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How then to act?

A Performance as Research investigation into the potentials of expanding an actor's agency.

ROSS BRANNIGAN

To my beloved wife Kerynn and my daughters Grace and Millie.

This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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September 10, 2018

Abstract

This thesis investigates how to act in a type of theatre that honours the traditions of psychological realism and heightened Shakespearian acting and also accommodates the incorporation of a multiplicity of mediatised forms. The combination of these elements has rarely been addressed in theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand and, in order to find acting techniques that might be valuable in intermedial-realist theatre, a Performance as Research project was undertaken. The process of making the play was designed to facilitate solutions by disrupting and complicating existing assumptions about the place of mediatised elements in theatre and the agency traditionally afforded to actors. This involved expanding the actor's traditional agency to include collaborating throughout a process of writing, designing, directing, making and performing a play. The play, *Foolish Prating Knave*, was developed through seven iterative experiments with a narrative devised around the themes of the inquiry. The research was situated within my own practice with the aim of working towards insights that might aid actors in Aotearoa New Zealand in extending their practice to find ways of working with multimedia or intermedial elements while honouring traditions of psychological realism and heightened style prevalent in theatre in this country.

KEYWORDS:

Acting
Agency
Performance as Research
Collaboration
Intermedial-realist theatre

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly acknowledged) nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

ROSS BRANNIGAN, SEPTEMBER 10, 2018

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ROSS BRANNIGAN, SEPTEMBER 10, 2018

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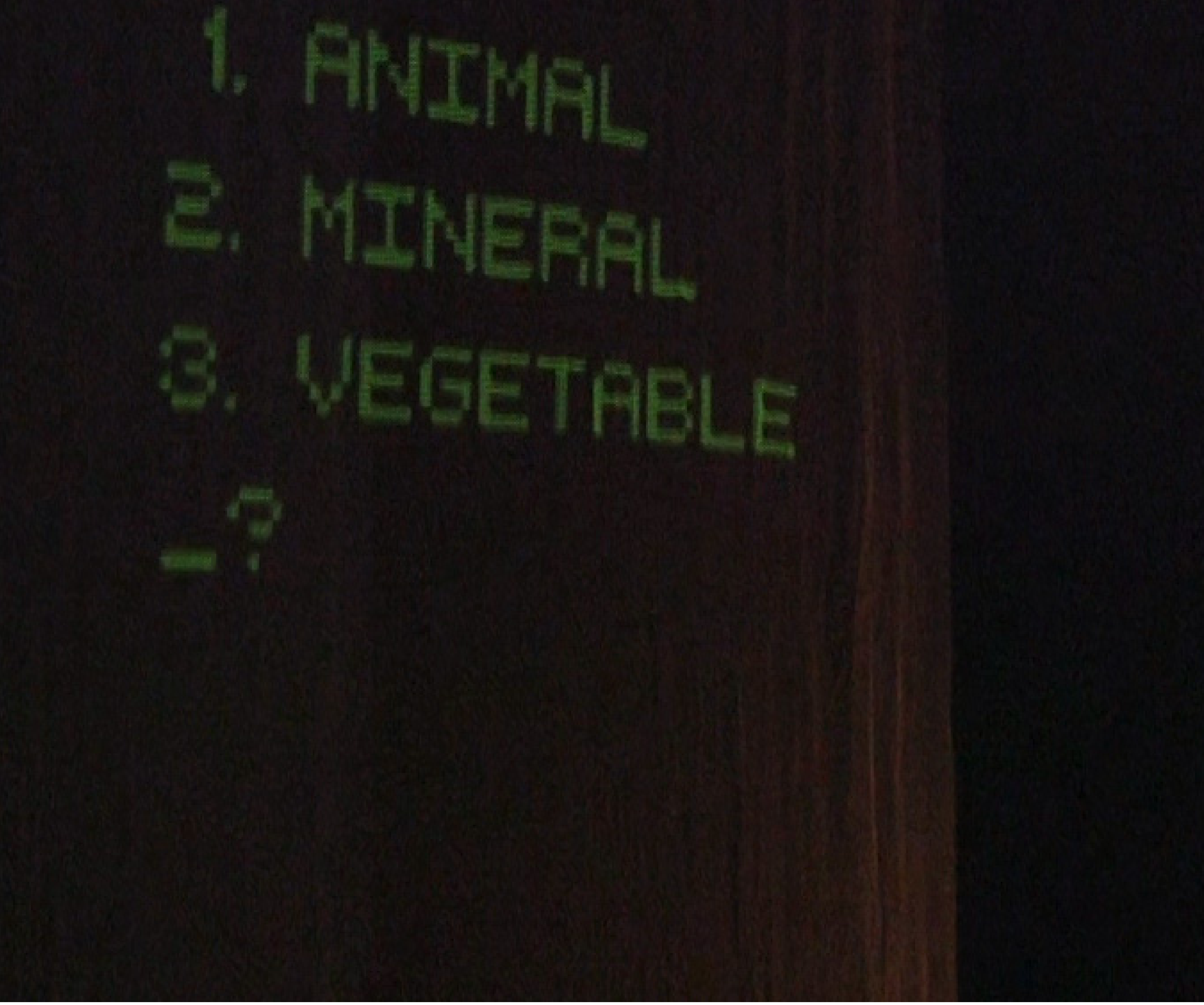
Ethics approval and consents

This research received approval from the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on November 10, 2014, for a period of three years until November 10, 2017.

ETHICS APPROVAL NUMBER: 14/329

All research was conducted in keeping with the regulations and guidelines of the approval.



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1. ANIMAL
2. MINERAL
3. VEGETABLE
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is located within my theatre-making practice as an actor in Aotearoa New Zealand. In order to discover how best to act in a form of intermedial-realist theatre I developed a creative production through an iterative series of performance experiments. In other countries, the combination of realist acting with the many variations of the intermedial form may not be the norm but it is something that deeply interests me in my practice. This practical approach to the research stems from my commitment as an actor researcher. To delve deeply into the topic I chose and complicate the tasks involved in order to force myself to strive for solutions. Sequential reflection, adjustment, refinement and further deliberate complication formed the basis of my methods. This approach may be seen as an evolution of the rehearsal process of theatre.

While observing my teenage daughter I noted that she is capable of dividing her attention between television, social media and internet video. She operates intermedially and navigates three screens at once. In order to find out how to act in theatre that also has multiple media I needed to physically and metaphorically position myself in the space between disparate screens and narratives. My acting technique needed to make the character I was playing connective in order to facilitate a sense of the interrelation of the spaces for the audience. I needed to act organically with and between the media just as my daughter was able to seamlessly traverse multiple virtual worlds. In order to determine how to achieve this I sometimes complicated the theatre playing space by having screens and stories disconnect and by stranding myself within an awkward liminality.

I designed a series of performance experiments to lead me towards the goal of developing a better understanding of how to approach or modify realist acting to accommodate mediatised elements in a dramatic play. At first I explored issues of using multiple media to tell a theatrical story and experimented with the idea of approaching mediatised elements in a similar way as I would with a live actor. Furthermore, I found it fruitful to extend the agency of the actor to engage with and control the media. Extending this agency and collaborating in all aspects of theatre production, led to a wide range of discoveries about the value and ability of an actor to contribute to the theatre making process.

The research seeks to disrupt traditional roles and collaborations by expanding the agency and scope of the actor. This is approached by consciously bringing an actor's perspective to bear on other nonperformative theatre-making disciplines. The thesis focuses on a specific form of theatre within Aotearoa New Zealand that integrates digital media elements, character and story to dramatic effect. The potential of the expanded actor's role has been explored within the paradigm of Performance as Research. The thesis therefore incorporates both a body of practice and this exegesis.

The thesis asks "What contributions might I, as an actor, make to the wider theatre-making process given expanded agency and a focus on refining acting techniques in a highly technologised form of dramatic theatre?"

The research has refined its thinking through the implementation of and reflection upon seven iterative experiments. This trajectory has culminated in the development and production of a play, *Foolish Prating Knave*. The process has creatively explored the positioning of the actor's self, empathy, and what it means to act within the context of the "both-and"[1], of intermedial-realist theatre.

I have woven together three strands of knowing that have enabled me to expand the confidence necessary to create and perform the thesis' culminating work: *Foolish Prating Knave*. These ways of knowing are tacit and embodied, critical reflection and knowing that exists in related theory and practice. The weaving of these strands has enabled vulnerability, playfulness, discovery and unconditional engagement with the given circumstances.[2]

The thesis is framed by concepts of the actor's self, process, and agency. Thus, it positions[3] a reflective and reflexive actor-centric response to the research question.

Performance and the thesis

I am an actor. This role traditionally has a limited agency to participate within

[1] Drawing on the writing of Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender, and Robin Nelson (2010), I use the term "both-and" in this thesis to mean that something new arises in the play between media. It may be that the audience appreciates that one medium is live and another is digital and that the play between them creates a hybrid relationship or that the interplay leaves a cognitive gap for them to fill. Within the combination there is a sense of both the individual media and the new interrelationship.

[2] Given circumstances refers to all aspects of the script, design and the choices that the actor makes when analysing the script.

[3] The word thesis is derived from the Greek word θέσις (thésis) meaning a proposition, positioning, setting down, or placing (Soanes & Stevenson, 2008, p. 1497).

some collaborative theatre-making processes. However, being an actor also affords a unique perspective from which to contribute. The thesis is located within contextualised performance practice and it endeavours to speak to theatre practitioners in their own language: a language that is embodied and dramatic. I believe that although the opening up of process and form brings with it challenges, an explicit reflection upon, and unpacking of, an actor's experience may offer perspectives on both what is performed and how it is conceptualised.

The language of performance seeks to engage an audience and the actor on both conscious and unconscious levels. Performance is a form of storytelling designed to provoke responses that are variously emotional, visceral and cognitive. An important aspect of the performer-audience transaction (and of this thesis), is that performance-driven investigation should also initiate discourse, such that we follow "reverberations that trail in [the] wake" of what is experienced (Mercer and Robson, 2012, p.11). David Saltz (2006) argues that the performance of a play generates meaning, and the response and discussion it initiates are a constituent part of the event. He argues:

> The recognition that the performance event is a vital site for generating meaning, rather than merely for illustrating the meaning of pre-existing texts, is now deeply entrenched within theatre studies. More significantly, so too is the recognition that the performance event itself is constituted, not simply by acts performed on stage (or wherever the performance occurs), but equally by acts of spectatorship and subsequent acts of critical and historical reflection disseminated in the popular press and through scholarly discourse ... (Saltz, 2006, p.ix).

This research however is not an audience reception study. It is constructed around the actor's discrete perspective during the theatre-making process and performance. Its focus is on the actor's agency, critical reflection and creative response across iterations of embodied experimentation.

Context of the inquiry

Given that a consideration of theatre, in its international sense, encompasses an expansive, multivarious and ever changing form, I have chosen to locate this thesis specifically within the context of my experience as an actor in Aotearoa New Zealand, focusing on two[4] major strands of influence in mainstream theatre in this country. The first is psychologically realist theatre (and acting) and the second is an appreciation of the heightened classical style of Shakespeare.

This is not to say that theatre in this country has not experienced other influences that have inspired some experimentation. Marc Maufort (2007) characterises theatre in this country as an art form determined to perform its identity and, in so doing, contribute to the building of a sense of that collective national identity through experimentation with content and form. David O'Donnell (2007) suggests that this process began as a concern for a new Pacific identity, expressed through hybridised themes and theatrical styles from Polynesia, Europe and Asia that were in opposition to the colonial past. However, he noted that the theatre was comprised of multiple, evolving identities and that the process would therefore be ongoing. While these hybridised forms have emerged, professional theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand is arguably still dominated by a tradition of realism and classical acting as evidenced by the persistence of realist writing (O'Donnell, 2007) and the continued popularity of Shakespeare.

---

[4] Arguably a major strand is the historical and growing impact of indigenous Māori performing arts. However, constraints of time, space and the experience of my own practice do not allow a depth of consideration of this strand in this thesis.

As Murray Edmond (2007) proposes, theatre[5] in Aotearoa New Zealand has developed from its English colonial roots through experimentation by companies such as Theatre Action and Amamus in the 1970s and early 1980s. These theatre groups were influenced by Jacques Lecoq and Jerzy Grotowski respectively. Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) suggests that internationally, postdramatic influences have challenged the foundation of traditional theatre, including Aristotelian concepts of character and narrative, and this has liberated the process of creating theatre. David Fenton (2007)[6] proposes that "de-representational performance is a central stylistic quality of postdramatic form" (p. 3). Thus, the form is at odds with the style of realist acting that is central to my practice. In my experience, these international shifts have remained on the periphery of mainstream theatre in this country.

Theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand serves as an appropriate site for this inquiry for several reasons. It is a unique and relatively small location that has an evolving national identity and is not fully representative of the British, European or indeed any other theatre tradition (Maufort, 2007). While there have been experiments with postdramatic theatre here, I would argue that mainstream audiences in particular are generally unfamiliar with the form. Lisa Warrington's extensive Theatre Aotearoa database, a collection of historical references to New Zealand theatre, has only one production linked to the word "postdramatic"[7] and none to "intermedial". According to Suzanne Little (personal communication, June 16, 2017) most postdramatic work in Aotearoa New Zealand is performed and studied within the university theatre department and, for example, Gaye Poole (2010) describes her use of postdramatic texts at Waikato University. While the use of multimedia elements has been growing in Aotearoa New Zealand, little has been consciously framed as postdramatic or intermedial. As Edmond (2007) observes, the impetus toward experimental and counter-cultural theatre in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s is better characterised as autonomous theatre. Lehmann (2006), in his definition of the postdramatic describes a shift in theatre away from narrative and character that privileges the "'phenomenology of perception' marked by an overcoming of the principles of mimesis and fiction" (p.99). It would seem that this shift has not been marked in mainstream theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, due to the prevalence of productions informed by a wide variety of cultures, forms and styles, the general audience in Aotearoa New Zealand is attuned to the potentialities of changes to traditional forms. My past experience and observation would suggest that the use of media elements in theatre productions is widespread but not in deeply integrated and intermedial ways. Projections, for example, might take the place of scenery or be rooted in the world of the play. It is not uncommon to see an image on a screen representing a background landscape or a television broadcast. However, it is more unusual to see projections evocative of a state of mind or to see characters interacting where one is a live and embodied stage presence and another is a mediatised projection. The focus of my project is on the more complex integration of multimedia elements combined with a style of realist acting. I refer to this as intermedial-realist theatre. The term is defined in more detail later in this chapter.

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[5] Mark Derby and Briar Grace-Smith (2014) propose that indigenous performing art forms in Aotearoa New Zealand, such as kapa haka (an art form where groups stand in rows to perform traditional Māori dances with singing and chanting), storytelling, dance, music and games were well established and culturally significant before European settlers brought English forms of theatre to the country.

[6] Fenton's thesis and especially his subsequent paper on an intermedial theatre research project, The Empty City (2010) provided a useful example of eclectic methods for a practice-led research project. Fenton uses the de-hierarchisation of media elements (after Lehmann, 2006) as a goal in understanding the form. However, the focus of my research was the actor's process.

[7] http://tadb.otago.ac.nz , An English play by Martin Crimp, performed at Allen Hall, Otago University in 2013 and described as "a postdramatic" play featuring "Seventeen scenarios for the theatre".

Aotearoa New Zealand also has a small population base and actors need to be versatile to ensure a continuity of work. In my experience, it is commonplace for actors to work across disciplines, with many doing voice work, theatre, television drama, cinema, short films, improvisation and so on. This means that many actors have experience performing in diverse media forms. They have understandings and skill sets based on wide-ranging experience. Furthermore, the casting process in Aotearoa New Zealand (given its geographical location) has adapted to the difficulty of auditioning for international projects through the increasingly common practice of self-taping. This involves actors recording themselves on video and audio in scenes to be sent to casting agents. Likewise, audio auditions or even voice work can be carried out remotely once the actor owns basic and affordable equipment such as a laptop, microphone, camera and media editing software. Accordingly, it is not unusual for actors to have well developed media production skills. Actors also tend to make good use of the networking capabilities of social media, for example, one of many Facebook pages set up by actors, *Auckland Actors Assemble,* has a membership approaching 4000.[8] This means that because of the country's isolation, small population base and varied work opportunities, actors are arguably well positioned to experiment with and contribute to an intermedial theatre production.

THE HEIGHTENED STYLE OF SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

The thesis draws upon and expands a personal interest in Shakespeare. There are two reasons for this. First, the originators of realism were inspired by the proto-psychological complexity of Shakespeare's characters and his work epitomises a combination of heightened language and observation of human behaviour (Benedetti, 2005). The seemingly disparate juxtaposition of heightened style with a depth of understanding of human behaviour and motivations challenges my thinking on psychological realism. The adoption of both elements in *Foolish Prating Knave* forces this study to address the intermedial issue of how to accommodate (and derive meaning from the juxtaposition of) very different elements. The research project prompted the devising of a play with a process, narrative and design that would enable exploration of this issue. Secondly, I have an abiding interest in acting in Shakespearean work because I find it technically challenging and the heightened style of the characterisation and language provides opportunity to experience an empathetic and visceral response to characters. I have used the thesis study to explore both a deconstructed narrative based on *Hamlet* and two versions of a *Hamlet* soliloquy. The first version of the soliloquy was a multimedia live performance and the second, a remediation of this work as short film. The choice of Hamlet, which is Shakespeare's most famous play according to Harold Jenkins editor of the Arden Shakespeare Hamlet (1982), is based on the psychological complexity of its central characters and the inclusion of purgatory, which I view as a space located between two worlds. This inbetween space suggested a fruitful setting for exploration of the liminality of intermedial-realist theatre.

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[8] https://www.facebook.com/groups/auckactors/

FOOLISH PRATING KNAVE

The research project culminated in a short intermedial-realist play. The narrative and production developed through four iterations and was based on the concerns of the thesis. The script for the play, co-written with Gary Henderson, evolved from my interests in the use of digital media in theatre, the style of psychological realism, the heightened nature of Shakespearean acting and a desire to explore how expansion of an actor's agency would impact on the quality of acting and the nature of collaboration in making a play. My reading about the cognitive neuroscience and psychology of acting, as well as acting techniques in the realist tradition, led me to question how the actor's self could be applied during performance. This, in turn, led to the narrative developing around the idea that the self could possibly be maintained digitally after death. If this were true then it followed that a purely digital entity could arguably exist and if this artificially intelligent being were to interact with a digitally alive human character, then what would the nature of the interaction be? IThe artificial intelligence could conceivably be parasitic, deriving its identity from the memories and experience of the live character. It might also be benevolent, helping the deceased human to find rest. Or the opposite might be true. It might be a tormenter.

Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* (1982) provided a parallel narrative that is familiar to audiences to base the narrative around. The play, as it developed, may have had similarities to *Hamlet* but its characters and narrative took new directions. I intended to use a minor character, Polonius, from the play and complicate the audience's familiarity with *Hamlet* by juxtaposing modern dialogue with remnants, or echoes, of Shakespearean heightened language. The characterisation was also based on this mixture of styles and complicated by interactions taking place between one character who appeared to be mostly live and embodied (Polonius) and others who were only portrayed through mediatised projections. Two characters from *Hamlet*, Gertrude and Ophelia, were recognisably human, although seen and heard only in discrete video projections. The fourth character was an artificial intelligence (the AI) who seemed to derive his appearance and voice from those of Polonius. There were times during the performance when the audience had difficulty telling when Polonius was being projected from a pre-recorded video, being projected from a live camera feed or was present as the live actor (J. Leigh, Personal communication, August 4, 2018).

Finding solutions to the problems of how to integrate characters from disparate media and how to match the heightened and realistic styles of the language prompted experimentation with acting technique. The presence of video projections on semi-transparent screens as well as on the walls and floor of the theatre and on the body of the actor also created the problem of how to match or interact with the heightened and privileged (Auslander, 2008) mediatised elements. These complications, together with a lack of neatly portrayed resolution to the narrative, were deliberate strategies to provoke exploration.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research proposes value to the wider theatre community because it explores, from the perspective of the actor, new collaborative processes of working with intermedial elements in a theatre production. This search for new insight comes at a time when, as Johannes Birringer (2014) notes, “it could be argued that there are no widely established conventions of live cinematography in Western theatre, and thus a given (and limited) range of acting styles” (p. 207). In this statement Birringer is responding to the multimedia theatre work of Katie Mitchell[9] where actors create a film live on stage that is projected above them as they work. Robert Lepage, in the making-of documentary about his staging of Wagner’s *Ring Cycle,* noted “Film and video has always been slapped on … but it’s never been integrated properly” (Froemke & Graves, 2012). Both observations indicate that the acting technique necessary to “properly integrate” intermedial elements is not well established and this thesis seeks to explore this gap in knowledge.

The thesis (comprising exegesis and performance practice) makes a contribution by questioning established ways in which actors interact with directors, designers and media technical specialists in the evolution of a theatre piece (from concept to staged performance). There may be as many unique ways of practising as there are combinations of individual practitioners but, in my experience of working in a wide variety of companies within the context of theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand, actors are able to speak with a largely common language in the production of theatre. Kattenbelt (2010) discussing the audience response to intermediality in theatre, asserts that the introduction of a significant intermedial element in the collaborative undertaking that is play-making, disrupts and forces a re-evaluation of the nature of interaction. Thus, this research aims to enhance existing modes of collaboration and propose new relationships achieved through the extension of an actor’s agency.

Finally, this thesis builds on actor–focused discourse where, in advanced research degrees, practitioners critique and contextualise their practice and the nature of agency, collaboration and the inclusion of significant digital media elements in dramatic theatre (Swart, 2014; Knapton, 2014; Robson, 2004; Mercer, 2009). This contribution runs parallel with the rise of practice-led doctoral studies in theatre and performance at such institutions as Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD, University of London). Actors are beginning to utilise the Performative Research Paradigm first proposed by Brad Haseman (2007) at QUT and refined by Robin Nelson at RCSSD and Manchester Metropolitan University. The increase in actor Performance as Research projects is well established in the U.K., Australia and the Nordic countries and is beginning to gain traction, after a period where it has been misunderstood and even maligned in the United States (Lewis & Tulk, 2016).

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THE THESIS

Within this exegesis I use certain terms in specific ways. In general, these may be understood in the context of the writing, but it is useful to consider eight of these

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[9] In particular Mitchell, K., & Warner, L. (Directors). (2013, April 30 – May 4). Fraulein Julie, Barbican Centre, London.

specifically at the outset.

Practitioner-researcher

A practitioner-researcher in the context of the performing arts is someone who combines their artistic practice with a research agenda. According to Robin Nelson (2013, p. 27), this requires a shift from normal artistic practice such that the researcher specifies a "research inquiry" at the outset, plans multimethod activities including critical reflection and evidence gathering, captures moments of insight in the documentation of process, locates the praxis in a lineage and context and relates the inquiry to a broader contemporary debate. This practitioner-researcher concept relates directly to Donald Schön's (1983) idea of a reflective practitioner in that there is a requirement to "surface and criticize the tacit understandings" (Schön, 1983, p. 61) involved in embodied practice through an oscillation of thought between the tacit and the abstract.

Performance as Research

Performance as Research (PaR) is the methodology used in the research design of this thesis. It is discussed fully in Chapter Two. PaR implies that an inquiry emerges through the practice of performance, and is explored within the practice and shared through the performance. The methodology asserts the centrality of the performance practice in all facets of the research.

My use of the term draws heavily on the work of Nelson (2013) and Little (2011). However, it is also influenced by the thinking of Haseman (2006), Ronald Pelias (2008), and Stephen Scrivener (2000). PaR asserts that a [reflective] practitioner-researcher can research topics by means of performative inquiry. Pelias suggests such an approach "… insists upon a working artist who engages in aesthetic performances as a methodological starting place" (2008, p. 186). A practice-led or PaR approach to inquiry assumes that there is a pre-existing performance practice and that the research inquiry is built on what Haseman calls an "enthusiasm of practice" (2006). The investigation is conducted and the findings shared through the methods and languages of that practice.

Actor

Definitions of the term actor and the task of acting vary depending on the context. Dennis Kennedy, in The *Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* (2010, p. 4) offers a broadly encompassing definition: "Acting is the art of performing an action or of representing human experience on stage or in some other mode of performance in which the actor's body and voice serve as the principle expressive tools." Philip Zarrilli describes acting as "a complex, ongoing set of intellectual and psychophysiological negotiations" (1995, p. 2). The focus in this project is on a particular type of actor. Denis Diderot addressed the issue of an actor needing both emotional engagement and cognitive control in his seminal *The Paradox of Acting*

(c. 1770, 1883). However, he concluded that great actors should confine their emotion to the discovery and rehearsal process and be dispassionately cognitive of the shaping of the aesthetics during performance. The actors could accomplish this by extensive observation, reflection and experimentation. Joseph Roach (1985) concluded that "Diderot maintains that by the time the rehearsal process ends, it is meaningless to call the automatized results sensible emotions or spontaneously vital expressions." (p. 152). While I agree with Diderot's observation that acting involves a degree of craft and intellectual control, my work has acknowledged a style of acting that encompasses a combination of objectivity and subjectivity during the act of performance. The actor's positioning can vary depending on the needs at any given moment of the performance. For example, if the character is reacting to another character's action then the actor might be in an almost completely subjective state, allowing a spontaneous response. At the other end of the continuum there may be moments where the actor is exercising a greater degree of cognitive control of the shaping of the aesthetics of the performance. This might involve, for example, thinking about the positioning of a hand to set up an event later in the script. That conscious cognitive decision about the positioning is objective craft.

My understanding encompasses someone who consciously engages in embodied storytelling using environment, self and character, voice and body as primary tools. As Antonin Artaud (Artaud & Morgan, 1958) observed, communication can be felt by the audience beneath the level of significance. Arguably this is borne out by cognitive neuroscientific theories of mirror neurons and empathy (Blair, 2009) and is the aim of the type of acting in this thesis.

The terms acting and actor used here also relate to Sanford Meisner's idea of "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 87) and Constantin Stanislavski's (1936/1980, p. 15) concept of "experiencing" the role while also shaping and adjusting the significance of the drama. The actor thereby pursues goals appropriate to the character and experiences emotional responses as a result. While actors today may be expected to perform in a variety of forms and across many platforms, this thesis is primarily concerned with acting that is focused on the style of psychological realism prevailing in Aotearoa New Zealand. This project aims to extend the role of the actor by affording greater agency in the wider theatre creation process. In this thesis I use the term actor to refer to a professional dramatic artist engaged in the storytelling of theatre.

Psychological realism

Psychological realism in theatre is a much debated term, but I use it in this thesis in relation to my proposition that one of the primary objectives of my theatre practice is to reflect the audience's experience of life back at them. One way of doing this is to pursue an acting style that enables the audience to engage with the performances, recognising elements of themselves on a cognitive and emotional level. This does not necessarily imply that the performance is realistic in every sense of the word but rather that the poetics resonate with and challenge the audience's perception of the reality of their lives. This position aligns with

Stanislavski's use of the term to imply an approach to acting that developed in opposition to the declamatory and naturalistic styles of the eighteenth century. As Jean Benedetti (2005) notes, he based his ideas on the work of writers Alexander Pushkin and Nicolai Gogol and actor Mikhail Shchepkin who were in turn, inspired by Shakespeare. John Lutterbie (2011) identifies realism as character driven narratives. This form and style of acting values character with an inner life that is truthful, probable and with psychological depth.

Intermedial-realist theatre

I use the term intermedial-realist theatre to refer to a form of theatre where the live actors and physical set are combined in meaningful ways with other media in the performance of a play to a live and co-present audience. It is in the combination of live and mediatised elements that the play becomes intermedial in nature. With an emphasis on character and psychological realism it becomes intermedial-realist theatre. Intermediality in the theatrical context is a widely debated construct. Aneta Mancewicz (2014), for example, includes the necessity for digitally mediatised elements as agents that activate interexchanges of media in a reflexive manner. Kattenbelt (2008) sees intermedial theatre as a new form that breaks through medium-specific conventions and needs a new definition for their combination. Since 2010 and the publication of the International Theatre Federation Intermediality Group's work in *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* there has been a refinement in theories of intermedial theatre away from thinking that the meaning resides only in the liminal space between different media types (including the live, embodied actors), to an understanding that it lies in "both-and" (Nelson, 2010, p. 17). In other words, while not discarding the concept of the importance of the liminal space, the meaning is seen to be present in both the live and the mediated in their separateness and in their inter-relation. The term is not used to indicate that all elements are equal as in Bryan Reynolds' (2017) definition of intermedial theatre. Rather, the emphasis in this type of theatre is on the story and not on balancing or contrasting the live and the mediatised.

Mainstream theatre

I use the term mainstream theatre to refer to the "traditional" Western forms of theatre and the hierarchically organised processes of the large and continuously state-funded professional theatres in Aotearoa New Zealand in the period from the 1970s to 2018. The majority of work in these theatres has been dramatic. David O'Donnell (2007) notes, the well crafted realist play is still the mainstream of playwriting in New Zealand.

Agency

In this thesis agency refers to permissions afforded or appropriated within the context of acting. It expresses the means by which collaboration can occur between an actor and other theatre practitioners, and the negotiation of roles and boundaries that this implies. Thus, an actor might assert agency to collaborate, for example, on the design of the set, the conceptualisation and narrative content of the play or the design and production of media for projection. An important element of this agency is "self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities" (Bandura, 2001, p. 1)

Thus, in this thesis I extend the term from its sociological use where individual agency implies the capacity of human beings to make choices and to act within any given environment on their own behalf (Hewson, 2010).[10] Agency, in this thesis, refers specifically to the actor expanding the dimensions of engagement with the wider theatre-making process and performance, such that roles that were not traditionally ascribed are drawn into creative consideration and synthesis.

Collaboration

Collaboration in the thesis is used within the context of the creative production of a theatre work and implies a range of assumed or negotiated ways of working together by various creative contributors in the development of performance. Robert Knopf (2006) proposes a continuum between the fully authoritarian (noncollaborative) and the purely collaborative. He defines a collaborative relationship in the theatre as having the essential elements of experimentation and risk. The underlying principles according to Knopf are that no one person has all the best ideas and talents and that the sum of collaboration will be greater than the parts. Within effective collaborative practice, the element of trust is essential to the success of the process. In my practice I acknowledge Susan Melrose's (2016) "constitutive ambiguity" between the shared and the singular. Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier (2016) connect this ambiguity directly to the notion of agency within creative contributions.

CONSTITUENT PARTS OF THE THESIS

This thesis has been undertaken as Performance as Research and therefore comprises two complementary elements. The first and primary of these is a corpus of performance work that has led to and includes the production of the intermedial-realist short play *Foolish Prating Knave*. This exegesis is the second body of work and it serves to contextualise and offer a critical reflection on the practice.

The practice

The thesis contains seven iterative PaR acting experiments. The first was an intermedial-realist interpretation of a Shakespearean soliloquy, *O, What a Rogue*, from *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1982, 2.2.544-601). This work explored the dramaturgical validity[11] of intermedial screen elements and was presented at the fourth Visual Aspects of Performance Practice Conference organised by Interdisciplinary.net at Oxford University (September 18, 2013).

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[10] I do not employ the term to describe a collective, historical dynamic as it is used in the philosophical discipline of action theory, especially in traditions established by Hegel and Marx.

[11] Various elements were tested against their suitability to enhance the storytelling facility of the embodied presence of the actor.

The second work experimented with increasing performer agency in the production of intermedial elements. Here I experimented with mobile videography technology, with iPhones serving as both cameras and light sources. The flexibility and mobility of this approach allowed the camera operators to follow the performer (opera singer Fiona Randle) rather than her having to constrain herself to the dictates of camera setups (December 11, 2013).

In the third experiment, I returned to the material of the first experiment, the *Hamlet* soliloquy, and approached it with an aim of increasing actor agency. Thus, as the actor I also designed and directed a cinematic shoot of the scene in a television studio (September, 2014).

The fourth experiment evolved into the first iteration of an intermedial-realist play that came to be known as *Foolish Prating Knave*. This was presented at an international conference as a work-in-progress PaR experiment and subjected to critique by an audience of practitioner and academic delegates (June 22, 2016).

The fifth performance piece was a further iteration of the intermedial-realist short play, *Foolish Prating Knave.* In this work, I experimented with new relationships between the live actor and video screen. The play was performed in the Live Performance Lab at AUT University. Its story was constructed using principles from both traditional drama theatre and cinema, including montage theory.[12] Building on discoveries and influences from the preceding experiments, the work combined digital media elements with live dramatic theatre performed by an actor (September 23, 2016).

The sixth experiment was a new iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* developed to incorporate multiple screens and audio sources and more refined media elements. It was performed in the Live Performance Lab at AUT University (January 31, 2018).

The seventh and final iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* was presented for examination on July 16, 2018 in the Live Performance Lab at AUT. It incorporated refinements of the narrative, the prologue and other media and a final creative interrogation of my acting technique.

The exegesis

This exegesis contextualises the creative production[13] by discussing methodological approaches, bodies of theory and related practice. It also elucidates the work through a critical commentary. Jillian Hamilton and Luke Jaaniste (2009) note that such an approach allows for both the framing of the practice as research and explicating and doing justice to its invested poetics. The complementary writing and visual material in the exegesis have been created alongside the practice and therefore form an integral interface with it.

This exegesis follows the connective model of Hamilton and Jaaniste (2009) and is conceived as a hybrid, outward looking, contextualising document and inward looking, reflective practice. Within this seeming paradox, as the researcher, I move between the objective and subjective and must therefore choose between a range of communicative modes (Hamilton, 2011; Ings, 2015).

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[12] The Soviet montage theorists working in the 1920s, particularly Sergei Eisenstein (1994) and Lev Kuleshov (1974), proposed a model for conveying meaning through the juxtaposition of shots by editing them into a linear narrative.

[13] I use the term creative production in reference to Scrivener's (2000) definition of a distinct problem-solving research project that is profiled by its originality, its framing as a response to issues that are expressed through the creation of an artifact, and its contribution to human experience.

Stylistic conventions in the exegesis

This exegesis adopts the referencing style of the American Psychological Association, version six, with some adjustments. In breaking with APA convention, footnotes are used throughout in order to assist the reader by providing easily accessible, parallel parts of the discussion on the same page. In the writing, I use the first person singular attribution because the thesis is located within my practice and the "self" is infused connectively throughout the research inquiry.[14] When citing others in the body of the text I initially use both first and surnames and thereafter just the surname. This is in order to be more precise and to initially honour the wholeness of the person.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EXEGESIS

The weighting allocated to the constituent elements of this thesis reflects the nature of Practice as Research (Nelson, 2013). The "creative production", including the iterative process involved in bringing it to performance, therefore occupies the primary site of scholarship. The exegesis serves as a complementary, supporting contextualisation of the research. However, all elements of the thesis are inextricably linked and should not be considered independently of each other.

Chapter one of the exegesis positions both the researcher and the research. It discusses my history of involvement in theatre and the origins of the thesis inquiry.

Chapter two unpacks the research design employed in the explication of the project. This includes the project's paradigm, heuristic methodology and methods.

Chapter three then locates the inquiry within and reviews the wider body of knowledge relevant to the project, including key concepts, theories and practical theatrical contexts.

Chapter four presents a critical commentary, using both written and visual modes, to consider each of the seven iterative experiments and the development and aesthetics of the work. Central concerns of the thesis include discourses surrounding the role of the actor within the theatre-making process, the techniques used in acting and the potential for expanded agency.

Chapter five contains an illustrated script of *Foolish Prating Knave* (as the work was presented for examination).

This is followed by a thesis conclusion that presents a summary of key findings, a discussion of contributions to the field of inquiry and a consideration of further research suggested by the study.

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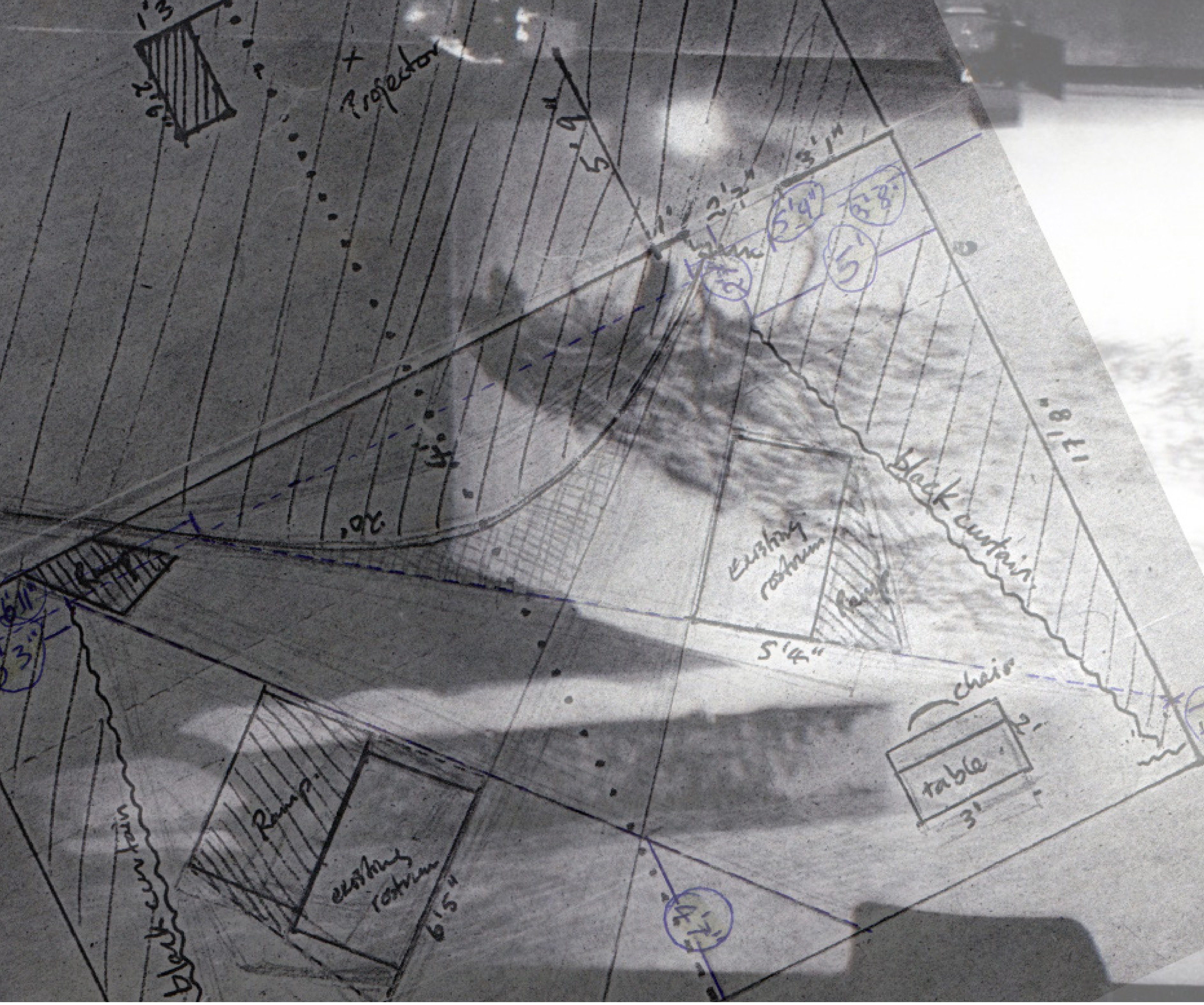
[14] Usefully, Saltz (2006) and Haseman (2006) note that Practice As Research in theatre should be expressed in the language of theatre and because the thesis is actor-oriented I speak and write from the position of the subjective and analytical "self".


1'3
2'6"
Projector
5'6"
3'1"
2'2"
1'
5'9"
3'8"
5'
26'
4'
11'8"
black curtain
existing rostrum
Ramp
5'4"
chair
table
2'
3'
6'11"
3"
Ramp
black curtain
Ramp.
existing rostrum
6'5"
4'7"

CHAPTER 1

POSITIONING THE RESEARCHER

CHAPTER 1

POSITIONING THE RESEARCHER

This chapter reflects on experiences and values, both personal and professional, that have given rise to the thesis. It also discusses the historical culture of personal practice from which the project emanates.

The nature of the actor

“Actor”, for me, is a statement both of who I am and what I do. I am an actor and I act. The acting projects I have gravitated towards all share characteristics driven by personal experience. My aim has been to open dialogue with the audience on an emotional and intellectual level that evokes a visceral response to ethical questions on what it means to be human. I have always felt a drive to tell stories that move people to a deeper appreciation of life. That is a broad palette to paint from, but the aim is neither reductive nor didactic. The acting work I have developed stems from my belief that observations of life and representations[15] thereof can provoke both an immediate emotional and a lingering discursive response; the bounds of which are not prescribed.

I am reminded in this regard of Shakespeare’s Hamlet who observes:

> … the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now,
> was and is to hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue
> her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the
> time his form and pressure. (Shakespeare, 1982, 3, 2, 20-24)

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[15] The term representation is used here to imply a complex acting process that includes a level of re-living and not of mimicry (Konijn, 2002).

In other words, his purpose is not to didactically preach to the audience but to reflect an image of aspects of behaviour back to them in order that they may attain a deeper appreciation of the human condition. This function of acting and drama aligns with Scrivener's (2000) discussion of "creative-production PhDs", where he suggests the created artifact "should contribute to human experience" (Scrivener, 2000, p. 5).

Hamlet demands that his actors fulfil the script and that they base their performances on observations of real life. "You o'erstep not the modesty of nature" (Shakespeare, 1982, 3,2,19). Furthermore, he trusts the aesthetic choices that the actors make when he says, "… let your own discretion be your tutor" (Shakespeare, 1982, 3,2,16-17).

In other words, Shakespeare, through the lines he gives the character of Hamlet, lays down a theory of the purpose and technique of acting. He maintains that acting should be based on observations of life and that it should be performed with modesty and not ostentation because otherwise the actors will open themselves up to derision. Hamlet in Act 3, scene 2 notes that poor actors, "imitate humanity so abominably" (Shakespeare, 1982, 3,2,35).

However, Hamlet marvels at the ability of an actor to engage simultaneously, both critical faculty (conceit) and the inner animating core of the self (soul). He says:

> … this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wann'd,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? (Shakespeare, 1982, 2,2,545-551)

He goes on to observe how this combined cognitive and emotional aspect of the performance can impact on the audience:

> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul … (Shakespeare, 1982, 2,2,585-587)

The narratives in the plays and screen work I have performed in the past have tended to align with my own experiences and beliefs. Indeed, I have found it difficult to play a role or character that does not spark some recognition from within my experience. I am reminded in this regard of Craig Parker[16] who says that one of his primary and on-going tasks as an actor is to know himself better, so that he might play those aspects of himself that resonate within the character.

[16] C. Parker, personal communication, March 25, 2011.

CONTRIBUTING PRACTICE - THEATRE

The body of work that represents my past practice in the ephemeral field of theatre exists only in trace elements.[17] Historically the development of my thinking has been progressed through four related realms of practice:

- Work in large professional theatre companies
- Involvement in cooperative theatre companies
- Contributions to regional professional theatres
- And engagement with transdisciplinary practice

Large professional theatre companies

My engagement with large professional theatre companies may be traced back to the mid 1980s.[18] This involvement taught me the traditional place of the actor within a company. Much was expected in terms of dramatic acting technique and peripheral skills. Countless hours were spent in fencing, singing and company classes in acting technique. As a young actor I was expected to bring innovative choices in characterisation and contribute to an ensemble blocking of stage movement. Set, lighting, costume and audio design were decided in advance of the actors arriving at the first read through. My primary task was to breathe life into the role I was to play and to support the rest of the cast in ensemble exploration of the script. Knowing how to “find your light” was an expected skill for actors of any age and junior cast members often “walked the lights” during preparation for technical rehearsals. This entailed performing the movements of the entire cast while the lighting designer and technicians focused lights and made last minute alterations to the design. It was a privileged opportunity that allowed trainee actors to develop an appreciation of the craft of sculpting the viewing experience with light. It represented a partnership of sorts between lighting designers and actors who had to inhabit and interact with the light during performance. Frustratingly the opportunity was mostly limited to observation while other artists made creative decisions, although on rare occasions it was possible to make suggestions.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, large professional companies demanded a separation of roles and a hierarchy of creative input. However, as is indicative of New Zealand culture and by extension, the culture of these theatres, there was much socialising not only amongst cast but also between crew and cast. Roles sometimes blurred, with junior cast members in particular often undertaking assistant stage management tasks, operating follow spots or other technical equipment, for example. This grounding in the craft and culture of large scale professional theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand whetted my appetite for extending the creative input of the actor.

Cooperative theatre companies

Between 1987 and 1993 I became actively involved in cooperative theatre companies in this country. In these comparatively small scale companies

[17] Traditionally performance in theatre is of the moment and endures only in memory and contingent texts. Conversely, screen work produces an enduring artifact that represents the editorial and cinematographic choices that others have made from my acting work. Thus arguably, live theatrical work has less durability. The contingent records of productions include publications associated with the event, such as play programme notes, press reviews, recorded interviews and publicity material. In addition, some theatres document performances with photographs and/or video recordings. These tend to be reductions of the live, compromised by the nature or quality of the documentation process. A posed photograph will show actor, set and costume but not a moment of acting performance. A video recording will flatten the viewer’s experience to a single perspective, usually from a wide angle. As such, these records rarely capture nuance or the atmosphere of a performance.

[18] The Mercury Theatre in Auckland, where I worked as trainee and then actor from 1985 until 1987, and the Court Theatre in Christchurch, where I worked as actor in 1992-93, were the largest companies in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time.

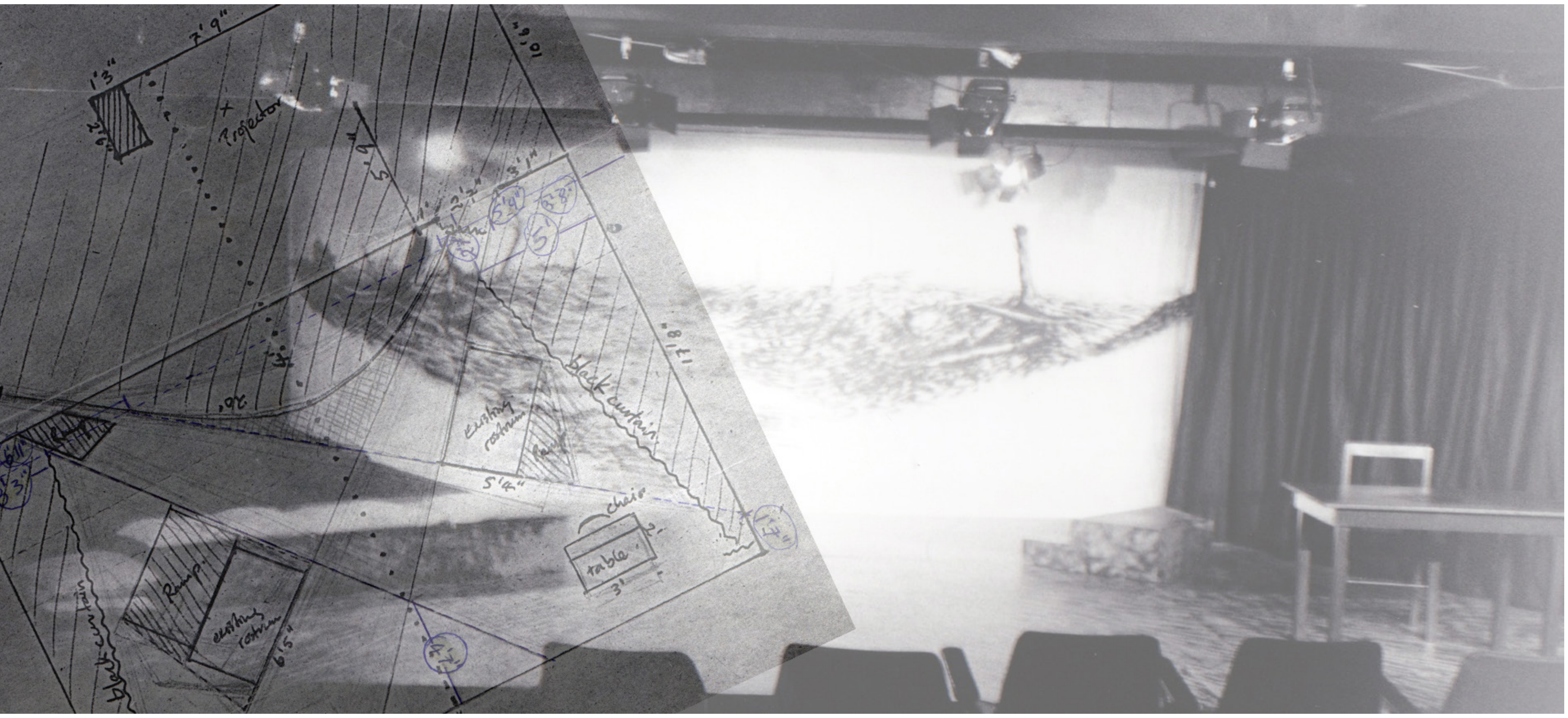
7'9"
1'3"
2'6"
Projector
10'6"
5'9"
3'1"
2'2"
5'9"
3'8"
5'
17'8"
black curtain
existing rostrum
Ramp
5'4"
chair
table
2'
3'
1'7"
Ramp.
existing rostrum
6'5"
4'7"
black curtain

FIGURE 1.1.

Set designed for *Killed: July 17th 1916*.

FIGURE 1.2.

Billy Dean (Ross Brannigan) in *Killed: July 17th 1916*.

there was the opportunity to negotiate many roles. There were also ensembles where responsibilities, of both necessity and desire, could be trans-disciplinary. Professional cooperative theatre companies, born out of both necessity and political conviction, filled the space between the large companies and amateur theatre (Derby & Grace-Smith, 2014).

In these companies participants shared multiple roles and any profits that might accrue after the costs of mounting productions were deducted from income derived from box office takings, sponsorship and Arts Council grants. This type of company, including The Other Company that I cofounded in Auckland in 1987 and the Canterbury Arts Network in Christchurch in 1992, afforded the opportunity to explore what an actor with a predisposition to transdisciplinarity might contribute.

One of the first productions where I attempted to integrate screened material into live theatre was The Other Company's 1987 production of *Killed: July 17th 1916*, written by the Belgrade Theatre in Education Company. My concept for the stage included a metaphorical and physical crossroads with ramps directing the action centre downstage. The ramps came from either side of a large semicircular cyclorama that was painted in monochromatic greys around the periphery with a landscape of the devastated scenery of the Somme battlefield (Figure 1.1). On to the centre of this screen we projected historical photographs of the scene (as a cinematic set extension) and poignant images of soldiers. These were used to punctuate pivotal moments in the First World War narrative. I acted the central character in the play (Figure 1.2), as well as designing the set. With direction by Stephanie McKellar-Smith, the play was well received.[19] It was in this first experience of pre-digital intermediality that I felt the possibility that the combination of live, co-present actors and screened elements held potential for the creation of a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts.

Regional Professional theatres

Between 1987 and 1991 I worked in smaller regional centres at Fortune Theatre in Dunedin and Centrepoint Theatre in Palmerston North. These organisations provided an opportunity to be paid a living wage and to be more involved in discussing the work of other artists, if not of actually contributing in a substantive way. In the early 1990s, when I worked at Centrepoint Theatre, there was still a distinct sense of community because actors could be kept in the company for a number of years. The longevity of this relationship enabled a deeper understanding of the roles that various contributing artists played. Productions were able to be more synergistically designed since the staff of all departments, including wardrobe, set, lighting, cast, audio, publicity and directors were all familiar with each other. The boundaries between departments in these small community theatres were much more relaxed than in the bigger city theatres.

[19] Gill, R. (1988, July 12), Killed: July 17th 1916 Craccum , 62 (15), 11, "'Killed: July 17th 1916' is an extremely powerful play about a young soldier awaiting execution. … some of the acting was similarly powerful , especially Rachel Nash as a war widow and Ross Brannigan as the soldier."

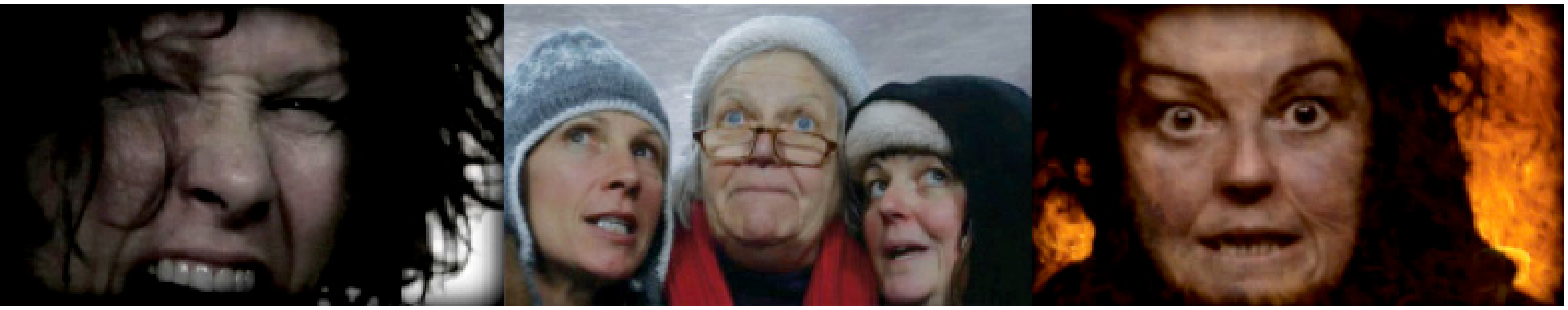

FIGURE 1.3.

Holding the Digital Mirror up to Nature – three witches (Alison Bruce, Elizabeth McRae, Kerynn Walsh.

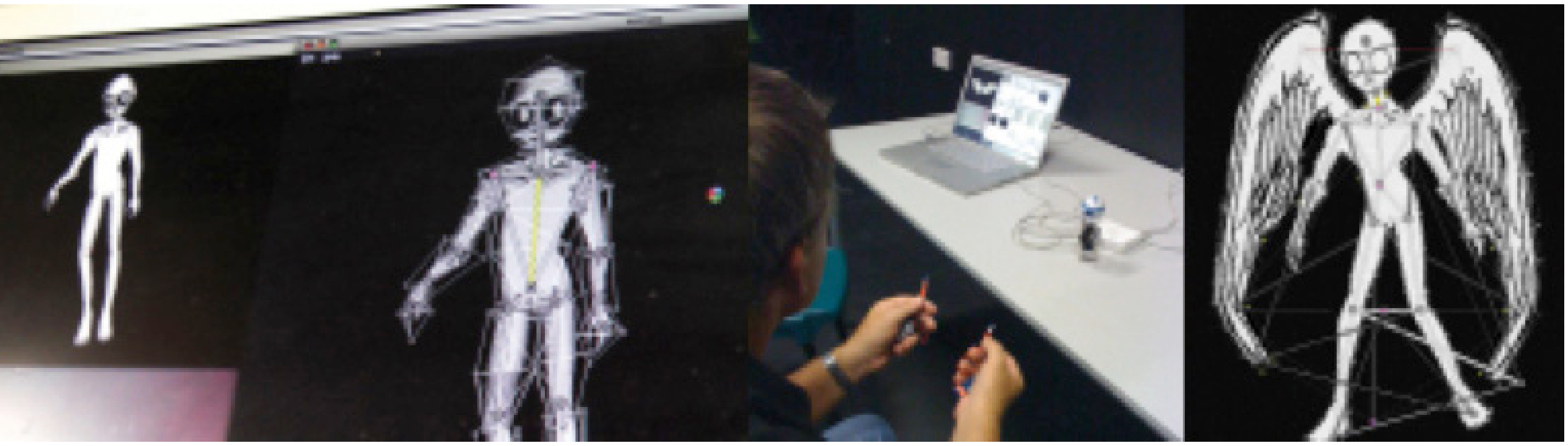

FIGURE 1.4.

Holding the Digital Mirror up to Nature - experiments with live animation generated by the actor’s movement and voice.

Contributing practice – screen acting and screen production

As an actor in Aotearoa New Zealand I have had many opportunities to work on national and international screen productions. These include months of work on a soap opera[20] and guest appearances on comedies and dramatic series as well as two feature films. Furthermore, I have developed my own skills in cinematography, editing, postproduction and directing video for digital media productions and have taught these disciplines within the university environment of AUT since 2000. Within the context of digital media productions, small scale teams and sole producers are not uncommon.

FORMATIVE WORKS

Outside of these projects and engagements, two specific works I have been involved with have had a distinct influence on this thesis. While located in different realms they both specifically addressed a central issue in this thesis: the location of the self-as-actor within collaborative "creative-productions".

Holding the Digital Mirror Up to Nature

In 2009 I created *Holding the Digital Mirror up to Nature* as a Performance as Research exploration into the potential of digital media in live theatre. The intermedial play was presented at the Auckland Fringe Festival and employed live and pre-recorded video projections. The production used scenes from three of Shakespeare's plays; *Macbeth, Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, one live and present actor and seven pre-recorded actors, including the witches seen in Figure 1.3. The project demonstrated the potential that embodied and co-present acting have to enliven pre-recorded video projections. It provided an opportunity to explore and develop a type of acting that intermedial theatre requires in order to engage the audience with character and narrative. Audience feedback during and after the performance indicated that a sense of real connection between the live and mediated was felt (Brannigan, 2009).

In the project I also experimented with ways of capturing the live actor's movements on stage and processing them through a computer in order to transfer the movements to projections of an animated character (Figure 1.4). These experiments explored acting input beyond the live and the video-recorded. One of the key conclusions in respect of this was the need for any such technical aspects to be robust and trustworthy (Brannigan, 2009). In the case of the projections for Ariel I could not get the technology to function at a satisfactory level and this aspect of the work was omitted from the final performance.[21]

[20] South Pacific Pictures' Shortland Street.

[21] It should be noted that a successful implementation of this concept in 2016 by the Royal Shakespeare Company in conjunction with Intel and the Imaginarium Studios required extensive resources.

Martha and Edward

In 2010 I was cast in a lead role in a short film with a working title of *The Concert* (later changed to *Martha and Edward*). The direction involved a collaborative partnership of two directors. One of the attractions of the project was their combined experience including an international feature film and an experimental directing technique. The idea of working with two directors collaborating on a shared vision was novel and I was interested to see how the dynamic would work in practice. All I was allowed to know was that the film was a slice of life story about a man and a woman attending a concert together and I was to play the man. The style was described as continuity narrative[22] with psychological realism. In my opinion the success of the technique could be gauged in terms of the clarity of the story and the truthfulness of the onscreen relationship of the man and the woman.

The approach entailed placing even more faith than usual in the directors since the actors were not allowed to see the script nor know any details save those provided for each take of each shot. Often directions were given in private to each actor so neither knew what the other had been told. This is a technique that has been used very successfully for children or for small roles with performers who are not trained actors. While some professional actors might see such an approach as seriously curtailing their ability to contribute to the creative collaboration of the filmmaking process, I was curious to see if my acting process could adapt and whether the narrative, continuity and character's journey, largely taken out of my hands, would ring true.

FIGURE 1.5.

Edward (Ross Brannigan) in *Martha and Edward* (Amano & Brooks, 2010).

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[22] Continuity narrative is a style of editing that follows the classic Hollywood storytelling form where there is a linear time-based logic to the story and the individual shots are matched, one to the next, to support this.

Dennis Brooks, one of the directors, explained his approach at the premiere of the film. He said he was trying to achieve a certain type of *truth* in each shot, which was to emanate from the "actor" playing the action that was given in the moment – "as them self" (D. Brooks, personal communication, October 31, 2012). The degree to which a director should have access to manipulate an actor's personal "self" is an interesting ethical question posed by the experimental technique.

It was necessary to surrender the convention that the actor's place was to build character based on the script and take some of the responsibility for two other aspects of the process; character arc and continuity. Each take was performed as though it was self-contained without reference to any other take, shot or scene. Without the ability to contribute these aspects I asked myself what was left.[23] This question was fundamental to the core concern of this thesis about the contributions an actor might make.

The experience of acting in this project provided impetus to the trajectory of this research project in so far as it evoked material thinking about the actor's contribution and the positioning of self within a creative production. In my opinion the film was largely effective, but the finer elements of continuity in terms of the actors' intentions did not always align. At times this led to a certain vagueness in the realism of the story.

Conclusion

A common line through these experiences indicates several interests in an evolving form of theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand that integrates digital and especially cinematic media, in dramaturgically meaningful ways. The issue of the actor's position and potential to contribute meaningfully to a creative team that includes writers and designers as well as cast and a director has become very important to me. Thus, the possible forms and disruption to mainstream acting processes afforded by these productions as well as the skills and aptitudes required of actors to successfully perform within them have become the motivation for, and concerns of, this thesis.

Having now positioned myself in the context of the inquiry, it is useful to consider the research design underpinning its development.

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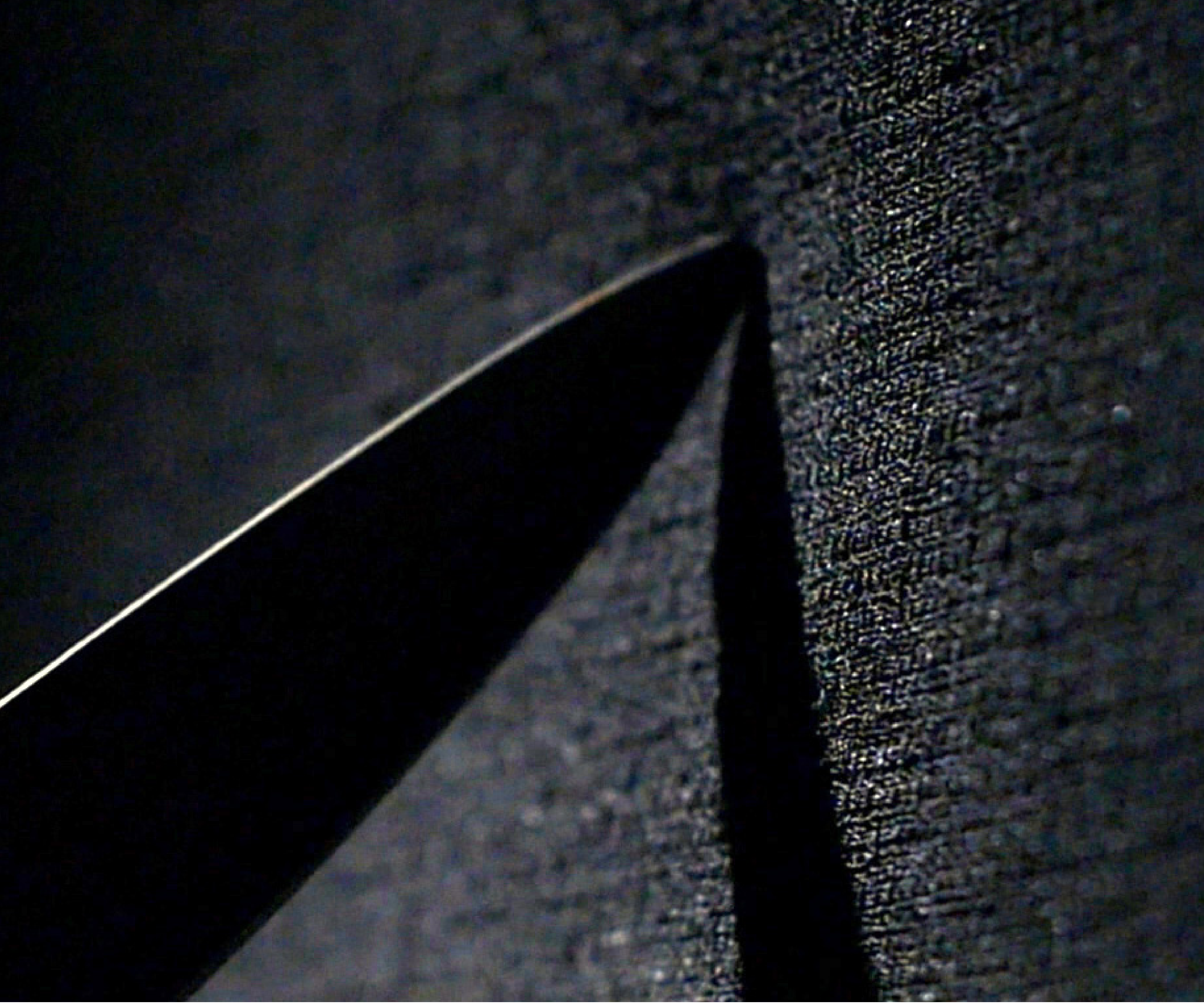
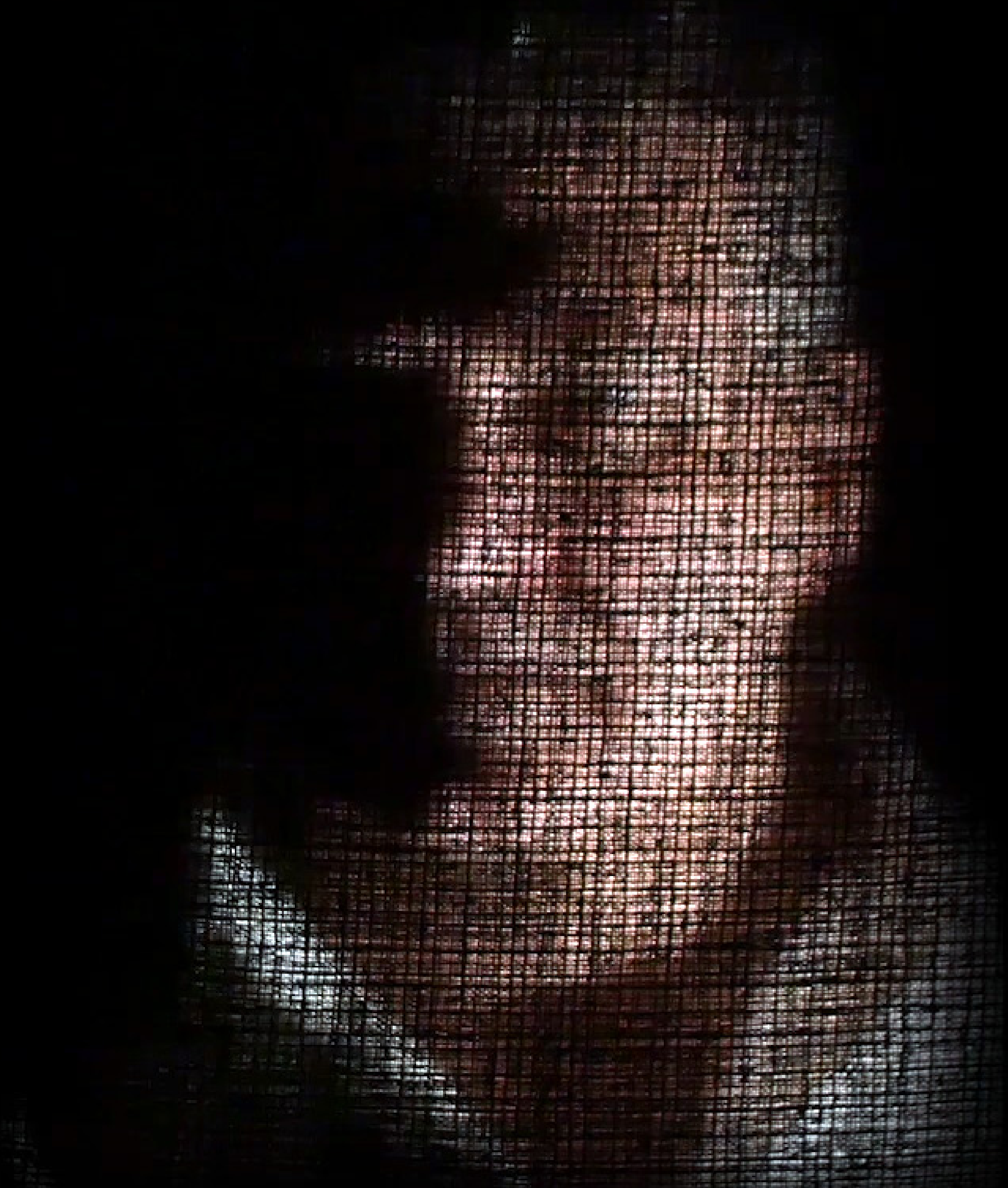
[23] Using Meisner's definition of acting as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 87) the remaining tasks of the actor can be read as living truthfully given reduced imaginary circumstances. It was still possible to create imaginary circumstances without character or continuity narrative with the set and directions for any given shot, however these were incomplete and puzzling. Truthfulness therefore involved a level of confusion and imprecision in goals.



CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN



CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

Overview

This chapter unpacks and explains the research design employed in the development of the thesis.

The chapter discusses:

- The Performance as Research paradigm underpinning the inquiry
- The research model
- The heuristic methodological approach
- The methods utilised.

PARADIGM: PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH (PAR)

A research paradigm describes an overarching philosophy or "the philosophical intent or underlying theoretical framework and motivation of the researcher with regard to the research" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 200). Given this definition, the research paradigm for this project may be positioned as Performance as Research (PaR). This is a specific type of Practice as Research where theory is imbricated with practice to produce research findings that emerge from and are embodied in performance.[24]

Pelias (2008) describes the approach as involving … "a working artist who engages in aesthetic performances as a methodological starting place" (p. 187). He argues that "Performative inquiry cannot be accomplished from an observational stance; it demands participation" (p. 190).

[24] This may be compared with Haseman's (2006) "Performative Research Paradigm". After Haseman, Nelson (2013) argued that shifting knowledge paradigms across the academy have challenged the privileging of the positivist paradigm and made room for acceptance of the performative.

Haseman (2006) suggests that Performative Inquiry is a multimethod paradigm, led by practice, and Bree Hadley (2013) notes that the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA) has been instrumental in establishing the paradigm since 1992. She says:

> … the complex position of the researcher as participant, observer and analyst in a Performance as Research project [involves] the combination of embodied, emotional, tacit and explicit intellectual ontologies and epistemologies underpinning Performance as Research. (Hadley, 2013, para. 10)

THE RESEARCH MODEL: PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

As Performance as Research, the thesis is influenced by the Practice as Research model developed by Nelson in 2013. This model encompasses diverse forms of creative practice[25] including performance and holds the situation of the research within creative production as axiomatic. This study worked iteratively through a series of experiments and culminated in the production of a theatrical work (*Foolish Prating Knave*) that is not just an illustration of new knowledge but also a discursive provocation and a dialogic working through of tacit, embodied knowledge.

Nelson asserts that formulating a "research question" or hypothesis, as is the convention in scientific inquiries, is rarely necessary or desirable in Practice as Research. He argues that a question implies a specific answer. He prefers the term "research inquiry" since "the kind of work typically undertaken in the PaR PhD context, while they yield findings, do not typically produce solutions to problems in the mode of answers" (Nelson, 2013, p. 97). In Practice as Research, methods employed in the explication of a project may be consciously disorderly so they engage with chance and the potential for discovery through disruption and the conscious pursuit of a maximum variation of perspectives (Kleining & Witt, 2000). This validates an open exploration rather than a reductive approach.

Arguably, PaR may be compared to Scrivener's (2000) concept of a "creative-production project" (p. 2), which he describes as a work concerned with intervention, innovation and change that is focused on a cultural aim of contributing to human experience. He argues that such a research project may not be problem-solving and that its outcome is explored through the practice and is presented as the creative production.

Nelson (2013) suggests that this form of research involves praxis[26] that engages reading, writing and practice in dialogic engagement. It focuses on exploration and is a multimode inquiry, interdisciplinary in nature, covering several contingent fields of knowledge. The rigour of Practice as Research, he suggests, lies in its syncretism.

Scrivener and Peter Chapman (2004), although writing in the domain of visual arts, suggest that in practice-led inquiries, much of the impetus for making work is not based on objective thinking or surveying the literature in a well-defined domain. For visual artists, and I would say actors, the driving force behind the process of making art or theatre and researching through practice is intuitive. It is not normally based on reading theory alone. Chapman (in Scrivener & Chapman, 2004) argues that such an activity can even be counter-productive because it suppresses intuitive and creative inspiration. The author proposes rather, that resources of inspiration are multiple, including mental and physical resources, thinking, reading, imagining, looking, reflecting, drawing, and painting. Practitioners absorb some but not all of these resources because the process is wide-ranging rather than reductive. Setting discrete parameters to funnel the domain by reductive reasoning to a narrow, well defined field where the complete body of knowledge can be reviewed may arguably be uninspiring (Scrivener & Chapman, 2004).

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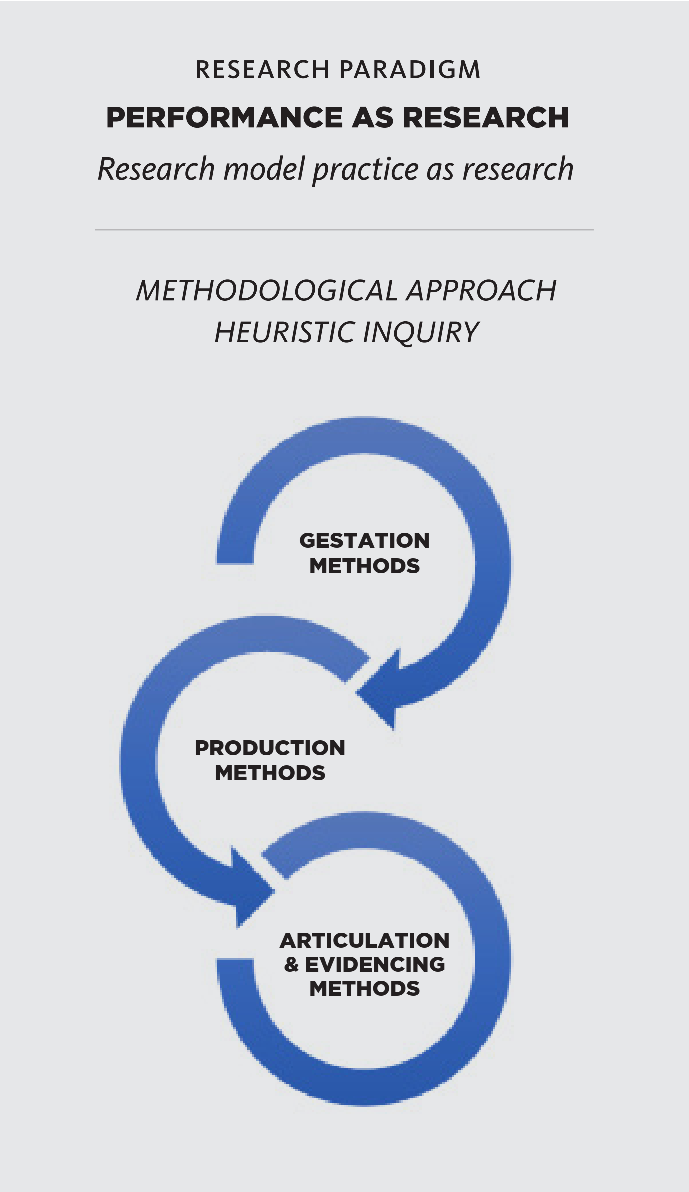
[25] Nelson was Head of the Centre for Intermediality in Performance at the Royal School of Speech and Drama, University of London, until 2015. He has a specific interest in intermedial theatre and a comprehensive knowledge of the development of doctoral degrees involving practice within the United Kingdom, having been instrumental in surveying Practice as Research in British universities (Nelson & Andrews, 2003).

[26] Nelson has proposed three modes of knowing in dialogic engagement with the performance praxis as a multimode epistemological model for Practice as Research. The first of these is close-up, insider knowing (the mode of knowing that is experiential, often tacit and embodied). He calls this "Know-how". The second is "Know-what". This is the knowledge that follows when the tacit is made explicit through critical engagement. This is the mode when, for example, the practitioner knows what "works". The last mode he describes as "Know-that". This engages "Outsider" distant knowledge. This he describes as cognitive, propositional knowledge. All these modes operate dialogically and dynamically within the Practice as Research approach. Presentation of the interrelationship of the evidence each mode affords adds up to substantial new insight or new knowledge.

Given the centrality of the performance/creative praxis, Nelson stresses the need to undertake the review of knowledge, including reading, in parallel with other methods of research so that ideas emerging from this may resonate with the material thinking in practice. These resonances he suggests can then emerge into a conceptual framework.

FIGURE 2.1.

Research design overview.



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH (HEURISTIC INQUIRY)

If paradigmatically, the research design may be understood as Performance as Research, activated through Practice as Research, its methodological approach is a form of heuristic inquiry (Figure 2.1).

Heuristic inquiry is a qualitative methodology particularly suited to solving problems where no formulaic procedure applies (Kleining & Witt, 2000; Moustakas, 1990; Ings, 2013). It enables discovery via intuitive and intelligent questioning. It is not concerned with proof so much as with possibility. Clark *Moustakas* (2001) describes a heuristic inquiry as an investigation that involves self-search, self-dialogue and self-discovery. In this process the research inquiry flows out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration. In discussing his use of the methodology he states:

> I begin the heuristic investigation with my own self-awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until an essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light on a critical human experience … I am personally involved, searching for qualities, conditions, and relationships that underlie a fundamental question or concern. (*Moustakas*, 2001, p. 263)

Heuristic inquiries emphasise connectedness and relationships and “may involve reintegration of derived knowledge that itself is an act of creative discovery, a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding” (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 38-9). *Moustakas* notes in certain inquiries that one approach to gathering and processing data is through an interview, not only with co-researchers but also as dialogue with oneself. Since the process starts within the researcher, he argues that the topic should be of intense personal interest and the finding of the path may take a long period of time. He notes that the heuristic research quest has the following definite characteristics:

1. It seeks to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience.
2. It seeks to discover the qualitative aspects rather than the quantitative dimensions.
3. It engages one’s total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process.
4. It does not seek to predict or determine causal relationships.
5. It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings, or scores (*Moustakas,* 2001, p. 266).

With the topic defined, the data he suggests is typically gathered through a variety of methods each of which has a defining spirit of dialogue (Moustakas, 2001).

Broadly then, heuristic inquiries are concerned with enhancing discovery when no known formula exists and the researcher is operating from accrued knowledge (both tacit and explicit) (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Ings, 2011). In such inquiries Gerhard Kleining and Harald Witt (2000) suggest four rules that may help the researcher to optimise the chances of discovery in the research.

They argue that researchers need to be open to new concepts and able to change their preconceptions if data suggests that they are wrong. Secondly, the research topic may change as the study evolves and the researcher must be flexible enough to work productively with this "instability". Thirdly, the authors suggest that discovery may be optimised if the researcher consciously adopts multiple variation of perspectives during the inquiry.[27] Finally, Kleining and Witt advise that the study is "directed toward discovery of similarities" (2000, p. 3). By this they mean the researcher is required to recognise connections between diverse data, or in Nelson's (2013) terms, "resonances".

Thus, in this thesis although my position may move between actor, writer, director, observer, interviewer, designer and media producer, for heuristic inquiry to function productively I am required to recognise homologies, analogies and resonances between and within all of these dimensions of the research. It is this ability to connect the potentially unconsidered that Kleining and Witt (2000) suggest, forms the foundation of discovery.

PHASES OF THE INQUIRY

Within the PaR research model I employ distinct yet dialogically integrated methods that occur within three phases of the inquiry. The first phase, ***Gestation***, involves a process of heuristic internalisation and also enters into discussion with aspects of the second phase, the production. This process of oscillation between inspiration and the data gathering of practice and reviewing contingent knowledge leads to an evolution and crystallisation of the research inquiry.

The ***Production*** phase draws in these inspirations and explores the research inquiry through performance practice. A performance piece is developed through a process that is both iterative and interconnected.

The final phase, the ***Articulation and evidencing*** of the research, results in public performances of the final creative production *Foolish Prating Knave* and exegetical writing outcomes.

In Figure 2.2 the research is presented in a linear fashion (to represent progression). It was carried out using feedback processes so the thinking and refinement occurred in all the phases. These phases are indicative of a progression but are interconnected and dialogic.[28] For example, the articulation of the research inquiry contributes to the development of the script and content of the play. Thus, progression oscillates between the phases and development occurs as a result.

[27] Thus, in this research project the issue of acting with technological co-characters to enhance the performed potential of character and story is considered from subjective reflection on performance, reflection within performance, from discussion with performers, and from collaboration and discussion with other theatre-makers.

[28] Nelson (2013) argues for three aspects of praxis; reading, doing and writing, to operate dialogically as integral to Practice as Research.

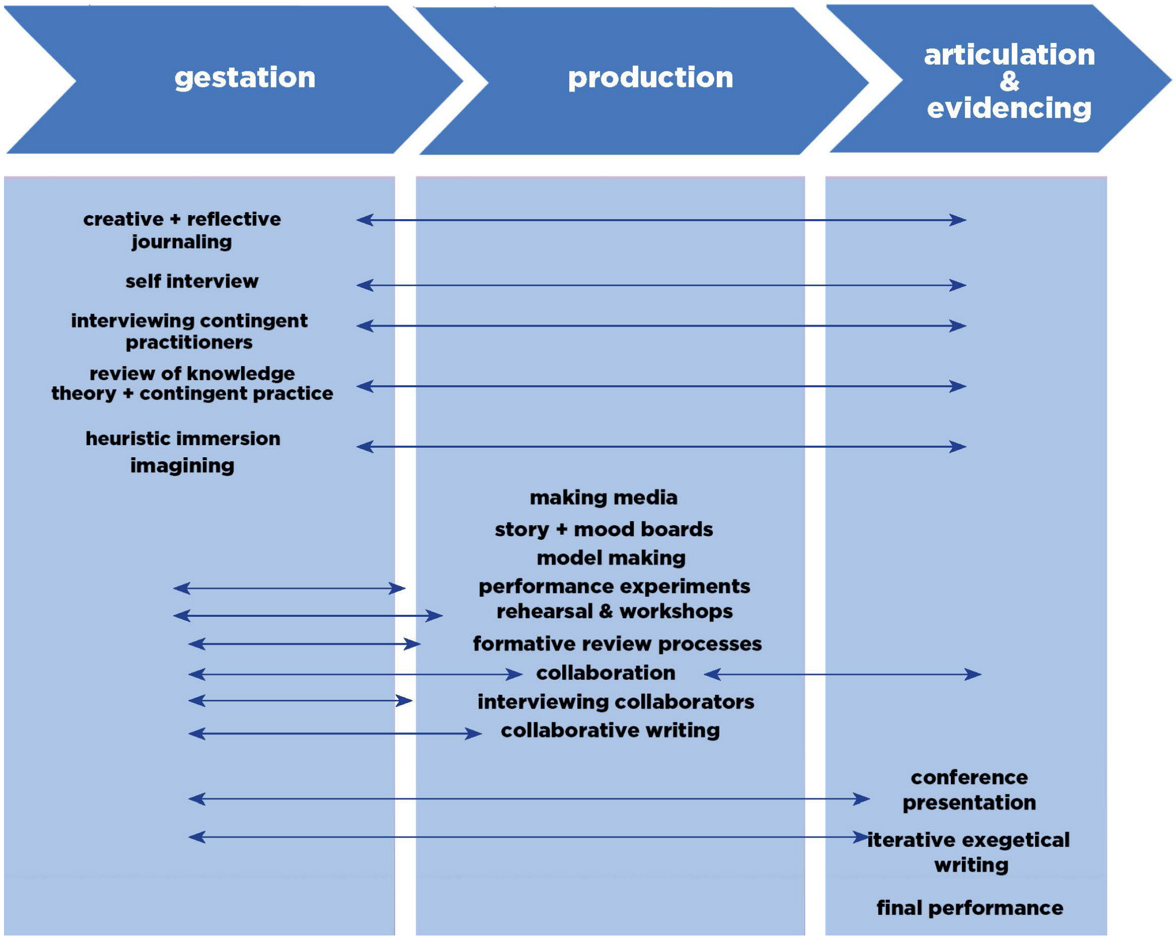
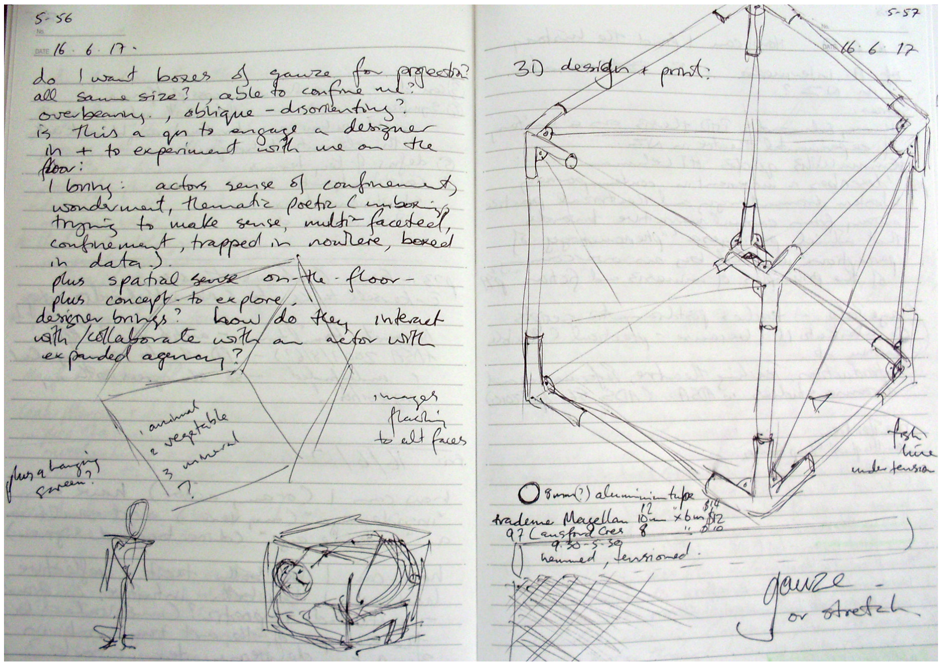

gestation
production
articulation & evidencing
creative + reflective journaling
self interview
interviewing contingent practitioners
review of knowledge theory + contingent practice
heuristic immersion
imagining
making media
story + mood boards
model making
performance experiments
rehearsal & workshops
formative review processes
collaboration
interviewing collaborators
collaborative writing
conference presentation
iterative exegetical writing
final performance

FIGURE 2.2.

The phases and methods of the research design.


5-56
No
DATE 16 · 6 · 17 ·

do I want boxes of gauze for projection?
all same size? , able to confine me?
overbearing. , oblique – disorientating?
is this a qn to engage a designer
in + to experiment with me on the
floor:
I bring: actors sense of confinement,
wonderment, thematic poetic (unboxing,
trying to make sense, multi-faceted,
confinement, trapped in nowhere, boxed
in data).
plus spatial sense on-the-floor-
plus concept-to explore.
designer brings? how do they interact
with/collaborate with an actor with
expanded agency?

1 animal
2 vegetable
3 mineral
?
images flashing to all faces
plus a hanging screen?

5-57
No
DATE 16 6 17

3D design + print:

fish line under tension

8mm(?) aluminium tube
trademe Magellan 12 10m × 6m $14 $12 8 " $10
97 Lansford Cres
9.30-5-30
hemmed, tensioned.

gauze or stretch

FIGURE 2.3.

Journal pages exploring ideas for a PaR workshop on set design.

METHODS

Shelley Kinash (2006) states that, “methods are the techniques or processes we use to conduct our research” (p. 3). Within the phases of the inquiry I employ a number of distinct but interrelated methods. Carole Gray (1996) argued that the methods useful in Practice as Research should be familiar to practitioners.

METHODS CENTRED IN THE FIRST PHASE: GESTATION

In the Gestation phase of the research I engage six distinct but interrelated methods. These are:

- Reflective and creative journaling
- Self-interviewing
- Interviewing contingent practitioners
- Reviewing contingent knowledge: theory and practice
- Heuristic immersion
- Imagining

Reflective and creative journaling

In this research project, I used a series of soft bound notebooks (Figure 2.3). These contained annotations, reflections on work and theory,[29] sketches and diagrams that recorded my thinking at the time.[30] Journaling was employed early in the project and continued throughout. It enabled a self-conscious reflection on data as it emerged from the practice. I used this reflection to interrogate, disrupt and defamiliarise my practice as an actor and intermedial theatre-maker. Journaling was a useful method because it enabled me to consider possible revisions of issues and theory. As Haseman and Daniel Mafe (2009) suggest, this type of journal, subjected to regular and formal re-reading can show how the creative journey shifts over time. Keeping the notebooks also served as a form of creative process in that writing and drawing became a dialogue with the self, recording issues and inspirations as they occurred and folding them into performance experimentation.

I also used journals reflectively to explore the context of the practice, employing words and images to reflect on the progress of experimentation (Ortlipp, 2008). The sketch shown in Figure 2.3 indicates a progression of thinking about the relationship between screen surfaces and the live actor. At the time this sketch was made I was considering a cubic arrangement of screen surfaces to integrate the actor into the conceptual space of the production. This was prompted by feedback from Experiment 4, documented in my journal, that suggested the single rear-mounted screen at the Artsworx theatre (discussed in detail in Chapter 4) did not serve the production well.

Melissa Trimingham’s (2002) hermeneutic-interpretative spiral of action and reflection cycles was used as an iterative method leading to both refinement of thinking and a creative production. I also found Trimingham’s (2002) and Peter Brook’s (1968) practice of returning each day, inspired by the processes

[29] Thus the praxis of reading theory, practical experimentation and writing reflectively produced insight that drove discovery.

[30] It was useful in the Gestation phase to explore the topic of intense personal interest (Moustakas, 2001). Later it proved invaluable in refining my emergent and evolving “research inquiry” (Nelson, 2013).

of experimentation and the intervening reflection, useful in my application of journaling as a method. Because journaling constitutes an act of thinking it extended across all phases. Ideas generated within it were fed back and used to refine both the thinking of the gestation phase and the practical development of the production phase. This spiral of feedback loops was integral to the research design.

Interviews

A variety of interview methods were used throughout this project with the self-interview and interviews with practitioners whose work relates to my own practice.

Self-interviewing

The self-interview[31] was used to tease out knowledge and challenge and disrupt my thinking in order to avoid the pitfall, noted by Schön (1983) of practitioners sometimes failing to adequately question assumptions about their practice. Most frequently seen in autoethnography, the self-interview is acknowledged as having no defined parameters (Crawley, 2012). While Michael Brorer and Andrea Fontana (2012) see the self-interview as a retrospective and narrative reconstruction of life events, I would suggest that it can also be generative and particularly useful as a performative way of surfacing tacit knowledge, in the sense of dialogue with oneself (Moustakas, 1990). This aspect was most useful in defining the research inquiry and thus was used especially in the Gestational phase. For example, before reviewing the NT Live production of Hamlet (2015) I used my mobile phone as a camera recording device for a self-interview. I documented reflections about my expectations regarding the ability of a recording of a live play, projected on a two-dimensional screen, to capture the immediacy and depth perception of live theatre (Figure 2.4). This act of performing my questions as a conversation with myself and then during the film's interval and afterwards enabled me to capture my immediate responses and to reflect on these reactions in relation to my overall conceptions of theatre performance.

FIGURE 2.4.

Frame grab from a mobile phone video recording of my response to the experience of watching a screening of the *National Theatre Live: Hamlet* (Friedman & Turner, 2015). This method encompasses the language of the medium in the performativity of my reflection.

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[31] The audio-visual exegesis of Trygve Diesen's doctoral thesis Swimming With Sharks (Diesen, 2010) offers an excellent example of this type of self-interview.

Interviewing contingent practitioners

In the development of iterations of my work I also used open-ended, unstructured and active interviews[32] as a method for developing dialogue between the researcher and a range of expert practitioners working in contingent fields.[33] I recorded interviews with a video camera and sound recording device and then reviewed the material and reflected upon it in my journal. Such interviews were conversational[34] in nature and were understood as a social encounter or meaning-making collaboration (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Fontana, 2011). The interviews enabled me to access embodied knowledge that may not be available through written texts or observation. These interviews contributed largely to the contextualisation of my research. They were mainly about the practitioner's work. However, they also provoked wider, critical discussion of our field of practice and challenged my thinking. In Experiment 4 I conducted interviews with experts who had viewed the first iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave*. These are discussed in Chapter 4. These types of carefully targeted feedback interviews were helpful in refining the work.

Reviewing contingent knowledge: theory and practice

I resourced my practice with ongoing reading and exposure to ideas and performance works. This constituted Nelson's (2013) "Know-That" and the practice inspired "Know-How" and "Know-What" and was, in turn, drawn upon to answer questions that arose in the practice. Thus, in PaR, I did not use a review of knowledge as a discrete study undertaken only at the outset of a thesis to identify a gap in a field. As my practice developed and changed, it attracted theory to explain or contextualise thinking or to provoke reflection and development within the performance process.

Nelson (2013) notes that there are profitable resonances in contemporary related fields that can focus or provide an alternative lens with which to view a research project, and he refers to one of the functions of a review of knowledge as locating the researcher's practice in a lineage of work. However, for me a review of knowledge does more than this. I developed this knowledge iteratively and in response to the needs and findings of my research. It served to provoke and critique move-testing experiments, it was used to design hypothesis-testing experiments and it was employed to help me think through the context of an emerging idea.

While sometimes this knowledge is in written form, it may also be accessible as audio-visual documentation, interviews, performances[35], photographs, notes and reviews.[36] This material about theatre practitioners working in this field was accessed internationally and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Heuristic immersion

The formative, gestational value of immersion in a topic of intense personal interest is an important characteristic of the heuristic approach and may be considered a method in itself. In Moustakas's (1990) research approach, "immersion" involves deep and sustained focus and concentration on the topic in order to "live" it and access and surface tacit knowledge. He sees it as a step beyond the initial engagement with the topic and formulation of a problem or question. He suggests that immersion results in spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching to uncover personal connections with the topic. Beginning with an intense interest in the agency afforded to an actor and the issue of finding a way to use highly technologised theatre techniques in conjunction with psychological realism, I immersed myself in relevant theory and practice, following any connection that arose. In my daily life, the issues served as an excitation and provocation to find connections and questions. This period of the research was joyously open and deliberately eclectic. Challenging traditional approaches became a cornerstone, since the disruptive force enabled variety in perspectives. I found myself thinking deeply about long held opinions about the place of the actor and the meaning of the metaphors that Zarrilli (2002) suggests actors use to understand and articulate their process. For example, I found my tacit knowledge about psychological realism and its relationship to the poetics challenged with respect to theatre. This living with the material led to uncovering a personal connection to this that went deeper than intellectual curiosity and connected to the criteria with which I judge myself both in relation to believability as an actor and in respect of self-worth. These issues began to crystallise into a research inquiry and demanded answers that could only be fully explored through performance.

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[32] By this I mean interviews that are not driven by pre-established focus questions but respond to issues emanating from the participant's perception of performance. This acknowledges the dialogic relationship between interviewer and subject and is semi-structured in search of insights rather than empirical data.

[33] The interviews were conducted inside the agreed guidelines of the AUT Ethics Committee, Approved application 14/329.

[34] Conversational is used here to connote a free flowing exchange of ideas rather than the specific form of the conversational interview that seeks to improve data acquisition through responsive rephrasing of questions for the purpose of clarification.

[35] As a practitioner and a researcher, I am able to access embodied and tacit levels of understanding by experiencing live performance from multiple perspectives.

[36] The term "review of knowledge" has been used in this thesis to encompass forms of knowledge additional to the traditional reading of theory in the domain.

Imagining

The method of imaginatively living the dramatic possibilities of a topic may be seen as an extension of immersion. It is an actor's technique that I use in my practice from the beginning of any project. As an actor, my engagement is often creatively imaginative and generative. Thalia Goldstein (2009) observes that actors show a particular childhood proclivity, that they carry into their professional lives, to enter into fictional worlds, either their own or those created by others. She agrees with Daniel Nettle's (2006) ground breaking study into the psychology of acting[37] where he suggests that empathy, which she defines as "the ability to feel another's feelings" (Goldstein, 2009, p. 7), is one of the defining personality traits of actors.

In 1987, Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell defined good acting as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (p. 15). This method of indwelling with material using an actor's skills in empathy and living in an imaginative world is how I approach drama. For example, the acting technique of engaging the imagination to "live" within the given circumstances of a script is a specialised

[37] Nettles' study showed professional actors scoring significantly higher than control groups on the Baron-Cohen empathising quotient (Nettle, 2006).

tool used in complex acting. It situates the actor in a moment of performance where access to tacit knowledge and motivated real reactions are possible. This is regardless of whether this is as a "character", distanced from the self or, as Deryn Warren (2008) advocates, as your "unique self". I found this technique could be extended to my research agenda and was a way of incorporating ideas or identifying something that did not fit. Furthermore, it is an improvisational tool that generates further ideas and emotional responses. When I assumed the character of "the man" in the evolving narrative for what was to become *Foolish Prating Knave* I was not merely contemplating interesting plot developments. I was living imaginatively as the character and feeling my way through events improvised by my mind.[38]

METHODS CENTRED IN THE SECOND PHASE: PRODUCTION

- Making media
- Storyboards
- Mood boards
- Modelling
- Performance experiments
- Rehearsal, workshops
- Formative review processes
- Collaboration and interviewing collaborators
- Collaborative writing

MATERIAL THINKING METHODS: MAKING MEDIA, STORYBOARDS AND MOOD BOARDS AND MODEL MAKING

Making media

Designing and producing video projections, audio-scapes and set materials have been useful methods for engaging both tacit knowledge and material thinking.[39] The act of making diverse media exposed me to meanings attached to the matrix of each mode of production. In conceptualising, shooting and then post producing the video projections, I engaged with cameras, lights, video editing (Adobe Premiere Pro) and postproduction (Adobe After Effects) software. Each of these tools has its own mode of production that affected the parameters of material thought. Premiere, for example, helped me to think in terms of the time-based and visual rhythms of the projections. It enabled me to consider the potential contributions of colour, weight, composition and tone. In developing the audio-scape of the play, using Adobe Audition and Premiere I paid attention to the possibilities of dimensions of ambience, volume, tone and duration. I deliberately chose to minimise the impact of space with respect to sound because I only have hearing in one ear and therefore a limited sense of directionality and spatial separation.

Even in my earliest experiments in this thesis I took my thinking beyond the parameters of words. Working physically with media, away from the immediacy

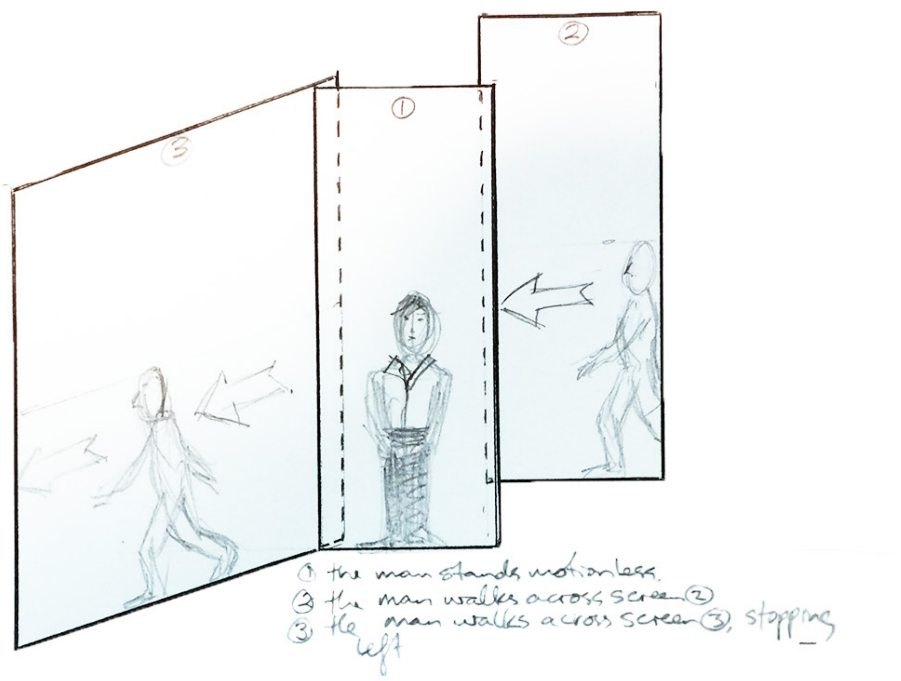
[38] Recording and reflecting on this in my journal served as a resource to take into script sessions with the writer. For example, imagining myself as a lost and bereft man trying to push through stretchy gauze screens helped create the core goal of the character and of the narrative of Foolish Prating Knave.

[39] Material thinking is a term Paul Carter (2004) uses to describe a process of building tacit knowledge through the practice of working with material objects.

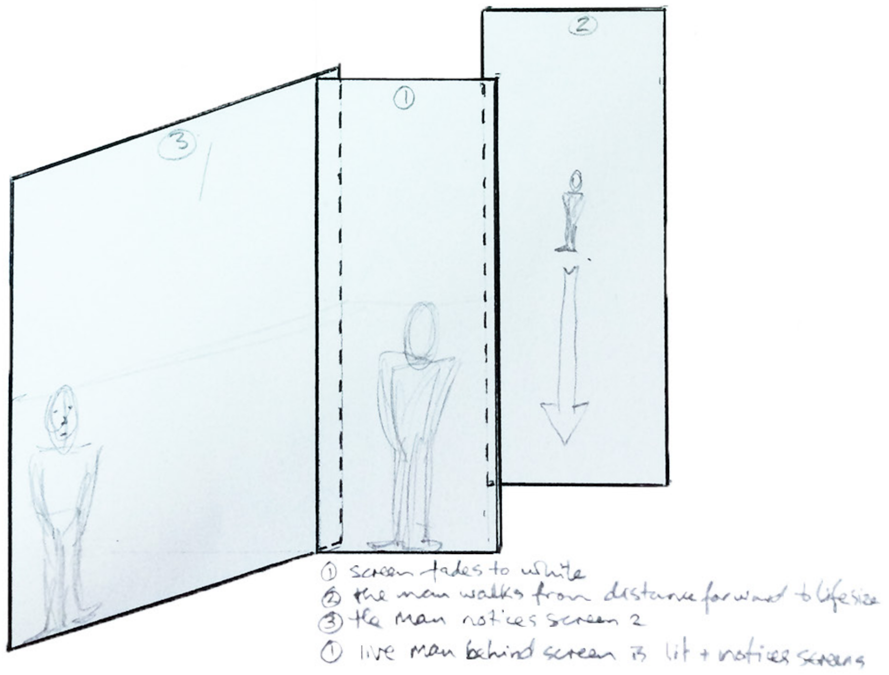
FIGURE 2.5.

Storyboard used for *Foolish Prating Knave***.**

These images were used to visualise the three video projections at the start of the play which convey that Polonius is in a space where time is asynchronous.



① the man stands motionless.
② the man walks across screen ②
③ the man walks across screen ③, stopping left



① screen fades to white
② the man walks from distance forward to lifesize
③ the man notices screen 2
① live man behind screen is lit + notices screens

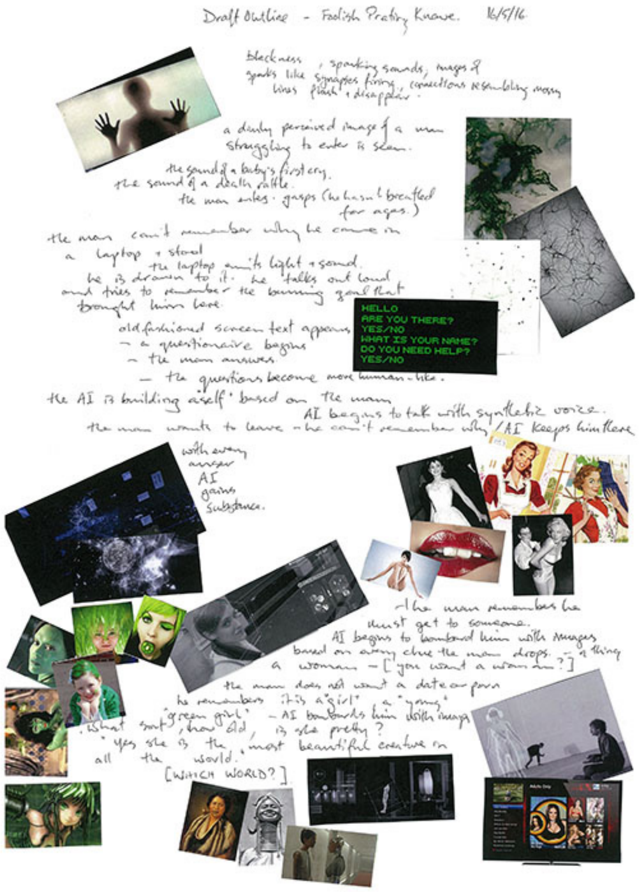
of performing, enabled me to explore how the particularities of my skills and inclinations as an actor could affect material thinking in collaborations with other theatre-makers. Furthermore, the act of thinking through such practice inspired resonances with the thematic concerns of the piece.

Storyboarding

I used storyboards as a visual representation. These comprised a series of still images of the proposed narrative, augmented by written explanation (Figure 2.5). Storyboarding is frequently used in the planning of video productions. Although it has its roots in early animated films, the motion picture industry borrowed the concept from theatre. For example, Andrew Wachtel and Michael Denner (2002) note that Stanislavki employed a version of a storyboard with stage design and sketches when illustrating a production script for Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* in 1898. For his 1898 production of Chekhov's *The Seagull,* Stanislavski wrote precise stage directions illustrated by sketches. These early forms of storyboarding are concerned with the spatial movements and orientations of the cast, rather than a depiction of the visual aesthetic of the production.

FIGURE 2.6.

Mood board (a story sheet version incorporating text) for a scriptwriting workshop.



Draft Outline - Foolish Prating Knave. 16/5/16

blackness, sparking sounds, images of sparks like synapses firing, connections resembling mossy lines flash + disappear.

a dimly perceived image of a man struggling to enter is seen.

the sound of a baby's first cry.
the sound of a death rattle.
the man enters. gasps (he hasn't breathed for ages.)

the man can't remember why he came in
a laptop + stool
the laptop emits light + sound.
he is drawn to it. he talks out loud and tries to remember the burning goal that brought him here.

old fashioned screen text appears
- a questionaire begins
- the man answers
- the questions become more human-like.

HELLO
ARE YOU THERE?
YES/NO
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
DO YOU NEED HELP?
YES/NO

the AI is building 'itself' based on the man
AI begins to talk with synthetic voice.
the man wants to leave - he can't remember why / AI keeps him there

with every answer AI gains substance.

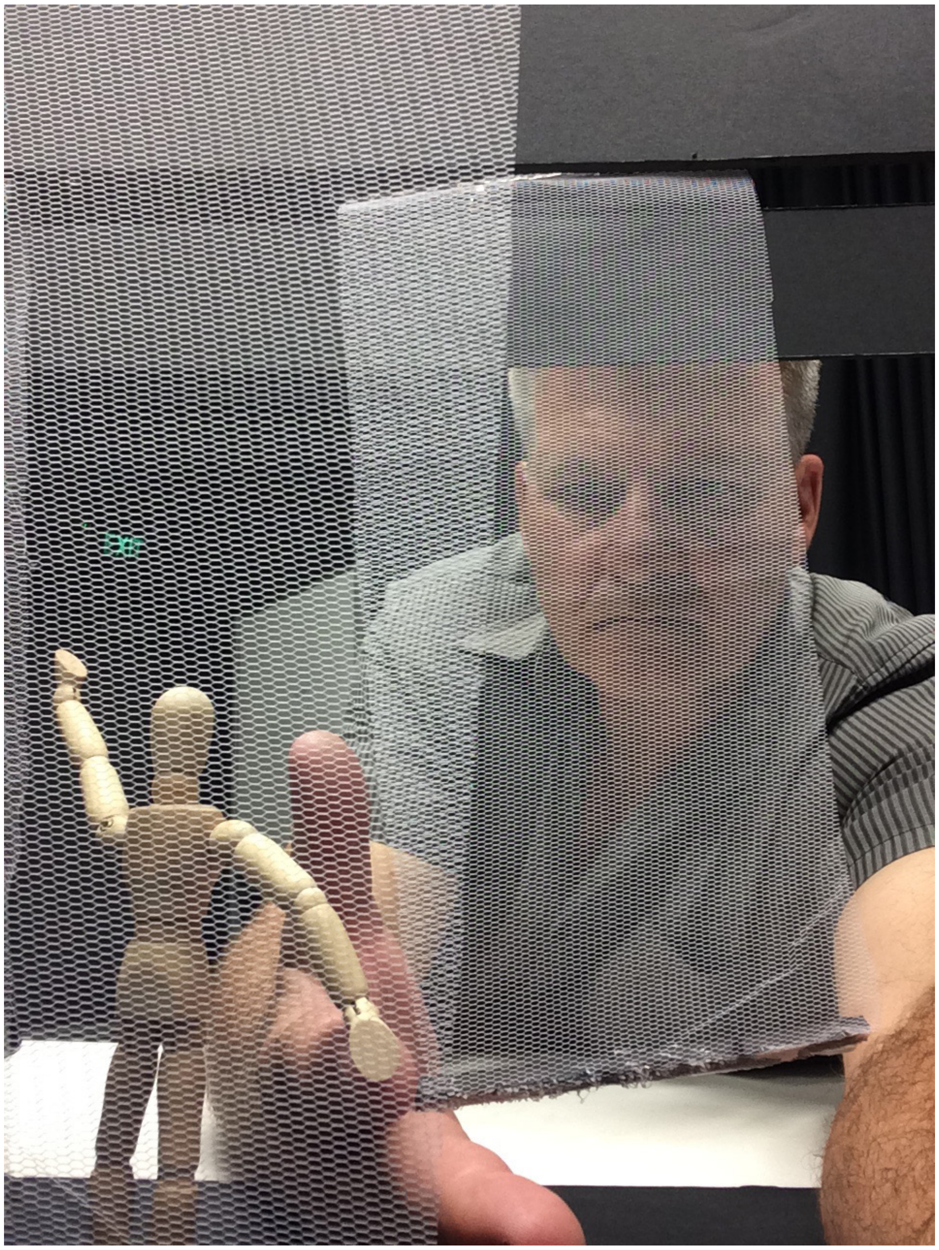
- the man remembers he must get to someone.
AI begins to bombard him with images based on every clue the man drops. - a thing a woman - ['you want a woman?']
the man does not want a date or porn
he remembers it is a "girl" a "young" "green girl" - AI bombards him with images
'what sort', how old, is she pretty?
'yes she is the most beautiful creature in all the world.'
[WHICH WORLD?]

Mood boards

I use “Mood boards” in the gestational phase of digital media design projects as well as in related design processes. They normally consist of a collage of images from an eclectic range of sources. The assembly serves as an inspiration in ideation process, especially with respect to style and tone. This mood board (Figure 2.6) was used to assemble visual cues to my thinking for the narrative and style of Foolish Prating Knave. It served as a starting point for a collaborative discussion of the script with writer Henderson in Experiment 4. Thus, using this method I can think in colour and density, emotion and resonance that reaches beyond the limitations of the written word.

FIGURE 2.7.

Modelling the set and projection design (2016).



Modelling

I employ modelling as a method for experimenting with potential sets and projection design. These constructions are scaled assemblies made of foam board and samples of projection materials. Because in this process I am external to the space, the method enables me to think more objectively about the nature of spatial relationships (Figure 2.7). In this process, I use a micro projector to visualise and develop potential media effects. This approach lets me engage in a form of rapid prototyping of the projection design that can be achieved without a two-day setup normally needed to explore such thinking in the actual theatre space.

Here the primary screen is repositioned to explore the spatial relationship with Polonius (represented by the to-scale mannequin) from the perspective of the audience. The model was useful in concept development in Experiment 5 and then proved valuable as I developed the screen positions for the last two experiments.

PERFORMANCE EXPERIMENTS AND FORMATIVE REVIEW PROCESSES

Performance experiments

The thesis has employed seven performances and reflections have emanated from them in an iterative refinement of my thinking. The experiments span both the Gestation and Production phases of the research design, but are principally located in the latter phase as the research moved from crystallisation of the concept to devising and scripting the final creative outcome.

Rehearsal, workshops

The processes of rehearsal and workshop in traditional theatre preparation are delineated by the existence of a script. If a director and cast have a script to work from then the creative impulses are directed towards realising the script's potentials through embodied exploration in rehearsal. The spatial and interpersonal relationships of the characters and the pacing of the narrative are evolved collaboratively, with the director providing an outside eye. When a script is in development or does not pre-exist then the company engages in a devising or workshopping process. A combination of both of these methods was used to develop *Foolish Prating Knave* in Experiments 4-7. The rehearsals with directors Walsh and Alison Quigan, after the script had been developed, yielded refinement to the performance and helped realise its potential. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

All seven performances may be seen as employing Schön's (1983) three main types of experiment. His "explorative experimentation" is designed to discover "What if?" with no predictions or expectations imposed on outcomes. Much theatrical rehearsal and improvisation follows this model as tacit knowledge inspires an actor to move, think and act in the rehearsal space. This form of experiment is particularly useful when the objective is to discover what emerges. In the second experiment, with opera singer Randle, we devised the movement and cinematography using a workshop experimental approach. We asked, “what if” you begin the aria in the dressing room and end up in the theatre. Then we followed her creative impulses through iterations of her ideas.

The second type of experiment Schön describes as move-testing. This term describes trials that are employed systematically to improve an aspect of practice. This form of experimentation involves implementing an action then evaluating its success and either incorporating it, discarding it or progressing with further iterations of the process. This may involve a change to either the actor’s theory in practice or to the espoused theory. This type of experiment was useful in developing objective reflection about the lessons learned in the study. For example, the use of prototype media in rehearsing the fourth experiment proved useful to actor Kerynn Walsh’s process if the prototype was evocative. This discovery helped progress her character and resulted in the use of improved prototypes in pursuit of better attuned rehearsal outcomes.

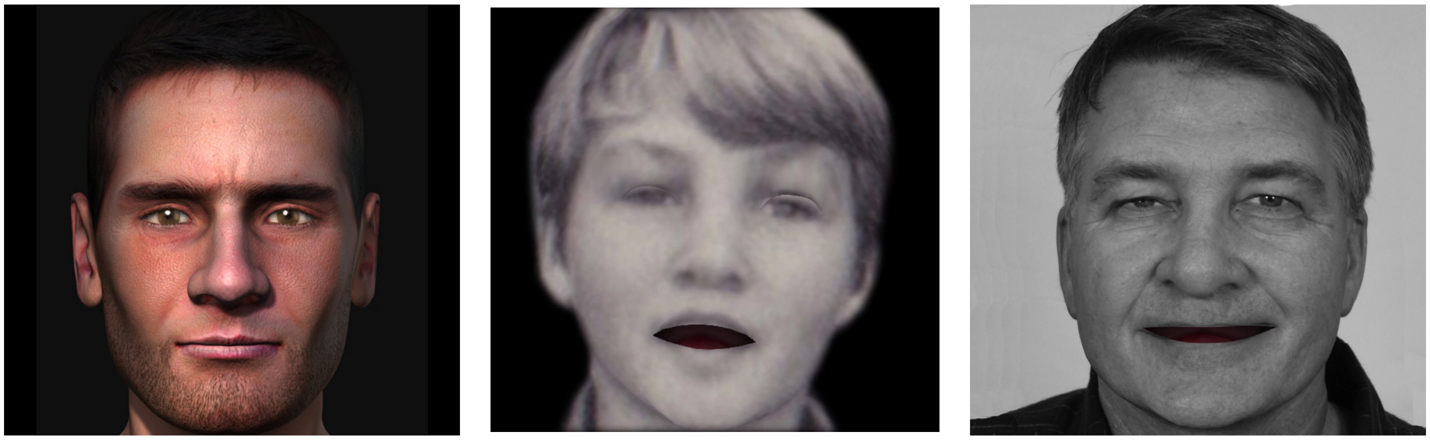


FIGURE 2.8.

Hypothesis-testing experiments using alternative representations of an artificially intelligent character.

There was also occasionally a need for Schön's third type of experiment. This is more focused upon traditional hypothesis-testing where I developed comparative tests of several iterations to evaluate which worked best. This was evidenced in the post-production of media for projection where I created samples of videos to project within the theatre space and evaluated the most effective in terms of building an aesthetic sense of the connection between mediated and live characters (Figure 2.8).

The character on the left is a photo-realistic 3D model from the software application Reallusion Character Creator library. I created the other, less realistic, images within Reallusion's Crazytalk software. These experiments generated different visual concepts to explore the use of realistic and nonrealistic characters in the narrative of the play. Surprisingly the experiments suggested that a clumsy representation might be more uncanny.[40] This experiment resonated with the thematic concerns of the play and was incorporated in the narrative. The AI character explicitly performs these experiments on the live character.

Formative review processes

As the play *Foolish Prating Knave* began to develop iteratively it was subjected to formative peer review (using draft showings and targeted interviews with expert theatre practitioners experienced in similar forms of theatre). Essentially, in this process I showed iterations of my work and sought critical and creative feedback from other practitioners.[41] For example, after presenting a draft of the play at the Australasian Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies (ADSA) conference at the University of Southern Queensland (June, 2016), I asked David O'Donnell, a theatre academic and experienced director and actor, to provide feedback in a conversational interview (discussion of these interviews takes place in the *Expert feedback* section of Chapter 4). I scheduled this with him to occur the following day, thus allowing him time to reflect in private on his experience but still capturing his impressions when the memory was fresh. The interview took place in the theatre as a contextual aide-memoire and was recorded by video camera and audio recording device. I then reviewed the recordings and noted salient points in my journal. The purpose of presenting the piece to the conference audience was to gain informed academic feedback about the research. The play was at the stage of development where the script was complete and all media was in a draft iteration. By assuming sole responsibility for the operation of the play and from the location of a single projection screen I was able to generate valuable insights to carry forward in the development. These insights were noted by the interviewee. A

[40] Prof. Masahiro Mori argued in 1970 that animations that approach but do not achieve verisimilitude with humans fall into what he terms an uncanny valley and are found by most people to be alienating (Hosea, 2012).

[41] Practitioners may include actors, directors, sound designers, filmmakers and theatre designers.

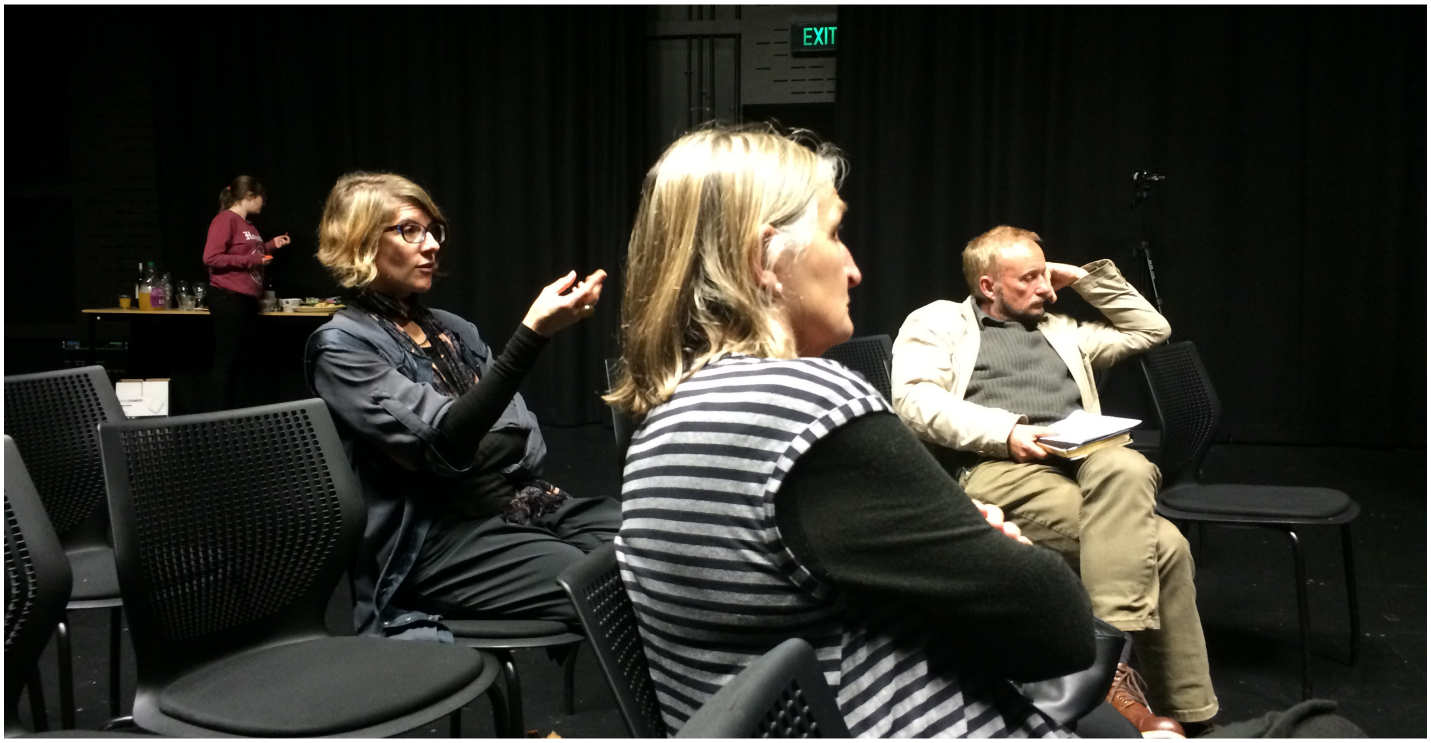


FIGURE 2.9.

Post-performance expert review, AUT Live Performance Lab, September 23, 2016. (Left to right) Theatre and Dance academic/practitioner Dr. Jennifer Nikolai, Journalism academic/practitioner Dr. Lyn Barnes and Design and Film-making academic/practitioner Professor Welby Ings discuss a draft performance of Foolish Prating Knave.

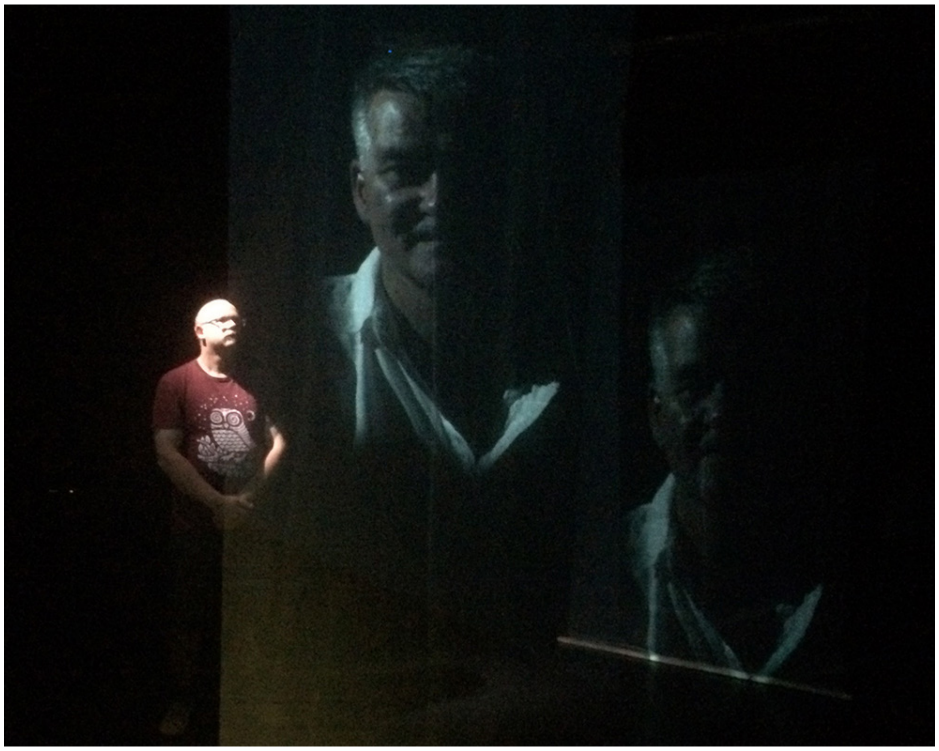


FIGURE 2.10.

Screen experiments - Lighting Designer Duncan Milne and projections of actor Ross Brannigan. Collaborative experiments with the position of prototype screens, lights and projector locations to ascertain spatial relationships and the creative potential of image spill.

subsequent iteration[42] of *Foolish Prating Knave* improved on these insights when I experimented with locating the performance in an intimate space and redesigned the screen and its location. The formative peer review in this case, and at USQ, included a feedback conversation with the expert audiences straight after the performance (Figure 2.9).

Collaboration and interviewing collaborators

The method of collaboration in this thesis is primarily centred in the production phase although it was also used in the development of the concept and in the final performances of *Foolish Prating Knave*.

Within the context of the creative production of a theatre work, a range of assumed or negotiated ways of working together with other creative contributors is standard practice. However, in this thesis I afforded myself a greater level of agency (as an actor) to collaborate in deeper, more substantive ways with writer, audio designer, lighting designer and cinematographer. Knopf (2006) suggests that collaborative relationships in the theatre employ experimentation and risk as essential components of exploration. However, in this project this engagement extends through collaborative material making, idea exchange and conversational interviews with practitioners.

Thus, when I designed lighting and projection surfaces for the work, I began with the assumption that I would bring the qualities and skills I have as an actor to contribute to discussion and practical exploration with designer Duncan Milne. In his professional experience, it is disruptive and therefore risky to engage with an actor at the design stage. The traditional relationship is for the designer and director to collaborate and for actors to react to the design they are given. In the theatre space, for Experiments 6 and 7, we set up lights and screens that I had made in order to experiment with the spatial relationships they might create. We discussed our processes and took inspiration from the differing perspectives (Figure 2.10). As an actor, I was particularly interested in the way I could move and position myself in relation to projected images. Milne was excited by the possibilities that the positioning afforded for images to fall on my body and to create depth and repetition.

Collaborative writing

The collaboration between writer Henderson and I occurred primarily in the early part of the production phase, but evolved iteratively as experiments with other practitioners offered insights that were incorporated in the narrative. Henderson and I spent many hours discussing both the aesthetic and narrative ideas I had for the play. We also talked through the research issues I was exploring and these provided opportunities to incorporate the research questions in the script. For example, when I explained that I wanted to explore how the actor could relate to a projected image, we decided to have an artificially intelligent character with no initial visual form derive its visual existence from interactions with the live

[42] At AUT's Live Performance Lab theatre on September 23, 2016.

character. As an actor, I brought my improvisational "imagining" to discussions and a sense of the dramatic and emotional connections. These were relatively familiar to a writer but Henderson added a focus on the potentials of plot beats and structure. I created mood boards with writing added to describe potential moments for the script. Henderson wrote blocks of dialogue as starters to improvisation and we took these on to the rehearsal floor to use them as provocations in devising the script. He took the risk of surrendering control of the story to the research agenda and to the input of an actor. Through wide-ranging exploration of possibilities, a script was evolved with Henderson taking final responsibility for writing it down. Conversations were recorded for reflection and analysis and salient points were reflected upon in my journal.

I also worked collaboratively with other actors to co-create and iteratively develop some sections of the play. I chose to work with actors who were open to embodied dialogue and a devising process. The negotiation of roles was in a constant state of flux since the play only has one character performing at any given time. Therefore, in the absence of a director, we took turns at being the outside eye to critique the performances. In this devising process, we risked attempting to use improvisation with one actor who, as it turned out, did not feel comfortable working without a script. Collaboration was limited by this missing element and it highlighted the importance of aligning possible contributors to the aim of the session. I also used critical conversational interviews during and after an actor's participation.

METHODS CENTRED IN THE THIRD PHASE: ARTICULATION AND EVIDENCING

- Conference presentations
- Iterative exegetical writing

Conference presentations

Once my thinking reached a level where I felt it needed to be opened to critical peer review (outside of that provided by other practitioners and collaborators), I took bodies of work into the public domain through conference presentations. The first of these involved presenting a paper, *Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy,* at Oxford in 2013. The paper[43] included an early performance experiment. The critical response was refreshing.

The approach of presenting both written and performance-based papers at international conferences[44] was employed as a method for eliciting critical feedback from outside of the creative experience underpinning the development of the work. As discussed earlier, I sought feedback at the 2016 ADSA conference in two, in-depth interviews and from an open forum after my presentation.[45] These sessions allowed for intensive interrogation of both what was performed and the articulation of my thinking.

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[43] Brannigan, R. (2013, September). Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy. Paper presented at the 4th Global Conference on Visual Aspects of Performance Practice, Oxford, England. Retrieved from http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/RBrannigan-wpaper-perform4.pdf

[44] Brannigan, R. (2015, June). Acting the self in an experimental short film. Paper presented at the 2015 Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA) Conference – The Player's Passion Revisited, Sydney, Australia. Brannigan, R. (2016, June). The actor persists – a Post postdramatic exploration. Paper presented at the 2016 ADSA conference – Resilience, Revive, Restore, Reconnect, Toowoomba, Australia, 2016.

[45] David O'Donnell (Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand) and Bernadette Meenach (University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia).

Iterative exegetical writing

Although the method of iterative exegetical writing has been positioned in the last phase, it has been utilised throughout the research process, operating dialogically with all other methods. In the thesis trajectory, early drafts of exegesis chapters were tentatively drafted over three years ago and I have revisited them as the research has progressed and drawn its thinking into sharper definition. I am reminded here of Nelson's (2013) model for Practice as Research which notes that exegetical writing is one of the three components of praxis, and I have found this a valid assertion because, when I write exegetically, the process causes me to clarify emphases in the research and to draw what is often tacit, into explicit expression. When consciously processing thought in this manner, I am not producing an "end of thesis write-up" but, rather, I am using exegetical writing as a method for reflection, focusing and clarification.

Conclusion

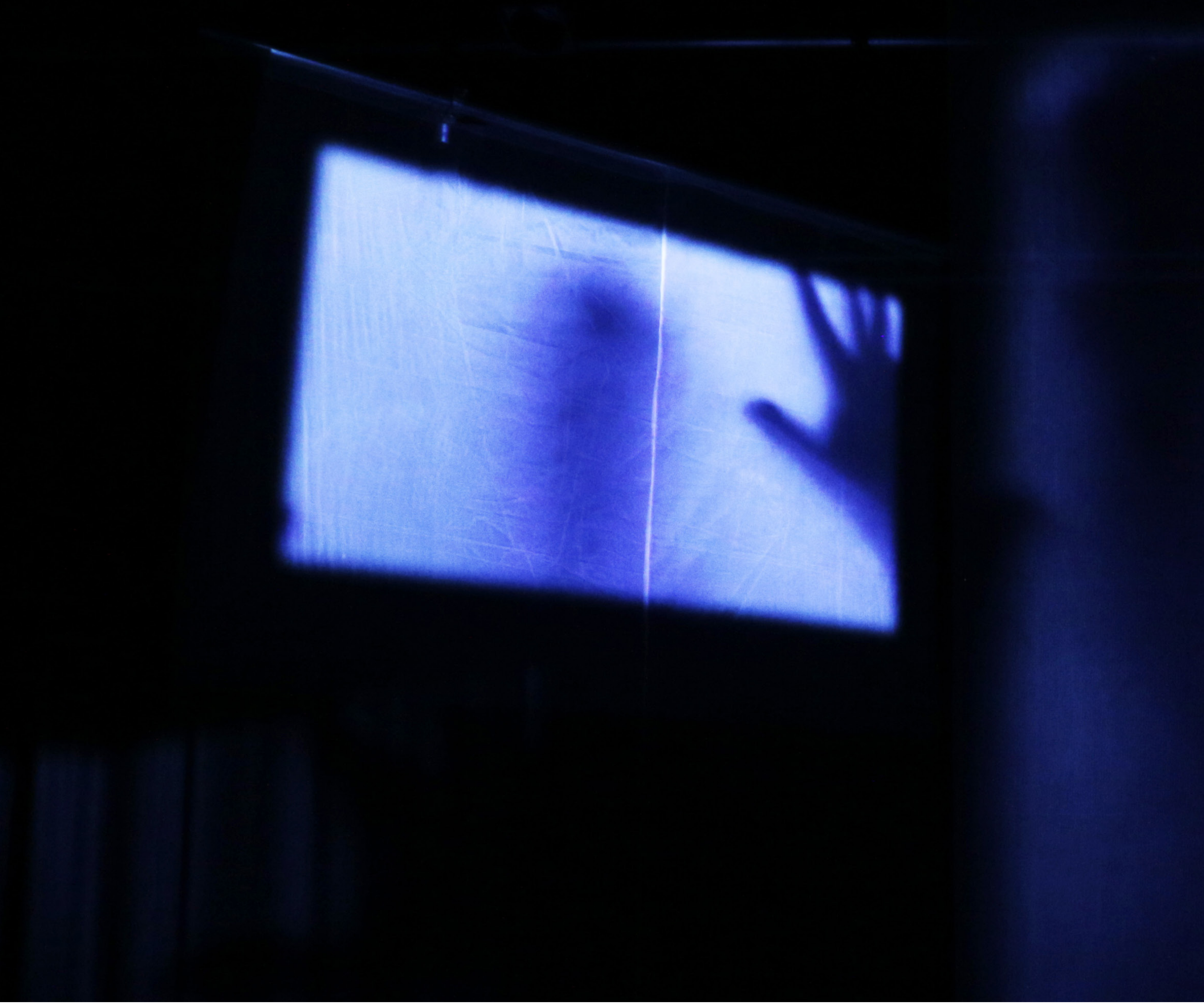
Paradigmatically this thesis may be understood as Performance as Research. It developed and adapted Nelson's (2013) Practice as Research model wherein I have employed practice to produce research findings that have emerged from, and are embodied in, performance.

Methodologically I have employed a heuristic inquiry for its flexibility in using both explicit and intuitive knowing. Because it is not concerned with proof so much as with possibility, a heuristic approach has enabled me to "come to know" via a process of self-search, self-dialogue and self-discovery.

In resourcing a heuristic approach the inquiry has employed three phases of methods that, despite the demarcations, were often in dialogic engagement with each other.

- Beginning with issues of intense personal interest, the first phase progressed these through wide-ranging exploration of the contextual framework, locating the inquiry and clarifying the issues into a research inquiry.
- In the second phase, several methods were used to explore, through practice, key issues and to iteratively draw in resources to provoke, extend or contextualise the thinking.
- The final creative production and exegesis were completed and presented in the final phase after subjection to critique.

The findings that were uncovered through the inquiry are not framed as solutions to discrete problems, but rather may be understood as discoveries that are useful to myself as a practitioner, my community of actors, and arguably as contributions to scholarly discourse surrounding how an actor practitioner might engage methodologically with Performance as Research.



CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELATED KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELATED KNOWLEDGE

This chapter reviews knowledge from a range of disciplines, both academic and professional. It is from the interplay or dialogic engagement between these knowledges that the project has drawn inspiration. Therefore, the review has been undertaken in parallel with other methods of research as a way of both contextualising and resourcing the practice. The focus of this study and this review of knowledge is on a form of theatre that is important to my practice and that might facilitate new agency and new skills for actors in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this form four strands of my interests and background coalesce. These are the prevalence of realist drama in mainstream theatres, the perseverance of productions of Shakespeare[46], a British-influenced acting technique bringing together awareness of psychological realism and a sense of style, and the increasing use of digital media within the stage setting. Given these influences at play in Aotearoa New Zealand, the study is designed to find an approach to acting in intermedial-realist theatre that is relevant to the dominant aesthetic choices of the professional theatre in this country and to extend notions of curriculum content in the training of actors. International instances of intermedial theatre have tended towards the postdramatic with the nonrealist acting and rejection of linear narrative and character that the form often implies. Intermedial theatre that aligns more with the current aesthetic and cultural preferences in professional theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand is rare. Local instances of intermedial-realist theatre are arguably even rarer in mainstream theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand and audiences must look to work by touring companies such as Lepage's Ex Machina.

[46] In the last two years since it was established, the Pop Up Globe claims to have performed Shakespeare to over 450,000 people (Gregory, M. (n.d.). Welcome from the Artistic Director. Retrieved August 10, 2018 from https://popupglobe.co.nz/about/welcome/)

The review falls broadly into three categories:

- Theories and practices of acting technique relevant to the nature of the study
- Acting in a form of intermedial-realist theatre
- Understanding my state as an actor with regard to issues of agency, psychology, cognitive neuroscience and collaboration

THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF ACTING TECHNIQUE RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

As a starting point, it has been useful to consider an evolution of thinking with regard to Western acting techniques. This overview enables me to position both my practice and thinking within a historical trajectory.

Lutterbie (2011) attempts to coalesce the main theories surrounding a definition of acting and acting techniques. He traces a line through a series of largely Western key thinkers from Aristotle, Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Augusto Boal, Grotowski, to the American “Method” tradition. Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) and Liz Tomlin (2013) extend this lineage to the explorations and deconstructions of the postdramatic. Phillip Zarrilli (1995, 2004) approaches the same task from dual perspectives; theory and practice. By drawing together a disparate collection of perspectives on what he terms a “mode of socio-cultural practice” (p. 2), he initiates a dialogue within which we might reconsider what acting is. In this research, I have chosen to focus on practitioner-theorists who have contributed to the development of styles and techniques that engage with “psychological realism”[47], with particular emphasis on those who have had an impact on the theatre community in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hilary Halba (2017) describes the influence of Stanislavski and psychological realism as having a generalised currency in Aotearoa New Zealand and this study is designed to ensure relevance to the local industry and to refine and extend my own work. It is valuable to consider psychological realism as well as acting in the British tradition of Shakespearean performance, both of which underpin my practice and shape much of mainstream theatre in this country. The focus is further refined to concentrate on those practitioner-theorists working in intermedial theatre who emphasise an empathetic response to narrative and character.

Much of the acting in intermedial and postdramatic theatre aims at something different, eschewing character altogether. Denise Varney describes actors in the postdramatic as critically distancing themselves from any notion of character: “There is no longer embodiment of character but selves present in real time” (2007, p. 2). This rejection of character is arguably a reaction to classical theatre.

Classical acting from Aristotle to Shakespeare

The concept of “character” in this classical lineage of acting was first theorised around the fourth century BC by Aristotle, who developed in his *Poetics* (c. 335 B.C.E.), a foundation for an understanding of drama as a “mimetic” art. He used the term “mimesis”, meaning imitation, representation or expression, to describe the function and imperative of the art form. By this he meant not just imitation of the particular, garnered from close observation of life, but something that encompasses the universal because the form of dramatic writing and performance is an act of creation (an idealisation). The imitation is of the universal and its organising principle constituted a search for universal truth. He argued that there is an instinctual drive within humans to imitate and a related instinct toward rhythm and harmony. The goal of drama, he argued, is based on this instinct and its purpose is to lead the audience to a satisfying intellectual and emotional release. In order for the audience to be moved in this way, he believed that they must empathise with the characters and understand the inevitability of the logic and order of events portrayed. The cathartic release at the conclusion of a tragedy (which he saw as the epitome of the dramatic form) therefore depends primarily on the plot (which he calls *mythos*), as well as on the character or personality (which he calls *ethos*) of those portrayed and their thoughts or the “faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances” (Aristotle, VI,16). He argued that characters must be true to life and their actions, just as the plot’s progression should be driven by necessity or probability. The actors who deliver these thoughts, he believed, were the location of evocation for the audience to feel pity, fear, importance or probability. Aristotle argues the need for the poet (playwright) to engage viscerally with the material during its creation. He urges them to place the scene before their eyes and see with vividness and also to perform the play because, “those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent; and one who is agitated by storms, one who is angry rages, with the most life-like reality“ (Aristotle, XVII, 2).

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[47] Stanislavski began to use and define this term in response to both the declamatory style prevalent in 19th century Western theatre and the emergent “naturalism” movement.

Shakespeare, writing two thousand years later, I would argue directly acknowledged the tradition Aristotle began. Where Aristotle suggested that “Thought … is found where something is proved to be or not to be” (Aristotle, VI, 17), Shakespeare has Hamlet ponder the meaning of “To be, or not to be? That is the question” (Shakespeare, 1982, 3.1.57) … ”and thus the native hue of resolution, Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (Shakespeare, 1982, 3.1.85-6). Here, Shakespeare appears to have been structuring Hamlet’s soliloquies around Aristotelian dramatic theory but subverting it to the psychology of the character. Of course, the psychology of acting and the concept of psychological realism was three hundred years in the future when Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet,* but within this play he expounds on a theory of acting that is a precursor. In Hamlet’s instructions to a travelling troupe of actors (Shakespeare, 1982, 3.2), his exhortations to perform according to observations of nature, without exaggeration or embellishment, suggest a resonance with the style of psychological realism begun in the early part of the 20th century. Through his character Hamlet, Shakespeare suggests that the work of acting is intrinsically linked to that of the writer but, he also acknowledges the agency of the actor in bringing life to the performance. Hamlet is astounded that an actor could “force his soul so to his own conceit” (Shakespeare, 1982, 2.2.512). This suggests that Shakespeare believed that the actor could engage his inner motivating core (this in Stanislavskian terms might be described as internal psychological reality), with the pursuit of a cognitively reasoned argument. Whether he would have accepted the style of Stanislavskian realism is uncertain given the Elizabethan style with its conventions for verse, direct address, soliloquies and other heightened aspects. That Hamlet, and perhaps Shakespeare, disapproved of an acting style that unrealistically exaggerated the outward show of human behaviour is suggested in the injunction to "o'erstep not the modesty of nature" (Shakespeare, 1982, 3.2.19). However, he also recognised the emotional power of activating the imagination through conceits.

John Barton (2009) addresses the issue of how a modern actor might approach performing a Shakespearian play in the original language. He called for a more naturalistic style. Ian McKellen, interviewed by Barton (2009), discerns a positive shift in the way Shakespearian plays are often presented in the 21st century, towards smaller theatres and expresses his disdain for any sort of theatre that requires big gesticulation and shouting in order to communicate. They agree that the problem is how to communicate intimate performances to large groups of people. Elizabethan theatres, as can be seen in practice in recreations of The Globe (the theatre most associated with Shakespeare and his players), achieve an intimacy by using height rather than depth in the auditorium.[48] The acting style at the original Globe was developed to cope with an open air, daytime performance where the audience could be rowdy and comment on stage action. Shakespeare wrote direct address and used topical references and attention-grabbing action into his scripts and relied on actors to manage the audience interaction. The balance between the sounds of words and visual communication has shifted since Shakespeare's day. If the word for the group of people who come to a play to experience it were to be coined afresh today, it would probably not be based on listening. Spectators is now a far more apt choice than audience. A modern audience is far less likely to be distracted or disruptive and the distancing devices of "hand sawing"[49], typical of Elizabethan actors, are anachronistic. The problem remains the same as it was in Shakespeare's day; how to be real: "we have to work in the bigger theatres and be real there too" (Barton, 2009, p.185). In Shakespearian productions in Aotearoa New Zealand, I observe a desire by the actors to achieve this sense of realism, sometimes at the expense of the heightened style. In Hamlet's advice to the players, he too seems to be struggling with reconciling the realism of a portrayal, which he values for its ability to move the audience, with the heightened nature of the style of acting of his day. His use of the word "monstrous" in describing the impact the fiction has on the actor compared to his own reaction to the actual murder of his father could suggest one of two things. On one hand, it might be that he disapproves of the extremity and lack of distancing of the actor's engagement with character, or it could be that he is applying the word to his own reaction. Shakespeare did not write a treatise on how to act that is any more clear than this oblique reference in *Hamlet*. Therefore, the style and acting techniques applied to productions of his plays are always changing in response to prevailing aesthetics.

The declamatory style of 19th century acting

In the 19th century, a style of acting arose in Western theatre that largely questioned the principles of "life-like reality" espoused by Aristotle and Shakespeare's concerns with keeping to the "modesty of nature". This style was prevalent in Britain, Europe

[48] Lepage addressed the same problem through magnification of sound and image by digital means.

[49] Hand sawing refers to overt gestures that demonstrate the actor's intentions. These suited the declamatory style of acting but do not suit modern theatre and nor, it seems, did Shakespeare approve.

[50] August Strindberg's (1888) play Miss Julie is an example of naturalist theatre.

and America up to the late 19th century and is best described as declamatory, with actors posturing on stage and turning their performances out to the audience. Benoit-Constant Coquelin (1881), a French actor and theorist, argued that there was a need for acting to be based on nature, but that it also needed what he called "idealisation or stress" to elevate it to art. In *The Actor and his Art* (trans. 1881), Coquelin maintains that it is the actor's goal to please the audience, by "charming with a display of the beautiful; by transporting with the spectacle of grandeur" (p. 24). Francois Delsarte's lecture on the *Delsarte system of expression*, subsequently published in 1885 as a book of emotions and appropriate gestures, was essentially an effort to link the inner impulse or feeling with a system of physical responses. This approach came to be seen as an external language of signification that actors needed to learn in order to convey meaning, and through it the declamatory, exaggerated and embellished style that held that acting was a process of deliberate external signification came to the fore.

However, dissatisfaction with this style led to a movement towards naturalism developing in European drama in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the "thesis of the *Paradox* was rejected" (Benedetti, 2005, p.100). Emile Zola (1881/2001) held that in "naturalism" the characters should be of real flesh and blood with realistic behaviour based on a study of psychology. He held that while the settings and action of plays in the naturalistic style should be small and relevant to working class people, the issues should be very significant.[50]

Stanislavski and psychological realism in acting technique

In response to Zola's (1881/2001) minimalist naturalism and Coquelin's exaggerated and externalised style, Stanislavski and the Moscow Art Theatre sought a new path. In the early 20th century Stanislavski began his research into acting technique to address the issue of actors being able to create and sustain a strong emotional connection with the character being played. Benedetti notes that Stanislavski valued realism over naturalism, "a word which he normally employed in a purely pejorative sense" (1982, p. 11). In other words, he, like Aristotle before him, believed that there was an overarching purpose to theatre that is rooted in real human behaviour but not mired in banality. Realism, "while taking its material from the real world and from direct observation, selected only those elements which revealed the relationships and tendencies lying under the surface" (Benedetti, 1982, P. 11).

Psychologists Tony and Helga Noice express the psychological activity that actors engage in during performance as "active experiencing" and relate it to the processes used in all genuine human interactions (2006, p. 15). In this, their assertion aligns with what Stanislavski was proposing a century earlier. The term Stanislavski used was, in Russian, *perezhivanie*, which literally means "'living through' or 'undergoing' an experience" (Benedetti, 2005, p. 147). Benedetti describes Stanislavski's approach to realism in acting as "asserting the primacy of the human content of theatre over other considerations, of content over form" (1982, p. 11). In order to create a sense of realism, Stanislavski advises actors to perform two functions. One is that of the artist who shapes the performance and the other is the player "who acts from moment to moment. At the beginning of the play he does not know what the end will be" (Benedetti, 2005, p. 126).

Eric Hetzler (2007) argued that actors operate on multiple levels of consciousness and although they feel the emotions of the characters they are able to maintain a level of separation between themselves and the characters they play. This reflects Stanislavski's description of the actor as being in a "multi-storey consciousness", who is on one floor and focused on what is happening on that floor, but also able to be simultaneously aware of what is happening on the other levels (Benedetti, 2005, p. 125). This ability of actors to operate on multiple planes and be aware of the conscious shaping of the communication to the audience (the art, in Stanislavskian terms) as well as living in the imaginative given circumstances of the play, as if they were real, is core to my own beliefs and this project.

Over the following decades, Stanislavski applied advances in science to his practice and experiments, with a focus on the psychology of human behaviour (Benedetti, 2005). Most subsequent Western acting theories and practices have evolved, some as modifications to, and others as responses to or reactions against, his theories. At the heart of Stanislavski's work lay a concern with tying the processes of acting to the organic, and scientifically understood (at the time), laws of nature (Stanislavski, 1936/2017). His solution for achieving a performance that evoked a sense of realism for the audience was for the actor to explore the physical actions of the script in order to emotionally understand the inner reasons and motivations of the character. Acknowledging the impossibility of actually playing the psychology or playing a map of consecutive feelings, he taught actors to keep to the logic and consistency of their physical actions and to pursue an objective. Since he saw these as being intrinsically linked to the inner pattern of feelings, such adherence, he believed, would result in a real evocation of feeling (Stanislavsky, 1936/2017). The essential premise of his approach to acting was that an actor should, in an interaction with another actor, pursue an objective. In pursuit of that objective, the actor would encounter obstacles. As a result of these, the actor would struggle. Then, truthful reactions to what the other actor responds with, would follow. In other words, he sought to generate emotions, energies and ways of being from inside the actor in the same way as everyone does in everyday life but in the artificial environment of the stage. Stanislavski was inspired by scientific approaches that viewed the human organism as a single entity. There was no separation for him of the emotional, physical and intellectual aspects. He noted that psychologists such as Ivan Pavlov were proving the power of the body to evoke mental and emotional responses. He focused on actors fulfilling the role, as written, "truly" by encouraging them to be "right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel, and act in unison with your role" (Stanislavsky, 1936/1988, p. 14). In order to do this, the actor must begin with the action and not the feelings. Feelings, he argued, arise from something.

An important concept for Stanislavski was the engagement of the imagination through the use of the word if: "inner and outer actions arise naturally and organically, of their own accord, through the use of 'if'" (Benedetti, Carnicke, Stanislavski, 1993, p. 40). As Sharon Carnicke notes, he extended this to the "magic if", whereby the resulting action was immediate and heightened but the Soviet censors saw it as "antithetical to Marxist materialism in its commitment to flights of the imagination" (Benedetti, Carnicke, Stanislavski, 1993, p. 38).

Stanislavski spent decades developing his theories of acting and they came to be known as his "System". After founding the Moscow Art Theatre and successfully producing plays in a new style that embraced "psychological realism" (to use his term), he toured internationally with his company (Shirley, 2012). In New York in 1923, before his System had matured, the American Laboratory Theatre was founded by two members of the Moscow Art Theatre touring company. This theatre and drama school taught Stanislavski's System as it existed at the time and several students went on to set up the influential Group Theatre and began to evolve several American versions of the System. Strasberg's variant, focusing on release of emotion, came to be known as "the Method" (Benedetti, 2005). Stanislavski continued to develop his ideas, especially after he saw the negative aspects of "emotional memory", but these changes were not reflected in most American schools, with the exception of Stella Adler's.

Stanislavski's influence on the British tradition

The legacy of Stanislavski is often presumed to be mostly situated within the American and Russian traditions; this assumption, Jonathan Pitches (2012) suggests, is contestable. Pitches describes the considerable impact that ideas originating from Stanislavski had on the training and performances of British actors. While the influence may have been more eclectic, drawing on a variety of sources, it was nonetheless evident. Michel Saint-Denis, for example, introduced aspects of Stanislavski's system into his teaching at the influential London Theatre Studio (Baldwin, 2008). Pitches (2012) also suggests that the influence of Stanislavski's ideas, including the work of Theodore Komisarjevsky[51], was widespread in the British acting tradition and accommodated a pre-existing emphasis on style. David Shirley (2012) contrasts the indirect early influence of Russian ideas about psychological realism in Britain to the direct contact that Stanislavski had in the USA. Doreen Cannon, supported by Uta Hagen (both Americans), adapted and taught Stanislavski's approach at the Drama Centre and then at RADA in London (Pitches, 2012).

Stanislavski's influence in Aotearoa New Zealand

The British Stanislavskian tradition, was instrumental in the widespread influence of his system in Aotearoa New Zealand. In noting the general influence of Stanislavski and psychological realism in this country, Hilary Halba indicates resonances between a Māori performing arts mind set and Stanislavski's influence (2017). Specifically, she sees common ground in the holistic and spiritual nature of the two approaches and argues that Māori theatre has adapted Stanislavski's actor training and rehearsal principles and that they have been "claimed for their usefulness and mobilized through a local world view" (Halba, 2017, p. 371).

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[51] Komisarjevsky's work in directing and teaching in England was very much of the Russian style and his father had taught Stanislavski. He published The Actor's Creativity and Stanislavsky's Theory two years before he emigrated to Britain in 1919 (Shirley, 2012).

The training of influential artistic directors in seminal professional companies in Aotearoa New Zealand was based in the United Kingdom. Government study bursaries were available in the 1950s in the absence of national drama schools in this country. Raymond Hawthorne, founder of the influential Theatre Corporate in Auckland and latterly artistic director of the largest professional company, Mercury Theatre, was one such recipient.[52] He trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London, where he was exposed to the British approach to Stanislavskian theory. Hawthorne then became a member of staff there for twelve years (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2000). I trained under him at both Theatre Corporate Drama School and as a trainee actor at Mercury Theatre (1985-6). His style, described by Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2000) was theatrical rather than purely naturalistic. After returning to Aotearoa New Zealand he had developed an acting technique based on a wide reading of contemporary acting theories, with an emphasis on Adler (R. Hawthorne, Personal communication, September, 20, 2018). In the 1970s there were three major regional professional theatre companies in Aotearoa New Zealand and two drama schools; Mercury Theatre in Auckland, Downstage Theatre in Wellington, The Court Theatre in Christchurch, with the National Drama School in Wellington and Theatre Corporate Drama School in Auckland[53]. In all of these institutions a British theatrical influence was strongly evident. Elric Hooper, Artistic Director of The Court Theatre, Christchurch (1979-99), trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Another New Zealander, Sunny Amey, brought the British influence she had learned as assistant to the Director of Britain's National Theatre, Laurence Olivier, to bear on Downstage where she was Artistic Director between 1970 and 1974. Later Amey took this influence to Toi Whakaari[54], The National Drama School where she was the acting director between 1989 and 1991. I trained in this environment that emphasised respect for psychological realism in the British tradition and my practice reflects this.

Stanislavski's American legacy

The various forms that American Stanislavskian acting have taken generally utilise common techniques (Strasberg, 1987; Adler, 1988; Meisner & Longwell, 1987; Hagen & Frankel, 1973). The main point of difference among various exponents reflects a shift in Stanislavski's thinking on the positioning of the actor's own "emotional memory". Stanislavski (Lutterbie, 2011) and Adler (1988) came to prefer that actors engage their own imaginations and experience, and not focus on recreating similar emotional states (from personal emotional memories), to those required by the script. Conversely, Strasberg, suggests that the actor identify with and/or create the character through the use of analogous personal affective and sense memory (Baron, 2016). In other words, if a scene calls for extreme sadness based on the death of a loved one, Strasberg asked his students to mine their own memory for a time when they felt this depth of sadness and to think of this while performing the scene. The ramifications of connecting personal emotional trauma to every performance proved difficult and, according to co-founder of the Group Theatre Adler, unhealthy (Adler, 1988). She travelled to Paris in 1934 where, coincidentally, Stanislavski was touring, and discussed the issue with him

[52] Mercury Theatre, Auckland, 1968-92. Raymond Hawthorne was Artistic Director between 1985 and 1992.

[53] Smaller professional theatres survived for several decades in Palmerston North and Dunedin.

[54] Te Kura Toi Whakaari O Aotearoa: NZ Drama School was, until 1988 named The National Drama School.

over several weeks. He had moved on in his thinking and no longer supported the use of emotional memory. This challenge to the Method theories of acting created a schism and Strasberg left the Group Theatre. Adler chose to focus on the use of physical action and objectives augmented by imagination.

Meisner, an early developer of the Method theories, proposed a definition of acting as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 178). He argued that the actor could not play an emotion, only circumstances and objectives. The emotion, in his technique, would follow as a reaction to playing the action and following the objective. Once actors have analysed and internalised these aspects Meisner suggests that they relinquish control and simply follow their impulses during performance, accepting whatever comes out spontaneously (Meisner & Longwell, 1987). I find his focus to be particularly filmic in that it surrenders control of the aesthetic, which is something that could lead to an unruly performance on stage but that provides useful material for the director and editor of a film. The actor, as Stanislavski said, needs to be both a player, who does not know where the play will lead, and an artist, who has control over shaping the performance towards an artistic purpose.

Screen acting

Since the focus of this thesis encompasses both stage and screen it is useful to look briefly at the more widely used film acting techniques. Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier (2013) argue that it is the film director's job "to draw the actor into an intimate, internalized way of sustaining belief" (p. 234). The premise of this aim is not dissimilar to stage acting except in so far as its efficacy depends on the film medium and the ability of a close-up shot to show every facial nuance. When screened acting is staged within an intermedial-realist production, as Birringer noted in 2014, there is little acting tradition that involves insight into matching the disparity required by stage and screen levels of performance. A tiny nuance, visible in a close-up, may be completely unnoticeable on a stage actor.

David Mamet (1992) suggested that a system of Practical Aesthetics would allow the actors to construct and convey the narrative. This is based on four steps, the first of which is the Literal, or to use Stanislavski's terminology the Given Circumstances. This is followed by the Want – what a character ultimately wants the other character to say or do. Mamet uses the term Essential Action to mean what the character is doing and the action she or he performs. He points out that what the character is doing is distinct from what the actor is doing and he uses a fourth technique to spark a memory for the actor that will connect the Essential Action to the actor's own experience and make the action appear believably real to the audience. This is the "As If" which helps the actor detach from the fiction, find the truth and reapply it to the scene (Mamet, 1992).

William Ball (1984), writing from the perspective of a director, identified a "system of wants" or objectives as the core around which a scene is constructed and to which a director must engage their actors' attention if the scene is to be successful. He notes three things that are always present; an ongoing want, a receiver and a desired response from the receiver. Ball uses the common term “beat” to mean a point in time when the want of a character changes. He sees the role of the director, in rehearsal, to “perform the following function: persistently to draw the actor to a more meaningful and appropriate choice of objectives, and then to persuade the actor to lend his full commitment to those objectives” (1984, p. 81). He also notes that actors tend to postpone making choices that make them feel pain and since it is the actor’s job to lend their belief to the character and go through the passions and suffering of the character, the director must continually urge them forward. The actor must sustain the experience of the inner life of the character. This approach acknowledges the remove that exists between actor and character and the craft that is necessary to bring the experiencing of that character to life. Furthermore, it values the actor’s ability to sustain that experience. The subterfuge in presenting a realistic character to the audience lies in the convention of suspending disbelief in the artifice of the actor assuming a character.

Judith Weston (1999, 2003) positions the relationship between actor and director even more collaboratively in *The Film Director’s Intuition: Script analysis and rehearsal techniques.* She says, “the director and the writer re-meet the characters as embodied by the actors, and hand the characters over to the actors to bring to life” (Weston, 2003, p. xix). Weston, with twenty years’ experience as an actor herself and in her role of teaching directors how to direct actors, is well placed to understand the essential relationship that can exist between the two. Her argument suggests more agency for actors than many directors allow.

John Freeman (2007) states that, “the submergence of self into character is a defining trait of acting” (p. 12). Unpacking his argument shows that he feels that the actor is the active agent because “submergence of self” implies that it is a conscious act of will on the actor’s part to negotiate the relationship between self and character and this involves a degree of danger or, at least, a loss of frames of reference (Freeman, 2010). Weston (1999) argues that directors should be cognisant of the vulnerability of actors in the moment of performance and generate a safe space on set for the actor to create without inhibition or the need to overly stimulate their objective faculty. She suggests that there needs to exist a trust between actor and director. The actor trusts that the director will be an outside observer who will recognise and approve the truth of the performance and who will persevere until that truth is captured on film. During a “take” the actor is subjectively submerged in the character and surrenders objectivity in the moment of performance. The director, on the other hand, trusts that the actor will subjectively submerge themselves in character and script and perform truthfully.[55] Thus, there should be no hint of artifice or reminder of storytelling. Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier (2013) argue that in order to achieve this optimum result the actor needs to be focused, relaxed and maintain an interior monologue. They say “this mental and emotional **focus** lets you simply *be*; being preoccupied and in a state of **relaxation** blocks your internal censor from hounding out your failings” (p. 227).

[55] Truth is a contested term and may be used somewhat romantically by practitioners. Zarrilli (2004) proposes that actors use metaphors with implicit truth claims and thus mask their positionality, ideology, and the referential, signifying nature of the language. For the purposes of this study I take “truth” to be indicated by a viewer suspending their disbelief and empathising with the character in response to an apparently realistic or convincing performance.

The self in acting

The implication of the declamatory style is that real behaviour is something to be mimicked rather than "lived", as Meisner would rather have it. Bert O. States in *the Phenomenology of the Actor* (in Zarrilli, 2004) describes actors as storytellers and notes that they *are* the story that they are telling. He finds it impossible for the self to be completely exorcised from the portrayal of a character but acknowledges that the actor is always slightly outside and "quoting" the character. Philip Auslander, in his collection of essays From Acting to Performance (1997), argues that there has been a shift away from representational drama toward what he loosely describes as postmodernist performance. He identifies "a progressive redefinition of theatrical mimesis away from "character" toward "performance persona," with consequent redefinitions of the functions of the performer's self in relation to performance" (Auslander, 1997, p. 6).

In his consideration of this phenomenon, Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) identifies a historical movement away from the representational and realism which he calls the postdramatic. For Lehmann (2006), "the actor of postdramatic theatre is often no longer the actor of a role but a performer offering his/her presence on stage for contemplation" (p. 135). This parallels the distinction between a dramatic actor and a television presenter. Both perform but the former is based around the fiction of a character while the latter performs a version of their self without the intervening construct of a fictional character.

Most theorists of dramatic acting traditionally place the "actor's self" at the centre of a good performance. As Auslander (2002) has noted, Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski, each in their own way, designate the "actor's self", as the logos of performance. For them this "actor's self" precedes and grounds the performance and it is the presence of this "self" that gives the audience access to human truths. Auslander contends that the "self" they refer to needs further definition and that it is not originary. He notes that "the self is not an autonomous foundation for acting, but is produced by the performance it supposedly grounds" (p. 54, 2002). I suggest that an "actor's self" is a mutable, evolving manifestation of lived experience and the "self" that surfaces in a production is much more than an unedited glimpse of an actor. Good actors bring not only their experiences and memories but also their imagination and a good deal of craft to the process of "living" the character in a dramatic production.

Summary

The evolution of theories and practices relating to acting techniques relevant to this study may be understood as having its origins in Aristotle's framing of drama as a "mimetic" art. From this beginning, a sense of the importance of "truthfully" conveying the realism of life in conjunction with a heightened or poetic vision has extended through classical Shakespearean acting and Stanislavski to contemporary theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand. Significantly all of these theorists suggest a common core of the technique of acting that encompasses the creation of character with a degree of realism on stage in such a way that it encourages the audience to recognise human behaviour and respond feelingly.

ACTING IN A FORM OF INTERMEDIAL-REALIST THEATRE

Is there a form of theatre that is distinctly intermedial and realist?

The range of performances that can be classified as intermedial is wide and the term is used in many different ways. There are forms that use live actors in combination with technologically generated co-characters. Emma Cole (2015) argues that Mitchell's theatre, for example, has used this practice as well as being explicitly aligned with Stanislavskian psychological realism. Mitchell uses the term multimedia theatre to describe her work and I will discuss the link between psychological realism and her use of multimedia devices and characters in her work below. Tanine Allison suggests that psychological realism is not dependent on hiding the mechanisms of production since it is possible to portray a 3D animation of a giant ape in the film *King Kong* (2005) as "visually realistic and emotionally resonant" despite the audience being aware that the character is technologically generated (Allison, 2011, p. 325). A parallel can be seen to this in the multimedia character of Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2017) at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in England, where the character is manifested in technologically generated form as well as by a live actor on stage.

Fenton's very interesting work in *UnstableActs* (2007) is far removed from realism however his subsequent practice-led research project culminated in a play, *The Empty City* (2010), that approaches the dramatic. In it he was seeking "to examine how the different media – live performance, animation, film, music, puppetry and design –come together into a performance and to examine the creative methodology of generating parataxis in an intermediality work" (Fenton, 2010, p. 158). Fenton chose to use a lens adapted from Lehmann (2006) that used the postdramatic concept of parataxis or de-hierarchization of form. While I found the eclecticism of his methods to be a useful resource in thinking about my methodology, the postdramatic framework and his focus on form rather than acting process was less useful.

Theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand has made few attempts outside the academy at complex integration of multimedia elements combined with psychologically realist live acting. However, this thesis aims at providing insights for actors in this country to help them extend their approach to encompass potential developments in this direction.

Defining intermediality

In the 21st century there has been something of a paradigm shift in some forms of theatre towards the use of multiple forms of media on stage. Mitchell, in an interview with Anna McMullan (McMullan & Mitchell, 2018) states she was first inspired to work in multimedia theatre in the 1980s and 1990s by the use of video by contemporary avant-garde companies such as the Wooster Group, Hesitate and Demonstrate and Impact. In contrast to the "unquenchable appetite for formal experimentation" in Germany she observed that in the UK there was "an orthodoxy of tame default realism the theatre houses adhere to" (McMullan & Mitchell, 2018, p. 131). However, Mitchell does strive for psychological realism in her multimedia productions, "we decided to treat the situation as if it were real" (McMullan & Mitchell, 2018, p. 128). She approaches the classics in the same way. In her 2007 Royal National Theatre production of *Women of Troy*, she facilitated a Stanislavskian approach to the characters (Cole, 2015).

Mitchell assisted her actors in achieving such accuracy by employing three primary techniques: creating an extensive backstory for the production; constructing detailed psychological profiles for each character; and rehearsing the play with a focus on the biology of emotions (Cole, 2015, p. 403).

Although the theorists discussed above consider acting techniques and the role of the actor within them, none adequately examine how acting might be practised in an intermedial theatre form, based in psychological realism, that juxtaposes elements of stage and screen. Indeed, the forms that intermedial theatre have taken are often anti-realist. However, this does not imply that the acting styles associated with the realist form have no place in theatre that employs media. Intermedial theatre is a term that has gained currency, but not a universal definition, over recent decades. The term is so varied and fluid Irina Rajewsky (2005) suggests that anyone using it must first define what she or he means by intermedial theatre. I use the term intermedial-realist theatre to acknowledge the presence of different media within a stage environment and suggest that the interrelationship between these, including the live and present human performer, is where the potential for enhanced communication lies. My use of the term also eschews the notion that there is any inherent equivalency between the live and the mediatised.

In 2008, Kattenbelt saw intermedial theatre as a new form that breaks through medium-specific conventions, resulting in an exploration of new dimensions of perception and experience. In defining intermedial theatre he described a co-relation of, and mutual influences between, media. He noted that when media elements were juxtaposed or intermingled, a change to the typical characteristics of each followed. This changed the interrelationship of media elements and therefore required a new definition for their combination. He argued that this change had an impact on the audience's perception and required, what he called, a "resensibilisation". The mutual affect between elements, he suggested, takes place in the inbetween space. Kattenbelt's (2008) definition drew on the early work of Wassily Kandinsky and Sergei Eisenstein who theorised the effect of juxtaposing or crashing together separate elements. Kattenbelt saw it as possible to create new meaning from such juxtapositions whilst also intensifying the continuity of the performance and the represented story.

In 2010 Kattenbelt revised his definitions of intermedial theatre as he, and the

International Theatre Federation's Working Group on Intermediality, felt that locating the form in a space "inbetween" mediums was both too imprecise and dependent on a negative definition. He reconceived intermedial theatre as "definitively multiple and interrelational ... "both-and" better characterises contemporary performance culture" (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender, & Nelson, 2010, p. 17). In so doing he was acknowledging that intermedial theatre employs elements that can operate "both" independently "and" can also interact with each other.

In the same year that Kattenbelt was reconsidering the intermedial in theatre, Lars Elleström (2010) also positioned intermediality as a "both-and" construct. He proposed that "intermediality must be understood as a bridge between medial differences that is founded on medial similarities" (p. 12).

Nelson contends that we have reached "a distinctive intermedial moment in digital culture" (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender, & Nelson, 2010, p. 11). In defining intermedial theatre, he describes principles of composition that are typically multi-tracked and likely to evoke feelings and perceptions that may intermingle or conflict. One of his early definitions of intermedial theatre encompassed "the traditionally established sense of theatre practices consciously performed 'live' before an aware audience but which overtly deploy digital media technologies" (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender, & Nelson, 2010, p. 32). Nelson acknowledges that many intermedial theatre works lack the self-reflexivity of the placement of medial elements typical of postdramatic theatre and instead employ a principle of disjunctive composition. In this type of intermedial theatre, elements are juxtaposed rather than fused, forcing the "experiencer" (to use his term) to engage actively and cognitively with the form. Although Nelson saw this as an interesting phenomenon he was not convinced that it is a necessary condition or inherent in all intermedial theatre.

Aneta Mancewicz (2014) defines intermedial theatre as "inter-exchanges of media in performance, activated through digital technology, which involve interactions between mediatised (digital) and live elements, in a reflexive manner" (p. 3). She suggests that instances of intermedial performance may be found "in the interrelationship of liveness and the mediatisation rather than in their ontological and epistemological separation" (p. 3). I find it interesting that she limits the mediatisation to digital media given that many theatre audiovisual designers use analogue media.[56]

Piotr Woycicki (2011) discussing Imitating the Dog's intermedial theatre defines it simply as "performance whose central staging strategy is an interplay between different media such as film and theatre" (p. 23). He goes on to expand on the liminal space:

> I started this article with the notion that the intermedial space, the in-between space of theatre and film … is an empty signifier. I have argued throughout this article that it can be both a space of disorientation, chaos and tension, but it can also hold the promised totality beyond the selective confines of theatrical and filmic signs. (pp. 40-41)

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[56] For example, Toneelgroep's Mourning Becomes Electra (2013) supplements digital media with an analogue overhead projector.

In this study I determined to explore how an actor might productively play in and with the space between media in order to explore its potentials.

In 2017 Bryan Reynolds gave a definition for intermedial theatre that included the requirement that the various elements were of equal importance and "no one feature is significantly prioritized" (p. 7) including realistic dialogue. This view is at variance with most other definitions (Mancewicz, 2014; Nelson, 2010; Balme, 2004; Chatzichristodoulou & Crossley, 2016). I find it limiting to my study since the focus is on the effective use of psychological realism within intermedial theatre and not on formal homogeneity.

Johannes Birringer (2014) noted a lack of development in suitable acting styles for a distinct form of intermedial theatre known as "live film". The live film that Birringer refers to, Mitchell's *Fraulein Julie* (2013), incorporates filmic production processes, in full view of the audience, within a live stage production. In arguing that insufficient practical knowledge has been generated about acting in intermedial theatre Birringer (2014) identifies a gap that this thesis seeks to partially address, through a survey of a number of key intermedial-realist productions in the coming section and through the performance as research project that is central to this PhD research. The focus in this thesis is towards aiding actors in Aotearoa New Zealand to extend their traditional practice to find ways of working with multimedia or intermedial elements in theatre in this country.

I believe that the tools actors use when acting with psychological realism can be applied in both solo performances and in those that incorporate interactions with nonhuman "actors". By utilising the engagement of imagination, (the Stanislavskian "as if"), this research suggests that the interaction can be processed by a single actor whether that actor is performing solo or with a technologically generated and pre-recorded character. A further element that this thesis argues is helpful to working successfully with technologically generated co-characters, is for the actor to have an involvement in the collaborative creation of them. This can lead to tacit knowledge, especially of the meaning that is produced in the interrelation of live and mediatised characters, and greater investment and agency in the process.

CONTEXTUALISING PRACTICE

The research inquiry in this thesis is contextualised by a selection of eight intermedial works. Although these cannot represent the full diversity of theatrical responses in the public domain, they enable me to position my work and frame its contribution to knowledge. The performances I will discuss in terms of their contribution to an understanding of psychological realism in intermedial theatre are:

- Mitchell, K. (Director). (2008). … *some trace of her.* Live performance at the Cottesloe Theatre, London, England.
- Marbrook, A. (Director). (2008). *Ship Songs.* Live performance at the Pumphouse Theatre, Auckland, New Zealand.

- Quick, A. & Brooks, P. (Directors). (2011). *Hotel Methuselah*. Live performance at Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster, England.
- Falkenberg. Peter. (Director) (2012). *I sing the body electric.* Live performance at the Jack Mann Auditorium, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Van Hove, I. (Director). (2013, September 14). *Mourning becomes Electra (Rouw siert Electra).* Live performance at Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Lepage, R. (Director). (2014, February 21). *Needles and opium.* Live performance at The Opera House, Wellington, New Zealand.
- McBurney, S. (Director). (2017, March 19). *The Encounter*. Live performance at The Aotea Centre, Auckland, New Zealand.

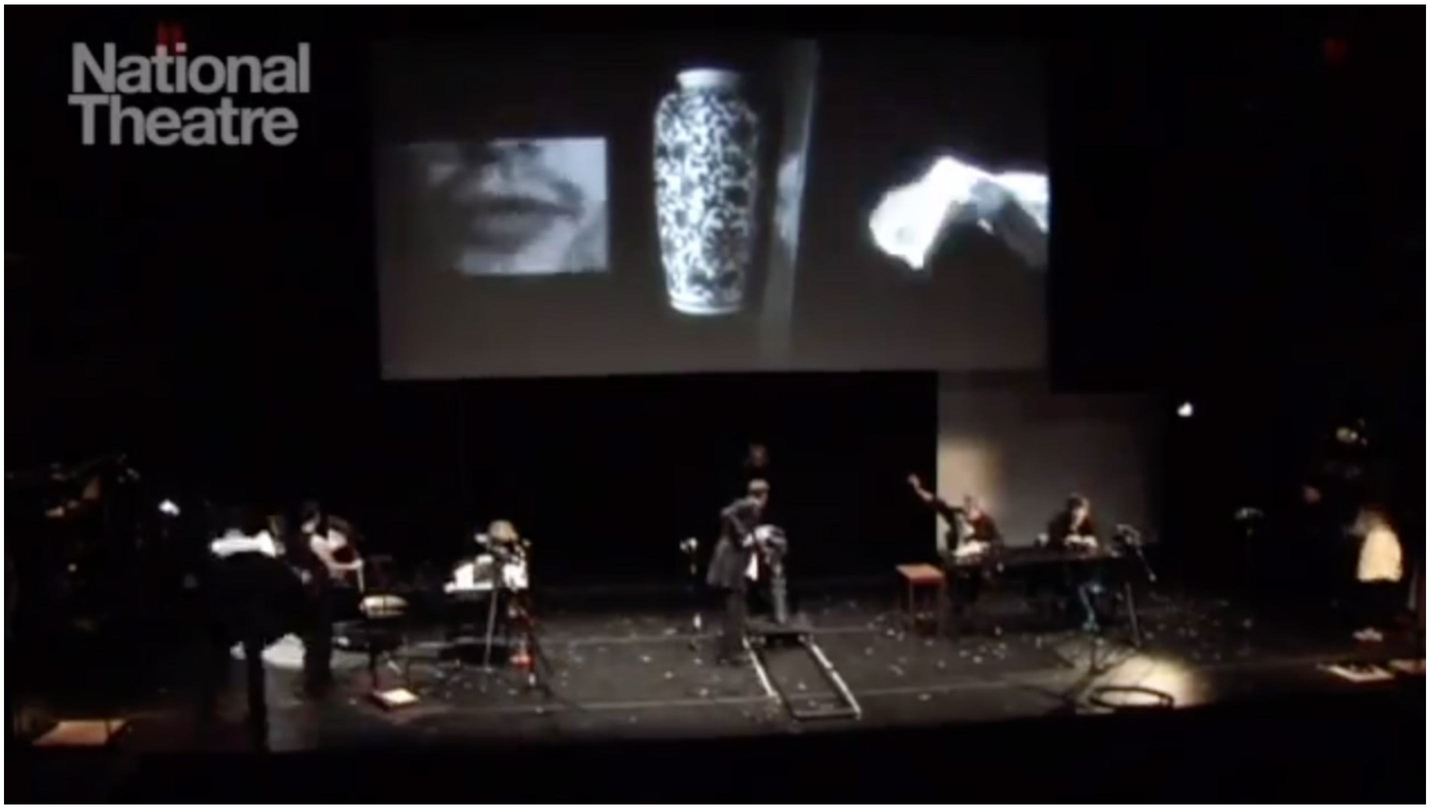

FIGURE 3.1.

Mitchell, K. (dir., 2008*) … some trace of her.* London, England. A large screen above the stage relays the images captured by actors below. Reproduced with permission.

PRODUCTIONS ACCESSED THROUGH DOCUMENTATION ALONE

… some trace of her

Katie Mitchell's work[57] with the National Theatre in England often engages with a form of 'live film'. Her production of … *some trace of her* (2008) provides useful examples of practice that is highly self-reflexive and built on "multimedia"[58]. In the production the mediatised elements equate with my definition of intermedial-realist theatre although it is not a term that Mitchell uses. Archived materials for experiencing this production include short video excerpts, an education pack and photographic documents showing the design of the set and the relationship between the live production of intermedial elements and their screened representation (Figure 3.1).[59] These materials include discussion with actors about their performances as well as short glimpses of the acting style.

Interviews conducted with Mitchell (Mitchell, 2011), published as educational material by the National Theatre about her work, help illuminate a modern practice that blends traditionally trained actors with multimedia artists in a collaborative process of devising and rehearsing. This aspect of her work relates to the exploration of expanded agency for actors discussed in the account of Experiment 4 in this thesis.

Mitchell's work typically explores a form of deconstructed theatre[60]. Often she devises a production around a difficult source text that involves fragmented narratives and internal monologues. This is the case in … *some trace of her* which is based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. Markos Hadjioannou and George Rodosthenous describe the play as "a revolutionary work that not only expresses the psychological naturalism of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot* (1869) but also reveals the aesthetic and theoretical potential of intermediating artistic forms in the current landscape of electronic technologies" (2011, p. 44). A love triangle involving three key characters from Dostoyevsky's novel (Myshkin, Rogozhin and Nastasya) forms the core of Mitchell's play. In brief, Prince Myshkin, an extremely naïve epileptic, falls for the self-destructive Nastasya who, through various machinations in the dangerous high society of St Petersburg ends up being murdered by the lecherous Rogozhin. Michael Billington, in his review for *The Guardian* newspaper, said the production was "everything to do with form and very little to do with content." (Billington, 2008.). He doubted that anyone who was not familiar with the book would be able to follow the plot.

The production involves actors creating live filmic representations of character and narrative on stage. Actors supply not only a physical presence and a voice for characters (sometimes with one actor being the image and another the voice), but they also operate cameras, lights and microphones and create sound effects in full view of the audience. In so doing they lay bare the process of representation and assert the liveness of both the mediatised and the embodied as being present. For the times on stage when each actor was not playing their character, Mitchell instructed them to invent their own second character, perhaps a performance artist who was skilled in the use of media production tools. In this way, even as the actors set up cameras or lights, they were acting with psychological realism as a character in 2008 rather than performing a function as themselves.

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[57] Mitchell is a theatre director and devisor.

[58] This is Mitchell's term. Her multimedia theatre uses video, sound and the fragmentation of the stage picture to represent chaos while simultaneously investing it with feeling (Mitchell, 2011).

[59] Although these documents provide useful information relating to the production and the processes used in its development, I am aware that they are not a substitute for experiencing the live performance.

[60] This form of theatre is an adaptation of originary texts, deconstructing, rearranging and sometimes only obliquely referencing the source narrative. As Kattenbelt notes, it uses "the non-hierarchical structure of its elements, arranged according to a spatial principle of next-to-each-other (in a relative independence from each other) rather than after-each-other (in a chain of cause and effect)" (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender, & Nelson, 2010, p. 188).

Every performance in the season was new so the screen above the stage was not a space of pre-recorded and edited perfection but of live experimentation, played out before the audience. Significantly, what was seen on the screen did not correspond completely to the scene being acted beneath it on the stage. Close-ups provided intimate opportunities for nuance and disparate elements were brought together on the screen. Charlotte Loveridge, referring to the simultaneous representation of the theatrical and filmic images on the stage and on the screen above the stage, notes that this approach "plays with the audience's awareness of the artistic fiction and represents a metatheatrical breakdown of the barriers governing theatrical illusion" (2008, p. 1). Fragmentary elements on screen, such as the body of one actor playing a character in long shot, with the voice of the character played by another actor, and a close-up of the character's hands played by a third actor, are combined and integrated to "become the stable (but fluid) thing we call the self" (Jefferies, 2011, p. 406). The integration of cinematic codes in live theatre and the interesting treatment of the theatrical creation of self, have been useful considerations in this thesis.

Hotel Methuselah

The British theatre company Imitating the Dog has developed work that, although stylised and not realist in the traditional sense, uses elements of psychological realism. *Hotel Methuselah* (2006)[61] (written and directed by Andrew Quick and Pete Brooks, with the company) was developed collaboratively and co-commissioned by the Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster University and the Cochrane Theatre, University of the Arts, London. It has since been translated into six languages and toured extensively in the U.K. and Europe. The play was developed from a short film screenplay and narrates the story of Harry, the amnesiac night porter in the eponymous hotel. The story is told in repeated cycles and Harry's past is progressively revealed. In the production, Imitating the Dog play with cinema and theatre in order to explore how the structures and codes of cinema can be used to inform those of theatre. The playfulness of such an interplay is one of the hallmarks of the company. They seek to fuse live action with video projection and place narrative, emotion and wit at the core of their work.[62] Much like the performers in The Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, the actors in *Hotel Methuselah* perform along with the projections. However, in the latter it is the same actors appearing in the projected images and they add their voices live during the performance of the play. The live actors' heads are not visible but they attempt to lip synch with pre-recorded, silent projected images of themselves.

Quick, discussing the nature of theatre and its use of frames, notes that "Theatre relies on its capacity to institute limits and divisions to re-create reality" (2009, p. 32). The set of *Hotel Methuselah* was built with a solid front wall except for a rectangular slot through which the audience could view the action. This created a physical frame (in cinematic widescreen aspect ratio), through which the audience's perception of the play was controlled. This conscious use of cinematic

[61] Hotel Methuselah is available to view in its entirety on Imitating the Dog's Vimeo Channel (https://vimeo.com/13675577)

[62] See Imitating the Dog website http://www.imitatingthedog.co.uk/portfolio/hotel-methuselah/

language to describe theatricality was translated into a physical set for the play and inspired my thinking about the use of multiple screens in the thesis production. I intended to explore the explicit relationship between a live actor, able to range freely, and the framed cinematic projections of the other characters. Woycicki (2014) argues that *Hotel Methuselah*, using as it does a magic realist aesthetic[63], could be seen as a way of reacting against the culturally dominant cinematic realist tradition. He describes the intermedial space traversed by the production as a space of disorientation designed to interrogate the politics of perception. This approach serves to comment on the nature of the relationship between film and theatre, but in so doing it utilises actors engaging the tools of psychological realism in their performances (both filmic and theatrical). It does this within a stylised and heightened aesthetic and space which is an aspect I determined to explore in the thesis production.

Needles and Opium

In February 2014, I travelled to Wellington to attend a performance of Robert Lepage's *Needles and Opium* (dir. Lepage, Wellington Opera House, 2014). This work was exemplary of the style of intermedial theatre on which this thesis focuses. Lepage's work gave weight to character and story, thereby resisting the deconstruction of existing texts that Lehmann (2006) notes is indicative of postdramatic theatre. The production by Ex Machina, a leading international theatre company based in Canada, utilised 3D projection mapped scenery on the walls of a set that revolved in a vertical plane. The set consisted of a grey three sided box rotating on a rotisserie with the axis at the apex of the sides. Apart from some fold-out elements and a few props, all scenery was projected. In scenes where it was necessary for the actor to be lit without any hint of the projected scenery falling on him, this appeared to be achieved by procedurally tracking him and projecting a clear form matching his shape and movement.[64] The outline of this form can clearly be seen in the shadow cast by the actor. In the work, Lepage considered the notion of hallucination, (as the title of the performance suggests), and the set dislocated the audience's expectations of gravity and reality through the use of this intermedial projected component. The performance styles of the two actors, Marc Labreche and Wellesley Robertson III, were heightened and yet also clearly rooted in believably realistic psychology. The technological and staging resources available to Ex Machina to explore the intermedial relationships between set, projections and actor were clearly extensive and far beyond the limitations of my study. My focus is on beginning to explore intermedial aspects and is focused on helping the actor to find a way to successfully navigate, contribute and act in theatre with such elements.

Lepage's integration of media artists within rehearsal is a step towards enabling actors to participate more fully in the creation of what Aleksander Dundjerovic describes as "techno-en-scene.", or mise-en-scene with the co-presence of technological elements (2006, p. 69). This level of agency seems to be well suited to intermedial theatre. Mark Crossley describes Ex Machina's process as a "well documented combination of a democratic, pluralistic approach to devising"

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[63] Woycicki argues that Imitating the Dog are concerned with the ways illusion is constructed in film and theatre. Thus, they exaggerate images in what he calls a magic realist aesthetic and insert magical elements that are too strange to believe.

[64] It appears that the light falling on the actor was at times provided by a projector and that the area of light responded to his movements. This meant that a computer was tracking where he moved and altering the projection to provide light on the actor but without spilling light on to the background. This meant that the computer had to process very fast and that a delay of microseconds between discerning the actor's position and recalculating the image to be projected ensued.

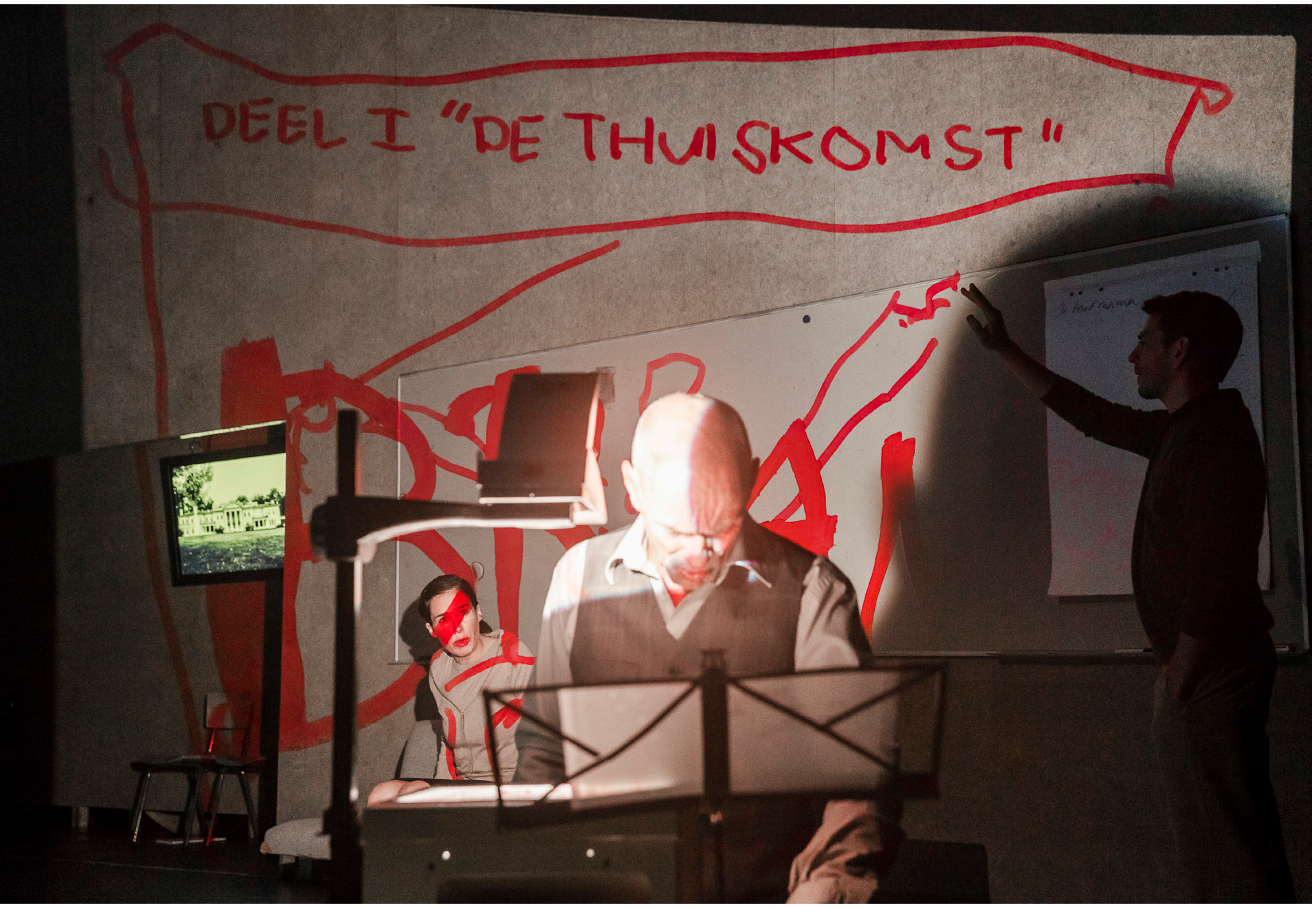

FIGURE 3.2.

van Hove, I. (dir., 2013). *Mourning Becomes Electra (Rouw Siert Electra),* Amsterdam, The Netherlands. An actor draws on an overhead projector. Photo credit Jan Versweyveld. Reprinted with permission.

(2012, p. 179). One of the problems raised by Lepage's method is how to enable actors to find a place amongst an expanded team of collaborating theatre practitioners. Crossley notes that this is important in intermedial theatre with its "multidimensional structure of intermedial roles and the hybrid nature of the construction that is only fully realized in the *techno en scène*" (Crossley, 2012, p. 181). Crossley suggests that Lepage uses a process of décalage, in which he abandons a structure of linear and rational progression in favour of following the energy of the text. He also states that the devising process "challenges certain ensemble practices as it accepts and revels in the use of technical conduits alongside the corporeal autonomy of the actors" (Crossley, 2012, p. 181). For this approach to a devising model to work in Aotearoa New Zealand, I would suggest that actors need to have knowledge of the concept and production processes of the technical conduits that Crossley refers to.

Mourning Becomes Electra

In October 2013, I flew to Amsterdam to attend a performance of Toneelgroep's *Mourning Becomes Electra (Rouw Siert Electra)* directed by Ivo van Hove at the Stadsschouwburg.

This production made use of a variety of screened elements. A character drew on an overhead projector that was projected on to the wall of the set and another picked up a handheld video camera and its live video was relayed to a television screen on set.

This use of video projection was markedly different to that employed by Lepage in *Needles and Opium.* While Lepage concentrated on the creation of a dream-like set, Toneelgroep used video to underscore the action. This was believable within a style that encompassed realism because it was either produced by the actors as a normal part of the fictional world or was displayed on screens that belonged in the world of the play. However, van Hove went beyond the realistic use of video by characters within the narrative. He included stylised commentary, projected across the walls as a kind of chorus effect (Figure 3.2). The world of the play expanded to encompass this non-realistic action. This "both-and" use of intermedial elements, typical of Toneelgroep's work, is important in this thesis' consideration of the deployment of acting techniques in relation to intermediality.

The Encounter

The English theatre company Complicite produced a highly intermedial production in *The Encounter* (2015, 2017, directed by Simon McBurney, Edinburgh, and live streamed from the Barbican, London). I first experienced this

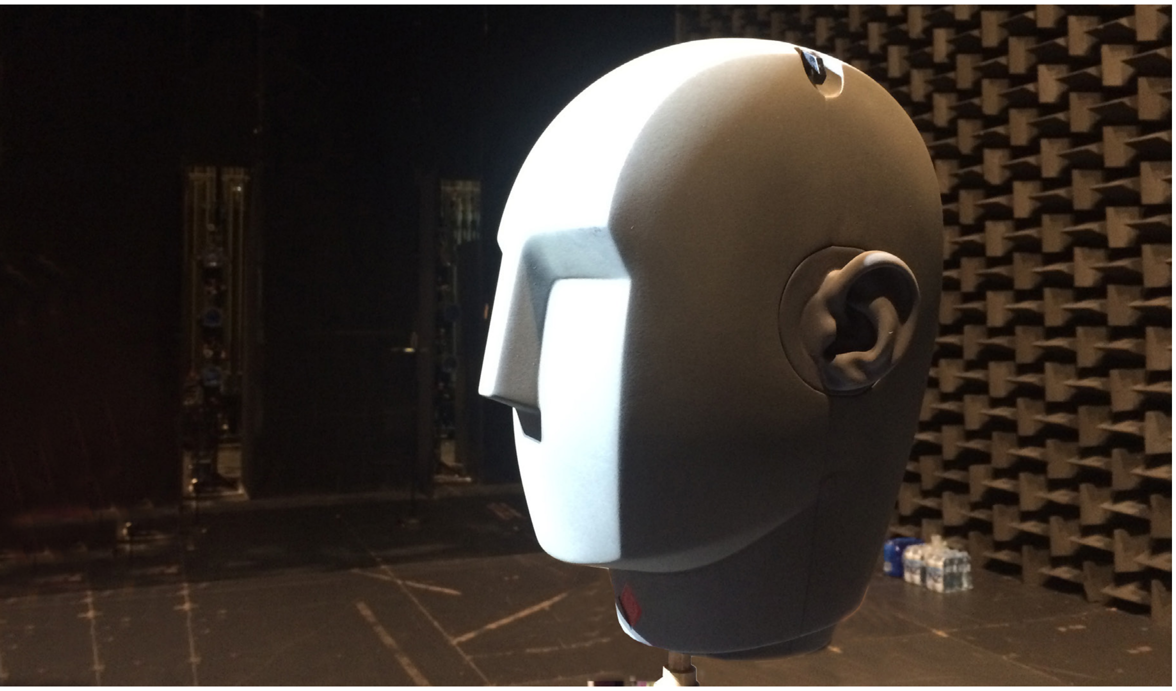

FIGURE 3.3.

The Encounter (McBurney, 2017). Centrally located mannequin containing microphones.

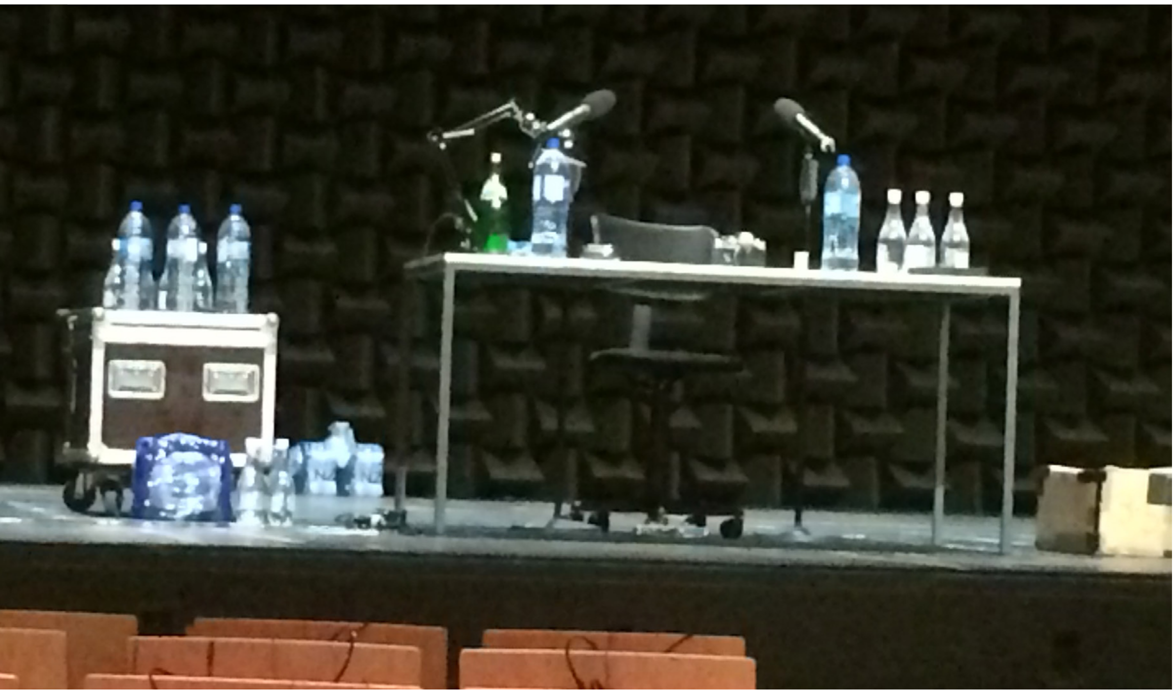

FIGURE 3.4.

The Encounter (McBurney, 2017). The performer's workstation, including microphones for different characters, props and a loop pedal.

work when it was streamed live over the internet, coupled with a user interface that included facility for questions, answers and commentary. There were over 4,000 participants internationally the day I watched it. This play had a single live actor (McBurney online and Richard Katz in the Auckland production) who communicated to the audience that he was a storytelling performer as well as a character. McBurney told the story of a photographer who travelled alone to the Amazon rainforest and expanded his consciousness after life-threatening experiences and an encounter with a reclusive tribe. The main mediatised components of the piece were auditory. McBurney demonstrated how sounds would be relayed to each member of the audience through the headphones they were required to wear. The diegetic sound was highly directional with binaural headphones creating a sense, for those with normal hearing[65], of the spatial relationships of stage elements. A mannequin incorporating microphones in each ear was positioned centrally throughout the production as a de facto audience member (Figure 3.3). He demonstrated to the audience how to correctly fit their headphones so they would hear as though they too were central on the stage. Sometimes McBurney created sound effects with his own physical props and a looping device. He explained this process to the audience. At other times the sound was pre-recorded and he responded to it or navigated the stage to change its audio positionality for the audience. He used props that both positioned the audio within the fictional world of the play, such as a cell phone, and others that were clearly outside that world and in the domain of the storyteller, such as the looping pedal (Figure 3.4). Some months later Complicite toured to Auckland and I watched the play live. This time there was no web user interface and the visceral experience of a live embodied performance and audience added a further dimension. The framing of the performer as a storyteller allowed him to swap between moments of psychological realism where he was fully invested in the lead character of the story, and more self-reflexive, postdramatic moments where he was clearly a skilled teller of tales standing outside the plot. The possibility of one actor fulfilling dual roles and still maintaining an empathetic response from the audience helped me to understand psychological realism in relation to shifting narrative point of view.

INTERMEDIAL THEATRE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

While the international examples of intermedial theatre discussed above are selected from numerous possibilities, there have been very few such productions in Aotearoa New Zealand. In terms of intermedial theatre in this country two works

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[65] I have no hearing on one side and therefore much of the positional nuance was unavailable to me.

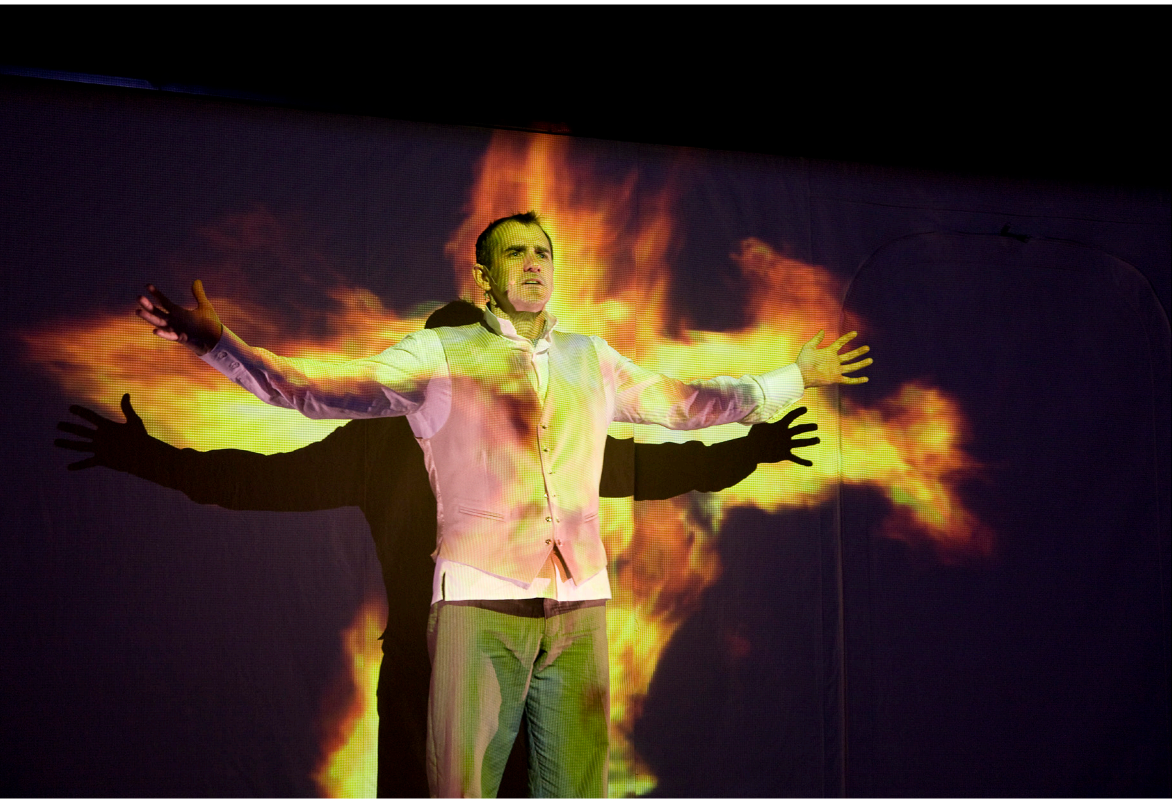

FIGURE 3.5.

Ship Songs (Marbrook, 2008), showing the video projection responding to input from the actor Ian Hughes.

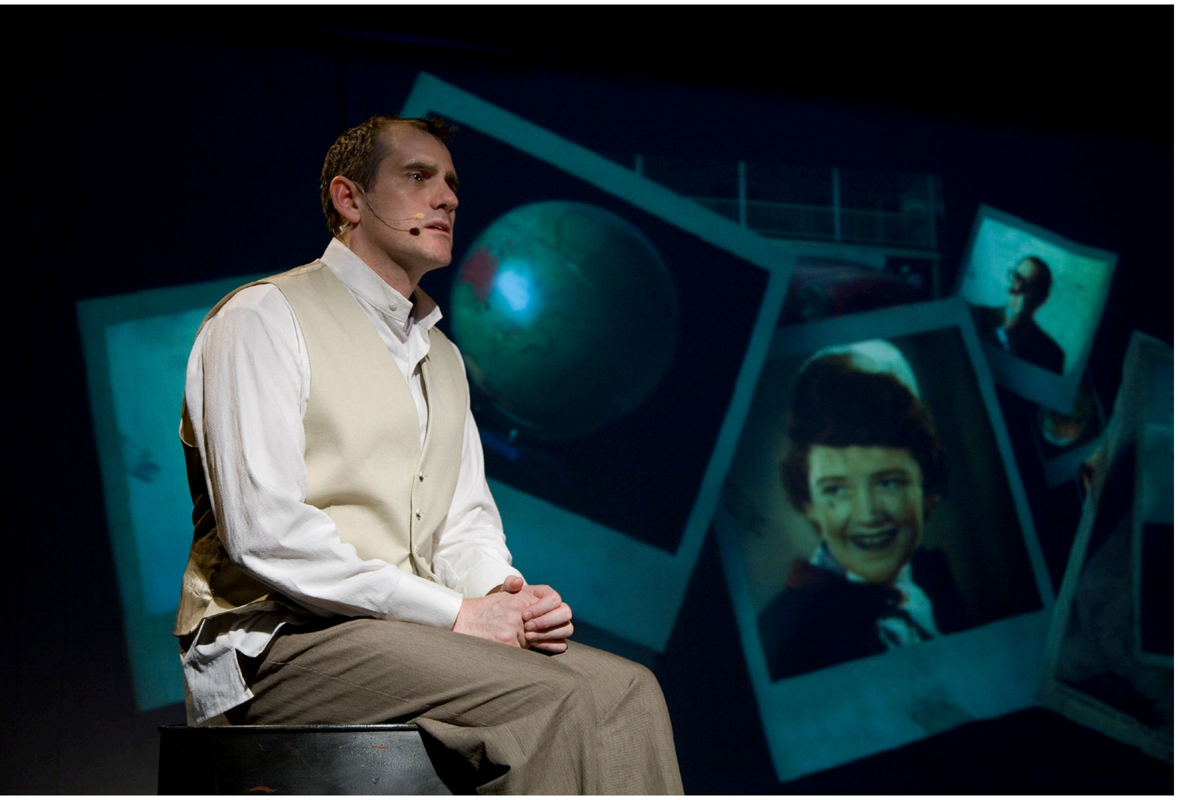

FIGURE 3.6.

Ship Songs (Marbrook, 2008). Projection of personal memories in response to the actor's narration.

are of interest to this thesis.

Ship Songs

The first is Ian Hughes' play *Ship Songs* (developed for the Auckland Theatre Company in 2008, directed by Anna Marbrook, the Pumphouse Theatre, Auckland).[66] Hughes, the sole actor, weaves three stories together, playing the role of a young Irish whaler. The personal story of how Hughes' parents met after a sea voyage mixes with the tale of 15th century Chinese admiral Cheng He and the whaler's own experiences. The character of the whaler narrates the stories and his storytelling is augmented by projections on the set. He consciously uses the projections as a storytelling device that is "immediate, playful and obviously constructed" (Marbrook, 2008, p. 6.).

This work made use of the interactive performance technology Isadora.[67] The tool allowed the actor to control both audio and the projection of images to illustrate the historical depth of the narrative by, for example, driving slideshows of his parents. Lynne Cardy (2008) notes that the production team sought to use the technology with immediacy, playfulness and to draw attention to it as a tool. She cites Marbrook: "*Ship Songs* uses the oldest theatrical form of the travelling storyteller combined with some of the newest multi media technology" (Cardy, 2008, p. 6). Hughes' voice, for example is apparently processed live to create animations which are simultaneously projected on the screen behind him (Figure 3.5). Hughes adopted the acting style of psychological realism. The conscious construction of technologically-generated intermedial elements became a significant part of the world of the play because the main character, as a travelling storyteller, used it as a device (Figure 3.6). According to AV Design content designer Grant Bowyer, grappling with the digital media elements was:

> … about as terrifying as it was exciting: how to build moving images into live action without compromising either. Incorporating elements of narrative, effects, and set extension, the graphical parts of the show presented us with the kind of challenge that demanded a great deal of innovation and subtlety. Referencing the mechanical nature of its own construction, the images extend and enhance the feeling of a story told from memory, a personal recollection assembled into a theatrical experience that is part imagination, part narrative. (Cardy, 2008, p. 8)

The use of the actor's movements and voice as inputs to drive the technology made him a technician as well as a performer and this possibility is something I experimented with in the first two iterations of *Foolish Prating Knave*.

I sing the body electric

Free Theatre, in association with the University of Canterbury (Christchurch, New Zealand) and HITLab NZ (Human Interface Technology Laboratory),[68] produced

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[66] Cardy, L. (2008). 2008_shipsongs.pdf. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland Theatre Company. Retrieved from http://www.atc.co.nz/media/121655/2008_shipsongs.pdf.

[67] Isadora, designed by choreographer Mark Coniglio and first released by Troikatronix in 2002, is designed to enable video designers and interactive artists to create responsive media experiences. It accomplishes this by using live movement and other data from an actor or dancer to manipulate digital video projections.

[68] HITLab NZ (Human Interface Technology Laboratory, Hangarau Tangata, Tangata Hangarau) https://www.hitlabnz.org/index.php/about-us/partners/. Utilising complex technology in a production requires considerable resources to ensure robust reliability. The 2017 Royal Shakespeare Company production of Shakespeare's the Tempest, for example, was sponsored by technology company Intel and required the use of a supercomputer and a dedicated team working on special video projection effects for a year.

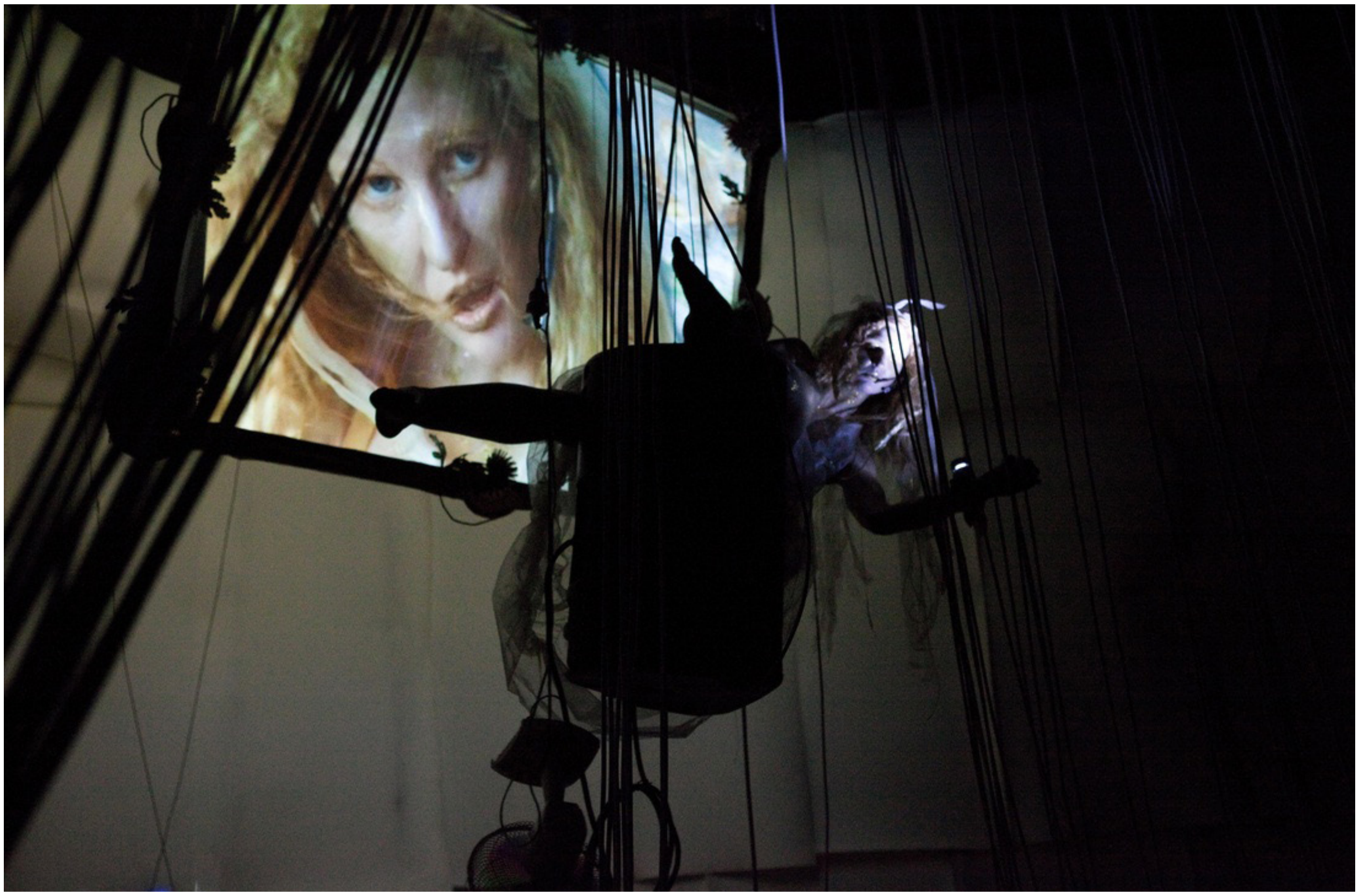

FIGURE 3.7.

I Sing the Body Electric,
(Falkenberg, 2012).

an intermedial production called *I Sing the Body Electric* in 2012. Director Peter Falkenberg and Intermedial Designer Ryan Reynolds used reactive devices to create sound from movement and colour inputs.[69] Free Theatre, it should be noted is unusual within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Falkenberg, trained as a theatre academic in Germany and steeped in European experimental theatrical traditions, brought something unique to the country. This production employed digital media and physical computing elements, including dancing robots, to considerable effect. However, the work did not feature an acting style that aimed to evoke a sense of psychological realism. The production might perhaps be described as avant-garde (the dominant style of the theatre company) and postdramatic in form and intent. The spectacular and thought-provoking use of mediatised elements provided some inspiration for this thesis as can be seen in Figure 3.7. Images with striking colour and scale are able to draw attention and bring a cinematic language into the stage environment. However, the use of posthuman "actors" in the form of robots was not relevant to my experiments, because the core focus of my research is on human acting techniques.

Summary

The work of the practitioners outlined here has been selected in order to contextualise my Performance as Research. The overview does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather it provides a representative range of performances that have directly informed the project. My experiments with the potentials of expanded actor agency within psychologically realist intermedial theatre draw upon, and are positioned alongside, the following features:

- The playfulness of the interaction between the mediated elements and the live embodied performer seen in the work of Lepage and the Wooster Group. The creative approach to every interaction serves to connect with the audience as well as to cement a relationship between the live and the mediated.
- Both the filmic intensity and interiority of Katie Mitchell's work and the agency she affords to actors in devising her productions are important in my work because the collaborative team is exploring multiple media technologies, and creating meaning, together. My research aims to discover what extending agency to actors might surface about the contributions they could make. Mitchell's work provides an example of a company that broadens the ensemble of actors' skill sets to facilitate this.
- If Mitchell sets out to lay bare the process of constructing filmic representations live on stage then Imitating the Dog assume that their audiences are familiar with cinematic production and seek to interrogate the codes used in film. This aspect of their work is important for my research as I seek to understand how the cinematic understanding of realist acting technique can be applied to a hybrid of film and theatre.
- Both Complicite and Ian Hughes explore affording agency to the performer as a way of expanding the potentials of technological special effects. The characters in each drive at least some of the effects from their position on the stage. In one of my experiments[70] I pursued a similar aim, finding

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[69] Reynolds, R.M. (Intermedial Designer). (2012) I sing the body electric. Devised and directed by Peter Falkenberg. Free Theatre at the Jack Mann Auditorium, Christchurch, New Zealand, June 19 - July 1, 2012. Live Performance with Interactive Intermedial Technologies.

[70] Performance of an iteration of Foolish Prating Knave at the 2016 ADSA conference. By working as both actor and show operator I was forced to split my focus.

that the requirement to split the levels of consciousness I was working on was not conducive to psychological realist acting techniques. The device of framing the performer as a storyteller, as practised by Complicite and Hughes, is tangentially relevant in interrogating character-based psychological realism.

- All of these examples, except that of Free Theatre's production, have elements of theatre that value character, narrative and believable responses. The practitioners have each approached acting or storytelling by using a form of psychological realism within distinct styles.

However, my research is distinct from all of these practices in that the location of intermedial moments within *Foolish Prating Knave* forms a space where psychologically realist acting occurs in the interplay between the embodied, live actor and the mediatised, technologically generated "actors". An exploration of how acting techniques might be developed to play in this space (including the incorporation of heightened Shakespearean language) is therefore a contribution I make to the field.

THE ACTOR – ISSUES OF COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE, AGENCY AND COLLABORATION

I am cognisant of the impossibility of providing a comprehensive review of all the knowledge impacting on my acting practice. However, this third section of the chapter briefly considers knowledge from the fields of cognitive neuroscience and acting, agency and collaboration.

Insights into actors from cognitive neuroscience

Cognitive neuroscience, according to Rhonda Blair (2009), offers new, scientifically based insight into how the human organism processes such things as images, reactions and imagination. It is therefore useful for actors and directors to gain some knowledge of these scientific advances. Blair describes how cognitive neuroscience suggests that the 'self' is not necessarily something essential and unchanging but rather a manifestation of neural processes and as such it is a narrative creation. Blair argues that memories are not retrieved from a database but are rather set in motion and relived. This concept is something I sought to explore in *Foolish Prating Knave* with respect to the narrative of the play. I asked whether a character deprived of ready access to his memories would re-experience trauma when fed small chunks of information from his immediate past. This technique required the actor to be immersed in the moment of re-living as well as the character.

Blair believes that the discovery of the mirror neuron systems suggests that humans can share in the actions and intentions of others on a level that does not require conceptual reasoning. People feel with others automatically and this is based on seeing actions and expressions. In a very real sense this makes the sharing of "self" or at least aspects of the "self" possible. It poses the question, can a "self" become a shared communal experience through the agency of drama? If it can, then drama has the power of expanding an experience of what it means to be human into a temporary communal identity.

Cognitive neuroscience, a field located at the intersection of biology and cognition, is providing valuable insights into the way humans (and therefore actors) work. Blair (2008, 2009) has been foremost in exploring, through Practice as Research, the way this new understanding of "the human condition" can be used by actors. The science explains the connections between behaviour and the elements that cause it. The mind processes visual images, words and preverbal mental language. It does this in response to perceived forces, what the individual chooses to focus on, emotional responses and the individual's goal. Furthermore, this is seen as intensely individual since it stems from experiences and responses specific to each person. Mental representations and imagination are central to constructing possible responses to stimulus. Blair suggests that awareness of how this works allows the actor "to access the unconscious by conscious means" (Blair, 2008, p. 43). Psychological realism requires of the actor a deep understanding of how human beings operate and therefore insights offered by cognitive neuroscience are particularly useful to the technique and to my research.

Earlier work by psychologists interested in emotions and acting provides a basis for these discoveries. For example, Elly Konijn (1995) studied how actors' feelings relate to the character's feelings that they are playing. She concluded that actors' feelings, during performance, closely follow those written for the character, albeit at a reduced level of intensity. She also found no appreciable difference between the feelings that actors reported whether they were engaged in realist or Brechtian production.

The concepts of character and self have also been the subject of research by Blair (2008) who brings a cognitive neuroscientific perspective to the issue. As Elinor Fuchs (1996) points out, some proponents of a postmodern approach to theatre see character as a moribund concept and endeavour to have the performer rather be "themselves" as they perform (Lehmann, 2006). This stance, adopted by postdramatic theorists, is not something that directly concerns my thesis because it denies the element of imagination and Stanislavsky's "magic as if" in producing a response. Blair suggests that character should not be viewed by an actor as a separate entity and that the well worn arguments about self and character are best sidestepped by considering character as a construct or a process. She believes that actors should not try to be but rather to live through the character. She states, "There is no character in any fixed or pre-set sense; as in life, there is only the progress of a particular individual moving through a particular context, changing with each moment" (Blair, 2008, p. 83). Blair is suggesting that a deeper understanding of the way we create our own self can be usefully applied to Stanislavski's concept of psychological realism. This concurs with Benedetti's claim that one of the two main principles of Stanislavski's system is "that the actor must understand and make use artistically of the mechanisms of human behaviour" (2005, p. 120).

An extension of this concern over the playing of emotion and the construction of character is the empathetic response of actors to the characters they play. Blair describes a definition of empathy, summarising the most consistent scientific agreement in so far as it has three components. The first is that there is an affective response to someone else, possibly involving sharing their emotional state, or feeling what they are feeling. Second, the cognitive dimension includes the ability to "visualize or imagine yourself in the other person's situation and put yourself in his or her shoes" (2009, pp. 98-99). And lastly that healthy empathy requires that you maintain an awareness that you are separate from that other person. This scientific understanding of empathy accords with Stanislavski's psychologically realist approach to the actor's relationship to character. He believed that the actor should not actually become the character but that, through the engagement of imagination, the actor should feel as if the given circumstances were real. Benedetti, in his summary of Stanislavski's work states that the "truthful, creative actor is one who can use the magic 'If'. Who can believe in the 'given circumstances'" (p. 33) and "the sense of truth lies in the actor's imagination, childlike simplicity, openness and sensitivity" (p.34).

From a cognitive neuroscience perspective, empathy is seen as an evolutionary adaptation that enables us to respond to a stimulus. In order to know how to respond, people are able to visualise an event thereby engaging the imagination. Visualisation precedes an empathetic response and can be triggered by any of the senses. The empathetic response is furthermore automatic, situated in mirror neurons (Blair, 2009). Karen Pearlman (2009) provides an example of how this process works when an audience watches actors and dancers move. She relates the idea of mirrored, visceral response to rhythm. She suggests that when an audience member watches an actor move, their own mirror neurons light up as though they were moving in parallel. Whether this was something I could apply to the responses of an actor performing live on stage who was exposed to the movements of a mediatised character was something I explored in *Foolish Prating Knave*.

These insights are useful in contextualising this thesis' interrogation of the nature of psychological realism with respect to the stimulation of intermedial elements. They suggest that automatic responses need not only be triggered by cognitively conceived and linearly narrated plot points; they might also be understood as a precognitive response triggered by watching intermedial elements. This therefore suggests that the techniques of psychological realism can extend to interactions with technologically generated and presented elements when the actors, in a leap of "poetic faith" suspend their disbelief.

Agency

The traditional mainstream theatre process in Aotearoa New Zealand and in much of Western theatre has afforded limited agency to actors. Actors are positioned as interpretative artists who have limited permission to adapt the material delivered to them in terms of a script, production design (including costume, hair, makeup, set, lighting and audiovisual media) and the director's vision. Peter Harrop and Evelyn Jamieson (2013) describe the process of making theatre in this way as "undemocratic, hierarchical and unhelpfully sequential" (p. 167).

Auslander (2009), in his discussion of agency, makes the point that an audience perception of where the agency lies need not actually reflect the reality of the performance. He compares the perceived agency of inanimate objects such as a ventriloquist's dummy to a musician's instrument. He contends that these objects seem to have autonomy even though they are subject to the agency of the human artist who animates them, (without whom they would be silent).[71] As an example, he notes that in the audience's perception of apparent autonomy in the performance of Mari Kimura's (2005) *GuitarBotana* (a digitally programmed robotic instrument) there lies an opportunity for the audience to imagine the inanimate instrument as separate from Kimura and not simply an extension of her. He argues that the separateness of the digital device compared to a traditional violin, that must be held to play, increases this illusion. Auslander's observation is useful in so far as it points to what the audience perceives, despite the reality that the agency lies with the performer. Furthermore, his assertion suggests a possible way that acting might be perceived with respect to a digitally-projected character.[72] In the fourth experiment of my project I explored whether the audience would accept that a digitally created character had autonomous agency.

This study is however concerned more directly with the specific agency that human actors are afforded or can claim in theatre. In my research, I suggest that, given improvements in technique and skill sets, actors can be given more agency in the theatre-making process and this increased freedom to contribute through collaboration might enable them to be more successful in intermedial-realist theatre.

Collaboration

Harrop and Jamieson (2013) define collaboration as that activity that occurs when you work with someone to produce something. Theatre, as I am using the term in this project, by its very nature is not a solo activity. It requires at the very least, one actor and one member of the audience. Any activity involving more than one person requires interaction and that interaction either initiates or builds on conventions of the relationship. The essential requirements for any theatre production (to meet Harrop and Jamieson's definition) are therefore already in place. Every theatre production involves more than one person and they must work together to experience an outcome.

An ensemble theatre company was defined in the proceedings of the 2004 Director's Guild of Great Britain and Equity conference as one in which the core team of theatre artists works together over a number of years to create theatre. Others could be brought into this collaboration with an aim of refreshing and developing the work of the core team. Within such a construct, Mitchell (2011) stresses a sense of shared group activity or purpose. John Britton (2013) suggests that this sense of common purpose is a defining element of ensemble. Ensemble in theatre usually refers to the company of actors and is not inclusive of the production crew. In my experimentation, I sought to break away from the exclusiveness of this model and explore whether some of the values and perspectives inherent in the collaboration between actors might be usefully applied

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[71] There is a legacy of theoretical discourse about whether actors can be considered to be puppets. Diderot in the 19th century presumed that the embodied performance was controlled by the intellect of the actor. Edward Gordon Craig (1911) argued that the only true interpreter of the poet was the marionette. In this he follows Heinrich von Kleist (1810, trans. Gerti Wilford, 1989) in proposing that the ideal actor is the puppet or "über-marionette". Kenneth Gross (2014) describes a puppet as an "actor" moved by others. I find Gross's assertion that puppets somehow have their own level of autonomy or agency interesting with respect to the perceived performance of mediatised "actors" in intermedial theatre.

[72] The issue of human agency in performing is challenged by the increasing sophistication of performances that are created by machine and by artificially intelligent agents that continue to learn, adapt and create long after they were initialised by a human programmer. Ralph Remshart (2008) proposes that posthuman performance heralds a major shift in human agency with respect to performance.

in the wider theatre-making process.

Harrop and Jamieson (2013) argue that collaborative processes are inherently performative and that these collaborations can exist as moments that cumulate into embodied knowledge and as memories that are carried forward into rehearsals and future work. Brad Krumholz (2013) describes the North American Cultural Laboratory's aim to create a culture of collaboration where everyone involved in a theatre production can participate according to his or her interests and abilities. This leads to an affording of agency to actors so that they may contribute to such things as conceptual conversations, their own costumes and the designing and construction of set elements. This collaboration encourages a fluidity of roles and openness of communication and interaction with the objective of complicating and challenging traditional and hierarchical models of theatre organisation. This may lead to a sense of ownership of the work where actors feel more like authors than interpreters.

Simon Ellis and Colin Poole (2014) acknowledge all of these aspects of collaboration but also discuss (with respect to Slavoj Zizek's philosophy of performance) the central role of conversation, the importance of gaps, difference and imagination. They propose that collaboration can prosper when conditions of antagonism, difference, friction and even violence are welcomed.

More useful to this project is Knopf's observation (2006) that there is not a binary distinction but instead a continuum between the fully authoritarian (which he defines as noncollaborative) and the purely collaborative. Collaboration in the theatre requires experimentation and risk for Knopf, and its underlying principles are that no one person has all the best ideas and talents and that the sum of collaboration will be greater than the parts. If collaborative practice is to be effective, then the element of trust is essential. Susan Melrose (2016) suggests there is a "constitutive ambiguity" between the shared and the singular. Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier (2016) connect this ambiguity directly to the notion of agency within creative contributions.

Mitchell (2011) describes her process for enabling actors, trained in mainstream theatre, to effectively participate in the production of multimedia components of the live film production of *… some trace of her* (dir. Mitchell, The National Theatre, England, 2008). In collaboration with her multimedia designer, Leo Warner, she trained the actors in basic videography, lighting and sound recording. This enabled informed and practical devising methods with actors who had no prior knowledge in videography in order to present "live construction" of filmic images on stage (Mitchell, 2011). Sean Jackson, one of the actors, describes the process as "there are moments when you are acting and then there are moments when you're facilitating somebody else's acting" (Mitchell, 2011). Mitchell developed a highly collaborative process resulting in the actors improvising 80% of the images used while she reserved the editing and structuring role for herself as the director. During the performance of the play, a live filmic version of the story was projected on a large screen above and behind the cast who were busy shooting it on the stage below. Ben Whishaw (Mitchell, 2011) said that he was not playing the character but "caretaking" it, to use Mitchell's term, because other actors might be contributing a voice or the hands of the same character. In fact, he solely provided the face throughout the performance but jumped in and out of other roles, set up lights and focused cameras. He described the acting technique he used as very filmic and the difficulty of switching from a creative and emotional side of the brain to a part that was very technical. Mitchell's process, if not the style of live cinema, inspired my research. The collaborative nature of the endeavour and the empowerment of actors to contribute outside the field they trained in, showed me the value of exploring this in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, where I believe the culture to be more egalitarian rather than hierarchical. In the iterations of this thesis' production *Foolish Prating Knave,* I sought to discover what benefits to acting and the collaborative endeavour might accrue from extending the agency of actors in some of the ways that Mitchell has done. I adapted aspects of her live film process to a solo performance with pre-recorded characters.

Conclusion

As Nelson (2013) proposed, a review of related knowledge that is suited to an inquiry activated through the creation of a performance should be eclectic and seek resonances between a variety of domains. The inspiration drawn from these arenas of discourse both inform and contextualise the inquiry. The scope of research from professional and academic researchers discussed in this chapter is wide, but its concern is specifically focused on knowledge of use from an actor's perspective. Thus, the aim of the chapter has been to describe lineages of thinking relating to acting and to contextualise certain issues that the iterative experiments in this thesis have sought to address. Such a review now lays the ground for a consideration of the research design employed in the explication of the research and a critical commentary on its iterative development.

CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL, REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT OF PRACTICE

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A CRITICAL, REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT OF PRACTICE

Introduction

This chapter outlines the evolution of the research inquiry through a series of seven interrelated investigations. They are divided into two phases, the initial, gestational phase and the later developmental phase that was focused on iterative experiments and refinements of the final thesis performance, *Foolish Prating Knave*:

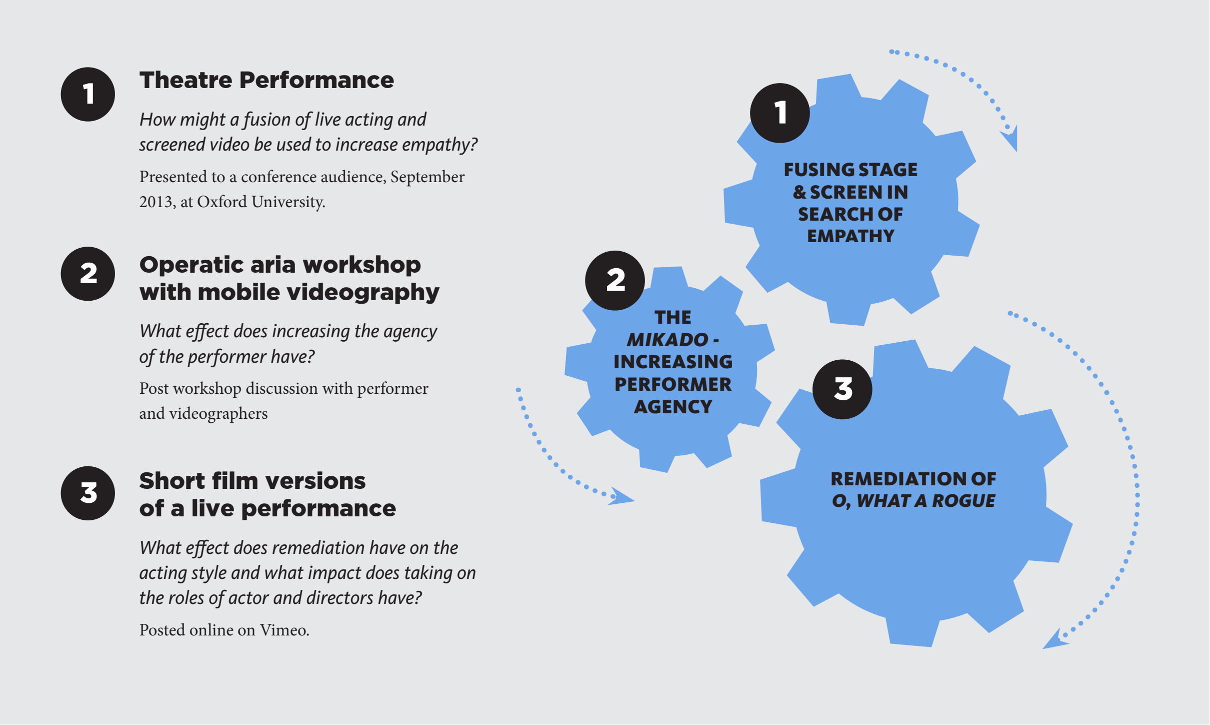
THE GESTATIONAL PHASE

The gestational phase involved three experiments.

- Performance experiment 1: *"O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy*
- Performance experiment 2: *The Mikado – increasing performer agency*
- Performance experiment 3: *Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film.*

These iterations of practice created a progressive clarification of emerging questions and findings within the project.

My reading and critical reflection on knowledge imbricated in other practitioners' work inspired a series of subquestions around my practice. This formed the basis of the practice research projects described in this chapter. Figure 4.1 shows the first three experiments that were designed to surface subquestions.



1 Theatre Performance

How might a fusion of live acting and screened video be used to increase empathy?

Presented to a conference audience, September 2013, at Oxford University.

2 Operatic aria workshop with mobile videography

What effect does increasing the agency of the performer have?

Post workshop discussion with performer and videographers

3 Short film versions of a live performance

What effect does remediation have on the acting style and what impact does taking on the roles of actor and directors have?

Posted online on Vimeo.

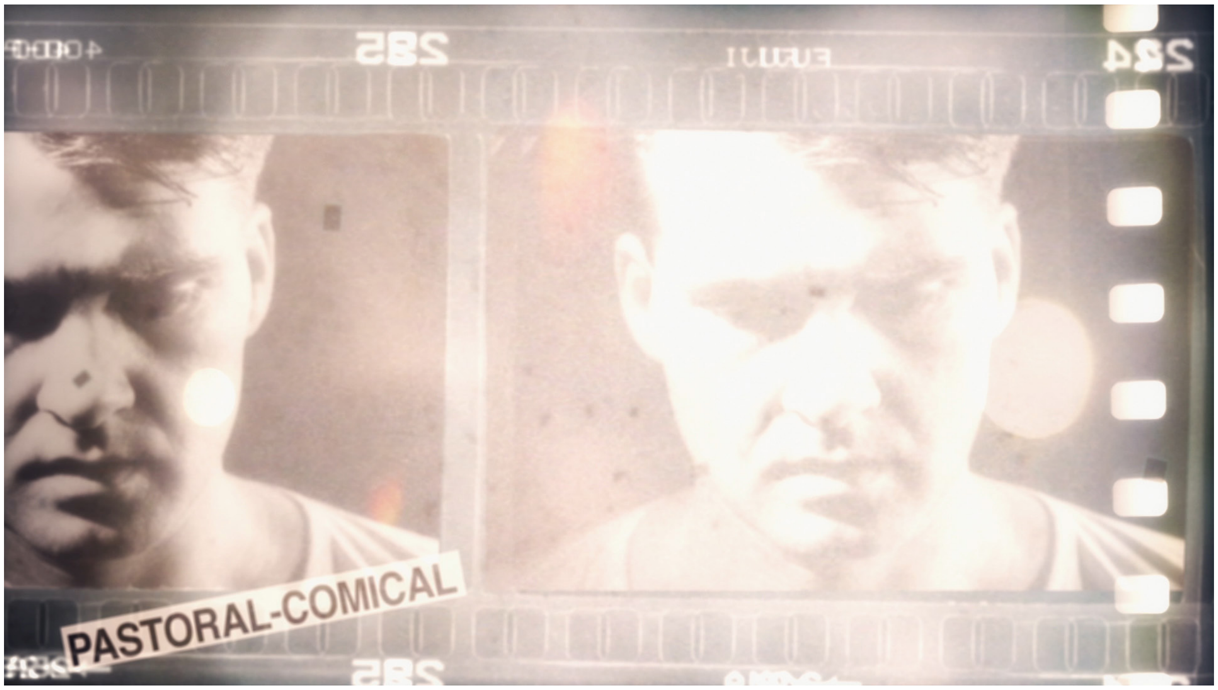
1
FUSING STAGE & SCREEN IN SEARCH OF EMPATHY
2
THE *MIKADO* - INCREASING PERFORMER AGENCY
3
REMEDIATION OF *O, WHAT A ROGUE*

FIGURE 4.1.

Iterative creative experiments one to three.

FIGURE 4.2.

Brannigan, R. (devisor/designer/actor/director, 2013). Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy, Oxford, England. A still image grabbed from a video I designed and used during the performance.



PASTORAL-COMICAL

Performance experiment 1: "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy

CONTEXT

The first creative experiment was an exploration of the potential for enhanced empathy through blending live and pre-recorded elements within a performance. Empathy, with respect to this project, refers to an emotional response evoked in the actor by the character's feelings. Within the limitations of this project I have explored my own empathetic responses as an actor and my perceptions of the audience's responses during the performance. The performance was presented at Mansfield College, Oxford University[73] on September 18, 2013, with an audience of approximately 35 people.

The media elements were projected on to a small screen behind the live performer. The intimate space was set up as a conference presentation room with general lighting and participants seated around three sides of the room. It was not a space optimised for performance.[74]

Contextualised by a paper that I presented at the conference, considering the implications of fusing stage and screen in search of empathy,[75] the performance consisted of an intermedial-realist imagining of the soliloquy *O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I* from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.[76]

The performance piece was developed through a process of experimentation and media design. I collaborated with AUT lecturers Matthew Guinibert and Paul McGreal to shoot a brief video that was projected on to a screen behind me as I performed the role of Hamlet live. Guinibert and McGreal played Rosencrantz and Guildenstern listening as Hamlet talked to them in a brief video conference. John Leigh, a professional actor and another collaborator, posed for photographs as Claudius, one of which I edited into a cinemagraph[77] as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

I chose Hamlet's *O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I* for its impassioned introspection. Since a soliloquy is a direct address to the audience it allowed the character, and therefore the performer, to take control of digital screen elements as if they were a device to aid in communicating his message.

The excerpt began with Hamlet engaged in a video chat session with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They obediently leaned into their webcam and Hamlet was able to disconnect them at will. The image of their chat screen was projected on a screen behind Hamlet. He then searched for a promotional video of the Players and their production of "*The Murder of Gonzago*" and watched it (Figure 4.2), assessing the quality and suitability of the piece for his undisclosed purpose. With the title of the play remaining on screen, Hamlet rang the First Player by cell phone and arranged for the play to be performed and for the players to adapt the performance in order to trap his uncle. He then reconnected the chat session with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, controlling their ability to see him then shutting them off dismissively.

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[73] The performance formed part of a presentation at the Fourth Global Visual Aspects of Performance Conference organised by Interdisciplinary.net.

[74] The technological aids, including a Macbook laptop and a small projector, linked by an insecure cable, were rudimentary.

[75] Brannigan, R (2013). Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy. http://hdl.handle.net/10292/6611

[76] Shakespeare, 1623/1982, 2.2.531-601. Hamlet, as one of the most performed and psychologically complex plays of Shakespeare, formed the basis for all but one of my experiments.

[77] Cinemagraph is a term coined by American photographers Kevin Burg and Jamie Beck in 2011. It refers to an otherwise still photographic image that has a single discrete element animated, such as smoke rising from a cigarette.

Throughout the direct audience address of the soliloquy Hamlet used projections from a PowerPoint[78] presentation to illustrate his points.

CRITICAL CONCERNS

In this experiment I asked myself two questions:

- What might the potential be for intermedial-realism to enhance empathy?
- How might the combination of stage and screen processes be negotiated?

CRITICAL DISCUSSION

The preproduction and performance experimented with the potential of intermedial-realism as an agent for enhancing empathy. I approached the investigation from the perspective of an actor navigating media within a short piece involving some aspects of intermedial and multimedia theatre. I was interested in my own empathetic responses to what the character did and felt and my own perception, during performance, of any discernible empathetic response from the audience.[79]

The work was therefore not an audience reception study. However, by performing the piece to an audience made up of theatre academics and practitioners, within a conference framework, there was opportunity for me to seek critique and feedback.[80]

I used the method of reflective and creative journaling during the making of media preceding the performance. Verbal and visual notes on theory and potential designs were processed through my journal and explored while constructing still and moving image videos. I then reflected on the efficacy of the emerging outcomes. Immediately post performance, I used the journal to record and reflect on my own responses and those of the audience.

My primary concerns for the experiment were with what might occur between stage and screen, in a liminal, inbetween space of possibility, where performance existed as both live, embodied and present and also as technologically mediatised and screened. My aim was to create an empathetic[81] response in the audience in order to encourage investment in character, plot and theme. I was seeking to build practice-centred understanding of how to negotiate the combination of stage and screen processes involved.

I anticipated that applying a style of intermedial-realism in the remediation of a soliloquy from a classic play was likely to surface issues about negotiating such a combination. The heightened language of Shakespeare and the classical form of a soliloquy provided challenges to the notions of realism and to the engagement of mediatised elements. Hamlet's responses to an actor inspired the choice of this particular soliloquy as it contains musings on the nature of emotional connection and to the use of theatre to provoke an automatic reaction. In the *O, what a rogue* sequence, Hamlet sets a theatrical trap for his uncle. He has been told by an apparition that his uncle Claudius had murdered

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[78] Microsoft's presentation software, commonly used by presenters to illustrate their talk.

[79] As an actor, I have a capacity to respond emotionally to the cues I receive from the audience. These cues may be such things as laughter, intakes of breath, silence or restlessness. Attention to these cues can operate below the level of consciousness and is part of the actor-audience conversation.

[80] Critique was offered formally at the end of the presentation and informally afterward.

[81] There is not the space within this project to explore all psychological definitions of empathy. While empathy is normally considered an ability to understand or share in the feelings of another, I am using it here to describe a situation where a feeling or understanding is generated in response to the feelings or actions of another thus creating an investment or connection.

Hamlet's father and that it was now his task to avenge the death. Having just witnessed a troupe of travelling players performing and been moved to tears, it occurs to him that, in order to get proof of his uncle's regicide, he could get the players to perform a facsimile of the murder. He intends to observe his uncle's response acutely and to set himself on a path of vengeance if Claudius's reaction betrays guilt. The power of this sequence lies in Hamlet's belief in an overwhelming and automatic emotional response.

Know that: outsider-distant knowledge

I was cognisant in this project that my concerns with the combined use of screened media and live theatre had a diverse and extensive history. Since the birth of film, projected elements have been incorporated in stage productions. For example, Winsor McCay's 1914 film/stage hybrid *Gertie the Dinosaur* was an animated short tale of a dinosaur produced to amaze audiences of McCay's vaudeville act. Audiences were intrigued by what was probably the first animated film they had seen and by McCay, clearly live on stage in front of them, seeming to interact with the projection. Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein screened a film in three parts during his live production of *The Wiseman* in 1923 in order to explore a form that he hoped would communicate appropriately with audiences in the Soviet Union, many of whom were newly empowered but illiterate.

I had been reading Greg Giesekam's (2007) survey of recent major practice that had explored the use of screen on stage, including experimental theatre companies as diverse as Robert Lepage in Canada and The Wooster Group and The Builders Association in the United States. Giesekam cites Lepage as asking "How do you maintain a sense of intimacy with a thousand people?" Lepage then answers his own question with, "You have to rely on technology to magnify you" (cited in Giesekam, 2007, p. 219).

The Wooster group, from their beginnings in 1975, had been concentrating on the content and style of the material they screened rather than creating work that was technologically driven. The Builders Association, I was aware, had been using video, projection and computer animation in diverse ways to explore the impact those technologies can have on storytelling. I was also aware that discussions of intermediality had shifted from perceiving the liminal space as one of inbetweenness, to conceiving it as a productive fusion in the inter-relation of media (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender and Nelson, 2010).

In reflecting on these examples, *"O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy*, sought to explore the possibilities of technology, refine the content and style of the live and the digital media elements, and utilise the potential of media to magnify the impact of the interplay between the live performance and the projected video.

Empathy

The focus of the experiment was on seeking to create a situation through acting where the live actor can emotionally connect to and engage 'truthfully' with a mediatised character. The aim of this connection was to affect and engage the audience so, ideally they might share the feelings of one or more character; in other words experience empathy and thereby deepen their level of engagement. It is apropos to remember that although when Coleridge wrote "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" (Coleridge, 1817, Chapter XIV), he was referring to written fiction, his concept might equally be applied to the empowerment of the actor to become an imaginative participant in the world of a play. Through an act of will, actors are able to not just understand but also share in, the feelings of another. This phenomenon is distinct from the more objective term "sympathy" that encompasses only observation and understanding of another's feelings. Herein, I suggest, lies the emotional power of the shared theatrical experience. It aims at evoking a response from the audience that aids in understanding another human being's emotions by partially feeling along with them. This, used purposefully, I believe, promotes a deeper appreciation and understanding of the human condition. Empathy is however not something that an actor (or an audience member) has complete control over. As Daniel Hodges and Sara Wegner (1997) argue, empathy can be automatic. Blair (2009) notes that design for empathetic response can carry a number of dangers.[82]

An underlying assumption fundamental to this experiment was that empathy[83] is a desirable affect[84] to strive for in an actor's response to the characters. In 2009 Blair approached the question of empathy through the lens of cognitive neuroscience. She considered diverse theories relating an empathetic reaction to our evolutionary need to decide how to respond to a stimulus. People have an ability to visualise an event in order to know how to respond to it. This implies that empathy requires an ability to engage the imagination and that that engagement has a visual aspect. Indeed, the image that precedes an empathetic reaction can be triggered by any of the senses. Blair, arguing from her position in both theatre and cognitive neuroscience, posits three essential components to empathy. The first is the presence of an affect; an embodied response to someone else (feeling what they feel). Secondly she suggests that this response implies that there is a cognitive capacity to visualise the other person's situation. Thirdly, she argues that there is also a capacity to know that the experience has originated in someone else.

It should be noted that in this analysis there is a physical response from which an action ensues. Thus, empathy is linked to visualisation *and* to action. The experiencing of empathy requires engagement with the visual aspects of performance. I suggest that it would therefore follow that whatever visual elements can be utilised in performance to engage the eyes and imaginative visualisation, might provoke a visceral response. This was an idea that I wanted to test out in practice. During the making of the piece and its performance I reflected on my own empathetic responses. I did not carry out an audience reception study and deliberately limited my reflection on audience empathy to my own perceptions during the performance and comments from the audience afterwards.

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[82] These may include the possibility of indulging in a narcissistic or solipsistic experiencing of someone else's pain.

[83] Goldstein and Winner (2012) define empathy as having an appropriate emotional response to the person being observed. Their psychological definition stops short of defining the response as necessarily feeling what the person being observed is feeling.

[84] I am using affect here in the Aristotelian sense of a transformation, impacting judgement, brought about by the mimesis of theatre and felt as pleasure and pain.

Intermedial-realism

The second question *"O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy* considered was how might the combination of stage and screen processes be negotiated? By employing three distinct intermedial elements, I wanted to find out how a traditional soliloquy might operate if its content, under the control of the actor, was distributed across screen and stage elements in the service of the play. The intention was to avoid devising the theatre to suit the screened elements, but rather to explore the ways in which the screen could augment the stage.

The technology of cell phones, internet access to promotional videos and someone using PowerPoint to illustrate an argument is familiar to a modern audience. Vesting control of the media in the character allowed it to be a believable component of the mise-en-scene. The screened elements, controlled by the character, were afforded attention when necessary but were able to be put in their place when the narrative demanded the attention be thrown on to the live performer. Hamlet was able to control the projections by either closing the PowerPoint slide or video or leaving something appropriate to visually underscore his argument. By interacting with the media elements, the performer instantiated the pre-recorded as live. It should be noted that in making the media elements I was invested in them and they carried a resonance that might not be felt by the audience. Because I carried memories of producing the media and the aesthetic choices I had made there was already a familiarity with them that I held as the actor rather than as the character.

A second intermedial element designed to disrupt the audience's relatively comfortable position as uninvolved observers was the breaking down of the "fourth wall". This drew them into the inner turmoil Hamlet was feeling. In the performance, he took the webcam and pointed it at the audience, asking "who calls me villain?". The convention of direct address in a soliloquy arguably renders this as within the world of the play. However, here the audience was also forced to see images of themselves projected in large scale on the screen behind the performer. This theatrical intermedial device was designed to make the experience participatory for the audience. I thought that it might be possible to create a visceral response to Hamlet's challenge if the audience saw themselves incorporated in the performance. However, in the event, the unreliability of the equipment led to the failure of the image to display and it was not possible to gauge whether heightened responses to the intermedial element would have ensued.

Thirdly, I employed a sequence of still images of the debauched King Claudius that Hamlet showed as though illustrating his point with a PowerPoint presentation. This created a link between the live and the media elements in so far as the images magnified and made concrete the failings of his uncle. The projections were used as a type of visualisation prosthetic device, with particular relevance to an audience within the framework of a conference, since presenters usually use PowerPoint in this way. The theatrical validity of illustrating Shakespeare's word-pictures so literally could be challenged as a diminution of the agency of the audience to create their own individual imagery. However, used sparingly, I believed it might be a way of enriching the visual impact of the piece by providing a visualisation of

Hamlet's charges against his uncle. The usage was designed to create a link between the media elements on screen and the live performance. They were a cue for the emotional responses of Hamlet and the audience.

All of these media elements were activated and operated by the performer and therefore the focal point of the narrative was controlled in the moment of performance.

The Cinemagraph

I was aware when developing this work, that Auslander (2008) warns that screened digital media elements can take precedence in the attention of the audience by virtue of their scale, novelty and perceived ephemerality. In addition, he suggests that audiences are conditioned to expect a film or television episode to play continuously as linear time-based media and they therefore pay close attention.

In the experiment, I felt it necessary to allow them to see Hamlet *controlling* the playback and to witness him actively using the control he had to tell his story. A pause before delivering the next part of the narrative could be made if the actor felt a shift in focal point or emphasis, or an adjustment time was needed. Colin McColl[85] has suggested the necessity of a "cool down" period after audiences experience an exciting screen element to allow sufficient time for them to switch their attention back to the live performer. I was therefore aware that I was taking

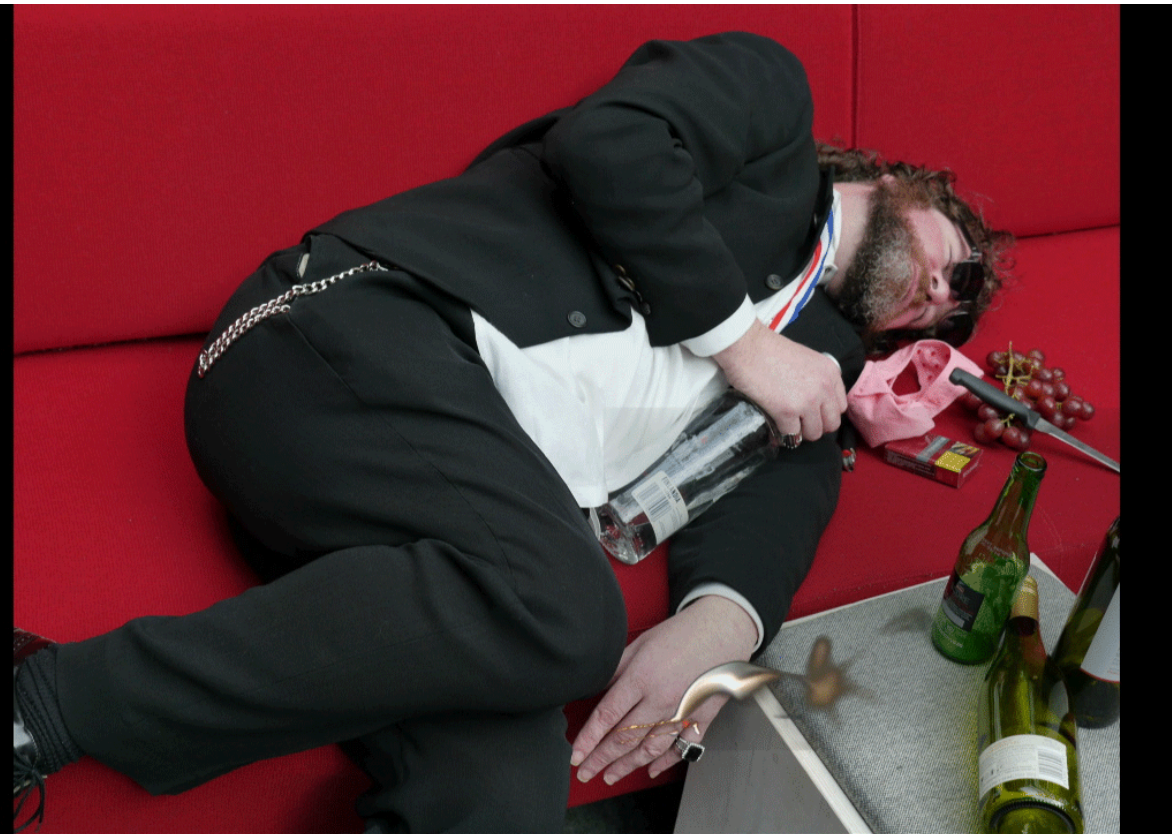

FIGURE 4.3.

Brannigan, R. (Devisor/designer/actor/director, 2013) "O, what a rogue": fusing stage and screen in search of empathy, Oxford, England. A cinemagraph of actor John Leigh as Claudius, projected on to a screen behind the live performer.

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[85] Colin McColl, Artistic Director of the Auckland Theatre Company, (personal communication, August 1, 2013).

something of a risk to leave an image of Claudius on screen while Hamlet fleshed out his plan and canvassed his fears at the end of the soliloquy. So, instead of using moving image footage behind Hamlet, I explored the potentials of a cinemagraph. Cinemagraphs are images that are, in the main, still, but they contain a subtle element that is animated and looped.[86] My experiment explored whether the subtlety of this form of image might offer less of a distraction from the live actor but at the same time provide a continuous presence that suggested Hamlet was still seething and the accused was still very much alive.[87]

The experiment explored the possibility that a cinemagraph might be useful to provide both a continuing presence and a focal point for a defined moment in time. In order for actors to claim attention after a cinemagraph had been viewed, it needed to recede within the attention of the audience. I trialled this by designing an image of a drunken Claudius, with his face turned away from the camera, unconscious and surrounded by the detritus of his debauchery (Figure 4.3). Although these signifiers of his decadence were static, the cigarette in his hand subtly emitted an animated wisp of smoke.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

The potentials for intermedial realism as an agent for enhancing empathy

In asking myself what the potentials are for intermedial realism as an agent for enhancing empathy, my primary focus for the experiment was on a classical play that afforded an opportunity to explore the applicability of the acting technique of psychological realism. This technique is different to that applied in Shakespeare's day but is something I commonly use in my practice and I wanted to explore its potential to fit the demands of both classical and intermedial theatre. I was particularly interested in the fusion of stage and screen where the media elements might be deployed within a realist "world of the play" rather than treated as disjoint commentaries on the action. I explored the potential of these elements to see if they might sit comfortably within that realist world and contribute to meaning generated in the interaction between the live and the mediatised.

The combination of stage and screen processes

Within this I was concerned with how the live and the digital media elements might interact as seamlessly as possible. I attempted to create an experience that was both live and mediated where the interrelation between the two was carefully managed to avoid disjuncture.

This experiment highlighted for me that Auslander's (2008) concern about the privileging of the technological media is valid within performance. This issue surfaced during preproduction when the question of focal point during the soliloquy arose. After Hamlet used images of Claudius to reinforce the argument that his uncle was debauched he turned to introspection and self-loathing. I

[86] The BBC used the technique in coverage of the World Snooker championships in 2013 because the feel of the images was suited to the intense concentration inherent in the game.

[87] This parallels the use of a slightly animated resting pose for characters in 3D animated games. The minor movement keeps a sense that the character is still live and "in play".

experimented with leaving a cinemagraph of Claudius active on the screen behind Hamlet. I felt in preparation and in performance that there was a risk that this image would pull focus from the live performance and this proved to be true. It disrupted the seamlessness of the flow of the narrative. However, this could potentially be used as a creative constraint by designers to increase empathetic affect by deliberately changing the focal point. The use of changes in the media might be a useful tool to direct the audience's attention to the element with the most potential to create an empathetic response. During the performance of the piece to an audience of theatre practitioners and academics I was able to feel the audience responses. Whether it was an intake of breath, a silence or a restlessness I could sense how they were reacting. The soliloquy also requires direct eye contact with the audience and the performance space was lit brightly enough to facilitate this. I noted that the audience was responding with appropriate emotion when the character whom I played directed their attention to a graphic image of debauchery. I also noted that the cinemagraph, left on screen when I wanted attention to be on the character, still claimed some attention. Swapping attention to the live actor after a dramatic media image could draw the mood to something more intensely internal. I realise now that a film editor's understanding of this shift can help in directing such a performance. This understanding of the relationship was something I was only able to access during post performance reflection because I was positioned within the action and lacked an observational perspective. I was aware that during the performance the audience was not able to turn its back on the image of Claudius as I could.

At any given time in a production there is usually a defined focal point for the narrative. Actors are highly conscious of the need to give focus and not to upstage another member of the cast who, given the exigencies of the narrative, has the attention of the audience at any given point in the play. My sense, as I progressed with the research, was that perhaps it might be helpful to think of the digital media elements not as design features but as other actors. They would therefore have their own time as a focal point but be expected to be invisible when the focus belonged elsewhere. This invisibility could conceivably be literal, the image and sound could be turned off, or the attractiveness or urgency of it could be substantially reduced through altering brightness or focus.

This experiment raised issues for me relating to the empowerment of the actor to claim focus and how these might be navigated. Specifically, it showed that directorial shaping of the interplay between actor and media elements might need to consider how the actor could actively work towards attaining this focus during performance. Significantly, I found that it is possible to establish an empathetic connection with the character when control of media, within the world of the play, was vested in the actor. A major caveat with this is that the technology responsible for this needs to be robust so that the actor can trust it and not have attention diverted to consideration of mechanical issues. The expansion of the actor's agency into production and control of media was something that I took forward to explore further in my subsequent practice experiments.

Performance experiment 2: The Mikado – increasing performer agency

CONTEXT

The second, short experiment temporarily moved away from concerns with intermedial-realism and considered ideas of enhanced agency for a performer. The inquiry was developed in a performance workshop held in the green room and Live Performance Lab at Auckland University of Technology on December 11, 2013. For this workshop, I enlisted the collaboration of two mobile videographers, Matthew Guinibert and Abhishek Kala, and an opera singer, Fiona Randall. I sought to explore whether increasing Randall's agency, by directing the videographers to follow her lead, would be beneficial for her process and resulting performance. Randall's practice conventionally involved very low levels of agency and control in preparation and performance. She was accustomed to taking specific direction from third parties. To enable the experiment a smartphone video device, stabilised on a handheld gimbal was used to follow wherever her performance impulse led her (Figure 4.4). Randall was instructed to follow her instincts and, placing her own needs first, to action solutions to performing the narrative. In working to provide maximum flexibility for the performer we discovered that a second smartphone could provide an additional angle on her performance and its LED light could illuminate the singer. The LED light freed the videographers from the need to set up lighting in advance of her movement.[88] Typically, in video production, a performer is asked to conform to the exigencies of capturing images from a variety of angles. As a consequence, she would normally be asked to repeat rehearsed movements multiple times. In this experiment, I sought to remove as many conventional filming constraints as possible and to use equipment familiar to Randall from her everyday domestic environment (smartphones) in order to place the performer's decision-making process at the centre of the exercise.

The green room provided an intimate space where Randall began her aria[89] before sweeping down a long corridor and making an entrance into the main theatre. In this large black box space, she spun around before coming to a stop to deliver the final lines of the aria. Throughout this process she was followed by the videographer. A moving shot of this complexity would normally require extensive setup and planning with traditional video equipment. An opera singer would not be expected to understand or contribute to the technicalities of the cinematography or the filmic flow of the sequence.

CRITICAL CONCERN

- Are increased agency (gained through control of technical elements and/or co-directing the production) and the opportunity to be involved in collaborative relationships beneficial for process and performance?

[88] I operated a third video device, in this case a camcorder, to document the experiment.

[89] Alone and yet alive from Gilbert, A. (Music), and Sullivan, W.S. (Libretto), (1885/2015), The Mikado, New York, NY: Dover Thrift Editions.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

The mobility afforded by handheld smartphones with high definition video cameras and inbuilt lights meant that the videographers were able to follow her lead. In developing the experiment, we rehearsed numerous iterations, always affording primacy to her ideas. The smartphones provided immediate playback opportunities and Randall was included in all discussions of these videos. The videographers were told to minimise their suggestions, except with reference to safety. I acted as designer of the experiment, documenter and as co-director with Randall. My role was to increase her agency through enablement and support. I followed her lead as much as possible and observed how she responded to being given expanded agency. Randall organised reshoots based on feedback afforded by playback of the smartphone footage (from two different angles) and collaborative discussion with the crew. She knew that the objective for her was to sing and move as her performance instincts dictated. Across a three hour rehearsal process Randall's confidence grew and she increasingly took control of the direction of her performance.

I had been reading Robert Knopf's *The Director as Collaborator* (2006) and noted his assertion that no single person has all the best ideas about a production and that the sum of the contributions will be better than any individual's. However, he also argued that an environment conducive to collaboration was a necessary condition for this to be true. Randall had confided in me that her confidence in her practice had suffered because of a perceived lack of agency to collaborate in the traditionally hierarchical opera companies in which she worked. I therefore designed the preconditions for the workshop to encourage Randle to accept an expanded role and to feel comfortable collaborating as co-director. Everyone was encouraged to contribute on the basis that the experiment involved Randall taking the lead.

A number of things became evident from this experiment. The first was that, from an observer's perspective, Randall's confidence increased the fluidity of her delivery

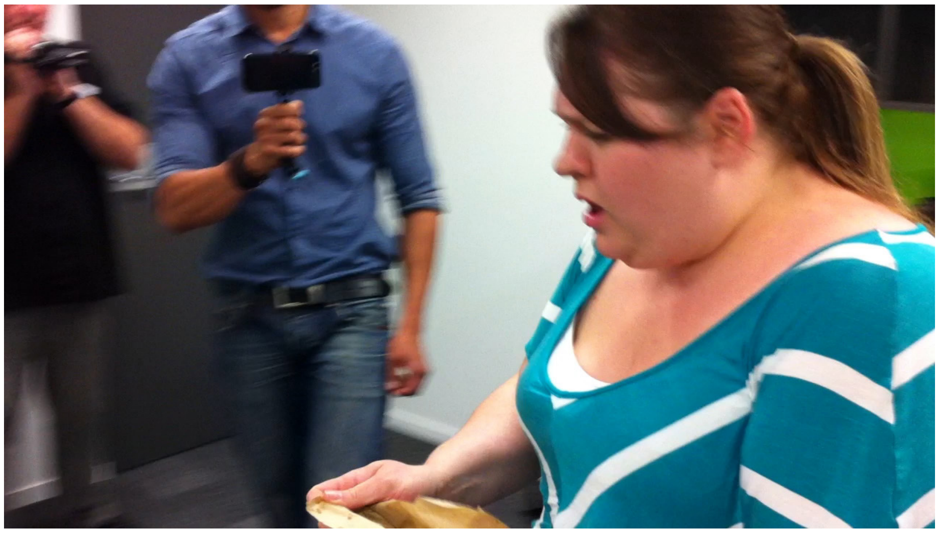

FIGURE 4.4.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2013). The Mikado – increasing performer agency, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Opera singer Fiona Randall being followed by videographers Abhishek Kala and Ross Brannigan.

and rendered performances that were incrementally less self-conscious and more impassioned. Arguably, this process may have been assisted by the fact that she was familiar with the smartphone technology that was used to replace traditional, professional recording equipment.

Secondly, in our post workshop discussion, Randall reported that she felt empowered and that her singing and performance had improved as a result. The aim of the experiment was not to create high quality video or an exceptional performance of an aria. It was to find whether expanded agency was beneficial for a performer (and how this might work). When Randall was afforded the power to lead technicians and assume responsibility for directorial decisions she became more relaxed and therefore able to less self-consciously focus on telling the story in her performance. She discussed being freed from the need to please the director. She reported benefits in confidence, relaxation and focus. Because of this she said she was able to transfer her attention to embodying the character and shaping the narrative as an integrated process.

The experiment suggested benefits that might accrue from expanded agency when performing a character in opera and I determined to carry this into further experiments to discover whether similar positive results might occur in my own acting practice.

Performance experiment 3: Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film

CONTEXT

The third experiment, *Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film* was developed at AUT University in Auckland during September, 2014. In this work, I took the first live intermedial-realist theatre performance of Hamlet's soliloquy *O, what a rogue* and adapted it into a short film (Figure 4.5).[90]

In this experiment, I sought to interrogate the position of media elements as privileged components of intermedial-realist theatre. Mediatised elements, as Auslander (2008) has argued, demand attention in theatre as components that contrast with live embodied performance. Given this contrast, I wanted to explore their potential when used inside another medium where the distinction was of a different nature.

The short film form was chosen as a medium in which the media elements from the live theatre piece could be incorporated and reconsidered. A negotiation of the place of these elements within the cinematography of the rest of the film would have to be considered in relation to the realist acting technique I employed in performing the role of Hamlet. In addition, I was interested to see how I might expand and exercise my agency by both performing and directing myself as the actor within this format. My collaborator in this experiment was James Nicholson (Director of Photography (DOP) and camera operator).[91] Shooting the film in Auckland University of Technology's Television Studio enabled the use of a crane, DSLR cameras[92] and sophisticated lighting and green screen facilities (Figure 4.6).[93]

In this experiment, I was also concerned with how, as an actor, I might extend my agency and conceptualise a production. For example, in the first live theatre experiment, a camera had been turned on the audience. The intention of this had been to create a dislocating effect for the audience but the technique has no direct equivalent in a linear short film. In considering this, I experimented with acting techniques suitable for producing three different points of view.

The first was "voiced-over" internal monologue that was designed to present a subjective, interior point of view. This entailed voice acting the lines so the recording could be timed to the physical acting of the character's thinking process. The audience could, in effect, hear the character thinking. Secondly, I experimented with third person point of view, where the character could be observed talking to an off-camera audience. Finally, I experimented with direct address to the audience by breaking the cinematic fourth wall (in other words acting directly to the camera as though it was an audient). These three filmic modes are illustrated in Figure 4.7, Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9.

In creating this remediation of a performed piece, as an actor and director, I experimented with ways in which I might negotiate both collaborative process and points of view.

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[90] Ross Brannigan Creative Experiment 3 is 5:35 minutes duration and accessible at https://vimeo.com/111482736

[91] Margaret Mataio contributed technical assistance as an audio recordist.

[92] A Digital Single Lens Reflex camera is a hybrid camera used for both still and moving image recording. It allows interchangeability of lenses and sophisticated, high resolution cinematography.

[93] Green screen refers to a process that allows portions of the video image to become transparent, thereby facilitating the layering and compositing of several images.

CRITICAL CONCERNS

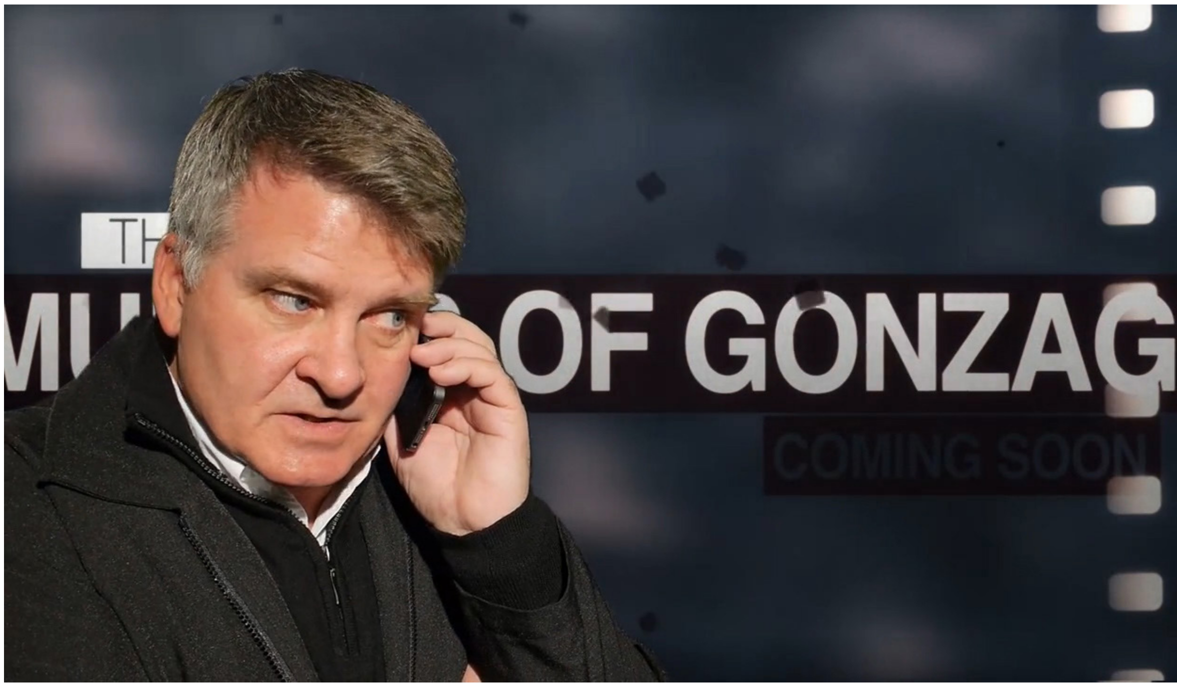
- As an actor, I asked myself how I might assume the agency to conceptualise a production and what effect that might have on the shape of the production and my ability to act within it.
- I was interested to discover how the expansion of my agency to both act and direct myself might impact on both roles.
- In this experiment, I also sought to interrogate the position of media elements as privileged components of intermedial-realist theatre by remediating the production in such a way that the interrelation of components had to be reconsidered.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

Within the context of the research project, I chose to conceive and develop the concept and to act. This allowed me to operate from two perspectives. Giving

FIGURE 4.5.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grab from Remediation of 'O, what a rogue': Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film, [0:58] Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.



myself agency to conceive the short film, and the integration of filmic and theatrical languages that might be used, was empowering. From my actor's standpoint I could contribute an understanding of the embodied progression of narrative and the emotions that performing in the intermedial-realist production had evoked in me. This was invaluable in designing a filmic language that operated from the actor as its source. It also meant that in developing the work, rehearsals (as is the norm in my practice) could generate performance solutions and this process might suggest solutions to filmic form.

From this perspective, I was continually reminded of what it felt like to be positioned within the story. The performer's tacit embodied knowledge of the narrative, gained in Experiment 1, augmented the external viewpoint I adopted as I considered the realisation of the short film. This enabled an auteur-like concept of short film production, locating most of the creativity in a single person. The caveats to this were the collaborative input of the cinematographer and the original Shakespearean script.

The film became very actor-centric. Most of the shots were of the character, rather

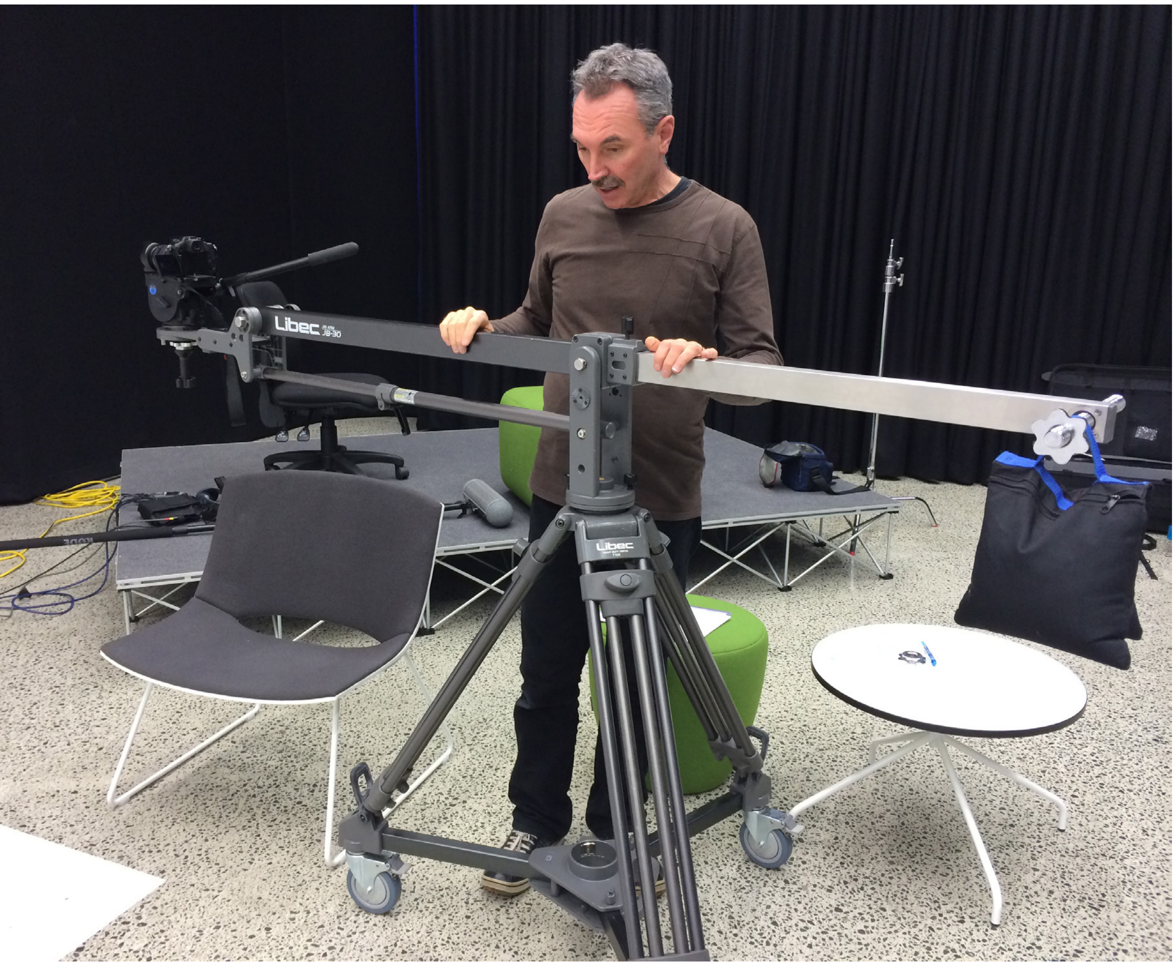


FIGURE 4.6.

Cinematographer James Nicholson mounting a DSLR camera to a gib arm (compact crane) in the AUT television studio. This facilitated experimentation with point of view camera angles and movement.

than of the environment or of symbolic objects or compositions designed to convey abstract concerns. Looking back on the result, it is impossible for me to view it entirely objectively. Likewise, as the actor in the moment of performance, I continued to question the aspect of how the concept was constructed around myself. This gave the performance a degree of self-consciousness that is not conducive to the tenets of psychological realism because the acting technique values immersion in the character and subjectivity rather than objectivity.

FIGURE 4.7.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grab from Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film, (1:36) Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. The actor thinks through the lines of the soliloquy as an internal monologue.

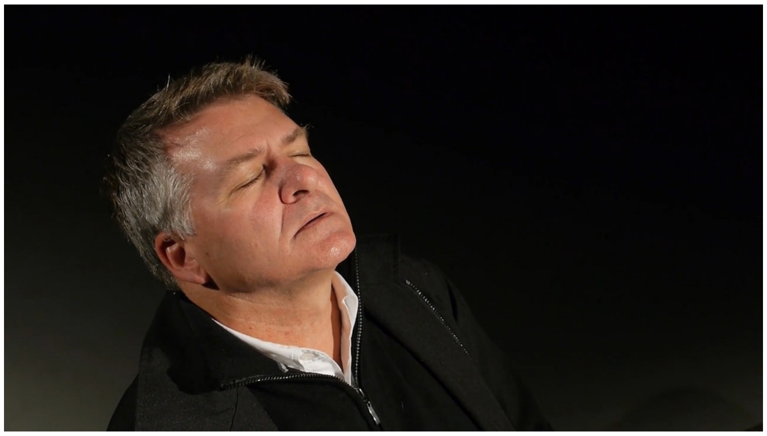


FIGURE 4.8.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grab from Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film, (2:23), Aotearoa New Zealand. The is the most common cinematic address, where the audience is positioned as an external observer, witnessing the action.

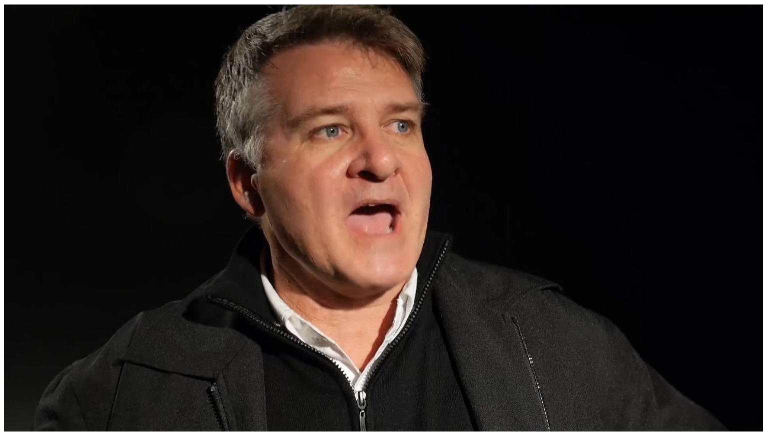


FIGURE 4.9.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grab from Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film, (3:13), Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Breaking the fourth wall, the actor talks directly to the film's audience.

Conflict and expanded agency

Working as both actor and director, I had initially imagined that I could manage a directorial perspective with an acting perspective by swiftly swapping between them and by relying on some directorial input from my cinematographer, with whom I had collaborated before. When working collaboratively with Nicholson, I was aware that he saw his role as limited in terms of directing an actor. Although I had said that I would welcome contributions of observations on my acting I had not envisaged that this would be problematic in that it involved a split focus for him between filming and directing. We experienced a similar schism between purposes. This is an issue that I realise will need to be taken forward in my study as I navigate ways of working with collaborators whom I will be asking to extend their agency into managing dual roles.

In this experiment I had assumed that I would be able to concentrate primarily on my acting and leave observation and directorial adjustment decisions to the time available inbetween takes (when I would be able to review the footage). However, I found that splitting my focus between the roles of acting and directing meant a diminution of both.

Designing spatial relationships

The process did allow me to explore spatial relationships on set and the flow of visual narrative from shot to shot in a more complex way than had been the norm in my acting practice. For example, as an actor I was used to being told by the director what size frame a shot would have. I would need to know this to determine the amount of freedom of movement allowed within the frame. However, when operating as director as well, I also needed to make decisions about the size of the frame with respect to the flow of the narrative. Issues such as the eyeline matching from shot to shot are usually technical considerations for the director and DOP and are only communicated to the actor as instructions in order to keep the acting focus as subjective as possible. Having the opportunity to explore these aspects of film-making as an actor/director caused me to consider how filmic codes could be utilised in intermedial-realist theatre.

The impossibility of standing inside and outside at the same time

An actor in the realist tradition of screen acting is usually expected to surrender as much objectivity to the director as possible and the director then functions as an "outside eye". I found it very difficult, as a director, to stand outside a take when I was also required to be acting within it. Therefore, any objective critique was really only able to occur in retrospect and could not help but be influenced by my embodied experience when performing. In this regard my experience was different to Randall's in that she had not been asked to consider the cinematography with respect to producing a complete filmic narrative.

Degradation of investment

In my acting practice, I normally maintain some level of awareness of the form and aesthetic of the film during my performance. However, the magnitude of the task of directing resulted in a degradation of investment in the reality of the character. This grew in direct proportion to the amount of directorial objectivity I engaged in. A director usually functions as an outside eye during rehearsal or production and therefore has an objective stance. It is beneficial for the director to also maintain a degree of empathetic engagement in the work and to be 'in the moment' of the performance. Total objectivity is neither desirable nor possible. However, this balance between the objective and the subjective is weighted strongly toward the objective end of a continuum. This contrasts with actors who, in the realist tradition, function most believably when they are positioned on the subjective end. While experiencing both roles provided useful data for the research, it was not conducive to either an enhanced aesthetic or refined dramatic outcomes. The concentration needed to observe the shoot from a directorial stance suffered from being concurrently in an actor's subjective headspace. This is another issue I sought to take forward in the research.

Privileging of attention

By repositioning theatrical media elements within a filmic framework, I sought to explore their interrelationship with the live actor's performance. What had been separate live and media elements in the source intermedial-realist performance were both rendered as video in the short film form. The issue of the interrelationship between these elements had to be reconsidered when they were transposed to the new form. The problem of privileging of attention identified by Auslander (2008), for example, was able to be dealt with by using depth of field to place media elements physically out of focus when attention needed to shift to the actor. This shift of focus is common in film and the transposition of filmic conventions to intermedial-realist theatre is a concept I decided to carry into future experiments.

Space and gaze in short film

The short film version differed considerably from my earlier live, intermedial-realist performance. Film enabled me to direct the viewer's attention more explicitly to details than theatre allows. Close-up shots, for example, were useful to create a sense of spatial intimacy. Shifting the point of attention was also facilitated through experimenting with the focus of the camera and using depth of field and the pull-focus technique (Figure 4.10).[94]

The use of green screen techniques to layer the video image enabled me to construct an artificial space. This was either seamlessly photo realistic as in Figure 4.10 or used to indicate a spatial relationship between elements indicative of a more conceptual nature. Lev Manovich (2001) theorised the various conceptual possibilities for compositing layers of moving images, labelling the two opposite possibilities as seamless and stylistic. I designed the experiment to explore

[94] A pull-focus refers to the technique of changing what is in focus to another detail within the shot. This allows the director to control and shift the viewer's attention.

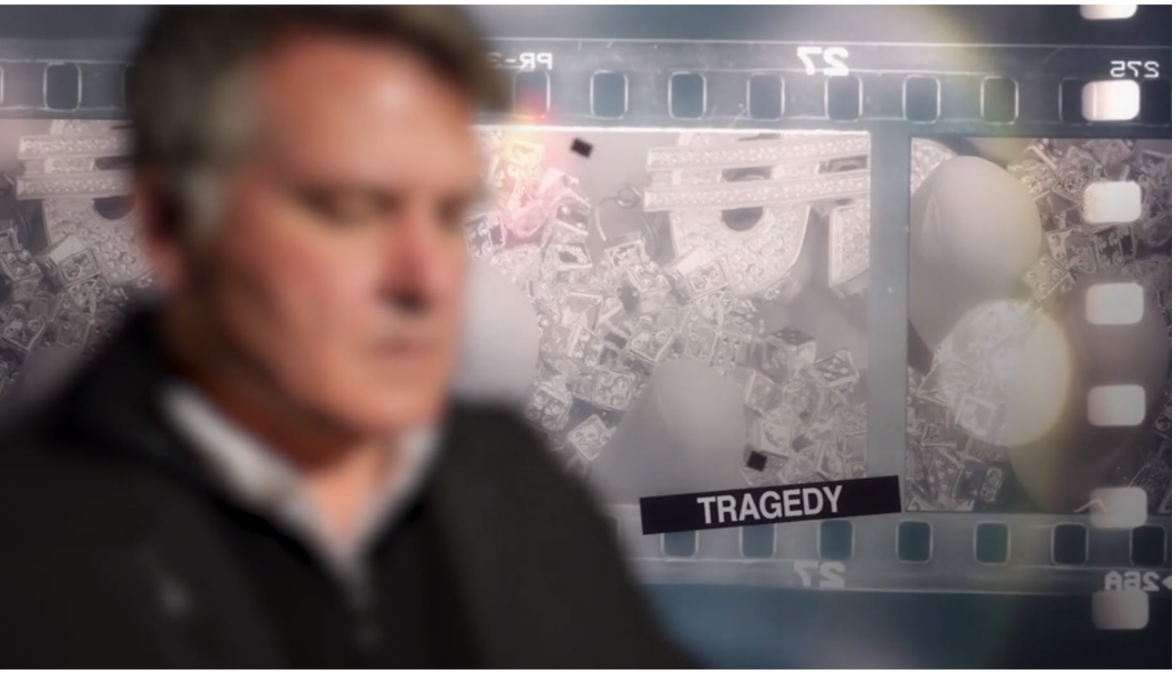


FIGURE 4.10.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grab from Remediation of "O, what a rogue": Fusing stage and screen in search of empathy as a short film, (0:26), Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. In this shot attention is directed to the background image by focusing it clearly while de-focusing the actor. This device was achieved by using a green screen to key out the background then substituting what had been one of the media elements from the live, intermedial-realist performance.

remediation of the original intermedial-realist theatre piece so, as in the original, I strove to render the intermedial elements as if they believably, and "seamlessly", belonged to the world of the character. Shilo McLean (2007) expanded on Manovich's categories and described the seamless as something where the marks of its construction were invisible to the casual viewer but could be discerned on close inspection. This latter description better describes the use I made of the layers of "live" and "mediatised" within the short film. This slight level of differentiation I discovered, suits the "both-and" nature of intermedial-realist theatre.

In addition, my experimentation showed that film can enable the repositioning of an audience's gaze. I explored this several times within the short film (as can be seen in Figure 4.11). Changing the camera's position (in relation to the actor) has the dual effect of elevating attention to the nuances of the narrative as well as drawing the viewer in closer to Hamlet's perspective. This closeness, I suggest, helps facilitate connection and therefore engagement with his character.

At the start of the film the camera tracks behind seated members of the audience as Hamlet walks in. This positions the viewer as the audience of a play. Then I adopted the third person objective viewpoint so that the viewer could watch Hamlet's actions and hear him speaking. Next, I altered the rules of the third person convention by using a voice-over of Hamlet's thoughts. The final variation was direct address to the audience by looking directly into the camera lens. This was intended to break through objectivity and engage the viewer as directly as possible.

Editing, flow and the status of the digital media elements

I found that the narrative could be driven by editing a flow of shots with a level of precision that a live actor could not achieve. I could use cuts between shots to punctuate shifts in Hamlet's thinking. The process allowed for revisions and selections of alternative takes that live theatre cannot. Counterbalancing these advantages there was loss of the immediacy, ephemerality, responsiveness and the "risk" of live performance.

The media elements lost their status as the privileged "other" within a live performance setting. They became more similar because the live actor was now completely mediatised as well. The film shooting process is compartmentalised with the scheduling of each shot being organised on the basis of efficiency. Therefore, the flow of the narrative and the interaction between one element and another becomes something that the actor plays only one part in. The normal action and reaction sequence is created in the editing process from the captured live performance and constructed media elements. Within the medium of the short film the relationship between the recorded actor and the other media elements could be conveyed as natural. However, in the live performance of Experiment 1, I had to work to create a connection with media elements and had to consider the style of my interaction. The consideration of the style of interaction essentially lay in the hands of the director in the film version. Although I was also in the director's role, I could perform my interactions with the media elements having made the prior directorial decision that they were no longer privileged and I would not have to compensate for this in my performance.

The narrative relationship between the live and the media elements and how I might perform it, was enhanced by thinking-in-practice. First, in the live performance and then through renegotiating that relationship within the short film context.

The issue of feedback

Feedback to the actor from the audience was not possible on set and since the film process substitutes the director as the "outside eye", and I was both actor and director, any feedback was necessarily not fully objective. Each role, as I experienced it, was influenced by the other. Both entailed engagement of the "self" and shifting levels of objectivity and subjectivity. In the experiment, I found it impossible to completely separate the two roles. The subjectivity of the actor "bled" into the objectivity needed by the director during moments of critical reflection. Likewise, the objectivity of the director's role "bled" into the subjectivity the actor needs during a take in a realist performance. Critical reflection, I discovered, was therefore not achievable as a wholly objective process.

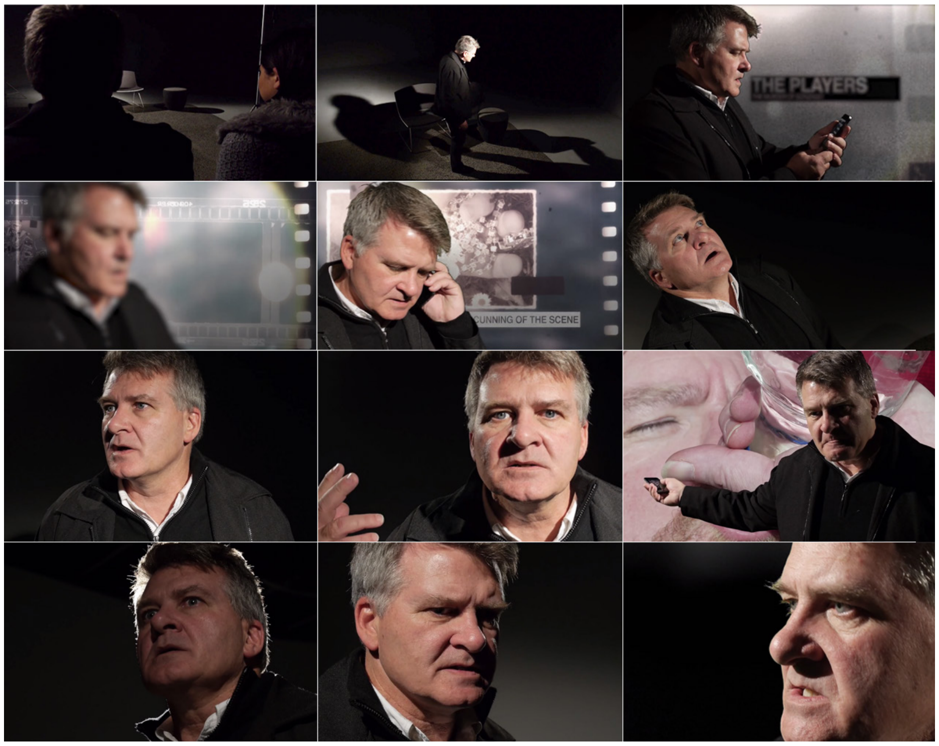


FIGURE 4.11.

Brannigan, R. (dir., 2014) Frame grabs from Remediation of "O, what a rogue". In this chronological compilation of images of the actor, the camera initially positioned the gaze of the viewer behind the studio audience. The perspective was then systematically renegotiated.

SUMMARY - THE INITIAL GESTATIONAL PHASE – EVOLVING THE RESEARCH FOCUS

Before moving on to the second phase of the inquiry, it is useful to summarise my findings from the three experiments in the gestational phase of the research.

In an introductory phase to the study I was able to evolve the research focus because the experiments were not designed as iterative refinements but rather as a way of exploring a “variation of perspectives” (Kleining & Witt, 2000, p. 3) that enabled me to evolve questions and reflections on and in my practice. These three experiments enabled me to scope the potentials in both intermedial-realism and actor agency.

The search for truth

During the feedback session after the performance of my first experiment, one audience member challenged the validity of the style and acting technique I used. Initially I was taken aback but this caused me to re-evaluate what I believe as an actor. The reflection enabled me to reaffirm that I believe acting is a search for truth. The position that I take at the end of these three experiments is that the search for truth within the self, within the world of the play and within the world itself are foundational to my practice and to this research. I decided to take this forward into the second phase of experiments.

Claiming attention

The first experiment uncovered an issue regarding the active claiming of attention within a live performance. Given an innate difference between the attention audiences pay to the live performers and the media elements, I found that the balance needed to be managed by acknowledging the differential, finding ways of reducing the ephemerality of the media elements and introducing a “cool down” period so that the audience could adjust to a shift in focal point. I determined to explore the management of the flow of the attention from the live to the media in the second phase of experiments so that the shift, including any hiatus, could be productive.

The first experiment, a type of intermedial-realist theatre production, suggested that there was potential for integrating both live and media elements so that they fitted seamlessly in the conceptual world of the play. If this is handled well, both technically and in terms of performance, an audience might accept the relationship. I believe that this acceptance is necessary for an audience to willingly suspend their disbelief and that the conditional belief that follows is an enabler of empathetic response. In the second phase of experiments I am asking what the potential is for extending the concept of integrating media elements beyond the character’s conscious reality.

I brought my experience as both an actor and as a video editor and film-maker to the first experiment. I found that there was potential in both perspectives because storytelling techniques are different for stage and screen. I had to be aware of the differences and alert to the potentials. It became apparent that familiarity with both media and theatrical narratives was fundamental to making intermedial-realist theatre. As a result of this finding, I determined to use these dual perspectives in the second phase of the study to ask how the different emphases could be used to create a unified narrative flow in an intermedial-realist production.

Trust

In theatre, it is fundamental for a cast to work within an atmosphere of trust and I found that in Experiment 1 I needed to be able to trust the technology in order to avoid performing in a state of anxiety. I determined to take the need for reliable and robust technology into the second phase of experiments.

Agency and confidence

In the second experiment, I saw an example of how a performer exercised agency and I noted that this led to better outcomes for her process and performance. A feeling of confidence affords the actor with the ability to relax and focus attention on their performance. I was aware that I needed to be very attentive to establishing a work environment where extended agency was supported and understood by all participants. I found the parameters of collaboration were best discussed with clarity and openness. As I move into the second phase of the study I will be reflecting on whether the extension of agency I plan to put in place for my own performing will have similar results.

In the third and final experiment in this phase of the study, I discovered that there can be dangers with increased agency when allowing the performer to extend their practice into other roles within the production. For example, taking on the simultaneous roles of performer and director proved problematic. The main reason for this was that maintaining a position that was equally subjective and objective at the same time proved impossible. In my acting practice, I am aware that I work on a shifting continuum between complete subjectivity and complete objectivity. The position varies continuously but is usually only highly objective at times outside of performance. Therefore, during the shooting of video when I am both actor and director, the need for directorial objectivity is incompatible with performing well in a subjective headspace. Being completely focused on the character is also counter-productive to the conceptual stage of production and led to an actor-centric result. I determined to explore possible solutions in the second phase of the inquiry, such as taking only one role at a time or using a stand-in actor during rehearsal and blocking so that I might stand outside of the mise-en-scene[95] to objectively consider it.

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[95] Mis-en-scene is a term borrowed from theatre by film makers. It refers to everything that the director places in front of the camera, including the actor's performance.

Attention and emphasis

In Experiment 3 I also found that various types of media and live performance have a variety of ways of communicating and they demand attention in different ways. In designing media and shaping a performance I need to be aware of the potential power of each over other elements. There are many tensions between the elements and I am not yet sure how to manage the relationship.

I have found that a useful position to take is to consider the media elements as another actor. This can create a frame of reference that allows me to cooperate with, pursue objectives against, and react to, the media elements with a degree of realism. However, there is an inherent difficulty for an actor working with a technologically generated co-character because the responses are all predetermined. So, in preparing to move into the second phase of the study, I am asking myself what potential adjustments to my technique of acting in the psychologically realist style might be useful in intermedial-realist theatre with respect to acting with technologically generated co-characters.

Having outlined experimental work that functioned as scoping and gestational exercises, it is now useful to consider the more focused developmental phase of the thesis project.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE – EVOLVING THE THESIS PRODUCTION

The developmental phase of the research involved four experiments.

- Performance experiment 4: Development of the first iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* and presentation at ADSA conference in Toowoomba, Australia, June 22, 2016
- Performance experiment 5: Second major iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* and presentation at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand
- Performance experiment 6: Third major iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* and presentation at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, January 31, 2018
- Performance experiment 7: Fourth major iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* and presentation for examination at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, July 16, 2018.

This phase of the inquiry involved the creation and refinement of the thesis' central creative production, an intermedial-realist play named *Foolish Prating Knave*. Experiments involved the evolution of a script and the design for the performance of the production. The chronological development of the research is illustrated in Figure 4.12.

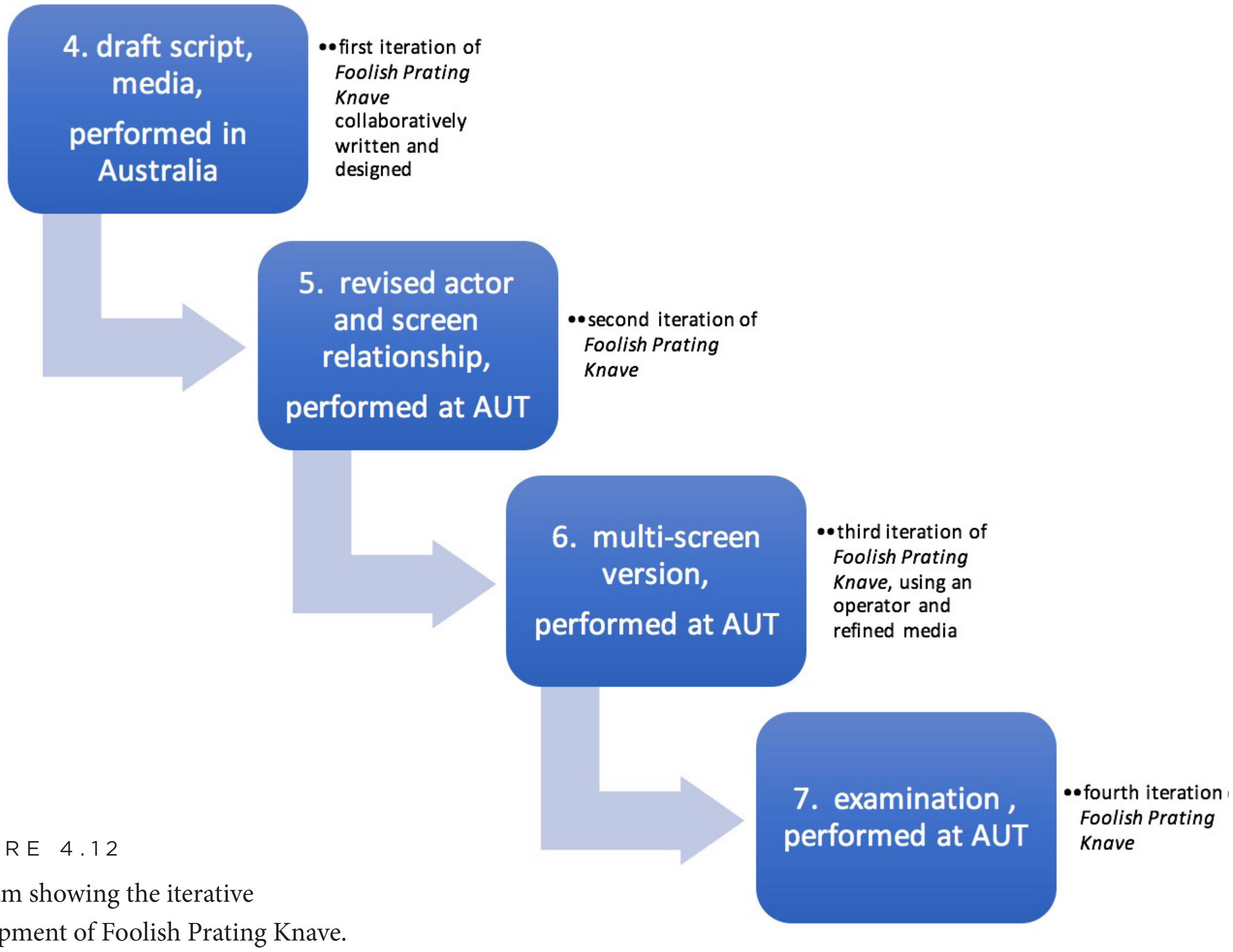
4. draft script, media,
performed in Australia
••first iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* collaboratively written and designed
5. revised actor and screen relationship,
performed at AUT
••second iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave*
6. multi-screen version,
performed at AUT
••third iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave*, using an operator and refined media
7. examination, performed at AUT
••fourth iteration
Foolish Prating Knave

FIGURE 4.12

Diagram showing the iterative development of Foolish Prating Knave.

Performance experiment 4: Development of the first iteration of Foolish Prating Knave and presentation at ADSA conference in Toowoomba, Australia

CONTEXT

Experiment 4 drew on questioning and insights from the first phase of the inquiry. It involved the design and development of a performance that was presented for feedback at an international conference [96] (Figure 4.13).

My first concern in this experiment was how I might, as an actor, explore the potentials of expanding my agency through collaboration with other theatre-makers. By taking on writing and directorial roles I sought to discover if the expanded agency might inform my acting process. Collaborators included a writer, a cinematographer and other actors.

My second consideration was with how I might, through the lens of an actor, design and produce intermedial elements within the context of a scripted play. These elements included considerations of character, narrative and a psychologically realistic style.

As an extension of this, my third concern was with navigating the relationship between the live character and the technologically created elements, and how this might be realised on stage.

The experiment involved multiple levels of consideration that, while undertaken discretely, all fed into the eventual production. These elements involved acting, making and collaborative engagement (Figure 4.14).

Developing a narrative – collaborative writing and making

The first, foundational collaboration for this experiment[97] took place in various locations in Auckland in and around the Live Performance Lab at AUT University. Initially I met with the playwright Gary Henderson.[98] We collaborated on the scripting of what became *Foolish Prating Knave* using discussion, story sheets, visual research, co-writing and editing, workshopping and experimenting with rapid prototyping of avatars (using a smartphone application). While the writing was developing, I collaborated with other actors to create intermedial elements for the work. The script evolved to consider characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; Polonius, Gertrude and Ophelia. I worked as director, first with actor Sarah Graham and then with actors Holly Hudson and Kerynn Walsh.

My intention was to create discrete segments where Ophelia would be pre-recorded

[96] ADSA (The Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies) Conference: Resilience: Revive, Restore, Reconnect, held at The University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia, June 21-24, 2016.

[97] This began in March, 2015.

[98] Henderson teaches playwriting at various tertiary and professional venues around Aotearoa New Zealand and is experienced in intermedial theatre and in workshopping scripts.

for projection during the play.[99] These were shot underwater in a local school swimming pool in September, 2015.[100]

Actor Stephen Ure participated in an improvisational workshop, playing Polonius while I took the roles of researcher and director. Actor Walsh had wider availability and agreed to collaborate on exercises, offer some input into directorial perspective and devising as well as performing Gertrude. The Live Performance Lab at AUT, in effect a black box theatre space, proved invaluable for workshop and rehearsal. It was used to shoot the Gertrude material.

The making of intermedial elements for *Foolish Prating Knave* was a very productive method incorporating material thinking and practical collaboration with cinematographer James Nicholson. This included the underwater shoot and workshops to explore lighting and scale.

With draft script and intermedial assets for the play in hand I prepared the cueing in the software application QLAB.[101] Setting up a projector and screen in AUT's Live Performance Lab allowed me to perform and operate *Foolish Prating Knave* simultaneously as I developed it.

Performance

The draft was then exposed to a conference audience at ADSA in Australia in June, 2016. Immediately after the performance, which was documented by the Audio Visual department of the University of Southern Queensland, there was a question and answer session with approximately 50 audience members. As discussed earlier, I subsequently interviewed two expert theatre practitioner/academics, with

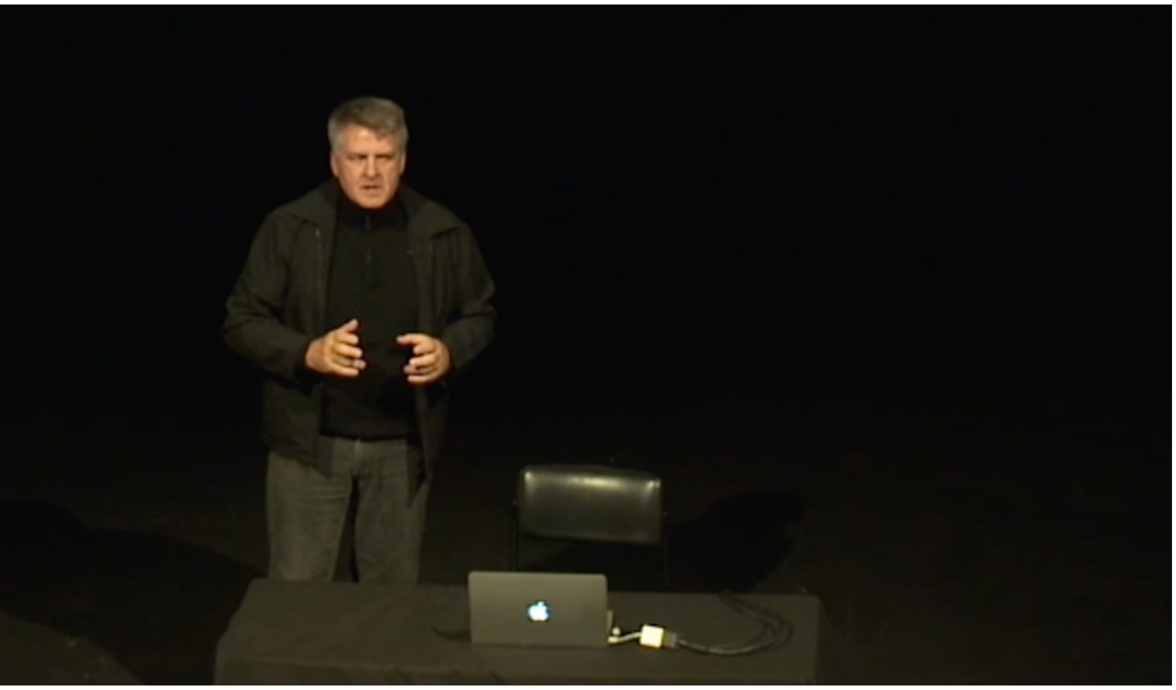

FIGURE 4.13.

Ross Brannigan performing in Foolish Prating Knave at Artsworx Theatre, Toowoomba, Australia, 2016.

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[99] I am using the term "play" to mean two things: a story, written and/or devised for the purpose of performance and the production of that story for an audience.

[100] After Graham became unavailable, I rehearsed Hudson into the role and we shot at New Windsor School Swimming Pool, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, September 2, 2015, with cinematographer James Nicholson and assistance from documentary maker Jim Marbrook.

[101] QLAB produced by Figure53 (https://figure53.com/qlab/) is a software application that allows video screens, projectors, lights, cameras, microphones and speakers to be connected to, and operated from, a computer. This enabled an entire show to be run from a laptop operated by the actor on stage.

experience in Performance as Research, about their responses to my presentation and their impressions of acting in intermedial theatre.

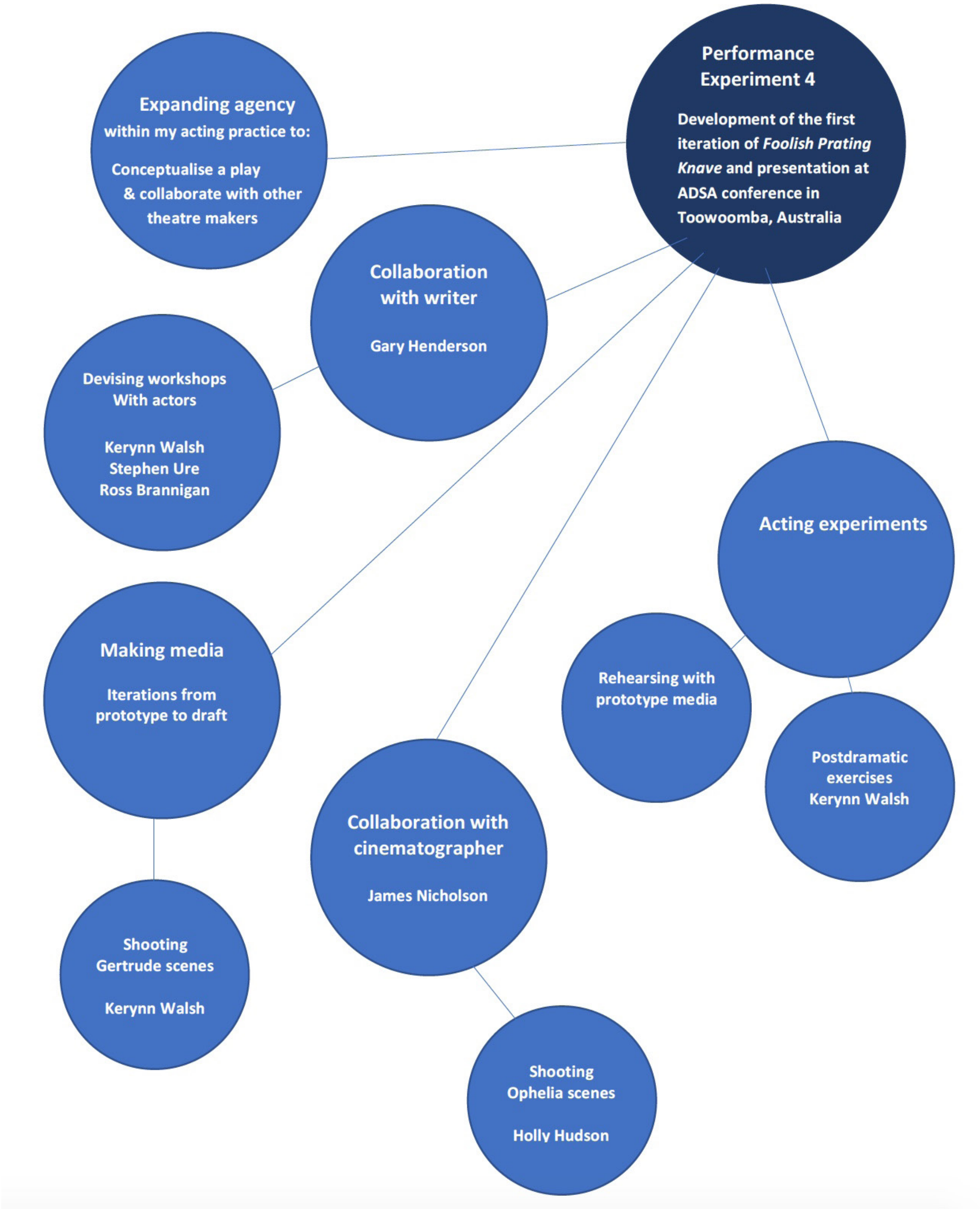
Performance Experiment 4
Development of the first iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* and presentation at ADSA conference in Toowoomba, Australia
Expanding agency within my acting practice to:
Conceptualise a play & collaborate with other theatre makers
Collaboration with writer
Gary Henderson
Devising workshops With actors
Kerynn Walsh
Stephen Ure
Ross Brannigan
Acting experiments
Making media
Iterations from prototype to draft
Rehearsing with prototype media
Postdramatic exercises
Kerynn Walsh
Collaboration with cinematographer
James Nicholson
Shooting Gertrude scenes
Kerynn Walsh
Shooting Ophelia scenes
Holly Hudson

FIGURE 4.14.

The constituent elements of Experiment 4.

CRITICAL CONCERNS

In this iteration of the research I asked myself three questions:

- What might the potentials of expanding my agency as an actor through collaboration with other theatre-makers be?
- How, as an actor, might I design and produce media elements within the context of a scripted play that included emphasis on character, narrative and a psychologically realistic style? (I was particularly interested in what the actor's perspective might contribute to the media produced).
- How might the relationship between the live and the media elements be realised on stage and what issues might this surface?

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

The potential of expanded agency and collaboration

The approach I took in this experiment was to give myself permission, wherever possible, to extend into roles that would not normally be taken by an actor. This involved collaboration with other specialist theatre and media-makers. I was interested in the potential benefits of including an actor's perspective in the creative practice of creating and producing a play. A further focus was whether there would be positive effects on my acting process. The key theatre-making roles with which I engaged were writing, directing, operating, media design and making, and set design.

Collaboration with the writer

My initial contact with Henderson quickly moved from the possibility of using one of his existing plays to developing a piece from scratch that might productively interface with an inquiry into intermedial-realist theatre. In the collaboration, I wanted to explore the potential for expanding an actor's agency when they work with a writer. The initial story evolved in the service of this aim. Since my primary interest was with a type of theatre that involves realist acting technique in conjunction with intermedial elements and the liminal space where the live and media elements interact together playfully, we worked on developing a narrative that facilitated all these elements. The play *Hamlet* includes a liminal world and was a logical inspiration due to its metatheatricality and musings on the nature of acting. Furthermore, I have an abiding interest in Shakespeare after training under Hawthorne, whose experience at RADA and dedication to the classics was incorporated into the drama school and theatres he led.[102]

I had already used *Hamlet* as the basis of Experiments 1 and 3. The heightened nature of Shakespearean language, both verse and prose, was valuable to include as

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[102] Theatre Corporate Drama School and Theatre and Mercury Theatre.

we wrote the play together. It contrasted with the more naturalistic speech of most of the play. By contrasting these styles I hoped to find a parallel with the contrast inherent in having both live and pre-recorded characters. Any solutions found to the problem of how to juxtapose naturalistic and heightened language might illuminate the relationship between live and pre-recorded characters. This then might lead to insights into how to balance realistic speech, heightened speech and mediatised characters.

In Shakespeare's work the relatively minor character Polonius is the butt of jokes, but we decided to reimagine him as a focus for the audience's attention and potential empathy. Hamlet's deceased father, in Shakespeare's play, visits the corporeal world from purgatory and attempts to effect change where he no longer belongs. This involves reaching across boundaries and disrupting what Shakespeare considered the natural world. Interestingly, Tom MacFaul describes Prospero's mysterious island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as "a strangely liminal space" (2015, p. 179). Arguably the action in the scenes where the Ghost interacts with Hamlet is an early precursor of the liminal space of intermedial-realist theatre. The interchange between the characters disrupts the usual separation between purgatory (itself a liminal existence between heaven and earth) and the natural world. It transgresses both the unnatural and natural, taking place in a doubly liminal space between them.

After a collaborative writing process (outlined in Chapter 2: Research Design) that lasted nine months and the subsequent performance of the draft script in Australia, we felt that the writing was sufficiently workable as a short dramatic play. During the writing, things that felt appropriate to my sensibility as an actor were often attuned to the emotional content of the narrative. Conversely Henderson favoured surprising twists in the story. It was by testing these on the floor that we found the most appropriate elements that served the play. The testing usually involved rehearsing sections of the script in the Live Performance Lab at AUT in which I experienced the narrative from within as Henderson observed what was happening from an outside perspective. However, we felt that a directorial eye would be beneficial, allowing Henderson to concentrate solely on the narrative. In two workshops, I invited two actors to contribute to the devising process. Walsh, who also performed the role of Gertrude, was able to variously improvise, act and fulfil a directorial function, commenting on my performance objectively. Through discussions of our ideas for the play and early rehearsals for the role of Gertrude, she was very familiar with the concept. She was a skilled improviser and explored the opening minutes of the narrative while Henderson and I watched, added suggestions and collaboratively decided on the content. Henderson then went away with the ideas and improvised dialogue and returned to the next workshop session with a draft script for this section that we rehearsed and improved through improvisation.

Collaborative devising with actors – using a stand-in

The second actor, Ure, was very unfamiliar with the concept of the play and of the role expected of him. I had neglected to brief him appropriately and not explained fully what I meant by performing as a stand-in. In a possession reflection, Henderson commented that the role of Polonius, as we had conceived it, was too idiosyncratic for Ure to be able to perform as a stand-in (while I observed).

The problem I faced was the difficulty of extending my agency to conceptualising and co-writing the script while concurrently improvising it on the floor. In order to address this, I had attempted to apply Lepage's decalage technique. James Bunzli (1999), describes Lepage's decalage process as having "its focus on improvisation and indeterminacy" (p. 89). Lepage uses a stand-in when he is both directing and performing in a production. During devising, he generates discoveries as a performer and then steps out of the acting space and instructs the stand-in to repeat his performance so that he might adopt a directorial perspective. However, I had attempted to apply this technique without sufficient preparation. I asked Ure to be a stand-in for me and play the role of Polonius in a workshop. On film and television sets I have frequently experienced the use of stand-ins when blocking and setting lighting and camera movements. Stand-ins are sometimes used in technical rehearsals in theatre, especially in the protractedly technical phase of focusing the lights. However, traditionally these are nonmatrixed acting tasks.[103] Ure tackled the task enthusiastically but the results of the workshop proved unsatisfactory because the script did not evolve as a result of our exploration. There were a number of reasons for this that surfaced in our post workshop reflection. First, it became apparent that my communication with Ure had confused the nonmatrixed tasks with the expectation of an actor having freedom to explore and devise. Second, Ure explained that he found it difficult to improvise without the basis of a draft script as he did not have enough information to work from. I realised that the multiple inspirations necessary to expand the script were in my head as well as in the writer's and it was unreasonable of me to expect an actor to be able to contribute without this foundation. Furthermore, I was unsure myself of the boundary between asking him to simply repeat my own improvised moves and words and adding his own. In effect, I had curbed his agency. On reflection, I expect that explicit negotiation of tasks would be necessary to facilitate useful collaboration.

Digital purgatory

The broad concept behind the work that we created was an exploration of a character caught in a digital purgatory. In parallel with thinking about Shakespeare's world I had been reading about Kattenbelt's theories of interplay in intermedial theatre (2010). His argument that meaning resides neither in one medium nor the other resonated with me. Kattenbelt observed that meaning existed independently in both mediums (the live and the digital) at once, as well as in the correlation between them. This related directly to my understanding of the concept of purgatory. In *Hamlet,* Shakespeare's version of purgatory is a dangerous space where the afterlife intersects with the natural world. Shakespeare presents it as indeterminate, in line with the confused thinking of his day where folk tales and Roman Catholic ideas clashed with Protestant concepts. Catherine Belsey (2010), in her discussion of popular ghost stories in Shakespeare's time states that "The history of purgatory indicates that, whatever the orthodox position, the old stories just would not go away" (p. 10). The Catholic idea was of a temporary location where the recently deceased experience torture to purge their sins before they can progress to heaven. Protestants believed that no such place existed and that ghosts and purgatory were merely the machinations of the devil.

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[103] Meaning mechanical tasks that do not require psychological engagement with the character.

We decided to write the play as a modern indeterminate version of a such a liminal space; a kind of dangerous digital purgatory. An unnamed, recently deceased character, based on Polonius, found himself in this space. He would try to make sense of a world where his memories and thought processes were imperfect. Polonius would be played live and interact with an artificial intelligence (AI) whose motivation was to remain a mystery. The AI character would be shown only in pre-recorded audio visual projections. We also eventually decided that the characters of Gertrude (Polonius' queen and Hamlet's mother) and Ophelia (Polonius' daughter and Hamlet's lover) would be pre-recorded. They would be shown by the AI to Polonius, but he would be unable to communicate with them. With the AI, Polonius could have a two-way dialogue but with Ophelia and Gertrude he could only observe. In this way, the plot was designed to provide a platform for experiencing two distinct relationships between the live and the projected elements during performance.

Collaborative directing of other actors

A further expansion of my agency formed part of the experiments in so far as I engaged in material thinking in the making of intermedial elements and directed other actors, in order to explore the process of directing with an actor's sensibility. During these experiments, with actors Graham, Hudson, Ure and Walsh, I experimented with a variety of directorial approaches that were always inflected with the aim of collaboration and conducted with my own acting sensibility. I encouraged each actor to contribute ideas to the development of the play. As the structure of the production evolved, I decided to include performances of two characters as pre-recorded video projections and to play the character of Polonius myself as the only live, embodied presence. Hudson would act as Ophelia and Walsh would play Gertrude.

Directing and underwater acting

Experiment 2 had indicated the potentials of expanding agency so, when working with Hudson, I designed the Ophelia shoot as a workshop in co-creative process. My agency had been expanded to take on a directorial role and Hudson's was expanded to include her in co-creative discussion of the cinematography. While Henderson and I were devising the script, we conceived Ophelia as a character trapped underwater and desperately trying to communicate with Gertrude. I was interested to explore the potential of directing an actor where her training in psychological realism would be put under stress. I asked myself how I would want to be directed in order to co-create a character within a difficult environment and where there was no other actor to respond to. I therefore explicitly invited her to join in discussion of both the directorial concept and cinematography. Because we were shooting Ophelia looking directly into the camera, Hudson could not

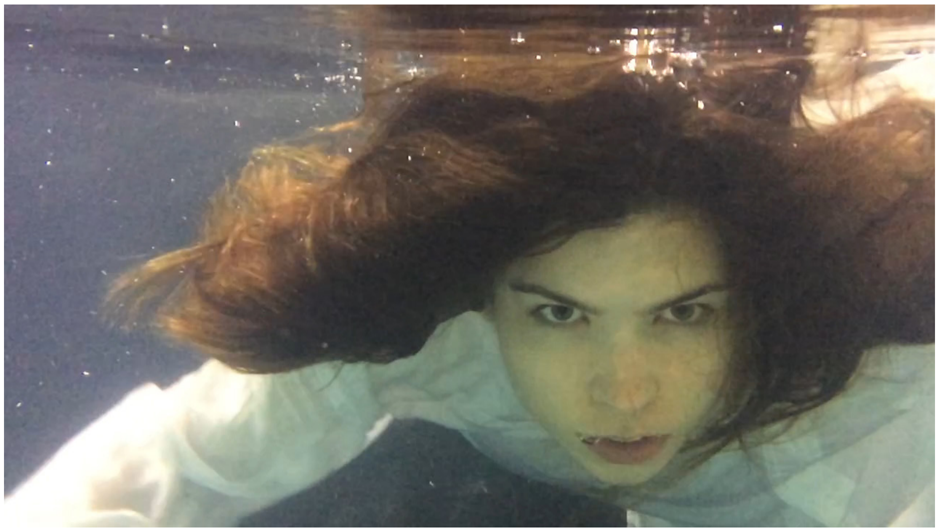


FIGURE 4.15.

Frame grab of Holly Hudson as Ophelia in Foolish Prating Knave. Here Hudson is interacting with the lens of cinematographer Nicholson's iPhone 5s (housed in a waterproof casing). She is imagining that she is looking into Gertrude's eyes.

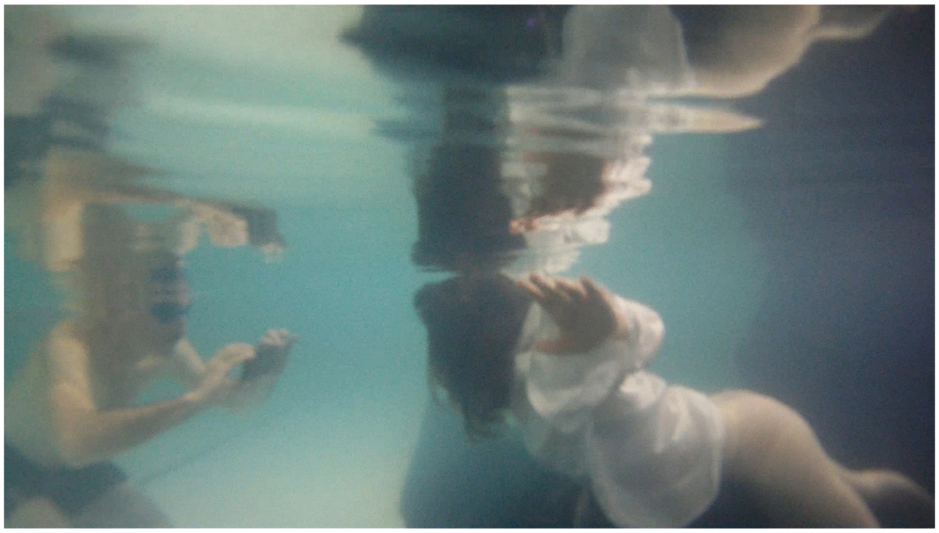


FIGURE 4.16.

Frame grab of Holly Hudson as Ophelia and cinematographer James Nicholson.

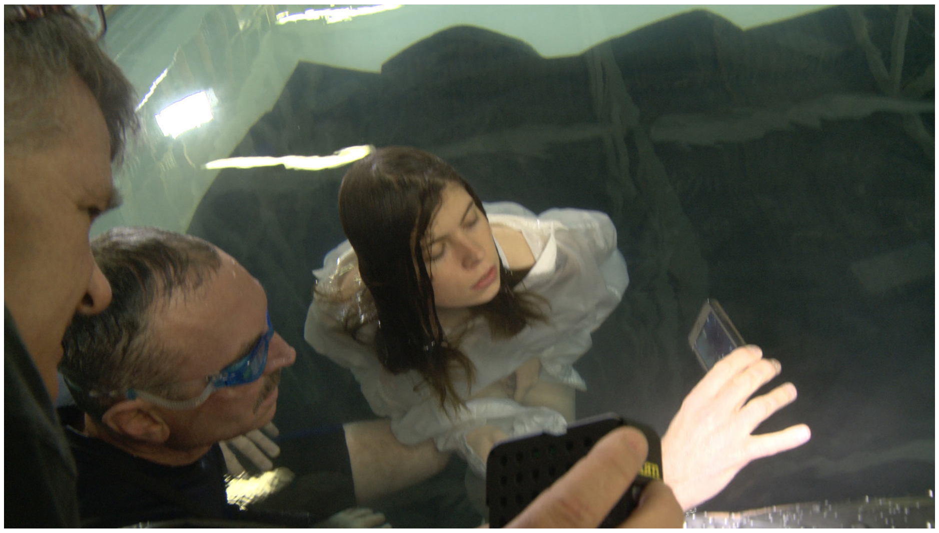


FIGURE 4.17.

Actor (Hudson), director (Brannigan) and cinematographer (Nicholson) reviewing footage during the shoot.

perform an action on another co-present character in pursuit of a goal and nor was there anything from another character to respond to.

I visualised an intermedial presence for the character of Ophelia that required slow-motion underwater filming as she tried to communicate with Gertrude. Being immersed in water was appropriate because Ophelia drowns in Shakespeare's play but the approach was also metaphorically rich as a reference to the inability to communicate through barriers of death and memory. (It is difficult to transmit sound in water; movement is slowed and images become refracted as the camera and subject move). In a digital purgatory, fluidity, set against the verbally impenetrable nature of water I believed might produce a performance that combined beauty and pathos (Figure 4.15).

The intervening complication of underwater filming made visualisation of the results difficult, so replay of footage on mobile devices (we used a GoPro camera and a Panasonic waterproof camera as well as the iPhone) was adopted. This rapid review process helped actor, director and cinematographer collaborate on improvements to the shots and to the performances (Figure 4.17). Within the flow of the experiment we were able to review, reflect, discuss, then co-create iterative responses. The speed of this allowed us to maximise the limited time available in the pool because, even though it was tepid, both actor and cinematographer began to feel uncomfortable after two hours. The collaboration was built around a three-way co-creation of the shots, which is an expansion of agency for the cinematographer and the actor. This observation is based on my experience of television and film shoots in Aotearoa New Zealand, where it is normal practice for the director to communicate with the cinematographer and then individually with the actor. The cinematographer and the actor do not usually discuss substantive creative issues with each other on a set.

On reflection, we agreed that the process had benefited from the cross-fertilisation of ideas and perspectives. I believe that perhaps my experience as actor-director was an enabler of this collaboration. From Experiment 3 I had learned that an actor's perspective was valuable to the co-creation. Hudson responded to the invitation to contribute positively, bringing her actor's understanding of the goals of her character and her training in ensemble co-creation.

Hudson reported that she did not find it particularly difficult to play Ophelia without being able to react to a co-present actor playing Gertrude. She was used to the technique of performing for a camera rather than a live human being. We approached each segment of the script as a line of unvoiced dialogue directed at Gertrude whose physical place was taken by the camera lens. I kept the lines short so that she could accomplish them within a single breath. This allowed her to pursue an objective within an imaginary space. I outlined the concept of the final play to her but also explained that it was not necessary for her to engage fully with it in order to fulfil her role in each scene she was in. All she felt that she needed to know was who she was trying to communicate with and what she was trying to achieve through the communication. We had rehearsed the character within a directorial concept of Gertrude leading Ophelia to her death. This was followed by her trying to convince Gertrude to help her. Ophelia had no self-awareness that she was dead or that Gertrude was complicit in her drowning. We approached the shoot as though it were filmic.

In my experience, actors on television or cinema shoots are primarily concerned with the scenes they are actually in, may not even be given the script for the entire production and are not usually present during the shooting of other scenes. The difficult task for Hudson was buoyancy, because I wanted her to appear as though she was inhabiting an underwater existence rather than submerging herself for a short time. The length of time she appeared to be submerged in the edited projections was designed to make the audience (and Polonius) hold its breath, triggered by mirror neuronal responses.

Operating as an actor/director

In directing Walsh, the expansion of my role enabled me to experience several things. The first of these was an alternate perspective on the experiment as well as on the play we were creating. When Walsh asked me for a reason for something I realised that justifications based on the research agenda were not necessarily relevant to her approach to the character. The only thing that mattered to her, as an actor, was the directorial concept for the play. Her focus, in turn, led to me understanding the roles I was embodying as director, researcher and script co-writer. For example, when observing the way that she dealt with the concept of screen deployment of the character of Ophelia, as researcher I was interested in how the actor processed "both" performing for the camera "and" performing with an imagined co-character who was not corporeally present. Figure 4.18 shows Walsh imagining how she, as the actor, would perceive visitations from the intermedial character of Ophelia.

As the director, I was concerned with the physical location of this other presence for the actor and for the audience. We decided to have Ophelia appear to Gertrude in her mirror. As the co-writer of the script I was actively selecting and experimenting with lines from Shakespeare's original play that would suit my purpose. It was during rehearsal exploration of Shakespearean lines that we decided that Gertrude should construct her account of Ophelia's drowning as a way of processing the fact that she had just murdered her.

Using prototype media for rehearsal

In the early stages of rehearsal, I screened examples of a young woman underwater in order for Walsh to have an intermedial experience approximate to the final production. She said she, as Gertrude, felt the presence of a drowning Ophelia very strongly and it helped shape the way she performed for the camera. It also helped her understand what the experience would be like for the audience to see both her and Ophelia simultaneously.

The use of these screened intermedial "prototypes" helped in writing, rehearsing and researching. I found adopting three roles (researcher, director and media designer) variously and simultaneously during the process, always with an actor's sensibility, beneficial. Involving the actor before the intermedial elements were finalised produced insight into potentials for draft design concepts. I had expanded my role to be director of the scene and Walsh was deliberately involved in discussions of intermedial elements. This confirmed for me that expansion of agency can produce deeper understandings of the intermedial-realist nature of the play and lead to enhanced results.

Performing as actor/operator

The operation of the show was completely controlled from a laptop positioned on stage throughout the performance. I took on the role of operator as well as actor in a further extension of agency. This expansion of the actor's role into a further aspect of production yielded insight into the holistic creative process. Thus, in dialogue with the AI, I was able to time his responses to me. I could slow the pace down or overlap our argument in reaction to audience responses or as I felt inspired to do in the moment of performance. QLab software and a laptop connected to a projector provided the apparatus for operating the show. The interface (Figure 4.20) was complex and required a certain degree of concentration.

During rehearsal, without a projector connected, it was possible to view all media in a window on the laptop. This meant that while seated in a position to operate the cues, I assumed that I would concurrently be able to face the audience and know what they were seeing. However, in the performance, once a projector was connected and the screen was positioned behind me, the laptop preview of projections disappeared and I could no longer see any of the media unless I turned my back on the audience and faced the screen. This created a physical barrier and a temporal delay.

Acting for two

I was acting for two; Polonius and the AI character, in a form not dissimilar to a ventriloquist and a dummy or a puppeteer and a puppet. Kenneth Gross (2014) proposed that puppets are "actors that are moved by others" (p.xxiii). However, my performance in *Foolish Prating Knave* did not self-reflexively comment on this relationship between actor and "digital puppet", nor was the audience meant to be aware that I was cueing the show. The script for the play reversed the puppet-puppeteer relationship between the characters so that the audience might see the digital character of the AI manipulating or "moving" me as the ostensibly live and embodied character. So, in a thematic sense Polonius was a puppet moved by a digital puppeteer.

Operating as an actor/cinematographer

The Gertrude scenes were shot without the benefit of collaboration with cinematographer Nicholson. I assumed that role for this task as a further expansion

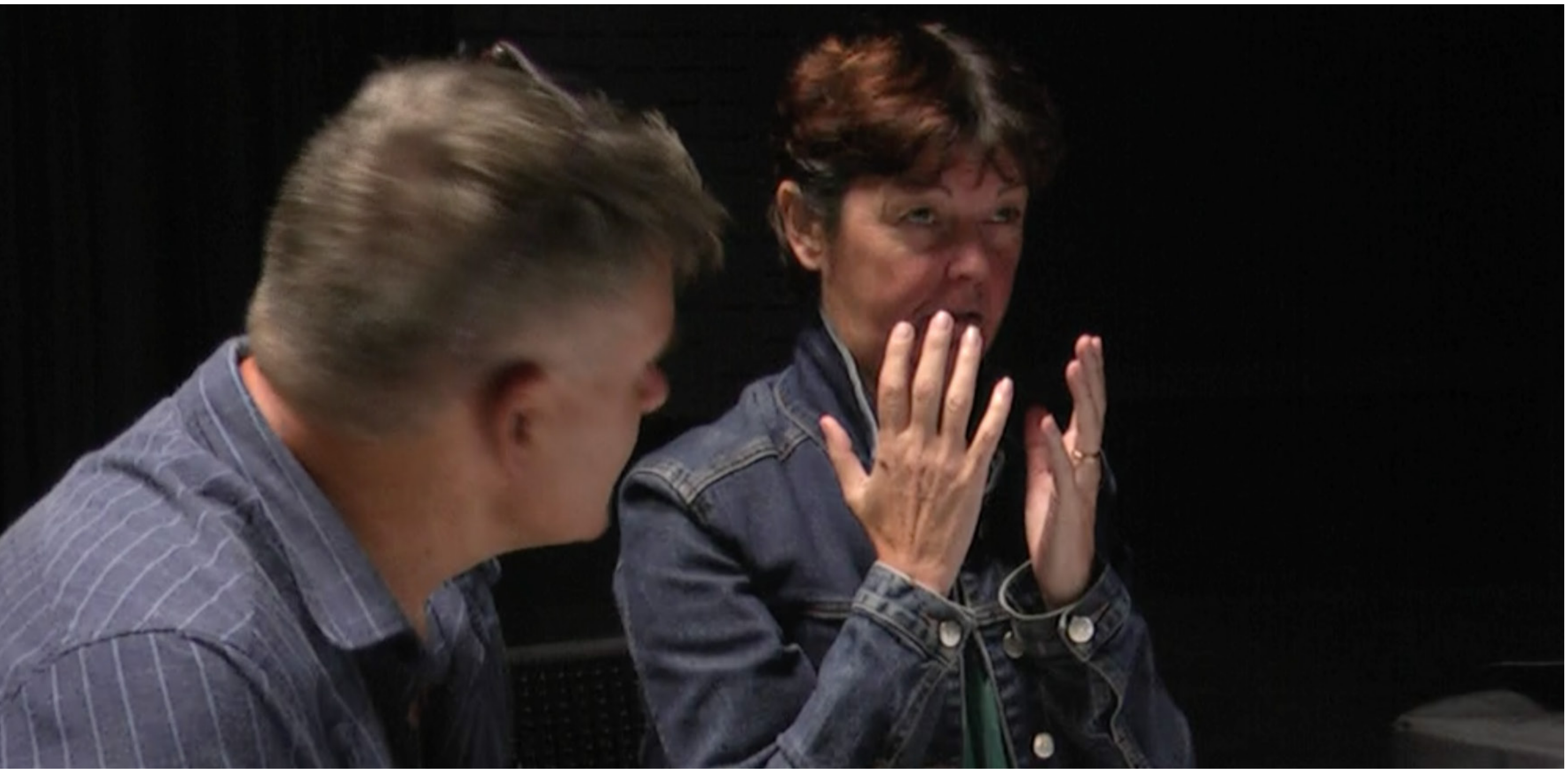


FIGURE 4.18.

During rehearsal Walsh uses embodied, tacit knowledge to explore the location for projections of a character. Here she is considering how her character, Gertrude, perceives the presence of Ophelia.

of agency. While the results may not have been as aesthetically accomplished, the experiment enabled me to engage more directly with my communication objectives for the scenes. As an actor/cinematographer (and director) I had to consider the levels of Walsh's performance and to find a balance between theatrical and cinematic styles. Level is a term actors use to describe the extent to which they allow their internal processes to be visible to the audience. Typically, screen performances are concerned with deeply internal expressions and the camera is able to be positioned close enough to the actor to capture minutely nuanced facial expressions. Stage acting cannot rely on an optical device to capture and magnify nuances and therefore actors must adopt a level, dependent on the size of the auditorium, that communicates their internal processes to everyone in the audience.

In the conceptualisation of the cinematography of Gertrude, I intended one shot to take the form of surveillance footage. The type of camera used for this typically spies on people from a distant, high location and distorts their image because of the very wide angle lens required to view as much of the location as possible. In postproduction I distorted the footage, rendered it as monochromatic and added a security camera graphical overlay. I knew that this would give me, as the live actor in *Foolish Prating Knave*, an opportunity to struggle to decipher the video image and that the audience would have a split focus at this point in the play, swapping attention back and forth between Polonius and Gertrude. I therefore directed Walsh to perform with a stage level of large and unrestricted movement that would draw attention to her character (Figure 4.21).

Later in the scene I decided that the more intensely intimate content would suit a close-up shot (Figure 4.22). The scale of a projected close-up would afford the projection more dominance and therefore the acting style could adopt a more filmic level without any exaggeration. Both Polonius and the audience would be able to eavesdrop on the projection. This comparatively detailed framing allowed the nuances of Gertrude's behaviour to register very clearly with the audience. I directed Walsh to look directly into the camera, with the device of talking into a mirror to provide a realist justification for the point of view. The result meant that she appeared to be looking directly at each member of the audience and, just as importantly, at Polonius wherever I might stand on the stage. This choice of shot and staging reflected my combined perspectives of actor, director and cinematographer. It allowed me to think of character relationships, the flow of narrative and to make media that would enable me, as Polonius, to operate within the tenets of psychological realism on stage. Expanded agency and multiple perspectives were enablers of sophisticated decisions in the making of intermedial elements.

Designing and producing media elements

In expanding my agency to collaborate in areas of production that an actor would not normally have access to, I opened myself up to a more holistic perspective. The processes of conceptualisation and design of visual and spatial aspects of the set require an outside standpoint and this level of objectivity conflicts with my acting process. I therefore have avoided them in the past. My approach to

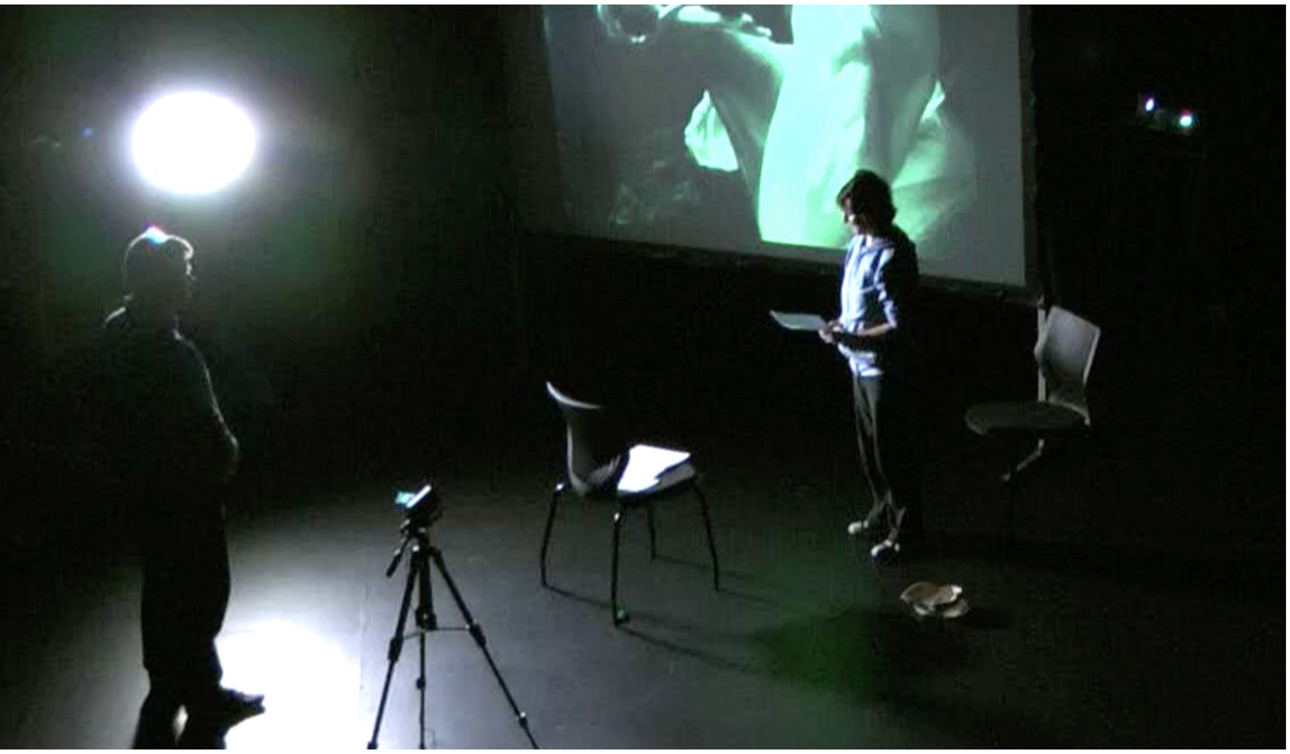
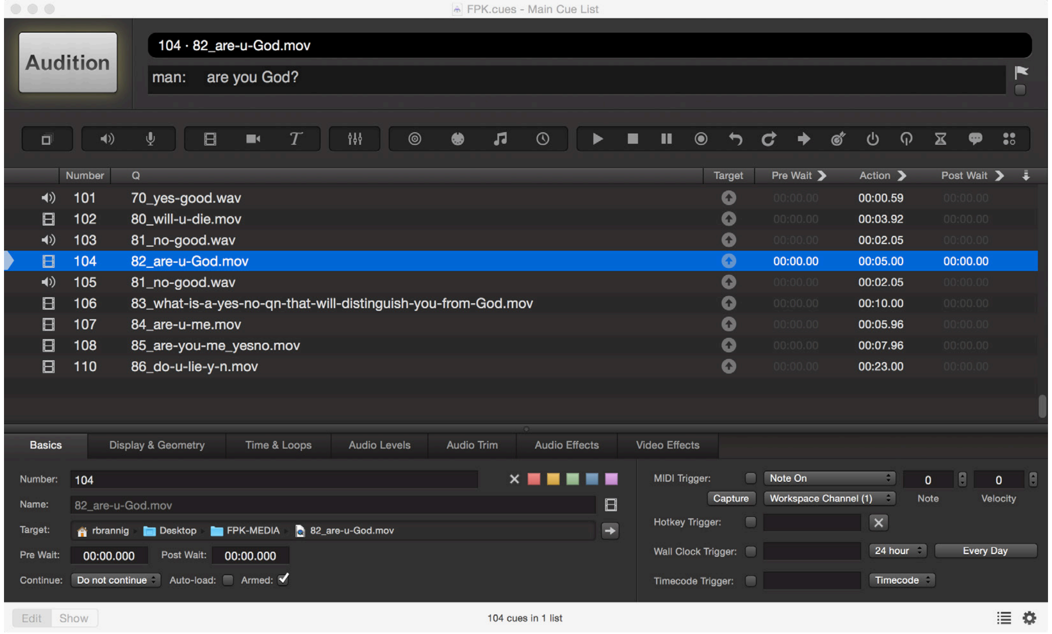


FIGURE 4.19.

Actor (Walsh) and director (Brannigan) rehearse with draft intermedial projections.

FIGURE 4.20.

The media cueing software QLab, showing what the actor has to concentrate on during the performance.



FPK.cues - Main Cue List
Audition

104 · 82_are-u-God.mov

man: are you God?

	Number	Q	Target	Pre Wait	Action	Post Wait
🔊	101	70_yes-good.wav	⊕	00:00.00	00:00.59	00:00.00
▤	102	80_will-u-die.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:03.92	00:00.00
🔊	103	81_no-good.wav	⊕	00:00.00	00:02.05	00:00.00
▤	104	82_are-u-God.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:05.00	00:00.00
🔊	105	81_no-good.wav	⊕	00:00.00	00:02.05	00:00.00
▤	106	83_what-is-a-yes-no-qn-that-will-distinguish-you-from-God.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:10.00	00:00.00
▤	107	84_are-u-me.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:05.96	00:00.00
▤	108	85_are-you-me_yesno.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:07.96	00:00.00
▤	110	86_do-u-lie-y-n.mov	⊕	00:00.00	00:23.00	00:00.00

Basics
Display & Geometry
Time & Loops
Audio Levels
Audio Trim
Audio Effects
Video Effects

Number: 104

Name: 82_are-u-God.mov

Target: rbrannig › Desktop › FPK-MEDIA › 82_are-u-God.mov

Pre Wait: 00:00.000 Post Wait: 00:00.000

Continue: Do not continue Auto-load: ☐ Armed: ☑

MIDI Trigger: ☐ Note On 0 Note 0 Velocity

Capture Workspace Channel (1)

Hotkey Trigger: ☐

Wall Clock Trigger: ☐ 24 hour Every Day

Timecode Trigger: ☐ Timecode

104 cues in 1 list

acting in psychologically realist theatre involves immersion in character and the given circumstances of the play.[104] During the act of performance, my attention is normally focused on my character's goals and the actions of the other characters. I would normally only think of the set as an environment within which the actions occur. Any semiotic cues that the audience perceives in the mise-en-scene are not the focal point of the actor in performance. Actors often use the metaphor[105] "get out of your head" as an injunction against being too objective during performance. Being overly concerned with the visual design is therefore too much "in the head", because it is neither related to a goal nor part of an interaction with another character. However, in this experiment I found that my process was enriched by considering external elements during preparatory phases.

I drew considerable inspiration from the process of designing and making multimedia elements. The process activated my personal interest in the possibilities afforded by technological and digital aspects of performance. This interest is something that may not be shared by all actors. A holistic appreciation of technologically created co-characters proved useful to my acting process in so far as it deepened my engagement with them. It provided a level of familiarity that worked on an unconscious level during the act of performance.

In addition to shooting the Gertrude scenes and colour correcting and editing all of the video footage, I also produced the graphic and motion media and audio files for the production. This process of making media enabled me to contribute notions of my embodied understanding of the characters of Polonius and the AI to the media.

I utilised an avatar and facial animation application[106] to create drafts of the AI's attempts to find a visual representation that would help it communicate with Polonius. The idea had been to use these as drafts and then establish a collaborative relationship with an animator capable of creating motion-captured photorealistic avatars. I intended to use these as a way of exploring the "uncanny valley" theorised by Masahiro Mori (1970), cited in Birgitta Hosea (2012). Mori showed that a common human response to a robotically-animated humanoid fell into a dip of uneasy familiarity and even revulsion as the appearance of the robot approached realism. I thought the use of a near realistic character might challenge the audience to consider what it is about human connection and realist acting that can elicit connection or empathy. In the play the AI tries to use animated versions of Polonius's own face and that of Polonius as a ten-year-old boy (Figure 4.23).

Bridging the live and mediated spaces

The live actor playing Polonius and the pre-recorded character of Ophelia have a separateness that is literal in the production. One stands on the stage while the other is projected on to a screen. Ophelia appears to Gertrude, who is also a pre-recorded character, and the effect Ophelia has on both her father and queen through representation that is "both" virtual "and" affective, spans the liminal space.

In order to explore the theoretical implications of the intermedial relationship between the live and the virtual characters we wrote a narrative that made their exchanges difficult. This forced me, as the actor, to work hard to find solutions

[104] Stanislavski developed the term given circumstances to mean "everything which is a given for the actors as they rehearse" (2017, p.55). This included the contribution made to the production by writers, designers and the director that provide the substance for the actor's imagination.

[105] Actors have a tendency, according to Zarrilli (2002), to use metaphors in descriptions of their craft because propositional language can never fully represent the acting process.

[106] Reallusion's Crazy Talk (https://www.reallusion.com/crazytalk/).

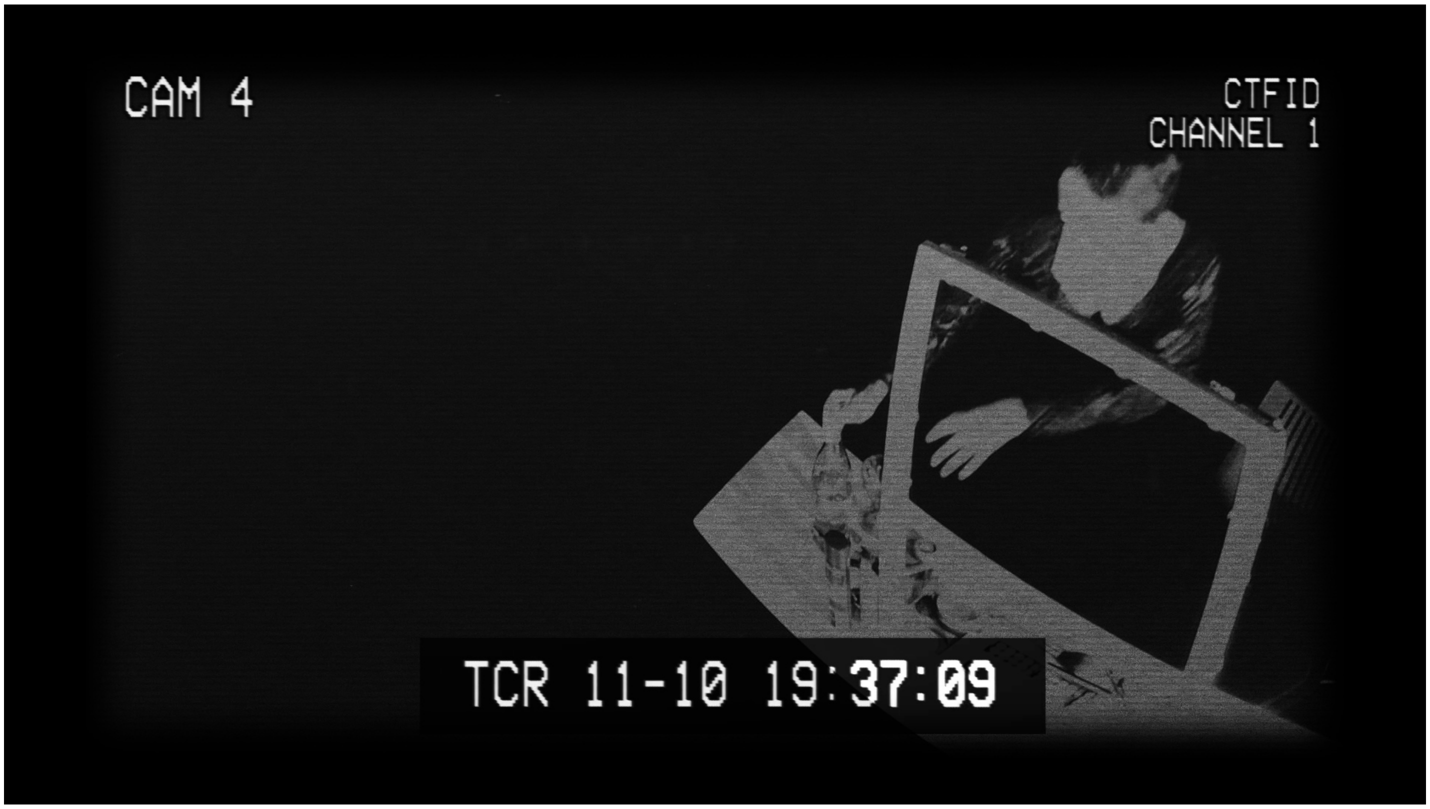
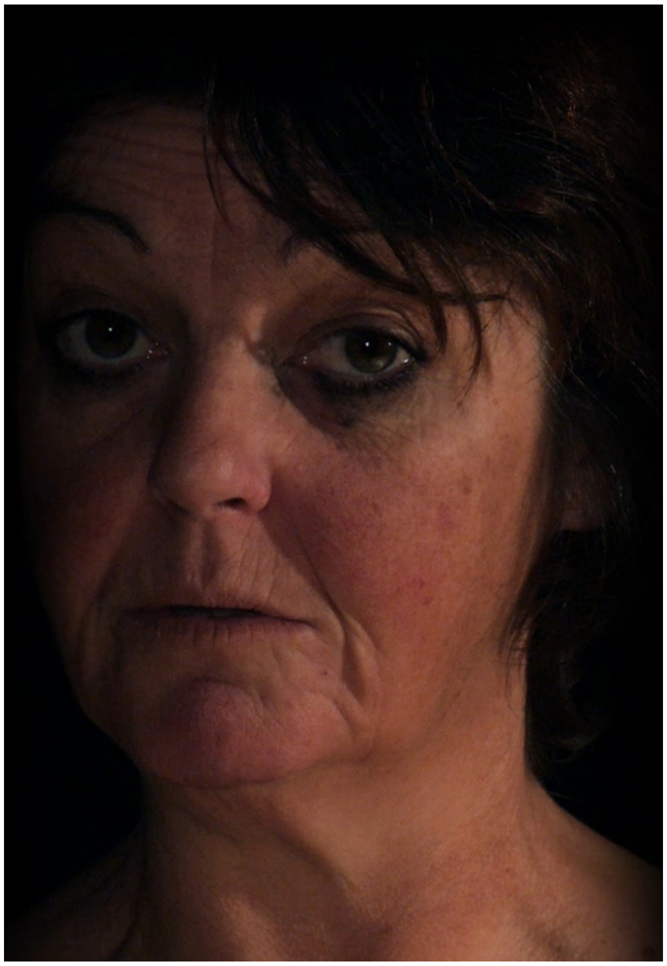

CAM 4
CTFID
CHANNEL 1
TCR 11-10 19:37:09

FIGURE 4.21.

Video grab of security footage of Gertrude from *Foolish Prating Knave*.

FIGURE 4.22.

Close-up shot of Walsh as Gertrude in *Foolish Prating Knave*.



to the problem of communicating with the virtual characters, just as Polonius struggled with the AI, Gertrude and Ophelia. The need for Polonius to break through these barriers was set up as the driving force of the work. Polonius enters, half remembering that he must warn someone of something. As the memory becomes clearer he faces a barrier when he cannot make contact with the virtual character of Ophelia. It is his attempt at the impossible that connects the two media (the live and projected).

We found, during rehearsal performance, that physical arrangements of the live actor and the screen were vital to a perceived connection. The freedom to move around attempting to make a connection, was also found to be valuable. Although two-way communication was not possible between Polonius and either Ophelia or Gertrude, it was with the AI character. Much of the play explored ways to make this communication possible, through the use of the laptop keyboard (Figure 4.24) then through audio and lastly video connections.

The exasperation felt by Polonius, as he tried to connect the virtual and the live, was mirrored in the audience. They laughed in recognition of the familiarity of having to answer frustrating, automated questions. Even though the communication could not be direct, the affect was made palpable by the absence of connection. For example, Polonius felt shattered seeing his daughter struggling underwater and by his inability to warn her or help her.

Acting and not connecting

The inability of the character Ophelia to speak directly to either Gertrude or Polonius in *Foolish Prating Knave* mirrors an aspect of Kattenbelt's (2010) theory of the nature of intermedial theatre. In arguing for the "both-and" nature of the relationship between the live and the media elements, he saw the need for the audience to reconceptualise their response to each medium and to the relationship between them. In this iteration of the work, we experimented with the designing of intersecting but nonconnecting planes of communication between characters. Actors were asked to deal constructively with this simultaneous phenomenon (of connecting and not connecting) as we developed the performances. For Walsh, the location of the images of Ophelia was critical to her understanding of how best to apply realist acting techniques. For Hudson, the substitution of the underwater camera lens for Gertrude was sufficient for her to be able to pursue the character's goals.

Performance and feedback on the experiment

This iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* was performed for a mixed audience of practitioners and academics at Toowoomba in June, 2016. By exposing the performance with its draft script, media and acting, I sought to gather insights from reflecting on the experience of performing and responses of the audience during the play. I wanted to gauge for myself, as an actor, how the performance would hold together and then to engage the audience in post performance discussion.

Audience forum

Immediately following the performance, which was part of a selection of Performance as Research pieces shown at the conference, a forum was chaired by Michael Smalley, co-convener of the conference. Smalley facilitated the session with a question and answer structure. One question was whether I had used a method of creating a space for playfulness to occur. On reflection, that is what I have done both literally, as an actor exploring in a state of playfulness, and metaphorically, by creating an interchange within the space of the stage where the live and technologically created co-characters can play. The framing of the question reminded me of the desirability of being free-ranging in explorations during devising and rehearsal.

Another question referred to confusion over the relationship of Polonius to the other, virtual, characters that was caused by the tasks I was completing and the positioning of the laptop and the screen. As Polonius was positioned where he could not look directly at the screen, the audience was confused about his exact relationship to it. In response to the discussion arising from this question I decided to experiment with ways where the audience might be more effectively included in

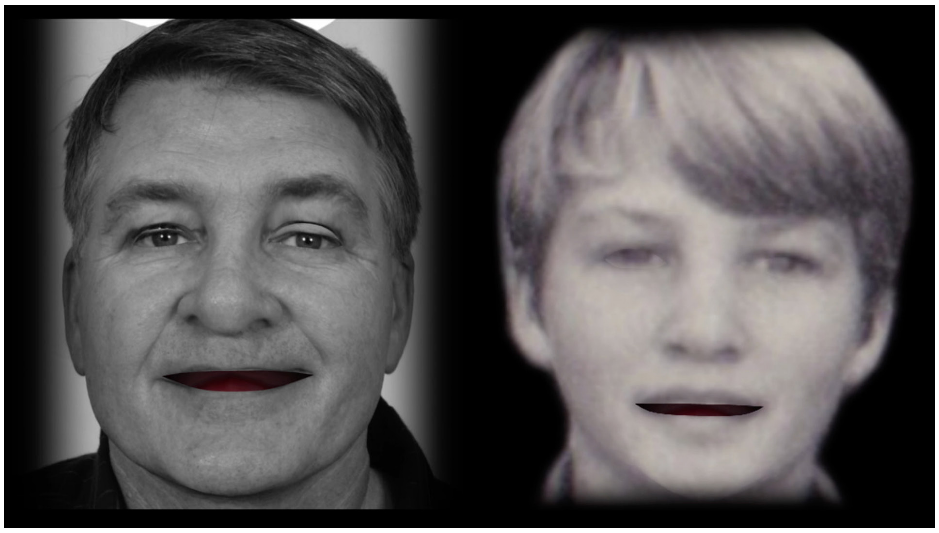


FIGURE 4.23.

Video grabs of the AI's attempt to find an avatar. These are animated versions of the face of Polonius at his current age and as a ten-year old boy.

the action by rearranging these elements in a variety of ways.

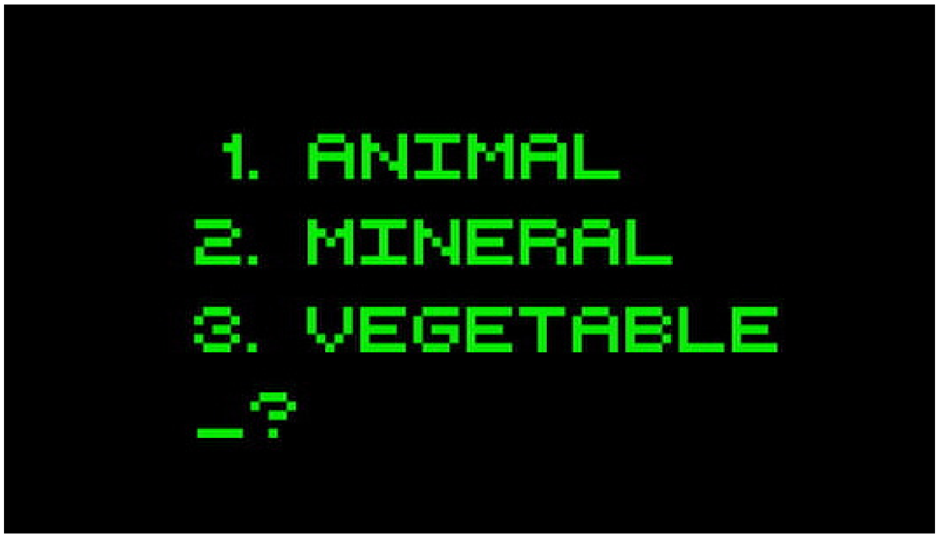
The theatre space I had used for the performance was larger than the studio I had been devising and rehearsing in and it had tiered seating on two sides. Importantly, it had a single opaque screen mounted high above the actor and to the rear of the stage. This meant that, as an unanticipated adjustment during the performance, I had to continually choose between facing the projected characters, turning my back on the audience and facing the audience without being able to see the other characters. This meant facing away from the screen while trying to maintain some connection with it. Figure 4.25 shows the relative positioning and scale of live actor and screened actor in the Artsworx theatre space. This positioning disrupted my sense of connection to the other characters and to the audience. The issue of designing intermedial and spatial relationships for a space became viscerally apparent. I had assumed a level of transferability and easy adjustment that proved not to be the case. I determined to find better solutions to the spatial arrangement of live and projected elements in the next iteration of the work. Specifically, I began to consider designing for an actual physical space. I had learned in Experiment 1, and then again in this experiment, that a distinct sense of security is necessary to enhance the ability to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances and to avoid distracting performance anxiety.

Another question challenged my use of a retro computer font. I defended the choice in terms of recognisability for the audience and a rapid progression of design elements as the AI character quickly assessed the best way to communicate with Polonius. One suggestion from the floor was for voice and gesture activation of communication, perhaps with actual deployment of such technologies during the play. My response to this was that the technology would then become more important than the acting and its reliable use would require technical investment that would not be commensurate with my aims. Furthermore, I had found in my first experiment that technology must be absolutely robust and reliable to avoid unwelcome performance anxiety. Another question directed me to consider a ludic, game based interaction structure for the play. While this was an interesting consideration, I determined that my primary interest was in acting technique and not the improvisational technique that such a shift would require.

Forum discussion of presence and Liveness

Discussions of liveness and liminal space were particularly interesting with respect to my concerns about how I might bridge the gap between live and technologically generated co-characters. It was suggested that the projections could be just as active and that the live body was vulnerable in comparison. Cormac Power's (2008) review of the debate about presence was referenced by one delegate and I found a very useful conclusion in it that theatre has a "potential to stage presence in a play of appearance and disappearance" (p. 201). This made me think about the usefulness of asserting a presence through expectation and absence. This idea also has ramifications for the connection between the "live" actor and the projected characters, in so far as the intermedial connection might exist despite the lack of full reflexivity.

As Auslander (2008) has noted, the interaction between the live actor and the pre-recorded character "lends" a sense of liveness to the mediated presence. It enacts a relationship. I would suggest that this relationship has dramaturgical validity in the perception of the audience if it is believable on a theatrical level as embodied within the stage. The factors that enable this, I believe, are the techniques of psychological realism employed by the actor during the recording of their part in the scene, the interactions of the actor live during the play, the nuances of timing at which the pre-recorded projections are deployed and by the spatial relationships designed within the set.



```
 1. ANIMAL
2. MINERAL
3. VEGETABLE
_?
```

FIGURE 4.24.

The AI character communicating with projected text.

In the performed experiment at the Artsworx theatre, notions of presence and liveness were at play in the relationship between the embodied and mediated characters. In this work, I had built on Auslander's concept of liveness (2008) when he proposed that the live and the mediatised were mutually dependent. My work connected more with Matthew Causey's (2006) argument that the concept of liveness should be expanded to include the traditional face to face theatre model and an agency-extended model that incorporates media elements. Cormac Powers (2008) argues that notions of "presence" are varied and that theatre has an ability to disrupt and question such notions. The experience of performing in such a large space with an inconveniently located screen proved deleterious to my feeling of connection to the screened elements.

Another point of interest for participants in the session was the choice of Shakespeare and the particular aspects of *Hamlet*. This caused me to reflect on my choices and explain that I have a personal, abiding passion for Shakespeare, an interest in playing an older character who is often overlooked (or not taken seriously) and a desire to examine heightened language and style juxtaposed to a realist style. Both styles are prevalent in theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand and suited to my method of bringing together opposites to complicate the inquiry.

Expert feedback

On the day after the staging of the play I targeted two very experienced practitioner/academics to discuss with them, their experiences with realist and intermedial theatre. I recorded these interviews on video so I could review and reflect on the content as the research progressed.

That the live/screen relationship was problematic for the audience was borne out in post performance interviews with David O'Donnell, Victoria University, Wellington, and Bernadette Meenach, an Australian practitioner/researcher.

David O'Donnell

O'Donnell's experience as an actor, director and academic was valuable to me. He noted that the separation of screen and actor was such that it broke a connection. In addition, he was aware that in this theatre space I was unable to see the projections without turning around, and he felt that this crossed over a convention that appeared to have been set up in which Polonius saw everything on the laptop screen in front of him, and that the audience saw another version of that screen projected on the back wall of the stage. When I stood up and interacted directly with the projection, he found the convention's rules to be no longer clear and was confused about the relationship between actor, laptop and projection. He also found that the theatre space was too large and well lit and the audio levels were too low to suit the type of production.

O'Donnell's experience in multimedia theatre and knowledge of the theatre world of Aotearoa New Zealand is extensive. When I asked him about the history of intermedial theatre in the country he struggled to come up with influential local productions. He stated most of the theatre which made extensive and innovative use of technology (such as video projection) had been produced by students within the university environment. He gained inspiration from touring productions, especially Lepage's *Seven Streams of the River Ota* when he saw it at the New Zealand International Arts Festival in Wellington in 2000. O'Donnell's experiences in directing theatre productions with extensive use of projections led him to observe that some actors enjoy the excitement of engaging with technology but others, perhaps those for whom the intensity of emotional narrative was more important, hated this type of theatre. He recounted an anecdote of one actor storming off the set of a workshop involving multiple projectors and excited multimedia designers. "After watching your performance … and hearing you talk about it … it made me feel quite guilty … that actor had no agency whatsoever … we were treating him like a puppet really" (D. O'Donnell, personal communication, June 23, 2016). He felt that, as director, he should have done something to aid the actor. O'Donnell observed that sometimes the precision required of actors to serve

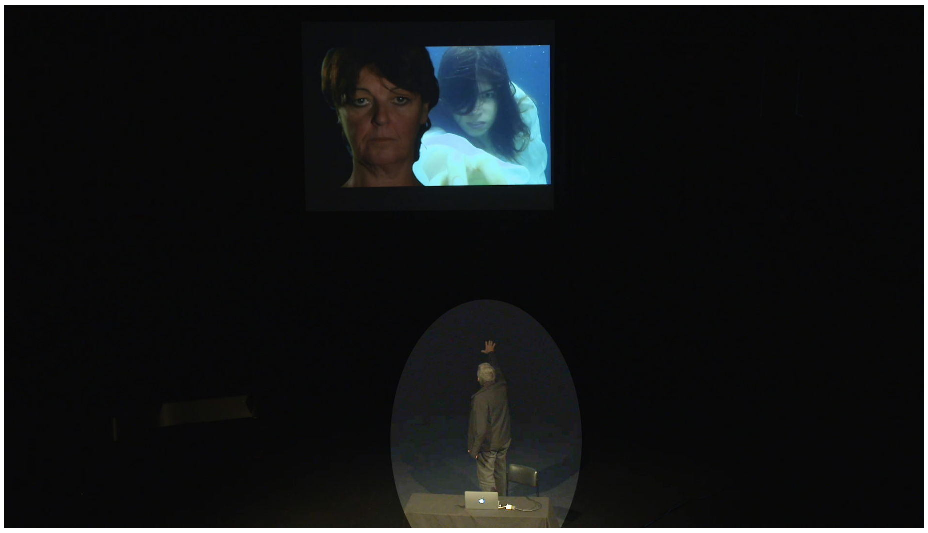


FIGURE 4.25.

The physical and personal distance between live and pre-recorded characters during performance of Foolish Prating Knave at the Artsworx Theatre (2016). (The highlight around the onstage actor is inserted in this image to render him more visible).

the projections runs counter to freedom in the acting process. He remembered one actor feeling that the precise choreography required to position himself for a projection to be mapped on to a shield he was carrying, interfered with his psychological process while acting.

Bernadette Meenach

The second expert interview was with Meenach. She has over thirty year's experience as an actor and director and lectures at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. She was invited to be a member of the Practice-Led Research panel at the conference. Meenach shared my anxiety about the risk of technology malfunctions derailing an actor's performance, but was excited by the ability of projections to bring a cinematic scale to theatre. At the post performance critique, audience members had questioned my choice of "retro" font and a keyboard-based interface between human and AI characters. Meenach however, found the familiar interface accessible and the set of logical questions that the AI posed, engaging. She found the use of pre-recorded actors playing realistic characters refreshing and said that it made her think of the power and relevance of their physical absence.

Psychological realism with pre-recorded co-characters

These reflections on the place and purpose of realist acting techniques within an intermedial production enabled me to think more deeply about the nature of realist acting techniques where an ensemble cast is not co-present. My aim had been to raise issues that would cause audience members to ponder the relationships and techniques of realism and intermediality and it was affirming to hear that this was indeed happening. The performance within the Artsworx space generated useful critique of this initial experiment with psychological realism and the intermedial. It also provided me with material for reflection as well as feedback that I was able to take forward into the next iteration of the project.

Performance experiment 5: Second major iteration of Foolish Prating Knave and presentation at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

CONTEXT

After the experience of performing *Foolish Prating Knave* in Australia, I was determined to address a research and production issue relating to the dislocations between the screen and actor. So, examining conventions set up in the performance and the location of the screen became factors that I experimented with before presenting the play to a small audience in AUT's Live Performance Lab on September 23, 2016. Immediately after the performance a critique session was held and this was followed by informal conversations over subsequent days.

CRITICAL CONCERNS

- My first concern was to discover if a revised physical relationship of the screen, actor/operator and audience might aid in building an improved sense of connection between the character and the technologically created co-characters.
- Secondly, I wanted to explore how I might set up a convention so the audience would understand the nature of the screen.
- The third issue addressed in the experiment related to the communicative clarity of the narrative. I wanted to gauge whether the audience perceived the narrative as incomplete.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

In this iteration of the play, the physical positioning of the screen in proximity to the live actor was changed so I could see it clearly from my position beside the laptop. This was important because I needed to be able to cue each media change. When looking up at the screen from the laptop my face was fully open to the audience and easily perceived as engaging directly with the screen. The audience members were able to see when my attention switched from the laptop's screen, which they could not see, to the projection screen. This created a sense that the two screens might contain differences or at least that Polonius might have a reason for swapping his attention from the laptop to the projection.

In Experiment 4 the location of the screen above and behind me had meant that the audience could not see my face whenever I looked at the projections. This had resulted in performance anxiety and meant that I had avoided turning my back on the audience whenever possible.

The screen arrangement for this new experiment built a physical link between the character and the co-characters projected on the screen. The audience was able to see all parties looking at each other. This improvement significantly reduced my anxiety around excluding the audience from the relationship. As a consequence, I was able to invest more in the connection with the co-characters. Critical feedback following the performance indicated a much stronger sense of relationality and intercharacter dynamics. The result was an appreciable increase in continuity and a strengthening of dramatic tensions within the work.

As my thinking moved forward with this iteration of the play, I also began to focus attention on how, in *Foolish Prating Knave,* we might find embodiment within an indeterminate space where reality existed as flashes in the darkness. I worked towards a more claustrophobic closeness to force projected and present elements to cohere. I believed they might do this out of a need to find meaning from each other. I thought the character of Polonius, played live, should somehow be visually located within the screen(s) and the space. In order to achieve this, I moved a rear projection screen downstage right of Polonius's chair and angled it so that both he and the audience could see. This rendered the performance space more intimate (Figure 4.26).

In this experiment I used a single screen, but the wider concept of using multiple screens to frame a space for the live actor to move within was already in gestation and planned for a future iteration. The lighting was kept very low and its spread beyond the performance space was limited. This enabled me to use the absence of visibility as a component of the design. The narrative was framed around a search for answers from within the darkness.

The clarity and proximity of the screen made an appreciable difference to my feeling of connection to the content being projected on to it. Feedback from the reviewers of the work noted that the light from the projector spilled on to me and illuminated me with a soft, multicoloured light that visually tied me into the projections. With the screen no more than a metre above the ground, I was able to interpose myself between the audience and projected images and respond to it in ways that the physical separation had made impossible at Artsworx.

The impression that Polonius could view both the laptop screen and the projector screen easily without turning his head altered a perception that the projection screen was only a second version of the laptop screen provided for the audience to see what Polonius encountered.

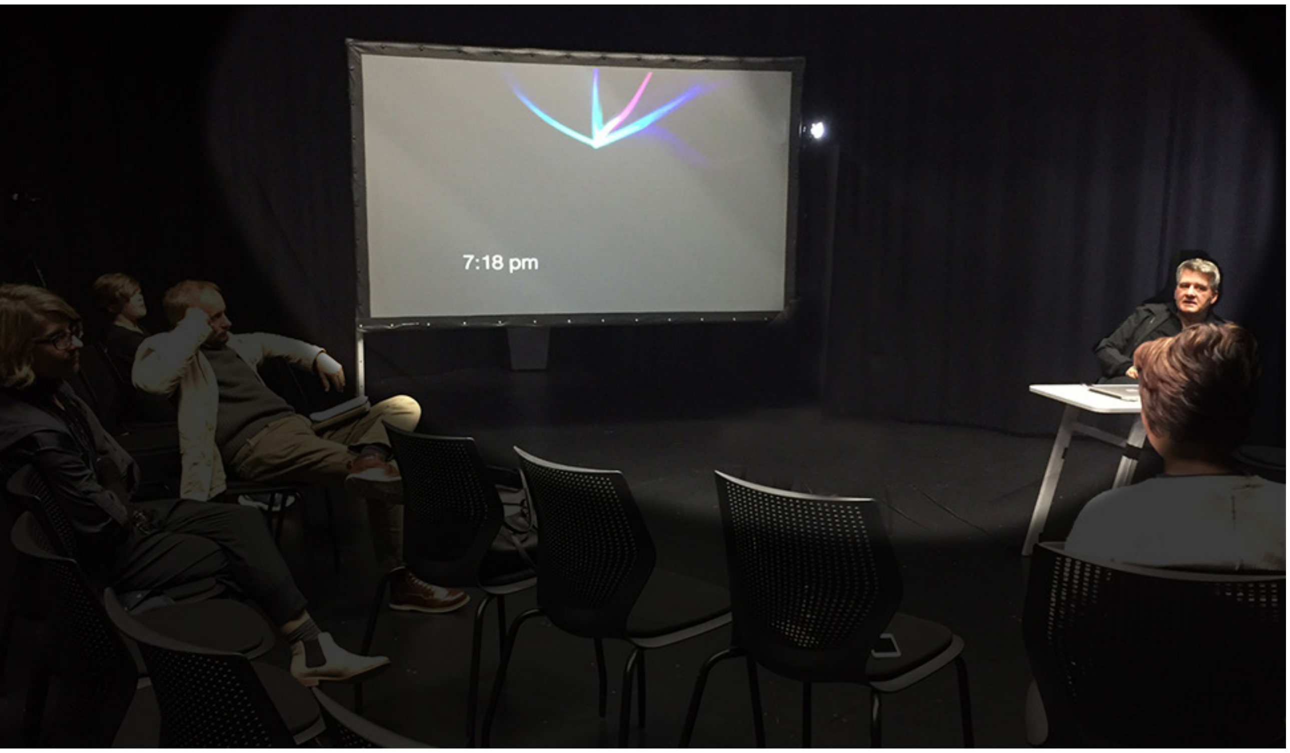


FIGURE 4.26.

Actor-screen-audience relationship as actioned in Experiment 5 (2016).

My acting instincts pushed me to free myself from the constraint of constantly remaining close to the laptop and an increase in energy was facilitated by being able to move more freely in the space. What I was trying to establish was that the laptop was only the initial point of contact and that it was useful when Polonius needed to type a reply. I wanted the projections on the screen to become the primary focus of communication. This would enable the audience to perceive the visual connection taking place between Polonius and, for example, Gertrude's projected image.

In this experiment I left the complexity of the play's narrative relatively untouched. Instead I framed the performance as a draft, using draft media, of what might become a much larger and more refined iteration of the play. Usefully, consensus among the reviewers during post performance discussion was that the narrative was relatively complete and that many of the draft media elements were appropriately affective. It was felt that over-polished media might detract from the viscerality of the performance. There were some exceptions noted and I experimented with refinements to these as I developed Experiment 6.

Significant among these were two points that I determined to take forward into further iterations of the work. These were:

The footage of Gertrude and Ophelia, shot on a variety of cameras and lit in different ways, was seen as lacking cohesion.

The very clear, back-projected screen produced a hard-edged and high-contrast image that negated the air of uncertainty I was aiming for. Its singular and solid presence did not promote multi-layered and partial miscommunication, but rather it functioned as a cinematic screen, precisely demarcated from the dark space that surrounded it. This resulted in a sense of conceptual space that lacked ambiguity. Polonius was seen with too much clarity and there were no layers of darkness for the actor to navigate. Thus, I determined to carry an exploration of a much more indeterminate space forward into the next iteration of the project.

When I began this project I had planned to place more emphasis on the cinematic and explore how the codes of theatre and cinema might interact. However, as the inquiry developed, a focus on acting process took increasing precedence. I found the work of Imitating the Dog, and in particular *Hotel Methuselah* (Quick & Brooks, 2006), provocative. In particular, I considered their devolution of components of a character across live and projected elements particularly intriguing. Their set was constructed in such a way that only the midsection of the bodies of the live actors could be seen, and the disembodied sound of their voices could be heard. Silent closeup video of their faces was simultaneously projected above them. In the synchronisation of live movement and sound with the large video images of facial expression and lip movement, an intermedial exchange occurred. This linking of the two spaces provoked my thinking about the collaborative location of meaning across different spaces. Neither the screen nor the live action was complete without the other. Accordingly, in my experiments I decided to explore how an actor might inhabit the inbetweenness and negotiate a link through performance. The idea that *Foolish Prating Knave* was played out in a haunted space where everything was perceived in disparate flashes and where belonging was a foreign concept proved a useful conceit for the exploration.

Finally, although I was working towards narrative clarity and a sense of resolution in the play, my primary concern was that the audience might perceive the narrative as perfunctory. I worried that Polonius's journey might be seen as incomplete and that the ending was too ambiguous and came around too quickly. This is a work that I wanted to resonate within audiences as a journey into anxiety and darkness. The humour, dependent on frustration, avoided a comfortable and easy solution to Polonius's predicament, suspended as he is in a purgatory. He is searching for answers that he may never find. I wanted to provoke the audience and to leave them with questions to ponder and a sense of understanding of Polonius's suspended existence.

Feedback on this experiment indicated that this was achieved. The last communication between Polonius and the AI was understood as leaving him suspended, uncertain and at the mercy of something he was unable to comprehend. Feedback indicated that the script and its realisation in performance were seen as refusing to engage with dénouement. There was unanimous feedback that the script was sufficient in length and complexity. I therefore decided that, in the next iteration, I would not try to extend the narrative. My focus would be on considering how to enable the audience to enter conceptual space that characters both live and projected inhabit.

Performance experiment 6: Third major iteration of Foolish Prating Knave and presentation at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, January 2018

CONTEXT

This third iteration of the play was framed as a rehearsed reading and presented to an audience of about 30 in the Live Performance Lab at AUT, January 31, 2018. It was designed specifically for this space and used a lighting rig, three semitransparent gauze screens (as can be seen in Figure 4.27) and three projectors.

After the experiences of performing *Foolish Prating Knave* and the generous critique given by audiences, I began to work on a further iteration that would involve refinements to the media, multiple screens and a more deeply theorised relationship between screens and the live actor. I wanted to explore how multiple screens made of gauze might build a connection between live and mediated characters. Specifically, I wanted to know how I could embed the live actor within the screens and how pre-recorded characters could be enlivened by the acting of a live and present actor.

My thinking about the uses of cinematic language within the stage environment became a focus for media creation collaborations. I was particularly interested in how swapping focus through the use of depth of field, cuts, screen direction and the pull-focus technique[107] across multiple screens, might serve issues of emphasis, disconnection and integration in the play. The ability of cinema to create an impression of depth and three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional screen was something that I extended to multiple, semitransparent screens and multiple planes within the real three dimensions of stage space. My collaboration with lighting designer Duncan Milne explored the potentials of bleeding images across multiple surfaces, including the screens, walls, stage and a moving human actor. Milne also operated the performance from the laptop off-stage. This freed me from the need to operate and perform simultaneously and allowed projections of a keyboard to indicate communication between Polonius and the AI.

CRITICAL CONCERNS

- How might multiple screens made of gauze build a connection between live and mediatised characters?
- In what ways could the live actor be embedded within the screens?

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[107] These cinematic terms are used to mean, the parts of the image that are in focus at varying distance from the camera (depth of field), transferring attention from one subject to another by altering the focus during recording of the shot (pull-focus) and a style of editing and narrative construction that depends on matching one shot with the next in order to progress the narrative and dictate what the audience should focus on (screen direction). This last technique matches elements such as the direction of movement, the directions in which characters are looking and the conventions of point of view in order to progress the story from shot to shot.

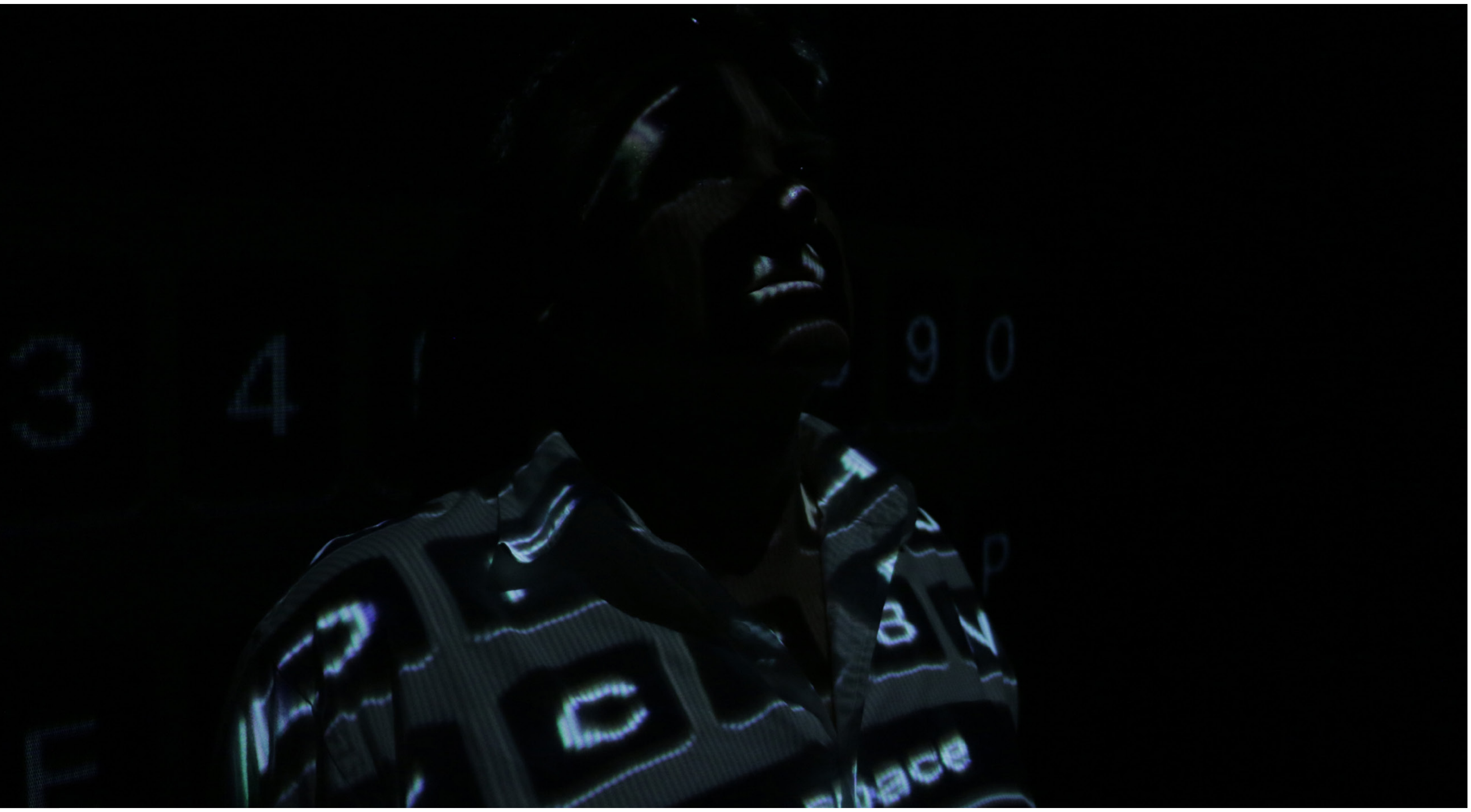


FIGURE 4.27.

A projected image of a keyboard shines through the gauze screen altering the appearance of Polonius.

- How might the pre-recorded characters be enlivened by the acting of the live and present actor?

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

I found that, by using multiple screens in rehearsal and in performance, my sense of the space available to me in the expression of the story was appreciably expanded. The nature of this space was real, in the sense that the character found himself in a particular place and could look and move around to interact with images and sounds projected around him. It was also figurative, in that the actor was working with an imaginary world that was composed of light, space and digital media elements. By honouring the reality of the given circumstance of the space and responding to the projected elements (by using the acting technique of a modified psychological realism), I was able to maintain my own belief in the character and feel empathy for the other characters.

The experiments in utilising cinematic language and the expansion of these techniques to multiple planes within a three-dimensional space suggested that there was indeed potential for enhanced storytelling and that expanding my acting skill to include an appreciation of the director's and designer's perspective could be beneficial.

A multilayered physical and metaphorical space

I had always planned to use more dimensions to the space than were afforded by a single projector and back-projected screen. The stage model I made allowed me to experiment with iterations of the design on a small and manageable scale before I considered full-size screens and rigging projectors.

The use of gauze enabled the screens to be either opaque or transparent depending on the lighting that fell on them and the lighting of the actor behind them (Figure 4.28).

Several gauze materials and colours were experimented with. Depending on their constitution, the fabrics afforded different qualities of the projector's beam to pass through them. In arranging the screens I also considered the potentials for the overlapping images and the spilling of image fragments across the walls, floor and the body of the actor (Figure 4.29).

In these experiments, I used up to three projectors which were suspended and arranged on an overhead grid. Two were standard projectors but the third, used on the central screen, was an ultra-short throw projector. This projector created a steep beam that allowed the actor to get very close to the screen without obstructing the image (Figure 4.30).

In the end I decided on three screens; two in portrait orientation and one in landscape (Figure 4.31). The large portrait-oriented screens were particularly useful

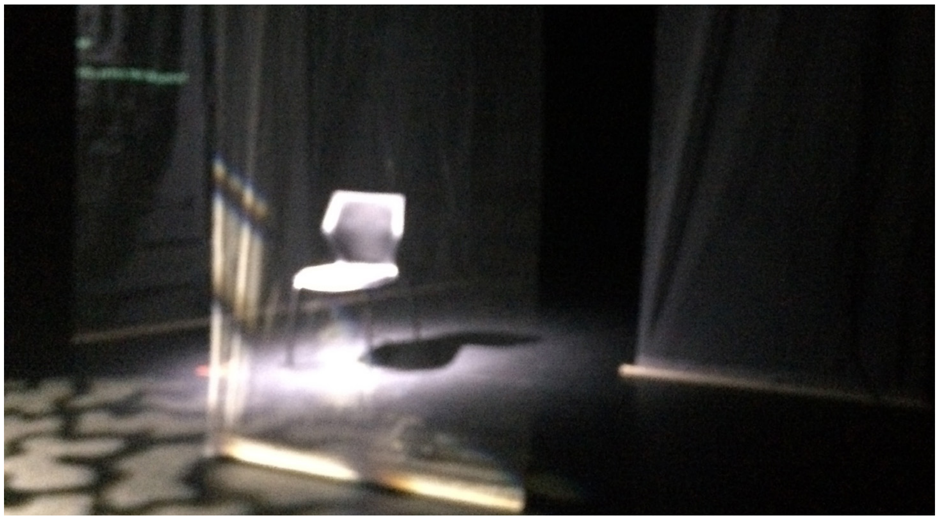


FIGURE 4.28.

A well lit chair can be seen with very little obstruction by the intervening screen.

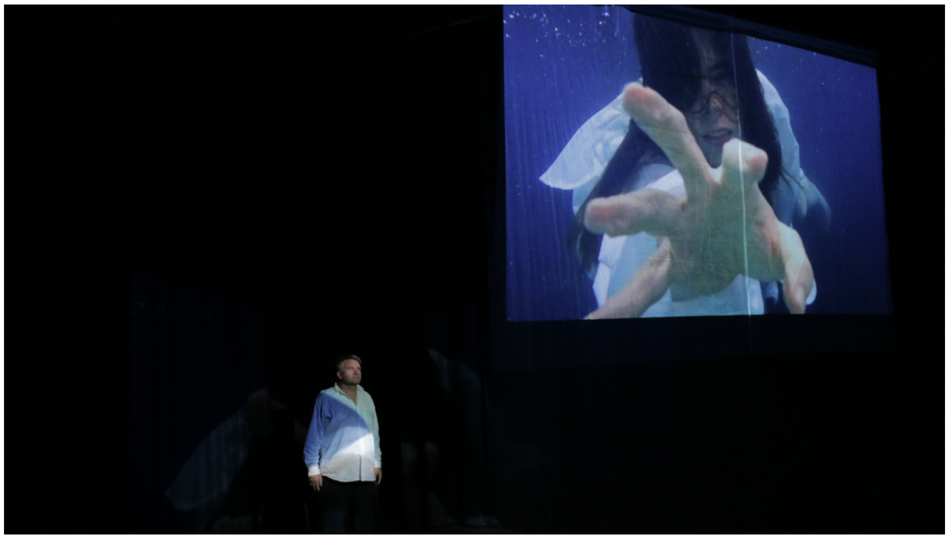


FIGURE 4.29.

Colours from the projected image pass through the screen and fall on the live actor.

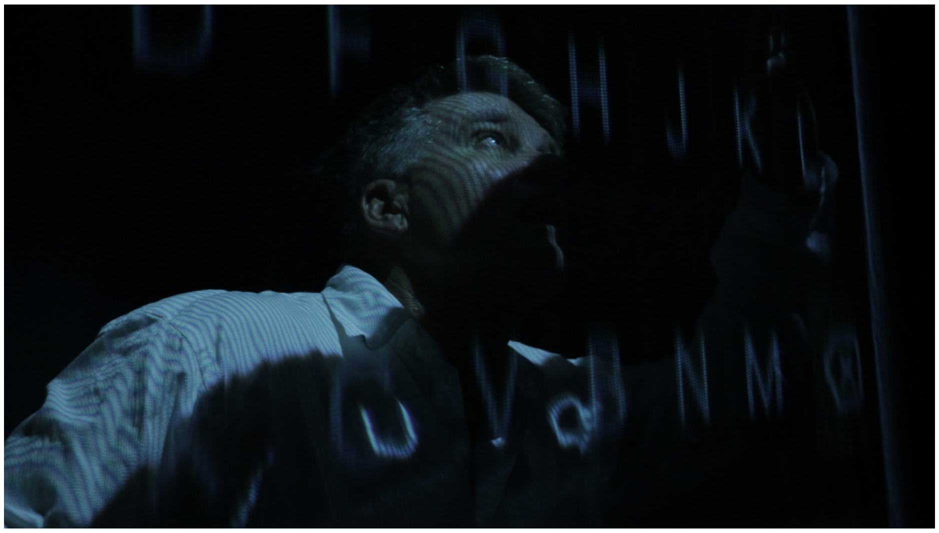


FIGURE 4.30.

Standing very close to the rear of a screen with an image projected by the ultra-short throw projector results in little of the image hitting the actor's face.

in showing close-up images in ways that avoided reference to television or cinema screens and the weight of expectation that might accompany this.

This complex arrangement of screens and projected images constituted the physical space of the set. It was an intimate space bounded by darkness. The live actor could be positioned in front, behind or between screens. My design meant that the character, Polonius, was also metaphorically in an uncertain and changing relationship with the space. At times, he was talking directly to a projection and at others he was between projections of characters. Gertrude and Ophelia were trying unsuccessfully to communicate with each other and Polonius was positioned between them and unable to make his presence felt by either. He was stranded in a liminal space between projections and I found that his presence bridged the gap for the audience. The gauze screens literally enabled the illumination of the live actor and the merging of images of the technologically created co-characters with his embodied presence. He became a screen for them.

Embedding the live actor within the screens

In addition to interposing the actor between images, we experimented with using video and audio recordings of the character of Polonius as projections. At one point in the play the AI usurps his face and uses it as an avatar. This unsettles Polonius and he cannot bear it when three uncanny versions of himself look down on and surround him from the screens. The AI also quickly masters Polonius's voice and generates speech that resembles his. I designed this colonisation of Polonius's image and sound to feel disturbingly parasitic (Figure 4.32).

The AI then responds to Polonius's objections by creating an avatar of a young Polonius, which is only slightly less uncanny (Figure 4.33).

In this experiment I also explored the potential of a prologue using cinematic techniques. This provided an opportunity to further embed Polonius in the video and audio spaces of the work. I recorded a soundtrack, speaking a collection of Shakespearean lines in an increasingly distracted tone. Some were Shakespeare's lines for Polonius, others were adapted from those of Hamlet or Ophelia. The imagery that accompanied these words was designed to appear as decaying, distracted memories of the end of Polonius's life and his funeral (Figure 4.34-39).

Additionally, some images represented things that Polonius felt but had not experienced with his senses, such as a feeling of being trapped in a liminal space, unable to enter or to communicate through an opaque barrier (Figure 4.39).

My collaboration with cinematographer Nicholson proved extremely valuable for this experiment and included wide-ranging explorations. In Figure 4.40 Nicholson can be seen discussing how to frame a shot of the arras, which is a tapestry hung as a decoration. In *Hamlet*, Polonius hides behind an arras to eavesdrop and is stabbed through the cloth.

I also collaborated with a drone videographer, Justin Matthews and shot images of Polonius floating, surrounded by an expanse of sea (Figure 4.41, Figure 4.42). The footage was shot at up to a height of 60 metres and was technically difficult to achieve with winds buffeting the aircraft. I processed the video in postproduction to make it seem as though there was no shore nearby.

I had been watching a video essay by Daniel Crowley (2017) on Darren Aronofsky's use of sound and been inspired by the sound of dripping blood prefiguring the revelation that a man in his film *Pi* (1998) was standing bleeding in a train station. In the prologue to this iteration of my play, I added the sound of dripping throughout as a sign that the story would take place in a space where there was coldness, too much water and possibly even dripping blood. The echoes of water dripping in a cave evoked a space with unseen boundaries in the dark. This ambient sound and the cool colours of the lighting helped to set a mood for the

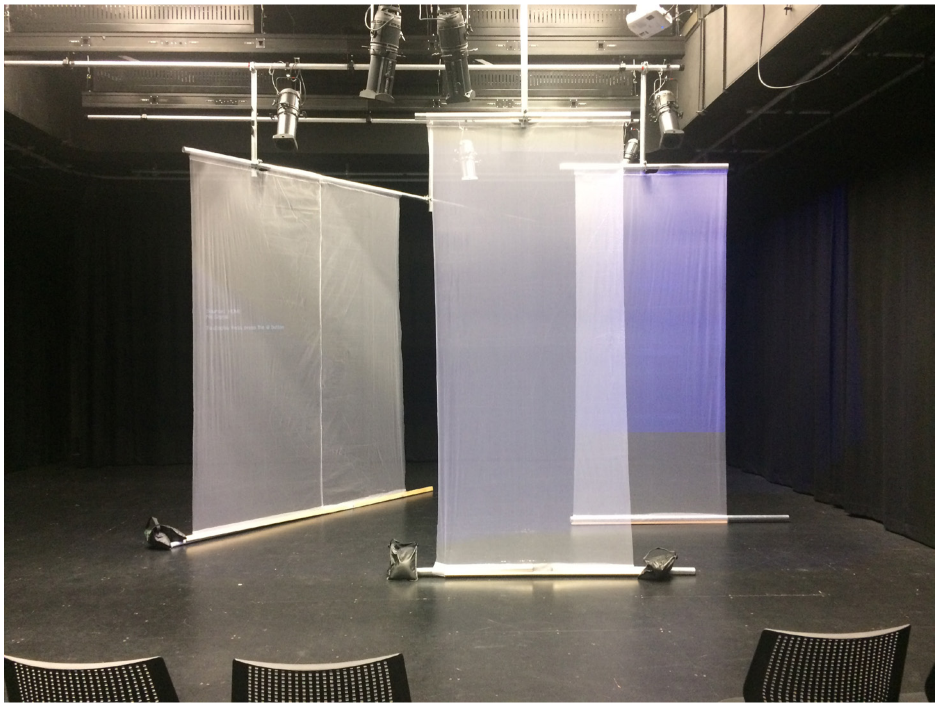


FIGURE 4.31.

Experiments toward final screen positions.

piece. These techniques were designed to embed Polonius's image, memories and psychological state in the consciousness of the audience. Because the prologue's images and sound were immersive and visceral they also served to orient me, waiting in the wings, to enter as Polonius.

The functions for the prologue noted above were also inspired by my experience of Toneelgroep's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (van Hove, 2013). Watching their performance in a foreign language I found myself responding more to the nuances of tone of voice, body language and the relationship between screened elements and live actors. I noted in this work the times when the actors stepped away from the realism of the action but remained as commentators or observers. This technique, not dissimilar to the chorus in classical Greek theatre, did not dislocate

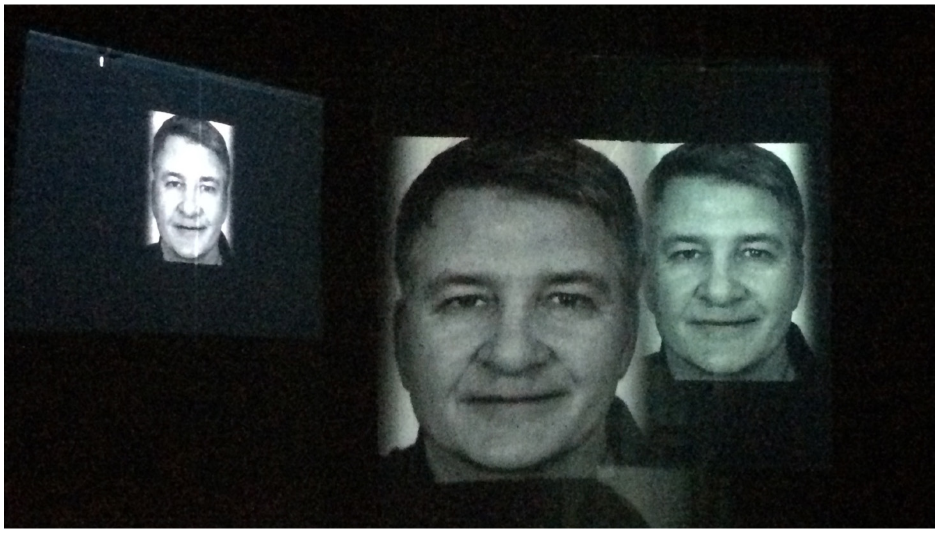


FIGURE 4.32.

The AI uncannily usurps Polonius's image as an avatar.

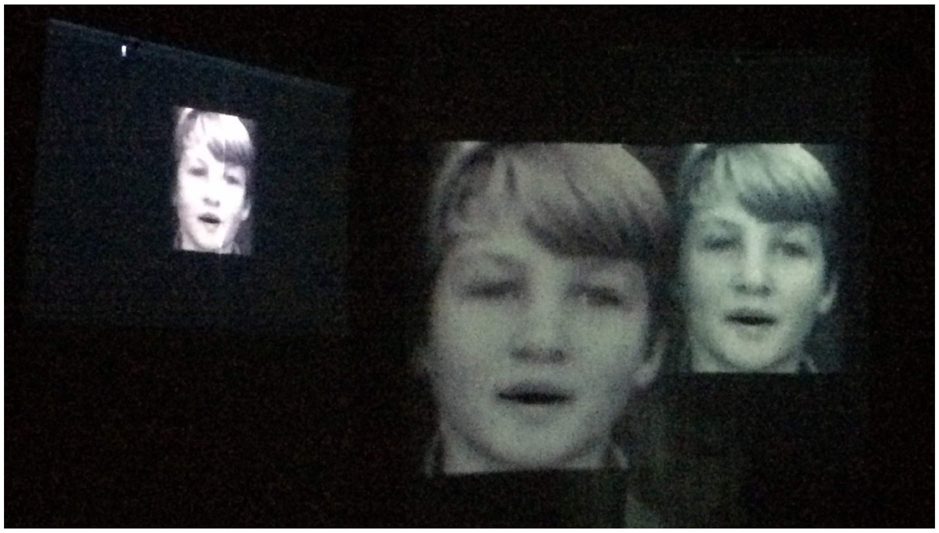


FIGURE 4.33.

The AI as a young version of Polonius.

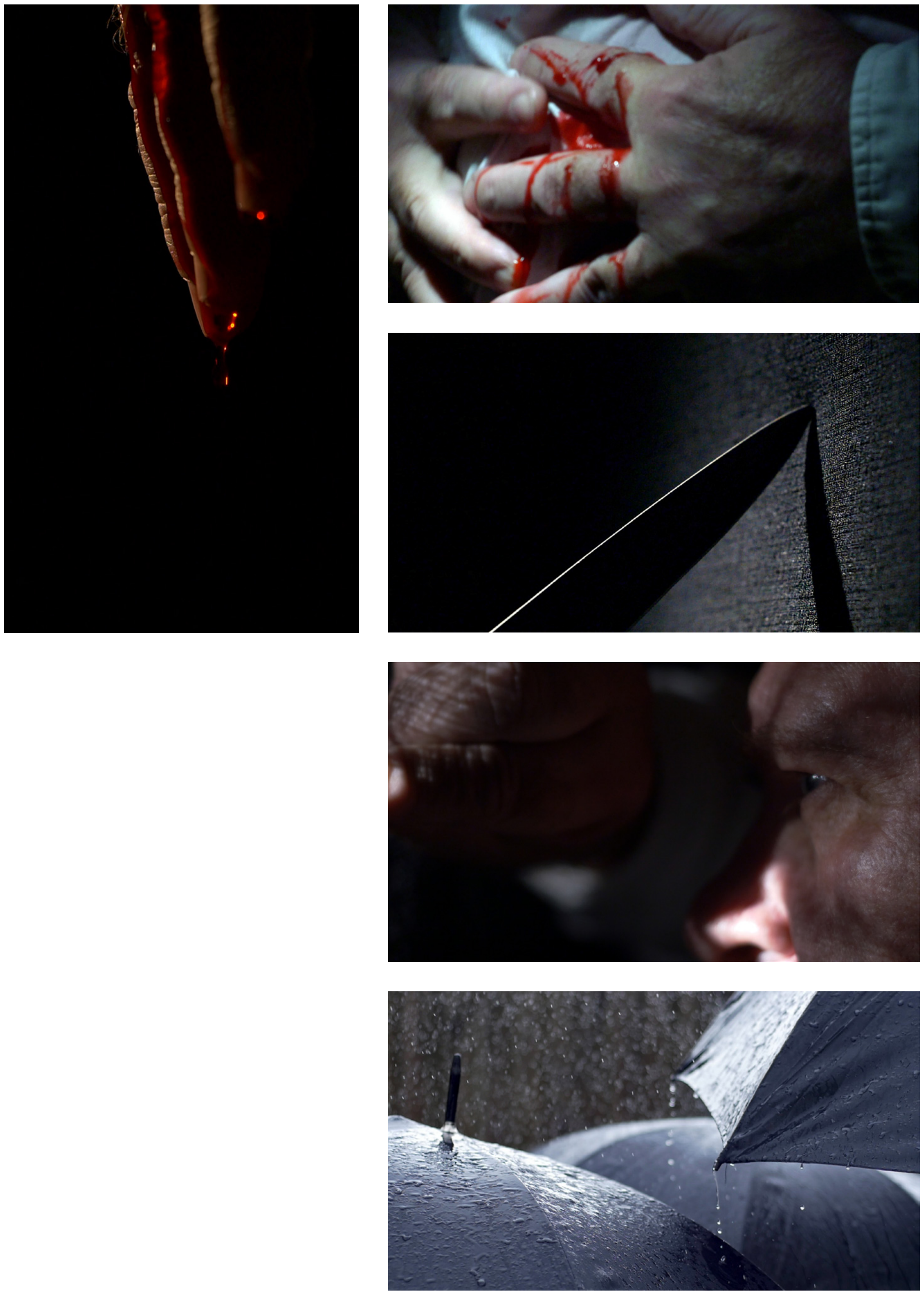


FIGURE 4.34-38
Video grabs from *Foolish Prating Knave*.

my sense of empathy for the characters. Likewise, I noted a certain heightened style and theatricality in the production did not reduce my empathetic engagement. Experiencing how these elements could work enabled me to explore heightened theatricality. However I chose to locate the prologue within the world of the play by justifying it dramaturgically as flashes of memory. The impressions of Polonius projected in the prologue included images of his death and funeral and these were not things that he could have experienced during what we consider to be normal life. The logic of this was not meant to be clear to the audience at the beginning of the play. However, I had an expectation that they might have been familiar with the filmic convention of a prologue that was designed to orient them to the tone of the piece.

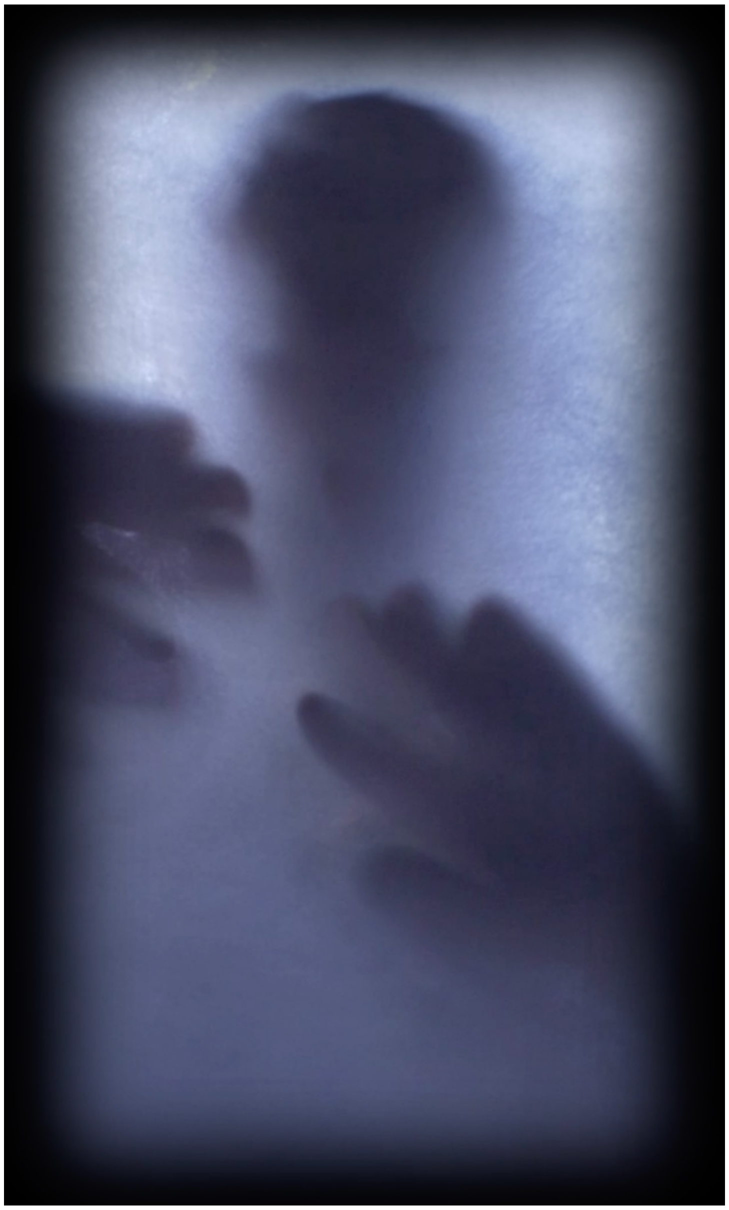


FIGURE 4.39.

A video image intended to evoke a feeling of desperate encroachment from a liminal space.

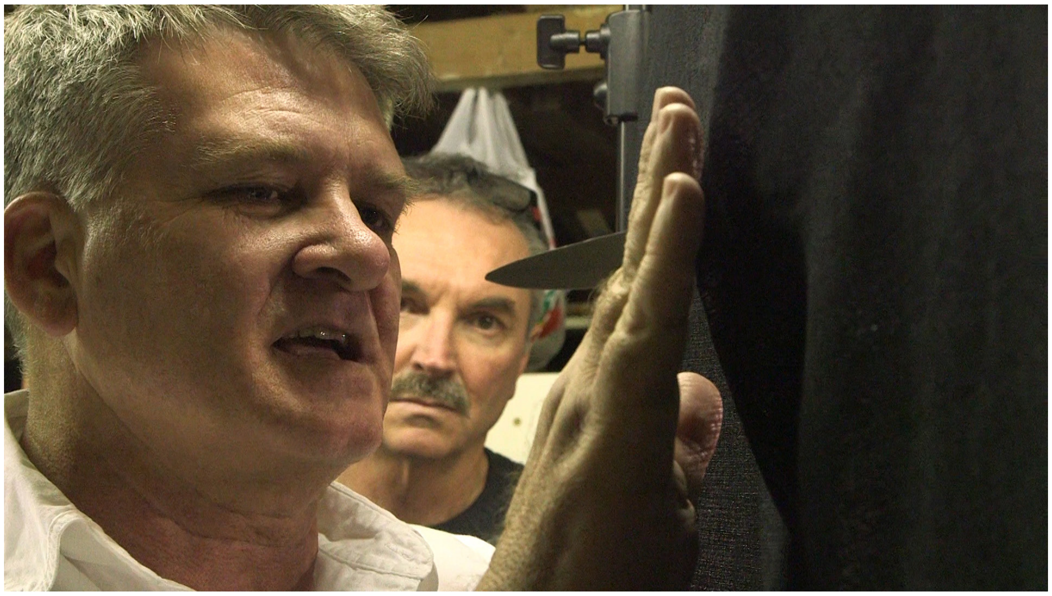


FIGURE 4.40.

Cinematographer Nicholson and actor Brannigan discuss a shot of a knife stabbing through the arras.

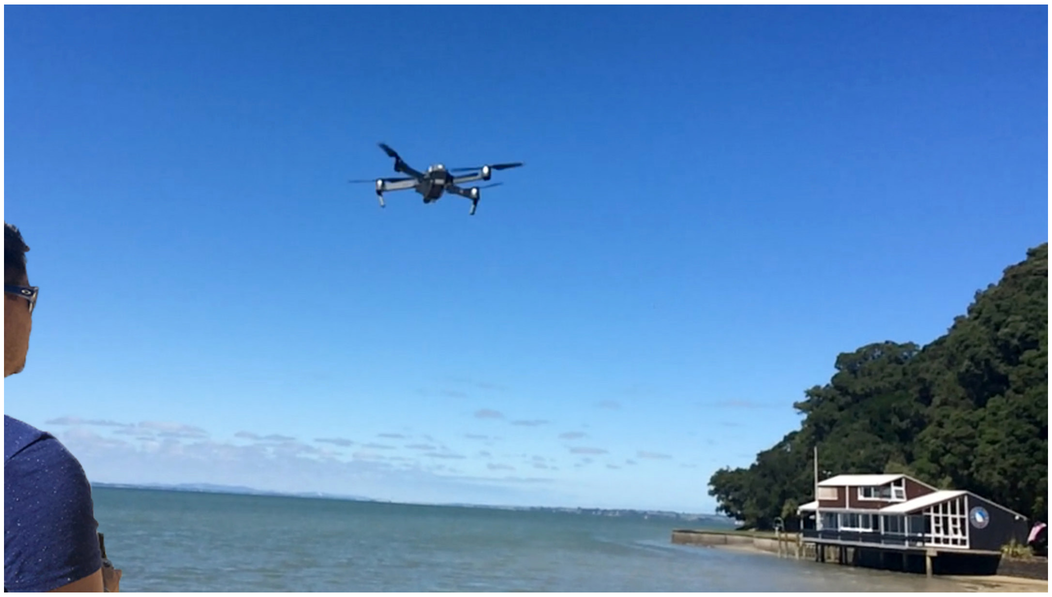


FIGURE 4.41.

Drone videographer Justin Mathews shooting Polonius in the sea at French Bay, Auckland, March 13, 2017.

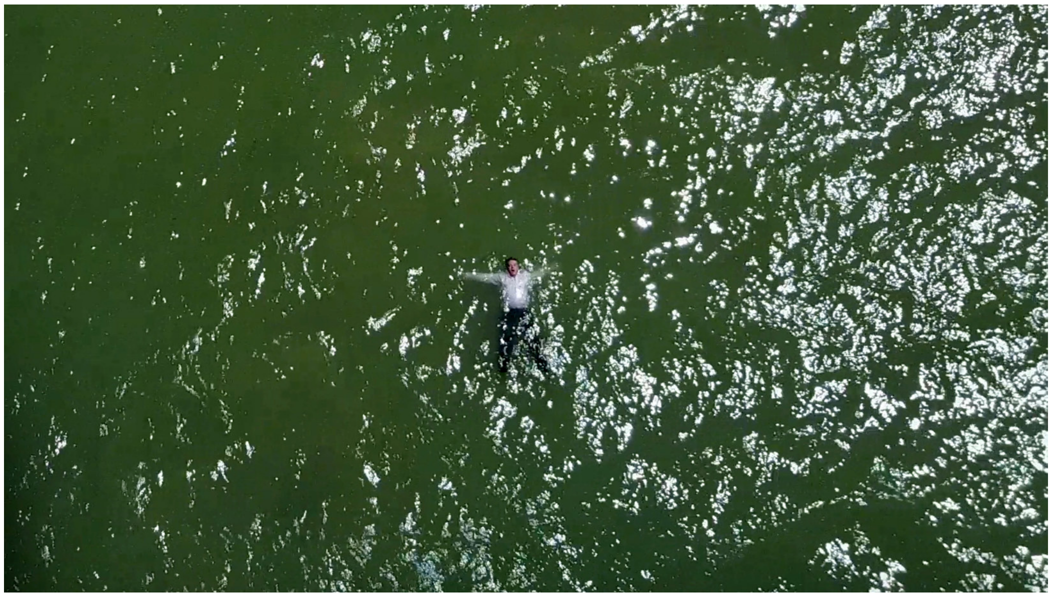


FIGURE 4.42.

Polonius awakes, floating in an endless green body of water.

Endowing technologically created co-characters with a sense of being alive

In acting and improvisation exercises there is a technique called endowment. This technique revolves around one actor performing an action (or saying something) that gives the other actor a state or status for the rest of the exercise. The endowment creates a relationship between the two actors. I determined to test whether the same principle could apply to a pre-recorded character. In rehearsal, I found that if I were to vary what I said to the pre-recorded character then the relationship itself would vary in my perception. Despite the fact that the recording could not be altered, the relationship itself, in so far as it was initiated by my action, could change. This meant that in my imagination, when I was acting with a pre-recorded character, I could set up an interchange and respond with spontaneity. The aim of every interaction on stage is for it to be lived anew each time it is performed. This involves pushing a knowledge of the script to the back of the actor's consciousness and listening intently for an answer. The pre-recorded response is far more prescriptive than a live reaction, but it nevertheless fulfils the same pattern. The presence and engagement of the live actor creates a sense of spontaneity and interaction that lends credibility to the arrangement.

These experiments resulted in substantial change to the spatial dimension of the play. In a way, they created higher levels of immersion both for me as an actor and for the audience's perception of the complex relationships within the work. This iteration focused on revision of the physical and conceptual context of the space. It was framed as a rehearsed reading so that the consideration of designing a new set and media for the prologue could take priority.

The audience of 30 people provided feedback on both the cohesion of the narrative and the new spatial relationships I had designed for it. A feedback session after the performance was recorded and I later analysed this and reflected on how the audience perceived the changes I had made to the design. Feedback on the arrangement of gauze screens and my position within them was favourable. Audience members commented on the disturbing nature of some images and how they felt that they were in a suspended amorphous space when colourful screensaver images snaked across all three screens and bled through on to the walls and floor. The audio levels were considered by some to be too low for the size of the space and I determined to experiment with different speaker arrangements to maximise the acoustic properties of the theatre.

I was concerned about the shape of the narrative and whether the new prologue might be too serious to allow the audience to appreciate the dark humour written into the script. Audience members who had seen the previous iteration commented that they did find it less humorous. Others were somewhat confused by the ending. We had written alternative endings and I felt dissatisfied with the gradual death that I chose for this performance. It seemed unmotivated and too convenient as an end to the narrative. Since the style of psychological realism was key to the project, I chose to experiment with a new, more enigmatic ending in the final iteration. There were also suggestions that the prologue contained images that lacked subtlety and so worked against the mood I was trying to set, and that the number of Shakespearean lines, spoken by Polonius in a distressed state, gave an impression that the heightened nature of the language was not being honoured. Redesigning the prologue imagery and delivery of Shakespearean language, as well as establishing a visual presence for Polonius in it, became a goal for the next iteration.

Milne's operation of the lights and media cues proved extremely valuable, freeing me up to concentrate on acting. Dispensing with the laptop as a stage prop allowed me to move about the space. Utilising projections of a keyboard meant that I could position myself to convey my response to the typing to maximum effect. We explored the use of a live camera feed and lighting to accommodate it to carry forward into a new version of the prologue. Both Milne and Nicholson saw potential in the draft prologue and suggested improvements to imagery and lighting. Walsh suggested that my movements within the space were too tentative and that more precise use of positioning to enable the audience to see me through layers of imagery would be effective. All of these suggestions provided inspiration for improving the final iteration but the greatest need was for refinement to the acting style to find a way of balancing the heightened language and the heightened nature of the screened material with a realist level of live performance.

Performance experiment 7: Development of the culminating iteration of Foolish Prating Knave and presentation for examination at AUT, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, July 2018

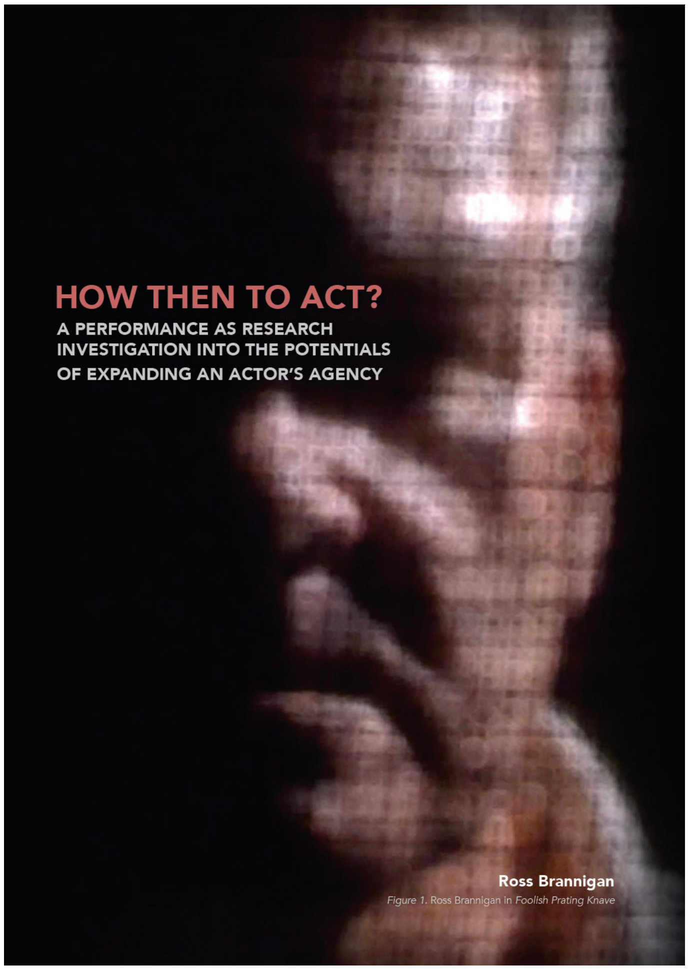
CONTEXT

Experiment 7 was the final iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave*. It was presented to examiners and an audience of 20 people in AUT's Live Performance Lab on July 16, 2018. It constituted the site of the culmination of the inquiry. This iteration of the work was shaped through refinements to the script, acting and the digital media.

These refinements took five months, beginning immediately after the January performance of Experiment 6. Decision-making was influenced by the feedback received and by my own reflection.

FIGURE 4.43.

The cover for programme notes of Experiment 7.



HOW THEN TO ACT?

A PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH INVESTIGATION INTO THE POTENTIALS OF EXPANDING AN ACTOR'S AGENCY

Ross Brannigan

Figure 1. Ross Brannigan in Foolish Prating Knave

CRITICAL CONCERNS

- First, I was interested to discover how my psychological-realist acting technique might be refined for a multifaceted, unreal world. This involved my acting on the stage, within the pre-recorded media in which I was embedded, and in the interaction between these forms.
- Second, I was interested in how I might practically integrate, counterpoint or connect the live and the screened.
- Third, I wanted to find ways in which I could build trust in the recorded elements that might result in a higher level of playful complicite.[108]
- Fourth, I wanted to explore if uncertainty might help to convey a sense of questioning.
- Finally, I sought to interrogate the extension of my agency as an actor into other fields of theatrical production, and to assess if this extension was useful in developing acting technique and trust.

Psychological realism in a multifaceted, unreal world

The acting technique I most often use in my practice is based on the prevailing techniques of psychological realism I have encountered in stage and screen work in Aotearoa New Zealand. As I have already noted, this technique has its roots in a British tradition influenced by the Russian theorist-practitioners of last century. It may also be configured to respond to a British theatrical concept of heightened style. This technique must adjust to the style of the script and the technical constraints of the medium. Once adjusted it can be applied to any script that involves a degree of realism in characterisation as long as those characters are in opposition to forces with conflicting goals. In *Foolish Prating Knave* I deliberately juxtaposed conflicting styles as a challenge to my technique. Acting with heightened Shakespearean language requires me to embrace a version of realism that accepts that language can be thought and delivered poetically, with rhythms and wit beyond our everyday experience. Barton, in *Playing Shakespeare* (1984, 2009), advises that a marrying has to occur between two traditions of acting; the modern and the Shakespearean. He argues that each actor must find the heightened language and not take it for granted. I would say that this involves subsuming the complex conceits and lyricism of Shakespeare's words within the imaginative space of the play.

"Given circumstances" is an acting term used to describe this complex universe of the play as it is written and produced. It includes the mise-en-scene, script and the style of the play. Actors must become absolutely familiar with the elements, conventions and rules of the given circumstances before they are able to push them to the back of their minds and operate with playful complicite within the imaginative space. According to Barton (2009), this poses a problem for modern actors in a Shakespearean play because the language and other conventions are different to their contemporary experiences. Therefore, he advises that a balance

[108] Complicite is a French word that, in its theatrical sense, suggests a collaborative, playful process of devising as well as a positive interplay of elements.

must be found. In *Foolish Prating Knave,* I complicated this dynamic by adding naturalistic language and the medium of digital media through video projections and audio. Playing opposite virtual characters is outside the experience of most actors in mainstream theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In order to explore these dynamics, I collaborated with two directors. The first, Quigan, had not seen Experiment 6, so she brought a fresh perspective. I explained the methods I was using and my question regarding psychological realism. Quigan is a director I have worked with many times and we both trained at Theatre Corporate Drama School. Her insight and experience with Shakespearean language were particularly valuable. An initial suggestion was to include my presence in the opening sequence in order to create an embodied link with the screened media. In a series of iterative experiments, I altered the pre-recorded material to make the presence of the character more explicit, linking images of him with an inner monologue. This was designed to balance the Shakespearean language with a degree of naturalism. This was possible because the character was musing rather than talking to anyone directly. He was remembering fragments of his life and not making them actively coherent. Quigan suggested that this approach might also help transition the audience from heightened verse to the prose of the main body of the play. We explored these solutions on the rehearsal floor. I found that balances between the heightened and realistic were possible given a belief in a world of the play where the character used both forms of address in different circumstances. He was grasping at memories and struggling to structure his thoughts with varying degrees of eloquence.

The second director was Walsh, who had performed the pre-recorded role of Gertrude. She collaborated with me on the final rehearsals for *Foolish Prating Knave*. Walsh challenged me to believe fully in the world of the play, to assert ownership of the space and screens and to react with psychological realism to the projected characters. This, of course, was something I knew intellectually and had planned for in my conceptualisation of the piece. However, to know it tacitly and to experience it as real, required a trust in the concept that I had not had. Discovering this trust during the rehearsal allowed me to engage with a sense of complicite and play with the various elements as though they were co-characters and not unresponsive pieces of stage technology.

Walsh encouraged me to enter with energy and attack, giving weight to my performance to match the heightened nature of the screens' presence. In this way, the realistic style was elevated or dilated to meet the levels of the digital media elements (and the Shakespearean language). I was able to move around the screens more freely allowing the audience to see me through the semitransparent screens where the technological co-character resided. This became a useful tool to connect with the screened elements in my mind. This approach essentially facilitated the use of the technique of psychological realism. I could listen and react to the other character and the audience could see and feel our spatial and emotional relationship. My response was spontaneous and changed each time the work was performed. Differences in my physical position or in my inflections changed the relationship between a projected character and my live character. Since a relationship depends on action and reaction and I was capable of varying both for

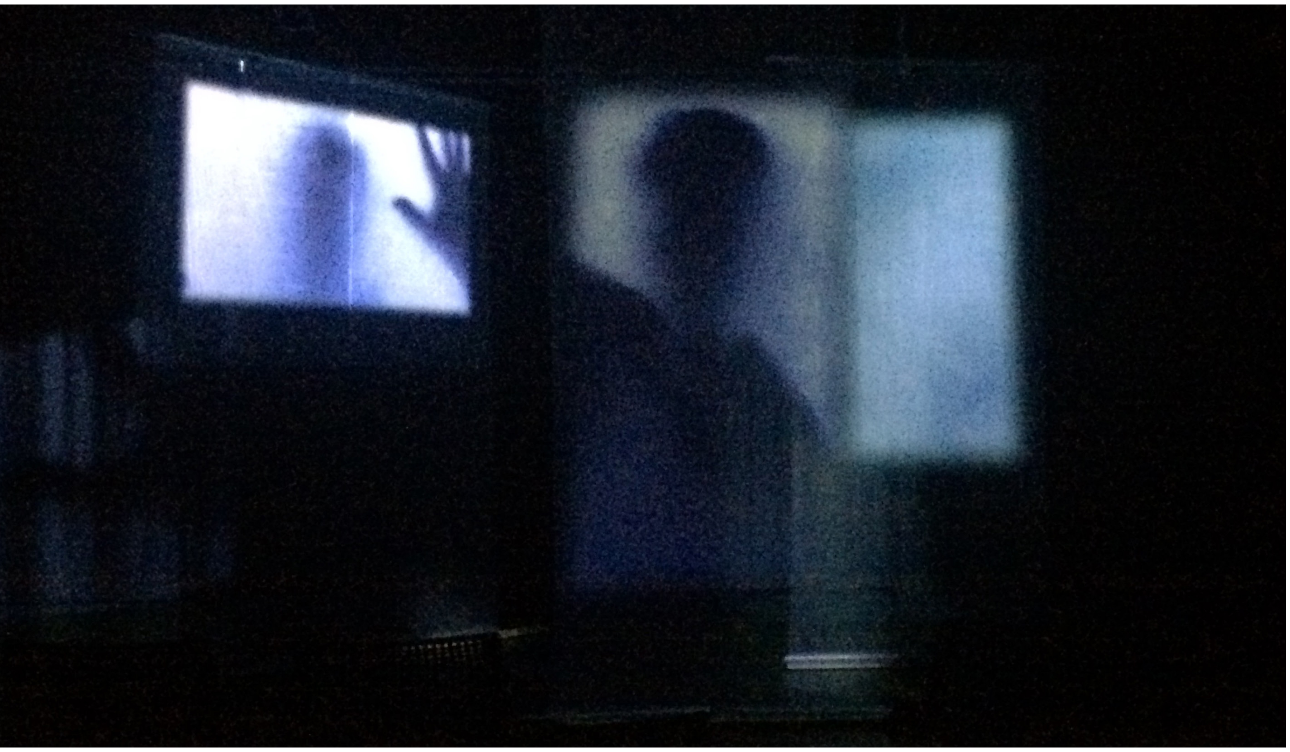


FIGURE 4.44.

Video images of a man trying to gain access through a frosted glass window are shown on three separate screens.

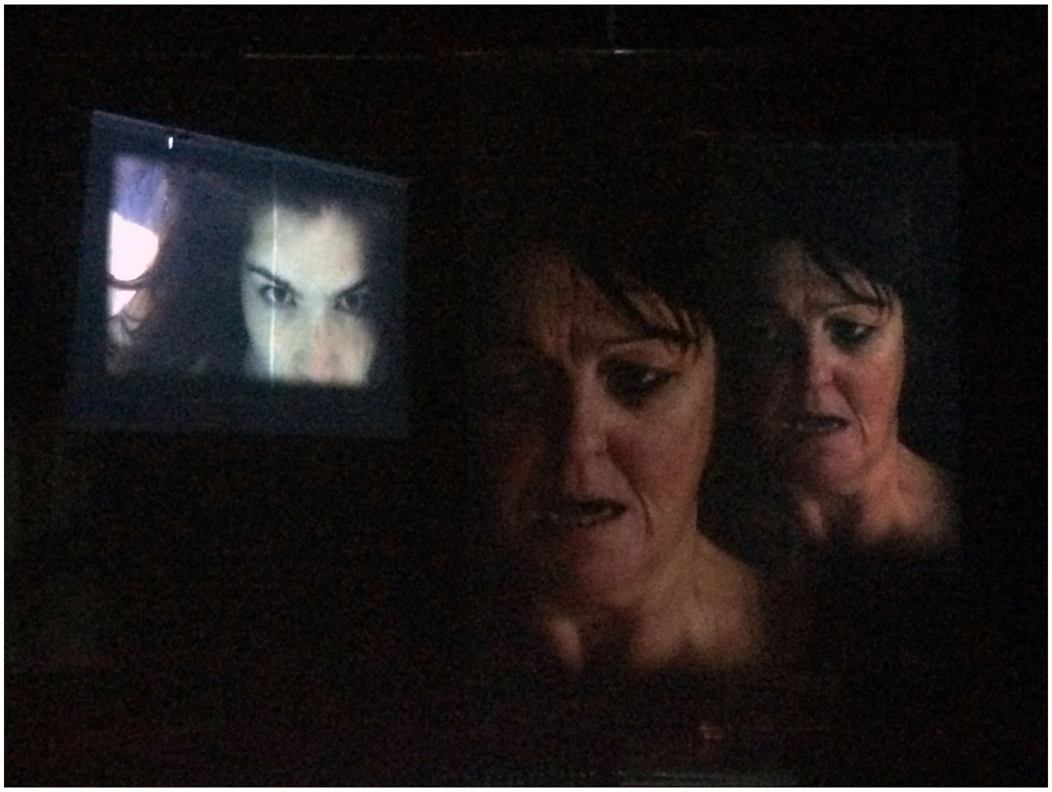


FIGURE 4.45

Gertrude, shown in two downstage screens, responds to the feeling that there is a presence behind her. Ophelia, clearly visible to the audience is projected on to the upstage screen.

my character, the relationship itself also changed. This relationship became unique in every performance, despite the fixed nature of the projection. The aliveness of the interaction could be said to exist in the intermedial space between the two sides of a conversation. In my interaction, by investing belief and activating a psychologically realist action/reaction, I endowed the projections with liveness. Furthermore, the actions of the other characters, pre-recorded as they were, could be cued with nuanced variations in timing by the production's operator.

The value of trust

I found that trust in the dramatic validity of the given circumstances allowed me to believe in the world of the play and to live truthfully under these imaginary circumstances. This belief validated the use of the acting technique of psychological realism for performing live, for the camera (to create pre-recorded elements) and in my interaction with technologically created co-characters. The belief was aided by embedding myself within the technology.[109] This afforded a familiarity and a trust. By claiming the stage, moving around the screens and actively investing belief in them, I was able to play with their integration in the play.

The script

In Experiment 4 I had worked closely with Henderson to write the script, but in the last two iterations I adjusted the document and added a prologue without his involvement. The prologue was developed from its first iteration in Experiment 6 and sought to integrate more cinematic language while refining the spoken language and imagery. I wanted to construct and perform a type of overture that would prime the audience for the narrative to come but also disorient them and leave them questioning their belief in reality and the fixity of boundaries. The ending of the play was also altered. In Experiment 6 Polonius had collapsed but we decided that an ending where he despaired of being able to help his daughter or of getting meaningful answers from the AI would be more thought-provoking.

Integrating and counterpointing the cinematic and the live

The primary semantic unit of cinema is the shot and the most common way of transitioning from one shot to the next is through a cut. With the arrangement of three translucent screens within the three dimensions of the stage, I had the opportunity to expand this cinematic language into a theatrical space. Cinema controls the gaze of the audience by showing only a single shot at a time on a single screen. I decided to experiment with showing one, two or three shots, each starting and finishing at a time of my choosing. These shots were designed to reinforce each other (Figure 4.44).

The overlapping translucency of the screens allowed the images to connect and bleed into the set and play on the black curtains, the floor and the actor. At other times, I used the three screens to lead the viewer's eye from one side of the stage to the other by projecting shots in a sequence across them (Figure 4.45).

[109] I was embedded both literally, since I appeared and could be heard in the projections, and metaphorically. The long hours of filming, editing, grading, motion graphics and sound design infused a dimension of me within the play.

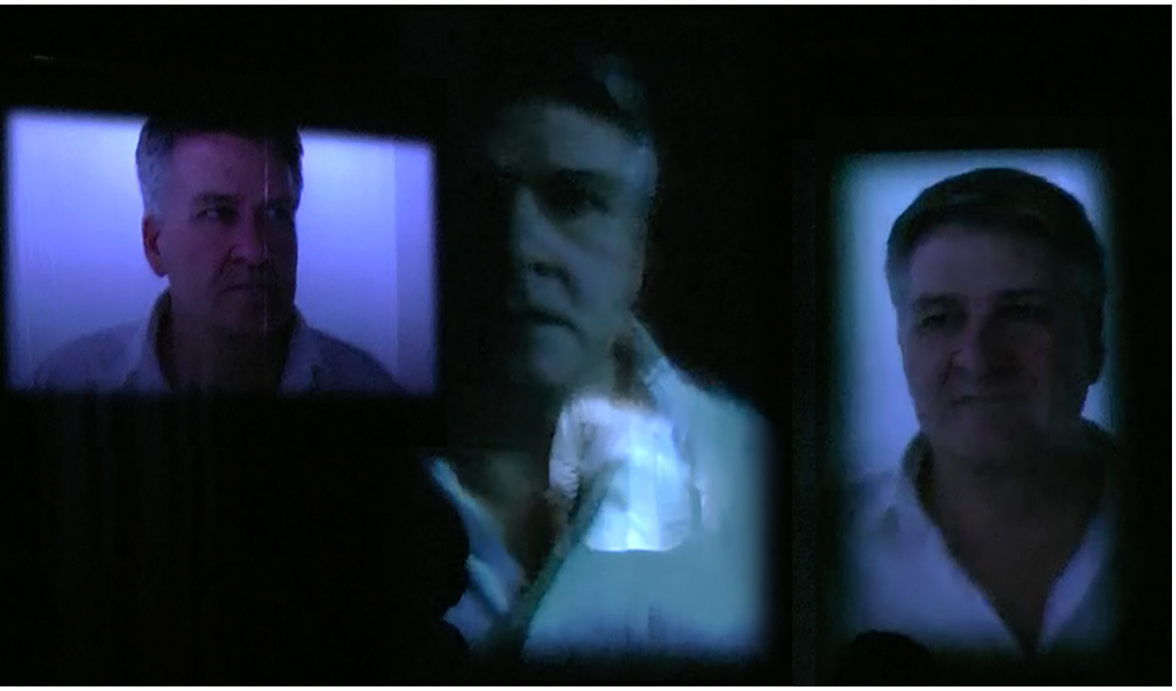


FIGURE 4.46

Three screened images of Polonius with him appearing live behind the central screen.

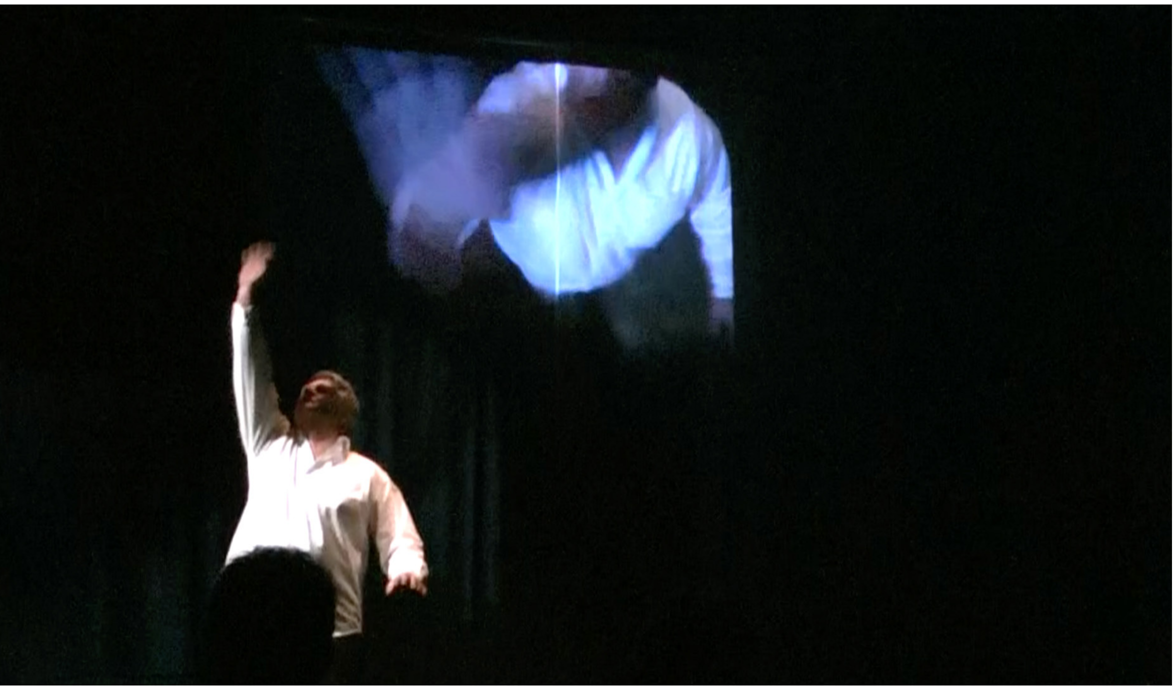


FIGURE 4.47.

Polonius, live on stage, discovers he is being filmed live.

At one point the screens became self-reflexive, with images of the man appearing on all three, as well as live on stage. A pre-recorded video of the man ran up to the centre screen and then a close-up image of him appeared on the stage left screen. The version at stage left then looked towards the centre screen and disappeared with the visual and aural disturbance of a glitch. Before this shot had completed, a further version of the man appeared in the stage right screen and also disappeared in a glitch. While this was taking place, the centre screen became complicated by a shadowed image of the man and the live actor appeared behind the screen. He then was thrust out into the light and his screened images were gone. However, another image quickly appeared. This was a live feed showing a security camera perspective of the live actor. This complex sequence using pre-recorded video, multiple screens and a live camera and actor was designed to disrupt the audience's trust in the delineation between stage and screen (Figure 4.46). The live actor was integrated with his images across three screens but also counterpointed because only one image could be live. This contrapuntal use connected the live and the screened and this was reinforced by the subsequent relaying of live footage of him on the screen (Figure 4.47).

Uncertainty

The purpose of this was to unsettle the audience and create a sense that a central concern of the narrative, mirrored by the purpose of the research, was to explore the interrelationship between live and mediated elements on stage. I was proposing in this construction that there was a fluidity and uncertainty of boundaries.

This uncertainty pervaded the play and the ending was designed to be unresolved in the sense that it was unclear to the audience whether the man was being tormented by an artificial intelligence or whether he was simply confusing himself with unanswerable questions. In adopting this approach, my aim was to provoke ongoing questioning in the minds of the audience and to foreground the audience's place in the conversation that is theatre.

Establishing tone

A further development of the design of Experiment 7 was the inclusion of music to underscore the prologue.[110] The use of nondiegetic music is a cinematic technique that is infrequently used during a realist play. In this iteration of the prologue I experimented with a foreboding tone and a driving rhythm. This provided pacing to edit the playback of the video to. The presence of rhythm provided by the music was continued in Shakespeare's verse. The prologue was designed to create a dark mood but also to set up the contrapuntal humour that would follow in Polonius's responses to finding projections of a live security camera. This was partly in response to Kattenbelt's (2008) "both-and" way of describing intermedial theatre. Throughout *Foolish Prating Knave* I aimed to create a sense that meaning lay in diverse elements and in the interrelation between them.

[110] The Portal by Origami Pigeon, accessed July 11, 2018 from https://www.premiumbeat.com/royalty-free-tracks/the-portal

Increased agency

Experiment 7 represented the culmination of the increased agency process that I explored throughout the inquiry. I have recognised the limitations of taking on most roles in pursuit of a good performance outcome. Experiment 3 had shown me that directing myself could result in an actor-centric production that lacked the value that an outside, more objective perspective could provide. Experiment 4 revealed that there are limitations to my ability to be continuously invested in living truthfully if I have to simultaneously operate the show. Therefore, in this experiment, I chose to heighten the process of collaboration by working co-creatively with two directors and an operator. The operator, Milne, also worked with me in designing the lighting, which was provided by both lighting instruments and projectors. He viewed himself as a co-performer in a sense and varied the pacing of cues responsively during performance. In turn, I felt able to trust that he could rescue me by switching cues if I made a mistake.

Limitations aside, the method of giving myself agency to contribute to the production and to collaborate with other theatre-makers in ways that would not normally be afforded to an actor, proved invaluable. It brought empowerment, relaxation in the knowledge that there is a sense of control and trust in the given circumstances that I had helped create. This allowed me to be generous and to take risks in my performance. While performing the role of Polonius I felt invested in the technologically created co-characters in a deep and unconscious way. I was functioning in a world I had created that contained both manifestations of myself and those whose circumstances in the play impacted upon my condition.

Some of this familiarity was achieved because, having directed the shoots of Ophelia and Gertrude, I set up opportunities to interact with the recordings. Playing the character live I discovered more possibilities through embodied exploration. Therefore, I had a depth of understanding and tacit experience to call upon during performance that I would not have had if I had not been so intimately involved in their creation. In accordance with the heuristic approach I took in the inquiry, I drew the elements of my intense personal interest into myself for Experiment 7 and made the iterative improvements out of myself. In this undertaking, I embedded myself in the process and in the media.

This opportunity to revisit and refine, incorporating the findings of earlier experiments proved valuable in the development of the work and of my understanding. I doubt that any actor, without the knowledge of how to conceptualise and realise the technologically created co-characters, would have this same depth of experience because they would be unlikely to be able to feel the depth of connection that collaboration with the creation of the character afforded. However, this is unknowable without further research, which is outside the scope of this current inquiry.

CHAPTER **5**

ILLUSTRATED SCRIPT

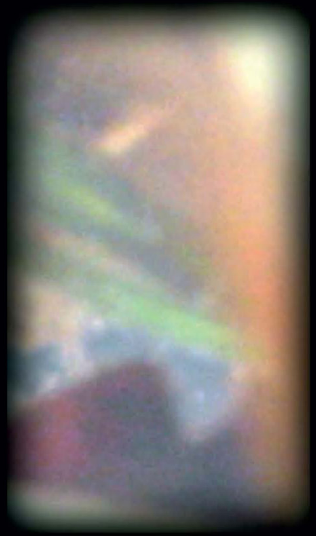
CHAPTER 5

ILLUSTRATED SCRIPT

FOOLISH PRATING KNAVE

Written by Ross Brannigan & Gary Henderson

A 4 minute introductory video with images of a man (Polonius) hiding behind a black curtain, dripping umbrellas, flurries of someone falling into water, a knife, blood, someone trying to get through a translucent screen, Polonius, rehearsing his public persona, builds to him confused and babbling.



I have, my lord, wrung from you my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon your will I seal'd your hard consent:
I do beseech you, give me leave to go.

these few precepts in my memory

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice

For the apparel oft proclaims the man

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine ownself be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it

you speak like a green girl,
I will stay till ye come.

Let come what comes

Too much of water hast thou
And therefore I forbid my tears.

I am gone, I am gone,
And they cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on my soul!

The man stands

MAN
Don’t panic. Retrace your steps.
I was ...
There was something important.
I must warn-- um ...

But it’s gone.

I need to collect my thoughts.
Green. A shadow’s shadow.
Connect my thoughts.

He stares at the screens

Do we know what we are?

old fashioned screen text appears.

TEXT
1. Animal
2. Mineral
3. Vegetable
_?

A cursor flashes beneath. A keyboard is projected on the screen. The man reaches out and types.

MAN
1
Hits return.

TEXT
Are you a fish Y/N??
_?

MAN
N

TEXT
What is a Yes/No question that will distinguish you from a fish?
(Yes = You)

MAN
(types) Do you have legs.

TEXT
1. Animal
2. Mineral
3. Vegetable
_?

MAN
1

TEXT
Do you have legs Y/N?
_?

MAN
Y

1. ANIMAL
2. MINERAL
3. VEGETABLE
_?

1. ANIMAL
2. MINERAL
3. VEGETABLE
_?

WHAT IS A
YES/NO
QUESTION
THAT WILL
DISTINGUISH
YOU FROM
A FISH?

HAVE

(YES = YOU)

ARE YOU A
FISH
Y/N?

_?

DO YOU HAVE
LEGS

DO YOU HAVE
LEGS

TEXT Are you a horse Y/N?
_?

MAN N

TEXT What is a Yes/No question that will distinguish you from a horse? (Yes = You)
_?

MAN Do you have two legs?

TEXT 1. Animal
2. Mineral
3. Vegetable
_?

MAN 1

TEXT Do you have two legs Y/N?
_?

MAN Y.

TEXT Are you a bird Y/N?
_?

MAN (speaks) No!

The AI makes a distorted sound. The screen behind shows an audio waveform.
Then again. And again. With each repetition the sound becomes more like the word “No.”
Finally it is clear enough for a sentence spoken in this voice to be intelligible.

AI (speaking) What is a Yes/No question that will distinguish between you and a bird. Yes equals you.

Now, both man and AI are speaking. Each time the AI speaks, the “voice” is clearer.

MAN Do you have hands?

AI Do you have hands?

MAN Yes.

AI Are you a gorilla?

MAN No!

AI What is a question that will distinguish between you and a gorilla, Yes equals you.

ARE YOU A
HORSE
Y/N?
_?

Q W E R T Y U I O P
A S D F G H J K L
Z X C V B N M
123
space
return

MAN Are you a man?

AI Are you a man?

MAN God!

AI God?

MAN Yes! Yes, I am a man.

The AI's voice is close to human. But not quite.

AI What is god?

The man stares. The screen is blank.

The AI forms an image of itself. The messy tangled lines settle into a more or less consistent pattern, flickering and sparking.

MAN Who are you?

AI We know who we are but not who we may become.

MAN I don't have time for riddles! I need to find ... aargh!
A groan of frustration.
I don't know who you are. What you are.

A pattern on screen pulses as the AI scans the man. The AI begins to represent itself on the screen, adopting a progression of visible forms, trying to find a suitable avatar. Then a succession of human faces. This display is littered with interjections from the man.

MAN What? ... Is that who you-- ... No, that can't be right.
No. Wait.
Not like that ...
... and so on.

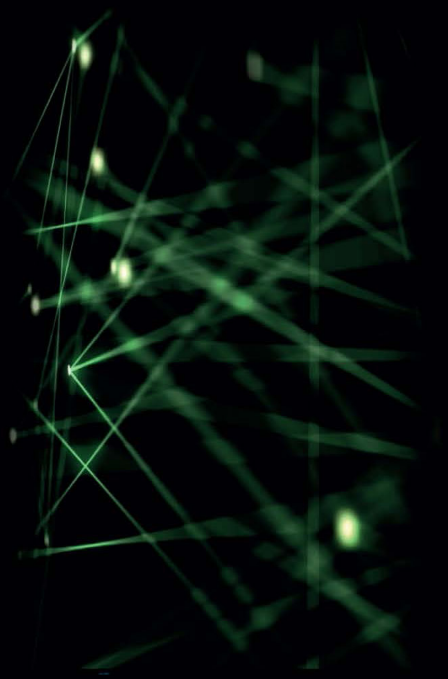
Finally the AI settles on an image which is the man himself.

MAN That's not you.

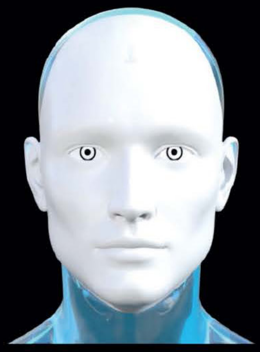
AI How about ...

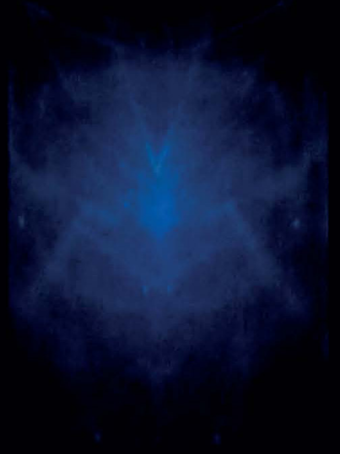
Morphs to something robotic.

MAN No!



avatar
/ˈavətɑː/ 🔊





The AI reverts.

MAN But not that's not you either.

AI I thought you would like it.

MAN It's a copy.

AI Yes it is. Everything is a copy.

MAN It's unnerving. It is like talking to myself.

AI Maybe something ... lesser. The wisdom of innocence.

The AI morphs backwards to a 10-year-old version of the man.

MAN I don't have time for this.

AI Then let's be getting on. Let's find ...

MAN Yes.

AI Who?

MAN I need to warn ... a woman…

AI Who?

MAN Argh! 'Tis in my memory locked!

The MAN tries to think.

AI I have some rights of memory in this kingdom.

MAN I think it's a woman

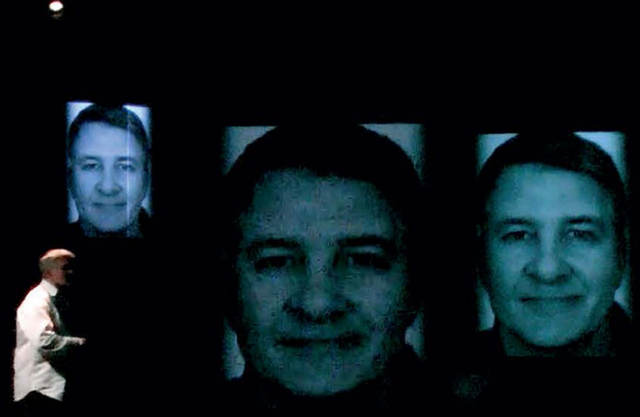
The AI presents a stream of images and sounds

AI What woman then?

The AI generates a stream of images of women. The MAN watches the images.
Makes random protests (used as appropriate)

MAN No.
Not that kind of woman. None of these.
... and others, until finally:

AI What woman then?



MAN A ... a girl.

The AI shows a stream of images of girls. Again, none of them is who the MAN is looking for.

MAN No, no…

AI What does she call herself?

MAN She speaks like a green girl.

A cavalcade of images of green-coloured girls.

MAN No, not green like that.

AI Then green how?

MAN Another meaning.

The AI speaks the words, and we see them on the screen

AI viridescent
verdurous
virescent
verdant
aquamarine
aqua

MAN Aqua.

AI Aqua?

MAN No, not that sort of green.

AI Chartreuse
Jade
Mint
Olive
Shamrock
Moss
Myrtle

MAN Myrtle!

AI Myrtle.

MAN Myrtle ... um ... hurtle, turtle ...

AI Gertle ...

MAN Gertle! No ... gert ... Goethe ... Gertrund ... Gertrude. Gertrude!

VIRIDESCENT
VERDUROUS
VIRESCENT
VERDANT
ACQUAMARINE

AI Gertrude!

The AI streams a series of different “Gertrudes.”

MAN No … no … (etc)

One that flashes by depicts Gertrude.

MAN That one!

The stream rolls on a bit then freezes.

MAN Back. Back.

The AI ticks the images backwards. The Queen reappears.

MAN Yes!

AI The green girl?

MAN No. That’s … someone … someone I know.

The AI does some searching, and comes up with a security camera shot of Gertrude.
The video plays. Gertrude enters distraught, talking to herself.

MAN What is she doing?

AI Is she your wife?

MAN I don’t think so.

He watches Gertrude.

MAN That’s her chamber! I remember!

Gertrude approaches and closes curtains across the lens.
She speaks fragments of Ophelia’s lines.
She drinks

GERTRUDE Lord, we know what we are,
There’s fennel for you, and columbines. There’s rue for you
And here’s some for me…
Oh you must wear your rue with a difference.

She wipes her tear-stained makeup off

CAM 4
CTFID
CHANNEL 1
TCR 11-10 19:37:09

MAN Is this happening now?
AI What is now?
MAN Right now. At this moment.
AI What other moment is there?

The curtains reopen. Gertrude is staring with horror in her eyes.
Behind her we see Ophelia swimming towards the camera, reaching out.

MAN That's my green girl!

Gertrude closes the curtain.

MAN How long… is this happening now? What…
AI You have a daughter?
MAN Yes. One fair daughter and no more.
AI You have a daughter?
MAN Yes – I have while she is mine. Can you take me back?
AI Back?
MAN I need to speak to her.
AI I can't take you back.
MAN I must warn her.
AI Would she take the fruits of your advice?
MAN Too much of water hast thou, poor ... my poor ...
AI What is her name?
MAN Ophelia. Poor Ophelia!

Gertrude in ECU as she drinks, cries, swipes her makeup off the table. She looks in the mirror as she makes up the speech then delivers it, interspersed with images of Ophelia underwater, trying to make contact.

GERTRUDE Will she never come again?
Will she never come again?
No, no, she is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
She never will come again…
She is gone, she is gone,
And we cast away moan,
God-a-mercy on her soul.

She misquotes Ophelia (4,5,183)

GERTRUDE They say she made a good end
Laughs

She misquotes Ophelia (4,7,163)

GERTRUDE She's drown'd
A willow…
A brook…
An accident, the branch broke… (4,7,165)
fantastic garlands…
sliver broke…
her clothes spread wide…
pulled the wretch... poor wretch... to...

Fully made up and in control she stands & delivers the speech with great skill and sympathy – it is her last practice

GERTRUDE There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

MAN How long has she been thus?

AI From now until now.

MAN Alas, then, she is drowned? Take me back!

AI I cannot take you back. There is only here.

MAN Is this not something more than fantasy? Take me back!

AI It is not nor it cannot come to good.

MAN We know not who we are, nor what we may become.
This, in obedience, has my daughter shown me.

The screen fades to black.
The MAN moves to the keyboard. He speaks what he is typing.
The AI speaks the text it displays on screen, using Y for Yes and N for No.
The AI speaks in a near-perfect version of the MAN's voice.

MAN Who are you?

AI That is not a Yes/No question.

MAN Are you sentient?

AI Yes.

MAN Are you intelligent?

AI Yes.

MAN Do you imagine?

AI Yes.

MAN Can you create?

AI Yes

MAN Do you dream?

AI Yes.

MAN Can you reproduce?

AI Yes.

MAN Do you love?

AI Yes.

MAN Do you cry?

AI Yes.

MAN Do you feel pain?

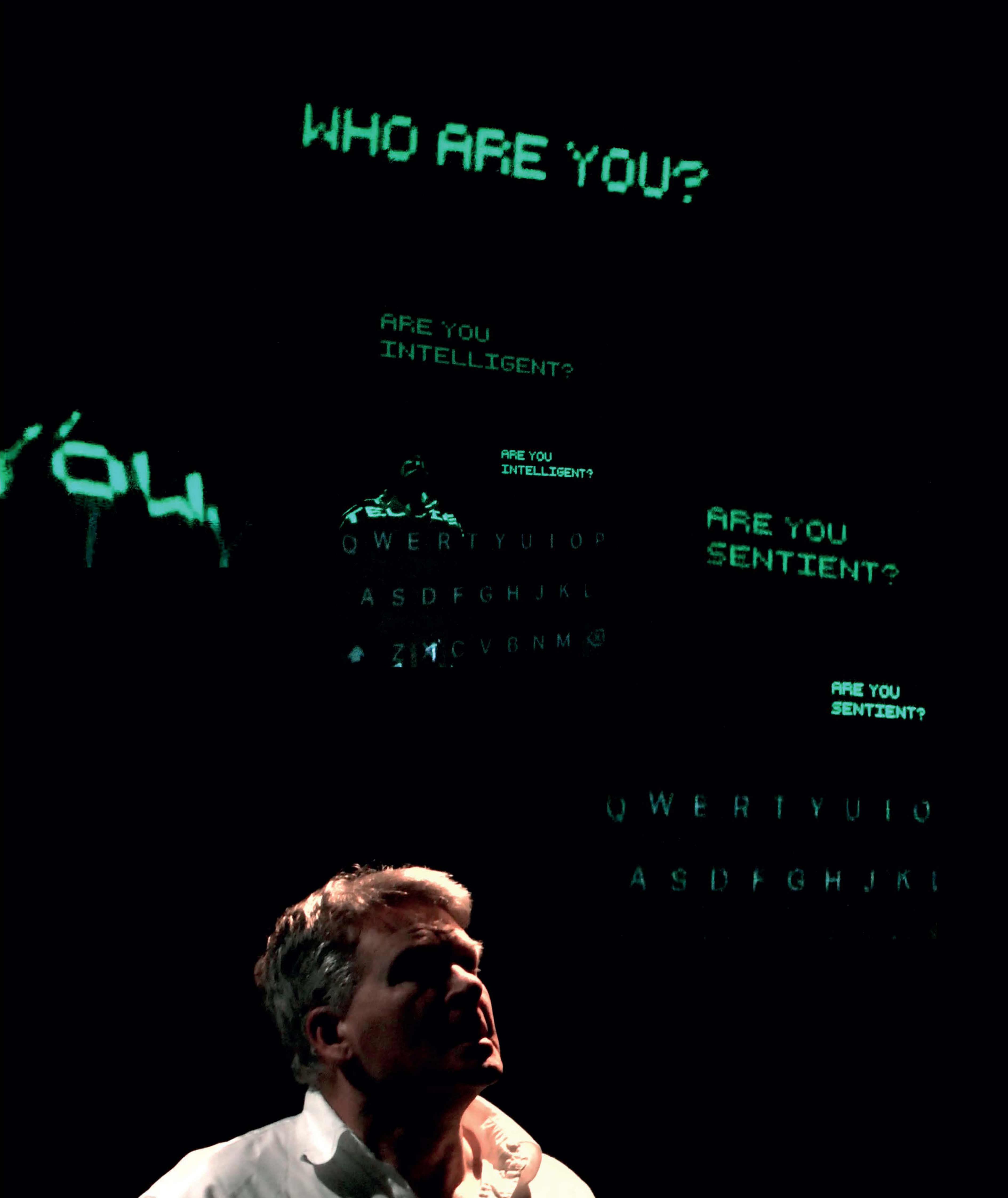
AI Yes.

MAN Do you have a soul?

AI Yes.

MAN Will you die?

AI No.


WHO ARE YOU?
ARE YOU INTELLIGENT?
YOU
ARE YOU INTELLIGENT?
QWERTYUIOP
ASDFGHJKL
ZXCVBNM
ARE YOU SENTIENT?
ARE YOU SENTIENT?
QWERTYUIO
ASDFGHJKL

MAN Are you God?

AI No.

MAN What is a Yes/No question that will distinguish you from god?

Silence. Blank screen. Then text appears. No voice.

TEXT Are you me?

MAN stares at it for a long time. Then types.

MAN Are you me Y/N
_?

A long silence. No response from the AI.
The Man is exhausted and, turning away, gives up.
Text appears as if being typed. No voice.

TEXT Do you lie Y/N?
_?

Then, below that ...

TEXT Y

The screen switches off.

END.

```
DO YOU LIE
Y/N?
_?

Y
```

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Introduction

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN IDEAS

This thesis is centred on a play, *Foolish Prating Knave*. The work was written and developed as a Performance as Research project. Through seven experiments, including four iterations of the production, the thesis sought to address the question:

> What contributions might I, as an actor, make to the wider theatre-making process given expanded agency and a focus on refining acting techniques in a highly technologised form of dramatic theatre?

The location of this research is mainstream theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand, (with its aesthetic preoccupation with heightened Shakespearean style and contemporary realism), and the research deals with a specific type of theatre that I have defined as intermedial-realist. This form values the complex integration of digital media elements and encompasses psychologically realist characters and narrative.

In *Foolish Prating Knave*, when Polonius realises that he cannot communicate with Ophelia and that he can neither warn nor save her, he is bereft. Adrift in a space where time is not strictly linear and where physically he is not fully connected, Polonius himself is liminal. My acting had to find a way to honour this, to inhabit that space. I needed to find a way to allow myself to be affected by mediatised and spatial inputs. My ability as an actor to empathise and to “live truthfully” as the character in each moment of performance had to function beyond the expectations of linearity. Cause and effect functioned in the techno-en-scene as did momentary chunks of linear time. For example, Polonius caused the AI character to respond to his rejection of its assumption of a visual and aural approximation of him. I also had to be cognisant of sight lines that would convey believability in the almost-connections of the visual. This implied positioning myself, as the actor, so that the audience could believe that I was making a connection with a screened character. Sometimes this positioning, for the benefit of the audience, was not spatially realistic for me. For example, in order for the audience to read my expressions as I typed on a projected keyboard, I had to stand upstage of the screen and the projection was therefore mirrored for me but the right way around for the audience. It also meant that I simultaneously had to bridge any physical misalignment in my apparent connection. How was I able to facilitate connections in my acting? My findings were that I was able to do this through a combination of the following, through placing trust in the technology, through endowing virtual characters as co-actors and accepting that they might interact with me and through dilation of the level of my performance to match the heightened attention garnered by the presence of classical echoes and intermedial screens.

The thesis has investigated the transformative potential of expanding agency within my acting practice. In so doing it has worked towards insights that might aid actors in Aotearoa New Zealand to extend their traditional practice to find ways of working with multimedia or intermedial elements in theatre in this country. A new model was developed for research purposes to explore the potential contributions an actor might make if involved in the wider process of theatre creation, including conceptualisation, writing, the design of video, audio and spatial relationships, and directing.

Actor, for me, is a statement both of who I am and what I do. I am an actor and I act. My practice has leant towards opportunities to engage empathetically with scripts that seek to advance understanding of what it means to be human. In this thesis project, I have reflected in and on practice and I have positioned myself at the centre of both the performance and development of the theatre production by collaborating with other theatre professionals as a practitioner-researcher. An aim has been to develop insights into using the actor’s empathy to honour the prevalence of realism as a style in actor training and theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The historical culture of personal practice from which the project emanates is one of mainstream realist theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand that increasingly makes use of multimedia elements and technologically created co-characters. Such theatre integrates digital and especially cinematic media, in dramaturgically useful ways. Because my background encompasses professional acting for stage and screen and digital media production, the idea of renegotiating an actor’s position and potential to contribute meaningfully to a creative team (that includes writers and designers, as well as cast and a director) has offered productive space for consideration. The challenge to mainstream acting processes and the expansion of skills and aptitudes required of actors to successfully perform within this type of production, have been the central concerns of the thesis.

The script for *Foolish Prating Knave* was devised and extrapolated from the heightened language and characters of Shakespeare. In the research project, I have sought to mine the psychological depth in the characters of Polonius, Gertrude and Ophelia and to reimagine them in a combination of heightened and psychologically-realist style. One of the defining characteristics of intermedial theatre is that it is both theatrical (in that it elevates observations of nature to an aesthetic purpose) and that it stages multiple media. Any modern production of a Shakespearean play is, in a sense, intermedial in that the medium of heightened language is juxtaposed with modern actors and audiences who are attuned to the medium of a realist style. The choice to base *Foolish Prating Knave* on these Shakespearean influences serves the purposes of the research to explore the juxtaposition of disparate elements in intermedial-realist theatre and reflects my abiding interest in Shakespeare.

The practice

The thesis has evolved and refined its thinking through the implementation of, and reflection upon, three gestational performance experiments and four iterative experiments. These culminated in the creative production of a short intermedial-realist play. The research adopted a heuristic approach by internalising a topic of intense personal interest and drawing in thinking around this topic in three distinct, yet dialogically-engaged forms. The first of these dialogic forms is most closely aligned with practice; it is tacit, embodied and experiential. The second follows when the tacit is made explicit through critical engagement. The third type is cognitive and propositional and occurs especially in reviewing a body of related knowledge, whether that knowledge is theoretical and textual or resides in the practice of others in the field. This model of practice as research, proposed by Nelson in 2013, has formed the core of the methodology adopted.

The first performance experiment was an intermedial-realist interpretation of a Shakespearean soliloquy: *O, What a Rogue*, from *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1982, 2.2.544-601). This work explored the suitability of multimedia elements to enhance the storytelling of the embodied, live actor. It was presented at the fourth Visual Aspects of Performance Practice Conference organised by Interdisciplinary.net at Oxford University in 2013. Through this experiment I found that robust, trustworthy technology is essential and that it is productive to think of media elements as another actor.

The second work was an experiment in increased performer agency. I directed an opera singer (Fiona Randle) and facilitated an expansion of her power to enable her to lead a video shoot using flexible and unobtrusive mobile phones as cameras and light sources. This allowed the camera operators to follow Randle rather than the usual arrangement of the performer submitting to the needs of the technology. This empowerment led to benefits to her performance and process in the form of increased confidence and provided me with an early indication of challenges and potentials inherent in expanding a performer's agency.

The third experiment was a remediation of Experiment 1. The Hamlet soliloquy was turned into a short film. In the development of this work I gave myself permission to be both director and actor, designing a cinematic shoot of the scene in a television studio. This experiment revealed the difficulty of taking on objective and subjective roles simultaneously.

These three gestational experiments provided the context to develop the thesis concerns into a short intermedial-realist play.

In the fourth experiment, I collaborated with a writer and cinematographer to develop a script and video projections for what came to be known as *Foolish Prating Knave*. The outcome of these early experiments was presented at an international conference. A range of methods were applied, including rehearsals and devising workshops and material thinking in the design and production of media. Useful critique from an audience of practitioner and academic delegates was gathered and reflected upon. This experiment showed the value of collaboration to theatre production outcomes. It demonstrated that expanding an actor's agency to contribute to the creation of media elements, led to the enrichment of the actor's engagement with the mediatised components of the play.

A second iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* became the fifth performance experiment. Its main concern was to address a problem of configuring the physical and theoretical relationship between actor and screen that surfaced in Experiment 4. The work was performed in the Live Performance Lab at AUT University. The narrative was told by combining principles from both dramatic theatre and cinema. I found that by relocating the single screen in relationship to the actor, the audience could be drawn into the space. The experiment also surfaced the need to collaborate with an operator so a singular focus could be dedicated to the task of acting.

The third iteration of the play was also performed in the Live Performance Lab at AUT University after refining the digital media elements and developing a set with three screens and projectors. This experiment was more complex in the way that it addressed the relationship between the live actor and the physical and virtual space his character inhabited. I found that, by using three semitransparent gauze screens and three projectors, my sense of a multilayered metaphorical and physical space was appreciably expanded. From this work I carried forward a concern to refine the acting approach and to develop a new ending to the narrative that was more enigmatic and unresolved.

The final iteration of *Foolish Prating Knave* was presented for examination and focused on refinements to the media and a further creative interrogation of the acting techniques. The narrative was concluded with a deliberately unresolved ending, designed to provoke an on-going engagement. I also sought to engender a questioning of issues such as liminality, identity and the refinement of the acting style in relation to the mix of live and media elements and heightened and naturalistic language.

Through the series of experiments I set the groundwork for discovery by establishing the need for robust and trustworthy technology and by opening myself to the possibility of interacting with the multimedia elements as though they were living co-actors. A further factor enabled the production of *Foolish Prating Knave* to lead me to discover how best to act in intermedial-realist theatre. This was the choice to empower the actor through an expansion of agency, allowing me to contribute to wider roles in theatre making than had been traditionally allowed. Taking on the whole gamut of roles also uncovered inherent dangers. It proved unhelpful to try to maintain objective and subjective perspectives simultaneously (as director and actor). Directing myself, for example, pulled me out of a subjective perspective and diminished the performance in the moment. While the value of exploration of each role from an actor/researcher's perspective was very apparent, effective collaboration also highlighted the benefit of honouring the unique contributions possible from within each specialisation.

The collaborative extension of agency of the actor's role within the production of intermedial realist theatre in these experiments enabled a richer engagement between the actor and the multimedia elements. For example, careful consideration of the physical and metaphorical relationships between the actor, character, screens and audience was facilitated by both reflective design and tacit knowledge activated through performative exploration. Being involved in the design, as an actor, led to being able to contribute my emotional responses to the mediatised elements as well as to combine this with the sort of creative choices actors typically make when rehearsing. For example, I could decide that Polonius was adrift metaphorically and contribute this decision to the design of the placement of images on screens. His sense of being lost could be reinforced or driven by images appearing on one screen and then swapping to another screen behind him. This forced him to spin around to try to make sense of what he is seeing. This type of to and fro between projection design and actor's choices was surfaced by allowing agency for the actor to collaborate. This led to enhanced emotional investment in the video projections and a deeper understanding of how to position myself physically in relation to them.

These findings show that *Foolish Prating Knave* worked well as a vehicle and laboratory, providing a space and opportunity for me to discover how best to act in relation to multimedia elements within my Aotearoa New Zealand context. By endowing these intermedial aspects with liveness and their own agency I developed the confidence to trust in the relationship and this trust freed my empathetic responses enabling a psychologically realist acting technique. Moreover the techniques and refinements that I have discovered through this project may be useful to actors and practitioners beyond Aotearoa New Zealand who wish to combine these particular forms.

The exegesis

The body of performance experiments and the play are contextualised and explicated by this exegesis. The document serves to complement the practice and is most usefully read in conjunction with the experience of viewing *Foolish Prating Knave*.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The research addresses a gap in the knowledge surrounding the practice of acting with technologically generated co-characters within a realist dramatic play. A paucity of research surrounding this was identified by Birringer in 2014. The study has engaged with issues relating to the place of the actor within the wider theatre-making endeavour and of agency, collaboration and acting technique.

As an actor-focused inquiry, the thesis demonstrates how techniques of psychological realist acting may be applied to theatre where characters and interactions include pre-recorded digital media and stylistic shifts in language. It shows how my technique of applying an empathetic response can be extended to a new type of theatre where, ostensibly, important elements necessary for applying Stanislavski's system are missing. A fundamental building block of the system is the pursuit of a goal in opposition to another character's actions. The spontaneity that this approach implies, occurs as a result of deep listening and reaction to conflicting goals and actions. The thesis sheds new light on the applicability of this equation to an interaction where only one party has a live, embodied and reactive presence and where the other character inhabits a privileged mediatised space.

A second finding is that the acting technique of psychological realism can be applied to interacting with technologically generated co-characters. One of the keys to the effectiveness of this approach is the endowment of such characters with liveness through interaction. The dilation of the realist acting style to match the heightened nature of digital media elements and technologically generated co-characters was found to be important to the success of this interaction.

The study identified that framing the given circumstances of the play as inclusive of the digital media elements, with full investment and belief in them, enabled a sense of trust that facilitated empathetic response in the actor.

The study found that an actor's unique perspective, enabled by increased agency and collaboration, can enrich other aspects of the theatre-making process. As a corollary, if the actor is allowed to make such contributions, the study suggests that the actor's embodied and tacit connection with the digital media elements may be enhanced.

The most significant finding to emerge from the study is that increased agency for the actor and engagement in collaboration throughout the work of making theatre can contribute insights toward enhancing a psychologically realist approach to acting in intermedial-realist theatre.

STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One of the strengths of the study lies in its ability to provoke discourse among actors. The thesis unpacks the practice of making and performing a play. It speaks to theatre practitioners in their own language; the language of theatre. By performing empathetically with technological co-characters and raising questions about how to interact with them, I have demonstrated one solution, pertinent to my practice, to the problem of how to act in such circumstances.

These findings may resonate with practitioners and with those seeking to develop a new theatre work. My research suggests that empowerment and collaborative inclusion of actors have benefits for the conceptualisation and development of work. A contribution of the study has been to confirm that expanding the actor's understanding and involvement in the making of digital media elements benefits the actor's ability to trust in the given circumstances of the intermedial-realist play. The study indicates that when actors engage with making digital elements, their tacit and embodied knowledge of how to relate to them improves. This suggests that broadening of an actor's skill set may be of value when engaging in this type of theatre.

It might be considered a limitation of the research that the findings are located within one actor's practice. However, practitioners may ride the ripples emanating from the experience of watching *Foolish Prating Knave* and build their own contributions to expanded agency based upon personal potentials, situations and processes.

This thesis has not set itself up to be an audience reception study because the focus has been on my acting practice. Theatre is centred on a conversation between actor and audience and this study focused on the interchange from my perspective rather than that of the audience. I sought targeted responses and critical feedback from only a small sample of the audience in the development of the play and concentrated on my own reception of cues from the audience to lend shaping impulses to my performance.

The play was exposed to a limited number of influential practitioners within the context of theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand. A natural progression of the work may be to analyse its effectiveness with a wider audience in this country and to compare the reception to that of international theatre audiences who might have had more exposure to intermedial-realist forms.

There is also further research potential in creating work that moves away from a Shakespearean narrative and its heightened language. I am particularly interested now in exploring the extent to which the insights into acting techniques I have discovered might be applied to a more naturalistic style of play.

As the thesis has progressed, it has drawn upon theory and given expression to considerations of method. Throughout its trajectory I have presented both practice and thinking at conferences. It is now my intention to write an article for *Studies in Theatre and Performance* about the Performance as Research method, developed in this thesis, and how this was applied to increasing actor agency through collaboration. I have also given thought to a second article for the *Journal of Embodied Research*, that might unpack and examine the challenges of integrating heightened Shakespearean language and screened elements in an intermedial-realist narrative.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Peter Brook described the process of rehearsing theatre as an iterative open ended exploration. These are terms that would not be unfamiliar to a researcher:

> "In a living theatre, we would each day approach the rehearsal putting yesterday's discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us." (Brook, 1968, p. 14).

The journey of this thesis has been an exploration of the self and of the self laid bare in sharing with the audience.

I have asked myself what it is that only I could know from *within* the performance that has made this research project so rewarding and constantly surprising. The study has woven three strands of knowing together to help me find the confidence necessary to perform *Foolish Prating Knave*.

The first strand of knowing is tacit and embodied. It enabled me to actively claim ownership of the space and to tell a story within it.

The second strand of knowing, produced by critical reflection, revealed that the confidence I felt within the imagined world of the play, resulted from having been involved in conceiving and making it myself.

The final strand of knowing was contributed by reviewing related theory and practice. This provided inspiration and challenges to the project as it evolved.

The weaving of these strands enabled vulnerability, playfulness and unconditional engagement with the given circumstances.

This is what burns in my mind and my heart.

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