

https://dspace.org/

Language and interpretation in Playback Theatre in a multilingual society: Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company, Wits University, Johannesburg, South Africa

Zanjam, Ngefor Shella

2011-10-10
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/10514

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I come from a background in theatre and have experience in applied theatre as a facilitator. The most common/familiar method in Cameroon, where I originate is Theatre for Development and some of Augusto Boal's methods. Coming to South Africa through the Drama for Life programme (DFL) at Wits University opened me up to a new environment, new knowledge, and experience. I was introduced to several applied drama and theatre methods for working with communities. In particular, I had a profound experience with Playback Theatre as a form of applied theatre that focuses on audience participation and sharing of personal stories. I was amazed at the courage with which people narrated not only life experiences, but painful and shocking stories; however, comical stories and those relating good memories were also shared. This rekindled the passion in me for using applied drama and theatre as a means of bringing change to communities in need. Playback Theatre seems to be an interesting method for breaking silences and encouraging people to talk about issues or areas in which they have been silenced, thus helping to build new communities while strengthening existing ones. Although this method seems appropriate for use in Africa, there is a need for further research on Playback Theatre, given that it is newly introduced here and definitely has some difficulties within this context. Language could be a major concern in the multi-lingual context of Africa because the improvisational nature of Playback Theatre requires a story, and stories tend to be conveyed through language. It should be noted that the dramatic form of Playback Theatre also allows for other mediums of communication than the purely verbal.

Language can sometimes be an obstacle to communication between the audience and the performers in a Playback Theatre performance, and the language of the form itself is very important in maintaining the structure and ritual of Playback Theatre. Communication as a mode of human existence is a process that encompasses different components (communicator-message-recipient; Schoor 1986) and language as a mode of communication is considered complex as it includes verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. The whole process of a Playback Theatre performance can be

considered one of communication in which language and other components are used to send and receive messages.

Playback as a form of non-scripted theatre and interactive theatre 'relies not only on the attentive listening and watching of the audience, but also on the verbal input of an audience' (Salas 2006: 5). In a society like South Africa, the actor's authenticity in enacting these stories may be questionable due to the linguistic and semiotic disparity caused by the multi-lingual and multi-cultural context. In my observation and interaction with the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company performers, they have admitted that not connecting with a teller's story results in difficulties in enacting the story. Though a teller has never openly denied authenticity of the enactment of his story in a performance, (not of which I know) there have been occasions when side comments have made it evident that some audience members have not connected with or understood the enactment in relation to the story told. However, communication in Playback Theatre does not only rely on the spoken word, but, as Fox asserts:

> To a significant extent, drama in Playback Theatre is not conveyed with words. In fact the entire thrust of the performance is to take the verbal rendition of experience and translate it into not-so-verbal drama. (Fox 1986: 38)

In my observation of the Playback Theatre performances, I will take into account Fox's assertion of "not-so-verbal drama" as the more expressive component in a performance of non-scripted theatre, but by looking at Playback Theatre as the "verbal rendition of experience" that is transformed to "not-so-verbal drama," it can be seen that verbal language plays an important role in the communication process of Playback Theatre. The simple fact that someone narrates a story that is listened to and then re-enacted immediately calls for good listening skills and the ability to interpret given that:

> … each act of expression is only fulfilled when the message has been received and understood. And to understand a message the recipient must actively interpret it. The act of expression always goes hand in hand with an interpretive act and it is this process of expression and interpretation of messages that underlies all forms of human communication and for that matter human existence. (Schoor 1986: 3-4)

In expression and message sharing, the recipient might not be able to get an exact sense of what the communicator means, though he understands the language, because what we say is not always clearly expressed, and words are open to different interpretations

(Stecker, 2003; Posner, 1982). Understanding becomes more complicated when we are not very familiar with the language spoken. Using Playback Theatre in a multi-lingual context such as Johannesburg places its communication strategies under a very particular strain which is often met through the use of a translator.

This research is aimed at identifying, exploring and assessing the efficacy of the verbal and non-verbal modes of communication embodied within a Playback Theatre performance. Drawing from a number of different performances, this research looked at how the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company actors interpreted and enacted a teller's story. It focuses on the nonverbal forms, music and action as modes of communication in the interpretation of audience stories in the Playback Theatre performances.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does a Playback Theatre performance function as a means of communication?
2. Does Playback Theatre need to go through any changes for it to fulfil its purpose in a multi-lingual society?

1.2 RATIONALE

> I was particularly drawn to Playback Theatre because of the values it insists on. It is also a method that holds the possibility of using personal stories to allow the Playback Theatre group and audiences to own their own stories of [human and societal issues] HIV/AIDS, sex and relationships in a South African context. (Barolsky 2009: 10)

In the past, people sometimes made meaning and connected with the universe through myths and tales. This storytelling function has evolved into sharing stories of our own experiences. Even when it is not easy for people to open up their lives and share with others, this seems to be our modern way of building communities by listening and learning from each other. This experience connects both the listener and storyteller in families and nations, through hearing past and present experiences, to the possibility of building a new future. Such experiences are told not only through narration, but also

through different theatrical forms and techniques that have evolved through the years like Playback Theatre.

I believe any form of theatre should be able to accommodate the social status of any type of persons in any type of place as Fox states about playback theatre, '… our interest has been to enact the stories of every kind of person in every kind of society' (1986: 3). Therefore, as practitioners, we should be able to adapt the rules and techniques of any form of theatre to suit the people and environment where it is applied, bearing in mind the purpose, for Plotkin says that 'the roots of Playback are deep in the origins of theatre, so what seems like simplicity is actually a return to practices we as a species have known for millennium' (1999:9).

I see Playback Theatre as a potential tool, in addition to other forms of applied drama, for breaking the culture of silence around important social issues in African societies. I come from Cameroon, a country with two official national languages - English and French - and a range of about 200 local languages. Despite the official languages, communication is often difficult. This is a common situation in many African countries, yet there is a need to reach out to all citizens, and in the case of drama and theatre, to entertain and educate despite the difference in language and culture. South Africa as the setting for the research has eleven local languages with English as the most widely spoken language. With this common language of interaction, there are still people who can speak nothing but their local language. Would this mean that their interaction remains only within their communities? What of social interventions made by outsiders to the community? Playback Theatre provides a safe space for interaction and for stories to be told without fear, which can bring about dialogue and change as Salas puts it, 'We also tell stories about our world, and they help us to comprehend what otherwise might seem to be a confusing and random universe' (1993:21).

How this form will assist people in sharing their stories brings us to another area of research. Dennis says that the choice to share or participate in a performance is informed by many reasons, one being the 'personal values' of the participant and also 'the experience of watching the enactment inspired by the personal stories has been shown to be a key point of audience engagement' (2004:19). The fact that the Playback Theatre performers are both citizens and performers at the same time usually warrants

enough trust for people to open up. As citizens, they share their own stories with the audience before calling on the audience to share, so that as performers, they can enact the audiences' stories back to them. Burr indicates that language is more than a way of simply expressing ourselves, and if we consider Playback Theatre as a form of communication, it means that 'When people talk to each other the world gets constructed. Our use of language can therefore be thought of as a form of action…' (1995: 7). This action becomes more effective when we understand each other in the communication process.

The main motivation for focusing my research on the non-verbal forms of Playback Theatre is because of some performances of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company. In such performances, the Playback performers have been more spontaneous and acted intuitively and the audience has been more engaged especially when the performers could express the unspoken words of the teller. Improvisation within Playback Theatre becomes interesting when it puts the audience on the edge of their chairs due to the spontaneous ability of the performers. Jonathan Fox (1986) points to the fact that an actor in improvisation must act spontaneously by not asking questions for clarification and not planning or analysing the situation or story. I will be looking at the non-verbal modes used in the enactment of the audiences' stories - the way in which the audience, despite their expected reticence, is prompted to tell their stories through the spontaneity of the actors and their ability to connect with the story and enact it in non-verbal forms. Identifying the non-verbal forms, ways of listening and interpreting a teller's story, will help practitioners of Playback Theatre to effectively implement this method in their various contexts. Since its inception, Fox (1986) writes that Playback Theatre has received many criticisms and questions on its practicality and intentions from a spectrum of scholars and practitioners. This research intends to add to the academic literature that has been carried out by scholars and practitioners of Playback Theatre in trying to define its practicality and elucidate its applicability. Before we move further into the research and its findings, it is important we understand the key terms of the research and the context in which they apply.

1.3 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.3.1 Language

For this project, I will define language as a human system of communication that uses signs and symbols, such as voice, sound, gesture or written symbols. But, frankly, this is too simple, for language is far too complicated, intriguing, and mysterious to be adequately explained by a brief definition. Applied to different contexts, settings and situations, language will have more meanings than a simple definition can include. Language may refer either to the specifically human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication, or to a specific instance of such a system of complex communication (Schoor 1986).

Human language and communication, unlike that in plants and animals, is unique in being a symbolic communication system that is learned instead of biologically inherited (Burr 1995). Human language as the most salient can also be based on visual rather than auditory stimuli as in sign and written languages. As a tool, language is used to build every other tool in human life and interaction. Burr (1995) explores the relationship between language and the person. To her, language is the means used to explain the person's "personality," and Social Constructionism deals with the constantly changing and varied meaning of language. One of these varied meanings of language can be found in theatre. As we shall see later on in this study, the use of language in theatre involves the verbal and non-verbal (beyond sign and written language).

1.3.2 Interpretation

In other words, interpretation is explanation, elucidation, and oral translation from one language to another. In other words, it is to explain the meaning of words in verbal communication; to make out or bring out the meaning of creative work, conceptualization especially in literature, painting, music or other art forms; to explain or understand behavioural change in people, situations and living objects. In cases of two different languages, an interpreter is required to facilitate dialogue between parties using or speaking different languages. In art forms like Playback Theatre where one language is in use, the individual interprets speech in context for clear understanding of

what is being rendered to him. Then there is the interpretation of that speech into the predominantly non-verbal language of Playback.

1.3.3 Multi-Lingual

English and French, as known world-wide, are the two most influential and widely used languages. In most countries of the world, there is either the usage of one national language as way of communication or the presence of several other languages. Multilingualism can refer to an occurrence regarding an individual, a community, society or country that uses two or more languages. English is the binding language in South Africa, though its diversity evident through eleven languages is so prominent. Another example of a multi-lingual African country is Cameroon; it has English and French as its official national languages but still registers about two hundred languages spoken in communities throughout the country. I used African countries as examples because they are well known for their diversity and multilingualism but also to reiterate the fact that not everyone in these same locations speak or understand the same languages. The issue of multi-lingual societies does not form the focus of this study but remains important in understanding the application of the Playback Theatre method in such societies in terms of its language and interactive approach.

1.3.4 Culture

Culture is simply the way of life of a group of people. It includes knowledge, language, law, arts, belief, morals, custom and any other defining characteristics and habits acquired by a person as a member of that society. Culture is a term that acquires different meanings in different contexts. Sapir (1949) and Schafer (cited in Epskamp 1989) provide an overview of the three contexts within which the term ‘culture’ is applied in societies. Most developing countries value the meaning of culture in an anthropological context in which traditions, values, institutions and even artefacts become part of the concept of culture. With its application in this field, even those living in archaic groupings are considered to have culture as they live in a social world characterised by a complex network of traditionally conserved habits, usages and attitudes. The second application of the term is more widely current in which society is understood as multi-cultural and sophistication in the realm of intellectual goods is

demanded of the applicant to the title of “cultured person” (Sapir 1949): this social context of culture specifies the interaction of individuals with others and their environment. The third view in the application of the term “culture” speaks of the ideological context which excludes sentiments, ideas, world views and actions and focuses on the way of life or life-style of an individual as well as the collective society. Emphasis is put not so much on how and what is done by a people but on what significance it has for them (*ibid*).

Apart from these three cultural contexts, Schafer (in Epskamp 1989) gives a fourth context, which has the most limited meaning. In the artistic context, he attributes culture to the arts, which sometimes also includes industrial arts, the handicrafts and the skilled labour of artisans. Culture as the way of life of people will also include other aspects like human personality in that cultural context and the language of interaction as a cultural element. Language is seen as the unique and most valuable context of culture (Sapir 1949). Language is a fundamentally social phenomenon, as it is something that occurs between people who live under the same or different cultural contexts.

> The person you are, your experience [in society], your identity, your ‘personality’ are all the effects of language. This means that we can only represent our experience to ourselves and to others by using the concepts embedded in our language, so that our thoughts, our feelings and how we represent our behaviour are all ‘pre-packaged’ by language. (Burr 1995: 39)

As a cultural element itself, language is also important in expressing and understanding the other cultural elements and context of a society. As the title of this study suggests, the research is based in a multi-lingual society, which means different cultural heritage and practices. It will be important in the study to see how culture affects interaction in Playback Theatre and of course how it changes the language and experience of a performance within a specific cultural context.

1.3.5 Playback Theatre

Playback theatre is an original form of improvisational theatre in which audience members/ participants tell stories from their lives and watch them re-enacted immediately and spontaneously by artist/ performers. Theses stories are acted out using mime and music as well as spoken scenes. This theatrical form involves components developed from improvisational theatre, story telling and psychodrama. This particular form of theatre was started around 1975 by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas. As a student of improvisational theatre and oral traditional story telling, Fox trained in Jacob Moreno's psychodrama, which he found complementary to what he was researching and experimenting with.

The outcome of the Playback Theatre form is a long and collective process of experimenting with different forms and modes of drama and theatre. Its main objective is to use stories from audience members, create a piece of theatre that is original, and eschew the use of scripts or rehearsals for, 'in many ways we were groping for a new synthesis of old and contemporary' (Fox 1986: 3). Playback Theatre is a contemporary, interactive, non-scripted theatre that brings back ancient communal forms of communication into the present. However it has its own dramatic form, which will be examined in the course of this study. Fox explains that:

> Our mission was to find effective dramatic forms for the enactment of any and all personal stories. We tried many ways, some dance-like, others clowny, others psychodrama. Over time we learned that our form demanded its own aesthetic. (*ibid*, 4)

This unique dramatic interactive form is open to adaptations as Salas (1993) mentions. The one point about the Playback process or method is that it is not simple to describe or understand because of its flexibility. As a method, it spans the conventional category of theatre, psychology and education as it can be adapted to many different specific needs in education, therapy and the arts (Fox 1999).

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study sought to better understand the process of Playback Theatre through the experience of the performers. In order to investigate the experience of the performers in a Playback Theatre process, I had to employ a method that allowed me to follow the Playback actors in and out of performance within the framework of Qualitative Research. Qualitative Research involves the collection and study of empirical material and is seen as a:

> Situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practises that make the world visible. These practises transform the world. They turn the world into a field of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and memos of the self. (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 3)

The context of the work is situated within the Drama For Life Playback Theatre Company and their performances. Ethnographic and participant observer approaches were implemented through researcher reflexivity, observation, informal interviews and focus group discussion with the members of the Playback group. The first part of this research consisted of participating and observing the Playback group and their performances, holding informal individual interviews/discussions, and a focus group discussion with the Playback group. I also collected data by recording a number of performances and keeping a journal of my observations. The second part of the research consisted of transcribing the data collected and writing up a research report with the findings obtained.

The methodology of ethnography and participant observation is related to action research, which seeks the collaboration of the community or group members. Action research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a "community of practice" to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. As the word implies, the research is done simply by action. Kumar (2005) explains that the desire to take action does not necessarily define the methodology of action research. For him, action research can focus on:

> An existing program or intervention [which] is studied in order to identify possible areas of improvement in terms of enhanced efficacy and/or efficiency. The findings become the basis of bringing about changes. (*ibid*: 109)

My application of the action research methodology in this study is in relation to Kumar's explanation of action research. I undertake research on the already existing Drama for Life Playback Company in order to improve their practice within a multi-cultural context.

1.4.1 A Multi-Method Approach

As mentioned above, the focus of the research was an examination of non-verbal language in the actor's experience of Playback Theatre. To be able to understand the actor's experience in the process of performance and group engagement, it required inside observation. As a Qualitative researcher, I had to situate myself within the social and political scope of my object of inquiry, especially as it concerned observing human beings. 'Qualitative inquiry is properly conceptualized as a civic, participatory, collaborative project. This joints the researcher and researched in an ongoing moral dialogue' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 1049). The ethnographic approach as a research methodology enables this collaboration between researchers and researched.

Ethnography is often used in the social sciences, particularly in anthropology and in some branches of sociology, as a research methodology. This methodology is often employed for gathering empirical data on human societies and culture. Data collection is done through participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. Being an insider in the Playback group allowed me to be subjective in the interpretation of my data as I gained personal experience, which also included exposure to the opinions and experiences of the members of the group. Jorgensen explains that:

> Personal experience derived from the insiders' world is an extremely valuable source of information, especially if the researcher has performed membership roles and otherwise experiences life as an insider. (1989: 93)

As an insider, I observed the actors in rehearsal and performances. As a researcher, it is important to maintain access gained to a group and create relationships with the

members through human interaction. Being closer to the actors allowed me access to their responses to each experience at the end of every performance. Jorgensen maintains that this relationship between the participant as observer and people in the field of research 'heavily influences the researcher's ability to collect accurate, truthful information' (1989: 21).

Social Constructionism holds that knowledge is historically and socially specific. It therefore insists that we take a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding people (Burr 1995). Social Constructionism refers to:

> [T]he assumptions that the nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and that what exists is what we perceive to exist. Social Constructionism cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be. This means that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions. (*ibid*: 3)

For example, understanding that the actor's enactment of the teller's story has no essential truth in it cannot be deduced through observation, but it is only by participation that one can understand and clarify such assumptions. Understanding also depends on the cultural and social setting of the Playback Theatre performance. Personal experience is extremely valuable information, especially when the researcher has performed membership roles and experienced the practice as an insider. However, when the role reserved for the researcher is a minor one that limits his participation as an insider, there are possibilities of his experience being limited. This critic of social constructionism is what prompted me to choose the methods I used in seeking answers for the research questions.

1.4.2 Observation

> Observation begins the moment the participant observer makes contact with a potential field setting. Aside from collecting information, the basic goal of these largely unfocused initial observations is to become increasingly familiar with the insiders' world so as to refine and focus subsequent observation and data collection. It is extremely important that you record these observations as immediately as possible and with the greatest possible detail because

> never again will you experience the setting as so utterly unfamiliar. (Jorgensen, 1989: 82)

In this research, my observations were undertaken from a point of an observer participant rather than engaged-participant. During my data collection I started observing the group in performances before ever being a member of the group. My preliminary observations were based on the basic notions of Playback Theatre that I received in class lectures and as I attended these performances with my classmates, they became indirectly co-observers as we would analyse and critique every action made during the performance. Whatever notion of the actor's performance and use of language I had about Playback Theatre could only be verified once I became a participant-observer in the Playback Theatre group. My observations became more focused with specific interest once I was a member of the group. The most important achievement of the preliminary observations was that they started the process of bringing me closer to the group.

1.4.3 Interviews

The interviews were informal as no formal interviews were programmed. The relationship built with insiders enabled informal interviews that took the form of conversations. Coffey and Atkinson (cited in Dennis 2004) assert that approaching interviews as conversations could generate rich data. With informal interviews, 'you may have a general set of issues to be discussed but, unlike more formal interviews, it is not necessary to ask the same questions exactly the same way each time' (Jorgensen, 1989: 88). Each performance that I observed was a different experience altogether, which made it difficult to have a set of questions. My conversations with the participants depended on the observations made in that particular performance. An advantage that comes with informal interviews is the fact that the questions asked to participants could also be informed by outside views on the event observed. I obtained audience views on their experience of Playback Theatre in sharing stories, listening to others tell and watching the enactment of the actors.

These conversations helped in shaping my research and narrowing my scope such that by the time I joined the Playback Theatre group to observe more closely, my interest was specific; understanding the non-verbal enactment of the actors. As the informal

conversations focused my eyes and ears to specific observations of the members of the group, they also enabled me to construct more specific and direct questions towards the focus group discussion with participants. Though informal interviewing is a useful strategy for discerning different viewpoints by the insiders, it is particularly demanding on the researcher to record the information fully and accurately.

1.4.4 Focus Group

Focus groups are the most common method of research in the social sciences as it is a self-contained method of gathering information (Janesick 1998; Morgan 1997). A focus group is a 'group interview, with a trained moderator, a specific set of questions and a disciplined approach to studying ideas in a group context' (Janestick 1998: 34). I employed this method in this study to understand the experience and the contributions of actors in the experience of Playback Theatre. It served as a source of follow up data to assist the primary method of participant-observation.

1.4.5 Researcher Reflexivity

Either individually or as mix and match methods, the researcher requires reflexivity in data collection and analysis. The role of a Qualitative researcher demands total commitment and involvement. Being a participant and an observer required me to take on the complicated role of critical reflexivity. "It is a conscious experiencing of the self as both enquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself" (Lincoln & Guba cited in Barolsky. 2009: 27). As participant and researcher, my reflexivity allowed me to be mindful of my own assumptions and biases from my firm position as insider. I participated as an audience member in performances, took part in rehearsals as an actor and member of the group. The fact that I did not have full responsibilities as a member in the group gave me enough space to be critical in my observations, and constantly be in reflection with those involved in the research. For a more accurate analysis of data to prove my assumptions, I used video recordings and journaling for data collection.

1.5 A BREAKDOWN OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one: This chapter serves as the introduction to the research report. It opens with my experience as a practitioner in using applied theatre for change in communities. The explanation shows the need for a more interactive method of community theatre, which led me to Playback Theatre and my subsequent research on it. The chapter provides the reasons for undertaking this research and the focus on which the findings are based. It presents the research questions and deconstructs some key terms from the title of the research. The chapter concludes with the methodology employed in investigating, collecting and analysing the data that provides possible answers to the research questions.

In Chapter two, I document the literature from which I provide framing for the study. Performance theory, ritual theory, community theory and communication theory are fields through which I frame the research. The broad concept of the study is derived from performance studies, which is a field that presents the systematic and rhythmic processes of performance that contain personal and communal experience in a public space held or framed by ritual. Turner's (1969) exploration of the ritual process as a structure of social drama presents the ritual theory from which Playback Theatre is framed. It brings in the experiences of "liminality" and "communitas" that in this case occur beyond the tribal ritual, which is Turner's focal point. Communication theory is used to frame the experience of Playback Theatre through the verbal and non-verbal modes of language. Actors' and audiences' experiences are discussed through the concept of projection. The chapter then ends with discussions on how these different fields interact to form the conceptual framework of the research.

In Chapter three- I analyse the data collected in the field. I give a descriptive analysis of three performances and a transcript of one performance to enable the reader to experience in writing what on stage is experienced differently. This chapter stands as a bridge in analysing the data and helps to locate the readers as they embark on reading the study findings.

In Chapter four- I identify the communicative elements in a Playback Theatre experience. It draws examples from the analysis in chapter three to elucidate its points. The verbal and non-verbal elements of communication in Playback Theatre are identified and explained.

In Chapter five- I summarise my research findings. This chapter also attempts to answer the second research question of how Playback can be applied in multilingual settings or communities. I focus the argument on the engagement and participation of the Playback actor in the performance experience. I conclude the chapter with recommendations and possible areas for further studies of the Playback Theatre method.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Playback Theatre is a hybridized performance ritual that blends personal story and improvised theatre in its form, drawing from the pre-literary theatre tradition and the oral aspects of storytelling, improvisation, community and ritual (Dennis 2004; Barolsky 2009). I draw on literature and theories from the fields of performance, ritual, community performance, improvisational theatre and language of the stage in order to critically engage with the Playback Theatre form and particularly the non-verbal elements of this form of theatre. I draw from the literature on performance theory to examine how society and culture influence the flow on the part of the performers. I particularly interrogate how intuition, spontaneity and the ritual elements of performance can evoke a spirit of "communitas". Communitas is presented as an experience of community that is evoked when individuals encounter simultaneous experience of flow during liminal [meaning "a threshold"] activities.' (Dennis 2004: 34-35) The multimodal theory is discussed in relation to the non-verbal elements of the Playback Theatre form looking at how constructed norms of society (as in social constructionism) can influence the authentic flow of performers, the connecting interpretation of the audience, and vice-versa. This study is done through the framework of performance theory and communication theory as is analysed in this review.

2.1 PERFORMANCE THEORY

The use of the term 'performance' has increased in recent years in the social sciences and the field of theatre studies; indeed, performance studies includes a broad spectrum approach to performance. This study looks beyond the traditional Western idea of performance that takes place on theatre stages. Schechner says that performance studies needs to include how 'performance is used in politics, medicine, religion, popular entertainment, and the ordinary face-to-face interactions… [and also] as a means of understanding historical, social, and cultural processes' (2004: 8-9). With its broad spectrum and range of activities in the arts, in literature, and in the social sciences

(Carlson 2004) ‘it is hard to define performance because the boundaries separating it on the one side from the theatre and on the other side from everyday life are arbitrary’ (Schechner 1988: 85).

Seeing performance studies as the myriad conceptual tool used to “see” performance, Auslander says ‘the concept of performance is both its object of inquiry and its primary analytical concept’ which as a theoretical discipline, emerges originally as a ‘… confluence of ideas drawn from humanistic and social scientific disciplines that include theatre, anthropology (including the study of folklore and oral tradition)…’ (2008:1). These are disciplines from which Playback Theatre originates and draws its forms and structure. Though he says that performance studies focuses on the idea of performance as broader and more inclusive than theatre, it is not easy to separate theatre from the study of performance. Both intersect as we view them through the lenses of anthropology and sociology and other disciplines that include studies of performance.

Schechner (1988) and Turner (1969) tend to view culture and ritual as performance. Particular emphasis has been given to documenting the performative aspects of culture and society and looking at the concepts of embodiment, action, behaviour and agency, which are dealt with interculturally (Schechner 2006). In sociology, we read that theatre is a part of everyday life. Goffman’s theory says we all perform as part of everyday life. He states that performance is “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (cited in Dennis 2004: 36). The same concept will apply to Playback Theatre when the actors or audience member perform before the rest of the participants in ways that influences them to share in the experience. Like Turner, Goffman is direct in using theatrical paradigms and believes that ‘all social interactions are staged…’ (Schechner 1988: 166) and therefore, our involvement as participants or spectators leads to a transformation of the self and society. In dealing with the issue of spectator involvement and transformation, Schechner is critical of Turner’s conception of performance as being reflective and reflexive (transformative) for the audience. Schechner differentiates his own conception of performance as transformative from Turner who ‘locates the essential drama in conflict and conflict resolution.’ Schechner writes:

> I locate it [performance] in transformation- in how people use theatre as a way to experiment with, act out, and ratify change. Transformations in theatre occur in three different places, and at three different levels:
>
> 1. In the drama, that is, in the story;
> 2. In the performers whose special task it is to undergo a temporary rearrangement of their body/mind, what I call "transformation"
> 3. In the audience where changes may either be temporary (entertainment) or permanent (ritual) (1988: 170).

This concept of transformation is important in Playback Theatre where people are not only expected to share stories but also to participate in their stories, and those of others, in ways that change them. In this is an active audience engagement which goes beyond what Carlson claims is a passive hermeneutic process of decoding body, gesture, sound. Thus audiences are:

> [M]uch more active, entering into a praxis, a context in which meanings are not so much communicated as created, questioned, or negotiated. The "audience" is invited and expected to operate as a co-creator of whatever meanings and experiences the event generates. (Carlson in Dennis 2004: 38)

In a way, the actors also go through a transformation period of working with their bodies and minds, which can enable them to hold and perform these stories in neutrality. McKenna writes of Playback Theatre as transformative. A 'place of expanded consciousness … [where] shifts in awareness, artistic involvement and social reconstruction are attended to' (in Dennis 2004: 39), as I mentioned earlier performance cannot be discussed separately from theatre. Schechner maintains that:

> Theatre, to be effective, must maintain its double or incomplete presence, as a here and now performance of there-and-then events. The gap between "here and now" and "there and then" allows an audience to contemplate the action and to entertain alternatives. (1988: 169)

The "here and now" performance of the "there and then" takes place in a theatre 'whose only use is to stage or enact performances' (*ibid*: 155). Schechner believes that the theatre space we see as a structure is not new in human cultures but was present from the beginning before the Greeks of the fifth century. However, performances that characterise the daily lives of people through gatherings for special occasions like the celebration of birth and death and seasonal changes could be held in any space, which would become special through ritual. 'In other words, people came to a special place,

did something that can be called theatre (and/or dance and music because all three genres are always performed together in such situations), and went on their way' (1988:158). This link between the public and the private space like the Playback Performance space makes it possible for collective experiences of intimate/private truths to be achieved, a site for thresholds and convergence. Situated on the margins, performance is a site for dialogue where different voices, different worldviews, different value systems and different beliefs are brought together (Dennis 2004) More precisely, Mason states that the performance is a site where the

> [B]orders between entertainment and art, between audience and performer and between the performance itself and the larger social event; have become less defined in recent decades. (cited in Dennis, 39)

This is an aspect of performance that is evident in the Playback Theatre form.

Most important to this study is the concept of the defining characteristic of performance being the interaction between the performer and audience where insight into human beings and their activity is attained (Carlson 2004, Schechner 1988). Fundamentally, I am also looking at performance that emphasises process over structure, participation over competence, and the dialectics of socio-cultural processes over the logics of cultural and social systems (Dennis 2004: 40). The inter-relatedness of performance, ritual and culture is present in the non-scripted theatre and most especially Playback Theatre. Playback Theatre has a structure that is unique to its form and each process either of ritual or performance has a structure through which it is contained and understood clearly. In understanding Playback Theatre one needs to know the structure in order not to be lost in the process which is participation.

2.2 RITUAL PERFORMANCE and PLAYBACK THEATRE

Ritual, like performance, is seen as being part of everyday life. The overlap between ritual and performance is important in understanding the ritual structure in Playback Theatre, that is, the way in which Playback Theatre might 'straddle the performance/ ritual threshold.' In this light Dennis asserts that 'Playback Theatre appears to be all one, and at other times all the other, and at times in between or neither' (2004: 42). By

this she means that Playback Theatre fluctuates between being purely ritualistic and at other times performative. Sometimes it shares either aspects or neither of them. Determining this will depend on the content and context of the performance.

As a key contributor in the exploration of ritual performance, Turner's concept of Social Drama is useful when trying to understand structure, ritual and its possibilities in performance. Turner draws on Van Gennep's analysis of ritual as a transition of individuals or whole societies from one social situation to another (Carlson 2004). Van Gennep's ritual process is divided into three phases, which comprise 'rites de séparation, marge or limen, and agrégation' translated by Turner as 'separation, transition and incorporation' (Turner 1969, Carlson 2004). Turner's alignment to Van Gennep is implicit in the idea that performance occurs in the context of everyday life, in the "in-betweeness" of spaces rather than the ideas propounded by Singer, Hymes, Bauman, and Barba who generally view performance as an activity "set-apart" from that of everyday life (Carlson 2004: 16).

Turner's model helps in understanding the structure and ritual in Playback Theatre where participants go through the first phase of separation in time and space from their daily lives by shifting to a more "sacred space and time from profane or secular space and time" (Turner cited in Dennis 2004: 43). Carlson writes that this shift in time and space opens a performance space that exists in-between rather than set-apart from ordinary life, and on the "boarder, margin", the subjects encounter the second phase which is the liminal or transition phase. In the final phase, we have the intergration or 'acceptance of rupture and change' (Barolsky 2009: 31). Guss (cited in Dennis 2004) writes that this phase evokes "ambiguities of meaning which emerges on the margin between structures of the past and the future" (43), while Turner claims that the ritual subjects pass through a sort of social limbo and so in this phase:

> The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and "structura" type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions. (1969: 95)

This structure invokes the experience of communitas that allows the ritual subject to be incorporated in the society. The ritual process in Playback Theatre is framed by rules and a structure, but these rules transcend its frames and allow participants to reach a liminal state that comes with transformation. The transformation is obtained through healing when the alienation in our society is addressed allowing people to find comfort in going beyond the ritual structure that characterises society.

Fundamental to this research is Turner's liminal phenomenon that includes "lowliness and sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship". This reflects the Playback Theatre ritual space in which there is no hierarchy, everyone is equal and share equal opportunities to enter into the process. Attainment of liminality in Playback Theatre allows for the experience of communitas in which everyone is equal. In his theory, Turner outlines different types of communitas from which "spontaneous communitas" is of interest to my study because it allows participants to transcend the ritual structures of society. Spontaneous communitas occurs in the moment outside structural norms and Turner demonstrates that this experience of community "is always completely unique and hence socially transient… [and has] something 'magical' about it" (cited in Dennis 2004: 69). The experience of "spontaneous communitas" occurs when we 'are released from structure (the regulated way of doing things) into communitas only to return to structure revitalised by [our] experience of communitas' (Turner 1969: 129). I will be looking at this process and its relevance to Playback Theatre as a way of explaining how the participants in the training process and performance are able to explore aspects of themselves and the way in which they connect and hold other people's experiences.

Barolsky (2009) suggests that to achieve any performance of this magnitude (with spontaneous communitas), depends on the dynamics of the Playback Theatre group. The ritual in Playback Theatre provides a platform for such creative heights and it is only by examining the ritual in Playback Theatre, as Barolsky affirms, that one begins to understand why it might have a magical quality to those who witness Playback Theatre or find themselves in a Playback Theatre group experience. Jennings states that:

> Dramatic ritual is a set of performed actions involving metaphor and symbol which not only communicates to us about change, status, values but also affects us. Ritual sets us thinking; it may remind us or reassure us or stimulate us. Our responses to ritual are likely to be at several levels: physical and corporeal, affective, cognitive, imaginative and metaphysical. (1994: 95)

The ritual frame in Playback Theatre of constant questioning by the conductor, the back and forth rhythm of sharing stories and watching the performance is what stimulate the Playback Theatre participants to engage in the process. These different levels of response are possible as theatre and ritual are inter-related. Schechner states that one develops from the other: 'theatre develops from ritual and, conversely, ritual develops from theatre' (1988: 112). This circularity is explained by Dennis as 'inherent in Playback Theatre with the ritual repetition of the invitation to tell juxtaposed with and contained by the rhythmic theatricality of the conductor and the creation and representation of the enactments' (2004: 44). Though one develops from the other, ritual and theatre share a common element which is language as means of expression and communication. This language can either be verbal or visual and are both part of the Playback Theatre process.

2.3 VERBAL and VISUAL LANGUAGE in PLAYBACK THEATRE

As a systematic means of communicating through the use of sounds or conventional symbols, language is essential for everyday interaction and the different modes of human communication make it unique from other living species. In theatre and drama, verbal language is obviously a major component for communicating to and with the audience, though not necessarily the strongest and can be at times minimal or even totally absent. Fox emphasises that, 'despite its affinity to the preliterary mode, non-scripted theatre depends on language for communication of its meaning' (1986: 183). Playback Theatre as a form of non-scripted theatre and interactive theatre, 'relies not only on the attentive listening and watching of the audience, but also on the verbal input of an audience' (Salas 2006). Therefore the formulaic and repetitive language in Playback Theatre combined with the visual articulation of the enactments and the music are all fundamental to its effectiveness. The looseness of verbal language used in Playback shows that the conventions of polite public social interaction are suspended

and this looseness is often demonstrated by the conductor in Playback Theatre who repeats important lines of the teller's story and 'the repetition takes on almost a chant' (Fox 1986: 41). Fox says that, 'many forms of preliterary drama utilize language' (1986: 33) but for him, Playback Theatre is more a 'theatre of action and the senses over a theatre of words' (*ibid*, 67). This truly applies in the enactment of the drama itself with its short forms of "fluid sculptures and pairs" (Salas 1993). Being a form of theatre that interacts with the audience while relying on the audiences' stories for dramatic enactment, words do play a major part in the process for 'the entire thrust of the performance is to take the verbal rendition of experience and translate it into not-so-verbal drama' (Fox 1986: 38). Thus Playback Theatre involves an initial conventional use of language in the verbalising of the Teller's story; followed by both verbal and non-verbal (physical, visual and musical) modalities of communication in order to express or interpret the inner emotional "truth" of that story. This emotional "truth" sometimes might not really be what we determine to be. This is because as humans, we are in constant change and discovery of ourselves and experiences in the environments we come in contact with.

Social constructionism argues that a person's nature is a product of environment (social and biological) which means the person has some definable and discoverable nature that is created through daily social interaction with other people. Language is very appealing to social constructionists as Burr 1995, Sapir 1921 and Schoor 1986 say that our experience of ourselves and of our lives is only given structure and meaning by language, for language is a form of social interaction. Burr's (1995) view of knowledge, language and identity is not focused on the individual person (psychic, biological traits) or social structures but the dynamics of social interaction.

Language in social contructionism is seen as a form of action that is contrived when people talk to each other as in the Playback Theatre interview between conductor and audience or teller. It is through ongoing conversation in the telling and enactment of stories and the conversations after a performance that shared understanding with and response to other people occur. Language is therefore more than a way of simply expressing ourselves and does not reflect a pre-existing social reality, but constitutes, brings a framework to that reality for us. Burr elaborates:

> The person you are, your experience, your identity, your 'personality' are all the effects of language. This means that we can only represent our experiences to ourselves and to others by using the concepts embedded in our language, so that our thoughts, our feelings and how we represent our behaviour are all 'pre-packaged' by language.(Burr 1995, 39)

If language is therefore the way we present ourselves to other people, it means that our expression and interaction with other people should be in a way they can read and understand. Burr explains that words can carry numerous meanings depending on who is speaking, to whom and to what purpose, and the use of signs can have no "intrinsic" meaning, therefore 'the meaning of a sign resides not intrinsically in that sign itself, but in its relationship to other signs' (1995:38).

Given that language is a way of expressing ourselves, it means that the language we speak is embedded in a particular culture, for language is not only an expression of a man's action, relationship and value but part of his society, social institution and a system of values. Several scholars point to the fact that language is implicitly a part of culture (Sapir 1921; Salzmann 1993; Schoor 1986; Mehrabian 1972). According to Sapir:

> Language has a setting. The people that speak it belong to a race (or a number of races), that is, to a group which is set off by physical characteristics from other groups. Again, language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practises and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives. (1921: 221)

Truly, language is a part of culture and Salas affirms that language and its relation to culture has enormous relevance to Playback Theatre for 'what someone says is not necessarily what you are supposed to understand' (2006:4). This involves knowing the 'unwritten rules of the culture, in terms of language' (*ibid*). For example in her article, Salas quotes from someone's experience in England that, 'If someone says, "I am cold". I learnt that it means "please shut the window". Why don't they just say, please close the window if that's what they want?' (*ibid*)

As a literary work of art (in the sense of language and not text), Playback Theatre's use of language is a human creation that embeds several meanings in the expressiveness of

the form and the stories requiring human understanding in interpreting this language. The objects and system (which will be elaborated in the next chapter) used to communicate in Playback Theatre, does not stand out on its own, but is a part of a whole; culture, language, beliefs and social interaction. Therefore, the interpretation and understanding of the text or process as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole. Neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another. The stress here lies in the fact that, meaning is found within a cultural, historical and literary context though meaning sometimes can be made without the whole. In the moment of creation and interpretation of the Playback show, the audience, conductor and performers form a community with a shared interest. Their interests are shared through verbal and visual language.

The place of visual language in the Playback experience is greater than that of verbal language. Visual language will include symbols used to bring out emotions and concepts in the mind. It consists of written language, body and sign language and also the usage of objects to convey messages. In general, visual language is associated with signs which in literary theatre start from the performance text. Elam defines sign as ‘a two-faced entity linking a material vehicle or signifier with a mental concept or signified’ (1980: 6). A theatrical performance in its entirety is a sign. It is an ensemble of elements that add up to produce the aesthetic object (performance). Elam explains that the signs on stage are objects used in everyday life but when they take their place on stage, the objects are semiotised for “on stage things that play the part of theatrical signs… acquire special features, qualities and attributes that they do not have in real life” (Bogatyrev cited in Elam 1980: 7). This applies to Playback Theatre in which there is less usage of stage props but the crates and cloths in the performance space acquire the meanings given to them by the actor. The Playback actor is of particular importance in understanding the signs on stage which include his physical attributes. On stage, ‘the actor’s body acquires its mimetic and representational powers by becoming something other than itself, more and less than individual’ (*ibid*: 9). The actor’s body is referred to as the “dramatic body” (Jones 1996). The Playback actor expresses the teller’s story in non-verbal language through his body and manipulation of the objects on stage which makes up the different modes of communication in theatre. Multimodality is the study of the different modes of communication and it is

therefore appropriate that I look at how this study can help us in understanding the language of Playback Theatre.

2.4 MULTIMODALITY and PLAYBACK THEATRE

Human existence and everyday interaction with nature are full of communication and the passing of messages. As Schoor states, 'even when we are silent, and avoid gesture and imagery, we are nevertheless conveying something to others…' (Schoor 1986: 3). However, this act of communication is not only through words or speech, for messages can also be conveyed with different modes of communication such as sound, gesture and facial expression. These modalities in communication are at the forefront of the theory of multimodality. Ahlsén explains this concept by saying:

> If we look at ordinary face-to-face interaction, much of what goes on is not expressed in words but handled by other modalities. This is especially true of interaction regulating information, which depends on body communication, such as body posture, gesture and gaze, as well as on intonation and voice quality. It also applies to communication of emotions and attitudes, where facial expression, sounds, tone of voice and body communication in general are important. (2006: 150-151)

Multimodality 'can be very general, stemming from the theoretical methods of human information exchange…' (Granström et al 1999: 1). It is an innovative approach to representation, communication and interaction which looks beyond language to investigate the multitude of ways we communicate: through images, sound and music to gesture, body posture and the use of space. Researchers in multimodal theory argue that different modalities have different meaning potentials; therefore, to use sound, verbal language, music, movement, acting, and pieces of cloth in Playback Theatre implies a cluster of expressions and possible impressions in one unit.

> The expression of Playback Theatre is multilayered and exposed to the audience in a simultaneous way. This multilayeredness is one of the key features of expression in Playback Theatre … (Dauber 2008: 83)

The multilayered expression of Playback Theatre can be seen in its form, which is made up of the theatrical methods of story telling, improvisation and ritual. The multilayeredness also applies to the improvisational actor in non-scripted theatre who is

expected to be flexible so he can play multiple roles in one performance. While Jonathan Fox says that if the improvisational actor falls short of this ability, 'the story they convey is liable to be a metacommunicative one…' he continues by saying that, '…the non-scripted theatre actor needs not only a basic expressiveness, but a high degree of role flexibility…. He or she must have the spontaneity to play many roles quickly' (Fox 1986: 103). This flexibility in the non-scripted theatre actor requires skilled use of the body and voice, which are two of the different modes of verbal and non-verbal language in Playback Theatre.

2.5 INTUITION, SPONTANEITY and PLAYBACK THEATRE

Fox (1986) points to the fact that the non-scripted theatre actor is different from a writer who uses his mind and the traditional theatre actor who uses a ready-made script with directions for his actions. The non-scripted theatre actor is always in relation with others and needs to be spontaneous in his actions as he gets instant and tangible feedback. Spontaneity is '…the power of creating beyond oneself without loosing oneself.' (*ibid*, 81) Spontaneity and intuition are the most important tools of a non-scripted theatre actor which explains the reason why Barolsky regards Spolin's concept of intuition as '…important to engage with in order to understand how the spontaneity of the act allows the participant to reach the stage of Turner's liminal experience' (2009: 34). Spolin explains:

> Experiencing is penetration into the environment. Total organic involvement with it. This means involvement on all levels: intellectual, physical, intuitive. Of the three, the intuitive, most vital to the learning situation, is neglected. (Spolin cited in Barolsky 2009: 34).

Fox explains the fact that most cultural and childhood upbringing stifles the actor's intuitive mind and improvisational body and makes it difficult for a flow in action as 'spontaneous dramatic action demands we do the very thing that we have been told not to do through most of our lives' (1986:82). Though he sees culture as an impediment to spontaneity, he still thinks that spontaneity does not exist in a vacuum as it moves either towards creativity or towards cultural conserve (Fox 2008: 47). This view is

related to Moreno's definition of spontaneity as one that '…propels the individual towards an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation' (*ibid*, 44). Therefore in order for an actor not to be blocked by their cultural upbringing, Fox suggest that the Playback Theatre actor needs a training that liberates the stifled body to be more flexible and responsive. In the body of this research, I will be looking at how this concept of spontaneity relates to Playback Theatre. How the participants prepare themselves to be spontaneous in their enactment of the Teller's story.

Although the spontaneous actor is considered to be a person of free will, who acts on impulse, we should note that improvisation is not without rules. It is such rules, especially in Playback Theatre that prevent the participants from exceeding the boundaries and it also creates the ritual space that needs to be respected. These rules need to apply because they release participants from their conventional roles to engage in new ways of communicating with themselves and the environment through spontaneity. Fox describes this as:

> The senses be[ing] open to information from the environment. To accomplish this receptor task, we must be in the moment, animal-like. Second, we must be able to stand outside the moment to make sense of what is occurring. We can then take action - that is, perform a conscious act - which is no small achievement. This action in turn will create a new environmental condition. Thus, spontaneity is the ability to maintain a free flowing constantly self-adjusting cycle of sensory input, evaluation, and action (Fox cited in Dauber 1999: 10).

This means that as a Playback actor, you listen to a teller's story as when you are in a conversational mood with someone, that is, being yourself. At the end of the story, the actor immediately gets into the character of the story without a thought on how to play the role. This is a spontaneous process that is done repeatedly through the performance by actors. To achieve such moments of spontaneity, the Playback Theatre actors go through a particular training that is kept up throughout their lives as Playback Theatre performers, in order to access their spontaneity and intuition thus freeing their creativity and allowing for communal focus. In the body of this research, I will look at the life and activity of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company in relation to their use and practice of spontaneity and intuition in performances. It is important to understand how the process of intuition and spontaneity creates that communal environment in Playback Theatre.

2.6 COMMUNITY and PLAYBACK THEATRE

Community which derives from the 'Latin word com (with or together) and unus (the number one or singularity)' is a word or an idea that relates to the search for belonging in the irregular and insecure conditions of modern society (Delanty 2004; Dennis 2007). The meaning of "community" can be ambiguous; sometimes it refers to the inter-personal connection of people who share a common interest and sometimes to the geographical location which is the "area of common living". The use of community in Playback Theatre stems from the inter-personal and purely ideological perspective where;

> community overlooked… the actual conditions of existence, such as the presence of any conflicts of interest, and instead offered an interpretation of relationships between all local inhabitants as being characterised by harmony, affection…[ ] and stability (Newby cited in Barolsky 2009: 30).

This type of community enables the portrayal of the personal and the connection with the public domain as Dennis (2004) suggests that community exist in-between family and society and offers opportunities for connections with others. She goes further to explain that the study of community implies an effort to overcome the past fragmentation of society described by Tocqueville:

> Each person withdrawn into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not, he touches them, but he feels them not; he exist only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society. (Cited in Dennis 2004: 67)

This citation shows that a community gives the chance for individuals to interact, express and share ideologies in a language that allows for the growth of a better society. The purpose of this research is therefore to see the role of language in inter-personal interaction, given that each community is made up of a group of differentiated cultures and languages in each Playback Theatre performance.

In the context of this research, I will be applying the term "communitas" coined by Victor Turner to differentiate this '…modality of social relationship from an area of

common living' through his study of ritual processes (2004: 80). Dennis identifies Turner's distinction between existential or spontaneous communitas, normative communitas and ideological communitas. She states that:

> Spontaneous communitas is that which happens in the moment and is situated outside the domain of the dominant societal structure. Normative communitas emerges over the course of time when what was once a spontaneous experience of communitas is the subject of social control agendas and is organised into the fabric of the social system. Ideological communitas is that which is desired, and is "a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of society based on existential communitas. (Dennis 2004: 68)

Given that community is in opposition to structure and communitas is formed at the margin (liminality defined as the moment when "the ritual subjects pass through… a sort of social limbo" (Turner cited in Dennis 2004: 43), it invokes the climate of anti-structure and allows for our creative selves to help shape society. With the distinctive forms of communities explained above, my research sits with the spontaneous communitas that brings out the expressiveness of Playback Theatre through the enactment of audience stories. The process of communitas in Playback Theatre is enabled as a result of projection. Actors and audience throughout the performance unconsciously project their own experience on to those of others whom they identify with. Below I explain why and how these projections happen.

2.7 DRAMATIC PROJECTION in PLAYBACK THEATRE

As this study focuses on the actor's response to and performance of stories, it is important to look at dramatic projection and how it works in Playback Theatre. Aspects of projection are present in our everyday life and 'involve the placing of aspects of ourselves or our feelings into other people or things' (Jones 1996: 129).

Freud's concept of projection and identification of inner past conflicts is somewhat similar to Schechner's "restored behaviour" of performance theory (Carlson 2004). The most common behaviour in the human being is pretending to be someone else other than oneself to which Schechner gives the name of "restored behaviour" (Carlson 2004: 3). This concept points to a quality of performance in which there is a distance between

the actor and the role this actor plays on stage. With the difference of being "performed" on stage and merely "done" off stage, the actor sometimes still projects an aspect of themselves into the character which performatively affects the traditional theatre actor and non-scripted theatre actor differently. Freud's concept of projection and identification occurs when an actor on stage identifies with 'characteristics of a role they are playing either through motivation, experience or attitude' (Jones 1996: 132). With this identification, the actor's personality or emotions that are available and also those that may have been denied or repressed are projected onto the role. Freud's concept applies in Playback Theatre as in Dramatherapy as the projection is expressed creatively rather than being seen as a defence (*ibid*).

In Playback Theatre, people's feelings are projected onto dramatic material only when they offer to and are chosen to tell a story. Following Barolsky, I prefer to understand dramatic projection in Playback Theatre as being similar to the drama therapy perspective which is that when the Teller's projection is expressed it is done so creatively rather than being seen as a defense. Jones explains that it is through the process of projection 'linked to the dramatic form…that enables… clients (Tellers) to create, discover, and engage with external representations of inner conflicts' (1996:132). Therefore the external representation that is embodied by the Playback Theatre actors should be accurate, clear enough for the Teller to recognise this conflict or feeling.

2.7.1 Projection of Actors in Playback Theatre

The Playback actor projects themselves in a teller's story by bringing out traits or emotions they may not have dealt with for a long time. With traditional theatre, actors go through a process of characterisation that allows them a period of time to study the character's emotions and attitude unlike non-scripted theatre / Playback Theatre where the actors perform instantly and the dramatisation does not allow for that period of developing a characterisation. In order to do this they have delve into themselves connecting with experiences and traits which may not be part of their usual repertoire. Accessing these feelings can be at times disconcerting for the actor, who can only work through it and find catharsis in the next Teller's story. However, in other to avoid

situations where the actor could project their whole being into the Teller's story, Fox (1986, 2008) calls for a constant training process in which the Playback Theatre actor can always work on their intuitive and spontaneous abilities while dealing with their own personal daily experiences.

2.7.2 Projection among the Audience in Playback Theatre

With the audience members, projection is different because they sit and witness the roles that are being projected through the re-enactment of the Teller's story. By listening and viewing the enactment of a teller's story, the audience identifies with and relates their feelings to the enactment of the stories. These connections allow for that feeling of communitas and it is in such ways that other people are motivated to share in the Playback Theatre experience. For these connections to happen it therefore calls for a spontaneous and accurate enactment of the Teller's story without the actor projecting much of themselves in the enactment.

CHAPTER THREE

DRAMA FOR LIFE PLAYBACK THEATRE COMPANY and PERFORMANCES

The journey and context of my inquiry has been with the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company. In this chapter, I discuss the history, structure and aesthetic style of the company in order to give the reader information about the company and its performances on which this research is based. Given that the focus of my research is on language, I found it necessary to provide a full scripted verbal outline of one of the performances. However reference will be made to other performances analysed in the research report. I chose to draw data from different performances that happened in different contexts and with different audiences because despite the use of the same theme, no two performances can be the same. Fluid components such as audience reaction and the mood of the actor (Aston and Savona 1991) with the effective use of other performance elements will always make each Playback Theatre performance unique. The language of Playback Theatre, being the main element that enables the experience, also varies with different audiences in different contexts therefore making it essential to refer from different performances.

3.1 DRAMA FOR LIFE PLAYBACK THEATRE COMPANY

3.1.1 History and context of creation

The Drama For Life Playback Theatre Company was formed by Kathy Barolsky in 2008. In exploring how Playback Theatre could help in the fight against HIV/AIDS, she started the company with seven members as part of the research for her Masters degree. After an intensive training (the process explained in her thesis), and a couple of open performances, Barolsky came to believe in the importance of Playback Theatre in enabling people to share their stories as a first step towards social change. This quest for using Playback Theatre as a medium to break silences around issues of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa was instigated by an event she experienced in New York during her Playback training.

In June 2008 at the Centre for Playback Theatre in New York, she witnessed a colleague (from Botswana-Africa) tell a story about his family and his experiences of HIV/AIDS and loss that he had never told before. The enactment of this story not only had a profound impact on the group as a whole but for herself in particular as a Drama for Life scholar who uses applied theatre and drama for social change in her community. She was struck by the fact that her colleague could only tell his story in a foreign land to foreign people, and then she began to ask herself:

> Why was it that he felt he could only share his story at the Playback Centre in New York? Has the space for telling such stories in South Africa become so loaded that people would rather not share their experiences of an epidemic that has engulfed us all? (2009, 9)

Not only was she determine to research the use of Playback Theatre in breaking the silence in South Africa around social issues, she also decided to establish the Drama For Life Playback Theatre Company after her Masters research at the end of 2008. This company has been in existence for two years now and they have so far explored issues of HIV/AIDS, sex and relationships, race, racism and identity. They appear to have had a remarkable influence so far in that audience members have been able to tell stories around these issues, that are sad and emotional, and which they had never told before, as will be seen in the performance transcript below (see 3.2.3).

The Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company is based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and is affiliated to the Drama for Life programme. It is made up of members who are from different occupations in society, but have a theatre background and they meet at least once a week for training and rehearsals. As a company formed so many years after the first Playback Theatre Company was created in 1975 in New York (Fox 1986; Salas 1993), they still strive to maintain the form and its principles. Fox asserts that:

> I told my actors that I never wanted them to do this more than half time, because I did not want them to share the fate of many modern actors, forced to become exotic, hothouse flowers, with brilliant colours and severe pruning; instead I wanted them to live in the world and be like their audiences, men and women of common work, family responsibility, and civic duty. (1986: 2-3)

This is one of the principles put in place by the founder of Playback Theatre that is applied by almost all Playback Theatre groups around the globe including the Drama for Life Playback Theatre group. The actors of this group are part of a community that requires services that only they can give, they are not stars nor do they live lives different from the what their community experiences. As such, the performers consider themselves at the service of others which explains why the company operates as a non-profit entity, allowing the members to earn their living elsewhere.

3.1.2 Objectives and structure of the company

The Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company is the only Playback Theatre Company existing in South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa. As the only company in South Africa, their aim is to promote the Playback Theatre method. Their overarching purpose is to provide opportunities for people to tell their stories in situations where they can be valued especially in areas where they are otherwise silenced. Also, they aim to use Playback Theatre as an open forum for stories.

From the year of creation, the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company has been operating under the single leadership of Kathy Barolsky (founder of the company). This year (2010) the company shared responsibilities among its members and is now operating under a shared leadership structure. With this model, any member can demonstrate leadership in at least one or two roles, depending on their ability and availability. Each member must either take full responsibility or assist in any of the duties or roles of the company. This model of shared leadership re-enforces the ensemble and sustains the united spirits of the improvisational performers.

The task or roles are multiple. There are the performing roles - musician, actor, conductor; the operational roles - secretary, treasurer, performance liaison (producer); and finally the artistic and strategic roles - rehearsal director and artistic director. Everyone is encouraged to take up roles not only in service to the company but as a learning process so members are given a chance to challenge themselves in roles that are not their best. During my stay in the company as a researcher, I held the role of the stage manager whose responsibility is to prepare rooms for rehearsal and performances.

3.1.3 Artistic style

With her training in Playback Theatre at New York based on psychodrama, the founder of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company has had a great influence on the company's artistic style that combines physical theatre and movement with improvisational theatre. The willing and active pursuit of playfulness in the members is what characterises the artistic style of the ensemble. There is a tendency for some members to use direct representation to the audience and dialogue-driven enactments. This style always leads to a verbal rather than action based theatre with the risk of destroying the performance by using language that does not come from the teller. Other members incline towards a more physical performance of movement and mime. This physical relationship on stage drives the emotional and narrative content of the enactment but sometimes, it leads to abstraction and the verbal narrative content of the enactment being overlooked for the sake of the aesthetic.

From my observations of the company and through taking part in their training and rehearsals, I noticed that the artistic director most often encourages members of the company to move towards a more physical enactment rather than a verbal narrative. However, it is the combination of both the strengths and weaknesses of both styles that influences the work and performance of the ensemble.

The composition of the company at the period of my data collection was not racially diverse (there were only three blacks and two coloureds with nine whites), therefore it does not reflect the demography of the society in which it is operating. With the influence of my research, the group members all agreed that the group was not representative of the demography of the audiences they wished to reach, so there was a call for auditions at the end of 2010 for black performers and other black Africans interested in Playback Theatre. The company values the artistic abilities of its members in a diverse theatrical repertoire, a good sense of play and well developed spontaneity as vital attributes for a Playback Theatre performer.

3.1.4 Preparations towards performances

An improvisational actor is ready at all times to perform; however, this ability requires lots of preparation. Preparation is vital to the Playback Theatre actor because the success of the performance on stage rests on the ensemble rather than an individual. The training of a Playback Theatre performer is continuous and a pre-requisite to sustain his spontaneous and intuitive abilities. At first glance, Playback Theatre appears to be simple but requires a rigorous and committed performer to undertake the training and commit to the work of performing.

The Drama for Life Playback Theatre group meets at least once a week (Tuesdays) for rehearsals when they do not have any performance at hand. This regular training process is to keep the performers in constant touch with their creative self and to keep the ensemble intact. Apart from this, they undertake intensive training when there is a new theme to be explored in performances so that the actors can also 'empty their baskets of stories' around the theme and feel ready to hold other people's stories. For example with the theme of sex relationships and HIV/AIDS; the group went through intensive training to explore their own stories and rehearse the forms and structure of the Playback Theatre ritual. Such trainings are usually handled by certified drama therapists who form part of the group.

As they prepare for a performance, any member chosen to be part of the performance is required to attend the two rehearsals before the performance. The actors prepare themselves through exercises, games, expressive movements and drama therapy sessions. Preparing for the performance ritual, they focus on the theme of the performance and what aspects of the theme will appeal to the expected audience. Sometimes the groups' preparations also focus on the audience, as in the case of children - getting to know the age group and what characterises their stage of development, understanding their intellectual capabilities and particular cultural and social context.

3.2 PERFORMANCES

I have attended the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company's performances from the moment I got the idea to do this study. This study will be making reference to a number of performances that took place in 2010 and most especially at the period of my data collection. As not all the performances were recorded, those cannot be used in this research report. This section analyses three performances recorded during the period of my data collection. Each event or performance lasted at least 90 minutes featuring the Playback Theatre forms of fluid sculptures, pairs and narratives (see appendix A); performed by an ensemble of four actors, musician and a conductor.

The content of a Playback Theatre performance emerges through the stories shared which is framed within a given theme for each performance. The themes for performances of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company are usually provided by the company or the community requesting the performance. Each Playback performance is unique because the context in which the performance takes place includes the social, cultural and political dimensions of that particular social grouping. Stories from a Playback performance reveal the contemporary issues and concerns for that particular group in that particular context and cannot be considered as representative and collective (Dennis, 2004).

The focus of this section is not on the content and performance event, but on the structure, as language is implicit in the structure of the event. With the first two performances, I record particular aspects of the performance including information about the wider context, the purpose, place and space of performance and the audience. However with the third performance, I attempt a full script of the performance. As it helps me to further analyse my findings, providing the script of a performance gives the reader an idea of the use of language in a Playback Theatre performance.

3.2.1 Performance 1: King David School Performance

WIDER CONTEXT: This initiative forms part of the schools project initiated by the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company to market the Playback method and put it at the service of private institutions. The performances are usually themed by the school that hires the company or by the company itself.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this initiative is to introduce and spread the Playback method to a wider South African population - exhibit and showcase the method to interested clients. Through these performances, the company can continue training and developing the skills of both new and old members. With private performances, they aim to realise some income for the running of the company's affairs.

PLACE and SPACE: The performance took place in King David's school hall. Though the hall had a stage used for school performances and events, the Playback group framed their own stage in the open space of the hall to be closer to the audience. This closeness brings a sense of a collaborative experience and gives the audience the feeling of being included rather than being spectators to a stage performance.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The grade 7 children (ages between 12 and 14) as audience were new to this form of theatre. A group of about 44 children were present at the performance and 6 teachers who witnessed the experience but did not participate. The audience was made up of both boys and girls all from the Jewish culture.

THEME of the PERFORMANCE: the Playback group together with the audience created an experience around the theme of "relationships". Stories were to come from, relationships with friends, family, teachers and most importantly relationships surrounding the school setting.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE:

The performance opened with the Playback Company introducing themselves and sharing their own experiences of being at that age in primary school and how they felt about it. Through their sharing, the performers were introducing the Playback form to the audience and setting a safe space for sharing their own stories. The audience was then warmed up to the idea of sharing by asking them to say in a word how they were

feeling that day or at that moment. The responses included: ‘a general feeling of excitement’, ‘emotional’, ‘disturbed’, ‘confused’, ‘tired’, ‘disconcerting’, ‘stressed’, ‘bored’, ‘hyper’, ‘hate’. This was then followed by eliciting short moments of an experience which related to the theme. The general issue that came up in these short experiences were that of weird or unexpected situations with friends that caused laughter and excitement. With family relationships, the audience brought out sibling rivalries between the older and the younger child. They shared moments of being hurt by their older siblings which made them scared of them.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The audience was very involved but rather noisy. Most of the stories shared brought out this general feeling of embarrassment that children experience from their friends. Also, the stories centred around play, a characteristic that reflects the audience’s age group and social environment. Most Playback Theatre performances bring people together from different cultural and social backgrounds who through sharing their stories and listening to others become a community with common experiences. The grade 7 children of King David School already exist as a community whose activities are a shared day-to-day experience. This explains the reason why each story told included another member of the audience. It was also amazing to see how several people will tell one story by throwing out words and correcting while the teller narrated. The Playback performance with children is quite different from the adult experience because they are very rowdy and it requires a lot of strength and energy from the actors and conductor to elicit their stories. It takes a lot of deep listening with children because their stories lack a lot of details even with the conductor’s questioning. This performance gave an opportunity for the audience to be more aware of their relationships with friends, teachers and family members and not to forget their impressions about the school they attend each day. The stories shared in this performance enabled the use of the non-verbal more than verbal language. This was also due to the fact that these stories were mostly action oriented (moments they play with friends) rather than emotionally oriented.

3.2.2 Performance 2: Hillbrow Theatre Performance

WIDER CONTEXT: Affiliated to the Drama for Life Programme, the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company takes part in the programme's festivals that aim at reaching out to communities through applied theatre and drama. The festival takes place every year on a set theme and a number of performances and workshops are programmed for the exploration of the theme in different settings.

PURPOSE: Through this initiative, the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company has the opportunity to implement their objectives of breaking silences in South Africa around the issues of sex, relationships and HIV/AIDS. It also enables them to introduce the Playback Theatre method as it is new to the South African context.

PLACE and SPACE: The Playback Theatre performances for the festival are programmed in different venues. This particular performance took place in Hillbrow in Johannesburg. This settlement area is notorious for its crime and has a high population of foreign settlers thus making the area multi-national and multi-cultural. The space for the performance was a large theatre hall with a stage. Given that there was no other smaller space for the Playback performance, the group was forced to perform on stage which effectively separated them from the participants. This alienation had a great impact on the audience participation and interaction with the group.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The performance in this venue targeted youths from the ages of 14 and above. However, in the audience were a few children below the ages of 14. The audience numbered about 75 and were all new to the Playback Theatre method. This number in the first place is too large for a form of theatre that is supposed to be interactive and intimate, coupled with the fact that the audience was not in connection with the group which was on stage. The whole audience was of the black race while the Playback performers were all white on this day.

THEME of the PERFORMANCE: The theme of the festival used in the performance was "Sex Actually". The experience with the audience explored issues of sex, relationships and HIV/AIDS.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE

The Playback group introduced themselves, the Playback form and the theme for the performance. The audience were warmed up to the theme through the actors sharing a few of their stories. There was some reluctance from the audience to share, however stories eventually elicited included a teenage boy telling of his fear when he found out that his condom had torn in the process of sexual intercourse. Another shared his anxiety and fear while waiting for his HIV test results. More stories continued which reflected a general sense of distrust in relationships. The only teller willing to move on stage was a young woman who told of her first sexual encounter eight years before that left her with a baby and an STI (sexually transmitted illness). She commented that parent to child sex education is important which in her case was absent. The most regretful and painful situation of her experience was her partner's denial of her and the pregnancy. In her distress, she found solace in friends and family and the love with which her child was welcomed comforted her. She concluded by commenting that any experience in life is a moment for deep reflection and growth. After the enactment of the story, the conductor concluded the performance with an audience's reflection of the experience in one word expressed by the group in a fluid sculpture.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The general atmosphere in this performance was silence and less participation from the audience. The first thing that one could notice in this performance set in a multi-racial and multi-cultural city like Johannesburg was the race difference between the Playback Theatre group and the audience. The audience was entirely the same race (black) while the Playback group were also all of the same race (white). This was one factor that brought less participation on the part of the audience as some of the audience members called the Playback experience a "white man's thing" as they could not relate to any of the performers. Another factor being that the audience and the performers were not close enough to feel the energy from each other. With less enthusiasm to participate, the few who opted to share their experience received mocking laughter from their friends. Considering the intimacy of the theme and the vulnerability of the age group, some audience members found that the questions asked and the request for them to share their experiences so publicly was inappropriate. The explanation for such

reactions could lie in the reasons I outlined above. A majority of the audience were young performing artists who at the end of the performance gave the impression of not understanding the Playback Theatre method which is also one of the reasons they could not share their experiences. They clearly had a very different idea of what a performance should comprise. However the story finally enacted shows that a degree of trust was created as the teller was able to share a painful story and valuable insights gained from it.

The Playback actors admitted to finding the performance difficult, first because they could not elicit the audiences' stories clearly with the distance that separated them. This compelled the conductor to move down stage to the audience so as to get their story and before she said "let's watch", she moved back on stage. Secondly the silence and absence of enthusiasm from the audience also diminished their performing spirit despite all efforts to encourage the audience with their intuitive and spontaneous enactments.

3.2.3 Performance 3: University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UKZN)

WIDER CONTEXT: The context of this performance remains the same as performance 2, also taking part in the Drama for Life Festival organised each year for community outreach on social issues.

PURPOSE: By moving into different settings and communities, the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company organises performances to explore social issues such as relationships, sex and HIV/AIDS. They also are introducing this form of theatre that is new to the South African context.

PLACE and SPACE: In Pietermaritzburg, the Drama for Life Festival was hosted for the first time by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Playback performances took place in a dance studio at the university. It already contained audience seats at the three corners of the hall leaving the middle of the hall as the stage. However, the Playback group used only the middle seating position for the audience so that they could be face to face with the performers and not strain to see what was happening.

TARGET AUDIENCE: although the performance was done in a university environment, it was opened to the general public. Within the audience was a mixture of lecturers, university students and secondary school children. They numbered around 80 and included a representation of all races in South Africa. The number here was slightly above that of performance two but there was a lot of connection and a real willingness to tell stories as a result of the closeness to the performers.

THEME of the PERFORMANCE: The performance follows on the theme of the festival “Sex Actually”- exploring issues of sex, relationships and HIV/AIDS.

3.2.3.1 Performance Transcript

Unlike the traditional stage performance in which curtains open with the audience seated, Playback Theatre starts while the audience is still outside and are ushered into the performance space. While the audience enters into the performance space, they meet the actors in a playful ceremonial mood accompanied by music. At the beginning of each performance, the group plays a number of games to get them into a spontaneous and intuitive mode, while also rehearsing the forms to be used in the performance. When the audience is seated and settled, the music stops and the actors move into neutral for the performance to commence. Because of the importance of recognising the characteristics of the non-verbal language in the performance, I have omitted details of the dialogue at the beginning and at the end of the performance.

CONDUCTOR: Guys welcome. [I would like to give you all a] very, very warm welcome to this performance of Drama for Life Playback, the “Sex Actually Festival”. I just like to find out [if] there are people who were in the performance yesterday? Put your hands up (there is a handful of people). And who has no idea what to expect today? (Hands are raised) O.K, before I explain what we are in for today, I would like to introduce you to our company.

Music starts playing. Actors step forward in pairs, one introduces himself and shares a personal moment or feeling while the other listens and performs. As they finish, they return to their position while the next two step forward and the same process continues.

After the actors, the musician introduces himself and shares his moment which is captured by the performers in a fluid sculpture. Then finally the conductor does the same and it is played back.

CONDUCTOR: Thank you [to Actors]. So we come into this special sacred space to share stories; stories of whom we are; where we come from, big or small; stories that we don't know have even impacted on us yet. The way that it works is that you guys volunteer a moment and later on a longer story, then the actors and the musician play that back to you on the spot. So in keeping with the theme of the festival we are going to be sharing stories of our relationships, sex and our relationship to HIV/AIDS. All those exciting things we don't always talk about, we will see what happens in the space today. So now that you have got to know a little about us, we would like to find out about you. Maybe just one word of how you are feeling today.

As the conductor engage the audience with these questions, the musician starts playing music. The actors begin to walk in different directions like in a chaos while listening for words from the audience. As the audience call out a word, it is repeated by the conductor (to confirm,) then the actors immediately embody the word in a snap moment and resume their walk. During this warm up moment, music plays continuously. This opening phase warms up the audience to the idea of sharing and to the theme of the performance and also works for the actors to increase flexibility and expressiveness. Most times the words come randomly but the actors only take what the conductor repeats.

CONDUCTOR: I am going to now ask for more than a word- a moment. A moment around an intimate relationship that you have had or have.

(SILENCE)

CONDUCTOR: Yes.
AUDIENCE MEMBER: I remember my first kiss.
CONDUCTOR: And what is your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thabi

CONDUCTOR: Thabi?

THABI: Yes.

CONDUCTOR: Thabi, can you tell me little more about this moment of your first kiss?

THABI: Ah! I never got a second one (Audience laughter)

CONDUCTOR: So you never got a second one from this girl (he nods). And what was that like?

THABI: It was sad

CONDUCTOR: It was sad?

THABI: I just don't want to talk about it.

CONDUCTOR: And how long ago did this happen?

THABI: Just a few weeks ago.

CONDUCTOR: (Facing the Actors) I never got a second kiss from the first. It was sad. Thabi. LET'S WATCH

FLUID SCULPTURE. Actors come forward one after another and give their own interpretation of the feeling in the story but remain connected together as one unit. They stand on different levels to bring out the aesthetic of the form. After two to three repeated actions and sound, they hold the action, come to a neutral state and return a thank you to the teller with a glance. They then return to their positions in preparation for the next story. Audience Applause

CONDUCTOR: So watching Thabi's moment, I am wondering if it has made you think of your own? Aha! What's your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jude

CONDUCTOR: Jude?

JUDE: Yeah. O.K first kiss… it wasn't really a first kiss because I was jumped like… (Shows action with his hands) jumped. Let's just say the tongue was weird (Audience laughter).

CONDUCTOR: So it was not really a kiss?

JUDE: It was not.

CONDUCTOR: O.K. A weird first kiss. LET'S WATCH

FLUID SCULPTURE. Actor's enactment is concentrated around the mouth and tongue as they wipe and make disgusting sounds. Applause

CONDUCTOR: Now I am looking for a moment about the first time that you were confronted or became conscious of sex. (Noise and laughter in the audience) Yes.
AUDIENCE MEMBER: ehhhh, I was, I think about 15 years old and I walked into my mum's room. Where the hair dryer is placed, there is an indication of sex books in the drawer and with all these funny positions on it; I don't quite know what these people are doing. So my naïve 15 year old found this book full of positions. That was my first memory of sex.
CONDUCTOR: And seeing this book full of positions and thinking of your parents, what was the feeling that came up for you?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Disgusted! Really, because my parents do this….
CONDUCTOR: The name is Clarinet right (she had shared a story in the first performance so the conductor went by the ritual and did not ask her name at the beginning of her story) so this is Clarinet's disgusted moment. Sex and the parents. LET'S WATCH

FLUID SCULPTURE. Actors are looking into a book, another showing a sex position all looking surprised and making disgusted sounds. Applause

CONDUCTOR: Anybody else with your own moment around sex?
(SILENCE)
AUDIENCE MEMBER: eeem… (Audience laughter)
CONDUCTOR: What is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ken
CONDUCTOR: Ken?
KEN: Yes. I was also young, probably 12 and my first experience of sex was… *Emmanuelle* on *e-TV* (Audience exclaim) My cousin and I used to record it and my mother caught us, then she just looks at us and went back to her room. So we threw the cassette away.
CONDUCTOR: And when she caught you watching this recorded tape of *Emmanuelle,* what was that like?

KEN: Very embarrassing and scary because I expected her to react more but she was just like O.K.
CONDUCTOR: Ken's embarrassing scary moment. LET'S WATCH.

FLUID SCULPTURE. Actors stand at different levels; others standing and some sitting looking into the air embarrassed. One actor shows he is scared by putting his hands between the legs and shivering. Applause

CONDUCTOR: I would like us to go to a short story. A short story about your first memory of HIV/AIDS. (Pause) Yes, what is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Rebecca.
CONDUCTOR: Rebecca?
REBECCA: Yes. I have a four year old cousin.
CONDUCTOR: A four year old?
REBECCA: (Nods) a four year old cousin.
CONDUCTOR: She is HIV positive?
REBECCA: It's a he.
CONDUCTOR: He is HIV positive.
REBECCA: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: And can you tell me more about this?
REBECCA: The first time he got sick… it was in January and I had not come back from home to varsity yet. My aunt was also sick.
CONDUCTOR: So you had come back home from varsity…
REBECCA: No, I was still at home.
CONDUCTOR: You were still at home?
REBECCA: Preparing to come back to varsity.
CONDUCTOR: O.K. You were going to come back and your aunt and cousin were very sick?
REBECCA: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: And can you tell me more about… so did this stop you from going back to varsity?
REBECCA: No, I came back. It was kind of scary because he was just tiny.
CONDUCTOR: And can you tell me a little bit more about you and your cousin?
REBECCA: Umm… he is adorable. He sings and plays the guitar.

CONDUCTOR: And how is he now?
REBECCA: He is great. He started school. One day when I was home he did not want to go. On their way to school he beat up my nine year old cousin and then came back.
CONDUCTOR: So this little four year old beat up your nine year old cousin?
REBECCA: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: And when you think about… what's his name?
REBECCA: Lefa.
CONDUCTOR: Lefa? (She nods) and when you think of Lefa what does he bring out for you?
REBECCA: I think about him and I feel a lot of joy.

V-FORM NARRATIVE. With this form the conductor also becomes an actor and forming a "V" she narrates the Tellers' story while gesticulating expressively and the actors follow the same gestures and body movement. APPLAUSE

CONDUCTOR: So watching Rebecca's story, I am wondering if you have a short story of your own around these things. Around HIV/AIDS, relationships… yap. What is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Simon.
CONDUCTOR: Simon?
SIMON: Yes. I have my sister who is 10 years bigger than me and she is my best friend. We share everything with my sister. She was unfortunately diagnosed with HIV in 2001 and I was in grade 4 at that time but then as young as I was, I was the first person she came and shared it with…. At that time, as premature as I was, I did not know how to take it because, you know, she is like 10 years older than me. But now when I get to look at it, she is one of the most successful ladies that I know. I actually look up to my sister more than my parents because she is like this strongest person ever. She always keeps me going when ever I am down. And if she managed to live with it so long without ever taking ARV and still living, it taught me to rise above any situation that I encounter in life. If she could do it many of us can.
CONDUCTOR: So, she told you in 2002?
SIMON: 2001.
CONDUCTOR: In 2001 and she is still very strong.
SIMON: She is still much very strong.

CONDUCTOR: So Simon, could you tell me more about this moment that she told you she was HIV positive…
SIMON: Well at that time I really did not know because I knew very little about HIV/AIDS… I only learnt it in school and did not take it seriously, not thought it was a reality. Then when she came and told me, I knew its something that is happening, my sister had it….
CONDUCTOR: Thank you, Simon and his older sister. LET'S WATCH.

TABLEAU. The conductor narrates the story in parts. After each part or sentence the actors create a tableau: a sculpture that is still. In the first part of the story, actors sit looking confused. Second still image sister is telling Simon the news. Third image shows sadness. Fourth image actors looking up with a smile Applause

CONDUCTOR: This is the moment in our performance where we start to tell longer stories. So, I would like you to turn to the person next to you. Tell them the title or perhaps a couple of words about what this story might be if you were to tell one today. (Music plays while the audience talks amongst themselves. After a while the conductor brings their attention back to the performance space) I would like to invite somebody to come sit here with me and tell a story. Yes, Brenda.
CONDUCTOR: Brenda, out of these actors who would you like to play you in your story?
BRENDA: Clara. (She stands)
CONDUCTOR: Where does your story begin?
BRENDA: About 10 years ago my uncle got married. Now am like the youngest child of my family and I have never really seen anybody get married or been able to go to a wedding. It was a huge event, he was out doing well for himself and he was marrying a beautiful woman… like a perfect marriage. Then they had a child after that, and everything was so perfect. He will come and pick us all the time to go to the beach. Then at some point everything just started going down and at my age I did not know what was happening. My parents and most of the elders in the family are not keen on talking and explaining to the young kids what is happening. So he…
CONDUCTOR: And how old were you at the time?
BRENDA: I was probably like 13 and the oldest.
CONDUCTOR: MMMMM

BRENDA: And that time he stopped coming through and my mum told me that he was sick but I did not know what was wrong with him. Then there were all these crazy family meetings; my mum, aunts going to my gran's trying to sort out stuff and all these talks on the phone but nobody was telling us anything.

CONDUCTOR: So you saw things were drastically different but you did not know why?

BRENDA: Yes. After some time Phil (the baby) passed away and after the wife aunt Lucy passed away. Then my uncle passed away. But they did not tell us what had happened to them; they just said that they had passed away. But I remember seeing my uncle having dark, brown bruises all over his body. He could not eat or do anything and was living in the outside room of my parent's house… I was just like why is uncle living in the outside room. Then later on I found out… my cousin told me that uncle was having AIDS. So I was like what! Started freaking out and went to my mother asking - how come you don't tell us these things and you know how close we are to him. We could have been there trying to help him and what if you are not there and I had to go help him out with something.

CONDUCTOR: Was this after everybody passed away?

BRENDA: Yeah, he was the last to pass away.

CONDUCTOR: And how old were you?

BRENDA: I was 13 to 14

CONDUCTOR: This all happened in one year?

BRENDA: Yes. It was very quick and I was even so surprised like what happened?

CONDUCTOR: As a13 year old seeing this, what was going on in your mind?

BRENDA: It freaked me out and taught me that some elderly people think sometimes they are making some good decisions on your behalf and at the same time it might not be so, they are not always right. Then just seeing how my uncle looked like from this perfect healthy man, lost his job, house, his wife and kid, everything and the way that he looked like his body freaked me out.

CONDUCTOR: How would you describe your uncle? What was his personality like?

BRENDA: He was a kind man who was like really, really giving and kind. Like if he wants to go to the beach, he will go and collect every little cousin there was. Even we were like 16 of us he will take us there and pay for everything.

CONDUCTOR: And this is something that he used to do…

BRENDA: All the time.

CONDUCTOR: So if you could give this story a title what would it be?

BRENDA: The never ending, ending.

CONDUCTOR: The never ending, ending. LET'S WATCH.

(Setting- up music)

Music stops. Brenda (the actor) comes on stage, sits on a crate and starts playing- throwing stones up in the air and catching. Uncle comes in the space.

UNCLE: (calling) Brenda

BRENDA: Yes.

UNCLE: What are you doing? Are you ready to come to the beach?

BRENDA: Is today beach day?

UNCLE: Today is beach day. Take the blanket (throws a red cloth to her)

COUSINS: (screaming and shouting with joy) uncle is taking us to the beach.

(Uncle stands in front and holds a crate as the driver; the other actors take positions by him as in a car. They drive to the beach. Audience laughter)

UNCLE: Guys, we will be coming to the beach for years and years to come. I love you guys.

COUSIN: (To Brenda as they play on the beach) I am going to jump in first.

BRENDA: (To uncle) Can we get ice cream now?

UNCLE: Go get your ice cream.

(Action moves to Brenda's house)

BRENDA: (Calling) Mummy, mummy.

MUMMY: Yes my baby.

BRENDA: Is it true that Uncle is getting married?

MUMMY: Yes he is getting married. You know he is doing well for himself and has a job (Brenda nods), so he is getting married and you are going to have another aunt.

BRENDA: And I can go to the wedding?

MUMMY: Yes, this is your first wedding

BRENDA: Yes. (Looking at Uncle and wife) look how beautiful they are

(Action moves to Uncle and wife)

Wife; Of course I will marry you.

UNCLE: I am happy.

WIFE: I want children.

UNCLE: We are going to have a child.

WIFE: I want a boy

UNCLE: Me too (audience laughter)

(Wedding day, excitement, dancing and ululations all round the couple)

MUMMY: Thank you, it's so beautiful.

(Uncle touches his wife's stomach)

BRENDA: A baby! I am going to have another cousin.

MUMMY: Yes you are not the last child any longer (audience laughter)

BRENDA: Aunty, what are you going to call your child?

WIFE: If it is a boy, Phil.

BRENDA: Phil. Beautiful.

(Uncle and wife turn their face from the audience, and while turning back is holding a baby- they use a red cloth- audience laughter)

BRENDA: (jumping happily) Things are happening so quickly. A baby and a house. Aunty can I hold him?

WIFE: Will you come visit us?

BRENDA: Yes, everyday; all the time. Uncle does this mean you are not taking us to the beach anymore?

UNCLE: No, I will still take you to the beach.

(Uncle and wife seat on the ground in a sad mood and start unfolding cloth-baby. Mummy comes over with a red cloth and starts spreading over the couple lying on the ground)

BRENDA: (confused) Mama why is Phil dead? Why is uncle sick?

MUMMY: He is just very sick (still standing by the couple spreading the cloth)

BRENDA: Why is aunty sick?

MUMMY: Don't ask too many questions Brenda. These things happen ok.

BRENDA: Mama why is uncle staying in the back house? (angrily) Why the back house?

MUMMY: Because he is sick.

BRENDA: (rushes to the uncle) Uncle what is all this? (Looking at his body) bruises?

(The atmosphere is sad and pitiful. Wife goes off stage and uncle roles over to the back of the stage covered with a cloth)

BRENDA: I do not understand.

MUMMY: None of us understand my child.

BRENDA: What happened? Busisi told me that he had AIDS. (Angrily) mama why did you not tell us?

MUMMY: How was I supposed to tell you?

BRENDA: Because then I could have done something.

MUMMY: What were you going to do Brenda?

BRENDA: I could have fed him, helped him and be with him.

MUMMY: Brenda…

BRENDA: No, mama. You sometime think that the decisions you make are the ones that are best for us.

MUMMY: We always have your interest at heart.

BRENDA: (moves a crate to the front and seat. Mummy bends over to comfort her) I could have done so much if I new. Just to be there with him

(They seat silent for a moment. actors come on stage and face teller. Applause)

CONDUCTOR: Brenda, did you see parts of your story there?

BRENDA: (Teller) Definitely.

CONDUCTOR: And looking back to that time now?

BRENDA: There is so much more I could have done as Clara said.

CONDUCTOR: But you were 13?

BRENDA: It's true.

CONDUCTOR: Thank you for sharing that story with us. (APPLAUSE)

CONDUCTOR: Now, I am wondering if watching Brenda's story made you think of your own moment, something that you identify with?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can it be anything?

CONDUCTOR: Yes. So what is your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ryan.

CONDUCTOR: Ryan?

RYAN: YES.

CONDUCTOR: So who would you like to play you in your story?

RYAN: Uh, I don't know

CONDUCTOR: Take a moment to look at these actors.

RYAN: Second from the right

CONDUCTOR: Lezzy?

RYAN: Yes, thanks. O.K. In the first year I went to Moorgate with 19 other guys all Afrikaans and I was an English guy. There was a hectic language barrier going on there already and we…

CONDUCTOR: And how did you land up going to Moorgate with 19 Afrikaans guys?

RYAN: Well, I kind of hit one of them and they all jumped on me but I fought back against them. Then they were like wow! "Let's take this guy with us to Moorgate"

CONDUCTOR: What is that?

RYAN: It's a club in Pietermaritzburg.

CONDUCTOR: A club, O.K.

RYAN: So we go down there for a weekend and the plan is to camp. The first night, we get bad luck in Moorgate which is really a nice club. It's cheap if you get there early and there was a cool party happening so the guys got on. This one guy saw a girl he liked and started getting a little friendly but this guy grabbed his hand and threw him off. Being really aggressive Afrikaans guys, big as well and drinking brandy, they decided we can box this guy.

CONDUCTOR: The guy that threw the other guy off the girl?

RYAN: Yes. O.K . So we go outside and meet in the street and there is only one guy, with a big mouth. We are like, there are 20 of us outside and we will knock you down, bring your friends. This guy goes back in and brings his friends and this chick. We found out that she is a prostitute and we have to pay and the guys that were around her were her pimp and dealers…

CONDUCTOR: So your guys did not know what they were getting into?

RYAN: Yeah. And we thought 20 of us, 4 of them and a girl we can take them. So we are standing outside and one guy slaps another off to a stop sign… then there is this roar and fighting.

CONDUCTOR: And where are you in this story, are you involved in all this action?

RYAN: Obviously. So as we are fighting this guy comes back and says "run or we are going to shoot you" and we thought he was joking.

CONDUCTOR: These were the Afrikaans guys?

RYAN: Yeah. Then this car full of these heavy looking coloured guys pull in waving guns at us and we run. They took after us but not shooting. With all this happening, we spend a lot of money on Friday night such that we did not have money for Saturday. We arrived at the camp at 5 in the morning, took our things and left without paying for

the previous night. We drove off and spend the rest of the weekend sleeping in the car. (Audience laughter)

CONDUCTOR: And these guys you have never met before, and this is your first experience?

RYAN: Yes (Audience laughter)

CONDUCTOR: How long ago did this happen?

RYAN: 4 years ago.

CONDUCTOR: 4 years ago? And what type of person would you describe yourself…

RYAN: Back then?

CONDUCTOR: Yes.

RYAN: I am very different now. I liked fighting, drank a lot and did lots of stupid things.

CONDUCTOR: And now?

RYAN: Not so much.

CONDUCTOR: And why do you think you decided to tell this story here today?

RYAN: I thought… I was going to tell another story about how I got away from the cops (Audience laughter) but I saw that there was a serious moment that maybe we could do with some laughter.

CONDUCTOR: But sometimes it's also good to be able to sit on our serious moments.

RYAN: Yes.

CONDUCTOR: Thank you that was your first instinct. So, some of us like to heal through our past crazy experiences. O.K. Ryan's crazy days. LET'S WATCH.

(Setting up music)

Ryan (actor) comes on stage holding a cloth. Sits and starts drinking using the cloth. Actors (the guys) follow and start fighting him.

1st ACTOR: (To Ryan) what are you doing in our place?

RYAN: Where would you like me to go?

2nd ACTOR: Somewhere else.

3RD ACTOR: Dude what is your name?

RYAN: I am Ryan (extending hand to greet)

(The other guys continue attacking and teasing him to fight back. Ryan hit one of the boys and run off. They are amazed at his courage and call him to come back)

1st ACTOR: (To Ryan) come over, listen the oaks are going camping.

2nd ACTOR: Moorgate (audience laughter)

RYAN: Where is Moorgate?

1st ACTOR: It is just a place in Pietermaritzburg. Let's get out of here.

RYAN: (lifting bottle up to the boys) cheers

(MUSIC. Scene moves to the camping ground. Actors are setting up tents using cloths and crates

2nd ACTOR: (to Ryan) you need to work as well. Do something.

RYAN: Sure. Are you pouring a drink? (To 2nd Actor)

2nd ACTOR: Yah (brings the drinks- cloths- and they share) we have worked very hard. I think we need to go out.

RYAN: Let's get the car, drive and see where we can go.

1st ACTOR: Who is driving?

(Using the crates, 3rd actor drives while they drink, laugh and whistle at girls on the way)

RYAN: Stop here. Let's hit it guys.

3rd ACTOR: Where is my drink?

2nd ACTOR: Who cares, the drinks are cheap here man.

RYAN: We are lucky to be here early. You pay something like R30 and you drink as much as you want till 10:30 pm.

2nd ACTOR: (In a drunken tone to Ryan) I like the way you think.

1st ACTOR: Here are the shuts, let's line up.

(They drink progressively. Girl passes by and they look at her stunningly. Music- whistles sound. Audience laughter)

1st ACTOR: Excuse me (to girl) come with us (pulling her but is thrown off by another guy)

GIRL: Oh my god! Don't touch me.

GUY: (To girl) where these guys bothering you?

1st ACTOR: So what are you going to do?

GUY: Let's take it out of here. Let's go box outside.

1st ACTOR: (Confidently) let's take it outside oak (to girl) see you later (audience laughter)

(Music. Chaos, fighting. Girl is screaming in fear. Suddenly they stop)

1st ACTOR: Did someone say they going to shoot us? (Audience laughter)

GIRL: (Pointing towards audience) those guys over there.

1ST ACTOR; Oooops! Its coloured guys (audience laughter. They have guns. Run let's go to the camp.
(Audience laughter. Actors face teller. Applause)

RYAN: (Teller) Sure guys, thanks. That was like ever but now I don't hang out with them anymore.
CONDUCTOR: Thank you Ryan. Now we have time for just one more story. I am wondering if there is any one…
CONDUCTOR: Yes, what is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Lily.
CONDUCTOR: Lily? Where does your story begin?
LILY: My story happened when I was in grade 10.
CONDUCTOR: You were in grade 10?
LILY: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: Who would you like to choose to be you? (She points at MAURINE who stands) So Lily you are in grade 10 and what happens in your story?
LILY: Well I cannot really say the names of the people in the story just in case…
CONDUCTOR: That is fine. Change the names.
LILY: I am living in a house with two of the closest people in my life and I had to watch this man… O.K I will give them character names- Creon (Audience laughter)
CONDUCTOR: You are living in the house with Creon?
LILY: Am living in the house with Creon and Lady Macbeth
CONDUCTOR: Lady Macbeth?
LILY: So I am very close to Lady Macbeth, I have known her all my life. She was not in the house most of the time, she only came on Fridays.
CONDUCTOR: She only came on Fridays?
LILY: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: What relationship did she have with you?
LILY: She was close
CONDUCTOR: She was just close?
LILY: Yes.
CONDUCTOR: O.K.
LILY: So I had to watch Creon… they were dating not married. I had to watch him cheating because Lady Macbeth was not there the whole week. She only came back on

Fridays. As (pause) in grade 10 I thought to myself, what do I do? Do I tell Lady Macbeth what this evil man Creon is doing? Is it my responsibility to tell her?
CONDUCTOR: And you are like 16?
LILY: Yes, at the time. I had to watch him do it with different women not just one and I was in silence the whole time. I had to watch her come back thinking everything is all good because in the weekends he will not do anything.
CONDUCTOR: He will be there in the house?
LILY: He will be there in the house. So as I was just going through… its not a big house, everything is here and there. I was going through some things; I found a paper written the name and HIV positive. I felt responsible in a way because if I told her about what was going on (sobbing) … it was going on for like the whole year until I had to go to grade 11. So if I told her earlier maybe she would have made a decision and we would have moved away from him. Since that happened, whenever she gets sick, I have to… I feel responsible because she even told me to my face when she actually found him with another woman. I told her I have seen him time and time again with different women, then she looked at me and told me that " why did you not tell me all this time and now this man has fed me with all these diseases, its your fault, why didn't you tell me?" I felt it was not my place to just come and tell her. Yes, she has been doing everything for me so now when she falls sick I feel responsible. I have to relive that if I would have told her, she will not be HIV positive and it's also with my future. I fear that she is going to die and who am I going to be with because she is everything that I have and somehow it's my responsibility. I feel it's my fault. Every year I have to go through… and she gets sick like time and time again. Oh my God! Right now she is in Durban and I am in Pietermaritzburg. I get calls that she is sick and I have to relive it again. Silence was not a good idea, I should have said something.
CONDUCTOR: But you were 16 as well so… and grown ups do what grown ups do. Tell me what's your relationship with Lady Macbeth now? You say you are still very close. You are very close?
LILY: Yeah. Lady Macbeth is my mother (still crying)
CONDUCTOR: And what do you do when you spend time with her?
LILY: I always try to make the best of it because am not always with her. I study here and she is in Durban…
CONDUCTOR: So you do make the best of it most of the time when you are with her?
LILY: Most of the time she is working. I always see her after work.

CONDUCTOR: And thinking about what you could do for her now, what would be the most meaningful thing for her now at this point?

LILY: She wants the best for me so all I plan to do is get some education and be the best that I can.

CONDUCTOR: How would you describe your mother's personality in general?

LILY: She is great (smiles, Audience laughter) she is the craziest mother ever.

CONDUCTOR: And you, how will you describe yourself?

LILY: Crazy.

CONDUCTOR: Like mother like daughter.

LILY: Yes.

CONDUCTOR: This Creon character, where is he now?

LILY: He is ok, he is around. He doesn't give a damn about me or Lady Macbeth.

CONDUCTOR: But you are away from him and your mum is away from him now?

LILY: It's been like three years. I only see him once in the beginning on the year- new year's day- he passes to say hi and on my birthday. That is all.

CONDUCTOR: So if you could give your story a title what would it be?

LILY: Silence killed my mother.

CONDUCTOR: Silence killed my mother. LET'S WATCH.

(Setting-up music)

Lily (actor) comes on stage with a crate, sits and starts writing on her palm.

LADY MACBETH: (cloth round her waist) What are you busy with?

LILY: Ah, Lady Macbeth. I am just writing some stuff.

LADY MACBETH: Doing homework?

CREON: Ohh, Lady Macbeth (embraces her). Hi Lily

LILY: Hi (without raising her head)

CREON: (To Lily) How are you?

LILY: I am fine. How are you?

CREON: Fine thank you. Did you have a good birthday?

LILY: Yes (another actor is sitting by her as her inner thoughts)

CREON: Good.

INNER THOUGHTS: What are you looking at? (Referring to Creon) Do not stand there pretending everything is fine. I know what you are doing.

LILY: (Stands up) Ma can I get you guys anything?

CREON: Make me a cup of coffee.

LILY: O.K.

LADY MACBETH: Should I come and help? (She joints Lily in the Kitchen. Creon makes a phone call)

CREON: Hi, how are you? (On phone) What are you wearing? O.K I will call you later.

LILY: (To her mum) I forgot something; let me get it in the room. (She enters the room and gets Creon's conversation on phone. She quickly leaves the room in anger).

LILY: Mum, Lady Macbeth…

INNER THOUGHTS: Don't say anything. Say something. Don't say anything.

LADY MACBETH: Yes.

LILY: (Murmurs) I forgot to ask Creon how many sugar he wants.

LADY MACBETH: Two and a half. He wants four but don't give him (audience laughter)

CREON: (moves to the kitchen) What are you ladies doing?

LADY MACBETH: We are busy making food.

CREON: Do you mind if I take some with me?

(Lily stands up. The actor who is playing her inner thoughts and emotions stands behind her, stretches her hands in front of Lily twisting them up and down angrily)

LILY: Ma, I am going to do my home work sorry.

(Lady Macbeth gathers food and hand over to Creon-cloths)

LADY MACBETH: Why don't you just take it all? Can I get you something else?

CREON: Do you have some beans?

LADY MACBETH: Yes (hands him more food. Creon gives her a kiss and leaves the house. Lily rushes to her mum as though she was waiting for Creon to leave)

LADY MACBETH: (To Lily) Come sit with me. Oh I must do your hair. Let me get the comb (audience laughter)

LILY: No, no it's fine…I …there is something I have been meaning to tell you for like…

LADY MACBETH: Tell me.

INNER THOUGHTS: Don't tell her. You can't tell her.

LILY: I am doing really well at school…and…

INNER THOUGHTS: That idiot has women over here day in. day out.

LADY MACBETH: Just promise me you will work hard.

LILY: Yes. I promise.

LADY MACBETH: Everything will work out. You just work hard and be the best that you can be (Lily nods)
(Creon comes in with a woman and Lily watches them with lots of anger in her. They are embracing and laughing)
WOMAN: Your lady is away this week.
CREON: It is just you and I.
WOMAN: And the little girl? (Laughing) I hear something.
(Lily is knocking on the door and calling Creon. The woman leaves the house handing over a red cloth to Creon who puts it round his body (sad sounds from audience)
CREON; Hi (opening arms to embrace Lily who ignores him)
LILY: Listen (searching the house. She picks up a paper and stands shocked, speechless. Creon puts the red cloth on her open palms as he leaves the house. Lady Macbeth comes in with a sad face)
LADY MACBETH; (To Lily) You did not say anything.
LILY: (Weepy) I wanted to. But I did not know how. There were times when it was sitting on my tongue and I wanted to… but I did not know how to tell you (crying) and I know if I did tell you, you could have done something about it. I am so sorry. Will you ever forgive me?
LADY MACBETH: (embrace and caresses Lily) Sometimes the elders don't have all the answers.
LILY: I am so sorry. I feel so responsible (crying, there is sobbing in the audience) if I had done something if I had said something. Things could have changed. It could have been different. It's my fault.

(Actors face teller. Applause)

CONDUCTOR: Watching Lily's story, I am wondering if there is any one who connected to the story in any way.

There are a number of responses to not only this story but the others too. These responses are not performed; it is like a post performance discussion which is the first I have seen happening in the Drama for Life Playback performances. After the

discussions, the conductor still ends the performance in the ritual of Playback performances.

CONDUCTOR: Guys before we end, I would like us to sing a song together. (Musician tunes the song and the actors together with the Audience follow in)
CONDUCTOR: So I would like to hear four different voices that have not spoken today. What has this performance left you with, in a word?
AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Responsibility; connection; to keep on sharing; the hope;
CONDUCTOR: LET'S WATCH

(FLUID SCULPTURE. Each actor comes into the sculpture and expresses one word with the body and facial expressions. Applause, MUSIC PLAYS WHILE AUDIENCE MOVE OUT OF PERFORMANCE SPACE)

Performance Analysis
This performance took place the day after another performance had taken place in the same venue and space. The news of the Playback Theatre performance circulated from those who witnessed it so that this performance was full and people had to sit on the floor while others where standing. The diverse audience was made up of people who had seen Playback the previous day and others who where there for their first time. Not only did the performance get a full house, the audience was sitting on the edges of their chairs with stories ready to tell and all ears to listen and commune with others.

The stories, as seen in the transcript were deep, intense and heart touching. The "red thread" of the performance was the responsibility young children have and want to have towards their older siblings in protecting them during times of distress. The theme of the performance "sex actually" was diverted by the audience to concentrate stories on HIV/AIDS. This is exactly what happens in Playback performance as the group might set an objective with a theme, but they remain open-minded to follow the trend stories take in the performance. Therefore as the conductor guides with questions, the audience still holds the upper hand in deciding what to share. The details, with which audience members shared deep personal stories, show how Playback Theatre is penetrating the hearts of South Africans, enabling them to break the silence and tell untold stories. This performance has been one of the most successful and longest performances in the year

2010 that the group has had. It was different from all other performances with a post performance discussion before the ending of the performance ritual.

The Playback actors carried with them a high degree of energy for improvisation that took them beyond the surface enactment of stories to the untold in the stories. Their creative spontaneity was one factor that held the audience captivated and wanting to share so that during reflections an audience member asked what it takes for them to instantly listen to a story and perform it so expressively. Their use of the verbal and non-verbal languages blends so that one could imagine that the stories had been rehearsed before-hand. These verbal and non-verbal languages will be examined in the chapter that follows with examples from the performances analysed above.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELEMENTS OF STAGE LANGUAGE IN A PLAYBACK THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Language is primarily a medium of communication or a means of interaction and understanding between human beings. It is part of our daily lives. In drama and theatre as in every day interaction, language goes beyond the mere fact of verbal communication between two people. In the field of theatre and drama as in everyday life, language is more than the rendering of words on stage. It is a combination of words and sign systems that convey meaning to an audience in a given cultural context. Pavis (1996) writes that theatre is made up of traditions, conventions, institutions and habits that have permanence in time. Elements from all these areas are encoded into a theatrical piece that needs to be decoded for the message and meaning to be received in context.

The process of producing meaning through the different sign systems and codes of society is termed semiotics. This discipline is a 'multidisciplinary science whose precise methodological characteristics will necessarily vary from field to field but which is united by a common global concern, the better understanding of our own meaning-bearing behaviour' (Elam, 1980: 1). Despite its high usage in the field of literature with regards to poetry and narrative, Elam comments that theatre and drama has had less attention in semiotic investigation, despite the richness in theatrical communication. Deriving from linguistics and structuralism, theatrical semiology entails analyses of performance text and stage performance through the participation of theatre practitioners and audience (Pavis 1982; Elam 1980; Aston and Savona 1991). In his theoretical analysis of theatre semiotics Pavis (1982) indicates repeatedly that semiology is not there to locate meaning. He states:

> Semiology in no way resembles a machine or a technique meant to produce ready made discourses about a text or the stage. It is necessary in fact to construct this analytical machine which is not preconceived and which has to be built up according to the theatrical subject studied. (1982: 195)

The analytical machine or process begins from the director reading the script - in main stream theatre, to the audience reception of the performance on stage. As for traditional

stage theatre whose semiotics will include text and stage performance, improvisational theatre has not received much semiological analysis. Its analysis will entail a study of performance through to audience reception in a particular social and cultural context. Playback Theatre as an improvisational form of theatre combines verbal and non-verbal elements of language in its enactment of stories. The blend of these elements carries with it many sign-systems through which the message of the story is conveyed to the audience. This study does not search for the semiotics of the performance, but aims to identify the elements that make up the sign-system of a Playback Theatre performance and how they are combined and used in conveying the story. This section identifies the language of Playback Theatre through both verbal and non-verbal communication systems, laying emphasis on the use of the non-verbal which dominates the verbal. Identifying these elements reveals their importance in the performance ritual and to the persons involved in their usage.

4.1 VERBAL LANGUAGE in PLAYBACK THEATRE

> It would appear that while language may not be essential to the portrayal of role and the narration of story, it is of vital assistance. (Fox 1986: 191)

Pre-literary performances consisted of storytelling and shamanistic enactments. These were stories about fallen heroes, stories that communicated good conduct that helped redress and keep communities together. These events were highly communal and intimate in nature especially the shamanic acts in which the performers or curator was considered as healer. With such performances, language was hieratic thus not always fully understood by auditors (Fox 1986), however, importance was given to the ceremony and not the language. Immediately after this period, came the literary era where language was given great importance in dramatic enactments. The neatly composed language of the literary enactments places attention on the aesthetic and not the redressive elements in communities. As society evolved and saw the need for theatre to be more than just entertainment, the post-literary era returned to out-door performances, welcomed ecstasy and allowed non-actors on stage, giving preference to political and personal transformation (Fox 1986) a category in which Playback Theatre

finds itself. The careful blend of pre-literary and literary elements gives equal importance to language as to the theatrical enactment.

Playback Theatre as post-literary theatre has characteristics of oral composition. The oral style comes from the verbal input of the audience which runs from start to end of performance. It is characterised by narrative tendencies through the sharing of stories, between the conductor and the audience which also explains the looseness in the language.

The language of Playback as an oral mode portrays a lot of looseness in the language which is very different from scripted stage performances. It does not make use of the hieratical language of the pre-literary performances, which spectators could not always understand; nor the well structured and composed language of the literary age reflected in poetic and narrative texts. The language of Playback Theatre uses the normal day-to-day interactive language in the society. The conversation between the audience and the conductor is very informal. The looseness of language is echoed in the repetitive and slow beat of the conversation. This can be seen in this example below extracted from performance 3.

CONDUCTOR: Yes. What is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Rebecca.
CONDUCTOR: Rebecca?
REBECCA: Yes. I have a four year old cousin.
CONDUCTOR: A four year old?
REBECCA: (nods) a four year old cousin.
CONDUCTOR: She is HIV positive?
REBECCA: It's a he.
CONDUCTOR: He is HIV positive?
REBECCA: YES.

****

CONDUCTOR: … what is your name?
AUDIENCE MEMBER: Simon.
CONDUCTOR: Simon?
SIMON: Yes

CONDUCTOR: so she told you in 2002

SIMON: In 2001.

CONDUCTOR: In 2001. And she is still very strong?

SIMON: She is still very strong.

These examples from the transcript of performance 3 demonstrate the looseness in the language. Repetition is mostly echoed in the conductor's language which is formulated not in the manner of the narrative poet but rather through 'questions and instructions repeated at threshold points' (Fox 1986: 44). Through the constant repetition and questioning, the conductor directs the story teller to precision and at the same time places emphasis on certain parts of the story for the actors and the audience. Fox (1986) spells out the looseness in the conversation between the Teller and conductor while emphasising that the looseness remains evident due to the uncertainty in the improvisation of the story. Within the performance and the conversations are noises and sounds which can be considered as language because they add meaning and aid understanding in improvisational theatre.

4.1.1 Music as Verbal Language

> Music has a unique power to express our emotional experience.
>
> (Salas, 1993: 84)

It is this connection between music and mood that enables the use of music in theatre. Music creates mood and heightens emotions that embellish theatrical experiences. Well played music in any performance draws the audience into the action. In Playback Theatre, music has a particularly important role in creating the atmosphere, shaping the scene and above all conveying the emotional development of the scene (Salas 1993). In the analyses of language in Playback Theatre, music is considered to be a non-verbal language (Fox 1986) which I will examine in the next section of this chapter. However its appearance under verbal language lies in the fact that there is singing in Playback Theatre performances apart from the use of musical instruments.

Singing sometimes makes up part of the Playback Group performances. They either start or end the performance with a song that includes the audience in singing. This

song is sometimes used to set the ceremonial space of the Playback performance. So music becomes part of the show's opening or is used to end the show as in performance 3(above). One of the songs the group sings is:

Tell me, tell me, tell me a story
Tell me; tell me a tale (x 2)
Listen to my story
Listen; I will tell it now (x2)

This song through its words already introduces the audiences to what is going to happen in the space, which is the sharing of stories. However, music plays a greater part than just setting the space as I will explain in the section on the non-verbal elements of Playback.

4.2 ELEMENTS of NON-VERBAL LANGAUGE

The literary era, as mentioned earlier, saw the documenting of stories as dramatic text in composed language. Semiotics has offered the possibility of understanding how this dramatic text is made, but at the same time it has provided the key to avoid imprisoning theatre in the text. Theatre goes beyond actors improvising stories or rendering memorised words on stage. It is a combination of several elements both verbal and non-verbal that brings out the meaning in a theatrical performance. Aston and Savona say it is the 'ability to draw on a number of sign-systems which do not operate in a linear mode but in a complex and simultaneously operating network unfolding in time and space' (1991: 99). This means that any element found in a theatrical space is used to convey meaning in that time and space despite the fact that it's meaning changes outside of the particular time and space of the performance.

With scripted performances, everything or anything that is placed within the theatrical frame has an 'artificial or predetermined meaning' (Aston and Savona 1991; Elam 1980) suggested by the script or director of the play. However, all things put on stage are open to various interpretations by the audience so the meaning these objects have in real life or in the script are not necessarily the same as what the audience will read in the performance space. Playback Theatre as non-scripted theatre is flexible with performance space – it can be performed anywhere - thus there are very few stage

properties. Anything on the Playback performance stage can be given meaning in context which means there are no artificial or predetermined meanings for any object in the performance space.

We are in a school hall; at the centre of the hall a few chairs are placed for the teachers as the students are to sit on the floor. Directly facing these chairs four beer crates of different colours are lined up on which the actors are to sit. On one side of this space (right side of the audience) are different kinds of musical instruments with a crate as the musician's chair. On the left side of the stage are two crates for the Teller and the Conductor. Between the Teller's seat and the Actor's seat hang bright colourful pieces of cloths from a wooden prop tree. This is the totality of the Playback Theatre performance space. All these elements in the space bring out the non-verbal language in a performance, with the actor as the convergence point. All these items on stage become part of the language of the performance because they are found in that space. As I earlier explained, things put on stage send out different messages to people depending on how they read what they see and because these objects are inhuman or without voice and sound, they form part of the non-verbal mode of communication.

4.2.1 The Actor's Body

The actor is the centre of any theatrical performance. There is a tendency in scripted literary theatre to typecast actors according to their looks, voice and prior roles in performances. On the other hand, the non-scripted theatre actor needs not only basic expressiveness, but a high degree of role flexibility. This is because in non-scripted theatre the emphasis on improvisation and ensemble demands a great deal of the actors' physical apparatus - body and voice, to convey the story.

The Playback Theatre actor is required to be flexible so that for example, he can switch from being a mother to being a table in a story. 'The principle of flexibility is easy but the practise is hard…' (Fox 1986: 104) This affirms what I said that being a Playback actor is a job that requires commitment and rigour. Fox (1986) and Salas (1993) write that the flexibility and spontaneity required in a Playback actor comes with constant training through games. One of the games practiced by most improvisation groups and the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company is the "sound and movement" game.

> The group clumps together while one person starts a sound and movement that the group follows. The group, once they have found their rhythm changes the sound and rhythm; ideally one should not know when the last sound and rhythm ended so it looks like the group is one mass reading each others thoughts. (Barolsky, 2009:53)

There are different variations to this game and a group develops more improvisational games as the group grows.

Being flexible, allows the Playback actor to perform any role in a story from animate to inanimate roles. Brenda's story in performance 3 is about the loss of her uncle and his family to HIV/AIDS. As the actors took up the enactment of the story, at the point where the family started falling sick, one of the actors became the virus, representing death at the same time. She put a black cloth on her head and hovered around the uncle and his wife. When the wife was dying, the same actor, as death, led her out of the performance scene. In the last story where Lily blames herself for her mother's illness and suffering, an actor played the subconscious mind of Lily in the enactment. The actor personalised the subconscious mind, wondering loudly whether to tell her mother about Creon's cheating or not.

The Playback actor is seen as a social character (one who is constantly playing a part in society. Carlson 2004). Therefore, he must be able to perform several different roles in one performance. In this case, what the actor shows to the audience is more important than the actor as an individual. An actor in a performance must have the ability to switch from one role to another no matter how different they may be in emotional demand. S/he may go from performing the role of an HIV/AIDS dying wife to a drunken bullying rascal in one performance. Such switches from emotionally draining roles to relaxed playful roles demand some degree of flexibility from the actor as earlier explained. With this, the Playback actor is faced with an aesthetic challenge (Salas 1993). He is called upon to tell the story in a language that brings out the aesthetics of the performance. As such, the actor not only uses his body in expression of the story, but endorses a blend of all elements in the performance space to create that aesthetics.

4.2.2 Music in Performance

Earlier, I have discussed music as a verbal complement in the Playback performance. This element of theatre is mostly considered non-verbal in Playback Theatre. Music in Playback Theatre is distinct from music in scripted theatre or music theatre. Salas says that 'like the acting, the music is a gift to the teller and the audience, not a vehicle for virtuosity' (1993: 85). Music is present throughout the performance to enrich, shape and support everything that happens.

Its first important use in Playback Theatre is to set the performance space. As a part of the show's opening, it focuses the audiences' attention, reminding them that they are entering a different realm apart from everyday experiences. Apart from singing or verbal music which I examined earlier, the musician mostly plays instruments for music. The music at the opening of the show is just ceremonial, not accompanying any emotions or representing anything in the performance space. When the show shifts to action, the purpose of the music also changes from ceremonial to enhancing the enactments.

The conductor says "let's watch" and music sets the scene. The musician plays while the actors set themselves to move into action and as the first actor comes in, the music stops or sometimes it stops to give the cue for the actors to come in. The setting up through music also indicates the transition into theatre from the here-and-now conversation between the conductor and the teller. As the actors perform, they are accompanied by music but the musician makes sure not to play too loudly so as not to drown the words that accompany the actor's enactment. During the enactment, music is considered as a character and an actor in the story. The musician therefore, must also listen to the story, so as to determine the different emotions or moments that underpin the story. As he plays, he listens to the actors; similarly the actors must listen to the musician so that the flow of the enactment and music may not be distinct but be one. They therefore engage in an exchange of cues each enhancing the other's ability to render the story vividly and truthfully.

Within the Playback group, everyone is encouraged to take up roles especially as musician of a performance which requires playing fluently and creatively. Moshe (Focus Group, 26-October-2010), the Playback Theatre group musician says that while

playing music for a performance, he tries to follow the flow of the actors, though sometimes they pick up what to do next from what he plays. He adds that when playing music for the pairs (conflicting emotions), he plays one emotion for each pair. As an actor the musician must work in close collaboration with his company members and needs the ability to respond flexibly to a scene just as an actor must be ready to play any role he is chosen for.

4.2.3 Colourful Fabrics

These are used mostly for the long stories. The teller ends his narration and the conductor says “let’s watch”. On this cue, music plays as transition from conversation to theatre. While the music is playing, performers stand behind the wooden prop tree from which the colourful fabrics hang, waiting for the musician’s cue to move into action. This also serves as a curtain from which they come into the scene. When the music stops, the actors grasp a piece of fabric as they enter the scene either tying it to the waist or on the head. Putting a piece of fabric on the body symbolises the transition the performer is taking from being himself while listening to being a character in the story. They however do not represent any costume of any sort. We can only identify the role the actor is in from his enactment and interaction with the teller’s actor. However, since it is acceptable for a man to play a woman and vice-versa, how the fabric is tied to the body can help to indicate the gender of the role and this adds to the aesthetic of the performance.

Sitting in the audience, one can only deduce the meaning of a fabric on stage when it is used in the context of the story. In performance 2, the lone teller of the day talks of giving birth to a baby. The child is represented using a piece of fabric. They are also used as beer bottles in the enactment of Ryan’s story. Consisting of different sizes and colours, the fabric only accrues meaning from the way it is handled and used by the performer. The colour or size does not matter much according to Renos (Focus Group, 26-October-2010). However Cherae (Focus Group, 26-October-2010) believes that the performers must be careful not to use the same cloth for different purposes in one performance as the audience is very vigilant in picking up and interpreting signs in a performance.

The use of fabrics in any enactment will be less important if the actor can make use of his body, facial expression and voice as the Playback actors are encouraged to do. The frequent use of fabrics in Playback Theatre is seen mostly with new actors who do not trust their instincts to perform any type of role. However they can be used very poignantly and meaningfully as they have a symbolic potential.

4.2.4 Crates

Looking at the arrangements of the crates on the Playback Theatre stage, one would think of them only as seats for the performers. There is more to it than just being seats as their presence first brings out the simplicity and commonality of the Playback method which is a representation or reflection of society. During the enactment of stories in the performance, the crates are turned into house furniture (performance 1); as a car (performance 3), one actor stands in front holding a crate as the driver while the others stand behind him as passengers on the other crates. As I mentioned with the fabrics, these crates do not have any meaning except the one given by the performers as they use them in the enactments.

4.2.5 Silence

There is a common saying that silence speaks louder than words. A person goes to a Playback Theatre performance, not knowing what to expect from the performance or not knowing that they will be sharing past experiences of their life with people they have never met. These are events of which they might have forgotten most of the details of what happened. When the conductor asks for stories, there is always this moment of silence that follows especially, with a new audience to Playback Theatre. The audience is either thinking of which story to share or deciding whether to share or not. Like the improvisation actor, who stands on stage not confident of what will come out of him; the audience is (1) afraid or reluctant to share intimate stories in the midst of strangers (2) searching and putting pieces together of the story he wants to share and (3) others are still surveying the environment to see what is happening in the space. These are the reasons that sometimes explain the long quiet moments that follow the conductor's question. Apart from these reasons, there is a lot that can be read from these silences as was experienced in performance 2. After giving time for the audience

to respond and still no one came forth with a story, the conductor asked the actors to perform ‘silence’ in a fluid sculpture. It was evident to the group that a great deal of silence still exists around the issues of sex, relationship and HIV/AIDS even though it continues to affect society.

The teller in a Playback Theatre performance is considered a performer who, as the actors do, is also improvising narrating a story. As they are not professional story tellers, they are bound to stutter and make incomplete sentences. The use of (…) in the transcript represents pauses or moments when the teller goes silent. These breaks either give the impression of the teller remembering the story or cutting out parts of the story which he might not want to share. The unsaid word can be read from the teller’s body language and facial expressions. The teller pauses and looks in a different direction; puts his head down; covers his face with his hand or takes in a deep breath which gives the impression of a difficult moment which cannot be expressed. This shows that one can read several meanings from silent moments.

4.2.6 Noise and Sounds

The entire enactment of a Playback Performance depends on the verbal rendition of stories. While doing physical enactments, the actors sometimes accompany them with sounds, mostly with the fluid sculptures, for example, in portraying a heart beat the actor adds sound to emphasise the gesture in context. The audience also put in sounds while narrating their stories and make noises during the performance. These noises and sounds from the audience are the means by which the undertone or unsaid part of a story can be determined. The sounds also help to determine how the audience feel about the performance or the stories they are hearing. In performance 3, sounds that came from the audience were that of empathy given the intensity and sadness of the stories told. This was accompanied by sobbing from some audience members which signified their sharing of the teller’s emotions. These are moments that allow for the experience of communitas in Playback Theatre and prompt other stories to be shared as experienced in performance 3.

The experience of noises and sounds are different with audiences and performances. Children will make noise that is not related in any way to the performance or the

experience they are having while adults make noises either commenting on the stories or enactments of the stories. The performance at King David School was really noisy with children talking amongst themselves and not paying attention. At some point the conductor had to call for their attention to listen to the teller's story. Shared experiences that are told in performances call for a lot of response as the other characters in the story will pop in from time to time with comments and corrections especially with children. The most common sound in a Playback Theatre performance is laughter.

The audience laughs when the story or enactment is comic but also, you find that in some serious less explicable moments, there is audience laughter. Fox (1986) explains that the only explanation for such apparently inappropriate response is the fact that individuals are not comfortable or ready to acknowledge the feelings and emotions they are experiencing. For example when Lily is telling the story of Creon and Lady Macbeth, the audience share in her sad emotions but still they laugh when she says that Lady Macbeth is crazy.

In this chapter, I examined the elements that make up the language of Playback Theatre in its ritual space. The verbal rendition of the teller enables the non-verbal enactment of the performers, though the performers occasionally use dialogue and verbal expressions in the long story enactments. The actor as the central and most important person in a theatrical space gives meaning to anything in the performance space through the way he handles and uses them. These meanings are derived in the context of the story which is placed culturally and socially. In the next chapter, I will look at how meaning is derived and translated into the non-verbal through careful listening to the cultural and social context of the audience.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND THRESHOLD: ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The path of evolution and growth through human interaction includes moments of conflict and celebration which Turner (1976) terms “social drama”. The commentaries on social dramas have generally been concentrated on conflict situations in societies. Philip Gulliver (in Turner 1976) warns against looking at social drama from the point of conflict, while Turner asserts that ‘disturbances of the normal and regular often give us greater insight into the normal than does direct study’ (1976: 104). Social drama occurs as a result of a breach of norms governing society by a person or groups within the same system of social relations. With this breach of norm-governed relations, a crisis arises which will call for a redressive action to resolve issues and re-intergrate the disturbed social group. Turner (1976) explains that not every social drama reaches a resolution, for emphasis is laid upon loyalty and obligation to the norm-governing social relations. As a social drama, Playback Theatre’s experience is quite different from what has been explained above as social drama. Turner’s social drama is based on maintaining society under social structures which undermine individual needs in that group. With Playback Theatre, the individual is expressed and acclaimed within a group. ‘Playback Theatre honours the people’s voice, be it joyful or ashamed, triumphant or oppressed. One of its purposes is to let this voice be heard, before witnesses, in all its richness and variety’ (Fox 1999: 4)

The Playback Theatre performance is made up of people who hardly know each other. They come from different socio-cultural backgrounds with different experiences from their societies which is shared through stories. At the end of a performance, these people who were strangers to each other, discover how related they are through the stories heard and shared. This is the experience of communitas. This experience is enabled by language that is unique to the Playback Theatre method. There is the use of more abstraction through emphasis on the actions, and fewer words than we find in ordinary discussion. The discussion between the parties involved in Playback Theatre occurs through scenes enacted on stage.

In this structured process, as in everyday communication, there is a recipient and a sender of messages. In the communication system of Playback Theatre, each participant involved has the dual responsibility of receiving and sending information, only the mode of receiving and sending changes. The purpose of this chapter focuses on the actor who listens to the teller's story, interprets and transforms it into improvised spontaneous actions on stage.

5.1 LISTENING ON THE STAGE OF PLAYBACK THEATRE

Within the complexity of Playback Theatre performance, one identifies other *petit* performances that can stand out on their own as a performance. First we have the performance of the conductor and the audience that takes place through the conversation with the conductor as Master of Ceremony or controller of the event. This is followed by the performance of the teller as narrator or story teller. Then we have the core of Playback Theatre which is the performance of the actors through the enactment of the teller's story. These are parts of a Playback performance that are discrete performances as Playback is a mix and match of the forms and methods of theatrical and social performances. An audience is always required for any theatrical performance to take effect and in Playback Theatre, each party or person that makes up the performance process is both an audience and a participant. When the teller is narrating, the rest of the audience and the actors automatically become the audience to that performance. Each party, either audience or actors listen and watch each other's performance but the actor's performance is the most important in the experience. The aspect of listening is essential to the experience of Playback Theatre. As I mentioned before, my analysis is focused on the actors as listeners of the teller's story. The musician is an actor so the analysis includes him because his method of listening is the same as the performers' it is only the means of interpretation which is different.

5.1.1 Body and Mind

The most important tool of a Playback actor is his body and mind. I have discussed in this study that the Playback actor requires spontaneity and flexibility in order to be able to switch from one role to another in a short space of time. To the Playback actor, performing a story means speaking with the body and as important as it is to use the body for the enactments, so is it also a tool in listening to the stories from the teller.

The body is connected to the mind such that when there is any touch or feeling of either hot or cold objects, it is first sent to the mind which identifies the feeling then there is a reflex sent back to the body which results in physical action. It is the same when one hears a word; the response to what one hears is reflected in the body even when the person is responding verbally. This phenomenon is according to the laws of neurological mechanics (Merleau-Ponty 1958). Peltoniemi (1997) puts body and spirit or body and mind together when he uses the term "listening with the body." In his article, he criticises the dualism preached by religious men who consider the spirit as sacred and superior to the body. Thus the body was seen as bad and it was considered a sin to express it as in dancing. It is such doctrines that restrict corporality and restrain spontaneity in people as they grow from childhood. Peltoniemi says that:

> When we want to speak about body and corporality it is important to see how the concepts we are using suit [the] experience of our existence, [we should ask if] those concepts correspond with the experience that we are allowed to exist in the world as corporal bodies [.] Do they permit [me] to remain open toward all the messages and resonance of life in me? (1997: 4-5)

The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty examines this in his theory of body phenomenology. He expresses that a human being is simply his body, and the body gives form to the life. According to Peltoniemi (1997), the body and the world are inseparable which means that the functioning of the body is bound to what happens in the world. Bodily movements consist of individual present acts and previous ones that will also include those received from other people. 'The possession of language is in the first place understood as no more than the actual existence of 'verbal images' or traces left in us by words spoken or heard' (Merleau-Ponty 1958: 203).

To possess this language of the body, one must be in contact with the everyday world which explains why the Playback actor is not a star in the theatrical industry but an ordinary citizen who lives the experience of everyday life with his community as explained earlier. Only a small percentage of human communication consists of words. We share messages through facial expressions, gestures and other corporal expressions. Whether we are speaking or not, messages are transmitted through the body, for the condition of the body is communicated continually. Feelings such as love: hate; pain; joy; shame, are all transmitted through the body.

Communication especially in Playback Theatre is through the body rather than words. A Playback Theatre actor listening on stage has to listen to the non-verbal messages of the teller and not only the words of the story. Picking up these non-verbal messages from the teller entails opening up their non-verbal receptive capacity as Renos (Focus Group, 26-October-2010) confirms that while listening to the teller, he allows his body to pick up some elements from the teller. Listening to the teller is multilayered; requiring your whole being and not just your ears. Therefore the actor's mind is not only directed to the words and their meanings, but how the body reflects the thoughts especially those not verbalised. The actor listens to the tone of the voice, rhythm and undulations of the breath, the teller's entire body postures and body language. Mostly the questions of the conductor are answered with the body when the teller is narrating a story.

Moshe's (Focus Group, 26-October-2010) experience of listening depended on the interaction between the conductor and the teller. The conductor often asks the teller questions for precision and clarification and she (conductor) guides the actors according to what she hears from the teller. In this case, the actor is listening to the teller, conductor and their interaction. This is important as communication in Playback Theatre differs from real life as the actor can only listen. The actor neither questions the teller nor asks for precise information or comments on what he has heard. In his enactment, the actor therefore trusts his body to reproduce what it has captured from the teller, which as Merleau-Ponty explains will relate or tap into past experiences that the body has had in the world. Therefore, the actors' enactment is never entirely new or only coming from the stories in that performance. Given that the only thing required in the communication between the actor and the teller is the actor's presence, the

multilayered listening will obviously intensify when the teller is a foreign language speaker.

5.1.2 Teller as Foreign Language Speaker

This section is concerned with the issue of verbal interpretation in a Playback Theatre performance. Most Playback Theatre companies around the world are situated in countries or communities with a common language of communication. Africa as a diverse continent can have as much as eleven languages in one country (South Africa). In preparing for a performance, the Playback group familiarises themselves with the theme of the performance and the nature of the audience, especially their language of interaction. However, it sometimes happens that in open performances there might be a teller who does not speak the language of interaction in the performance space. This has been a case with one of the Drama for Life performances.

The performance took place on April 22, 2010 at the University of the Witwatersrand. It was an open performance which formed part of a festival programme. Within the audience were Mozambicans who could speak and understand only their local languages and Portuguese, while the conductor, actors and the rest of the participants used English as a first language or lingua franca in a situation which included a number of different African languages. This situation called for a translator in the performance. As a Playback performer, one must always be ready for any unforeseen event in a performance as understanding the teller's language is fundamental so that it does not hinder the enactment of the stories. Doing Playback Theatre in a foreign language does not only require the performers to understand the meaning of words and sentences pronounced, but it also means knowing the identity and culture of the teller's society. Salas (2006) explains this through her experience of doing Playback Theatre in a foreign language (German). She says that the fear of expressing a word or an action that might be culturally out of context in the society restrains her as an actor from being spontaneous. Performing in response to a language one does not know requires very careful listening to the teller and the translator involved.

As mentioned before, the Playback actor's most important tool in performing and listening is his body. The presence of a translator for the teller does not change much in how the actor listens to the story. As he does not understand the words spoken by the teller, the actor listens for facial expressions, tone of voice and the rhythm of the teller's breathing. In opening up your body to access these expressions, Megan (Focus Group, 26-October-2010) explains that 'you also have to listen to the translator to make sure that you are on the right path and [also listen to] the conductor who paints the story clear [through questions].' Important in this situation for an actor is to comprehend the sense in the story and the emotions that it brings out because the actor uses mostly non-verbal expressions in the enactment of the teller's story. The non-verbal enactment also makes it easy for the audience to receive the story or message even when they do not understand the language of the actors. In situations where foreign languages are used, the Playback actor has to handle communication conflict while listening to the teller - the conflict between the words of the translator and the non-verbal expressions of the teller. It must be noted that the teller's translator while translating accompanies those words with his personal corporal expression, which might be quite different from the tellers'. The translator might also project himself into the story if he relates or is familiar with the story.

In some cases like the performance mentioned above, the audience contributes to the translation. As some audience members could understand the teller's language, the translator checked with them to make sure that she understood and translated the teller's words correctly in context. The audience also would sometimes put a particular emphasis on the meaning of some words in the context of the teller's story. This was because the translator was an English second- language speaker so there was virtually a double translation of one story. With the conductor's interventions, emphases were made for the understanding of the actors because understanding the story correctly helps the actors give a true enactment of their own understanding of the story. However the presence of a translator in any performance does not change the ritual of Playback Theatre. The translator does not replace the teller or conductor in any way. The presence of a foreign language or a translator also does not change the fact that the actor under no circumstance communicates directly with the teller. The actors still depend only on the conductor whose role does not change even if she can't understand the teller.

5.2 INTERACTION in PLAYBACK THEATRE

This study has shown that interaction between the audience, conductor and the actor does not reflect everyday life communication despite the fact that it is an interactive form of theatre. Playback Theatre maintains the role of the conductor as a Master of Ceremonies and intermediary between the teller and the actors. The actors have no direct interaction with the audience but look and trust the conductor to give them all the information they need for their enactment. Usually in the case of a young Playback group, it is advisable to have a discrete sign that the actors can make to the conductor when they require clarification or more information.

Although the group is in the performance space as an ensemble, each actor relies on his own listening skills to get the information he needs to contribute in that one spontaneous enactment as a group. The silent interaction does not only exist between actors and audience but even between the actors themselves; there is absolutely no dialogue when listening but only in the enactments. Each actor brings on stage what resonates with them in the teller's story. The actors first listen to the teller and conductor, and then they allow their roles to come alive on stage. In their spontaneous improvisation the group is performing one teller's story so it is important that the actors listen and respond to each other in that moment of performance. 'Improvisation is a kind of continuously transforming communication. It is a language between bodies, listening and being listened, sending and receiving impulses' (Peltoniemi 1997: 9). As performers, Playback Theatre actors are also playwrights (Salas 1993) who create and deliver at one and the same time. The actors must remain open to the environment and what is happening on stage including the musician. Only in a state of neutrality and presence on stage can Playback Theatre performers connect and communicate with each other and by so doing deliver a true enactment that connects them to the audience. It is in such situations that the participants of a Playback Theatre performance experience communitas.

5.3 PLAYBACK THEATRE as UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Universal is a concept meaning general application. Considering that Playback Theatre is a language in itself, I consider the possibility here of it being applicable to many cases and places. As a method it is very flexible and can be adapted for the exploration of many needs in a society - the educational sector, health sector (especially mental health), work sector and as entertainment. Playback Theatre operates according to the needs of those present. 'This means that as a method it spans the conventional categories of theatre, psychology, and education' (Fox 1999: 1).

As one of the founders of this socially interactive method, Fox (1986) explains that when putting together and experimenting with different theatrical forms and techniques, their aim was to perform stories of all kinds of people everywhere, based on 'ordinary and not-so-ordinary life events told during a performance' (Salas 1993: 1). Since its inception in 1975, Playback Theatre has grown and is practised in a large number of countries by both professionally trained companies and lovers of the method. It has training institutes in some countries of the world like New York, USA and the United Kingdom for the purpose of maintaining standards and co-ordinating good practice.

As an improvisational theatre method, Playback Theatre's experience is based on the spontaneous performance of the actors, which depends on the verbal rendition of the teller, who is a member of the audience. This method can definitely be applied in any situation and context such as the University of the Witwatersrand that host people of different race, nationality and culture because it connects to our needs to come together, share stories and validate each other. The ritual in the enactment creates a sacred space for individuals anywhere to be validated, for it goes beyond the verbal. The ritual of the method creates an energy that can only be realised through the mode of performance; physicality, connection, embodiment through working with literal metaphor such as the cloths. The connection is possible because 'there is a core language that exists in all of us. It is an unconscious [language from] which Playback Theatre taps' (Kathy Focus Group, 26-October-2010). The Playback Theatre performers on going to any community must trust that the human experience is largely a universal one.

Jonathan Fox acknowledges the fact that in its long existence, Playback Theatre practitioners and trainers have gone into communities where they do not understand the language spoken, and still made the experience memorable for the participants. He says that the actors should not depend on knowing or understanding the language that is spoken by the audience. The task rests on the conductor to guide the performers in giving the audience an experience in a language that is universal. However, despite the fact that non-verbal language can be universal, it still constitutes part of a culture and the actors need to be careful not to misrepresent information in that cultural context. Fox (2009) recognises that Playback Theatre can be implanted and practiced anywhere despite cultural and language barriers. For him, the only consideration is for Playback practitioners to be aware of issues of congruence as he experienced in Burundi which almost led to the failure to implant and sustain the Playback Theatre method in that community. He comments:

> No matter how deep my respect for the people I met, the fact remains that I, a white American, with commensurate stature and authority, was the teacher. My colleague on the second trip was a white Swiss. Looking back we might have deliberated more before sending two white trainers to Burundi and considered a person of colour, preferably of African descent, instead. (*ibid*: 244)

It is this same issue of congruence, having white performers for an audience made up of black people that can explain the non-participation of the audience in performance 2. A member of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company also acknowledges the fact that she had a similar response from an audience member who said they would not share their story if the actors where from another race. In response, Cherae (Focus Group, 26-October-2010) thinks that in a diverse cultural country like South Africa, the Drama for Life Playback Company has the potential to communicate to anyone. She explains that if the diversity of the country is reflected in the group, then when going into any community to perform, the person most familiar with the language and culture of that community can lead the performance. Jonathan Fox comments that when his group goes to communities with a different language and culture, they would have to teach someone from the community the basic knowledge of Playback Theatre and its ritual process. This person then has to help the conductor in the performance. With such a strategy in place, the Playback method is not only accessible to anyone but it also assures Playback Theatre's sustainability.

5.4 ACTOR/SERVICE/COMMUNITY

Playback Theatre is about whom we are as people, the life we carry in us, our need to be recognised and acknowledged, the need to come closer together as people and how that shapes our experience in Playback Theatre. This longing for connection with one another is realised through Playback Theatre, people have the chance to talk and their social issues addressed, though it happens indirectly. In the performance space, people bring their pains, joys, anguish and offer them openly trusting that these feelings will be held and assimilated by the Playback group and returned as a healing gift to the audience. This places a Playback Theatre group in the service of others.

The act of service is central to the Playback Theatre method and it is this idea of service that creates or enables the experience of community. In Playback Theatre, everyone; actors, audience and conductor are involved in the show as a community. When an audience member chooses to tell a story, he chooses to create the show. A first story is followed by another and then another, which though not related bring out traits or similarities. It is by listening to each others' stories, watching the enactment of the actors that the audience relate to the shared experiences that can exist even between strangers therefore enabling the experience of communitas. The conductor, musician and actor also contribute to this experience of communitas. When not in role, they share their own experiences as members of that community. They also listen to others share for it is this breaking of the fourth wall and the interaction between actors, conductor that builds the community.

People come to a performance as individuals or groups of family and friends in a particular context. When a teller shares a story, that story may shed more light on the person's experience and enable the family or friends to become more aware of that person's experience, which they might not have known before, and this contributes to a closer connection with the teller. As a stranger to the teller, the audience become connected to the teller when they relate to such an experience or share in the teller's emotions. This connection is what inspires more stories in a Playback Theatre performance. Watching the enactment of the story increases the bond and connection. Keith Johnstone says; 'it's the most marvellous thing about improvisation: you are suddenly in contact with people who are unbounded, whose imagination seems to

function without limit' (1979: 100). The idea here remains that personal story sharing is one of the defining elements of Playback Theatre. It is through the sharing of stories that the community is created and where people reflect and make sense of their identity and different cultures. The community experience is also enabled through the enactments of the stories by the actors who are also members of the community. Actors experience communitas by projecting aspects of themselves into the enactment especially when they relate to a teller's story (Jones 1996).

As a member of the community, the actor remains at the service of that community, as a central element to enabling the experience of communitas. In the Playback experience, the actor holds the roles of both citizen and actor. The actor constantly switches back and forth between the two roles of actor and citizen. Before an actor is chosen by the teller, he sits or stands as a citizen of that community listening to the experience of the other members of the community. When chosen (as teller's actor) the actor goes into an imaginary world and only comes back to himself to render service to the teller on stage and at the end of the enactment comes back to neutrality as citizen. '[He] performs as needed by the community, [and] then melts back into the social fabric…' (Fox 1986: 214). The Playback actor needs to be strong and firm as they take great risks in absorbing the pain and problems of others. Fox says that this takes a different kind of commitment, 'service without security, without fanfare, without adulation' (*ibid*).

CONCLUSION

Writing up a research report on the experience of Playback Theatre actors is not easy when one has not had that experience of being a Playback actor on stage. While initialising plans and the proposal to undergo this research, my plan had been to become part of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company given that by the time I was collecting my data, I had undergone core training in Playback Theatre. I was hoping that taking part in public performances would enhance my analysis and understanding of the findings I was searching for. Despite this training, my integration in the company gave me only the status of researcher-observer. However, the methodology chosen for the study enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings. I had to trust my knowledge and training in Playback Theatre, combined with the mixed methods of ethnography, participant-observer and focus group discussion to document the findings for my research. These findings were to help me answer my research questions or not. Although I was not a full participant in the group, I began to realise with time that my presence in the group with the knowledge I already had of Playback Theatre was enabling me to engage with my research focus.

The findings in this study were based on the following questions:

- How does a Playback Theatre performance function as a means of communication?
- Does Playback Theatre need to go through any changes for it to fulfil its purpose in a multi-lingual society?

These questions were answered based on the data collected from the Drama For Life Playback Theatre Company. I had started by wanting to organise a performance in which I was going to bring in people from different races and cultures speaking different languages. Then I realised that it would be best to collect data from open performances because the actors go into a performance not knowing what will happen. I also came to realise that no two performances are the same and it would be more genuine to observe a number of performances as the language differs in each performance with a different audience and context.

The study found that as a non-scripted theatre form, Playback Theatre is based on spontaneous improvisation of stories narrated by audience members. As a method, it is flexible enough to be performed anywhere and for anybody. Its flexibility does not allow for it to engage with many stage props. This means that anything that is on the Playback space has no defined usage and can represent anything the actor desires it to be.

The study has shown that when talking of language in Playback Theatre, one looks beyond the verbal language of communication. As its focus, this research emphasised the non-verbal language in Playback Theatre. It showed that the experience of the Playback performance is brought out through the expression of this non-verbal language by the performers whose requirement as Playback actors is to be intuitive and spontaneous, using the tools of the body and voice to render service to others. While most non-verbal elements of the Playback performance reside in the actor, the Playback method does not presuppose that the audience is exempted in the usage or production of these non-verbal elements analysed in this study. There is thus a connection between the audience and the performers which is what Playback is all about. This connection creates a circularity and one cannot discuss the performers without touching on the audience. This interaction in Playback Theatre allows for the experience of communitas when the participants in a performance reach a liminal state as they involve and engage themselves in the performance experience.

The experience of communitas involves engaging with one most important aspect of Playback Theatre which is listening. In the research, I have shown that listening is at different levels which involve using the whole body. The actor's only success in a performance depends on the way he allows himself to listen and comprehend non-verbal signs from the teller. The aspect of listening is crucial and the interactive mode of the method has brought up questions of what happens in the case of differing languages being present in a performance. How truthfully does the non-verbal expression capture the verbal rendition of the story?

This research demonstrates that with its ritual frame and the intention of bringing people together into a sacred space to listen to each other's experience, Playback Theatre can be applied in any context and environment even when there are language barriers. The whole idea of the enactment is to capture the essence of a story and therefore a translator can be used if need arises. Through their performances, the Playback group has shown that this method has the potential to be applied in any place and for any situation and that any practitioner could adapt it to fit their context. Therefore, the method itself does not need any change but can be adapted as mentioned. There is still much work to be done to understand how communication works for both actors and audience and to what extent. This is because the limited time for this research did not allow the voice of the audience to be heard.

REFERENCES

Action Research. Author Unknown. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_research (Accessed 31-01-2011).

Ahlsén, E. 2006. *Introduction to Neurolinguistics.* Amsterdam. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Aston, E and Savona, G. 1991. *Theatre as Sign-System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance.* London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Auslander, P. 2008. *Theory for Performance Studies: a student's guide.* London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Barolsky,K. 2009. Breaking the Silence. *The Telling of Untold Stories in Playback Theatre Training: Combating Stigma and Denial Concerning Sex, Relationship and HIV/AIDS.MA.* University of the Witwatersrand.

Burr, V. 1995. *An Introduction to Social Constructionism.* London and New York. Routledge.

Carlson, M. 2004. *Performance: a critical introduction.* 2nd edition, New York and London. Routeledge, Francis and Taylor Group.

Dauber,H. 1999. *How Playback Theatre works: A Matter for Practical Research.* www.playbackcentre.org. (Accessed 6-07-2010).

Dauber, H(Hrsg). 2008. *Wo Geschichten Sich Begeenen- Gathering Voices.* Kassel University Press.

Delanty, G. 2004. *Community.* 2nd ed. London and New York. Routledge.

Dennis, R. 2004. *Public Performance, Personal Story: A study of Playback Theatre.* Ph.D.Griffith University.

_____. 2007. 'Inclusive democracy: a consideration of playback theatre with refugee and asylum seekers in Australia', *Research in Drama Education: the Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12: 3, 355 — 370.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. eds.2000b. *Handbook of qualitative research.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Elam, K. 1980. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama.* London and New York. Routledge.

Epskamp, K. P. 1989. *Theatre in Search of Social Change: the relative significance of different theatrical approaches.* The Hague. Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (CESO).
Focus Group. October-26-2010.

Fox, J. 1999. A Ritual for our Time. In J. Fox & H. *Dauber (eds) Gathering Voices: Essays on Playback Theatre.* New Platz, NY: Tusitala Publishing.

_____.2009. Playback Theatre in Burundi: Can Theatre Transcend The Gap? Prentki,T and Preston, S (eds) *The Applied Theatre Reader*. London and New York. Routledge.

_____. 1986. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* Hasbrouck Rd, New Paltz. Tusitala Publishing.

_____ (ed). 2008. *The Essential Moreno: writings on psychodrama, group method and spontaneity by J.L. Moreno, MD.* Tusitala Publishing.

Grantröm, B et al. 2002. *Multimodality in Language and Speech System.* Netherlands. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Janestick, V. 1998. *"Stretching" Exercises for Qualitative Researchers.* Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi. SAGE Publications, International Education and Professional Publishers.

Jennings, S. et al., 1994. *The handbook of Dramatherapy.* Routledge.

Johnstone, K., 1979. *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre.* New York. Theatre Arts Books.

Jones, P., 1996. *Drama as Therapy: theatre as living.* London and New York. Routledge.

Jorgensen, D. L. 1989. *Participant Observation: a methodology for human studies.* Newbury Park, London, New Delhi. SAGE Publications The International Professional Publishers.

Kumar, R. 2005. *Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners.* London. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Language. Author Unknown. http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Language&oldid=410652230 (Accessed 31-01-2011).

Mehrabian, A. 1972. *Non-Verbal Communication.* Chicago, New York. Aldine,Atherton,INC.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1958. *Phenomenology of Perception.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Morgan, D.L. 1997. *Focus Group as Qualitative Research.* London. Sage Publications Ince.

Pavis, P.1982. *Languages of the Stage.* New York. Performing Arts Journal Publications.

_____ (ed). 1996. *The Intercultural Performance Reader.* London and New York. Routledge.

Peltoniemi, S. 1997. *Listening with the Body on the Stage of Playback Theatre.* www.playbackcentre.org. (Accessed 6-07-2010).

Plotkin, J. 1999. *"Theatre that Keeps Darkness at Bay" Arts Now Conference presentation, Arts Now Conference.* Suny, New Paltz.

Posner, R. 1982. *Rational Discourse and Poetic Communication: Methods of linguistic, Literary, and Philosophical Analysis.* Berlin, New York, Amsterdam. Mouton Publishers.

Salas, Jo. 1993. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* Dubuque, IA. Kendall/ Hunt.

Salas, J. 2006. *Doing Playback Theatre in a Foreign Language: Learning Language, Learning Culture, Learning Identity.* www.playbackcentre.org. (Accessed 6-07-2010).

Salzmann, Z. 1993. *Language, Culture and Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology.* United States of America. Westview Press, INC.

Sapir, E. 1921. *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech.* Harcourt. Brace and Company, INC.

_____. 1949. *Culture, Language and Personality.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London. University of California Press.

Schechner, R. 2006. *Performance Studies: an introduction.* London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

_____. 1988. *Performance Theory: revised and expanded edition.* New York and London. Routledge.

_____. 2004. Performance Studies: the broad spectrum approach In H Bial (ed). *The Performance Studies Reader.* London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Schoor, M.V. 1986. *What Is Communication?* Pretoria, South Africa. J.L van Schaik (Pty) Lt.

Stecker, R.2003. *Interpretation and Construction: Art, Speech, and the Law.* Oxford, UK. Blackwell Publishing.

Turner, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process: structure and anti-structure.* New York. Aldine De Gruyter.

_____. 1976. Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors In R Scherchner and M Schuman (eds). *Ritual, Play and Performance: readings in the social sciences/ theatre.* The Seabury Press, New York. A Continuum Book.

_____. 2004. Liminality and Communitas In H Bial (ed). *The Performance Studies unless you have a separate section for internet references.Reader.* London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

APPENDIX A

PLAYBACK THEATRE SCENES and FORMS

Fluid Sculpture

This is a non-narrative short form of Playback Theatre. It focuses on a moment or an emotion from the teller. The Playback Theatre actors use sound and movement to express an audience member's response to the conductor's questions. These short abstracts usually serve as a way to ease the audience into the Playback process. The actors step into the middle of the stage one after another, perform the teller's moment in no more than a minute then send it back to them by briefly looking at the teller.

Pairs

This is a non-narrative short form that asks the audience member to share a moment where they had conflicting emotions. Actors stand in pairs one behind the other and each person chooses one emotion to express. The pair closest to the musician is always the one to start. Like the fluid sculpture, they use sound and movement rather than words.

V- Structure

This short form requires a short story rather than a moment or emotion from the audience. The conductor joints the actors to form a V structure on stage. The conductor or one of the actors standing at the head of the V narrates the teller's story while gesticulating and expressing with the hands and body. The other actors follow the gestures produced by the conductor without using any words or sound.

Tableau Stories

An audience member is asked to share a moment that is just a little more expansive than for the fluid sculpture. As in the V-structure, the conductor listens then retells the story in short sentences or a series of titles. After each one of these sentences, the actors create a tableau, a sculpture that is still, not fluid expressing the main idea in the sentence.

Stories

Here the teller is invited to the stage to tell a longer story. The conductor elicits the story through the ritual of questioning and then sends it to the actors. The actors have the responsibility of creatively performing the teller's story but honouring it by keeping to its structure. At the end of the improvisation, the story is acknowledged by sending it back to the teller.

APPENDIX B

PLAYBACK THEATRE RITUAL

The ritual in Playback Theatre creates a sacred space. It is repetitive and remains the same all the time so people know what to expect and provides a sense of safety to the audience. Everyone works together to hold the ritual space (quality of ceremony).

Stage

Neutral stage (boxes or crates and actors in line).
Two crates for conductor and teller (sideway).
Cloth draped over on a stand (left).
Music area with instruments (right).
The Playback stage is in front of boxes.

Conductor

The conductor explains the Playback Theatre model.
Who would like to tell (conductor asks)?
Conductor interviews teller.
"Let's watch" at the end of interview.
Conductor checks with teller about the experience, teller has the last word.

Actors

Actors stand in position, neutral and ready to start short forms.
Actors sit on boxes to listen to teller's story.
Once picked by teller, the particular actor stands. He is between self and role.
Actors don't ask teller questions.
Actors wait for the conductor's cue of "let's watch" before they begin enactment.
In general, they don't begin until everything is in place. The musical introduction of the story allows the actors to set up the scene in silence.
Actors play it back then honour/acknowledge teller after enactment (short and long forms).

Music

Music frames the short forms and long form by providing music to introduce the stories and then draw them to a close.

Music can help create the atmosphere when the audience enters the space of a Playback Theatre performance.

Music adds to creating the emotional mood of the story being enacted.

Musician decides when to stop playing and therefore when action begins.

Teller

Teller chooses actor.

Teller stays in chair to watch enactment after narrating story.

Teller does not talk to actors. It all comes from the conductor.

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION TO CONSENT LETTER

My name is Ngefor Shella Zanjam, a scholar in the Drama for Life programme hosted in the Wits school of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Drama for Life (DFL) is a programme that trains and empowers young men and women on how to and the importance of using applied drama and theatre practices in the fight against HIV and AIDS in Africa. These practices encompass drama in education, drama therapy, playback theatre, theatre in education, theatre of the oppressed, community theatre and theatre for development.

As a requirement for my Masters degree by course work and research in this programme, I am undertaking research based on Language and Interpretation in Playback Theatre in a multilingual society. The research is focused on looking at;

- The language of Playback Theatre and the language of communication in the practice.
- It focuses on identifying and analysing the use of non-verbal elements in the Playback Theatre performance.

This research was inspired by the fact that Playback Theatre amongst other forms of applied drama and theatre is newly being introduced in Africa, which is predominantly multicultural and multilingual in nature. This type of interactive theatre was founded in the western world where most countries are monolingual or have one common national language and whose culture of social interaction is different from most African countries. Above all the research will add to an academic body of knowledge in the field of Playback Theatre as a practice.

Participants in this research will be required to;

1. Consent to have videos taken during performances
2. Take part in a focus group discussion
3. Volunteer information through interviews

Note that the consent form does not oblige you to participate to the end as you are free to withdraw whenever you wish and the information gathered will be used only for the research and nothing else.

However, if you feel like having more information on this research, feel free and it is by right that you ask through:

TEL: (27) 0835131052

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Wits School of Arts, Division of Dramatic Arts

16-07-2010

RE: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

I, …… am an……. …….At…….. I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the aim and procedures of this research. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the Research Project being conducted by …… a Master of Art in Dramatic Art Student between …… 2010 and ……2011.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to Drama for Life - a Capacity Development Program in HIV & Aids Education through Applied Drama and Theatre that is aimed to empower young people to take personal responsibility for the quality of their own lives. I also understand that Drama for Life is being hosted by the Division of Dramatic Art within Wits School of Arts.

I understand that excerpts from my written transcripts, tape and/or video-recorded verbal communications and any other form of information shared with the researcher will be studied and may be quoted in Research Reports and in future papers, journals, articles and books that will be written by the researcher.

I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that my full name or other identifying information will never be disclosed or referenced in any way in any written or verbal context. I understand that transcripts, paper, video and audio tapes, will be secured in the privacy of the Wits Drama for Life Monitoring & Evaluation files.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study without explanation or penalty.

I grant permission to use one of the following:
My first name only (tick)

……Only a pseudonym

…… ……./…../2010

Signature Date