HOMO FUGE: DEVELOPING THE PHYSIO-VOCAL CONCEPT OF VOICE THEATRE LAB'S EARLY PRODUCTIONS (2007 – 2010)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the techniques and methods used during rehearsal process and performances of the early physio-vocal exploratory productions staged by the Voice Theatre Lab: *White Dark* (2007), an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* (2007, 2008), *5* (2008), *The Oedipus Project* (2009) and *Iam Nocte* (2010). These productions were a result of experiments that took place during training sessions from 2006 to 2010, and was inspired by an eclectic range of Eastern and Western performance practices and techniques, predominantly Butoh, and its affect on the voice. This paper will give an opportunity to review what was involved in the incorporation of previous work done by the cast in preparing for the final performance, such as drawing abstract imagery from the performance text. This resulted in the development of their own original Butoh-Fu score, which subsequently affected physical and vocal action. This form therefore makes way for an intercultural, integrative form of performance highlighting the voice from the 'inner world' of the performer.

KEYWORDS: Intercultural Performance; Butoh; Voice; Movement.

INTRODUCTION

'Homo Fuge'; the actor flees from literal reality, which is bound by semantic meaning and various constraints by tapping into the subconscious. When combining voice work in the context of actor training, and the abstract performance aesthetic of Butoh dance, one is left with many questions and contradictions. The Butoh movement began in a spirit of revolt and to essentially 'create performances which strove to break the rules, to upset existing forms and to shatter the traditional framework of dance' (Masson-Sekine & Viala 1988, p.17). In addition to that, dancer Natsu Nakajima stated that 'Butoh should reject any notion of symbolism, message, or formalism, and only express its energy and freedom' (Masson-Sekine & Viala 1988, p.132). This, in essence, is a revolt against all narrative and logical Occidental performance convention, as the majority of it is narrative driven.

The Voice Theatre Lab and its associated company, Persona Collective, with its training and performance, aimed to revolt against conventional vocal methods in order to

discover an alternate means of expression by fusing abstract imagery and illogical conventions. This investigation would take the overall principles of these statements by Masson-Sekine and Viala, and Nakajima and place it into a performative context by experimenting with textual narrative, textual form, vocal delivery and expression and combining physical and vocal crisis with release and freedom to explore control, presence and energy.

Throughout Voice Theatre Lab's investigations since 2006, two main theme areas have been developed which captured the essence of the voice/Butoh connection: physical crisis and imagery. These methods have been implemented throughout training sessions in order to eliminate blockages, and were carried through the rehearsals and production of *Dr Faustus* (2007, 2008). This investigation into an alternative method of vocal and physical training for the actor aimed to eliminate these obstacles through non-conventional physicality's, heightened use of voice and text, and abstract imagery which Butoh dance is recognised for. The *ego* is jettisoned, and the *image* (from the unconscious) becomes the main point of focus, therefore the spectator sees past the obstacles created by the conscious mind. Two statements by Tatsumi Hijikata, one of the founders of Butoh, are clear examples that signify a cathartic movement, a release and deconstruction of ego to discover self: 'Man, once dead, crawl back!' (Masson-Sekine & Viala 1988, p.186) and 'Once fallen, man must rise again' (Masson-Sekine & Viala 1988, p.187). The philosophical background to this theme stemmed from Hijikata's physical preparation, with an underpinning reference to Grotowski's 'via negativa'. In essence, the practice of 'killing' off the body in order to discover its true sense is Grotowskian, as this method eradicates the obstacle, that being the habitual body.

Defining and categorising the core elements of Butoh dance was arbitrary as the style itself, after all there is no concrete definition or textbook guide on Butoh dance. It is a vague and ambiguous concept more closely related to Dada in the fact that it is not a structured method of performance, nor does it claim to be. After all, it is structure, method and conformity in which Butoh originated as a revolt from. Toshiharu Kasai, a therapist and Butoh dancer who performs under the name of Itto Morita stated that 'the ideas, philosophies, performance styles…of Butoh differ very much among Butoh dancers, troupes, choreographers' (T Kasai 2007, email, 12 December).

Imagery is prevalent in Western voice practices with Kristen Linklater being an example of a practitioner utilising imagery in relation to voice. Some elements of Butoh is largely based around the continuum of internal and external abstract or concrete imagery, the manifestation of these images and the transcendence of these images through the body. An internal image can be inspired from external sources such as a picture, painting, symbol or any object. The performer experiences an external object and experiences the 'essence' of it by touching, smelling and moving around it. Then they form their own choreography based on the essence of that specific object(s) in direct relation to it in the immediate space. The transference from external to internal occurs when the performer personalizes and interprets the essence of the image through body and voice: the external influence manifesting itself through the body, which is released through physical and vocal action. The most influential in terms of this

component of the research is Hijikata's Butoh-Fu, which he used extensively in his choreography. This way, Hijikata used words 'to draw movement from his dancers, to unlock something from within' (Barbe 2002, p.9), however image can be much more than just visual imagery.

An image is recognised as something visual such as a picture, painting, symbol or a work of art. Hijikata's imagery was drawn from a wide variety of sources, especially words. A student of Hijikata, and dancer, Yukio Waguri documented his words and claimed that 'Hijikata's attempted to "awaken and embody physical images through words" is considered a kind of 'method'' (Barbe 2002, p.10). During his direction, Hijikata would stream off abstract words and the dancer would move these images, which culminated in a final performance piece. This shows that images are multi layered in Butoh dance: from the Butoh-Fu, to the dancer physically transforming from one image to the other, and finally the audience's perception of these images. San Francisco's Flesh and Blood Mystery Theatre explained that 'the audience cannot usually discern what this internal image is – nor should it. Good Butoh is like a Rorschach test. The audience reads their own story in the actions' (Flesh and Blood Mystery Theatre 2006).

An example of Hijikata's Butoh-Fu choreography, *You Live Because Insects Eat You* was recorded by Waguri:

> 'A person is buried in a wall.
> S/he becomes an insect.
> The internal organs are parched and dry.
> The insect is dancing on a thin sheet of paper.
> The insect tries to hold falling particles from its own body,
> And dances, making rustling noises.
> The insect becomes a person, who is wandering around,
> So fragile, s/he could crumble at the slightest touch.'
>
> (Fraleigh 2006, p.135)

WHITE DARK: IMAGERY, BUTOH-FU AND THE VOICE

White Dark, a one-man production which was first produced as part of Island to Island, a program from the Ten Days on the Island festival (2007), was staged with the aim to investigate how Tatsumi Hijikata's Butoh-Fu method of abstract imagery correlated with voice and text. Hijikata widely used Butoh-Fu in his choreography that comprised of marks, visual images and poetry that was the foundation for the dancers actions. The dancer would only physically capture, explore and perform the essence of these abstract images that would 'strike the eye and mind of the audiences' (Fraleigh & Nakamura 2006, p.52). The Butoh-Fu method has been proven to work in physical theatre and dance contexts, and *White Dark,* a text based work, was developed with the idea of abstract images being the main vehicle. Before examining the methods and techniques

used in *White Dark*, and how the images were developed, we will now take a look at the history, themes and synopsis.

White Dark depicted the tale of an individual grappling with their own understanding of enlightenment, and the struggle dealing with multiple layers of contradicting thoughts ultimately leading to the debate of the concepts of good and evil. The protagonist attempted to uncover the meaning of this by questioning the fact that evil is necessary for good to exist (and vice versa) while abruptly moving from one emotional state to the other. At the beginning of the play, the protagonist questioned the meaning of light and dark and assailed the audience with a barrage of questions that were asked before encountering a mysterious figure on a beach, later identified as Gaia, who wailed loudly as her red robes she wore blew in the hot wind. The figure, whose words circled 'like vultures' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007), declaimed 'where is your life?! Can you feel anything' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007). When the protagonist asked 'where is my life?' the figure replied 'it is here', indicating the present moment. The characters enlightenment began almost halfway through the piece when he finally understood 'what she was 'wailing' about on the jetty' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007).

The piece concluded with the protagonist answering the questions posed at the beginning of the piece. He explained 'One cannot understand the true meaning of happiness if one is in a constant state of depression' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007) as he walked slowly and neutrally imagining a bowl of precious water on his head. The bowl, explained in the Butoh-Fu notes was 'taken off [the head] and brought out forward [to the audience, with]…all the experience [that the character had] in it' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007). Throughout the piece, the protagonist moved through experiencing fear, despair, agony, ecstasy and enlightenment, allowing the audience, who are in close proximity to the performance area, to experience diverse emotional, physio-vocal states. These emotional states were anchored by strong symbols that acted as metaphors and allegories.

The two profound symbols in *White Dark* were darkness and light. These symbols were expressed literally through the text, for example 'Life is filled with ups and downs, light and darkness, until you go back to the nothingness from which you came…darkness' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007) and through the voice and body, as in 'Black. I can't see! Hot sand! Blisters!' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007) spoken with a full, grounded voice while physically low to the ground retreating backwards. This was opposed to 'Light. I can see! Lucia!!' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007) which was spoken using a high voice as the body was pulled up from the ground. It explored stillness and dynamic movement, the monotone voice to the extremely expressive voice, the inward breath to the outward breath. Darkness was also represented metaphorically.

Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura explained that darkness is a term that had become synonymous with Butoh (Fraleigh & Nakamura 2006, p.103). Natsu Nakajima, in an article called *Ankoku Butoh* stated that darkness associated with Butoh has 'nothing to do with evil, but refers to the spirituality that is mythically associated with feminine principles of softness, earth, and surrender of ego' (Fraleigh & Nakamura

2006, p.104). It was this darkness that compelled Hijikata's world. It was more of an expression of primal experience (Fraleigh & Nakamura 2006, p.47) rather than a depiction of evil. It was through the darkness that the character in *White Dark* found their light: their inner meaning. By exploring the dark side, the character discovered their primal instincts and in turn found their metaphoric light. The metaphoric and literal darkness therefore was essential in order for the light to reveal itself, both elements form one entity that work together to form the holistic essence of man.

The theme of *White Dark*, inspired by Plato's cave allegory outlined in Jeremy Griffith's *A Species in Denial* (2003), was the notion of being trapped in physical and metaphorical darkness and being ignorant of the figurative, ubiquitous light. Griffith (2003) quoted Socrates (1955) referencing the human condition: 'Imagine an underground chamber, like a cave with an entrance open to the daylight and running a long way underground. In this chamber there are men who have been prisoners there' (Plato trans. Lee, 1955, p.278). This statement reflected the speech beginning: 'when someone is trapped in a dead mouth' (Voice and the Core/White Dark 2007).

In the cave allegory, Plato affirmed that humans see a 'highly distorted representation of the world' (Griffith 2003, p.96) because of living in deep denial. The next part of the cave allegory sees Plato explaining how humans could escape this world:

> 'Breaking free, one of the individuals escapes from the cave into the light of day. With the aid of the sun, that person sees for the first time the real world…Escape into the sun-filled setting outside the cave symbolises the transition to the real world' (Griffith 2003, p.96).

The realisation, or the sun, is explained by Gaia using verse, as she tells a tale of a fictional person experiencing a similar situation several centuries ago.

The protagonist in *White Dark* decisively chose to remain in the metaphoric cave even though the thought of happiness was within reach. The extreme emotional states corresponded with his dilemma that was expressed through the physio-vocal dynamics and now will now discuss these techniques and how they were transferred into performance.

METHODS

Abstract images were drawn from the text, also considering mood, emotion and atmosphere. These images were written as self-contained pieces of text, becoming the Butoh-Fu. What resulted was a multi-layered performance articulating the unconscious through the spoken word using physio-vocal expression that was drawn from the Butoh-Fu. These layers were put into practice and developed, explored and refined over an eight-week rehearsal period.

The primary focus throughout the early stages of rehearsal was the cohesion of movements from one unit to the other and the linking of imagery, voice and body, with

text unconventionally being the least priority. The image was read or spoken by the director and explored physically, through a dance. The starting point for voice was exercising the vocal range and exploring all facets of the vocal terrain, including sound created by the inward breath, an element which is highly ignored in everyday speech. The voice was not intended to sound forced, contrived, or manipulated by the intellect; rather it was a reflection of the inner sense of the Butoh-Fu. The body's dynamics, tempo, rhythm and energy were connected to the voice. The dialogue was the third and final layer that was added, but conventional speech delivery was ignored as the words maintained the expression of the sound. The result was an abstract, multi-faceted performance incorporating alternative forms of text interpretation (relying on the unconscious for subtext), physical theatre, and unconventional use of the voice by shaping the sounds inspired by the body and imagery rather than standard text delivery. For example, one of the main characteristics early on in the performance was the implementation of speaking on the inward breath while physically engaged to the imagery, which actually internalised the meaning, sense and imagery. This was performed with an open throat, achieved by being aware of the openness of the pharynx and the slight flattening the back of the tongue, as it was difficult restricting the throat when inhaling and vocalising at the same time.

White Dark was a starting point for further Butoh-Fu exploration. The experiment was in its early stages, therefore the full commitment to the abstract imagery and the physio-vocal expression was at times, not present, resulting in some physical restraint and idiosyncratic gestures and mannerisms. The heightened sense of physical focus and proximity to audience was successful, as it challenged the notion of audience commitment and performance energy. This was largely due to the physio-vocal elements of the performance, challenging the audience to absorb the movements and sounds rather than the narrative. Although these elements were overall successful, the body could have committed fully to responding to the vocal sounds. At times, the strenuous physical activity affected the voice and breath. The blurring of sound and text explored the fact that voiced sounds were equally as important in conveying a message to spoken word. Consequently, the blurring of sound and text was aurally interesting, but at times the narrative of the text became disoriented due to the inaudibility of some words, subsequently alienating the audience. Overall the technical aspect of voice production was fair, however, more awareness of physical and vocal control could have improved the performance.

Paul Silber, one of the founding members of the Roy Hart Theatre, reviewed the live recording of the performance and commented on the technical aspect of the voice, particularly the extended range. Although Silber found the work 'inventive and certainly interesting culturally' (P Silber 2007, pers. comm., 9 July), there were several issues which needed to be addressed. Firstly, it would have been simpler and easier if the text were abstract as opposed to the current conventional narrative structure. Silber could not see how the production was experimental because the performer is 'obliged to tell the story' (P Silber 2007, pers. comm., 9 July) if speaking text. Silber suggested to 'use the consonants and vowels as a musical and rhythmic line and dance accordingly' (P Silber 2007, pers. comm., 9 July), which would place less stress on the breath and voice. The other suggestion was to separate the narrator and the dancer, however this

suggestion digresses from the whole notion of the performer obtaining a greater level of physio-vocal connection. On a technical level, Silber stated that it needed 'body sound' (P Silber 2007, pers. comm., 9 July), and that words like dark, black, shadow and even fear needed a deeper, richer quality to them. Perhaps the most influential comment was when Silber suggested playing:

> 'a game with someone who knows [the] form of dance; where you separate the two arts and…then 'sing' the story as the text written and the dancer dances to [the] song; clearly there needs to be interplay between the singer and the dancer. You could then, if you wanted to put the two arts back together for yourself (if you have the breath and energy)' (P Silber 2007, pers. comm., 9 July).

This tactic was implemented in *5*, and subsequently used in the re-mount of *Dr Faustus*. Although the essence of the emotions and actions of the narrative was overall amplified by the abstract imagery inspired by Hijikata's Butoh-Fu, what it needed was balance and control, the embracement of stillness, physio-vocal discipline and dissection of voice, text and body before combining them.

There were some key questions raised throughout the process of *White Dark*. Did it matter that the words were not decipherable? Does narrative have to be expressed in the form of conventional speech, or can it fall in the space between literal reality and abstraction, a space were sound and text blur to encapsulate the Conceptual Crisis inspired by Butoh? John Nobbs noted in his personal response to the *Dr Faustus* film, that the 'astute appreciation of Butoh's precognitive aesthetic possibilities is an excellent starting point [for this exploration]' (J Nobbs 2008, pers. comm., 22 July). In the process of *White Dark*, any intellectualisation was abandoned and abstract imagery was embraced. The text was the least priority and interiority was the main focus. The separation and identification of sound, text and body was explored further on an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's classic *Dr Faustus*.

DR FAUSTUS: SOUND, TEXT AND IMAGERY

The overall aim of *Dr Faustus* was to create a production whereby the internal image generated by abstract imagery of the Butoh-Fu, became the guiding influence of the voice and body through means of spoken word and non-textual communication. The specific aim was to increase performers ability to connect voice, body and internal image and the objective was to provide a method of training and performance that merged Oriental and Occidental performance practice and to provide non-conventional means of text interpretation and expression.

Dr Faustus, an abridged version of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604) was first performed in Launceston's Annexe Theatre on October 2007, and subsequently staged at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, Sydney in May 2008. The themes of salvation, damnation, sin and power as corrupting influence are underpinned by Faustus' internal struggle between good and evil, which correlates well with the light and dark aspects of the human soul so wonderfully explored in Butoh.

In order to identify the effectiveness of abstract imagery and text, performers were given a guideline as to how they would approach the text. Firstly, preverbal vocal expression of the internal image during selected scenes, or especially for specific characters such as Good and Evil Angels (internal), and reactions to physical actions on stage (external), and secondly, the merging of sound and text. This element depicted the full physical and vocal expression of the images in the text by expressing the sounds within the words, whilst adhering to the structure of the words in order to maintain clarity. Faustus would primarily use this element to enhance his fragmented mental state. Thirdly, the use of conventional spoken word with full expression, extended range, and full articulation with exaggerated means of vocal expression used in sections where the narrative is important such as Chorus. Performers were encouraged to use their extended range and implement their vocal landscapes in order to evoke and express their internal image.

Performers were encouraged to find their own images within the text, then move the image, vocalise the image, then speak the words maintaining the quality of the sound produced. Upon reviewing the work in rehearsals, if the sound was more affective than the spoken word, a suggestion was made to the actor to maintain that element without going further into speech. For instance the cast were to sound their image using preverbal expression and would not proceed to speaking the text. Nevertheless, the performers in Scene 5 (Seven Deadly Sins) asked if they could speak some of their lines instead of vocalising the essence of the image due to the importance of the words. The cast also commented on how laborious creating the Butoh-Fu was, as the creation of abstract imagery for each line was time consuming. A suggestion was made to generalise the images in accordance with each character. As early as the second week of rehearsals, each character was given elements that would be the impetus for abstract imagery. These images were as diverse as 'Cold. High register, yearning up to the heavens' (Good Angel), 'a body resurrecting from hell, picking up pieces of flesh from the body (affecting) the voice. No sound, text only' (Mephistophilis) and 'Image of ice, but when Faustus draws near, it changes to extreme heat' (Raymond).

The first performance of *Dr Faustus* was evaluated by separating it into three categories: text, sound and body, with each one focusing on successful and unsuccessful elements. An example of success in relation to text was the hyper-expression of the emotion and image behind the words, for example dialogues spoken by Faustus, Mephistophilis and the Angels. A suggestion for improvement was to observe the inner choreography of the text (observing each individual sound that a word contains and exploring those minute sounds in detail) and express the inner emotion of those specific sounds. The abstract and expressive delivery of spoken word was successful in relation to sound, for example Jackson's choice of using '[*A dark, guttural voice*] Et omnes Sancti!' (Dr Faustus 2008). Two suggestions for improvement were clarification in defining sounds and to choreograph and refine them once established. In order to do this, textual analysis needed to be implemented early on in the rehearsal stage. Successful physical attributes were the constant and seamless physicalisations creating stimulating visual imagery from all performers throughout the play.

Dr Faustus contained no sets (apart from a small wooden block) and no specific costumes, the main focus: the body and voice. There were no entrances or exits; the performers were seen and therefore their energy for the entire length of the performance was high. Given that the performers were the main focus throughout the performance, John Nobbs (co-founder of Ozfrank Theatre Martix) upon reviewing the film of the performance stated that in order for performers to be 'transported to any kind of imaginative zone…[they must be aware of their] own daily habits; [their] non-conscious twitches and glitches' (Nobbs 2008 pers. comm., 22 July). Nobbs' example is Chorus' introduction, where he weakens the effect by habitual swaying and wondering around the stage' (Nobbs 2008 pers. comm., 22 July). These comments encouraged the Voice Theatre Lab to reflect upon the importance of physical work, and to embark on further study of the Suzuki Actor Training Method, created by Tadashi Suzuki, and further explored by Ozfrank Theatre Matrix. This rigorous physical training was beneficial for eradicating personal habits and idiosyncrasies, generating a sense of grounding, and allowed the performer to be aware of (and subsequently) activating the imperative centre of the body from which the voice can find an element of truth.

The proposed training method and performance style was not a representation of a mixture of Oriental performance concepts and techniques. Doing this would see a mere generalisation, mimicry and perhaps mockery of styles steeped in tradition, and cultural and historical significance. Eugenio Barba 'rejected the idea of Western actors merely reproducing Eastern forms' (Watson 1995, p.133) and if Westerners attempt to replicate these styles, it would result in 'poor imitations of the original' (Watson 1995 p.144). Barba continued to argue that forms such as No theatre or Kathakali involved a lifetime of study and practice, therefore it would attack the dignity of these forms of performance to reproduce them on a contemporary Western stage. Having stated that, this investigation contributes the notion of merging Occidental and Oriental not to create a cross-cultural hybrid performance style, but to unlock the psychological imaginative realm, and physio-vocal potential of the performer.

SOUND, VOCABLES, PARALANGUAGE AND THE IMAGE.

The search for a sound based performance to contrast *White Dark* text based narrative and *Dr Faustus* attempt to blur sound and spoken word, led to the development of *5*. The one-hour production was essentially a performance showcasing training aesthetics developed through Voice Theatre Lab's Stage 3 and Stage 4 training sessions. Stage 3 training sessions aim was to identify the energy source, Stage 4 immediately followed with the focus being on vocal actions utilising the most affective source of energy found in the previous training session. The exercises were developed into 19 discrete scenes and what connected them together was the theme revolving around the sacred number 5.

METHODS

Eugenio Barba's notion of non-textual communication, vocables and Vocal Action (Vocal Training at Odin Teatret 1972) underpinned by the conceptual notion of Butoh

dance, were key figures in developing Stage 4 Training Sessions and subsequently, the style of performance. An exercise to explore extreme emotion, informally called Gargoyles in a Line, was experienced in previous training with Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre (2007). This began with participants standing at one end of the performance space, and increasing their physical expression of a given image until they reach the other end, stretching the emotion beyond recognition in order to find the essence of it (S Tate 2007, pers. comm., 18 October). Applying voice developed this notion further by going beyond the conventional sound of an emotion, therefore expressing the essence of it, like the physical counterpart. Another Butoh inspired exercise informally called Reaching (S Tate 2007, pers. comm., 17 October) was applied to develop physical expression of external imagery. Traditionally exercised in silence, this notion was also extended by incorporating voice. Members of the group circled the performer in the centre and vocally reacted to the movement/dance performed by the actor reaching for an image that was out of their reach. The scene Invisible String was inspired by the Vocal Actions exercise demonstrated by Barba (Vocal Training at Odin Teatret 1972). The concept was extended by incorporating physical expressions of internal imagery which was also determined by the external imagery their partners finger.

A scene to portray the relationship between external imagery, physical and vocal actions and energies was present in the scene called The Kite, which was an extension on The Invisible String. This scene was included to depict, through voice and body, the connection between all the elements. It was obvious through the rehearsal and performance process that the practices of Hijikata and Barba link in terms of their use of internal and external imagery through physical actions, which was developed further which was therefore enhanced by the addition of voice. This resulted in a successful performance of sound and gesture.

In a review of the performance, actor, director and voice teacher Jeff Hockley, stated that the 'extraordinary use of voice [was] taken to a level not often heard on stage [and that there was] astonishing range of vocal techniques way beyond what is required for normal text-based work' (J Hockley 2008, pers. comm., 30 April). In addition to this, Hockley noticed that there were some moments when the performers were 'holding back' (J Hockley 2008, pers. comm., 30 April) and resided in their comfort zone. Hockey also stated that 'there were at times some really severe throat constrictions, and alarming glottals [and asked] if these were intentional' (J Hockley 2008, pers. comm., 30 April). Despite their effectiveness, these restrictions needed to be addressed. Hockley continued: 'with all the other bodily things going, on [were the vocal constrictions and glottals] a lack of attention to detail, or done in the moment, or are they deliberate?' (J Hockley 2008, pers. comm., 30 April). The vocal constrictions Hockey observed were not prescribed or intentional. Tension present through the voice or body in the act of performance *may* be appropriate, but the performer must not maintain that through the rest of the performance or carry it with them off stage. If restrictions or constrictions were present (specifically in the case of anger or disgust), then they were purely spontaneous and an obvious vocal reaction to the emotion and image.

The major question asked was in relation to the actor's preparation and what exercises were implemented for performers to cope with such stresses. Overall, no performers

lost their voice or encountered vocal fatigue. In fact, the performers voices became flexible in terms of pitch and range, and developed a richer tone. They were also physically free by the end of the process, especially Andrew Peek, who seemed quite tentative at the beginning of the Stage 2 Training Sessions and *Dr Faustus* rehearsal process.

Like *White Dark* and *Dr Faustus, 5* was a production that contained no sets, props or detailed costumes. It was not a scripted piece, nor a dance piece. The performers only wore colours relevant to their element that was portrayed. *5* was integral in this investigation as it proved that a form of narrative can be conveyed without spoken word or formal textual devices. The non-conventional use of voice, such as sound production from Physical Crisis and experimental vocal sounds, was a focus in terms of the main objective of the performance. *5* was, to an extent, self-exploratory and semi-improvisational. Each new production would be different, but the tight structure would remain the same.

THE OEDIPUS PROJECT

If *White Dark* focused on how the body and voice was shaped by the abstract imagery of Butoh-Fu, then *Dr Faustus* was to expand that notion: to create a production whereby the internal image, generated by abstract imagery of the Butoh-Fu, became the guiding influence of the voice and body through means of spoken word and preverbal communication. *5* stripped away the spoken word and completely focused on imagery and vocables, paralanguage and preverbal sounds. The next performance would demonstrate the balance between abstract imagery in terms of the textual and preverbal, with the added element of Physical Crisis. In order to choose the right production, a re-visitation of the original themes prevalent in Butoh, being central to the ideas of Conceptual Crisis took place: the themes of light and dark. One of the cornerstones of Occidental drama that superbly captures the essence of light dark, sight and blindness and death and life is the story of Oedipus. Originally written in the 1st Century AD, Seneca's *Oedipus*, known to be more violent and graphically detailed than Sophocles' version was not intended to be performed; the play was to be recited.

The fact that it was a well-known story was one of the reasons it was chosen. The other reason was its themes of light and darkness, sight and blindness; appropriate elements in order to explore the antithesis; the highs, lows and dichotomies of the body and voice. The narrative was not an important factor, rather, the essence of the story, the imagery and the characters emotional journeys were to be highlighted. The fact that it had been dealt with many times in classic and contemporary theatre was more of a reason to dissect and re-arrange Seneca's visceral version to create a fresh and innovative experience which impinges on the core of human essence. The appealing factor of Seneca's *Oedipus* was also its negative trait. The text is raw and evocative, but also dense and lacks dramatic action. It has a clever balance between the poetic and humane essence of the Sophocles version, and the violent, bloody, and psychologically complex angle that Seneca masterfully conveyed. It is also more violent that Sophocles', and not

enough lighter moments to create balance. One of the challenges as an adaptor and director was to find a dynamic equilibrium of these elements.

The need to have a solid story to work with was important. In order to find this base, four versions of Seneca's *Oedipus* was examined, E. F Watling's (1966), F. J. Miller's (1917) and a Latin version found online (L. Annaei Senecae Oedipus 2008). The Ted Hughes play of Seneca's *Oedipus* (1969) was also close at hand as a reminder to be dramatically relevant and concise. One thing that was appealing about referencing Hughes's *Oedipus* was his simple, yet affective use of dramatic language. The ritualistic quality of the play was due to its sparse text and action driven dialogue. The idea was not to replicate any of those translations, but to capture the essence of what Seneca was trying to say.

After completing several drafts, the text was submitted, along with Voice Theatre Lab's premise and a brief outline of the intentions for the production to dramaturge Peter Matheson. Matheson indicated that the script and the premise did not correlate as they had two different objectives, the script being very conventional and narrative driven which would take many months of rehearsal resulting in an extremely long production if the performance style was to be imposed on it. The premise, on the other hand, lied in the realm of abstraction and performance art. It was advised that the text needed to be abandoned. It was important to look at what Seneca was actually trying to say, according to Peter Matheson. Seneca just used the words to put the message across, but what was happening deep inside, what was underlying the text? What was underneath the intellectualisation? Was is necessary to look at what the author was trying to say, and explore that through physio-vocal means, rather than text based narrative?

The notion of turning *The Oedipus Project* and *Iam Nocte* into a piece if performance art or a preverbal piece like *5* was not exactly how it was imagined, however, the eight and final version of the work in progress script found a workable balance between abstract imagery, improvisation and spoken text. It also explored the past and present occurring together, experimenting with temporal shifts rather than focusing on the linear dramatic action that was used in the three English translations examined.

The Oedipus Project was a surreal exploration of Oedipus's mind. The purposefully fragmented timeline suggested that Oedipus was in the present moment, or in the not too distant future reflecting upon moments leading up to his self-exile. Oedipus's fantasy life was shown in the interplay between himself and Laius's spirit, who was brought back from the dead by Tiresias. An elaborate reconstruction of the past, especially when the dramatisation of Oedipus slaying his father at the crossroads, or solving the riddle of the Sphinx, was indeed agonizing for Oedipus. There were temporal shifts (two time frames in one scene, for example) and a blur between past and present. There were also no distinct changes in scenes (apart from the prologue at the very beginning), and seamless transitions were implemented to evoke a sense of fluidity and temporal fusion, an experience rather than a narrative exercise employed to take the audience on a spiritual and metaphysic journey. It also intensified the performers state of physio-vocal Crisis, having to maintain various physical states during transitions from one image to the next. The rejection of the conventional notion character allowed

the performers to organically transform from one image to the next without having to focus on certain psychological attributes. The set was also kept to a minimum to enforce the performers physio-vocal actions.

METHODS

Stage 5 of the Training Sessions was crucial in terms of exercising the methods and physical and vocal requirements for the work in progress: *The Oedipus Project*. The entire focus of Stage 5 was to use the core, and Centre, while exploring internal and external imagery. John Nobbs stated that actors should be able to speak in any position (J Nobbs 2010, pers. comm. 25 January). This statement reinforces the fact that actor training, particularly voice training should be rigorous enough to prime the performer for any physio-vocal challenges. Even standing or walking should contain some form of crisis to increase performers concentration and stamina. At no point were the performers standing in neutral or walking conventionally throughout *The Oedipus Project*. Attention was placed on their physical Centres at all times, and their core was challenged by intentionally putting it off balance.

The performances on November 20 and 21, 2009 was evaluated, and the following are some major observations of the production. Prior to the prologue, a spotlight illuminated Oedipus's face, which was facing a large suspended mask. In that moment, which lasted several seconds, it would have been interesting to see the journey that Oedipus takes from birth to banishment, or from plague to banishment through his facial mask alone. Extensive phonetic imaging needed to be explored even further (i.e., connecting physical imagery to each phonetic sound uttered), especially when the Chorus spoke Latin, a language that symbolised the archaic, mystical word. Latin is a language which the performer can easily emphasise individual vowels and consonants. The postverbal treatment later explored in scene 7 from *Iam Nocte* developed this notion. The specifics regarding sound should have been adhered to, especially with the emotional context of the vowels and the logical context of the consonants. The physicalisations in terms of gesturing the image needed to be addressed, especially in the states of Crisis (particularly the Sequencing), so that it did not seem as though they were displaying a sequence of rigid exercises, rather a gestured expression of the internal image through these physical states with absolute purpose.

POST-SHOW REFLECTION

After witnessing the final work in progress performance, it was clear that the majority of the spoken word that was *consciously* spoken in a very manipulative way (e.g., extra-daily) could easily be jettisoned, or revisited in a different way. If spoken, it should come from the Centre without any conscious manipulation. A sense of physical and vocal presence was lost throughout most of the production, as there was an obvious blur between conscious manipulation of sounds and the organic reactions to specific imagery. An example of the progression is as follows: *physicalising* the imagery (from either internal or external sources), allowing the voice (*sound* alone) to connect with the body and adding *words*, but using the quality of the voice to dominate rather than

meaning. This is where the progression stopped in *Dr Faustus* and *The Oedipus Project*. This further addition was considered for the re-mount, *Iam Nocte*: completely stretching or condensing the vowels and consonants of the particular word(s), in what could be called the new definition of *extra-daily spoken word*, or the hyperextension of text (later classified as postverbal). The result may be dialogue that cannot be *literally* comprehended, but *figuratively* understood.

This proposed amendment may not work for an entire line of text. A single figurative word in that line could be explored, it can be stretched out, condensed, repeated and even reversed. This way, audiences can accept it as abstract sound rather than an infusion of noise that may be identified as words. This could in fact confuse the audience. The application of sound and text in the re-mount, *Iam Nocte*, can be categorised in four sections: breath (inward, outward, gasps), sound (primordial, preverbal), extra-daily spoken word (the hyperextension of text and expression of individual sound within the spoken word, *postverbal*), conventional text (for narrative purposes), and foreign and invented languages.

IAM NOCTE

The revised production of *The Oedipus Project,* which was performed on December 9 - 11, 2010, was not a remounting of the work in progress with some minor changes; it was a complete reworking of the production. The final performance, *Iam Nocte* (being the first two words of Seneca's *Oedipus* loosely translated as 'now darkness is driven off' (Mastronarde 1970, p.222)), focused less on the well-known narrative, and more on the emotional and core essence of Seneca's interpretation of Oedipus's character. Oedipus sensed that 'he [was] to blame for the horrors of the plague' (Mastronarde 1970, p.222) therefore his conscience is filled with guilt and fear. The opening Latin text, according to Donald J Mastronarde, 'is a projection of Oedipus' doubt over the cause of the plague and over his own god-ordained guilt' (Mastronarde 1970, p.223). Exploring those human emotions: guild, fear and doubt, rather than a prescriptive, narrative text, became the inspiration and constituted the main elements of the restaging.

One of the major changes was the minimisation of Creon, and the merging of Chorus with a new encompassing element, The Plague. It was in Creon where we originally saw a gradual rise and fall of power, offering a more a more rounded character with a clear journey and he also represented the real power of the human law, and the need for a stable and orderly society. With this major condensing of Creon's character, more focus would be placed on The Plagues hold of Cadmus and Oedipus' consciousness. The Plague, being physically present on stage throughout the entire performance, portrayed the fact that the pestilence and widespread affliction is prevalent amongst the people of Cadmus. The Chorus would now seamlessly merge into The Plague itself, shifting forms and fluidly moving from Citizens to The Plague and various other elements in order to represent the fragile and unstable state of Cadmus and Oedipus' mind.

METHODS

The revisiting of textual use and extension of image-based passages altered the entire shape of the performance text. The further exploration and implementation of the preverbal and postverbal applications meant that the majority of the English dialogue needed to be cut, and more Latin was to be introduced. Lengthy textually dense passages were also cut to give way to more exploratory physio-vocal praxis, and when passages were retained, performers were encouraged to develop preverbal or postverbal responses. To introduce more non-textual elements, *The Dance of Bacchus,* the Epilogue of *The Oedipus Project*, was reintroduced. Originally embedded in a monologue in Seneca's version, *The Dance of Bacchus* expressed the frenzied passion of freedom, a release of energy and exhilarating emotions. Instead of the story being told, it was expressed through physio-vocal action and positioned at the end of the performance, allowing the opportunity to explore a range of training methodologies and how they transfer into performance.

Previous methods were carried through from *The Oedipus Project*, notably the Sequencing, a form of Physical Crisis that portrayed individual physical reactions to a range of juxtaposing internal images, and Flocking, which portrayed group cohesion and a collective physio-vocal experience. The concept of The Kite was also further developed, expanded and explored. Perhaps one of the most influential and current additions was the work influenced by the FSPK, in particular, a new exercise called Geology, based on their Teddy Bear exercise. The original FSPK exercise had participants place both hands on the upstage wall and at a certain cue (in Ozfrank Theatre Matrix's instance, after the first 16 counts of Slim Whitman's *Rose Marie*), transferred their attention to a teddy bear placed downstage and progressed towards the bear placing their focus and attention to their Centre, the audience and the bear. Geology, on the other hand, used performers bodies as both a starting and finishing point rather than a wall, creating a heightened level of physical connection. The exercise was implemented in scenes where a collective consciousness was explored, such as Chorus/Plague.

CONCLUSION

The two main aesthetics that was solidified as a result of *Iam Nocte* was the production-focused attributes, which included the structures, textual choices and overall aesthetics, and secondly the performer-focused attributes. The conventional theatrical narrative structure was evident in *White Dark* and *Dr Faustus*, but ignored in *5*, which contained self-contained vignettes, acting as their own 'moments'. It seemed as though the textual narrative had a strong hold on *The Oedipus Project*, therefore hindering the physio-vocal potential of the performer, which impeded on the expression of preverbal sound. *Iam Nocte* was neither a narrative exploration of the Oedipus story, or a completely non-verbal production filled with vocal sound-scapes. It was a physio-vocal exploration that was abstract and visceral in terms of the unconscious exploration of voice and body via using Seneca's *Oedipus* as a template.

Iam Nocte borrowed, and re-codified elements from *The Oedipus Project* and previous training methods, while incorporating new methods inspired by the FSPK. Several examples, like The Invisible String, was developed into Conversational Kites and the expression of internal imagery through voice and body in Scene 6 where Oedipus scanned the plague-ridden landscape. The carnage is expressed through his body and voice, while the Chorus/Plague Flock. New aspects were general specificity and concentration of the walks (a combination of Butoh's neutral walk and Suzuki's Tenteketen), and Geology. The Swipe, a new concept, was taken from the FSPK's original Bacon exercise where the participants 'swipe' their face with their right hand, and the face morphs into whatever position the hand moves to, the face being like malleable clay or plasticine. The Swipe was extended to include the whole body with full vocal reactions, and instead of their own hands, other bodies swiping near them could also manipulate their physio-vocal instrument, signifying transformations not created by the individual, but created by external forces. A final reoccurring element in *Iam Nocte* was the action of trampling. The notion of trampling or 'running over' was put in place to show that in fact, nature, or powerful external forces beyond man's control, cannot be tamed. They in fact control the characters and there is nothing they can do to directly change or stop these natural forces. This is representative of Oedipus's inability to control his fate. *Iam Nocte* saw the codification and refinement of past and current practices, seamlessly integrating training (in which exercises were given performative context), rehearsal and performance.

This investigation also cannot ignore the boundless therapeutic benefits of the work that is indeed worthy of investigation. Paul Newham, a therapist who uses voice and movement as a therapeutic tool, declares that preverbal, primordial sounds allows the patient to recover and unearth that very organic essence which has been suppressed. Newham, maintained that:

> 'During the…(therapeutic voicework undertaken) the client often appears to vivify and reanimate an earlier time in our history and evolution as sounds emerge which seem of mythical proportion: piercing screeched, bellowing sobs, spirited cries, beauteous and angelic melodies of glee as well as crude implorings of despair' (Newham 1998, p. 143-144).

Like Roy Hart, Newham believes that voice work provides the key for the patient to rediscover his or her mysterious entity, an inner voice through improvisations and non-verbal expressions, an inner voice that has been profoundly affected by past circumstances, personal trauma and literal reality. This profound area, as Hart mentioned in 1964, is in need of study and since then, a tremendous amount of research on the voice has been made. Jacqueline Martin stated that there has been much neglect in the area of voice, and this investigation aims to maintain the view that voice is indeed an immensely important tool, a tool that has been neglected, and that physical and conceptual crisis, as opposed to freedom, relaxation and textual, 'literal reality', can benefit the voice and allow it to flourish and reveal its many colours and nuances.

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