THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by – Dr Mark Cariston Seton – 2009 Churchill Fellow

THE GILBERT SPOTTISWOOD CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP

to study holistic healthcare of actors

in training and in the workplace

DR MARK SETON AT SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE THEATRE

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Signed Mark C. Seton Dated 10th December 2009

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Introduction

We love to watch actors onstage or screen being vulnerable and taking risks – enacting and experiencing the traumas of life – but we don't consider the physical, emotional and personal impact on actors, their families and friends. Psychological or emotional injury, especially, is not as apparent as a dancer's or musician's injury. As a consequence, actors continue to suffer in silence in spite of the psychological and sometimes physical injuries that occur in training and in the workplace. And their silence also means that their circumstances of well-being can be difficult to track and analyse in order to find better ways of enabling them to have healthy and enduring careers. In September and October 2009 I spent five weeks researching the healthcare of actors in the UK. While in the UK, I interviewed Actors Equity staff, teachers and scholars of actor training, actors, directors, voice coaches, performing arts counsellors, psychologists and dance psychotherapists. My aim was to study holistic healthcare for actors in training and in the workplace in the UK.

In this Report I will discuss my informative albeit brief experiences in researching the current training and working environment of actors in the UK and its impact on their well-being. This was done, initially, through reading of available documentation provided by the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) and the National Council of Drama Training (NCDT). I was invited to participate and present a paper in the Performance Training Working Group of the UK's Theatre and Performance Research Association's (TaPRA) annual conference, and also presented a paper at the first international Applied Arts and Health Conference. In addition, I was fortunate to attend one meeting, held at the University of Lancaster, to explore possible synergies and collaborations around the question of mental health education in higher education and the performing arts, and, a one-day industry forum, initiated and hosted by the Central School of Speech and Drama, entitled *The Actor's Body: Identity and Image,* addressing physical and psychological stresses facing the student actor preparing for a tentative career in acting. All these gatherings were unique opportunities to seek out those in the UK who either share or question my concern for the well-being of actors in training and in the workplace.

I also arranged interviews with scholars and practitioners of both acting and dance, given that some, in dance education, have led the way in interrogating and advocating healthier training and work practices. I was honoured that many of these scholars and practitioners, in turn, put me in contact with their peers who were also willing to be interviewed on these issues. While my interviewees represented different disciplines and/or institutional affiliations, it was significant to discover recurring themes of concern and comparable ways of addressing those concerns even though the specific terminology differed. Yet while it was evident that there was a slow but growing interest and attention to the whole life experience of the actor by some teachers, counsellors, and scholars, such experiences and opinions have yet to become either a publicly acknowledged part of the performance industry's 'duty of care' or accessible for teachers and students to consider, through journal articles or textbooks. Furthermore, as key staff at Equity informed me, health issues tend to be low on the agenda of most actors until they are injured in some way. The preoccupation of most actors is, understandably, securing the next job!

I am extremely appreciative of the opportunity afforded me by the award of the Gilbert Spottiswood Churchill Fellowship. This particular Fellowship is allocated for research pertaining to aspects of theatre and thus I was honoured to be its most recent recipient. The privilege of travelling and representing the Winston Churchill Trust has given me a new boldness in the pursuit of 'a better deal' for actors both in Australia and in the UK. I would especially like to acknowledge the two people who acted as my referees during the application process - Dr Bronwen Ackermann, President of the Australian Society for Performing Arts Healthcare (ASPAH) and Assoc Prof Ian Maxwell, Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney. I greatly value their continuing support and guidance that has brought me to this exciting moment.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the hospitality, generosity of time and experiences afforded me by all those I either interviewed or spoke with (acknowledged in the following Programme summary) during my time in the UK and Northern Ireland. This is indeed only the beginning of many relationships and potential collaborations I look forward to pursuing as I seek to promote and offer guidance in areas of healthcare for actors in training and in the workplace both in Australia and beyond.

Executive Summary

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The Gilbert Spottiswood Churchill Fellowship to study healthcare of actors in training and in the workplace - UK and Northern Ireland

Highlights:

- three days participating in Performance Training Working Group, Theatre and Performance Research Association annual conference, University of Plymouth
- interview with Prof Julia Buckroyd, Emeritus Professor of Counselling, University of Hertfordshire
- interview with Stephen Spence, Martin Kenny and Hilary Hadley, UK Equity
- participation in a one day Forum entitled *The Actor's Body: Image and Identity,* Central School of Speech and Drama

Recommendations:

- Establish forums and other means (such as a national actor trainers association) to encourage ongoing conversations between stakeholders about the specific healthcare needs and concerns of actors in training and in the workplace
- Encourage further research into four key factors that can contribute to sustainable training and workplace practices: somatic awareness, relational resilience, the ecstatic-recessive continuum of performance-making, and the actor's identity and authenticity
- Collaborate with industry and union stakeholders to document and analyse workplace injuries to counter the conspiracy of silence prevalent in the field
- Advocate that a unit of study, addressing physical, psychological (including emotional) and social issues of actor healthcare, be part of the curriculum in every drama training institution in Australia

Implementation and Dissemination:

- Presentations at conferences on training and well-being of performing artists
- Circulation of research findings through both a Report to be sent out to all Australian actor training institutions and through scholarly articles on findings and identification of further research needed to advance the healthcare of actors
- Convening of public forums, in association with the Media and Entertainment Alliance Association, across Australia in 2010 and 2011
- Formation of a national association of all involved in the education of professional actors in Australia

Programme

2nd September 2009
London, UK

Meeting with Major General Jamie Balfour CBE – Director General, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, UK

3rd September 2009
Lancaster, UK

Mental Health in Higher Education – Performing Arts Project,
University of Lancaster

Meeting with Jill Anderson and Nicola Westbury (Mental Health in Higher Education, University of Lancaster), Miriam Murtin (PALATINE, University of Lancaster), Hilary Jones (Lecturer in Voice, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) and Dr Nick Rowe (Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Health, York St John University)

4th September 2009
London, UK

Interview with Lawrence Carmichael – freelance Fight Co-ordinator

Interview with Dr Tamara Russell – Affective Neuroscience Group, Section of Cognitive Neuropsychiatry, Division of Psychological Medicine, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College

Interview with Dr Dick McCaw – Feldenkrais teacher, Royal Holloway, University of London

Interview with Struan Leslie – Head of Movement,
Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford on Avon

7th - 9th September 2009
Plymouth, UK

Participated and presented a paper within the **Performance Training Working Group** at the **Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) Conference** , University of Plymouth

Interview with David Shirley – Programme Leader and Head of Acting, School of Theatre, Manchester Metropolitan University

Interview with Ruth Way – Senior Lecturer, Head of Theatre and Performance, University of Plymouth

9th - 11th September 2009
Northampton, UK

Participated and presented a paper within the **Applied Arts and Health Conference,** The University of Northampton

Interview with Sally Cook – Lecturer in Drama and Performance/Course Leader BA Acting, The University of Northampton

14th September, 2009
Oxford, UK

Interview with Dr Chris Mowles – Complexity and Management Centre Fellow, Complexity and Management Centre, Business School, University of Hertfordshire

16th September, 2009
Hatfield, UK

Interview with Prof Julia Buckroyd – Emeritus Prof of Counselling, School of Social, Community and Health Studies, University of Hertfordshire

17th September, 2009
London, UK

Meeting with staff of British Equity:
Stephen Spence – Assistant General Secretary, Live Performance and Organising
Martin Kenny – Legal Referrals Officer
Hilary Hadley – Head of Organising, Live Performance

18th September, 2009
Northampton, UK

Interview with Dr Jane Bacon – Reader, Performance Studies and Dance, School of the Arts, The University of Northampton

Interview with Dr Ross Prior – Principal Lecturer in Acting and Drama, School of the Arts, The University of Northampton

21st – 25th September, 2009
London, UK

Interview with Elizabeth Nabaroo – Psychotherapist for
RADA and London Contemporary Dance School

Interview with Prof. Phillip Zarrilli – Department of Drama
School of Arts, Languages and Literatures, University of Exeter

Interview with Andy Evans – Convenor, MA program in Performance Healthcare, Thames Valley University

Interview with Sally Brooker – Administrator and Manager of UK Choreographers Directory, Dance UK

Interview with Dr Arthur Fowle – a General Practitioner for the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM)

Interview with Nick Moseley – a Director of the Council of Drama Schools and Senior Lecturer and Pathway Leader, Acting for Screen and Stage, Central School of Speech and Drama

Interview with Prof Patricia Shaw – Associate Director, Complexity and Management Centre, Business School, University of Hertfordshire

Participated in **Open Space Forum: The Actor's Body: Identity and Image**, Central School of Speech and Drama

27th – 28th September, 2009
Derry, Northern Ireland

Interview with Paul Moore – Lecturer in Drama, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

Interview with Zoe Seaton – Artistic director, Big Telly Theatre Company

Interview with Niall McCaughan – General Manager, Derry Playhouse theatre

Interview with Matthew Jennings – actor and final year PhD student, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

Interview with Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick – Course director, BA Drama, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

Interview with Dr Tom Maguire – Senior Lecturer, Drama, Magee Campus, University of Ulster
and
Dr Paul Devlin – Lecturer, Drama, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

Interview with Prof Carole-Anne Upton – Professor of Drama, School of Creative Arts, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

30th September – 1st October, 2009
Lincoln, UK

Interview with Andy Jordan – Senior Lecturer, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Interview with Martin Curtis – Senior Lecturer, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Interview with Kayla Bowtell – Joint Programme Leader - Dance, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Interview with Dr Sreenath Nair – Senior Lecturer, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Interview with Prof Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe – Professor of Drama, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Interview with Anna Makrzanowska – Lecturer, Lincoln School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Lincoln

Healthcare of actors in training and in the workplace

Actors: 'the forgotten patients'

I begin the main body of this Report with a background as to why actor healthcare has tended to be a neglected area of enquiry and activity. In the United States, the Performing Arts Medicine Association's (PAMA) founder, Dr Alice Brandfonbrener, in a December 1992 Editorial of the Association's Journal, Medical Problems of Performing Artists, wrote of "The Forgotten Patients", referring to actors. The following series of quotes is taken from that editorial:

> In any discussion about performing arts medicine it is generally assumed that the "arts" under consideration are dance and music. This assumption, however, leaves out a large and important group of performers, those in the theatre. I believe this has been a major oversight that should be corrected if performing arts medicine is to live up to its name …
>
> As with other performers, there are also health risk factors in the lifestyles of many people associated with the theatre. Among those are sleep deprivation; poor dietary habits; excesses of caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol; and a higher use of street drugs than I have encountered either in musicians or in dancers …
>
> While not necessarily condoning risk-taking behaviour in their peers, there tends to be an attitude of "live and let live" unless the situation approaches an emergency level. Consequently, many of these individuals fail to seek help when treatment might be appropriate and efficacious …
>
> Regarding the many areas of potential research in "theatrical medicine" those in the psychological realm are particularly intriguing. In addition to all of the stresses discussed earlier, some additional factors clearly add to the

> psychological hazards of the theatre. I refer to the need of the actor/actress to portray convincingly the emotions of their characters and, indeed, temporarily to take on the personality traits of this character …
>
> It has been my observation in providing medical care to many actors and actresses in this process, while integral to being what they are, can put them in touch with some of their own feelings for the first time …
>
> For some this is a positive experience, but for others the process can range from difficult to unbearable. Even the most mature, stable, and experienced actor suffers the effects of playing Willy Loman night after night, and this is not confined to what transpires on the stage. This consequence is one that all of us should think about when we go to the theatre and especially when we are treating the medical problems of actors and actresses. (Brandfonbrener 1992: 101)

The desire to express one's self or to be recognised as creative is a paradox of human experience. It is such desire that enables perseverance in the midst of short-term failings or mis-understandings. We applaud the person who pursues, in a disciplined way, his or her goals and proves his or her ability to perform. The adage 'the show must go on' becomes the rule by which an actor's courage is measured as a 'trouper' in spite of tiredness, injury or rejection. But it is also desire that can compel a person to accept continual abuse and mistreatment because, using the same premise of self-discipline, he or she is willing to undergo maltreatment and suffering in order 'to get it right' or 'get over it'. In my doctoral research, entitled *Forming (in)vulnerable Bodies: Intercorporeal experiences in actor training in Australia* (Seton 2004), such was my experience of participating in a privately-run acting school with some other students. We were repeatedly told we needed to learn how to be vulnerable but we never taught how to be resilient in such vulnerability - in the face of possible exploitation and rejection by casting agents, directors, producers, critics and audiences.

As audiences, we admire actors who appear to (or may claim to) 'lose themselves' in a role or who 'expose' themselves through their vulnerable portrayals. In my research of acting schools I have observed one teacher comment that "… it affects the audience to see the lines take the actor somewhere, rather than see the actor controlling the delivery, the package." (de-identified teacher cited in Seton 2004) Furthermore, various stakeholders in Western performance contexts, whether actors, teachers of acting, casting directors, agents, directors, critics or audiences, are often invested in the pursuit of such demonstrable vulnerability. It would be reasonable to argue that the majority of Western acting schools are committed to enabling actors to be intentionally vulnerable i.e. they demonstrate the ability to affect and be affected by others.

But at what price, to the actors, does vulnerability come in using their own embodied experiences as tools, mediums or channels? While some actors move from playing role to role with apparent ease, others seem to 'live out' their latest roles. In the United States of America, Dr Cheryl McFarren (2003), in her thesis *Acknowledging Trauma/Rethinking Affective Memory: Background, Method, and Challenge for Contemporary Actor Training*, interrogates the wisdom and ethics of training techniques that intentionally enable students (consciously or unconsciously) to tap into trauma as a resource for the development and enactment of characterisation. McFarren notes that acting teachers are neither trained nor necessarily equipped to recognise hyper-arousal and dissociative responses in students or help process traumatic experiences so that these do not leave a harmful residue (184, 201). While acting schools are effective in shaping actors in 'taking on' a role, there is far less guidance, if any, about 'removing' a role or debriefing after a season of performances. Actors may often prolong addictive, co-dependent and, potentially, destructive habits of the characters they have embodied. In fact, as Burgoyne, Poulin and Rearden (1999) have observed, many acting students are taken by surprise in the process of character creation. Yet, they remain silent for fear of being judged odd or incompetent for not coping when they experience trauma as they embody 'characters' and their fictional lives (Burgoyne, Poulin and Rearden).

It was also twenty four years ago, in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985), that Richard Schechner advocated "the cool-down ought to be investigated from the point of view of both performers and spectators". The "cool-down" phase is that period of time, immediately following a performance, when actors go off-stage. In many Western performance contexts, actors use this time to socialise with those who have seen the performance, rather than, firstly, take time out to shift their mode of embodiment from the characters they have just played to their own personas. By contrast, Schechner cites instances in Balinese and Indian performance contexts where the performance phases of both 'cool-down' and 'aftermath' are seen as integral both to the sustainability of individual performers and the well-being of the communities for which they perform. In such contexts, performers are kept from their audiences while they are given space to have physical and emotional replenishment (Schechner 1985: 18-19). By comparison, there are very few documented suggestions offered to actors in Western acting traditions. In the final chapter of *An Acrobat of the Heart: A physical approach to acting inspired by the work of Jerzy Grotowski* (2000) Stephen Waugh signals the importance of self-care, before and after each performance and David Hlavsa, in *An Actor Rehearses: What to do when – and why* (2006) does offer generalised advice about 'cool downs'. However, there has been no consistent further interrogation of these identified pre and post-performance phases with regard to either the actor in training or in the workplace.

From my own participant-observation of actor training schools in Sydney and Melbourne, the only training or advice about "cool-downs" and "aftermath" is either that actors "develop the heart of a dove and the hide of a rhinoceros" (Seton 2004: 217) or that actors just "get over it!" (Seton 2004: 262). These attitudes tend to encourage a reaction of silent submission among acting students. I have also encountered anecdotal evidence from seasoned professional actors who have experienced difficulties negotiating the inevitable post-performance blues. Similarly, there are actors who have not known how to "shake" off a role or performance experience. These actors have told me, when they notice their peers turn to drugs or alcohol to manage these stresses, their peers are often marginalised

by the profession as not "having what it takes". But, as McFarren argues, such criticism is unfair when processes of actor training and 'character' formation may actually be contributing factors to compulsive or addictive behaviours. In 1991 Suzanne Burgoyne commented, "We educators like to consider ourselves professionals, but I have yet to see an explicitly-stated code of ethics guiding the training of actors" (Burgoyne in McFarren 2003). However, in spite of the submission of a 1997 Ethics Task Force Report (which calls for safe practices but does not identify potential risks) by the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) in the United States, there has been no further collaborative discussion among teachers of acting to interrogate and address matters of vulnerability in actor training.

These matters of vulnerability and sustainability (physical, psychological and emotional), both in training and in the workplace, have been the focus of my concern as a scholar and educator of performers since the completion of my doctorate. The Churchill Fellowship has afforded me an opportunity to pursue these questions by studying an overseas context, the United Kingdom, which has a much larger population base and a more long-standing commitment to actor training and working opportunities for actors. It was with this expectation that I pursued the experiences and insights of teachers, scholars, and practitioners, as well as institutions such as the British Association of Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) and British Equity, the union of working actors, to find out how they were addressing vulnerability and sustainability.

Research and the value of recognising complexity and conversation

In approaching this research of the 'world' of actor training and employment in the UK, I was very keen to continue to draw upon a particular research model known as Complex Responsive Processes that I applied to my doctoral research into actor training in Australia (Seton 2004). Through this model, Dr. Ralph Stacey, Dr Patricia Shaw, Dr Douglas Griffin et. al. (Stacey 2001; Stacey and Griffin 2005, Shaw 2002, Shaw and Stacey 2006) argue that there is no objective 'organisation' or 'system' that we can claim to step outside of in order to control or predict its present or future behaviour. Instead, they suggest that

organisations or social groups need to be viewed as patterns of interactions between people that are iterated i.e. repeated with subtle variations in the ongoing, 'here and now' of social interaction. The moment we become involved in engaging with a social group, we shape it as we are shaped by it, **at the same time**. There is simultaneous co-operative, consensual relating and conflictual, competitive relating between people as they organise themselves in the everyday of life. Thus, what may be described as Complex Responsive Processes of relating, consist of three interdependent activities: acts of communication – how we make meaning together, relations of power (how we enable/constrain each other, at the same moment) and choices arising in acts of evaluation (what we perceive as generalisations/idealisations in our meaning-making together) (Stacey 2005: 7-10)

In turn, this thematic patterning of human interactions is understood to be

1. Complex – that is, it is paradoxically stable and unstable, known and unknown, certain and uncertain
2. Self-organising and emergent – patterns occur in myriad local interactions, and widespread generalisations emerge
3. Evolving – generalisations are never particularised in the same way, leading to small differences producing new generalisations (Stacey 2005: 10-11)

Such an understanding of human interaction and social meaning-making has significant implications for research methodologies. Firstly, a researcher can really only understand an organisation or social group [in my case, the 'world' of actors, shaped through training and work practices] from within the local interactions in which any apparent 'global' tendencies to act are taken up. Secondly, any insights/findings must arise from the researcher's reflection on the micro detail of the researcher's own experience of interaction with others. Thirdly, the research method becomes a paradox of detached involvement. The research outcome is exploratory and emergent, and does carry the paradox, during the research process, of being 'in control' and 'out of control' at the same time. (Stacey and Griffin 2005: 9-11)

Given that Prof Patricia Shaw would be willing to discuss my research into acting healthcare while I was in the UK, I took the opportunity to interview her and engage in open-ended conversation, expectant of unanticipated understandings and actions that might emerge. In her work as a consultant to organisations who want to explore adopting a Complex Responsive Process perspective, she informed me that the kind of conversation that she is constantly having is one of "drawing them back to the exploration of concrete circumstances, particular experiences - what they actually know about because they've been there ... a knowledge from within the situation" rather than anticipating and relying on 'best practice'. She observes:

> One of the most important ways that human beings have for making complex situations intelligible is that they are able to perceive the side-ways connections between things. They can see what's similar in what, at first sight, looks totally different and they can see what's different in what might look the same. So, like the 'best practice' movement – it gets the step of saying 'we should be communicating in this sideways manner – what I've been doing and what you've been doing' – then it makes the step of saying 'we'll abstract from that to create the template of the best to be done'. And, over and over again, what people don't notice is that whatever it was that was of value never came into being through the exercise of such attempts. So the attempt to template and impose it elsewhere as the source of effective work is bound to fail. It's missed the emergence of the valuable and it misses the fact that it could be transferred through the abductive process [as advocated by John Shotter] of concretely sharing experiences where people are able to say 'oh, we do something like that' and then go on and talk about something utterly other than that, but which has connections to that. That is the way we ripple, at fast speed, what we know about. And the 'best practice' phenomenon misses the point. And it puts very turgid and, ultimately, ineffective steps into this process. So I would say that I'm constantly trying to wean people off that sort of understanding.

This has crucial significance to whatever might be learnt from the reporting of my findings and how that might 'in-form' the acting 'scene' in Australia. It is my intention, in the remainder of this Report, not to identify or idealise some 'best practice' but rather to encourage further awareness and conitinuing conversation in anticipation that shifts will emerge. Patricia's own experience of working over the past ten years with an improvisational business theatre group, Dacapo Theatre, has also informed her appreciation of what it means to be ready to perform 'in the moment'.

> "Working Live" ... was the subtitle of the second book [Shaw and Stacey 2006] which was a kind of phrase we use to sort of epitomise something about working in this improvisational way – that it's the live material that's endlessly available to be worked with, and that we're focussing on, and making all the time these kinds of connections out. So that there's a kind of constant tracking in and tracking out between what's happening, recognising what's happening here, what's emerging here and how it illuminates, because of the associations and connections we make to other circumstances. So that the focus on the particular can illuminate much more broadly then to these local circumstances because of these associative connections we can make.

I regard this approach to emergent meaning-making as worthy of adoption by stakeholders in education (acting school teachers and administrators) and industry (unions, employer groups, creative agents) as they each enable and constrain, at the same time, the training and working conditions of the actor . Furthermore, in our conversation, it became possible to imagine that actors might also benefit from such ongoing, attentive noticing of their own embodied processes in dealing with the enactment of fictional, yet traumatic narratives:

> ... it's the whole area of thinking about the body, emotionality and feeling – that the very direct, bodily responses we have to situations are emotions but it's also the kind of consciousness that it's important to develop. It's the art of being able to 'say', which is closely linked to feeling, and, by 'say', I do mean all the ways that we can 'say'. For an actor, I imagine it's the ability to find the fine distinctions of that 'saying' that move emotion to feeling. It seems to me what we need to be doing with actors ... in the sense of wanting to affect and move situations ... (is) acquiring these endlessly more differentiated 'noticings' in the subtle shifts of the quality of emotions. It's the noticing of the movement of emotion which generates feeling – in these incredible distinctions which we can use language for – and with that, we can touch, move, strike each other, and we fashion our circumstances together, that's how I would understand it. So, to do that, is much finer work, than simply open the availability of the body to its own emotional life, much, much more work. And, I think, concentrating too much on the cathartic availability of the emotionality of the body – well, at best, it might be described as a first stage, but I'm not even sure that that's a helpful way to look at it.

I find it interesting that, given this interview with Patricia occurred approximately halfway through my UK tour, the 'theme' of deep noticing, which had regularly surfaced in my earlier interviews with actor training scholars and practitioners in the UK, had again emerged without any prompting. So I sought further clarification about how Shaw might envisage this 'noticing' could support the actor:

> I think it is about training the imagination – it is about bringing a tremendous amount of attention to the body, and also the responsiveness of bodies to each other, to be incredibly sensitive to the listening. After all, an actor is listening for the breathing responses of the live audience and, if they haven't got that, they're listening to the imaginative conversation they're playing to, if they have to. And it's like you have to be trained to be able to

> listen for all that. So, we've done a lot of work [in a regular peer group] , for example, in listening again – so another thing that we'll do in these things is people will say ' you know that there was a moment that was really vivid for me when this happened' and often we will go back, because we record, we'll find that moment and we'll listen again – not for 'what really happened' – but by listening again we hear more. And, if we listen again, we hear yet more - not that was in it - but because our own responses to what we're hearing are 'filling out', we're complexifying the moment and training our own responsivity by doing that. So, I think, these are the kinds of what we've begun to call 'methods' which are drawn from, in my understanding, what it is to live and work improvisationally. And there are disciplines, there are methods, (so that) you can become more sure-footed, not more certain ... And each (step) is a risk – the reason the book is called *Experiencing Risk, Spontaneity and Improvisation* [Shaw and Stacey 2005] is because you have to learn about that. Risk is not throwing yourself off the cliff. Risk is experiencing the openness of each evolving moment which is also becoming as you live into it – more sure, but open in a new way. So it's always, as Doug Griffin taught me, we are always moving into the known-unknown. And it's not a static paradox of – we partly know it and we partly don't – it's the very evolution of living. It means that the endless openness is coming to be known and opening, at the same time - that's what staying open to 'we know and we don't know' at the same time is.

This rich conversation with Prof Shaw highlights what I will briefly address in the next section of this Report, namely, my research methods of participant observation in meetings and conferences and recorded interviews with numerous scholars and practitioners.

The process of participation and interviews

My earliest research encounters in the UK took the form of participation in meetings and conferences. Through my online subscription to the Standing Committee for University

Drama Departments (SCUDD) emailing list, I had learnt of an initiative of PALATINE, the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music (established in 2000 to support and enhance learning and teaching in performing arts higher education across the UK) and the Mental Health in Higher Education (mmhe) unit, Lancaster University, entitled *Mental Health in Higher Education:Linking the performing arts and mental health*. I participated in a meeting convened at the University of Lancaster that covered a very broad range of considerations:

- Mental wellbeing and ill health are concerns for all who learn and teach in the performing arts.
- Students in performing arts disciplines, like those in health and social care disciplines, may draw on their own life experiences in the context of their work. This can raise particular challenges for educators seeking to support them.
- There are interesting and well-established links between mental ill-health and creativity. Students in the area of performing arts may benefit from help to identify stressors and potential sources of support.
- Mental health may be a fruitful topic for exploration in its own right, within the study of dance, drama or music.
- Performing arts students may undertake community arts placements, for which some understanding of mental wellbeing and ill-health can be of help.
- Educators in performing arts may benefit from locating and developing closer links with mental health specialists in other disciplines.
- Drama is increasingly used as a tool for developing students' understanding (Wasylko & Stickley, 2003) with a range of theatre companies involved in educative work (see, for example, Stepping Out Theatre).
- Paid actors are engaged as simulators in the training of professionals.
- Student awareness of the specific stressors and lifestyles of performing artists may be low; and mental health educators themselves require some guidance in this area.

- Students may have an interest and/or experience in the performing arts, yet lack opportunities to explore the links between this and their future practice role.

  (http://www.palatine.ac.uk/scprojects/mhhe/)

As can be seen, this is a huge area of consideration and it was inevitable that we would not do justice to all these areas in one meeting. Nevertheless, we did have some fruitful discussions about how actor training schools (or drama schools as they are more commonly referred to) may need to more actively address mental health issues among both teachers and students. Specific insights about 'duty of care' of immediate relevance and application to the situation in Australia will be highlighted later in the Report. But it is worth noting, that in this particular research context, a statement on mental health posited by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare proved a useful benchmark for discussion at this meeting, namely:

> The *National Health Priority Areas Report on Mental Health* defined mental health as 'the capacity of individuals and groups to interact with one another and the environment, in ways that promote subjective wellbeing, optimal development and the use of cognitive, affective and relational abilities'. A diverse range of social, environmental, biological and psychological factors can impact on an individual's mental health. In turn, people can develop symptoms and behaviours that are distressing to themselves or others, and interfere with their social functioning and capacity to negotiate daily life. These symptoms and behaviours may require treatment or rehabilitation, even hospitalisation. (http://www.aihw.gov.au/mentalhealth/faqs.cfm)

This meeting at the University of Lancaster provided a useful 'springboard" for my subsequent explorations of understandings of mental health and appropriate resourcing for 'duty of care' for both students and teaching staff in tertiary actor training institutions in the UK.

Following this meeting, I was a participant and presenter at two conferences attended by scholars and practitioners from around the UK. These two conferences afforded me great opportunities to network with scholars and practitioners who have a long-standing interest and engagement with the quality of actor training and what was repeatedly referred to as its 'fit for purpose' i.e. how the training actually equipped student actors for sustainable careers on stage and screen. However, it was significant to discover that at these formal gatherings, my own focus on the potential 'abuses' and 'ill-effects' of acting training and acting practices was sometimes greeted with puzzlement and even concern. It was perceived that I was negating the more positive and, sometimes, cathartic experiences of acting. Initially, I wondered if perhaps what I had observed in Australia, and read about in acting schools in the United States was peculiar to these two continents – but, subsequently, in my interviews with specific teachers, I found that what I had raised as a concern was just beginning to be more consciously and consistently noticed and addressed by concerned individuals within the field. It also became evident, though, that there was no obvious public or institutional leadership or written documentation advocating not only 'duty of care' but also ongoing research and interrogation of actor training pedagogies and often unintended 'side-effects' of many actor training techniques.

Most of the interviews I conducted in the UK were recorded – using an Ipod and a Belkin microphone. I obtained written consent from all my interview participants. This was done on the understanding that, upon viewing the Report, they could ask for amendments or excisions to ensure their comments were not mis-represented when quoted in the context of this Report. They will also have the opportunity to approve and, if necessary, ammend any subsequent podcasts that I may produce for the further dissemination of this research. Therefore, what follows in the remainder of this Report is a montage of experiences, beliefs, values and practices – shaping and, simultaneously, shaped by emergent themes to do with the health and well-being of actors in training and in the workplace. I believe these conversations can inform and stimulate further conversations in Australia.

Actor training and employment in the United Kingdom

It was not surprising to learn that, as in Australia, there is an ongoing tension as to the context in which the best training might take place – is it through the conservatoire or through the university? A conservatoire is usually understood as a school or college of the performing arts (music., dance, acting) which specializes in preparing students for a career in performance or composition. The term originated in 16th-and 17th-century Italy with orphanages that taught music to a high standard. For various economic, philosophical, pedagogical or historical reasons, some conservatoires have been subsumed within university governance and control, while, in other universities, vocationally-oriented drama programs have emerged out of theatre/drama departments. The criticism usually aimed at such acting schools is that because they are constrained, in comparison to conservatoire programmes, by the number of face to face hours and often larger student to teacher ratios, it is anticipated the the quality of university-trained graduate actors will be lower. But there can also emerge a difference in educational ethos along the lines of the distinction that has often been made between 'training' and 'education'. In a 1995 issue of *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, Peter McKenzie argued that it was necessary to maintain a distinction between, in the first instance, learning that is undertaken, with specific roles, skills and tasks as its outcome, and, secondly, learning that would "enable people to question those ends if necessary and to propose, or entertain, others" (1995: 41). On this understanding, conservatoires are dedicated to daily, rigorous training in which minds and bodies are disciplined and formed through the acquiring of performance skills while a university education is primarily intended to nurture critical thinkers and professional researchers. This apparently inevitable polarisation (I say, apparently, because I have encountered vocational programmes where this tension can produce innovative outcomes) can, nevertheless, be a challenge for those who run vocational acting programmes under the auspices of universities. In my interview with Dr Ross Prior, Principal Lecturer in Acting and Drama, School of The Arts, The University of Northampton, he observed:

> University students, by their nature, have to sceptical … whereas it's not useful for actors, necessarily, to be sceptical in that sense – and a lot of their work is built on trust and belief. And, if you're sceptical of your training and of your trainer then you're really not going to develop your craft – it still is a craft, a whole skill set that you've got to develop.

There are two significant associations, the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) and the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) that shape how actors train in preparation for the workplace in the UK. I sought to meet with representatives of these bodies in the expectation that they might offer me some perspectives on how actor's healthcare is perceived and addressed. It should be noted that I did find that sometimes using the term 'healthcare' did create some confusion – in the UK, 'healthcare' tends to be used to refer to a person's everyday health concerns such as dental and physical checkups. etc. The term 'welfare', in the UK, seemed more synonymous with the kinds of areas I was interested in. I also came to realise that a 'drama school' in the UK is synonymous with an 'acting school' in Australia. Therefore, to minimise confusion for the reminder of this Report, I will use 'drama school' on this understanding.

The National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) is a partnership of employers in theatre, broadcast and media industries, employee representatives and training providers that accredits vocational courses, advocates for the industry and optimises support for professional drama training and education (http://www.ncdt.co.uk/). The Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) is an association of 22 leading drama schools that exists to strengthen the voice of the member schools and to set and maintain standards of training within the vocational drama sector (http://www.drama.ac.uk/). In correspondence with the National Council For Drama Training (NCDT) I sought an interview and enquired as to how they might be addressing healthy actor training practices. However, it was suggested I would need to consult with individual drama schools as well as the Conference of Drama Schools as I was informed that "[T]his is not an area that the NCDT currently engages in" (Email correspondence 4.07.09). Similarly, I had sought some response from the International Federation of Actors (FIA), based in London, as their website indicates that "The International Federation of Actors (FIA) is an international non-governmental organisation representing performers' trade unions, guilds and associations around the world. It voices the professional concerns and interests of actors

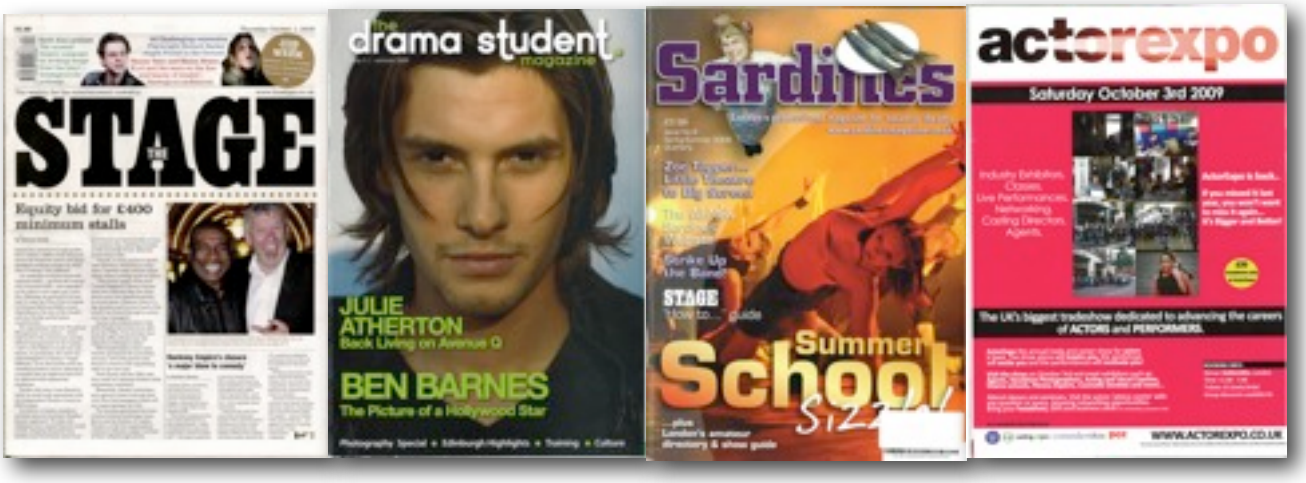
(in film, television, radio, theatre and live performance), broadcast professionals, dancers, singers, variety and circus artists and others, with the exception of musicians and visual artists." (http://www.fia-actors.com/en/faq.html). However, I was advised that they, too, "don't deal so much with practical healthcare for actors or the psychological or emotional sides of injuries on performers" (Email correspondence 1/09/09).

I was fortunate, however, to able to interview one of the directors of CDS, Nick Moseley (who is also Senior Lecturer and Pathway Leader, Acting for Screen and Stage, Central School of Speech and Drama) and he was able to give me some insight into the real-world complexities of holding together an association of drama schools – lessons that will be useful towards any consideration of creating a similar association in Australia. In response to my enquiry about a CDS perspective on healthy actor training practices he noted:

> Although CDS has got a kind of research forum and does have kind of symposia looking at some of the issues of actor training I think that is one of the areas which the drama schools have taken on separately and I think it's also an area that the CDS would be reluctant to try to open up because there is, built into the philosophy of CDS, the notion of difference in the drama schools and there is a reluctance to, if you like, tread on the toes of any particular school and the way it negotiates some of these trickier issues. CDS wants to preserve the uniqueness of each school. So I think there are certain 'no-go' areas. CDS is more of a body which has, increasingly, been a lot about sharing information and marketing and of strengthening the notion of the conservatoire where universities have kind of swallowed up and taken over CDS schools so that CDS tries to make sure that CDS schools that are part of universities now are very much recognisable as conservatoires so it's about identity as much as anything else. It's not probing into the methodologies of actor training … NCDT [National Council of Drama Training] – it loosely monitors that the course are 'fit for purpose' to the industry. It's much more

> about course design and outcome than it is about monitoring the actual processes that take place within the teaching room. NCDT was set up at a time when most of the drama schools were small, independent, unregulated institutions where, you know, anything could happen really. And NCDT was there to maintain standards and to develop protocols to which major schools signed up to and adhered to. But since the time when the NCDT was set up in the late sixties, of course, drama schools have become regulated and part of regulated bodies [universities] so, of course, a lot of the slightly questionable teaching methodologies have now come under immense scrutiny from within [the universities]. And the NCDT is not really there anymore to defend those sorts of standards … it has now become an organ which is there to protect conservatoire values against those of the Academy.

In traveling through England, I also learnt that there were some significant publications and an annual tradeshow that were available for both student actors and professionals to keep track of creative trends and, more importantly, job opportunities. There is a major tabloid newspaper *The Stage* (a weekly newspaper for the entertainment industry in the UK), *Sardine* (London's professional magazine for amateur theatre, published quarterly) and, a recent entry, *The Drama Student Magazine* (a quarterly magazine). The annual tradeshow, *Actorexpo*, is "dedicated to advancing the careers of actors and performers" and includes industry exhibitors (agents, headshot photographers, acting and vocal coaches, drama schools, fitness experts, cosmetic dentists, etc.), classes, live performances, and networking opportunities with agents and casting directors (www.actorexpo.co.uk).



I draw attention to these resources because the only equivalent publication, in Australia, is *Stage Whispers* (a monthly magazine principally for amateur theatre). Aside from the actors' union quarterly publication, *Equity*, there are no other print publications that support the networking and resourcing of actors in Australia.

Professional actors usually join Equity which is the UK Trade Union representing professional performers and other creative workers from across the spectrum of the entertainment, creative and cultural industries. In Australia, the equivalent union is known as the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and Equity is a subsection of that Association (of which I am a member). MEAA was of great assistance in arranging for me to meet with key personnel at UK Equity during my research tour. I met with Stephen Spence (Assistant General Secretary, Live Performance and Organising), Martin Kenny (Legal Referrals Officer) and Hilary Hadley (Head of Organising, Live Performance). They, collectively, provided me with some very immediate insights into what is at stake not only for actors but for the union as it seeks to support them, represent them, and fight for them, while facing diminishing resources as the global financial crisis takes its toll on the UK economy and the wage-earning capacity of Equity's constituency.

I was especially interested to learn if health and well-being were the concerns of professional actors:

Stephen: The priority for actors is much more, I think, linked around getting work … actors are very focussed from gig to gig.

Martin: I don't think there's any focus on that side of things [psychological and emotional well-being] outside the occupational health issues while they're in work

Hilary: The Theatre Safety Committee (TSC) does work on the physical aspect of health and safety. So what we have done is we've produce guidance to the industry: for example, on safe practice on the use of rakes [raised stage floors that can cause accidents and injuries to performers] that are widely available. And we have started to include those in our industrial agreements, so the focus is there but it is done within the context of producing guidance to the industry on safe working practices … the usual things are rakes, costumes, footwear, how much, how often, how long the rehearsal is, how long are you meant to stand around. That's what the Theatre Safety Committee looks at – it looks at practical health and safety issues ... Equity can do it on its own but it's of little value if it's a union-promulgated code. But it is of some value, hopefully much greater value, if it [a policy] comes from the Theatre Safety Committee which consists of representatives from employers, unions and neutral bodies like the Association of British Theatre Technicians.

A particular case in point of a long-standing issue was that of backstage conditions in the West End (consisting of 42 commercial theatres). Many of these theatres are of late Victorian or Edwardian construction and are privately owned. The largest and best of these theatres maintain feature neo-classical, Romanesque, or Victorian façades. On the other hand, leg room is often cramped, air conditioning may be absent (as my wife and I discovered upon seeing a production at The Duke of York Theatre) and audience facilities such as bars and toilets are often much smaller than in modern theatres.

The protected status of the buildings and their confined urban locations, combined with financial constraints, have made it very difficult to make substantial improvements. But it is the backstage conditions that Equity has now sought to address on behalf of the well-being of its members:

> **Stephen**: We are putting together a working party to deal with the question of backstage conditions which comes out of long-term, sustained complaints from our membership about the backstage conditions, including cockroach infestations, vermin infestations, mice, rats crapping in the make-up before you put it on, which is fairly common to a number of West End theatres – it'll give you a bit of an indication of the fairly basic level that we have to try and deal with on an ongoing basis and the employers are aware of the problem but there's a very mixed reaction. Some organisations take a very responsible view and will put their hand in their pocket and spend their own money.

> Others won't, and there's been a lobby for sometime on the Government to come up with 250 million pounds worth of tax-payers funds to assist with these problems. And to get the matter aired not only required our conference to take a position but we actually came up with an idea, in relation to the mice, that there should be the re-introduction of the theatre cat which actually managed to get us rather a lot of publicity on the question and that's one of the things our Backstage Committee's going to be looking at. Rather ironically, it seems at first indication, that the decline of the theatre cats was the result of a health and safety concern about cats spreading various types of disease and people being allergic to cats, etc.

It's good to be able to see the humorous side, but Stephen and his colleagues also clearly recognised that actors regularly face many stresses in their endeavours to both find and sustain themselves through work.

> **Stephen**: For the average jobbing performer, you know, they're up for anything that's going I mean there are some exceptions – if you spend your career in the ensemble in the West End then that might be the case that's the only place you ever go. But, generally, for actors and so forth you go anywhere you can. And, you know, it's a problem because the employers are very tough on sick leave and so forth … there's very much a culture that the show must go on. I'm fascinated by this idea of emotional trauma – I just assume that every one of our members is emotionally traumatised by the …
> **Hilary**: ... by the audition process, alone …
> **Stephen**: … the audition process. You put yourself in front of people on a regular basis and say 'choose me' and 9 times out of 10 they say 'no, thanks'. That, I think, you must develop a fairly thick skin or a way of dealing with it if you haven't got a fairly thick skin ... And certainly once you're working, it's no bed of roses, it is tough … and that's why if you have an injury or an accident and something goes wrong, it is such a trauma because either, you're trying to continue to work and deal with something [an injury] at a

> low level that's still getting at you but you can keep going, or, you're incapacitated and your income disappears.

I noted that, from my experience in the Australian Society of Performing Arts Healthcare (ASPAH) there is what has become know as a 'culture of silence' among musicians and dancers. If a dancer or musician experiences an injury, in the course of their rehearsing or performing, they often keep quiet for fear of being treated differently or losing their jobs to someone else - so competitive is the field.

> **Stephen**: ... We spend a lot of our time trying to counter that culture, to point out to people what their rights are, that they are entitled to sick leave and to proper consideration. But the fear is there – there's absolutely no doubt – and we get a lot of what we refer to as 'magic wand' culture; people wanting to tell us about something, but not wanting to identify themselves or identify the problem, and then asking us to wave the magic wand and miraculously fix it without implicating them. Of course the first question you're asked when you approach an employer or employer body about a particular problem is 'who', 'when' and 'how' – and unless you can give those answer, you are limited in what you can do [to help] … because so much, in this country, is based on the individual taking a legal action against somebody else. Because even our collective agreements are not, legally, enforceable – it's the funny thing about the agreements. The contracts are – if they're [the agreements] enshrined in the contract, they are, but on their own, a union collective agreement has no legal enforceability.

It will be interesting as I share these experiences with MEAA to see if they have encountered similar challenges with their constituency in Australia.

Training the actor for and in the workplace: Healthy considerations

Enquiring about different approaches to actor training that took into consideration the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the actor proved to be a very encouraging process as I encountered several practices sharing similar core values and expectations of somatic experience.

My interview with Struan Leslie, the recently appointed Head of Movement with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) gave me insights into how he likes to help performers move beyond their common drama school experiences of separate training experiences of voice, movement and 'acting':

> There's movement training within the drama schools but it's not holistic – and I talk about holistic a lot. The idea of it being a holistic practice is opposed to a sectional or divided practice, which is where you go – this is your voice – this is your body – this is the text. But what's interesting is that now my job exists because of the voice work of the Company [RSC]. In contemporary voice work, you can't talk about the voice without talking about and engaging with the body ... What's interesting about the drama school context is that there is the opportunity, of course, for all these things to come together [voice, text, movement] in the productions that they do, but what ends up happening is we do productions and they're [students and teachers] not bringing together the skills that they've learnt – they just put on plays. You know, there'll be a director and, maybe, there'll be a voice person but there wont be a movement person on the production.

Another holistic approach for actors emerged out of a conversation I had, during the Mental Health in Higher Education meeting at the University of Lancaster, with Hilary Jones, Lecturer in Voice at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama [RSAMD]. She and her colleagues in the Centre for Voice in Performance, use training processes with the voice from a holistic perspective recognising that both the freedom and care of the voice

are related to the actor's own sense of care and freedom in their physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. They have found that sometimes voicework exposes traumatic experiences in the actor's past but their approach, rooted in the technique of Nadine George, allows the actor to acknowledge, process and accept their trauma so that their experiences can be used in a creative and meaningful way. (Nadine George is an International fellow in Voice at The RSAMD; http://www.voicestudiointernational.com) The technique's focus on breath and energy and its unique emphasis on the vocal-ocular relationship has certain parallels with EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing), the therapy used to treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Hilary reports that students engaged in this work appear to suffer less performance stress and is now engaged in research to establish the George/EMDR relationship.

Feldenkrais training is slowly being included in actor training programmes and I sought out Dr Dick McCaw, Feldenkrais teacher and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Drama and Theatre, Royal Holloway, University of London, to explain how this might contribute to young actors being more holistically aware of themselves as thinking, feeling, living and social beings:

> [in Feldenkrais training] You learn about learning, rather than learning what you've been told and learning how to repeat it … if you know how to 'pick things up' you can pick other things up – if you only know how to repeat what I've taught you, you'll be a very admirable parrot but it wouldn't have actually engaged kinaesthetic learning, just repetition ... You know 'you' best, and certainly in an Awareness Through Movement lesson [the foundational lessons of the Feldenkrais method] when there's twenty other people that's why I have to be as open as I humanly can. {For example] let's say you have a certain response to the movement proposition that I've made and 'Jane' has a completely different one. I think that's worth stopping the class and letting the class look at how you're doing it and how 'Jane' does it. If you can do what Jane can do as well as what you can do, you've got a big scope. If 'Jane'

> can only do what 'Jane' can do then 'Jane' is the prisoner of a certain pattern and I would possibly ask you to then take over, at that moment in the lesson, and in some way try to explain how you do what you do – better than explain it, try and give her the experience of how you move. Then she has a choice, and there, if you have choice, you have autonomy and you have creativity – again , it's the space to do different things. A space is a field of possibilities. There's no space at all – zero space – if you just respond [when asked how you did it], "well, I don't know. I have no idea, Dick - I just move my arm up here to 37 degrees as I was told, 38 too many, 36 too few. " So that's why, on one hand, it's [Feldenkrais training] extremely precise, on the other hand, extremely open.

So there is evidence that holistic practices are being inserted along the margins of contemporary actor training programmes in the UK that not only provide a greater awareness for the actor to look after him or herself but also provoke alternative ways of experiencing the whole process of learning.

I was also interested to explore if there were instances of 'invasive' or abusive actor training techniques similar to my experiences in Australia and reading of American drama school practices. In fact, when I presented my paper on such experiences at an open forum entitled *Why Train* during the TaPRA conference in Plymouth, there were some reactions to suggest that what I was describing was quite foreign to those UK drama schools present at the forum. However, I did subsequently learn that those at TaPRA didn't represent all drama schools operating in the UK and that there were comparable stories of insensitivity or abuse to be found if you knew who to ask. Nevertheless, it was Ross Prior who helped me best contextualise this phenomenon:

> You will find stronger cases of poor practice and, possibly, malpractice in countries where the Method is used explicitly. We [The University of Northampton] do look at Stanislavsky's system and a lot of our work is

> guided by action but we don't take the Method approach. I think, you will see in this country, most schools will operate in a similar way to the way we do. In the United States, you won't find that as much – you will find a reliance on the Method.

And, in my interview with Prof Phillip Zarrilli, Department of Drama, University of Exeter, I learnt that it was his experience of witnessing the misuse of Stanislavsky [in that the Method, attributed to Strasberg, is derived from the system of Stanislavsky in the United States] was one reason that he migrated to the UK.

> I've seen too often, in American teaching, badly taught Stanislavsky – teachers manipulating students, emotionally or whatever, and the collapse of, in America particularly, the collapse of 'self' with 'role' and character - I find highly problematic, which is part of the reason I ended up over here. It's just tiresome to have to deal with that all the time. What I do [now] would help people with that but it's systemic in the US although it's much better than it was when I left ten years ago. Actors get so confused by the lack of clarity about the fact that what we're doing is something artistic – that there's an aesthetic to it, that there's a structure to it. And, obviously, we have feelings when we're acting – it's a feeling-full occupation which is fantastic and if you're on stage, you usually don't feel more alive than when you're on stage – or – when you're doing something like psychophysical training [Zarilli 2009]. And this is the part of the reason to do it because it's not just that special occasion on stage, it's a part of, and a daily encounter with your bodymind in the studio where you are working through a process that can go on and on and on ... you can't do something unless you learn how to do it with something that has a structure that you can repeat it over and over and over again. And it's the repetition, it's the nuance, the intensity of the relationship of the doer to what they're doing that has the potential for the excess – the vibrancy, the enlivened qualities of it being something more.

I believe that Phillip, in his practice of psychophysical acting [Zarrilli 2009], offers a very refreshing approach to training and preparation for performance that, in my understanding, doesn't encourage a striving after, and potentially, a dependency on the sporadic 'high' of performance. Instead, I believe, he encourages a daily, deeper appreciation and attentiveness to the encounter of one's self and relationship to the world and others through structured action. He uses a methodology where "one is using one's awareness, deploying one's awareness and perceiving consciousness in a way that what you're doing is not settled even though it's present to you as a structure to be repeated". He stresses that this doesn't mean necessarily digging down to some emotional, personal past. Rather he sees it as an energetic relationship to the structure of action that the person, psychophysically, is embodying – "a place where that aliveness is present to you, to the activity and to those observing you".

Struan Leslie {Head of Movement, RSC] has been in the process of introducing the RSC [Royal Shakespeare Company] to a regime of "daily preparation" rather than calling it warm-ups – "because it has a connotation for those of us who grew up with Jane Fonda's notion of warmups". He has found that, in typical theatre rehearsals, people often don't value the allocation of time for 'daily preparation' and fail to recognise that this a piece of time, at the beginning of every day, that means that when the actors step onto the rehearsal floor they're ready to work. But, more crucially, he sees that 'daily preparation' provides the actors with

> ... a physical homebase that, for me, is based around the neutral body. So that when they finish the performance they can go back to that. The idea of a neutral body as a kind of 'home' body – a 'home' body being, for me, a fully extended, fully open, fully connected body. And I talk about a fluent body … I want to become fluent with my physical vocabulary. Whether that's as an actor or a dancer or a mime, I want to be as fluent in my language so that I

> can communicate more clearly. So part of what this home body, this neutral body is, is a way of realising that and a way of making those connections.

Struan believes it's crucial to increase awareness of the body and to strive to find tools whereby actors can have a stronger physical connection with themselves as opposed to where they might 'go' as their fictional characters during a production. He gave me the practical example of a recent production of *The women of Troy*, in which the performance company got a rehearsal room for twenty minutes after each performance for the women to go to, to stretch out. In addition, he set up a series of exercises and stretches, based around the work that they had done in preparation and a series of exercises that were hands on. He made this choice for physical contact because the play is about a group of women who are working in isolation – their cities have been bombed, their husbands have been taken away, their children have been killed, and one of the things that happens in these situations is that people don't touch. So, in order to look after the performers, Struan made sure, in the cool-down after each performance, that the performers touched each other " [in] quite firm but, at the same time, gentle ways, and it was about getting back to this [neutral or home]body".

This practical advocacy for care for performers is also evident in the practice of Dr Jane Bacon, Reader, Performance Studies and Dance, The University of Northampton, who has been making use of a six-step process known as 'focussing' [developed by psychologist, Dr Eugene Gendlin, 1978) in enabling better somatic (bodymind) self-awareness in performers. Gendlin, in his psychotherapeutic practice, felt that he could see a pattern emerging in therapeutic processes whereby some people seemed to be able to make changes and really take on the therapy but that other people didn't. He observed that people who had a sense in their bodies of how they were so that they could notice change, in the course of therapy, were better able to move towards change. They could sense the embodied difference more clearly. 'Focussing' was developed as a way to access what he calls the 'felt sense'. Jane describes this 'felt sense' as

> that place, that sense when body-mind come together and there is a clear something that we go " … yes …" It's either a gut feeling or a hunch or a really strong moment of recognition that we feel in the body. He [Gendlin] gives descriptions like "You meet someone on the street. You know you know them, but you can't recall where you met them, what their name is, who they are, but there's a knowing, there's a strong sense of knowing." And so before you can articulate, in language, what that knowing is, e.g. "I met them here, I know their name is such and such" – there is 'something' that's happening in us that comes before language. That something is what he calls a felt sense. It's different for everyone and it works in different ways. So it might be a kind of emotional tone, it might be image-based, it might be what some people would call sensation, it might be what some people would call feelings.

Jane sees that one of focussing's great benefits for creative people is that it enables them to slow down and regain attention to what's happening for them and around them, experientially, moment by moment. This enhances the 'presence' of the performer and, Jane adds,

> It enhances confidence because, for me, I see it enhances the ability just to be and to wait, rather than always feeling this need of actors to take the next step, to move forward, to be 'on', to do, to do, to do - but just wait and to see what's there. And really, you know, it's a sense of like I've watched dancers work with it and when you watch them it's like, somehow, they're fully, bigger, more alive.

Yet, she is also fully aware of the impact such a technique can have on a person's sense of self. She has witnessed that the basics of focussing, in a quite structured way, can be safely introduced to young kids and if they gain this skill it can be a great asset as they go through puberty and beyond. However, puberty is a highly unsettling time, usually

exacerbated by great fluctuations in self-awareness at a somatic level. She has therefore decided not to have it in an ongoing class in actor training or dance training as a compulsory subject. She sees it as important to affirm the student's need to explore or not explore such deepening awareness at a time and pace that they feel comfortable with, without compulsion due to course requirements.

Each of these practices, I believe, offers helpful insights and some significant ways forward to develop healthier actor training and workplace practices. Yet, at the same time, it's important to recognise that each of these practices is not currently either an integral or foundational part of all actor training programmes in the UK. Nor are such practices supported, in the majority of workplaces, by managements to ensure that time and 'safe' spaces are provided for actors to warmup and cool-down as part of management occupational health and safety accountability. This is why it is important that such stakeholders become part of these conversations. As it is, firstly, in drama schools that young people learn to take on the embodied habits and expectations of the acting profession, I shall now report on matters of teaching accountability and learning responsibility that 'set the stage' for an actor's ability to survive and hopefully flourish in the industry.

Actor teacher accountability and actor student responsibility

Actors, going through drama schools, need to be physically, psychologically and emotionally fit and 'available' to perform in many different workplace contexts - stage, film, TV, radio, corporate training, medical and military training simulations and so on. It is the teachers who provide the 'learning environment' that will have the most significant effect on the eventual sustainability and resilience of the actor. And yet it is also the young actors who choose and must commit themselves to this demanding, potentially rewarding yet financially and vocationally unpredictable lifestyle. Both teacher and students shape, as they are shaped by, each other. In teacher accountability and student responsibility lie the foundations for healthier actor training and subsequent actor workplace practices.

At CSSD, Nick notes that there is a lot of stamina work, and a huge amount of building cardiovascular strength and muscular strength in the body but never in the sense of muscle bulk. The students have to be in at eight o'clock, two mornings a week, doing intensive stamina work, including press-ups and lots of running. The School would advise also any student, who is a regular participant down at the gym, with weights, not to do such a program of muscle development because it will tend to privilege one set of muscles at the expense of another. By contrast, the idea of the actor is to build everything but not too much. And complementary to the monitoring of the students' physical preparation and care by the School comes the care for emotional and mental health. At CSSD they have personal supervision, as a type of personal tutoring, built around the idea that actors are vulnerable. So it sits outside of the teaching and learning process although the supervisors are teachers at CSSD. (It might seem that it might be better to have people who weren't teachers doing it but Nick believes that it is made clear that the teachers are able to wear those different 'hats' and that they will listen to students completely outside of the context of any actual learning and teaching process). There are formally scheduled tutorials, supervisions, which happen at the beginning and end of each term but there can be many more – the personal supervisor can respond to requests from the student or even request that the student come and see them if it's perceived, by either party, that there are emotional or psychological problems which are getting in the way of the work. But Nick also pointed to the need to extend this awareness, of what may impact on the psychological and emotional well-being of students, into the actual design, implementation and assessment of actor training:

> My personal view is that maintaining a student's emotional and mental health has also to be built into the teaching curriculum. You can't emotionally 'beat up' a student in the studio and then, kind of, patch up and repair that, in the personal supervision. I think the thing that troubles me most about some areas of actor training – notably the kind of Method approach as

> practiced by some advocates of Strasberg and Meisner – is the lack of boundary. For me, the most important thing the student can learn is to understand the boundaries of the acting space and to understand that the things that happen within that space are particular to that space and do not have a bearing on what happens outside there. For us [CSSD], this has to be built into the course. There are certain rules which apply: for instance, where one is doing improvisation work, never to use the student's own name so that, from the start, there is an assumed fictional world [or] a fictional character – it's not blurring the boundaries between the student's own life and the 'life' in the space. The actors are actively and firmly discouraged from discussing things that happen in the acting space outside of the space except in a very, very analytical way as about things that happened in that space. So they're actively discouraged from having any kind of conjectural, gossipy type of conversation about what something might have revealed about somebody's real character ... Similarly, bringing knowledge of somebody from outside is actively discouraged ... from the start, we get the idea that the acting space is another world, in fact a series of worlds, but only loosely connected to the world outside and we have to be able to step in and out of that space and leave behind the things that took place in it.

It is not surprising, given the careful thought that Nick and his colleagues have given to creating a 'safe' training environment, that the Central School of Speech and Drama has recently begun to offer an MA program in Actor Training and Coaching. This course has been designed for "performance specialists interested in studying the synergy of advanced skills that are crucial to the work of the contemporary actor" [http://www.cssd.ac.uk/postgrad.php/7/actor_training_and_coaching.html]. It offers specialists from appropriate disciplines (actors or other performers, movement or voice teachers, directors or emerging directors in film, theatre and television) the opportunity to diversify by following a specialised study in the education and support of professional actors. It's objective is to enable already established performance practitioners to work more effectively as an

educator, coach or director of actors. Yet such a course is still only in its infancy as Ross Prior [The University of Northampton] observes. There is the need for a greater accountability in the skill of teaching by actors who, without any specialist educational qualifications, work in drama schools:

> I know teachers of other disciplines tend to understand their pedagogy fairly well or it's being encouraged to understand their pedagogy. That, I haven't seen in actor training. Some actor trainers are anti-pedagogical and that's an area I'm exploring and I'm also open to that – I'm not saying that actor trainers have to teach like school teachers or University professors – I acknowledge that. But to be able to teach teachers of acting you need to be able to reproduce that field, that knowledge base. How do you reproduce it [the field of training actors] if you haven't got a language to talk about it? It worries me because then you just rely on clichés, imprecise sort of phrases ... Because someone's a good actor doesn't mean they're a good teacher. And, in fairness, a lot of actor trainers I've spoken to acknowledge that. But nearly all would say that you need to have experienced it to be able to teach it. And that's fine, but there's a missing link, isn't there, namely, training to be an acting teacher. Very few places have taken this on as a serious issue. Central School of Speech and Drama is offering a Masters degree in that area, just commenced it in recent times ... Whether that's ultimately going to produce better actors, I'm not so sure, I'm not necessarily convinced of that. What I am more convinced of is that it might alleviate some of the poorer practices that we see in amongst a lot of terrific work. And I don't want to ever sound as though I'm negative towards actor trainers because I'm an actor trainer and my colleagues are and I know so many who do it and who do it particularly well. But there are times when what's going on is suspect and could be dangerous, not just on a physical level but a mental one. There are too many people out there playing amateur psychologists ... And

> psychologists, like actor trainers, don't have all the answers – it's a new field, really. And acting in this realistic way is quite new.

Ross shared with me that he had audited classes in the Unites States in some drama studios/acting studios there. During that time he witnessed some distressing practices where there was a high level of emotion and trauma being exhibited by the students. They were being asked to recall events and to link that to the work they were presenting – "trying to be realistic to the point that you wonder whether they're actually acting or whether they're engaged in another process that we are, all of a sudden, calling 'acting'". Ross observed that often those who go into drama school are fragile and suggested it would be interesting to do a psychological assessment of those that are attracted to acting. In auditioning students for their actor training programme he sometimes got the feeling that some were trying to find their own therapy, possibly by being actors. This may be a possible outcome but Ross was keen to stress that doing an acting degree was not set up to be therapeutic.

At CSSD, Nick acknowledged that they make very carefully monitored use of some of the techniques associated with the different 'Method' approaches of Strasberg and Meisner but added the caution that, in order for Meisner to work at all, it has to be working on the back of a full physical, vocal training. As a consequence, he doesn't teach it until second year. And he emphasised that any of this intense training always occurred in the 'safe' pre-established studio space:

> Strasberg, I think, is different but, at the same time, we teach it in a very limited way. It's very much about the affective memory - the Stanislavsky idea. It's about the way in which reliving certain past events can help to unlock emotional responses in a very, very structured , very careful environment. It's simply establishing pathways into one's own emotional centre, if you like. It is not about putting the actor through the wringer. It is very much studio-based and within that safe space again.

Clearly, as evident at CSSD and at The University of Northampton, it is possible to put in place, in drama schools, 'safe' practices and supportive resources (such as personal supervision) for the well-being of students – without compromising the necessary requirements of the learning environment. In my interview with Elizabeth Nabaroo, a psychotherapist for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) and the London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS), she observed that actors would benefit from a lot of psychological care because their training is intense, quite cerebral, and requires the ability to switch identity quite a lot. She felt the acting students needed the time "… to think about what they're doing [in their training] and to process things because they do go on from one role to another ... their day is crammed full of activity, and then they go home and they've got to learn their lines for the next day".

While participating in the Working Group on Performance Training at TaPRA at the University of Plymouth, I was able to interview David Shirley, Programme Leader and Head of Acting, School of Theatre, Manchester Metropolitan University. He told me that at his School they had a small cohort of students that enabled the teachers to stay aware of any signs that students may be struggling in the process of training and, through peer consultation, determine what pastoral care could be offered. But David also identified a far less discussed issue that required ongoing pastoral care not only of individuals but also student groups. Growing rivalries, jealousy and envy can disrupt the social and collaborative fabric of each year group. These dynamics inevitably surface as competitiveness grows over the three years towards graduation and seeking employment via an agent. The teaching staff might also need to intervene to support students who may feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the demands of externally contracted directors. Hilary Jones, Lecturer in Voice, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, also informed me that staff had faced the challenge of guiding students through interpersonal conflicts when some of them had taken out vigilante-like actions against a vulnerable peer who had been regarded as a liability and distraction - a situation eventually resolved by the teaching team and the student counsellor, but an indicator of the pressures that students can feel in

response to the exacting demands of the industry itself. Such pastoral care stresses also take their toll on the teaching staff of any drama school and it needs to be asked if there is pastoral support for them as well.

During the one-day forum at CSSD entitled *The Actor's Body: Image and Identity,* the forum's convenor for the day, Susie Orbach (psychotherapist, co-founder of The Women's Therapy Centre in London and author of *Bodies* [2009]) perceived a possible shift in popular culture from regarding acting as about acting, to acting as "the need to present one's self in a way that made it possible for one to be picked by the industry". Having been involved as a consultant with CSSD, in preparation for this forum, she expressed a broader concern that as acting students were coming in quite young (partly as a result of Government policy changes in only supporting funding for a student's first degree), that issues of identity and self were happening earlier. Questions such as 'who am I', 'how do I represent myself', 'how do I find the truth', 'how do I find depth' were being encountered by young acting students who were then overladen with the need to 'produce themselves' for the industry, very rapidly when they were just beginning to struggle with those concerns.

This concern for the younger age at which students were entering into full-time actor training was also voiced by Sally Cook, Lecturer in Drama and Performance/Course Leader BA Acting, The University of Northampton:

> When the students come to us, they are 18, 19 years old which is still very young. It's still emotionally very young. And I see these young people playing roles – and I'll give you one specific example - I saw a male student playing a character who raped somebody and I really saw a student struggling to come out of that state and feel comfortable. I think he became depressed. I think he actually became associated with the character for too long because they were doing lots of long improvisations in character and he found it very, very difficult to come out … and so I started to offer, because I'm not a trained counsellor, shall we say, debriefing sessions so that then I

> built into the rehearsal time a debrief at the end of the session where we all talked about what had happened. I set up online blogs and I made it compulsory for students to actually write a blog at the end of the week because writing can just get it out of your system. So they had to write a blog as well [privately, to me so only I, their teacher, saw their reflections]. And then I just made myself available for any students who after the debriefing sessions, after the blogging, still needed a little bit of help and support. And there were girls who were very good actors who were very in touch with their emotions and they could cry very well, in an improvisation, but then they couldn't go (click) 'and now that improvisation's over and I'm back to myself'. They come and they'd still be tearful, the improvisation's over and they'd still be tearful and I thought 'this is wrong' for this vulnerable age group to be going through this.

In this particular case, the value of ongoing conversation is demonstrated as a way forward without encountering recrimination for past short-comings. After hearing my paper at the Applied Arts and Health Conference at her university, Sally felt at ease to make the following further observation:

> I'll still use it (improvisation) because it is such a powerful tool but I am very aware of, dangerous is the wrong word, the vulnerability it creates … I've understood the debriefing and I've incorporated that into my classes – what I haven't done is the warmup, as in the [emotional] preparing of students for this, perhaps not in the session but over a long period of time the improvisations build. As I understand from your paper [Seton 2009], I'm seeing the need for an emotional warm-up in the session. So I'll go away and analyse what I do – it may be there implicitly but I haven't consciously thought about it.

Jane Bacon also expressed concern about the apparent lack of consideration by some drama schools as to how actor training, using twentieth century approaches such as

Stanislavsky, Strasberg, Chekhov, Meisner and others, can impact on students' psychological and emotional well-being:

> If acting schools are enabling students to do psychological work on themselves [in creating characters] well, then they [the acting schools] need therapists and counsellors - much of the work I do is about crossing over when working with creative people and therapy – so how do you do that and do that safely?

In relation to this need, Jane is aware that a lot of counsellors and therapists are not really of interest to people in actor training or dance training. She feels this is because actors and dancers tend to believe it's too far away from what they think they want. Actors and dancers tend to believe that a person only goes to a therapist or counsellor when he/she 'has a problem'. However, Jane hopes that students might learn to recognise these specialists' value in assisting the requirements of 'available' vulnerability in their craft or the development of their creativity. I will now move from conversations around training to conversations in the workplace about the health and well-being of actors.

Workplace expectations and perspectives on the actor's health and well-being

During my time at the Derry campus, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, Prof Carole-Anne Upton, Professor of Drama, School of Creative Arts, very generously took the time to arrange interviews for me with local theatre industry practitioners who engage actors for work. I was fortunate to meet with Zoe Seaton, Artistic director, Big Telly Theatre Company, who informed me of her concerns for the wellbeing of actors that she employs for productions:

> I think there's a big difference to the impact, of the kind of pattern of an acting career, on someone in their twenties to when they're in their thirties. And I think it's the continued negative impact of being reactive rather than

> proactive – simply because actors tend to have to wait for projects to happen that they can then be part of. So it's quite a passive role and I think that has a very negative impact on peoples' psyche. And I think people who stay in the business are either working all the time or they start to shape their own projects. To remain passive for that long, particularly when you're considering being proactive in other areas of your life like settling down, marrying, having children, those things – I think that becomes very difficult, not just in a kind of an economic sense but in a psychological sense. I've found this through engaging actors through my company and through my peers and finding how dangerous some actors in their forties are because actually they're quite bitter. I think there's a bitterness and a resentment quite often. (I mean dangerous, not that I've met any violent actors, but dangerous in terms of jeopardising the process and having a negative impact on the process and making everybody more risk-averse and therefore less creative.) ... I think it's about the sense to which you feel you are empowering your own destiny.

In the *Actors Body: Image and Identity* forum, Susie Orbach put forward the notion that maybe a "culture of shame" in needing recognition was having an impact on the well-being of actors in the industry. But she argued that rather than trying to deny or downplay this desire for recognition, it should be more closely examined, understood and honoured as a legitimate need of all human beings:

> … there is a vulnerability in that desire for recognition which is a human need and how actors go for that isn't a particular fault ... But the thing that actors do which I think is really very different from what other people do is that they set themselves up for rejection. And I don't know if that is an important piece of an actor's psychology – I don't think that it is. Or, if it's a different aspect of the work – that in order to do this work unless you're

> actually somebody who is constantly employed and there's probably only a few hundred people in the world who are in that position – then there has to be a way that rejection can be allowed to be felt. It's not trivial and we ought to find a way to have space for that. It isn't to be just brushed off – it hurts like hell and if you can allow it to hurt then it's possible to move on to the next thing, if you deny it then you create this kind of frozen relation to your self where you're not allowing yourself to experience that which I think takes away from authenticity. So I think the issue of recognition and the issue of vulnerability and rejection are things that somehow need to be explored in the exercises that you do [at drama school] so that they're not something that the students have to feel ashamed about.

This notion of setting oneself up for the vagaries of the acting life is similarly echoed in an interview, arranged courtesy of Prof Upton, that I had with Matthew Jennings, a postgraduate student in theatre at the University of Ulster, who works as an actor in Derry. Upon meeting him I was surprised to learn that he had come from Australia ten years earlier where he had work as a professional actor and musician for many years. In our interview it became apparent what could be learnt about one's habitual acting practice, once removed from a particular formative environment and culture.

> Maybe it's the masochism that drives you into being an actor in the first place. Nobody goes into it out of any deep-seated sense of personal or emotional security. If you're emotionally stable, you're not going to do it – because it is potentially damaging and, in Australia particularly, you get almost no respect and almost no money, ninety-nine percent of the time. You get disowned by your family, you get abused at the employment office – "what do you mean you're doing a play, get a real job!" So, especially in Australia, you have to be at least slightly masochistic to get involved in the performing arts at all. So they[employers] feed into this masochism that

> you've already got going with you, they're aware of this masochism as well – they know actors will do anything and they will risk and will damage themselves, physically and emotionally, for a part, for the opportunity to get a part. I've seen people get injured in auditions but this is all part of the wonderful opportunity that people have to exploit this endless supply of willing actors. And the masochism of the actor is regarded as something that is a necessary part of that resource ... And it's the same thing with the emotional and physical stuff – if you end up having a breakdown, if you end up developing a drug dependency or an alcohol dependency, if you end up with an injury, well, you know, that's all part of it. If they [student actors] are going into acting in the first place, that's what they're buying – the idea that, because you have this aspiration, you are therefore going to be masochistic enough to accept any kind of pain that comes along with it. And we as actors buy into that. We go – "Oh yes, I'm suffering, suffering, and it's all for my art and it's all worthwhile ".

Struan Leslie, in response to my query about the different ways in which dancers and actors find healthy and sustainable careers in the arts industry, pointed out that perhaps a crucial difference that could be impactful both for the longevity of an actor's working life and for the quality of training in drama schools was the actor's attitude to post-graduation training in comparison to the dancer's attitude:

> [in the UK] There's something about the actor not wanting to be trained once they've graduated. The thought of not doing class is kind of alien [for dancers]. We're actually talking about a completely different 'culture' that goes, actually, by the time you get to January, the second term of your third year, you're basically being treated like an actor. So you're thinking like an actor. And so you've moved already, you've moved away from your training. You're now focussed on building up a repertoire of productions, attracting

> agents, thinking about your future job prospects, getting photos in Spotlight, as opposed to [schools] bringing in practitioners who are directing work and training actors as a learning process [rather than just doing productions for the students' repertoire and their own CVs] …what's interesting about dancers is that we always teach. [It's part of having a sustainable career] – you have to do it. So when I graduated from the London Contemporary Dance School, I went straight into a teaching job - it's interesting that as a dancer you learn that, but as an actor, because there's no continuing practice, there's no sense of needing to teach anything.

Interestingly, when it came to posing the question of actors being trained in drama schools to know their rights in the workplace, with regard to issues of occupational health and safety, I felt that there was a certain naivete in currency. It was presumed that because theatre managements were responsible for OH&S provisions that actors should be taken care of. However, my invitation to sit in on a free health clinic which is regularly offered to injured performing artists by the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) dispelled such an assumption. Performing artists, who are injured in the workplace sometimes due to negligence on the employer's part, are incredibly vulnerable, disillusioned, sometimes angry and anxious about both their financial and creative future as they consult the GPs at the clinics for remedial advice. There is great value in having medical professionals who have growing experience in and exposure to the peculiar needs and injury circumstances of performing artists. However, the great healer, 'time' is not a message that the injured and therefore unemployed artist wants to hear.

Matthew Jennings also highlighted two health issues that needed addressing in the workplace beyond the circumstances of any physical or emotional injury or neglect – alcohol and drug dependency and abuse:

> For me, in Australia, in particular, I think that the main professional health hazard and the main professional health damage outcome is the drinking and the drug addiction. Although Irish people are famous for drinking a lot, the acting fraternity wouldn't drink vastly a lot more than the average Irish person – there'd tend to be a lot of people who drink a lot but they're not remarkably different from ordinary Irish people. And there's nowhere near the amount of drugs, particularly hardcore drugs that I noticed when I was in Australia, and hardly anybody smokes anymore. Now it's probably changed in the last ten years in Australia since I was there but when I was there in the nineties there was an awful lot of people with serious problems and serious alcohol problems ... the people I knew who had the biggest problem were those in the performing arts industries from high level movie stars down to people who were, originally, aspiring dancers and now just strippers, people who'd been in punk rock bands to people who'd been in a lot of co-op theatre productions and so on. There was heroin at every level – I mean, cocaine was too expensive for this kind of sub-group or social demographic but there was a lot of heroin and the more successful you got, the more heroin you took ... For me that was what was doing the most damage to people in Australia.

Matthew believes that the attraction towards drugs within the arts community might start out as a way to be part of the in-crowd, but it can also become a 'blanket':

> [some actors] realise it can provide you with this cocoon, this kind of extra sort of layer of metaphorical flesh to protect yourself with. A lot of very sensitive people, especially in a place that is so harsh to its sensitive artists as Australia, find that it is the only way or the best way they find to just get through the day. That if you are a deeply creative and sensitive person, if you've got that kind of layer of heroin to sort of 'mothball' you from the world, you won't be as concerned about the fact that most people think

> you're completely indulgent and pretentious and, somehow or other, suspect or probably effeminate and probably not worthy of any kind of payment, and so on and so forth, and being rejected on a regular basis. But I mean, even once the people are successful and they're not being rejected on a regular basis they're still having to protect themselves from the fact that to be that open emotionally is so different and challenging and therefore dangerous and alienating. I mean the way you behave when you're performing or rehearsing – you cannot do that in any other social context and get away with it. And, in particular, the idea that you might behave like that sometimes is enough to get Australian people suspicious of you or suspect of you.

Perhaps with this account in mind, it would be also appropriate to heed the warning genuinely expressed and emphasised by the highly regarded actor Emma Thompson during the *Actor's Body* forum at CSSD that "students understand the generally predatory nature of parts of our industry". Ms Thompson was adamant that acting students need to know "what goes on, on the other side [in the industry]". She believed that such an awareness would ultimately be beneficial earlier rather than later in their training so that they could go into the industry prepared and able to protect themselves appropriately.

Resistance to review and change of the way things are

By this stage of my Report, readers may be wondering why there hasn't been more far-reaching mobilisation for change but this can be understood, in part, through a salutary lesson I learnt from my interview with Prof Julia Buckroyd, Emeritus Prof of Counselling, School of Social, Community and Health Studies, University of Hertfordshire In 2000, her book *The Student Dancer: Emotional Aspects of the Teaching and Learning of Dance* was published. It was a significant outcome of her work as a student counsellor at London Contemporary Dance School and her experiences as a consultant in dance schools for over 15 years. Her research initially focussed on eating disorders and their prevalence in

dancers. She has also indirectly encountered similar concerns in actor training via her daughter's experience of actor training in London. Being overweight is stigmatised in actor training and trainee actors, implicitly, are aware that certain body images are more desirable if they want to attract work. Her broader background in psychotherapy and education led her to research the inter-relationships between physical disorders and psychological and emotional issues in training as well. She highlights issues such as the young age at which persons decide to commit to training in dance and how their subsequent regime of training prevents them from much normal psycho-social development. In subsequent chapters, Julia outlines recommendations for training practices and a training environment that is mutually healthier for both students and their teachers. I sought her out in the expectation that what was apparently now on the agenda in the dance world might be of value to the acting world.

However, she shared with me that her ideas have not been taken up in the UK dance community, although her book is a standard text in many dance schools in the Netherlands, Sweden and South Africa. The response in the UK has been to reject her recommendations because "she's not a dancer". While she has been invited to speak about eating disorders and asked to offer just 'bits of advice', her broader suggestions for educational reform have been regarded as "too psychological". Julia also expressed concern, garnered from hearing about her daughter's actor training, that acting teachers often appeared to be unaware that what they say to acting students, in their vulnerability, impacted profoundly on their internal view of themselves. She contrasted this with the accountability of therapists who are extremely careful with their words with clients, and who undergo regular supervision as part of their duty of care. I found it sobering to learn of Julia's experience of rejection to possible reform of practices for the better health and wellbeing of students and teachers alike. It demonstrated starkly the reluctance to change and the stigma attached to considering psychological and emotional well-being in contexts of performing arts training as was noted also in Dr Jane Bacon's comments documented earlier in this Report.

In my interview with Jane, she also noted that some attempts to promote healthier performing arts practices were lacking a holistic approach:

> [I]t all seems to be to do with this 'thing' we call the body. And still I get through the door every year dancers who say things like, " Well, I want to dance because I'm not very good at thinking". So there's this dreadful duality, this dreadful body-mind split which is percolating through our education system and, I think, is deeply engrained in dance – that it's about bodies, and somehow bodies are not bodyminds ... 'bodies' means not even a somatic understanding but a absolutely physiological, kinaesthetic awareness. But quite often, those dancers, through the process of training, become what we would call dissociated. [This is] because we concentrate on a particular way of understanding our bodies which is muscle, bone, alignment and it's very image based so we move outside of ourselves to view ourselves through the use of mirrors. And emotion has to be controlled and applied to the service of this 'image' that we create and that's a very traditional kind of process which I think is very tricky.

Another place of resistance occurs in the possibly stubborn commitment to conservatoire values of singular dedication to the craft of acting without considering the impact this may have on young peoples' necessary psychological and social development in late adolescence. Elizabeth Nabaroo, in her psychotherapeutic practice, has observed that

> ... these are kids who, if they weren't going to performing arts school, they'd be going to university and they'd be having a lot of time off and a lot of peers and they'd be in the pubs and so on, but they don't seem to have that … I think the people who come to school with a relationship outside school, that relationship is definitely in jeopardy because a drama school is so all-consuming, and they're there until nine o'clock at night, and so the other

> person in the relationship feels terribly left out and that usually doesn't work. And, equally, it's very difficult to have a relationship in school because you are in groups and you know that, in actor training, you're really getting into your own personal experiences so it's pretty difficult if your boyfriend's there as well. Or then if you break up, what happens? So I think it's a great strain for kids who at that age would otherwise be having more time, and freer and easier relationships.

Finally, I want to identify another place of resistance (by neglect rather than intent) among, perhaps, unexpected stakeholders who could potentially be very productive partners in pursuing the health and well-being of actors. Stephen Spence of Equity expressed to me his frustration that there could be more fruitful research done into the health needs of actors but that it required more resourcing than Equity alone had at its disposal. He would like to hope that members of the Academy might be proactive in looking for possible research partnerships with Equity for the sake of the viable future of the industry and all its stakeholders, including the scholars of the performing arts:

> There's not always a clear link up between the industry and the Academy – I mean you can get a piece of research into nineteenth century pantomime in Scotland ... which I'm sure is terribly worthy, but in terms of the stuff we're trying to deal with today it's hardly the most pressing issue. To try and do the link up to get some research on these kind of issues (health and safety) can prove difficult - it certainly, most of the time, is beyond our ability which is one of the reasons we are in the process, at the moment, of launching a thing called *The Manifesto for Theatre* which is our internal debate which will serve both an industrial and a political focus of getting our members to come together to discuss what kind of theatre do you want from 2010 on. It will be interesting to see what they come up with because there's a whole gamut of issues from training to the kind of work that they do ... Now I don't know what they'll say but, to be honest, whether their health and safety and

> welfare is at the top of the agenda – if it is, frankly, I would be surprised, because, normally, what they talk about is 'getting a job, and then once I've got it, what are the wages?, what are the terms?' and it tends to be us who say '… and health and safety' – 'oh, yes, yes, that is terribly important as well'.

Opening up the conversation between training and industry practice

My research tour has enabled me to meet and converse in depth with many dedicated and conscientious teachers, performance practitioners, scholars and advocates for the well-being and sustainable vocational path of actors. As I continue to review and reflect upon the material I have collected and now attempt to synthesise and disseminate that material in Australia, I have identified additional questions and possibilities that may become either conversation starters or starting points for the emergence of much needed research into the health concerns of actors, identified at the start of this Report as 'the forgotten patients.

During my attendance at the Applied Arts and Health Conference at The University of Northampton I attended a paper by Malcolm Learmoth (co-director of Insider Art, an independent arts and health training organisation) entitled *Developing a training model for artists in health*. It's intended purpose was to advocate for 'duty of care' by artists who wish to apply their skills into health care contexts. It offered a training program in the interplay between health contexts, theory and practice (addressing emotional intelligence, loss and recovery, mental health, group work, mentoring, support and supervision, reflective practice groups), and art-making. I could envisage that a similar model of training (substituting 'performance' contexts (e.g. stage, screen, radio, etc.) for health contexts) could be reconfigured for acting teachers to train in 'duty of care' for the training of actors, healthily and resiliently creative, without compromising the risk-taking and vulnerability inherent in acting.

The apparent 'need' or popular expectation of being vulnerable and emotionally available continues to circulate in the field and Ross Prior (The University of Northampton) observes that this becomes a life-long challenge for actors:

> [A]s vulnerable artists, they need to be supported and we need the right sort of support to offer them – all the way through, through their life. Not just want to know them, when we want them for a film part, or for a television part – the industry is very good at using people and throwing them away … and then a lot of older actors, ageing actors who find they are not getting work any more, what happens to them, emotionally, and also the physical effects on those who resort to becoming heavy drinkers, and also the classic *Sunset Boulevarde* syndrome – how do we look after our artists in the long term?

A recurring theme throughout this Report has also been advocacy for more intentionally formalised training and supervision of acting teachers (in voice, movement, acting, directing and so on). Again Ross offers some ideas for further conversation and consideration about actor teacher training:

> It would be useful to have the provision of the sort of training for teachers of acting. It does bring about all sorts of problems because there are different approaches, so one cap may not fit all. But then, in the hiring of these teachers, maybe it could be that, with a qualification, some sort of accreditation, that there is an incentive, a particular pay scale, as a bit of a carrot approach rather than the whip [by attempting to regulate a particular set of teaching practices]. You would hope that, amongst actor trainers, that you could get some level of agreement about what they would expect from one another. And I'm sure, within institutions, there would be individuals who would be able to point to others who aren't up to speed, or [individuals] who have seen their classes [and have concerns about the quality of the

> learning experience]. Maybe they haven't experienced each other's classes because everyone's so busy doing their own classes, they don't know what's going on.

And then there are more profound questions about what actually does go on, at a neuro-physiological level, when people 'act' – Sally Cook (The University of Northampton) would love to see some research and discussion initiated in this area as it might enable a better understanding about why some training approaches are more conducive to sustainable work practices than other training approaches:

> For me, when you're in character there's a neurological change so that the neurotransmitters within you are not your own balance. So you can actually feel different. but you have to then be able to return to your own neurotransmitter balance. Everybody's different. Some people can do it quickly, some people take longer for that adjustment to take place so that they can go back to themselves. And I think that's what I was finding with these students was that because they were young they were taking much longer to come to that balance, to come back to themselves And I just wondered if there was, is there anyway you can do that knowingly - take students, take their chemical balance back. I mean, I should imagine that some of those 'undressing' exercises around the circle [removing the costume of the character as a ritual in removing the character] are trying to address that. But you don't know if you've achieved it if you've got a student who can't do it quickly. Could people in the medical community help us track that? Would screening of students help us identify who needs particular help in this?

But I do want to conclude this final section with a recognition that, for me, the greatest highlight of the tour was the opportunity to witness and participate what I regard as a historically significant event in the history of actor training and, consequently, actor

workplace practices in the UK – the conversations generated by the Open Space Forum *The Actor's Body: Identity and Image* hosted by Centre for Excellence in Training for Theatre (CETT) of the Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD), London, on Friday 25th September 2009.

The stated aim of *The Actor's Body: Identity & Image* project is "to promote a healthy/robust learning environment that fosters informed and confident attitudes towards the body as a professional tool, and appropriate awareness of self within professional and industry contexts". This Open Space Forum was designed to enable discussion among practitioners from the Higher Education/vocational drama sectors, professionals from the film, TV and theatre industries. During the day's presentations, public forums, workshops, and break-out groups the following areas were subject to much conversation and debate:

- auditioning;
- training;
- vocabularies and language in the education of the actor and within the acting curriculum;
- student self-confidence and understanding of body image;

- promotion of authentic actor embodiment that values diversity and allows a flexible response to embodiment of character
- acknowledging and reflecting on the reality of current industry values;
- 'celebrity' versus 'actor' and the conundrum of being both;
- transformation through acting, as opposed to body-shape changing, in a culture that can privilege extreme or unhealthy body types
- differences and dialogue between educational ideals and industry values and expectations.

Such conversation will be continued in the UK and I will be in ongoing conversation and collaboration with members of the CSSD about possible exchanges and research ventures between the UK and Australia in this regard. In the meantime, I intend to create spaces and places in Australia over the next year where these topics and the many other themes I've raised, throughout this Report, may have the opportunity to find resonance with local experiences in Australia.

I wish to draw this final section to a close with two extended quotes, from the opening presentations of this Forum that epitomise the profound significance of the day's proceedings.

Debbie Green – FHEA, Senior Lecturer in Movement for the Actor, CSSD

> For many years, Vanessa Ewan [FHEA, Senior Lecturer in Movement for the Actor and co-Course Leader MA Movement Studies, CSSD] and I in our roles as movement tutors, who had a close-up view of the acting students, attempted to deal with those whose bodies had diminished in size and confidence in front of us before our very eyes it seemed or particularly when they returned from a long Summer break, the bridge, before the public third year. They had transformed their bodies, not trusting that it was in their acting that the transformation occurs. I attempted to take these female

students on as personal supervisor as I related to their state of being – it is a mind-crammed, but voiceless place; it is a locked-in place; it is a self-absorbed and self-sufficient place. It is a place closed off, separate to and disconnected from others. It is strangely ecstatic at times. It is powerful, it is all-consuming, it is destructive.

Dieting, food and eating is a job in itself, rather than part of the job of acting. Watching the dwindling of the full-bodied power that we have seen develop over one and a half years is very hard, knowing that the beauty of this full embodiment is not understood or recognised as attractive. The reverence attributed to the model-like student is insidious. The robust, healthy student is enthralled to the diminished presence of over-defined, muscular body – this presentation of self as decreed by cultural pressure. However much the student believes he or she can manage to control her or himself, compulsion becomes a heavy duty. My response then as now is helplessness.

David Petherbridge – Head of Student Support Services, CSSD

What is most important about this forum is the chance it gives for me to move beyond the confines of the consulting room and collaborate with colleagues to explore the complexities of the actor's body – image and identity – within the curriculum. My colleagues and I share a belief in the importance of acting. It is a socially meaningful function to accurately reflect humanity back to itself. And we'll feel passionately about those who against the odds fulfil this role and the young people who pass through Central hoping to make a contribution to the profession.

Psychotherapy has been called 'the impossible profession ' – well, I think the acting profession can feel fairly impossible at times too. It's made more difficult for the many young people who intend to join the profession year by

year, by the blurring of boundaries – boundaries between the personal and the professional, between the private and the public spheres of the actor, between the actor and the celebrity, between the body the actor has, in kilos and inches, and the transformation that is possible, the role of imagination.

Dieting, bulking up, snipping, tucking and cutting the body are now more the status quo. The visible signs of ageing are reprehensible. The Media charts celebrity weight loss and gain through magazines, TV, the internet – we are invited to intrusively regard these changes and are offered, at best, remedial psychology as a way of explanation, at worst, simple derision. A socially meaningful profession deserves dignity but I think there is much that is currently undignified about the profession.

The Actor's Body: Image and Identity project takes as one of its precepts that it is not enough to address body distress within Student Support Services alone. An institution such as ours [CSSD] needs to interrogate this pedagogy and look at how it may, through its silence, collude with wider societal pressures, generally, and, within the industry, in particular, how it [the industry] is rejecting a diverse aesthetic and becoming transfixed on surfaces rather than curious about interiors.

Today, we may not be able to change the industry or Media but we can start to have a conversation with one another that can open up a debate and an exploration of the issues that we have related before you. Such conversations are urgently needed as part of what is on offer to an actor in training. I suspect that as we start to do this – in the rehearsal space, the photographer's studio and in the wardrobe room – students may, in turn, be more able to speak, in the consulting room, about the specific histories that also inform their concerns about the bodies they have.

I hope these statements will serve as a perpetual impetus for why we need to be vigilant about the holistic well-being of actors in training and in the workplace.

Conclusions

I believe that this is a significant and critical time for the performance/media industry that depends on the skills and durability of its primary storytellers - the actors. This notion of actors being the primary storytellers may seem at odds with the commonplace privileging of script writers, directors and creative producers, but I would argue that each of these artists, in their own right, does depend on the actor to incarnate the stories we watch and listen to. Even a successful TV series has been made on the lifestyle of the extra as part of that story telling process. I have found that, in the UK, there is a slow yet emerging recognition that the health and well-being of actors is something that many stakeholders, including the actors themselves, need to be concerned with. My encounters with individual teachers, movement directors, voice teachers and student counsellors has confirmed that there are those who are actively engaged in addressing what has been a legacy of just over a hundred years of Western actor training and resultant practice.

I've learnt the value of four key areas of engagement in addressing the wellbeing of actors:

- Conversation

The facilitation of ongoing conversations, as advocated by Prof Shaw, among stakeholders (actors, teachers, drama school administrators, counsellors, unions, industry groups, casting directors, agents, reviewers, practitioners of other performing arts, and so on) is the way by which change will take place.

- Education

Teachers of acting (and, consequently, their students) benefit from having opportunities to dialogue about their practices, exchange ideas and values, and explore new models of training together. They can be best nurtured and held accountable for their teaching practice by their peers but school administrations need to provide the support (time and space) for them to do this. A review of the most appropriate starting age for vocationally-

oriented and intense actor training also needs to be carried out to ensure the wellbeing of younger acting students who have been entering drama schools.

- Research

There are many physical, psychological and emotional impacts on actors (in training and in the workplace) – such as backstage and rehearsal working conditions, 'vulnerability' on demand, job insecurity, addictive patterns, relationship breakdowns – that need to be more formally investigated, documented and disseminated to relevant stakeholders.

- Advocacy

Actors need safe places and opportunities to recognise, hear and give voice to the specific stresses, injuries, abuses, questions of image and identity, and their own mistakes of judgement – all these experiences occur both in the drama school and in the workplace.

Since returning from the UK I have presented papers reporting on my findings to two relevant national conferences – the third national conference of the Australian Society for Performing Arts Healthcare (ASPAH) in Brisbane and the 2009 Drama Australia conference in Melbourne. The University of Sydney's Media Office has arranged an interview with Joyce Morgan, Arts Editor, The Sydney Morning Herald, to speak with me about my research findings. I have been invited to make presentations on my findings and recommendations at several universities theatre/performance departments and tertiary performing arts schools. I will be making available a copy of this Report on the website of the Australian Society for Performing Arts Healthcare (www.aspah.org.au) and in 2010 will develop a series of podcasts, accessible through the ASPAH website, that will make extensive use of the interviews I recorded during my UK trip. I have also submitted a paper proposal on some of my findings to the 2010 Performing Arts Medicine Association conference. In attracting interest and support in the United States, I hope to gain sufficient impetus for a global collaboration to hold an international conference for acting practitioners, acting teachers, students and other industry stakeholders on the health and wellbeing of actors in Western theatre and screen production. Often, in Australia, it is not

until something has been seen to have global merit that it is then considered worth pursuing at the local level.

I'm delighted to have become part of a growing number of those concerned in advocating for and finding practical ways to support healthier actor training and workplace practices. I look forward to collaborations, with colleagues I have met in the UK and Northern Ireland, to do research, produce writing and develop practical workshops. I want to demonstrate the merits, ethical and creative, to be gained by putting human beings first in the belief that healthier training and work practices always 'add value' to any artistic endeavour or imagining.

Recommendations

Facilitating continuing conversations of healthcare experiences of actors in training and in the workplace

It will be crucial to look out for whatever opportunities are available to facilitate conversations (derived from the themes in this Report) among the many stakeholders who play a part in the well-being and sustainable resilience of actors - these stakeholders include actors (students and professionals), teachers involved in all aspects of actor training (including voice and movement), acting school administrators, directors, producers, industry unions and associations, casting directors, agents, venue managers, reviewers, and the public. I am presently liaising with MEAA (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance) to host, in conjunction with local actor training institutions in each State, a national series of public forums to open up conversation about healthcare experiences of actors in training and in the workplace. I believe that both contexts (training and workplace) should always be discussed together as they are interdependent on each other. I also have an expression of interest from Susie Orbach, the convenor of the UK forum The Actor's Body: Image and Identity at CSSD, who will be visiting Australia for the 2010 Sydney Writers Festival. She has indicated a willingness to be a part of any such forum on actors' well-being that I may be able to convene. These forums need to be facilitated in 'safe' spaces where participants can feel free to give expression to their experiences and concerns without feeling the need to either defend themselves or attack others. In order to move forward, we need to be able to acknowledge the errors and misunderstandings of the past without seeking revenge or compensation.

Establishing a national association of tertiary actor training educators

From my interview with Dr Ross Prior, it is apparent that there is lack of conversation around approaches to, and experiences of, the teaching and learning of acting as it affects the whole person. My participation in the Working Group on Performance Training, while valuable, also highlighted a reluctance to talk about the 'dark side' of actor training i.e. when we, as teachers, don't get it right and acting students are injured. A national

association of tertiary actor training educators (to include all disciplines – voice, movement, design, direction, costume, etc.) would go some way to create a 'conversation place' for dialogue and exchange of practices that nurture, in both teachers and students, creativity and healthy, sustainable activity. Such a genuine exchange needs to be held in creative tension with the recognition that acting schools also compete in the marketplace for students. But it is possible that a healthy rivalry can 'lift the game' of all the players in the field.

Advocating for industry and scholarly research into health issues of actors

Understandably, advocacy for change requires data, qualitative and quantitive. There is the need to be proactive in interrogating and documenting, for example, workplace injuries including depression, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship breakdowns, and so on. We also need to research the potential health benefits of approaches to actor training such as the use of somatic awareness, relational resilience, and understanding of the ecstatic-recessive continuum of performance-making. Furthermore, we need to participate in and contribute to international interrogations (as exemplified by the forum at CSSD) on issues about the actor's identity, image and sense of authenticity, and the psychological and emotional effects of different actor training pedagogies.

Hosting professional development workshops and educator accreditation for drama teachers, directors and actors

This recommendation addresses the concerns raised by both Ross Prior and Struan Leslie that, in the 'culture' of acting, there is a neglect of ongoing learning and quality assurance in the professional teaching of acting.

Designing a foundational healthcare programme for tertiary actor training curriculum

In 2009, an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Priority Projects Grant was awarded to a project entitled *A Musicians' Health National Curriculum Initiative.* The project is to develop a national approach to teaching performance health for Australian tertiary music students (2009-2011) and to draw on and contribute to the work of this project. The project is led by internationally regarded musicians' health specialist/researcher, Dr. Bronwen Ackermann, of the University of Sydney (and President of ASPAH) and music educator/researcher, Dr. Suzanne Wijsman (a member of the ASPAH Executive committee), of UWA's School of Music, with input from a nationally-based team and reference group. It aims to develop a unit based on current research and international best practice that can be easily and economically incorporated within existing music performance teaching curricula, using IT technology such as DVD-ROM and WebCT delivery. Testing of the curriculum at several partner Australian tertiary music schools will allow further refinement before the final curriculum is made available throughout Australia. Funding and expertise need to be sourced and galvanised to develop an equivalent project that engages with acting-specific healthcare issues.

Creating professional supervision/coaching support services for actors in the workplace

My research, to date, has identified a recurring wisdom in encouraging actors, especially in training, to become more somatically aware as a daily practice. This includes the development of skills, through movement and stillness, for paying attention to both the pleasures and pains of the self as an integrated whole, and using breathing as both a renewing and grounding tool for such awareness. It appears that the flow of breath and of movement not only feed the body, internally and externally, but provide an embodied and cognitively meaningful way of encountering vulnerability, openness, connection and creative stimulus. In these practices of noticing and breathing, actors are able to more immediately recognise when they need to take care for their psychological and physiological wellbeing.

I will be continuing my own practical research, with funding from the University of Sydney and collaboration from the actor-training program at Wesley Institute for Ministry and the Arts, in early 2010 to develop supervision/coaching strategies that better enable actors towards somatic self-care in the context of the workplace.

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