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## Moments in performance: Developing an aid for articulation and reflection

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**Moments in Performance**  
**Developing an Aid for Articulation and Reflection**

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Bachelor of Performing Arts Honours

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## Abstract

Embodiment is an innately human experience. Why then, is it so difficult for society to come to a shared understanding of what it is to be embodied? This problem is particularly relevant in a theatrical context. Critical thinking across the disciplines of Philosophy, Science and History have impacted an actor's theoretical understanding of embodiment. However, this has not affected their corporeal understanding. As an actor I realised that this gap led to my inability to articulate the embodied experience in my practice. This inability to explain the experience meant I was unable to experience it consistently. This thesis examines how the gap in our current understanding of 'self' manifests within theatrical performance, and how this gap can be reduced through process to allow for a succinct interpretation and articulation of the embodied experience. Using practice-based research in live studio productions, I was able to analyse the performances and reflect on the experiential data collected to distinguish four performative Moments that I encountered. These Moments were, the Distracted Moment, the Structured Moment, the Embodied Moment, and Exceeding Embodiment. By establishing these moments in performance, I was able to develop a reflective aid used to discover the components that formed the Moments. This aid could, therefore, be considered a model for an actor to articulate and replicate their embodied experience

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## Declaration

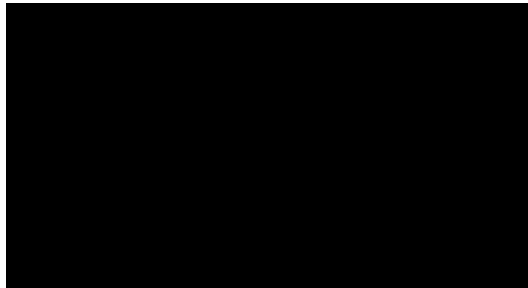
I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- I. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- II. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- III. contain any defamatory material;

Furthermore, I declare that the creative element attached to this thesis and research (Melon) was written by play write Ella Randle.

Name of Primary Researcher: Shelby McKenzie

Researcher's Signature:



## Introduction

In 2020 I performed as a lead in Stephen Berkoff's *Metamorphosis*. While this was not my first performance, nor my first experience being 'in the space' or 'grounded', it was the first time I had considered the crucial nature of embodiment in my creative process. At the time, my understanding of the term embodiment was the state of being completely present at a particular moment without the need for a conscious thought to trigger a line or an action. However, in attempts to replicate embodiment I found that the idea of 'just being present' did not accurately explain what I was feeling or how to achieve that state again. Director and teacher Arkady Nikolaevich Tortsov noted:

Ask an actor after some great performance how he felt while on the stage, and what he did there. He will not be able to answer because he was not aware of what he lived through and does not remember many of the more significant moments. All you will get from him is that he felt comfortable on stage, beyond that he will be able to tell you nothing (as cited in, Stanislavski, 1964/2003, p.46).

It became clear to me that my lack of ability to articulate this experience was common within performance. This research was then conducted to articulate embodiment in a theatrical context. Therefore, over the course of my research I have sought to answer the following question:

What effect does the articulation of embodiment have on an actor, and how can this articulation be applied to consistently replicate the experience of embodiment in performance?

To achieve this articulation, I developed a creative process that led me to the experience of embodiment in a live theatre production. I used preliminary research to extend my understanding of embodiment in a cultural, historical, and theatrical context. This research became the framework that informed the development of the rehearsal process, applying theatrical techniques that have connections to embodied practice, and that I have had previous experience with. The literature review and my rehearsal preparation worked in partnership to develop the live performance of *Melon* which I used as an autoethnographic case study. Through the rehearsal process and performances of *Melon* I applied reflective practices to identify and analyse embodiment as well as other performative experiences. This process and



the articulation of embodiment will be a subjective approach to further develop my creative practice.

My original interest in embodiment stemmed from my experience of it in performance. The term embodiment has a vast history and relevance in society, it is an innately human experience (Seton, 2010). Due to this extensive collection of knowledge, I understand that I will not be able to discuss every aspect of embodiment, however, I have researched and collated a broad and relevant understanding of embodiment as it relates to embodied performances in live theatre. The literature review discusses key understandings from the disciplines of Neuroscience and embodied cognition, linguistics and the English language, Western philosophy, and theatrical understandings of embodied practice in theatre from practitioners such as Stanislavski, Adolf Laban, Peggy Hackney and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen as well as the broader knowledge of embodiment from the disciplines.

The first section of this thesis will discuss the relevant literature that became the framework of my practice, as well as how I will be applying this information to my creative process and the methodologies and methods of this practice-based research. The second section will detail my creative process and the outcome of this experience. This section of the thesis is structured in a manner that diverges from the commonly used format of analysis and discussion, primarily due to the cyclical nature of practice-based research (Mercer et. al, 2012). As a result, my research led to the development of a reflective aid which I then used to retrospectively analyse my performative experiences.

## Background

The processes applied during the aforementioned production of *Metamorphosis* had a considerable influence on my practice, with the use of Stanislavski's script analysis, Laban Movement Analysis and Somatic Movement practice. I incorporated these techniques into my research and preparation of *Melon*, as they were the techniques which I felt had the most influence on the embodied state I experienced during the production of *Metamorphosis*.

When I thought back to my experience in *Metamorphosis* it became clear that although preparation is significant to the outcome of a performance, it is not the only thing that

influences an actor's embodied experience. On the day of the final performance, I contracted a head cold, the symptoms of which were impossible for me to ignore while on stage. Furthermore, I was informed pre-show that a prominent agent was in the audience. It was clear to me that these external factors negatively impacted my ability to achieve embodiment. I left that performance feeling defeated – no matter how prepared I was, and no matter how embodied I felt in prior performances, all my preparation proved unhelpful in the moment. It was through this awareness I was able to witness the discomforts I felt in the experience, something I was unable to do while experiencing embodiment. Further discussion with my peers confirmed my earlier suspicions – this was not an issue that I was experiencing alone, it was a gap in the collective knowledge on articulating and actively repeating the embodied experience for theatrical performers. I felt strongly that I wanted to reduce this gap in my own theatrical practice to have a clearer understanding of the process to and experience of embodiment.

## Literature Review

This literature review will be separated into three sections. First, it will analyse embodiment as a globalised phenomenon and discuss its cultural and historical significance through the lens of disciplines like Philosophy, Neuroscience and Linguistics. Secondly, the literature review will discuss embodiment in a theatrical context explaining the approach of practitioners like Konstantin Stanislavski and Rudolf Laban. It is important to note that this literature review will be discussing Laban's teaching lineage, specifically the work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Peggy Hackney. Finally, I will discuss how this contextual research has been applied to my creative practice, establishing a framework for my process of experiencing embodiment.

### Section 1: Globalised phenomenon

For the purposes of this literature review, the research into the disciplines covered in this section have been separated, however, it is relevant to note that there are multiple crossovers between the disciplines, particularly regarding the influence of the concept of dualism, popularised by French philosopher Rene Descartes.

#### The Body-Mind Connection in Philosophy

Philosophy, in relation to embodiment and the body in the West, has been influenced by 17th-century French philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes established the philosophical idea of Cartesian dualism, which is the thought that the body and the mind are two distinct entities; the mind can act outside of the body and the body does not think (Descartes, 2000). This philosophy is innately disembodied because the body is seen as only a vessel, incapable of perception (Damasio, 1996). In its popularity, dualism has directly impacted the Western perception of self. As noted by Neeta Mehta (2011), it is more commonly accepted to think of one's existence as two separate entities: thus, disregarding one's connection to their spiritual self and their environment. Descartes' separation of the body and mind led to an objective and empirical method of approach. This use of a methodical use of language benefited the hard sciences like physics and chemistry because it removed any room for bias and/or creative input. However, this method did not consider the understanding of the human experience, leading the creative disciplines to insufficient methods of articulating subjective data (Klein & Lyytinen, 1985).

French philosopher and phenomenologist<sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty countered Cartesian dualism with a holistic approach to the self, using the term 'Lived Body,' Body meaning the entirety of a being, not only their physical self but their experience of consciousness and perception as well (Merleau-Ponty, 2005). Merleau-Ponty's views were monistic, his understandings were centred around the embodied self as he felt that the dualistic approach was reductive. Merleau-Ponty's views of the embodied self were that the inside and outside of a body are inseparable. Ron McClamrock (2020) suggests that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is in direct contrast to Cartesian dualism's materialistic approach to the self.

There are parallels between monism and dualism in South Asian philosophy and the Religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, and while these religions vary widely between themselves, they all offer similarities to the Westernised understanding of the body (Newman, 2020). Like Descartes, these belief systems acknowledge that there can be a distinction between the physical body and the independent soul that it encases, however they extend this understanding of the self and accept that one can use the practices within their chosen religion to move past the dualistic body and transcend to the monistic and embodied self, not to be mistaken with the conception of enlightenment (Chapple, 2020).

Adam Newman explains how the body and space have an intimate relationship, "That bodies are the very foundation of reality itself" (2020, p.92). For conciseness I will only be referring to the Hindi perspective of embodiment from this point on. The Hindi myth of Purusha Sukta is about an androgynous cosmic giant who sacrificed their body to create the universe. The meaning of this myth is that physical locations of the world relate to the sacred body, therefore, space is created through the experience and perception of the self (Doniger, 1981; Chapple, 2020). This myth is to say that the body will always come first, therefore it is the body that brings meaning to the space in which it inhabits because it is through an individual's experience of themselves that the world gains meaning (Smith, 1978).

Contemporary Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa focussed on dissecting Descartes' dualistic philosophy via Eastern practices and philosophies of body wholeness. Further, Yuasa acknowledged and extended the work of the monistic philosopher Merleau-Ponty. Similar to the views of the self in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, Yuasa believes that body-mind

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<sup>1</sup> Phenomenology refers to the philosophical belief of the lived experience of a human is the source for all knowledge and meaning, that every tangible object in space is there via human consciousness.

unity is not a state that one is innately born with but must self-cultivate to achieve embodiment. This self-cultivation removes a person from their cultural, social and familial world to discover their independent self, through this, self-consciousness and ego are removed, and the individual re-establishes themselves as one with space (Dilworth, 1989; Godfrey, 2020).

Over the course of my research, it became clear to me that this dualistic concept of the body-mind separation had become the predominant form of thinking in Western philosophy. In recent years Western cultural awareness has shifted with more literature becoming available, however this historical domination has already caused a significant impact that is difficult to reverse.

### Embodiment in Neuroscience

Neuroscience, specifically the study of embodied cognition which is the understanding that cognition is processed by the entire body has garnered an increased interest in the performing arts since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McConachie, 2019). This addition of empirical evidence in theatrical practice has acknowledged “what theatre practitioners already intuitively know: we are holistic beings, inextricable from our environment, which includes each other (Blair, 2019, p.15). Godfrey (2020) similarly suggests that “knowledge is embodied and assimilated through experience; it is not merely a learning of the mind, but a learning of the body” (p.78). It is important to acknowledge that Godfrey’s very attempt to explain the embodied experience is based in the dualistic understanding of separating the body from the mind. The use of dualistic language is discussed further in this literature review.

Through the study of embodied cognition, theatrical practitioners with a focus on neuroscience have acknowledged the importance of the body in cognitive processing (Blair, 2008; McConachie, 2013). Currently, the discussion of cognitive neuroscience has centred around the West’s understanding of the body-mind split and how Descartes’ philosophy of Cartesian dualism has impacted the holistic approach to embodied performance. By separating the body and mind and allowing the distancing between a person’s thoughts and feelings, Cartesian dualism disrupts an individual’s understanding of self (Blair, 2008). This separation of body and mind in Western thinking has also been witnessed by the theatrical practitioners discussed in the second section of this review. Todd (1959) believes that in

Western cultures the physical body is only acknowledged in times of injury or sickness and that society tends to avoid it at all costs, thus resulting in a disconnection of self. The separation of body and mind has plagued the Western acting world since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. There have been attempts made by practitioners trying to integrate the immaterial mind with the external body, but even with these understandings of a monistic approach, cartesian dualism still dominates the field because any use of spoken language limits a theatre practitioners' ability to articulate their experiences because the language is dualistic in nature (Freed, 1953).

### Embodiment in Language

The English language has been informed by the dualistic concept of the self (Cook, 2013). This language interrupts an actor's ability to see themselves as an entire being acting in relation to experience; therefore, they may not have the linguistic capacity to accurately verbalise the experiences they feel when they are in an embodied state. Blair (2019) suggests that an actor knows intrinsically what it is to be embodied. The lack of articulation will not remove the performers' experience of embodiment, but it can limit their ability to actively define and repeat the processes that led them to it. Similarly, Cook suggests

The problem is not with making our thinking of our performing more 'embodied.' The challenge is coming up with the language to articulate what it has been all along, but we have missed some of the nuances because our language looks for bodies and minds (2013, p.84).

This statement leads me to the artist's use of metaphor. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued that when humans are faced with an unknown or unfamiliar concept, they rely upon metaphor to build meaning and reason (1999; 2003). Francis Barbe noticed that as a practitioner, she had to be conscious of the words she chose to say while teaching theatrical workshops, as she knew that everyone in the class had their own subjective experience of the language she was using, and that the language that "liberates one performer can confuse and immobilise another" (2019, p.181). Interestingly Sven Bjerstedt (2021) used the application of different methods and theories to study other artists' use of metaphor in their creative work but acknowledged that he would not be able to experience the art as the original artists had because "[his] own experiences tinged the study" (Bjerstedt, 2021, p.4). Mark Cariston-Seton (2002) and Valentina Cuccio (2017) both suggest that the body is innately involved in perceiving the environment it is in, with the term 'environment' being used to describe the culture, society and language that surrounds the individual. Therefore, these environmental

factors influence the way in which an individual perceives, comprehends, and expresses language and metaphor.

While metaphor can be received and understood by groups similarly, the individual's subjectivity will always change their perception of information. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Cuccio, 2017). The lack of appropriate language and use of metaphor has allowed practitioners to develop their understandings of embodiment from a subjective outlook; this subjectivity may not be of use to all actors (Blair, 2008). Margrit Shildrick proposes that "it is the strangeness of embodiment, and the differential ways in which each of us lives our body that must be preserved" (2002, pg.104). It is possible to state then, that there may never be a shared verbal articulation of embodiment because of this subjectivity.

## Section 2: Theatrical Embodiment

The process of embodying imagination is something all performers do to some extent. Actors, dancers, singers, and performance artists might all be called upon to embody an idea, thought, image or emotion by manifesting it in physical form. (Barbe, 2019, p.179).

### Konstantin Stanislavski

In his later work, Stanislavski referred to the act of embodiment as one's 'inspiration' or 'creativity'. Stanislavski's approach was thorough, moving from the physical to the psychological in a multistep process known as psychophysical acting (Blair, 2008). According to Zarrilli & Hulton (2009), Stanislavski was the first theatrical practitioner to explore the use of the psychophysical approach to acting. This interest in approach can be attributed to Stanislavski's interest in French psychologist Théodule Armand Ribot's monistic exploration of psychology (Carnicke, 2008). Blair (2007) and Carnicke (2008) both note that this approach has been compared to that of neurobiologist and noted critic of Descartes, Antonio Damasio, whose interest lies in the understanding of consciousness through monistic philosophy (1996). Stanislavski responded to the West's binary perspective of the body-mind split by developing techniques that minimised the schism of the body and mind. Stanislavski believed that an actor must prepare their body fully to allow themselves to become present and embodied on stage, reacting with all parts of themselves (Stanislavski & Benedetti 2010). This application of psychological understanding of consciousness was

acknowledged in the field of neuroscience in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, decades after his death (Carnicke, 2008).

### Somatic Practice

Izzard (2013) understands Somatic Movement Education (SME) as perceiving and experiencing the body from within. Izzard brings into question whether embodiment can be accessed through somatic practices and uses Laban Movement Action (LMA) within this process. She discovered that “[SME and LMA] offered [her] a way of conceptualising, experimenting with, and experiencing embodiment” (2013, p.13). Laban designed a unique language that is used to analyse, record, and develop human movement. Izzard (2013) explains that SME and LMA work cohesively because the combination of processes allows the performer to be grounded in their movement while gaining knowledge through their emotional and spiritual self that they can then articulate through Laban’s methods of analysis and application of language. Somatic practice may allow the performer access to an embodiment that they can then analyse and begin to articulate through Laban’s language; this articulation leads them to observable and repeatable patterns in movement (Payne, 2017). Karen Bradley asserts “while much of theatre relies on text, Laban’s contributions are in helping performers find that part of themselves that predates language, reaching back to experiences from one’s early years to find nuance and clarification of qualities” (2018, p.48).

Laban has developed a standardised language that allows theatrical performance makers a clearer understanding of the corporeal experience. It has established a precedent for future actors to characterise and record their movements. The use of Laban’s language limits a performer’s need to articulate through metaphors that may cause confusion; a problem that Barbe (2019), Bjerstedt (2021) and Cuccio (2017), collectively acknowledge.

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1993) a somatic practitioner and the founder of Body-Mind Centring (BMC) believes that to be embodied one must be in communion with the world and that there must be a relationship between external sensations and internal perception. Cohen also suggests that embodiment lies at the cellular level. To feel embodied, one must feel with every part of themselves on a microscopic level. Sandra Reeve (2013) described Cohen’s practices within BMC as useful in creating embodiment through the rediscovery of the ontogenetic body, which can be defined as the development of the body and its movements



across the lifetime of an individual (Hackney, 2002). This rediscovery of movement patterns allows for a broader range of movement possibilities and levels of perception of self in an environment.

Peggy Hackney, a student of Cohen and Bartenieff developed the Patterns of Total Body Connectivity (PTBCs) from the earlier work of her two predecessors. The work focussed on how to incorporate and analyse movement patterns within psychology (Connett, 2011).

Hackney refined Bartenieff's work in her practice, focusing on:

1. An individual's relationships, including their relationship with their body, their relationship within the body, and their relationship to their environment.
2. Witnessing, acknowledging, and accepting the process of change in all elements of movement, existence, and environment.

The PTBCs were developed by Hackney to inform the practitioner of their most efficient way to move. This technique brings awareness to their body and their habitual physical expressions, and from there they can re-pattern their movements for a larger range of motion (Billingham, 2009). Regarding the PTBCs, Hackney notes:

They are fundamental to human movement. They establish basic patterns of gross body function and an ability to deal with the demands of gravity. They set up pathways of muscle sequencing. These become integrated into larger neurological patterns of movement through which the human being organizes the total body, providing neuromuscular coordination, "connectedness," and a sense of basic comfort and being "at home" on earth in an embodied way. (2002, p. 42).

## Section 3: Application to practice

### Application for this enquiry

This contextual research deepened my understanding of the self and has reaffirmed that I was not alone in this inability to articulate the embodied performative experience. It also justified my desire to articulate my personal embodied experience rather than trying to define embodiment within a broader community. Yasuo states that "[embodiment] is not an appropriate topic for abstract intellectual analysis alone, but a living project to be cultivated by the individual" (as cited in Godfrey, 2020 p. 78). As my own personal articulation and experience of embodiment would be too subjective for any other individual to find useful in its entirety, my research focused on my own experience.

The information presented in this literature review was the preliminary research that informed my practice. It is the framework in which I developed the process that led me to experience and define embodiment in the production of *Melon*. It made me aware of the impacts that living in a westernised society has had on my process, but it has also given me the knowledge that as a theatre practitioner my body intrinsically knows what it is to be embodied, and that the challenge was simply to articulate the experience in a tangible form – written or verbalised – to repeat it.

## Methodology

This research was conducted through Qualitative and Practice-based methodologies. By using Christopher Frayling's (1994) practical application of research, I was able to acknowledge the cultural, historical, and theatrical understandings of the embodied experience. The broader research led me to develop my approach to said experience in live performance. This process then led to a reflection on the experience of embodiment to articulate and replicate it. I included qualitative data due to the use of the autoethnographic method I applied. Nicholas Holt suggests that “- autoethnography allows the researcher to draw on their own experiences to understand a particular phenomenon or culture” (2003, p.18). The creative process of *Melon* was an autoethnographic case study that I used as the vessel to my articulation of embodiment. Through this process, I developed my practice, experienced embodiment in live theatrical performance and analysed this experience through reflective practices. This broadening allowed me to create an informed process, in which I could develop and articulate my subjective experience.

## Methods

### Research into Art and Design

This form of research is one of most conventional and commonly used research methods in the creative disciplines. This form of study posits the art as the object of inquiry (Frayling, 1994; Borgdorff, 2010). For the articulation of embodiment in live theatrical performance it is the preliminary research in which I obtained a broader cultural, historical, and theatrical understanding of the term embodiment as well as key terms that surround it, such as monism, Cartesian dualism, and the body-mind split. This research into embodiment showed the

limitations and holistic approaches of articulation, as well as the flexibility and subjectivity of the concept. This information has been recorded in the literature review of this thesis and was used as the framework for the development of the practice and application of techniques in the process of *Melon*, and the analysis of *Melon* through reflection.

### Research Through Art and Design

This area of my practice is centred around research through action; the action being my practice and performance. To articulate embodiment, I needed to experience the corporeal sensation. I produced, rehearsed, and performed *Melon* to gain clarity in my embodied experience. By applying research through art and design, (Frayling, 1994; Borgdorff, 2010) and previous experience with productions, I created a rehearsal process that developed script and character and informed my overall theatrical practice. I implemented techniques from a wide range of practitioners, with a focus on Konstantin Stanislavski, Rudolf Laban and Peggy Hackney. This process incorporated solo rehearsals as well as a collaborative approach. These rehearsals ran concurrently and allowed my practice to be informed by personal discoveries and the discoveries of collaborators. To collect experiential data during my performances of *Melon*, I used reflection-in-action, after the performance was complete, I applied reflection-on-action for further understanding and clarification on these performative experiences (Schön, 2016).

### An Introduction to Practice

Over the course of two months, I produced and performed *Melon*<sup>2</sup>, a one act show performed four times to a public audience. This process was used to develop my understanding of performative embodiment in live theatrical performances. After developing a theoretical understanding of embodiment and embodied performance through the literature review, I was able to develop my practice in rehearsals. These rehearsals were separated into independent and collaborative processes focused on applying techniques to develop the play as well as incorporating an embodied approach to my practice. The rehearsal process led to four live productions of *Melon*.

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Appendix A for the four recorded productions of *Melon*.

Although I was unable to use reflection-in-action and therefore reflection-on-action (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Schön, 2016) during the embodied experience, I did conclude that I could build this articulation through the process of elimination. Therefore, I used these reflective processes to identify moments where I was not embodied and analyse why. This process of identifying embodiment through what it is not, was, admittedly, a Sisyphean task. There are infinite reasons why a performer may not be embodied but because a non-embodied state was easier to access, I had a larger collection of data to interpret and therefore it was easier to work through the process of elimination. Furthermore, as it is difficult to remember the minutiae of an embodied state, my recollection of the embodied experience was limited.

Like many academics using Practice-based/Led research, it was through the reflective process, postproduction that I was able to distinguish the methods I would use and the analysis of my practice. Mercer states that:

The complexity of art practice - the lineage or idiosyncratic and interdisciplinary processes from which methods emerged - could be so embedded in the approach itself that an articulation, classification or theorisation of how one undertook the research in practice seemed elusive or inadequate (2012, p.1).

My analysis and discussion are cyclical, as is the practice-based methodology I am using (B. Cook and L. Cook, 2016). Through my practice, I gathered my evidence, and this collection of evidence was developed into the tool I used to analyse my practice. Therefore, the next section of my thesis will begin with the results of my creative process.

## Discovering the Performance Moments

Through my practice and the production of *Melon*, I developed an aid for articulation and reflection. This aid articulates the experiences I had in performance, which I will refer to as 'Moments'. By analysing each experience, I could see common traits that were present, these varying traits can be grouped, and these groupings created specific Moments in my performances. The aid is separated into two categories that determine the performance Moment, these are 'external factors' (influence) and 'internal factors' (experience). The internal factors are further broken down into seven elements which are presented on a scale. This aid is the result of the experiential analysis; however, it is also a reflective tool developed to analyse and categorise performance experiences. This tool allows me to present a highly subjective experience as observable qualitative data.

I discovered through *Melon* that although an embodied experience was the goal, it was of equal importance to other performance Moments. By using reflection-in-action (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Schön, 2016) during the production of *Melon* I was able to distinguish three other relevant performative Moments other than Embodiment. After the discovery of these Moments, I changed my approach and focused on defining the unembodied Moments as well as embodiment.

### The Performance Moments

1. Distracted
2. Structured
3. Embodiment
4. Exceeding embodiment

There can be multiple Moments experienced in one performance, but only one Moment can be experienced at a time; the time in which a moment is held is unpredictable. Through the reflection process, I determined that these Moments<sup>3</sup> were further separated into two factors. The first being the external factors, which can influence the experience. They are separate from the individual performer. The second is the internal factors, the internal factors are the performer feelings in and of the Moment. The external factors that of the performer's environment, and therefore can impact the internal factors. However, the internal factors are intangible and therefore cannot influence the external factors, they can only influence each other.

### The External Factors

The external factors are a feature in the performer's physical world that can influence the performance moment. These factors are involved in the rehearsal process and in performance. They have the ability to affect unembodied Moments but cannot influence the embodied Moment, with the exception of preparation. These factors can be changed by the actor outside of the performance but cannot be changed during the performance without disrupting it. Unlike the internal factors that have a known set of elements, there is no limit nor category to the External factors and therefore these did not require a visual aid.

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<sup>3</sup> Please see appendix B for other Moments that have been identified through reflecting on performance prior to this research.

It is important to note that these factors are time and location specific. They are factors that can be modified by the creative team. Although relevant in the overall contextual understanding of the thesis topic, social and cultural influences on the performer will not be included.

### **Emotional Well Being**

The well-being of the creatives in a space is crucial for a smooth production. When there is emotional tension in the space prior to a performance this tension is carried through the production. This is not to say that the emotion is not valid, as Alli John (2022) states that “it is not reasonable to expect human beings to turn off their lives for hours and fully devote their attention to the work” (p. 119). It should not be expected that a person's responsibilities in production should outweigh their emotional well-being. There needs to be a safe space for the creative team to be able to sit with their emotions, however when under time constraints, it is difficult to allow these emotions to subside, and through *Melon* I realised that emotional tension could alter the Moments I experience in performance.

### **Experiencing the Impacts of Emotion Wellbeing**

During the production of *Melon* there was a situation in which the creative team entered the space prior to the performance, and the emotional energy of the space was tense. We acknowledged as a group that it was affecting us but with the limited time available, we were not successful in positively changing it. I then went into the show feeling low emotionally and energetically, and it was difficult to engage with the performance. This influenced the way I connected to my characters' emotions, and because *Melon* unpacked darker themes, I felt myself attached to the anger and grief my character was experiencing, but to an uncomfortable point where I was unable to separate what was performed and what was real during the performance. This factor was the direct cause of experiencing the Moment of Exceeding Embodiment. Susan Leith Taylor suggests that “simply dwelling upon potent emotional occurrences in pursuit of an artistic end seemed a questionable endeavour with regard to mental health” (2016, p. 53). My role in *Melon* required me to perform a range of intense emotions. Rarely did these emotions attach themselves to my life outside of performances, but on this occasion, I struggled during and after the performance to release these emotions.

## Preparation

As the Factor title suggests this is the preparation of the performer to ready themselves for performance. This Factor involves the preparation required during the rehearsal process and the preparation directly before a performance. Carrie Coon suggests that “All the preparation is needed because once you are onstage you don’t want to be acting; you want to be expressing yourself as the character” (as cited by Miller, 2015. Para 5). For me to reach embodiment I had to be completely committed to the preparation, so that when it was time to perform there was no questioning or doubt that I know exactly what I’m doing. I decided to separate my rehearsal process into an independent process and a collaborative process. During the independent process, I developed my practice as a performer, created a warm-up routine specific to *Melon* and introduced theatrical techniques to create my character. The collaborative process was used to develop and rehearse the performance. The Preparation Factor is the only factor that influences all Moments. Without preparation, a successful performance could not exist.

### Experience of Preparation: Independent Process

	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Abby</b>	<b>Mitch</b>	<b>Caroline</b>
<b>Character Description</b>	Quiet Reserved Observant Naive	Superficially confident Hyper aware Feminine	Egotistical Manipulative Sloppy Calculating Charming	Judgemental Narcissistic Abusive Christian
<b>Basic Shape</b>	Screw	Pyramid	Wall	Pin
<b>Leads with (Not LMA specific)</b>	The Head	The chest	The Hips	The Hips

Figure 1 Application of LMA 1

Efforts	Main Character Pre Death	Main Character Post Death	Abby	Mitch Relaxed	Mitch Angry	Caroline
Time Quick/Sustained	Quick	Quick	Quick	Sustained	Quick	Sustained
Weight Strong/Light	Strong	Light	Light	Strong	Strong	Strong
Space Direct/Indirect	Indirect	Direct	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Direct
Flow Bound/Free	Free	Free	Bound	Free	Free	Bound
Action Drive	Slash	Dab	Dab	Wring	Punch	Press

Figure 2 Application of LMA 2

I perform from the outside in, using physical stimuli to inform my internal state, this method is known as psychophysical acting, an embodied practice defined by Stanislavski (Zarrilli, et al., 2009). I used LMA <sup>4</sup>, specifically efforts, drives and shape in the rehearsal process of *Melon* because I have previously found the technique useful in analysing and developing character movement. After applying script analysis to understand my characters I developed their physical form and movements through LMA. When I applied these character physicality's to my body, I was able to connect with the character I was playing.

My performance in *Melon* required me to cycle through characters in quick succession, therefore, it was required that I distinguished the characters from each other, to avoid audience confusion. LMA informed the changes I applied to my external body, like tone, intonation, and physicality in order to influence my internal state, allowing me to access their emotions as my own (Bradley, 2018; Izzard, 2013).

### Experience of Preparation: Collaborative Process

The collaborative process was a safety net for my creative input. I chose to have other artists on board so I could focus on my process to embodiment. The relationships I had with all the creatives in the room were beneficial to my creative process, however, I will be focussing on my relationship with the Director of *Melon*. The director and I have worked together in the past but never in the capacity of actor and director. This collaborative process ran smoothly because we have the same background in theatre education and we share the same language,

<sup>4</sup> Please see Appendix C for LMA workbook, as well as other preparation required to perform in *Melon*.



therefore, we understood each other's ideas and interpretations of the script. This relationship felt more like working with a scene partner because our rehearsal process was non-hierarchical, as everyone had creative input.

Uta Hagen (2008) believes that one should follow the directions of their director whether they agree with them or not. I do not believe I've worked in a process where this hierarchy has been implemented to quite an extent, however. I'm curious to see how I would perform under these circumstances. On the other hand, Kline feels that the actor creates, and the director builds from that creation; through the rehearsal process, the actor finds what the scene means for themselves (1986, as cited in Cole, 2013, p.172). While I respect both understandings of the actor-director relationship I feel as though Kline's interpretation of rehearsal hierarchy was what Melon required for a desirable outcome.

### **Performance Environment**

I consider the performance environment to be a collection of all physical elements of the space of performance, it can include the technical elements of the production, the audience, and the physical location itself. David Obney explains that "spatial arrangement, organisation, and form of a stage design will influence an actor. The important question, then, is in what specific ways does space help to shape an actor's performance?" (2007, p.6). Extending on Obney's theory, I question whether the Hindu myth of Purusha Sukta should be considered when a performer perceives their physical environment; the myth suggests that space and being are one (Doniger, 1981; Chapple, 2020). I posit then, that the distracting elements of the physical space can disrupt the performer's access to the embodied moment, but once in an embodied moment the performer is one with the space, the elements exist but they cannot distract.

### **Experience of the Performance Environment**

*Melon* was performed live in two locations, the black box theatre located at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), and the rehearsal studio at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). The locations varied in technical capabilities and audience configuration. I found that the more acquainted I was with the space the more comfortable I felt. The PICA space was one I had little experience in. Due to time restrictions *Melon* only had one full run in the space before the live performance. There were scenes in *Melon* where

I spoke directly to the audience, this interaction was limited by technique requirements that created distance between me and the audience during the shows at PICA. I struggled to form a rapport with them. The lack of connection between the character and the audience decreased my immersion into the play world. The rehearsal space at WAAPA was a more comfortable location to perform in, the space was intimate, and I was able to connect with the audience as intended, therefore I felt more comfortable in my performance.

### The Internal Factors

There are seven internal factors<sup>5</sup> I discovered during the process of *Melon*. These factors are a combination of elements experienced by an actor in all performance Moments. These factors can be influenced by external factors, they can also influence each other. Each internal factor is expressed by a scale consisting of two opposing elements, many of these scales also include a combination of the two elements in each factor, creating a possible hybridised third element.

#### I. Sense of Control

High sense of control/Mixed Control/ No sense of control

- A high sense of control means that I feel confident in my sense of control over the performance moment.
- A mixed sense of control means that I have a limited sense of control over the outcome of the performance moment.
- No sense of Control means that I am unable to change the moment without consciously disrupting the entire performance, therefore I must continue and move through it.

Phillip Streatfield states that “the notion of control needs to be distinguished from the sense of coherence in experience – to keep anxieties associated with disorder and unpredictability on the margins of consciousness” (2001, p.139). An individual's sense of control is about knowing that everything will happen as they expected (Pacherie, 2007). Through this process I now see the high and mixed sense of control as beneficial to my practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Please see Appendix for the draft version of the factors (conditions) of embodiment.

## **II. Comfortability**

Comfortable/ Mixed/ Uncomfortable

- The comfort I feel on stage ties into my confidence as a performer to hold the attention of the audience and perform to a standard I have set for myself.
- Mixed comfort would be the understanding that logically the performance is running how it should, but I do not feel as confident in my abilities.
- No comfort means that I do not trust myself or my performance.

Alasdair White (2008) defined three zones of comfort in workforce performance that I have found similarly to the comfort elements.

1. Comfort Zone: The zone in which an individual performs without a sense of risk or anxiety, this performance will remain constant and habitual behaviours will be more present.
2. Optimal Performance Zone: stepping out of the comfort zone to perform consciously. An increased sense of anxiety can lead to active choices that enhance performance.
3. The Danger Zone: There is no comfort causing anxiety to rise, and performance to be impacted negatively. Comfortability is linked to a performer's confidence in their abilities as a performer.

## **III. Immersion**

Full immersion/ Mixed Immersion/ No Immersion

- During full Immersion in the world of the play, I am one with space but do not sense external stimuli.
- With partial Immersion into the world of the play, I work with the space and external stimuli but do not respond to the external stimuli.
- Without immersion, I am influenced by the space and external stimuli, like audience or technical elements.

Stilson (2005) suggests that through Stanislavski's 'magic if' an actor can move from their reality to the reality of the character, to experience the character's truth as their own.

## **IV. Vulnerability**

High Vulnerability/Mixed Vulnerability/ Invulnerable

- High Vulnerability is to be open to the emotional connection with the character's experiences and expressions as if they were my own. This cannot be achieved if I as the performer am not open to the connection (Shildrick, 2002).
- Mixed Vulnerability When I am not fully open to the character's experience. My connection to the characters' experience and emotions are limited.
- Invulnerable, meaning I am closed off as a performer, I have no connection to the experience of the character. My expression of the characters emotions is surface level.

Brené Brown suggests that “Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection” (2015, p.2). When I allow myself to be vulnerable in performance, I open myself up to a more truthful connection to the character. When I close myself off from emotions my performance becomes artificial, and surface level.

## **V. Behaviour**

Habitual Behaviour/Mixed Behaviour/Goal-orientated

- Habitual Behaviour is reactive and inflexible, it is pre-existing and unconscious and does not stop when the objective is achieved.
- Mixed Behaviour is the combination of both behaviours in performance (not occurring at the same time).
- Goal-oriented behaviour is pre-planned and flexible, it is a choice of the conscious mind to perform and complete a task. The behaviour will end when the objective is reached (Eitam & Nafcha, 2016).

The rehearsal process can be one of repetition (Kartsaki, 2010; Zimet), and through repetition, habitual behaviour is developed (Eitam & Nafcha, 2016). Stina Bergman Blix suggests that “Habituation is an important part of the finished product that helps the lines come automatically when the actors do their scenes, and also triggers the emotions that the character needs to express” (2015, p.8). In this instance, I am referring to Habitual behaviour as the developed unconscious actions learnt through repetition and performance (Bergman Blix, 2015).

## **VI. Predictability**

Predictable/Mixed Predictability/Unpredictable

- Predictable means I have a keen sense of the outcome of my performance.
- Mixed Predictability is that I know the structure of the show will remain, but I am not certain of my performative outcome.
- Unpredictable, meaning I am not certain of the structure of the show or my performative outcome.

## **VII. Experience of the Self**

Corporeal experience/Dualistic experience

- Corporeal Experience refers to the entire body working as one in the experience. There is no disconnection. I compare this element with the monistic view of the body seen in South Asian religions (Newman, 2020).
- Dualistic experience makes me rely on active awareness to inform performance. This feels dualistic in that my body and mind are in communication, but they are not acting as one (Blair, 2008).

## The Moments through the reflective aid

### The Distracted Moment

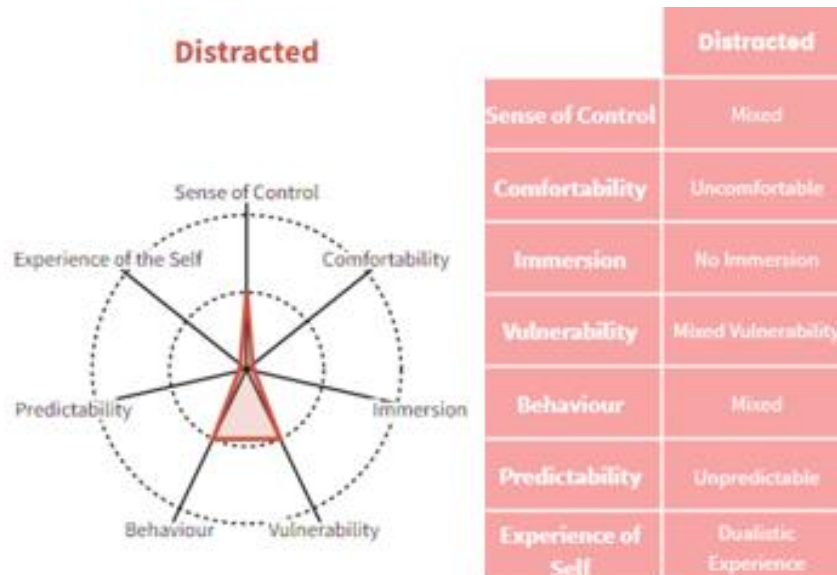


Figure 3 The Distracted Moment: Visual Analysis

The Distracted moment (See Figure 1) is one that I experienced only rarely during the process. On most occasions, it is beyond the control of the cast and crew. I have however experienced this moment due to sickness and injury, and I felt my ability to perform was hindered. A distracted moment does not necessarily detract from the enjoyment of the audience, if a performer has become aware of a distraction, but the audience has not, it is only the performer's experience that has changed.

During *Melon* this moment felt surface level. I was unable to be immersed in the play world because I was too aware of external stimuli. The Distracted Moment (See Video Link 1) was in this instance impacted by the physical environment, specifically technical difficulties. This was noticed by the audience and negatively impacted my performance experience.

#### Video Link 1

[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av\\_collection/102/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av_collection/102/)

## The Structured Moment

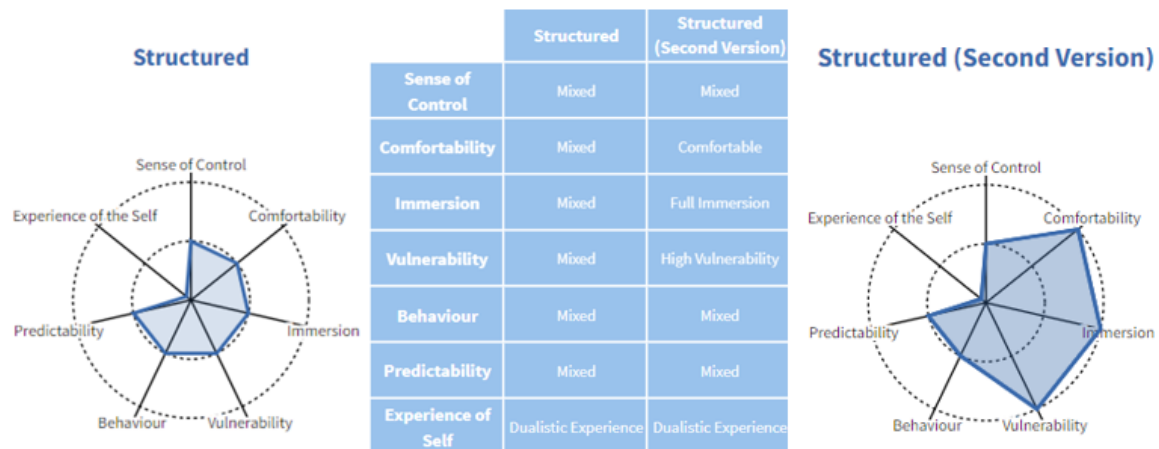


Figure 4 The Structured Moments: Visual Analysis

The Structured Moment is aesthetically comparable to Embodiment from an observational perspective. It is also the closest experience to the embodied moment as seen in figure 2 is how I first explained the Structured Moment in *Melon*. In fact, it was through a run of the show in rehearsal that I was able to articulate how uncomfortable the moment felt. This run was after I was given the note to “let go of the structure of the show and ignore the choices we’ve made in previous rehearsals” (A. Gilmour, September 22, 2022). The letting go of the habitual behaviours meant that I was not able to predict the outcome, creating a mixed sense of control that paradoxically resulted in a performance that was commended by the director. It is through the reflection of this moment that I realised that the lack of control was not a hindrance, it was allowing for more creative choices. This realisation began to change how I performed. It increased my vulnerability because I was open to making mistakes. The increased vulnerability opened me up as a performer and allowed me to become more immersed in the world of the play (See Video Link 2). I experienced a higher level of comfort even without the sense of control I had previously craved. The change in experience, therefore, I created the second version of the Structured Moment (See Figure 2).

### Video Link 2

[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av\\_collection/103/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av_collection/103/)

## The Embodied Moment

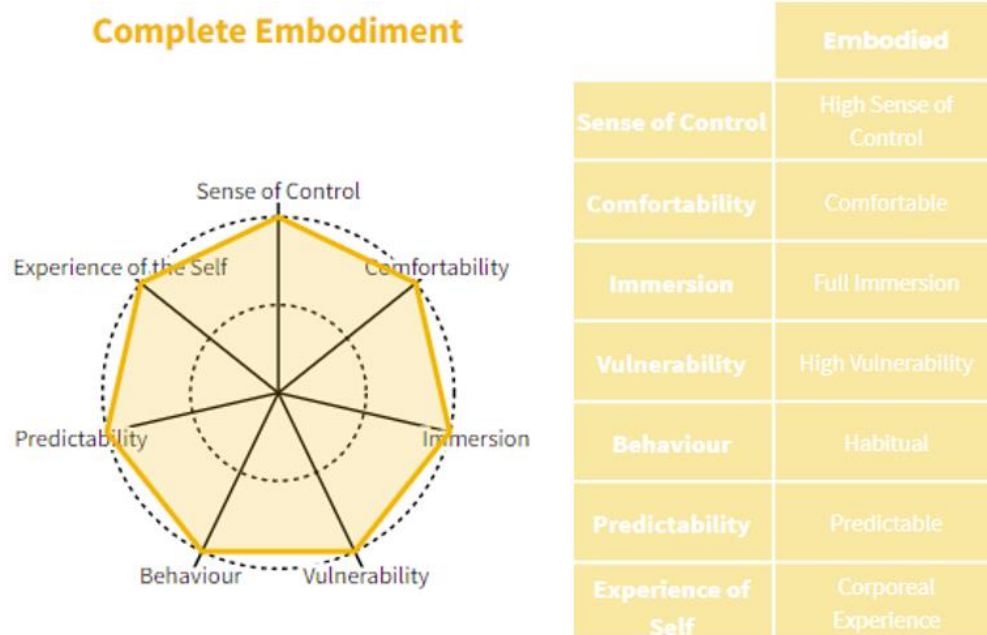


Figure 5 Complete Embodiment: Visual Analysis

The Embodied Moment was experientially all-encompassing. For the moment to be all-encompassing I needed to have high levels in all the internal factors as seen in figure 3. I believe embodiment to be an unconscious experience. I performed with habitual behaviour, and therefore I was responding reflexively. This behaviour was developed through the repetitive nature of preparation. I felt connected to the characters I played, meaning I was open and vulnerable. This vulnerability allowed for full immersion into the play world. I felt that in that moment, I gave conscious control over to the corporeal experience. Through reflection, I noticed that directly after experiencing an embodied moment I felt confident that my performance was strong. Through this confidence I knew that I had experienced an elevated level of comfort in that moment.

Through reflection I realised that the times that I felt most embodied were when I played multiple characters in quick succession, these were also the hardest scenes to prepare. The combined application of LMA (Bradley, 2018) and psychophysical acting (Zarrilli, et al., 2009) allowed me to easily switch my physicality and therefore my internal state, creating seamless transitions. The first performance in the rehearsal studio at WAAPA was where I experience the Embodied Moment the most (see Video Link 3), this could be due to my familiarity with the space as it was also the location for *Melon* rehearsals. However, this is

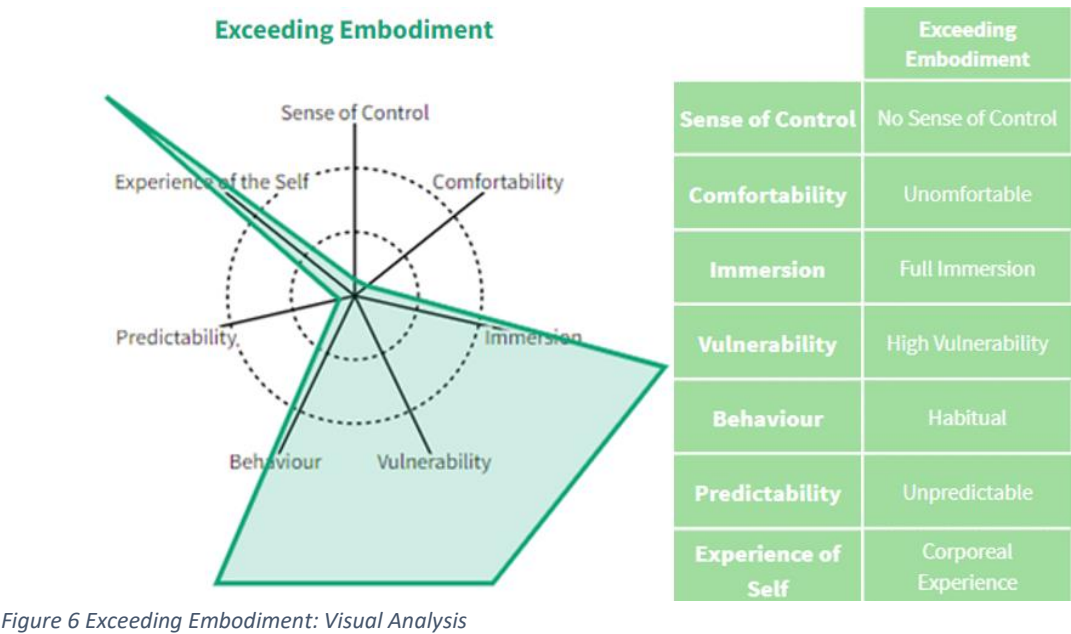


also the performance where I forgot my lines (this felt like an eternity of silence, but the footage showed the moment to last 3 seconds). I was certain this was going to throw me off for the entire performance, but that was not the case, I was still able to reach the embodied Moments with ease.

**Video Link 3**

[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av\\_collection/104/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av_collection/104/)

Exceeding the Embodied Moment (Exceeding Embodiment)



This was a terrifying moment to experience, and one that was difficult to step out of without noticeably affecting the performance from the audience's perspective. As seen in figure 6, the moment extends beyond the realm of measurement. I felt too vulnerable as a performer to be in this moment because the character's emotions overwhelmed me, and I had no control in order to reduce them. It can feel as though I am stuck and immersed in the world of the play because I have no sense of control. It is an uncomfortable moment to be in because I cannot predict what is going to happen next. Unless I consciously remove myself from the performance, I must let the moment pass. Without my conscious intervention, this experience is not noticeable to the audience, from an observer's perspective it looks as it should, but as the performer, I felt stuck (Video Link 4).

#### **Video Link 4**

[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av\\_collection/105/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av_collection/105/)

#### **Comparing the Embodied and the Structured Moment**

At the beginning of this process, I was so concerned with reaching an embodied performance that I had not considered that other Moments were beneficial. It was not until an individual who had watched the show three times disclosed what performance they felt most engaged in. To my surprise it was the second showing at PICA, in which the Structured Moment dominated my performance. The positive reception from this individual revealed that my experience in performance is not always revealed to the observer. Similarly, Margrit Shildrick states “[she] witnessed the struggle to determine, predominantly through sight and sound, whether a student's performance displayed signs of ‘inner’ vulnerability or whether it was merely a surface one” (2002, p.194). My understanding of Shildrick’s statement is that an audience, whether they be trained in performance or not, are unable to differentiate a performer's internal experience by witnessing their external performance (see Video Link 5). I believe that even if the two Moments are similar in their external output; they each have their own benefits in my practice. The active awareness of the Structured Moment gives me the opportunity to make informed creative choices. The corporeal nature of the Embodied Moment gives way to safety and comfort in performance.

#### **Video Link 5**

[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av\\_collection/106/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/av_collection/106/)

## Conclusion

This research was used, in part as a personal journey through contextually informed practice to answer the research question:

What effect does the articulation of embodiment have on an actor, and how can this articulation be applied to consistently replicate the experience of embodiment in performance?

The initial research seen in the literature review supported my concerns about my inability to reflect on or explain embodiment in performance. Prior to this research, I had a limited theoretical understanding of embodied experiences, for the most part, this had come from a westernised approach to the idea of self. Through this research, it became clear to me that my confusion stemmed from this perspective. It seemed that the very way in which I perceived myself and my environment was and still is dualistic - a concept that opposes the very experience I was trying to define.

The practitioners that developed the techniques I applied in my process all worked under a monistic assumption and therefore although these techniques could not lead me directly to the articulation of embodiment, they did offer me access to the experience. I saw the challenge of articulating embodiment as a double-edged sword, on one side was the inability to comprehend the embodied experience while performing, the other was the tight grasp that dualism had on the understanding of self. The aid for articulation and reflection that I developed in, through and for my practice has offered me an immense sense of relief. development of the aid has offered my practice four beneficial outcomes:

1. I can use the aid to reflect on previous performances retrospectively by moving through the list of factors to distinguish what performative moment I was experiencing.
2. I can use the aid in performance to identify the elements I am experiencing if they are any external factors influencing the internal factors and analyse if there is an ability to manipulate the elements mid-performance for a better experience.
3. Although the Embodied Moment is still my preferred experience in performance, I can see how beneficial the Structured moment is in my practice. The process allowed me to change what I could achieve in this performance moment.

4. The last benefit and the most relevant to the research, I was able to articulate my experience of embodiment, the development of the aid created an opportunity to dissect all Moments of my performance and by finding the common factors I was able to compare all the unembodied Moments with the embodied moment to distinguish the elements that created the experience.

This is my subjective articulation of the embodied experience. I am aware that it may only hold significance in my practice. I do feel however, that while my subjective articulation may not be shared, the replicability of my process may be useful as a framework for other performers.

This research surpassed my original expectations, not only did I answer the research question and articulate my embodied experience, but I was also able to develop an aid that is able to articulate the entirety of my performative history. I know the likelihood that this aid will change as I continue to develop my practice, but I feel confident that it is a strong base to refer to as I progress in my creative endeavours.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

These links will take you to google drive where you can watch the full performances of *Melon*, as well as all Video Links from within the thesis (labelled in order of appearance).

Appendix A is not available in this version of the thesis

### Appendix B

#### **Performance Moments**

This is the extended diagram and table of all performance moments relevant to my process. These moments were discovered through reflection and application of factors and elements on previous performance and studies completed prior to the commencement of this research. Some moments relate closer to my practice than others.

I am currently not interested in further pursuing text-based improvisation. I do acknowledge the importance of the craft in application to other form of theatre, like devising. The elements represented in the graph and table are relevant to how I experience the moment of text-based improvisation. Therefore, the graph looks relatively empty.

I have a particular interest in Movement based improvisation, this is from early exposure of movement training in my theatre career, I feel more confident in my improvised movement skills than I do in text-based improvisation and supplied an embodied version of this moment. As seen the only missing element that separates it from the Embodied moment is the predictability of the performance, this is not to say that it is any less embodied.

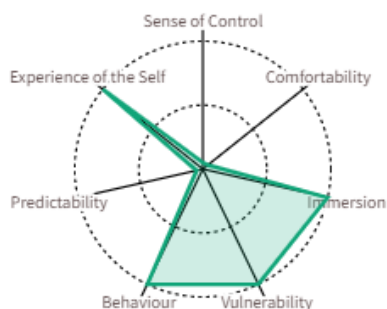
The unstructured moment is not necessarily relevant in performance; however, it is a moment that can be experienced in the rehearsal process when the performance information is not yet well known. It is the complete opposite to the embodied moment.

I believe moving forward in my performance career that I may discover new moments of performance and will continuously add to this creative aid.

	Improvised (Movement)	Improvised (Text)	Embodied Improvisation (Movement)	Unstructured
Sense of Control	Mixed	Mixed	High Sense of Control	No Sense of Control
Comfortability	Mixed	Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Uncomfortable
Immersion	Mixed	No Immersion	Full Immersion	No Immersion
Vulnerability	High Vulnerability	No Vulnerability	High Vulnerability	Invulnerable
Behaviour	Goal-Orientated	Goal- Orientated	Habitual (Movement History)	Goal-Oriented
Predictability	Unpredictable	Unpredictable	Unpredictable	Unpredictable
Experience of Self	Dualistic Experience	Dualistic Experience	Corporeal Experience	Dualistic Experience

- Exceeding Embodiment
- Structured
- Unstructured
- Improved (Movement Specific)
- Embodied Improvisation (Movement Specific)
- Improved (Text Specific)
- Distracted
- Complete Embodiment
- Structured (Second Version)

**Exceeding Embodiment**



**Distracted**



**Structured**



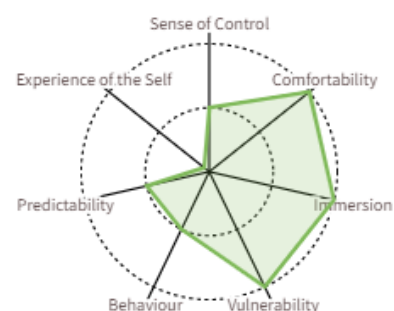
**Complete Embodiment**



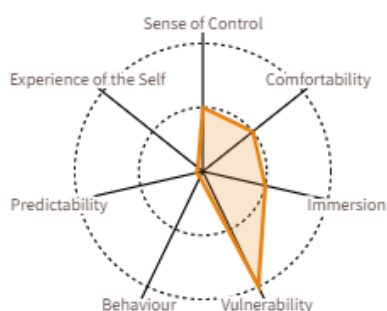
**Unstructured**



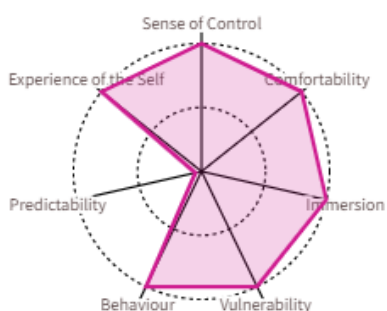
**Structured (Second Version)**



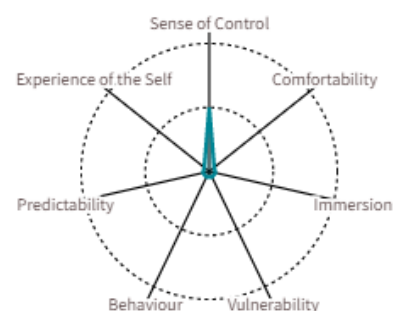
**Improved (Movement Specific)**



**Embodied Improvisation (Movement Specific)**



**Improved (Text Specific)**



## Appendix C

### Techniques applied in process.

#### Script Analysis

##### II. Facts and Questions (FaQs)

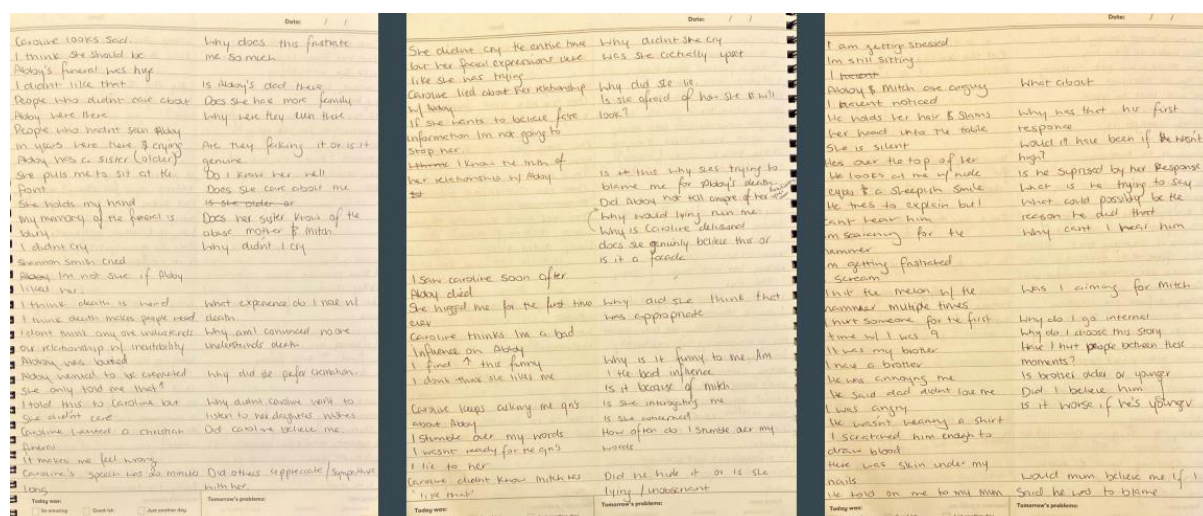
This activity can be done by the individual or an ensemble, in the beginning stages of rehearsal.

Go through the script line by line and find information that is definite and true. For example, if the first line is a stage direction 'Jack and Jill went up the hill' the fact would be that Jack and Jill are currently walking up the hill.

Currently, we do not know what their intentions are for going up the hill, just simply that they are doing it. Because we do not know yet we can ask the question Why are Jack and Jill going up the hill? Or is there something chasing them or are they trying to get something.

Don't try to assume anyone in the situation knows what's happening next. Even if later in the script you find out that a character knew the whole time this is a fact that can be written down later. The next line is 'to fetch a pail of water.' This answers our first question of why they went up the hill. The fact in this case would be They are going to get water. A question could be What is the water for? Do they have the pail with them already or is it at the top of the hill. Unlike the previous example this question will not be answered at all in the next section of the nursery rhyme. Not all questions need to be answered, this gives some playing room for the actor, even though we don't know what the pail of water may be used for, we can give suggestions and play with how these suggestions change the intention of the lines/ action.

This is an incredibly long process but I find it the most useful at the start of rehearsals. I have used this as an actor and director and feel that it gives an objective look at the script so I am less likely to interpret something incorrectly. It feels like a basis for all decisions in the rehearsal room. If I place an intention behind a line, I need a reason as to why my character would act or think that way. To me it feels like I'm giving my internal dialogue stability because it's not just made up from nothing. (Mitchell, 2009).



## After FaQs

FaQs are not necessary to complete this section of script analysis, but I find it useful to pair them. The next step is to read through the script slowly with the questions. Only do one question at a time in each reading of the script.

Q. What does your character say about themselves:

- Knowing how a character feels about themselves plays into how I develop their emotional and physical states. My character speaks very little about herself given the fact that this is a one woman show. At the beginning this showed me that she is either uneasy about giving her information to the audience/ does not think highly of herself and/or may be unwilling to give information out on purpose. However, from the little information she does say about herself most of it leaned towards the negative side. "Sharper than me anyway." "Just being a nuisance" "I guess I deserve it though." Even in the light-hearted sections of the script she seemed to use self-depreciation as comedy.

Q. What does your character say about other characters (redo for each character):

- The use of what my character says about others helps build my relationship to them, how I see them in my world or how their actions make my character feel and why. These observations of other characters are important to building my character, what does she see in others that makes her jealous, or angry, or happy. I can see her morals and values begin to develop through her reaction to other people's behaviours and actions.
- My character spends a lot of time talking about and impersonating the other people in the play, therefore the information I get through this question informs that character's physicality. For example, building the character Mitch's persona through my character's eyes was the most enjoyable to build. My character really did not like this man and it's visible in my impersonation of him. My character says things like "He's such a hypocrite." "He was a c\*\*t." "His tongue is really dirty." "His breath smells like abscess." Most of the words she uses to describe him are visceral and disgusting and these descriptions transferred very well into my impersonations.

Q. What do other characters say about your character?

- This step was more difficult than the other questions because the experience of the script lives through my character's perspective. This warps anything that other people may say about her. In this instance I will trust my character. I don't think it would work if I didn't; saying this I know where to draw the line with more immoral characters, however for this script I do have empathy for my character and act her with that in mind.
- Something useful with this questioning is the clashing opinions of what a character says about themselves compared to how they are viewed by other characters. If the thoughts are similar than this character has a reliable view of themselves but if the

opinions clash it is likely that the character is either, lying, unaware of how they are perceived or have been misinterpreted by their counterparts in the world of the play.

- My character is hiding something from the audience, but this is not clear until the final moments of the script, she is an unreliable source of information, but I feel she genuinely believes she is not in the wrong.

### **“I am” and “They are” statements.**

Once all the character questions are answered they need to be turned into ‘I am’ ‘They are’ statements. This solidifies my characters thoughts and feelings into her truth, even if they aren't objectively sound, this is how she views her world.

“[Abby] was sharp, more than me anyway” - I am not as smart as Abby.

“Well [Abby] didn’t have much of a family.” - Abby is alone

“Her mum was an alcoholic, semi functioning but not enough to take good care of a kid.” - Caroline is an alcoholic - Caroline is semi functioning - Caroline is a bad mother.

### **Character beliefs and values**

Once the previous information has been discovered I can use it to develop my character’s understanding of their world through beliefs and values. Similar to the ‘I am’, ‘they are’ statements. This is a long list of everything that your character might be involved in or know of. An example of this is:

- Love is dangerous.
- Death is scandalous.
- Drugs are fun but f\*cking stressful.
- Brothers are annoying.

Once this list is complete sit down in a comfortable position and close your eyes, take three deep breaths in and out.

Another person will read the list to you, and you can raise your hand if the sentence resonates with you as the character. Continue to cycle through the list until there are only a handful of statements that you really relate to these will inform your Super Objective (SO) and Germ.

Germ- The germ is the ‘why’ for the character is there

SO - The SO is the characters end goal, what they are striving to accomplish by the end of the script.

An example of this would be.

Germ: I am not in control of my life

SO: I want to move away from home

When developing a character, I will build multiple SOs and Germs from the previous exercises. I can apply these combinations during the rehearsal process to create different experiences of the character. I will eventually feel that one fits better than the others and that will be the SO and germ I take into performance.



Statement Activity		Date: / /
Friends are family X	Inevitability is constant X	
Friendship is protection	Burials are traditional X	
Love is questionable X	Cremation is overlooked X	
Mothers are Abusive	Christianity is a joke X	
Fathers are abusive X	Fantasies are .... X	
Brothers are destructive X	Delusion is an easy way out X	
Sisters are Rocks X	Sleep is useless X	
Family is Confusing X	Exhaustion is deserved X	
Life is hard enough X	Guilt is a melon	
Death is inevitable X	Lying is necessary X	
Women are acting X	Murder is Accidental X	
Men are reactive X	Brides are Suspicious X	
People are fake X	Stress is internal X	
Work is smelly X	Arguments are the beginning X	
School is insignificant X	Anger is Blood X	
Money is tight X	Race is Abby X	
Cups are dingy X	Shock is slow X	
Drugs are immoral X	Accidents are faultless	
Suicide is significant X	Fault is other people X	
Acid is safe X	I can't cry X	
Hamsters	I must <del>not</del> forget X	
Hamsters are backups X	I must not break X	
Cigarettes are dirty X	I am convincing X	
Melons are avoided	I want peace X	
Reps are pushed down X	Friendship is protection	
Funerals are weird X	Mothers are Abusive	
Crying is impossible X	Melons are avoided	
Boyfriends are PIGS X	Guilt is a melon	
	Accidents are faultless	
	I am convincing	

I want to convince myself it wasn't my fault	
1-	Germ: I am stuck repeating the past
SO:	I want to convince myself it wasn't my fault
Pay Off:	I can live peacefully
2-	Germ: I am feeling guilty
SO:	I want to place blame on Caroline & Mitch
Pay off:	People will know the truth about their behaviour before Abby's death.
3-	Germ: I am - I am out of control
SO:	I want to analyse the situation
Pay off:	To gain a clearer understanding of my actions

### III. Stanislavski Beats and actioning

My script analysis is a hybrid that I have developed over my education, Stanislavski has a big influence in my process to building character through SO and germs and beating and actioning my script. I did not use some aspect of this approach such as specifying the scripts events in the beginning, but they were found naturally through the rehearsal process. Beating is important for my pacing. I have a quote from my director saying that in the beginning of rehearsal I would speed through lines to get to the point and the audience would have to try to keep up. But when I found the beats in the script and allowed myself to slow down, pause and allow the thoughts to come naturally and find the words as the character I was able to take the audience on a journey with me, they had time to think on the lines too before moving to the next thought. Super objective Germ and Objectives will inform actioning. Actioning shows the intention of the character, what are they trying to get across, what are they trying to achieve? I thought I would struggle to action the script because it is a monologue, she not necessarily talking to people within her world even though she's talking to the audience. Through the rehearsal process I discovered that the audience represents her. She is talking to and convincing herself, trying to rationalise the experience by talking aloud. This made the actioning make sense, even though the actions are basically being received by the same character who spoke to them I now know who the lines are targeted to. This made the actioning less about others and more about how she sees herself, when she trusts her own words, and when she feels like she needs to justify her wrong doings.

### Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) - Basic Shape/Effort/Drives

LMA is an incredibly detailed understanding of movement, one that I am still learning to solidify in my work. LMA was developed as an understanding of human movement, it was

taught to me first as a way of understanding my own body and how/why it moves through space. I use LMA primarily as a mode of developing character movement.

I have based my analysis of the characters movements on my script analysis. Using character information, I decided to create a base understanding of each character's shape, the variations of effort and, action drive. I do understand these movement qualities are constantly changing and one body does not remain constantly the same, but for building character I find sticking to a stagnant shape or effort or drive allows me to explore the characters movements without getting overwhelmed,. Once I feel confident in this base level I develop their movement language as rehearsals progress and I begin to understand their given circumstances, history and internal monologue.

### **I. Basic shapes**

Are the most simple forms a body can take

- Pin, Ball, Wall, and Screw

### **II. The Efforts**

How a person moves. The practical actions one does to complete a task, all voluntary movement comes from an individual's internal attitude. There are four factors involved and each have two qualities, these qualities are either 'fighting' or 'Indulgent'.

	Fighting	Indulgent
Space	Direct	Indirect
Time	Sudden	Sustained
Weight	Strong	Light
Flow	Bound	Free

### **III. Drives**

Laban connects the Jungian theory of functions of consciousness to the 4 factors seen in the table.

- Sensing = Weight

- Thinking = Space

- Feeling = Flow

- Intuiting = Time

#### **The drives include**

- Action drive is about working, and getting things done. It is a combination of Space, Time and Weight, no Flow as flow is connected to feeling, the need to feel.

- Passion drive is being deeply within an emotion, anger, sadness, or joy. It combines Time, Weight, and Flow. It is without Space as space is related to thinking, which is lost in intense emotions.

- Vision drive is a trance like experience. It is a combination of space, time, and flow. Removing Weight is removing Sensing and therefore the mover can be lost in their experience, this can also include situations like studying or being immersed in an activity.

- Spell drive is a liminal experience. A combination of Space, Weight, and Flow. It removes the use of time, which is related to intuition. Moments become timeless and otherworldly. This includes being lost in a story, being seduced or in moments of bliss.

A character will not necessarily go into all the drives in a single play so I don't feel like it is necessary for me to discover all the movement aspects of every single character. I also decided not to delve into the complexities of analysing states. They will obviously be present in the performance, but I will not be exploring them in practice this year.

## **Warm up.**

### **I. Physical**

I begin my warmup process with stretching moving down my body (gentle neck stretch, arms, toe touches, spinal roll to floor, back (cat cow), Legs (splits/lunges) wrists and ankles. Move tongue around mouth and open up jaw to stretch the mouth.

### **II. Vocal**

Breath - Walking around the space begin with an in breath, on the outbreath begin to count to 1, breath in and out, 1, 2, breath in and out, 1, 2, 3 continue this counting upwards until you feel that your breath can no longer support the voice. This exercise will always be different, some days I am able to get to 20 on my final exhale, other days I struggle to breathe 15. This activity can also be done on the floor if you are struggling to find the support through your diaphragm and core.

Resonance - hum 'mmm' on an out breath with mouth closed first, place hand on chest to feel vibration, lightly tap around chest to activate area. Open mouth with an 'ahh'. You can repeat this with your hand placed on your back. Place hand on head and hum from your lowest range to your highest, move on to trills. Place two fingers on each side of your nose over your maxillary sinuses and hum a 'nhh' sound, gently rub with fingers. Place the tip of your tongue on the alveolar ridge leaving space above your tongue (enough to fit a strawberry) hum 'nhh.' Throw 'mahs' at targets around the space to work on referencing and throwing your voice.

Tongue twisters - Choose multiple tongue twisters, speak the first neutrally, then with a British accent, then with your tongue out, and finally neutral again.

### **III. Pre-Show**

The next step in my warmup depends on my level of stress, focus and grounding. If I am feeling stress nervous or restless, I will do a tension and release activity (tense body part for 5 seconds then release and move to next)- Lying on your back begin from the toes, tensing left side first then right side, move on to feet, left side right side calves, thighs, bottom, core, fingers, hands, forearms, upper arms, shoulders, chest, neck, jaw, squeeze face. Whole body Release. This helps me to be mindful of every area of my body, reducing my ability to over think, the release also increases relaxation by dropping tension.

If I need to gain energy I will do a shake out, which is a 30-second-high intensity activity used for fun, it is better in a group. Standing in a circle shake right arm left arm right leg left leg back side in counts starting at 8 and then go down by twos after each full shake out of the body.

To ground I will get another person to push down on my shoulders as hard as is possible and safe for as long as they can. This is physically pushing me to the ground, and I need to push back creating grounding from the floor and from above. The next I will push against the wall digging myself into the floor with my feet. I find the first activity works better to ground me as it's completely vertical while the wall activity is not.

## **The Patterns of Total Body Connectivity**

Please see video explanation of the PTBCs via this link

Video link is not available in this version of the thesis

**Breath** - awareness of the body's movement with breath. Breath is the baseline which all movement follows. As you can see from the video my movements will be initiated by breath

**Core Distal** - Allows inner-outer connectivity, core to limbs.

**Head tail** - the connection of the head to the tail through spinal movements

**Upper/Lower** - the contradictory movement of the upper and lower body

**Body half** - the ability for half of the body to remain grounded while the other half moves freely.

**Cross lateral** - Allows the connection of the body through diagonal movement (Hackney, 2002).

## **Appendix D**

### **500-word response: Articulate your problem as you see it now and journals of articulating problem.**

I have found within my performance repertoire, multiple outcomes regarding embodiment on stage. This outcome depends on my ability to connect with the text and character, as well as my preparedness and trust in my technical abilities. The list is as follows.

- I. Disengaged from the text due to lack of preparation – weak performance, missed lines and/or cues due to lack of preparation.
- II. Engaged with text and technical elements but disembodied – completely prepared, but all tasks are completed consciously, lines are thought before spoken. Technically pleasing for an audience but no embodiment.

- III. Complete embodiment – unconscious/free performance, free to play, in the moment, the outside world doesn't exist, I am the character in the world of the play. Trusting myself because I know the structure and technical side of the performance enough that I can let go completely.
- IV. Disengaged from the text but completely prepared – like number 2 but includes information I perceive as a challenge. Even though I am prepared I will miss cues and drop lines. This ties in with my anxiety as I will be hyper-aware of the challenge mid-performance. As discussed with supervisor this can include an individual in the audience or performing while sick.

### **Breath**

Through my acting training, I have gained the knowledge of how my habits have been informed by society. I have noticed that when I am not fully engaged in my task/performance I'm aware of how limited my breath is, it feels confined to my chest and throat. This may be a result of my years as a competitive cheerleader where one must remain 'tight.' I remember coaches coming around in practice and trying to manoeuvre our arms torsos or legs, we were not supposed to falter. As a result, I remain tense, especially in my core. This tension is also a result of aesthetics, not only in cheerleading but in media as well. This issue has affected my ability to loosen up and feel connected to myself when performing, allow my breath to inform my emotions and therefore created an anxiety when consciously trying to correct the habit. I have had experience with somatic practices like PTBC, taught by Teresa Izzard; I feel that this training has allowed me to be aware of my habits, I am still trying to correct them consciously. These habits create blocks when I am trying to connect psychologically to my performance, when I do not drop my breath, I feel as though I cannot connect to the emotions of a piece as well. This is not to say I have never connected to my breath in a performance as I know I did it successfully and unconsciously in *Metamorphosis*, but these experiences are few and far between.

### **Bridging the gap between the intuitive and the rational**

I can analyse a character well, and I have confidence in my movement ability, however, there is a gap between my physiological and psychological abilities that I believe stems from self-consciousness and anxiety which leads to an inability to trust myself with the information I know. Getting on stage with a character and playing them convincingly even just for myself is where I struggle. I need to be comfortable in dropping my conscious self to allow my unconscious mind to play with the moment. I need to feel that I have prepared as much as I can before I can trust myself to be free on stage. If there is even an inkling that I do not know a line or blocking I will over analyse everything and remain in my head. It is not that I am lazy with preparation but the fact that I do not have a solid practice that I know works for me when preparing for a character.

## Journal for problem and research idea

Notes

The idea of the 'altered state'  
 ↳ Being in the moment  
 ↳ departing from the rational self.

Working on pieces that you don't connect with have no interest in

↳ let them so instinctive and now I feel as though my instincts have been taken away. Only bones.

↳ finding my instincts in metamorphosis and then moving into 1st year BPA felt like I was going backwards. I was not focusing on doing method. Doing what used purpose to create a 5 minute piece I had lost interest in because the process went for 12 weeks.

↳ was working on a piece outside of uni I also had no real connection to and was feeling quite trapped down like I was frozen in my process.

hence discusses the bridge between intuitive and rational

↳ This is one long aspect I would like to focus on in my piece because this year the gap between my body and its ability to process and react intuitively and connecting it to my analytical/ constantly naming when I needed my mind is my biggest ~~thing~~ issue. I can't know a script though and though and still not fully find myself with and in the moment.

↳ allowing her mind and allowing her imagination to pick up I need to allow myself the best to imagine rather than analyse in my process.

Working with  
☐ Interview  
☐ Research  
☐ The process

Researcher's problems  
☐ Research  
☐ Interview  
☐ The process

Looking at the comparison of Western vs Eastern processes and how they feel with the self

Eastern Buddhism is spiritual  
 Eastern culture rely on this spiritual self for guidance very central & embedded  
 ↳ could try meditation

Encouraging of the 'flow' state now

↳ allowing I or allowing past future thought to be pulled aside while experiencing techniques & process. Allowing yourself to be fully in the moment and experiencing life as it is in that time & space

↳ meditation  
 ↳ 6 weeks

↳ emotional provide regard & idea of hierarchy in research

I will find my own judgment the work in this process because for the most part I will be working independently I struggle to remain of that when I feel that I'm not on the right path. Even if I am familiarised with a piece of or process I feel that I stop myself from fully doing because I don't feel as though I'm doing it correctly.

I find the idea of hierarchy in a process 95% confidence. Even as a director I have many fed info from everyone involved & I can't be challenged respectfully.

↳ when a director makes your opinion (especially in the piece as a whole & not just your own character) you feel respected & seen as an integral member of a process.

↳ This brings me to the paragraph probably if a director like Peter Jackson makes me enough to

Working with  
☐ Interview  
☐ Research  
☐ The process

Researcher's problems  
☐ Research  
☐ Interview  
☐ The process

allow many of my ideas into the final product of in such a long time I trust myself in the same outcome?

↳ inspire work

↳ Similar to Tasso's ecological view points (first text) might be in the poem text or group chat.

↳ consistent response  
 ↳ full body awareness (yes awareness)

↳ language in implicit work

↳ somewhere I know I will struggle but so on hoping apply this to my process w/ interest my awareness in a piece

↳ Begin in a state of intense awareness

↳ Can't remember what defining or experienced goes

↳ want to find what internal self needs to calm down in order for external self to blossom in best specificity

↳ To rediscover language

↳ 'Real more' doesn't make written inspiration rather than more understood & comprehended not just seen.

↳ create a scene

↳ notation an impulse practice!

↳ notation to impulse in text

↳ find 18 words that create a response in you

↳ in the poem, Peter said etc. find what meaning for yourself in the beginning stages of a process in script.

Working with  
☐ Interview  
☐ Research  
☐ The process

Researcher's problems  
☐ Research  
☐ Interview  
☐ The process