

## Introduction

My research for this dissertation was inspired by those almost unexplainable moments in theatre (or music, or film), when as an audience member I felt a powerful sense of recognition of elusive truths within my own life, which left me with a feeling of witnessing something of great import and relevance to me, even if the material itself had no clear meaning or message, or no obvious bearing on my own personal experience. My curiosity to discover how such disparate elements could touch me so deeply, affecting my view of myself and the world in which I live, led me to explore this rather intangible area further.

I believe that *true* understanding in life comes from immediate, first-hand experiences. We can have academic, or theoretical, viewpoints on many aspects of life, based on our own observations and the teachings of our culture, and we can learn to empathise with others through imagination and sensitivity, but it is through our own actual, personal, experiences that innate understanding comes, giving real insight into our own circumstances and the lives of others. Clearly, it is not possible to live through all life's possible experiences first-hand in any one life, so how can we further our understanding of ourselves, and one another, beyond these personal circumstances? I believe that the theatre gives us such an opportunity.

Whilst all theatre has the potential to reflect on, and reveal, life to us, my research has shown that contemporary Western physical theatre practitioners are actively exploring social and political aspects of human life through the lens of their own personal perspectives, and are seeking to convey the essence of that experience through the tools of physical theatre. By approaching meaning in apparently ambiguous fashion, crucially, these practitioners require

audiences to create their own meanings and supply their own answers to these existential questions, of who am I, why am I? Whilst the experience of another's art is clearly a second-hand experience, I believe the physical theatre practitioner who remains true to the authenticity of her own experience, applying well all the techniques and skills available to her in creating her art, can produce a sense of recognition in the spectator, and I intend to show that, through seeking the essence of what it means to be human and alive today, and by using the body as conduit for this experience, physical theatre practitioners are creating moments of *authenticity*, *correctness*, or *truth*, through which a heightened emotionality is released in the spectator which echoes that first-hand experience. This elusive quest is one that Eugenio Barba has pursued for 40 years, in his creation of an affective physical theatre which,

“depend[s] above all on [the actors’] skill in creating an ‘organic effect’, in embodying the laws of life’s movement... which [create] understanding through the senses and kinaesthetic reactions of the spectator [who] becomes a person who *is able to see as if he (sic) was seeing for the first time*. The performance acquires a consistency not merely of the interpretation of a text or of a knot of events, it does not simply turn into an emotional involvement, but it becomes the *experience of an experience*.”  
(Barba, 2003: 112-113, emphasis in original)

All meaningful art emanates from a place of truth within the artist who, as authentically as possible, tries to present that truth, as they experience it, to the world. The closer the work gets to this recognition of authenticity, the more profound it becomes and the greater the response it creates in the spectator. This exploration of personal truth lies at the heart of physical theatre and, in order to conduct a methodical examination of this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine the nature of truth, which I shall explore in Chapter 1 through philosophical discourse, and in Chapters 2 and 3 through the works of specific practitioners.

This is an elusive area, full of romanticism and metaphor and, in Chapter 2, I will contextualise the evolution of this physical theatre within the visions of Barba's four riders of

the Apocalypse; Meyerhold, Craig, Stanislavski and Artaud, examining the notions of naturalism, anti-naturalism and non-naturalism, and placing physical theatre within this context. Chapter 2 will draw from contemporary physical theatre practitioners emanating from the theatre world and look at the theories and work of Odin Teatret, Complicite and Volcano Theatre, to examine their processes.

I believe that the underlying motivation behind developments in dance-as-theatre have mirrored those of theatre in their route to concretising this 'x' factor, which I believe occurs when the whole audience focuses, is drawn in, because all the elements on stage are creating a truth, an authenticity, something real and correct, which the audience recognises. It takes precision to create these moments, it is not serendipitous, although sometimes serendipitous moments can occur which also work, and the skill of practitioners in concretising these moments of correctness, truth, or authenticity may be the closest we can come to creating a universal language – a language tuned to the pulse of the time and space, which resonates universally amongst its audience, albeit each resonance being personal and unique to each spectator. In order to explore this further, Chapter 3 will draw from physical theatre practitioners emanating from the dance world, looking at the works of Wendy Houstoun and Earthfall.

To illustrate my thesis, my analysis of theoretical discourse and practice will show how it is in the area where theatre and dance converge to create physical theatre, that we find this opportunity for “heightened awareness or emotionality” within the audience (Ennis, 2005: 49).

In conclusion, I hope to be able to offer a concrete definition of contemporary physical theatre, which I believe emanates from the personal truths, or autobiographies, of practitioners, which are processed into physical performance, and finally given meaning by the audience.

## **Chapter One: Truth and philosophical discourse**

In order to analyse moments of ‘truth’, ‘correctness’ or ‘authenticity’, it is first necessary to understand the meanings of these words, and, in my first chapter, I have turned to philosophical discourse in trying to locate a workable understanding of these elusive terms as they relate to the physical theatre experience. I will offer a brief chronological philosophical perspective on the nature of *truth* as a concept, and, in Chapters 2 and 3, go on to locate this concept in the context of physical theatre and the way in which it endeavours to provide physical expression and concretisation of truth.

2,500 years ago, in Ancient Greece, humankind first started to examine the nature of being, questioning the meaning of existence, and seeking truths that lay within that existence. In the *Allegory of the Cave*, Plato places humankind, with the body in the material world, and a soul guiding that body while on earth but belonging, essentially, to the immortal world of ideas, to which it departs on the death of the body. Plato’s theory sees the world of ideas as fully real, whilst the everyday world is a mere shadow region, lacking in reality compared with the realm of ideas. Whilst Plato placed artists and poets on a higher level, in terms of Aquinas’ nature and grace discourse, by locating them in his unreal shadow world of ideas, he then demoted them, in his view that truth lay only in the application of *reason* to the world of clear, abstract ideas. Plato ruled out the whole world of artistic creation as a source of rational truth, wherein “the world of the senses, which is in constant flux, cannot yield permanency and knowledge” (Horton Fraleigh, 1987: xxxv), thus creating the great divide between the rational and emotional temperaments, the head and the heart.

Aristotle then dismissed any possibility of a separate, mystical realm of ideas, asserting that knowledge derived only from our senses. When Christianity arrived, challenging much that had gone before it, God became the source of all knowledge and wisdom and it took St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to try to heal the breach between the Greeks and Christianity, asking if belief and rational knowledge were compatible. I believe that it is in this divide between belief and knowledge that we seek our own truths in life today, not necessarily in a religious belief, but in what we know to be true from what our senses tell us, and what we believe intuitively to be true in a metaphysical way. Physical theatre has the capacity to enter this murky territorial divide through our physical sense witnessing of the experience, and our metaphysical responses to that experience of witness, created by the performers' skill in abstracting the essence of meaning and emotion through embodiment.

In the fifteenth century, *Renaissance man* was born amidst “the flowering of music, art, science biology, astronomy, medicine, and individual religious meditation” in an abundant age when “man started to delight in himself for his own sake...exploring his mysteries and possibilities” (Gaarder, 1995). Bruno, Galileo and Newton’s discovery of gravity then revealed “immutable laws governing the universe... [providing] the mechanistic world view [wherein] everything was pre-determined and there was no such thing as free will” (Gaarder, 1995). Again, we see a historical development from a belief system rooted in God, something greater than humankind, into the humanist world of imagination and self-expression, which is then pulled back once again, this time into the mechanistic world view, subjugating individual truth, which is dominated by something greater than itself. This pattern repeats itself throughout philosophical discourse, with a constant to-ing and fro-ing between opposites. Truth, I believe, is to be found at the heart of this dialectical divide, which is what physical theatre offers - something ‘in between’ form and idea, between our physical selves and something higher, the metaphysical.

Like Aristotle, Descartes brings us back to the body, seeing knowledge deriving from the five senses, as well as mathematical knowledge based on intellectually apprehensible truths. He coined the phrase *Cogito ergo sum - I think therefore I am*, which led to the notion of Cartesian dualism, the division between mind and matter. Horton Fraleigh gives us the opposing views of Descartes' dualistic scheme wherein, "the body is material, function[ing] as a machine to execute what the mind wills...the mind...is immaterial, invisible, inner, and mysteriously ethereal... bodies are situated in space, but minds, being invisible, extend beyond physical categories", with Ryles' view that, "knowledge, will, emotion, sensation, imagination, and intellect... [are] occurrences within the single indivisible world of persons" (Horton Fraleigh, 1987: 162). Descartes' solipsistic view meant that the achievement of epistemological certainty could only be accomplished at the heavy price of personal isolation, and he turned to the ontological argument to shore up his theories – the perfect God does not deceive and gave us the means to discriminate between delusions and dreams and our sense experience, and releases us from solipsism (Tucker, 2005: 12). In focussing on the performer, Ryles sees mind and matter as indivisible, running together concurrently, "the dancer [is] performing [her] wit, intelligence, and artistry... movement displays judgement; it is not prefaced by it" (Horton Fraleigh, 1987: 163).

The foundation of empiricism, as posed by John Locke, is built on the theory that all concepts of truth and meaningful experience are derived through a process of mental abstraction from our fundamental sense experiences, or phenomena. David Hume, in the eighteenth century, drew on Locke's theories to demolish any reasons for thinking that any meaning or truth attaches to these phenomena, suggesting that truth lies only in what we observe and not how we feel about what we see, creating the seeds of the modern divide between head and heart, reason and emotion. Whilst empiricism successfully applies to an understanding of the physical world, it has done little to increase knowledge of the self as an arbiter of truth, denying the possibility of free will and giving credence only to what we observe as reality (Tucker, 2005: 15).

Immanuel Kant restored causality and determinism with his concept of transcendental idealism, comprised of the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, which places truth in between intellectual intuition and the perceptions of the senses. Kant placed free will in this noumenal world, rendering it a truthful reality, which meant that humankind could make an active contribution to his experience, and was not merely a passive thinker of abstractions. Kant argued that the mind has both a receptive capacity, or sensibility, and a conceptual capacity, or understanding, with sensibility being the understanding's means of accessing objects. "Kant argues that we cannot experience objects without being able to represent them spatially. It is impossible to grasp an object as an object unless we delineate the region of space it occupies. Without a spatial representation, our sensations are undifferentiated and we cannot ascribe properties to particular objects" (McCormick, online). Kant ascribed intuitive consciousness to God alone, who could "apprehend objects directly, as they are in themselves and not by means of space and time...but our [human] apprehension of objects is always mediated by the conditions of sensibility" (McCormick, online). We can apply Kant's transcendental idealism to an understanding of the way in which meaning is located in physical theatre, somewhere between the body and the senses, and filtered through our sensibility.

Out then poured the Romantic movement which "gloried in the power of the individual imagination to shape and make sense of the world" (Gaarder, 1995) and the idea starts to emerge of the artist as purveyor of wisdom and truth, being able to harness the beauty of the natural world and express it through the possession of artistic talent.

In the nineteenth century, existentialist philosophy arose in the ideas of Hegel and Marx, amongst others, who continued on a dialectical course, attempting to show that humankind could not only interpret the world, but could actively change it too, and the modern politicisation of philosophy began in earnest. In Hegel's philosophy, the universal world spirit took precedence over that of the individual, and Marx's dialectical materialism formed the basis

for the Marxist-Communist analysis of a classless, socialist, society, where the individual subjugates himself for the greater good. At the same time, Dostoievski, with his profound existentialist Christian faith based on first-life experience (everyday life experienced in the raw without any process of intellectualisation applied to it) foresaw that atheist, materialist, determinist, and socialist philosophies would result in tragedy for all. The existentialist belief that anything we call a 'truth' must be livable, by the individual who believes it, minute by minute within first-life, brought about immense change in perspective by looking at life from the point of view of the subject acting in the real world, rather than from that of the object, considered by empiricist abstraction, and here is where modern humankind consciously starts to "rise above the despair of his situation to seek salvation and understanding in art" (Schaeffer, 1968: 66). Towards the end of his life, Heidegger turned away from his existentialism, commending us to turn to the poet for answers to the great questions of truth and meaning, not because of anything the poet might have to say, but because of his very existence, giving us "hope that there is more to life than merely what you know rationally and logically to be the case" (Schaeffer, 1968: 60).

Sartre was an atheist existentialist who thought that "man is a tragic joke in a context of total cosmic absurdity. He has been thrown up with aspirations which rationally have no fulfilment in the universe in which he lives" (Schaeffer, 1968: 67).

The Sartrean man realizes that there is more to existence than mere existing, and that there is more to life than mere living. Confronted with the ambiguity, meaninglessness, and absurdity of his existence, he then sets forth in a journey towards the rediscovery of his real self. He attempts to surpass himself, and imbedded in that transcendence is the meaning he has been looking for in his life. The search for meaning becomes an act of surpassing. The search for meaning, then, becomes the search for authenticity

(Decino, 2001: online)



In Freud's psychoanalysis, the 'unconscious mind', the hidden, unobservable, mental processes of the human mind, combine to synthesise the observable inputs and outputs of human experience and Artaud suggested that "theatre today ought to return to the fundamental magic notion reintroduced by psychoanalysis, which consists in curing a patient by making him assume the external attitude of the desired condition" (Artaud, 1974: 60). Unlike Plato, Freud engaged with the irrational component in humankind's nature, but he wanted to engage with it in a scientific way, building "on the insights of the artists to produce a deterministic theory of how these irrational forces work on the unconscious mind... parents and early influences in life took the places of the Homeric Gods" (Tucker, 2005: 40). Freud's attempts to quantify an understanding of truthful reality had philanthropic motives, he saw that men and women were trapped in their own personal history, or truth, which was not of their own rational choice, and therefore not necessarily true in a wider sense. Freud perceived the enormous human suffering caused by this imperception of truth, and devised psychoanalysis as a means of unravelling these histories through the mechanisms of the unconscious mind.

This is a very potted history of philosophical discourse, but through it we can see the dialectical struggle between God, humankind and determinism that still rages today, wherein nothing is actually proven, and all is open to debate. At the end of the day, it is all words, and words, as we know, have huge potential for misconception. As Artaud said,

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey... to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its full, physical shock potential, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflexions in a completely tangible manner and restore their shattering power and really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one might almost say alimentary, sources, against its origins as a hunted beast, and finally to consider language in the form of *Incantation*.

(Artaud : 35)

And here is where physical theatre takes its place, centre stage in a post-modern world, as a means of going beyond words to convey meaning through the body via the skills of

practitioners in “the magnitude and scale of a show aimed at the whole anatomy...an intensive mustering of objects, gestures and signs used in a new spirit” (Artaud, 1993, 66) and I will go on to explore this *intensive mustering* of elements in Chapters 2 and 3.

## **Chapter Two: The Actors**

Knowledge can inform through books, but understanding comes only through embodied experience.

(Barba, 2004 a)

Barba describes his adopted theatrical forebears, Meyerhold, Craig, Stanislavski and Artaud as the “four Riders of the Apocalypse, the founders of theatrical knowledge who wanted to create truth in theatre” (Barba, 2004 a). My hypothesis that physical theatre emanates from the truth of the performer, is then filtered through the performer’s body, and translates into a different, personal, truth for the spectator, led me to research the works of Barba’s truth-seekers in this chapter, to see if they could be the founding fathers of contemporary physical theatre. I will attempt to contextualise developments in physical theatre, examining the notions of naturalism, anti-naturalism and non-naturalism and placing physical theatre within this context, and will then go on to discuss theories on the creation of authentic meaning through the work of Barba’s theatre company, Odin Teatret, and also the work of Complicite, and Volcano Theatre.

Vsevolod Meyerhold was the first Russian theatre director to develop a symbolist style of theatrical representation, focussing on technical, separate actions, and musicality, and positing the idea that movement can be separate from text. A colleague of Stanislavski in the early years of the Moscow Art Theatre, he later rejected the notion of imitating life and “reacted against naturalistic theatre from inside the fount of naturalism” (Huxley, M. and Witts, N., 2002: 312). In the early 1920s, his work featured “abstract, intensely dynamic, anti-realistic and non-representational action, aimed at creating an ‘independent reality’ on stage”,

([www.meyerhold.org](http://www.meyerhold.org)). Meyerhold perceived truthful expression to lay in the body and he developed Bio-Mechanics, a system of actor training which is based in physical exercises, but which also,

... forges a connection between mind and body... expanding and deepening the actor's kinaesthetic, spatial and relational awareness... teaching the body to think...[and creating] an awareness of space and rhythm as variables to be explored in the creation of a role [alongside]... awareness of the other actors in their 'ensemble' as well as their own 'inner movement'.

([www.web.syr.edu/~kjbaum/meyerholdsbiomechanics](http://www.web.syr.edu/~kjbaum/meyerholdsbiomechanics))

Barba describes the profound effect of these biomechanical exercises, as “sensory metaphors showing how thoughts move... becom[ing] physical behaviour, dynamic design, a dance of balance and contrasting tensions” (2003a: 113). Meyerhold wanted to show that his new system was devised in a scientific and mechanical way, “...as opposed to those of Stanislavski and Tairov, which were unscientific and anachronistic” (Braun, 1991: 183). Meyerhold posited the “Theatre of the Straight Line” wherein “the actor reveals his soul freely to the spectator, having assimilated the creation of the director, who, in his turn, has assimilated the creation of the author” (Meyerhold, in Huxley, M. and Witts, N., 2002: 305). In an article that appeared in 1920 on Meyerhold's theatre, entitled *The Theatre Theatrical*, Sayler writes,

The audience is always an essential factor in the production of drama, but never does it enter so completely, so keenly into the psychological complex as in the theatre theatrical. The give and take between audience and actor is dynamic and almost incessant.

(Sayler, online)

I will go on to show that this focus on the dynamic, non-realistic, expressive capability of the body, on spatial awareness and rhythm, on the ensemble and the individual performer, and his positioning of the audience, identifies Meyerhold as a forefather of physical theatre, described by Huxley and Witts as “foreshadow[ing] much of the exciting visual and physical theatre of recent years” (2002: 312).

Unlike Meyerhold, who saw the actor as central to his theatre, Edward Gordon Craig perceived the actor as difficult to mould, suggesting that in time we would “do away with the actor”, blaming her for the “debased stage-realism [which] is produced and flourishes” and choosing to replace this living figure which “confuse[s] us into connecting actuality and art” with the Über-marionette (Craig in Huxley, M. and Witts, N., 2002: 159). Lea Logie, in her article, *Developing a Physical Vocabulary for the Contemporary Actor*, says that training methods have frustrated *all* the actor-trainers of her study, citing Copeau’s view that actors “cannot get out of themselves; they love only themselves...reduc[ing] everything to the level of their habits, their clichés, their affectations... they do not invent anything” (1995: 231). Despite Craig’s dismissal of the actor in his creative vision, his place as one of Barba’s apocalyptic riders can be located in his advocacy of “theatre as a collaborative art, ...where the visual must dominate” (Huxley, M. and Witts, N., 2002: 166). Craig, like Meyerhold and Artaud, hated realism, seeing it as “something everybody misunderstands while recognizing” (2002:163), and he despised any reliance on complete scripts as a source of theatre, wanting to “free theatre from dependence on realism, literature, and the actor” (Wilson & Goldfarb, 1994: online). Craig argues that,

modern dramatists have forgotten their heritage, writing for the ear and not the visual stage... [his] aim was for artists, specifically stage-directors, to refocus the art form, to reclaim theatre from the dramatist...calling instead for texts that are unfinished when they are read so that other theatrical elements complete the piece.

(Pepiton, C., 2004: online)

Craig saw theatre as having five essential elements, “action, words, line, colour, and rhythm, as the basis of true theatrical creation... these tools theatricalize the impulse [by which] theatre is created directly and specifically for the stage, for the eye as well as the ear” (Pepiton, C., 2004: online). So despite Craig’s aversion to the actor, in the coalescence of elements in his theatre, we can see the seeds of contemporary physical theatre.

Stanislavski, as Barba's third horseman, stands out from the others as the architect of realism - the flag bearer of Aristotle's mirror to nature. In the Moscow Art Theatre, Stanislavski devised what remains today the most extensive and detailed actor training method available to many students of drama. His System, or, in its Americanised modified form, Method, is based on the actor's ability to *be* rather than *act*, through the development of sense memory and "observation and analysis of everyday human behaviour as a basis for... internalising knowledge of which the results will be shown on stage" (Huxley and Witts, 2002: 391). Brando is probably the Method's most famous son, epitomising "the art of creating genuine realities on a stage" and, in Brando's case, film (Morris and Hotchkis, 1977: 1).

Barba's positioning of Stanislavski as one of his riders of the Apocalypse, is based, I believe, on the notion that you cannot move away from realism without having an understanding of realism to begin with, and Stanislavski is the undisputed master of this field. *All* theatre is based in realism, inasmuch as all theatre ultimately stems from an observation of real life, and, however far that observation may evolve into different performance forms, without truth from within, nothing is truthful on the surface. One of the laws of Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*, is that "everything is made of opposing forces" and the movement *away* from realism, then, must begin with what it moves away *from* (Engels, F., 1954: online).

Barba's final rider, Artaud, perhaps acknowledged more than any other as the founding father of physical theatre, made his entire life a search for truthful expression through the body. In his seminal work, *The Theatre and its Double* (1993), Artaud repeatedly returns to the magical, transformational potential of a physical theatre with its "unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought" (Artaud, 1993: 68). This language is founded firmly in the expressive capability of the performer's body, rather than the words of a script, with "centrality of gesture, and the subordination of the textual; it had discipline and magic" (Barber, 1993: 45), and sought to "break away from language's intellectual subjugation by conveying the sense of a new, deeper intellectualism hidden under these gestures and signs and raised to the dignity of

special exorcisms.” (Artaud, 1993: 70). Above all, Artaud sought a visceral language of theatre, one which would satisfy the audiences’ “search for a poetic state of mind” (1993: 81).

Many of the elements in Artaud’s vision of a total theatre exist today in contemporary physical theatre. His focus on the poetics of performance, musicality and rhythm, the imaginative use of the performance space in all its dynamic potential, his belief in the primacy of the *moment of creation*, and use of shock tactics and the unexpected event to make his audience *feel* rather than *think*. Artaud was an angry and disturbed man, deeply dissatisfied with his own life and frustrated in his attempts to create the theatre of his imagination. His legacy lies in the outpourings of his writings on theatre, which are passionate, and at times vitriolic and bordering on the fanatical, but remain genuinely visionary in their scope and appeal. In Artaud’s day, the audience was a conservative one, and Artaud’s approach to his *special exorcisms* was aggressive and antagonistic, focussing on evoking visceral responses by shocking his audience out of their complacency with disturbing images and sounds. The post-modern audience of today is fairly unshockable in the way that Artaud’s audience was, and theatre practitioners have turned to more subtle means of evoking resonance and emotionality in their performance but, beyond that, many of Artaud’s visions continue to be reflected upon and explored today in highly physicalised performances which focus on expressive potential of bodily movement, gesture and musical expressivity of sound, using the performance space itself in unexpected ways and employing the “complete liberation ... of the surreal” (Barber, 1993: 47). Presenting the unexpected is, I believe, a recurring motif in all practitioners working in physical theatre, for example, Robert Wilson’s work which is “... full of contrasts and contradictions that force the spectator to attend” (Huxley and Witts, 2002: 432) and, from the dance world, Pina Bausch, in her unfamiliar use of the everyday.

Theatre is of its time, as Barba puts it, “If theatre becomes superfluous to our society, its strength can only come from its *difference*: in other words, its capacity to attract those spectators whose questions are echoed in the needs which drive certain people to make theatre”

(2003a: 111, emphasis in original). This is an important point to note, as I believe that physical theatre is a challenging one, made by, and for, those who wish to explore the nature of their existence, it is not for those who wish only to be entertained. To understand the development towards physical theatre it is necessary to look at the context in which it has evolved. In semiotic terms, in Stanislavski's theatre, signifiers are chosen to fit the framework of real life; everyday conversation, sentences, tone, tempo, ums and ahs. Stanislavski saw this presentation of reality on stage through the use of linear structure and narrative and the psychological development of character, as the principal way to communicate with the audience of his day. Meyerhold, Craig and Artaud, as part of the anti-naturalistic movement, which includes Expressionism and Surrealism, actively broke away from their perceived limitations of realistic performance in theatre, seeking instead a visual, dynamic theatre which used signifiers to present anything *but* a sense of reality. They passionately disliked the politics of naturalism, seeing words as wholly inadequate in dealing with the sticky issues of human life, and a reliance on words in performance as misleading, limiting and unexciting, and there was no place in their theatre for naturalistic performance. Physical theatre today, I believe, sits more readily under the heading of 'non-naturalism', being clearly not naturalistic, but neither being *against* naturalism, freeing itself from the limitations of any movement, and merrily employing an eclectic mix of forms borne out of the expressive potential of the body in performance.

Fuchs states, on witnessing what she describes as a neo-realist performance in 1979 that plunged her into "the mental swoon of post-modernism", that the "older categories of fantastic, theatricalist, and the 'absurd', whose effects realism underwrites through contrast, had little explanatory power....[to unravel] this new culture, or new way of being" (Fuchs, 1996: 1). In 1996, citing "poststructuralist theory ... [as] the chief articulator of the 'crisis of representation' ... in the past twenty years", Fuchs suggests that poststructuralist theory was "providing an intellectual framework for the artistic and cultural phenomena that, especially in the United States, were coming to be understood under the heading of post-modernism" (1996: 2), describing the pervading feeling in the 1980s of "Western culture... moving into a new,



dizzying spiral of Marx's 'All that is solid melts into air' " (1996: 2). In Fuchs's "mental swoon of post-modernism... circa 1980" (1996: 2), she describes the "rampant eclecticism" which was taking hold in architecture, which Charles Jencks called the " 'double coding' of highbrow and vernacular, classical and industrial, to him 'the essential definition of Post-Modernism' " (Fuchs, 1996: 2), where people started to see the merging of forms to create new shapes. This, then, translated to other artforms and, in post-modernist theatre, we find this merging of pure forms, creating an eclectic mix of the indeterminate, the self-referential, "the freewheeling pastiche that began to replace unified 'concept' productions" (Fuchs, 1996: 2). In short, a challenge to conventional narrative in a hybrid of elements wherein a lack of rules governs, conjoining in the construction of work that is poetic, rather than psychological, in approach. Fuchs describes "the sense of entering a new and newly unstable culture [which] was acute... rawly expos[ing] our old nostalgias for 'progress', 'man', the transparency of 'truth'... the post-modern... did not mark a style so much as a cultural condition" (1996: 3), and in this quest for truth, acting in the late twentieth century was moving away from character-led performance towards a search for self, in a more playful, creative way. Artaud exhorted us to free ourselves through the deconstruction of our whole experience, and this is what I believe post-modern physical theatre is attempting to do.

Preceding this period, from around the 1960s, similar moves were afoot in the dance world where, in the German school (Bausch et al), "dance was a means toward self-knowledge – not a disclosure of personality but a construction of it, not self-expression as self-indulgence but a creation of self in expressive action that moves one beyond the confines of self" (Horton Fraleigh, 1987: xxii). As actors began to explore and incorporate choreographic methods and non-naturalistic movement to create theatre, so dancers began to speak, creating characters and scenes in post-modern dance. It is somewhere in the collision between these two that we find the birth of post-modern physical theatre.

In her article ‘Altered States and Subliminal Spaces: Charting the Road towards a Physical Theatre’, Sanchez-Colberg locates physical theatre within the avant-garde, as a hybrid of dance and theatre, which posits the physicalised event over verbal narrative and goes beyond mere representation via the body, into discursive practices of the relationship between body/text/theatre reality (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 40). She traces the general devaluation of spoken language in theatre in favour of the non-verbal back to a ‘mistrust of language’s ability to convey the experience of self-in-the-world’ (1996: 44), specifically in the works of Brecht, Ionesco and Artaud, and also locates the roots of physical theatre in German Expressionism, the works of Mary Wigman in the 1920s, and particularly Laban, who focused on the body in space, challenging the accepted language of virtuostic technique wherein the body is objectified, placing the import of movement only in its expressive capability (1996). From these developments in dance and theatre, a cross-fertilisation begins which sees the removal, or diminution, of language which is, “not only incapable of ascribing meaning... but also [acts] as a coercive institution, ‘a carrier of implied meanings which distort our perception of reality’ ” (De Merritt *in* Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 42). This leaves the body as the central figure in a largely spatial plane focusing the process of alienation on the body itself, becoming self-referential rather than carrying referential meaning or structure to organise the world experience, and conveying the experience of self-in-the-world in a way language could never achieve (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996).

The term *physical theatre* is hotly disputed amongst practitioners and theorists, some denying that there is such a thing at all, but it has now come into generalise use by dance and theatre companies, although its tenets remain slippery. To define what it is, and what it is not, is problematic, with no finite, universally accepted definition. For analytical purposes, theorists and commentators are understandably keen to categorise theatre into different genres and forms, whilst many practitioners prefer not to rationalise their work in this way, rather remaining open to a myriad of influences and techniques.

Simon McBurney of Complicite, whose work is clearly highly physical in nature, became very irritated when asked about physical theatre after a recent performance of *A Minute Too Late*. He said, “If I possibly could, I would banish the term ‘physical theatre’ ... [there is a] cultural tyranny in the UK – we are prisoners of our own terms. Physical theatre doesn’t exist, it’s a very Anglo Saxon need to divide everything up and categorise it.” Quoting Aristotle, McBurney continued, “All theatre is an act and an action, therefore a physical act” (McBurney, 2005). To demonstrate his description of non-physical theatre, McBurney and his actors walked off the stage, leaving it bare of human form. McBurney went on to say that this need for categorisation is a political issue, good vs. evil, sharing this view with Artaud, who also disliked dualistic ideas such as good and evil, and didn’t believe in the division between mind and body. Complicite’s website describes their work as:-

Always changing and moving forward to incorporate new stimuli, the principles of the work have remained close to the original impulses: seeking what is most alive, integrating text, music, image and action to create surprising, disruptive theatre. There is no Complicite method. What is essential is collaboration. A collaboration between individuals to establish an ensemble with a common physical and imaginative language.  
([www.complicite.org](http://www.complicite.org))

Watching Complicite work, their physical foundations are readily apparent, with their Lecoq training clearly evident. However, I believe that this antagonism towards a confinement to any restrictive definition of genre proclaims the artists’ need for freedom of expression, and is typically post-modernist in its desire not to be defined or categorised.

In this crossing of boundaries and merging of forms, some practitioners are happy to associate themselves with the term ‘physical theatre’. Volcano Theatre is one such company, based in Wales, and is an example of a vigorous, contemporary theatre company working within the category of non-naturalism. Their description of themselves as physical theatre practitioners, exemplifies many of my identified elements in physical theatre, such as the mix

of theatre languages employed, use of the unexpected, a distinct focus on its liveness, its basis in corporeality, and its social and political awareness.

Volcano... is often described as a 'physical theatre' company, [which] has developed a reputation for an energetic, muscular, choreographed performance style. Nevertheless, the company has only partially embraced this definition, and rather regards its undeniable physicality as one of the several component parts of its theatrical language, which also affords importance to visual design, text, video, music etc. Volcano shows seek to exploit the possibilities of surprise, confrontation, immediacy and excitement offered by live performance. They are unashamedly non-naturalistic. Design tends to be bold, striking and unfussy. Volcano's theatre is determinedly political, setting itself against the complacent, the orthodox, and the bland.

([www.volcanotheatre.co.uk](http://www.volcanotheatre.co.uk))

Volcano Theatre also cite *authenticity* as a key component of their theatre practice, which they locate within the body, stating that their work is "founded on the authenticity of the body... the authentic body reopen[ing] the dream of unlimited freedom... freedom to express the multifaceted nature of human possibilities. The politics of identity derives much of its force from the idea of authenticity" (Davies, 2003: online).

Peter Brook treads in Aristotle's footsteps with his notion that "theatre... is like a magnifying glass, and also like a reducing lens" (Brook, 1990: 110). Whilst all theatre seeks to challenge conceptions of self, physical theatre approaches this task through the stripping away of the psychological barriers inherent in word based theatre. I find Brook's statement acutely pertinent to physical theatre, which, through its self-referential and self-seeking habitus, reflects the cultural, sociological and political agendas of its audience, in its "embodied mental representation, which is grounded in specific socio-material conditions" (Bourdieu *in* Shevtsova, 2003: 12). Physical performance converses eloquently with a questioning post-modern audience, who, confronted with the first-hand experience of the performer's personal truth, can assimilate and contextualise that performed experience back into their own lives, "repeating the cognitive breakthrough of its 'inventor'...performance...[which] can be

understood and practised only when each new member repeats the original cognitive leap” (George 1996: 17).

Eugenio Barba has spent the last 40 years exploring this cognitive leap. Beginning his theatre career in the early 1960s, as assistant to Grotowski, Barba has continued Grotowski’s studies in the theatre laboratory, into the “nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, [and] the nature and science of its mental-physical-emotional processes” (Brook *in* Grotowski, 1991: 11), which identified the body and voice as the starting point for creation in an entirely stripped down ascetic, leaving only the spectator and performer to commune in a mutual “process of self-penetration” (Grotowski, 1991: 34). Barba’s experience of working with Grotowski, and his research into the forms used in Kathakali, helped formulate many of his fundamental beliefs, such as the vital importance of rigorous physical actor training in creating truthful expression, and the use of non-naturalistic stylisation. Barba compares the theatre laboratory to an “anthropological expedition... go[ing] beyond civilized territories [to] challenge the collective unconscious... in the theatre laboratory, the spectators are made to face the most secret, the most carefully hidden part of themselves” (Barba *in* Ley, 1999: 212). Barba saw that ancient ritual challenged this *collective unconscious*, by pushing “reality... through the sieve of stylisation... guarantee[ing] the involvement of the audience... lift[ing] him [sic] out of the world of phenomena and into the supernatural world where gods and demons fight the archetypal battle of our human adventure”. Back in the laboratory, this role of the spectator as co-creator, translated into a breaking down of the “stage/audience dichotomy... [by distributing the action] all over the theatre and among the spectators” (Ley, 212-3).

With a group of unwanted outcasts, Barba then set up his own theatre company, Odin Teatret, founded in “a loss, a privation, a lack, an exclusion” from mainstream theatre, compounded by their self-imposed exile to a remote corner of a foreign land, Denmark, which meant that they even lost their native speech with which to communicate with those outside of their small group (Barba, 2002: 12). Barba is an explorer, epitomising the idea of a world

citizen, deliberately placing himself outside of the societies he inhabits, which he sees as better equipping him to more fully explore the nature of human relationships, enabling him to step outside of himself and ask the question, ‘how do we define ourselves’? He says, “When you travel, you leave behind your culture, your language and lifestyle and this brings a freedom to be anonymous, and allows you to explore life from another perspective; recognising everything, but not knowing how things work” (2004 a). He sees this form of exile as an opportunity to face oneself in a raw state, and either sink or swim in the process, stating that, “Every form of exile is like a poison: if it doesn’t kill you it can give you strength” (2002: 14). This very isolation, and lack of support system, other than each other, forced the Odin actors to “abandon the protective shell of certainties... [revealing] the wounds that secrete the essential” (2002: 12-14). In his isolation, Barba looked for, and found, connections with his adopted theatrical forebears and, in his extensive reading of Stanislavski, Artaud, Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Reinhardt, Piscator, Weigel, Vakhtangov, Brecht, Lorca, and Sulerzhitski, he discovered that he was not alone at all, and was, in fact, in very good company (2002: 14). The evolution of the *secreted essential* Odin Teatret stems both from the early naïve explorations of this, then, young group of actors, and the aesthetic theories of Barba’s identified forebears, which “appeared to be divergent... [but] were, at times, only different metaphors”, and he gives as example “the three emblem-words that Meyerhold had used at different stages to indicate his personal vision of the actor – the grotesque, dance, and biomechanics” (2003a: 111). The subsequent theatrical language which Odin developed, has produced 40 years of detailed investigation into what is essential in the nature of acting, and integral to the creation of authentic moments in physical theatre.

Barba’s Theatre Anthropology explores Eastern methodologies of performance to find techniques that might be of use to the Western performer in harnessing “presence” or “energy”, and, in the expressive potential of movements, rhythms and stances of performers of different cultures, Barba discovered recurring principles of pre-expressive behaviour which, when applied to physiological factors such as weight, balance, position of the spinal column and

direction of the eyes in space, produce physical tensions which generate a different energy quality, rendering the body theatrically alive, or “decided”, which translates onto the stage as something mesmerising to watch (1991). Barba sites these pre-expressive tensions between opposing energies in the body, and his principle of oppositions, as the essence of energy, is linked to the principle of simplification, or the omission of certain elements, which allows the body to expose what is left, putting other elements into relief, which then appear essential.

The theatrical omission does not constitute in ‘letting oneself go’ into undefined non-action. On the stage and for the performer, omission means ‘retaining’ that which distinguishes real scenic life and not dispersing it around in an excess of expressivity and vitality. The beauty of omission, in fact, is the beauty of indirect action, of the life which is revealed with a maximum of intensity in a minimum of activity... it is a play of oppositions which goes beyond even the pre-expressive levels of the performer’s art.

(Barba, 1991: 15)

Barba also describes the performer’s body as a dancing body, and he discovered “the waves of a rhythm or of a powerful action which is retained in the depths of the body even if it barely moves, or behaves ‘normally’... in the deep dance, hidden in all performers when their presence is efficient ” (2004 b). I was lucky enough to attend a practical workshop given by one of Odin’s performers, Julia Varley, which explored these notions of deep dance and opposition. We worked on speaking whilst moving the hand in the opposite direction from the meaning of the words, e.g. starting on a low note and go up in scale, whilst taking the hand from above your head to the floor, and we worked on the negation principle – prior to a movement, doing a small movement in the opposite direction and then into the main movement. This expanded into whole body movements, whilst speaking a script in monotone then moving around the space, adding in different physical dynamics such as running, jumping, slow motion, etc., allowing the voice to come from the body movement, then making the voice go against the movement, and seeing the effects on both movement and speech. It was surprisingly difficult to keep these actions distinct from one another and not let them drift together, keeping a clear defined tone and maintaining physical focus, but, when we did achieve this, the entire tonicity

of the body altered, giving a greater depth of meaning to the action. These techniques were demonstrated with more precision in Varley's performance of *Doña Musica's Butterflies*, in which the subtext of her character in a former production, *Kaosmos*, becomes the text of *Doña Musica* and she openly discusses these techniques in the interplay between actress and character onstage, creating an immediate relationship with the audience (Varley, 2004).

Barba views Odin's audiences as the other half of their lifeblood, describing the performers as the systole of their heart, and the audience, the diastole, presupposing that, unlike laboratory theatre, one cannot exist without the other.

The spectators must be cradled by a thousand subterfuges: entertainment, sensual pleasure, artistic quality, emotional immediacy, and aesthetic refinement. But the essential lies in the transfiguration of the ephemeral quality of the performance into a splinter of life that sinks roots into their flesh and accompanies them through the years.

(Barba, 2002: 16)

The very purpose of Odin, then in Barba's vision, seems to lie in a dualistic, synchronistic interdependence of performer and audience, wherein the discipline and skill of the ensemble in creating performances that, "touch... sensibilities and intimate wounds... penetrating psychic, mental and intellectual metabolism... becom[ing] memory" is rewarded, via the spectator, by being passed on to the inhabitants of the theatre, those of "the living, the dead and the yet unborn" who await receipt of this sacred tradition of the authentic experience of humankind (2002: 16). Whilst admitting to the pomposity of this view, Barba believes that "within this ancient and noble art the most anachronistic passion is the search for something permanent that outlives the performance" (2002: 18).

Eugenio Barba embodies a profound charisma, and to read his writing, and witness his theatre, is to be taken on a poetic journey of the senses, full of florid language and exotic, larger than life, often grotesque images. This may stem from Meyerhold, who used the grotesque to create a "dramaturgy of changes of states... the totality of knots or dramaturgical short circuits



which radically alter the meaning of the story and plunge the spectators' senses and understanding into an unexpected void that condenses and disorientates their expectations" (Barba, 2003a: 113). Odin's performers pick up the mantle of their theatrical forebears in their relentless and rigorous physical training as a means of going beyond the body to create metaphysical connections with their audience. Artaud said that, "there is no question of putting metaphysical ideas directly on stage but of creating kinds of temptations, vacuums, around these ideas... humour and its anarchy, poetry and its symbolism and imagery, give us a kind of primary idea of how to channel the temptation in these ideas" (Artaud, 1974: 69). Barba sees himself as the "orphan heir" of his cited forebears and, if Artaud is watching over him as he imagines, I think he might recognise those very temptations and vacuums in Odin's performances. As Barba says, "The essence of theatre does not reside in its aesthetic quality or in its capacity to represent or criticize life. It consists rather in radiating through the rigor of scenic technique an individual and collective *form of being*" (Barba, 2002: 16). This connection, expressed through the body in Barba's physical theatre, is where we find his moments of truth.

In tracing the origins of physical theatre as a hybrid of avant-garde theatre and dance, my next chapter will explore these moments of truth in an analysis of the work of practitioners emanating from the world of dance.

### Chapter Three: The Dancers

To experience dance is to experience our own living substance in an aesthetic (affective) transformation.

(Fraleigh, 1987: xvi)

In dance we have a truly embodied art - the dancer is inseparable from her body, we cannot view dance without the presence of the dancer, and so the dancer *is* her art. It is possible in theatre, though not physical theatre, to have theatre without the actor, as Craig might have wished, but it is not possible to have dance without the dancer. As Fraleigh suggests,

“all performing artists are embodied in their art, but the dancer most clearly represents our expressive body-of-action and its aesthetic idealization.... the essential reduction and significance of dance lies in this distinction: *I am embodied in my dance, I am not embodied in my painting*. The painting is separated from me; it is, finally, out there in front of me, but my dance cannot exist without me: I exist my dance.”

(Fraleigh, 1987: xvi, emphasis in original)

In *Dance and the Lived Body*, Fraleigh focuses on existential phenomenology, which “developed nondualistic views of the human body, which provide a foundation for overcoming well-entrenched dualisms in dance” (1987: 8). In looking at developments in modern dance, Fraleigh draws on Lawrence and O’Connor’s view that “phenomenology holds that philosophical knowledge must be general (not simply private) but also based upon direct experience” (Lawrence, N. and O’Connor, D. in Fraleigh, 1987: 255). This *direct experience* brings mind and body together, in an experience viewed “from the inside rather than at a distance... [and] consequently... often takes the form of the first-person description”, thus highlighting the subjective view of the performer (Fraleigh, 1987: xiv).

Whilst Fraleigh's view is exclusive to dance, and may not indeed apply to theatre and actors in general, I believe that it does apply unequivocally to the actor in physical theatre, whose focus similarly lies in the corporeal body, and without whom physical theatre cannot exist. The terms *dance* and *physical theatre* then become interchangeable in much of Fraleigh's exploration of dance as "an embodied art, [wherein] the body is the lived (experiential) ground of the dance aesthetic" (Fraleigh, 1987: xiii). Barba similarly describes a "dynamo-rhythm constituting the music of the body... [which is located]... not in the genre 'dance', but in the dance of the body-in-life" (Barba, 2004 b). The "lived attributes – its kinaesthetic and existential character" that Fraleigh sees in dance, likewise applies to physical theatre in which the merging of forms from dance and theatre are creating a new type of performer, whom Fraleigh sees as "the ultimate athlete of our expressive body" (1987: xvi), whilst Artaud describes the actor as "a heart athlete" (1974: 88). The physical theatre performer, like the dancer, requires a high level of training to become this athlete, of the heart and the expressive body, and by, "following the inner organic music of their own physical actions... the action retains its [own] force and life... [this] ability characterises all those who struggle for a scenic presence through the training of precise physical actions" (Barba, 2004 b).

In the creation of a physical theatre, the influence of the German school of dance can be seen in the words of Mary Wigman, "the dance form is not determined by dance (only)... on the contrary it is more of a compromise which has its origins in theatre, where the main accent is no longer on the dance itself but on the total stage event" (Wigman in Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 9). When pure forms merge, as in dance and theatre to make physical theatre, there will always remain a feeling amongst the purists of each genre that this merging is, as Wigman says, a compromise of some form. However, I would see it instead as the birth of something new, that has its roots in pure forms, rather than the compromising of something old. The pure forms remain for those who wish to follow them, whilst physical theatre adds a new form to the repertoire, rather than detracting from its source.

The source can be seen in Rudolf Laban's hugely influential theories of *Tanzschrift*, choreutics and eukinetics, which laid the foundations of much dance study, have been developed further in the late twentieth century to address emerging, specialist areas of dance practice. In 1987, Valerie Preston-Dunlop launched the choreological study of dance-as-theatre, to address developments in dance practice of post-Laban practitioners such as Merce Cunningham and Pina Bausch (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 2). The move that Preston-Dunlop perceived in 1987 towards dance as a theatre art shows us the beginnings of a movement in dance towards physical theatre and Bausch could, indeed, be considered the forerunner of physical theatre in her focus on corporeality which,

... sees the human body as a body that is personal, social, emotional, animal, mineral, vegetable, sexual, biological and psychological, as well as an agent of motion, and one that is given a context, a space, which is in itself socio-personal, political, domestic, abstract, conscious, unconscious, etc... movement in tanztheater arises from the interplay of humans in these diverse and at times incongruous manifestations.

(Dunlop-Preston and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 9)

In Bausch's theatre, the experience of the piece is the thing itself, with no place for the passive observer, thus fulfilling Laban's vision of dance theatre by incorporating sound, dance and speech to express the world around her in a more direct, believable way, and utilising an autobiographical element to illuminate what is shared and specific in the human condition, so that the body is contextualised by the space and also transforms the space by its movement through it (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996).

The influence of dance on the creation of a physical theatre, then, can be seen in this focus on corporeality and subjectivity in dance, "... when the dance's conceptual content has an effect on its material form, where there is an emphasis on emotion and, with it, a focus on the performer's presence as a central factor of the event... corporeality links dance theatre to the radical developments within the avant-garde theatrical practice" (Dunlop-Preston and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 10).

In order to explore further the dance theatre and theatre influences that go into the creation of physical theatre, I have chosen to explore the works of specific practitioners from both of these worlds whom I have identified as crossing over from their pure original form into the territory of physical theatre. This chapter will look at the work of practitioners emanating from the world of dance, Wendy Houston and Earthfall.

Wendy Houston is a dancer and choreographer who has worked extensively with DV8, as well as in collaboration with other artists, and also as a solo performer. The London Dance website lists Houston under the heading of contemporary dance, describing her work as “experimental video/film work, in collaboration with artists occupying different standpoints, to search for honesty in expression, to make connections between the personal and the political... continu[ing] her commitment to the territory in between dance and theatre” (London Dance, online). London Dance does not offer any definition of this *territory in between dance and theatre*, but, in analysing Houston’s approach and methodology, her location in physical theatre is evident. To explore this further, I will focus on Houston’s performance in the film of *Diary of a Dancer*, based on the stage performance, *Haunted*.

Houston kindly discussed with me her search for truthful experience in her work, which she describes as “a combination of movement and text which combine personal with the political (small p) and endeavour to retain some humour with a darker side...[the pieces] have evolved through working with different companies and an ongoing questioning of what and how I approach work” (2005: 1). Houston’s questioning approach echoes through her professional workshops, in which there is a reciprocity of ideas and experimentation which feeds into the work of both the participants and Houston herself. Anne O’Keeffe, a dancer and choreographer based in Australia, describes the experience thus,

The workshop explored collisions between movement and text [(spoken word) and] was also a celebration of the quest and the questioning, the faith

in the journey and the craft of deepening and refining... beyond the specific exercises in movement and text lay something deeper – THE PROCESS OF CREATIVITY itself... from the fog of confusion to the blue sky of creative clarity, the week affirmed for me what it is to be an artist.

(O’Keeffe, online, emphasis in original)

In working towards performance, Houston’s workshops and rehearsals focus on the personal *journey* towards knowledge, rather than in any answers that may lie at the end of that journey, and her performances become an expression of this search. She demonstrates an altruistic approach, freely sharing the creative processes of her choreographic research, and workshops become a mutual process of discovery, a shared journey through the spirit of investigation of truth. In seeking to create truthful experience, Houston views precision and technique as crucial, not only in “being a way of reproducing things... keeping the body safe in activity... and controlling the body in specific ways, but to be able to analyse and discipline more theatrical concepts - the way a look will read, the timing of a reaction, staying open to other performers, listening to the music and staying present” (Houston, 2005: 46).

The opening credits of *Diary of a Dancer*, describe the piece as a fictional account, but it nevertheless has a strong confessional quality to it, and Houston acknowledges that it is, in fact, a mix of autobiography and fiction. The film is based on a live solo piece called *Haunted*, and gives us detailed insight into Houston’s processes in creating performance, playing out in collage effect, cutting between the rehearsal studio, where a dancer works on the creation of a piece, and the dancer’s own life and observations, from which she is drawing her ideas. The semi-autobiographical sense is clearly highlighted by the ambiguity of boundaries between Houston’s character and Houston, herself, as the performer. Houston’s focus shifts constantly between speaking directly to her audience, straight to camera, engaging attention and creating an immediate relationship, and an introspective perspective of self, into which the audience is drawn through a sense of recognition, such that, “although it is self-referential, autobiography nonetheless assumes an audience, engaging in a reciprocal dialogue in which a

story about my life helps you to think about your life” (Cooper Albright, 1997: 119). Through this engagement with the audience in live performance, Houstoun has discovered that she is able to manipulate moments of tension, for example, “it is possible to use breath to still an audience, holding breath imperceptibly can quieten or hold an audience for the next moment and create a kind of tension” (2005: 4).

In the film, we see Houstoun watching a TV programme about a woman being attacked in the street, then cut to the rehearsal studio where she begins to work with movement – falling down repeatedly, arms clasped around her body, with narrative over (Houstoun in disjointed fashion), “she felt... she remembers...”. Houstoun’s focus in the creation of *Haunted* was on “form and how to place words next to movement”, and we see this clearly in *Diary of a Dancer*, watching the dancer rehearse, exploring the placing of words next to movement, trying different forms, using repetition and making adjustments, to her desired effect, (2005, 2). We witness the piece developing, as Houstoun’s movements incorporate two guns, and the addition of costume and lights. The lighting changes show the progression of thoughts feeding into the developing movement, from the dark studio where we hear Houstoun’s thoughts in voice over, giving herself instruction, “head back” etc., to the lit studio where Houstoun talks directly to camera, extending the stream of consciousness into performance. The film ends in clips from the completed *Haunted* showing its tour of UK pubs and clubs, in “small intimate environments that place the audience hard up against her technical virtuosity and verbal irony” (O’Keeffe, online).

Through setting physical tasks and working with spatial awareness, focussing on “the use of energy, whether the energy is coming in or moving out, or both at the same time, what feels like the right next move for generating energy, and whether action is full bodied or naturalistic - which moves the air in a different way”, Houstoun explores how space generates movement and how movements work in space (2005). Working to camera adds another spatial relationship to consider alongside the relationship of the body in space and the camera in *Diary*

*of a Dancer* acts very much as an eavesdropper on the dancer's experience, the documentary style complementing the autobiographical performance style which "change[s] the dynamic of an objectifying gaze" (Cooper Albright, 1997: 121) by confronting the audience with the performer's perceived truths.

There is a tangible honesty and integrity in Houstoun's bearing and to watch her perform is to experience a profound sense of witness, and empathy, with the deeply personal exploration of a woman pushing her body, heart and soul forwards into dangerous territory, courageously and knowingly entering murky waters to privately and publicly face her personal demons. Her skill as a dancer and her intelligent, imaginative and humorous exploration of political and social issues, epitomises "the personal made physical", creating performances of immense passion, power and veracity (O'Keeffe, online). Cooper Albright describes the trend of female dancers in companies such as DV8 towards, "this kind of intense, driven movement... fearless, aerobicized physicality... in this genre of Euro crash and burn dancing" (1997: 35-36), and I believe that it is from such approaches to movement, which push bodies to the limits of their capacity, going beyond the objectified-virtuostic dance form into the search for raw human emotionality and truth, that dance moves towards a physical theatre.

Prior to Jim Ennis and Jessica Cohen of Earthfall, kindly inviting me to observe the final stages of rehearsals for their new production, *At Swim Two Boys*, at their home base in Cardiff, I had previously seen two Earthfall productions which identified the company, to me, as also seeking to explore this notion of truth in performance, through their use of risk-taking physicality, characters who speak, live music, and live film, all combining in a montage effect of high energy and visceral theatricality.

*Running Away With The Hairdresser* is a "physical portrayal of extreme characters in extreme places with a depth and black humour that draws from cinema, stand-up, opera and farce to create a heady mix of vital cutting-edge performance" (Earthfall, publicity leaflet) and *I*



*Can't Stand Up For Falling Down* is a “fast, furious and fervent performance of extreme dance, film, live music, DJ and stand-up as six characters go in search of a new life and end up a family of outcasts in the remains of a house” (Earthfall, online). For me, the mix of extreme physicality combined with poignant use of fragments of script, and the live quality of music and film clearly evoked the struggle of these characters to understand and make sense of their worlds, epitomising the existential phenomenology of physical theatre, creating moments of resonance with my own personal struggles. The intelligent use of live film, which came into play periodically, gave a magnified double of the performers on stage in real time, focussing in variously on a face or body parts, hands, feet, legs, stomachs, allowing us to focus in, in minute detail, such that I almost felt that I *was* the character, relating in an entirely subjective way, whilst at the same time seeing the whole image from a distance and being able to combine an objective and subjective view. The doubling effect of this created a sense of eavesdropping almost, being inside or outside the mind and body of the performer, focussing in or out at will, seeing their thoughts, almost feeling their breath, whilst observing their bodies in motion, or stillness, epitomising Dunlop-Preston and Sanchez-Colberg’s description of corporeality in “a synthetic approach to the production as a whole including a concern with the dialectic between an individual’s internal reality (their subjective life) and its external socio-cultural context” (2002: 9). The choice and use of live music performed by musicians on stage in these performances added greatly to the sense of the experience in the moment, creating or reacting to changes in mood and emotion, lending the power of music to the sensory experience as a whole.

Earthfall’s production of *At Swim Two Boys* is based upon the novel of the same name by Jamie O’Neill, which is epic in nature and, for their production, Earthfall focus on the core of the novel, the love story, and sexual and political awakening of two teenage boys. The performance employs two dancers, two musicians who perform live and pre-recorded music, live and pre-recorded film, spoken text, and a lot of water.

There is always a personal relationship with content in Earthfall's work, unique to the constellation of people involved in their projects. This creates a point of departure with which there are already personal resonances, based on a conviction and belief in the content with which they identify on a personal level. The seeds of *At Swim* were sown in the personal relationship between Ennis, Cohen, and O'Neill, and also Ennis' personal family history, and like most of their work, developed over several years. Alongside this sense of identification, there is a symbiotic intellectual connection with the material chosen, and Ennis and Cohen look to parallel artforms such as visual arts, galleries, music from every source, and cinema, for ideas and inspiration. I believe this self-centred approach, based on the creator's honest response, allows for translation to the audience of an emotionality in recognition of the performer's truthful event or meaning. Ennis acknowledges the intangibilities and dangers of attempting to evoke this heightened emotionality in the audience, but cites personal identification as a starting point to this process.

If you put a series of ideas that you *care* about, that you *identify* with, together, you get the right team, who have strong technique, who have strong ability, who work hard, *technically*, then you work on the dynamic of the piece in terms of timing, in terms of sound, in terms of what comes where - the orchestration of the piece - and keep watching it and keep being aware of it, make certain choices, experiment, explore different rhythms, choices, in terms of structure, then something sometimes happens in terms of this feeling... [a] kind of heightened awareness within the audience, or heightened emotionality.

(Ennis, 2005: 49)

Ennis points out the dangerous nature of this territory, expressing distaste for the manipulative methods used in film formulae to achieve, often superficial, results, and Cohen affirms their intention to avoid creating literal responses. However, all created work must have an intention at its heart and I would agree with Daniel when he says that, "when performances are successful, there is always evidence of awareness being consciously manipulated" (Daniel, 2000: 65).

Any analysis of the affective qualities of an artform on its audience will inherently be full of conjecture. Post-performance surveys have tried and, more often than not, failed to measure audience responses in any meaningful way and these attempts to gauge responses rather miss the point of post-modern performance practice. The myriad of elements that physical theatre practitioners are able to employ in creating performance renders any presentation of meaning, as such, within that performance, a subtle affair. Fraleigh ascribes embodied qualities to the experience of both the dancer and audience, when she locates understanding of the dance through a recognition of the “expressive nature of our own bodies... [which] draws upon both the personal and the universal body... as it becomes a source for communion, testifying to our bodily lived existence, our mutual grounding in nature, and our shared bodily acculturations” (Fraleigh, 1987: xvi-xvii). This applies equally to physical theatre, wherein the expressive nature of the performer’s body is the primary element, and it is this same process of creating meaning through the body in physical theatre that allows for the sharing of that experience with its audience, as Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg say, “Embodying is a process which gives tangible form to ideas” - ideas which the audience can then absorb and interpret for themselves (2002: 7). Manipulation of the audience towards a specific meaning is not an intention of physical theatre, the focus lies rather in the manipulation of the creative processes which might then achieve the possibility of free interpretation. As Wigman says, “corporeality... [can provide] a final heightening of the opportunity for human expression” (Wigman in Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 9), and Ennis points out that, through their relationship with the work which is paramount, they begin with an honest and passionate perspective, nurtured by the group’s involvement, which allows a natural evolution of the piece, without forcing the creative process, then the result may well be a heightened emotionality in their audience.

Ennis and Cohen have evolved a harmonious and synchronistic communication, and also a conscious dialectic in their working relationship, both of which they draw upon to inspire and create. They bring together their separate research and make certain choices before

including other core members of the company in the development of a piece, creating the beginnings of a route map, or throughline, at an early stage in their process, which then becomes distilled throughout the rehearsal process. Like Odin Teatret, a core group of performers and technicians has evolved within Earthfall, generating continuity and a sense of mutuality and receptivity within the group. Whilst the final say always falls to Ennis and Cohen, the sense of mutuality that they have actively encouraged within the group produces a fast, slick, communication which lends an innate understanding of the direction of the piece and feeling of ownership by all involved, such that performers and musicians can, at times, work independently of Ennis and Cohen in creating the work.

This collaborative method of working is a key element of Earthfall's approach. Their core team consists of dancers, musicians and technicians, and live music is seen as being as vital a component of their creations as the corporeal body, with the fusion of music with movement fundamental to their method. They work with both live and prototype sounds that interest them, investigating different qualities through physical reinterpretation. Live music is used as much as possible in performance, and, if not live, pre-recorded music, which is ideally written alongside the creation of the movement, to evoke mood and emotionality and also in moulding transitions, when the movement, or the music, might take the lead, "depending on that particular set of circumstances.... we might say, that note has to go shorter and then the boys' movement will hit that exactly, or we might say to the boys, hang back a moment until you hear the strong beat and then go with it. Both things happen" (Cohen, 2005: 51). Eugenio Barba describes the dancing body as an organic organism, where movements springs from the body, rather than from a reaction to music being imposed mechanically on the body (2004 b). Whilst Earthfall take inspiration and impulse from music, the synergy of music and movement in their approach to creating performance allows for this organic organism to emerge, as Barba says, "when dance is organic, it contains its own music" (2004 b).

This precision is fundamental to Earthfall's methodology in homogenising live music with emotive physicality and imagery, speech, and filmed and live close-up camera work. Within this homogenisation of elements, due consideration is given to the notion of dynamic flow and, whether mood changes and transitions are deliberately smooth or jarring, their aim is to make them invisible or seamless, creating the feeling of a whole performance, rather than a sequence of vignettes. As Cohen states, this creation of a whole performance, not with beginning, middle and end, as such, but with a dynamic flow running throughout, locates Earthfall's work more closely to theatre than contemporary dance, and where "we experience the lived substance of dance through our own kinetic flow of being... the dance unites the dancer and the audience in a lived metaphysic" (Fraleigh, 1987: xv). Within this dynamic flow, the music more than the choreography in *At Swim*, creates an episodic sense, more akin to theatrical scenes, which is aimed at wakening or surprising the audience, to avoid any feeling of settling into something predictable or comfortable, "for theatre can only happen the moment the inconceivable really begins, where poetry taking place on stage, nourishes and superheats created symbols" (Artaud :18).

For *At Swim Two Boys*, Ennis and Cohen identified events in the lives of the two boys in the story, from which they made their own discreet narratives, which became the headers, or throughline. These events, or themes, provide a point of departure from which the dancers improvise, alongside the simultaneous creation of the music for the piece, creating their own personal narratives from this exploration of different perceptions and realities. When I asked how they achieve this merging of fictionalised characters with the dancers' own stories, Cohen points out that they do not aim to create characters, in the acting sense, instead,

... allowing the choreography to dictate the emotion...we're quite technical in the approach to the emotionality of the actors, if we call them actors, because they *do* develop personae on stage and we have *fed* into them during the creative process the mannerisms and character elements of the two characters that we drew from the novel, but we haven't pushed that on them, they've been able to embrace some and not other elements... [to] make sense of it themselves.

(Cohen, 2005: 50)

This, I believe, is an essential element in the creation of recognisable truth – this truth from within the performer, which lends an “...anti-mimetic attitude towards the performance event where narrative is subsumed in corporeal form and a polysemantism of the theatrical signs is employed” (Dunlop-Preston and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 10). Certainly, in watching *At Swim*, the overall depth of meaning and emotionality that I experienced cannot be explained by any of the elements of the *mise en scene* in isolation, but seemed to come from the careful melding of all these elements, foremost amongst which is the performers’ almost intangible *making sense of it themselves*, creating for them a truthful experience, the witness of which caused me to reflect upon my own personal emotionality and truths.

*At Swim Two Boys* is choreographed to work in water and my first experience of the piece, on Day 1, was, literally, a dry run, without the water. I arrived to find this dry run about to commence and so watched this performance before any discussion with the creators and with little prior knowledge of the content of the piece. It is not possible to offer an analysis of the whole piece here, but the opening tableau gives a taste of the depths of meaning and emotion conveyed throughout the piece. A trumpet plays a slow lament and we see the performers sitting, relaxed, at the top of either side of a ladder, looking as though at some far horizon. As they glance fleetingly at one another, briefly making eye contact and looking away with small smiles, I sensed a feeling of togetherness and a gentle warmth between them – two good friends. The music adds to the impression of a relaxed end of a late summer’s day. The gentle looks and smiles turn to boyish, gentle nudges and shoves at each other, slowly giving a sense of a sexual undercurrent, reminiscent of innocent youthful explorations of sexuality on balmy summer evenings. It is clear from these few movements, that Jim (Cai) is the innocent here and Doyler (Terry) the more sexually aware of the two. There is nothing threatening in Doyler’s demeanour, who also displays a gentle uncertainty, treading carefully and nurturing Jim’s awakening sexual interest whilst being aware of his naivety. All this is gleaned through the

corporeality of the performers through very little movement, and the trumpet music, which subtly evoke a place and time, and reflect the sexual tension between the performers. The subtlety of the performers' movements and use of music here clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of Ennis and Cohen's fondness for understatement and economy and their attention to minute detail which gives us a clear picture of "the interesting [feelings which] are the ones that are being hidden, that leak out" (Ennis, 2005: 50). By reducing movement and using stillness, they create a subtlety of meaning "which is approaching a kind of honesty of expression, or truth... which we always arrive at through this technique of reduction certainly in movement" (Ennis, 2005: 50). Cohen describes an example of this, which I witnessed in the opening tableau described above.

Terry's character is more forceful than Cai's... it needed to look like he wasn't being repelled [but] maybe slightly coy or nervous. It only involved a 2mm turn of the head, possibly, to make that emotional difference. Really, subtle physical changes and more technique than anything... we're quite loathe to use emotionality or story when we're doing the choreography... because it can so easily go the other way and become too much. It's much better if we see what's needed and we might just say, oh, tip that head just slightly inwards a little bit, and that will sort it out.

(Cohen, 2005: 50)

The decision to use water in the piece grew out of the novel, as the sea is where the characters express themselves, away from everybody else, more freely, and it also provided a choreographic challenge to Ennis and Cohen. Their early rehearsals started off softly, exploring the physical cautiousness and curiosity of the two characters, but "once the water came in, which was not long, then it became very, very extreme and we went through a series of extreme exploration in terms of physicality and risk taking and throwing each other around" (Ennis, 2005: 53). Seeing first a dry, then a wet rehearsal, I witnessed the effect of the presence of the water on the second day, which had a profound effect on the senses. The smell of the water, like fresh fallen rain inside the space, created a feeling of dampness in the air, evoking the moment of just stepping in from the rain, clothes soaked and steamy. The lights reflecting onto the water on the floor created secondary, blurred images of the dancers and the reflections

of the water on the backdrop looked at times like smoke or steam rising from the floor. The sound of water gentle trickling down the backdrop, and lapping in relative stillness in the space, evoked an atmosphere of being contained under a canopy of some kind, perhaps a rainforest or under the sea itself, then the explosive sight and sound of great swathes of water cascading through the air as the dancers threw themselves into it, sending water in all directions in showers of water bursting with dynamic energy. The proximity of the audience to the dancers and the water created a sense of danger and excitement, and, depending on how one responded to the possibility of being soaked by the sprays of water, panic or readiness to laugh in the face of an unexpected shower - although publicity for the show clearly states the risk here.

Earthfall decided with O'Neill "to depict the relationship between the two boys with few words, using emotive physicality and imagery within a provocative performance environment" (Ennis, director's notes, 2005). I would say that *Running Away with the Hairdresser* and *I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down* more obviously than *At Swim Two Boys* sit in physical theatre domain, but only by dint of the performers' use of speech within these pieces, and *At Swim Two Boys* therefore, which uses few words and these are in recorded voice-over, is more at the dance-as-theatre end of Earthfall's work, but the creative processes and working methodology, clearly locate Earthfall as physical theatre practitioners who are exploring all aspects of their creativity and, in the end, creating these elusive moments of authenticity in their performances.

The sheer physical intensity of the physical theatre experience, with its basis in the corporeal body, creates a *performative event*, described by Merriam-Webster as "an expression that serves to effect a transaction" (1993, in Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, 1). The notion of the *performative* has evolved from Austin's ideas relating to the action consequence of utterances, and developed through the ideas of Derrida and Butler, amongst others. When we relate this notion of performativity to physical theatre, Searle's "speech acts" (Searle, in Schechner, 2002, 112), become *action acts*, transacted between performer and



spectator in the consequences or resonances of the self-referential action of the performer. In physical theatre this transaction is located in the sharing and exchange of metaphysical energies between performer and spectator, where “knowledge from experience and knowledge from observation are distinct but essentially inter-related and ultimately interdependent... requir[ing] this multi-level of complexity for its knowing” (Dunlop-Preston and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002: 11). The transaction via physical energies and techniques directed through the body, attunes the audience to the immediate experience, or action, of the performance, and we find ourselves living very much in the moment; something which we find increasingly hard to do in our frenetic and stress-filled lives, but which is cited as one of the means of gaining enlightenment and a sense of peace by many spiritual gurus of the post-modern age.

## Conclusion

There are clearly many elements which come together to create physical theatre. In its evolutionary journey it is becoming increasingly sophisticated, often incorporating high-tech means within its constructs, which speak clearly to its technically aware, often young, audiences. By looking outwards at the world around them, the physical theatre practitioner allows the spectator to look inwards at herself. By acknowledging a paradox of performance that Diderot first recognised - the duality of the performer's consciousness, that is, how can she present truth when she knows she is lying - the physical theatre practitioner turns to the subjective view, the observed truth of the present moment, rather than fixed truth, as Horton Fraleigh describes, "our subjectivity is lived rather than known... I describe the body in dance as objectively known and subjectively lived" (1987: 43). Everything in life is paradoxical, and to copy reality we have to understand its paradoxes. As the performer seeks to translate her own first-hand meaning through her corporeality, if her skill is judicious and well formulated, her audience can then construct their own first-hand meanings through the experience of witnessing the corporeality of the performer, who becomes the mediator for the expression of ideas. All artforms are trying to show unmediated truth, which is revealed through its mediators who find a method - a configuration - that will resonate with others, and physical theatre practitioners are attempting to achieve this resonance through a particular set of tools.

I believe that this dissertation identifies many of those tools and configurations, even if one of these is its "purposeful ambiguity... in order to avoid fixation in any particular temporality" (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 42). In physical performance the body is a social and political body, in its attempts to "question what is shared and what is specific within the human

condition” (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 46). Whether movement has a dance orientation, or emanates from mime, or other physical training such as that defined by Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Grotowski, Suzuki, etc., or is simply the unique manifestation of an individual’s perspective, the movement will be stylised and poetic in essence, within a merging of naturalistic and non-naturalistic movement, and made with great awareness of how the body moves through the space, and the affective qualities of that movement in the space, so that the layers of meaning within the movement become visible to the spectator’s inner eye, as much as we see the visible traces of the ice-skater’s journey on the ice.

Inspiration for physical performances may come from parallel artforms, as well as from dance and theatre, and performance is more likely to be crafted from a score, rather than a script, with autonomous scenes, unconnected by time which is fluid, and non-chronological, offering “a view of reality [that] remains partial and a result of the poetic juxtaposition of the scenes in an extreme form of scenic montage... which remains open-ended so as to engage the audience actively” (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996: 42). Barba describes this engagement as “organic dramaturgy, which comprises the dynamics of the actions and the flow of impulses directed at the spectators’ senses... this ‘theatre that dances’ gives the actions a coherence which does not stem from the meaning but from the capacity to keep alert, stimulate, and convince the spectators’ senses” (Barba, 2003: 113).

Physical theatre is a return to the source of theatre, in its merging of dance and theatre, as Barba says, “theatre and dance form one single vast territory”, and he locates the rigid borders created between dance and theatre in the European conventions of the last centuries, describing this distinction between elements as a wound, an unnecessary separation of forms, which did not exist in most of theatre history, in ancient Greek and Roman theatre, the Elizabethan stage, the *Commedia dell’Arte*, nor in classical forms of Asian theatre, nor in “the practice of actors who know they are dancing even if they conceal it beneath an interpretation which has nothing to do with the genre ‘dance’ ”(Barba, 2004 b). The blurring of boundaries,

then, between avant-garde theatre and dance theatre, take us back to what is essential in theatre, when “actors retain the energies that infuse life into their scenic presence, when they do not dance overtly, something dances *within them*... [and] the actors, despite all appearances, dance all through the play (Barba, 2004 b).

Appendix One: Wendy Houstoun Interview by e-mail 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005

*How would you describe your work today and how has it evolved?*

I would say that the pieces I make are a combination of movement and text. That they combine personal with the political (small p) and endeavour to retain some humour with a darker side. The pieces have evolved through working with different companies and an ongoing questioning of what and how I approach work. A lot of work develops through teaching – through experimenting with ideas with groups of people and through having to from ideas in order to pass.

*What/who have been the chief influences on your work?*

I would say that Lloyd Newson and working with DV8 has been one of the strongest influences. But also work before that - working with Ludus, doing class with Gill Clarke, Matthew Hawkins, watching other dancers at work. Reading things like David Mamet, the films of Atom Egoyan, music of many kinds and reading any current thinking, novels and papers. Also watching comedians (French and Saunders, Eddie Izzard). More recently the work of Forced Entertainment, Jonathan Burrows, people from Ballet Frankfurt, philosophy books, Jerome Bel, and reading books on spiritual development.

*Diary of a dancer is told in the first person but says it is a fictional account - how much is it autobiographical or fictional and how important is this to you?*

I think when you make solos there is a tendency to always think they are autobiographical - confessional. The film was based on a piece called Haunted, which had, in parts bits of reality, but I was interested in form and how to place words next to movement and this was also one of the main concerns to me. I think the work of DV8 and Diary of a dancer were both from periods where my own experience was feeding my work more than it might do now.

*How would you compare your experience of creating Diary of a Dancer with Strange Fish?*

As films they were very different processes. *Strange Fish* was a 10-day shoot with a crew and scheduled filming script. It had been rehearsed shot by shot and the filming followed the end of an 8-month tour. *Diary of a Dancer* was filmed only by David Hinton over the course of one summer, There was not script but scenes were based on a piece I had made. There were a lot of times when it was unclear whether the camera was filming or not and a lot of the time David was testing his operation of the camera as well as filming the action. It was more documentary in style and also performance. The order that the material was to be used in was not predetermined so as a performer I was not being asked to create any kind of development from within the action. As pieces, again totally different. The solo that the *Diary* was based on was made in sections over a long course of time, and at the time of filming had been performed intermittently over the course of two years. *Strange Fish* was made in three months with a director and a group of people. The piece went straight into an intensive tour and after finishing has not been done again.

*Do you generally prefer devising work as a solo performer or in collaboration with others? How does the experience differ?*

The collaborative experience is richer and more fun, for obvious reasons. Solos allow you to follow your own track a lot more, and things don't need to be explained to other people- allowing ideas and atmospheres to slowly form. I prefer to work with a group but solos are a good antidote every now and then, but not too often.

*In a directed/choreographed piece how much of a contribution do you feel dancers can make to the creation of a work and how important is what they bring personally to the creation of a piece?*

It very much depends on the process of the director/ company. In DV8 the pieces are a direct result of the degree to which the participants contribute and also the degree to which they realise they can. Often people arrive from a very different kind of work and don't realise they can offer things. Most devised work I have done is very personality based and is often very hard to translate to other people in a way that less devised and more technical work isn't.

*How important is technique to you in creating a truthful experience?*

I think of technique as being a way of reproducing things and also as a way of keeping the body safe in activity. In this sense technique is crucial, not only an ability to control the body in specific ways, but to be able to analyse and discipline more theatrical concepts - the way a look will read, the timing of a reaction, staying open to other performers, listening to the music and staying present. All of these things I think of as being technical.

*How do you consider the use of spatial relationships in your work?*

I'm not really sure. In solo work there is a very obvious way of patterning the floor and working out places to be on stage. In filming this is a very different thing as the camera is one spatial relationship but the geography of where you are is another thing as well. With the camera there is also an added question of how close the camera is on you and this is often hard to know until someone tells you, as you usually can't see what they are doing with the camera. In performing I tend to think of spatial things to do with use of energy - whether the energy is coming in or moving out, or both at the same time, and whether action is full bodied or naturalistic, which moves the air in a different way.

*When creating a new piece of work are there any theatre languages that you would consider taboo or does anything go?*

I would probably stop at mime, but apart from that... whatever says the thing you want to say the best.

*How do you address the relationship between performer and audience?*

In *Strange Fish* I remember thinking of allowing the audience to see me rather than thinking of showing something. This had a very specific affect on the action I think. In solo work I play a lot with how directly I am addressing the audience and how much I am engaged in something that I would be doing whether they were there or not. Also making use of involving them within a scene – almost as one of the characters in the scene. Also sometimes, I noticed you can use breath to still an audience, holding breath imperceptibly can quieten or hold an audience for the next moment and create a kind of tension.

*Do you seek feedback on audience responses?*

When making solo pieces I usually do a tryout where an audience can offer responses and comments and affect the piece, but you can generally feel what the feedback is from within the piece without having to ask. In group work the director acts as a kind of constant response and the audience becomes less impactful on the actual changes that might happen.

*How much do you aim to present clear meanings and how much do you want the audience to create their own meaning?*

A bit of both I think. I have what I think but there are always things that people will see that either I didn't notice or also didn't intend - the latter can be a problem sometimes and context can make a big difference. In the US when I did the piece the use of a plastic gun created more problems than it did here, but that was some time ago and I think the use of a gun on stage here would be something I would think very carefully about.

*How much do you think the culture of the spectator affects the reception of your work? Does this matter to you?*

I think I just jumped ahead with the last answer. It does matter to me if people are going to be reading something in a way that there was no intention for. For instance in *Strange Fish* the woman on the cross created problems for us when we were going to be touring to Northern Ireland and I don't think the intention was to make an anti-catholic statement, but could have been read as one. In solo work a lot of my references are very colloquial and this means that people in other places feel like they are studying England rather than having shared an experience there. In a wider way, if cultural differences mean that people don't like it that doesn't matter to me...some pieces are more and less universal and I don't think this means that the other pieces shouldn't exist.

*What do you see as the main challenges in creating your work?*

Many of them are practical, where to work, how to make a budget stretch, where to place the work. Then, in the nature of the work itself, what to speak about, how and in what way. How much the form is developing and where the content is placed, what is important to speak of, what feels like the right next move for generating energy interest and challenge to me. Trying to balance what I feel like doing with what I think would take me to a different place. Who to work with. Those kinds of things.

*What have you been working on recently and what are you working on now? What are you trying to achieve with this/these works?*

I recently worked on a duet – which was trying to develop even more how language and movement sit next to each other. It was also working with video and playing around with how the written word can feed into movement. Its concerns were quite formal and trying to allow the movement to really sit as movement, but still using spoken and other forms when needed. I made a group piece in Australia, which was a combination of video, movement and speech. It was attempting to make a piece which was a cross between a film and a theatre piece and again slipped in and out of humour and darker material, played around with who was in control of who and dealt with political issues quite head on - mostly the current notion that you can force democracy on people. I just had to do a lecture, which was a combination of story telling and set sequences around the notion of home and death. It was very much about my mum's experience in a nursing home and also dealt with quite abstract notions of absence and presence. I think I am trying to find oblique ways to deal with issues and situations that seem to transgress human dignity in some way.

*Thank you*

Appendix Two: Earthfall Interview, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Complete transcription of an interview with Jim Ennis and Jessica Cohen during rehearsals of their production of *At Swim, Two Boys*, at Ebeneser Chapel, Cardiff

*When I started working on this dissertation, my focus was on the way in which an audience receives a performance, particularly the transference and recognition of personal truths between audience and performer. However, this focus has shifted due to the logistical difficulty of quantifying audience response, and my focus is now on the process of creation of moments of truth in physical theatre. Jess, yesterday you were talking about not wanting to dictate a response from the audience. Can you tell me about your process of creation and what's in your mind when you are creating; not then by trying to manipulate a response, but what you are trying to create.*

Cohen: I didn't say I didn't want a response, but not a *set* response. I'd be sad if they didn't respond in some way, but I'm not necessarily looking for a literal response - that we are dictating our story to them.

*OK so how did you approach the creation of a performance from this text – the novel?*

Ennis: Leaving aside the fact that we have a relationship with the author, Jamie O'Neill (we collaborated on a previous project with him, *Forever and Ever*, which was also issue based - based on solitary confinement - where he honed and refined the text that we started to develop into three monologues for the three performers), it was always our intention, if the time was right and Jamie was willing and the coincidences of our activities were right, that we would collaborate again. Jamie started the germ of *At Swim, Two Boys* during this period in 1995 when we were making *Forever and Ever*, so it took him 10 years to write it from the beginnings of his research then, and the beginnings of his writing. We've kept an eye on his work and obviously he's followed our work as much as he's been able to as well and we knew this book was going to happen. It had its publication, strangely, on September 11<sup>th</sup>..... [at this point rain starts hammering loudly and dramatically on the roof – eerie!] .... we were zapping up to see Jamie for the book launch in London and found everything cancelled in London, and London full of security people. We saw Jamie, gave him a big hug, turned around, went home, read the book and were absolutely knocked out by it. It coincided with a point in our process where we wanted to make a piece with Cai and Terry on their own. We've worked with Cai and Terry over a period of 5 years, they work *incredibly* well together, and it just so happened that the two main protagonists of Jamie's book, Doyler and Jim, are in their mid-late teens, and it seemed very suitable to adopt those characters to Cai and Terry. And, although it's an epic novel, essentially it's about the love story, sexual awakening, political awakening of these two boys. Jamie's book had a massive impact on us and there was some kind of inevitability that we would try and find a way to connect those two characters with Cai and Terry and develop an idea to make a two-hander, albeit with two performing musicians as well.



Cohen: We should mention that, at the very time that we were doing *Forever and Ever* and Jamie was beginning to research for this book, he borrowed a book from Jim that was part of Jim's family history to do with Ireland and the developing political situation there, during the Easter rising and around the time of the origins of the IRA. Something that we've done with *Earthfall* over and over again during our productions, is to find something which is personal, which is unique to the constellation of people that we're working with, so it can be really poignant for us, otherwise we think, well, what's the point? You know, we have to feel that we can really put our heart into it and it's something that we *believe* in before we make a piece of work. Also, it has been sort of the way that we've worked, to develop ideas over several years. Sometimes they come as a sideline to something else we're thinking of and we just put that on the back page and think, well, that might be good for later and ideas develop that way. That's how this happened really, the seeds were sown long ago and developed over time.

Ennis: Yes, there's a personal relationship with content. Because I come from an Irish family and I was born in Dublin - my Grandfather was a Commander in the official IRA and he was a young soldier in the Easter rising that takes place in the novel.... [sounds of thunder overhead] ....sorry granddad! [laughs] and later on in 1921 he went on hunger strike for 12 days and nearly died. He eventually became a farmer, highly politicised but at the same time still a Republican, but not an advocate of violence; a non-violent Republican let's say as the years went on. So there is a personal connection. Above and beyond that there is an interest in the material itself. The strength of the material doesn't necessarily need that connection, although we do look at our lives and our performers' lives as well in terms of building up material for work. We always enter into a more personal relationship with the content, with the material. I think there are several answers, and not one clear answer, to the point that you raised right at the beginning of this interview, which made you change your research into something more about the creative process - this area of evocation or heightened emotionality that is provoked in an audience is in a way intangible, but if you put a series of ideas that you *care* about, that you *identify* with, together, you get the right team, who have strong technique, who have strong ability, who work hard, *technically*, then you work on the dynamic of the piece in terms of timing, in terms of sound, in terms of what comes where - the orchestration of the piece, and keep watching it and keep being aware of it, and make certain choices, experiment, explore different rhythms, choices, in terms of structure, then something sometimes happens in terms of this feeling you are talking about which is some kind of, let's say, heightened awareness within the audience, or heightened emotionality. It's a dangerous territory though because we know that lots of film formulae are manipulated right down to stopwatch timing in order to be able to achieve something, which might be perhaps more superficial, but has some kind of similar result. But it's to do with our relationship with the work I think. If we start off from the basis where our heart's in it, our soul's in it, then I think that drives everything in a way and also creates and helps nurture everybody else's involvement in it, and everybody else then develops their own way of caring for it and wanting to develop with it and owning it. There are several answers to that, however, in our experience, don't force it. Don't even try and explore it in one way, just get on with very practical ways of creating a piece of work and, if that happens, all well and good, but don't push it, force it.

*But you're always starting from this personal, truthful place.....*

Ennis: Identification, yes.

*When you're approaching a piece like this which connects with your personal family history, but is also a fictional story, there is the autobiographical element coming from within you, your*

*feelings and personal truth, and there are also the biographies of the characters in the story. Do you and the dancers aim to combine your own truths with the truths of the fictional characters to create characters onstage or do the characters come out of your truth?*

Cohen: You're talking about acting really aren't you? We tend not to do that and, as much as possible, we let the choreography dictate the emotion. So we're quite technical in the approach to the emotionality of the actors - if we call them actors, because they *do* develop personas on stage - and we have *fed* into them during the creative process the mannerisms and character elements of the two characters that we drew out of the novel, but we haven't pushed that on them. They've been able to embrace some, and not other, elements and I think it's where they feel they can make sense of it as part of themselves. We're very, very careful with the acting not to overstate. We're very fond of understatement and economy so we'll deal with the characters in a very subtle way, probably much more like a film actor as opposed to a stage actor for example - in that kind of detail.

Ennis: Also, perhaps, deeper feelings are not so easily expressed. Sometimes a fuller expression of emotion is sometimes a superficial one; the interesting one is the one that's being hidden, the feelings that are being hidden, that leak out. And, in a way, we look for those kind of things and deal with choreography in that way. We *do* let rip and we *do* take risks from time to time, but also we look at stillnesses and we *reduce* movement. We start off big and really turn it down so that it becomes really quite subtle and something which is approaching a kind of honesty of expression, or truth, then starts to emerge. It's a curious thing but it's something that we're very much aware of in our process and we always arrive at it through this technique of reduction, certainly, in movement, unless there's a reason for us to be full-on physical.

Cohen: There was an example yesterday in rehearsals, where Terry and Cai were doing their first duet, which we call The Ladder. Terry's character is more forceful than Cai's - Cai's character is more shy and withdrawn but it needed to look like he wasn't being repelled and he was just being maybe slightly coy or nervous. It only involved a 2mm turn of the head, possibly, to make that emotional difference. Really, really subtle physical changes and more technique than anything because quite often we're quite...well, not afraid, that's not the right word, we're quite loathe to use emotionality or story when we're doing the choreography. We actually try specifically not to, because it can so easily go the other way and become too much. It's much better if we see what's needed and we might just say, oh, tip that head just slightly inwards a little bit, and that will sort it out.

Ennis: The interesting thing for us making *At Swim, Two Boys* also, and for us the essential element of the story, is the fact that intrinsically it's a love affair between two teenage boys in an environment first of all, which of its time - early 20<sup>th</sup> century - any kind of homosexuality is massively taboo, much more even than it was 50 years later. That's a really curious thing because we regard from the outset of this novel, right from beginning to end, these are *true* developing feelings between two people, it transcends any kind of taboos, politics, or anything. And also we've got then the sacrifice young men and women are making in the First World War, another sacrifice, and then at the end of the story we have an ultimate sacrifice where the character of Doyler leaps onto Jim to pin him to the ground to avoid a British sniper bullet and consequently gets killed himself - that's an ultimate sacrifice of love, to die for someone else, which is intrinsically what he's done, it's the fullest expression of unconditional love. And that, beyond homosexuality, wars, civil or European, is the most important thing to explore - that relationship and where it ends as a result, how it finally expresses itself. That's the most interesting thing really.

Cohen: And Jamie states that in his novel quite clearly.

*I wondered when you read the novel, did you go through and pick out key phrases, because I see you are using bits of actual text from the novel in the voice-over.*

Ennis: Yes we did.

Cohen: Scenes I think.

*It seems to me that you've successfully distilled your cherry picks from the book into performance, as I watched rehearsals before looking at the book, and the things that I picked up from the rehearsals – the growing relationship between the two boys, their changing feelings about their sexuality, I then discovered in the book. For instance, Cai and Terry's characters were vividly apparent to me from the opening scene; just from tiny simple movements I completely understood Terry's stronger character, who is more secure in, and knowing of, his sexuality, and Cai's character who is less certain, discovering feelings for the first time. So I'm interested in your process in achieving this clarity, how you've created these characters and the performance as a whole, for instance when you began this process, is the music written separately...?*

Cohen: Side by side with it. It's been composed at the same time as the choreography.

Ennis: There are three different ways we do it really. We work just with body in the space with no music; we work with the body in the space with music and develop it together; or we separate - the music can come in first and we do something to it. The best way, but the most time consuming way, is to grow it together, so we're in the space together.

Cohen: But the result ends up being that we must do some degree of that, even if they're created separately. Like you've seen....

Ennis: We end up doing all three of them.

Cohen: ...it's *so* important to us as creators of work that that music is fused in every possible way with the movement and the movement with the music. It's really fundamental to the way that we work.

*I can see a real synchronicity between the two at this stage of the process [last week of rehearsals]. You were working on transitions yesterday, making them work. Does any one element take prominence at that time?*

Cohen: It depends on that particular set of circumstances. I mean, we might say, that note has to go shorter and then the boys' movement will hit that exactly, or we might say to the boys, hang back a moment until you hear the strong beat and then go with it. Both things happen, it depends on that particular set of circumstances.

Ennis: We continue with that process on tour. We'll tweak things depending on how much the computer dictates we can't, because obviously it's storing some of the timing to certain things. But generally we let that evolve as well and change things as we can.

Cohen: That's what's unique about working with live music – is that you can all the time be cueing off each other. If we had more money, we would have *all* of the sounds live, but it's not possible, so the combination of what's pre-recorded on the computer *with* the live music, gives us as much flexibility as we can have, but *totally* live soundtrack is even better in terms of the way that it can homogenise with the movement.

*And initially, when you were creating the movement to begin with, did you start with the throughline and then work it scene by scene?*

Cohen: Not really, we started with a whole list of episodes, but we didn't decide on the final mix of it until about halfway through the process, or maybe three quarters of the way through.

Ennis: The difference with this process in comparison with other processes we've had is that there's a book that's written and, even if we've thrown away about sixty characters and taken the two boys out, they still have a line of life that they pursue all the way through Jamie's story. So, therefore, the difference in this piece is we make our own kind of discrete narratives in terms of structure and everything and throughline - this time we had some stepping stones to follow already. But what we tend to do generally in our process is, after myself and Jess researching a piece of work, we will come in on the first day of rehearsals with some kind of route map. Now that might be dislodged or we might throw it all up in the air and we might just take one element from it and pursue that wholeheartedly and discard everything else, but there is some kind of initial structure that we've thought about. Whether we do it as a result of that chronologically... we don't really, because we don't necessarily follow beginning, middle and ends. We don't start at the beginning of somebody's life and then, they die. We're messing with time all the time. We're messing with history, future, present, dream states, whatever, you know, so we're dealing with different perceptions and different realities. So in a way the personae that we develop onstage, also in other works, follow their own little narratives as well. We normally start in a situation like this from a very simple improvisational point. So it will be Cai and Terry in an empty space, working either in silence or to a piece of live music straight away. And I think this time it was Cai and Terry in a space working to some trumpet that Roger was playing initially. And one, two or three ideas that we would use as a starting point and then start feeding stuff in during the course of the day. And from that beginning, everything starts branching out. Sometimes it's just to do with getting into a situation of familiarity - physical familiarity and audio familiarity - in terms of homogenising those initial elements in terms of sound and movement and a certain amount of simple subject matter. But I can't remember actually what we kicked off with.

Cohen: I can't remember either. I do remember it wasn't long before you started throwing buckets of water around!

Ennis: Yes, that's true. It was always our intention to work with water because, in the novel, that's where they could express themselves, away from everybody else, more freely.

Cohen: Also it was a very good choreographic challenge for us.

Ennis: We've used different elements... soil and grass and we did a performance on 4 ½ tonnes of coal once in a pit. [Looking at his note book] It looks here as though we started from the "Side by Side", so we took an actual episode from the novel where they lay together for the first time and we explored this curiosity of these feelings that were emerging in these two boys... what is this I'm feeling? why do I like lying next to this other boy? is this just more than friendship? And so we starting building choreography and physicality out of that early awakening. That's where it started.

*How much discussion had you had with Cai and Terry about these feelings as portrayed in the novel? How much did it come from their personal feelings about being in that situation or from the novel?*

Ennis: In a way I think you'd have to ask them that.

*Had they read the book?*

Ennis: Terry doesn't read, he's got strong dyslexia. Cai read it. It's a question to ask them, but I would imagine from what we know about these guys they would have drawn from their own experiences, either intuitively or consciously. Probably intuitively. The other thing we started to work on quite early was this idea of not quite being able to express themselves physically with one another, out of which emerged those pocket movements – where they've got their hands in their pockets and they're exploring physically but they're not actually...

Cohen: ....touching.

Ennis: ...just going for it. That's another thing we started very early on – that physical cautiousness, but curiosity. So it started off quite softly. Of course, once the water came in, which was not long, then it became very, very extreme and we went through a series of extreme exploration in terms of physicality and risk taking and throwing each other around etc.

*It must be quite dangerous in the water?*

Cohen: I think if you hadn't chosen the right movements for it, it would be. But you have to find out what will work and what won't in the process. At the moment it's more dangerous for them if they *don't* have enough water because they burn themselves when they're doing the moves and it's made for the friction of having water in, so you work appropriately.

Ennis: And we have an understudy who's learning both their parts, for that very reason.

*You said yesterday, you wanted the transitions to be invisible. Can you expand on that?*

Ennis: Yes. In a way it goes back to this route map thing and this throughline that you mentioned. We have a series of events that take place in the course of the performance and which we have names for.

Cohen: Headers.

Ennis: For example, we've got 17 elements within the piece, which we call our throughline. This is the final version, sometimes there are about 30-40 things and we distil it down. They get their names quite quickly and they fall into place, in terms of in which order things happen, in the latter stages of the process.

Cohen: We're talking about dynamic flow. When we say "seamless" or "invisible" there are transitions and there are mood changes but they should be smooth, or jarring if that's what we choose. I mean if, say, we've had a long period of time where it's been really mellow and we want to kick arse, we'll bang in with the next episode because it needs that dynamic lift. But the way we should do it, should be seamless so you don't feel like you're coming in watching vignettes of pieces, but you come to a performance and you watch a whole show. That's the way we work in all the works we make. And in terms of what *was* contemporary traditional dance, that was an unusual form, and that's why we're much more related to theatre as opposed to contemporary dance.

Ennis: If you take away the music at the moment and watch the thing all physically and nothing else, you would see it as being quite seamless. The music at the moment actually makes it more episodic than some of our pieces, in terms of going from one

occasion, one event, or one *scene* to another. For me, anyway, I'm more aware of scenes. And I think Jess's point about, yes, sometimes we deliberately do that to *jolt*, if we've got something peaceful and floaty and ambient sound, and then [makes explosive sound] we bring in a dynamic that destroys it or shatters it and moves on. It's a kind of awakening or surprise so there's not settling, people don't just settle into something. But at the same time, generally, in previous works we are conscious about the composition just flowing all the way through from beginning to end, as well as the performance itself. There are contradictions with that.

*Roger was talking about creating the music earlier on and he was saying that you'd had a piece of movement that you'd created initially with a Moloko track, and then he'd come in and put a different piece of music in. Was that deliberate?*

Ennis: Yes, because we source our material from all sorts of different places. So, for example, in the coal show – the piece that we did with 4 ½ tonnes of coal - we used a Japanese novel called *The Woman in the Dunes* by a Japanese author called Kobo Abe, we looked at the paintings of Gwen John in terms of images, we listened to various sounds, various pieces of music. We tend not to seek ideas or, for want of a better word, inspiration, from going to see live theatre, but more particularly from cinema and music - we tend to use parallel artforms like visual arts, galleries, music from every source, from indie to classical, to whatever, and by the same token we come in with a lot of prototype sounds that we think have got some kind of interesting area to investigate for us physically, if we want to reinterpret them; in terms of their dynamic, in terms of their epic, in terms of their peacefulness, whatever. And so there have been several occasions where we've used sometimes quite obscure music and Moloko is an example of a piece that we came in with because it was quite an appropriate rhythm for a pulse that we were looking for to merge, insert itself, into the physicality.

*You created movement with that piece of music to then put a different piece of music with it, was that to create a sense of opposition?*

Cohen: No. You might find this a parallel because you know when you edit a piece of film and the composer hasn't been asked in yet to compose for that, you have to work to a track with a beat and a dynamic and you edit to the rhythm of it. Sometimes it's not always an ideal way to work because it's quite hard to replace something that you've worked with as a sketch, as a draft, especially for Roger, but it can't always happen because he's away doing stuff that he has to finish off, well we can't stop making material while we wait for him, we just don't have that ability of time. So we *need* music to stimulate movement and sometimes we *will* put in a track that we know would work for a piece of choreography that we're going to make and sometimes that's difficult for him to follow but that's part of the process. It's one of the various ways that we create work.

Ennis: But we quite like doing that sometimes though, if the musicians are away. And the composers come in with pieces of stuff as well, written by other people, because it's also to do with atmosphere, as well as dynamic and as well as rhythm, it's to do with what this sound is evoking and how do they make that happen – why do we feel that way as a result of hearing this piece of music? And so, as a consequence of that, it gives us some indicators of what we can pursue with our own composition and our own live sound. And sometimes, cinema-wise, we lift things, we lift elements of character and movement from actual films, we watch them and lift them – we nick them *then* we reinterpret them to our needs!

Cohen: Well it's been done throughout the ages, from Greek theatre onwards, it's always happened.

*Well, we're all affected anyway by everything around us, we're all only creatures of.....*

Ennis: Creatures of theft! [joke!]

*...of our personal experience! I think it's very honest to say that.*

Ennis: By the same token we want to maintain our own identity and develop our own identity but we're always looking at STUFF.

*How has the working relationship between yourselves developed – do you have specific roles or do you both do everything?*

Cohen: We do a lot of things together but Jim predominantly goes out on tour and keeps the show fresh and fine-tuned that way. It's changed because in the first 6 or 7 years of Earthfall I was working as a performer as opposed to a director, so that changed when I stopped performing, but we do do a lot together in terms of the research, we chip in all the time and sometimes we argue and that's part of the process of strengthening.

Ennis: It's a conscious dialectic. We both started off as performers and we entered into Earthfall as performers. We'd performed in various companies and I'd directed Jess in a solo piece and we both felt we didn't want to work for another group, or another director any more, it was time for us to make our own thing. We were ready for it and we wanted to do it, and therefore we formed a company to do it. Jess and I research separately, I mean we share experiences a lot, but we do our initial research separately. We come together over a period of time and then compare notes, swap notes, and then *before* we reach the environment where we include everybody else in the development of the piece, we iron out what we want to dominate and what we want to throw in the bin, and then distil it as we were talking about, so it becomes some kind of route map to work with.

Cohen: I think the fundamental thing now is that we've worked together so long that often Jim will give a note to the performers which I was about to say, or I'll do the same, because we've got such a tuned in style of what we like, and what we feel works, it's quite horrible sometimes really the way that happens!

Ennis: But it works both ways, that kind of harmony is good, that's positive, but also the dialectic is good too.

*And by the same count, as the company's been going a long time now and you're using the same performers and musicians again and again, is that happening with them as well?*

Cohen: Oh yes, they have a vocabulary now which we *would* call the Earthfall vocabulary, and they're part of the evolution of that as well.

*And does that change your two roles at all?*

Ennis: Well it does in a way, because there is a self-sufficiency. We always, as much as possible - although me or Jess make decisions in the end, we say "we'll do that, we won't pursue that any more, we'll keep that, that's not good enough", whatever, we do make those decisions and we're quite clear about that - however, it is quite a creative democracy and we do listen very carefully and we do watch very carefully. It is about ownership, and we try to create a situation where everybody feels that they own the piece, and to a great extent that happens. Because we try to have a continuity of people we develop a creative working relationship with, they are able to take shortcuts, they

know what we're on about straight away, we don't have to investigate it for two days, we can get somewhere in an hour sometimes, but we're also able to leave them to their own devices and know that they're going to come up with something that we can actually start honing and working with as well, so there is a self-sufficiency.

*Yes, like today when the musicians were working on that piece of music on their own I wondered how they were actually doing it – if they've got the movements so well in their heads that they can make changes to the music without the dancers, because what would happen if they made changes that then didn't fit with the choreography?*

Cohen: Occasionally that happens, we lost a sound yesterday, after the weekend, that we needed in - it was important for the choreography, so we had to put it back again but mostly, at this stage in the process, they have a very strong idea of what's happening with the performers even if they're not present.

Ennis: And the musicians are going through a process at the moment of matching what they've created again, or developed again, to what's happening in the space, so there's this meshing going on at the moment. And they're actually in the position of playing catch-up because there's been new composition since the last time we did it. And also Frank has come in on a more full-on basis because there was another musician as well as Frank, and Frank was operating all the computerised elements before, but now he's participating a lot more in the live contribution of music, so that's a process that's requiring catch-up at the moment.

*We're running out of time, but I also wanted to ask you about the experience of working with Gardzienice.*

Cohen: We were in Poland as recently as last March.

Ennis: We're collaborating with Tomasz Rodowicz who was a co-founder of Gardzienice with Staniewski. He's now left Gardzienice and formed a company called Theatre Association Chorea. *Hode Galatan* was the first collaboration we did with Tomasz Rodowicz and Theatre Association Chorea when he left Gardzienice to form the new company. They've been over already, and we've directed them in a performance that took place on the outskirts of Cardiff about a year and a half ago and we've been out to Poland developing a new piece with them, which they're coming over to Cardiff in late summer to rehearse and perform in the Cardiff Festival. My personal experience with Gardzienice was over a period of 4 years, including expedition work as well as performance work in two pieces called *Guslav* and *Avvakum* and let's say it was profound, intense, essential and vital.

*Thank you.*



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