have been that the actors and the audience were protective of me as the creative or wanting to engage with me as the artistic director with my depth of experience and understanding rather than with any other interviewer. All these nuances are worth considering as much as for the researcher's wellbeing and in aid to prevent bias or preclude the Hawthorne Effect. However, it is left to further careful consideration of all the options in the future research.

This research also needed to demonstrate ethical practice that adhered to the University Code of Practice (St Mary's University: 2017) and the research guidelines and codes of practice outlined by BERA (2018). The research proposal must be submitted and passed by the University Ethics Committee before the project occurs. The proforma of the participants' consent and anonymity forms were submitted in July 2020 with an outline of the doctoral study and its steps. The main outline of ethical considerations was summarised in the main proposal of the study. The participants were decided to be between 18 and 65 years old. They were informed about the research's main objectives, that the data were kept

confidential, and that they had the right to remain anonymous. Informed consent was gained from all the participants. Ethical practice protects all, and in the instance that I described above, I would welcome the ethics process created for practitioners themselves.

As an academic researcher and representative of a university as an institution, I recognised that the institutions need to protect its researchers as well as those they are researching.

Therefore, a robust ethical process would be needed.

## PART 2

### Chapter 4 The Initial findings of the research

This chapter outlines the difficulties with the nomenclature and formation of the definition of *Moments of Transcendence*. It also presents two perspectives of perception when discussing and analysing the phenomenon. This chapter also specifies and links the footage of the four moments in **Tiger Lady** selected by the participants in its performance.

#### 4.1 *Transcendent Moments - Moments of Transcendence* nomenclature

At the beginning of the research, I decided to call the phenomenon ‘Transcendent Moments’. This term opened a discussion in the theatre experts' semi-structured interviews about whether it was an appropriate nomenclature that would fit the language used in the theatre world. They predominantly advised against using it as a title for my thesis. The word ‘transcendent’ was understood as close to what the experience felt like but argued that it was not wholly satisfactory and suggested that it makes the phenomenon seem 'special' in the meaning of superior. There is a deep suspicion in the devised theatre territory when the terms seem pretentious and are used to serve the author. The resistance came from the sense of importance and sounding 'academic' when using the term. These factors, they purported, undermined this research's credentials in the theatre world. Even today, the theatre is regarded as a high-end cultural experience and sometimes proclaims its significance using weighty terms. The type of theatre I am involved in and the experts from that territory reject that glossy cultural privilege in place of simplicity, honesty, good faith, and work within ‘poor theatre’<sup>2</sup> principles. The theatre experts also questioned the term's closeness to religious associations. Many twentieth-century acting groups with protagonists such as Grotowski and Barba, amongst many others, created a sense of ritual verging on religious rites and a sense of performance being ‘holy’. In certain respects, theatre performance lies

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<sup>2</sup> Poor Theatre term originates from the work of the Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski, (1969) who worked through the principles of abandoning emotional trickery, theatrical gimmicks, theatre lights and pre-recorded sounds in order to capture actor's essence and his human instincts in its most pure expression.

very close to religious and ritual performance. The lack of faith in religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and the cynicism towards religion are confronted by spiritual searching amongst young people. Theatre gives a certain level of spirituality and a sense of belonging to people. The word ‘transcendence’ etymology is “to go up” and “to raise and go over to another world” (Oxford Dictionary, accessed 18.12.2023). The sensation of the otherworldly, often facilitated by shamans in other cultures or by the highest in hierarchies of religious doctrines who helped with having a breakthrough or an ecstasy facilitated by certain substances, is often associated with this nomenclature.

The theatre experts especially hesitated that the association and closeness of the word's meaning would lead us to think in religious terms. This is because theatre and *Transcendent Moments* are closely connected to terms such as *possession*, *becoming*, *theatrical presence*, and transcendence in rituals, similar to transcendent acts in performance. One of the first to acknowledge this was an anthropologist, Turner (1966), who compared the states of transcendence, possession, and becoming in rituals across different cultures and tribes. He investigated the liminality of these experiences and, as an application in theatrical performances, called them ‘liminoid’ experiences. The critical difference between them was that ‘liminal’ ritual states created a lasting change and recognition of the change in society, whereas ‘liminoid’ states created a short-term experience during theatrical spectacles that society did not recognise or acknowledge. Many contemporary theatre practitioners and makers, including me, are uneasy about the association of transcendence as a religious experience. However, theatre is a place for certain forms of spiritual experience. The amount of education and development of the spiritual self when working with the body and emotions in the theatre leads to a better spiritual understanding of the individual and the group. It also means that the spiritual understanding of the self is expanded.

The experts suggested that “moments that touch”, “moments of connection”, and “moments of paradox” (Experts SSI, Barbara, Ben, Michael, Phase 1) would perhaps serve the thesis better at this point. These terms do not embrace the entirety of experiences and the many facets of the phenomenon that surfaced during this research. I needed a word that would carry the moment's weight and lightness, and transcendence combines both worlds for now. However, towards the end of writing this thesis and at the stage when I was re-reading different chapters, I realised that ‘moments of’ as in the above examples, hold the lightness, ephemerality, and transience of the phenomenon much more potently than the declarative,

and rather weighty 'Transcendent Moments'. This was the reason for changing the nomenclature to *Moments of Transcendence*.

## 4.2 Perspectives of Perception

The participants (audience and actors) all pointed to four moments in performance and rehearsals of the **Tiger Lady** where they felt altered or there was some kind of shift whilst experiencing it. Observing that the participants' experience and perception of transcendence vary is crucial. In this research, I was concentrating on analysing any experiences ranging from a sense of shift, alteration, and opening, as well as acquiring a sense of a change of perspective to seeing the world, a sense of overwhelming awe, or outright calling the experience a transcendent one. The range and variety of experiences added to this phenomenological enquiry's richness and helped structure a new 'experienced' definition of all three-stage models of the phenomenon.

This research did not anticipate unanimity of all participants calling on the same four moments in the performance. The opposite is true. As a researcher, I was self-reflexive, considering the participants would point to various moments as they looked from different viewpoints. The fact that ten audience members and three actors specified the same moments in the performance and during the making of the show signifies that these moments diverge from the other aspects of the show. Furthermore, the phenomenon upholds its unique distinctiveness; its veracity is recognisable, and it holds validity.

### 4.2.a Outside - Inside Perspectives

The subsequent finding demonstrated the critical, extensive disparity of how the same phenomenon was described as experienced. The descriptions were expected to be varied and rich; however, a definitive difference in the type of perception was not anticipated. The spectators described the experience 'from the outside': by watching, listening, and perceiving the sensations of what is created in front of them: "A moment in time, it is about being taken somewhere, it is about allowing something in our bodies to switch off and just being taken" (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3). However, the responses from the actors gave a

completely different picture. The actors were focused on what needed to be done rather than how they experienced it. Therefore, the focus was ‘from the inside’ during the creation of the moments for the first time and during performances. They were defining it in terms of working through it:

It is a feeling that you feel in your stomach; it is definitely some sort of emotional and mental state; you cannot put it into words; you all feel the energy, and you feel connected. It is not much talking, but it is much doing, and that is what is for me, and when everyone is in tune and everyone is feeling the same sort of thing, you just push and strive for this moment. (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 3)

The actors' experience was not directed towards the perception of the phenomenon. They were focused on implementing the mechanism at work; once they felt something 'stirring' inside them, they needed to develop it further. There was an active immersion in the moment, what needs to happen between the actors and the structure of the show, and between them and the audience. Their experience of the phenomenon was preoccupied with the body, with sensing. The performers were not observing what kind of effect the phenomenon had on them. The drive was to work through the moment. Therefore, the actors' perspectives are distinctly and understandably different since they are preoccupied with communication and connection to the moments, not perception. This very different nature of experience by actors made me aware that the mechanisms observed ‘from the outside’ still have their foundation in the work constructed in rehearsals, even though it is experienced differently by the makers. I will outline both positionings in the pedagogy of creating the *Moments of Transcendence* in Chapters 7-9, in the pedagogy.

Once the outside-inside perspective was clarified, the experts' interviews in Phase 1 supported and further elucidated the intricacies of the phenomenon. The experts bridged both categories by bringing knowledge from hundreds of hours of making their performances and observing other artists' work. This comprehensive and critical understanding of the phenomenon was then followed by the 'live' research during rehearsals and performances of **Tiger Lady**.

#### **4.2.b Four Transcendent moments in Tiger Lady**

It is crucial to observe that the rich data derived from the research initiated a search for a prototype or a model of the structure of the transcendent moment. This research allowed me

to analyse my experience deeply and how the experts, actors, and audiences sensed and felt it as it happened. The analysis of the moments in **Tiger Lady** in Chapter 6 suggests certain traits of the transcendent experience as identified through the *three-stage model of CITE*, which I created on the basis of this research. I would, however, not aspire to suggest that the show holds four *Transcendent Moments*, only that I was searching with the participants for the mechanisms of their constructions. I would think of them more as moments where transcendent experience is possible. People are affected by different singularities; some need just a specific aspect of the phenomenon to open up or have an experience; others need more. I constructed this *three-stage model of CITE* by analysing what functioned and what did not in each moment selected by the participants. I based it on the experiences of the audiences and actors, the experiential knowledge from the experts, and my own experience. This *three-stage model of CITE* is the original, first approximation of the structure of the phenomenon that is ephemeral, cantankerous, and elusive and is governed by its own logic.

The section below identifies four moments during the performance of **Tiger Lady** where the audience felt a shift of emotions, a sudden opening, or an experience of transcendence. All the analysis is accompanied by short links to the recordings from the performance and photographs. The show was first performed at St Mary's University Theatre (22<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021) Greenwich Theatre (28<sup>th</sup> September 2021). All the photography and recordings are from the Canada tour in August 2023.

In *Appendix Two*, the reader will find the whole recording of the performance with press reviews, reviews from the audience, information about the company and a link to the website.



## 4.3 Four Moments from Tiger Lady's performance

### 4.3.a The Train Sequence –

<https://vimeo.com/906717558/1e9ad87e5a?share=copy>

*Recordings 2 The Train Sequence*

“Magic transition into the world” (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3)

This moment has the visual and aural function of bringing the audience into the world of imagination.

The show begins with the protagonist (Mabel) remembering her humble past in America at the beginning of the century. From the protagonist’s narration, we are led by an old-time music number to see the workers dismantling the circus in a silent movie style, then building the train and her jumping on top of the train. Then, the image and set-up come to an abrupt halt with the train and the band set up – with one performer imitating the sound of the train with a beatbox. The sudden stop is followed by a band singing a country song.  
(Director’s/ Researcher’s notes)



*Photograph 3 Opening scene of Tiger Lady, contrasting with the rush of following The Train Sequence source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.*



Photograph 4 Mabel running after the circus train source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023



Photograph 5 20's silent films slapstick, source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023





Photograph 6 (continuation of the routine) source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023



Photograph 7 (continuation of the routine) source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023



Photograph 8 Mabel jumping onto the train (continuation of the routine) source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023



Photograph 9 settling down to the rhythm of the train, Mabel trapped in the tiger's wagon source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.

The set-up of a show has many functions, such as an introduction to the characters and an introduction to the themes, place, time, and plot, but for this research purpose, I would like to focus on bringing people into the world of the play. (Director's/ Researcher's notes)

### 4.3.b The Ocean Moment

<https://vimeo.com/906726656/fc7a2bf06a?share=copy>

*Recordings 3 The Ocean Moment*

The scene starts very gently, where we see the chorus working the thin material of a white parachute to create the waves touching the beach. It is done very softly, delicately, and simply. The focus is on the first waves and the music. Then bigger waves come to play, and suddenly, we are enveloped by enormous waves with quite epic music on top of the ocean music (Director's/ Researcher's notes).



*Photograph 10 Big waves with Rajah source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.*





Photograph 11(continued) Source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.



Photograph 12(continued) Source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.

It was important that the scene seemed very delicate at first. Delicate and simple, slowly growing in size, rhythm, and music, it builds and overtakes like the waves that crash on us in the last moment. I felt that I had built a suddenly different reality by the smallness and nuance. It is a very delicate scene, the simplicity of it, the parachute simplicity – the breaking waves. The important thing is the detail, the smallness of it at the start, a few little waves, but it builds and builds and then suddenly overtakes...  
(Director's/Researcher's notes)

### 4.3.c The Elephant

<https://vimeo.com/906718086/87ef9aceda?share=copy>

Recordings 4 The Elephant Moment

The elephant appears from nowhere - on the floor. A large parachute is 'wafted' by the audience and the actors around the stage, and an elephant in enormous shape appears on stage. It interacts momentarily and then disappears on the count of three by the performers dismantling the parachute. (Director's/ Researcher's notes)



Photograph 13 Elephant being created source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023



Photograph 14 continued source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.

Function visual – exaggerated- intriguing suspense. The elephant has an exaggerated visual function. I wanted to create that visually spectacular moment because I knew there was a possibility. I consciously wanted to create an exaggerated sudden moment that would surprise me. I played with this big, light, white parachute in a previous production. It had so many possibilities and images hidden in it, so I went on an adventure with our designer Tina Bicât (Director’s/Researcher’s notes)

#### 4.3.d The Ladders Progression

<https://vimeo.com/906719196/d5d4247501?share=copy>

*Recordings 5 The Ladders Progression*

“Tornado of ladders” (Audience SRI, Adam, Phase 3)

The ladders’ sequence is repeated three times in the show. It starts with the ladders moving slightly on their sides, tilting, being lifted, and spinning around Mabel, to being lifted in the air by thin wires, spanned by the chorus with one finger, and then left alone to spin around the main character. The actors move around the ladders, and Mabel continually balances and unbalances the stage- they are in a state of risk as the heavy ladders are spinning fast around them. (Director’s /Researcher’s notes)

In this show, I built up a crescendo leading towards the final moment. For the final moment to occur, the phenomenon's structure needs to be complex. I used layers, repetition, counterbalance, progressive involvement of the whole body in movement, silence and stillness as contra-point and incongruity. (Director’s/Researcher’s notes)





Photograph 15 Beginning of the Ladders' progression, source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.



Photograph 16 Lifting of the ladders source, © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.

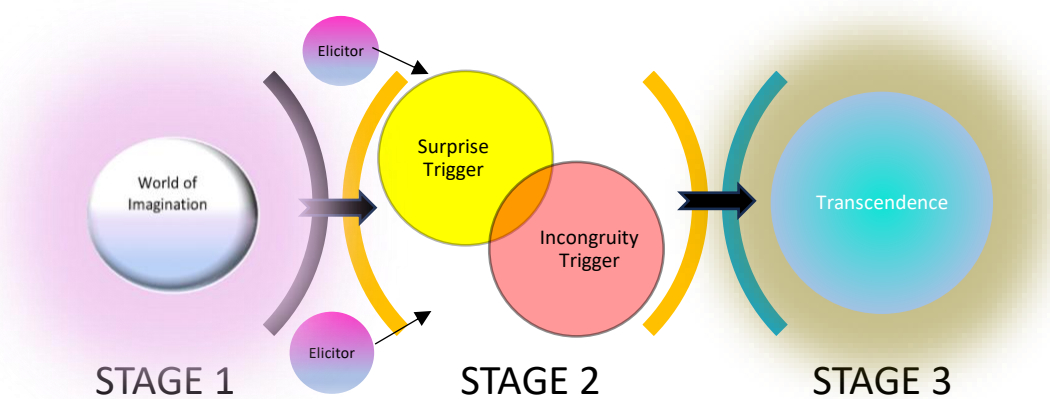


Photograph 17 Final moments of the Ladder's progression source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2023.

These four moments identified by the audience members and the actors create an outline of the structure of the process of creating the *three-stage model* of the phenomenon.

## Chapter 5 Structure of the phenomenon

This chapter defines the *three-stage model of CITE* and explains how each stage determines the emergence of the next one. First, I explain STAGE 1 of the phenomenon as entering the *World of Imagination*, and next, I demarcate the structure of STAGE 2 and the elements that establish the *Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*. I will identify and explain the observed mechanisms that generate *CITE*. Lastly, I will explain STAGE 3 and the three types of transcendence depending on the type of *CITE* Trigger used.



*Imaginative Wondering 1 Outline of the three phases of the phenomenon.*

The analysis of the *three-stage model of Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)* was conducted on the findings from the audience interviews with additional input from the experts and my own experiential knowledge as a theatre director and a pedagogue. The leading idea behind generating this model is that the performance and the *Moments of Transcendence* are crucially created for the audience. Therefore, the audience's perceived (the outsider's) view of the event is the main indicator and leads the process of generating the theory of how the phenomenon is perceived and experienced. My directorial view and the devised theatre experts' views have a supportive and enriching function and further discern the intricacies of the *Moments of Transcendence*.

## 5.1 STAGE 1 Entering the *World of Imagination*

STAGE 1 of the phenomenon was experienced as “entering the threshold of the world of imagination” (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3). The audience commented on the sensations of “going into the imaginary world” (Audience SRI, Nigel, Phase 3), or “being invited” (Audience, SRI, John, Phase 3), “on a cusp between the reality and the imaginary world” (Audience, SRI, Anna, Phase 3). The experts also added that this stage was “drawing people into the state of dreaming, fantasy, suspended disbelief and wondering” (Expert SSR, Barbara, Phase1). These experiences were described in varied and distinctive manners, illustrating the highly individualised sensations while experiencing the transcendent moments.

However, I would like to concentrate on the physical sensation that the spectators observed, as this was the most unifying response from all participants at that stage. First, they notice being jolted back into the instance of being in the experience; they talked about sensations of “hair raising” (Audience SRI, Adam, Phase 3), “being lifted” (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3), “hovering on the edge of a precipice” (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1), “that everything is going up” (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1). They described sensations of going up: being weightless, engrossed in something, drawn into something, is comparable to an out-of-body experience. However, the participants never compared it to that state. Analysing the many responses, I recognised that they were talking about the sensation of crossing into another world; however, the world was within them, in their mind. Whatever they perceived must have stimulated their inner world and, as I propose, the world of their imagination.

The second physical sensation discerned by the audience members was holding one’s breath, described as simultaneously “going up and holding one’s breath” (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1). Bouten, Bourgeois, and Boone (2020) conducted a scientific experiment on holding breath in static conditions and confirmed that the brain initially gets more oxygen in sudden, abrupt breath-holding. This is the brain’s self-protective mechanism in the event of hypoxia. Breathing stops being automatic when we suddenly concentrate on something or when it astonishes us. In that case, there is an indication that when something astounds us, having breath and bringing in the first instance more oxygen would make the brain work more quickly or more efficiently on the puzzle that just gave us the jolt. The sensations of going

up, being on a threshold, and holding one's breath are not only visual and aural experiences but also emotional, intellectual, and, most crucially, physical openings towards the phenomenon. The audience viscerally enters the world of their and the creatives' imagination.

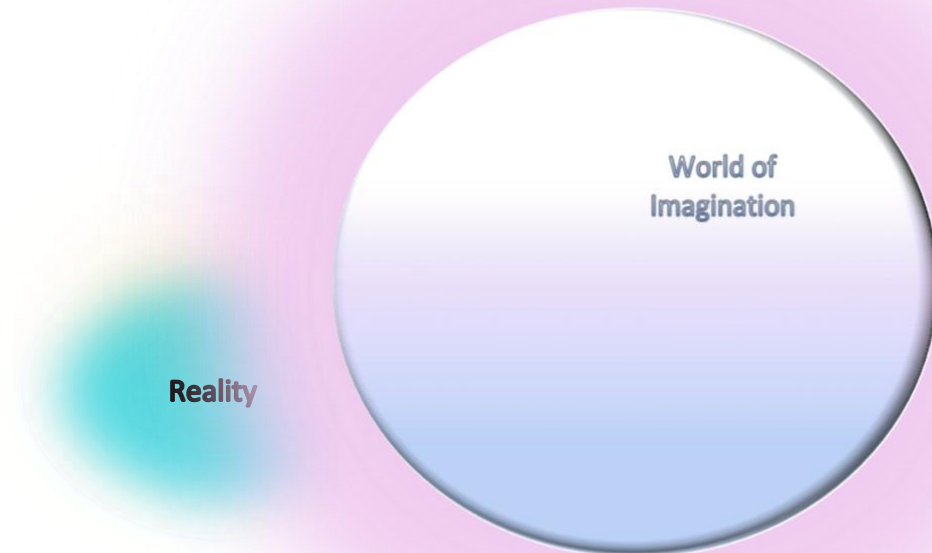
Moreover, the word 'entering' as 'entering the world of imagination' is a present participle that connotes a certain temporal and spatial passage pointing towards the journey into the *World of Imagination*, but also being between the worlds as oscillating between the reality and imaginary world. The state of 'entering the world of imagination' is a little blurry and ephemeral, reflecting the phenomenon's ambiguity. I, therefore, examined that state of 'entering' a little further.

## **Three states when entering STAGE 1**

This research identified three states of STAGE 1: The phenomenon's attribute of drawing the observer into the *World of Imagination* by being completely immersed in the world of fantasy; second, the perception of oscillating between reality and fantasy; and third, an acute awareness of being in two worlds at the same time. I investigated these three states of STAGE 1 further as they provide vital clues for the sensations of transcendence and deep presence.



### 5.1.a Being immersed in the fantasy.



*Imaginative Wondering 2 Reality is completely forgotten by being immersed in the World of Imagination*

The first of the states was established as an experience of being in the world of fantasy that the theatre makers create. The audience and their imagination are completely immersed in that world. One audience member observed: “You slip into a different world, and you forget you are watching a piece of theatre’ (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3). This state curiously was described as “being instantly in the world of fantasy” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3) and felt as “suddenly pull into a world of imagination” (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3). The suddenness of being pulled into the world of imagination must be a factor that makes the spectators deeply immersed in fantasy. Another audience member observed a similar deep experience of being transported into the imaginary world:

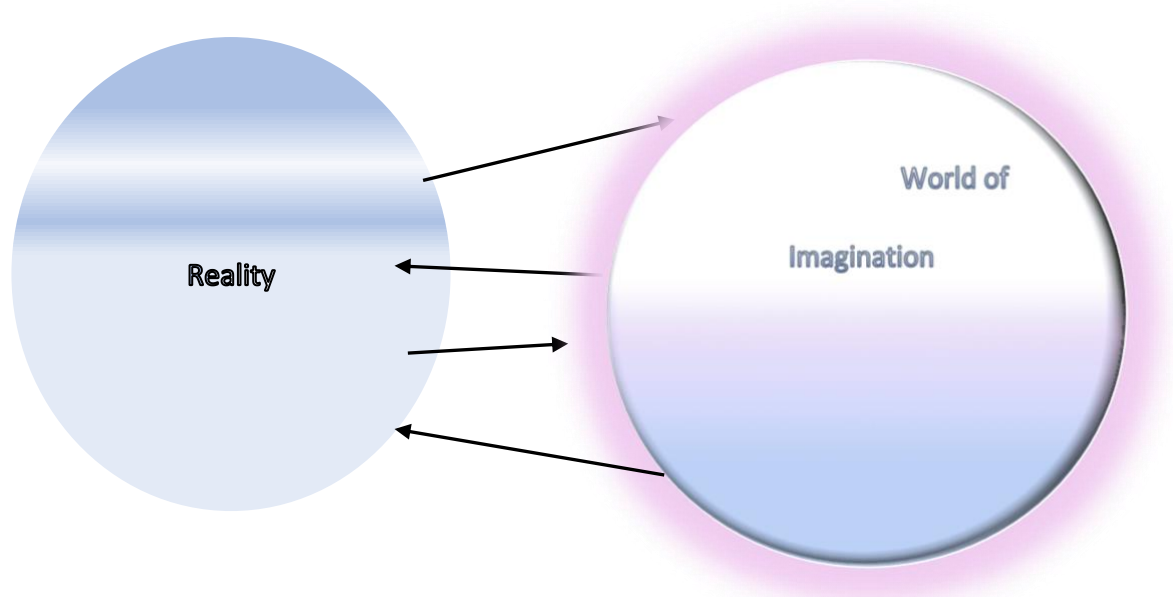
(This moment - The Train sequence) put me in a very happy place; I was transported into that world that is obvious, that is not contemporary. That is something with a bit of nostalgia in a good way; this is not specific in time (Audience SRI, Nigel, Phase 3).

The audience member found themselves in the imaginary world, this time through the prism of their childhood memories and collective memory. He used the word nostalgia in the sense of longing for what is lost with time, but he is also unequivocal that he meant it in a ‘happy

sense'. He suggests that the sense of nostalgia was experienced not only in historical terms of what is lost in time but more in re-watching the sequence as one watched it as a child, which activates longing for the feeling from and of childhood itself.

The world of imagination is a first step in going towards transcendence. It is an initiation of memories and associations, dream-like states. A quote from the audience member: "I am instantly in the world of the circus, and I think it is magical" (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3) clearly indicates that the audience's imagination is activated, becomes dominant, and enters a different world. It is worth noticing here that they comment only on being in the world of fantasy. STAGE 1 is the activating process where our imagination opens up towards the creators' imagination. It enables the audience to travel into the fusion of memories, associations, imagination, and dreams.

### 5.1.b Oscillation between the worlds

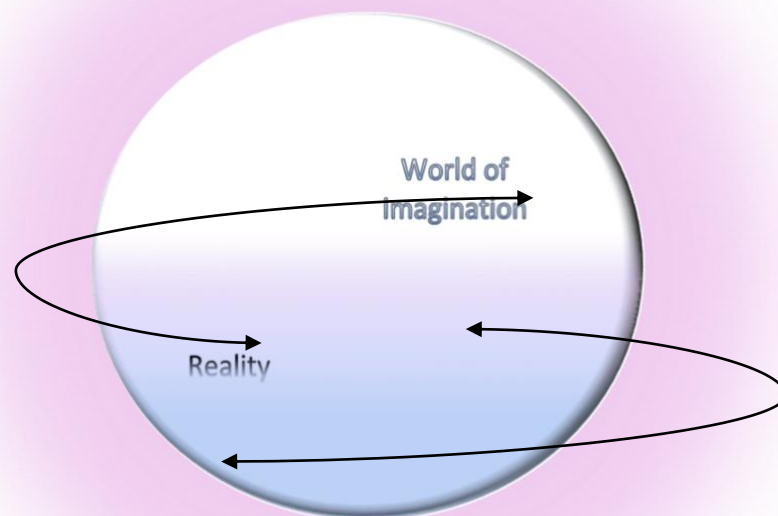


*Imaginative Wondering 3 An audience member's perception oscillates between the World of Imagination and Reality*

The second state was experienced as a process where the attention fluctuates between fantasy and reality in an oscillatory pattern. Once the alternating of attention happens, the audience member realises they are shifting between two worlds. One participant observed a particular system at play: "There are moments where you are almost tricked into the belief of what you are seeing being true" (Audience SRI, John, Phase 3). This audience member asserts

knowledge of that certain mechanism they are involved in. On the one hand, it shows their awareness of the world built in front of his eyes; on the other hand, he expressed his experience of “almost being tricked”, which signifies his awareness of the oscillation between reality and fantasy. He also observes the existence of a certain game being played, causing interactions between the actors and the audience. The audience members see the event, believe in the fantasy, and then begin to see the actor who brings attention to themselves. For example, they may suddenly see the wall of the theatre as real because the actor broke the convention and commented on the wall’s coldness. This remark reveals the awareness of the beginning of the oscillatory processes between the two worlds.

### **5.1.c Soft-open focus - being in both worlds at once.**



*Imaginative Wondering 4 Being in both worlds at once.*

The third state comes with an acute awareness of being in both worlds at once.

The audience member described a state where they:

don't see the theatre lights and where they come from and the electricity they are connected to, you don't see the audience in front of you, and the picture that you are in becomes a little bit blurry, and you can drift into this dream that allows you either fully emerge in emotion or fully emerge in fantasy and it is like you are full... my best word is a dream because I feel like I am in that state there is unclarity of where



things start and when things end and in a way that's the magic of theatre when you forget that you sit there on a little chair... (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3).

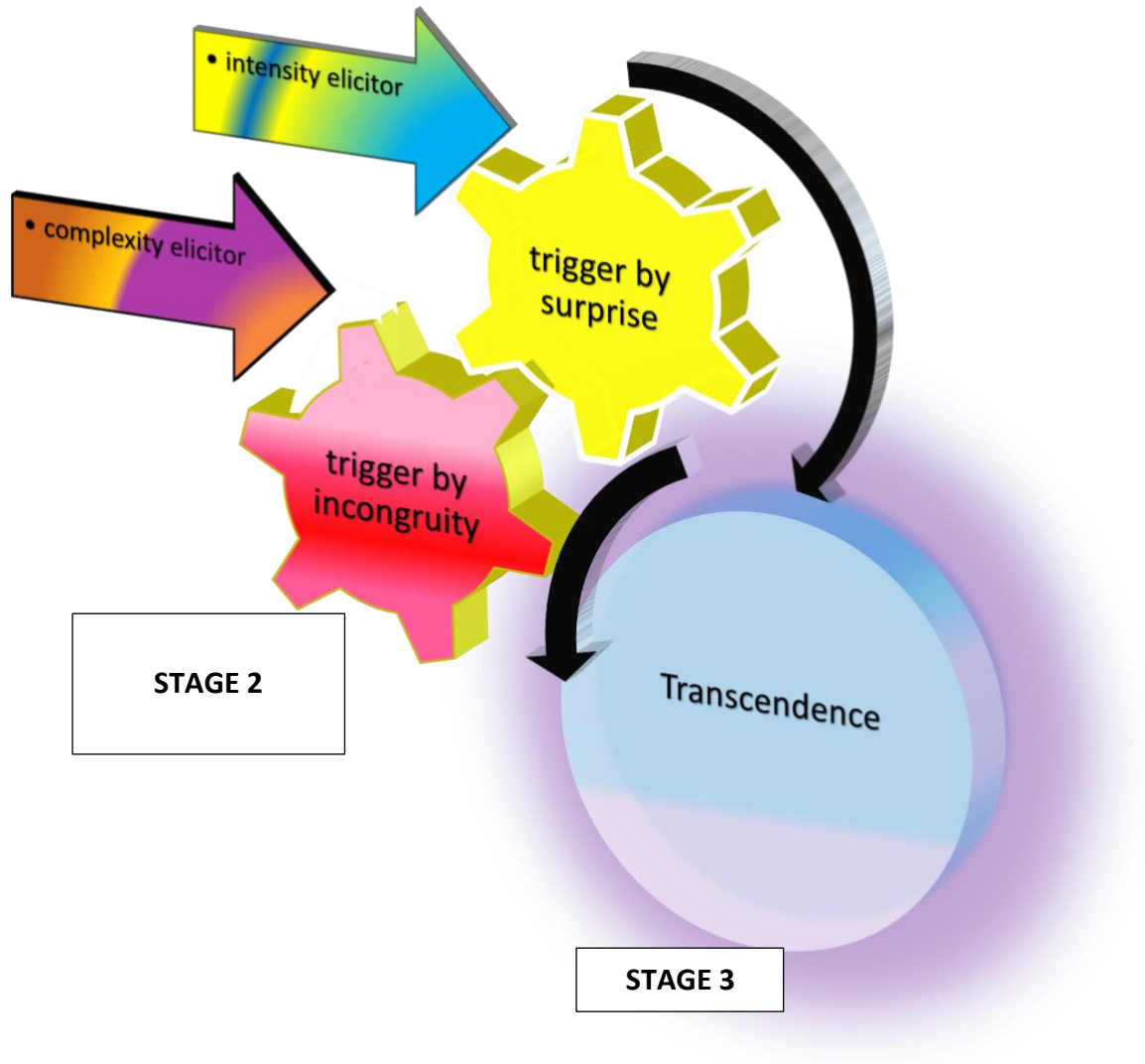
This statement would suggest that the audience member is fully immersed in fantasy; however, there are some clues here that it is a slightly different state of mind. Things become a little blurry, and it is a state of 'unclarity' of the starting and finishing points. It is a state of merging of the two worlds and a state of being at once both worlds. The audience member is highly discerning about the details, the double state of fantasy and herself. Her attention is at once in the real world, with the small, uncomfortable chairs and visible stage lights being suspended at the same time by the blurry edgings of fantasy. In other words, everything on the outside is a little blurry, and this fuzziness is part of that third state; it is being fully enveloped by the sensation, and the senses respond differently than in ordinary circumstances.

What is worth pointing out that even though some of the perception is blurry, another level of consciousness perceives everything from above. The primary functioning is in our consciousness, through being in our imagination, while being acutely aware of reality. Fischer-Lichte (2008: 174) observes that this state of being in two worlds simultaneously destabilises the structure of binary opposites. These moments in the theatre uniquely provide instances where the world is not seen as 'either or and should as well as' (2008: 174). This thesis highlights the importance of destabilising binary opposites and bringing the function of perceiving both realities simultaneously to the front through what I term at STAGE 1 of the phenomenon as a *soft-open focus*. Being in a state of *soft-open focus* is also observed at STAGE 1 by the actors in rehearsals, which I will further discuss in Chapter 7.

In summary, STAGE 1, entering the *World of Imagination*, is characterised by the physical sensation of a jolt or a lift accompanying a sharp inhalation or a short sensation of holding breath. The audience can find themselves suddenly immersed in the world of fantasy, or there is a sensation of oscillating between the real and the unreal. Finally, there is the state of *soft-open focus*, which is having an awareness of being in two worlds at once. The three modes of experiencing the phenomenon are crucial to locate now in preparation for the findings that emerge in STAGE 2 and STAGE 3.

## 5.2 STAGE 2 Initiation of the Triggers

I will now explain the structure of STAGE 2 and the elements that establish the *Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE)*.



*Imaginative Wondering 5 STAGE 2 Compound Incongruity Trigger Event (CITE) elements.*

The interviews with the participants indicated the existence of STAGE 2 of the phenomenon as a “threshold crossed by initiating a trigger” (Audience SSI, Stephen, Phase 3). The audience members, experts and actors described this stage as stepping through “a state of crossing” (Expert SSI, Ben Phase 1), “a threshold” (Expert SSI, Roger, Phase 1), “a portal” (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1), “a doorway” (Audience SRI, Leo, Phase 3), “a glimpse” (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 3), and “a shock factor” (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3). The trigger was observed as a psychological shift of tensions, emotions, and meanings:

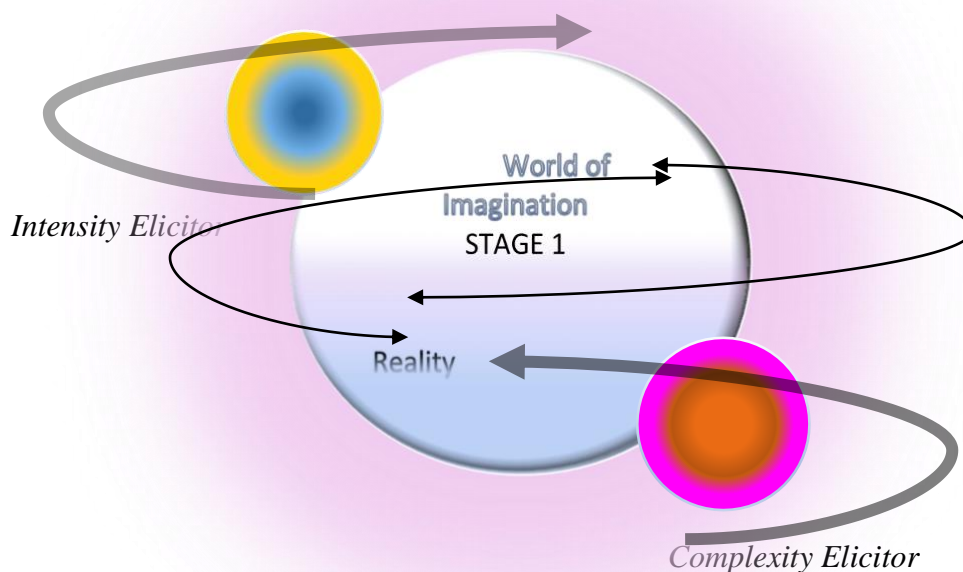
It makes your mind go fuzzy; it makes this overwhelming feeling; it is a shift of tension because the previous scene was sort of happy, and then this scene starts, and it completely shifts, and you are drawn into that, and then the music starts, and you are drawn again, and then the ladders fly, and the chorus moves, and you are just in...(Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3).

The participants viewed this stage as an actioned event, often a trigger or an impulse within a fabric of the performance that consequently generated the experience of transcendence. The trigger point was also experienced as a memorable surprise that is paradoxically anticipated, but at the same time, still disturbing, incongruent and beyond comprehension at the moment of experiencing it. The term ‘a state of crossing’, as participants often described it, also corresponds with the suspended temporality of the event, not unlike the term ‘entering’ at STAGE 1. In both cases, the timeline of events is a little blurry, which is one of the features of the ephemeral nature of the phenomenon.

This enquiry established that STAGE 2 was initiated by two *Fundamental Elicitors of Intensity and Complexity*. They are the fixed constructs built during rehearsals.

My analysis also extended to the finding of what I termed as *Auxiliary Progressive Elicitor*, which is not fundamental to STAGE 2 to progress. Still, because of its recurring and progressive function, it is often used as a leitmotif to enhance the culminating moments of the performance.

## 5.2.a Elicitors



The elicitors' elementary function is to further engage the audience's attention in the *World of Imagination*. The elicitors increase oscillation between the focus points on the stage and between reality and imagination.

The principal function of the *Fundamental Elicitors*, however, is to 'jump-start' STAGE 2 in the event. They are built during the rehearsals, but their crucial function lies during live performances with the audience. The elicitors increase the oscillation and bring the energy up to a threshold point where the triggers can be activated in live performance. The elicitors amplify the sense of suspense in preparation for the *Primary Trigger by Surprise*. The audience members sense that something is about to happen:

It is the anticipation of something happening. I don't quite know, but something is going to happen, and there is something beautiful in the suspense and the build-up of this moment, but I don't think it would have the same impact or magic without this suspense in the way that is played out by the cast, with a script over the top with the music, it is like a crescendo, it is getting there getting there, and then we see it...  
(Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3).

Observing that the suspense is critical to the moment reveals the audience's astute awareness that 'something is happening'. It is central to this research to accentuate the importance of the audience recognising that the suspense is being built in a very considered way by all the factors involved. It is a deliberate, very carefully created in rehearsal structure that needs to be rebuilt in front of the audience every night. Their strength is variable and is dependable on the established process of *Tuning* with the audience, which I explain in Chapter 7, as well as the actors' engagement in elicitors' activation during the performance. The fundamental elicitors of Intensity and Complexity must be fully engaged for the Triggers to generate successful STAGE 2 that leads to STAGE 3.

## ***Fundamental Elicitors***

### ***Intensity Elicitor***

The research demonstrated the necessity of intensification of experience before the trigger is activated. One of the experts commented on the importance of intensity:

We all sat through plays in varied theatres which I will not name in London where we know there will be no transcendent moment, not because of them being bad, although that is also true, but because there is no energy, oh come on man, to be perfectly obvious, this is like sex, you know, something has to happen, and it is human, it is physical (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

The intensification that comes through the performers' bodies carries and strengthens the ensemble and transmits its energy to the audience. The intensification of experience is understood here not only as the increase in speed of action but also as a growing emotional or intellectual intensity of the experience for the actors and the audience members. This force is visceral and visible and often transmitted through rhythm: "There has to be sufficient rhythm because for the transcendent moment to happen, what has to happen is that all our hearts have to beat faster" (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1). The rhythmical, repetitive intensification of energy communicates as physical and emotional sensations. The audience members observed the feeling of visceral extreme aliveness, intensity, and awareness of this amplification. In the Train Sequence ( <https://vimeo.com/906717558/1e9ad87e5a?share=copy> ) the intensity elicitor is the intensification generated by the contrast between the total stillness of the first scene and the sudden commotion of movement, fast rhythm, music, and an amalgamation of images. The elicitor is the starting point of STAGE 2; it is crucial for the performer to find the optimal levels of the intensity elicitor before the triggers can be activated.

### ***Complexity Elicitor***

*Complexity Elicitor* was observed as the second *Fundamental Elicitor*, and it revealed itself through the utilisation of various devices simultaneously: a multitude of images, rhythms, voices, and sounds, with often added intricacy of the narrative just before the trigger. The elicitor creates an intellectual intricacy and emotional instability of the task and complexity in the narrative.

In the Train Sequence shown in the previous paragraph, the *Complexity Elicitor* is the set-up for creating a plethora of movement, images, and slapstick, as well as an intricate connection between visual and aural stimuli:

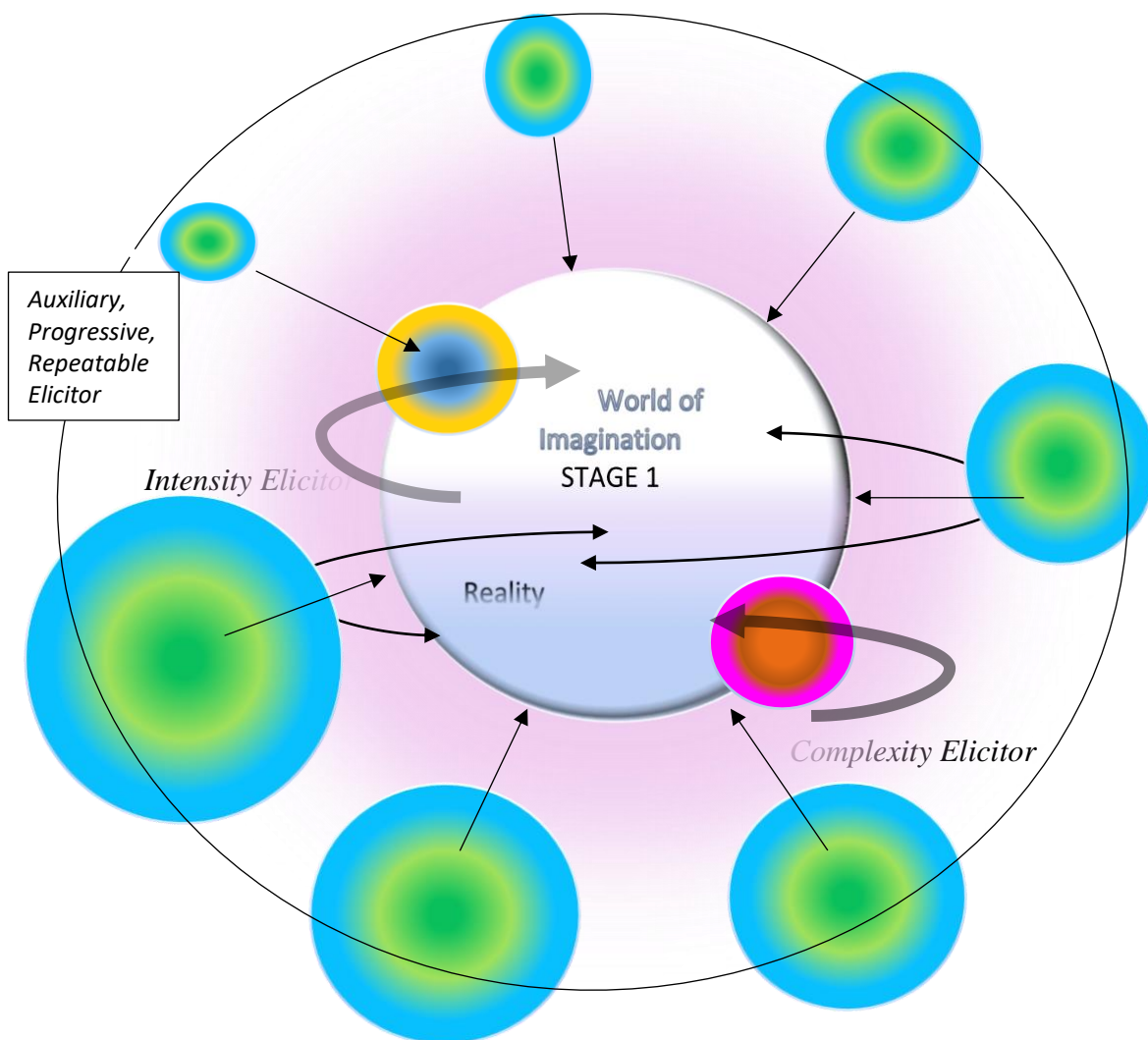
The movement and the voices and the acting, how they collaborated in it, all the smoke and how they used the ladders, like four different things that completely take you into this world and just let your imagination go wild with it and you picture all the classic slapstick comedy moments, the chorus completely changes for me, and you

see different characters by hardly doing anything and then the significance of doing small tiny movement sequence that lasts 30 seconds (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3).

This construct must be complex and layered and can be visual, aural, rhythmical, emotional, or intellectual. This elicitor has the crucial function of ‘jump-start’, like activation of the increase of the oscillation frequency and intensification, which Fischer-Lichte (2008) terms as ‘multi-stable perception’ for the audience as well as for the actors.

Both elicitors need to be fully engaged to produce the optimal level of oscillation to catapult the process through STAGE 2 into STAGE 3.

### ***Auxiliary, Progressive Elicitor***



*Imaginative Wondering 7 Auxiliary Progressive Elicitor. A ‘leitmotif’ generates repetitive progression of a phrase - leading to a final effect towards the end of the performance.*

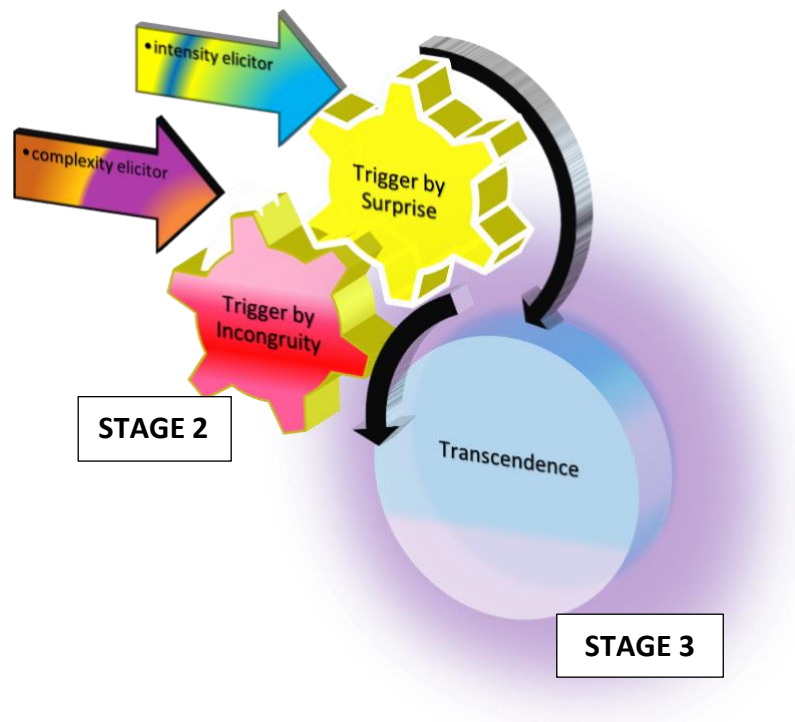
The *Auxiliary Progressive Elicitor* (repetitive progression- leitmotif) controls the additional purpose of bonding distinct elements of the performance by generating an over-arching structure through repeated sequences, thus creating a final effect. In music-related disciplines, there is a term ‘leitmotif’, which stands for a repeated, short musical form often augmented towards the end of a piece. Theatre makers, especially after the 1970s, also used this device to enhance the importance of an image, gesture, sound, or theatrical phrase. In this research, I used this auxiliary elicitor for its function of repeatability, which generates familiarity and encourages the generation of associations, progressively extending the visual and aural scope towards the end of the performance. The audience members observed that the repeatability of the phrase subconsciously prepared them for the lift (transcendence):

And it is not the first time we see this image, that’s interesting..., it comes from somewhere, there is a link from the beginning to the end in small ways, these ladders are kind of very silly to be moved around, and then there are the beautiful moments that echo from the start what is coming later... there is something about the weight and something about these moments in time coming together to this critical moment, dragging through of the play in a way (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3).

The repetition of the movement of the ladders happens three times, and the musical leitmotif that accompanies it functions as a slow build-up. This repetition is a sequence that the audience recognises and provides a focus for the finale. The experts advised against constructing anything for the effect except for the last moment in the performance as it is a moment of culmination of all its aspects. In this research, this *Auxiliary, Progressive Elicitor* supported the construction of the experience of the *Deep Transcendence* state at STAGE 3 and the *Deep Presence* phenomenon, which I will examine in section three of this Chapter.



## 5.2.b The Triggers



*Imaginative Wondering 8 The primary Trigger by Surprise and foundational Trigger by Incongruity*

This research determined that STAGE 2 must provide at least two triggers, released almost instantaneously, for the phenomenon to attain STAGE 3, transcendence. These two triggers, when combined, create a psychological shift in the audience and performers. The triggers may happen concurrently or in close progression. They can also be repeated. STAGE 2 is attained by combining the primary *Trigger by Surprise* with one or both *Foundational Incongruity Triggers*.

The research did not determine the closeness of the trigger's progression, and more research needs to occur in this area. I will elucidate more on this point of the findings, in limitations and further research required on this topic in the Conclusion of this thesis, in Chapter 10.

### ***Primary Trigger by Surprise***

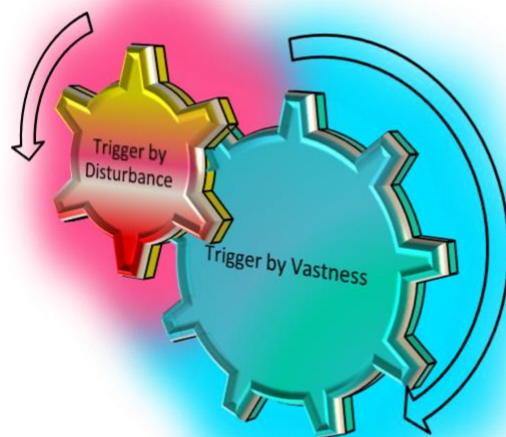
The first category of the trigger was observed as “a sudden and intense quality of surprise” (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1). The audience and the experts commented that the surprise was always present during the transcendent moment. The trigger initiated a shocking change in



the event. The audience observed that there must be a surprise element for the moment to take place. The term primary relates to the necessity of this trigger present during CITE. The *Trigger by Surprise* can be released multiple times throughout the event, but it has an essential function at the beginning and especially at the end of CITE when it causes an abrupt stop. This function is illustrated in the Elephant moment (<https://vimeo.com/906718086/87ef9aceda?share=copy>) and in the analysis in Chapter 6. In that moment, there was a strong, initial *Trigger by Surprise* as the Elephant is created out of nothing as well as when it is suddenly dismantled at the end of the event. The audience anticipates an unexpected turn; they are in on ‘the game’; however, because of the sudden change of rhythm, which creates a sudden contrast, the audience members are still subject to a shock when the trigger is activated. The *Trigger by Surprise* always sets up the CITE event by the abrupt change of expectations.

## Foundational Triggers of Incongruity

The second type of trigger present in *CITE* is the *Foundational Incongruity Trigger*. This thesis’ conceptual framework in Chapter 2 outlined the leading theory and concepts of schema incongruity that were initially developed by Taylor and Uchida (2019). The two foundational incongruity triggers rest on the two types of schemata incongruity of their theory: Vastness and Disturbance (extremity).



*Imaginative Wondering 9 Incongruity Triggers: by Disturbance and by Vastness*

The two Incongruity Triggers:

- *Trigger by Vastness*, trigger by scale.
- *Trigger by Disturbance (Extremity)*, trigger by a shock point by extreme disturbance/violation.

These triggers can be activated on their own or concurrently. They need to be initiated in correlation with the *Primary Trigger by Surprise*.

### ***Incongruity Trigger by Vastness***

*Trigger by Vastness* is created by the visual or aural incongruity by scale, atypically what one perceives as overwhelming strangeness, or by the beauty of the image and sound. Its function is to generate STAGE 3 by creating wonder and awe, to stop us in our tracks and to be overwhelmed. One of the experts elucidated the effect of vastness not only in the theatre but also in ordinary lives:

I think it has to be something you don't normally pay attention to in life, so if you imagine, quite often at the moment when it is cold outside, there are these puffs of condensation from central heating coming out from the side of the buildings, you know what I mean, it looks like smoke, and you can see the light shining through that, and you see someone walking through it, and it is a transcendent moment because you are seeing something completely ordinary that looks astonishing, but people see these things all the time, and they do not notice them (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1).

The idea of sublime beauty in ordinary life, as the expert carefully observes here, is not readily observable not because these moments do not exist but rather because people, in general, live by patterns, and something has to happen out of the ordinary for them to notice the reality of the full extent of its beauty. Fischer-Lichte (2008: 179) observed this tendency as the ordinary turning into the sublime, suggesting that "Performance allows entirely ordinary bodies, actions, movements, things, sound, or odours to be perceived and has them appear extraordinary and transfigured. Performance makes the ordinary conspicuous". By begetting the ordinary into sublime, into focus or creating extraordinary conditions in theatre, in my theatre practice, I often look to re-enchant the ordinary and re-enchant the audience through creating wonder that opens us up to the world as if we were children.

This phenomenon is generated by the *Trigger by Vastness*, by creating an 'out of ordinary' scale, not only in a visual sense but also aural (sounds, music), with lighting effects, as well as the emotional, physical, or intellectual scale of the moment. When triggered in a

compound combination with *Trigger by Surprise*, it creates the sublime experience that leads to STAGE 3 of *CITE*, *Vast Transcendence* with the sensation of awe.

### ***Incongruity Trigger by Disturbance***

This incongruity trigger rests on the second type of Taylor and Uchida's (2019) theory: Extremity. I use the term 'disturbance' trigger as a shorthand for 'extreme' disturbance to simplify the association of the terms. The schema incongruity by extremity can be a disturbance/violation that is emotional, psychological, physical, intellectual or all of these combined. Observed in a theatre situation, this extreme disturbance is what Warren and McGraw (2016) call a benign violation. The violation is benign in that it is established as 'not real', that it is presented on the theatrical stage, in the fantasy. It does not physically affect the audience member; however, their emotions are real. The *Trigger by Disturbance* violates the audience's comprehension of the world and disturbs their system of beliefs. This violation of schemata creates a "need for cognitive accommodation" and "a change in conscious re-interpretation of beliefs" (Taylor and Uchida, 2019: 1519). The *Trigger by Disturbance* acts as a tool to get the audience member to re-examine their pre-conception about the world and to see the world anew. In theatre practice, the *Trigger by Disturbance* can be demonstrated as physical, emotional, or psychological disturbance/violence. It can also disturb the audience's intellectual comprehension by the mental incongruity of being fooled or tricked. This *Incongruity Trigger* is sometimes resolved to be benign by laughter or jokes. From my own professional and personal standpoint as a director but also as an audience member, I found it very difficult to cope when the trigger is discharged to stimulate the violent sensations for its own sake without the protection of the set-up or discharged by laughter. Even though I know it is benign in the sense that nothing physically will happen to me, my lack of control over the emotional or intellectual disturbance as an audience member makes me very uncomfortable. During this research, I noticed a pattern in my practice that constitutes a challenge to creating this type of trigger on its own because I feel responsible for not being able to control the emotional outcome that the trigger can produce fully. I will elaborate on this finding in the Conclusion, in Chapter 10.

## Summary

The *Elicitors of Intensity and Complexity* play a crucial role in commencing STAGE 2 of *CITE*. They enable the intensification of the audience's oscillatory processes to develop further to the threshold point where the primary *Trigger by Surprise* and the *Incongruity Triggers by Vastness or/and Disturbance* can also be activated. The triggers can be initiated more than once during the event. The imperative behind a successful STAGE 2 of *CITE* is that a strong primary trigger by surprise commences the event, followed by at least one strong incongruency trigger that must act as an abrupt and definitive stop to STAGE 2 that generates the *Hovering Stillness* and suspends the oscillatory process. The STAGE 3 (transcendence) commences at the point of suspension.

## 5.3 STAGE 3 *Transcendence*

So by passing the threshold when it is a surprise, you will be more likely to be aware of something happening, that it is bigger than life, but not turning onto yourself, you may feel interconnectivity with others, or that it is a very individual moment for you, you are in awe – what is the level of transcendence then, it is more an opening  
(Director's/ Researcher's notes).

STAGE 3 constitutes the part of the audience's responses where they just stepped through the threshold into the state of transcendence. These are the moments most often remembered and described in academic articles (Heim: 2020, Carlson: 2009, Dolan: 2011, Fischer-Lichte: 2008) as the transcendent phenomenon. This stage is also vividly recalled by the audience because it generates a plethora of sensual impressions and an altered state of consciousness. First, I explain the experience in the moment of transcendence at STAGE 3. Next, I discern the types of inter-personal states of transcendence, and then I outline the three types of transcendence based on the type of trigger activated during STAGE 2.

### *Hovering Stillness*

STAGE 3 in this research was experienced visually on stage in terms such as: “suddenly out of the chaos and intense, complex rush on stage an image appears of sudden hovering stillness” (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3). Other audience members observed the state that I termed as *Hovering Stillness* as “an airy quietness” (Audience SRI, Adam, Phase 3), “the moment just hovers on stage” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3), “the image is sitting; the image just sits there” (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3). Brook (1968: ¶ 10) observes a similar state that an audience can be “touched, entranced, or – best of all – moved to a silence that vibrates round the theatre”. These vibrations begin on stage and move like a wave towards the audience. What begins at STAGE 2 as an intensification of ‘oscillation’ and ‘multistable perception’ is suddenly suspended and transforms into a different kind of looking and perceiving. The audience member is led from the complex intensity of STAGE 2 to a sudden impasse, a suspended state of confusion.

Moreover, the audience recalled that the *Hovering Stillness* induced in them an internal experience of “having a tunnel vision” (Audience IRS, Pam, Phase 3) and an “inward focus” (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3). One of the audience members described it as:

In the ladder sequence, there is the idea of looking through a glass, looking really observing and focusing, and recognising what just happened (ART Rooney arriving in that movement and then disappearing, I am not really sure, but he dies at the end), that took a while to process, nothing really is said, the image is quite big it requires us to sit and really focus (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3).

If the *Hovering Stillness* induces inward focus or tunnel vision, the two outward and inward perceptions remind me of the concept of *Soft-Open Focus*<sup>3</sup>, as well as an expression used by theatre directors “, “laser focus vision” (Expert SSI, Roger, Phase 1) and my own terminology of ‘indirect vision’ which I go on to elucidate further in Chapter 8. The experience of tunnel vision here is observed as the outside perception of the image of *Hovering Stillness* is channelled to create an internal focus and experience. It creates a similar state to what Kounios and Beeman (2014) recognised as ‘a brain blink’ when the brain is suddenly flooded with low-frequency ‘Alpha’-band waves. There is a suspended moment of isolation from the outside stimuli. An example can be an instance when people avert their eyes from external stimuli while on the cusp of discovering insight. ‘Alpha’-band wave oscillations cause “neural inhibition” (2014:13.10) that, on the one hand, reduces distractions and, on the other, supports retrieval of the insights and associations that were considered weak or not relevant. ‘Brain-blink’ is analogous with the sensation of ‘tunnel vision’ and ‘ultra-focus’. Kounios and Beeman (2014) also described this brain function as ‘idling’. At first, they observed what seemed to be that the brain was slowing down its effort; however, it was later discovered that the function of slowing down, and ‘idling’ was to open up the connections and flood the mind with all different associations. The state of ‘idling’, or in this research, *Hovering Stillness* that causes inward tunnel vision, is the moment of a temporal discrepancy between STAGE 2 and STAGE 3. Koestler (1964: 39) called it “a double-minded transitory state”, a state of suspension just before the ‘aha moment’.

I propose that at STAGE 3, when *Hovering Stillness* and tunnel vision happen, or ‘idling’ according to Kounios and Beeman (2014) takes place, the state of ‘being in two worlds at once’<sup>4</sup> (one of the states discussed during STAGE 1) deepens. I propose that the mind goes into a different mode of operation and perceives everything from a meta-level: “a focus where the mind shifts to take in all the events” (Audience IRS, Stephen, Phase 3). I propose that at STAGE 3 of the phenomenon, the state from STAGE 1 of ‘being in two worlds at once’ for the audiences and *Soft-Open Focus* for the actors is transformed to what I termed as

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<sup>3</sup> I refer to the term ‘open, soft-focus’ in training in Pedagogy in Chapter 7

<sup>4</sup> just as suggested in the Chapter 5 when discussing the state of STAGE 1

a state of ultra-consciousness of *Deep Presence*. *Deep Presence* is one of the states created during *STAGE 3 Transcendence* that I discovered during this research. As I progressed during writing the thesis, I became aware that the existing terminology is not sufficient, needs to be adjusted, and further clarified. My new term, *Deep Presence* narrows down the term Peak Experience, which I discussed in Chapter 2 in the Conceptual Framework of this research.

*Deep Presence* is identified in this research, as a state within transcendence when the person who experiences it is deeply aware of their internal sensations as well as has a meta-awareness of everything around them. This state will be further discussed in the findings of *Deep Transcendence* in this chapter. The dichotomy of being in *Tunnel Vision* and the sensation that everything is in a state of *Hovering Stillness* and seeing things from a meta-level demonstrates the ephemeral nature of the phenomenon. At the same time, this dichotomy further determines that this research is concerned with a meta-level of perception where the language use is ambivalent as it encompasses the state of being ultra-focused on the matter and, at the same time, having an awareness of all other settings and conditions. The *Hovering Stillness* acts as a conduit charged with many associations, memories, emotions, and sensations, which are then released into a state of transcendence.

## **Associations, memories, visceral sensations**

The released associations are intertwined with cultural codes and communal meanings; they can appear as intuitions of new ideas, and the audience often is not conscious of how these perceptions appear or interrelate. The sensations of hovering, suspension, and airiness engender the perception of what Fischer-Lichte (2008: 142) calls “things show themselves as they are in their intrinsic meaning”. In the Train sequence:

(<https://vimeo.com/906717558/1e9ad87e5a?share=copy> ), one audience member observed the impact of “the sudden, ominous stillness” (Audience SRI, Adam, Phase 3):

Because it settled at the end of the song and the chaos of the song and the cast set up, then you suddenly see a very clear silhouette of the train, so I don’t see it on stage... I see it in the distance, across along, I see the focal length much longer than the reality of the theatre, so it is going across the desert, across the wild west, it is moving across all of that pioneering country that America had to conquer to get to the West coast, and it is really when we hear that noise, the sound from the beatbox comes that’s when you are really transported, that’s when the whole magic comes together, (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

The audience member observes how the *Hovering Stillness* of the stage picture draws their imagination inward. He discovers his own ‘secret meaning’ to the hovering image; he suddenly sees what he imagined many times before or what he greatly missed. He describes a sensation of being emotionally and intellectually invested, and his knowledge connects him to what he creates in his imagination.

In the past, theatre aimed to induce meaning, create an interpretation for the spectators, and direct the correct way to feel about what the audience was perceiving (Fischer Lichte, 2008). The current associative generation of meaning is on the opposite scale to the intentional process of interpretation. The associative generation of meanings does not claim control over the thoughts and experiences it produces. One of the significant findings of this research is that the *Hovering Stillness* is the conduit for the release of, not connected to, the stage events, associations, and sensations that lead to transcendence. Fischer-Lichte (2008: 142) comments that “a secret meaning is given, and phenomenal being in the object is uncovered”. The secret meaning is a subjective part that cannot be controlled and, when nourished by being subjected to the triggers, creates enrichment and opening to the world and experiences. The audience senses that the *Hovering Stillness* produces something, a unique state, perhaps a special aura or atmosphere that is palpable and physical. Fischer-Lichte (2014: 1428) observes that these are the “instances of emergence”, and these instances are not easy to express linguistically. There is often trouble putting those impressions into words; they are incommensurable with linguistic expressions and only very inadequately described. These meanings can be equated to states of consciousness but not through language logic. In this moment of ‘instance of emergence’, Fischer-Lichte (2008: 142) observes “the binary oppositions collapse; the divide between the sensual perception of an object, seen mostly as a psychological process, and the attribution of meaning normally considered a mental activity are not different”. Sensual impressions can, therefore, be more accurately described as meanings of which one becomes conscious through specific visceral effects. They can be likened to certain states of consciousness where the physical, intellectual, and emotional perceptions function together.

STAGE 3 Transcendence, therefore, is a state that happens after going through a ‘threshold’ of STAGE 2 and is characterised by a sudden abrupt stop and a perception of *Hovering Stillness* on stage. That perception creates, in an inward focus, a state of ‘idling’ in the audience member that acts as a charged conduit and releases a plethora of associations,



memories and visceral sensations that bear no associations with the stage image. The abundance of sensations is a state of transcendence where a sense of being in ultra-consciousness arrives, a state of *Deep Presence* of being deeply aware of individual sensations and at the same time with meta-awareness of seeing of being connected to and sensing everything around. This section, therefore, leads to the differentiation between individual and collective transcendence.

### **5.3.a Individual and Collective Transcendence**

There are two types of interpersonal sensation of transcendence: awareness of the individual as ‘individual transcendence’, awareness of interconnectivity and feeling of community, and ‘collective transcendence’.

#### **Individual Transcendence**

STAGE 3 of the phenomenon is termed passing through the threshold and experiencing transcendence. The individual transcendence is often recognised as an insight into someone's life. I discern here that many types of experiences are not transcendence per se; however, they are justifiable for this research. The *three-stage model of CITE* can cause different levels of engagement, insights, and different revelations for each individual. The triggers can open the audience member up to the experience and create a sense of change transcendence; however, the sensations and their meaning do not have to relate to what is perceived on stage. The data analysis of STAGE 3 focused on recognising a pattern creating a change or physiological shift. It was often described as an opening in a person. One participant described it as seeing the world differently because of the visual experience one had witnessed:

You do believe, and you feel that you have gone to another reality. So, you know you are in the theatre, and you know you are watching a play or an opera or whatever it is, but it has gripped you so far that you forget that reality, that's for me what it is supposed to be. That is essentially one of the things we work for (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

The example of an individual openness was often described as being touched on the inside, being changed.

## **Collective Transcendence- Interconnectivity and feeling of community.**

Theatre carries immense power, with the dimmed light and proximity of others, without an obligation but through one strong focus on the events on the stage. One of the experts explained the power of theatre as: “They (the audience) come to the theatre to connect... They are separate in life, but together here (in theatre), they come to connect” (Expert SSI, Samuel, Phase 1). He talks about a crucial state whereby the means of the audience’s and the actors’ imagination generates a state where they all travel somewhere together. In this experience, the focus is away from oneself; it makes us more connected to each other and, in a sense, less lonely. One of the experts also observed:

Sometimes you have the feeling that everyone has been gripped by these moments of transcendent reality, and you can feel the other people, people around you, being transported at the same time, which is kind of, you know- the best (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

The openness that communal laughter and communal pity breaks the barriers between strangers as the audience seems to grow closer by being affected by the same triggers. The audience member expressed this shared experience through a visceral understanding of the experience:

At the moment, there is the idea of one breath; in the audience, everybody starts beating the same heartbeat, and everybody has the same focus, so maybe some of that was going on at the time (Audience SRI, John, Phase 3).

The audience member observes the phenomenon of shared breathing and shared heartbeat. In my theatre practice, there are a myriad of exercises where, with the ensemble, I investigate the synchronisation of breath and heartbeat. The tuning is on the inside; to become a group, you need to go through the tuning on the inside. Part of the *Tuning* process, which I outline in Chapter 7, has a similar purpose to the audience, and we are tuning not only what we know as conscious but also the unconscious. The audience senses that they suddenly possess many feelings and co-share them just by being with others. We share our sensations bodily or physiologically. The audience member in this research observed that some moments tapped into a collective imagination. Sometimes, it was an intense experience or sensation of community, a feeling of communion. Durkheim (1915) examined the mentality of crowds and congregations and studied the phenomenon called 'collective effervescence', when a person suddenly feels a part of a more significant entity and no longer is in complete control of their feeling but instead follows the feeling of the crowd. Heim (2020) correlates

Durkheim's (1915) 'collective effervescence' to the feeling in the theatre and argues that being together in the audience creates a thrill. These are the moments when the audience 'catches' the wave of emotions from actors as they circulate in the charged atmosphere: "There is a sudden feeling that the actors and the audience are part of something bigger than themselves" (Heim, 2020: 41). I argue that this is a moment of 'communal transcendence'. The experience of interconnectivity with others that our minds are not just in our body, but they extend and connect with others, is a feeling that has been observed by anthropologists like Turner (1986) and extended into the theatre domain through his study of the role of 'Communitas'. Some of the experts in my interviews discussed the collective sense of tragedy, a collective sense of pity, or a collective sense of laughter that suddenly takes over. Both of these types of transcendence can be found in the next type of transcendence, which is categorized by the type of trigger set up at STAGE 2.

### **5.3.b Three types of transcendence underpinned by the type of trigger during STAGE 2 of *CITE***

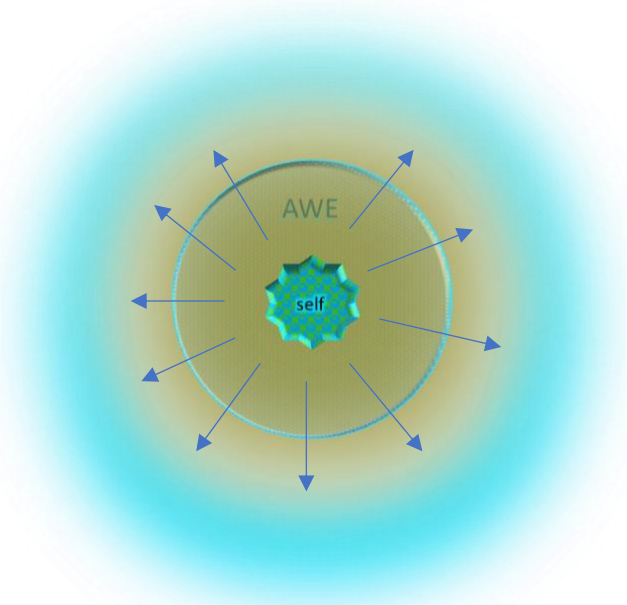
<https://vimeo.com/906719196/d5d4247501?share=copy>

*Recordings 6 The Ladder progression*

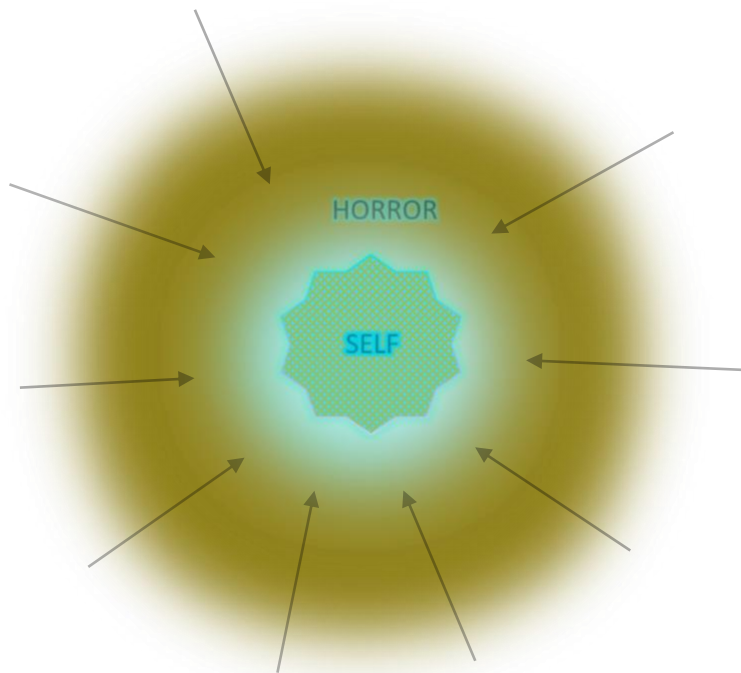
In the final *Ladder progression*, there is a sense of suspension, a sense of *hovering stillness* that arrives as the rhythm breaks towards the end of the sequence. The emptiness of the stage with the spinning ladders and the vulnerability and openness of the actor standing in the centre of the stage create the conduit for the meanings that I described above. This conduit of ladders spiralling in the air generates sensations, memories and overtones that flood our minds. Meanings are formed involuntarily by the audience. They 'just' appear in our consciousness. I would argue, however, that their emergence is not, as Fischer-Lichte (2008: 143) asserts, "inexplicable and uncontrollable". The emergent meanings are inexplicable and uncontrollable, but the process of emergence itself can be controlled or channelled to create an explicable process of emergence. I contend, therefore, that the type of *Compound Incongruity Trigger* stimulates the propensity for the type of sensation. The type of *Compound Incongruity Trigger* does not determine what kind of associations are formed but stimulates and channels propensity for the sensations of Awe and/or Horror/Disturbance.

The analysis of three types of transcendence in STAGE 3 is constructed on the underpinnings of the theories developed by Taylor and Uchida (2019). As I outlined in Chapter 2, they proposed that schema incongruence (triggers in STAGE 2) activates and violates our systems of beliefs, eliciting emotions that increase cognitive accommodation and neural plasticity (Taylor and Uchida, 2019: 1549). This enquiry reveals two principal tendencies of sensations that are grounded in two types of schema incongruent emotions as expounded in Taylor and Uchida's (2019) theories:

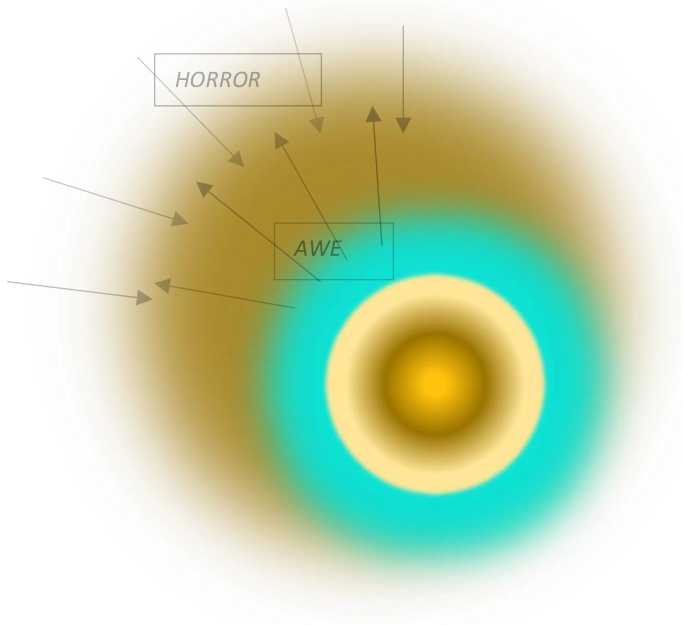
- The Trigger by *Vastness* instigates the sensation of *Awe*.
- The Trigger by *Disturbance* instigates the sensation of *Horror* (*violence/ disturbance*) and
- The two triggers of Vastness and Disturbance, when simultaneously combined, create a meta-incongruity state of heading in both directions, which I termed *Deep Presence*.



*Imaginative Wondering 10 The Trigger by Vastness instigates the sensation of Awe. Direction Outward Awe has a sense of self-expanding, the system of beliefs expanding.*



*Imaginative Wondering 11 The Trigger by Disturbance instigates the sensation of Horror (violence/ disturbance) Direction inward Horror/Disturbance gives a sense of self and systems of beliefs disturbed, changed and re-accommodated.*



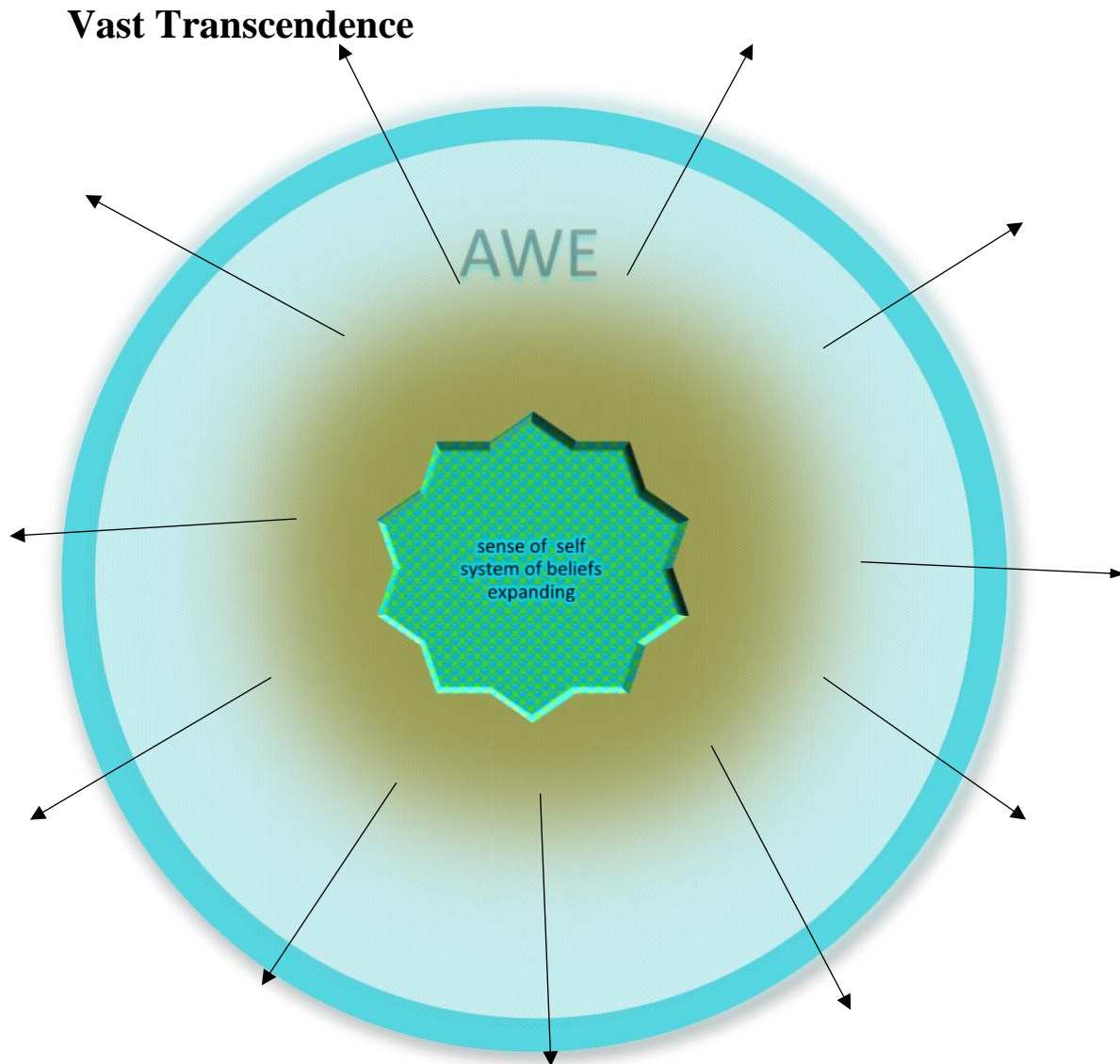
*Imaginative Wondering 12 Two triggers are combined; Vastness and Disturbance simultaneously create a meta-incongruity state of heading in both directions, the outward direction of Awe and inward direction of Horror that generate the sense of Deep Presence.*

The emotional experience of schema incongruence shifts attention away from what we believe (our schema, beliefs, and mental models) and towards the external elicitors (triggers), therefore privileging what we experience (see, hear, feel) to our meaning-making processes. This research proposes the formation of the *trigger by Vastness*, which, according to Taylor and Uchida (2019), instigates the sensation of awe and opens up the schema, often creating dreaming and wondering within the experience of the ecstasy of beauty.

In section 2 of this Chapter, I explained the function of *Trigger by Disturbance*, which produces the sensation of horror and disturbs/violates the schema. In Chapter 2, in the conceptual framework of this thesis, I noted that the sensation of horror is supposed to be a sensation of ‘benign violation’ based on a contract between the actors and the audience in the theatre environment. It is essential to emphasise that the sense of horror and awe is real, but the trigger itself is set up as a ‘benign violation’, which enables the spectators the freedom to feel these sensations and be safe at the same time. Awe and horror create sensations that go opposite directions: horror shatters the schema incongruency, but awe affirms, alters, and expands them. They are both a spectrum of options of how our models of understanding the world can be disturbed or opened up to new possibilities. I categorised the outcomes of *STAGE 2 Triggers by Vastness and Disturbance* as experienced by the participants, consequently generating three types of transcendence:

<b>Primary Trigger</b>	<b>Foundational Incongruity Trigger</b>	<b>Type of Transcendence Event</b>
Trigger by Surprise	Trigger by Vastness	Vast Transcendence
Trigger by Surprise	Trigger by Disturbance	Extreme Transcendence
Trigger by Surprise	Trigger by Vastness Trigger by Disturbance (activated simultaneously)	Deep Transcendence and a state of Deep Presence

Figure 3 of the above table outlines the Primary Trigger in conjunction with the foundational Incongruity Trigger(s) and the type of Transcendent Event they generate.



*Imaginative Wondering 13 Vast Transcendence. Awe expands the sense of self and ontological worldview.*

The compound *Trigger by Surprise* and *Incongruity Trigger by Vastness* creates *Vast Transcendence*. The *Trigger by Vastness* guides the transcendence towards the sensation of awe. Vastness and vast phenomena such as unique nature, charismatic people and spiritual forces create sensations that something is on a scale beyond human comprehension, as noted by Taylor and Uchida (2019: 1549), who observes that “awe expands ontological schemata beyond the material world leading to a metaphysical feeling of personal connection with



higher powers”. The direction of awe is up, towards the ‘heavens’, towards something more significant than the individual. In theatre practice, the *Trigger by Vastness* can be demonstrated through visual and aural imagery that supersedes the ordinary. That can involve the ‘trickery’ that fools the expectations by turning the ordinary into the sublime. One of the experts brought the sensation of awe when she described one of the **Ockham Razor** shows<sup>5</sup>:



Photograph 18 Ockham Razor- Tipping Point - Running on the poles. Source: © Ockhamrazor.co.uk

One of the aerialists was running on two sticks that were held by the rest of the company and moving them backwards and forward:

...it was such a breath-holding moment, this very delicate, small body, running on this heavy scuff bar... It suggests all of us running on life, trying to catch something we never can and try to balance our way through life and love and living... (expert interview, Alice, Phase 1).

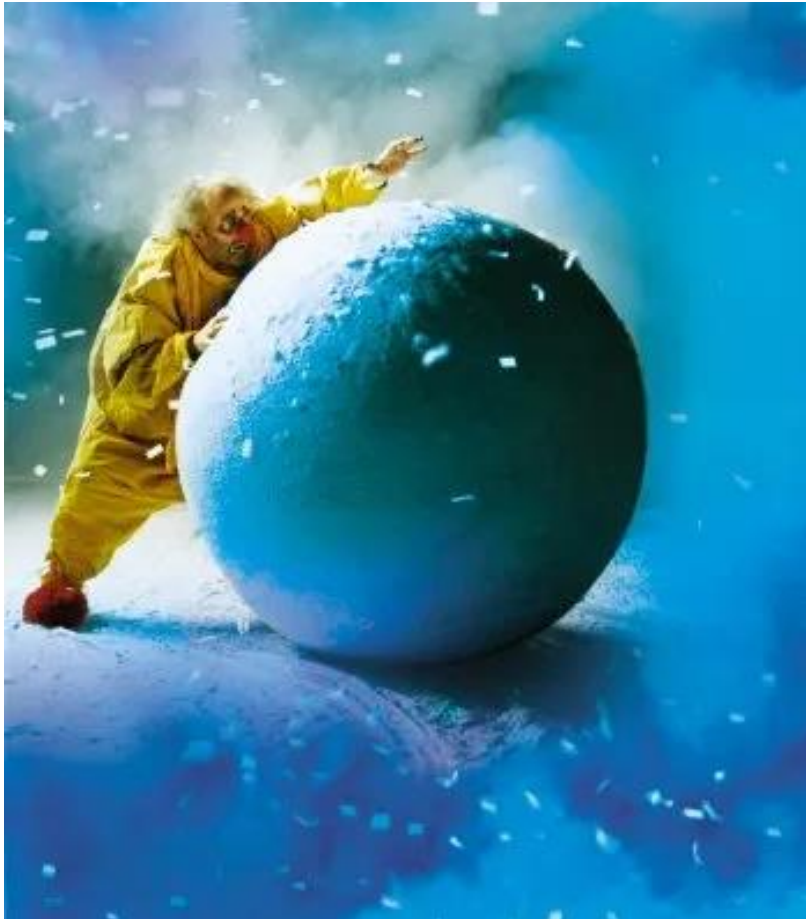
The audience’s experience of *Vast Transcendence*, described here, elucidates the sensation of life’s intangibility and personal struggle of being present ‘in the moment’. *Vast Transcendence* happens through the sensation of awe that the imagery produces, generating metaphysical concerns that connect us to something bigger than us and make us think about these intangible moments in our lives. Keltner and Haidt (2003) proposed that *Awe* produces a strong connection of individuals to other group members and a sensation of reduced

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<sup>5</sup> Ockham Razor is a physical theatre and circus company with an NPO status from Arts Council of England.



importance of personal self. The sense of empathy and care extending because of *Vast Transcendence* in the above example corresponds to Taylor's and Uchida's (2019: 1550) findings that "awe strengthens the systems of meanings" and "makes us more inclusive, less egocentric" and "can increase the perception of purpose, meaning and order in the world". This sense of connecting to the 'inner secret meaning' in our individual lives and, at the same time, generating a growing communal connectedness and empathy is even more visible in the following example in the famous Slava's **Snowshow**<sup>6</sup>.



Photograph 19 Slava snow show (source: ©Veronique Vial)

**A short footage of Snow show:** <https://slavasnowshow.com/en/>

Recordings 7 Short Footage of Slava's show source: Slava's website

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<sup>6</sup> Slava's *Snowshow* is one of the most recognised and internationally acclaimed clown show. For more information please access: <https://slavasnowshow.com/en/>.



Photograph 20 People walking through a snowstorm (source: ©Veronique Vial)

While examining Slava's **Snowshow**, I discovered that he focuses on creating many strong *Triggers by Vastness and Surprise*, thus creating the phenomenon of *Vast transcendence*. He utilises an extreme amount of fake snow on stage, often with the effect of the snow blowing at the audience through giant turbines and being covered by the snow. The stage is transformed into a winter wonderland. He also uses an enormous fake spider web that he throws over the whole of the audience.



Photograph 21 an enormous spider web spreads across the audience (source: ©Veronique Vial)

The spider web is very light and breaks easily, so it does not pose any danger by pulling or getting stuck; however, it creates the desire to play, to try to reach and catch the thing that playfully trapped us. The spider web triggers the feeling of wonder, awe, and the sense that we are all connected.

Finally, at the end of the show, the whole theatre is suddenly transformed as Slava throws large, heavy balloons for the audience to play with. The big balloons floating across the auditorium release instantly the joy, wonder and the impulse to be part of the fun and trying to push them and make them float further. There is a sense of wonder, awe, connection with other through play and an escalated sense of delight and pleasure in the moment.

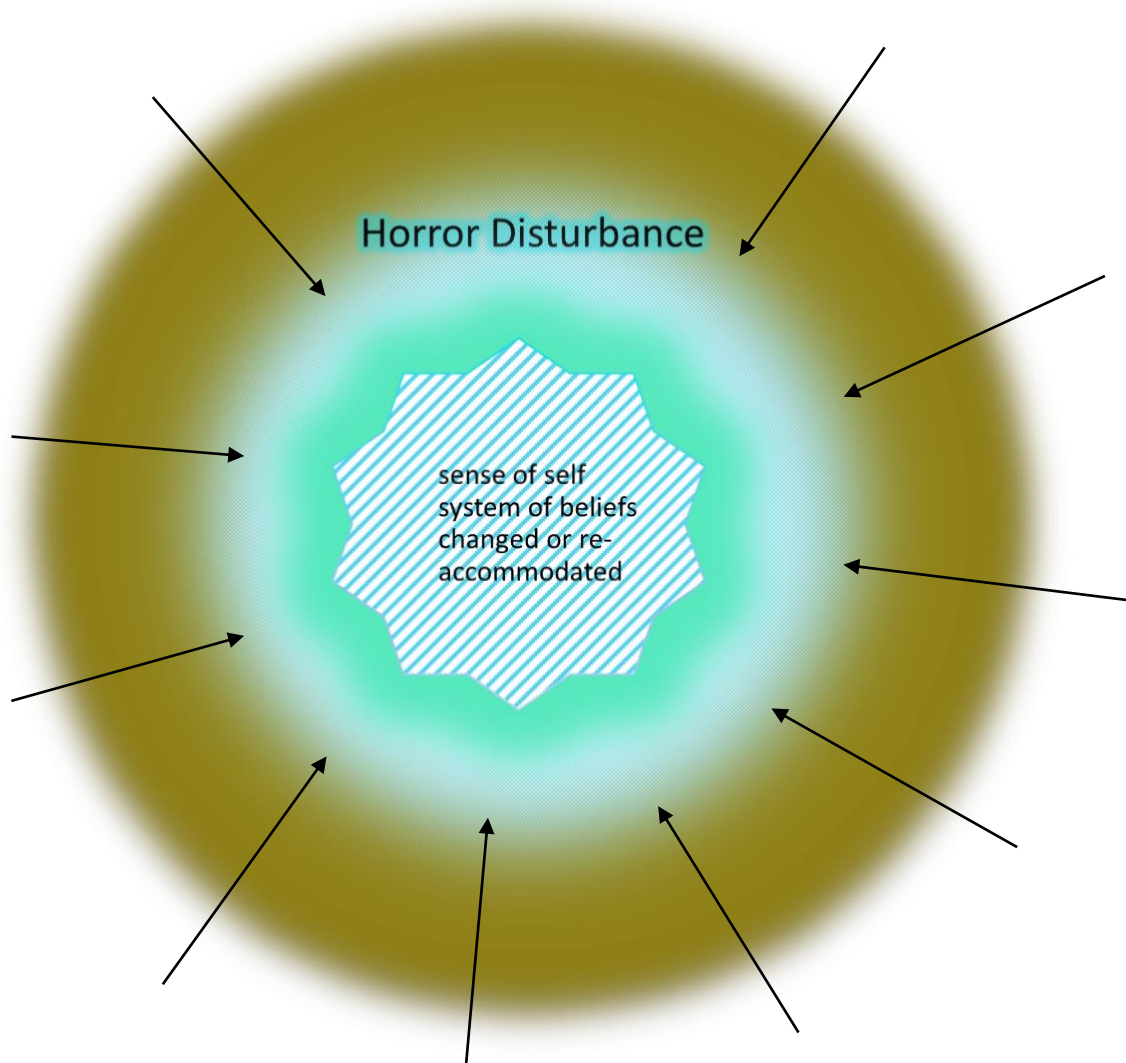


Photograph 22 Balloon balls sent out into the audience at the end of the show (source: ©Veronique Vial)

Throughout the show, the *Triggers by Vastness and Surprise* generate a multitude of *Vast Transcendences* where the direction of awe is towards connecting with others, strengthening a system of beliefs, and expanding an ontological worldview. However, the meaning of these triggers stays on an individual level.



## Extreme Transcendence



*Imaginative Wondering 14 Extreme Transcendence. The direction of horror is towards oneself, towards re-accommodating shattered worldviews.*

*Extreme Transcendence* is created by the compound *Trigger by Surprise* and the incongruity *Trigger by Disturbance*. The *Trigger by Disturbance* guides the transcendence towards the sensations of horror (disturbance/violence). Examples of horror (disturbance/violence), such as catastrophe, cruelty, and violence, are all triggers that undermine our systems of beliefs. Taylor and Uchida (2019: 1550) observe that “horrified fear is a response to the realisation that actual harm is occurring or has occurred”. Their study also confirms that disturbance/violence disrupts schemata related to safety, trust, power, self-esteem, and intimacy. The direction of horror is down, towards oneself, towards re-accommodating

shattered worldviews. In theatre practice, the trigger of extremity can be demonstrated as physical, emotional, or psychological disturbance/violence. It can also be shown by disturbing the audience's intellectual comprehension by the mental incongruity of being fooled or tricked. The disturbance of being fooled, coupled with the theory of 'benign violation', often resolves itself through laughter, but that does not undermine the value of the trigger. While laughing, the audience is aware of the worth and the costs of the felt disturbance. One of the experts explained it through an anecdote:

Peter Brook, in one of his books, talks about being in Berlin just after the war, just after everything was bombed out, and he saw a group of young children excitedly running down the street, and he casually followed them into the bombed out theatre and in the theatre there were two clowns doing kids show and he watched them, and he said how they were hysterically involved in all the jokes and slapstick and then it came to talk about the sausage and the room went dead because everybody was so hungry, so they were starving, and this was a joke about food, and it was not funny, it was something...(Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1).

Here, the laughter and warm atmosphere that the clowns created is suddenly broken by the stark reality of mentioning the presence of a humble sausage that comes from a different world, from the real world of hunger, that is not part of the world that the clowns created. The effect is triggered by disturbance. Furthermore, *Extreme Transcendence*, caused by disturbance by the shift of expectation, has an emotional connotation and is often described as uncomfortable. One of the experts experienced just that in the show called **Nate**, where an American female clown comes out on stage dressed as 'hell's angel' male chauvinist character and, in an aggressive manner, approaches a female audience member, looked at her breasts, smiled, extended her hand, and asked in a creepy, male deep tone of voice: 'May I?'

And the effect on the audience was astonishing, suddenly they and we were really uncomfortable, deeply uncomfortable, we did not know where to look, some people laughed, hysterically...and then played with whatever happened and that for me was one of these moments of a transcendent moment and a moment of 'act of witness', we were there, we knew what was going on, it was pityingly obvious what was going on and the politics of it were throbbing away right in the centre of the room (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1).

The disturbance trigger of the actor asking if they can touch people's private parts caused deep discomfort, which demonstrated itself through some of the audience members' laughter, the feeling of being trapped or not being able to believe that this is happening, or avoiding seeing what is happening. The state elevated the audience to be a witness of something that is so disturbing and violent but also something that we recognise from everyday life. It

brought the feeling of being trapped and, at the same time, confronted by the actions of the performer. In everyday life, we avoid these situations; however, this interaction puts the audience in the place of a direct receiver, witness as a reminder of facing these situations. It is crucial to notice that even though *Extreme Transcendence* through triggers of surprise and disturbance creates the inner, personal sense of disruption to our sense of beliefs, in the theatre situations, it also provokes a shared communal sense of identifying that we are not just an individual but that we are all in this together.



Photograph 23 Iva playing a 6-years old girl pretending to be a Gestapo member rounding up her family (source: Marusya Galtsova) (source: Nie vimeo Website)

This is NIE's production<sup>7</sup> **End of Everything Ever**. The scene begins at 9:25 but perhaps it is better to watch from the beginning for context.

<https://vimeo.com/143677614?share=copy>

Recordings 8 NIE's End of Everything Ever, source NIE Vimeo

The action takes place in 1936 in one of Berlin's apartments where a Jewish family lives. The moment is when Iva (playing a little girl) is playing a game of being a member of the Gestapo, arriving to search the apartment. Her parents make the game to prepare everyone better to hide once the necessity comes. However, the child is playing the game so well that the uncle begins to believe in the realness of the situation. It quickly turns tragic as, in the

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<sup>7</sup> **New International Encounter (NIE)** is a physical theatre company with an NPO status from Arts Council of England. The company is a recipient of 17 international awards, produces and tours internationally over the past 20 years. I am a founding member and a movement director of NIE.

climax of Uncle's fear, the child comes out of the realisation of the terror that she caused. This is a complexly built trigger of a disturbance where the audience is part of a shared play transaction that goes terribly wrong. As the audience is let in on the child's game, it is also a part of the disturbance when the game is experienced as a gruesome collective experience of the Jewish reality in 1936 in Berlin by one of the characters. This profoundly disturbing trigger, combined with surprise, creates *Extreme Transcendence* that follows the direction of horror/disturbance. It is worth noticing that the moment is resolved by cartoonish violence against the perpetrator (the child), and by that, it is eventually perceived as benign violence. Another example of *Extreme Transcendence* can be seen in another show by NIE, **Tales from the Sea**.



Photograph 24 NIE Tales from the Sea, Captain shooting his dog (source: NIE website)

<https://vimeo.com/906727854/75542ea3d1?share=copy>

Recordings 9 NIE's Tales from the Sea footage, Source: NIE

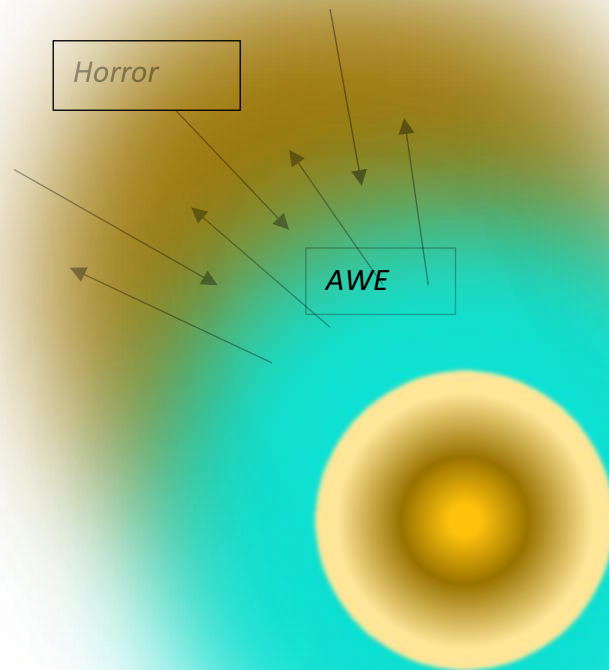
NIE's **Tales from the Sea** performance creates a moment where a captain whose ship is under an imminent attack by the enemy must kill his dog to save him from a long and terrible death in the abandoned ship. The dog is made from three pieces of fur that three people then operate.

The audience knows the dog is going to be shot. The *Trigger by Disturbance* demonstrates itself when the sailor shoots the dog, then shoots it again the second and third time, in the end

pleading with the dog that it must be done, and the annoyance with a puppeteer for keeping the dog alive. At the same time, amazement at the ‘aliveness’ of the dog and the playfulness of the creature and the puppeteers makes the audience see the pet as a living being. The disturbance trigger is strong and resolved through cartoonish violence that creates laughter at the end. A strong *Trigger by Disturbance* generates a state of *Extreme Transcendence* and leads towards re-evaluating and changing our models of thoughts and beliefs. *Extreme Transcendence* has a very profound effect; however, as a director, during this research, I began to recognise that I avoid creating this compound trigger. I realised that I am deeply apprehensive about how the trigger might affect people, and I noticed that I tend to compound it with the *Trigger by Vastness*, which I will address next in *Deep Transcendence*.



## Deep Transcendence with Deep Presence



*Imaginative Wondering 15 Deep transcendence AWE/ HORROR triggers with the emergence of Deep Presence*

*Deep Transcendence* is the most exciting finding of this research. It is generated by compounding the *Trigger by Surprise* with both incongruity *Triggers by Vastness* and by *Disturbance*, guiding the transcendence towards experiencing opposite sensations of *Awe* and *Horror* at the same time. Participants of the research called these moments “moments of deeply felt freedom” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3), “moments of hope” (Audience SRI, Melissa, Phase 3), “moments of escape” (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3), “moment of heightened awareness of our mortality” (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1). The *Trigger by Vastness* guides the audience towards *Awe* and wonder, openness, and hope. Combining it with the *Trigger by Disturbance*, which at the same time disrupts or violates certain schema

and beliefs, creates what the audience member described as the “moments of escape” (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3). The clash of these two triggers was also articulated as an “existential dilemma” (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1) and a sudden sensation of mortality and an insatiate want to be alive. One of the audience members revealed:

I felt much more sadness, but when the ladders were going up... I got a different feeling; it will be ok kind of feeling, that’s how I can describe it; it’s not that bad, I don’t know if I told it very well (Audience SRI, Melissa, Phase 3).

This statement reveals the ambiguity and, simultaneously, the awkwardness of feelings that are being awakened in the audience member. The sadness combined with what I can only call an ‘existential touch of perpetual hope’ in “It’s not that bad”. The above quote talks of our living experience and the undying hope that it will be better...one day.

In this research, another audience member remembered the experience of *Deep Transcendence* that occurred when they were watching **Dead Rabbits Theatre** ‘previous show: **My Love Lies Frozen in the Ice**.



Photograph 25 **Dead Rabbits Theatre’s’ My Love Lies Frozen in the Ice**, source: © Marc J Chalifoux, 2017

### **My Love Lies Frozen in the Ice**

<https://vimeo.com/913826058/d7c24fae65?share=copy>

Recordings 10 *My Love Lies Frozen* Ending scene.

In **Dead Rabbits Theatre** show there is a strong *Trigger by Disturbance* when the three characters understand the ultimate moment of their death. There is also a strong *Trigger by Vastness* created by the sensation when, despite their bickering and blaming each other, all

the characters unite at the moment when they are facing their shared demise: the moment of “holding hands when they all realise, they are doomed...these provoked feelings of reflection on relationships, accord and that of atonement. That moment in the show was that light bulb moment that flooded my senses with all these thoughts” (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3). The audience members felt an overwhelming sense of relief when thinking of that moment for themselves, in that we all meet our end when we pass away, and having comradeship, love and friendship on the way is essential. They reflected on recent years and how having support, love, and togetherness is “uplifting, hopeful and full of salvation” as opposed to dying alone during “the COVID sadness”:

This was my prophetic magical moment in that we all meet our end/die/pass away and having comradeship/love and friendship on the way is essential. And moreover, when your time comes - having support, love and togetherness as opposed to dying alone (COVID SADNESS). The concept of your loved ones, friends or family being with you is uplifting, hopeful and is full of salvation (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3).

It is crucial to note that the *Deep Transcendence* created a sense of atonement for the individual, a sense of being connected to others, and a sense of empathy and love for others in unfortunate circumstances. As much as there is a feeling of overwhelming sadness, the created sensations possess a certain feeling of hope.

Vast (by awe) and Extreme (by violation/ disturbance) transcendence travel in opposite directions when creating sensations. I further analysed audiences’ experiences and determined that vast and extreme triggers can cause individual or collective transcendence. *Vast Transcendence* may create a sense of illumination when people feel connected to others, and *Extreme Transcendence* has the tendency that one centres on one's own experiences. However, I want to avoid following the route of determining whether these two types of transcendence lead to certain associative meanings. The direction of triggers in STAGE 2 has no correlation to what ultimately the sensations mean for each individual member of the audience. One of the remarkable features of being human is our unpredictability, diversity and uniqueness of behaviours and actions, and to round these experiences into groupings would have been perhaps ignorant of previous experiments and scientific research where one has made broad statements about human nature. Sometimes, in adversity, one may turn to look towards themselves, but it is also known that in adversity, people are also very likely to turn to each other for a sense of support and or being together in times of communal pity or communal tragedy. *Deep Transcendence* ties up with individual transcendence, but it also

fits with the type of communal transcendence, and it is often experienced as an individual and collective transcendence where the audience senses a phenomenon of *Deep Presence*.

## ***Deep Presence***

The combination of triggers in my work comes from a deliberate angle of creating shows as a director. It is not enough to tell a story where terrible violation, tragedy and disturbance happen to the characters. This is the *Trigger by Disturbance* that, as I mentioned in the previous section, I am so wary of because the trauma of the characters is transferred onto the audience. The creators of the performance are not able to control the associations and sensations created in the audience members' minds. In my work, as the *Trigger by Disturbance* is released, there must always be a way out, a glimpse of hope, encompassed by the *Trigger by Vastness*.

One audience member noted the final moment of the show in **Tiger Lady**, that “the show finished with uncertainty, with openness to questions, suspended” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3). The moments produce uncertainty that the audience also recognises as authentic in their lives. The audience member highlights the importance of risk and contradictions when constructing *Moments of Transcendence*. In that moment of the show, it is not just the ladders flying that cause disturbance; the danger of choreography visible on stage creates a visceral sensation of disturbance in his own body. At the same time, the control and virtuosity that the actors exhibit by moving the ladders just with one finger create the incongruity of the heavy versus light, fast versus immovable, danger versus heightened control, and weight of the ladders versus lightness of touch. However, in the eyes of this audience member, the actors did not create freedom; they ‘attempted’ to create it. The importance here lies in the endeavour of freedom, the desire that some audience members are drawn to. The further observation by the same spectator is also poignant:

It left me not knowing what the future was, it left me, and I like shows that are left with a question rather than an answer to it. And I am always more fulfilled if there is an uncertainty of a question rather than the full certainty of an answer. (Audience IRS, Tim, Phase 3).

The combination of these two triggers generates a deep existential dilemma. By seeing the uncertainty in front of us, we recognise it as something truthful and meaningful. This observation of the nature of the experience reveals that the audience member is acutely aware of himself in that moment, as well as of the moment passing in time, and that brings him to

awareness of his mortality and the importance of catching every meaningful moment in his life. This revelation brought me to the conclusion that the clash of the two incongruent triggers by *Disturbance* and *Vastness* creates a state of *Deep Presence*. *Deep Presence* is a state of doubleness where we are acutely aware of everything that surrounds us and the sensation of being very alert and awake within ourselves. STAGE 1, the state of ‘being in both worlds at once’ transforms by STAGE 3 into a state of *Deep Presence*. One is fully engaged in both worlds at once. The transcendence comes from an immense shock, and it shows itself through a perceived dichotomy of the world. One is able to be, in a sense, ‘above the worlds’, in an altered consciousness, observing their own reactions, their positioning and the events happening around them all at the same time. It is often a momentary sensation that leaves a long-lasting memory of being extraordinarily sentient, alert of that state, and acutely aware of our surroundings. This sense of *Deep Presence* was also demonstrated when the audience member compared the moment and the performers to “butterflies moving in a jar” and observed that even though it is a wonderfully beautiful moment, it is also a theatrical illusion of freedom. This illusion stays in the theatre, and he is deeply aware of the tragic fragility of these moments and the need to transfer these moments into his own life:

I want those moments of beauty in my life, and maybe that’s what life is about, about finding those moments, in the theatre and beyond theatre, and finding them and treasuring them, and relishing when they happen, rather than dismissing them as something gorgeous but unimportant like a sunset of fireworks. To appreciate them properly, rather than say, oh yes, that’s nice, but tomorrow I have got to go to work and clean out my cat litter tray (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

This observation shows that the audience member was deeply conscious and aware of himself in that moment, of the moment passing, of our own mortality. In that moment, we are very much aware of our own reality and presence (of ourselves) and that we are connected and sharing the experience together. Perhaps those moments guide us to change, as one audience member observed: “These are the moments that prioritise change, those moments of freedom” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3). This double awareness is one of the main features in the state of *Deep Presence*; one feels connected within the community and, at the same time, feels deeply present within oneself and at the same time sensing that one transcends communally. The significance of that state is that these are the moments that prioritises change not only for individuals but also in our communal way of thinking.

## Summary

In this section, I explained the three types of transcendence based on the type of trigger used in STAGE 2. The *Trigger by Vastness* compound with *Trigger by Surprise* creates *Vast Transcendence* through the sensations of awe and wonder. The *Trigger by Disturbance* and *Surprise* creates *Extreme Transcendence* with sensations of violation and disturbance to our mental schemata. I also noted that the *Trigger by Disturbance* is sometimes resolved by humour, which protects the audience members and allows them to sense the transcendence better. The last type of transcendence is *Deep Transcendence*, which is generated by two incongruity *Triggers by Disturbance* and *Vastness* and *Trigger by Surprise*, which creates the meta-consciousness state of *Deep Presence* of being deeply aware of the individual sensations and, at the same time, aware and deeply connected to everything around. This state of *Deep Presence* was also acknowledged as a deeply impactful state that prioritises change in the individual and our communal selves. To demonstrate this, I wanted to engage with those who had experienced these moments most intensely - the audience.

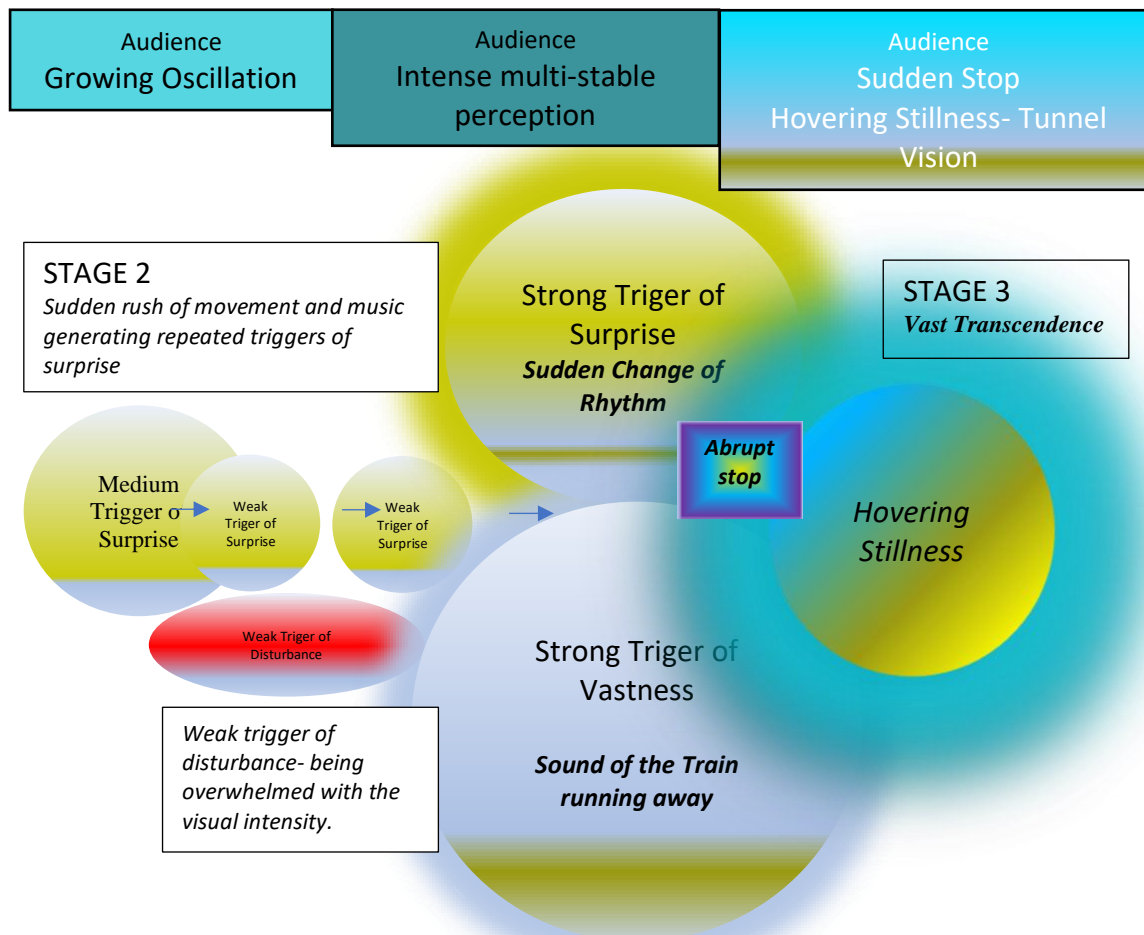
## **Chapter 6 Analysis of the four moments from the Tiger Lady performance.**

This chapter will analyse the audience members chosen moments in the performance of **Tiger Lady**. STAGE 1 has been omitted as it is already recognised as a foundational base for all the moments. Therefore, I will discuss the set-up and strength of the triggers at STAGE 2 and analyse their outcome according to the *three-stage model* of *CITE*. I will furthermore explain STAGE 3 for the type of transcendence generated based on the interviews with the audience after the performances.

## 6.1 The Train Sequence analysis - Vast Transcendence

<https://vimeo.com/906717558/1e9ad87e5a?share=copy>

Recordings 11 *The Train Sequence*



*Imaginative Wondering 16 Vast Transcendence by CITE (Main trigger by Vastness and Surprise)*

In the Train Sequence, the trigger of surprise was utilised repeatedly throughout the event as there was a multitude of fast actions and quick changes of rhythm. There is a weak *Trigger by Disturbance* generated by the quick changes in aesthetics, overwhelming and causing the audience member a state of disturbance through confusion when trying to comprehend what is happening. However, this disturbance is not strong and similar in its outcome to surprise. Towards the end of *CITE*'s STAGE 2, there is evidence of a strong Trigger by Vastness that is released together with a strong *Trigger by Surprise* by unexpectedly changing the rhythm at the end of the sequence and settling the image of the train and the vastness of the landscape by sudden abrupt stop to all the action. The sudden stop at the end generates the sensation of *Hovering Stillness* on stage, which causes a sensation of tunnel vision. The strong *Trigger by Vastness* and *Surprise* at the end of STAGE 2 creates *Vast Transcendence*, causing the



sensation of awe. When creating this scene, I was constructing it intuitively: “It was just a feeling when I saw that the fast images needed to settle and settle the story in preparation for the next part of the show” (Director’s/ Researcher notes). An audience member expressed his sense of transcendence:

That moment when the sound comes in, you suddenly see a very clear silhouette of the train. I see it in the distance, across along, when that noise comes, that’s when you are really transported, that’s when the whole magic comes together, the sound from the beatbox makes it come all together, it is very beautiful and evocative of the time and the place and of the journey and history or many histories (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

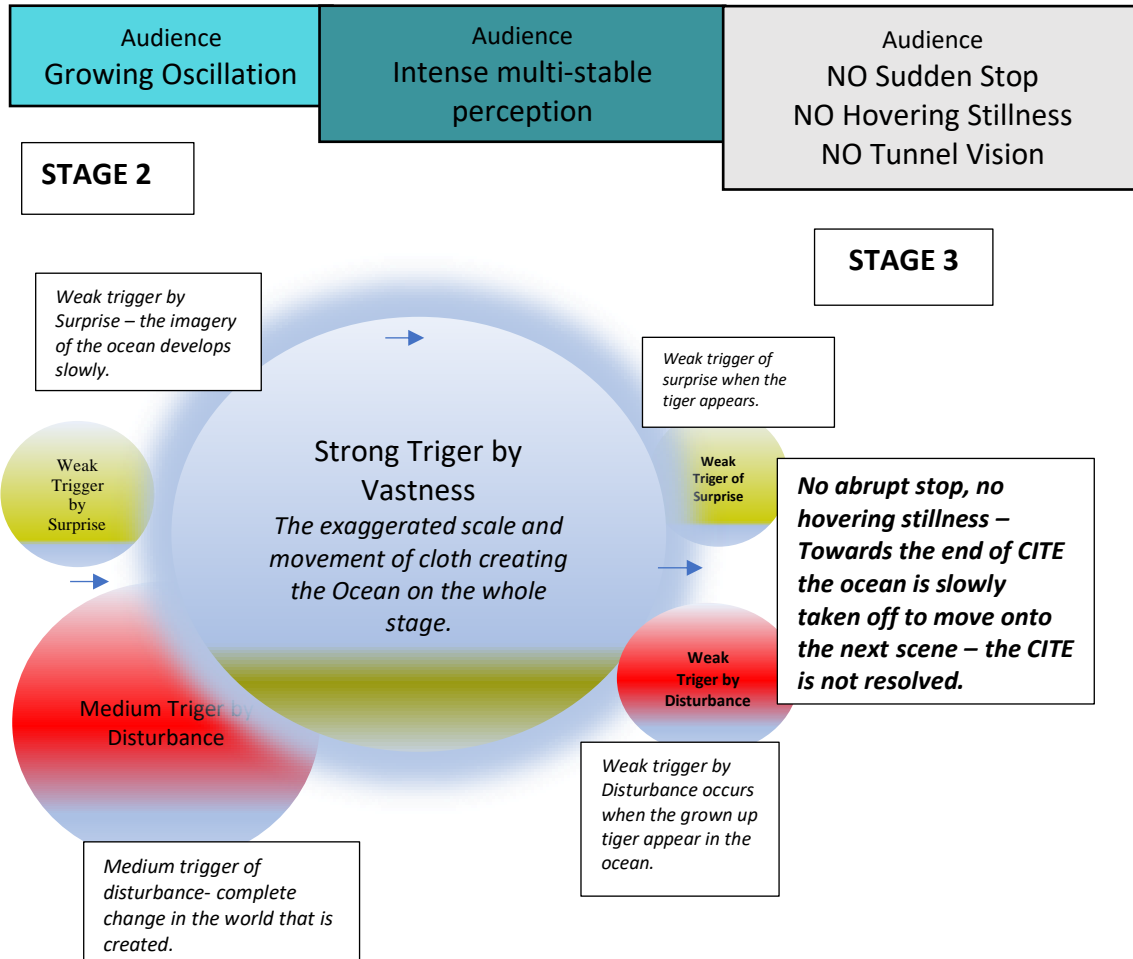
The audience member points to the contrast and contradiction between the visual chaos and rush of energy, sudden stillness, and a single sound of the beatbox imitating the train, which acts as a conduit for the transcendent moment. This indicates a chain reaction with a build-up and then a resolution, often in the form of feelings, inner images, and memories. He suddenly connects to something known to him, to what he is emotionally and intellectually invested in, imagined, and thought of many times in their life. The meanings and associations released through a conduit of hovering connect him personally to what he perceives, thus creating a moment of *Vast Transcendence*.

In summary, the Train Sequence is a moment that has the potential of stimulating *Vast Transcendence* as STAGE 2 of the phenomenon was constructed by applying a strong *Trigger* by *Surprise* and *Vastness*, which resolved through an abrupt stop and caused the sensation of *Hovering Stillness*.

## 6.2 The Ocean Moment – The Possibility of Vast Transcendence

The Ocean Moment- <https://vimeo.com/906726656/fc7a2bf06a?share=copy>

Recordings 12 The Ocean Moment



Imaginative Wondering 17 The Ocean Moment - STAGE 2 and STAGE 3 analysis. Vast Transcendence by CITE has not been stabilised.

The Ocean Moment begins with a weak trigger of surprise as it is set up slowly and delicately by making cloth and creating small waves. That image is quickly overtaken by the growing scale of the ocean created with the parachute cloth covering the whole stage and the music accompanying it, creating a strong *Trigger by Vastness* which generates the sensation of *Awe* based on the *three-stage model of CITE*; there is the possibility of experiencing the sensations of *Vast Transcendence*.

There is also a medium *Trigger by Disturbance* that the audience observed as “a definitive shift that you have to navigate” (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3):

The sea is interesting, but in a way, it kind of feels completely unnecessary for the narrative... I like that it is so different from everything else... it is the scale of it, it covers, it hides things from before, and it takes us somewhere else(...); it is a definitive shift of place, and that's not only in the narrative, or literal. It takes us away from the other places, and we must navigate that (Audience SRI, Stephen, Phase 3).

The change of setting and aesthetic of the show, even though it seems unnecessary to the narrative or drive of the show, creates at the same time a shift that one has to navigate, that takes the audience even deeper into the world of imagination. As a director, I was intrigued by this comment, as I also sensed that shift. The ocean was so different and encompassing as an image that it created a space for a feeling: "It is a moment where we are lost, or we stop for a moment- and it takes us out of the normal rhythm" (researcher/ director's notes). The phrase, 'to navigate' something in our mind, is not just an intellectual statement but expresses an emotional difficulty with comprehension of the events. My decision to bring the ocean was based on a very strong urge to take the world out of the circus aesthetic:

I wanted to take the audience out of the familiar. I understood that it was a change not of pace or rhythm this time but to radically alter the world, the colours, the atmosphere, and to again shock people through the delicacy of the images and closeness of the parachute lights on the ocean. The movement of the parachute can also resemble the ocean, so it was a sudden change to be there and not to be here in the previous aesthetic and see what it does to people. To dream for a moment. (Director's/ Researcher's notes)

The ocean's purpose was to create yet another alternative *World of Imagination* to seduce the audiences to dive even deeper into this world. At the same time, I felt the need to unsettle people's comprehension yet again, and by creating another more profound level of fantasy where everything has a different pattern, structure, and change of dynamics, I aimed at provoking the audience's minds, not to settle.

However, *the Trigger by Surprise* towards the end of STAGE 2 is weak (sudden appearance of a grown-up puppet tiger playing in the waves), there is no other trigger towards the end of the sequence of STAGE 2, and there is no abrupt change of rhythm or an abrupt stop. The state of *Hovering Stillness* does not come to an effect; therefore, the sensation of *Awe* passes through the audience rather than being captured. The *CITE* fails to create a *Hovering Stillness* that enables STAGE 3 to generate transcendence.

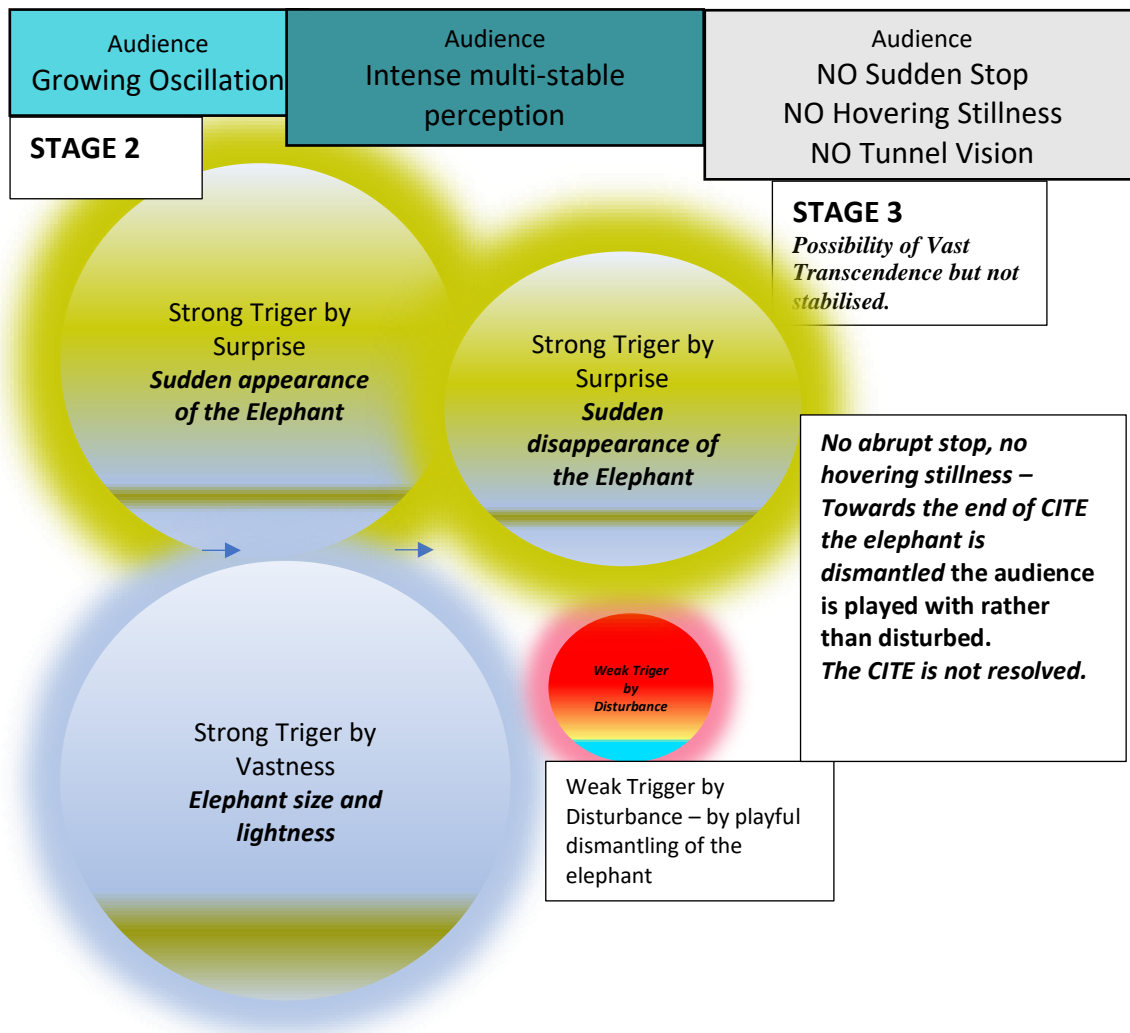
In summary, based on the analysis of the audience SRIs and according to the *three-stage model of CITE*, the Ocean Moment does not possess a strong enough ending *Trigger by*

*Surprise* to make a change to the rhythm of the event to establish *Hovering Stillness*; therefore, the sensation of *Vast Transcendence* has not been stabilised.

### 6.3 The Elephant Moment- Vast Transcendence

**The Elephant moment-** <https://vimeo.com/906718086/87ef9aceda?share=copy>

Recordings 13 *The Elephant Moment*



*Imaginative Wondering 18 Elephant Moment -STAGE 2 and STAGE 3 analysis. Vast Transcendence by CITE has not been stabilised.*

In the Elephant moment, there was a strong *Trigger by Surprise* on the arrival of the elephant and a strong *Trigger by Vastness*, highlighted by the elephant's scale and materiality. The

*Trigger of Vastness* was constructed by exaggeration of the scale unexpected in the theatre scenarios. The audience members accounted for the experience of the trigger:

volume is amazing, I have not seen anything in theatre yet where the volume takes the space” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3) and “the way it appears from nowhere it is huge, and it fills so much space and the thing that makes the moment is that it shocks you like how the hell, did they do that, like where did that come from... (Audience SRI, Pam, Phase 3).

The sensation of awe, which leads towards the *Vast transcendence*, was created by the *Trigger by Surprise* by the elephant being suddenly created out of nothing and the *Trigger by Vastness* when the parachute is filled with air and creates a massive elephant puppet. The focus is on the strangeness of the experience of the beauty of the giant puppet and its life-like qualities, coupled with the astonishment at seeing something ordinary turned sublime. Moreover, the unexpected removal of the elephant at the end of the scene also created a strong *Trigger by Surprise* and a weak *Trigger by Disturbance*. I called it a ‘weak’ disturbance as the audience is played with rather than disturbed. The audience remarked on the approach when removing the elephant from the stage:

Fun in the way that you declare the disappearance, in the way it helps with the special moment, it is that it is so beautiful, and it can be destroyed so quickly, so simply, with such a silly trick, ‘close your eyes I will make it disappear’, you just collapse it and go, that makes it much more special. (Audience SRI, Adam, Phase 3)

The audience members commented on the moment of incongruity through the violation of expectation by a declaration of simplicity of means. The playful violation of obtained high status of the object by destroying it in such a matter-of-fact way. It is the juxtaposition of having the gigantic, beautiful, ephemeral puppet and then the playfulness, ridiculousness, simplicity, and gentle stupidity in the way it is destroyed. The word ‘ridiculous’ and ‘stupid’ sometimes is understood as simplicity of means that work in a direct encounter in the theatre when the charged moment surpasses intellectual analysis. When watched from a distance of time or through a screen, this simplicity shows itself as a shock. However, at the moment, it is the joy and pleasure of being tricked or fooled.

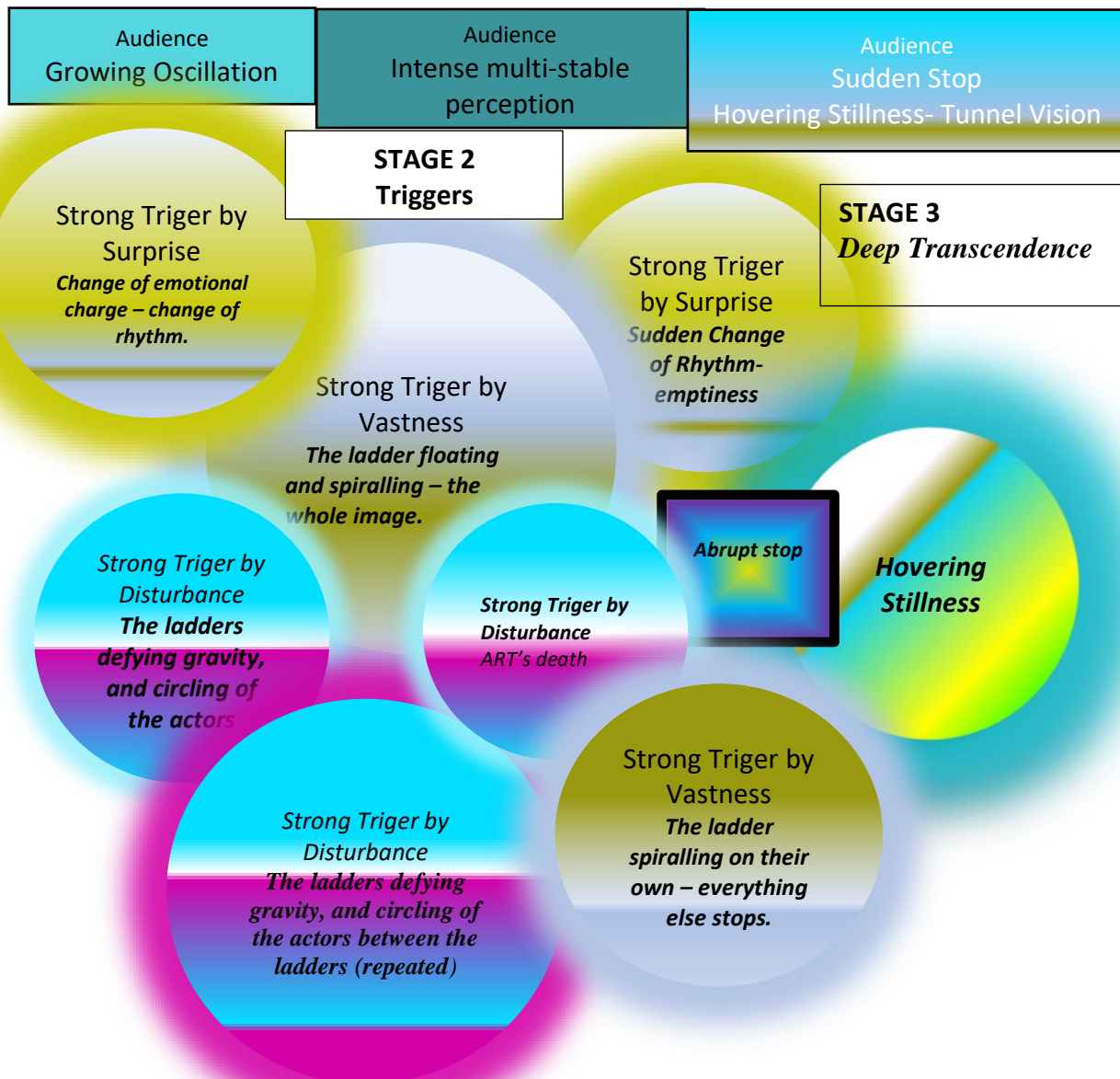
In summary, based on the *three-stage model of CITE*, this analysis of the *Elephant moment* indicates the existence of strong Triggers by *Surprise* and *Vastness*; therefore, there is a potential for the experience of *Vast Transcendence*; however, the following strong *Trigger by Surprise* and weak, playful *Trigger by Disturbance* did not generate *Hovering*

*Stillness* sensations; therefore, the *Moment of Transcendence* in this case may not have been stabilised.

## 6.4 The Ladders progression- Deep Transcendence with Deep Presence

The Ladders Progression- <https://vimeo.com/906719196/d5d4247501?share=copy>

Recordings 14 The Ladders Progression



Imaginative Wondering 19 The Ladders Progression. STAGE 2 and STAGE 3 analysis - Deep Transcendence

The three sequences of ladders progress by developing the intensity of bodily and object movement. The last ladder's sequence begins with three strong triggers: *Trigger by Surprise* when ladders are lifted, *Trigger by Vastness* through the sense of lightness and speed of

movement and *Trigger by Disturbance* through heavy objects defying gravity. The audience member observed:

We trust ourselves to stand on step ladders and to climb them. You have taken the ground from under, and you have flown them; you have taken them to the air, and if that's possible, what else is possible, in the right conditions and in the right way (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

The perceptual inversion of the law of gravity causes the sensation of disturbance and incongruity. The ladders start to be lifted in the air; the music intensifies; the actors spin the ladders and then run at full speed between them. The next trigger is a *Trigger by Disturbance* when the male protagonist, Art, exits through the door, culminating in the sudden stop of all action, music intensifying, and only ladders hovering and silently spinning above the protagonist.

One audience member observed:

What you are doing there, you are playing with something so solid, wood, something we stand on, and you are turning them into air, fragility, something eternal, so you are reversing their function in that moment, and that creates a form of magic, I think in which everything else is possible because you have reversed something so tangible (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

There is a strong *Trigger by Disturbance* and *Surprise* that creates the disruption of logic, expectations, and visual defying of gravity. At the same time there is a *Trigger by Vastness* and *Surprise* created by the scale that is created by the music and lightness and quickness of movement to the spinning ladders. The audience member comments on the combination of the two incongruous triggers, that 'reverse' the logical and expected function of the elements. He expresses the sense of being overwhelmed and open to possibilities that this creates in his mind. The *Trigger by Vastness* created by music and lightness of the ladders triggers a flood of associations and a deep sense of engagement in trying to understand their positioning in the world. This is an example of what Taylor and Uchida (2019: 1549) call a 'need for cognitive accommodation' and rebuilding schemata that were disturbed through incongruity from 'bottom to top'.

Furthermore, the audience member highlights the importance of risk and contradictions when constructing the *Moments of Transcendence*: it is not just the ladders flying but the danger visible on stage that creates a visceral sensation of danger in his own body. The *Trigger by Disturbance* is generated by inverting the function of objects, which can be perceived as a violation of function. This violation of schemata again creates a 'need for cognitive



accommodation’, and as I observed in Chapter 2, the change in conscious modification of beliefs. The inverted function of spinning ladders triggers strong disturbance connected with the image of vastness and suspension in place and time.

At the same time, the control and virtuosity that the actors exhibit moving the ladders just with one finger created the trigger of vastness by creating a dichotomy of heavy versus light, danger versus heightened control, and heavy versus lightness of touch. In the eyes of the audience, we did not create freedom; we ‘attempted’ to create; it is about the endeavour, the desire that some audience members are drawn to. At the end of the sequence, there is a state of hovering.

Based on the *three-stage model* of *CITE*, this analysis of the ladders’ progression moment indicates the existence of many strong triggers of *Surprise, Vastness, and Disturbance*. The triggers generated a strong sense of *hovering stillness* by an abrupt change of rhythm on stage; *therefore*, there is a strong potential of experiencing *Deep Transcendence* with the additional constructs of *Deep Presence*. This new model of analysis requires further pedagogic underpinning as I discuss in the next chapter.

## PART 3

### Chapter 7 Pedagogy of STAGE 1 (Entering the World of Imagination)

This section comprises of two parts:

- **The Pedagogy of Preparedness in Rehearsals**
- **The Pedagogy of Disponsabilité (availability) for Play and Playfulness in Rehearsal**

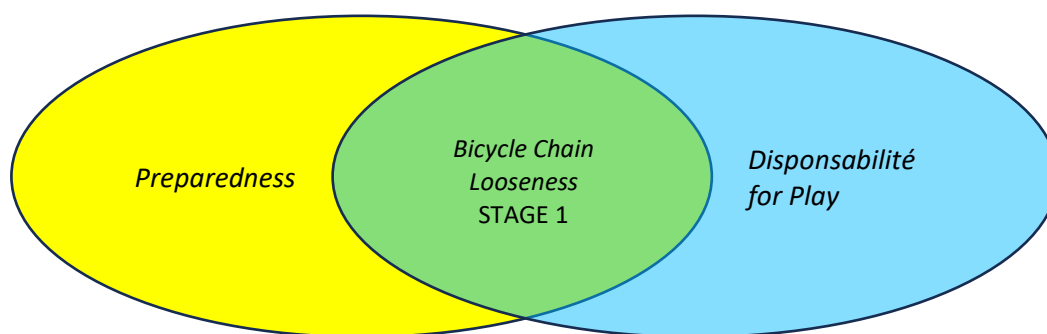


Figure 4 Pedagogy of STAGE 1 in Rehearsals.

This chapter explains the pedagogy behind the creation of STAGE 1 of the phenomenon and the conditions needed for the phenomenon to set off in live performance with the audience. I explain the interconnected pedagogy of *Preparedness* and *Disponibilité for Play* in rehearsals. The two pedagogies aim at generating ‘bicycle chain looseness’ in actors.

Before STAGE 1 begins, certain conditions determine the plausibility of the phenomenon happening. As I set out on this journey of ‘catching’ the *Moments of Transcendence*, I am mindful that, at the same time, I am trying to catch ‘the human exchange’ between the performers and the audience. Theatre is a place for listening in society, as one of the experts explained:

So, yes, the audience has something to do with it; that’s the theatre maker’s job to respond to whatever audience you have in front ...theatre is like any other human exchange; it can be transformed or not (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

For the exchange to occur, the factors that enable this exchange need to be examined first. An actor's availability is part of the human exchange; therefore, the conditions that facilitate their availability must be considered in the pedagogy of the *Moments of Transcendence*.

## **7.1 Availability of the Actors – *State of Risk***

This research proposes an innovative approach to 'stage fright' and to transform the state dreaded by the actors into a positive state necessary for the creative act. 'Stage fright' is an energy that needs to be harnessed a vital part of creating the landscape for *Moments of Transcendence* to occur. This research established that the actors' availability to be in a 'state of risk' is the most critical initial factor when encountering the audience in performance. Sometimes, this state is articulated in negative terms as 'stage fright' (Heim: 2020, McCaw: 2018). The performers recognise the power of the audience and anticipate it with nerves and emotional trembling in their knees. They understand and rely on the performance structure within which they play. They know what to do but not how things will turn out. The actors' and audience's energy creates a fusion that is not fully controllable or predictable. This research attempts to validate 'stage fright' or, as I termed it, *State of Risk* as a more positive experience, one that is under their control and, therefore, is predictable. *State of Risk* is a necessary quality needed in training, rehearsals and performance and needs to be affirmed rather than feared. It generates an opportunity for the phenomenon of *Moments of Transcendence* to occur. Therefore, this new approach to the availability to be in the *State of Risk* is one of the cornerstones of this thesis' pedagogy and will be discussed further in this chapter.

## **7.2 Principles of Pedagogy of Preparedness in Rehearsals**

One of the research questions I asked the experts in Phase 1 was: 'How do you create the right conditions in training or rehearsals for the phenomenon?'

The analysis of this research question established two directional necessities for training: one up towards virtuosity of performance and another, the opposite direction down, towards chaos, being human, failure, playfulness, and trickery. The two directions co-exist and are in constant tension, keeping the actor alert and alive to the moment, anticipating.

## 7.2.a Educating Senses

My pedagogical ontology is situated in the understanding that acting methods are regarded as stultifying and obscuring the way of human exchange. The work I do in rehearsals is not ‘training’ but ‘educating senses’ of the actors to be more aware of themselves and others. McCaw (2018) points out that the training of actors differs from that of musicians or athletes. Actors are not taught information, but theatre teachers create an experience for the actors. Brook (1968: 9) additionally proposes that training does not make a “cleverer or better actor, but the process focuses on working as a group ensembled together”. The group becomes more in tune with each other, which changes them, and they become more aware of themselves changing. Every group has its particular ecology. Therefore, working with actors is not about following a method but educating their senses. The process of training actors supports the actors’ wellbeing, that they are more in tune with their senses and in the process become more ‘themselves’.

Gaulier often remarked on the quest of his pedagogy to discover the liveness and what makes the performer ‘beautiful’ or unique on stage. In the experts’ interviews, this way of thinking was also confirmed by this statement:

They (the methods techniques) are only useful in so far as through the technique there is a possibility to connect to the teacher to touch the student (actor); I don’t mean to physically touch, I mean, something has deep meaning and impacts the actor, and it has nothing to do either with the person or the techniques but with the human exchange (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1).

The idea of ‘human exchange’ is critical to understanding the philosophy behind the pedagogy of ‘the world of the imagination’ and the foundation necessary in rehearsals.

An opinion expressed very vividly in the expert’s interview considered what it means to be ‘touched’ through practice or practitioner:

There is a change, a connection through inner touch, and because something has changed in you, your eyes (also) have changed, and the sense of sound and rhythm...Feldenkrais (movement awareness work) is like that, and Monika (Pagneux work) particularly, she was very like that, you suddenly feel, now, I am alive, this is it, it is an illumination (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

This sensation of change is sacred in human beings. Grotowski (1969) showed others that their work assumes another level by stripping away the social habits and defences in actors,

“not collection of skills but eradication of blocks” (1969: 37). I would argue that by the ‘via negativa’ approach, his work centred on opening up what is vulnerable and authentic in us.

### **7.2.b Re-interpretation**

The discussion about training in drama schools and professional rehearsal spaces brought many insights when I questioned the issue of methods of acting and their re-interpretation. The inner processes of finding ‘the theatrical truth’ have changed with time, and the value of the term ‘truth’ itself is now outdated. Several teachings still regarded as Canon (Chekhov: 2002, Merlin: 1980, Stanislavsky: 1937) established the main principles of acting and teaching acting in the West. One of the interviewed practitioners acknowledged:

We can draw on history, we can draw on techniques and systems in a way that has depth and thoroughness and appreciation, and practice... But I also don’t want to be a slave or disciple to a technique and, in doing that, close down the present connection and search for the mystery of theatre, which is and how do we make it live now... (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1).

I argue that theatre speaks of ‘now’, and to be connected to people, it must be invented repeatedly, and actors must metabolise the knowledge given to them and work it through their system. I perceive a deep conflict between the above statement and the current teaching practice. I argue that teaching young actors to obey time-honoured acting manuals (see p. 60 in Appendix Four for Guildhall, BA Acting 22/23) closes down what connections to ‘presentness’ the actors possess. Moreover, it closes the “search for the mystery of theatre” (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1). Theatre changes with time, cultural and social progress and adjustments in language, mannerisms, and ways of thinking change. In Chapter 1, I also outlined the value of ‘truth’ versus authenticity and believing in the rules of the game. This dichotomy within practical knowledge would perhaps benefit from being re-evaluated and re-interpreted as people change socially and culturally with time. I consider the process of re-interpretation or even re-discovery that relates to the contemporary circumstances of our lives to be one of the most critical factors in the education of the actor.

### **7.2.c Not systematic**

From readings of Stanislavski (1937), Lecoq (1990) and other practitioners, as well as from my practice, I recognised that there are plenty of hours spent in the rehearsal room where

there are “hours of bad stuff and occasional moments of something wonderful” (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1). The work in the rehearsal room can be unsystematic and haphazard. The essence lies in human connection: “So I believe in technique, I believe in knowledge, I believe in tradition only in so far as it offers me the depth of process to meet and touch the students now” (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1). In my practice, I also rely on some of that previously discovered knowledge, however I noticed that I introduce it when the students or actors search for it in their practice. It is as the expert points out, to find something universal that translates through the time and societal changes. The central meaning here lies in the immediacy of searching for the moment that creates the connection between human beings. By not systematic, I mean that these touching moments are better thought of as constellations being visible on a starry night. They have tentative, invisible links that create patterns for the observant eye. These touching moments create the foundation for the development of *Moments of Transcendence*.

#### **7.2.d Technical competency**

The experts emphasised that they do not believe in any particular training method that can exist to develop the phenomenon, but they stressed that “You have to know your job, and you have to know how to make the cloth catch the light, or the actor to release the puppet” (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1). Technical competency requires physical and practical precision in the act of doing things. One of the experts compared the acting technical competency to the competency of a musician:

(In classical music training) you have to be able to be precise and keep attention to details, no, no, this is B, and this is B flat, so you have to be able to do the equivalent in physical theatre work, this is diagonal, this is not, while always accepting that the thing that is not ‘correct’ could be the most exciting thing but never the less you need to know what is left, what’s right, what’s up what’s down. (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1)

The attention here is drawn to understanding the physical precision in space. Technical competency for actors, in my professional experience, begins with educating the senses and educating the actors’ sensibility and sensitivity. The technical precision is often discovered through the work of front-runners in this field, including Feldenkrais’ or Alexander's Methods. McCaw (2018: 38) makes a critical point from the angle of the teaching of Feldenkrais, where he observes that in the West, the attitude to learning is by will and compulsion rather than by being open to the experience of learning. Feldenkrais’ method is

essentially grounded in developing the ability to learn. Feldenkrais posited that the human nervous system's ability to learn is far superior to any other animal on the grounds of the comparative weight index of infants' and adults' brains (Iris: 2021). Early stages of human development are centred around an enhanced visceral curiosity leading to a better understanding of all our senses, awareness, and reactions and, through that, an improved understanding of ourselves. This learning shows a different attitude to what adults often demonstrate when sized by the opportunity to learn. Feldenkrais worked on re-activating the inner curiosity and questioning of the world and our senses. His work is fundamental in re-awakening these qualities in the actors and acquiring the technical competency needed for the profession. In my own practice, I am indebted through the Feldenkrais method<sup>8</sup> to understand that there are layers to somatic learning, and the more 'life experience' one has the somatic understanding deepens. Therefore, learning, and technical competency is in constant flow between experience and sensitivity of the body. Technical competency guides the development of precision of actor's senses and perception of themselves and the world. I will, therefore, outline the concept of *Preparedness*, which is the first part of the pedagogy of STAGE 1.

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<sup>8</sup> I completed Advanced Feldenkrais Practitioner Training (4 years) in Lewis in 2012 after working with Pagneux through this technique for over 20 years.

## 7.3 Preparedness

In this thesis, I propose *Preparedness* directed towards the actor's mental, physical, and emotional readiness. I concur that even making this compartmentalization is misleading as the practice encompasses all human faculties. It is also true that in my practice, I start the process with the physical preparation. The experts emphasized the significance of the primary physical preparation:

So physical training is very important if the body cannot express...; as I said, these things travel through the body because it is the only real method we have of expression on stage, so yes, the physical training has to happen, but it is also mental training (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

This statement, which illustrates the problematic nature of splitting the training into categories as the expert's thinking visibly oscillates, trying to decide what is more important, pinpoints my main point that we should educate an actor in their 'expression on stage'. The expression on stage has a physical form first, which mental and emotional centres then support.

This search for the most authentic, alive expression on stage, in my practice, consists of going back to fundamental processes of *Openness, Alertness, Touch, Focus and Presence* through the work on the actor. One of the experts observed it as an idea of 'regression' which means going with actors back to rudimentary basics:

To go backwards rather than to go forwards, so we do not see the process as about perfection; we see it as a kind of regression. I mean, I know that there is a kind of paradox there, but to see the process as going backwards, going to the fundamentals (...) in terms of artistic work so that I am looking all the time to question through process which travels forward in time, but in terms of artistic work goes backwards towards essence (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1).

This process of 'going backwards' seems to be conceptually related to Grotowski's (1969) *Via Negativa* practice, which entailed stripping the actors of layers of socialization that impeded their authenticity and interrupted the clarity of the instinctual responses. The crucial realization here is that the rehearsal process should not be considered as creating a polished, perfect product. The idea of thinking of art as a product (the finished, perfect performance ready to be shown to the audience) whilst creating it contradicts the philosophical discernment of this thesis, which supports the principle of creating art as a spiritual form



rather than seeing it as a commercialized object. Therefore, there should be no separation between the rehearsals (the preparation time) and the performance. It proposes that the cast and the director are ‘fundamentally in process’. The search for what feels most ‘alive’, most touching in human beings, therefore, is inconsistent with looking at the performance as a commercial object:

I am looking all the time for their oneness liminality, in order that the actor is comfortably questioning, seeking, opening, revealing, making them more and more attentive to the present, as opposed to preparing in the sense of rehearsing and presenting ... Because the liminality is already not possible, probably (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1).

*Preparedness* signifies here the physical, emotional, and intellectual aliveness that supports the creation of the world of imagination in rehearsals. In my practice, I prepare actors through the exploration of five main categories of *Preparedness* by working through movement with individuals and through physical ensemble work:

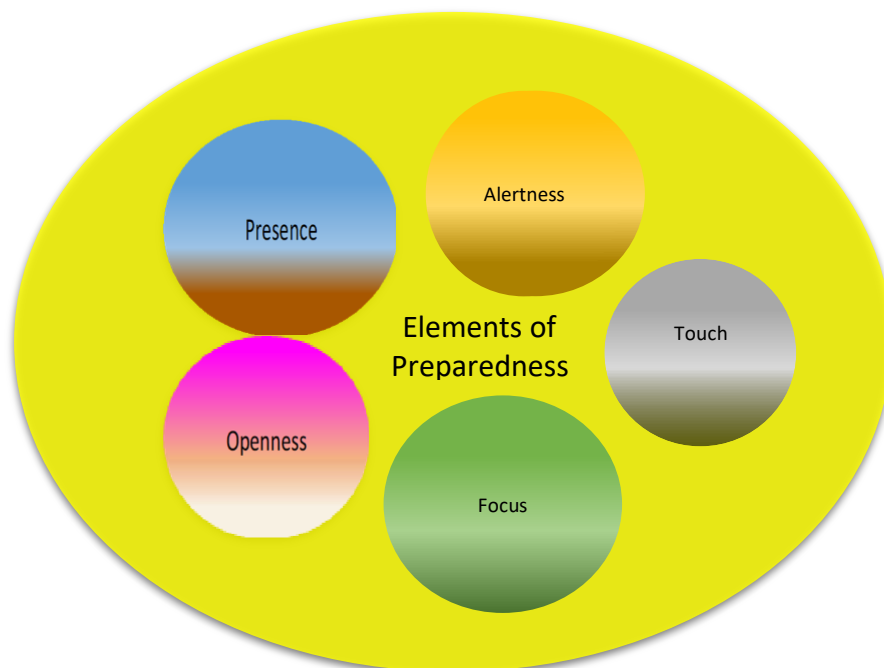


Figure 5 Openness, Touch, Focus, Alertness and Presence

### 7.3.a Openness

The first category of *Preparedness* is *Openness*, which connotes the availability of the performer. ‘Being open’ indicates a state where the actors are willing to see the world with ‘fresh eyes’ and are, as the experts suggested, “free from stress, fear, or necessity” (Expert SSI, Samuel, Phase 1), and are also deeply engaged in every challenge. Kounios and Beeman (2014: 13.13) considered observing the state of openness as more advantageous for discovering insights. They noted that mood influences cognitive abilities, “positive mood

facilitates intuition, the ability to make decisions or judgments about stimuli without conscious access to the information or processes influencing their behaviour". In my professional practice, this state is accessed through work on softening the body and often through making the actor exceptionally slower. This process of slowing down is implemented through the floorwork I lead with the Feldenkrais method, which alerts the nervous system's habitual patterns, and through this alertness, I can locate 'the groove' of the pattern residing within the actor and make them aware of it. It is crucial, however, that I do not communicate the discovery directly but guide the actors through their sensing to discover the state of openness for themselves: the actors must sense it within themselves. I ask them to discover it by making the discovery theirs, and in this circumstance, they have a choice of seeing the old pattern and consciously changing it, adapting it, or working with it. This pedagogical approach creates a state of availability and openness within the individual and the group, which enables the changes to be sensed as they happen: a discovery by an actor sensing openness through a bodily change.

### **7.3.b Alertness and Lightness**

One of the qualities of Preparedness is a state of alertness. It organises the actor's body to respond instinctively to the impulse. Meyerhold (1968) valued the acrobatic training of his performers (which later was adopted by Stanislavsky) and often observed that the acrobatic training or the ability to use actors' bodies creates 'a quality of decisiveness' in the actor. This decisiveness is observed in physical, emotional, and intellectual states. It supports the actor's strength and confidence when working through their response to the impulse. In my experience as a pedagogue and a director, I developed alertness through training in many physical art forms (stage fighting, acrobatics, and Eastern forms of movement). I also often ask a performer 'to be on their toes' as we search together for what I refer to as 'flying, effortless lightness' or 'not having Spanish feet' in honour of amazing but heavy-footed Spanish actors that I worked with once. The sense of being on one's toes relates to the lightness, quickness, and alertness necessary to anticipate what is coming the actor's way. It does not only mean physical agility and physical alertness but also, equally significantly, quickness of wit, changes in one's thinking and ability to be agile in response to changing strategies and behaviour, and quick understanding of the situation. From my professional experience, the actors train their alertness by observing people's habitual movement patterns and playing with changing them by switching, quickening, and being in a rhythm with others

without making it into an abstract form of movement or dance. From my training, the sense of lightness was one of the first essential factors. My master teacher, Pagneux, often pointed out the quality of lightness when changing physical direction and the importance of mental dexterity when moving. The quality of the sound of the footsteps indicated lightness. The moment we hear them, we stop looking at the actor, we stop dreaming, we stop imagining. We are disturbed and escape from the *World of Imagination* into the real world of 'heavy feet'. One of the experts observed: "I learned it from Peter Brook that you need to stop quickly, you need to move forward very quickly, otherwise you push on it too much, and you and you stub yellow colour on it, and then they can say: oh, what was that..." (Expert SSI, Samuel, Phase 1). The expert observes the fragility of the moments and the necessity to be light and quick when on stage and when creating material. The "yellow stub" represents when the actor held too heavily or too long to show something important or something that has a meaning, at the same time making it evaporate. For the audience to be immersed in the *World of Imagination*, the actors need to have a mercurial quality, carrying the intangible, ephemeral message, and this can only be done through a unity of the body, sensations and mind which can be found through the quality of lightness: "one should be light as a bird, not as a feather" (Murray 2013: 212). The state of alertness and lightness in *Preparedness* requires crucial physical and somatic in-depth training.

### **7.3.c Touch and Trust**

*Touch* is another element of *Preparedness* that explicitly connects to the *Tuning* process between the group and between the group and me, the director. Safety to touch galvanizes the sense of trust between the participants. The performers can feel safe and trust each other when working on quality, precision, and physical sensitivity with each other. The experts also highlighted the importance of touch and the sensitivity that must come with it:

You see that in games, and you see their (the actors') fun and their insecurity, and you see them getting braver, and you see them touching each other in the way of children, not in the way of men and women, and you see to get the innocence of touch it is quite difficult in the rehearsal room and doing my job, I am very lucky to be able to touch so many people, without it being rude, and my job is to stare and touch and the physical stuff, especially the circus stuff, bodies are innocent things, they're, they're very respected and loved (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1)

When working with the element of touch as preparation for constructing the *World of Imagination*, I often take time to explain at the beginning of the rehearsals that the performers

are encouraged to voice how they feel about being touched. I want the actors to feel confident and know each other's sensitivity. Kapadocha (2023: 201) follows the same line of thinking, observing that "touch is proposed as an ethical renegotiation between self and other that necessitates differentiation and destination in nearness". My approach as a director is closely linked to Kapadocha's (2023) as we both promote sharing the actors' sensitivity through negotiations assertively and with no agenda. By 'no agenda' I mean conscious lack of any form of power over someone else's body or being. Trust through touch in the ensemble and on the individual level is a cornerstone of creating a world of imagination. In my professional practice, trust through touch begins the process of the search for what touches us and the audience on an emotional and cerebral level.

### **7.3.d Focus**

The next category of *Preparedness* is focus, which has two different angles to its understanding. One of them is the actor's ability to focus and command focus. The experts observed the necessity of generating attention to one thing on stage as well as the ability to change or sustain it. McCaw (2018: 33) calls this skill "a single focus". The experts observed that developing and commanding focus is an integral part of *Preparedness*: "You give attention to the object; you command the whole audience" (Expert SSI, Samuel, Phase 1). The changing focus in theatre exists because of what the actor pays attention to, where their eyes are resting, or how they handle an object or a puppet. The 'single focus' is connected to and, more importantly, charged by the presence of the actor. There is, however, another understanding of the term 'focus' highlighted by McCaw (2018: 33) as a "soft, open focus", which is closely related to the state of 'being in two worlds at the same time' from STAGE 1 of this research. McCaw (2018: 38) inspired my investigation by outlining the definition of 'soft focus' as: "This is not some woolly lack of single directed focus, but a more global sense of attention, to movement, positioning, timing". His definition of 'soft focus' as the actors' act of concentration on all senses, visual, aural, and interpersonal, led me to associate the findings of 'being in soft, open focus'. That leads my research to the finding of the state of *Deep Presence* at STAGE 3. *Soft-Open Focus*, I propose, is an initial state of perception and a state of mind that supports the audience, actors, and the director in entering the *World of Imagination* as well as a state that leads the audience into the state of *Deep Presence*.

### 7.3.e Presence

‘Having presence or being present on stage’ is a term that recurs frequently in theatre practice literature (Barba: 1994, Grotowski: 1969, McCaw: 2018, Rodenburg: 2007, Zarilli: 1997) and among practitioners and master teachers. It differs from ‘stage presence’ as the latter means “a quality that attracts attention on stage” (Merriam-Webster, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023). The term stage presence is often affiliated with having charisma or an aura. Fischer-Lichte (2008) comments on what she terms ‘weak presence’, where the actor uses his presence in a sense of charisma to enthrall the audience to their charms. The difference between the two terms is in the angle of perception: stage presence is release upon and absorbed by the spectators, and being present on stage is a technical term amongst theatre practitioners that connotes a certain ‘quality of awareness’ from a performer of what is happening inside and outside them. It is being aware of all of one’s senses and having the same attention directed towards others. Fischer-Lichte (2008: 96) also investigates the term strong presence, where she is closer in her definition to the meaning ‘being present on stage’ which she proposes as:

“a stream of magic- it appears unforeseeably: They (audience) sense the power emanating from the actor that forces them to focus their full attention on him... and perceive it as a source of energy”.

This kind of presence created in the actor is perceived by the audience, granting them an experience of an intense sensation of “themselves at present”. *Presence* demonstrates itself during the encounter between the actors and spectators in the theatre, and it is always phenomenal (as in meaning: perceived by the senses). The audience member sees an embodied mind; it is not just a body. Barba (1994) was occupied by the pre-expressive and expressive articulation of the actor, Grotowski (1969), with impulse and reaction. Both looked to the East to observe the tools for generating presence. Grotowski (1969) did not differentiate the actors from their bodies but observed them as ‘Holy Actors’. Fischer-Lichte (2008) points out that the actor is not an object and that the human body is ultimately elusive. She observes the sensual effect on presentness through an act of perception and the transfer of energy from the actor to the spectator. Through specific processes of training actors’ physicality, the actor is able to capture intense levels of energy and acute self-awareness that emanate this sense of ‘presentness’. The “radical concept of presence” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 99) highlights the erasure of the oppositions between body/mind divide for the actor and for the audience: “The spectator experiences the performer and himself as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming – he perceives the circulating energy as a transformative and

vital energy”. In this research, I also argue that the actor’s ‘radical’ presence on stage leads them through the *three-stage model*, ultimately to a *State of Becoming* highlighted earlier by Fischer-Lichte (2008) as the ‘process of becoming’. State of Becoming demonstrates itself through an intense quality of presence in the actors when there is an erasure of body and mind dichotomy, and they become a conduit for ‘collective effervescence’ between themselves and the audience. I will expound on the *State of Becoming* in Chapter 9, where I talk about the state of transcendence in the actor.

The five elements of *Preparedness* organise the physical, emotional, and intellectual readiness of the actor and the ensemble that supports the creation of the *World of Imagination* in rehearsals and in performance. In my professional practice, these elements are always present, and they are always working synchronously with *Disponibilité for Play*.

## 7.4 Pedagogy of *Disponabilité for Play*

The second part of the pedagogy of the *World of Imagination* will explore the state of playfulness as the bonding ingredient for the next stage to come into existence. This research recommends that the pedagogy of the *World of Imagination* prepares the acting ensemble and the creative team to relish what participants termed as a “state of risk” (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1), “stage fright” (Expert SSI, Thomas, Phase 1), or ‘tightrope walk’ (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1) as well as be part of the communal imagination and sense of delight and joy of creativity. This part creates a meaningful contract between the players and the director, which establishes STAGE 1, where the *World of Imagination* is created. In Chapter 4, I outlined the difficulties with the nomenclature of ‘transcendence’ in theatrical settings. This quote below is an example of the expert finding difficulty with the term and at the same time embracing my territory of playfulness:

Well, all that kind of language (subject of transcendence) and these thoughts are in danger of becoming pretentious, are in danger of becoming religious and are in danger of becoming intellectual, and I think playfulness is one of these essential dimensions in this work that ensures that it is not pretentious, not intellectual, not religious, that it is not a cult (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1).

*Disponabilité for Play* is a phrase used by French master teachers and means to be available to play. In the context of devised theatre, the phrase indicates that the actor, under the sustenance of play, can take personal risks to extend themselves towards the others on stage and in the auditorium. The actors and the creative team create a web-like support towards the occurrence of what I termed being in a *State of Risk*. The challenge of the unpredictability of what will happen on stage must be welcomed and embraced in full. The pedagogy of *Disponabilité for Play* epitomizes taming that fear and risk-taking. Heim (2020: 46) describes the condition of being on stage as “walking the tightrope” and observes that “this vulnerability can create moments of sheer terror for actors as they risk breaking out of their character, forgetting their lines, are overwhelmed by stage fright actors are vulnerable together”. I would argue that this positioning reflects perhaps more the traditional theatre scene as well as encompasses the term ‘stage fright’ in an individual context rather than a group setting. The main variance is that the formerly disconnected individuals build a strong and safe ensemble group. This main feature (building a strong ensemble through play) of this part of the pedagogy allows for *Moments of Transcendence* to occur. Heim (2020: 46), however, also observes that “the ephemeral unpredictability in theatre heightens the enjoyment” and “unpredictability also provides conditions in the theatre for something to go

more than right”. The risk factor is important, but it does not need to stultify the performers. Instead, it can be set up as the springboard for transcendence. The *Moments of Transcendence* are often more visible in the devised theatre territory because of the foundations, particularity, and significance of rehearsal training. The pedagogy of Lecoq, Pagneux and Gaulier, who are the founders of creating *Disponibilité for Play*, begins with connecting physicality and flexibility of mind.

In Chapter 1, when explaining the ontology of my practice, I noted that my research rests on the foundations of Bakhtin’s (1984) and Huizinga’s (1938) philosophy. The pedagogy of *Disponibilité for Play* is grounded in Bakhtin’s (1984: 122) philosophy of Carnival, where he emphasizes laughter’s qualities: “Laughter liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion”. Laughter and humour are signals for non-threatening behaviour, a sign of acceptance of belonging to a group. In my professional practice, as well as in rehearsals, the bonding of the ensemble begins through laughter and the sense of equity that it generates. Laughter educates the actors about the importance of flexibility in the mental framework and the necessity for kindred spirit towards each other and enhances the sense of being a community. I draw on laughter in of *Disponibilité for Play* as well as in *Preparedness*, as a constant and fundamental aspect of the ensemble and actors’ work. Laughter brings together all the elements that constitute *Disponibilité for play*. These elements are: *Ensemble Work* and *Breaking the Barriers*, *Creating a Bond*, *Setting Boundaries and High Stakes*, *Fear of Failure*.



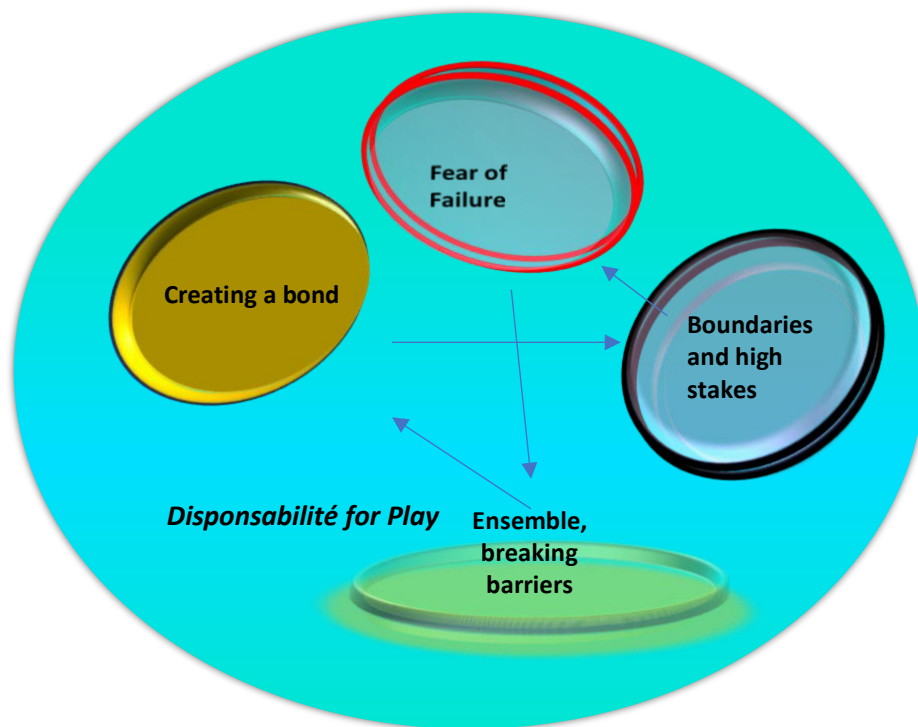


Figure 6 Elements of Disponsabilité for Play

#### 7.4.a Ensemble work and breaking the barriers.

Building an ensemble happens through creating complicity with others. When we laugh, joke, and tease each other, the mind relaxes, similar to when we daydream or imagine. In a rehearsal environment, this imagining is done together through communal playing, competing, inventing and sometimes just being silly. Through *Preparedness* in the body, the actors become more open in front of each other. During the interviews, the actors talked about their need for trust: “and it is helpful for the actor to feel free and not to be afraid, and maybe I mess up, but I know that Patrick or (other actor) have my back, and everyone is in tune” (Actor’s SRI, Jacob, Phase 3). They focused on the construct of the group’s safety, complicity, and the need to rely on each other. The actors were concerned with building the ensemble and the feeling of safety between each other to play and take risks together. In the interviews, the actors pointed to the tendency of “losing themselves” in the game and being engaged in it “to the limits of physical exertion” (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 2). I termed this experience as *breaking the barriers*, which is also a part of the director creating the contract with the actors and creating a *World of Imagination*. *Breaking the Barriers* in some traditions, such as Grotowski (1969) and Barba (1986), means stripping the acquired social behaviours and habits, getting rid of a ‘bag of tricks’, as well as “annihilation of one’s body’s

resistances” (Grotowski, 1969: 115) and is in direct opposition to the tradition that I am representing. Murray (2013: 213) explains that in the tradition of Lecoq, Gaulier and Pagneux, the essence of training is to create “the generative tactics of pleasure, through an embrace of the moment, of openness and of ‘disponibilité’”. Lecoq (1990: 65) once stated about his school: “It is essential to have fun, and our school is a happy school. Not for us, tortured, self-questioning about the best way to walk on stage: it is enough that it be done with pleasure”. *Breaking the Barriers* means breaking the constraints within the individual and between people in order to feel pleasure on stage, which ultimately leads to creating a bond.

#### **7.4.b Creating a Bond.**

The state of knowing how to play with each other is crucial to this pedagogy; it is a skill of reverting to a state with a ‘child-like’ quality, which I discussed as a quality needed by the audience in Chapter 5. When a group reverts to that ‘child-like’ (and not childish) quality, the group acquires a deep level of ensemble trust. It sometimes demonstrates itself through real-life teasing, pushing the boundaries, and the understanding that each of us is different; a process of acquiring rare ties begins. As a director, I create circumstances where, with the actors, I create a “gang of friends” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3) where there is a safe space for messing around, taking risks, and bouncing off each other’s ideas. Assurances cannot do this with words; it needs to be done through physicality and laughter during rehearsals. This is also what one of the experts called a ‘cushioned spontaneity’, where the actors know they have each other’s back. One of the experts commented:

You have to do that in the spirit of knowing that it does not matter if you make a fool of yourself, that there is no way that you can be wrong, the ideas may not be used, the ideas may be hopeless, may be completely impossible, but you cannot be wrong if you feel it when you in the rehearsal room, in a good rehearsal room you cannot be wrong (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1).

Once I have the cushioned spontaneity between the ensemble, they know that any ‘offer’ is possible. The acceptance of the offer is only on the grounds of its suitability towards the project. Actors learn how to listen to each other and feel and sense how they respond. The actors’ interviews expressed it as “being on the same wavelengths” (Actors SRI, Patrick, Phase 2). One of the experts compared what happens within a theatrical ensemble with a musical ensemble playing jazz:

It is a bit secret as well, and sometimes it can happen within an ensemble where something can travel between them; it is like jazz; it is a group of people who are playing a story or a piece of music, and when they all switched on, they can feel it, and I have been there (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

Here, the expert recognizes that something travels between people. This kind of bond is only generated when people spend many hours together and have a common goal with a deadline. This ‘something that travels’ is recognised by Heim (2020) as an ‘electric air’ that is then able to move like an ‘impulse’ or an ‘electricity’ or a ‘wave’ from the actors and is experienced by the audience. In rehearsals, I always work on establishing this special bond, a shared understanding. It is a contract between me and the actors setting up the structure of the *World of Imagination*.

### **7.4.c Setting Boundaries and high stakes**

At the same time as creating the bond, I introduce games and improvisations, themes of work that have unambiguous rules, limitations, and boundaries. These activities seem very simple initially; however, the complications begin when the body is involved, and the quickness of response and rhythm are part of the construction. These simple games incorporate different brain functions, making them increasingly complex to execute. There are two main ideas when using play and improvisations in rehearsals or working room: the games have to be finite, and they have to have high stakes:

You need a structure, to begin with; that is why I always speak about the lines on the floor, like a tennis court (...), so there are infinite possibilities within that space, but only because the lines on the floor are there, you have the potential to be inventive, ... there needs to be confined space and time (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1).

Games are set up by a clear, finite structure with tight restrictions, a complication of high stakes. This setup imitates our mortal existence with its infinitive variation of human stories within limited bounds. One needs to know their limitations to be inventive.

The competitive games are designed to challenge physically and emotionally. The competitive game often reveals something unexpected of the participant and something that generally a person wants to hide. In rehearsal situations, even though I work with awareness-release through the work on *Preparedness*, the tension is always present. Part of being in the theatrical process and the artistic creation is the individual's egos, the power play between them, the actors' ambition, and the tension from the time limitation. Playing competitive

games unravels hidden vulnerabilities, authenticity, and honesty in the player. One of the experts observed that “when the body is doing the work for you, you are not thinking” (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1). ‘Things’ are revealed and cannot be left hidden. I have heard a common observation about the British: they frown upon outright competition, and some assert that they are not competitive: some people hide this trait, or it has been installed in them. The game challenges you to play your best; the stakes are high. In that moment, people’s vulnerabilities are revealed through the moments of failure. In the set-up of trust, we identify with ‘the losers’; the moment of empathy is exchanged, and the trust is built even deeper. One of the experts observed the importance of a different working the body through a competitive process in theatre:

The body is working through the problem for you, but so many different things come to light, overcoming endurance, speed, agility, the human skill is improved and also the kind of trickery we do to win,(...)to be so engaged you forget how much energy you are using, that all those things, by playing you train those things (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1)

The difference in philosophical stance between sports-playing games and theatrical playing games is that in theatre, we do not encourage competitiveness for its own sake. We nurture competitiveness as it reveals hidden traits of the actor and shows what they usually want to hide, such as secretly wanting to be a leader, seeking power, too much enthusiasm, and lacking confidence. All these traits are not judged; they are simply revealed in the chaos of action. The games also create a chance to expose athletic or physical prowess or weaknesses and playfully encourage the conscious use of actors’ wit to outsmart others by breaking some of the rules to succeed. If this is done with humour and intelligence, the outfoxing tactics are celebrated by the group as a happy sentiment: ‘Oh no, we have just been fooled’, showing everyone that a different kind of competition is happening simultaneously. These outmanoeuvring tactics are rewarded rather than frowned upon, as they demonstrate the possibility of divergent thinking and tackling a problem through a different set of invented rules. Playing games puts the actors in a safe world of play; one gauges their intelligence, wit, physicality, and comradeship with others.

#### **7.4.d Fear of Failure**

Taking the risk without intellectual defence and hardened heart...

(Director’s / Researcher’s notes)

In rehearsals, I see a certain nervousness at the beginning, which acts as a defensive mechanism when the actors are afraid of failing or showing their vulnerability. This risk factor and its association with the fear of failing must be overcome. The games are designed to weaken the defensive mechanism and accept failure as a part that can also be enjoyed. They are structured so that everybody can play, improve their quickness, wit, and connection to others, and reveal their vulnerability at the same time. Once people are not afraid of failing, they learn to take risks and enjoy the vulnerability that comes with it. As a director, I am always sensitive towards what vulnerable qualities are revealed in these situations. It is crucial to how actors react when they have been exposed and fooled. Do they laugh with everyone else, or do they try to hide their embarrassment? Gaulier teaches us to see hope, imagination, pleasure, and empathy through allowing ourselves to be vulnerable on stage. Kendrick (2011) observes that Gaulier's disturbance technique teaches students to discover moments of beauty through vulnerability and openness. That quality also teaches us to care for others as they are as vulnerable as us. The critical quality of play is that one cannot control it. The state of play is in flux, anti-static and has an autotelic quality, which means that it is played for the sake of playing. The actors need to take risks and be open and vulnerable. Being so open and vulnerable and letting others see it can only happen if one accepts and embraces the possibility of failure. The audience wants to see the full extent of the performers' humanity. When the ones who try to hide their vulnerability see others submitting to failure, which shows itself through being vulnerable and laughing at their foolishness, they begin to be curious and step by step, they accept that there is nothing to hide or be ashamed of.

Artaud (1964) once famously called actors 'athletes of the heart', meaning that they need to experience all the human emotions and be able to find them as called upon. Huizinga (1949: 21) emphasized: "The joy inextricably bound up with playing can turn not only into tension but to elation. Frivolity and ecstasy are the twin poles between which play moves". Frivolity and ecstasy extend our range and show our humanity. Caillois (2001:13) termed this sensation as 'paidia' in his theory on play: "an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety" or "uncontrolled fantasy". The acceptance of our vulnerability during play, in front of others, often produces sudden ecstasy and a sensation of overwhelming pleasure.

#### 7.4.e Doubleness of the world of imagination- Autopoietic loop

Once the *Preparedness* and *Disponibilité for Play* are present in the rehearsal room, the contract between the director and the actors is set up. Smith (2023: 29) similarly observes his own devising practice as creating a ‘playground’ that “as the environment must be fostered”. When this contract is founded successfully, the players and the creative team enter the world of imagination. Experts observed that STAGE 1 commences in rehearsals when the feeling of ‘co-creation’ between the actors and the director is established. The actors extend their imagination and connect, and with the director, the communal imagination starts to grow more robust, and they create and see images together. As a director, in rehearsals I want the actors to feel valued, perhaps even loved and I consciously look to develop the joy or the elation and pleasure necessary for the performance, and I call it after Frost and Yarrow (1990: 64) developing *Bicycle Chain Looseness* and Murray (2010: 225) made a further comparison to a piece of string that is loose: “a relaxation of sinew that the one who tries too hard is anxious, brittle or stiff will find difficulty to play”. Both authors offer metaphors to manage the dialogical tension that characterizes the nature of the moments. This quality or looseness, bravery, openness and ‘disponibilité to whatever happens’ defines and constructs STAGE 1 of the phenomenon.

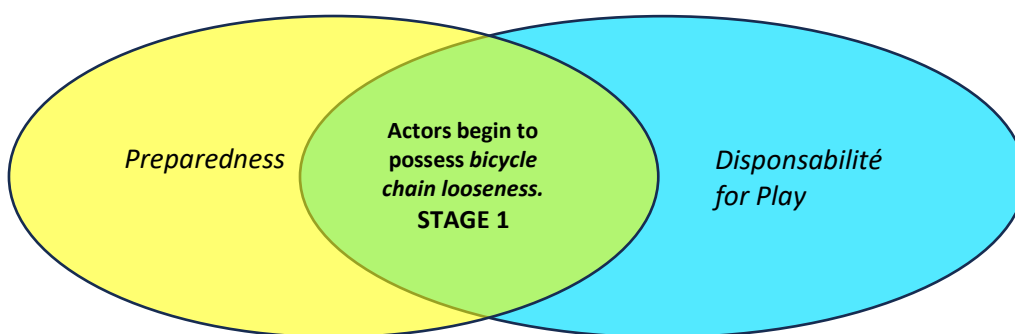


Figure 7 Pedagogy of STAGE 1 in Rehearsals

#### The doubleness of the world of Imagination and Bicycle Chain Looseness

The *Bicycle Chain Looseness* is created through the actors' understanding of the state of 'paidia' (overwhelming pleasure) from playing and the constriction of the role by 'logos' (rules of the game). The actor begins to understand that the distance between themselves and the role creates freedom of choice and the pleasure of being in the moment. This doubleness within the actor, this ability to have distance between yourself and the role (character) and to see the game between being the actor and the character creates a moment when the actor enters the doubleness of the world. Fischer-Lichte (2008) terms this as an 'aesthetic perception', and this process of switching between the perception of being an actor and being a character takes on the form of oscillation. Fischer-Lichte (2008) comments on the two modes of perception constantly oscillating from the perspective of the audience watching the actor, shifting between the character and the actor's phenomenological body. The audience stumbles in their perception and experiences a constant oscillation between phenomenal body and character. This induces perceptual multi-stability similar to perspectival multi-stability. An example of perspectival multi-stability is the visual paradox.

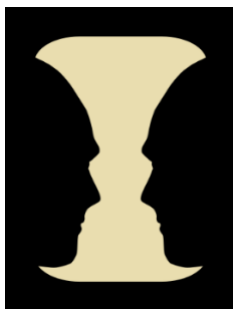


Figure 8 Rubin's Vase in the drawing of a human face or vase.

The perception oscillates between seeing a vase and a human face. While psychological, realistic theatre repeatedly postulated that the spectator should only see the character, contemporary theatre plays with perceptive multi-stability. The focus lies on the moment of destabilization, in which perception switches between the phenomenal body of the actor and the character. The perceiving subject stands on the threshold of two modes of perception. However, if conceptually we are on the edge between the two worlds, it seems possible to consider the following mode of understanding the phenomenon: a mode of being in two worlds at the same time. The fast oscillation and the comprehension of the doubleness of the images transports the perceiving subject into a 'state of betwixt and between', a temporal state of suspension where we perceive both at once. I am therefore proposing a change from the oscillating mode of: 'I see a character, and then I see the actor' into a mode of: 'I see the actor 'enjoying' themselves playing this character'. When the actor oscillates from being a character to enjoying themselves as an actor playing the character, a space within them is

being created to perceive and experience both simultaneously. This is done through initial accelerated oscillation, which turns into an autopoietic loop in rehearsals and then in performance. Once it is a loop, it is a united phenomenon of STAGE 1. This is the *Bicycle Chain Looseness* and ‘doubleness of the world’ that creates STAGE 1 *World of Imagination* of the novel *three-stage model of CITE*.

My approach here engages with Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) discussion of the autopoietic loop, when she asks if its process depends on dramaturgical techniques or a particular disposition of the audience. From the above analysis, it is apparent that the construction of STAGE 1 in rehearsals already creates the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’. It is the techniques within the rehearsal room that are mainly responsible for creating that phenomenon. They are also responsible for establishing the rules for the *Tuning* process, which establishes STAGE 1 in a live performance. The *Tuning* process also commences the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ between the actors and the audience.



## **7.5 Tuning process between the audience and actors - tuning and the auto-poietic feedback loop**

At the beginning of this Chapter, I established the necessity of emotional availability from the audience and actors when the theatrical encounter begins. I also explained how the actors become available through the pedagogic processes of *Preparedness* and *Disponibilité for play*, thus creating stable conditions for the phenomenon. Audience availability was established to be a variable condition.

### **7.5.a Audience Availability (Variable condition)**

As the lights grow darker and the silence sweeps over the audience, the performers are ready to go on stage and often perform very emotionally and physically. And an intellectually complex task where there are many variables that are not fully controllable. The actors feel the spectators watching them from the darkness. The atmosphere is charged by the audience's energy. The focus of everybody's senses is on the stage. The audience brings something to the meeting (Director's/ Researcher's notes).

This phenomenological research enquires about the individual and sees the audience as non-homogenous. Heim (2020) emphasises that the audience should be seen individually and poses valuable questions about the audience's view, not the researcher's view. Heim (2020), one of the precursors in the phenomenological research about live audiences, observes that the audience is often viewed as a unit. The audience in academic tradition was usually discussed as homogenous, often without the engagement in the field research to understand what people who come to the event experience. It is crucial to point out the reason behind this historical audience consideration. Brook (1968: ¶ 5) touched upon the process of unification during the performance:

There are moments in a play when we feel that we have all been touched at the exact moment. We have come in as hundreds of heads with hundreds of different preoccupations. We have come off the street – that busy state of chaos of the world – and now, in a short space of time, through the work of a little group of actors in a play, we are brought to a point where we sense a moment of truth.

The creatives and actors initiate this process of unification. Throughout the performance, the task is to submerge everyone in the fantasy of the world of the play. However, as Brook

points out, this is not the case, especially at the event's start. The audience member arrives as their own entity; they come with their own preconception and understanding of the world and themselves. Some come to ask questions, some to learn or be entertained. Often, the expectation comes with the price of the ticket. Some audience members want to be moved emotionally by the event, and some are distracted or want to hear stories that transport them into a different world.

However, from this research it is clear that the audience's availability on the day must be carefully managed if the phenomenon occurs. As a director I recognise that my aims during the production are to seduce, enchant and beckon. **Tiger Lady's** main theme is about unpredictability of life, and I wanted the audience to have a sense of this unpredictability but at the same time to stir their curiosity and in this way to enchant them and draw them into the *World of Imagination*. I figured that stirring the theme of unpredictability especially in the theatre where the audience knows that everything has been prepared for them is a difficult task. I weaved unexpected thunder in the soundscape of the scene with the repeated text: "It always rained on Wednesdays" trying to puzzle the audience by its meaning. The reality of always raining on Wednesday is unattainable and introduces uncertainty if the protagonist is saying the truth, but also stirs the curiosity to the importance of Wednesdays and rain. I encouraged the actor who plays Mabel and the ensemble to find a game of being between the two worlds, one of telling the story, and one of the world of memories half remembered. The audience's curiosity is led to try to understand this world of dreams, memories, and frequent rain.

The director and the actors must drive the process of making the audience available by assessing which strategy works best for the themes of the performance as well as on the night. However, the actors also need to be in a state of availability. Both sides of human availability (audience and actors) need to be explicated because they are co-dependent, and each side has required conditions that need to be met, altered, and tuned in if the phenomenon were to happen.

Experts in this research pointed out that audiences' emotional availability on the arrival in the theatre was one of the main prerequisites of the *Moments of Transcendence*. Heim (2020: 20) explores the audience's role as performers when faced with the actors on stage. She focuses on the empathetic response of the audience as a crucial part of this symbiosis:

empathy in English in German 'einführung' which translates directly: 'feeling into': "Aesthetic empathy is a feeling into the aesthetic work and affective empathy; involves the capacity to enter into or join the experience of another person" (Hojat et al., 2002: 411). The human exchange is a form of ritual. This ritual is about the link between the audience and the actors during the performance. It is a shared event between many strangers. Turner (1966) first analysed the mechanism of rituals. As an anthropologist, he observed the creation of a moment of '*Communitas*' when the boundaries between individuals are experienced as erased, and people feel interconnected. This connection is created during sporting events, which are classified to serve a different function as "a social connectivity rather than a connection through aesthetic experience" (Fischer-Lichte, 2016: 190-193). However, there is a difference when experiencing this connection during aesthetic experience. Similarly to ritual, theatre uses symbols to turn them into dense carriers of meaning, allowing actors and spectators to create "diverse interpretative frames" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 175). The question here is how to make the spectators available or, in other words, care about what is happening on stage and later involved in the story, cherish the characters, and worry about the events.

### **7.5.b Child-like innocence**

This research revealed that one of the elements of the availability is the need for the audience to have a 'child-like' innocence. When asked about the audience conditions for participation, the experts and audience members drew attention to the difficulty between the process of intellectualising what is observed and their wanting to actively participate in suspending the disbelief. Some participants were conscious of the struggle and emphasised the significance of emotional availability. One of the spectators described watching the show with his eight-year-old daughter: "I had my arm around her for most of the time, so there was a physical feeling there, so I am very influenced by that as well, but I think that is fine in a way it helped me to get out of my head a bit actually and be a bit more open emotionally" (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3). The spectator observed 'a physical feeling' that they sensed in this instance from a child. They are talking here, perhaps of a sense of anticipation and excitement, and this recognition and awareness of the fact is essential here. Recognising the feeling that the child was completely emotionally involved in what she was experiencing helped the parent to 'get out of his head' and watch it 'through her eyes'.

One of the experts also remarked that the feeling could be not conscious: “The decision (of the parents) was not conscious, and I have often observed parents watching a family show with their children are often unaware but quickly taken by that state” (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1). This is one of the states I work on in rehearsals and theatre training. I differentiate here between ‘a child-like state’ instead of being or acting ‘childishly’. ‘Child-like’ terminology opens the performer up and, in this instance, also the audience member to the world with a sense of curiosity and alertness. Being or acting ‘childishly’ is a representation of certain behaviours enacted by children, often coupled with some sort of judgement on the part of the adult. The distinction between ‘child-like’ and ‘childish’ is blurred in everyday life and often regarded as not serious, and it is a certain quality that is not often revealed in the presence of others. I propose that the emotional availability and vulnerability that the audience members allow themselves to feel in the theatre is one of the elements that ‘enchants’ us with the world and makes us see it anew. The experts pointed out that the ‘child-like’ quality of innocence and the possibility of being in touch with that feeling of being vulnerable as an adult creates in people an opening to enter the *World of Imagination*. The creative team and the actors are aware that these conditions of emotional availability in the audience are a variable that needs to be harnessed.

### **7.5.c Power of anonymity and cushioned spontaneity**

The audience enters the auditorium, which is often covered in semi-darkness. There is a sense of excitement of seeing so many other people coming to the space for the same reason, for the same event. They must find their seat; then they often look around at others, leaf through the programme, chat or observe others, and slowly concentrate more and more on the stage (Director’s / Researcher’s notes).

The choice of behaviours upon entering the auditorium belongs to the audience. The semi-darkness extends the feeling of safety. At the same time, the semi-darkness encourages spontaneity because it gives the audience a sense of anonymity. Heim (2020: 21) points out that the current set-up in the theatre helps the audience feel safe through a ritual of entering the main theatre house and comments that these strangers “adjust their emotional and behavioural repertoire of actions to produce a fertile climate for social interactions and collaborations”. This is a process of creating a community. The theatre experts found importance in this pre-amble to the spectacle. “In the darkness and semi-darkness”, they observed, “there is a sense that everyone is anonymous, they are not seen, they are safe, everyone’s focus is on stage” (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1). This safety is vital for the

audience; it assures them they can be more individual in a crowd. One of the participants of this research described it as a state of ‘a cushioned spontaneity’ (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1) that the sense of anonymity and the feeling of being in a community has given them. This state often gives audience members courage and space to react more freely or expressively than usual:

And if you see someone laughing like mad to your side, you laugh as well; we all enjoying it, and you know it moves on very quickly, so that group empowerment and that group anonymity and the fact that the group can lead you, you do not know who is leading there is a sense of cushioned spontaneity in a group which is interesting (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1).

The audience enters a state of ‘cushioned spontaneity’, where they can feel more open about reacting to what they experience. It is a part of crowd mentality, where the focus is not on the individual, but even when the focus is on the crowd, they are in the dark, and they are one of many. It is a socially unusual situation. People behave differently in the dark, just as they behave differently in a mask. Their faces are invisible, but they can feel the power of the focus on stage; something collective takes over: “You have a complete sense of the audience as a single unit so or to put in another way, a sense of the interconnected whole” (Expert SSI, Mike, Phase 1). This is often felt by the actors on stage, and I believe this is one of the factors why we most often express the audience as a collective. Heim (2020: 21) supports the expert’s views by outlining a phenomenon which she calls: “emotional contagion that happens as a consequence of mimicry and feedback; people tend to, from moment to moment, catch other’s emotions”. Hearing other people laughing encourages others to laugh, clap or hold their breath – all these moments will be mimicked unconsciously: “It is often through emotional contagion that the audience member becomes part of the audience collective” (2020: 22). This is especially felt when there are many people in the audience. The initial moments of the show are crucial because this is the time the audience unites in STAGE 1, entering the *World of Imagination*. Some audiences are quieter and listen to the story, and some laugh together at every surprise or gag; however, the task of the actors is to find a way for the audience to enter the state of what one of the experts called “collective imagination” (Expert SSI, Michael, Phase 1), which I termed in this research STAGE 1 the *World of Imagination*. This sense of being part of the community, the togetherness, puts the audience in a certain physical, emotional, and intellectual state that creates an opening or a place of availability in each member. The audience’s availability condition, therefore, is maintained by enhancing their ‘child-like’ state as well as supporting and enhancing the state

of ‘cushioned spontaneity’ in the theatre. This condition of audience’s availability can be created by the process of *Tuning*.

## 7.6 Tuning

The *Tuning* process is an extension of establishing a contract with the actors in the rehearsals, which leads to entering the *World of Imagination* STAGE 1 of this *three-staged model*. The *Tuning* process enables the audience to be emotionally connected to the fantastical world; however, at the same time, it initiates the process that Fischer-Lichte (2008) labelled as an ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ which is a continuous autotelic exchange between the audience and the performers, which I explained in the Conceptual Framework in Chapter 2. In this research, I analysed the varied factors that the audience and the actors experienced as *Tuning* for autopoiesis to begin. The better the *Tuning*, the more chance for the audience and the actors to experience the phenomenon. *Tuning* sets up autopoiesis and the *World of Imagination*. As a director, I set up boundaries for the actors to be in a ‘state of risk’ and, at the same time, in a state of control for the conversation to begin. It rests on the actors to earn the audience’s trust. One of the actors observed the differences between rehearsals and the actual performance:

(in rehearsals) we are always searching what and how to be most alive, but we know when the audience comes in, something extra happens; there is another energy that happens to the actor (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 3).

The actor comments here on the mechanism called: ‘making of your audience’; the actors must ‘touch’ the audience, just as the directors connect with them by making a contract during rehearsals. One of the experts emphasised the power that the actor has over the audience:

I do not think an audience by itself has the greater power; I do think that it is the responsibility of the people on the stage to create the vibrations, the bond, and the openness where, thereby, something magical will happen within the audience (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

The necessity of creating a connection and bringing the audience into one focused state is a condition that needs to be fulfilled by the actors to instigate the audience’s availability. At this moment, the performers need to do that first step of entering a dialogue with the spectators. The role of the performers changed from being led in rehearsals to creating circumstances and necessary conditions to tune their audience for them to enter the *World of*

*Imagination.* It is the actors and the creators of the structure of the performance who are responsible for the *Tuning* as well as the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’.

The steps of the *Tuning* process that this research discovered are:

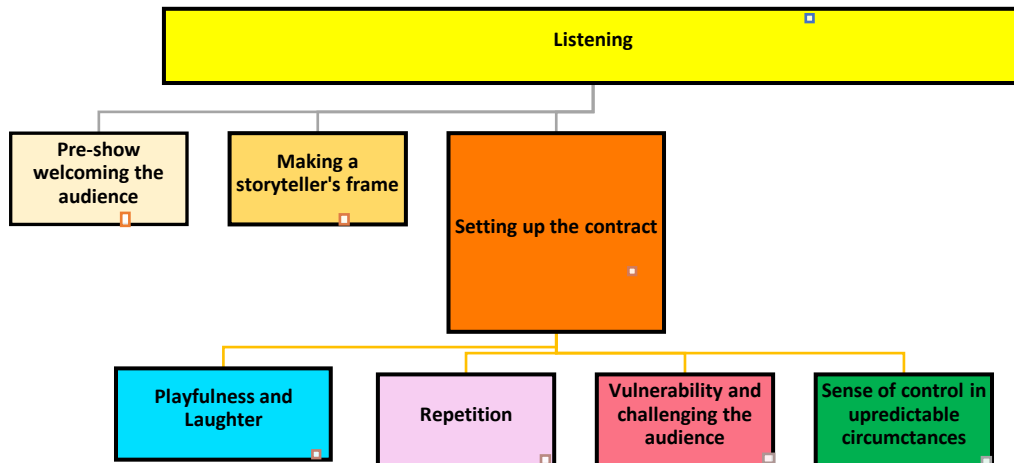


Figure 9 Tuning process: the steps to tuning autopoiesis during the performance.

### 7.6.a Listening: being on the same wavelength as the audience.

What does it mean to listen to the audience: how to sense them, how to read them, they are one or many? What is the feeling what is the atmosphere – what needs to be done to coax them into the state of innocence that they want to play with us, that they want to be with us?

How do you make them part of the gang? This is an active first thing that the performers have to do. How the audience is treated as they come through is also very important.

(Director’s /Researcher’s notes)

This research demonstrated that during the performances, the actors who went through the contract phase during the rehearsals were foremost concerned with creating the experience of being on the same wavelength as the audience. By being on the same wavelength, they expressed themselves ‘as listening first’ to the audience, trying to capture the mood and find the rhythm on the first night of the performance. The rhythm comes from closely observing the audience, which they articulated as ‘sensing them’, ‘breathing together’ and ‘listening’. The listening happens as the performance is about to open, as in this research when the audience is welcomed but also as the performance begins – on top of the structure of the performance. Knowing how to be on the same wavelength can take a little time. One of the performers acknowledged his search:

So yes ...by the third night, I felt the rhythm of it; I felt which rhythm the audience was with you; the way the audience is laughing and how they are reacting to it sort of set me in my rhythm of what can do with them (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 3).

The actors' sensibility and sensitivity extend towards the audience and are merged with acute listening and discoveries. Heim (2020) touches on these different modes of actors' and audience's behaviour, one of which is listening. She points to the act of listening and sensing: "The act of listening is difficult to quantify. Attention reflected in a poised silence is perhaps the closest way to describe the ephemeral state of listening that is sensed rather than heard or seen" (2020: 33). This is a two-way exchange of audience listening to the actors and vice versa. One of the experts observed: "actors always know when the audience members are really listening and actively seek their attention" (Expert SSI, Mike, Phase 1). As a director, I sometimes sense a certain quality of 'softness' in the actor; in their body, they extend themselves in order to really listen and sense the reactions of the audience. They are quite exposed and vulnerable at that time. Being on the same wavelength with the audience, creates a state of sensing with a 'soft-open focus', of extending all the senses to meet other human being. There is always a sense of vulnerability there in this 'extending 'to others' but also an excitement of 'the meeting', of a new experience and all the joys and delights that it could bring. This is also a process of establishing autopoietic loop, beginning of a conversation and relationship. When the actors tune-in to being on the same wavelength as the audience, they are not 'performing for' but 'performing with' and reach the state of 'the bicycle chain looseness' that they experienced previously in the rehearsals. This means that they are free to play, risk, challenge as well as fail.

### **7.6.b Pre-show welcoming the audience.**

In my practice, I set up the performance by actors welcoming and getting to know the audience. I often create circumstances for the actors to welcome the spectators personally. We create the ritual of shaking hands and giving out tea or drinks in miniature glasses, so the audience feels welcomed and invited. After initially individually welcoming people, the actors often keep going to the audience to ask them questions and chat. They must be open, quick-witted, and full of warmth to the audience. They need to find a way to cajole the audiences to be with them on a more personal level and be alert and playful with them. This strategy instils the feeling that we are equal, we are reaching out for trust, and we are all here on the same 'boat'. The audience's members observed during the performance:



And there is nothing distancing or unwelcoming; it is very rewarding (...) There is something there that I am loved, and they (the performers) want me to see their work. In most of the theatres that I go to see, it is a challenge in the way that it is set up. There is an intellectual barrier, and here, there is something about being pulled in and rewarded for going into the show... (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3).

Once active listening commences, the audience needs to feel that they are invited into the conversation and that they are partners rather than passive recipients. There is a feeling of responsibility that they feel safe and respected, that we will always have their back:

I think it is a friendly place for you to enjoy the jokes and to enjoy the story, that is not a trick; we like the actors, and that is really profound because if we did not care quite as much about you if you have not shown that you care quite so much about us, I think we would not be able to travel in those moments together, but we are part of your gang, we belong ...through doing everyday things you do ritual protection of other people, and it is very lovely (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3)

Listening, creating trust, and playful challenge with control re-created the social contract I observed in rehearsals. It is crucial to notice that the audience member's comment cited just above is: "We feel like we are part of the gang" instead of being onlookers. It is this sense of being together, co-creating, and feeling safe with the performers, but also being excited by the actors being playful with each other and by the risks and challenges directed at them. The audience member commented on the atmosphere where everyone feels safe. Safe in the sense that they feel loved and appreciated, the performers are excited and grateful for the audience's presence. The actors show how much it means to play for the audience. The audience feels loved and wanted and feels included. The contract, therefore, can be treated as what the audience member above calls "doing ritual protection of other people". Part of the master teacher Gaulier's pedagogy consists of learning to connect to the audience on the level of a normal conversation and ensuring that everyone feels invited and part of the community.

### **7.6.c Making a storyteller's frame.**

In my theatre practice and in this research, I established a convention that at the beginning of the performance, I establish that what the actors are presenting is fiction. The experts observed that this is a helpful practice in establishing a storyteller's frame:

There are formulaic storytelling exchanges that have to happen before the story can be told so that again links to a very old human tradition: if you want to tell someone a story, you have to begin (in French)'... It happened one day...' and the audience responds: and were you there? Storyteller: 'No, I was not there, but I know someone who was there...' (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1).

I ask the audience to enter a contract with us to suspend their disbelief. It is not always explicitly declared at the beginning of the performance. There are many ways of setting it up directly or indirectly, but for me, it helps to declare it openly as, I feel that the contract has now lost its cultural significance, and the audience sometimes is not sure what they should be looking for in their imagination, and what is real and unreal. The cultural significance of the contract seems to be lost on the account of stories being told through a cinematic frame which operates through much more powerfully imitating reality. I worry that the use of triggers by disturbance in the cinema has a very different impact from their impact in the theatre. This difference is very interesting and worth further enquiry. In my practice, the storyteller's frame supports setting up expectations and further protects the audience from unwanted consequences of *Triggers by Disturbance*.

#### **7.6.d Playfulness and laughter and setting up doubleness of the world.**

When the actors listen, they start recognising how and when to inject the audience with *Disponabilité for Play*. The parameters of playfulness and its boundaries are set up in rehearsals, and the actors transfer the same values and the atmosphere onto the audience. They are sharing what they have built up between themselves. The playful spirit of pre-show communication also continues in the fabric of the show. The actors need to find a way to be equal with the audience, with a glint of humour in their eyes. This is the Aunties scene from the beginning of the show:

<https://vimeo.com/913983183/2c001ba8b9?share=copy>

*Recordings 15 Aunties Scene*

One of the audience members observed:

This moment is also somewhat on the border of the dream, (...)this one was triggering more kind of lightness and playfulness of theatre, and we are seeing three men jumping behind the doors (with little napkins on their heads pretending they are aunties), but the fact is that is so playfully done you accept it, and you close the gap between what is happening on stage and the events that are told to you, and although it happens on stage, in your mind you can elevate this moment and see her you know between the different houses and have this relationship with different aunties... (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3)

The audience member here points out the awareness of their imagination activated through silliness and playfulness of the ‘napkin device’ and the actors and the sense of their imagination being entangled and creating the world between the storyteller and the simplicity of the construction of the world on stage.

The actors are transferring the *World of Imagination* established in rehearsals, making it evident that they are the actors playing the roles and that we are all entering the doubleness of theatrical reality, of pretending and having fun at switching between the real and imaginary worlds:

The playfulness of it, the comedy of it, and the lightness that it is done with again invite you to fly in your imagination around the set that is created on stage (it) allows you to dream and laugh or potentially laugh and dream whichever way you look at it (Audience SRI, Anna, Phase 3).

The lightness of humour and playfulness are the factors that invite the audience into the fantasy. The breaking of the fourth wall, the acknowledgement that we are playing with the audience, the coming out of character, or references to the theatre itself or directly to the audience are also strategies for the audience, as well as the actors, to feel in the moment, to be an active participator.

### **7.6.e The Repetition; making things familiar.**

In all the novelty of the narrative, intensity and complexity of images and sounds, there is also a place for little pauses of familiarity for the audience. These are the oases of calm before the storm. Some audience members remarked that repetitions of sequences, sometimes of particular movements, words, and gestures, give them a feeling of familiarity and comfort. The scene in Mabel’s cabin is repeated as a sequence, which creates the familiarity observed by the audience members:

They make a circle around her to ask her questions the first time, but then the second time they do it, you get a sense of familiarity. Familiarity makes you feel comfortable, and I think it helps you with the characters more... (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3).

Here, in the example of circling Mabel, the audience became familiar and comfortable with the game we were playing and warmed up to the characters and, through that, got a greater sense of identification with them. Similarly, by creating the Train Sequence, I used the set-up of silent movies from the beginning of the 20th century and repetitions of the rhythm. The

sensation of films being slightly speeded up and using slapstick comedy moments from those films generated a reminder of the world that they have seen in films as cultural signifiers and codes in our communal psyche. The audience member observed about creating these codes:

The mechanism of repetition, it was the same processes as earlier on...and that is somehow, it feels familiarity, sets me in greater comfort, 'oh I remember that', it gives you the connection (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3).

The audience noticed repetition in the show, making them feel familiar as they recognised a pattern. As I observed in Chapter 5, in STAGE 2, I use repetition or leitmotif as a non-foundational, auxiliary elicitor device, which generates an additional function of making things familiar. I created a similar pattern through a repetition of the Ladders' progression, which was a repeating sequence throughout the performance. The repetition is a pattern that grows, expands, and alters, but the starting point possesses the same elements. When constructing, I am looking at the repeatability that creates conditions where the audience's mind is entangled in the patterns created by the performance and, therefore, creating more relational dependability.

Mattson (2014: np) explains that the fundamental function our brains work through is recognising patterns, symbols, and signs: "to encode and integrate information acquired from the environment through sensory inputs, and then generate adaptive behavioural responses. Sensory information is first rapidly encoded as patterns inherent in the inputs". In my practice, I use repetition of sequences, movement, some of the words and sentences, images from the past or collective cultural images that create an opening to a deeper level of associations, thus creating subconscious signs for the actors and the audience. In my experience, however, the signs and symbols cannot be declared or made evident. There is an intangible line: if they are directly declared and therefore consciously recognised that they are being used as signifiers of meaning, the mercurial game, the play of meanings, escapes. The idea is to use repetitive patterns, so the mind is unconsciously provoked, similar to a dreaming state when we remember just bits or understand fragments. Then, the repetition of the scene or movement in the scene is a vehicle (elicitor) for creating free associations.

#### **7.6.f Vulnerability and challenging the audience.**

This observation came from the audience as well as from the actors. The audience members recognised that the actors put themselves at risk by making very clear eye contact, talking to them, and chatting to the audience informally when they were exposed. The actors were not hiding it and showing they were on the same level as the audience. They also take risks and get embarrassed or struggle to find a suitable riposte sometimes, but this sharing of vulnerability is also about honesty. Acknowledging vulnerability and lowering the actors' status pays off by the audience recognising the vulnerability of the actors being their equals. This generates the sensation of mutual respect, and parity encourages trust and connection.

There is, however, a risky, unstable, and fascinating dynamic between building the audience's trust, taking care of them, making them more familiar as well as teasing them with surprise patterns. The significance here lies in not overindulging in familiarity but in enticing the audience's minds to activate their imagination. Once the trust is established, the actors can playfully challenge the audience. One of the functions of challenging is to connect on a deeper, more meaningful level with the audience. The actors assess the boundaries of the show and the boundaries of the audience. During the first nights of performing, the actors also evaluate how some of the performance's structures work. Later, during the show's run, the actors also try to gauge how much each audience member can be pushed and challenged and how sensitive they are to finding the right level of playfulness and showing the boundaries of the performance. The actors would challenge the audience by starting to connect with them through testing them at the same time. One of the audience members specified:

He (the actor) points at the audience and says: 'You, you, and almost in a heartbeat, yes you.' and I wondered if he ever points to someone disengaged, looks down, 'Do not get me involved'. Or does he get the 'right' person, get the flashlight going - yes, he pointed at me..., at this moment, this acceptance and connection that happens, that little special connection that happens (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3).

The direct address of the audience breaks the *fourth wall* convention and makes them directly involved with the show. It is a conversation by playfully challenging as well as risk-taking on the part of the actors that the audience sees and appreciates for its honesty and vulnerability. The actors reach out, address in a direct manner, joke, cajole, or challenge, all at considerable risk. It is like balancing on a tightrope. Wright (2005) explains that everybody is fascinated by watching a tiny figure balancing up mid-air on a rope. The fascination is not with the fall itself, but they are captivated by the thrill of near misses. In a

direct address to the audience, in breaking the ‘Fourth Wall’ and playing with the audience, they see the actor as a person, balancing as a ‘tightrope’ acrobat of the heart, and they see the actors’ humanity. By seeing the vulnerability of the actor, the audience members experience co-connection, a co-feeling of vulnerability, often identifying with the states that are felt by the actors.

### **7.6.g Sense of control in unpredictable circumstances**

At the same time, the audience does not really want to see the actor fall. The actors need to be in control of unpredictable circumstances. The audience, then, senses that they themselves can take risks by responding. The individual or group audience responds, but only when they know that the actors are in control, and they can be trusted. This is thrilling and exciting for both sides of the divide and creates a strong rapport; trust and banter have been established. This mechanism was made evident in the third phase of the research. During the performances, the audience felt a strong sense of need for control and self-assurance from the actors. One audience member observed:

There was a moment when my friend was selected to be a lioness and started to make noises when Mabel was looking for Rajah, but the actor playing Mabel was so in charge she said: no, no, no – shush; otherwise they will find you, of course, it was something that she came out with (on the spot) but she was still in character, but it was not pre-planned, she was completely in control, and this is what I love (Audience SRI, Nigel, Phase 3).

The audience observed that they need to feel the performer is in control when improvising. The wit, quickness of intellect, courteousness, charisma, lightness, and total openness are in the balance there. If people sense a defensive attitude or stiffness and avoidance or sense fear, they sense that with unease, and they stay on their guard. Even when the actor is not so quick or witty on the night but acknowledges their failings, they win the audience through their honesty. The sense of control, therefore, is an additional security net for the audience as they enter the *World of Imagination*.

### **Summary of *Tuning* process**

The *Tuning* process is an important device that enables the actors and the audience to find themselves in the STAGE 1 *World of Imagination* of the *three-stage model*. I discussed the audience's availability as a variable factor which needs to be stabilised by this process. I also outlined that it is the actors' responsibility to start up the *Tuning* as well as the autopoietic feedback loop through careful listening in order to sensitise themselves to the audience on the night. I also discussed the importance of clarity that we are about to enter the world of fiction and the importance of the audience feeling appreciated and welcomed. This research established that the audience needs to be playfully challenged, even cajoled, but the actor needs to understand how to be in control, so the audience feels safe. The audience enters then the *World of Imagination* as a 'part of the gang', on the edge of their seat, with heightened focus, ready for the unpredictability and full of surprises STAGE 2.

## Chapter 8 Pedagogy of STAGE 2

This chapter outlines the two central precepts that govern creating triggers in rehearsals: my methods of creating STAGE 2 in rehearsals, the stabilisation methods, and the reconstruction process in performances with live audiences.

Chapter 7 specified the pedagogy of STAGE 1, *World of Imagination*, with its primary precept of building trust and creating a contract between the actors and the director and the *Tuning* process with the audience. Having the foundation in the *Preparedness* and *Disponibilité for Play* and the creation of the subsequent *Bicycle Chain Looseness*, the actors are prepared for going into STAGE 2. There are, however, further foundational precepts to initiate this stage in rehearsals.

### 8.1 The central precepts of STAGE 2 in the rehearsal process

#### 8.1.a The precept of Uncertainty in the process of finding triggers.

The findings of this enquiry indicated the importance of the perception of *Uncertainty* and the sensation of ambiguity and ephemerality, which are also the facets of the phenomenon. The state of uncertainty is a state of taking a physical, emotional, and intellectual risk while creating a devised show. One of the experts observed:

The moment you try to pin it (a way of working, director's vision) down, it escapes, exactly, especially when you are looking for it (and)... there is always a surprise, no matter how much you prepare or how much experience you have (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1).

In the *World of Imagination* pedagogy, Chapter 7, I outlined the importance of risk factors in actors' work. However, I want to emphasise that there is another level of risk-taking, not on an individual level but on the level of the whole group that is in the process of creating a performance. Each rehearsal process has its rhythm; sometimes nothing happens for a long time, and sometimes there are barriers and crises, but trusting the overcoming of the uncertainty is fundamental to being able to "touch something on a deeper level" (Expert SSI,



Ben, Phase 1) or to be part of “the great mystery of things” (Experts SSI, Kate, Phase 1). An expert explained it further through a metaphor:

But (those moments) ... they all come from an unknown and point of the unsteadiness of the rehearsal process, I always use boat language, so the moment we leave the shore, you can't see beyond the horizon, you don't know where you are. There is always an uncertainty (Experts SSI, Kate, Phase 1).

This facet of the phenomenon, especially of trying to ‘catch’ it, demonstrates its ephemeral side. One cannot pinpoint what it means ‘to touch something on a deeper level’ or ‘what is a mystery’, but one can sense it when working viscerally in rehearsals. The expert uses ‘boat language’, images that are easily understood and which translate the concept, yet again, on a metaphorical level and so much more vividly and precisely. The boat metaphor is very potent here as there are no stable elements to refer to. We set off in a boat and suddenly find ourselves in the power of nature’s elements. The same happens in theatre practice. Once immersed in the story and story-making, we are at the mercy of that unpredictable world of fantasy and imagination. In my practice, I do not use a script, and the points of the story I create what could be compared to stars and constellations. Nothing is certain about how to generate a physical substance out of this fragile material, so trusting your ‘crew’ is crucial.

The same expert also voiced the tenet of completely trusting the rhythm of the process:

I know now that when I am directing devising, I know that I have to wait for something to happen, like being in charge; you just need to sit it out, like being in prison or something, like one day the light will return, and there is some kind of faith or trust or risk or all these three things being put together that will bring you that moment (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1).

It is a cornerstone of my rehearsals to feel the uncertainty and to take an even greater risk by trusting the rhythm of the work. The sense of “one day the light will return” or “like being in prison” from the above quotation is also very telling of the state in which I am directing as I also know the feeling when I am full of dread waiting for the light of the premiere:

It sometimes feels like being in murky waters in the dark, trying to find a dry edge of the land. It is the hours spent in a dark theatre studio when you know outside is sunny and warm, and somehow you stay in that room waiting for things to happen...  
(Director's/ Researcher's notes)

The sensations of ‘murky waters’, ‘cobwebs’, and an image of ‘prison’ all have similar undercurrent meanings. It is the sensation of extending all the senses while looking inward; it is an unrelenting state of indecision and uncertainty.

The experts additionally observed that the feeling of unsteadiness in the process is sometimes provoked by stress, exhaustion and a certain level of tension and ambition. It can be argued that the expectation of something happening also causes stress and mistrust. These ‘instances’ of something happening sometimes do not arrive. As a director, I ask, without asking, that the actors trust the process. From my experience, I know that there is a certain rhythm to each project and that needs to be recognised and done through working with patience. One of the experts observed the aspect of time passing and that the changes and the waiting used to be more visible in the past. It is another level of experience to let the work ‘rest’ and to wait for things to appear. Sometimes, ‘the work’ needs to be left alone for a few days, and the result comes by itself, out of nowhere. The actors noticed the necessity to trust the rhythm of the process and the idea of “making space after hard work” (Director’s/ Researcher’s notes). This term encapsulated the understanding that one needs patience to leave the process and return to it later and ‘to let the work rest’.

### **8.1.b The precept of *Indirect Vision***

I am in this strange imaginary world where the senses are extended; I don’t look directly, often in the periphery of my vision, sometimes through the trick of painterly squinting the eye technique, but not quite that, I search through half-seeing, half hearing, half listening to the actors, to music, the lights and I am often looking for movement, or stillness that is there or that needs to be there in the empty space in between. Sometimes, I wear a hat because of the idea (stolen from my husband) of wearing a hat that helps to keep the senses together and somehow protects you in rehearsals from losing all these ideas... (Director’s/ Researcher’s notes)

The precept of *Indirect Vision* is aimed at the director. The interpretation that I propose in this research could be attained through what Bolt (2011) frames as ‘Double Articulation’, Heidegger (1966) as ‘Handleability’ and Carter (2004) as ‘Material Thinking’. All these ways of looking come from using one’s practical experience and recognising patterns ingrained in us through working to see what is to others invisible. One of the experts asserted: “the unknown and unsteady and that kind of waiting for the event, having the trust the unsteadiness and the unknowns, but you have to have eyes for this” (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1). As a director, I am looking from the outside, like the audience member, trying to catch that moment. The idea of *Indirect Vision* focuses on looking indirectly, trying to catch something through not looking, through sensing. Looking straight, directly at what is happening on stage, does not help; it stops me from registering what other senses are suggesting. When discussing this issue with the experts, they observed that it is often a

question of repetition, experience, and a certain maturity; it is a peculiar sensitivity developed when working on the pieces 50-100 times. One begins to discern what works and what does not. I am looking for some sort of opening, for something in between the ordinary.

Thomas' (2014: 3-4) proposition of a hunch, intuition and "moving through a maze of confluences of circumstantial evidence, through a curious juxtaposition of events" is aligned with my experience as well as Gaulier's insistence for the metaphorical language when working in theatre. *Indirect Vision* or 'having eyes for it' means creating a space within oneself to be able to perceive with all the senses simultaneously. As a director, I often use other creatives who are part of the process to be with me to help me 'see'. The experts contended that the actors could not perceive what was happening from the outside:

The actors couldn't necessarily see because they were in it, but you, the director, me as the designer and other people and music and everything could see that the audience would translate that moment into something that made them hold their breath with wonder (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1).

The experts and I use the word 'see', but there is a deeper meaning here: the creatives are using the *Indirect Vision* concept even if they are outside of the process. I noted in my diary:

I am their eyes and ears, and I lead the arch of the story. The main role of the troupe is working within the fabric of the show, proposing through action, and never explaining what they are going to do. I set up the world of imagination, and they work in playfulness and doubleness of that world. As a director, I watch and listen; they are sensing (Director's/ Researcher's notes).

The actors are inside the process, and they are also in the process of not looking for the phenomenon but sensing it. In the actors' interviews, they all independently referred to the mode of looking "for a glimpse" or "a hint" (actors SRIs, Patrick and Jacob, Phase 2). It is more of a feeling, a sensation of the moment's presence rather than seeing it. This is also a part of the concept of the *Indirect Vision*. I am searching through sensing, a technique in the Fine Art of looking through squeezed eyes. This technique allows the artist to see the whole picture; only more pertinent forms stand out, forming the foundation of what is crucial in the image. It also will enable eyes not to be dominant sense and bring us back to ourselves. A similar idea is present in Feldenkrais' method; it concentrates on comprehending the world through listening, which alters the senses from primarily watching. The principle here is to communicate and explain the instructions, not through a visual demonstration, as a visual imitation is a superfluous way to sense. In Feldenkrais method, we hear the instructions

rather than see them; our eyes are closed, and through hearing them, we try to sense them in our bodies. The learners of the method try to make sense of the instructions in the same way that one understands and responds to their environment: to their normal world, the directions, and the plains. For example, what does it mean to move a hand horizontally, what is vertical, and what does it mean when someone says ‘above our head’ when we are lying down? By listening, we create a different world to the ‘seeing’ world.

*Indirect Vision* is much more sensitive and refined by perceiving through all the senses.

As I work in the tradition of French masters, my way of ‘looking’ was developed from what Murray (2015) recognises as one of the tenets of Gaulier’s and Lecoq’s (1990) teachings: ‘the angle of aberrations’ (1990: 20) observed when explaining the concept of neutral mask and its universality: “Of course, there is no such thing as absolute and universal neutrality, it is merely a temptation. This is why the error is interesting. I am fascinated by the difference between the geographical pole and the magnetic pole. The North Pole does not quite coincide with the true North. There is a small angle of difference, and it is lucky that this angle exists”. There is something about the sense of obliqueness, the sense of not pointing a finger, the sense of trying to catch it with your heart somewhat; otherwise, it will escape. The precept of *Indirect Vision* can be experienced and described in many ways, and this is a part of the ephemeral, intangible nature of the pedagogy of the moments of transcendence. One needs to sense rather than see their way through the murky waters of creating and devising.

## Summary

These two precepts of the *uncertainty* of the process of rehearsals and the precept of *indirect vision* are the foundations of the rehearsals at STAGE 2. On the one hand, it is the acquiescence to the primacy of creative fluctuations and rhythms; on the other, the understanding that the *indirect vision* technique, the senses other than just looking, lead deeper and further into the authenticity and candour of the creative process.

## 8.2 Creating triggers in the rehearsals.

Looking to catch it (incongruity trigger) is like trying to catch tiny rabbits on a field. You seem to see them, and then they suddenly scatter into different places, and it happens

repeatedly. It is not through a direct line of action but through an unpredictable turn that one has any chance to catch these troublesome bunnies... (Director's/ Researcher's notes)

I determined in Chapter 5 that STAGE 2 is set up by a complex procedure of discovering triggers and orchestrating their components so they can be repeatable. The *three-stage model* is called compound incongruity trigger event because there need to be at least two or more triggers happening at one event, and they need to be compound. The trigger needs to be constructed from the found collisions that created a trigger. First, I will outline the construction of the triggers in rehearsals through what I termed *collisions*. I divided the collisions into two categories, incidental and elicited, which makes a distinction between uncontrolled and controlled collisions. I also outlined the stabilisation process of all the variable elements (elicitors, triggers of surprise and incongruity) to re-create it in performances; however, the main part of this thesis deals with creating the structure of the three-stage model.

The findings of this research indicated that the search for the trigger in rehearsals was done in an unsystematic and haphazard mode. It is, however, also true that theatrical practice is highly instinctual. Moreover, the research explores a complex human territory that cannot be revealed just as an instruction. This enquiry encourages further studies in search of unity and cohesion in the rehearsal process that could further support the construction of the phenomenon. As much as I am searching for the *Compound Incongruency Trigger Event* to be structured and analysed, it requires further testing and yields other discoveries in this area. This recommendation will be explored further in the conclusion, in Chapter 10.

## **Finding Triggers through Collisions**

I propose the term *Collision* about my working mode to communicate explicitly and deliberately the scale and the impact accompanying the discovery of triggers. One of the audience members observed that these moments reminded her of something present in the aviation industry where she worked. When accidents happen, it is often because different unpredictable elements are combined, unexplained 'holes' in the knowledge of the regimented machinery of the aviation industry. The workers and the engineers called it "a Swiss cheese effect" (Audience SRI, Lauren, Phase 3); when the holes lined up and made one big hole – the accident happened. I would argue that I am looking for those incongruent

unexpected ‘Swiss holes’, not for what is missing, but what is in between. Just like in poetry, one gets a meaning from the space that the words create. These spaces have something to do with the notion of freedom or creating freedom that liberates the audience to imagine and connect.

STAGE 2 of the phenomenon begins with the discovery of a tiny particle of the collision:

That it was only a glimpse or a hint of the moment and also not to be afraid to improve it even more, and I think as we progressively rehearsed, it definitely got better ...but if we knew that that original was good and we hoped that when we show it to the audience that it will make the magic even bigger and I think it did that (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 2).

STAGE 2 in rehearsals consists of catching a glimpse of a definitive trigger and then working, adapting, creating other triggers that are symbiotic with the first trigger, evolving-adding intensity, complexity – or simplicity. The actor here voices the moment of discovery as the ignition and then works and evolves to create a developed trigger. The goal of this stage is to make the trigger repeatable and stable and, at the same time, to add the parameters of unexpectedness, progression, intensity, and complexity. The trigger of surprise also needs to be additionally constructed as a change of rhythm or expectation.

There are two categories of collisions:

- Incidental collisions (Uncontrolled)

and

- Stimulated collisions (Controlled)

## **8.2.a Incidental Collisions**

*Incidental Collisions* are specific incidents that are not consciously designed or thought out by the creative team or the director. They can often be errors or misunderstandings, actions by director or the actors which were accidental. One of the experts asserted:

It is usually sparked by something that is going on, and it can be something really tiny, it can be something seeing an actor standing on one leg and the director is thinking and then hearing a chord of music, you know how musicians, they sit in the corner of the room, fiddling about, even when they are not concentrating, they always

fiddling, and then sometimes two things happen together, and they play the chord and the actor standing on one leg, and the director is thinking, and you think: yeah... (Expert SSI, Alice, Phase 1)

As a director, I noticed, that I worked towards generating a state of mind that is of half-dreaming, and then connecting all the senses in search of the moment. In *Incidental Collisions* that happen haphazardly as an outcome of different energies, coincidences, and mistakes, the director is in the same position as the actors. They are looking for a 'glimpse' or a 'hint' and are not responsible for these collisions. I recall when the *Incidental Collisions* happened; I sensed at that moment what I would call "soft sudden hesitancy or hovering" (Director's/ Researcher's notes). Some experts observed that collisions come in their dreams, and they need to wake up and write them down quickly before they disappear. In one interview, there was an observation of idleness in the process and the gaps necessary for catching the moments. This time of patience and waiting, which I already mentioned in the pedagogy of STAGE 1 in Chapter 7, is crucial when looking for the *Incidental Collisions*.

*Incidental Collisions* often happen by errors and slip-ups. The experts observed that "things which are not correct are the most exciting" (Expert SSI, Kate, Phase 1). During this research, in rehearsals, the most significant *Incidental Collision* was a part of miscommunication or misunderstanding between me and the Production Manager:

I was describing the concept of ladders moving like a tornado, and I was thinking about how to make the movement even bigger, so they look like they are flying; I was looking for the illusion of looking like they are suspended in the air, weightless, flying. In my mind, I saw it all done by the actor's movement. However, the production manager understood my thinking literally as flying. 'Flying' is technical theatre terminology that means to hang something up or move it by lifting it. I did not understand him because of the way I work (low-tech), but I also did not consider this option. I was operating on a different wave of thinking. And there it was the insight to the trigger, and the ladders were made to defy gravity (Director's/ Researcher's notes).

This entry indicates the process of *Incidental Collisions*. In this instance, two very different planes of thinking collided; one dreaming and thinking in half-images, half movement (tornado of ladders) and thinking of a pragmatic, technical creative helping to solve a material problem. These two frames of seeing the world collided unexpectedly over a tea break and created the final moment of a lift in the Ladders progression.

## 8.2.b Stimulated Collisions

*Stimulated Collisions* are semi-controlled, pre-planned triggers created by collisions of two incongruent areas (Koestler: 1964). The collision creates a momentary sense of a psychological shift happening to the participants. In my own practice, I experienced my focus changing into a *Soft-Open Focus* and a sensation of processing the world and the events through an *Indirect Vision*, which I discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, and I perceive a momentary “soft, sudden hesitancy or hovering” (Director’s/ Researcher’s notes). This sensation is similar to what the audience described as *Hovering Stillness* during STAGE 3. The performers described the experience of sense as “a glimpse” (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 2) or a “hint”, or as a “defining moment” (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 2).

The construction of the Elephant Moment is an example of a stimulated collision. Together with the designer, Tina Bicât, we devised a plan. We started with a plastic frame of ears and nose and a simple movement of the elephant stick puppet. We put an enormous cloth over the construction and let the actors play without seeing. They were suddenly underneath a giant parachute with a few long poles and were trying to move in a non-committed way; they were looking for something without seeing, searching for the feel of the elephant, movement, the sense of its scale, weight, and stillness. One of the actors observed, “It's interesting when you cannot see it when you are in silence, and you cannot see, but the moment itself gets made, you can imagine what it looks like” (Actor SRI, Celine, Phase 2). By limiting one of the senses, I orchestrated a disturbance that directly influenced the actors’ sensitivity and vulnerability when working on the elephant. The next phase was to play with lights, strange pink, and blue, sometimes very white lights. The effect of the lights was that it made the cast to be even closer and more intimate, hidden from the eyes but at the same time not able to see the outcome:

It was definitely one of the very first times, all of us together, we were feeling this moment of something; this could be good. ...but it is definitely unexplainable; you can’t really explain it, but there is some sort of atmosphere and feeling where everyone is merging together and collaborating, and everyone has to be focused; it was only a glimpse or a hint of the moment... (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 2)

The actor comments on the unexplainable factor of “a glimpse or a hint of the moment”, and that feeling communal is so strong that the actors feel the pull to keep on working, collaborating through it. He talks about feeling something rather than seeing it. Similarly, to



the idea of *Indirect Vision*, the actors also had to use their other senses and not their eyes. It is also important to note the straightforward way of explaining, a matter-of-fact way, “this could be good” in the above quotation. I would argue that the actors phrase it in this simple way because they are not preoccupied with how they experience the phenomenon but with its mechanism and the development of the trigger. The above example demonstrates that the collision was stimulated and pre-planned, but the whole construction of the *CITE* still needs to be stabilised.

## **Perturbation and destabilisation**

I would like to consider the mechanism behind this collision more extensively here. As observed in the previous example, I created the destabilisations or perturbations and orchestrated the disturbance to the actors’ normal perception of events. The disturbance was caused by surprising them, not explaining the concept, and putting the parachute over them, thus removing the possibility for them to see what they were creating.

I operate through activating disturbance, which I acquired from Gaulier’s teaching. Murray (2013: 217) observes that Gaulier teaches through perturbation and destabilisation:

In practice, these are manifested in a constant destabilisation of the student actor in the belief that out of such perturbation, the dynamic dramaturgical solution will be found, which would be elusive or impossible through a more straightforward approach.

Gaulier’s training proposes a disturbance of the habitual patterns of behaviour in the student. He encourages us to look for new emotional and intellectual patterns through pre-orchestrated dissonance, confrontation, and instability between old patterns of thinking and being.

Buchanan and Ulrich (2001) propose that perturbations are vital in creating new patterns of habitual behaviour. Mezirow’s (1991) ‘transformative learning theory’ and ‘system of disturbances’ recommends that the disturbances in learning, similarly to their function in life, can be specifically linked to causing a breakthrough in learning. Taylor and Uchida (2019) propose the theory of horror and awe to make us more flexible by altering our belief system through disturbance incongruency schema. All these systems suggest that acquiring knowledge can become visceral and situated in the learner as a sort of a trigger in their embodied memory and make them available to have a choice in changing their systems. This research into the ‘workings’ in the rehearsals establishes that even though I see my methods

sometimes as haphazard, confusing, and unsystematic, through this inquiry, it became apparent that the working methods need to be different but a way of understanding the work. Underneath the superficial level of disorientation and confusion, being led by the *Indirect Vision* or working through the ‘angle of aberration’ is more suitable for the arts.

At STAGE 2, in rehearsals, I search for flux between rules, obeying rules, breaking rules and the joy that emanates from that moment of released tension. In Chapter 7, in the pedagogy of STAGE 1, I established competitive games with challenge, trickery, mystery, and disguise. STAGE 2, however, brings the next level of destabilisation. Some subversion techniques may include playing with the invisible (imagination) or objects like cloth, ladders, hats, and suitcases. Often, this play is framed with live or recorded music. I frequently work through games that possess components such as rhythm, contrast, juxtaposition, atypicality, exaggeration, vastness (scale), grotesque, meta-theatre, status, inversion of image, inversion of the game's function or the players' motions. These games involve working with the body (movement or ‘catch’ games), often contrasted with simple games where the actors work through their intellect simultaneously. The moment the body is involved, the brain has troubles to operate with the same speed on the intellectual level of ideas. This dissonance of the mind and body (MBD) according to Huang (2019) as well as creating discomfort makes us creative. Huang (2019: 754) explains that “an atypical psychological state that occurs when the mind and body experience two seemingly contradictory affective or nonaffective states” and that they can contribute to emergence of creative states. Huang (2019) asserts that mind-body dissonance generates creativity through the activation of “atypicality mind-set or the inclination to dismiss conventional thinking”. In my rehearsals, I often intensify the conditions (elicitors), driving the elements into a frenzy, quickness of changes, different emotional states, and breaking unexpected boundaries (ex. touch – unexpected touch or gentleness). This dissonance creates discomfort that often produces some uncontrolled expressions, gestures, stream of thoughts in the actors. In that moment, I am looking to sense the moment for poetry, metaphors, and openings, sometimes without intellectual understanding but always through embodied sensory revelations. Often, a sign of a trigger will be a collision that creates a tiny psychological shift, a moment of suspense or stillness just after the collision. The actors going through these exercises, first feel unnerved by what is happening to them, however after a few times being in discomfort, a peculiar phenomenon happens. They see that after a few trials, they find a space where they begin to enjoy the

difficulty and their mind seem to acquire a greater flexibility to be in this discomfort. That demonstrates itself through being able to laugh at themselves in the moment.

### **‘Make it worse!’ (Don’t be boring!)**

One way of working at this stage is through the ‘make it worse!’ command. In the workshops, I remember hearing my teacher Gaulier often shouting: ‘Make it Worse!’ It means trying to make a higher, bigger stake that the actors find themselves in and expand by making it more complex, strange, random... but not ordinary and boring. ‘Don’t be boring’ - is another Gaulier phrase that terrifies actors of all sorts. It means they must take the risk immediately and without considering safety. The modus operandi of ‘make it worse’ makes us stop thinking rationally or having control. The performer goes through many processes, and their mind skips through different options while trying to find support. The body is also pushed to extreme effort. There is often a disturbance or a different processing speed between emotional, physical, and intellectual centres. There are moments of suspensions or disturbances, and as the performers are themselves in conditions of complexity and intensification, they find themselves in a state of going through a threshold. The collision is provoked when the performer lets go of the control and lets unexpected things come out of them. The mind of the actor extends to the whole of their being; they cross the ‘threshold’ and arrive at STAGE 3. They enter a state similar to Maslow’s (1997) peak performance that, for this research, I termed a *State of Becoming*, which I will explain in detail in Chapter 9. The moment is palpable and always memorable to the creatives who are watching and to the performers themselves. Creating stimulated collisions is at the heart of my practice and this thesis, as they provide the key to generating moments of transcendence. Their significance also lies in uncovering these findings for my work as a pedagogue in university settings and for other practitioners.

### ***Via Negativa***

*Via Negativa* is the method I have discussed briefly in Chapter 7 as Grotowski’s enquiry to stripping the actor of his/her unnecessary social habits. This method or to be precise, terminology ‘via negativa’ was later recognised as a very effective tool by Lecoq and Gaulier to be a way to work with an actor through failure. *Via Negativa* is a way of working in front

of other actors when the director playfully seeks ‘what is not working’. They cannot prescribe what they think is working; they can only take away what is not relevant, interesting, or exciting about the actor’s performance. The actors often commented that it feels like searching in the dark, as they have to refer to the director and the audience (other actors) to gauge how to proceed. This is crucially working through failure, revealing a person’s vulnerabilities, and stripping down the ‘not working’ offers. The crucial proposition here is that the performers have to change their thinking, take a step away from the usual habitual patterns and access something more instinctive, vulnerable, and spontaneous.

## **Summary**

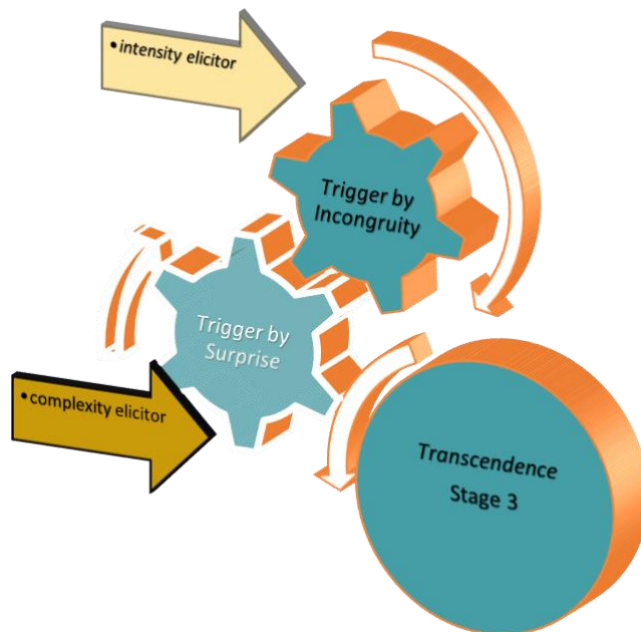
Triggers in rehearsals are created by generating collisions through a variety of the above-outlined methods. I observed that the collisions can be uncontrolled, which I termed as *Incidental Collisions*, which can be generated through accidents, mistakes, dreams, or misunderstandings. Other types of collisions are the ones which are semi-controlled, which I call *Stimulated Collisions*, which are pre-organised by the director or stimulated by a different kind of method that ‘disturbs’ the habits and patterns of the actors and puts them in an unusual state of sensitivity and vulnerability.

However, creating a trigger is only one of the elements of the construction of STAGE 2.

I will now outline the stabilisation process of creating *CITE*.

## 8.3 Construction and stabilisation of *CITE* in STAGE 2 in rehearsals.

STAGE 2, *Compound Incongruity Trigger Event* (CITE) is created by many variable elements: *Intensity Elicitor*, *Complexity Elicitor*, *Trigger by Surprise* and *Triggers by Incongruity*.



*Imaginative Wondering 20 STAGE 2 of CITE*

The process of construction of *CITE* in rehearsal was not linear and controlled. The findings of this ephemeral process serve as a map of constellation rather than an instruction manual.

STAGE 2 of *CITE* is constructed by combining the primary *Trigger by Surprise* and *Incongruity Trigger by Vastness* or, *by Disturbance* or both *Incongruity Triggers* at the same time. The compound triggers need to be strong in value. There needs to be a strong *Trigger by Surprise* at the beginning of the *CITE*, and there must be at least one strong trigger that abruptly changes or stops the events at STAGE 2. Any of the triggers can be repeated. The sensation of *Hovering Stillness* is an indication that the *CITE* moved into STAGE 3

An *Elicitor of Complexity* and *Intensity* needs to start the STAGE 2 of *CITE* that propels the process into the levels that were generated when first discovering the collisions. The Auxiliary progressive Elicitor (leitmotif) can be added to add depth and familiarity and help

with the last moments of the show. The director needs to find the elicitors that correspond with the scene, the actions, the narrative, and a style that governs the piece.

My research indicates limitations that need to be explored further through other enquiries. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the research showed that the process of constructing *CITE* was done in a haphazard way, through trial and error and indirect vision. I constructed the *three-stage model* of *CITE* through a theoretical analysis of this research using only three actors within one setting. There needs to be more practical utilisation of the *three-stage model* of *CITE* to determine more precisely how *CITE* is constructed in different settings and what the importance of the strength and repeatability of the triggers is.

## **Chapter 9 STAGE 3 as experienced by the actors: State of Becoming**

Chapter 9 focuses on establishing how *Transcendence* (STAGE 3) is felt and experienced by actors. Chapters 7 and 8 unveiled the pedagogy behind construction of STAGE 1 and STAGE 2. STAGE 3 of the phenomenon, up till now, was defined from the point of view of the audience as crossing the threshold, which begins with the state of *hovering stillness* where the physiological shift and an experience of transcendence occurs. *Hovering Stillness* cannot be created for an effect as this would inhibit and hinder the elusive phenomenon. The *Hovering Stillness* must materialise as an outcome of *CITE*, and it happens because of how the compound triggers are built during the performance with the spectators and the actors. Therefore, Chapter 9 focuses on the experience of the actors in rehearsals as well as during performances with live audiences. Establishing the experience of the actor during STAGE 3 is crucial as this research evidences that the experience is not only a temporary, creative transformation but life-altering experience, a Maslov's moment of self-actualisation which I termed a *State of Becoming*.

### **9.1 The sense of transcendence for the actors in rehearsals**

In Chapter 4, I explained that the actors are in a different experiential mode from the audience during the phenomenon. The actors are in a 'working mode', and the audience is in a 'receiving mode'. The actors focus on discovering, supporting, and stabilising all the elements of the unravelling phenomenon. This finding does not suggest, however, that the actors do not sense the transcendence. While the actors are creating the triggers to affect the audience, they are often able to experience this phenomenon themselves, especially in the initial moments in rehearsals. This enquiry uncovered that every time the actors found 'a glimpse' of a moment, as discussed in the pedagogy of STAGE 2, they described the sensation of time expanding as well as awareness of the fact that something extraordinary was happening. One of the examples was illustrated through the Elephant moment by the actor:

The elephant (...) really just set the tone and being underneath it, it is unexplainable, it is like a magical moment, and it felt great, but also the fact that we knew that ... And then the lights went on the cloth and music came on, and the actors underneath got a strange feeling, and at the same time there was a collective gasp from the outside,

there was a moment like a roller-coaster in the stomach, and it comes up to the chest, and it is a good feeling' (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 2).

In one of the first rehearsals of the elephant moment there was a lot of excitement and energy when the elephant was constructed. The actors observed a physical sensation of goosebumps, a strange feeling in the stomach, and a predominant sensation of collective connection with each other. They asserted the feeling of being united in the euphoria of such moment. The word euphoria is close in meaning here to what Fischer-Lichte (2008) calls the state of intoxication. One of the experts explained their understanding of this state when performing as the spiritual intensification of the experience and compared the feeling to 'inner god on a stake' (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1). The effect of the trigger is sensed through the levels of intensity, engagement, complexity, and energy. This finding further corresponds to what devised theatre experts called in anthropological terms a state of possession or what I termed as a *State of Becoming*.

To further develop this line of the argument, I will describe the last day of working on the Ladders progression. The whole cast and the crew were trying to find the last moments of the performance.

<https://vimeo.com/913940676/61faa928a1?share=copy>

*Recordings 16 Ladders progression in rehearsals*

These were the last sequences of the performance: repetition of ladders when they are suddenly levitating with many elements oscillating at the same time: raising the ladders, accelerating movement of the performers, consequent spinning of the ladders in the air, central positioning of the protagonist and entrance of Art who is about to die. We were trying to find the 'right moment' for each sequence, and working with the trigger of music to correspond with the lifting and movement of the ladders and for it to happen consecutively.

The actor expressed what was felt by all of us:

Certain ecstasy, possession... yes, something else happened; it was like breaking through a wall, really, and it is like a second wind, I suppose. Like a wind pushing us along, like we were being held up by something else, maybe it came from two people or one person, and that bled to another person, and to another person, and then suddenly we were all just there, absolutely we all felt it (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 2).

I also felt overwhelmed that evening, feeling the sense of responsibility to finish the show, responsibility for the actors staying so late and responsibility for the work to do it justice. It



felt like being possessed, on another level, thinking through doing rather than in any organised form. The actor also confirmed it in this observation:

We were so dedicated, and it comes from loving the story and loving the process, so we needed to do it justice, so everyone just kind of came together and sort of gave a little bit more energy, and it was kind of palpable; it was quite tangible the energy that we had at that moment, I think we were delirious a little bit, a bit loopy by that point, but I think that actually kind of worked in our favour as well(...) but we all certainly felt it that we were a little delirious (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 2).

The actor remarked that the energy was palpable, material, and they all felt energised, passing through to another level of energy, through a threshold, slightly delirious and in an altered state of mind. This was also a sensation that I felt at this moment, and as a person who creates but who also is outside the phenomenon, it was a visceral sensation that was re-confirmed by the footage of that evening. At the very end of the moment, the actor is not in her spotlight, but the presence and its *hovering stillness* is still felt. In my own experience, I felt the sensation of time slowing down and the images nestling in the music, its phrases, to every tiny detail. In this moment, the sensation of the hair standing on its ends and the awareness of being totally present and sensing every little bit of what is happening. The presence of *Hovering Stillness* in the room and the sensation of something ‘becoming’ was also acknowledged by one of the theatre experts:

Something has entered the space, which is both itself and not itself, that I suppose (could be called) incarnation. Hmm, something is passing through; the actor has become a channel for something else or seems to be that. (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1)

The critical sensations that are described can be compared to what Durkheim (1915) theoretically coined as ‘Collective Effervescence’ and described as “the euphoric self-transcendence” (McGonigal, 2019: 68) that individuals often experience when they move together in ritual, prayer, or communal settings. That evening we all experienced the sense of communal transcendence, the *state of becoming* and it brought a feeling of being united and being closer together.

But what happens when the phenomenon plays itself in front of a large audience?

## **9.2 Sense of transcendence for actors in performance with live audience**

The actors are acutely aware of the intense presence and energy that audiences bring, as well as that they are part of the phenomenon while they are concentrating on the inner workings of the moment. They felt that the audience helps the making of the moments; they could sense the energy in the room and described it as a sense that the reality gets ‘tighter’, their eyes more open and “it feels it feels so lovely and tense” (Actor SRI, Celine, Phase 3). The actor also described the state of *readiness* that this thesis discussed in Chapter 6, where I argued that the tension when facing the audience does not have to be perceived as fear or in negative terms. The performer is ready for the challenge, ready to take the risk, and there is a pleasure in that.

However, it is the actors who, in this moment of the meeting with the audience, dictate the levels of intensity. In this thesis, I treat intensity as one of the *Elicitors* of STAGE 2 before the triggers can be initiated. It is the drive of the structure of the performance, as well as the drive of the actors, that opens up the path for the *Moments of Transcendence*. The unusual need for intensity of the actors was highlighted by one of the experts who, on seeing Kantor’s **Dead Class**, exclaimed:

it was the most extraordinary thing, and it was so physically shocking, physically quite violent... there was the level that they were working at, both spiritually and physically, you could tell they were like people possessed, so that takes you to another kind of place” (Expert SRI, Barbara, Phase 1)

Here, one can see the recognition that the actors are working at a different spiritual and physical level during the show. In this research, the actors also experienced being in this heightened, different state altogether; they observed that upon discovering the rhythm with the audience, they felt “completely untouchable and invincible” (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 3): “It’s like you have a permission or you give yourself permission, and you just do everything instinctively” (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 3). Where does this permission come from, and who gives it out? This statement is an indication that the actor had a sense similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) term of ‘flow’ as well as peak experience derived from Maslow’s (1997) hierarchy of needs and self-actualisation (Maslow: 1997). For the purposes of this research, I termed this state a *State of Becoming*.

The actors observed the perception of time and action being altered; of everything happening slower and with more awareness of every detail. Some of the actors felt that they themselves

were performing everything faster and their awareness of possessing that speed felt like being on top and in front of the events. These observations from the inside of the phenomenon point towards a deduction that the actors are in a different ‘realm’, a different understanding of reality once the phenomenon goes from STAGE 2 to STAGE 3. It is the passing through the threshold that creates a ‘realm’ in people’s imagination that takes over the normal comprehension of time and reality. The experts observed a phenomenon that after passing the threshold, “something has entered the space” (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1), that makes the actor become ‘a channel’ for something: “It is about that the actor is being played, it is itself and not itself, something enters the room.” (Expert SSI, Ben, Phase 1). The phrase “the actor is being played” from the above interview indicates a state of doubleness where we observe the actor, and we sense forces being at work that they are not themselves. I argue that it is this *State of Becoming*: a state of being a conduit that is created by the *CITE* construct and the forces of the performers on stage and the observers. In the final stage of the phenomenon, these two forces tend to gravitate towards states that are not logical or easily explainable. It is the territory of human imagination, human connection, and Durkheim’s (1915) ‘Collective Effervescence’, where the phenomena are very complex, integrated are not fully explainable. One of the experts additionally observed:

It is as if what, in anthropological terms, we might call possession, and although I don’t mean in such a spooky way, although it clearly connects us to the origins of theatre, whereby something comes through that is not in a room and yet makes us feel like it is in the room, and I am taken by the illusion (Expert SSI, Mike, Phase 1)

The state of possession mentioned by the expert, which I call the *State of Becoming*, is when the actor become the ‘conduit’, when this sense of possession materialises, and it is felt by the audience that they witness ‘something extra’, which one of the experts asserted that it is “the imagination that is doing something” (Expert SSI, Barbara, Phase 1). In the fine arts, the artist explores that it is the material that is a conduit for something and that by working with the material, they are transformed. So here, as a parallel in the theatre, we have the actor being the material and the conduit at the same time.

As I explained at the beginning of my thesis, there are many instances where the language falls short of the experience. There are also experiences where the nomenclature guides us towards the area that is less approved by science and logic, the area that is a part of ‘a world less discernible’. In my thesis, I argue that the only way to describe the *State of Becoming*, more accurately is to work through metaphors such as ‘being a conduit’, poetry, and the language that sometimes enters the spiritual territory.

## 9.2.a The Spiritual

Here, I want to examine further the parallels between fine art and theatre. Spate (2001: 78) observes in her thesis similar instances of 'being a conduit' in fine arts practices:

Many artists speak of the experience when the material (their art) shapes itself - in the common phrase, it 'takes over' - and tells them what to do next. The forming of the material seems to act as **a conduit** for some force larger than themselves. This kind of experience is often described as spiritual.

The discovery and confirmation of the force being present that feels like being taken over is far more important to this research and its analysis than the knowledge of what it is that takes over. It is 'the conduit' that is evidenced here in this research. Spate (2001) argues additionally that the word of spirituality is often misused and abused. She consequently reviews the use of the word spiritual from various angles, such as modern art movements, religious significance, and philosophical positions, indicating that the word 'spirituality' should be kept for that experience where:

the mind breaks through into a sense of the unity of being. In painting, there can be moments of perceptual experience so intense and so joyous that one has to think why this should be so - and of the mystery of our being that can respond with such intensity to matter (2001: 78).

The sense of 'unity of being' and 'perceptual experience so intense and so joyous' are description that bare similarity to the state expressed by one of the actors in this research as being "completely untouchable and invincible" (Actor SRI, Patrick, Phase 3). I would like to note, however, that it is not only joy that articulates this experience, but awe and disturbance can also be present here. Awe can carry joy in its attributes, but there is also wonder, surprise and disturbance to the usual way of sensing when one has this kind of experience. The disturbance creates curiosity and self-awareness to things that are unordinary and exceptional. Such moments of spiritual transcendence when the activity is performed are not only those that one senses 'peak experience' (Maslow, 1997) but more notably they are examples of 'peak performance', moments of 'self-actualisation' which I termed a *State of Becoming*.

## 9.2.b Logos and Mythos

The new ways of thinking about the process of the creative arts experience requires a new language as I noted in Chapter 3 and throughout this thesis. Sometimes we need to borrow terms used in other disciplines, that propose shared understanding and their relevance to

creative arts. Therefore, in this case, I need to bring terminology from the classical analysis to enable terms such as ‘Logos’ and ‘Mythos’ to enter my newly developed thesis, because they more completely characterise the realm of experience that is created by the arts. The dichotomy that exists between seriousness and playfulness reverberates here through another duality of worlds. This duality shows itself through the understanding of the two worlds, one through ‘Logos’ (logical, analytical world) and one through ‘Mythos’ (mythological world). One of the experts explained the meaning of ‘Mythos’ as follows:

You could call it mythological, where you have to imagine the whole picture even if you cannot see it, and you create a narrative and ideas in which you are able to join the world up in a larger scale, an intuitive and imaginative sense, which allows you to see where you are in the whole and allows you profoundly to empathise with everything around you and give value to it and also importantly because we are aware of our own mortality, allows us to connect to the dead and the whole question of dying because it has a place too in that interconnected congregation. (Expert SSI, Mike, Phase 1)

As a theatre practitioner and researcher, I recognise the importance of expert’s words quoted above. In my practice, I intuitively search for the mythological ‘interconnectedness’ through theatrical narratives of empathy and acknowledgement of our mortality. The mythological world is also discussed by Turner (1982) and Shechner (1985) who further enrich the debate on theatre, ritual, spirituality and the value of ‘communitas’ in our lives through their enquiry into the forms of ritual. In theatre, the state of ritual lets the actor, through repetition and rhythm, access this ‘alternative realm’, even if it is in a sense that theatre is a ritual of returning to doing the same thing every night in its essential form of re-doing the same (more or less) actions every night.

One expert pointed out the different understanding of performance between cultures: as part of the ritual of the dead when the Amazonian tribe plays out the bird, the tribe believes they become the bird. They are not pretending; they become it. The expert explained this knowledge of becoming:

As I am thinking now is that in the moment, for a moment, the audience and the performer are in the *state of becoming*; they become something, they don’t just experience something, they become something else... and this is why this is a critical part of the experience in theatre in all its forms that is driven by music or by dance or what we loosely call theatre (Expert SSI, Mike, Phase 1).

This experience of the *State of Becoming* for the actor is a original, critical discovery of this research. Through a metaphor of ‘a conduit’ one experience becoming ‘something else’ which is an altering experience for the performer.

One of the actors expressed it when he was moving the hanging ladders in the last moment of the performance:

And with this floating, it is about being free, and it is about this omniscient, numinous thing that you can’t explain because when we see something flying, it is amazing, so when you are doing it and then obviously when we are pushing it as well as when it is on the strings, it felt free because I am physically only touching it a little bit and then it is going quite fast, so for me it also felt free and felt light on the feet ...it was definitely a moment of liberation I suppose you are free and enlightened (Actor SRI, Jacob, Phase 3).

The actor’s sense of freedom and liberation can be acutely experienced in the *Moments of Transcendence*. The actor transcends through doing just as the audience through perceiving. It is a state of transcending where the *State of Becoming* demonstrates itself.

However, here is the curious dichotomy of the phenomenon which operates on divide between the ‘doers’ and the ‘observers’. One of the audience members commented on the moment of the actor’s ‘liberation’ that it was like seeing “butterflies in the jar” (Audience SRI, Tim, Phase 3). As the actor’s state is being observed, to the observer the moment felt deeply tragic. Butterflies cannot escape; the purpose of having them in the jar is to be watched and delighted upon. The audience sees the attempt at freedom and feels the tragedy of the moment; the actors however momentarily experience the sensation of becoming, hope and the drive towards liberation. These sensations in the actors are an expression of experience of transcending the everyday and the ordinary, and they are real, material to them and ‘life-altering’. The audience members are looking at the same thing from an opposite perspective where they know the outcome is just an illusion. It is crucial to note at this point that it is not the observers’ understanding that we are all ‘the butterflies in the jar’ that creates meaning. What triumphs are the ‘doers’, the actors who dare to go with a level of extraordinary vulnerability and be inside the world of illusions, imagination, and hope for Murdoch (1970: 71) “tiny spark which automatically suggests that ‘there is something more than this’”. It is being in the *State of Becoming* that counts in the quickness of our lives and should be understood with all its significance of the finding of this research and in impact that it has on people’s lives. One of the actors exclaimed:

So, it is lovely when you have it all together and then relax all together when we are backstage, and we can take a breath together, even though we have been breathing the

whole time...It's exhilarating, and the best when we slow the ladders down (...); wow... it feels like eating Christmas pudding... (Actor SRI, Celine, Phase 3).

She expresses the joy that relates to festive moments, rooted deep in our communal psyche, but also an experience as a child at the end of the festivities, satisfied and fulfilled even if only for a moment. A moment that, by remembering it, changes us. It is this *State of Becoming* that has an Aristotelian cathartic, healing quality that re-charges us and makes us stronger. That what we see in our mind's eye can transcend us away from the immediate reality and minuteness of our lives and 'makes us dream', and this moment of being in the *State of Becoming* forms and grows our spirituality and what it is to be a 'humane-being.'

## **Summary**

This chapter focused on the actor's experience of transcendence and the significance of the uncovering of the *State of Becoming* for the actor. The *Moments of Transcendence* are these moments of schema incongruency that crack open the systems of beliefs and lets people access their schema from another angle and look at the world and their experiences from a different perspective. These moments happen not only to the audience members but also and crucially to the actors. Aristotelian theatre emphasises the value of theatre as a healing experience. The *State of Becoming* is a process of re-ordering, healing, better understanding by actors their and others' conditions, becoming more empathetic, human, flexible with their mindset. Through theatre, actors have the possibility 'to touch' the audience people but also to affect and influence others with the experiential knowledge of the *State of Becoming* and its qualities.

# Chapter 10 Conclusion

This chapter provides a conclusion to the overall research. First, I outline the contributions of the research to the area of devising theatre territory. Next, I observe the limitations and personal and professional findings during the research. Finally, I focus on future recommendations stemming from this research.

## 10.1 Contributions

This thesis contributes original knowledge on the *Moments of Transcendence* in devised theatre. This is the first time that the phenomenon is being explored within artistic practice as well as part of academic research. My *three-stage model* of the *Moments of Transcendence* is a prototype for other practitioners, directors, actors and academics.

This research directly challenges suggestions made by Fischer-Lichte (2008) where she claims that the phenomenon's emergence during theatrical events is inexplicable and unmotivated. This research provides detailed and rigorous evidence that the phenomenon can be intentionally constructed through the *three-stage model of Compound Incongruency Trigger Event (CITE)*. It evidences experiential findings, which prove that by following the *CITE* model of construction of the phenomenon, specific trigger mechanisms are activated that lead to the audience attaining the experience of transcendence. Specifically, the IPA analysis of the four moments in the **Tiger Lady** performance demonstrated that the model functions in rehearsals and performance, with optimally triggers carrying a strong value, being activated in close proximity, and with at least one strong trigger of any type creating an abrupt change thus generating *hovering stillness* and *Transcendence*.

The project's methodology was uniquely designed. My research contributes innovative design and methods to further the precision and detailed observation of the phenomenon through phenomenological methodology. The Stimulated Recall Method (SRM) has been verified as an excellent and rigorous method for capturing the experience of the *Moments of Transcendence*. It also contributes an innovative way of thinking and seeing the phenomenon's construction process through my use of *Imaginative Wonderings* which are artistic images that represent the *CITE* model.



Next, my research demonstrates a new knowledge of critical variation in the experience of the *Moments of Transcendence* between the audience members and the actors. The innovative design and methodology of this research enabled in-depth exploration of the ‘Outside’ and ‘Inside’ perspectives. The *CITE* model of the phenomenon was grounded in the audience’s experiences because the performances were created for the audience. Therefore, their experiences guided the uncovering of the new knowledge of the three types of transcendence and a state of *Deep Presence*.

My research also uncovered the specific, variable conditions of *Availability* and *Trust* on the audience’s part, and I designed an original method for their implementation through the newly found knowledge of the difference in the phenomenon’s perception by addressing these conditions by a process called *Tuning*. This process is established initially in rehearsals between the director and the actors, and later, it is experienced with the audience.

My research contributed new knowledge about the actors’ and creatives’ experience of the phenomenon. This discovery framed the further investigation of how the phenomenon is constructed, which guided the finding of a *State of Becoming*, the self-actualising state for the actor during the phenomenon.

Finally, this research presents the first pedagogical model for constructing and re-creating the phenomenon of *Moments of Transcendence*. This thesis contributes new knowledge about the phenomenon in the actor training domain that will support acting students in recognising their creative strength, in inspiring their imagination, and in understanding the value of shared creative experience. My research outlines an experiential pedagogy of STAGE 1 and 2 of constructing the phenomenon in the rehearsal room. As a pedagogue and a director, I have already begun to apply the findings of the research in my own practice in actor training at the University level and in **Dead Rabbits Theatre** rehearsals. For example, I am now consciously using the elements of *CITE* in experimenting with the triggers in rehearsals and when teaching devising to students. I am also employing the terminology and the concepts that govern the *World of Imagination* in much consistent and structured way. I experienced the direct link between theory and practice as the pedagogical model presented in this thesis, began the unifying process for the existing yet fragmented experiential knowledge.

The research contribution establishes and validates the *Moments of Transcendence*’s significance as a transformative and deeply engaging experience in the audience’s and creatives’ lives. The values of communal unity, pleasure, play and wellbeing of actors and

students are the foundation of this research and, therefore, carry the values of enrichment and inclusivity in people's lives.

## **10.2 Limitations**

Specific limitations of this research were already anticipated in my thesis proposal. Due to funding constraints, theatre rehearsals are normally very intense and compact. I knew this research would consist of a very short and intense period where the phenomenon must be experienced, recorded, and located on tape. The interviews had to be conducted within 48 hours of their occurrence. Therefore, I found it difficult to balance the significant and intense amount of work. The rehearsals lasted all day, and finding time and energy to work through all the material recorded and observed and prepare for the next day was difficult. Scheduling the interviews also proved problematic, as the actors needed to go home and rest. The process would benefit from having gaps to accommodate the amount of work. However, having gaps in the rehearsals could mean losing momentum and intensity of the process.

Another observation that I would like to make was that in my novice role as a researcher, I did not anticipate the emotional impact that Phase 3 interviews had on me. Phase 3 interviews were carried out in close proximity to the actors and the audience after the show's premiere. I had no issue with transcribing and analysing the recordings. Still, I found the SMR interviews extremely emotionally draining as I felt emotionally exposed to the judgement of the audience and the actors. The process as I explained in Chapter 3 needs further refinements. The live interviews brought many distressful sensations and feelings because the method felt 'too raw' and too exposing to me as an artist. However, at the same time, the participants perhaps opened more to me than they would to an external interviewer. Perhaps they were protective of me. There is also a need for further ethical guidance in practically based research which would take account of such circumstances, which would serve as a guide for all institutions involved to take more care of the wellbeing not only of the participants but the researcher's own wellbeing.

### 10.3 Future recommendations

*Moments of Transcendence* have proved to me that future research into the phenomena of the making these creative moments is vital and necessary. My *three-stage CITE* model could be used as the initial structure for expanding research in this area since it offers researchers a model that gives a specific structure and offers constructs that enable identification of each element. The model also clarifies the analysis of creative development process.

A study from a different area of theatre or discipline observing a similar effect on receivers, daily life and education would open this study to more people.

The recommendations for using *CITE* pedagogy based on the findings must be evaluated within an intervention study in other rehearsal rooms or an educational setting in actor training. The research did not determine the closeness of the trigger's progression, and more research needs to occur in this area. I also outlined the stabilisation process of all the variable elements: elicitors, triggers of surprise and incongruity, to re-create it in performances; however, the main part of this thesis deals with creating the structure of the *three-stage model*, and further studies need to be proposed to find a reliable process of stabilisation.

The findings of this research indicated that the search for the trigger in rehearsals was done in an unsystematic and haphazard mode. It is, however, also true that theatrical practice is highly instinctual. Moreover, the research explores a complex human territory that cannot be revealed just as an instruction. This enquiry encourages further studies in search of unity and cohesion in the rehearsal process that could further support the construction of the phenomenon. More research would be welcome in searching for the *Compound Incongruency Trigger Event*. More research is needed to study the practical utilisation of the *three-stage model* of *CITE* and to determine further the different settings and strength value of the triggers. However, it is important to stress that this thesis and my practical research began the process discoveries for me and for others.

In addition, findings have added to knowledge particularly in the understanding of the structure of the phenomenon, in development of practical pedagogy of how to construct the phenomenon. Previous reviews and analysis were mostly of academic profiles, and Heim (2020) and Fischer-Lichte (2008) suggested the importance of experiential, practice-based research. I feel that in the next five years, there needs to be more of experiential research that

creates more in-depth understanding how the triggers work in order to create the phenomenon as well as what influence they generate on the audience and how to make sure that they are safe. I would recommend further studies in this area to find an optimum research process in rehearsals.

## 10.4 Personal level of professional findings

*I skirt around that area, but perhaps I am too afraid to confront it directly. I feel that it would be too dangerous for me. It is interesting to see oneself through the light of this research and how it reflects on my abilities. Perhaps I need to develop these skills*

(Director's/ Researcher's notes)

From my professional and personal standpoint as a director and as an audience member, it is interesting to reflect on the results of my own practice to this extent. While analysing the *Trigger by Disturbance* and the creation of *Extreme Transcendence* in my and other directors' practices, I discerned a pattern of avoiding investigating the more intense *Triggers by Disturbance*. I can work with the *Trigger by Disturbance* through inversion, through exposing things that are ridiculous or silly. I noticed here that I am creating a disturbance by employing a mechanism that disturbs the senses or exposes logic's simplicity and ridiculousness.

Still, I would evade engaging in approaching horror or violation (strong disturbance). I find it very difficult to cope when the trigger is discharged to stimulate the violent sensations for its own sake, without the protection of the set-up or discharged by laughter. Even though I know it is benign in the sense that nothing physically will happen to me, my lack of control over the emotional or intellectual disturbance as an audience member makes me very uncomfortable. I am wary of *Trigger by Disturbance* because the trauma of the characters can transfer onto the audience. The creators of the performance are not able to control the associations and sensations created in the audience members' minds. I feel responsible as a professional director and also on a personal level, for not being able to control the emotional outcome that the trigger can produce fully.

During this research, I observed that my pattern lies in looking for 'Awe' and that I am fascinated by the *Trigger by Vastness*. I tend to be freer with creating this trigger as I feel awe and wonder uplifts and creates mystery in things and people. In my work, as the *Trigger by Disturbance* is released, there must always be a way out, a glimpse of hope, encompassed by *The Trigger by Vastness*. The combination of *Triggers by Disturbance and Vastness* in my work up till now came from a deliberate positioning as a director and professional. It is

not enough to tell a story where terrible violation, tragedy and disturbance happen to the characters. We tell stories to challenge our imagination and beliefs, but also to connect and to share. This sharing and being together makes us more empathetic but also more present in our in each other's lives.

However, it was also an unconscious pattern and therefore I found it more difficult to access something that might hurt, because perhaps some things in me are hurt, and therefore, I stop myself from eliciting these collisions and triggers. This discovery of the pattern of my work was made clear through this doctoral research. I am grateful for this because with knowledge comes the power to change. There is always a tension, however, between pushing forward and creating new directions in the artistic practice, but also the desire to create work which will be powerful, developmental, and innovative but not damaging to me, the company or the audience. I feel that the change that happened through this research, will enable me to be more aware of how to 'play' with triggers and their underlying structure.

Fischer-Lichte (2008: 173) points out that: 'Art earns its exceptional significance because it is uniquely able to transfer human beings at least temporarily into a state in which the meaning of 'human' fulfils itself – an aesthetic state'. The enchantment with the world can be re-established through our theatre experiences and bring fulfilment for the communities it creates and serves. I am very proud that the findings of my research have validated the *Moments of Transcendence* as a transformative and deeply enriching phenomenon. I am also very excited about further development of my model and pedagogy in the future research with my own company as well as working collaboratively with other researchers. I will be looking forward to areas that can emerge from this ground-breaking work that enables us to understand and interact with a phenomenon in novel and creative ways.



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# Appendix 1

## Application submitted to Ethics Committee at St Mary's University -July 2020



St Mary's University

**Ethics Sub-Committee  
Application for Ethical Approval (Research)**

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor and forwarded to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and named in the following format: '**Full Name – School – Supervisor**'.

Please note that for all undergraduate research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

**Please note:**

**In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.**

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or School Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).



## St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application. Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form, then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

<i>Document</i>	<b>Enclosed? *</b>	<b>Version No</b>
1. Application Form	Mandatory	
2. Participant Invitation Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
3. Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory	
4. Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory	
5. Parental Consent Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
6. Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of posters, newspaper adverts, emails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
7. Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct study on the premises)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
8. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
9. DBS if required (to be provided separately)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
10. Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

\*Double click the check boxes to check them

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format:

**'Full Name - School – Supervisor'**

Signature of Proposer(s):	<i>K. Zaremba-Byrne</i>	Date:	04.07.20
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	<i>Christine Edwards-Leis</i>	Date:	6 July 2020



## Ethics Application Form

1. Name of proposer(s)	Kasia Zaremba-Byrne
2. St Mary's email address	Kasia.Zaremba-Byrne@stmarys.ac.uk
3. Name of supervisor	Christine Edwards-Leis
4. Title of project	How are the transcendent moments created in Devised Theatre?

5. School or Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EHSS <input type="checkbox"/> IoT <input type="checkbox"/> SHAS
6. Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> UG <input type="checkbox"/> PG (taught) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG (research) Name: Ed(D)
7. Type of activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> UG student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG student

<b>8. Confidentiality</b>	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>9. Consent</b>	
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
<b>10. Pre-approved Protocol</b>	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable Date of approval:
<b>11. Approval from another Ethics Committee</b>	
a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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<b>12. Identifiable risks</b>	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress, or burden to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are participants over 65 years of age?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
i) Will highly personal, intimate, or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
j) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details:
k) Could the relationship between the researcher/ supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
l) Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

<b>13. Proposed start and completion date</b>
Please indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the study is due to commence.</li> <li>• Timetable for data collection.</li> <li>• The expected date of completion.</li> </ul>

Please ensure that your start date is at least four weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.

Commencement date: October 2020

Timetable for data collection: January-October 2021

Expected date of completion of data collection: End of October 2021

#### 14. Sponsors/collaborators

Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.

- Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.
- Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data, or another form of support.

NONE

#### 15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

Please indicate:

- Whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee).
- Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.

NONE

#### 16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. *[100 word limit]*

This research aims to contextualise the transcendent moments' phenomenon and show its significance as a transformative and deeply engaging experience in devised theatre. Koestler (1964) is closest to formulating a definition of this as momentary shifts of consciousness through disturbance or destabilisation of habitual patterns. I will be situating the theoretical and conceptual framework of this research in the pedagogy of three French master-teachers: Pagneux (2014), Lecoq (1990) and Gaulier (2012). There is a limited academic knowledge of this work and this research proposes to unify the fragmented knowledge as well as contribute new knowledge about the phenomenon in actor devised training domain. Neoliberalism leads the society to abandon the community and its values

(Brown, 2015) in favour of competition and profit-making. This enquiry proposes to investigate the phenomenon that triggers the opposite tendency: it prompts people to perceive, be part of or open up to creativity and imagination. The findings will inform my practice as an actor trainer and researching professional.

## 17. Study design/methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- c) The requirement of the participant, i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- d) Details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.
- e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

My ontological stance is based within the qualitative Social Constructionism paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) explain that 'Social Constructionism places importance on how people collectively construct the phenomena and the understanding of their social world' (Cohen et al., 2018: 23). This research will use the **socio-phenomenological approach**. The complexity and difficulty of capturing such phenomenon directed me towards subjective, real-life descriptions of the phenomenon which create a richer understanding of its vitality and unpredictability. The lack of academic writing about the topic instigates the need for a variety of methods to qualify the many-faceted nature of the phenomenon.

### Methods:

- Phase 1

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Interviews (IPA) – semi-structured, 45-90 min audio-recorded interviews with 10 experts from devised theatre domain. The first IPA interview will be appraised by the doctoral supervisor to further instruct the diligence of the research. The supervisory audit process will aid transparency and keeping trail during the research.

- Phase 2

Observation: recorded filmed observation of the rehearsals, researcher's diary – systematic observation over 3 weeks period of rehearsals and 2 performances

- Phase 3



Stimulated Recall Method interviews combined with IPA interviews- during rehearsals and performance phases with 3 actors, 10 audience members and researcher's initial interview with the supervisor.

The methods have been tested by SSR pilot study that have been approved by St Mary's Ethics committee in June 2018. The study's outcome has led me to refine the methodology and methods to the current form.

The research is schedule to take place in the UK, with most of it at St Mary's University (for example the rehearsals and the performances).

### **18. Participants**

Please mention:

- a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
- b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
- c) The inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
- e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation, then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.
- f) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.

The design of this research reflects the role of experiential knowledge of the participants at each stage of this enquiry. There are three different, purposively sampled groups: ten experts of devised theatre will be interviewed, 3 performers and creatives will be filmed and interviewed by Stimulated Recall Method during rehearsals and after performances and 10 informed-devised theatre audience members will also be interviewed through Stimulated Recall Method after the performances. The function of these three groups in this research is constructed to mirror their function in creating the performance: the experts use their experiential knowledge to come up with the concepts, the actors and creatives construct a deeper understanding and experience in making of the show and the final stage the actors and the audience come together on the night of the performance to share the experience.

Ten expert participants in Phase 1, are a homogeneous group chosen because of their practical expertise in the field. The participants of this enquiry are a homogenous, purposively sampled group of devised theatre practitioners, actors, directors, who share the same training tradition. In Phase 2 (rehearsal stage), the participants are: three actors from the rehearsing company and the researcher (myself) who is also an artistic director of the project. The participants will be randomly chosen from the group that is creating the show (six professional actors). This is the insider view of the phenomenon. The function of the participants here is to share their immediate experience of the phenomenon and insights from the inside world of making.

In Phase 3 (performance stage) the research continues with the insider perspective but in altered circumstances, when the sharing with the audience happens. This is an important change as the phenomenon extends between the audience and the actors and the circumstances of who is in control, or the role of different constructs may come to the forefront. This phase also enquires into the outsider perspective of the phenomenon. There will be a purposively sampled group of ten audience members and Stimulated Recall method interviews (five on each night of the performance). The only criteria on which the participants are chosen is their knowledge of devised theatre. This outsider perspective will also enable to explore the role of the audience in the creation of the transcendent moment and evaluate if it can change to insider position as the bond is created that perhaps enables the phenomenon to occur.

### 19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

- a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done.
- b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?
  - Children under 18
  - Participants with learning disabilities
  - Participants suffering from dementia
  - Other vulnerable groups.

If any of the above apply, state whether the researcher/investigator holds a current DBS certificate (undertaken within the last 3 years). A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.

- c) Provide details on how consent will be obtained. This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

There are no pressures to participate in the research. The participants will be appropriately informed about the research through an information sheet as well as they will be given a consent form to sign. The consent form will also inform them that the material they provide will be anonymous and that they can withdraw at any time.

None of the participants belongs to the groups stated in paragraph b.

The participants will be given a consent and anonymity form to sign, and I will explain to them the project as well as I will make sure that they understand that they can withdraw from the research at any point and without a reason.

### 20. Risks and benefits of research/activity

- a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- b) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- c) Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?
- d) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.
- e) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- f) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- g) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

There are no risks or adverse effects associated with this research. The study does not involve any invasive procedures. There are no benefits to the participants. The data will be collected by the researcher and viewed only by my supervisor and myself.

Participants must declare in writing that they have not displayed any COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

Participants must declare in writing that they have not knowingly been in contact with anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

Any people who are [shielding due to underlying health conditions](#) will not be recruited for research.

I will not pressure participants to take part in research, and will be especially sensitive to the fact that people may not feel ready to participate despite the easing of government restrictions.

I will also be mindful of the ancillary effects of the virus, for example emotional stress, and will try to recognise and mitigate the risks of compounding these. I will prepare appropriate measures, which may include signposting information and support systems.

## 21. Confidentiality, privacy, and data protection

- Outline what steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality.
- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
- *If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.*
- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
- *Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.*

- You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publicly available once the project has ended.
- You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating to data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.
- Identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).
- Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?
- Explain what information will be identifiable.
- Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
- Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any possible outputs which will use the information, e.g. dissertations, theses, and any future publications/presentations.

The data will be only accessed by me and my doctoral supervisors. The data results will not identify the participants and will be stored on St Mary's University servers for at least 10 years. I will ask Andrew Owusu-Mensa to store the filmed material in storage facilities at St Marys. The consent form will state what information will be identifiable and any possible outputs which will use the information, e.g. dissertations, theses, and any future publications/presentations.

## 22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriately written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

I will send the summary of each phase of the research to the relevant participants. They will have one month to respond and give feedback.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.


Signature of Proposer(s):	<i>K Zaremba-Byrne</i>	Date:	4.07.20
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	<i>M Edwards-Lis</i>	Date:	6/07/20



## Approval Sheet

Name of proposer(s)	Kasia Zaremba-Byrne
Name of supervisor	Christine Edwards-Leis
Programme of study	Ed D
Title of project	How the transcendent moments are created in Devised Theatre.

Supervisors, please complete section 1. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the School Ethics Representative for their records.

<b>SECTION 1:</b> To be completed by supervisor.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 1.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refer to School Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3.			
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):		Date:	06/07/20

<b>SECTION 2:</b> To be completed by School Ethics Representative.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 2.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 consideration is required by Ethics Sub-Committee.			
Signature of School Ethics Representative:		Date:	

## Sample information form



### Section A: The Research Project

#### **Title of project:**

**How are the transcendent moments created in devised theatre?**

#### **Purpose and value of study:**

This research aims to investigate the transcendent moments' phenomenon and show its significance as a transformative and deeply engaging experience in devised theatre.

#### **Invitation to participate**

You have been invited to participate in the doctoral research because you are a devised theatre expert, actor, or knowledgeable audience member.

#### **Who is organising the research**

I, Kasia Zaremba-Byrne, am organising this research because I am interested to research how are the transcendent moments created in Devised theatre.

#### **What will happen to the results of the study**

The results of this study will be used for writing a doctoral dissertation. The results may be published independently in the theatre journal or as an academic or practitioners' publication.

#### **Source of funding for the research**

none

### **Contact for further information**

You may contact me for further information – [kasia.zaremba-byrne@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:kasia.zaremba-byrne@stmarys.ac.uk)  
You may also contact my supervisor, Dr Christine Edwards-Leis – [christine.edwards-leis@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:christine.edwards-leis@stmarys.ac.uk)

### **Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project**

#### **Why you have been invited to take part**

1. You have been invited to participate because you are considered an expert in devised theatre domain.
2. You have been invited to participate because you are a professional actor who works in devised theatre domain.
3. You have been invited to participate because you are considered a well-informed devised theatre audience's member.

#### **Whether you can refuse to take part**

You can refuse to participate in the filmed interview. You do not have to give a reason if you do not wish to participate in the data collection for this project.

#### **Whether you can withdraw from the project at any time, and how**

If you wish to withdraw, after giving consent, please sign the bottom section of your consent form and give it to me or email a copy to me. Any data already collected will be withdrawn from the data. It may be difficult to withdraw video footage from that collected, but your participation/contribution to any filmed activity will be removed from analysis.

#### **What will happen if you agree to take part (brief description of procedures/tests)**

1. As an expert in Devised theatre - you agree to take part in the interview – you will be audio recorded and the interview will take 45-90min.
2. As an actor - If you agree to take part in the Stimulated Recall Interview – you will watch the previously recorded moments from the rehearsals and from performances and I will ask you to comment on some of those moments. You can pause the recordings at any time as well so that you can comment on moments that are important to you. The interview will take 45-90 min.
3. As an audience member - If you agree to take part in the Stimulated Recall Interview – you will watch the previously recorded moments from the performance and I will ask you to comment on some of those moments. You can pause the recordings at any time as well so that you can comment on moments that are important to you. The interview will take 45-90 min.
4. As an actor in the company – you will be asked if I can record the rehearsals and the performances that you are participating in for the doctoral research purposes.

#### **Whether there are any risks involved (e.g. side effects) and if so, what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety.**

There are no risks to your wellbeing and safety.

**Whether there are any special precautions you must take before, during or after taking part in the study**

There are no special precautions you will need to make to participate in the research project.

Participants must declare in writing that they have not displayed any COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

Participants must declare in writing that they have not knowingly been in contact with anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

Any people who are [shielding due to underlying health conditions](#) will not be recruited for research.

I will not pressure participants to take part in research, and will be especially sensitive to the fact that people may not feel ready to participate despite the easing of government restrictions.

I will also be mindful of the ancillary effects of the virus, for example emotional stress, and will try to recognise and mitigate the risks of compounding these. I will prepare appropriate measures, which may include signposting information and support systems.

**What will happen to any information/data/samples that are collected from you?**

It will be used to provide analysis for my doctoral research and the findings may be published in a theatre journal.

**Whether there are any benefits from taking part**

There are no particular benefits from taking part.

**How much time you will need to give up to take part in the project?**

Normally the interviews will take 45-90 min.

**How your participation in the project will be kept confidential?**

All the data that is given in the project, video footage and diary entries, will be anonymous. The video data will be kept on a St Mary's computer that is password protected and at no time will it be disseminated publicly. The interview will be analysed and anonymity will be preserved because no names will appear on the original data.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM



# Consent Form



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the project: How are the transcendent moments created in Devised Theatre.

Main investigator and contact details: Kasia Zaremba-Byrne

Email: Kasia.Zaremba-Byrne@stmarys.ac.uk

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

### Covid 19 Declaration:

I have not displayed any COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

I have not knowingly been in contact with anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days before taking part in the research study.

Name of participant

(print).....

Signed.....

Date.....

-----

-----

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project:

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I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## Appendix 2

Footage link to the **Tiger Lady** show in Canada, Edmonton 2023:

Vimeo Link:

<https://vimeo.com/875922869/b993050381?share=copy>

**Dead Rabbits Theatre** company information, awards, reviews on the next page.

**Rehearsals period** -30<sup>th</sup> August -18<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Premiere and playing dates** in London (St Mary's University, 110 seats and Greenwich Theatre, 300 seats)- 20<sup>th</sup> September-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021)

Edinburgh Fringe (1<sup>st</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> August 2022) Pleasance Above 1:05pm (140 seats)

Edmonton Fringe, Canada (15<sup>th</sup> August-1<sup>st</sup> September 2023)

Westbury theatre (350 seats)-recording is of our most recent show in Edmonton 2023

# TIGERLADY

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL  
FEMALE TIGER TAMER

The FINEST PLACE OF AMUSEMENT at the EDINBURGH FRINGE

★★★★★

HILARIOUS AND  
HEART-WARMING  
EDMONTON JOURNAL

★★★★★

"DEEPLY THEATRICAL,  
STRANGE AND WONDERFUL"  
12TH NIGHT CA

"EXCITEMENT,  
DANGER  
AND  
VERY SHARP  
CLAWS!"

PRESENTING  
A MENAGERIE

OF  
TRAINED TIGERS  
EAGER ELEPHANTS  
& Other Such Animals

THE ACROBATS

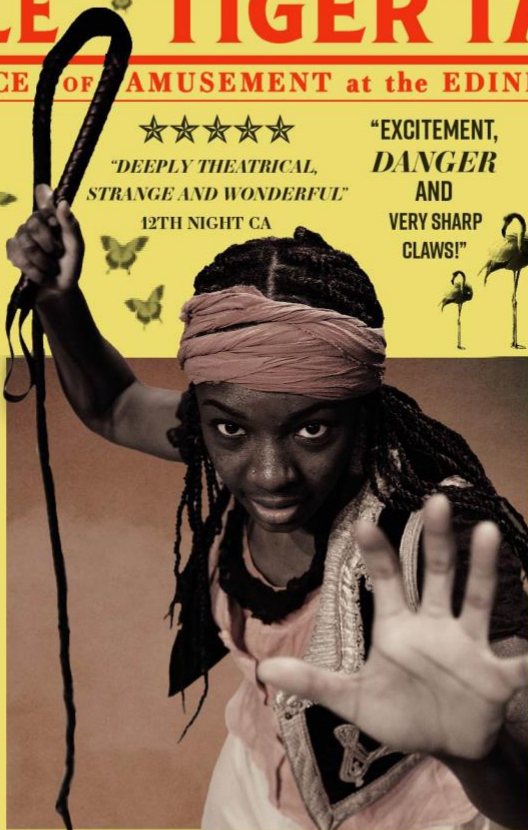
— PERFORMING —  
AS BEST THEY CAN



*A Laugh Every Minute*

33

PLEASANCE  
COURTYARD



MUSICIANS

A RIOT OF FUN



3-29 AUG 13:05  
(NOT 17, 22)

TO BE SEEN TO-NIGHT AT THE PLEASANCE COURTYARD (ABOVE) !  
6o Pleasance, Edinburgh EH8 9TJ

# TIGER LADY

**EXCITEMENT, DANGER AND VERY SHARP CLAWS!**

*'It's funny how the world turns on the smallest of things'*

**A deliciously funny but haunting, hilarious but heart-warming, crazy but poignant true story of a first female Tiger Tamer!**

*'To feed your heart you have to break a little. Sometimes you have to break a lot.'*

After an award-winning tour of North American Fringe and winning the Les Enfants Terribles, Greenwich Partnership Award 2019, Dead Rabbits are coming out of hibernation to

warm your cockles through their richly visual style, live music, humor and three anti-gravity ladders.

Imagine...It's the end of Summer 1915, Princeton Kentucky, and a young orphan girl runs away from her strict Presbyterian aunts to join the circus. Although adored for her dancing legs, she vows to become the first female tiger tamer. With a mix of clowns, live music, some seriously bad acrobats and a very small tiger, Dead Rabbits present this true tale of the price of fame, fervour and falling in love...

Quotes for the last show...

"Comedic Brilliance"  
"Unrelenting Inventiveness"  
"Epic"

BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

"Beautiful, ingenious and warm-hearted"

EDINBURGH GUIDE

"Impossibly tragic and uplifting...  
Achingly beautiful..."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED SHOW  
FRINGE REVIEW



UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH



GREENWICH THEATRE CONNECTS



Supported using public funding by  
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

**3-29 AUG 13:05**  
**(NOT 17, 22)**

TO BE SEEN TO-NIGHT AT THE PLEASANCE COURTYARD (ABOVE) !  
60 Pleasance, Edinburgh EH8 9TJ

**Tiger Lady** played 25 times during Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2022 at Pleasance above venue and was seen by 2500 people.

**Reviews:**

**5 stars Theatre weekly review:**

<https://theatreweekly.com/edinburgh-review-tiger-lady-at-pleasance-courtyard/#:~:text=This%20produced%20hilarious%20and%20tender,well%20given%20thei%20eccentric%20character.>

**4 stars the Stage review:**

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/tiger-lady-review-pleasance-courtyard-edinburgh-dead-rabbits-theatre>

**5 stars Edinburgh Guide review:**

<https://edinburghguide.com/festival/2022/tiger-lady-pleasance-courtyard-review-20887>

**Best of the Fest Awards – Theatre weekly**

**The best immersive theatre award**

<https://theatreweekly.com/theatre-weeklys-best-of-the-fest-2022/>

## Edmonton

2023 Edmonton Fringe Festival – 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest international fringe festival in the world.

**Dead Rabbits Theatre** Company arrive back to the UK after very successful Edmonton Fringe- CANADA run of **Tiger Lady**, the true story of the 1<sup>st</sup> female tiger tame, seen by over 3000 people across the 9-show run.

★★★★★ “Wildly entertaining.” [Edmonton Journal](#)

Top Pick “Theatre Magic” [Liz Nicholl's](#).

**Tiger Lady** captured the imagination of the local media with [CBC radio interview](#) and two appearances on Television. [An interview](#) outside Edmonton Fringe theatre and another [in the studio](#)





Picked as 1 of the best shows out of 185, the company were awarded “Holdovers” with 3 other companies, where the troupe performed again twice to sell out audiences, a week after the fringe is complete. With further mentions in the press

*“Tiger Lady: the ingenious Dead Rabbits Theatre production London cat-apults us into an atmospheric, richly imagined world, the story of the world’s first female tiger trainer in the early years of the last century. And it uses the most theatrical of means”* Found [here](#)

Tiger Lady went onto a very successful Rural tour of the UK with venues in Cheshire, Devon and Sommerset, as well as performances at St Mary’s University.

The Company of six is led by Artistic Director Kasia Zaremba-Byrne. Kasia is an Associate Professor of Theatre at St Mary’s University.

Exec Director Dr David Hockham, graduated St Mary’s in 2009 and is now the Associate Head of School of Stage and Screen at the University of Greenwich. Tiger Lady, is a joint university venture and is a research output of 2019 community project [“What About Us: Empowering Community Voices”](#), with inspiration from stories of the local Woolwich Community.

**Tiger Lady** has previously toured the UK as part of a Digital Tour during Covid and has performed live at Greenwich theatre, Twickenham, the Chelmsford Fringe as well 25 performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2022.



## Appendix 3

### Coding sample -inter-rated validity checked at 81% by thesis supervisor Dr Christine Edwards-Leis

<p>Interview 1 [redacted] [redacted] with Kasia Zaremba-Byrne (KZ) 4/11/20 at 1500 hours Via Zoom CEL in attendance as viewer Agree:73 Disagree:17 Reliability: 81%</p>	<p>Codes Defining Source- ephemerality Example construction audience reaction- relaxation- part of construction foolishness elements of training spiritual aspect other</p>
<p>Transcript:</p> <p>KZ: Thank you for agreeing for doing this. Sorry say again?</p> <p>[redacted]: My favorite subject</p> <p>KZ: and I think it is always nicer face to face but m.. we have what we have so lets do best out of it. I am recording this but only for purposes that I can transcribe it afterwards and I can take data from it. This interview is called an Interpretative phenomenological analysis interview but what it really means is that I am trying to find out as much as I can from however you think or however you see things or however you experience so you can describe it straight, or critically, you can tell me anecdotes or in anyway you feel you are the most likely able to convey your experience, so I am trying to understand how you perceive it. Not how we have one, general understanding of it.</p> <p>[redacted]: OK</p> <p>KZ: So what I am trying to do through lots of interviews to see lots of different facets of what I am trying to research. Because I think it is quite difficult to catch so I don't want to catch it. I want to see lots of different facets of the phenomenon. I think this method will help me the most. So this is the first part.</p> <p>TB: Will you tell me if I am saying things which are not helpful? Cos you know...</p> <p>KZ: But it is also not,mm.. I am trying to find out what is you, and I am not trying to make in anyway the interview bias or you don't have to be helpful. I am very interested how you describe it. So that's the main idea. And some people will describe some things differently, some things the same, some things differently, and part of it is to really catch all those nuances between people,</p>	

because it is the human understanding will help me to find a way to talk about it. Ok, well, yes?

■: so do you mind if I draw when I am talking, because otherwise I won't be able to talk properly?

KZ: yes, of course, and please show me as well if you can. Ok, so the first one is, the same as the one I wrote to you in the first letter to you as well, so the first one is: researching these what I call transcendent moments, in theatre they are called lots of different things, sometimes they are not quite described, so for now just bare with me, **but have you had any transcendent moment experience in theatre:**

■ yes, yes, that's **what I want to make**, that's what I want to **look for**. If you mean those **moments when the audience goes Ahhh...** and **they don't know where they are** or they **don't expect**, or it is **beyond what they would think** is that what seems to me the transcendent moment?

KZ: yes

■: and **yes I had lots of other people and from making them and most... most, I think from seeing, being in the rehearsal room with everybody and then suddenly getting a glimpse of how everything could get bigger all together, using the visual stuff and often the music and the movement.** I mean it does not happen so often with text, with text you tend to do it within your own workroom. Pursuit your design and then on paper, on a model, you design this moment, because you have a text but if you do it in devised work, which I mostly do at the moment, it is, it happens... ahh..it usually happens, **it is usually sparked by something that is going on** and **it can be something really tiny**, it can be something **seeing an actor standing on one leg and the director is thinking and then hearing a chord of music**, you know how **musicians**, they sit in a corner of the room, fiddling about, even when they are not concentrating, **they always fiddling, and then sometimes two things happen together and they play the chord and the actor standing on one leg and the director is thinking and you think: yeah...**and that's it you can make it. And the idea comes from that, and you **don't really know where the idea comes from**, but you, you can't store them, but you have store them, you cant store up idea thinking oh I use it one day, but you know you have store them because they come out, hmm there are certain things, for example, if its something to **do with angels**, because nobody knows what an angel is and everyone has an idea what an angel is, and they are not in our real experience, **but they in everybody's idea**, and they are coming into so many plays, this messenger from somewhere that that you do not understand. And ah... gosh is **difficult to talk** about this and then suddenly you think, I mean, I think, because I think visually, oh I **think I want everything to go up**, I want everything to change

Yes.

**Purposeful action** the same as CEL

**Defining** the same as CEL

**Source-** within defining

**defining**  
**defining**

Same as CEL- I have now specified further

**other:** comparison to scripted work

Same as CEL- I have now specified further

**defining**

**example to define**

Same as CEL- I have now specified further

**Source** but also **Defining- is source within defining?**

and storage and application storing the idea

**CEL has it as complexity**

**KZ has it as DEF-UP**

**the idea of going up**  
**how it is being made**

colour, and I want the audience to go ahh, and to hover and of course the director must want actors to be hovering on this discovery and the music has to hover and the lights have to hover, and when this actually happens, whatever it is, that lifts the audience from their normal, understandable, expected world always as a surprise...

KZ: so you are saying you feel it, the director feels it, that the actors feel it? Or?

█: the actors don't know, they don't know that they are feeling it, they are in it and their experience is personal hmm in their own bodies, so they don't quite know how ascendant they are being the actors.. I think about lots of stuff that you directed, like, do you remember when Tuan let the birds out of the book in a show somewhere and he opened the book and the birds flew, and of course it was sticks with people with bits of paper on the end of it flattering them, but the way he opened the book, the music that went with it, that actions of the bodies on the toes of understanding of the actors made the audience also see that flight as something beyond paper on the sticks...

KZ: so it is the moment of a lift, I remember it because you talked about it and I remember it like it is now so it is something that happened in the rehearsals but also something that happened with the audience

█: yes because we could see, the people, the actors couldn't necessary see, because they were in it but you the director, me as the designer and other people and music and everything could see that the audience would, would translate that moment into something that made them hold their breath with wonder

KZ: I am trying to be very careful at the same time, so it is not like our normal conversation

█: Am I not being too vague?

KZ: no, no, how you want, I am just not coming in into the conversation as much, and I don't know how much to come in and out

█: I can keep rattling in about other transcendent moments if you would like  
Hmm. Sometimes it happens in text, if you think of Godot, waiting for Godot for instance, which is a text which belongs to every generation and to every type of theatre and every period of theatre since it was written, I mean I must have seen it since I was about 12, every 10 years, it has always been different to me, and there is, there is quite a lot of transcendent moments when nothing happens, but you know something bigger is happening beyond your understanding. Hmm and occasionally, the latest

**Other:**The actors are part of the experience

CEL describes as an Experience category

Example describing it

KZ as defining Transformation of basic material into something immaterial

Actors in the experience  
AUD- describing audiences category how it is worked??

CEL describes as def feature and as experience

Others can see how it makes itself

KZ – there is perhaps a further construction of categories

Defining through textual example

the same as CEL

the same as CEL

CEL categorises as features the same as CEL

the same as CEL

the same as CEL

KZ – defining ???/ not sure

Godot that I saw about 3 years ago, with Ian Macallan with the other chap whose name I can't remember right now, had a lot of these moments, and there were mostly those moments when they were not talking, you know those moments when they are waiting for Godot, and he does not come. And something to do with the light and the fact that they were fantastically good actors and because they were playing as an ex- musical, so they were on their toes even though they were old, and the light, the lighting was fabulous, really beautiful, beautifully lit show, and that was the moment that was to do with text, but in fact without words.

KZ: The text created the space perhaps

█: The text created the expectation, but the actual transcendent moments were that breath holding moment partly to do, partly to do with: will he come- no he wont...also seeing into the hearts of these two old chaps and into all our hearts because we all are those chaps as well. (laughs) it is all a bit emotional actually. (laughs) I keep going, god what can I think of. Have you seen the latest Ockham's razor's show, no the show before last, which is called this time: was, I don't know if you saw it.. not it was not this time, it was called...I can't remember what was it called, there was a point where.. one of the aerialists was running on two sticks that were held by the rest of the company and moving them backwards and forward, they were held parallel, like railway tracks. Moving them forward and backward on a parallel and she had a foot each and she was running. Sometimes they were moving them up and down as well but she was running on these two poles and it was such a breath-holding moment, this very delicate, small body, running on this heavy scuff bar if it dropped on your head you would die, and hmm she was not high above the ground, because they were holding it on the shoulder level, nonetheless the concentration of the people moving the poles and her running on them is beyond the physical technique of it. It suggest all of us running on life, trying to catch something we never can and try to balance our way through life and love and living and that makes the audience that their bottoms hardly touch the chairs because it is not just they worried of her falling but that they recognise the danger in their bellies as well... Does this make sense at all?

KZ: Yes, what I understand is, what you just said, that it is not the risk of falling, because we like to see the risk, we like to be on the edge, that somebody might fall, that you are talking also that there is another elements there

█: yes the elements not just the actual visual beauty, but of course my job is to make it visually beautiful, it is the recognition of the audience in their own bodies which makes them, if you look at the audience when they are watching they are sitting on the chairs with the tops of their tights touching their chairs not

the same as CEL

Another dimension?  
Emotional response  
 CEL has it as def –  
 components  
 KZ – perhaps this demands  
 further category- is that  
 spiritual dimension?

example

KZ example much broader,  
with defining  
defining  
 danger, risk- what is this  
 category?  
 Different from CEL  
 constructing: concentration  
 KZ- very complex data- in  
 yellow a category that I am  
 struggling with –  
 part of definition  
 trying to balance  
 Metaphor  
 lifting up  
 danger

AUD- Experience? Or audience  
definition

the same as CEL-is audience  
reaction part of DEF?

Description by contrast  
 Recognition within the  
 audience the phenomenon  
 that they see  
 Audiences reactions  
 Recognition of being in the  
 phenomenon even when  
 thinking about it  
 Danger  
 Seeing yourself as part of  
 humanity

This is Definition  
the same as CEL

their bottoms and leaning a little bit forward, like I am now, even thinking about it, because it is not only the danger, it is the recognition it is actually you as well doing that, even 73 year overweight person like me, still sees myself running like a mad thing on these two polls, and recognises it and yes that's all of us, I think maybe it is something to do with recognising humanity, it is all getting a bit spiritual, I don't mean it to be, it is not meant to be arty farty...

KZ: no, no, I think that's great. , it is about the connection with the audience, it is about the metaphor is so deep that we don't recognise it so clearly but it goes into us and that's why the moment perhaps happens

█: yes and you are right about the metaphor, yes it is a metaphor, and a metaphor that resounds not just academically and emotionally but physically so it is everything together, aurally, I mean often also orally as you hear people going : Ah.. ( gasps for air) and when you make the angel take flight or when birds take wing or... the moment happens, the audience tends to go : ahh.. ( gasps for air) drawing the breath and then they sit on their tights not bottoms and they too want to fly. I think it is ahmm very spiritual idea as being very technical idea because you have to be very, technically competent for it to happen without knowing the technical skill of joining everything together to make it happen. But you need to recognise it so in a way, you need to relax to recognise it, and in a way you need to sit on the end of your toes, to join the audience and make it happen. And you have to know your job and you have to know how to make the cloth catch the light, or the actor to release the puppet, you know, you have to know all that stuff.

KZ: you said, could you say a little bit more about this feeling of relaxing, because quite a lot of the time there is this feeling on stage that ok be on our toes, but the feeling that we have to really be there, the sense of relaxation, could you talk a little bit more, is it for the actor is it for the director, what do you mean by this quality

█: I mean, I mean, if you not relaxed in rehearsal room or even when reading a text to make pictures in your head, you are not receptive enough to the feelings all around you, because if you are tense you, you on your guard, and you've got little things stopping, you think all the time is this sensible, is this going to work is this too much, has someone done this before, is this somebody else's idea, none of which matters at all, that's not what you are doing. What you are doing is a wonderful thing, for the audience if you would like, and if you relax, you got, you can let everyone's thoughts come to you and you can let your own come out and you can scribble rubbish on the page, and you can wave bits of material around and you can even go onto the stage with the actors and pass them things as if you were not there,

Metaphor that is constructed  
 Definition of metaphor  
 Definition of the phenomenon  
 Description of the examples  
 Going up

Different from CEL

Spiritual and technical idea – constructing the phenomenon

Relax to recognise-different from CEL- part of construction

At the tip of your toes

Knowing your job- technicality – structure

Not sure what is this category – but in construction

CST-RLX

Sense of relax, looseness

Stopping the feeling of availability to receive, to be receptive

Same as CEL- KZ now specified further

Further of the elements of Construction:

CST-RLX receptiveness, looseness, being Open

How to construct the phenomenon

State of foolinshness – looseness

You cannot be wrong

In a good rehearsal room

Example of contrast – when it does not work

How to construct

KZ: to me it is a part of constructing and not experiencing

DEF-UN being together

once you are loose enough, but. You have to do that in the spirit of knowing, that it does not matter if you make a fool of yourself, more importantly than anything else, that it is no way that you can be wrong, the ideas may not be used, the ideas maybe hopeless, maybe completely impossible, but you can't be wrong if you feel it when you in rehearsal room, in a good rehearsal room you can't be wrong unless you say back off, I am not interested, if you feel right in the room and relaxed then you have every opportunity to let as many opportunities as they come into your head out and play of ideas of everybody else, so you can see such little things, you can see split in the blind letting through a bit of light or somebody stumbling over a word or it can be a phrase which is so beautiful, when you doing anything where language brings you the character so someone very clearly to like in a cherry orchard for instance when Anja (I think she is called) comes into the room and says something completely, means nothing, and you know the whole despair of her young life is in that phrase

KZ: 'I am in mourning for my life'

█: Yes, exactly, yes he is a master of that, that feeling of nothing is happening but the whole world is here with us, and we all recognise it...

KZ: you started to talk about this idea that there is no failing in the room, in devising we play a lot, what do you think about this idea that in training we play a lot, how this have to do with the feeling of this looseness..?? or maybe it does not have anything to do with it.

█: I think it is different things for different people, if to make the actors laugh and knock about, I don't know, you know much more than me about it, but what it happens to you your body when you laugh a lot, I mean if you really laugh you have to lie down as you can't stand up. And that's a great beginning, because like when a child laughs they are helpless and if you can get to that state, that's a very good place to start from and quite often quite a lot of people find it from a physical exhaustion almost, that they have relaxation that comes after, when they physically quite, they have been throwing themselves about, and then they ha...(exhales imitating performers) right, let's do something now, hmm, for me watching the people who do that, watching how their bodies do that, how their necks and shoulders all change and you see when you are watching actors warm up in a loose rehearsal, then play, like that play, when they play about, you see, the character, you see their own character, the character of their living selves, the living person and you see how it fits with the character they are going to be, you can see it much more clearly then when you see it at the read through for instance, ahmm, when they quite often when they read through their lines and underlined them and rehearsed them by themselves so they don't feel foolish reading aloud...it is understandable, quite completely understandable,

How to construct

KZ-Agree with CEL – change to Def

KZ – defining one of the construction elements- laughter  
Laughter – what it does to the body

Physical exhaustion – how to construct

Relaxation after exhaustion

KZ: disagreement – different category CEL- experience

The relaxation, or exhaustion creates character

Doubleness – between the character and the actor – and seeing it- there is a space this is ambiguity?

Contrasting it with sitting and working from the table work  
Mechanism of defence- not to be judged as foolish.

Defining - Watching nothing developing- the phenomenon is not present

Constructing

The importance of doing CEL- difference- experience

Same as CEL-

When they play you see them

Insecurity

Bravery

Touch like children

Innocence and importance of touch.

KZ not quite sure how to categorise

but for the designer, you might be just sitting in their own room if they are doing that, cause what you are watching, is you are not watching, you have read the script if there is a script, you know it, but what you want to see is their bodies moving into the clothes that you are going to put them in, on the set, with props that you going to give them, and how they are going to... you know the difference between (Tina takes scissors and cuts the air with strong, general movements and then with soft, lovingly) someone going like that and going like that what is their natural way, how they pass the scissors, how do they drink the water, how do they look at the person they are taking too and turn and you see that in games and you see their fun and their insecurity and you see them getting braver, and you see them touching each other in the way of children, not in the way of men and women, and you see to get the innocence of touch it is quite difficult in the rehearsal room and doing my job I am very lucky to be able to touch so many people, without it being rude, and my job is to stare and touch and and the physical stuff, especially the circus stuff, bodies are innocent things, they're, they're very respected and loved and you want them to be as perfect as the 3d pencil that you like to draw with, you know it is personal and impersonal at the same time.. I am truly withering on are you sure you want this?

KZ: Ok, let me ask you the next question: **What specific conditions do you feel for the transcendent moment to happen?** And I don't mean just in rehearsals but more importantly, you can think about rehearsals but also when the show comes, because we know that is a very different kind of thing

█: Do you mean when the audience is in?

KZ: for example yes, let's start when the audience is in, it is such a big question but maybe: what are the specific conditions that must be there?

█: **Surprise**, definitely surprise, they need to be surprised

KZ: What do you mean by surprise?

█: They can be sitting there thinking something to happen, they might think something big might happen quite often and all the preparation has happened for them to expect an event of some magnitude to happen but they don't know what it is so I think surprise is very important and being prepared for a surprise in the way that you wait for firework to go off almost or you wait for the sun to come up, you know it is going to happen but the moment when it happens it is always surprising. I think it has to be larger than life in some way, no maybe that's not true, I think it has to be something you don't normally pay attention to in life, so if you imagine, quite often at the moment when it is cold outside there

Same as CEL

Elements of how to construct  
Surprise  
Element of Construction?

Waiting for the fireworks  
Same as CEL-

Is that Audience?

Same as CEL-

Something ordinary looks astonishing

CEL – different - experience  
How to construct

Same as CEL-

Technical idea

Actors don't see  
How to construct  
Music  
Light

Director to engineer the situation

CEL – different-construction  
A subject that people recognise – shared understanding from (incongruity theory)



are these puffs of condensation from central hitting coming out from the side of the buildings, you know what I mean, it looks like smoke.. and you can see the light shining through that and you see someone walking through it and it is a transcendent moment because you seeing something completely ordinary that looks astonishing but people see these things all the time and they don't notice them, so for the audience they have to be prepared to notice it, they have to be focused on what is going on and good directors do that.

KZ: Is it the job of the director or the ensemble? Who will do it? Can it be done by the company? Or does it just happen?

█: no, I don't think it just happens, the idea may just happen, but the technical skill and preparation is the director's really even if they pretend that it is not. Even if they pretend it is the ensemble and the company, because the company are in it, they don't see it, they are not the audience, the director has to be the eye of the audience, I think music, music and light are very strong for transcendent moments, I don't know if they are necessary, I don't know even if the people are necessary, or you can do it with just light, everybody knows that you can do it with just music, that happens all the time, but I think the director has to know because they have to engineer the situation right for it to happen, that's what I think but I am not a director, but I know working with the director, I would sit next to them and I would sit next to the lighting person at the same time and work it together to make this moment for the audience.. what else needs to work... it needs to be a subject that the audience oddly recognises, I think as well, I am pouring cup of tea out of the teapot is not a transcendent moment and it would be hard to consider this a transcendent moment, but pouring the tea but the music comes out, the light comes on and there was some kind of revelation coming out of the teapot cup, it could become it and it would be beyond what the audience would know what would usually happen when you poured the cup of tea.

KZ: ok, I think there is plenty.. we can go on ?

█: it is ok? I don't want to wither on and be boring.

KZ: no, no, you are not ahmm.. next question I have: **what is in your view: could certain training help with making those moments more frequent or are they untrainable those moments, is there something in training of the ensemble so we could create those moments?** So in a way we construct them because of the way that the actors already know how to work in this way that whats I mean, **is there a training or elements of training that could help?**

█: For actors or designers

Example of metaphor

Perhaps it is a construction.

This is part of the construction

KZ: Actor training

CEL- construction- I disagree – it is not direct construction of the moment

Elements in training-renaissance style education

Learning to see metaphor, poetry

Same as CEL- further definition

AUD

**Audience** necessary for the phenomenon.

Agree with CEL – part of the construction



KZ: I mean if you want to speak about designers that's interesting as well, I have not considered that but I think all aspects are interesting and insightful.

█: I think young actors, inexperienced actors I think it would help a lot to have more solid trampoline of music, poetry and reading and painting and natural science and or physics the great beauties of the world, and philosophy, to have an education in those things I think is very careful because you recognise and trust and of course as you get older you read and learn more and you realise that research is what you do every day of your life and you never stop but it is difficult for young actors to think looking at a picture or going for a walk is research if you concentrate. I think people, it is hard not to for lots of people haven't had lucky time at school to think that things like poetry is something that is a school think not that it is something where you find someone who think exactly like you think but they can actually say it. So that's a great strength because maybe you are fumbling for the words to describe your feelings somebody else have felt them too and knows how to do it, how to say it and it is not new to them and they were brave enough to lay it out on a paper or on the wall on the painting in an orchestra. Education in arts and humanities is most helpful and most good actors develop that, by the time they get to 30, if they are working, they usually pretty well educated and they know how to read and look, and they know how to learn, but I think it is very difficult for a 20 years old not to just be on stage doing it, so yes I do think wider education in a less academic way is very useful and humanities education, science is very useful, particularly physics is so full of poetry

KZ: Can I ask you the last question: **is the audience part of the phenomenon or is it not?**

█: yes, there is no point of any of it without the audience otherwise you may as well be poet, composer, or a painter, who can do this by themselves, actors can't do anything by themselves, otherwise they just re-record telephone messages to each other, they need to create for the audience

KZ: But what I mean do the audience in your view also creates the phenomenon, do they give something to the actor, is there something that they also help in making? Have you witnessed anything like that?

█: Yes they do, certainly I heard them, seeing them like we talked about, but no I think they do on stage you feel the power of the audience and when you making a moment like that you know that it works even though as an actor you can't see it as hear certainly as an audience does, Yes, I think they play a big part, they are the other bit of the triangle

KZ: and the triangle is what?

Same as CEL-

The power of the audience

Triangle

Same as CEL-

Being watched

■: I am just trying to think, I suppose when I am thinking of it, I am thinking of a triangle, like a upside down **Aischylus triangle** like the audience's eyes at the point and the two wider points being the stage, they focus a vision because every audience member is on that point, (shows drawing) **and that has to be strong**

KZ: That's all really, Thank you so much ■.

End of Transcript

## Appendix 4

Programme and module specifications – example of the module and its content (p.60).

<https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/BA%20Acting%20Gold%20copy%20for%202022%20New%20entrants%20from%2021-22.pdf>



## BA in Acting Studies

Programme & module specification & assessment criteria  
2022/23

*The programme and module specifications, "Gold copy", set out what the School intends to deliver to you as your programme of study. The recent pandemic has shown that on occasion national and global events can impact on the intended delivery but also that the School has the capacity to respond quickly and appropriately in such circumstances. The School is assuming that the current post-pandemic trajectory will continue with "back to normal" teaching in 2022/23 as set out in the specifications. Should this situation change at any time you will be notified at the earliest possible point.*

Programme details may change in future academic years, please consult the "Gold copy" for the given year. Any programme, module and assessment criteria amendments will be approved following consultation of the student body through the School's academic governance committee framework and in-line with the requirements of the School's Academic Regulatory Framework.