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SYNTHESISING THE METHODS OF STANISLAVSKY INTO THE AFRICAN AESTHETICS OF CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

In the Department of Theatre and Performance

Faculty of Humanities

University of Witwatersrand

March 2024

DECLARATION

I, Bertina Johnson, declare that:

a. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.

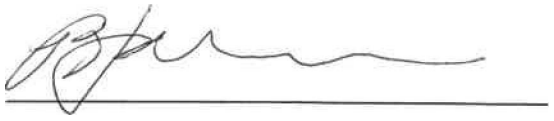
b. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Signed by candidate: 

Date: 31 March 2024

PREFACE:

I came to theatre as a child when I organised a dance and theatre troupe that went around the neighbourhood and more or less invaded people's homes to make them watch us dance or perform. I was the Spanish dancer. Having a mother who trained and danced with Lester Horton in Los Angeles, along with famous African American dancers such as Alvin Ailey, James Truitt and Carmen De Lavallade, I was often backstage and remember crawling around the dressing room of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. Horten's style was unique at that time as it reflected cultural plurality: he created pieces and trained dancers in a method that focused on both African and Native American dance and culture.

As I grew up, the only drawback was Hollywood, where movie stars were gods, and the cinema was the observatory where we viewed them. I related the gritty backstage of a dance theatre to the real work of performing, where a group of actors or dancers worked together to create something of beauty, no cameras, no light booms, but touching the audience through the presence of human beings sharing what they believed to have meaning.

After theatre school and university, I traveled to work in theatre in Amsterdam, Ghent, Hamburg and the U.K., eventually returning to New York where I studied with Michael Howard and Uta Hagan and mostly found acting work in performing Shakespeare. Eventually, I made a choice: either study for my PhD or go to South Africa. I went to South Africa. Why South Africa? I think it is because I had seen South African plays and was captivated by the power, honesty and physicality, and felt theatre in the UK and the USA was too often lacking that drive and power. Although I feel torn in half between the USA and South Africa, I have found an artistic home in my teaching and directing, a home where I feel honoured to contribute to, to work and to live.

As an acting teacher and director, I have approached my work intuitively, where, in directing a piece or in watching a student work, a trigger or a word appears that may guide us. This PhD is

an effort to make conscious that intuition is in the process of research and follow the steps of a journey that can lead us to create that which may be valuable.

My experience has spanned the actor's path in New York and Los Angeles, the actor in Western Europe, India, and, currently, the actor in South Africa, each with different challenges and concerns. My participation in South African theatre has revealed to me the multi-levelled commitment that exists in the inventiveness of the diverse theatre practitioners and storytellers. My effort in this work is to spark an investigation into the possibilities of a syncretic theatre in terms of training and performance. Empowering originality in the actors, giving them the tools to fully express who they are, empowers the theatre.

I came across the following comment posted online in response to an article on racism in the United States, specifically in the state of Florida:

> I dream of a world where philosophers and artists apply their intelligence to practical problems of a multicultural society. How are we to live together when we don't speak one another's language, follow the same social norms, or even follow the same nonverbal codes? Pure legalism is insufficient to answer these questions. I'd love to see cultural laboratories where people of good will could experiment on finding the codes and protocols of real intercultural communication. Without them, we will be trapped in an endless circle of resentment, reaction and mutual incomprehension. (Daily Kos, 2023)

This was the reply:

> We have them in colleges and universities that are not in Florida. (Daily Kos, 2023)

In essence, this is the root of why I have made the effort of this research: a search for these mutual codes. There is nowhere else it can be done but through academia, so it is with my awareness of this privilege, I begin this attempt.

DEDICATION:

I dedicate this to my late parents, Sander L. Johnson and Drusilla Johnson, and to my late brother, Torger True Johnson. Though they are gone, their courage, their spirit and their values have guided me and given me perseverance. I thank you and love you for being with me along the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to express my sincere thanks and acknowledgements to the following people and institutions: Professor Dr. Samuel Ravengai, my supervisor for the guidance, the support and the knowledge, my brother, Sander Johnson, for his support and kindness, my friend, Gita Pather, for her wisdom and support, the actors in the creative research project; thank you for your participation and the amazing creative energy of the work, my colleagues and students in the Theatre and Performance Department for the inspiration they provide every day, the theatre practitioners of South Africa for their innovative work, the University of Witwatersrand for the financial support and the scholars of Africa and the world whose work has inspired and challenged me.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is centred upon an investigation into the possibility of synthesising African aesthetics, as present in modern-day South African theatre, with the methods and philosophy of Stanislavsky in both the training of actors and in theatre performance, reframing the continuum whereby the two methods seem to exist. Presently, the two are often regarded as separate categories, one for realism, the other for more traditional African-based performance and South African presentational theatre. This research entails an examination into the nature of African aesthetics, which includes both the values and ideas surrounding an African worldview, as expressed in literature and in theatre, as well as the significance of post-colonial thought in contemporary South Africa, such as the theories of Afrocentricity and black consciousness, alongside the deciphering of how these approaches and influences are relevant to the creating of South African theatre. The issues surrounding Afrocentricity in training and in theatre are examined in terms of the codes of interculturalism, post-colonial theatre, syncretic theatre and cultural imperialism. This has included theories that apply to the nature of sacred theatre and the polysemic nature of contemporary performances of traditional theatre.

Pertinent to and contained within this study is the question of the methods, philosophy and worldview of Stanislavsky, as well as the influence of his position as the creator of what is known as the System. In the process of further defining how and if synthesis is possible, the concepts and methods of his work are examined about the meanings underlying his terms, particularly in the light of more accurate and detailed recent translations, which more directly relate to the spiritual nature of his concepts. The significance that much of Stanislavsky's work is based on spiritual concepts has been referenced to the spirituality found in African aesthetics and worldview, with a specific regard to the notion of an animated world that contains a force field of energy, which I have named an animated theatre in contrast to the psychological interiority found in much of Western actor training and performance. I have argued that acknowledgment of the articulation of the soul and the spirit in Stanislavsky as vital to the actor's work was often

eradicated or ignored and the subsequent re-evaluation of translations of his written work from Russian to English has opened numerous possibilities in the training of actors and in performance, especially in the consideration of his concepts of experiencing, the creative state, communion, *aktivnost* and resonance with the audience in relation to the African world view.

Included in the research is an ethnographic study of the work I have done as a teacher and director in South Africa, considered along with the creative research, as a way of comparing my Western-based training in both the USA and Europe to the discoveries I have made while practicing theatre in South Africa. Examining the theories of integration and synthesis, of Afrocentricity, the African world view and the underlying philosophy of Stanislavsky's methods through the creative research, with the exploration of methods of both African performance and Stanislavsky, contributes to the process of evolving effective actor training and dynamic South African theatre. It has led to the discovery of what I have labelled as 'an animated theatre', which conveys the intersection between African aesthetics and the work of Stanislavsky, through tracing the innovative possibilities of a conscious synthesis in both the creation of theatre and in the training of actors. Acting terms, such as 'the creative state', which are taken for granted, thus take on new meaning when the concept and theory of the spiritual state, as meant by Stanislavsky, and how it influences expression, is not eradicated but acknowledged. Through working in the specifics of locality, for a comprehension of varied cultures, and within the paradigm of African aesthetics and Stanislavsky, an analysis of the relatedness of values held in each system, integration and synthesis becomes possible. The notion of an acting system driven by the energetic concepts of both African aesthetics and Stanislavsky, which correlate to the neuroscience of the linkage of mind, body and emotions, puts forward new theories for exploration in terms of physical expression and the inner and outer continuum of the actor's expression and indicates opportunities for reevaluating the training of actors. My aim in this study has been to expand the knowledge of this evident synthesis, thereby contributing to the future possibilities in the creation of performance and in the training of the talented young actors so present in Southern African theatre.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Synthesising the Techniques of Stanislavsky into Modern Day South African Theatre…

> Afrocentricity as an intellectual idea takes no authority to prescribe anything; it is neither a religion nor a belief system. It is a paradigm that suggests all discourse about African people should be grounded in the centrality of Africans in their own narratives.
>
> Asante, 2015

1.1. Background of Study

This study centres on how the theories, methods and techniques of African aesthetics and the theories, methods and techniques of Stanislavsky, as they each have evolved to the present day, may be synthesized and made applicable and relevant to theatre practitioners in modern day South Africa. In light of the ongoing development towards a more Afrocentric aesthetic in the performing arts, how can Stanislavsky's approach be adapted and integrated into a post-colonial world? To what degree are his techniques, as well as his theories, as they are currently understood, useful to the training of actors in contemporary South Africa? Although Stanislavsky, in his position as the foundational teacher of acting technique worldwide, has been integral in the curriculum of universities and conservatories of South Africa, it has previously been taught in what can be regarded as a 'white space' (Ebewo, 2011). Indeed, his approach can hardly be avoided as it has been so universally applied. As the former head of the Central School of Drama in London, Nick Moseley, puts it:

> To this day there are still teachers proclaiming Stanislavski's System as the best way to train actors. To a greater or lesser extent, most drama schools still base their training on the System, and many of the other practitioners, such as Strasberg and Meyerhold, whose theories are in common use, either trained with Stanislavsky or were heavily influenced by him. Stanislavsky's key works may have been re-examined and reworked a number of times in many different countries, but no one has yet seriously challenged his supremacy. (Moseley, 2006, p. 5)

While the Stanislavskian system is presently taught as a basic approach, neither the scope of the possibilities of integration with an African aesthetic nor an analysis of the practical use of his approach by the actor in contemporary South Africa has been researched and considered. The discovery of modes and techniques for a modern-day use of Stanislavsky in South Africa, as well as the relevance of his philosophy, provides possible pathways of applicability in training and performing in Southern Africa, Africa and elsewhere.

Knowledge of the relationship between Stanislavsky's practical philosophy to the axiologies of South African performance and theatre through analysis of the values inherent in African aesthetics, post-colonial discourse and including creative research with the actor-students on the play *Izilo,* offers a tangible basis for purposeful approaches to working with and training actors, approaches which address the needs of theatre artists and students. Re-examining Stanislavsky's concepts of the nature of an actor's creativity in order to gain a full comprehension of such techniques as 'experiencing', 'action/intention' and 'communion', when viewed in correspondence to the concepts which underpin an African aesthetic opens up a possible dialogue and proposes a theatre animated through the integration of the two. The possibilities of an integration of Stanislavsky into the needs of the South African performer, in the context of Africa, is of importance so that Stanislavsky's techniques are neither over emphasized nor tossed aside but part of a useful continuum, one that is cognizant of where it fits into the whole.

A clear comprehension of Stanislavsky's system, in the historic sense and in the sense of how his work has evolved, is found in his writing and in the insights of such scholars and theatre practitioners as, for example, Jerzy Grotowski, Sharon Carnicke, Samuel Ravengai and Robert Kavanagh and take on further significance when interrogated in respect to those who have dealt with the effects of imperialism, colonialism, decolonisation and the binaries of North/South/East/West. The work of these writers and scholars, such as Frantz Fanon (1967),

Wole Soyinka (1978), Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and Rustom Bharucha (1993), provide both an overview and context in locating how the praxis of Stanislavsky is to be placed in South Africa.

By focusing on these binary inquiries of how to enable an actor to work from the context of their culture, from an African aesthetic and from their full sense of self, alongside Stanislavsky, a synthesis towards new methods of training is perhaps possible. In the process of training actors today in the techniques of Stanislavsky, is there a present tension between the needs of the actors who have grown up amidst such a diverse mix of South African cultures and may indeed regard themselves as specifically Zulu or Xhosa or Tsonga and the notions of his techniques? Should a teacher/trainer strive to incorporate and even emphasize these students' cultural experience into the training? How does a teacher of acting relate the notion of the subconscious to, for example, an actor's concept that the intervention of the ancestors is often present and guiding us (Gumede, 2021)? There are, of course, many cultures which adhere to ancestor veneration; it exists certainly in traditional China, one could make an argument for it in aristocratic England as well, and, of course, it exists in the traditional cultures of many South Africans. Thus, the specifics of South African culture and theatre making and the possibility of integrating Stanislavsky's techniques into a proactive approach to the training of actors will be the focus of this research. How can his work be properly located into the cultures of South African in theatre making? The questions surrounding how to enable an actor to work from the context of their culture and how to consider Stanislavsky in relation to this endeavor is the purpose and focus of this study.

1.2. The Problem

A significant focal point is the tension of racialism which exists for the student, suggesting the necessity of a curriculum which incorporates a design based on a consciousness of their needs. I would like to note here the research thesis of Elina Kamanga (2019), titled '*Lived Experiences of Hidden Racism of Students of Colour at an Historically White University'*, where students of colour spoke of their varied experiences, how black male students are often treated as criminals and

shied away from, how white students would move away when a black student sat next to them in a lecture hall, how the black students often felt invisible, as if they were trespassing on a totally white space (Kamanga 2019, pp. 36-61). In line with this, several of my acting students at Wits University School of the Arts have brought in devised work whose content is based on their experiences in formally all-white schools, experiences where they felt a profound sense of 'outsiderness', where they realized, at a very young age, that they had somehow encroached upon an all-white space (Performance 1 classes at WSOA, 2019).

This cannot help but to call into question the work of Stanislavsky, as the central teacher worldwide, in fact 'the master' of acting technique since it was first developed in his studio and at the Moscow Arts Theatre in Russia over a hundred years ago. His teachings and its supposed focus on realism (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 34-35), along with the hegemonies of the Western canon of theatre plays and performance standards, are in many ways part of the 'white space' students have referred to. In light of their experiences, a reconsideration is important at this point in time. A straight traditional teaching of his work via material that has not been consciously adjusted for the needs of the students and their experiences without regard to locality should be reconsidered and adjusted. Stanislavsky certainly did believe his system was universal, for all actors. He stated unequivocally, "my system is for all nations. All peoples possess the same human nature" (Stanislavsky, 1968, p. 170).

This implies the idea of the specific in relation to the universal or, as the poet, William Blake, put it in *Auguries of Innocence:* "to see a World in a Grain of Sand, And a Heaven in a Wild Flower" (Blake, 1978). As a director and a teacher, I recognize that we find the truth we are searching for in a performance through detail, the small truthful details, of who we are and, in doing so, if we are lucky, we can, in a roundabout way, approach universal truths. Thus, the search is to determine the accurate interpretation of the tension between the universal, the local, and the specific. As Jonathan Pitches has acknowledged in his introduction to *Stanislavsky in the World* (2017), the idea of universality, the essentially human, has been debated in light of critiques of

the geopolitical binaries between North, South, East and West, the tension of cultural exchange in relation to empire and the renewed focus on cultural specifics (Pitches, 2017, p. 13).

Given both the *zeitgeist*, the culturally defining spirit of an era, of political subversion that is inherent in much of South African theatre and the present necessity of transformation, the central and surrounding issues of training curriculum in South Africa universities in regard to teaching the craft and art of theatre and acting cannot help but to be concerned with ideas of colonialism, aesthetics and politics, as well as those around identity, appropriation, inter-culturalism, multiculturalism, nationalism and internationalism. In his study of the South African curriculum in drama studies, Patrick Ebewo concludes that,

> The non-reflection of some of the objectives (African-ness) of the universities in the drama curriculum is a worrying phenomenon (…) the flagging of the African content initiative (…) seems to be a dangling addition in order to avoid being labeled non-compliant. (Ebewo, 2011, p.134)

This also remains true currently. The issues of transformation to a more African aesthetic from a Western dominated aesthetic continues to exist in the South African university, in the drama departments, as a reflection of the greater forces at work in the South African society in general. The demands to actor training are multiple: the actor needs to survive and must be prepared to function on as many levels as possible, in a variety of genres: from plays, both realistic and presentational, to film and television to dance theatre to musicals, both locally and from abroad. In the midst of these demands is the necessity, the imperative, for the student/artist to create work in locality, in their truth, as an authentic reflection of who they are as artists and as a reflection of their inheritance, both culturally and historically. The tension is one that must be lived.

In comprehending what modern day theatre students are encountering, aside from problems of personal identity common to all, it must be acknowledged that they deal with and make choices in relation to the burdens of a post-colonial system. As artists, as individuals, they will face the specter of cultural imperialism. In discussing the cultural imperialism that has occurred in

interculturalism, where the dominant culture appropriates another culture, Igweonu (2011) highlights the idea of transculturalism as an alternative. He quotes the Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz who defines it as "the transformative process undergone by a society in the acquisition or imposition of foreign material, and the fusion of the indigenous and the foreign to create a new original cultural product" (Igweonu, 2011, p. 69). Igweonu also calls those societies which are forced to do this, such as the West Indies, 'liminal' cultures.

The aesthetics of contemporary South African theatre are infused with not only the inherited pre-colonial performance modes of ritual, ceremony, dance, storytelling and music and, as well, have been generated by the theatre practices related to Township Theatre, Protest Theatre and Black Consciousness theatre. Township Theatre refers to plays performed or originated in the often-isolated townships created by the apartheid regime and are personified by Gibson Kente, known as the father of Black theatre and the central figure in the formation of Township Theatre. Kente, based in Soweto, created musicals and plays from 1963 to 2003 expressing themes of oppression, poverty and unemployment in a distinct township style, with the use of heightened performances, easily identifiable characters and evocative music, dance and song. He offered, for the first time, entertainment which could reflect people's lives, where dynamic performance held sway over the script, veering away from scripted plays, as in plays created by more intellectual and bourgeoise playwrights such as Dhlomo's play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) and Nkosi's *Rhythms of Violence* (1964). Protest Theatre, which sought to oppose social injustices, existed in direct opposition to the apartheid regime and developed in multiple ways, either originating from the cultural wings of the activist union movements, agitprop theatre by various political groups or, as in the case of the play, *Woza Albert* (1984), from the township of Soweto. Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa, students of Gibson Kente, initially created *Woza Albert* in Soweto and later went on to workshop it with Barney Simon at the Market Theatre. The theatre of Black Consciousness based on the tenets of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), a movement which was first articulated by activists and artists such as Mafika Pascal Gwala, Steven Bantu Biko, James Matthews and Strinivasi 'Strini' Moodley in the late 1960s and 70s. As Steadman points out in his essay for the History Workshop at University of Witswatersrand

(1990), the BCM rejected the role of whites and the liberal-humanist rhetoric in favour of black liberation through political consciousness raising, which focused on the experience of the oppression of black people of South Africa (Steadman, 1990, pp. 13-14). The theatre of Kente was opposed by those of the Black Consciousness Movement as insufficiently political, and, as Steadman notes, Kente was "dismissed by radical intellectuals who accuse him of perpetuating false consciousness, reenforcing stereotypes and being frivolous" (Steadman, 1990, p. 16). These developments of the continuing influence of Township Theatre, Protest Theatre and the theatre of Black Consciousness are key to understanding the evolution of modern-day South African theatre, with its interweaving of elements, emphasis on performance and devised/workshopped theatre, and, when viewed from the perspective of Afrocentricity, call for placing the work of Stanislavsky within the context of present-day theatre work. Each of these three types and the inheritance of post colonial theatre practices indicate the need for the analysis of both the aesthetics of South Africa and the values and philosophy of Stanislavsky. In essence, how can Stanislavsky's methods and philosophy serve the creative needs of South African theatre?

What can be observed from this, in South Africa, when considering the use of Stanislavsky in modern day actor training beside the need to foster African aesthetics, is that perhaps this is a time of 'liminal experience' where the student is on a new threshold, indeed a period of transition, an emerging of sorts. In this context, in regard to the young artist, is it possible to turn liminality into a positive concept and to conceive of it as an emergence? In line with this is the recent, also emerging, aesthetic of Afro-Futurism where the old, ancient Africa is combined with the future as science fiction. In the *Binti* (2015) book and subsequent books by Nnedi Okorafor, Binti, the main character who is from a fictionalised Namibia, a quiet society of both deep tradition and great technological advances, must travel from her grounded more traditional culture to a university far away on another planet. Perhaps this can be viewed as an apt metaphor for the experience of many South African students. Hers is, indeed, a liminal experience, one where she is between the new and the old and faces heroic challenges, where she must carry her inheritance into a viable, whole future.

Perhaps the greatest challenge Binti faces is the problem of the dominant culture. Igweonu lays out, in his study of the dance, the Samba, how both the European culture and the African culture combine to perform the special aesthetics of the dance. It is a tense battle he describes, with gains and losses on both sides: there is the stiffly held upper body, reflective of what he calls the European court body and the looser, more flexible lower, which reflects the African element. Igweonu describes the Samba as having the postures of European court dance, as well as European floor patterns, yet shaped and infused with African dance (Igweonu, 2011, pp. 79-80). Is this struggle Binti's future? What does she lose and what does she gain? Must she sacrifice her past for her future? How will she blend these forces?

What, then, is the relevance to Binti, if she wants to tell stories and perform, in being taught an acting technique, created in Russia in the early 20th century by a man who was born into a wealthy merchant class and nurtured at the Moscow Arts Theatre? Stanislavsky's work is often considered to apply only to the style of Realism. For example, the director, writer and scholar, Robert Kavanagh, notes that Realism has functioned as a hegemonic force in Africa, the result of colonialism (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 2), and identifies Stanislavsky's method as a style developed for performing Chekhov's plays (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 5). As Aquilina recognises,

> That Stanislavsky's system was developed for sole application to realistic and naturalistic play-texts is a misconception that harks back to the system's own early formulations (…) Despite Stanislavsky's own efforts, however, the reading that has taken root is that the system yields effective results only when used to produce dramas such as those penned by the aforementioned Chekhov, Ibsen (Acquilina, 1917, p. 207)

While Stanislavsky's early successes were in directing and/or performing in realistic plays of Anton Chekov, his ever-evolving work as a teacher, which spanned from 1912 to 1938, supported and embraced styles ranging from the magical realism and symbolism of *The Blue Bird* (1908) by Maeterlinck to the avant garde work of Meyerhold. As well, he himself felt it important that his work not only be identified with realism; Carnicke quotes him from Russian as emphasising, "human life is so subtle, so complex and multifaceted, that it needs an incomparably large

number of new, still undiscovered 'isms' to express it fully" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 44, quoting Stanislavsky from *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1989, p. 458). Because his techniques are grounded in the actor realising the minute details of human behavior and are often misidentified as a primarily realistic style, it remains pertinent to ask, 'how do they apply and become relevant to the modern performer in South Africa when the ethos and aesthetics of the culture (or cultures) are so radically different from Russia?".

The engagement and physical intelligence of the South African actor is, for me, remarkable. So many of the students I have taught, particularly those from the townships, are able to engage and express with a power, fluidity and flexibility that I believe to be unique. And yet, recently, I have observed that a portion of the students in university, those who do not have a direct connection to the South African style of township theatre, seem to have forsaken the physical style of acting for a more television style of acting, which to me, is almost English in the presentation. The vocal feels more important than the physical.

The social mask we all wear could not be more complex, as well as determining what is socially acceptable behavior in the modern-day world, this masking has a constricting effect on actors. From my recent experience, what is significant about the current acting program at Wits University are the efforts being made to educate, expose and train theatre students in the grand panoply of South African and African theatre, immersing the student in African aesthetics, with a greater respect for the valuable expressiveness of the work of Mbongeni Ngema, Bheki Mkwane, Gcina Mhlope and Mcedisi Shabangu, along with countless other performers whose roots come directly from the township. This study furthers this agenda in that it views the education and training of actors beyond the binary lens of an African aesthetic on one side and the work of Stanislavsky on the other, through giving consideration to the rootedness in Africa, alongside the hybridity of the use of Stanislavsky's methods.

As it stands now, research into the use of Stanislavsky in South Africa has been minimal. From inquiries into the training of my colleagues in theatre and film here, many have been privileged enough to have trained in universities and have been exposed to Stanislavsky, if not directly in training (though many have been), then certainly in an intellectual analysis of contrasting and comparing his work to, say, the work of Brecht. I have also found Samuel Ravengai's essay, *The Dilemma of the African Body* (2011) to be especially helpful. It raises questions of the reality of an actual cultural body and all the ramifications that evolve from there. Concepts of authenticity, ability and pedagogical approaches spin out from 'a cultural body', as well as the difficulty of globalization versus locality. David Peimer, in his essay in *Stanislavsky in the World* (2017), has written on his personal use of Stanislavsky as a director in South Africa where he calls for a kind of hybridity of approach:

> Stanislavsky re-posititioned implies reflecting, transforming, appropriating, resisting, perhaps even a notion of a possible but not yet born hybridity. It is possible to observe a rough, adventurous project of how his ideas are transformed in the multiple contexts that constitute South African performance today. (Peimer, 2017, pp.310)

1.3. Significance of study

Given the uncharted territory of research into acting training in South Africa, this research provides an opportunity for an in-depth view of what processes South African actors use, what works for them and what does not. Some may rely on Stanislavsky, others on Gibson Kente (2012), and others on a Sangoma. There is, at the present time, no study I can find that offers this insight, both from the point of view of actors and directors, as well as from the point of view of young actors in training. South African actors come from and operate in many communities, with different theatre roots: from university, township, physical theatre, traditional dance, commercial theatre and television. The creative research, as an exploration, will provide an actual basis for understanding what tools are applicable within an African aesthetic, as well as a significant opportunity to delve into the value of the 'foundational' aspect of Stanislavsky's work to contemporary South African actors.

In the context of a contemporary and post-colonial South Africa, the applicability of Stanislavsky's codified principles for the Southern Africa actor, that the body, mind and emotions are intricately connected and therefore thoughts, intentions and emotions are continuously expressed, either consciously or unconsciously, as physical behavior while, at the same time, the physical impacts the mind and emotions, is researched, both creatively and analytically. The significance of these theories of the mind/body continuum, as endorsed in recent neurological research, alongside and in relation to creative research into the artistic effects of the process of working with both African aesthetics and his methods is investigated in order gain a deeper comprehension of the acting process, as experienced in the context of the artistic and aesthetic aims of South African actors.

1.4. Research Questions

The central question of this research encompasses both the performative and ontological values of African aesthetics as derived from theories of Afrocentricity and the foundational theories and methods in work of Stanislavsky: how can they be integrated and understood in creating theatre in contemporary Southern Africa?

In considering the two, the following questions become significant to the inquiry:

- Where is the commonality to be found between the two seemingly binary approaches: one which is highly expressive, physicalised and presentational and the other which seeks to find, in performance, the truth of the human soul?

- Is there aesthetic value in creating such a synthesis, which takes a hybrid and syncretic approach?

- In considering the actor's process of creating a role, what are the elements of Stanislavsky's philosophy and techniques linked to the aesthetics of Africa, those which give an actor agency and enables them to perceive and find significance such a syncretic theatre?

- Can Stanislavsky be understood in the light of African aesthetics and, conversely, can future African aesthetics utilise the work of Stanislavsky?

1.5. Research Aims and Objectives

The objective of this study is both creative research and a critical analysis into the potential relationship between the work of Stanislavsky and the values of African aesthetics in South African theatre, as they each have developed, through an interrogation of Afrocentricity, Stanislavsky's philosophy and methods and an African world view with the aim of:

- Developing possible methods of integrating Stanislavsky's approach in presentational theatre.
- Exploring the synchronicities between philosophies of an African world view and Stanislavsky.
- Discovering if and how the approach and methods of Stanislavsky work in creating a theatrical piece based on African aesthetics through creative practice.

1.6. Methodologies

This research will be conducted through mixed methodologies of autoethnographic reflection and a textual analysis of the discourse surrounding the work of Stanislavsky all done through the conceptual framework of, African Aesthetics, Afrocentricity, the African world view. Having worked in acting, teaching and directing, I have chosen to include creative practice as a section of the methodologies of this study as a means of accessing new knowledge through rehearsal, production and reflective interviews. The hybrid praxis of African aesthetics, its forms and methods, combined with the methods and philosophy of Stanislavsky function as an interrogation of the possibilities of a synthesis and a search for innovative new syncretic processes. Engaging in an in-depth critical interrogation of the values of African aesthetics and

of Stanislavsky through qualitative research, including creative practice, provides relevant content into questions of perceptions, experiences, interpretations and constructions regarding a possible synthesis. The methodological framework for my thesis will therefore include qualitative creative research, in order to understand and apply the implications of the creative research to the panoramic view: via practice to theory.

In considering these questions, I would like to develop the creative research in two directions, which will unfold one upon another: first, a laboratory where both selected students and I are able to practice and reflect on the exercises presented, as a way of quantitative research. The exercises will be varied ones, taken from both Stanislavsky and those who have developed exercises which, though they may claim originality, are based on the Stanislavsky system. If possible, and if found, I hope to include exercises developed, in relation to Stanislavsky, from other parts of the world.

Considering the following idea from Kershaw and Nicholson, I have concluded that my work will be best done as, "the practitioner whose work is the subject of the Enquiry itself and for whom knowledge can only be generated through creative practice as research methodology" (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2007, p.138). The nature of my investigation of Stanislavsky in South Africa and his contemporary relevance to an African aesthetic requires pursuing his exercises in studio practice as well as researching his theories in relation to and in context of African aesthetics. The experience of working with actors on his exercises, along with both my reflections and their reflections upon our work, provides the microscopic details necessary to formulate a macroscopic perspective.

The methodologies to be employed will be in consideration of and with respect to the frame of research methods discussed in Frank Camilleri's book, *Performer Training Reconfigured* (2019), as well as reflections on the approaches suggested by Jonathan Pitches in Baz Kershaw's and

Helen Nicholson's *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* (2011). The ordering principle of the research, with the inclusion of creative research, will be an effort towards creating a methodological procedure that will allow me to explore the research questions listed above, with the goal of finding in the specific, the details, and the greater picture.

Although what I have researched is, in certain ways, about hybridization, as I am dealing with issues of transmission and translation, the emphasis is the relation of the physical to the inner impulse, as asserted by Stanislavsky. It is not a hybrid research-based art form in and of itself (Camilleri, 2019, p.219) but is two-pronged: a workshop and a performance of a play, which is the result of the discoveries found in rehearsals, to establish the efficacy and applicability of training based on Stanislavsky, within an African aesthetic.

Qualitative exploratory research:

1. Practice research (PaR) in a laboratory as well as a performance of a theatre piece which reflects an African aesthetic. This praxis was conducted through Wits School of the Arts, with students from the acting program. This is an ontological search for connections as component of the all over design. The connections possible will provide a grounded sense of what actually works here for the actor: how do they relate to the psychology, the sub-text and the idea of will as a generator of activity in a character? Do they feel that sensory exercises and effective memory are helpful in terms of the kind of theatre they wish to perform? Can ideas of intentions and actions (inner verbs used to propel direction of scenes) work for devised pieces? Does the idea of a neutral body, being empty, deny who they feel they are? These questions are a short list, but they connect to the larger issue of, 'how useful and applicable is this approach to their artistic visions and desires?'.

2. Interviews with selected arts practitioners, as well as students who were a part of the workshop/rehearsal. These interviews are open-ended and generate the data necessary and provide a basis for the theory/theories that are part of my dissertation. The purpose of these interviews is to establish what techniques do they actually use in the most practical sense. How do they feel about Gibson Kente, Stanislavsky or the help of a chosen Sangoma? What works and what does not? What is their aesthetic, is it a mix or a search for a purer form? These will give me a clear picture of what divides exist or do not and provide a more accurate sense of the context of Stanislavsky's use in present day South Africa.

3. Journaling: Reflective writing to be done both by the students and myself as a reflection on the work done in the workshop, regarding lineage, viability, particularly in regard to an African aesthetic. The reflective writing on the students' part will be a deliverable requirement and will deal with the questions posed in point 1, as well as the personal value to the participants of the work they are doing: does it challenge, inspire or bore? I myself will do journaling both as an account of the process of the class and a query into whether the process is providing me with the necessary information I need to form a larger picture. I also intend to engage in formative writing as I decide what to emphasize, especially in the "how" of inner actions, the expression of these actions, and how impulses related to actions are manifested in the body, all to comprehend the mind/ body connections.

4. The insights of Schon in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), wherein he distinguishes between 'tacit knowledge' or 'knowing-in-action' and 'reflection on action' with finally highlighting 'reflecting on reflection-in-action' so necessary to research, applies to the workshop process. As a director, actor or teacher, much of what we do does fall into the first two categories: the actor intuitively knows the hesitation of a shy boy, they feel it in their body, just as the director 'feels' a moment is right or wrong in a sequence of action and seeks to solve the problem in the moment. And again, as they watch the created moment or as the actor goes through the speech once again, they

reflect, through reflection-in-action, on where *knowing-in-action* has brought them. The process requires constant adjustment as well as experimenting. As Schon delineates, the experiment occurs in various forms: experimenting as problem solving, or as testing an idea to see if it works or yet simply exploring to see what happens (Schon, 1987, pp. 68-74). The final challenge is the act of reflection upon reflection-in-action which, hopefully will occur with the journaling to achieve the goal of exploring the results so that a panoramic view of the process may be found. The issue of immersion and how to handle the inevitable push and pull of being deeply involved in both directing and teaching', while at the same time dealing with clearly documented reflective thinking and writing, along with the attendant necessity to translate this into research writing seems to me to be possible only if time is given to writing upon finishing the sessions. This method of recording of the process through *reflection upon finishing* is preferable to interrupting the work to document what is revealed in the process. Rehearsing, directing and teaching is about creative flow, and it is often difficult to interrupt that flow. Managing the shifts required from creative research to academic research requires constant correlation and reflection upon the qualitative involved. It requires a clear view of the panoramic and intended direction of the dissertation. If the intention is to discover the applicability of Stanislavsky in present day South Africa, it requires knowledge of the larger theories and analysis: what the Stanislavsky system is and what it is not, as well as experiential, epistemological and contextual knowledge of not only South African theatre but of the past, present and possible future of South Africa.

5. Other documentation processes are possible such as videotaping, reviews and still photography. This is relevant to me in gathering the data especially with the production of the plays and the response of the audience, as well as the possibility of videotaping both workshop and rehearsal, if given consent by all involved.

6. Epistemological reading, writing and research into the current debates surrounding the use of Stanislavsky globally. The research will entail readings into the historical context of Stanislavsky himself, what were his influences, his background. For example, he is said to have been a humanist (Moseley, 2006, pp. 5-14) and the question arises, 'what kind, from where?'. Aside from understanding the world from which he came is, of course, his books and his autobiography, *My Life in Art* (1939); Stanislavsky, as the director, actor and teacher who created what is considered the fundamental system for actors' work, exist the many debates about his techniques: what do the techniques really mean, what did he really mean, how well have they been translated, have they been misinterpreted in the USA and what was his relationship with the Soviet government? Last, but most important is the research into how his work has been transmitted globally and specifically in South Africa.

7. Epistemological reading, research and writing into South African theatre, with a focus on theatre from the past twenty years, and a consideration of the influences of South African pre-colonial theatre.

In regard to the question of what my relationship to the studio work under scrutiny and how these impacts on the experience, documentation and dissemination of the research, I must acknowledge that, as a director and teacher, this is what I do; it is my passion and vocation. This, of course, gives rise to questions of "objectivity" in the process as well as to the integrity of research done by a person who has *'a way of working'* that may not suit the necessities of viable research. But with the specifics of the methodology of research into the relationship between an African aesthetic and 'proven' methods of actor training, this research can be appropriately and effectively undertaken.

In order that my chosen research methods and my articulation of them best reflect the specifics of the work in the studio, the following quote is a guide:

> Transformative research frameworks include participatory, decolonizing, activist and community-based research. These are frameworks designed to reduce power imbalances within the research process and, ideally, to affect structural inequalities more widely (Kara, 2015, p. 1).

I have chosen to form a participatory workshop/studio, rehearsal process and performance from the community of acting students; ensemble-based and documented as part of my research. The participation of the students and their feedback has been vital. The performance has been put together in such a way as to bring to the fore the elements discovered in the process by the participants, myself included, in a rhizomatic manner of working. The results of tracing the creative process from the studio to the performances through reflection, documentation, practice and performance; create a more dynamic element as only can be provided by research.

The implicit context of the laboratory is that of process-driven, experiential participation, training and experimentation. Indeed, I will be the facilitator, the trainer, but that which levels the implicit power relation of teacher to student will be *their* central and significant responses to the viability of the work. The explicit is that which we agree upon their commitment to the work and willingness to reflect upon the work with honesty and forthrightness.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

1.7.1. Introduction

This study employs both Stanislavsky's theories of acting, developed through his practice, and African aesthetics as an expression of the theory of Afrocentricity. Placing the people of South Africa at the centre of their narratives is an imperative in contemporary Africa, not only in terms of dispelling the hegemony of the Euro/Western perspective and the myths of colonialism, but

from “a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture” (Asante, 2010, p. 150). Scholars such as Hall (1996), Schiele, in his definitions of the philosophical tenets of the African world view (Schiele, 1990, p. 147), and Chinweizu (1983), in his re-centering scholarly criticism of African literature and poetry on the discourse of African scholars, have each challenged Western scholars as continually defining the reality of Africa in terms of their own perceptions, and as having assumed a universal lens through which Africa has been defined.

1.7.2. Afrocentricity

Hall’s interrogation of the concept of ‘the West and the Rest’ delineates the notion of Western discourse and its defining purposes. He notes that:

> This discourse continues to inflect the language of the West, its image of itself and 'others', its sense of 'us' and 'them', its practices and relations of power towards the Rest. It is especially important for the languages of racial inferiority and ethnic superiority which still operate so powerfully across the globe today. (Hall, 1992, p. 318)

The Euro/Western discourse, which has evolved from the past and continues to the present, is, according to Hall, ‘alive and well’ in its definitions of difference. For Hall, “ such discourse, as a 'system of representation', represents the world as divided according to a simple dichotomy (⋯) That is what makes the discourse of the West and the Rest so destructive - it draws crude and simplistic distinctions and constructs an over-simplified conception of 'difference' (Hall, 1992, p. 280).

The ongoing project of the theory of Afrocentricity, with its focus on the centrality of African experience in any discussion of Africa, is the refocusing of a distorted lens and a reclaiming of historical, ontological and epistemological knowledge. This refocusing, in theatre and performance studies, requires viewing theatre practice from within Africa and Southern Africa, viewing both Africa and the use of Stanislavsky’s work in Africa in terms of the ontological cosmology and aesthetics of Africa and is necessary in order to separate from the silent

assumptions and hegemonies of power that persist in the midst of the supposed abandonment of cultural hierarchies (Jeyifo, 1996, p.160). Jeyifo describes the context of discourses surrounding Afrocentricity and Interculturalism and begins with Western scholastic interpretations which defined, on Aristotelian terms, that indigenous theatre in Africa could not be considered true theatre, as in Finnegan (2012), or the assertion, which he notes, of the "absurd suggestion that in African theatre (and traditional culture in general) that tragedy does not exist (Jeyifo, 1996, p. 156)". The subsequent, logical development to Afrocentricity as a means of defining Africa on its own terms, which asserts, "a valid worldview through which Africa can be studied objectively " (Oyebade, 1990, p. 234) is traced by Jeyifo as moving from a reactive counter-discourse to the point where, "African theatrical expressions which the critical orthodoxy of Western academicism had declared 'quasi-theatrical' and 'proto-dramatic' were reappraised in the light of different criteria and affirmed as valid indigenous traditions of theatrical performance" (Jeyifo, 1996, p.156).This, for Jeyifo, raises the important question of "what social and ideological uses and functions mediate, legitimise or problematise the intercultural fusion of the 'foreign and the 'indigenous'" (Jeyifo, 1996, p. 158).

The tenets of Afrocentricity can be considered as including the following:

- Liberation: The need to liberate Africa from Western and Eurocentric thought and discourse, which has disenfranchised and marginalised Africa through its own particular perceptions and ethos by assigning to itself a "belief in the superiority and universality of the European experience" and, subsequently, for over 500 hundred years, designated Africa as inferior (Mazama, 2014). At the core of the theory of Afrocentricity, as developed by Molefi Asante (1980), is a call for action and liberation from Eurocentric assumptions, oppressions and suppressions.
- Agency and consciousness achieved through a centring discourse based on the narratives of Africans themselves as defined by Asante (2015): Mazama further defines agency as the activating principle which allows for African people to find agency as a centre, a true home, which is 'a source for nurturing existential paradigms. Agency, therefore, is an expression of consciousness and found through an Afrocentric awareness (Mazama, 2014).
- Diopism, as known from Diop's analysis of the unity and continuity of African culture found in the midst of its diversity as researched in his book*, The Cultural Unity of Africa* (1989): Diop maintained that Egypt is African and notes that, "Egypt is a distant mother of Western cultures and sciences (…), most of the ideas we call foreign are oftentimes nothing but mixed up, reversed, modified images of the creations of our African ancestors" (Diop, 1981, p. 3). This reclaiming of African history which, along with Bernal's book, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical*

Civilization (2009), has proved to be controversial, with anthropologists fervently objecting to the rather logical confirmation of Africa related directly to Egyptian civilisation.

- Locality/Centrality as a counter to the dislocality of colonialism, is reflected upon in Ngugi's work, *Moving the Centre* (1993) and *Decolonising the Mind* (1986): Ngugi's searing condemnation of the effects of language suppression in Kenya and the resulting dislocation and alienation of people from their own inherited culture calls for a need of a refocusing, a moving of the centre, to the specificity and location of a culture (1996, p. 131).
- The acknowledgment of African philosophies and world view, inherited from indigenous knowledge, as an integral part of the theory of Afrocentricity: The research in post- colonial theatre by Ebewo (2017) and Scheub (1975) evidences the variety found in indigenous performance and highlights a rich tradition which has long been discounted and, as well, not fully correlated to its influences on contemporary South African theatre. Also, Nobles, in his exploration of the African world view as found in the Ba'Ntu people from the Congo who migrated across Southern Africa, lays out a narrative of a philosophy which is centred on the unified view that "reality is Spirit "and that a particular process of knowing emerges from African genesis or creation myths, meaning of being human, and concept of life and death" (Nobles, 2015, p. 4-6). Nobles describes African ontology and epistemology developed from the experiences of the people of Africa, coming from, as Nobles puts it, "African people's cultural grounding, meanings of being human, and historical relations, an African voice [which] reflects the subjective and collective ability to express the essential and authentic experience of life and living for African people" (Nobles, 2015, p. 5). Such studies which define Africa on its own terms unearth the vast resources of African knowledge and, as an inquiry, exercises the necessary agency of Afrocentricity (Mazama, 2014).
- Identity: The identity of the people of Africa, particularly young people who although centred on locality, simultaneously exist as part of a global world. This corresponds to Afrocentricity in that strength of identity allows for the agency of connectedness to the heritage of their culture.

If one considers the core theories of Afrocentricity, they must surely begin with the idea of liberation of African thinking from the tenets of the Euro/Western view which has been the lens through which Africa has been perceived. Hall's discussion of the West and the Rest (1992) highlights another basic tenet of Afrocentricity in the need to move the centre away from Euro/Western thought, in this case to the centrality of African knowledge as expressed by Ngugi (1986). The liberation from a Grand Western Narrative indicates the importance of the centrality of discourse coming via the analysis of those scholars who accept the need to move the discussion away from the West to Africa, as has been noted by Jeyifo (1996, p. 159). Such liberation is found in defining the terms of analysis based on the epistemological and ontological of Africa as that which has been inherited, lived and known by those from Africa, rather than

from templates taken from the West, with respect for the inherent knowledge of the African continent.

Afrocentricity requires comprehending the philosophical basis of the African world view, as developed from indigenous knowledge. Such a theoretical perspective is necessary to an analysis of Africa and provides the opportunity to view Africa in terms of its identity and agency. Recognising for an example, as Schiele indicates (Schiele, 1990, p. 146), "the Afrocentric paradigm is predicted on traditional African philosophical assumptions that emphasises the interconnectedness and dependency of natural phenomena", and, as such, is a part of the comprehension of the fundamental unity found in African philosophy and world view. Again, such recognitions put the people of Africa at the centre of their own narratives. The thought of Diop (1989) who argued that there is a continuity of cultural unity to be found across Africa, despite the great diversities of language and culture (Nobles, 2015, p. 7), speaks to this conception of unity beneath the diversity and lays a framework for comprehension of Africa.

1.7.3. Theories of Stanislavsky's System

In terms of the approach to actor training in a post-colonial South Africa, it is necessary to discover and establish the theories of Stanislavsky alongside both the traditional and contemporary South African approaches. The theories of the psychophysical as well as that of the subconscious apply. Stanislavsky's concepts of experiencing, of dual consciousness and the idea of the inner and outer of the psychophysical, as well as the significant theory of "creating the life of the human spirit in creating a role", form the base on which the many-faceted methods and techniques rest. The techniques of communion, given circumstances, affective memory weave together to create an idea of a holistic system.

The analysis of the acting theory of Stanislavsky, which proposes that the actor's aim, through the use of interconnected techniques, is to create the "inner life of a human spirit and its expression in an artistic form" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 15), is necessary in order to place his work

into the context of Southern Africa and Africa, it's aesthetics and world view. While actors generally rely on tacit knowledge, focusing on practice rather than theory, Carnicke highlights that, "Stanislavsky's enduring importance to the theatrical world thus rests upon a rare project: to exploit practice in order to generate theory" (Carnicke, 2009, pp.72-73). In codifying a creative process which proposes that the ultimate goal of the 'flow' which an actor may achieve is found when the actor is experiencing (*perezhivanie*) the role in the creative state (*tvorchesto*) and that the means of accomplishing this aim is found in the conscious work done in analysis and rehearsal. Thus, by way of the conscious work, we can enter into the threshold of the subconscious, which, according to Stanislavsky, is the goal of acting (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 303-314, Carnicke, 2009, p.162). Much of the use of his work has focused on the more practical use of its methods, rather than the theoretical, recognising that the goal is experiencing, 'living the part,' and reaching the subconscious. Yet, as indicated by Matern, "without understanding that view, any work on Stanislavski's methodology risks being done in a vacuum" (Matern, 2013, p.45).

Bearing in mind that the goal of Stanislavsky's theory is to reach the subconscious through conscious work, this study focuses on the principles of Stanislavsky which are extensions of the theory of the psychophysical upon which the interwoven methods of his system are based. The tools of: the given circumstances of a piece; expressing the objective/intention through action and breaking them down into units; communion; the use of the affective as both a memory and a trigger; imagination, also known as the 'magic if', all feed into the concept of the psychophysical. The technique of active analysis can be comprehended as a method for rehearsal which combines these techniques and requires that they be executed through the 'on the feet' and the 'here and now' of physicality. Additionally, there are the values of the system which include: the creative state or the creative process (*tvorchesto*), experiencing (*perezhivanie*), the spiritual energy of action (*activnost*) and physical action (*deistvennost*).

1.7.4. The Subconscious

> "In his creative work the artist is dependent on sources and resources deriving from the spiritual unconscious."

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* (1946)

For Stanislavsky, the subconscious corresponds to intuition, inspiration and the life of the human spirit (Stanislavski, 2013, p.14); an organic process which is linked to the laws of nature, and is elusive and paradoxical, rather than repressed.

> There is no sharply drawn line between conscious and subconscious experience. Our consciousness often indicates the direction in which our subconscious continues to work (…) the fundamental objective of our psycho-technique is to put us in a creative state in which our subconscious will function naturally. It is fair to say that this technique bears the same relation to subconscious creative nature as grammar does to poetry. (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 302-304)

This idea of the subconscious as the creative source of experience reflects the ethos of the Silver Age of Russia, at the turn of the twentieth century, rather than the view of Freud who conceived of the subconscious as repository of repressions. Carriere (2010, p. 218) names this process of the 'conscious to the subconscious' as a "living synthesis of the conscious structure of artistic form and the subconscious creative energy [and] is the fundamental paradigm in Stanislavski's [sic] system" Stanislavsky's theory that his conscious technique would lead the actor to the subconscious mind and his belief in the subconscious as a source for potential creativity for actors is frequently reflected, in the modern day, as a common belief,

> Everything that has once passed through your conscious mind in the form of experience is resident right now within your subconscious. Not only that, but imbedded within the cellular structure of your body, in the DNA code—one of the most formidable discoveries of modern science—lie all the experiences of your genetic history. The life, the bio-logical evolution of your forefathers, is all registered in the molecular strands of your subconscious, capable of being recalled into memory. The subconscious mind, like the conscious mind, has a form of its own. It is given form, shape and momentum by the nature of your experiences in life and the way you react to them. (Subramuninaswami, 2015, [no pagination])

Accessing this subjective resource of unconscious creativity and following, as Stanislavsky put it, 'the laws of nature' (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 16), is a consent refrain and aim of his system. When asked why the subconscious is so dependent on the conscious?"; Stanislavsky, as Torstov, in *An Actor Prepares* replies:

> The use of steam, electricity, wind, water and other involuntary forces in nature is dependent on the intelligence of an engineer. Our subconscious power cannot function without its own engineer—our conscious technique. It is only when an actor feels that his inner and outer life on the stage is flowing naturally and normally, in the circumstances that surround him, that the deeper sources of his subconscious gently open, and from them come feelings we cannot always analyse. For a shorter or longer space of time they take possession of us whenever some inner instinct bids them. Since we do not understand this governing power, and cannot study it, we actors call it simply nature. (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 16)

He conceived of the actor's work in approaching the subconscious as happening through the use of 'lures', in the same way as the hunter entices their prey. Such 'lures' or 'triggers' theoretically will occur by entering into the creative state through the use of such techniques as 'given circumstances' (asking, 'who, what, where, when and why?'), the use of the 'magic if', affective memory or feelings analogous to the piece or "a creative idea" (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 220-221). A lure can also be an affective image, created from sensory memory or emotion to which the actor responds, an image that moves them to action. Ribot (2015), a French psychologist who was influential in Russia during the Silver Age (1890-1917), researched the memory of emotion in human beings as biological and is, in essence, what Stanislavsky calls 'affective memory', consisting of not only the sensory but of the emotions as well. The use of these memories became a basis for the lures which Stanislavsky theorised, where actors can use both their emotional, sensory and physical resources when working on an exercise or the given circumstances of a scene (Carnicke, 2009, p. 157).

The idea of a lure triggering the elusive subconscious reflects the notion of a state of mind where synchronicity transpires, as posited by Carl Jung's theories of psychological phenomena. To give a concrete definition of an elusive concept, Trevor Scott defines synchronicity as:

> Jung posited that Synchronicity was acausal by nature or came before causality. He believed that forces in a person's unconscious (in the form of archetypes) could bring forth events enfolding in the real world; these events happened in a meaningful manner which defied causal explanation, but often gave way to extreme, life changing epiphanies in people's lives. (Scott, 2016, p. 1)

Often, in the search of an actor fixated on creating a character in the context of the piece they are working on, coincidences do occur. Thinking about the leaf the character is holding when

they heard of a friend's death makes the actor notice leaves and suddenly, they seem to be everywhere. Is this a part of working with the subconscious?

In considering these connections, the following comments by Jung illuminate his theories on the subconscious and synchronicity and posit an intriguing link between Stanislavsky's goal of creating the state where the subconscious appears and 'experiencing' is possible and Jung's revelations of the power of the subconscious mind,

> A young woman I was treating had, at a critical moment, a dream in which she was given a golden scarab. While she was telling me this dream I sat with my back to the closed window. Suddenly I heard a noise behind me, like a gentle tapping. I turned round and saw a flying insect knocking against the window-pane from outside. I opened the window and caught the creature in the air as it flew in. It was the nearest analogy to a golden scarab that one finds in our latitudes, a scarabaeoid beetle, which contrary to its usual habits had evidently felt an urge to get into a dark room at this particular moment. I must admit that nothing like it ever happened to me before or since, and that the dream of the patient has remained unique in my experience. (Jung, 1969, p.133)

I find in this experience of synchronicity, as recounted by Jung, an interesting relationship between the image presented to him by his patient, delivered from her subconscious mind, and the notion that when he received this image, a phenomenon took place where he was profoundly impacted, so much so that he created an entire theory from the event. Does this speak to the response of an audience when an actor is 'experiencing', as meant by Stanislavsky? Is this what compels an audience to link emotionally to a play when the actor is 'experiencing' and connected to their subconscious?

How do these theories of the subconscious mind fit into actor performing and training in contemporary South Africa? If accessing the subconscious mind is an important part of the creativity of the actor because of its power to both involve the audience and create a state of 'experiencing', then is there a universality to be found in his theories? Is there a functional association to be revealed in the various techniques, such as the 'magic if', 'objective/super-objective' and 'given circumstances' with training which is based on an African aesthetic such as

ritual, African spirituality, dance and African performance structures that broaden and enhance? Beyond their function as any selected form, akin to teaching T'ai Chi, do they have a significant place in a post-colonial curriculum when synthesised? If acting techniques are attempts to find a lure in order to 'experience', then which lures work, where and when? Are they only for Stanislavsky and 'realistic plays' or is there more to be found in considering the connections with African aesthetics and South African performance modes?

For example, trance has been used in performance throughout South Africa and Africa. From these theories of the value of the subconscious in creative work, it is necessary to consider and reference ideas of trance as a part of performance and as a way of accessing creativity in the context of performances in Africa and in South Africa. The very use of trance is a challenging notion, yet it is not an uncommon phenomenon in performance throughout Africa, the Caribbean and South America. In his article on trance in Neo-traditional theatre and trance in Nigeria, Bernard Muller, quotes Wole Soyinka:

> I wouldn't wish for a total secularization of the theatre (…) Let us take a concrete example. When I staged 'Death and the King's Horseman,' it was an experiment, or rather an exercise, in the profane. You have no idea how many times my actresses, and even certain of the actors, were possessed during the scene where the King's horseman is transformed. On several successive evenings they had to be helped off the stage. Part of the audience virtually fell into a trance (...) but where can we draw the line between the profane and the spiritual or metaphysical? (Soyinka in Muller, 2005, p.171)

Muller goes on to note:

> The aesthetic quality of witchcraft in fact lies at the heart of the tragic emotion and the dramatic experience of Neo traditional Yoruba theatre. Given that the divine beings represented on stage are associated with forces at work in the realm of witchcraft, a certain number of "precautions" have to be taken by an actor daring to play the role of a divine character (in this case, *anòrìshà*). The public is well aware of the danger. The situation is similar to that of the circus audience whose enjoyment of trapeze acts is heightened by the risk of falling. The performer's skill or brilliance lies in controlling the perilous nature of the performance material used and attributing the "fall" to an inability to "master" those forces. Imagine a circus act where the catching of the trapeze artist is systematically bungled. (Muller, 2005, p.180)

The above quotes are pertinent to me in that they speak to the issue of a continuum in the psyche of an actor in performance, as well as to the use of trance in theatrical performances. The

question arises: is trance an extension of an open and creative state in the actor or is it indeed a state of spiritual communion, beyond the Stanislavsky ideal? While this is perhaps a religious discussion, it does concern the states of mind that an actor accesses. It also raises issues of control on the part of the actor, with reference to the dual consciousness, which Stanislavsky termed 'sense of self', being on stage with an audience and being within the character at the same time (Carnicke, 2009, p. 224).

In a conversation/interview with my teaching colleague, Prince Lamla, I asked him about his knowledge of the use of trance in performance. He told me, "The special song or dance is used shamanistically to travel to where the body exists in another realm, a sacred one" (Lamla, 2020). Is it possible that the actor's work, the 'lures' and techniques of the modern-day Stanislavsky methods, create a more solid ground for 'experiencing' as a creative state of flow, akin to all artistic pursuits, which allows the actor, in trance or in the flow, to have a safety net under the circus trapeze when flying high in the air? Carnicke points out, in discussing Stanislavsky's concept of 'experiencing',

> If genuine experiencing is indeed the experience of the performance itself and if this creative state allows for the alternation of contradictory states of mind, then by recovering Stanislavsky's lost term we can easily revisit his system (…) Recovering Stanislavsky's lost term, '*perezhivanie'* (experiencing) unequivocally breaks the assumed but inaccurate link between the multivalent system and the aesthetic style of Psychological Realism. Stanislavsky's redefinition of truth as whatever happens during performance can take the contemporary actor into any dramatic style, including those yet to be invented. (Carnicke, 2009, p. 447)

1.7.5. The Psychophysical

Given that this creative state is conceived by Stanislavsky as a living, expressive process, the actor's work becomes psychophysical, the inner and outer impulses of action form a wholeness where the actor embodies a role. The question of conscious work is not only that of inner preparation and discovery but also that of physicality. The psychophysical element of the actor in Stanislavsky's approach and technique, where the invisible becomes visible, is a core part of

the actors training. In understanding the psychophysical technique, as initially conceived by Stanislavsky, one can break his approach down as founded on the following basic principles:

- The body, the mind and emotions are intricately connected: thoughts and emotions are continually expressed, consciously or unconsciously, as physical behavior and, in reverse, the physical impacts the mind and emotions: there is a sensate relation which is continuous. It is a mind/body continuum.
- The imagination of the actor is capable of driving the body towards physical expression.
- The use of the 'magic if' and 'given circumstances' centers the actor's imagination in the world of the play and allows them, through imagination, to express their role physically.
- An expressive body that is flexible, relaxed and concentrated allows the emotions, intentions and imagination to be fully realized through action.
- Analyzing and breaking down intention, objective and 'actions' based on transitive verbs brings forth the conflict and action of a scene and drives the actor's whole being towards action/expression, in accordance with the all over objective of the piece.
- Embodiment of a character occurs through the body as the medium.
- Training of the actor's body, voice, imagination and concentration is necessary so that they are fully able to engage emotionally, intellectually and physically in the circumstances, action and conflicts of their role in a play.
- Finally, Active Analysis, a rehearsal technique where the actors, from the start of rehearsal, explore the play on their feet, through determining their actions and improvising. Sometimes called 'etudes', the improvisations are physical explorations, directly based on a scene in a play or based on imaginary situations spun off from the story of the play. The actors are free to use their own words, rhythms, a remembered line, images or even gibberish. Silent improvisations, 'etudes' are also used. As well, Active Analysis can be used when devising a piece.

Since Stanislavsky, others have gone on to develop the psychophysical technique. Michael Chekhov, a gifted student and actor who worked with Stanislavsky in Moscow, went on to create his own specific psychophysical technique. His book, *On the Technique of Acting* (1979), aims at creating a harmonious flow between body and the inner life of the actor through such exercises as the psychological gesture, the imaginary body, atmosphere and the imaginary center. The work of Grotowski (2002) and Zarrilli (2009) has also pushed the psychophysical technique further. Along with Grotowski and Michael Chekov, Zarrilli (2009) has rejected the Cartesian notion of the mind body split and has worked with the breath as a path towards realizing the existent unity of the body, as well as exploring extensive training in *Kathakali*, martial art, tai chi and yoga. The work on the psychophysical techniques, with the view that the body, emotions and mind exist together in a continuum of expression is endorsed by Rose Whyman (2010) and Maria Knebel (2021). As Stanislavsky sums it up, "in every physical action there's something psychological and there is something physical in every psychological action" (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 180).

Grotowski, in his extreme physical training, worked toward what he termed the *via negativa*, stating:

> The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. Ours then is a via negativa - not the collection of skills but an eradication of blocks (Grotowski, 2002, p.17).

The question of impulse, the idea that the ability of the actor to respond fully and physically to any impulse, be it external or internal, is central to the ability to fully embody a character. For me, emphasis of impulse in training and rehearsal frees the actor from the tyranny of the mind which says, 'this is not acceptable, I'll make a fool of myself if I do, it's not socially proper', it frees them from the superego. To quote the acting teacher, Adam Lazard White:

> When pursuing truth and a "life" on stage, it is absolutely imperative that you honor those impulses. They will lead you to your greatest discoveries and surprises during rehearsals. They will

> lead you to your greatest originality, depth and new discoveries while performing. Impulses are the evidence that you are actually "Alive" and not simply "Acting" and following a pre-planned "map" for the scene. (Adam Lazaar- White, 2013)

Much of the rigorous training methods of Grotowski, which I have experienced in training and working with Frank Marijnen in the Netherlands, were designed to free the actor from blocks, from social ideas of right and wrong, from psychological blocks, from inherited tensions. His idea of *via negativa* is a method of stripping away so that the soul of the actor could be revealed. Thus, with this theory, an actor, through the plastiques of movement and work on the vocal resonances of the body, becomes finally free to express impulses holistically, far more so than an actor whose work comes from the mind only. Grotowski believed that the actor "must be able to express, through sound and movement, those impulses which waiver on the borderline between dream and reality.*"* (Grotowski, 2002, p.17).

Along with the ability to follow an impulse is the ability to respond with the body. I have called this the 'motility' of the actor. One of the definitions of motility is "the quality or state of being motile: capability of movement." (Merriam-Webster.) The word is most often used in relation to science, as in the motility of someone's colon - but I have thought of it in terms of an actor's ability to respond fully and vibrantly to what is happening either within or without. Perhaps this notion of motility is tied in with concepts of bodily intelligence.

Impulses which are fully expressed in the body and the ability to respond fully, a 'motility', are questions of the physical and its relation to psychology, emotions and intelligence. this corresponds to the dancer. Suzanne Farrell, who recounts in her autobiography, *Holding on to the Air* (2002)*,* that, after she stopped dancing, she would dream of mathematics every night in lieu of her moving according to the mathematics of ballet. These questions of bodily intelligence, beyond the mind, speaks to the language of training: what must be brought forth, what is it that students, as artists, already know? This bringing out what an actor already knows is central in considering how to and what to apply in regard to Stanislavsky and in regard to notions of a cultural body.

In considering the use of Stanislavsky's psychophysical techniques in contemporary South Africa, Ravengai (2011, pp. 52-54), in *The Dilemma of the African Body*, suggests Active Analysis as a viable technique for Africa. Developed in Stanislavsky's private studio from 1930 on, it was initially called 'the Method of Physical Actions' but has come to be called 'Active Analysis' (Carnicke, 2009, p.189). More than physical actions, this method relies on the actor determining the 'actions' in a scene, actions which are simultaneously both inner and physical, active, and based on transitive verbs. Developed in order to get away from the long process of sitting around a table and discussing the play, this later work of Active Analysis is a rehearsal method in both devising a play and interpreting a play, one where the actor is empowered to use his full self, his body and mind in a more holistic sense. Stanislavsky theorised that this technique gave the actor greater control over the process of working on a piece. Potentially Active Analysis can be more accommodating, in its very flexibility, to the actor in Southern Africa and raises the question: does this later technique replace the earlier psychological inner work for the young South African actor?

In regard to the various applications of a Stanislavsky acting technique, I have encountered actors in New York who take their script and notate personal memories alongside each section, a spinoff of the 'affective memories' of Stanislavsky. Strasberg went on to create his own exercises for affective memory which became foundational at the Actor's Studio (Carnicke, 2009, p.215). Actors in productions would work on these memories, often weeping or laughing before they went on stage. At the time, I regarded this technique as too raw, even dangerous, yet we must acknowledge affective memory as part of our make up as human beings and a tool that professional actors do use. Stanislavsky recognized that we could recreate emotional memories from our subconscious through the recalling of sensory details from our past, but he was cautious about the use of personal memories in a direct way. He was concerned about the actor's mental hygiene, particularly after his favorite student, Michael Chekov, experienced a nervous breakdown (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 153-154).

The question comes to the usefulness of a technique, if it is effective in propelling the actor to full expression of the role in all genres. With the psychophysical technique, full expression cannot be achieved if the actor is blocked, not free vocally and physically, but even if they are unblocked, inner emotions and actions remain a central driver. Stanislavsky quotes the famed dancer, Isadora Duncan, as saying, "before I go out on stage, I must place a motor in my soul. When that begins to work my legs and arms will move independently of my will. But if I do not get time to put that motor in my soul, I cannot dance" (Stanislavsky, 1938, p 506-507). In our search for the driver for the actor, one might consider the Möbius strip, where the inner and outer are a continuous single surface: one, the inner, twists to the other, the outer.

Central to this theory is, as well, the concept of action. Consistently acting is conceived of as action, 'doing', "on the stage, you must always be enacting something; action, motion, is the basis of the art followed by the actor" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 38). Taken as a holistic structure, the methodologies, based on the various theories of finding the soul or spirit of a role such as experiencing through entering the creative state, the energy of action (*activnost*) and the projecting and absorbing of this energy through intentions and objectives offer a potential for considering his work and philosophy through lens of the theoretical stance of African aesthetics and Afrocentricity, and including concepts of hybridity.

1.8. Conclusion

Binaries between African aesthetics and Stanislavsky do exist in the midst of the need to work from the theory of Afrocentricity. Students, for example, are taught one semester of African-centered presentational theatre and another on representational theatre and see them as separate, yet when stories of any kind are told, the concepts of character and motivation do, in part, remain relevant. Notions of integration are applicable when conceived of in a syncretic manner and if they are useful. Temple Hauptfleisch notes the need, in researching theatre and training in Africa, to remember that we are not looking for differences in a binary way of 'this is that here and that there' but

> Perhaps, if apparent binaries do exist, they are not so much binary opposites as two extreme but linked points in a continuum of meaning… once one considers theatre and performance history, it is clearly not found in general theories and definitions, but in the particulars: the particular play, the particular text etc. (Hauptfleisch, 2011, p. 14).

The framework of parallel paths that meet at points means that the points of intersection are significant. The links in a continuum of meaning between the methods of Stanislavsky and the methods of African aesthetics, for theatre practice, indicates a relevance when found in practice as theory. Together these theories contain certain similarities of approaches, as found in the theories of an African world view as denoted by Noble (2015) and Shutte (Shutte, 2001), where the unity found in community practices and relationships in Africa are also found in Stanislavsky with his theory of the affective connections between the audience and the performers. Commonalities are found as well in the philosophy of an African world view, revealed in spiritual approaches, the constant exchanges of energies between people and focusing on these exchanges revealed in Stanislavsky's concepts of action and communion and in those which are revealed in South African performance, ceremonies and ritual.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction: The Territory

The purpose of this literature review is to bring together the various strands of thought that I believe to be of value to my study and research on the use of Stanislavsky in contemporary actor training and practice with theatre artists in modern day South Africa. I have looked at the following as a way of orientation in formulating my hypothesis that Stanislavsky's work is potentially viable in a South African context: contextual issues which surround the education and teaching of Stanislavsky in present day South Africa and Africa; modern day re-interpretations and assessments of Stanislavsky's work; readings which deal with the ethos and aesthetics of Africa and South Africa and dissenting views on the ubiquitous use of Stanislavsky, along with the knowledge gained in my previous work as a teacher and director in South Africa, India and the United States.

The question of if and how the philosophy, methods and techniques of Stanislavsky can be synthesised into the training of actors in contemporary South African actor training is ideally one of a possible fusion. Stanislavsky has been taught in South African institutions: in formally all white universities, as well as in the former Technikons (now universities of technology); at the Market Theatre Lab and at private institutions such as AFDA but, as both Igweonu and Ebewo attest, Western approaches do continue to dominate in much of education throughout the continent of Africa (Igweonu, 2017, p. 280-281) and in South Africa in particular, in spite of a general recognition of the need for a more African based curriculum (Ebewo, 2011, p. 115). This applies to many theatre and performance departments in universities as well, despite continuing efforts being made to change from a Euro/Western focus.

As noted by David Peimer, (2017, pp. 309-311), the possibility of integration of Stanislavsky's work into contemporary South African performance and training necessitates a comprehension of the complicated intertextuality of much of South African theatre. Thus, performance styles of the foundational township style of creating and performing, as well as performative styles based on indigenous knowledge and traditions must be included. As such, Ebewo notes, (Ebewo, 2011, p. 115), it becomes a matter of how to place both South African and African based content in "a novel model that places Africa at the centre of things". It would follow that the use of Stanislavsky in the training of actors in a post-colonial South Africa exists alongside the tension of the necessary imperative to incorporate methodologies which reflect the sensibilities, aesthetics and values specific to the culture of Southern Africa – ideally a process-based endeavour, one based on an illumination of the culturally specific knowledge embodied in the South African performer.

Ukala emphasizes that Western education in Africa traditionally was not intended to 'educate' in the fullest sense of the word but meant to entrench a feeling of inferiority in relation to the 'superior' culture of Empire. The burdens of a university in modern day South Africa and the compelling necessity of transformation cannot escape the legacy of colonialism, just as a teacher cannot escape them. Sam Ukala states:

> Western education was as an effective a weapon of colonization in Africa as religion or brute force (…) What western education replaced was his self- esteem and psychological independence. These were replaced by a mentality that considered the colonialist as superior to the native, which caused the later to strive to acquire western social habits and consumer goods. Besides religion, no other school subject entrenched this mentality more than western literature, which was taught to the African student as *the* literature while most African artistic creations were denigrated or even banned. (Ukala, 2001, p.29)

Ukala goes on cite Frantz Fanon and describes the African writer/artist as caught in a loop, educated by the West but yearning for and seeking liberation through immersion in their traditional culture. Ultimately, Ukala (2011) states, the artist in this immersion does connect with the source of their true aesthetics and does begin the journey of revival and rebirth of a connection to their culture, at once connected to tradition with an integrity of form and, at the same time, radically connected to the heartbeat and aspirations of their culture.

His delineation of the artist's journey is taken from the work of Frank Fanon. Fanon (1967) traces the liberation of the artist after the liberation of her country. Both Ukala and Fanon describe the struggle of an artist caught between their westernized education and their desire to reclaim their culture, where they are outsiders on both sides of the spectrum, now alienated by their own culture, through education, and unacceptable in the colonial 'mother' country (Ukala 2011, pp. 30-31).

This internal struggle is reflected on many levels, with all people, not just in the soul and psychology of the artist. Those passing through the education system, in all fields, must grapple with the contradictions of a system with colonial roots. What is notable is Ukala's writing on African writers and how they have dealt with these contradictions. He describes 'a fourth phase' to Fanon's description of the three phases of political struggle for the African artist:

> Like the African traditional creative artist, the liberated creative writer now praises or damns the white man, his own king, president or God. He goes beyond subject matter and theme to experiment with African traditional aesthetics and progressively subverts the western dramaturgical mode, which he had imitated. (Ukala, 2011, p. 31)

In his discussion of Femi Osofisan's work, Ukala states:

> Osofisan's dramaturgy is, therefore, not a perpetuation, but a subversion of the European or Brechtian aesthetic hegemony in Africa. Subversion is the cornerstone of the politics of aesthetics required to totally free the African mind from the cultural shackles of colonialism. (Ukala, 2001, p. 40)

This notion of subversion is perhaps what is at the crux of African aesthetics in South Africa, as it applies to developing a modern day, non-colonized mind set and as it applies to the paradigm of what is remarkable in South African theatre. In terms of the dangerous and the subversive, South African theatre has often subverted stories, and it is the horror story of disenfranchisement at the core of its stories which makes it so compelling.

Patrick Ebewo concludes, in regard to the South African curriculum in drama studies,

> The non-reflection of some of the objectives (Africanness) of the universities in the drama curriculum is a worrying phenomenon (…) the flagging of the African content initiative (…) seems to be a dangling addition in order to avoid being labeled non-compliant. (Ebewo, 2011, p.134)

This remains true in 2021. The tension between transformation to a more African aesthetic and an ongoing Western dominated aesthetic continues to exist in the drama departments of South African universities, as a reflection of the greater forces at work in the South African society in general. The demands to actor training are multiple: the actor needs to survive and must be prepared to function on as many levels as possible, in a variety of genres: from plays, both realistic and presentational, to film and tv to dance theatre to musicals, both locally and from abroad. In the midst of these demands is the necessity, the imperative, for the student/artist to create work in locality, in their truth, as an authentic reflection of who they are as artists and as a reflection of their inheritance, both culturally and historically. The tension is one that must be lived.

In comprehending what modern day theatre students are encountering, aside from problems of personal identity common to all, it must be acknowledged that they deal with and make choices in relation to the burdens of a post-colonial system. As artists, as individuals, they will face the specter of the capitalism and cultural imperialism. In discussing the cultural imperialism that has occurred in interculturalism where the dominant culture appropriates another culture, Igweonu (2011) highlights the idea of transculturalism as an alternative. He quotes the Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz who defines it as “the transformative process undergone by a society in the acquisition or imposition of foreign material, and the fusion of the indigenous and the foreign to create a new original cultural product” (Igweonu, 2011, p. 69).

2.2. Hybridity

The synthesising of Stanislavsky in training and performance in a post-colonial Southern Africa, refers to the notion of a hybridity which empowers, and is articulated by Homi Bhabha as a

hybridity which "may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of a culture's hybridity" (Bhabha 1994, p. 38). This concept of hybridity is referred to by the authors in Pitches and Aquilina's collection of essays, *Stanislavsky in the World* (2017), as found in Igweonu, Mrabet, Peimer and Rigu. Hilary Halba states on the use of Stanislavsky:

> Principles are not passively adhered to, rather they are claimed for their usefulness and mobilized through a local worldview. The post-colonial world bears witness to the energy and productiveness resulting from these encounters, and to the possibility of multiple competing truths. Blended or hybridized social and performative forms are generated through such encounters. (Halba, 2017, p.370)

The concept of hybridity in post-colonial discourse along with the idea of a third space of contestation and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994, p.37) and its productiveness is easily related to my experience as a teacher in South Africa and to the search for a more harmonised and hybridised vision to communicate to the students, in terms of integrating traditional binary ideas of representational versus presentational performing, realistic versus township style (and beyond) and, most importantly, a psycho-physical approach that draws on the student's innate ability of physical expression.

Pitches, in his introduction to *Stanislavsky in the* World, notes that the use of Stanislavsky in training practice is worldwide, in one form or another, and is "a kind of United Nations of acting" (Pitches, 2017, p. 13). The continued use of his methods and techniques is in spite of the protests to his work in theatre as coming from a primarily bourgeois, realistic tradition which cannot always suit the needs of much of contemporary theatre (Moseley, 2006, pp. 8-9), as well as the insight that his work is overly psychological (Ravengai, 2011, p. 54). This indicates a seeming binary which posits Stanislavsky on one end of a spectrum and identifies his work as created for the genre of realistic theatre.

Igweonu, in tracing Stanislavsky in Nigeria, tells us that, in spite of the many and varied approaches to training that are indigenous to Nigeria, Stanislavskian principles do remain the "most recognised and acknowledged" in acting training (Igweonu, 2017, p. 279-280), but also

notes that “some ideas were more common than others, with those that emphasise psychological realism being more prevalent in transmission and practice than those that privilege physical actions” (Igweonu, 2017, p. 278). This emphasis on the psychological follows from the idea of the easily misunderstood Stanislavsky which Carnicke (2017), Smeliansky (2010) and Matern (2012) each note and may have contributed to the development of the American System, via Strasberg and the Method, as well as the difficulty of translation from Russian to English. Smeliansky observes, “the problem of translation is the problem of a general understanding of Stanislavsky” (Smeliansky, 2010, p. 687). It seems as well the result of the disconnect that occurred in the time gap, recounted by both Benedetti (1988, pp. xviii-xiv) and Carnicke (2009, pp. 77-93), between the publishing of Stanislavsky’s first volume, *An Actor Prepares* (1938), and the second, *Building a Character* (1949). Benedetti has written Stanislavsky himself was fearful that the decision to separate the two volumes by the publishers would lead to a misinterpretation of his work, which proved true, leading to the Strasberg Method’s focus on ‘emotional memory’, the psychological and the subsequent various and confused interpretations of what exactly his system meant and ignoring the later emphasis on physical actions (Benedetti, 1988, p. 298).

Igweonu’s tightly packed and insightful essay raises pertinent issues about how Stanislavsky’s work has been integrated in Nigeria. His focus is on the ‘post-colonial actor’ and raises the point that, in the creation of indigenous performance, Stanislavsky’s methods interestingly have become a common grammar for the process of acting, specifically, he points to techniques such as the ‘magic if’, circles of attention and affective memory,

> For a country like Nigeria, the role and importance of Stanislavsky’s system of actor training as a unifying framework for understanding and articulating the diverse principles drawn from indigenous milieus cannot be overlooked. In the Nigerian actor training context, some of the fundamental features of Stanislavsky’s system (…) serve very important roles as unifying frameworks on which indigenous principles drawn from the various ethnic performance traditions hang. (Igweonu, 2017, pp. 285-286)

This suggests that selected techniques, drawn from Stanislavsky by the actors working in indigenous performances, performances which make use of masking, dance and song and often mark a rite of passage from one stage of life to another, are encircled by the performers' traditional knowledge. Igweonu also recalls that presently this knowledge of the indigenous is transmitted via those who are experienced in indigenous performance working with young actors in university settings.

In terms of this 'blurring of boundaries' in Nigeria, Igweonu calls for more detailed research into this integration and addresses the potential use of the psychophysical of Stanislavsky's latter techniques, citing the Brugal article on the use of Stanislavsky's physical actions in combination with traditional Yoruba practices (Brugal, 2015). Brugal's analysis of the Cuban play, *María Antonia* (1964), by Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, is centred around the protagonist, Maria Antonia, a priestess of the Santeria religion - a religion infused with both Catholic and Yoruba ritual traditions. Brugal depicts the use of Stanislavsky's method of Physical Actions, used by the actor to guide herself to a trance state. In tracing how a trance state is approached, she includes the techniques of concentration, attention and given circumstances (upon which the physical actions are based) as well as, "emotive and ancestral memory, the faith and the sense of truth, the conscious intentionality, the conscious and pre-conscious relation of body and mind" (Brugal, 2015, p. 22). Brugal highlights how Stanislavsky works with the actor in Cuba, when dealing with the embodied knowledge of their culture, "it is important to note also that "the system" has been conformed to other techniques regarding the particularities and personal creation of his followers in countries such as Cuba, Argentina and Mexico, where "the system" found significant resonance" (Brugal and Campos, 2015, p. 19).

These possibilities demonstrate that the training of artists in incorporating cultural inheritances alongside and specifically integrated with the theatrical heritage of Stanislavsky contradict the claim that Stanislavsky was purely concerned with naturalism and his system suited only for realistic, closed universe plays, suggesting a potential flexibility, as noted in Carnicke. In his latter

life and work, he became obsessed with the idea that his system not be solely associated with Realism. Carnicke quotes in translation from a nine-volume manual, only published in Russian, "we need the truth of physical actions and our belief in them not for the sake of Realism or Naturalism, but in order to stimulate an experiencing of the role's human spirit in us as a natural reflex (…) the importance of life of the human body must not be confused with the devices of Naturalism" (Stanislavsky, Volume IV, 1991 in Carnicke, 2009, p. 190). This offers opportunities of a synthesis beyond realistic pieces.

Igweonu proposes that, rather than the initial transmission of the psychotechnique, an emphasis on Stanislavsky's later theory of the psychophysical in training opens new pathways, concluding that the combination of specific local knowledge (and techniques), such as a Yoruba trance ritual, with elements of Stanislavskian techniques "suggests an interdisciplinary bedrock that is not alien" (Igweonu, 2017, p. 283). This echoes Stefan Aquilina's notion of the fluidity that he has found in the essays on the transmission of Stanislavsky in Africa (Aquilina, 2017, p. 273) and while, as he remarks, Stanislavsky is often caught within the tensions of post-colonial discourse, he recounts the recent developments in Tunisian theatre:

> Mrabet, for example, uses the helpful image of the 'crossroad' to place Stanislavsky within the context of contemporary Tunisian theatre which, he believes, has inherited the markedly dualistic framework of East/ West, Professional/ Amateur, Oral/ Written, Actor-as-Creator/ Actor-as-Imitator. He argues that these binaries are today being challenged at such institutions as the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique, which adopts a critical approach wherein Stanislavsky's ideas are not blindly accepted but sifted through various angles that include scientific research, practical work, and historical contextualization. (Aquilina, 2017, p. 272)

According to Igweonu, in Africa, the challenging of solely Western based approaches to contemporary theatre and performance is ongoing and present in much of post-colonial theatre development, with playwrights and performers continuing to powerfully celebrate and forge their cultural identity (Igweonu, 2017, p.281). In acknowledging that the work of Stanislavsky has carved out a place in Nigeria that is useful, Igweonu takes notice of Samuel Ravengai's discourse

on the usefulness of Stanislavsky for the post-colonial actor and agrees that it is not an effort to rival or replace his work but to incorporate it in line with what is most applicable, suggesting that some elements of his work are more useful than others (Igweonu, 2017, p. 278).

As Alison Hodge concludes, in her introduction to *Actor Training (2001)*, that "many practitioners have eschewed the post-colonial notion of a comprehensive system in favour of identifying first principles within their own particular context." She goes on to note that "some principles are fundamental, capable of transcending their origins and therefore justifiably can be recognised as part of a matrix of key concepts in contemporary actor training" (Hodge, 2009, p. xxl). Identifying the principles that are the most applicable to 'a possible but not yet born hybridity' perhaps then comes through a sifting process of experimentation.

Ravengai's concept of the cultural body, his insight that indeed all actors are not the same due to the contexts of culture and environment, sees a '*habitus'* of the body created by natural responses engrained from birth within a specific locality and a specific culture. He draws the conclusion that the rural African body has culturally inherited a physical mode of expression that is potentially hampered by the earlier psychotechnique of Stanislavsky (Ravengai, 2011, pp. 42-43), which he views as essentially a director's tool. Ravengai does not call for rejection of his techniques but calls for an adjustment based on the needs of actors in Southern Africa, suggesting that, rather than working in a pure Stanislavskian approach, "an unalloyed Stanislavsky", the Method of Physical Actions as developed prior to his death in his last studio, is the more viable,

> The method of physical actions valued what actors brought to their acting practice. They generated creative discoveries in a rehearsal space through their bodies, however embodied, rather than relying on their brains as in the earlier version of the psychotechnique. (Ravengai, 2009, p. 53)

In challenging notions of the neutral body in that it presumes a Western ideal, denying the validity of a body's natural habitus, Ravengai also raises questions about the idea so central to Stanislavsky's method that the actor must begin work from within themselves in the given circumstances, as it deprives the body's inherent instinct to create character through imagination (Ravengai, 2009, p. 52-53). Regarding the common notion in acting of working from a neutral body, Morris, a lecturer in acting at Central School of Drama, however, states that:

> The neutral body isn't the perfect body. The neutral body is your neutral body, is your body without tension, with alignment that is physiologically possible for your body (…) For the actor then, the 'neutral body is a body 'ready to work and also a body shaped by the cultural history and the cultural economics of the 'natural' body. (Morris, 1999, in Evans, 2008, p.124)

What Ravengai and Igweonu then call for is a deeper focus on the physical elements of Stanislavsky's system, as giving all actors greater agency and an equalised space, wherein they are 'doing' artists, effectively creating change (Ravengai, 2011, p. 53). This focus on the psychophysical, where the inner impulse and the action can become immediate, reflects the contemporary emphasis on Stanislavsky's final work as well as its theoretical underpinnings, as reflected by not only Ravengai but also Mrabet, Brugal, Grotowski, Halba, among many others.

2.3. Considering the Work of Stanislavsky

When he speaks to the actors in *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky emphasises "always act in your own person, as an artist. *You can never get away from yourself* [my emphasis]. The moment you lose yourself on the stage marks the departure from truly living your part and the beginning of exaggerated false acting" (Stanislavski, 2013, p.152). And again, Carnicke quotes Stanislavsky from his Russian notes that "actors can experience only their own emotions. They can understand, empathise, put themselves in their character's shoes and begin to act as their characters do. This creative action calls forth experiences analogous to the role" (Stanislavski, 1989, in Carnicke, 2008, p.133). For Stanislavsky, the actor therefore must work from themselves. They can, if they are inspired, truly transform; the transformation to a character organically develops from their unique insights and creative resources if there is the capacity to fully

physically express themselves in action and embodiment in response to the stimulus of imagining 'the who am I' of Stanislavsky's given circumstances (Thomas, 2009, pp. 38-67).

In discussing characterisation and imagination in *Building a Character* - how it is achieved by the actor – Stanislavsky demonstrates to the class how intuition can physically invent a character, how, by a tic of the face or a slight adjustment, an actor can physically invent a character. Yet, he reminds us that a physical characterization is a mask, which only hides the actor, the human being (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 535). In conclusion, he asks and answers:

> Where does this intuition come from? (...) In any of a dozen ways (…) draw your external characterization from yourself, from others, from life (real or imaginary), either intuitively or by imagination, from the daily round…friends, etchings, books, stories, novels or let chance provide them. Only don't get lost in this outer searching, be yourselves. (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 519)

Stanislavsky indicates there is no one way, there are many paths for an actor, some from physical actions and others from affective memory or imagination (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 162). He also asserts, in regard to the actor's use of affective memory, a similar approach to characterisation, "we use not only our own past emotions as creative material but we use feelings we have in sympathising with the emotions of others (…) it is utterly impossible that we should have sufficient emotional material of our own to supply the needs of all the parts we are called upon to play" (Stanislavski, 1989, p. 205).

Stanislavsky's latter method was an evolution of his previous work, the result of not only the flux and flow of an artist's life but also his realisation that a theatre dominated by a literary approach, with the actors subservient to the playwright and the director made for a dead theatre, as he states in *Stanislavski's Legacy*, "therefore this playwright's theatre, predicated as it is by the despotism of the director/playwright, is doomed to be limited by the talent of the director/despot and deprived of the actor's talent" (Stanislavski, 1968, pp.173-174). This speaks to the evolution of South African theatre, with its reliance on devised theatre and the actor, a

natural move away from the domination of the literary text, which Stanislavsky refers to, where performance is emphasised over the literary (Steadman, 1996, p. 13).

Ian Maxwell (2004) relates that what essentially Stanislavsky created in his system was a manual of a practical philosophy developed in the 'hurly burly' of the rehearsal room, bringing up the binaries he has noted in much contemporary discussion of Stanislavsky:

> Meyerhold's topography of the actor, goes the story, followed the logic of the (William) Jamesian schema (famously: "I saw the bear, I ran, I felt afraid") to produce an "outside-in", "physical" theory of acting. Stanislavsky, in contrast, worked from the inside out, producing a "psychological" theory of acting; the theory that, notwithstanding the political/formalist diversions of Brecht, won out in the grand narrative of theatre history. (Maxwell, 2004, p. 93)

The issues of the need for an emphasis on a more physical approach highlights not only the needed considerations of what works best in the context of Southern Africa but also the issue of 'inner to outer' versus 'outer to inner', the same issue which created tensions between Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, Michael Chekov, his former and most brilliant students. Jonathan Pitches in his book, *Science and the Stanislavsky System of Acting* (2009), which explores the scientific roots of his work, discusses Pavlov and his study of reflexes in relation to Meyerhold and biomechanics, notes that "Meyerhold sees the actor's actions as a chain of physical responses to external stimuli" (Maxwell, 2004, p.56).

Tracing this conundrum of the mind/body becomes a paradigm for understanding the issues of inside versus outside. The discussion centres around the two ideas that if a person has memories within, psychologically, the recalling of which affects their behaviour, it follows, as well, that the body has knowledge, reflexes, impulses, instincts and memories which, in turn, affect behaviour. In analysis of the relation of body to mind, Carnicke devotes a section to effective memory and behaviourism in present day postmodern science, discussing not only the ethics of acting

teachers use of affective memory, but also that new research into the behavioural nature of consciousness has revealed that "discoveries in neuroscience support Stanislavsky's assumption that emotion is experienced as a psychophysical continuum" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 164). This speaks to a wholeness of being, as opposed the spilt of 'either

from the body or from the mind'. In arguing for Ribot's rejection of "a casual assumption" that maintains "either that mental impulses cause bodily responses or vice versa" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 168), she quotes the actor/director, Rhonda Blair, "the neuroscientific perspective critiques twentieth-century approaches that compartmentalise different aspects of the actor's being, e.g., separating acting from voice, voice from movement, and all this from research and critical thinking" (Blair, 2006, quoted in Carnicke, 2010, p. 54). Stanislavsky saw the body, emotions and mind as a coherent whole, a continuum (Stanislavski, 1989, p.157). As Carnicke sees it, Stanislavsky's resultant use of Yoga was from this sense of the wholeness of ourselves as human beings, as a well as necessary for the creative state he terms as both 'experiencing' and as "I am". Bella Merlin, who studied in Moscow, defines wholeness as, "in a nutshell, the basis of psychophysical acting is that inner feeling and outer expression happen at the same time" (Merlin, 2001, p. 27).

Psychophysical action then theoretically reflects a wholeness of action. Stanislavsky's use of active analysis in directing and actor training, through the application of actions, founded on intention and given circumstances, in the improvising of etudes - as suggested by Ravengai (2011, p.55) - is also seen in current training at the primary training school in Tunis where his teachings are still considered essential. Actors are trained at the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (Higher Institute for Dramatic Art, ISAD) in Tunis, in the second year, in Active Analysis, as transmitted by Maria Knebel, Stanislavsky's assistant in his last studio. Mrabet notes that his work is, however, put into a historical context, as well as students studying his theories in light of recent scientific knowledge (Mrabet, 2017, p. 305). In discussing Fardel Jaibi, the current director of the Theatre National Tunisian, whom he describes as the most emblematic of Tunisian theatre directors, Mrabet speaks of Jaibi's journey away from and return to the use of the system,

> ‘Stanislavskian despite himself’, Jaïbi has avoided a literal interpretation of the ideas of the Russian master and sought a creative direction that led him to ‘rediscover’ the ‘principles’ of the System, before integrating them within an eclectic approach which uses these principles as its backbone. (Mrabet, 2017, pp. 301-302)

The literal interpretation of the use of Stanislavsky seems to denote, for many practitioners and scholars, a universal unalloyed approach and has been eschewed in favour of practitioners like Jaibi in Tunisia who forge their own path in a binary search for the specific, as opposed to the imposition of a Western ‘meta narrative’. It can be concluded that practitioners and scholars in Africa have circled in and out of his work, regarding it as containing certain fundamental principles – and therefore useful to what is applicable to the context they operate in (Igweonu, 2017, p. 280). Again, in his essay on Stanislavsky in Tunisia, Mrabet tells of Jabir’s journey of a clear rejection and an embrace of Brecht to a revisiting of Stanislavsky on his own terms, remarking,

> But this ‘poetics of doubt’, apparently ‘in conflict with’ Stanislavsky’s approach, remained intrinsically faithful to Stanislavsky’s founding idea, which in 1936 he had expressed as follows: It is not a question of my method or your method. There is only one method, which is of an organic and creative nature (…) and I am ready to state in writing that if a student joining our theatre finds a way to attain the laws of this nature, then I will be very happy to learn from him, Stanislavski, 1958, p. 158. (Mrabet, 2017, p. 303)

It appears that this search of the actor/artist in Africa has led to a creative challenging of the notion of unalloyed Stanislavsky (as well as others), rejecting what has been seen as a Western bourgeois theatre tradition and seeking what is intrinsic and organic to their work, while continuing to respect Stanislavsky’s idea that his work is intended to follow the laws of nature.

Aquilina (2017) notes such efforts have, in certain instances, been a journey of integrating binaries into a creative hybridity. Considering new training methods and techniques within a context of African theory and in locality while, at the same time, teaching Stanislavsky’s approach requires perhaps the need to deconstruct as well as reconstruct when aligning with the post-

colonial world. A former professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at Wits University, David Peimer, emphasises the journey of traveling between the centre and the periphery so prevalent in South African theatre, noting that most of the plays for which South Africa is known for internationally are plays which have their origins in Township Theatre, so much so that the genre is central to theatre making in South Africa (Peimer, 2017, p. 309-310). The techniques of township theatre with its high energy, physicalised performances include frequent use of quick switching from character to character by the actors, the use of both political and traditional songs, as well as both traditional and urban style dance from gumboot to pantsula and beyond. Breaking the fourth wall with the actors interacting with the audience, often going out into the audience, makes special demands on the actor. This confirms what I have observed and encountered in teaching in South Africa. I interact with students who would rather perform in township style over all others, resisting any request to do the designated 'realistic' scene work. Much of theatre is rooted in the townships, dusty, far away from the centre of the cities. I have seen how the periphery to the centre journey these actors take can be dangerous, full of inequality, scarce funds and frustrations but they do happen by stint of perseverance. It is this very journey taken by many artists that has provided so much life blood to the inspiration of South African theatre. This genre of theatre has become the centre of much of South African theatre and reflects a history, based on the crucible of apartheid. Peimer accurately notes, "collective memory (colonialism and its effect on social relations) and daily life (legacy) are associated with murder in South Africa" (Peimer, 2017, p. 311).

Hybridity in teaching Stanislavsky in South Africa becomes a kind of deconstruction. In recounting his efforts towards translating the technique of emotional memory to young South African actors, Peimer highlights is his effort, as a director, to contextualise and translate. For example, he discusses the use of emotional memory to focus on the 'banal' details of life as opposed to the more general knowledge of what murder has meant in the history for South Africa, such as an actress recalling batting a cat against a wall after the cat has clawed her, as a correlation to connecting emotionally to her desire to murder someone, rather than the general anger towards the cruelty of apartheid. He juxtaposes this to another actor who, as an emotional

memory for Hamlet, recalled the details of his father's death and the elders of his village calling his spirit back to advise them. Peimer implies that the actor was responding 'culturally' in relating his father's death to a communitarian ideal (Peimer, 2017, pp. 311-312). Still, it is tempting to respond with the theatre maxim, 'if it works for you, then use it', in other words, the actor's choices are naturally from their culture and their world view. The use of Stanislavsky's techniques appears useful, then, and are functional in context, centred in the locality of experience. What appears to be significant is that the actor learns to work from within themselves, from their own 'sense of truth', therefore the consideration is not *what* the actor chooses but *how* the technique is used. Stanislavsky (2013, pp. 47-61) has said the small sensory details in the process of doing an exercise is how the actor connects to themselves. It would follow then that it does not matter how they come to it or where they come from, a calling from the ancestors or anger at a pet, the essential element is that they come from the individual's memory, the creative power within.

The small detail, taken from life, therefore is a 'lure' (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 163-164), to entice the actor's subconscious knowledge and thus a tool for the actor in performing - in order to connect to their role through stimulating affective or emotional memory. The definition of affective, according to Oxford Dictionary, is relating to moods, feelings, and attitudes (Oxford Languages, 2022). The synonyms include emotional, emotive, disturbing, sentimental, feeling, intuitive, non-cognitive, perceptual and moving. The definition's inclusion of 'perceptual, intuitive, non-cognitive and moving' indicates more than the memory of weeping over the loss of a loved one and opens up the use of Stanislavsky's technique to include memories of observations as well as emotions. As theorised by Pavlov and Ribot, 'emotion is motion' in accordance with their theory of behaviourism that sees "human behaviour as a physiological response to stimuli" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 162) and was used by Stanislavsky (possibly to justify his theories to the Soviet government). The tool of emotional memory or affective memory works then as it can expresses holistically an actor's response to the memory, on the moment and taken from who they are.

Both Alison Hodge (2004) and Igweonu (2017) have noted there are first principles which apply to the use of Stanislavsky. In past years, practitioners such as Michael Chekov, Jerzy Grotowski and Zarrilli have spun off from his basic teaching, emphasising what they thought to be important. This development is ongoing and continues to evolve on to the present time and hopefully will continue throughout the world. Certainly, some techniques are more applicable in some situations than others and Stanislavsky himself was aware of this, acknowledging, "one must give actors. One of these is the path of (physical) action. But there is also another path: you can move from feeling to action, arousing feeling first" (Stanislavski 2008, p. 498). He also advocated for the actor to take what he offered and do with it what they will. This suggestion of many pathways and taking what is offered to do what you will suggests that, through analysing and comprehending the principles of Stanislavsky's system and specifically delineating how they interact with and connect with the deeper creative needs of the actors in the locality of their culture, the idea of the possibility of synthesising is established.

As described above, the use of relevant techniques, without an orthodox interpretation and with reference to finding the useful pathway, one can begin to place him properly in the necessary context of South Africa. However, the difficulties of translation from Russian to English are noted by several scholars as impeding the necessary but complex process of comprehending Stanislavsky's actual meaning, as well as the demands for ideological correctness made upon him by the Soviet system and Stalin (Carnicke 2009, pp. 132-133; Benedetti, 2010, p. xxi). The challenges of pinning him down are complicated, not only did he contradict himself, but, as has been noted, what he meant is entangled by inaccurate translations and the subtlety of meaning in translations, as referred to by Carnicke (2008), Carriere (2010) and Benedetti (2010), all of whom speak Russian. For example, both Carriere and Carnicke make note of the important mistranslation which exists around the concept of 'experiencing' (*Perezhivanie*). This concept was so central to his teaching that he titled the two parts of the Russian publication of published in Russia after his death in 1937, *The Actor's Work on the Role*, Experiencing, part 1. and Embodiment, part 2. It is revealed that the Russian term for 'experiencing', as applied by Stanislavsky, is nuanced. John Gillett, an actor and scholar, defines the word from an actor's point

of view as an organic, explorative process of transformation, rather than copying the character from an external image,

> When I experience, as opposed to telling myself consciously what I should be doing, I have a number of qualities. I am focused and easy, absorbed and engaged in the imaginary circumstances of the improvisation or script, in the action, in the predicament of the character, as if the situation is real, so that I believe this is happening in the sense of imagining with commitment it's happening: I make believe with naivety like a child. (Gillett, 2012, p. 1)

Yet, as defined and translated by Hapgood, in *An Actor Prepares*, she alternately calls it, "the art of living a part", "the capacity to feel" or "creation" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 132), which gives a generalised meaning to the word and may not communicate what Stanislavsky intended.

Hilary Halba explains in her essay on Stanislavsky and Māori theatre and performance how concept of experiencing has been a source of discovery for theatre makers in the Māori culture, who relate the Māori traditional idea of *ihi*, *wehi* and *wana* in Māori dance, performance and, even, sports to the Stanislavskian principle of experiencing. The three terms work in harmony: with *ihi* being the psychic power of the performer, *wehi* being the response from the audience and *wana* being the combined effect of the three in interaction (Matthews, 2004, p.10). She explains, in regard to these ideas present in Māori traditional culture,

> Although a performance is rehearsed, it remains engaged, immediate, seemingly spontaneous, emotionally alive, and present. In many aspects of Māori theatre practice, the concept of experiencing for both performers and spectators is generated in the dynamics between Western theatrical training systems (to do with action, connection, empathy, and emotional identification), and Māori performativity. (Halba, 2017, p.374).

This demonstrates the way in which the goal of experiencing is incorporated into the aesthetic and ethos of another culture but requires a holistic understanding of what Stanislavsky actually meant and requires searching out translations which accurately reflect his meaning.

The conscious techniques of Stanislavsky allow the actor to enter into the subconscious, into the state of experiencing. Carnicke labels *experiencing* as the lost term of his work, devoting an entire chapter in deciphering his meaning (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 129-147). As noted previously, the Russian word for experiencing, *perezhivanie*, has been loosely translated to the detriment of what exactly he meant. Carnicke further explains the precise meaning of the word in regard to the nuances of the Russian language, choosing to translate the word as 'experiencing' rather than the more common translation of 'experience'. She goes on to say, the prefix, *pere*, means repeating, as in the repetition which occurs in in rehearsal and performance, but notes, as well, its meaning of to live through, as in 'the actor's unbroken concentration on the events of the play during the performance" (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 132-133). Stanislavsky's ideal then is the art of experiencing and he, as discussed earlier, juxtaposes it to 'craftsmanship' or 'mechanical' acting, which he defines as "having rather elaborately worked out methods of presentation of a role with conventional illustrations (Stanislavsky I, 2013, p. 20) and 'representational' acting is characterised as "a form and method of acting which is permanently fixed, and which is produced with a certain inner coldness" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 17). According to Stanislavsky, with representational acting, the actor may be close to experiencing in rehearsals but they are fixated on creating the external form of the character, which they will freeze and present to the audience, dry of the original emotion. The actor is not 'living the part', not 'experiencing' in an organic and spontaneous fashion, on the moment.

Ravengai asserts in his essay on artistic research and Afroscenology that the framework of curriculum and actor training in African theatre must be shifted more radically with, not only " the inclusion of African based theory such as Nigritude, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, Afroscenology, Afro-futurism, Womanism (African feminism) (Ravengai, 2020, p. 56), but also with,

- Production of new plays/performances from the African context that may be used by students and researchers for their courses and research.
- Production of new performer training methods and techniques that speak to the
- African context; e.g., Afroscenology, Afro-futurism. The world may benefit from Africa.

- Challenging the logos. The western academy has always worshipped positivist ways of producing episteme while at the same time demeaning knowledge gained through making, performing, and creating. Arts research challenges the dictatorship of logos and privileges embodied ways of knowing a major paradigm shift. (Ravengai, 2020)

This marks the need to place Southern Africa at the center of things in accordance with Afrocentricity in research, performing and training. It also marks the need to recognise the training of an actor/creator as inherently challenging the logos of the western academy, based as it is on a positivist approach of empiricism and science which does not easily meld with the ethos of the actor/artist, which is subjective. Pitches theorises that Stanislavsky's goal of 'experiencing' as the ideal state for the actor, is beyond logos, subjective, traveling into the world of metaphysics, if not physics (Pitches, 2006, pp.10-11).

The subjective experience of the subconscious exists in Stanislavsky's assertion that his conscious technique is an avenue to access the subconscious, the subjective. Torstov says to Kostya, in An Actor Prepares (2013), when discussing the use of both spontaneous emotions and repeated emotions, "let me remind you of our cardinal principle: Through conscious means we reach the subconscious" (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 190-191). Carl Jung, the psychoanalyst, also notes,

> My life is a story of the self-realisation of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as whole. I cannot employ the language of science to trace the process of growth in myself, for I cannot experience myself as a scientific problem. (Jung, 1966, p. 16)

Tolstoy contends that art communicates emotions and felt experience, as opposed to knowledge, by 'infecting' its audience with the artist's emotion (Tolstoy, 1964, pp. 85-86) and Stanislavsky also uses to infect in Tolstoy's sense that the audience is infected when a performance stirs the spectator's memories (Carnicke, 2009, p. 217). Soyinka's play, *A Dance in the Forest* (1971), depicts the presence of ancestors, supernatural beings intervening in the action and rituals. The question then arises of where the actor or the researcher in Africa or South Africa is placed, in terms of logos, in their search for Afrocentric systems, central to their aesthetic, artistic and embodied ideals, particularly when much of the embodied knowledge of their indigenous culture

has accepted direct relations with ancestors, the presence of gods onstage and elevated states of consciousness. It follows that, for the actor, 'felt experience' and embodied knowledge is confirmed and made tangible and conscious in their artistic work through in the lived experience of a person embodied in their culture.

Edward Gordon Craig, the theatre designer and innovator states that the playwright is not the god of theatre, nor is the director, but the dancer – she who moves (Craig, 1904, pp. 137-140). The thorny idea of truly living a part or experiencing seems to be elucidated in that it puts the performer/actor, "she who moves", at the centre of theatre. I see this as connected to Lebaka's discussion about the use of dance and music in the Pedi culture of South Africa, where he relates the cultural significance of the healing in the Malopo rituals, which takes place through music and dance, stating that "there is little possibility, if any, for the Pedi traditional healers to experience the supernatural form of healing without performing music and dancing to it" (Lebaka, 2015, p. 29). He also puts the dancer/musician at the centre and highlights that, in African traditions, "every human person has non-dichotomous physical and spiritual aspects. The physical aspect is the body that is seen. The spiritual aspect is invisible, but observable. Man's spirit serves as a link between the human person and the spirit world. The spirit of man is perceived as the essentiality of the human person(s)" (Lebaka, 2015, p. 34). This is, as Lebaka notes, a humanist philosophy, based on the African community's search to "use music to imbue human-being-ness in solving life problems (…) as a way of ennobling human life (…) it imbues humanness and an unbounded way of searching for meaning in life" (Lebaka, 2015, p. 35). This relates to not only the dancer as at the centre of theatrical experience but also to Stanislavsky's concept of living the life of the human spirit in a role (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 169). Rejecting the role of a comfortable bourgeois businessman of Moscow, Stanislavsky committed himself to the life of an artist who focused his life's work on elevating the experiences of the human being as central to creation in theatre. He regarded the actor's journey of creating the soul of the life of a character, "the life of the human spirit", as performing a vital spiritual act. Not only does this speak to the African conception of the harmony between the physical and the spiritual but is a humanistic and cultural view of human beings as at the centre of meaningful experiences through

the healing of performance, but perhaps also speaks to Stanislavsky and his lifelong pursuit of exploring the portrayal of the human being through the psychophysical technique as a path towards experiencing the human spirit in the acting process.

Stanislavsky's humanism was, of course, a humanism born of the Russian context. Nick Moseley (2006) asserts that, as Stanislavsky came from haute bourgeoisie, his humanism was from the ruling class who believed, in their superiority and privilege, that their souls were elevated. The result, as Moseley claims, is that they wrote plays about themselves, elevated their struggles to heroic proportions and celebrated the individual over the community. In contrast, Benedetti quotes Gurevich, Stanislavsky's longtime translator, who notes his response on the eve of World War I:

> He said that events of recent days had given him a clear impression of the superficiality of all that was called human culture, bourgeois culture, that a completely different kind of life was needed, where all needs were reduced to the minimum, where there was work - real artistic work - on behalf of the people, for those who had not yet been consumed by this bourgeois culture.' (Benedetti, 1998, quoting Gurevich from Russkaia Misl, Bk X, p. 153.)

Moseley goes on to sum up his argument by situating humanism as an essentialist philosophy which denies the modern discourse that "the human subject is not a coherent 'soul' but is a collection of behaviours which are learned and engrained during a struggle to gain and maintain acceptance and status within the social order" (Moseley, 2006, p. 8). This philosophy, while somewhat reductive, reflects the postmodern concept of the self, wherein the very idea of self is up for question, as in Elinor Fuchs' suggestion "that one of the meanings of 'postmodern' – its psychological formation, I would say now – was a dispersed idea of self, and that this dispersal was represented in many different ways in the contemporary alternative theatre" (Fuchs, 1996, p. 9). Still further, Carnicke evokes experiencing, which as the lost term, as involving dual consciousness of both the role and the actor which is, at once, representation (in terms of the body) and experience, concluding then, "if genuine experiencing is indeed the experience of performance itself and if this creative state allows for alternate states of mind, then by recovering Stanislavsky's lost term we can easily revisit his System from a postmodern angle and bring renewed vigour and relevance to his techniques" (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 146-147). It may seem that

the humanist philosophy is dispersed in modern discourse, more transactional. However, Lebaka points to the humanism found in African traditional values which links to the humanism at the heart of Stanislavsky's system, that of finding the life of the human spirit.

If music and dance connect a person to their sense of the spiritual, as theorised by Lebaka, Stanislavsky seems to relate his sense of what is human to the spiritual as well, as demonstrated in his "politically incorrect speech for the age of Stalin" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 96) to the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1928, Stanislavsky states:

> Art creates the life of the human soul. We are called to convey the life of the modern man, his ideas, on the stage. Theatre should not imitate its spectators, no, it must lead its audience step by step up a grand staircase. Art must open the eye to the ideal. (Stanislavsky in RAS, 409 in Carriere, 2010, p.
>
> 23)

This speech was given on October 26, 1928; three days later, on the 29th, at the theatre's jubilee celebration, Stanislavsky suffered a heart attack while performing and never returned to the stage again (Benedetti, 1988, p. 286). Tacitly, in the reading of the speech, it was considered by the Soviet government to be a condemnation of social materialism in that it referred to spirituality and religion, to the 'soul' and the 'ideal', as well as to the spiritual concept of ascending the ladder in the Russian Orthodox Church (Climacus, 1982). In line with this, Carriere's thesis, *Reading for the Soul in Stanislavski's The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself: Orthodox Mysticism, Mainstream Occultism, Psychology and the System in the Russian Silver Age* (2010), relates not only Stanislavsky's frequent conflating the idea of the self of the actor, the spirit of the actor and the soul of the actor (Carriere, 2010, p. 34, p. 88, p. 131) but interprets Stanislavsky's above statement as a reflection of not only of the spirituality of the Silver Age, combined with Russian Orthodox beliefs, but also the sense that, "the artist becomes the priest, through the active engagement of the powers of the soul, who opens access to the world of the unseen and essential and through his/her creative activity" (Carriere, 2010, p. 23). African spirituality in performance, as described by Lebaka, references the seen and the unseen, with its holism, humanistic values and moment to moment improvisation in performing (Lebaka, 2015,

pp.38-39). This can form a link with the heart of the Stanislavsky system where the ideal of experiencing, alongside the techniques of the use of prana, radiation, as found on his chapter on communion and 'creative will', as found in the chapter, The Inner Creative State (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 209-240 and pp. 281-292), reveals the spirituality of his work. This potentially works in harmony with the values at the heart of African spirituality.

As explained by Lebaka, the seen and the unseen so central in traditional African beliefs creates a communion between the ancestors and the community through the creative act of performance, experiencing "the universe of comprising two distinguishable but inseparable worlds – the visible and the invisible. Holism, the principle of appropriating things from many different perspectives, underlies the entire African metaphysics" (Lebaka, 2015, p. 38). This idea can be correlated to Stanislavsky's creative act of experiencing in theatre and speaks to a wholeness similar to Lebaka's meaning, where the inner spirit is revealed through physical expression. Achieving this wholeness through a holistic approach to acting also involves many perspectives: imagination, intention, physical readiness, an open voice, prana and radiation, as well as conscious analysis of the performed piece and can be said to like the tools of the musician in Malopo rituals, who, through knowledge of music and dance in the context of their community and culture, acquires the ability to perform, transform and heal. It is not as particular as it may seem. The sense of the actor as a priest in the holy space of a theatre is present not only in Stanislavsky's thought but also advocated by practitioners such as Grotowski and Artaud (Grotowski, 2002, p.35) and resonates to the roots of performing where, for example, Greek theatre evolved from celebrations of Dionysus. One could perhaps speculate that each theatre from each area in the world reaches back to religious and spiritual roots. Consequently, the relationships between ritual, the creative life of the spirit and a holy sense of theatre remain to the present day.

2.4. Active Analysis

Mrabet includes Active Analysis as part of the program in Tunisia's theatre training at the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique and Ravengai reasons that, for the actor in Southern Africa, Active Analysis is possibly the better method for training, as noted previously. Active Analysis is the last step Stanislavsky took in devising conscious techniques for the actor (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 194-202) and was developed towards the end of his life in a private studio. It proved to be his final and last contribution to the art of acting (Benedetti, 1988, pp.215-318), where the actor applies analysis though action. Initially called 'The Method of Physical Actions', it seems to have evolved to being called Active Analysis, as his assistant, Maria Knebel recounts in her book, *Active Analysis* (2021). The Method of Physical Actions is recounted as more in line with the Soviet endorsement of behaviourism and promoted by those at the Moscow Art Theatre after his death. Both Merlin (Merlin, 2003, pp.33-34) and Carnicke note that his student in the last studio, "the loyal Marxist Mikhail Kedrov" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 190), went on to become head of the Moscow Art Theatre and possibly created the imprimatur of 'The Method of Physical Actions', interpreting the work with a more reductive view of physical action, instead of Stanislavsky's meaning of psychophysical action. Carnicke states that Kedrov's interpretation dealt with activities instead of actions, with the latter including both the inner and outer meaning of the word 'action' (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 190-192). Stanislavsky asserts, "action in the theatre must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent and real" (Stanislavski, 2013, p.49) which signifies that if an actor decides on the action 'to defend myself', they may choose such physical activities as to hold up a barrier, to stay far away from a partner, to hug the door or simply to cross their arms – all of which are physical activities which justify the inner action/intention. Benedetti combines the two 'methods' as one (Benedetti, 2008, p. xiv-xv), as does Ravengai (2011, pp. 52-54), both calling it 'The Method of Physical Actions' - which somewhat confuses the narrative. Bella Merlin indicates that there is "some disagreement between scholars and practitioners as whether or not there is a difference" (Merlin, 2003, p.33). Regardless of the name, amongst both scholars and practitioners, Active Analysis has more recently emerged as a simple and efficient tool for rehearsal, as it requires a holistic understanding of Stanislavsky's techniques while also focusing more on action and less talking.

As recounted by Benedetti, Stanislavsky was politically isolated and ill and did not write down his last work, which took place from 1934-1938 and there is no primary source. However, according to both Knebel and Carnicke (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 194-195), Stanislavsky labelled these methods 'etudes', taken from a process of structural analysis and of breaking down a play into sections of actions and conflicts, 'events', which would be given names, such as 'Dorinne proves her point' or 'Othello takes the bait from Iago'. The foundation of the work was improvising around the script while checking back and forth for accuracy, as well as putting the action each actor chooses into an active, transitive, verb, as initially conceived of in his first studio and as indicated in Benedetti translation of Actor's Work, Year 1, Experiencing (2008), where Torstov says:

> I advise you never define a task by a noun (…) a task must be defined by a verb (…) yes, it's action but only not a genuine, productive, fit for purpose action, but stagey 'representational' action (…) let's see what happens if we change the Task from a noun to a corresponding verb…before you choose the verb place the words "I want" in front of the noun you are going to transform: "I want to do…what? (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 148-149)

The idea of action is foundational to the system and has become a method in theatre practice spun off from Stanislavsky, where using a verb to 'activate' a scene has been used commonly. William Glaskill, Max Stafford Clark and Nick Moseley in the UK have created a process that has come to be known as "Actioning", which is commonly used in the UK to this day. Based on breaking down actions, as in Stanislavsky, Moseley offers a clear description of how the method of actioning traveled,

> The Method of Physical Actions, which became the dominant rehearsal technique of the Moscow Art Theatre in the decades following Stanislavski's death, takes as its starting principle the idea that a physical action which is motivated from the character's objective and carried out truthfully within the world of the play, has a much more stimulating effect on the actor's creative imagination than an intention which exists only in the actor's head. A scene, therefore, should be 'mapped' as a series of connected practical or gestural physical actions, which the actor learns alongside the text. The actions themselves are like physicalized 'thoughts', which express in various ways the subtext and character intention, and which can (in theory) be performed over and over again without losing their power to stir the imagination (…) 'Psycho-physical Actioning' could be described as

> a refinement of this technique, yet its origins lie not in the Method of Physical Actions, but in the political theatre of 1970's Britain. (no date, pp. 1-2)

This reflects the concerns of Ravengai in regard to the overly psychological part of the psychophysical technique, as well as his advocating the use of etudes (Ravengai, 2011, p.54) and is a reaction to the inner focused methods of Strasberg. Certainly, in its action orientated concerns, it becomes suitable to exploring its use in South African theatre, as well as encompassing physical actions with intentions. During Stanislavsky's last studio, the work was focused on the play, *Tartuffe*, by Moliere (Carnicke, 2010, pp. 196-197). The actors spent time not only improvising around the script but also played "games" as he called them; exploring details of the household, improvising a breakfast, even though a breakfast scene was not part of the play – no longer the actor's imaginings at home alone but now actively present in rehearsal. What was called for is the necessity of the actor understanding, in present time, 'Here, Today, Now' (Merlin, 2003, p. 35), the skeleton of a piece in term of actions and events. What distinguishes Active Analysis is the idea of impelling action and resisting action between actors in a scene, a process of understanding the dynamics. As Carnicke lays out in her essay in *Politics and American Acting* (2010), after understanding what the event is in a scene, the actors establish:

> What is the dynamic function of each actor in the interaction? Some play impelling actions which move purposely toward the event; others play "counter actions" which resist, delay or seek to prevent the targeted event. At this stage of work, actors consider the force and directions and anticipate the collisions that are likely to occur between them as they improvise the scene. This step assumes the structural importance of conflict in drama. (Carnicke, 2010, p. 18)

In my experience of teaching actors in South Africa, the most potent tool is that of playing action in terms of using a transitive verb; the constant question of "What do you want and what do you do, in the given circumstances, to achieve it?" This very question circumvents the problems of language by addressing the struggle some have in acting in a second language and empowers the actor to concentrate on their partners and on the given circumstances, as opposed to 'how' they

say the words. The technique of Active Analysis works as it is clear and simple path to incorporate the use of intention/objective and, in effect, understand language as a facet of actions and behaviour

Active Analysis, as a rehearsal approach, does requires that actors are trained in Stanislavsky's techniques: the use of imagination in personally relating to given circumstances; the ability to break a piece into beats and objectives and to make choices as to which actions to choose; relaxation; concentration; the creative will; a sense of truth and logic; communion- these are all fundamental to the actor learning how to commit to an action. Furthermore, physical and vocal training, of any sort, enable the actor to connect to and fully express the inner to outer. Summed up, it indicates a new approach where the actor is more able to access greater power in performing,

> Energy, encouraged by feeling, launched by the will, guided by the mind, moves confidently (…) this kind of energy emerges in creative, sensitive, fertile, productive action which can't be done just anyhow, mechanically, but in accord with the impulses of the heart. It flows through the network of the muscular system and stimulates the internal motor centres; it elicits external action. That's the kind of movement and action, originating in the secret places of the heart, following an inner line, which genuine artists need. (Stanislavsky, 2008, p.365)

2.5. Challenges to the Ubiquitousness of Stanislavsky

In the foreword to his book, *Acting and Reacting* (2005), Nick Moseley, from the Central School of Drama in London, states,

> It should not be forgotten, however, that Stanislavsky was a man of his time, and his thinking reflects that time. To be fair to him, had he lived to the present day, it is very unlikely he would still be using his own early techniques (…) throughout his career, however, there were certain absolutes to which he adhered, and which we now have to challenge, because it is these absolutes which are partly responsible for the problems which arise in actor training today (…)The fact that Stanislavsky thought it necessary for the actor to create a fully rounded character and a coherent emotional journey before he actually steps onto stage, probably owes much to the 'ego' culture which Stanislavsky grew up with, and which pervades the acting profession today (Moseley, 2005, p.14).

The idea that Stanislavsky was primarily a man of his time, and his thinking created a system that is confined and limited by his time and place, Russia in the late 19th and early 20th century, raises questions around the application of his work in the present day in South Africa as well as worldwide. Moseley highlights the ego culture of the age in which Stanislavsky worked and suggests that is has had a negative effect on actors today. He takes his arguments further,

> Stanislavski himself derived from the wealthy Russian haute bourgeois. Living in a country with a recent history of feudal slavery where unimaginable poverty still reigned, the rich, educated class readily bought into a form of humanism which derived from capitalism and which placed emphasis on the essential nature of the individual (Moseley, 2006, p. 8).

Stanislavsky was indeed a humanist; he came from the humanist tradition of the 19th century. As David Chambers writes in the introduction to Elly Konijn's book, *Acting Emotions* (2000), says,

> As imperiously as Freud, Darwin, Marx or Mendel stand in their respective fields, Stanislavsky looms as the towering progenitor in his. In common with these aforementioned brethren, Stanislavsky's theories grew out of the liberal humanist rational intellectual culture of Europe in the 19th and 20th century (Chambers, 2000, p. 9).

Again, where do the theories of a liberal humanist fit into a country whose concerns are connected to creating a nation state in the aftermath of apartheid? What is it indeed to be a liberal humanist and is it fair to link Stanislavsky, the artist, as Moseley does, to capitalism as it exists in the modern world? Although we do not know what his politics would be now, does it matter? Can he be applied in the political world of modern-day South Africa?

Aside from who he was, Stanislavsky's work, his methods have recently been the source of debates, especially in the light of a postmodern sensibility of today. Along with this, challenges arise around discussions of 'bourgeoisie individuality' and notions of work on character by the actor. Moseley implies, as does David Mamet, in both *The Practical Handbook for the Actor* (1986) and *True and False* (1998), that there is no such thing as character, only an intersection between

'given circumstances 'and the correct 'action'. This is a post-modern approach, as well as an assertion by a playwright that the writer is the dominant element in theatre. Mamet says,

> The actor does not need to 'become' the character. The phrase, in fact, has no meaning. There is no character. There are only lines on the page. They are lines meant to be said by the actor. When he or she says them simply, in an attempt to achieve an object more or less like that suggested by the author, the audience sees an illusion of a character upon the stage (Mamet, 1998, p. 9-10).

Mamet's insistence that becoming a character has no meaning, 'there are only lines on the page', may be a reflection of his stance as a playwright. It calls to mind Craig, mentioned previously, who asks, 'who is the most essential in theatre, the writer or the actor?', and who answers that the most essential is the dancer (Craig, 1904, pp. 137-140). It is she who moves, she who acts - action is theatre, theatre is action. This concept of action is interpreted by Stanislavsky as the actors' action/objective and is at the heart of what Stanislavsky 'discovered' and may be the source of his preeminence today. The question, 'what do you want and what will you do to obtain it?' is possibly a 'golden key', as William Ball calls it in his book, *A Sense of Direction* (Ball, 1984, pp.70-80). The committed attempt on the actor's part to pursue a desire, in opposition to others, not only creates the dramatic conflict but allows for actions, words and meaning to flow freely.

Moseley, however, veers away from Stanislavsky and argues for a more transactional approach to performing, as in Sanford Meisner's 'moment to moment' repetition exercises between two actors, where the focus is on the simple chemistry of how people spontaneously respond to each other. He argues for Meisner's sense that there is no separation between the world of the play and world of the theatre, that acting is negotiating the moment. 'Meisner expected his actors to be emotionally open, he placed more emphasis on the truth of the moment and the actor's organic impulses and responses to one another' (Moseley, 2006, pp.126-127). He goes on to object to what he considers Stanislavsky's absolutist idea that an actor imposes his will through pursuing objectives in the theatrical space as an outdated approach of the heroic, too psychological and individualized sense of a character's journey (Moseley, 2006, p.11-13). He rather supports Meisner's sense that acting is negotiating the moment by what Meisner calls 'the reality of doing'.

Ravengai contends that the African body is being limited and alienated from itself and its more pastoral culture in the pursuit of a western based technique that, he believes, disempowers actors as it takes away their sense of agency and relies on the master teacher/director to impart wisdom to the humble actor. He sees this as reflective of Paola Freire's criticism of the 'banking system of education' where knowledge is deposited into the vessel, depriving the equality of discourse between the student and the teacher and rendering them passive (Ravengai, 2011, p.52). Furthermore, the notion of cultural embodiment raises questions as to the extent of the power of specific environments and questions whether a universal approach is, in fact, hegemonic or if it can and should be adapted.

Stanislavsky and the use of his methods in the 21st century is the question that Sharon Carnicke deals with in her book, Stanislavsky in Focus (2009). It is her contention that, after 1905, Stanislavsky realized that he had directed as a dictator, treating actors as marionettes. As a result of this realisation, he began to look for new ways, focusing on physical actions, etudes and Active Analysis. She points out that it was Lee Strasberg who believed that the actor need not concern themselves with action/intention.While Stanislavsky saw action as the most essential tool on stage, Carnicke notes that Strasberg felt that actors need not necessarily concern themselves with such matters,

> 'It's frankly better if the actor doesn't know what the action is' (…) In short, the director, he [Strasberg] assumes, can manipulate the actor with or without their knowledge by assigning them actions. In contrast to Stanislavsky's sense of the actor's freedom as artist, Strasberg puts artistic control into the hands of the director. (Carnicke, 2009, p.229)

What Strasberg is essentially saying is that very thing that is at the core of the actor's effort, action, is only the prevue of the director, depriving the actor of the central obligation of their purpose which is 'to do' – instead, they must only feel. This reflects what Carnicke calls the bifurcation of Stanislavsky's system, where common lore believes that there is early Stanislavsky which focused solely on emotion, as practiced by Strasberg, while the latter Stanislavsky was solely concerned with action (Carnicke, 2009, p.212). Yet, what is considered a bifurcation by

some is an instead an evolution, one which incorporates his work with emotional memory from his First Studio (1905) and harmonises it with the concept of action. As quoted earlier, it is necessary to reiterate out his belief that, "one must give actors various paths. One of these is the path of (physical) action. But there is also another path: you can move from feeling to action, arousing feeling first" (Stanislavski 2008, p. 498).

The tension of power and status between the actor, director and the playwright are a very real element of theatre collaboration. Mamet, as a well-known playwright, goes beyond questioning the notion of character and dismisses much of the Stanislavsky training method, as practiced today, as useless. He has asserted frequently that there is a 'cult' around the work of Stanislavsky. He describes the ridiculousness of sensory exercises, claiming it has no use to performing; his approach seems to be the 'just say the words' approach, presumably in order to allow the natural and spontaneous response of the human-to-human encounter, as happens in 'real' life,

> We actors, being human, do not like the unexpected. If we encounter the unexpected onstage, we are apt to reveal ourselves. And formal education and sense memory and creative 'interpretation' and all these skills which are more appropriate, finally, to the lectern than on the stage, are ways of concealing the truth of that revelation – of that moment (Mamet, 1998, p.10).

Mamet, in his dismissal of sensory work and character in favor of the transactional 'living in the moment', have, like others, taken foundational elements of Stanislavsky's methods and rejected others. Like Mamet, who uses the notion of intentional action, practitioners have either rejected the rest or emphasized what they feel works for their chosen approach. Igweonu and Ravengai look to the Method of Physical Actions, as opposed to the psychological. Maria Knebel, as a student of Stanislavsky, was knowledgeable with all his methods but she worked primarily with Active Analysis and went on to be a major influence on contemporary Russian performers and directors (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 191-192). Worth noting here is the tension between the Method of Physical Actions and Active Analysis. While the Moscow Arts Theatre, under Kedrov, promoted the former, it was Maria Knebel who rather advocated Active Analysis in her work at Moscow's

Central Children's Theatre, feeling that Kedrov's was an overly simplified version of what Stanislavsky intended.

Glaskill and Moseley also veer away from the psychological, interiority which Stanislavsky has become so identified with, and created the technique of actioning, one that has become widely used in the U.K. This is a part of a reaction to the internal mode,

> The actioning technique was born out of the need to move away from what Gaskill saw as a 'Method- based' Freudian approach to text, which focused on individual motivation (the 'why'), to a more 'intentional' analysis, which was more concerned with exploring the nature of a verbal or physical action, its intention and its effect (the 'what') (…) the action itself was the most important thing – what the character does – to whom, in what manner, and with what intention. (Moseley, n.d., pp. 2-3)

In line with challenges to Stanislavsky and in a search for alternatives, Ravengai has suggested that other training models are necessary. Based on his experience as a director and teacher, he observes that the psycho-technique, with its emphasis on psychology and analysis, seemingly neglects the somatic, the physical, and cannot not encompass and include the full scope of the experience and the talents of the more traditional African performer. Combined with the tensions of class, colonialism, language and the behavioral strictures of psychological realism, he reasons that it cannot not provide a full enough framework. Along with a suggestion that training emphasize the Method of Physical Actions, he calls for the use of an intercultural performance model which he terms 'Afroscenology',

> As can be derived from the term itself, the Afroscenology model is concerned with cultural performance practices of any ethnic group without patronizing or homogenizing the group by imposing what Parvis calls 'the overly reductive model of western theatre' (Parvis. 2003:228). While Parvis deploys the term from an analytic point of view, I intend to use it from a performance perspective (Ravengai, 2011, p.36).

The problem for the performer in Africa is perhaps then: if they undergo training solely based of a western system, what is lost and what is gained? If one can define a body as culturally formed and, in essence, inheriting the cultural DNA of an environment and a society, what happens when a performer from a more traditional background must confront a system such as the Stanislavsky method of training? If we accept that our bodies are primarily cultural and have been influenced and perhaps formed by the generational culture we grew up in, then the considerations of actor training must be founded on a profound awareness of, an understanding of, the context of the student's experiences. Certainly, the devising of cultural performance practices based of traditional knowledge, as Zarrilli has explored in India, is a natural step to be taken. And, as well, one needs to consider the philosophy of Freire (1972) and his pedagogical approach as key, where the teacher and the student are taking part in an exchange, a condition of reciprocal trust and communication between the educator, who also learns, and the student, who also teaches. The carried, embodied, traditions that both teachers and students know, if incorporated, can provide a vibrant and powerful path to new elements of training.

As trainers, the idea of the more rural body juxtaposed with a westernized body, which perhaps evolved from a 'court body' and a ballet-like way of moving, provides us with a kind of wondrous but sharp contrast. I saw such contrasts in traditions of movement reflected when I was in theatre school at California Institute of the Arts: the dancers, in protest to their training, went on strike and joined the Ewe ensemble from Ghana in a basement room, saying they would rather go down when they danced than go up. These cultural signifiers, how we dance, how we interact are inherent positions, gestures that we each display as part of our socialization. Ravengai asks if it is fair that, as actors, these must be removed and we must approach our art as neutral (Ravengai, 2011, pp.42-45). Does that neutrality rob us of our very selves, of who we are, or is it a political position, the result of a rigid, oppressive approach to training, which was founded on a Western tradition handed down from an Empire? In performing Shakespeare, it is common to be told, as the Player King says in *Hamlet*, to not to 'saw the hands in the air'. I assume that this is because it distracts the audience from the complex language. Yet, on the other hand, the notion of

neutrality is pernicious in that it may seek to render actors as homogeneous and deny the valuable individuality that we each offer.

In productions based on a strong African aesthetic, there are clearly actors who are especially suited, those whose experiences, talents and inherent knowledge of their tradition has led them to these skills. I taught at Sibikwa community theatre for six years, in particular one program which was part of the MAP Seta effort where actors were chosen from all over South Africa. Among the twenty-five plus students were those who excelled in Tswana dance and who have gone on to perform internationally as well as acting in movies and dancing for major dance companies - one student now choreographs for the Johannesburg Ballet. I found that these students were not only multi-talented but also multi-cultural and seemed able to flow from one genre to another. This raises the question in regard to cultural roots and raises the questions: were they truly accommodated in their training, what were their experiences and what is their perspective in regard to their needs and goals as artists?

With respect to the notion of cultural embodiment, as Ravengai notes from Chris Schilling (1997), it seems to me that each culture has a cultural coding and knowledge, each culture has the traits inherited from tradition. In England, there is the stiff upper lip; in Thailand, one does not touch another's head as it is seen as a profound sign of disrespect. In the Middle East, it is insulting to expose the base of the shoe when sitting and speaking with someone and, in some African traditions, making eye contact is considered rude. We all have significators for good or bad behaviors. In a society that has endured colonialism, however, these codes and signs are complicated by the need to code switch between groups. We speak differently at home than at work, especially in South Africa where the accents change radically from home to work. Does this code switching help the actor in South Africa or does it alienate them from their true selves and from the possibilities of a powerful new aesthetic form to be found in the traditions of African performing modes?

2.6. African Aesthetics and South African Theatre

Both Ravengai (2011) and Kavanagh (2022) contend that realism is not at the centre of both African and South African theatre. Ravengai has said that Stanislavsky's methods are more suited to the details of realistic theatre, as found in the work of Chekov, and not immediately applicable. Kavanagh asserts that "African non-Realism is not Western Realism and thus we should not expect the preparation of the actor, building character and creating roles to follow the Stanislavsky Method" (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 3). Soyinka's *A Dance in the Forest* (1970) can be considered to be, in so far as realism is involved, a magical realism. Taking into account that, as Kavanagh notes (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 3), the aesthetic of realism arrived along with missionary schools, Siyari's (2012) contention that at the root of South African theatre are the traditions handed down from traditional, pre-colonial theatre, requires that any possible synthesis must be channelled through the ethos, aesthetics and values pertinent to both contemporary and traditional theatre.

Sirayi, in his research into pre-colonial indigenous performance in Southern Africa, remarks that it is primarily contemporary South African theatre which has been researched rather than the performances passed down from traditional theatre. In his research into traditional forms of mime, music, oral narratives, storytelling and rituals, which he calls a special language of traditional theatre and performance, he emphasises that, "any attempt to do justice to African theatre should take into consideration the cultural, historical and social conditions that lead to the birth of African theatre" (Sirayi, 2012, p. 26). This signifies that such inherited traditions exist in present day South African theatre and subsequently are a major part of any consideration which concerns itself with performance in contemporary South African theatre. Theses inheritances can as well be taken to be embodied in the theatre practitioners and theatre students in Southern Africa.

Ian Steadman has written in regard to adversarial theatre of the seventies, forged on the realities of apartheid and centred on the Black Consciousness movement, with its consequential ability to

redefine and radicalise theatre in South Africa. He asserts that the movement pointed the way forward and "engaged in rapid consciousness raising and politicization of black people, and it did more to Africanize theatre in South Africa than Nkosi or Dhlomo" (Steadman, 1994, p.24). He quotes Pascal Gwala in a speech, maintaining that the subculture of Black Consciousness theatre will lead, "eventually to an authentic national culture" (Steadman, 1994, p. 24). Steadman notes, as well, the many elements of South African theatre which has become part of the styles common today: devised/workshop theatre, collaboration and a search for new forms. Certainly, the theatre of South Africa, as part of a post-colonial society, can be defined as heterogeneous but, at its core, it has been fundamentally challenged and changed by Protest theatre which has successfully created new, dynamic and African theatrical forms. This centrality of black theatre from the townships has 'the periphery to the centre' reality as well as in the multi-varied theatre styles and origins of South African theatre, all affecting and influencing each other in creating new theatrical styles and forms. Kavanagh has defined much of Southern African theatre as African Non-Realism, with its "elements of ritual, storytelling, work and play" (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 3). In terms of Stanislavsky's methods, he believes them to be mostly suited for realistic plays where the 'magic if' and given circumstances are necessary to be sustain through the entire play, as opposed to plays like *Woza Albert* where the actors constantly switch parts. Yet he does concede that these methods can be useful tools when used side by side with other techniques (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 5-6).

Ravengai discusses the ways that actors from a more traditional background are able to perform more naturally in a play that deals with African aesthetics of magical realism, where gods appear, where the border between the work of the spirits and the human is porous (Ravengai, 2011, pp. 50-51). As Mango Tshabangu remarks in his review of Credo Mutwa's production of *Unosilimela*,

> It is in fact the theatre of Black Consciousness (…) the play dug through the dross into the gold that Black Africa is: the legends and the myths, myths invented by Africa herself to express her dreams and aspirations. *UNosilimela* is a play that recognizes the importance of the mask in Africa-using it to symbolize divinities and characters. And also, the importance of song and dance. These are the important aspects of Black culture which *UNosilimela* has made into a harmonious whole (Tshabangu, 1974, p.170).

Credo Mutwa, who created *UNosilimela,* speaks of South African theatre with a clear vision of its origins, reminding us of the unique sources of African performances. In an issue of *Sketsh*, Mutwa (1974, p. 114) diagrams an outdoor place (‘*umlinganiso’*) where performances traditionally took place, with different areas for each phase of the performance. Such an African aesthetic has within its significant potential for future exploration, beyond what has been done so far. Igweonu indicates that universities in Nigeria have provided a platform for those actors skilled in indigenous performance to work with students (Igweonu, 2017, pp. 284-286). This interrogation of traditional forms through theatre practice creates links to both the traditional past, the more recent past of Black Consciousness and can provide insights into future developments of South African theatre aesthetics. In weaving together the theories of an African aesthetic and the imperatives of decolonization alongside the relevance of modern Stanislavsky acting technique, one comes to not so much a solution as to a place where accommodation and context seem to demand an introspection.

2.7. Pedagogy

Repositioning Stanislavsky, therefore, is the concern of any teacher/trainer who deals with his methods in Southern Africa. As Ellen Margolies emphasises, the work of Paolo Freire on the colonialism of Western education in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) becomes fundamental in approaches to modern education, especially in “exposing the unspoken forces in classrooms” (Margolies, 2009, p. 3).With his emphasis on a mutual partnership between student and teacher, along with “a profound trust in people and their creative potential” (Freire, 1993, p. 75) - rejecting hierarchical relationships based on education, class, race or gender - Freire’s philosophy can be seen as applicable to the training of actors:

> In the field of acting, one might find special resonance in the multiple connotations of the verb “to act,” or respond to Freire’s notions of the student as a social Subject, acting upon his or her environment. Freire asserted a “culture of silence” within which colonized people—and in the “colonized” Freire includes, by extension, students—are granted limited vocabularies and

> expressive channels, and are thus cut off from access to centres of power or means to mobilize. One doesn't have to stretch these notions very far to suggest similar limitations and oppressions in the looming presence of the theatre profession, with its scant opportunities, devaluing of rigorous training, and unpredictable points of entry. At the outset, then, Freire's ideas served as both specific models and metaphors for the theatre. (Margolis, 2010, p. 3)

Much of Stanislavsky's approach in *An Actor's Work* (2010) takes the form of an extended Socratic dialogue between the students and Stanislavsky himself. Socratic dialogue, as a method of investigating the truth of any inquiry, is between teacher and student, taking the form of questions; with the teacher, as leader of the inquiry, seeking to highlight the assumptions, values and beliefs which frame the topic in discussion. The teacher is not so much the learned master but serves as both a guide and a participant in the discussion (Reid, 2003). This Socratic element of Stanislavsky's teaching methods is easily notable in his books with Torstov, the guide, and Kostya, the student, engaging in a dialogue around Kostya's search for understanding the creative process of acting. Ysabel Clare, in writing on the use of the Socratic Method in Stanislavsky, notes that it is integral to his teaching approach and reflects his pursuit of the (Platonic) ideal in acting truthfully:

> The exercises perform part of the function of investigating the 'truth' as they provide the vehicle through which incorrect attempts, or 'not truths' can be identified. The questions are not asked in words, but by the exercises. The answers are not spoken, but behavioural: embodied in the student responses, which implicitly articulate non-verbal aspects of practice and find themselves to be truthful acting or not-truthful acting. The exercises-as-questions and the responses-as-answers comprise the Socratic dialogue. (Clare, 2016, pp. 159-160)

This approach and emphasis on 'truthful acting' calls to question the value judgement of truthfulness in so far as it is necessary to ask, 'truthful to what?' Although challenged by such practitioners and scholars such as Carnicke and Grotowski, much of the behavioural contemporary analysis of Stanislavsky is centred around the idea that he is tied to a 19th century realism. In that the values of Stanislavsky juxtapose the three types of acting: mechanical (cliched), representational (where all is shown and worked out) and experiencing (his ideal of living the part), one could instead conclude that he was attempting to promote an organic style of acting, a breakaway from the hack acting so common in 19th and 20th century theatre. Yet, in dealing with the actor in modern day Southern Africa, training with Stanislavsky's techniques

necessitates consideration of not only the methods taught but also the contextual and historical knowledge in relation to the values of Southern African theatre, with a sense of the forces at play in the wider society, including both a respect for the many paths travelled by each student from 'the periphery to the centre and back'. The acknowledgment of the need for historical referencing of the techniques taught is also necessary. A commitment to rigorous training, in spite of the contemporary devaluing of such endeavours, which is often seen as a quaint indulgence in the speed of a Tik Tok world (Margolies, 2010, p. 12).

Specifically, the issues of teaching Stanislavsky in South Africa centre around the challenge of justifying the teaching of the work of 'an old white guy from Russia from over a hundred years ago', consequently indicating a clear need to place his work in historical context along with the need to place the students who are learning his techniques in the context of where and who they are. If ideology does create the material, especially if the ideology of the Stanislavsky System as well as other system-based approaches such as Michael Chekov, Strasberg and Meisner limits the imagination of students to the ideology of realism as the 'default position in terms of style" (Chambers, 2009, p. 43). Kavanagh, in his essay, *Realism, Non-realism and the African Actor,* describes realism as hegemonic and states that most Western scripts are based on the standard of realism he sees as set out in Stanislavsky's work (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 3). Aside from the questions of Stanislavsky's later work, even if his adherence to Realism is ultimately true or untrue in terms of his intentions, there is a compelling need to communicate these historical contexts to students, especially to students in Africa. Johnathan Chambers, in his essay, *Actor Training Meets Historical Thinking* (2009), states

> I look for opportunities to continue to draw students' attention to the elasticity of realism by highlighting the dynamism of the approaches they are studying. For instance, early in the term I endeavour to help students see how what is regarded as Stanislavsky's approach evolved and changed in relation to his own experiences, passions, and contexts, and that the methods of the System, such as he envisioned them, were not meant to be frozen in time. (Chambers, 2009, p. 49)

Chamber's essay is a call for teacher/trainers to apply both historical and critical thinking into the context of their training, with the belief that, despite the pressures of professional theatre, students are then empowered to become critical thinkers and agents of what they are learning.

In accordance with Chamber's call for historical thinking in order to break the yoke of solely training actors to become cogs in a commercial wheel, Stanislavsky did strive to liberate the actor from the tyranny of the director and the playwright, to guide actors to become the agents of their own artistry, as opposed to the puppetry of behaving for an auteur/director. He demanded that the actor be respected as a creative artist and, in his studios, sought "to place the tools of creativity into the hands of the actors (…) to make actors fully accountable for their actions" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 202). The techniques used in Active Analysis can theoretically provide the tools with which the actor becomes an active agent of creating, enabling them to take on the whole of a piece and collaborate with a director, rather than a vulnerable child looking for approval. Kavanagh recounts that when he was directing *Hamba Kahle, Mkhonto,* an African non-realistic play, an actor complained that he did not guide them towards realising their part in terms of a Stanislavskian approach and notes that "they need to open their minds and be prepared to explore other ways of playing a character in a theatre that is eclectic and therefore requires versatility and creativity and explores new and different methods in actor training, preparing the actor and directing" (Kavanagh, 2019, p.12). Delineating and contextualising the methods of various styles becomes intrinsic to training, particularly the presentational style with narration, switching quickly of characters, the use of Afrosceneology (Ravengai, 2022) and transitions. The actor's training would have been enhanced if their training in Stanislavsky was put into an historical and an African context, in an endeavour to give the actor a greater sense of agency as an artist, one who did not need the approval of the director and was able to "take responsibility, not for their characters alone, but for the play as a whole" (Carnicke, 2009, p.203).

Central to the challenge of synthesising Stanislavsky and his methods in South Africa along with an African aesthetic then is the question of empowerment of the actor as an artist. Does Stanislavsky advance their agenda as artists, actors and storytellers? If the actor in South Africa is able to work both in collaboration with others and alone as an artist, with a sense of where they come from and who they are; able to perceive and communicate both a vision and a critical sense of what they wish to create, in spite of the pressures of a difficult profession, then, to quote Brecht, they can "make use all means, old and new, tried and untried, deriving from arts and

other sources, in order to put living reality into the hands of living people in such a way that it can be mastered" (Brecht, 1936, pp. 189-190).

With the (colonial) inheritance of theatre in Southern Africa and the varied forms of theatre present of the many cultures within its boundaries, including traditional performance, Afrikaans, English, Indian theatre, et al, this mix can be considered in light of intercultural theory. Much of South African theatre has, in fact, been a blending of influences with the work of Handspring Puppet Company, Junction Avenue Theatre, The Serpent Theatre and the work of The Market Theatre with Barney Simon, for example. Is this 'syncretic theatre' as defined by Christopher Balme, derived from a theory of blended religions? Balme defines syncretism as, "a conscious, programmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theatre in the light of colonial or postcolonial experience" (Balme, 1996, p. 180). Knowles (2010) notes the three types of syncretic theatre: the first being those that emerged and took on Western styles with only traces of the pre-colonial form, such as the Yoruba traveling theatre or the post-colonial theatre in India; the second being those forms, such as the Noh theatre, which have essentially remained intact but have incorporated pieces of Western theatre forms; and the last being, "essentially new forms that emerge from the more or less equal fusion of traditional forms with the formal properties of Western dramaturgy, retaining the cultural integrity of both" (Knowles, 2010, p. 37). Balme, a New Zealander, has both worked in and written about Māori theatre, which has been notable in terms of its intercultural strategies to make use and blend performance forms with ceremonial traditions (Balme, 1996, pp. 179-186). Pavis, in his introduction to Balme's essay notes, their theatre is seen "as an opportunity to reclaim one identity and reclaim another: a culture of choice (Pavis, 1996, p.179)". As indicated in Halba's essay, Stanislavsky's notion of both experiencing and communing have been sources of discovery for Māori actors in their theatre performances (Halba, 2017, p. 371, 377, 382). Knowles cites alongside the idea of intercultural, as in Syncretic theatre, the notion of hybridity - the creation of the third space of Bhabha where there is a hybridity without hierarchy (Knowles, 2010, p. 35).

In the training of actors, with the pedagogical approach of Freire, the hierarchical can be subverted through empowering students, through contextual and historical approaches, within locality and with an eye to the tension between essentialism and universalism. Perhaps these are dangerously utopian ideals, especially regarding the "disturbing imperialism of interculturalism" (Pavis, 1996, p. 13). Fisher-Lichte presupposes a world culture of theatre as "the path of permanent mediation between the cultures [which] will gradually lead to the creation of a world culture in which different cultures not only take part, but also respect the unique characteristics of each culture and allow each culture it's authority" (Fischer-Lichte, 1996, p. 38).

Kavanagh highlights a flexible approach in claiming authority in the making of African theatre and asserts,

> When we come to directing and acting African Non-Realism, the fact that Stanislavskian reality is adhered to when applicable and thrown out of the window when not, does not mean that plays in this form are not also looking for reality, truth, nature etc. but just like the others they are looking for it in their own ways and in their own places and, above all, in reference to their own performance forms and historical culture. (Kavanagh, 2019, p. 7)

In a practical sense, Stanislavsky did provide actors worldwide with a system that can be used and followed. While his early work was his attempt to codify what he, as an actor, observed great actors doing, he finally observed that theatre is 'action in conflict' and translated the idea of action into the fundamental tool of Active Analysis via physical actions which allows the actor to embody the dramatic structure of a play. This potentially empowers artists, providing the actor with a pathway towards becoming an artist. Is it then that his work is only applicable in certain instances, determined by style? To quote Sharon Carnicke:

> Re-examining Stanislavsky's key notions about actions - as the primary language of dramatic art and as the dramatic structures encoded in the dramatic texts - makes him seem less a turn of the century artist and more contemporary in his approach to performance…when the leading French scholar Patrice Pavis proposes examining a 'performance lines of force', 'it's vectorization' (2003, 16-17), he unknowingly follows Stanislavsky into Active Analysis. Stanislavsky's support of the

> actor as artist reminds us as practitioners that respect entails taking responsibility. (Carnicke, 2009, p. 206)

His use of the concept of through-line of action and artists, which provides the super-objective (Stanislavski, 2013, 237-246), what Harold Clurman (1974) and Boleslavsky (1987), Stanislavsky's student, called the 'spine' of a play, side by side with Active Analysis, with its breaking down a play in term of events, the story, the facts of a play, inciting action/resisting action and improvisation establishes, as Carnicke points out, "an implicit relationship to literary theory…yet one of the most overlooked aspects of the System" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 198). Noting, as well, the parallels between his ideas of embodying dramatic structure in acting to both Formalism and Symbolism and the Formalists contention that, "literary form cannot be separated from content (…) a work of art is a self-contained system of signs, and that what we perceive as content is the result of artistic structure" (Carnicke, 2009, p 200). For Stanislavsky, the play or any theatrical piece is a structure made of action; the actor learns to delve into all the elements of the given structure similar to the way a detective solves a mystery, reading the clues through the text, style, rhythms, facts, mood- all the signs which will lead them to grasp the spine, the skeleton, of a play (Carnicke, 2009, p.198). This is where the actor/creator can embody the literary without being dominated by it. His notion of actively analysing by doing, through improvising, rather than sitting at a table, as well as internally connecting to the super objective and a consistent through line of action, opens a path where the 'vectorising of action' (Pavis, 2003) empowers the actor, a kind of physics of art, possibly applicable in all styles of work and relevant in multiple forms of theatre.

2.8. Knowledge Gaps Found in Literature

Stanislavsky in the World (2017), edited by Pitches and Aquilina, has made an important contribution to the understanding of transmission of Stanislavsky across borders and cultures. Because of its vast scope, from China to Morocco to Nigeria, more in depth research would amplify how each different culture approach their work. In Nigeria, Igweonu states that, "the precise details of what was taught as Stanislavsky's system is sketchy and would require future

research to unpack" (Igweonu, 2017, p. 313). Mrabet describes the acting program at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Art in Morocco, which places Stanislavsky in historical context and addresses the questions which arise in its development for Tunisian theatre, and mentions the use of Stanislavsky's techniques of relaxation, sense of truth, physical grasp, communication and Active Analysis. He highlights the results of this training,

> The art of the actor has in the past thirty years undergone considerable progress, transforming Tunisian theatre into a 'theatre of improvisation'. However, this theatre is finding itself 'weighed down' by the model of the 'actor-creator' which it generated and which today encloses it into a mould. (Mrabet, 2017, p. 278)

This evolution of training in Tunisia, if researched in detail, can fill in the vacuum of the lack of process based creative research and provide meaningful insight into the development and results of training with Stanislavsky, particularly with the use of Active Analysis, in different parts of Africa. The new area of the actor/creator exists as well in South African training and the creative consequences of its development is a potential for future research. The ever- progressing process of integration or non-integration may then be understood on a thorough level, with respect to the values, ethos and aesthetics of a variety of countries and cultures. I discovered a brief but intriguing sentence found in Ukala's statement in an interview that he admired Stanislavsky's work: "I found that his system naturally generates electricity from the actor and superlatively enhances his believability in the audience" (Akpuda, 2018, p. 66). I could not help but to wish that he had said much more on the topic.

Focus on the philosophy of Stanislavsky, its more mystical aspects, has been downplayed, with the exception of Carriere (2010) and White (2009). Much of this is due to the suppression of his views by the Soviet government and the agenda of its focus on social realism (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 103-104). The very notion of conflict was an antipathy to the need to promote a harmonious society.

As well, remains the problems of translation. Benedetti has translated, in *An Actors Work* (Stanislavsky, 2008), a version which does rectify much of the vagaries of Hapgood's translation yet translates the word 'soul' as spirit. As well, the word 'action' is not explained in its full

meaning, a word which implies the idea of energy pouring forth to other actors and to the surrounding scenic world, as opposed to simply activity. Additionally, Stanislavsky's idea of 'I am' and its relationship to what he meant by reincarnation is not fully researched. A fulsome analysis of all the rectifications needed in translations of Stanislavsky's work for both theatre practitioners and scholars would bring light to the confusions if clearly laid out and, specifically, help the actor who is drawn to understanding his work.

African aesthetics, as described by Lebaka, in Malopo music, contains the world view of Africa and the inherited knowledge of indigenous performance. In South Africa there is, as yet, little consideration given to the methodologies of the hybrid forms which have resulted from the combination and application of pieces based on both indigenous knowledge and Western based training methods. Such analysis would certainly contribute to enhanced knowledge for the world of performance and theatre of South Africa.

2.9. Conclusion

We live as theatre artists, as people, in a world of contrasts, sometimes seeming to veer from one extreme to another. For the performer in South Africa, in forging a cultural identity unfettered by colonialism, there are the challenges of not only language, but also of class, culture, values and race - as well as what one could call the aesthetics of survival. If a young actor has the wherewithal - not easily guaranteed - to arrive at a training institution, the choices they face as future actors are not only aesthetic and political but also practical. How can they fit into an industry and survive and how can we as their mentors guide them, offer them the full range of possibilities available? With the objective of training the actor as an artist, what is the range of training which can be offered? What is our responsibility?

This chapter had indicated future possibilities through tracing the transmissions of Stanislavsky across Africa, Cuba and New Zealand, specifically the Māori culture, with a view of how Stanislavsky's methods have been interwoven into theatre making. The ideas present a view of his 'usefulness' and areas where he has been challenged. Hybridity has created new forms of theatrical expression, integrating methods of Stanislavsky, such as 'experiencing', which are mobilised in the context the local world view, when they can illuminate expression. The third space of Bhabha becomes a space of new processes and experimentation in integration. The emphasis on the psychophysical aspect of Stanislavsky's later work by Igweonu, Ravengai and Brugal, with its concepts of physical action, are indicated as a way forward for the post-colonial actor, where the mind, body and spirit are viewed as unified and thus function more fully and immediately.

Reviewing the views of Stanislavsky reflects the holistic efforts of his system, especially in his assertion that the search of the actor is found in discovering the living spirit of a performance. The idea that the dancer (or the actor), 'she who moves', is at the core of performing, not the playwright or the director, aligns with a theatre where the domination of the literary is eschewed in favour of the actor as an artist/performer who has agency, as taught by Stanislavsky. Additionally, is the commonality found in the spiritual, as discussed by Lebaka, found both in Africa and in the philosophy underlying his approach. As Hodge has noted, while the foundational aspects of Stanislavsky are valuable, modern theatre practitioners integrate that which inspires them in their creative endeavours, as has been found in that transmission of Stanislavsky across Africa.

Positioning Stanislavsky's practical philosophy and methods in Southern African theatre, located as it is in the vestiges of apartheid and a post-colonial reality, requires teaching and training actors in a historical contextuality, as noted by Chambers, and from an interrelatedness which acknowledges the contributions of Freire. Stanislavsky's techniques, therefore, must work in locality, with respect to its traditions.

In the following chapter, an autoethnographic analysis of my time spent in South Africa facilitates a deeper understanding of process of moving from one ethos and one aesthetic to another. Having taught acting and directing in South Africa for a considerable time combined with my experience in coming from the United States, where I trained as an actor, has provided an exposure which potentially opens up perspectives of a synthesis between my previous of understanding the acting process and the world of South African theatre.

Chapter 3: A Thousand Steps: Teaching Stanislavsky in Countries with a Different Performance Ethos.

3.1. Introduction

While contextualising Stanislavsky in the current world of South African theatre includes focusing on the theories of his work in the context of post-colonial thought, as well as tracing the journey his work has taken in Africa, the question also arises of contextualising why I, as a person who has worked in theatre in New York City, have journeyed to South Africa, time and again, to participate in the world of South African theatre? What is so compelling about South African actors and the South African theatre? How have I interacted with the theatre I have found here and with those I have worked with and taught - what have I learned in working here?

Indeed, I have found in South African theatre an immediacy of issues relevant to the contemporary world of theatre: questions around interculturalism, the universal versus the local and the priorities of a post-colonial society, all of which are relevant both in Africa and in an increasingly globalised world. In training and teaching South African actors, I have learned to negotiate not only my own cultural context but to approach, to navigate, to teach with an awareness of both the cultural context of each actor together with a historical context - that which has been inherited. The issue of transmission of Stanislavsky's work necessitates context as well, placing his work not only in Africa but placing the techniques and theories historically in the world of theatre, as it has evolved to the present day.

The essence of these conflicts and discourses are realised and epitomised in the stories South African theatre artists choose to tell and in the way they are told. Among them are, for an example, *Rain Song* (2021), a play by Mondi Mayepu about the unravelling of a rapacious politician, the son of a famous struggle hero, with the theme of deterioration through entitlement and corruption, a criticism and reflection on corruption in government. The play is

presented realistically, except for the portrayal of the central character who is clearly depicted as a hyena. There are more subtle presentational elements as well, with the characters facing the audience when not in a scene. This is the work of an artist placed clearly in Africa, concerned with, in his criticism, the upliftment of his society. *The Red in the Rainbow* (2022), a play by Monageng 'Vice' Motshabi, tells the story of the murder of a young black boy by an Afrikaner farmer and its subsequent effect on the community. It highlights the compromises the black community must make and the final refusal, by the mother of the murdered child, to accept the usual hierarchy. The actors are clearly the story tellers, the witnesses of the event, using narrative to enter and leave a scene, sometimes sitting in the audience, making the audience members part of a church and playing several characters, in and out of scenes which require a realistic depiction. Rather than choosing a realistic setting, the author broadened the perspective to include the idea of us witnessing the tragedy, distancing the audience, then pulling us in via the intensity of the dramatic scenes. This switching, often used in South African theatre, when done by skilled actors and directors who are knowledgeable about both realistic and presentational theatre, creates an intense pace with heightened emotions, unlike Brecht's theatre where there is emotional distancing. The story is expanded by the style of presentation and, in this expansion, speaks to the perspective of modern, post-colonial, South African theatre. This is also true in the student plays I have seen at Wits University, both devised and scripted, dealing with such issues as varied as virgin testing and riots in South African cities. Particularly dynamic was a play, *The Prophet*, (2019), by a student, Sifiso Ngwane, about a poisoned community in the Eastern Cape, forced to find their way back to their spiritual origins, as guided by a mysterious storyteller. The story is told in *isiXhosa*, with both singing and dance, yet follows a realistic narrative and uses the theme of healing as a catalyst for the way forward. With the play's elements of mysticism and Afro-futurism and with the demands of magical realism, singing and dancing, the actors are required to be well-versed in all the performative elements, including a Stanislavskian grasp of narrative and action. Again, Ngwane reflects upon the discourse of liberation through a reaching back to a traditional past.

Within my journey to South Africa is a discovery of a weave of discourses on post colonialism, stories told by theatre artists and ideas of future possibilities, surrounded by a consideration how the work of Stanislavsky can be integrated into South African theatre. His approach is complicated and multi varied, as it is not only a manual of acting and a philosophy but also reflects, "the struggle of the theatre worker negotiating on one hand with the science towards which he aspires, and on the other with the language of the spirit to which he is drawn; reaching towards an Eastern mysticism, and a final resort to the inexorability of lived experience" (Maxwell, 2004, p.100).

3.2. Context of Stanislavsky

In his original draft preface to *An Actor's Work,* written in the 1930s, Stanislavsky boldly states,

> Actors and others working in the theatre should create what and how they please but on one essential condition: that their creative process should not run counter to the laws of nature and her laws…it is of this technique that this book speaks and nothing else. It is written in defence of the laws of nature. If you want to sing the communist 'International" or the Tsarist anthem you need a well-placed voice and a technique. It is of this placing and this technique that this book speaks and nothing else. It is written in defence of the laws of nature. (Stanislavsky, 2008, xxiv)

Throughout his life, Stanislavsky consistently believed his techniques were founded on the laws of nature, that their use would chart the actor's path from the conscious to the subconscious and thus empower the actor as artist. Placed alongside theories of Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism, his techniques and theories and the centrality of his work worldwide, necessitates the interrogation of the universal versus the local, calls into question notions of the influences of interculturalism, multiculturalism and hybridity and requires a redefinition of concepts of humanism as extant in Africa and the West. These juxtapositions include post-colonial thought, which rightfully places the process of freeing oneself from the legacy and oppression of colonialism at the centre of discourse, questioning and often rejecting that which has been inherited and incorporated from colonialism. As Ukala notes, "western drama influenced African students of Western literature to interpret the world the way the colonial planners of African

curricula wanted them to" (Ukala, 2001, pp.29-30). While there has been change, it is not to be taken for granted. Biodun Jeyifo cautions that liberalism can be a façade that may "co-exist perfectly with actual, material relations of dominance and exploitation" (Jeyifo, 1996, p. 160). Thus, with this in mind, teaching and training in theatre becomes an endeavour which requires an ongoing post-colonial awareness, an awareness that transmission of knowledge from the West can morph into a paternalistic pattern that continuously reinvents itself and requires those of us who teach acting in South Africa to place the work of Stanislavsky into both perspective and context. Most teachers come from within; others, like me, arrive from without – finding myself in the midst of a debate which addresses issues such as inclusivity, as in the journey from periphery to centre and centre to periphery, transmission vectors in teaching, appropriation, transformation and aesthetics - issues which are at the cutting edge of the future of theatre and theatre training worldwide. The training of Māori actors in New Zealand and the synthesising of Stanislavsky's methods as detailed by both Halba, (Halba, 2017, pp. 367-387) and Balme who notes it is where, "the twin attributes of accessibility and cultural integration that characterises not only Māori theatre but define the special territory of intercultural theatre" (Balme, 1996, p. 186). The efficacy of their success can be found in the consistently enthusiastic reception of the Māori plays presented at the Edinburgh Arts Festival. The same phenomena are true in the reception of Kentridge's work, *The Head and the Load* (2018) at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City.

For the purposes of this study and connected to these considerations, is the idea that Stanislavsky's spiritual approach to acting training has been overlooked; his faith in the laws of nature and faith in the soul of the actor is indicated in his repeated statement that "the essential goal of theatrical art consists in the creation of the "life of the human spirit of the role" and its transmission on stage in "artistic form' "(Carnicke, 2009, p. 220). With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the removal of Soviet censorship, archives have opened and, with the release of his complete works in Russian, the full scope of his work has engendered a revision and a reconsidering of what he actually wrote. Scholars such as Sharon Carnicke and Bella Merlin in

Beyond Stanislavsky (2001), have contributed to this reconsideration, emphasising the physical aspects of his work with the Method of Physical Actions and Active Analysis. This is exemplified in such books as *Stanislavsky (Re)Considered* (Zarrilli, 1995) and *Method Acting Reconsidered* (Krasner, 2000), as well as the translation of Maria Knebel's *Active Analysis* (2021). Maria Shevstova, as well, in *Rediscovering Stanislavsky (*Shevstova, 2019*)* has highlighted the Russian Orthodox ideas present in Stanislavsky's thought, as in the charismatic word, *tselost,* which refers to the collective, to unity and integrity and which Stanislavsky applied in his emphasis of the value of ensemble work. Many of these more recent works have established that the identification of Stanislavsky with naturalism was much in line with the Soviet agenda of Socialist Realism, minimising the symbolic works he directed and his promotion of the work of Meyerhold, who ultimately was imprisoned and murdered by Stalin (Benedetti, 1988, pp. 318-321) and thus calls into question the identification of his work as useful for only the psychological and the realistic. It also distinguishes the Strasberg focus on the Freudian sense of psychology from Stanislavsky's more broader meanings of the soul. Patrick Carriere, in his dissertation on the spirituality of Stanislavsky and the Silver Age, argues that,

> This body of work represents both theoretical and practical approaches to understanding the System, the main projects of these works have been the recovery of the body of the actor – a renewed focus on a system of physical actions and the embodiment of performance whether in a semiotic or phenomenological way – or refining and defining the psychological approach to and role of emotion in an actor 's art. What they have tended to exclude, or touch upon only lightly, is the metaphysical component in Stanislavski's theory and practice of the System. (Carriere, 2010, p.28)

Carnicke, as a significant scholar on the misinterpretations of his work and the conflating of his system and the Method, has acknowledged the mystical side of Stanislavsky, emphasising the "missing term of 'experiencing' "and includes the genesis of his use of yoga, *prana* and the radiation technique of sending and receiving *prana* (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 129-147, 169-171). It remains that Stanislavsky was a part of Russia, embodied the indigenous, animist, values of the Russian Orthodox religion and, as noted earlier, was condemned for these beliefs. He had to negotiate his beliefs with the Soviet system – adjust them to the prevailing political winds. The parallels found in African and Orthodox spirituality and the subsequent potential of spirituality

found at the root of Stanislavsky's work exist, and, to an extent, are dwarfed, amid relevant issues of the often-unequal power relations between the global South and North present which are reflected in theatre. His depth of work, its vagaries and the surrounding discourses necessitates consciously redefining pedagogical approaches in training, paying attention to notions of the subconscious, the super-conscious and collective consciousness, and recognising his ideas of the manifestation of spirit in the body, the 'communion of actor and audience' as taken from Tolstoy; the holy actor, as in Grotowski; that the actor, in a sense, incarnates the life of the soul in the human body. These elements are far from a mechanistic view, even from a psychological view, in that there is a difference from a Freudian sense of the dangerous subconscious and Stanislavsky's view of the subconscious as a source of creativity.

Theatre is, in its deepest sense, ritual both in theory and in practice. I have discovered the reality of this not only through the theories of Richard Schechner (1984, 2003) or the plays of Wole Soyinka (*A Dance in the Forests,* 1971; *Death and the King's Horseman*, 2002) or the movies of Ousmane Sembene (*Black Girl,* 1966; *Moolaade*, 2004) but in the context of what I have observed in working with actors here in South Africa, in helping people devise the stories they wish to tell. The ritualistic and frequent use of water as a cleansing and purifying element in plays in South African theatre, as used by Lara Foot in a play about rape, *Tshepang* (2005) or Mncedisi Shabangu in *Tenbush* (2008), the very act of just lighting and smoking a cigarette as ritualised and mimed in *Coal Yard* (2019), by Prince Lamla, has awoken me to these roots of ritual, roots found in the midst of theory and practice, many of which are founded in spiritual traditions and beliefs. Carriere translates Stanislavsky from Russian and notes the ritual of significant moments of our lives:

> What does the close friend or wife of a dying man busy themselves with? Preserving the peace of the patient, carrying out the orders of the doctor, measuring their temperature and applying poultices. All of these little actions acquire a definite significance in the life of the sick man and are therefore performed like a sacred rite, they pour their whole soul into them. These physical actions, set amongst important suggested circumstances, bring about a greater strength. Under these conditions, the interaction of the body and soul, action and feeling, manifests - thanks to

> which the external can help the internal and the internal conjures up the external. (Carriere, 2010, quoting Stanislavsky, 1956, p. 143)

This speaks to Stanislavsky's later emphasis on the details of physical actions, how the interaction of the inner life flows into the outer, as well as how the utter simplicity and beauty of the things we do as humans become a ritualistic sequence in the most seemingly ordinary and mundane aspects of our lives. These insights, both humble and profound, in considering the spirit of Stanislavsky in South Africa, in discovering how it works in the midst of a post-colonial discourse results from a journey, one made on an impulse, to South Africa.

3.3. A Journey

When I arrived in South Africa, coming from a family which was involved in organising against racism in the USA, I encountered, for the first time, the central theories of Afrocentricity and of Pan Africanism which permeates much of contemporary South African thought. The idea that it is incumbent upon all to seek unity in the uplifting of African people is central to the discourse in Africa and in South African theatre in particular. I have come to understand that many of the colleagues I have associated with and worked with have been committed to such ideals since they have matured as artists, with those who have not overtly been part of the movement also influenced by such values.

As expressed by Robert Sobukwe, the notion of liberation is not only a literal journey but also a psychological journey. The influences of Black Consciousness, as it exists in artists and theatre makers in South Africa, can be said to be the psychological journey which grew alongside the actual fight for liberation. Mafikwa Gwala, in a speech at a Soweto gathering in the 70s, defined the influence of this influence in theatre as not only a "consciously articulated cultural counterpoint to the movement towards liberation" but also posits black theatre as a "black sub-culture (which) will act as a counterculture, leading eventually to an authentic national culture" (Steadman, 1994, p. 24) Although sometimes indirect, implicit rather than explicit, this

philosophy has created the philosophical approach in plays such as *Vuka Machel, Itsoseng* and *The Red in the Rainbow.*

In theatre, the effort to include and uplift all who participate in theatre making remains a living palpable thing, a part of the ideals of the post-apartheid world. For me, as a relatively privileged person, as a white person, it somehow seemed normal then, from 1996 to 2006, that I would go out 'to the periphery' to share my skills, even while acknowledging the ambivalence of differences. As I write, even now, colleagues from the theatre sector are arguing about the future policy toward the arts, specifically the policy of theatre and dance. They have experienced the failure of the government, as led by the ANC, to truly uplift artists, to provide the necessary steps of periphery to centre and of centre to periphery that are so vital to the culture of a developing country.

The dynamic struggle of liberation, as well as the euphoric cultural transformation of 1993, found when I first came to South Africa, has drawn me back again and again, particularly because the clashing forces of culture existent within the country has created a powerful fusion in theatre. South Africa is remarkably diverse, a multi-cultural society, and it is especially found in the cities. It is a country with a majority of people of African origin, who are themselves of diverse backgrounds: Xhosa, Ndebele, Pedi, Tswana, Sotho, Zulu, Venda, Tsonga, Swati, Khoi and San. Further diversity comes with the mix with of those of European backgrounds, such as Dutch, English, Lithuanian and Greek and, in addition, the Indian, Coloured, Malay, Zanzibarian and the original Khoi/San populations with now, finally, the many immigrants from Africa and further afield who have settled here since 1994. Perhaps because of the colonialization of South Africa by both the Dutch and the English, these strains of diversity seem held in the hands of the foundational African society and surrounded by the English culture and the Afrikaner society, as evolved from the Dutch.

The mix and the diversity of the country impacted me upon arrival. At an ANC gathering of cultural workers in Johannesburg, I was surprised when a famous protest poet said farewell with the word, 'cheers'. In New York City, at a meeting between the cast of a South African play and various black actors from New York City, many of the New Yorkers were surprised by the integration between the black South Africans and the white South Africans and taken aback with the openness of the South Africans in speaking about racial relations. This, for me, is about the zany unpredictability of the society, I ask young actors in class, "what do you identify with?", meaning, "what kind of theatre do you want to do: South African, musicals or …? ", and an actor, says, "Hmmm, Korean television?".

Recognising this diversity is necessary in any study of theatre and actor training. In South African theatre, there are a multitude of divergent strains and influences: the work of Gibson Kente in Soweto; large scale musicals both of South African origin such as *Sophiatown, King Kong, IpiTombi or Kat and the Kings,* those of the West End/Broadway ilk, including the tradition of the pantomime; realistic plays such as those by Fugard, Kani, Reza De Wet and Zakes Mda; plays which combine presentational and realistic elements, where the actors make use of both ensemble storytelling and intermittent realistic scenes: such as *Tenbush, Woza Albert, Asinamali, Fruit* and *Coal Yard.* This is a limited list - the range is even wider: the story telling of Bheki Mkwane and Ellis Pearson, many one person shows, Ronnie Govender and Kessie Govender. And the work of Matsemela Manaka, Mbongeni Ngema, Brett Bailey, Handspring Puppet, the Serpent Players and the Magnet Theatre must be included; Fatima Dike; the Protest plays of the 80s and 90s; adaptations of classical plays such as *Meis Julie* and *The Cherry Orchard*. The list, of course, can go on and on but it becomes clear that South African theatre has a multitude of traditions and expressions. However, the crux of the sensibility, that which rumbles beneath the surface of much of the theatre, is the protest play, as it has evolved to the present. Such a play as *Nothing but the Truth* (2002) and its story of Sipho, could be considered a protest, like the play, *Death of a Salesman* (1949), for recognition of the common man. This strain runs through South African theatre from presentational plays to realistic plays and speaks to its rich legacy. It also creates a dilemma and an imperative when considering the training of actors, in that a South African actor

must encompass and master not only the inherent nature of their theatre but also the many forms of expression it takes.

I began working with actors from various townships in the 1990s and early 2000s, townships such as Katlehong, Tembisa, Soweto and Claremont in Durban, often helping young actors develop their plays centred around traditional stories, presented with both song and dance, pieces that were African in their content and aesthetic, which sought to reflect upon traditional values. I taught in townships, prisons, community centres, often through Sibikwa Theatre, adjudicated festival competitions and was part of a team selecting plays for festivals in Johannesburg. In watching, I imagined, at the time, that one day theatre artists would come up with fully realised pieces based on more traditional themes, with solid African aesthetics, going beyond the steps of *uMabatha*, known also as the *Zulu Macbeth* (1970). Presently, there are theatre artists who are working with traditional African forms of theatre, forms previously delineated by Credo Mtwa and Femi Osofisan, artists such Sofian Mfundo Tshazibane and Brett Bailey. I observed the many strains and tensions in the aesthetics of theatre and the sensibility of its artists, some of which reflected the tenor of that time. I did witness then, when selecting plays for festivals, a rejection of more traditional African dance and themed plays, with South African artists from Soweto, in particular, preferring plays with 'modern' themes and aesthetics. I recall an argument with the members of a selection team, where another woman and I wanted a piece, told through the use of Tswana dance, to be chosen: we were dismayed with the vehement rejection of the work. Yet, that expressive need which reaches back to the traditional, seems to be omnipresent, often underground and full of potential.

Fanon has noted the reaching back which fuels the creativity of the future. This is a vision of a future theatre, rooted in black consciousness, a vision that such work will impact fully on the society and open new doors of possibilities. Ukala notes in his essay, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2002), in discussing the work of Femi Osofisan, that such theatre pieces from Africa allow the audience to stand either outside or inside of a performance and challenge the hegemony of

European aesthetics, concluding "subversion is the cornerstone of the politics of aesthetics required to totally free the African mind from the cultural shackles of colonialism." (Ukala, 2001, p.40).

This notion of subversion is perhaps what is at the crux of African aesthetics as it applies to developing a modern day, non-colonised mind set and as it applies to the paradigm of what some of South African theatre has excelled at. In terms of the dangerous and the subversive, South African theatre has often subverted stories, and it is the injustices at the core of its stories which makes it so compelling. *Woza Albert,* originally performed in 1984, a classic South African theatre piece, tells the story of Jesus's return to the world, only he comes to the country of the oppressed, not to some idealised catholic empire. The riotous *Secret Ballot* by Jefferson Tshabalala, where the politicians gleefully, with abandon, rob and steal and celebrate their victories; *Tenbush* by Shabangu, where retribution against the colonial encroachment and wars can only be achieved by the sacrifice of the beautiful and the young; or *I See You* by Mongi Mthombeni where the young of any colour are essentially victimised, brutalised and eaten up, as the mythic Saturn did to Uranus. These pieces all take on a basic ideal and twist it, subvert it, in order to highlight the brutality that has resulted from apartheid, colonialism and cultural imperialism.

Fanon's observation of the phases of post-colonial experience speaks of the initial surrendering to the culture of colonists, followed by a reaching back to an often, mythical past, and finally to the freedom of synthesising of both in the last stage. South Africa, having endured a long struggle against apartheid against both the British and the Afrikaner government, has, in theatre, incorporated both the latter two phases of Fanon's post-colonial definitions almost simultaneously, with the harkening back to the roots of the culture, redefining the terms of the struggle against colonialism and critical thinking about the past, present and future of its own culture. In describing the African writer/artist as caught in a loop, Ukala notes, artists are educated by the West, with a detached Western educated mentality, but yearning for and seeking liberation through immersion in their traditional culture.

On the specifics of theatre, Kene Igweonu, in his essay, '*Interculturalism Revisited*' points to Rustom Bharucha's protests to the theatrical appropriation of the epic myth, *The Mahabharata,* by Peter Brook, to point out that the dominant culture so often wins the day:

> A case in point is Peter Brook's [theatricalization of] *The Mahabharata,* which is typical of the form of inter-culturalism in which Eastern cultures and traditions are appropriated and decontextualized, with Western performance culture and tradition being privileged over it. (Igweonu, 2011, pp. 68-69)

Brook's production of *The Mahabharata* was adorned with 'Orientalism', as defined by Edward Said (1979), but in reality, it was performed as a staid white piece of boulevard theatre: civilised, calm, aesthetically pleasing, but lacking in the cultural signifiers, the energy, which would be authentic to the Indian culture surrounding Delhi. Here, one can contrast the more radical approaches of the subversive nature of South African theatre to *The Mahabharata.* A powerful though 'a poor theatre', barely subsidised and far away from the radical chic of Brook's Paris, which carries within itself a challenge to the audience: a twist which highlights and protests cultural imperialism and colonialism. It can be characterised as a *crie de coeur* for lost connections and a political consciousness which subverts from all sides and jolts the audience out of their comfort zones.

Thus, the acting student/the young storyteller, having inherited such a theatre, encounters a host of choices, but the core remains of the subversive and the radical nature South African theatre, which, at its roots, has been a cry for the people. The journey of the artist, according to Fanon and Ukala, 'the search for roots', remains a part of the student's journey as well. The actors I encounter have inherited this legacy and are as diverse as the theatre, often each having a distinct artistic sensibility, some urban, some reaching for traditional roots, some more commercial - any of a dozen things. In this overarching variety, Stanislavsky's teaching applies, "two basic assumptions are made: that each actor can encompass all human experience, and that character is generated by reactions to specific circumstances" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 203).

3.4. The West and the Rest

In the United States, where I am from, and based on my experience, I have observed that much of theatre is dominated by realism. Beguiristain in his book, *The Actors Studio and Hollywood in the 1950s, A History of Theatrical Realism* (2006) focuses on the aesthetic philosophy of realism in American cinema which he sees as a direct result of the influences of theatre and theatre artists, such as The Group Theatre and Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio. Chambers, in his essay on teaching acting in the United States, discusses realism as the default position when teaching Stanislavsky and notes that, "realism is not, as is often professed and believed, 'a style without a style', but is a particular mode of artistic expression rooted in a specific historical moment" (Chambers, 2010, p. 34). I came to see the limitations of a ubiquitous realism, which was so often universally assumed to be the only mode of theatrical expression. There is 'kitchen sink realism', the realism of Clifford Odets; 'living room realism', such as Edward Albee and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*; and the 'lyrical realism' of Tennessee Williams. Alongside this default position of a realistic approach to theatre, is the idea promoted that the playwright is the top of the hierarchical relation of actor, director and writer. The text is everything and actors serve the text, the writer and the director.

I felt, as a young theatre student, alienated by the hierarchy of the writer to director to actor and sought other influences. I remember a professor asking, "is the actor a creator or an interpreter?" I knew then that the answers to that question were important to me. Having studied theatre in college in California, as well as studying and working at American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, I applied for and received a scholarship to the newly formed California Institute of the Arts. CalArts, as it is called, had brought in teachers and artists from all over the world, with a core recruiting of those writers, poets, artists and musicians who were, in one way or another, part of the Beat Movement in San Francisco in the 50s and 60s. The teachers at California Institute of the Arts, funded by Walt Disney and a California movement at its heart, also included musicians

from Ghana, an Ewe Ensemble, Ravi Shankar, a Gamelan Ensemble from Indonesia and film makers, visual artists, theatre artists from Iran, Hungary and Belgium, as well as Native American visual artists.

At that point, the school reflected a mostly white student body and, while the teachers were of all races, there was clearly limited diversity. In the theatre school, ensemble work was emphasised and, while there was some Stanislavsky training, it was via New York and the Method of Strasberg. Our main teacher, Franz Marijnen, was from Amsterdam but had studied and worked with Grotowski in Poland for many years. His influence, in a sense, changed my life. The work emphasised extreme physical work as well as devising pieces; it highlighted the methods of Grotowski, with impulse, the holy actor and the *via negativa*. Still, for me, it reflected a kind of romantic agony, as in the suffering of Christ or Saint Sebastian. We worked, as an ensemble, in creating a piece based on the Oedipus myth. At the end of the three-year program, I chose to go work in Europe where Marijnen formed a theatre company.

After working in the Netherlands, touring to Germany, the U.K. and Belgium, I felt, in working with an approach akin to Grotowski and devising the pieces we presented, that although the work was innovative, the sensibility of 'romantic agony', an almost hermetically sealed effort, could not express what was happening in the present world – that it was all too precious. I returned to New York City and studied with preeminent teachers such as Uta Hagan, in her master class, Michael Howard and with the Meisner Studio. And, again, I was in the box of the default position of Realism. While I did work as an actor in New York and in regional theatre, often hired in Shakespearean plays, I was not adept at supporting this effort by doing commercials, which is the bread and butter of so many actors in New York. What I did was learn from studying acting with these master teachers, which, along with a friendship with Harold Clurman, the theatre director and critic, lead me to not only understand and value the techniques of acting but the roots of their theatre traditions as well. Harold Clurman, Meisner and Michael Howard came from The Group Theatre, which existed from 1931 – 1941, formed by Clurman, Lee

Strasberg and Cheryl Crawford, among others. Its roots were working class, as well as that of the Yiddish Theatre from the Lower East Side in New York City. It included the playwrights Clifford Odets, John Howard Lawson and Sydney Kingsley, whose parents were emigrants and had grown up in the hardscrabble of the city. Their model was the Moscow Arts Theatre of that period, with its psychological realism, influenced by the work of Stanislavsky and, in general, they were more open to Soviet Russia than most Americans. Many of the members of the Group Theatre would be blacklisted by the 'red scare' of the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s. Members of the Moscow Arts Theatre, such as Boleslavsky, Ouspenskaya and Michael Chekov came to New York and became influential teachers, particularly to members of the Group Theatre such as Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler and Bobby Lewis.

While Odets and others from the Group Theater eventually were enticed to Hollywood, Meisner, Strasberg and Clurman stayed in New York, becoming major figures in American theatre. The nature of the plays the Group created, with the depiction of the lives of working class, ordinary people struggling during the Depression, were what I wished theatre to be - yet many of the plays I performed in seemed far from that ideal. The stories depicting the struggle of ordinary people, whose lives were forged in the crucible of a crowded, often cruel environment, were no longer being staged when I was in New York; they instead seemed to focus on the torment of privileged lives, performed in realistic detail, more appropriate for television than theatre. At that time, I realised that, for me, Western narratives seemed hackneyed, the sensibilities predictable.

I came to think, "What was I to do, overtrained and under inspired?" I had the fortune to be well trained: where could I go; how could I use my somewhat obscure skills? Simultaneous to this, I was volunteering at a political committee advocating that businesses disinvest in South Africa and suddenly decided to volunteer at the Community Arts Project in Cape Town, subsidising my trip by subletting my apartment. I had seen South African plays, witnessed their powerful impact on audiences, and had hosted theatre artists from South Africa at the Open World Theatre, a

theatre group of which I was a member, whose mission was to do plays from all over the world, as well as work with a diverse group of directors and actors.

What I knew, then, about South Africa was that the stories being told in theatre were important; the narratives were dynamic and meaningful, not worn out. This sense that the narratives of Western theatre are depleted, with more innovative theatre happening in places such as South Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean is often noted by theatre scholars with Bharucha maintaining that the tourist element, the theatre anthropology, has come from, "a certain ennui, a reaction to aridity and the subsequent search for new sources of energy, vitality and sensuality through the importation of "rejuvenating raw materials" (Bharucha, 1996, p. 207). Barker also acknowledges that "Brook's work has recognised the devitalisation of European theatre and has been characterised by experiments to synthesise non-European theatre into his work. Well, Gauguin tried the same thing in painting but at least Gauguin tried to enter the Polynesian culture instead of trying to Europeanise it" (Barker, 1996, p. 252).

While I am no theatre anthropologist, I wanted then to witness what was happening and understand how the theatre of South Africa had produced such an incredible piece as *Woza Albert* or where do actors such as Zakes Mokai or Yvonne Bryceland come from, how did they become the great actors that they were? I travelled to Cape Town and began training a group of students with a director from Langa, then went on to work in Johannesburg, again teaching, at the Windybrow Theatre. It was 1993, a time in South Africa which was full of change and possibilities. To many, it seemed the doors had been flung open and I was fortunate to have been a part of it. In 1996, I returned to work with Gita Pather at the Education and Development department at the Playhouse in Durban, which in that time was initiating innovative outreach programmes in the townships as well as offering acting classes to those who could come to town. The Playhouse, at that time, was hoping that the former apartheid PACT company could transform from within, which it did succeed in doing, although its work from that creative time has not continued. Mbongeni Ngema was head of drama, Mark Hopkins was working with Boyze

Cekwana and other notable black dancers and Jay Pather was working in a newly formed company, Siwela Sonke. Since then, I have worked on and off in the country until the present.

I did find in South Africa that the important stories I was looking for were there and within the students I taught. I went out to townships in Durban and in Johannesburg to teach and to help with the plays the actors were creating – to Claremont, KwaMashu, Soweto, Khayelitsha, Duduza, Katlehong and more, really all over. As a teacher of acting, having had the benefit of extensive training and performing, much of my teaching was from tacit knowledge. My approach was to use the physical techniques of Grotowski along with a condensed version of Stanislavsky's techniques, as so often the time was short. Because many students struggled with English, I focused on the idea of intention, action and objectives in the belief that, when an actor embodies fully what the character wants to do and why, they are empowered to pursue their intentions in action (as words are actions as well), rather than thinking about the language, thus allowing the words to come out naturally, again and again emphasising, 'I want what my character wants'. Improvisation was important as well, as so often plays were devised, and I emphasised the knowing of intentions with spontaneous work. In a sense, it is, as Nathi Kunene, an actor from Claremont, once told me, a trick, where the mind, emotions and body focus on the actions below, around and within the words.

An actor wants to embody a character, to express the life within the character, but so often they do not know what to start with: 'how?'. In effect, an intention concentrates and pinpoints, it externalises what is happening inside. As Stanislavsky depicts in *An Actor Prepares,* the simple use of a transitive verb, a doing verb, creates the objective, a light the actor follows to show them the way through a piece (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 106-109). As Stanislavsky believed, the techniques of intention, affective memory, given circumstances were based on laws of nature; certainly, an ant carrying a leaf is involved in intentional behaviour; certainly, our memories and emotions as human beings do affect our behaviour and we behave in the context of who we are, where we are and when we are.

While the semiotics of physical expressions are cultural and gestures are determined by the context of the society we live in, when teaching acting, these became natural variables. Geneviève Calbris, in *The Semiotics of French Gestures* (1990), investigates the semiotics of French gestures and catalogues the conventional mimetic expressions, as well as the relationships between the signifier and the signified in communication, establishing how these are specific to each culture. I found within cultures, within these variables, the commonality of intention, filtered through our cultures, which transcends culturally bound practices through the intimacy of theatre practice. How a technique works, in delineation, does not always matter, however that it does work matters. In a sense, this indicates that tools are important in acting; if you have a wrench, a wrench works to loosen or tighten something. Many of Stanislavsky's techniques are based on what actors have always done, as he often claimed (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 11-27). For me, when I began teaching in South Africa, it seemed that I was finding a common language of acting work: that of doing, that of focusing on action. This 'doing' by the actor includes the concepts of the actor being in the state of *aktivnost*, as Stanislavsky called it, the state of being in action. This is at the heart of his system and is, "what the actor does to solve the problem or fulfil the task set before set before his or her character by the play…action is expressed as an active verb" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 211). Carriere expresses his experience as an actor in realising what action or intention, as it is often called, is:

> I had thought of communication as careful listening and clear intention. This is true, but the point of both listening and intention is to focus the actor outward, to get the actor out of his/her head. We use phrases like in the moment or get out of your head to encourage actors to listen and connect without making explicit that the goal is to transmit the inner life externally, to radiate it out. (…) communication requires a type of concentration and focus that feels as if I not only had a clear intention, but that I wanted my partner to feel that intention without the need for words or actions. This concentration leads you to listen to your partner with your being, to attempt to sense the energy of their intent by absorbing their rays of energy. (Carriere, 2010, p. 287)

The use of Stanislavsky's given circumstances: 'where am I? who am I? when is it? why am I here? what do I want? what are the obstacles?' places the actor in the present, demands concentration,

creates characterisation and overcomes the ever-present distraction of stage fright, whether or not the work is presentational or representational. In presentational theatre, often the action switches back and forth from storytelling to the audience, to a brief realistic scene and then to a song or a dance, be it in Africa, where it is more common, or in the plays of Susan Lori Parks in the USA. What this suppleness in performing in such texts and devised pieces, this tight approach, requires is an actor whose responses, whose motility rate, is sharp. What I found in working with actors in South Africa, was that the physical quickness was there, and it was enhanced by analysis, by knowing.

3.5. Teaching

In the 90s and early 2000s, most of the actors I worked with had not had the benefit of a theatre education and, in the time of a new dispensation, as it was then in South Africa, the sharing of skills was regarded as important. If theatre is a form of communication, then we as artists need to create that which we wish to communicate and thus need to have as many tools as possible to do it well - the skills to communicate what we wish, to have artistic control, through our knowledge. This, then, became the goal of my teaching and, through that effort, I found common ground with those I worked with. I realised many of the South African actors were powerful, talented and only lacked the privilege of knowledge, hermetically taught in the mostly white universities, knowledge which had been denied by the apartheid system.

At that time in South Africa, the younger actors I worked with, through the Playhouse, Sibikwa, the Market Theatre and elsewhere, were writing their stories, stories of their liminal experiences in growing up in apartheid South Africa. They knew their stories, I could only imagine them, and my job was to assist them in 'pulling the stories out', in making sure they had the tools with which to effective' tell them. In both directing and teaching, I found I did not have to do much more than ask, "what does your character want?', as they were compelled to tell them, knowing the stories had not been told and that they needed to be.

One of the plays I had directed, *A Coolie Odyssey*, was written by the playwright/actor, Rajesh Gopie. As we rehearsed, cast members drew on the stories of their families in depicting life on a sugar cane plantation, with the writer incorporating their stories into the script: one actor was descended from Dingane; coincidentally another had a Polish great grandfather who had advised Dingane; another told of his ancestor from India who travelled from plantation to plantation selling goods and trinkets to the Indian workers; and another was descended from an Indian woman and Scottish man who had met on a sugar cane plantation. Two of the plays I directed, *Itsoseng* (2008) and *Out of Bounds*, (2001) were brought to me by the actors who were in the process of writing them, stories derived from their life experiences, though transformed and shaped through the rehearsal process. When we presented them, I found a powerful immediacy with the audiences, who understood the sharing of stories and the tradition of storytelling; they were hungry to listen and to bear witness.

At that time, the actors I taught and worked with shared the view that the stories they knew had not yet been told or heard, because of apartheid. This can be said to be a characteristic of theatre artists in South Africa: the stories are carried within, based on experiences which are compelling, along with the urge to express them, to risk putting them out into the world. What was particular to South Africa in the late 90s seems a universal link in the process of making theatre - the expressing of the specific, the unique, as an act of resistance which can be only found in the specifics of the local.

The mechanics of acting, the techniques of Stanislavsky, I shared seemed foundational and practical, almost like the mechanics of an engine of theatre making. Movement, voice, interpreting or devising a script, inner and outer work, imagination, concentration, relaxation and, most of all, intentionality became basic work, and it did not matter where these techniques were found. In the process of work, there were no definitive differences between myself and those I taught. As I taught them, they did teach me. Most of the actors I worked with were from

urban and semi urban areas, rather than rural, growing up in townships approximate to urban and industrial centres, as inherited from the city planning of the apartheid government. Certainly, their parents and grandparents may have come from the rural areas as roots between family and tradition remain strong. I did, at one point, travel with a show to far northern rural KwaZulu/Natal with a group of actors from Soweto and Daveyton and found a radical and stark difference between the actors and the people who came to see the show. The actors were viewed as exotic creatures from another planet in the way they spoke, moved and interacted. Actors from townships can be said to be in a liminal space, caught betwixt and between. I did find, with the actors I worked with, that in our age of globalisation and the increasing use of technology, that as theatre practitioners, we together found greater reference points from which to travel in discovering one another and in finding mutuality. I do not doubt that there are areas of misunderstanding or times when I may have transgressed a norm that I was unaware of, however, from my experience, there has never been a moment when there was anything but a mutual effort to master a skill. The issues of power which are inherent between a teacher and a student and presumed cultural gaps are tempered by a universal ethic and a creative practice in teaching and learning. In the midst of a willingness to learn, the process where the student opens up, becomes vulnerable and 'lets go' obliges the teacher/trainer to place the creative potential and the wellbeing of an actor/student above all other considerations.

In this undertaking, the students empowered me as I sought to empower them. I learned new theatre games, learned dance by helping to structure traditional dance or gumboot dancing, was introduced to the power of song in Africa and later realised, when directing in India, I had absorbed many of the aesthetics and values of South African culture and theatre. For me, it became a matter of sharing the tool which I had learned from being almost 'overtrained', one that had unlocked my inherent creativity. I gave and exchanged techniques and ideas. "I also encounter the otherness of people and in doing so I change. My personality develops and becomes richer by moving beyond the cultural definitions of my nationality" (Barker, 1996, p. 256).

I did not want to be a tourist or to bring a show from Africa to New York, what I sought, at that time, was an experience based on "the rich diversity of exchange" (Barker, 1996). It was in the exchange, the sharing that I found inspiration and energy. I found the more informal it is, the better for everyone. The squashed spaces, the crumbling walls in some of the townships came to allow me to interact more, to take myself less seriously. Informality breaks down the barriers between 'the other and the other', allowing both teaching and learning in the new context, the new encounter. Often, when I drove off to a faraway township, alone, on roads winding to dusty places, through squatter camps to an isolated art centre or to a hut- like place, I would be greeted and escorted with hospitality, even by the renowned musician, Madala Kunene. I was welcomed, in African fashion, as a person, not as a stranger.

Without meeting and interaction, with no deep awareness of context, the realities of exchanges often remain superficial. Barker, in discussing the viewing of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* in the UK, observes the "white, liberal audiences in the UK may, in fact, be roused and indignant but, as a whole, remain unaffected" (Barker, 1996, p.252). He characterises this as a "form of cultural interpenetration as giving without taking" in that, while it may raise the audience's consciousness, the level of exchange remains on the 'oh, shame' level. He also notes the inequality of "a complementary neo-colonialist process of taking without giving (Barker, 1996, p. 252)". This taking without giving existed in Brook's *Mahabharata*, where the visuals of Indian aesthetics were used to inform the piece and yet the essence of Indian aesthetics, the *rasa*, the Sanskrit word which means the 'essence, taste or flavour' and literally means 'sap or juice', but in Indian aesthetic philosophy is conceived of as a "contemplative abstraction in which the inwardness of human feelings suffuses the surrounding world of embodied forms" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024), was never deeply dealt with. There was no cross fertilisation. As Rustom Bharucha, in *Theatre and the World* (1993), states the West is often indifferent to realising context in understanding distinct cultures, consequently creating an almost dismissal of

the culture and its aesthetics. He asks, as well, “can the bios or being of an actor from a particular culture be separated from his or her ethos” (Bharucha, 1996, p. 207).

The aesthetics of a culture, in a piece of theatre, are the expression of the culture of its creators. Yet, in each culture, the actor needs be trained to include all categories of performance. African aesthetics include song, dance, ritual, trance, gods (magical realism) as well as interchange with the audience and the implicit knowledge of the actor in the midst of their culture. This fact demands a deep awareness from a teacher trainer. At the base of African aesthetics exists the element of communal experience. Erika Fischer-Lichte quotes from Wole Soyinka in *African Drama and the World View* (Fischer-Lichte, 1996, p. 37), “this is the fundamental defining concept, that the stage is brought into being by a communal presence (…) the stage becomes the effective rational and intuitive milieu of the total communal experience: historic, race-formative, cosmogenic”. She concludes, “only in a theatre in which the individual consciously accepts his responsibility towards the community can the charismatic powers of a humanist image of man unfold”. Fundamental to these endeavours, as Fischer-Lichte asserts, is that theatre is communal; it is also that which distinguishes African aesthetics in theatre and reminds us thereby of the fundamental values of why we create theatre - bringing us together in an increasingly disoriented world. There is a possibility in theatre, still a potential, as she notes: “that the path of permanent mediation between the cultures (…) will eventually lead to the creation of a world culture in which different cultures not only take part, but also respect the unique characteristics of each culture and allows each culture it’s authority” (Fischer-Lichte, 1996, p. 38).

What I have experienced in journeying to South Africa, in directing such plays as *Out of Bounds, Itsoseng* and *A Coloured Place* (2002), in working with and teaching actors, is this communal experience, seemingly far away from the hectic individualism of New York. In coming to South Africa, there is an Alice in Wonderland sense of going through the mirror. Often things are similar but opposite as, for example, the demographics of the USA being a white majority and the people of colour a minority, whereas in South Africa, it is opposite. The attraction is not easily explained,

perhaps a subtle embrace of a found community. This embrace has encompassed my teaching and writing and moreover, lead me to recognise that, in synthesising Stanislavsky, it is the approach which I have learned. It is an approach in teaching and training which must be founded in context of who is being taught, with an appreciation of who these actors, with much potential, are and in supporting their stories and visions, without imposing my own. From my experience, Stanislavsky's teaching does hold that potential and informs, it does not distract from the task at hand.

3.6. Conclusion

The experiences of theatre practitioners in Africa, Cuba and New Zealand in experimenting with syncretic theatre, amidst the tendency of the West to dominate interculturally, as referred to in Jeyifo (1996), Bharucha (1996) and Sirayi (2012), create breakaway paths. Brugal's (2017) working with Yoruba traditions of trance, Halba's description of Heather Timm's work as head of Toi Whakaari, the acting training division of New Zealand's drama school (Halba, 2017, pp. 382-384) and Bharucha's intracultural work with actors in a small village in Karnataka, India all indicate valuable theatre projects which forge new relationships and contexts in executing agency, beyond the West.

In traveling beyond the West and detailing my experience in South Africa, I have traced the questions arising from the encounters and exchanges, of not only between people but between ideas, and recounted my context of coming from 'overseas' as a way of assembling my experiences into an autoethnographic journey of moving beyond the cultural context of theatre as practiced in the United States. Teaching Stanislavsky has required greater knowledge of Fanon's and Jeyifo's warning that the abandoning of the hierarchy of cultures can mask the continued domination of Western culture. In the transmission of Stanislavsky to the aesthetics and politics of South African theatre practices, concepts such intentionality of action do find a commonality, yet need be placed with respect and comprehension of its relation to locality and

context, understanding that liberation in Africa, often means reaching back to go forward. The immediacy of these issues is found in the stories that need to be told, narratives which have meaning, in a cultural sense, of connecting with a true aesthetic, but also contain a meaning which has profundity in tapping into both the universal and the human. The significance of the telling of stories, narratives which apartheid denied, has created a new vitality of authenticity.

Recalling my journey, detailing my motivations, and the realisation of the diversity and variety of identities and the cultural integration found in South African performance, combined with the philosophies of Black Consciousness Movement and Afrocentricity, have provided insight into the value of moving beyond the restrictions of Realism, the discovery of new modes and new significant narratives of theatre. Considering Stanislavsky's work moving beyond the psychology of behaviour to the communal, the spiritual and the ritualistic have revealed new directions and connections not only through exchange of skills but in comprehending the post-colonial awareness of Fanon's emphasis of the importance of connecting to the heartbeat of a culture.

The issues and insights found in my experience of teaching Stanislavsky in South Africa, as detailed above, will provide a context into the ensuing chapter, with a focus on an analysis of the aesthetics, the spirit, which infuses South African theatre, parallel to an analysis of identifiable methods and underlying philosophies found in Stanislavsky's system, which potentially create an axis of inter connectedness in both the aesthetic values of Africa and Stanislavsky's system.

Chapter 4: Integrating Stanislavsky into a South African Perspective: Action, African Aesthetics and the Structure of the System

"The whole psychic atmosphere of African village life is filled with belief in (…) mystical power."
(John Mbiti, 1968)

"Any tradition where Spirit is at the heart of its practice finds its home in Africa."

(Adama Doubmia and Naomi Doubmia, 2004)

"The essence of art is not in its external forms but in its spiritual content."
(Konstantin Stanislavski, 2013)

4.1. Introduction

The aesthetics of Pre-colonial theatre, the theatre of Black Consciousness and Township theatre, which includes the work of Gibson Kente, together create essential foundations of contemporary Southern African theatre. This chapter focuses on finding the links between South African actors' perception of and valuing of the African aesthetics, which guide them as theatre artists, and Stanislavsky's system of training actors. The focus on analysing the relationship between the two requires an analysis of both the central idea of 'action' in theatre performance, in both contemporary South African theatre, pre-colonial theatre in Africa and the concepts and techniques surrounding Stanislavsky's ideas of 'action'.

Placing the work of Stanislavsky in the context of South Africa and Africa and relating it to the contextual realities of the South African actor, realities which include the aesthetics and ethos of

South Africa, necessitates considering the components which constitute the African aesthetic, such as its place in the traditional philosophy of aesthetics, and an interrogation of what constitutes African aesthetics in Southern African theatre. In addition, the complex ideas, the entangled threads, which Stanislavsky pulled apart in order to assemble a holistic system are researched as a means of comprehending that which specifically applies to the aesthetic needs of the actor in South Africa, thus providing a way towards synthesis. With Afrocentricity as the building principle, the aesthetics, cosmology and epistemology of Africa are central to understanding the historical impact of all that has coalesced to create a unique South African theatre.

This analysis contains an examination of *action* in the Western definition of theatre positioned in relationship to pre-colonial theatre in Africa. Interrogated, as well, is the significance of Stanislavsky's theories and techniques which evolved from his belief that action, 'doing', is the dynamic and organic force which is fundamental to acting. In the actor's process of creating action in a role, the varied techniques of given circumstances, affective memory, *aktivnost,* inner motive forces of mind, will and feeling and Active Analysis, which all holistically feed into creating the vectors of action in a theatre piece, are noted and placed in relationship to elements of South African and African aesthetics, such as the use of narration, presentational theatre and aesthetic values inherited from pre-colonial theatre, that of storytelling, ritual and dance. In accordance with this, my observations of teaching young actors Stanislavsky at the University of Witwatersrand are reflected upon to provide a wider contextual picture of the processes of teaching Stanislavsky in South Africa.

4.2. Situating Stanislavsky

The African aesthetic present in much of South African theatre may be said to have been passed down from ancient times. Theatre and performance have existed in Southern Africa since time immemorial. Yet there remains to the present a debate amongst scholars as to how to define African performative forms. As a result, pre-colonial African theatre has been labeled as 'not

theatre' (Finnegan, 2012) in that it does not fit Aristotle's characteristics of what constitutes drama, characteristics such as: plot (including the ideas of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement), character, speech, thought, spectacle and rhythm. Mzo Sirayi, in defining views as to the pre-colonial existence of theatre in Africa, remarks that those who maintain that there was no theatre in Africa prior to colonialization are generally scholars from "within the Aristotelian theoretical framework, which comes from the Aristotelian model for Western dramatic art" (Sirayi, 2012, p.27). He goes on to challenge scholars who argue that 'real theatre' did not exist in pre-colonial Africa as an example of Western ethnocentric thinking, asserting that it is disingenuous to impose the development of Western theatre as the standard to determine if theatre existed among other cultures. He notes it is natural, obvious even, that pre-colonial theatre in Africa is markedly different from the earlier stages of theatre in the West and other theatrical traditions as well, including Indian and Chinese theatrical forms, many of which are centuries old. Aristotle's determination that theatre is the mimesis of action is linked by Sirayi as also reflected in pre-colonial theatre, "action here involves an experience which embodies the mental reactions, feelings, and emotions of the characters involved. The action could be in the form of dance, mime, drama, oral narratives, and oral poetry" (Sirayi, 2012, p. 20). African aesthetics in theatre to the present includes such elements, which may be said to be handed down from pre-colonial theatre and are embodied in such action. In discussing the survival of traditional African theatre, Yani notes that, despite colonialization and the influence of both modern culture and theatre, traditional oral narratives have survived and continue to the present day; they are valued and passed down to further generations (Yani, 2018, p.10).

A traditional dance, *Phathisi*, from the Bakwena tribe in Botswana (YouTube, 2016), dramatically depicts the life of a herd boy with one dancer playing the boy wielding a whip as other dancers enact the yoked cattle he is taming. The lineage of the dance, its meaning, and its historical significance as presented in present times by the Diwetse Cultural Group indicates the passing down of an earlier form as well as its dramatic viability, as described by Mojaki (2015), in her decoding the meanings in the traditional performances of the Phathisi dance in Botswana. The

action of the dancers reenacting the struggle of a herd boy taming his cattle is the dramatic action of Aristotle, as well the action Stanislavsky refers to when he says, “life is action; that is why our lively art, which stems from life, is preponderantly active. It is not without reason that our word “drama” is derived from the Greek word which means ’I do’” (Stanislavsky 1981, p. 48).

This view of action as creating the dynamic forces within a play is central to both Stanislavsky’s philosophy and, indeed, his methods correlate to Aristotle’s analysis of action in theatre (Pitches, 2006, p. 474). Pitches argues that Aristotle conceives of drama as action/praxis, connecting action as the realization of the *muthos* or the myth/story of a play. To Aristotle, the core *muthos* of a theatre piece or play is found not in the depicting of a narrative but in the performing of action, as arranged by the actors, action which creates the *muthos*. This directly relates to Stanislavsky’s assertion that motion and action are at the center of the art of acting (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 38). Pavis also conceptualizes the notion of action in theatre, distinguishing between the plot and the dynamic actions of the characters, viewing action as the dynamic which creates imbalances, balances, the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment which, through motion, is the transitional energy driving the plot/narrative (Pavis, 1998, pp. 11-12). Thus, if theatre communicates through action and action is what the actor does during a performance, then understanding how action applies to acting becomes essential for the actor. In theatre terms, this is often expressed in the concept of ‘intentionality’, the process of learning to play an ‘action’ based on what the actor/character wants in the given circumstances of a piece - this is done through activating what Stanislavsky called the three engines of mind, will and feeling (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 281).

The imperative on stage is action, ‘to do’. As he notes, “on stage, it is necessary to act, either outwardly or inwardly (…) all action on stage must have an inner justification, be logical” (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 33). For Stanislavsky, a play is a structure composed of the dynamics of action: emotion is the content, but emotion is communicated through action (Carnicke, 2009, p.185). In Stanislavsky’s system, the concept of action is twofold: *deistvovat*, a psychophysical action which means both to take action, to enact and to behave (Carnicke, 2009, p. 184) and

aktivnost, which is the inner creative state of being in action: "he claims that to act one must do something as if it were real; one must behave on stage, not play" (Carnicke, 1984, p. 492).

The etymology of the various words used for an action in theatre is complicated due to translation from Russian to English. An actor working with intentionality is 'doing' in a variety of ways: it may be an activity such as sweeping the floor, or an action based on a need such as asking for help. However, each action is linked to an objective with the actions as the smaller, logical, steps taken to achieve the 'task' or objective. The word for 'objective' is, nonetheless, often used interchangeably with terms such 'the action', 'the need', 'the want', 'the verb'. Max Stafford Clark and William Gaskell have called it 'actioning' (Moseley, n.d.). The Group Theatre and Harold Clurman referred to it as the spine or the intention (Thomas, 2009, p. 40). Stanislavsky himself defined it as the 'task' or the 'problem' and Hapgood, in the English translation, generally changed it to objective (Stanislavski, 2013). His instruction in *An Actors Prepares* (2013), was that actors use 'I wish to' or 'I want to' followed by a verb as an impetus to action. This is the use of a transitive verb, which by definition is a verb that is transmitted by action to another person or an object (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 107-109). His turn towards Active Analysis, based on the Method of Physical Actions, where all the work was done on the feet, on the moment via improvisation, was a final commitment to action as "the primary language of dramatic art and as the dynamic structure encoded in dramatic texts" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 206). Pitches highlights that for Sanford Meisner, whose work is based on Stanislavsky, "words are once again of less importance than what he calls the 'reality of doing, the very 'foundation of acting' (Meisner, 1987:16), rooted in simple, doable behavior on stage" (Pitches, 2006, p. 108). The outward focused expression, a flowing out of behavior which is privileged over words, empowers the actor over the text and lays the ground for the actor's use of Stanislavsky's approach in a variety of theatrical forms, revealing that many, if not all, of his techniques can be used in pieces beyond realism, absurdism and classical plays. His intention in the formulation of his System was to create an organic technique and approach, founded on the laws of nature, as he saw it:

> The laws of nature are the laws of nature. The birth of a child, the growing of a tree are manifestations of a single order. It is essential to establish a 'system', i.e., the laws of nature, because in performance conditions nature is violated and her laws broken. The 'system' re-

> established them, brings human nature back to normal. Embarrassment, stage fright, false traditions destroy nature. (Stanislavsky, 2009, p. 612)

The training of actors in Stanislavsky is not only an organic process but one that is conceived holistically. It requires knowledge of the interrelatedness of the elements he highlighted, such as: action in the given circumstances, imagination, the creative state, communion, subtext, concentration, improvisation and a sense of truth. These elements flow into one another with an understanding that the parts, the methods of his System, work together in a symbiosis to create the whole, the whole of which is found in the idea of experiencing, which the actor arrives at by the conscious work of analysing and decoding the inner action into physical action.

Modern drama in Africa, specifically in South Africa, embraces dance, song, the use of narrators, actors turning away from the action while still on stage, the putting on of a scarf to indicate another character, doing a scene with a partner when both are facing forward or reaching out and including the audience as if they are part of the action. It may also include playing Gods. These varied forms, termed nonrealistic African theatre (Kavanagh, 2022), or, more recently, "Afroscenology", (Ravengai 2020), do not sway the talented actor or performer's need to understand the organic nature of what they are doing and why they are doing it. The logic of presentational theatre, the switching of identities, the playing of scenes in a structure that does not depict an all over realistic 'mis en scene', is the logic of an actor's creation. However nonlinear the play is, the actor must find their own step by step logic, their 'line of action'. At the end of his life, when he was developing Active Analysis from the Method of Physical Actions, the goal was to have "no concern for feelings, no displays of personality or emotions, only concentration on action" (Benedetti, 1988, p.319).

It is the concept of conscious creation of action and analysis, as conceptualised and taught by Stanislavsky, which links the actor from dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre and provides the actor with a path towards 'vectorisation', in that they embody, through the technique of

creating physical actions, the network of energy and force which carries the story from one point to another. Pavis (2003) sees the actor/performer as a part of a vast network of semiotic signs in the theatrical experience. Taylor (2005) describes Pavis's theory of vectorisation as action which holds the network together, a current of energy which flows through all the elements of a performance: from the actor, the semiotics of the movement, the words, the lights, design, music and costume. He theorises theatre performance as networks which "are like nets which hold the production together and prevent it from being permanently fragmented" (Taylor, 2005, p. 101). The audience is an integral part of this network; the current of energy which flows through the performance flows to and fro with the audience, in their receiving and responding. In Pavis's analysis of the actor in contemporary theatre performance, he delineates the actor/performer, with the performer often performing as themselves, sometimes reflecting and presenting as themselves to the audience and refers to the actor as narrator as "*the narractor"*, where the narrator goes from telling to doing as a character, suggesting that the post dramatic actor is in a new aesthetic, no longer in an aesthetic of pure imitation, where a role is conceived psychologically (Pavis, 2016, p. 174). Ironically, this new aesthetic of '*the narractor'* may be from an older aesthetic, that of storytelling, folklorist traditions, rituals and ceremonies of occasion, as found in Africa and India.

In the South African play, *The Red in the Rainbow* (Market Theatre, 2022), the actors function as narrators, witnesses to the story being told, they move in and out of depicting characters. As storytellers, all their action on stage must be justified, with a sense of truth. They are called upon to not only motivate their roles in action as the overseers, tellers of the story, but also as the characters they switch in and out of, though accessing a creative state where experiencing is possible and generating action through the 'inner motive forces', the active forces of mind, will and action, as detailed by Stanislavsky. For the actor "this triumvirate of inner forces takes on the tone, colour, shadings and moods (…) to which the play lures them. They move towards creative objectives, pushed by inner longings, ambition, and by movements inherent in the character of their parts" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 227). The telling of a story in theatre or film is determined by the structure of drama, be it deconstructed or constructed along traditional Western lines. The

ability of an actor to grasp the varieties of structure and pursue their actions with strong objectives and actions is linked to the viability of their performance.

Surrounding the tool of determining an action or intention are the foundational philosophies of his process. This is summed up for Stanislavsky in experiencing, which is a creative state. For Stanislavsky, the beginning of achieving an inner creative state or 'the creative process' (*tvorchesto*), where, in both preparation before performing and in rehearsal, "the actor turns to his spiritual and physical instrument. His mind, will and feelings combine to mobilize all his inner 'elements'" (Stanislavski, 2013, p.227). I have found this to be applicable in all performance situations, both inner and physical preparation for performing is axiomatic and necessary for all performers, in all genres of theatre. One of the mis-readings of Stanislavsky, his philosophical approach and his methods is the myth that he is only identified with naturalism and realism (Gillett, 2007, p. 12).

The notion of mind, will and feeling as the inner engine that ignites a role and drives the actor towards action is defined by Stanislavsky as the "inner motive forces" (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 210-217). Grounded in imagination of given circumstances and expressed via the energy of the active inner state (*aktivnost*) to the active outer state (*deistvennost*), these engines of mind, will and feeling are a result of the actor learning how to access the creative state, *tvorchesto*, an active and energetic creative process. This, for Stanislavsky, is more than a general creative state; it is an active state of creation where creative energy pours forth, an emanating and the essence of creating (Carriere, 2010, pp. 35-36).

4.3. The Practical Philosopher

Admittedly, the scope of what Stanislavsky devised is complicated, even sometimes contradictory. Ian Maxwell views Stanislavsky as practitioner who created "an embodied, unfolding, practical philosophy: a sustained interrogation of the human being" and sees the contradictions within his system as both, "an ascendant, post-Enlightenment scientific positivism,

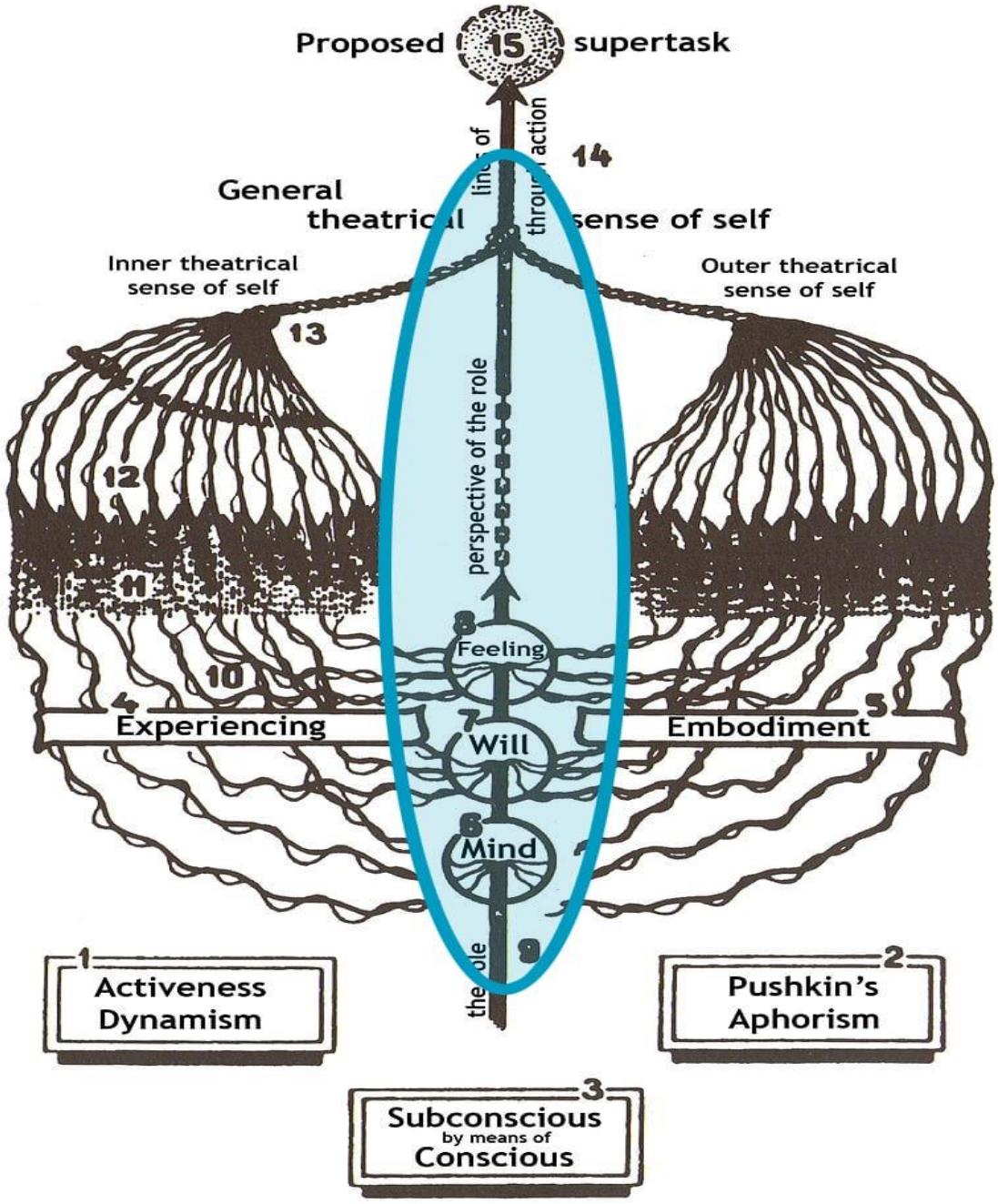
and on the other, of an insistent mysticism and spirituality" (Maxwell, 2003, p. 94). He characterizes these contradictions as an attempt, "to reconcile these influences in an economy of practice, to a profoundly humanist end, "our art is (…) to create the life of a human spirit" (Maxwell, 2003, pp. 94-95). The complicated schema of his 'cosmology' reveals the interwoven concepts found in Stanislavsky, in that its discourse is focused on how, in the creative process, the soul of the actor fills their concept of the character with a life force where the ideations are experienced as if they were truth. This living creative process therefore is the field where the ideas and methods of Stanislavsky's system are engendered: immaterial objects come to life through the imagination; the actor discovers the essence of action; they connect to the motive forces of the character's emotions through mind, will and action. It is this concept of the soul of the theatre artist in the creative process which is at the very core of Stanislavsky's System (Carriere, 2010, p. 4).

For Stanislavsky, this creative state (*tvorchesto*) is an active state of being that can be accessed in the conscious work process of training and rehearsing, as well as in performing. Although the journey of creating a role in rehearsal varies according to the nature of the actor: some are more intellectual, others physical and others emotional, the methods of analysis, imagination and embodiment remain tools for actors in that, through the conscious work, the subconscious will take over so that the actor experiences themselves in the role. In the following explanation and diagram drawn by Stanislavsky of his System (The Path to Experiencing, 1935), the creative state is included as one of the three foundations of the art of acting:

> At the bottom (just like the three whales upon which the earth rests) three ideas are set down - three main, unshakeable foundations of our art. We must lean on them at all times.
>
> 1. The first of these says "The art of the dramatic actor is the art of internal and external actions [given the terms aktivnost' and deistvennost' respectively]." [Also referred to in English as Activeness/ Dynamism.]
> 2. The second foundation is the aphorism of Pushkin: the truth of passions and believability [verisimilitude] of feelings within given circumstances.
> 3. The third foundation: The subconscious creativity [tvorchestvo] of nature itself through the conscious psycho-technique of the actor. [Often translated in English as, 'the subconscious by means of the conscious'.]
>
> On these three foundations of our art, two large platforms are constructed:
>
> 4. The process of experiencing [perezhivanie], of which we are studying in the

general outline [Here Stanislavsky is referring to Part One of his book, An Actor's Work: Year One, Experiencing (1954).] The second volume is Part Two: Embodiment (1954)].
(Carriere, 2010, p.159, cites Stanislavsky from Russian, RAS II, 1954, p. 360-361)

The diagram, as drawn by Stanislavsky, resembles lungs, with the right side representing the physical process of expression and the left representing the inner process. The middle area, highlighted in blue, depicts the three engines of mind, will and feeling driving the actor in the



An Actor Prepares (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 97-109), uses the image of a large turkey that must be cut down into bits and pieces, as it cannot be eaten all at once. Just as one cannot subsume an entire turkey at once, an actor must break his part down in scenes and then, moments. From these smaller units the actor, by putting themselves in the given circumstances, asks, 'if I were here, if I were so and so, what would I do?', and thus determines the motivation of his role. As Stanislavsky insists the actor must realize they are always playing themselves, "but it will be in a variety of combinations of objectives and given circumstances which you have prepared for your part, and which have been smelted in the furnace of your emotion memory" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 152-153). For Stanislavsky, the use of the self in creating the life of the human spirit in the role is essential (Stanislavsky, 2010, p. xxiv). In this instance, Benedetti, in his translation, replaces Stanislavsky's original meaning of 'soul' with the word 'spirit' but, as conceived, it is fundamental to the system that the actor works from themself, their own or empathic feelings and reactions, concentrating on, 'what would I do if…?'. These imaginative steps lead toward pulling the units and objectives together into 'a through line of action', the sum of all the parts, which finally result in the actor's chosen and created 'supertask'. I envision this process as a river, a current which drives the actor forward, others have related it to the spine (Grotowski, 2002) and Stanislavsky as a main artery of the body. Stanislavsky envisions this also as a stream, made up of the smaller objectives which contain the imaginary images, thoughts, activities and actions of the actors - all of which converge continuously to create the main objective which drives the actor and ultimately nourishes and give life to the other actors and to the piece itself (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 237).

This search for actions by the actor is a link towards an embodiment of a role, the conscious work posited to lead to the subconscious and then experiencing. However, with the element of physical expressiveness or plasticity for the beginning actor, the link between the inner and the outer can be tenuous. In the psychophysical technique, as developed by Stanislavsky and evolved by practitioners such as Zarrilli (2009) and Grotowski (2002), the actor's problem of a time gap between the inner impulse and the outer impulse as physical expression, is seen to be solved through psychophysical training (Whyman, 2016, p. 4). Zarrilli, in response to this false duality of

mind and body, looks to the east and focuses on integration through breath and *prana*; Grotowski focuses on the *via negativa*, where a stripping down allows for "freedom from the time lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction" (Grotowski, 2002, p. 16). Whyman notes that Stanislavsky saw the problem as one of tension which can only be cured by focus and concentration, concluding, "there is no time-lapse as such, 'psycho-physicality' means training your body to be receptive to your psyche'" (Whyman, 2016, p. 6). I would speculate that, because in Africa, the idea of the visible and the invisible as continuously present in a person's existence, the accessibility and the acceptance of the body as linked to the spirit enables the actor to have an immediate expressiveness where the gap of inner and outer impulse is not so wide as in a culture where the repression of expression is regulated and structured.

In regard to Stanislavsky's view that the mind, will and feelings mobilize the actor, Thomas has emphasised Stanislavsky's noting this freedom from the time lapse as, "plasticity [physical expressiveness] is energy warmed by feelings, filled by the will, directed by the mind" (Thomas, 1998, p. 31). This sensitivity of the body's response to an inner impulse is central in psychophysical actor training. The resistance of the body, the reluctance to fully express and explore the physical is, in both Stanislavsky and Grotowski, addressed through the techniques of relaxation, concentration and physical training. Grotowski, in the Polish Laboratory Theatre, developed various physical exercises aimed at breaking down resistance to physical expressiveness (Grotowski, 2002, pp. 133-204). He aptly sums up actor training as the effort to rid the body of resistance to expressing the inner forces of the psyche: "impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses" (Grotowski, 2002, p. 16). In African theatre practice, rhythmic dance, accompanied by drums, is often practiced as a warmup at the beginning of rehearsals and during rehearsals, an effective method of breaking down the resistance to openly expressing impulses.

In the second part of *An Actor's Work, Embodiment, Year Two,* the exercise of mercury flowing through the body (Stanislavsky, 2010, pp. 366-367) speaks to inner and outer flexibility, as well as to the flowing of energy. In spite of Soviet disapproval, Stanislavsky envisioned this as *prana*,

the Hindu concept of vital life energy (Carnicke, 2009, p. 182). The First Studio (1912) included the presence of Leopoldo Sulerzhitsky who was deeply influenced by both Hindu and Tolstoian spirituality. His influence presumably led to an exploration of yoga and the creation of various exercises based on yogic practices, emphasizing both breath and *prana* (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 171-172). Again, these techniques have become more common in actor training, initially used by practitioners such as Zarrilli, Grotowski and Barba, although there is no clear record of their use in Africa. Stanislavsky, in discussing where the inner flow of communication comes from, states, "I have read what the Hindus say on this subject. They believe in the existence of a vital energy called Prana (…) According to their calculation the radiating center of this Prana is the solar plexus" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 171). He interestingly concludes, in line with his practical philosophical approach, "I have no desire to prove whether Prana really exists or not. My sensations are purely personal to me, the whole thing may be the fruit of my imagination (...) If my practical and unscientific method can be of use to you, so much the better. If not, I shall not insist on it" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 172). It is not a leap too far to connect the idea of an energetic body which is capable of expressing that energy to much of the powerful and heightened performing found in Southern African theatre.

The idea of communion through rays of *prana* relates to Stanislavsky's concern with the continual unbroken flow and energy of thoughts and feelings onstage. He proposed that there are three areas of communion: self-communion, between the brain and the solar plexus, communion with objects and communion with others. In terms of communion with partners on stage, he asks,' what are you communicating with: the eyes, the nose, what?' His answer to the question is, "you see, when you want to communicate with a person you first seek out his soul, his inner world", concluding, "you always try to reach the living spirit of the object (…) do not deal with noses, eyes or buttons" (Stanislavski, 2013, pp.172-173). The idea of soul, of spirituality in Stanislavsky cannot be avoided. In his book, *Sacred Theatre* (2008), Yarrow argues that: "the sacred, as experience, mode of being and perception is central to theatre practice, which thereby locates a radical refiguring of engagement with the world" (Yarrow, 2008, p. 10). Again, this links to the pre-colonial performance practices found in sacred rituals to appease the spirits and the ancestors in

Africa. As Obaje recounts, when a mother hears her child cry, she acknowledges that a reborn ancestor may be calling out to her with a message for 'appeasement and sacrifice' (Obaje, 2018, p.51).

The exercises Stanislavsky devised for communion included partners working on sending rays, emanating, and absorbing, an element which relates to the belief systems found present in African spirituality, that a performance is an energetic force. This is also the method of Chekov, a member of the First Studio, who furthered such explorations with a series of exercises centered around radiation (Chekov, 1953, p. 12). White quotes Knebel (1998), Stanislavsky's assistant in his last studio, translating from Russian, "Chekov makes concrete Stanislavsky's thoughts on 'radiation.'" (White, 2009, p. 40). For both Chekhov and Stanislavsky, the basis of the concept was the belief that energy can be transmitted to an object, as well as the belief that energy can be sent and absorbed from one person to another. This is in line with the active nature of the entire process of the system, with *aktivnost/deistvennost* as the active inner essence sent through intention via the physical expression.

What is perceived through a study of Stanislavsky is the active nature of his system as well as its spirituality and his belief in soul-to-soul work in the technique of communion. It simply is not the psychological interiority of the Method as promulgated by Strasberg. Instead, it centers around active expression of the life of the human spirit, through *activnost,* with the actor radiating the energy, the content of their action, from soul to soul or from soul to object. For Stanislavsky, his technique of communion enables a higher level of communication of intention. Stanislavsky as Torstov, the teacher, in the original Russian version, says, "*aktivnost* requires of us that we implant our inner images in another" (Carriere, 2010, p. 68, citing Stanislavsky, 1954, p. 92). This intense and interactive giving and receiving of the energy of action based on feeling, thought and creative will, when focused on the acting partners and objects contained within the world of the piece being communicated to an audience, when achieved by the actors, is the pathway to Stanislavsky's definition of theatrical art as something that infects the audience indirectly through empathy and emotion.

The sum of these concepts requires that the teacher/trainer has a grasp on the whole of Stanislavsky's meaning beyond the methodology of his exercises, recognizing that the parts reference the whole, so that they can be taught in an African context. As well as connecting to his philosophy, conceptualizing the trajectory of the two separate phases of his work, the First Studio of 1905, where affective memory was emphasised, on to the later work where he emphasised Physical Action and Active Analysis, would assist the teacher/trainer in distinguishing what may be most useful for each genre of theatre. However, as noted earlier, the problems of translation have plagued a clear understanding of what Stanislavsky meant.

In Stanislavsky's ideal of 'experiencing', the actor lives the part anew each time, performing in a spontaneous and improvisatory way within the rehearsed boundaries of a piece. Experiencing "communicates felt experience, rather than knowledge, infecting the audience when a performance stirs the audience's affective memories" (Carnicke, 2009, p.217). According to Carriere (2010, p. 34), the Russian root verb for experiencing has many translations: 'to experience, live through, feel, suffer, survive'. In addition, Clare notes the difficulty in communicating what experiencing is, as the embodied experience of the actor is subjective, "complex, multi-valent, inexplicable, inherently subjective in that it can only be experienced by the experiencing subject, arguably human experience is the subject of the expressive arts because we cannot speak it" (Clare, 2010, p. 5). Despite the elusiveness of meaning, Carnicke (2009) correctly maintains it is the idea of experiencing which distinguishes Stanislavsky's conception of the art of acting from others. He perceived acting as capable of reflecting the organic process of creativity; the actor's conscious work would provide the means to access the subconscious, allowing the actor to live the part as 'experiencing'. This concept, in practice, leads to processes that the actor can be trained to access: the inner creative state, the resultant state of experiencing, found through 'thought, will and emotion' as the engine of performing, placed in imaginary given circumstances, Stanislavsky's 'magic if' (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 74). Taken together, they are elements feeding into the entirety of the creative process. This concept of experiencing, living the life of a part, brings up issues of not only the liminal state of the actor but

also the state where a trance is induced, as exemplified in the work of Brugal (2017) in integrating experiencing into Yoruba traditional performative modes in modern day narrative pieces.

The methodologies of the system, in the form of myriad exercises, dealing with such aspects as: relaxation and imagination, determining inner and outer action, rhythm and tempo; exercises dealing with connecting to the proposed imaginary circumstances, i.e. 'when, where, what and why', as well as sensory work and emotional recall are laid out clearly in the appendices of Benedetti's translation of *An Actors Work* (Stanislavsky, 2010, pp. 653-674), as well as in Merlin (Merlin, 2003, pp. 117-154). These methodologies become inherent values when the aesthetic philosophy of his system of 'finding the action' is understood and realized.

Increasingly, in teaching Stanislavsky to actors, it is necessary to go beyond the myths surrounding his iconic status, particularly those from the West, as well as to go beyond the exercises. They cannot be taught in a vacuum, without the greater context of his philosophy, especially when they are being taught in South Africa. As Matern notes, "a part of Stanislavski's methodology was exported, leaving behind the underlying aesthetic assumptions that informed Stanislavski's art" (Matern, 2013, p. 44). The aesthetic philosophy which underlies the exercises can correlate to South African actor in that they connect to notions of energy and action, offering a conceptual goal towards which they may direct their creativity. It is not enough to ask, without contextualising, to imagine that they are a tree or an imaginary space or committing to the action of destroying an enemy, for example. The actor's experience is enhanced, in the effort to embody these methods of imagination, given circumstance or a motivating inner action, when they realize they are part of the active creative state with energy flowing outward to not only their partner onstage but to the outer created and imagined environment which surrounds them. This includes, as well, the understanding that when the energy which they have created is sent out to their partners as outward communication, it is also indirectly communicated to the audience.

4.4. A Possible Fluidity

These approaches allow for and can be expanded to include the full scope of performance genres. They can include and be incorporated into what can be categorized as traditional cultural performance on to more deconstructed, modern performance modes. Carnicke traces Stanislavsky's evolution of thought in his formulation of experiencing to the point where he finally concludes that the actor's alternating dual awareness of both the role performed and themselves performing the role becomes "the theatrical event itself as the source of the actor's genuine experience" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 144). As previously noted, the evolution of his thought places Stanislavsky in the 21st century where, "experiencing is correlated with what happens in performance, where the actor/performer is at the same time both image and experience, breaking the often-perceived link between the multitalented training System and the aesthetic style of Psychological Realism" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 147). If one considers Stanislavsky philosophy as an aesthetic of humanism, based on the actor living the life of the human spirit in the role, then the values at the core of his system are not an acting 'style' but a humanistic concept of the actor's creative work.

In the eclectic modern theatre often theatrical styles, such as those of Brecht, Boal, Beckett, Protest Theatre and the Theatre of African Aesthetics, are conflated with acting style. As Gillett notes, "a problem arises when different theatre styles are misleadingly called acting styles, when Stanislavski is seen as if he were a writer in a particular style, like Brecht, and when he is narrowly limited to 'naturalism' and 'behaviorism'" (Gillett, 2012, p.13). What the actor potentially learns from being introduced to Stanislavsky is an approach, one which is available to the actor in the semiotics of representation in many forms. The performing artist of modern-day South Africa is capable and aware of which genre they are performing in and, as such, able to create the appropriate significators for their performance, through the process of embodiment, discovering truth as what happens during performance.

The elements of mime, song, music, dance, oral narratives, oral poetry and storytelling, all taken together constitute the African aesthetic and permeate much of the theatre of South Africa up to the present. Framing the philosophy and methods of Stanislavsky within the legacy of South

African and African theatre with concepts such as action/*aktivnost* and experiencing creates correspondence. The three foundations of his approach: Pushkin's aphorism of living truthfully in the proposed circumstances, the creative state of conscious work leading to the subconscious and the energy of the inner action connected to the physical expression of the essence of such action, as laid out in his chart of his system, are a grammar for collaboration. The methodologies taught can be done with not only an understanding of the key concepts of his work but also a comprehension that his work was spiritual at its core. It is within these concepts where we can apply and cross reference intraculturally, laterally, as well as where we begin to understand Stanislavsky's assertion that his system was following that which is found in the spirit and in nature. In discussing the chapter on communion in *An Actor Prepares*, Merlin points out, "possibly one of the most surprising elements of this chapter is how many references appear to the 'soul' and 'spirituality' (…) It is, in fact, extremely holistic, combining body, thought and emotion with the more intangible elements of 'energy' or 'spirituality'" (Merlin, 2003, p. 74).

The aesthetic philosopher and writer, John Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1993), stated that existence precedes essence, which, for him, emphasised the agency and freedom of choice of the individual from which comes the individual's freedom. But if we consider essence alongside existence, we can consider ourselves as coming from an essence which can be a central part of our existence. With an acknowledgment of the dangers of essentialism, perhaps an essence of known experience in the South African context has been destabilised by colonialism and apartheid. In contextualising both training and theatre, it is necessary to recognise that the legacy of pre-colonial African Theatre, along with indigenous knowledge, has been clouded by the legacy of apartheid. Until recently the teaching of pre-colonial theatre and performance has been neglected in university curriculums, as well as in many training institutions. The aesthetic choices made by students in the stories they prefer to tell and the plays they wish to direct very often reflects an African aesthetic. Many possibilities exist to enhance their learning and training in the theatre curriculum regarding pre-colonial African Theatre, including training methods that directly reflect their cultural experiences, specifically in movement training and in the use of language. Modern day actor training in South Africa, given the choices and variety possible for a

talented actor, must be lateral. Simultaneous to Stanislavsky's System is the necessity of including techniques as they have evolved in South African theatre.

Training in the System can be approached within a contextualised approach of African theatre and in a context greater than the methodologies. As Gillett notes Stanislavsky's training is basic for the actor. It opens "the actor's path to the experienced, fully physicalised embodiment of a role. In Beckett, Barker, Brecht or 'post-dramatic theatre' there is a level of experience to be explored and engaged, starting with oneself, however 'non-naturalistic'" (Gillett, 2012, p.17). The important idea is the opening of a grounded approach which the actor may use as a springboard. As Kavanagh notes "African art is rich because it is free to choose from all the resources available to artists of all different countries at all different times and use those resources as it sees fit in order to express our African realities" (Kavanagh, 2022, p. 4). The key then is in context and application.

Theatre, at its best, is the communication and exploration of human experience; it is a forum for a culture's values, political, aesthetic, moral and ethical. It is also concerned with the interaction of these values at a philosophical, emotional and intellectual level. The theatre in Africa has been, and still is, informed by its cultural practices and values. Stories told are enactments of such values. Storytellers include actors, directors, lighting designers and set designers. Each learns a craft: lighting designers learn lights, directors the bigger picture and actors the body and the inner life. In my research, I have been revitalized by two new concepts. First, the rediscovery of experiencing as laid out by Sharon Carnicke (2009) and secondly, the power found in theatre based directly on African aesthetics, wherein the action and power of music, dance and song, of gods and mysterious beings, with improbable leaps in the imaginary world is prioritized in the storytelling.

It is worth noting that Pitches states:

> The legacy of Stanislavsky (…) is characterised by a sense of fluidity, of receptivity to local, national and international influences and by an interrogative attitude to performance. The polysemic term

> ‘system’ encourages such a reading. Amongst other things, it connotes a wide programme of activities—a complex or network of ideas. A ‘method’, on the other hand, has a more limited range of definitions. It tends to operate at a local level, focusing on specific problems. A system can draw on a range of methods to achieve its overall aim, but the reverse does not hold true. (Pitches, 2006, p. 99)

In teaching acting in South Africa and India, the fluidity in Stanislavsky’s system that Pitches remarks upon is evident. Through the elements of an interacting system, actors begin to grasp the notion of experiencing a character onstage in starting with themselves, who they are, where they are and what they deeply know, in both a personal and an historical context, where the actor is not playing themselves but consciously using themselves as the material from which they create (Matern, 2013, p. 48).

The scope of Stanislavsky is an interrelated system of training, one that, if comprehended and studied, can be a multi varied path towards embracing the entirety of what is possible for a creative actor. In order for a synthesis to work between an African aesthetic and Stanislavsky, those who would use his work would need to be able to distinguish between the Actor Studio Method of Strasberg (1987), which emphasises the realistic and internal, and a total sense of what was originally intended in the system, including reflection upon of his meaning of an organic approach through ‘laws of nature’ and the network of relationships between the techniques, where focusing on one technique draws in another. For example, focusing on physical expression requires relaxation, concentration, imagination and a body that responds to inner impulses. It is in the holistic comprehension that a more flexible range of possibilities is found. In using Stanislavsky for their own means, the South African practitioner can, for example, consider the use of Active Analysis (Knebel, 2021; Merlin, 2013, pp. 33-37) in giving structure to the devising process. As well, the philosophy and methods of achieving an inner creative state in creating work (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 227-235), are developed through exercises focusing on the ‘muscles’ of concentration, relaxation and imagination, as well as in ritual, movement/dance and song. In working with ‘action’ (*aktivnost/divestivnost*), the knowledge that ‘action’ and ‘intention’ are intrinsically tied to communion and the radiating of energy expressed in physical actions enable the actor to fully embody and physicalise both the method and the philosophy, taking the work to a new level.

The aesthetics of Stanislavsky value living a part as conceived in experiencing, finding the truth of lived experience while in the creative state - it is also metaphysical (Matern, 2013, p. 9). The techniques which can lead an actor towards experiencing need not mitigate the application of African techniques, which may include the inducement of a creative state through rituals of purification or through rhythm, specific physical training of township styles, "Afrosonic" techniques (Ravengai, 2024)) and the myriad use of presentational South African styles. Nor should it exclude future possibilities which yet may be formulated. The flexibly of the system has enabled the practitioners who, having been trained in his theories such as Michael Chekov and Maria Knebel, went on to further explore and develop his work, as well as those who have considered and taken what they could use and rejected what they cannot use (Mrabet, 2017; Ravengai, 2018). Notions of a more radical physicality, of the 'holy actor', of the forgotten roots to be found in theatre, as well as the acknowledgment of the vast variety of theatrical experience are part and parcel of contemporary evolution and growth. Stanislavsky hoped future generations, both scientific and non-scientific, would rigorously critique and debate his work, "this is to be welcomed by intelligent professionals because criticism by intelligent professionals can clarify misunderstandings and gaps in our technique" (Stanislavsky, 2010, p. xxiv). The path offered to actors by Stanislavsky starts from the self, by creating organic responses to the given circumstances, not merely representing but experiencing, "unless we are to fall into empty mannerism and formalism, we need to play people roundly, fully, and with belief within the demands of the particular language, form and style of each play (…) do we want to experience a character through natural processes or represent and pretend?" (Gillett, 2012, p. 15). While Stanislavsky training may 'underpin' many other approaches, the actor who is able to fully grasp his process is equipped to operate with independence and enter many genres of theatre - because they understand his central values of experiencing, action and imagination, through embodiment, beyond intellectual comprehension.

4.5. Teaching Stanislavsky in a South African University

The training of actors is not the same as the directing of actors. Training implies giving actors tools and concepts for their artistry which, ultimately, they will use in the moment of performing. The individual and collective use of these tools is sometimes with the guidance of directors, sometimes as a collective devising a piece. As a teacher/trainer, I am concerned with empowering actors to rely on their understanding of what they must do to render a performance, not only in collaboration with others, but in accordance with their personal artistic sense of what they wish to express. Actors need a healthy sense of both equal collaboration and independence, where boundaries are respected. The conflicts between Stanislavsky, the actor, and Nemirovich-Danchenko, the director have been chronicled in both Benedetti (1988) and Carnicke (2009, pp. 35-38) and lead to his belief in empowering actors over the text, de-emphasising the literary, and in relation to the director (Benedetti, 1988, pp. 216-221). Stanislavsky considered acting an art and strove throughout his life to empower the actor as an artist. This confusion of actor/director roles and the ethical responsibilities of each can lead to an actor expecting a director to create and shape their role for them or, in turn, to a director conflating his role with instructing and teaching. This can be circumvented by training an actor to think of their work as both a philosophical approach and a craft, defined in Miriam Webster as, a "skill in planning, making, or executing", which they develop in order to create. This gives the actor agency and frees them to perceive what the director wants, what the genre of the play is and together collaborate or, alternately, frees them to offer their acting skills and approach to the process of a group devising a piece.

Specifically in line with Stanislavsky's techniques, the path taught is, in creating a role, the actors use the 'magic if' in the 'given or proposed circumstances' of the piece they are working on, through rehearsal and improvisation; they discover and choose the activities, actions and tasks; finally, with a 'sense of truth', which is unique to each, the actor creates the 'through action' which leads to their 'supertask' in the entire piece. This comes from the actors themselves, from their own ideations, in relationship to the other performers, who are their collaborators. Throughout this process, the actors, alone and together, learn to develop the psychophysical technique of conscious work assessing the subconscious. The basic steps of the system are open

to interpretation and may have varied meanings. They are surrounded by the more complicated concepts of the creative state, communion, embodiment/incarnation and experiencing, yet remain the basic process of giving 'creative breath' to a performance.

Initially, in my teaching, I have focused on 'action and intentions' as it is a summatory method, giving the actor a strong tool, an approach which offers a clear way to go from the idea of an 'action' to then create the entire skeleton of a role in relation to a play or a piece. Around this concept of action can be hung Stanislavsky's related ideas: given circumstances, subtext, sensory details in relation to 'where, what, who, why, when', as well as improvisation. The creation of a simple text such as, 'hi, how are you, I'm fine, I'm sharp, well…what?', allows the actors to understand the use of a transitive verb as well as understanding 'wants and needs' in the moment, to know that words come out of actions and finally overall to understand what the 'supertask' of the role is in an entire piece. Also, a simple dialogue can be a basic building block to expressing subtext, substitution and conflict. At this point, after three years of research into both Stanislavsky and his use in South Africa, I have come to correlate the techniques through the goal of experiencing, which Gillett calls "the core, the bedrock, the alpha, the omega, the essential element of Stanislavsky's approach, without which he would not have the enormous influence and relevance he still has" (Gillett, 2012, p.1). In that physical action opens lived experience, the techniques, of which action is so basic, now come together, now become even more directed for both me, as the teacher, and the student, and become a bridge to a path, which show us where to go.

Simultaneous to and beneath active improvisatory efforts towards an understanding of 'action' is what can be called an introduction to the creative state. The creative state is the state that the actor is in when experiencing, when, "independent of his will, he lives the role, without noticing how he is feeling, not thinking about what he is doing, and so everything comes out spontaneously, subconsciously (…) this demands long and conscious work, subconscious creation through the conscious, the involuntary through the voluntary" (Stanislavsky, 2008, pp. 17-18).

As the first steps in conscious work, action is the basic way towards finding the conflict at the root of a piece. To create action, actors use the imagination as a starting point. With Stanislavsky, many ideas are woven into a simple exercise. Sitting still, focusing on breathing and releasing muscles, imagining sunlight on the body, and adding further senses, such a smell of grass, the sound of birds or waves, the touch of a kiss, the smell of a grandmother or a favourite relative; these practices exercise both the actor's imaginary and concentration muscles and highlight the necessity of working without tension. Most of all, they begin to know what it is to enter a creative state.

This year in class, a discussion took place where two actors asserted that when you act a role, you magically become another person. I have concluded the opposite, to start from myself, not only through Stanislavsky's 'living in the given circumstances' but also from the simple question, 'who is the character?'. The answer, of course is, 'I am the character', encompassing his idea of the 'magic if': 'I were in this circumstance, what would I do?'.

It is fundamental that the actor begins their work from their own self as a person can only use their own experiences and emotions. Not only is the use of self-related to a sense of truth, it also relates to the actor's unique sensibility, which is the basis of their artistry and what they offer. Through a creative identification with the given circumstances, the actor merges with the role and makes the character their own, no longer viewing a piece from the outside but from within, subjectively. A transformation occurs where the actor and role become one (Benedetti, 2007, p. 122). The use of improvisation and Active Analysis allows the actor to experience the circumstances as real, beyond the text. This process of embodying the fictitious circumstances transfer the actor's real feelings to the role and is the essential element of creating the life of the human spirit in the role – it cannot be otherwise.

While Mamet declares that character is an illusion, just the intersection between given circumstances and action (Mamet, 1999, p. 9), Stanislavsky reminds actors that characterisation is a mask, and the actor remains behind the mask, using their own feelings and actions, "characterisation is the mask that hides the actor-human being. When we are masked, we can reveal the most intimate and spicy details about ourselves" (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 535). He notes physicalisation is an intuitive task for the actor; a limp, a habitual gesture, a way of walking or speaking comes from the willingness and ability to express physically. In teaching, the intuitive expression of physical characterisation so remarkable with South African actors needs to be balanced with an emphasis on beginning from their own feelings and experiences so that the acting does not become mechanical imitation. A conscious technique of the use of the self in creating as a means to access the subconscious, fostering a fluidity of expression in both the voice and the body and emphasising a commitment to the energy of action-ness seems to be the way forward in working with the student/actor.

The use of sensory exercises where, for example, the students are asked to go through an imaginary box from childhood, full of things they once treasured, is, I have found, effective in learning the use of real emotional responses. Sensory perception and awareness, the use of the memory of smell, touch, taste and sight opens up a creative world and allows the actor - from their innate sensibilities - to use authentic responses and feelings and transfer them from a treasured object or the sensory memory of important person in their emotional life to fellow actors onstage and to the scenic life of a piece. As well, it creates a strong inner life from which expression comes. This use of imagination in both the inner scenic life and the outer scenic life is necessary to find the living spirit of a role but also applies when sets are minimal, and the actors must create the surrounding imaginary world. The process of making the invisible visible, such as miming the act of taking out a cigarette and lighting it or the act of crossing an imaginary river, is translated into detail through the muscles of concentration, imagination and physicalisation. What Stanislavsky was adamant about was that this imaginary process is not an inner fantasy but located on real action, in the world of the play, an active state of creativity, generated out, "action-ness [*aktivnost'*] in the creative process that is the steam in the engine. Action-ness –

authentic, productive and purposeful action – is the most important thing in the creative process [*tvorchestvo*]" (Stanislavsky translated from Russian, 1954, in Carriere, 2010, p.77).

With 'action-ness', as a teacher/trainer, I am sometimes confronted by actors influenced by a small screen mentality where all movement is naturalistic: small, internal as in television or film with little physical expression. There is, indeed, a time gap between the inner and the outer based on a reluctance to fully express through the body, even in South Africa where physicality in theatre is especially powerful. The idea of trusting the impulse and knowing how to follow it requires physical training. The necessity of physical warm-ups becomes important, as well as alignment of the spine, all towards training the body to allow to "make the invisible creative life visible" (Stanislavsky, 2010, p. 353). I have used all means of physical expression possible: dance, T'ai chi, mime and plastiques, as well as warmups and games brought in by class members. We also include music and drumming.

Having been trained in Grotowski techniques, I find that the intense corporal exercises, designed to strip away tension and muscular resistance and done in relation to a partner are not useful due to the time constraints of a class, unlike a laboratory where actors train three hours several times per week (Marijnen in Grotowski, 2002, pp. 175-204). Plastiques, also included in the chapter by Marijnen, are a random language of physical gestures, many taken from yoga and mime and are learned and done in partners, provide a viable focus towards 'getting out of the head and into the body'. The Mirror exercise, again in partners, with each person accurately reflecting the action of their partner serves as well in learning to focus on the other instead of on themselves or the audience's responses (Curpan, 2019, pp. 145-146).

When the actor is 'playing to the audience', indicating what they feel, i.e., showing, instead doing in relation to the partner (even if the partner is the audience), they are falling into a common trap for the beginning actor. Often when I ask, 'what are you doing?', the actor will answer, 'I'm showing that I'm feeling happy'. They wish to show the audience something rather than doing something to a partner or an object or to an audience, as in 'demanding' or 'celebrating'. The idea of active verbs is interrogated in class, making use of all languages and emphasising that

actors in South Africa have an advantage in that many are multilingual and have the advantage of greater resources in choosing an action. In this instance, as I speak only English, I am unable to reference the variety of verbs and how they work in languages such as *Setswana* or *isiZulu*. As it is important that students make use of all action verbs they respond to and know, the teaching becomes a query and a search in multiple languages. For example, in *isiZulu*, the verb, '*thulisa'* means to calm down, sooth or assuage or alternately to make someone be quiet, an imperative command, as it is also often used. The point is that for each actor, their choice of the use of the verb for action is according to their personal experience and context as well as their artistic sensibility. It can be slang particular to where they come from but triggered and inspired by the piece they are working on and the given circumstances.

Here again, it is important to understand Tolstoy's definition of art as adapted by Stanislavsky, "art communicates felt experience, rather than knowledge, 'infecting' its audience with the artist's emotion (…) the actor 'infects' the audience when a performance stirs the spectators' affective memories" (Carnicke, 2009, p.217). The emotion which so many actors reach for, ironically, cannot be approached directly, it is the result of action, of doing – in a sense emotion is the water upon which we float, part of the subconscious, underneath the action of a play. If we connect to action, the emotion will come. If we connect to our fellow actors, we will indirectly connect to the audience. The aesthetic device of playing directly to the audience comes through the scenic life and circumstances of a play, from the imaginary world created, thus the actor is speaking to an audience from that world and, even though they are directly open to an audience, in the context of the piece, the audience's affective memories can be stirred. In telling a story, the actor is, for example, in the action of 'sharing' and from that 'doing' is able to connect emotionally.

For the past three years of teaching basic acting, with a tacit emphasis on Stanislavsky, to first year students, the elements that define them are:

- They are mostly of South African origins.

- They are approximately 90% of African origins, with the remaining of Indian, 'Coloured' or European origins.
- They come from a variety of areas, from all over the country, with many from townships, as well as many from suburban areas. In South Africa "townships" refer to designated areas given to non-white people by the Apartheid government.
- Again, they come from a variety of educational institutions: some private, some from suburban schools and some from township schools.
- From my perspective, they are intelligent, open and articulate. Although they are not initially always willing to articulate, as they are in a new group, by the end of the year, they are generally unafraid to express opinions as an ensemble bond has been forged.

As a teacher/trainer of acting, the goal is to give students basic and strong foundational tools to both approach a role and to work within an ensemble; encourage them to think of acting as an art; create an atmosphere of respect and discipline and help them to learn skills that will give them agency and enable them to flourish. While I, as a teacher/trainer, have skills that I need to share and convey, the work of Paulo Freire (2005) remains a constant reminder which causes me to sway towards a rhizomatic structure, where teaching is not seen as a top-down structure of activity but more as a "subversive" activity (Postman & Weingarten, 1971). The rhizomatic schema, reflecting the biological structure of the spread of outgrowth of a rhizome plant, is an approach that is, "multiple, non- hierarchical, horizontal" (Knowles, p. 59). Within the frame of learning a process as conceived by Stanislavsky and those who have followed him, the path is that of my working together with students synergistically as part of a group, an ensemble. Referencing and interrogating different experiences with the knowledge we each bring, alongside negotiating the ideas and methods put forth, allows students to interpret Stanislavsky's meaning through a "here, today, now" and "on your feet" discourse. This approach, while chaotic, facilitates ownership, where students take responsibility for what they are learning. The exercises are collaborative and systematic with the goal to: "forge learning connections and help the formation and development of a complex learning system, with the participants being the

constituent parts and the manifestations of a learning rhizome in the becoming" (Brailas, 2020, p. 4).

The structure of the first year includes acting training in both presentational and realistic forms of theatre put in the context of South Africa and often in relation to more Western material, as in Stanislavsky. The concepts of liberation play into the class context and structure, not only with the scripts performed, but insomuch as a post-colonial South Africa requires a post-colonial awareness, and, beyond that, an awareness of the centrality of locality. As an American in South Africa, it helps that I often know and have worked in areas where my students are from.

An Afrocentric approach demands that the issue of language be dealt with in actor training in Africa. The question of cultural domination exists both in terms of language and texts of plays. Adaptation to locality is necessary in selecting texts to perform with encouraging students to create specific parallel circumstances and translate the text into the language they wish to perform in. This is a process of generating meaning from the centre of themselves and from South Africa. To be authentic, actors need to use the language they are most comfortable with in rehearsing, improvising and performing. Knowles, in *Theatre and Interculturalism,* notes that the West tends to privilege "western textuality and create hierarchies of verbal language in intercultural practices (…) ignores the language of the body, issues of translation, and the negotiation of meaning in performance" (Knowles, 2010, p. 37). The specific linguistic code of a language, the sounds, the varied and subtle meanings, frees the actor and allows the energy and body language not always found in the use of English. Yani, a South African playwright, notes: "thinking in an African language and writing in English problematises indigenous African voices which are often times suppressed if not casually silenced by the dominance of Western languages in African spaces" (Yani, 2019, p.132). This applies to the actor as well.

The challenges of teaching Stanislavsky in a South African context requires constant referencing, discourse and contextualising. I am, along with the students, often in a liminal space, one of a

passage to identifying an embodied language of acting that has meaning. It is a compelling and stimulating process. That Stanislavsky has been both iconised and misinterpreted by the West, specifically in the United States, through mistranslations and through Strasberg's emphasis on the internality of 'emotional memory' has led to a constant reconsidering of Stanislavsky for modern day South Africa. Strasberg's emphasis on the psychological, particularly Freudian psychology, reflects the American obsession with Freud and resulted in the Method's obsession with emotion and pain (Carnicke, 2010), as opposed to outward and flowing expression. Freud was not commonly known in Russia when the system was developed, and it is likely Stanislavsky was not influenced by him. He was, however, concerned with the psychology of the unconscious (Whyman, 2008). This question of psychology in Stanislavsky is an example of the issue of translating his work in actor training for the contemporary world of South African performing and exemplifies the binaries of inner and outer, of the universal versus the specific and of realising Africa in relation to the West.

The schema of the system, taken holistically, posits many aspects which relate directly to South African theatre and African theatre, as well as African concept of humanism and spirituality. If Stanislavsky's teaching is delinked from identification with realism, as noted earlier in Carnicke (2009), then his training serves a multipurpose function and is applicable to African nonrealism. Beyond the methodologies of Stanislavsky are the foundational concepts which can apply. Matern notes in his article for the *Journal of Stanislavsky Studies* (2013), that the pedagogy of Stanislavsky has too often focused on the various exercises, the methodology, with the result that we miss the essential part: "wrapped up as it is in that one word, we are having trouble elucidating: perezhivanie (experiencing)" (Matern, 2013, p.44).

Recognising the contingency and agency of the artists who practice theatre today in Africa must deal with the question which Paul Taylor raises in relationship to the quandary of our existence in a modern and interconnected world, 'what is it to be authentic?' Is it the agency of the artist, of self-expression, or is it determined by what a global, and mostly Western world who would

determine what is ‘really real’? After querying what is authentic and its variations, from the notion of what is culturally pure, to the notion of a ‘fake’ or a ‘genuine’ work of art to the idea that workshop art is not real, as it cannot be attributed to one sole genius, Taylor defines a preferred level of authenticity which, “embraces contingency, insists on context, counsels responsibility, and refuses moralism, all to give human agents the resources to make their projects their own” (Taylor, 2016, pp. 146-147).

Taylor’s point is significant in a need to distinguish between what influences a creative artist and what constricts them. The goal in training an actor would surely be to free them to work creatively, away from the strictures of acceptable social behaviour to a place of the astonishing and the unpredictable. In discussing the process of the actor in reaching the subconscious through the conscious, through the detail work of structuring a role, choosing actions, objectives and tasks, Stanislavsky describes the difference, “Our freedom on this side of the threshold is limited by reason and conventions; beyond it, our freedom is bold, wilful, active and always moving forwards” (Stanislavski, 2013, p.20).

4.6 African Aesthetics

Without doubt, it can be said that until recent times Africa has either been ignored or viewed from without, from what can be considered a racialist point of view, one that accepts a Western philosophical and historical formula of evaluation from the view of considering civilisation as having developed from Greece on to the enlightenment and on to modernity. The study and philosophy of aesthetics is an example in that it has presupposed to align itself with concepts of the beautiful and the sublime as universally subscribed to, neither encompassing nor attempting to integrate and interrogate that which is beyond the West, with considerations which might include the nature of expression within a culture, and concepts of the functionality of art in a culture. Viewing the divergent cultures of the North, South, East and West From beyond the scope of traditional Western philosophy requires venturing beyond a scholar’s perhaps

perceived, and often unconscious standards of cultural expression. If aesthetics is about perception, then the effects of a racialised culture, must be analysed and interrogated. In *Black is Beautiful* (2017), Taylor notes that, "perception is an essentially ethical, and hence political, phenomenon, and that aesthetics is the key to understanding the ethics of perception" (Taylor, 2016, p. 69). He also contends that, "perception, in its immediacy, goes through the intuitive and habitual structuring of experience by the discursive resources of hegemonic social formations; that racialised ideologies are among the most persistent and pervasive of these resources" (2016, p. 70). As highlighted by Taylor, these racialised perceptions, often which focus on classification, are found in the assumptions and implicit behaviour that have existed in our social interrelations and have created a hegemony of whiteness. "When considered in terms of an expanded world of aesthetics, a Black aesthetic can redefine the essential components of aesthetics, reframing the immediacy of perceptions away from 'othering', 'objectification' and 'invisibility' towards an ethical perceptiveness which resists diminishing the value of another" (Taylor, 2017, p. 70).

If aesthetics is political, the process of defining, considering and encompassing black aesthetics becomes synonymous with the political, the ethical and the beautiful. Taylor throws light on the work of W.E. Dubois and his expressivist thought, paralleling his view as that of the idea of the human being as a part of the organic growth of life, where the seed becomes the tree "by actualizing in history what formerly existed in potentia" (Taylor, 2017, p. 92). This philosophical commitment to black expressive culture is, for Dubois, a natural expression of life experience, where he argues for the unity of the political interlinked to the truth, ethics and beauty of black experiences:

> Dubois's view was that blacks will be seen as human, and black artists will properly disclose the human, when their art eschews prejudgment and reveals the complex, mediated truth of human being as it achieves concrete expression in the specific contexts of black life. There is no conflict between the particular call for propaganda and the universal appeal to human truth. Human truth is unavoidably particular, and concrete, and will find expression in the work of the sincere artist who invites the world to pass through the alembic of his or her experience and sensibility. (Taylor, 2017, p. 99)

In South Africa, politics and black aesthetics are intimately tied, the experience of apartheid, colonialism and political resistance has, of course, defined much of aesthetics of South African theatre with historic themes of the political struggle against oppression being central. Bhekizizwe Pederson describes this 'protest' theatre from the seventies and eighties as multilingual and syncretic, switching from any of a dozen languages: Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans, English and township slang, for example. Multi-themed and often episodic, the performances used mime, song, sounds and dance, depicting the pre-colonial past as a reference point in passing on generational knowledge and constructing a future. He recounts the combined elements as, "a striking and aesthetically pleasing total performance" (Peterson, 1994, p. 44). The popular theatre of Gibson Kente, who is known as the father of township theatre, in the sixties and seventies, broke ground in its expression of black life as it was actually experienced in townships and cities. It was not overtly political but deeply radical in that, for the first time, it told the stories of people from the townships, placing black experience at the centre, and, with music, song, dance and melodrama, created a new performance style. Part of its appeal is the breaking away from a literary style to a performance style of the 'township musical' with large performances, often exaggerated, of easily identifiable types - heightened acting - celebrated through music and grounded in the struggle of black experience (Steadman, 1994, pp. 26-27). Kente's influence on actors, writers and directors is legend. He nurtured and mentored many prominent black actors, emphasising the power of black performers onstage and creating, for the first time, an aesthetic of township theatre. In his words, "people must walk out of the theatre proud. Proud of what they see as truly theirs. Their stories. Their songs. Their dances. Their lives. Their mannerisms and their vitality" (Kente, n/d). At the same time, true to the divergent nature of South African theatre, existed the theatre of Black Consciousness which coalesced in the seventies and, although not based on a single philosophy, was a space where theatre practitioners dynamically stressed the agency of black people in defining and determining their destinies and their political and social liberation. It was also about restoring value to "blackness". As Steadman recounts, it was a theatre which communicated to the audience through a shared structure of feeling, giving voice to black solidarity, resistance and liberation, with Pascal Mafika Gwala asserting that "black

theatre will act as a counter- culture leading eventually leading to an authentic national culture" (Steadman, 1994, p. 24).

Out of these theatre movements have come many of the elements of what has become a South African aesthetic in performing: realism was rejected in preference to a more direct presentational form; the relation to the audience was energetic with dynamic interchanges; plays were created collaboratively through workshop processes; and, as Steadman notes, included "formal innovations like episodic structures, quick shifts of scene and tempo, oral narrative, music and street rhythms, jazz and factory work-rhythms" (Steadman, 1994, p. 29). The theatre of Black Consciousness, the Township Musical and Protest Theatre all have fed into a vitalised theatre, one that existed on the margins, in contrast to the mostly white theatre performed in the monolithic state sponsored theatres.

The influence of pre-colonial theatre on these formative theatre movements is, I believe, not only self-evident, but formative. Additionally, the aesthetics of an Africa formed long before the advent of colonialism and apartheid have become emanate through the efforts of scholars and artists, such Ngugi, Kunene, Ukala, Mutwa, Soyinka, Ravengai and De Graft who have sought to view the aesthetics of Africa through an Afrocentric perspective. As Asante (2009) states, "Afrocentricity is the guiding principle, based on concepts derived from African aesthetics, cosmology, axiology and epistemology".

Traditional festivals, performances, rituals and the oral traditions of both storytelling and praise poetry long existent in varied cultures of Africa form an essential base for definition and understanding of contemporary African aesthetics in South African theatre, as evidenced in Sirayi (2012) and Ebewo (2017). It is necessary to interrogate the nature of African aesthetics in terms of the African artistic experience, scholarship and knowledge, rather than relying on the view of Western epistemological systems of defining theatre, systems that distinguish between theatre, drama and performance. Thus, as Ebewo notes, theatre may be regarded as a sum total of

elements: a text, either written by a single author, devised or improvised with production values of lighting, costumes and set; music and movement; and the actor's performance style and interpretations. While drama may imply a text, African performance and theatre are not always connected to a text and can be said to be intricately connected to action (Ebewo, 2017, p. 2).

Ravengai defines the concept of Afroscenology as the body of knowledge of performance practices centred in Africa and the Diaspora as has evolved from the past to the present day, which has embodied performance traditions and created work unique to Africa (Ravengai, 2022, p. 51). Among the many inherited traditions that forms this body of knowledge is that of storytelling, fundamental to both the African theatre tradition and African aesthetics. Gcina Mhlope notes in an interview with Tyrone August, "there was a time in African culture when the setting of the sun announced that it was time for storytelling" (August, 1994, p. 274). Traditional storytelling may include repetition, rhythm, refrains and sounds, the playing of multiple characters with 'Afrosonic' mime, which is both aural and physical, where the actor depicts a character, an animal or an inanimate object, through sound and movement (Ravengai, 2022, p.54).

Afrosonic mime techniques, as considered and delineated by Ravengai, are African performative techniques created within the ensemble and consist of multiple tenets. In his book, *Decolonising African Theatre* (2024), Ravengai defines various kinds of African theatre which can fall under the category of nonrealistic such as African epic theatre and interestingly a definition of Rombic theatre, based on often traumatic journeys and familiar archetypical characters known to a specific population in Africa, similar to the fool or jester in a chief's or king's court or to the Mudhead fraternity of clowns found in Native American Zuni performative traditions (Tedlock, B., 1983). The tenets of Afrosonic mime specified by Ravengai include:

- Vectorisation, where fragments of a nonlinear narrative are joined together by an ensemble, thus creating logical sequential links which clarify and inform the narrative. This would include aural landscapes, songs, games and image constructs from the actor's bodies, all of which indicate passages forward and backward in

the time of the storytelling. According to Ravengai, these are *syntagmatic* gaps in the African post-modern narratives which are illuminated by the vectorised shifters or drivers, the connectors of a story.

- Realistic mime, as reflected in the Zulu term for mime, *'ukudlala ngomoya'* which literally means 'playing with air', where an actor will define an entire imaginary kitchen, light an imaginary cigar or wrap themselves in an imaginary mantle to indicate a covered lady, done through miming techniques.

- Kinetic tableaux where, for example, an ensemble will create a living breathing forest at night with the trees and plants swaying and vibrating, perhaps even speaking in a secret language that the characters cannot hear or a suffering and creaking bed under a couple passionately making love. Ravengai explain this kinetic energy as 'spirimages which disregard the laws of nature' (Ravengai, 2024), p. 58). These are often accompanied by a change in light and atmosphere.

- Conception of space in Afrosonic mime is that of plasticity, a space that is capable of expanding, contracting and changing at the will of the ensemble.

  Ravengai, 2024, pp. 57-59

Scheub, who writes about Xhosa Ntsomi performance, describes the tradition of Ntsomi storytelling, usually but not exclusively performed by an older woman, a grandmother, as, "a fabulous story, a fairy tale (…) the storehouse of knowledge of Xhosa societies, the means whereby the wisdom of the past is remembered and transmitted" (Scheub, 1970, p. 119). He goes on to note that it is artistically rendered according to sophisticated aesthetic principles with the performer as director, actor, dancer and singer. Along similar lines are the performances of the great Griot storytellers of Mali, originating from the 13th century (Keita, 2023), as well as those of the praise poets of South African traditional culture.

The South African tradition of praise poetry, where an oral poet praises a chief or leader with poems, often impromptu, using metaphorical language in praising the person and their ancestry, often comparing them to a force of nature, an animal, or an object, are unique to the Bantu people of South Africa (Kaschula, 1993). Ebewo describes this traditional form of poetry as "some of the most specialised and complex forms of poetry to be found in Africa", telling the deeds of kings, warriors and chiefs and, in the praise poems of the Swazi and Basotho, recounting journeys to the mines, paying tribute to both the struggles and the achievements of a clan or a family (Ebewo, 2017, p. 6-7).

The use of oral traditions of Southern Africa and Africa as a technique in the presentation of plays and theatre is more than a director's technique of using a chorus of storytellers or a single storyteller or a praise poet, it is also engrained and embodied in the performer/actor who, having inherited these traditions, is able to, while praising or telling a story, seamlessly construct and deconstruct a narrative, switching from the presentational narrator to enacting a realistic scene and then to an ensemble in creating, both aurally and physically, the atmosphere surrounding a climatic event. These oral traditions of praise poetry and storytelling are intrinsic to African and Southern African performers and, as Sirayi (2012, p. 11) notes, are an abundant source of inspiration for theatre practitioners in creating a unique theatre which is able to integrate, "the images and knowledge from festivals of celebration, rituals surrounding birth, marriage and death, songs and dance".

Ukala, as a playwright and theorist from Nigeria, has formulated the Folkist theory of African aesthetics, based on the conventions of African performances of folktales, traditionally done with the use of mime, improvising, song, dance and, significantly, a communal and integrated relationship with the audience (Mark, 2018, pp. 25-37). In his delineation of the structure of the organic rhythm of folkloric African theatre, he has noted the Laws of Aesthetic Response, eight laws of African performance. The concept of a unique performance rhythm is found at the base of many types of theatre and is true for most cultures still immersed in their native cultures and

aesthetic such as India, the Aborigine culture and art in Australia, and the Māoris of New Zealand, as well as the performative practices of the Sami, Intuits and Buddhist traditions of Tibet and China. The *Noh* theatre is conceived as involving three stages, that of "Jo/Ha/Kyu" (Janisheski, 2014); one might decipher the conventions of Broadway theatre which always must end in a 'show buster' song before intermission – and in Africa, these stages are part of defining what constitutes African performance and aesthetics values. What distinguishes Ukala's work is his emphasis on the nature of the relationship between the audience and his highlighting of the communion which takes place in African performances, as is noted in his very naming of the laws as the 'Laws of Aesthetic Response'.

The first law, 'the law of opening', entails the call and response to gather for a story, common in African performance, a call to introduce the play as a joint experience between the actors and the audience, often by a narrator or narrators, where the parameters of the play are set up, the audience gives permission for the play to begin and characters are introduced (Umukoro, 2018, p. 157). The second law, 'the law of joint performance', as well, reflects the intimate relationship between audience and the actors, where interjections are acceptable and joining in with songs are acceptable, as it is a communal experience. It is acknowledged that seeing a theatre piece is not merely that of the audience passively receiving a story but of co-creating a special event. The idea of co-creation with the audience ties into the next law, that of the law of creativity and free enactment, where the actors are called upon to use their skills as performers, even improvising, and are responsible for engaging the audience fully. These laws, which flow on to 'the law of the urge to judge', 'the law of protest against suspense', 'the law of expression of emotions', 'the law of ego projection', where the audience accepts or rejects the validity of what the actors are doing, and finally 'the law of closing', where the moral of the story may be pointed out (Mark, 2018, pp. 29-30); each law requires an active, participatory and animated relationship with the audience. Because of the demands of a theatre with such a participatory ethos, the actor must exchange and use the energy of the audience in an improvisatory, spontaneous manner, on the moment. This can be said for most cultures and ethnic groups whose lives are intrinsically intertwined with their cultural rituals, the symbolic and mythical nature of religion/relationship to the world, their

use of language that, too, is often infused on an everyday basis with allusions to the mystical and profound. In India, *Bharatanatyam, Kathak* and *Kathakali* dances also begin with a call for the blessings of the gods to heed the invocation. These are performance rituals to celebrate and communicate with a higher reality as well as cement communal relationships. The audiences are active participants rather than spectators. Interestingly, Ukala does make use of Stanislavsky in Folkist plays with realistic characters and remarks: "I found that his system naturally generates electricity from the actor and superlatively enhances his believability in the audience" (Akpuda, 2018, p.66).

Asiedu (Asiedu, 2011, pp. 368-371) refers to the work of Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian playwright, in her coining the term of *anansegoro* to define an aesthetic of theatre based on the folktales of Anansi the spider, tales which are known throughout Africa, and combining the word with *agoro*, which has meaning of 'to play' but, as well, 'beauty', and 'fun', evoking the values of the tradition and conventions of the Akun people in Ghana, with the use of storytellers, musicians, actors and musical interludes in creating a theatre based on the ethos of the performance culture in Ghana. He notes that the theatre of Mohammed Ben Abdallah has taken Sutherland's concept further to create *abibigoro*, keeping the notion of 'play' but adding the word *abibi*, which can be construed as meaning 'black nation' or 'African' to create work which encompasses a broader ethos of African theatre. Abdallah has evolved his plays from an initial realistic approach to a style which, although it may contain naturalistic elements, is presentational, using oral traditions, chorus work and innovative use of storytelling traditions (Asiedu, 2011, pp. 370-371).

The theatre of Ukala, Sutherland and Abdallah all reference the communal nature of African aesthetics, based on Folkist traditions. Along with these traditions is the acceptance of the world of the ancestors, the spirit world, the magical, as demonstrated in Soyinka's play, *A Dance of the Forests* (Soyinka, 1971). This acceptance of the spiritual nature of life is at the core of African aesthetics, formed from the richness of the cosmology of the African world view:

> Man is a composite of soul, spirit and body. This means that African aesthetics is concerned with the tripartite of human nature and the connections between these three that is hinged on the cosmological order and value. The life force or/and the cosmic order is the motivating factor in the expression and the product of African arts and aesthetics. Hence the life force or the cosmological energy is at the centre of African aesthetics and thus, permeates all things. (Obaje, 2018, p.52).

Obaje, in her assertion that the cosmological energy or the life force is at the centre of an African world view and thus African aesthetics, where all things are connected, quotes Welsh-Asante, that the process of perception in an African centred aesthetics is of the "sacred and the profane, mind and body, the natural and the supernatural as organic dynamic entities, able to manifest themselves in all sort of combinations or discipline" (Welsh-Asante, 1993, p. 17, in Obaje, 2018, p. 52). The assertion of perception as a central question, the potential of its being both hegemonic and political, opens up the aesthetic choice to indeed view the world of performing from a more integrated point, where the oneness with ancestors, the sacred and the profane and the mind, spirit and body are perceived as a continuum. The spiritual and the magical are not separate but a source of creativity and one of claiming identity. The acknowledgment of the spirit as part of our daily life allows for less separation in mediating the relation between the audience, moving away from the science of the literary to a place where the creative imagination is linked to mind, body and spirit. In redefining traditional Western notions of what is theatre and performance is, Berleant (2005) writes on the idea of a cultural aesthetic and asserts,

> In pursuing a cultural aesthetic, we must abandon the ethnocentric assumptions of modern Western aesthetics that restrict art and the aesthetic to the carefully circumscribed objects and occasions of museums, galleries, and concert halls. Art is more inclusive and aesthetic experience far more pervasive than Western aesthetics has allowed, and their forms and appearance exhibit endless variety. (Berleant, 2005, p. 175).

This is true too for animist cultures, Māori, Hinduism, Buddhism, whose rituals are performance and whose performances are rituals, at once defining and confirming identity or even deconstructing and redefining identity. Unlike Western civilisation whose performance aesthetics arise out of Greece, there is less distance between ritual and performance in African aesthetics. The separation of audience and actor in Western performance is at once symbolic of the complete division between the spiritual and cerebral. While African performance is also

cerebral (using technique, or script or the mechanisms of stage craft), it is by virtue of its performers whose lived experience are an amalgamation of mind, body and spirit, completely different in ethos and praxis.

Two students, with whom I was rehearsing a play written in English, told me that after five in the afternoon they no longer speak English but only their mother tongue. They said the constant use of English exhausted them and the evening was a time they could speak from their hearts, not the head. Speaking from the heart implies speaking with the whole being, from the soul, rather than just that of the brain. The question of language comes up often in working with South African actors, many of whom wish to perform in the language they are most at home with. If theatre is a lived experience with the actor's spirit as the source, the actor's surest source would be the language they are at home with, the language of their culture.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) makes a trenchant case in regard to the use of language which he links directly to culture, noting that language is in itself a carrier of culture, beyond the practicalities of communication where, over time, the shared values of a people, "become a way of life distinguishable from other ways of life. They develop a distinctive culture and history. Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe" (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 389). For Ngugi, the colonialisation of Africa and the demeaning of African culture and languages as inferior led, in effect, to a kind of poisoning, a profound dislocation from the self. In reclaiming their languages in a post-colonial world, artists in theatre are, in line with Ngugi, reclaiming the history of their world, reclaiming the nourishment of the images of the very specific word structure and order which a language contains and, thus, reclaiming their culture (Ngugi, 1986, p. 391).

Language, the choice of which language to use in creating theatre, is an expression of an aesthetic, and a part of the aesthetics of Africa. In Southern Africa theatre practice, languages

are used in a variety of ways. I have observed that increasingly theatre practitioners are confident in using the language that best suits what they need to express. It has been common, from the emergence of black theatre as a force, for language use to be syncretic, with a vibrant mixture of local slang, township amalgamations of various African languages, and including Afrikaans and English (Pederson, 1994, p. 44). I have often seen and directed plays where, for example, the language was in *isiZulu* with English used as a point of clarification or the opposite, where mainly English is used with *Setswana* or *isiXhosa* interjected for clarification. There is a deftness about the various use of languages in theatre pieces which is remarkable in the level of multilingual sophistication. In time, when viewing and directing theatre, those of us who do not speak all of the eleven official languages of South Africa become used to reading the semiotics of a performance, as well as the emotional content, and are able to follow the narrative.

Mirrored in the eclectic use of language in theatre is the eclectic nature of theatre artists of South Africa and Africa, recognising the multi varied cultures of Africa and the hybridity of the theatrical art forms. At the same time, it does not lessen the need to define African aesthetics as inherent and inherited and as used in contemporary theatre. The influence of African aesthetics on a global scale is noted by Oliver and Dickson-Bonney (2023), with the incorporation of storytelling, ritual, the communal engagement between audience and actors, dance and its overall vitality as influencing physical theatre, dance/ drama and immersive and interactive theatre, breaking the traditional Western division of audience and performers and offering a space to push theatre performance and playwriting in new directions. The work of Freddie Hendricks and the Hendricks Method, an African – American acting approach, teaches acting from the three main tenets of Devising, Spirituality and the Hyper-Ego. Schaffer and Luckett (2016) describe his method, developed from working with black youth in the United States, as, “in line with Afrocentricity (…) an amalgamation of empowered authorship, musical bravado, spirituality, ensemble building, activism, effusive reverence of Black culture, devising often sans script” (Luckett, Schaffer, 2016, p. 20). The emphasis on spirituality, the ensemble, devising, Afrocentricity and activism reference the mutual impact of the African aesthetic.

In the arena of theatre and dance in South Africa, there are artists who resist categorisation of their work as 'African Art' or resist being defined by African aesthetics, artists who wish to be free of being boxed in, which I believe indicates the 'subversive' twist of South African performance, subverting the hegemony and dominance of the what is known as the Western Canon, or the 'Global North', as Emma Dollory refers to it in her article, *How to Decolonise Theatre and Dance in South Africa* (2021). She quotes an audience member as saying, during a discussion, "does it make me any less African if I want to wear a ball gown and dance around to Bach?". The resistance of artists to rigid categorisation and the desire to define themselves in their own terms perhaps competes with the need to specify the nature of aesthetics in African theatre. The creative divergences of South African theatre artists who express themselves in hybrid and inventive forms, where anything is possible, speaks to a vitality, which can be said to be a part of its aesthetics. I have worked with a student who was a Tswana traditional dancer, who together with a dance group devised remarkably beautiful Tswana dances and has since gone onto choreographing for the Johannesburg Ballet; conversely, there are dancers from ballet companies who now work in townships creating dance which makes syncretic use of both ballet, township dance, such as Pantsula, and traditional dance.

The deconstructing of forms in performances, done with facility by both directors and actors, results perhaps from an adaptability inherent in the many influences of South African culture, from traditional knowledge to the ability to speak multiple languages to an ability to express physically what is happening within. The play, *Sunday Kos* (2023), as directed by Viwe Sikali, a student in Theatre and Performance, is a deconstructed version of the original which was written in a realistic style. Reshaped and subverted into a presentational form, the set is empty except for three large images of a knife, a spoon and a fork placed in the background; the actors' bodies and voices become cars, tables, beds, closets; climatic scenes go both out to the audience or to each other and the miming is constant; the actors create the pathways in and out of one location to another and, performed in a heightened manner, the acting remains realistic, has integrity and

is affecting. The essential element is the animated world of the piece, think of Disney's movie, *Fantasia*, where pots and brooms dance, where everything is alive, done with a fluidity and ease, while, at the same time, making the narrative clear. Scenes flow into one another organically: songs, dance and abstract movements are used to transition, multiple languages are used, all communicated through the actors' bodies/voices, with full embodiment of each of the multiple characters played. In another play performed, small houses of cardboard symbolise their homes, the actors lie in front of them as if they are sleeping inside; a rich man's house is symbolised by the actors' sticks becoming the eaves and entrance, a baby born and held is a stick, a pregnancy is a costume bump seen by the audience and an actor changes character by tossing a sleeve off and wearing a bracelet. The two plays are not linear but episodic, not realistic but performed with utter realism; characters who are doing two separate scenes at same time may speak a climatic line together and then quickly switch through logical abstract movement to the next day. It is as they have discovered the fluidity of film through the body and in the freedom of movement and voice, freedom to become a window or door who may creak to open or even protest if pushed too hard and then switch to an angry wife or a chagrined husband. The resultant quality is pure theatre, not a theatre of agony or struggle, although the characters suffer agonies of life, but one of animated expression, in creating the environment and atmosphere and in building tension. In this fluidity of performance, realistic characters are created - a couple making love can happen symbolically through the actors in a dance, or in a taking off clothes while two other actors create the closure of a door. It is a fluid creativity, unhinged from the literary and created in bodies through ensemble 'play'. The techniques used, that of animation of objects, non-linearity, multiple characters, multiple languages, dance and abstract movement, playing out to the audience and symbolism form a totality of African aesthetics, as employed in South African theatre.

4.7. Conclusion

Linking Aristotle's concepts of action to traditional performance and, subsequently, to contemporary South African performance with the concept of action as central in creating

theatre pieces along with the correlated techniques for determining action, as viewed by Stanislavsky, indicates a potential continuity for the actor and clarifies the use of 'action' in teaching his approach and methods. Understanding the two fundamental concepts of 'action', of energy and 'experiencing', as living the spirit of a role is a common denominator in creating an interactive system, within the contextual reality, between the approaches of Stanislavsky and approaches to creating South African theatre. This requires training and developing a freedom of expressiveness in the actor's body, learning to value the importance of entering a creative state and understanding the tool of action as leading to experiencing, while, as well, enhancing the agency and independence of the actor to generate meaning from an empowered sense of self. Working from Afrocentricity, in the specifics of locality, alongside a rhizomatic learning structure, where the structure of a training session is ensemble based and all input is valued, becomes a part of the dynamic and spontaneous exchange found in the creative state and in the communal potential.

The position that pre-colonial African performance is not truly theatre, when considered in terms of the aesthetic traditions of storytelling, oral poetry and the functions of ceremony and ritual, all of which influence contemporary African theatre, impedes the ability to fully conceptualise the nature of African aesthetics in theatre making. The aesthetic perception imagined by theatre practitioners in South Africa references pre-colonial ceremonies and rituals, storytelling, the power of Protest Theatre and include African cosmology and world view. These practices energetically inform the present and form a part of a creative enterprise of incorporating the past and envisioning a future.

In the following chapter, the African world view, its cosmology, and the questions regarding its veracity amidst the wide variety of African culture will be discussed in a conceptual relationship to the work of Stanislavsky. As well, a definition of locality will be interrogated. The links between the humanistic view of the African world view and Stanislavsky, including the sharing present in the communal nature of Africa and in his techniques of communion with both the audience and with the actors onstage are explored, as a means of establishing the pertinent techniques applicable to South African performance.

Chapter 5: Stanislavsky within an Afrocentric World

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will establish a relationship between the world view of Africa, as diverse and varied as it may be, and the world view of Stanislavsky. This requires the defining of 'the what' of what each world view or cosmology it is, amidst many varying narratives, but which, possibly, can be found in the definitions relating to the Ba'Ntu people who spread long ago across sub–Saharan Africa, as well as in definitions of scholars and writers, such as Chinweizu, Mbiti and Soyinka. I have attempted to relate the cosmology of an African world view to that found in the view of Stanislavsky in order to discover the points where they meet, in the possibility that the convergencies may be understood and communicated in the training of actors and the making of theatre. While Stanislavsky has been accused of creating 'the grand narrative of western theatre' (Maxwell, 2004, p. 93), his codifying of the creative nature of acting is, in its organic approach, a foundational approach for the actor and which, if comprehended in the framework of an African world view, South Africa and African culture, can be of value.

When placed within an Afrocentric paradigm, the spiritual aspects at the foundation of Stanislavsky's methods and philosophy, his continual search for finding the life of the human spirit in theatre, potentially allows for new relationships to be found in thinking about theatre practice and acting training in Southern Africa. Finding the meeting points, however initially tentative, opens up Bhabha's third space of hybridity, enunciation and discovery, which allows for an exploration beyond the binary poles of post-colonial Southern Africa and a system evolved in 20th century Moscow.

If experiencing the life of the human spirit is the goal of the System, how does this approach correlate to an African world view? Possible links exist between the cosmology delineated in Sub-Saharan Africa and what, conceivably, can be labelled the cosmology of Stanislavsky. At the core of Stanislavsky's system is the aesthetic value of experiencing the life of the human spirit through an organic creative state which, as discussed earlier, he contrasts to the two other modes of acting: mechanical acting, where the actor performs in cliches with little feeling and that of representation, where a manipulated outer form is valued is over content. In order for the actor to achieve the creative state of experiencing, he developed the methods of communion as the active exchange of energy between people, places and objects, the endowing of an object with spiritual significance, the focus on the movement of vital energy or prana found in the solar plexus which he thought to be at the core of a person's emotional being and conceptualising the process of creating of a role as an 'incarnation'. As well is the commonality of the unity found in the communal link between people in the African cosmology and the Russian concept of *sobornost*, the belief among nineteenth century Russian philosophers and theologians that the unity of souls is linked in a spiritual community as the emanation of the Creator (Carriere, 2010, pp. 115-118). The concept of communal unity as seen in Africa is reflected in Stanislavsky's concept of the affective link between the actor and the audience, where "the audience constitute the spiritual acoustics for us" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 221). Such techniques, when not viewed as polar opposites, provide the opportunity of enhancing both African aesthetics and the use of Stanislavsky's system in post-colonial South Africa. Thus, how does 'experiencing of the life of the human spirit' and the surrounding methods of approaching this artistic ideal connect with an African world view?

Questions of locality versus universality and the dominance of a Western narrative, of cultural inheritance, agency and identity all come into play. Perhaps, in a post-colonial world, these questions remain as a necessary tension played out by the theatre artist in the midst of their artistry and their aesthetic choices. The agency of the South African theatre practitioner springs from many life sources and for the actor, as Stanislavsky asserted, from subconscious choices as well as conscious ones. These sources of creativity for the actor can be related to an African world view, as varied as that may be, to who they are as both an actor and a person - what inspires

them to create. Knowledge of community and communion, of the humanism found in an African worldview and in Stanislavsky's approaches, the processes of analogous and affective thinking in acting technique, the vital interactions of energy found in both African spirituality and Stanislavsky and notions of incarnation and ancestors, when placed alongside a view of the cognitive processes of consciousness in Stanislavsky's notion of intentionality and creativity in performing, offer new perspectives in training and performing in Southern Africa.

5.2. The African World View

The Afrocentric world view puts the people of Africa at the center of their discourse, creating an African narrative, as opposed to a "Western Grand Narrative" (Nobles, 2015, pp. 4-5). Asante in the introduction to his book, *Afrocentricity and the Theory of Social Change* (2003), sees Afrocentricity as a philosophy positioned within African history and culture which focuses on the agency of African experience and knowledge. Chinweizu in *Decolonization of African Literature* (1983) also speaks of the need for an African aesthetic based on not only the present but also based on the connection with the African cultural traditions and the past (Chinweizu, 1983, p. 287). In discussing elements of the African imagination present in African theatre and literature, he describes a magical reality with a prevalence of the supernatural: a world where trees can speak, where ghosts and spirits are returned from the dead. These elements which make up the 'cosmography' of the African universe, as depicted by writers and theatre artists, and portray an inclusive world including not only the living but the unborn and the dead. It is a world view where the living, the yet to come and the dead are accepted and interact, where boundaries can be crossed and the supernatural is experienced (Chinweizu, 1983, p. 22).

In defining the differences between European drama and African drama, Soyinka (1978) asserts that Western theatre has abandoned any sense of a culture based on fundamental truths between themselves and the larger universe. He notes that it is not simply a difference between form or content but that: "it is representative of the essential differences between two world views, a difference between one culture whose very artifacts are evidence of a cohesive

understanding of irreducible truths and another, whose creative impulses are directed by period dialectics "(Soyinka, 1978, p. 6).

Nobles' Western Grand Narrative corresponds to Hall's discussion of the notion of 'the West' as a concept, an idea constructed historically rather than geographically, a concept used as a model for characterisation, comparison and classification (Hall, 1992). His chapter title, "*The West and the Rest*" indicates how the concept of the West, in its global domination, has created an idea of those on the inside of the Western loop and those on outside of the loop, 'the rest'. That this idea of 'the West' has become a system of categorization which can define and restrict discourse is exemplified in Chinweizu (1983) where he forms an incisive argument in calling for African literature and art to be considered outside of how the West defines what is acceptable and what is not. The discourse surrounding an African world view, as found in art, theatre and literature, can be a significant principle parallel concept alongside the Western concept of itself.

Aspects of the African world view, as conceived by Mbiti (1969) and delineated by Turner (1998) are:

a) The interconnectedness and interdependence of all living things
b) Mind, body, and spirit as parts of the whole
c) Collective identity
d) Extended family structure
e) Consequential morality
f) Analogue thinking
g) Time
h) Spirituality
(Oppong-Wade, 2020, pp. 86-87)

Schiele (1990) also has consolidated the core tenets of the African centered paradigm from scholars such as Mbiti, Nobles, Asante, Baldwin and Akbar and defines them as:

Human beings are conceived collectively
Human beings are spiritual
Human beings are good
The affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically valid

> Much of human behavior is nonrational
> The axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relations
> (Schiele, 1990, p. 147).

According to Carroll (2010), the forces which make up the world view of a culture include: "a cultural group's understanding of the universe (cosmology), nature of being (ontology), values (axiology), reasoning (logic) and knowledge (epistemology)" (Carroll, 2010, p. 120). Taken together, these each contribute to the way people within a culture interpret reality.

Shutte (2001) notes that in the traditional African view the universe is not composed of matter, material that interacts with other material, but a world of forces interacting in a universal field of force, with everything imbued with life force or energy (Shutte, 2001, p. 22). Mbiti states that, "there is virtually no barrier between the realm of man and the spiritual realm" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 44). Nobles, in his analysis of the BaNtu people of the Congo, takes Diop 's argument that the people of Africa are united in its language, history and psyche (Diop, 1989, xiii). While Diop's contention of unity and his 'Egypt centric' writings are controversial, his assertions are influential (Parker, 2007, p. 129). Nobles contends that the BaNtu-Congo are an essential grouping in Africa as they are the people who spread out over much of sub-Saharan Africa and therefore the BaNtu's world view speaks to much of the inherited philosophy of the peoples of the continent (Nobles, 2015, pp. 7-8). This includes South Africa. (I would like to note here that in South Africa the word, Bantu, is loaded with meaning, as in 'Bantu' education, 'Bantu' languages, which during the time of apartheid, implied the inferior status assigned to those who were not classified as white.) Nobles notes that to the BaNtu, all life is encompassed in the notion of spirit; there is no duality of spirit and matter but instead a variety of forms of expression of spirit, which include:

> Human beings (Mu Ntu or Muntu) are an expression of spirit or force.
> Place and Time (Ha Ntu or Hantu) are equally expressions of spirit or force.
> All the material objects (Ki Ntu or Kintu) like mountains, other animals, rivers, and so on, are spirit expressions.
> Joy, beauty, laughter, love, emotions, and so on (Ku Ntu or Kuntu) are equally spirit expressions.
> As such everything and all being is "UbuNtu" and as such are more than simply related to each other. All that exists are different concrete expressions of Ntu.
> In effect, "Being" is being spirit in a reality of spirit. (Nobles, 2015, p. 9-10)

The root word *Ntu* refers to a person, but also has the meaning of a vital and creative life force. As Mudimbe describes it:

> Its presence in beings brings them to life and attests to both their individual value and to the measure of their integration in the dialectic of vital energy. Ntu is both a uniting and a differentiating vital norm which explains the powers of vital inequality in terms of difference between beings. It is a sign that God, father of all beings (⋯) has put a stamp on the universe, thus making it transparent in a hierarchy of sympathy. Upwards, one would read the vitality that, from minerals through vegetables, animals, and humans, links stones to the departed and God. Downwards, it is a genealogical filiation of forms of beings, engendering or relating to one another, all of them witnessing to the original source that made them possible. (Mudimbe, 1985, p.161)

The ontology of *Ntu* is contested by scholars and philosophers, with Tempels in *Bantu Philosophy* (2010) naming it as 'being', while Bhengu (2016) notes that Kagame in his groundbreaking text, *La philosophie bănty-rwandaise de l'Être* (1956), outlined four categories of *Ntu: Muntu,* the divine, human beings and spirits of gods and ancestors; *Kintu*, that of the spirits of animals, plants, the things of nature; *Hantu*, that of the dynamics of motions and events existing in space and time; *Kuntu,* being aesthetics, with concepts of beauty, ritual and performance. To Kagame these forces are those of cosmic expression (Bhengu, 2016, p.1). Makhathini, in his dissertation on South African jazz and *Ntu* cosmology sums it up as a vital force, "by extension, in wholeness, I locate *ntu* (life force) and the belief that personhood (*ubuntu*) is an acknowledgement of interconnectedness to others and the broader cosmic fields" (Makathini, 2023, p. 52).

Hountondji, in his book, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1996), questions and rejects the theoretical model of what he terms the ethnophilosophy of Kagame and Tempels, challenging the claims of a unifying philosophy of traditional African cultures which they find in the *Nguni* languages and in the beliefs of the traditional culture - which they locate as spreading out from the Congo. Houtondji asserts such ethnophilosophy to be "an implicit, silent and latent philosophy" (Hountondji, 1996, p. ix), a nonscientific discourse which neglects the need for more rigorous and exact discourse on African philosophy. He finds, in ethnophilosophy, "a reconstruction of implicit philosophy behind the habits and customs of the host society through

a lot of non-verifiable hypotheses which over interpret the facts" (Houtondji, 1996, p. ix). He would rather call what he regards as the speculation of ethnophilosophy 'traditional African thought' and in general finds the research underdeveloped. He does, however, acknowledges the work of Diop in linking ancient Egypt to Africa and, as well, the antiquity and historical depth of African philosophy, highlighting that, "this direction of research seems particularly exciting. It allows us to put the colonial and late pre-colonial into perspective […] It is a pre-condition for the rediscovery of Africa's age-old civilization and history" (Hountondji, 1996, p. xxiv).

Shutte's book, *Ubuntu* (2001) deals with the concept of *Ubuntu* from an ethical approach, a cosmology of belief, and draws comparisons between African and European ethics, noting the European view of the self as private, something hidden, a thing within our bodies, and contrasts it with the Sotho word, *Seriti*. He quotes the South African theologian, Gabriel Setiloane, who defines it as the life force of a human being, "exuding life force or energy in all directions…it is like an aura around the human person, an invisible shadow forming something like a magnetic or radar field" (Setiloane, 1986, p. 13; in Shutte, 2001, pp. 21-22). Shutte also notes that this life force has its seat in the physical, the body, yet the source is beyond the body, with the self, "outside the body, present and open to all" (Shutte, 2001, pp. 22-23). Mudimbe, like Houtondji, challenges notions of an African world view, such as Shutte's, applied to what he calls 'Bantu Philosophy' and refers to the conundrum of a Western philosophical lens put onto what may be an implicit philosophy. He notes that the application of, "semiology, as an intellectual tool for examining social signs, and hermeneutics, as means and method of reading and interpreting these social signs, may indicate a future direction for African Studies in philosophy. They address an apparently simple question of "how can one unveil and describe African experience" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 196). Soyinka, however, reminds us that, "when ideological relations begin to deny, both theoretically and in action, the reality of a cultural entity which we define as the African world view while asserting theirs, even to the extent of inviting the African world to sublimate its existence in theirs, we begin to look seriously into their political motivations" (Soyinka, 1978, p. xi).

5.3. Diversity and a World View

Certainly, the diversity of Africa makes it problematic to imbue every person with a single world view, thus the inclusion of a world view must be a 'conjectural analysis', with the use of abstract concepts to find possible relationships - in an attempt to contribute to an ongoing conversation around Stanislavsky, African aesthetics and culture. Stuart Hall (2019), who is the originator of conjectural analysis, speaks to this factor in cultural studies and points out that:

> Cultures consist of the maps of meaning, the frameworks of intelligibility, the things which allow us to make sense of a world which exist but is ambiguous as to its meaning until we've made sense of it. So, meaning arises because of the shared conceptual maps which groups or members of a culture or society share together. That's a very important kind of way of coming to an understanding of why, in cultural studies, if you privilege the notion of representation as giving meaning, you are making culture very central; you're giving it a kind of central role. It's not just sort of the values and things which we happen to have been born into. It literally is the way without which we would find the world unintelligible. (Hall, 1997, p.9)

Grossberg also points out that, in conjectural analysis, "every attempt will at best be partial (…) a conjunctural analysis is not a goal but a practice, a process, a critical analytic (…) one has to imagine one's work as a contribution, perhaps a small one, to an ongoing conversation" (Grossberg, 2019, p. 42).

With the above in mind, perhaps some of the principles and tenets in an African paradigm can be correlated to the practice of theatre and the use of Stanislavsky in Southern Africa: those of community, of the interrelatedness of human beings and of spirit as the basis of actions and being. Included, as well, can be the acknowledgment of affective knowledge as epistemologically valid, time as spiritual and fluid, and that much of human behavior is non rational.

5.4. An African World View and Stanislavsky

The Communal

The idea that human beings are born into a collective speaks to the very enterprise which is theatre. Theatre is a collective endeavour, including all who make theatre and the audience who allow us to perform. Not only do we, as performers and artists, address the collective but we also

collectively create. So, in our mutual conception of theatre, we are born as artists into a collective. Soyinka says, “the stage is brought into being by communal presence” (Soyinka, 1978, p. 43). Shutte notes that Senghor (1963) distinguishes the African conception of the organic wholeness of a community society from a collective society, a more mechanistic idea, concluding, “breathing, they [a community] have one breath, one spirit, one heart. A community is a unity of a uniquely personal kind” (Shutte, 2002, p. 26-27). That Stanislavsky, too, was part of a community, that we all are, forms a root from which we all come and can understand, especially in theatre work. As well, in reflecting on community, Lebaka relates that for Africa a community includes the ancestors as those who lived well and died well, those yet to come and the living, explaining, “in African community, all art is integrated with life and with each other” (Lebaka, 2014, p. 36).

5.5. Ancestors and the Imagination

The ancestors, in being those that have come before, can be said to be represented by performers who may, in a sense, incarnate them in a performance. Stanislavsky’s second volume, a sequel to *An Actor Prepares*, published in the United States as *Creating a Role,* is titled, in the literal translation from Russian, as the more awkward ‘*The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself in the Creative Process of Incarnation’* (Stanislavsky in Russian, 1954). Benedetti (2010) has more recently translated the two volumes together, titled *An Actor’s Work,* with two sections, Year One: Experiencing and Year Two: Embodiment, but he replaces ‘incarnation’ with ‘embodiment’. Scholars agree on the problem of how mistranslations of Stanislavsky have led to misunderstandings, particularly in the two volumes published in the United States (Carnicke, 1984, pp. 489-490). Carriere asserts the mistranslations as leading to, “the erasure of the living, spiritual sensibility conveyed by Stanislavsky’s rhetoric in the text itself” (Carriere, 2010, p. 36).

I have often wondered where an actor’s ideation of a character comes from. Why, when working on the character of Hermione in Shakespeare’s *A Winter’s Tale,* described as a Russian princess, did I connect the role with personal notions of having a far back Ukrainian ancestor? What inspires us is unpredictable. The initial creative process of ideation remains mysterious with the sources from which we draw coming from the varied synchronicities of life: perhaps from memory, from random images or experiences of life, from the imagination or implicit knowledge.

If imagination is at the beginning of creating a role, in the imagining the given circumstances, an actor imagines what they desire to create and uses the creative will to bring it into being. While there is much discussion about whether the actor is solely an interpretive artist, not a 'real artist', as performing is mimetic, Trenos (2014) points out that artistic expression occurs through an inner lens and the medium of expression, which is the actor's body, noting "actors do not just mimic people they see out there in the 'real' world, however 'true to life' their portrayals might seem. In addition to insightful observation, actors use their imagination, intellect, artistic intuition and expressive [body and voice] skills to create their roles" (Trenos, 2014, p. 25). In the research journal, *Learning and Individual Difference,* the authors noted the motivations of artists as a need to give form to what is imagined, to experiment and surprise, as well as to express "a narrative desire" which can lead back to childhood, "artists had to always be receptive, like "sponges", impregnated by things and people" (Botella et al, 2013, p. 11). The need to give form to the imagination, to be a 'sponge' to the life around us, in our own specific locality, rests in the integrity of the artist. In the creative process, this begins in the artist's imagined vision. Many actors, myself included, recognise the empty period of wandering, a void, until finally finding something - an image, a sound, a dance, a thought or feeling which inspires and triggers a creative path, one which suddenly appears, guides and ultimately matures (Botella et al, 2013, p. 11). For the South African actor, especially in theatre, imagination often is a trigger through physical movement, in mimetic expression, as it was also for Stanislavsky who demonstrates to his class, as Torstov, how the simple distortion and change of the body creates a character from without (Stanislavsky, 2008, pp. 517-519). In the cosmology of Ntu as a life force, an actor's expression, mimetic or otherwise, not only reflects images, memories or feelings but also an ontology of being, which may provide them with multiple connections with the communal and the greater world.

In an interview with the South African director, Dom Gumede (2012), where we discussed the imagination of the actor, we spoke of actors who connect with ancestors in the process of rehearsing and performing. He stated, "some actors use their connections with ancestors in preparation - in creating a role. I find this process fine with Stanislavsky's ideas. It is part of their creative process" (Gumede, 2021). This is not uncommon in Southern Africa. An actor in class has told me that before she begins work on a role, she has always taken herself through a ritualistic

process where she communicates with her ancestors and asks for their blessings to go forward with the role and the project.

In performance, we make the invisible visible through the imagination and physicalisation, a creative act. We do it in the presence of others, with others. It is both an incarnation and a communal experience. Lebaka quotes Nzewi's reference to the intertwining of land, ancestors, art and the community and notes the idea of ancestral land:

> A binding factor among community members is the ability to trace their origins easily to the same ancestral fatherhood or motherhood. What is more, every African community has a central place where members congregate for meetings, ceremonies, rituals, festivals and music performances. The place, generally known as the village square (…) provides the space for validating, regenerating or commemorating the community binding and viable mythological concepts and covenants. (Nzewi 1978 in Lebaka, 2014, p. 36)

In the modern day, this creative and imaginative binding between the community, ancestors and land, with a sense of inheritance is, for many, found in theatre, where the actor steps from the chorus and speaks. It's resonance with the audience bespeaks where it happens and the spirits that are called forth. That an actor should know what they are doing, have a conscious technique for reaching the depths of which they are capable is not mitigated by the subject of ancestors but enhanced.

5.6. Locality

> "The question of who I was consumed me.
>
> I became convinced I should not find the image
>
> of the person that I was: Seconds passed. What rose to the surface in me plunged out of sight again. And yet I felt the moment of my first investiture was the moment I began to represent myself— the moment I began to live—by degrees—second by second—unrelentingly—Oh mind what you're doing! —
>
> do you want to be covered or do you want to be seen? — And the garment — how it becomes you! —starry
>
> with the eyes of

others,

weeping —“

JORIE GRAHAM *"Notes on the Reality of the Self"*

Graham’s poem speaks to me of the questions of identity existent in a post-colonial world where the notions of selfhood are caught in a vortex of otherness, which include not only racism but gender and identity in juxtaposition to a former, perhaps mythologized, world. Where are the true roots and, from these true roots, how do we move forward? In searching for the image of herself, the poet is lost and yet, finds, in something emerging, a moment of truth: movement and a beginning of true representation. This may as easily be lost and covered up but remains a choice, one that reveals not only beauty but sorrow.

In his profound study of culture and locality in a postmodern racialist world, Bhabha (1994) has articulated the notion of a third space of enunciation, one that recognizes a hybridity were,

> They are now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference. The native intellectual who identifies the people with the true national culture will be disappointed. The people are now the very principle of 'dialectical reorganization' and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress. The changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38)

Locality of the individual and locality of the community has taken on significance in regard to cultural studies, along with representation, as reflected in the work of Stuart Hall (1997). To represent is also a pop culture phrase, as in asserting one’s identity. The Urban Dictionary defines represent as “to lend physical presence or voice on behalf of a constituency defined by geography or purpose, when such manifestation of presence or voice by the whole of that constituency would be logistically impractical or impossible” (Urban Dictionary). The need to represent in locality becomes a reflection of an Afrocentric awareness and is a necessary and central act regarding acting training in Southern Africa and in Africa in general. As Wole Soyinka so trenchantly stated in his Nobel Prize lecture:

> The African continent has been 'resourced' by Europe in its search for meaning in the midst of the "social malaise" of a materialistic world: It has led to a profound respect for the African world knowledge, which did not, however, end the habitual denigration of the African world. It has created in places a near deification of the African person - that phrase in which every African had to be a Prince - which, yet again, was coupled with a primitive fear and loathing of the person which is African. (Soyinka, 1986, p. 15)

Bharucha speaks of being 'somebody's other' (Bharucha, 1996, pp. 197-211), stating that he no longer wanted to be somebody's other and consequently returning to directing in the local communities of India. As somebody's other can be foisted upon the actor in Africa, a creative response in theatre may be to embrace not only Afrocentricity but also Stanislavsky's use of given circumstances with a special focus on both the ontological and the existential question 'who am I'. The plays I directed in the early 2000s had a common theme, whether it be from the African community, the Indian community or the 'Coloured' community, which was that of defining oneself in opposition to the vision of otherness forced upon the actor in Southern Africa. I remember the theme of the time as 'telling our own stories'.

5.7. Interaction and Life Force

In the telling, the communication, of a story, interaction between the actors and with the audience is of key significance. A story told on stage or in film is a highlighted, condensed artistic activity and, as such, could be said to be an interaction which mirrors a cosmological sense of forces interacting with one another within a universal field. This is similar to the concept of interpersonal relationships examined by Shutte who maintains that, in Africa, a person is conceived of as having both a life force within and of having a vital outpouring of life force in participation with each other. I have asked people in South Africa about their knowledge of *seriti* and in discussions with a friend who had grown up with the idea of *seriti*, it was described to me as an aura, a power and a force. When a famous politician in our building objected to the Covid restrictions and had his bodyguards prevent anyone from entering and exiting, my friend said it occurred because, "his *seriti* was too strong, it was not connected to the community" (Pakwe, 2023). *Seriti* is defined as projected outward, in relation to others. In Stanislavsky it exists as well,

with his appropriation of the Hindu idea of *prana* as life force which flows out of the actor and is exchanged with other actors, in both receiving and sending. He labels the phenomenon 'Communion' in general and called it radiation in the sending of energy (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 166-191). I have found students to be stimulated by exercises surrounding this: in class, we routinely do the exercise of students standing in front of each other and silently radiating a simple intention, such as, "walk to the door" or "hug me". For the past years, the students have claimed, in approximately seventy percent plus times, that they were successful in silently conveying their instructions.

Presenting Stanislavsky's ideas as connected to our life force when teaching the methods of intentions, communication/communion and creative will thus become viable. "In the discourse of the System, during the creative process of *tvorchestvo*, the *dusha* [soul] of the actor imbues the actor 's ideation (which is —the life of the human spirit" of the role) with a life force that allows the actor to experience these conceptual forms as if they were living truth" (Carriere, 2010, p. 4). This sense of life force, when understood by a teacher/trainer, provides a strong commonality which correlates between Stanislavsky and an African sense of the life force. The interconnectivity of community, as found, for example, in the ethics and values of Ubuntu: '*Ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', '*a person is a person through other people', applies. If, as in the concept of the self in *seriti*, the self is present outside the body, the "sum total of all the interacting forces" (Shutte, 2001, pp. 22-23), then it is in relationship to others and to our surroundings, that we exist. Shutte quotes Setiloane (1986) as noting it is, "the essence of being is 'participation' in which humans are always interlocked with one another. The human being is not only a 'vital force', but more: vital force in participation." (Setiloane, 1986, cited in Shutte, 2001, p. 23). This also reflects the world view that axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relations.

This deep interaction between people and surroundings is essential in Stanislavsky's work as well, in the idea of communion, and *aktivnost* and *divestnost*, inner and outer actions which are focused on others with an intense outpouring and receiving of energy and done consciously in the process of creating a role. Here the phrase, 'only connect' (Forester, 1905, p. 225), takes on

significance. In acting, it is the embodied connection to action done with radiating and receiving of energy which communicates the spirit of the material, bringing the audience into the circle of meaning. Stanislavsky describes it as a resonating force, which brings both the actor and audience into experiencing in both realistic theatre and non-realistic performing (Carnicke, 2009, p.157). Carnicke links this to Stanislavsky's notion that actors have a sixth sense of affective memory which elicits traces of the audience's memories.

5.8. Ritual and Stanislavsky

Ritual in Africa is common in traditional ceremonies. The connection between ritual in performance, in rehearsal and in human behaviour has been established by theatre practitioners such as Wole Soyinka (1963), Barney Simon (Henriques, 2006), Grotowski (2002) and Schechner (1981). At the end of his article, *Ritual and Performance*, Schechner concludes, "the similarity of the ritual process to the training-workshop-rehearsal process is evidence of the close and indeed indissoluble links between ritual, aesthetic, and social performances" (Schechner, 1981, p. 645). In human behaviour as well, Stanislavsky notes that the all too human act of caring for a loved one who is dying, in the physical actions of the mother or caregiver, is that of ritual; the water used to cleanse a sweating face, the holding of the dying person, reflect a ritual of saying goodbye. That rehearsal becomes ritual is easily apparent, the very effort of creating physical action forms, in its repetitions, the recreation of the rhythms of the sanctity of ritual. Ritual with intention is a deeply human act: the ritual of caring for someone, of honouring the dead or celebrating a birth is a fundamental part of our human behaviour. In regard to the use of ritual in performance, Climenhaga emphasises, in Alison Hodge's *Acting Training* (2010), theatre reconnects with the potency of ritual where we are not simply told a story, but asked to join in to become part of the event. Theatre needs to recover that vitality if it is going to survive the onslaught of images, we see flashing before us (…) The stage can be a place for participation of a different sort" (Climenhaga, 2010, p. 303).

In theatre with an African aesthetic, ritual is often used, along with sounds, music and dance. Characters can be gods, animals, spirits or those who are dead, appearing in a magical fashion. Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) combines ritual, symbology, magical characters and folk lore to tell a tale of warning to modern day Nigeria. Gods are fighting, the past impacts the present and the dead reappear, bringing with them the past. As communicated in an interview with a directing colleague, Prince Lamla, fantastical elements each have, as well, an inner logic, which the actor working in such a piece must discover - in the inner workings of the play and the inner workings of themselves:

> Through the use of shamanistic ritual, including specific songs and dances, in working with an actor who is informed and open to the experience of trance, the actor can be guided by a knowledgeable person towards going into a trance. A special song or dance is used shamanistically to travel to where the body exists in another realm, a sacred one. The trance is actual and real and, in the trance, the actor is able to go into a spiritual state where they are connected to the spirits, to their ancestors. It is a process based on traditional knowledge. The actor who is able to do this is usually a person firmly rooted in their identity as an African, to the deepest part of who they are. (Lamla, 2020)

This use of shamanistic ritual and trance is also used by Brugal in Cuba, who notes Ortiz's research and considers trance, "the intermediate state between the conscious and the subconscious" (Ortiz, 1981 in Brugal, 2017. p. 257).

5.9. Ways of Thinking, Ways of Being…

As Lebaka has asserted, “the spirit of man is perceived as the essentiality of the human person(s)” (Lebaka, 2015, p. 34). That human beings are spiritual is essential to an African worldview. That Stanislavsky considered acting to be a spiritual endeavour is a more recently acknowledged aspect of Stanislavsky’s philosophy and methods (Curpan, 2019, pp. 82-83). The varied methodologies devised by Stanislavsky, the result of a lifelong process of exploration, can be said to be predicated on his belief in the spiritual life of a human being, “that is why we begin by thinking about the inner side of a role, and how to create its spiritual life through the help of the internal process of living the part. You must live it by actually experiencing feelings that are analogous to it, each and every time you repeat the process of creating it.” (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 16). Alongside his emphasis of the spiritual life of a role is the note of finding analogous feelings in the given circumstances. As noted in a study of analogous thinking and creativity, analogous thought is a method of thinking which discerns similarities, commonalities, patterns and relationships between varied elements (Shena, 2013, p. 577). Analogous thinking, for the actor, is found in discovering their inherent knowledge in the truth in a circumstance (the creative problem) and drawing a parallel truth from their own experience and knowledge. When asked where an actor finds a character, Stanislavsky says it is found in research, impressions, intuition and empathy, as well as in ‘the magic if’, i.e., ‘what would I do if I were in these circumstances’ (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 64-65). It is also found in emotions near to the circumstances, emotions which are analogous. Wolf, in making a case for analogy and intuitive understanding, asserts that:

> To suggest that analogy allows us to grasp phenomena intuitively without contravening the need to understand is to legitimate an alternative mode of understanding, one as tied to the literary arts as to the exact sciences. It means that seeing-as often gives more to thinking, and eventfully so, since it occurs simultaneously with the understanding it produces. (Wolfe, 2017, p. 107)

Parallel to the analogous is the use of affective knowledge in the African world view. Affective knowledge can be viewed as an opposite to a positivist sense of logos. Ravengai, for example, calls for creative research not dominated by the Western sense of logos, research which acknowledges and accommodates the artistic process (Ravengai, 2019, p. 56). To Stanislavsky,

the use of the affective for the actor includes more than emotion, it also includes the senses of sight, sound, smell, touch as in the Russian word, *chuvstvo*, which includes both the emotional and the physical (Carnicke, 2009). In APA dictionary of psychology, affective is defined as 'the attitude or emotion elicited by a stimulus, such as a musical piece, a drawing, or—especially—a word or phrase'. The notion of a stimulus affecting our behaviour is what, in fact, actors are doing when they recall a smell or see, in an empty space, an imaginary place or remember in detail the circumstances around an event from their past. Similarly, the actor can endow a bundle of rags with meaning, where rags or a twig become a baby. This use of the affective as a stimulus is both from the imagination and from the affective knowledge in the subjectivity of the actor or, as Stanislavsky would say, the soul of the actor, and is intrinsic to their artistic process. The subjectivity of both the emotions and senses posed problems for two scientists, one, Ribot (1897) from the nineteenth century and the other, Damasio (1999) from end of the twentieth century but both concluded that subjectivity made empirical studies difficult. Damasio, a neuroscientist whose work has concentrated on emotions, remarks, "we must not fall into the trap of attempting to study consciousness from an external vantage point based on the fear that the internal vantage point is hopelessly flawed. The study of human consciousness requires both internal and external views" (Damasio, 1999, p. 82).

Much of an actor's work is a study of human beings, a total consideration of what motivates a character and what obstacles they face: why we do what we do. The idea, taken from an African world view, that human beings are non-rational, as opposed to irrational (M. Keane, n. d., p. 226) is a part of what an actor delves into and makes logical. This is not an anomaly to the actor, they motivate and create the inner logic of a character, even if the character is insane (Carnicke, 2009, p. 220). The acceptance of a human being as human includes the non-rational human. Whyman notes in regard to Stanislavsky's notions of the subconscious, that he saw the subconscious as the final source of inspiration, mysterious but not irrational, with associative memory as the storehouse of the subconscious (Whyman, 2008, p. 91). Noted as well is that in Stanislavsky's diagram of his system, under the elements of the soul, he included both the characters logic and consistency. If the world is perceived as animated, as in an African world view, then perhaps the

subconscious can be seen as a magical source, akin to Jung's concept of the subconscious than to Freud's.

5.10. Humanism

This focus on human being as at the center of life is humanism to both an African world view and, as well, to Stanislavsky. Lebaka (2015) discusses how, as with so many rituals, celebrations and gatherings in Africa, Malopo music rituals put human beings at the center of the communal experience. Obioha (2017), in an essay on social cohesion and African humanism, sees African humanism as made up of three values: communalism, a rejection of extreme individualism and a spiritual dimension which sees people as God's images. Nkrumah (1967) traces African humanism as beginning from the family unit and expanding from the community to the nation to the world, ultimately seeing all people as part of the family of humans. Kwame Gyekye defines the concept of African humanism as, "a philosophy that sees human needs, interests and dignity as of fundamental importance and concern. For, the art, actions, thought, and institutions of the African people, at least in the traditional setting, reverberate with expressions of concern for human welfare" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 158). Although Moseley (2006) has condemned Stanislavsky's humanism as bourgeois, the result merely of comfortable privilege and therefore not truly valid, it is necessary to note that Stanislavsky lost his privilege and wealth after 1917. As Beneditti notes, his business was appropriated by the Russian state after 1917 and he was arrested and interrogated by the secret police for 'tsarist leanings', leading Stanislavsky to say, "my life has changed. I have become a proletarian" (Beneditti, 2009, p. 35). According to Carnicke, "after the revolution Stanislavsky himself had lost the family business and fortune, wore threadbare clothes, and struggled to find hard currency to pay for medical treatment for his son's tubercular condition" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 119). Despite his circumstances, his work remained committed, until the end of his life in 1938, to the actor/person and it emphasisised the human soul - in essence, a study of humanity, what it is to be human. In the context of theatre, he focused on the actor/person in relation to others, a communal endeavor which is human centered, and, in an African world view, spiritual. Rose Whyman notes Stanislavsky's view:

> Art, like science, should be for the improvement of society and the purpose of drama was to use the actor as an example of humanity. He saw it as therefore, the art form closest to its audience, because there is direct contact between the audience, as human beings, with the actor as a human being, enabling the audience to gain in understanding and compassion. As we the public become more engrossed in the emotions and fate of other human beings on stage, our egoism evaporates and we become better persons and better citizens. (Whyman, 2016, p. 10)

In finding existing common ground between the work of Stanislavsky and African aesthetics in an African world view, the notion of making the invisible visible in both African spirituality and traditional performance links to the philosophy of Stanislavsky's System as well as what he envisioned as the goal of acting: "to create the life of the human spirit in a beautiful artistic form" (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 16-17). This is true for humanism, in the sense of putting human beings at the centre of existence and the notion of community. The African aesthetic of contemporary Southern Africa, of course, goes beyond traditional performance and has taken protest theatre, song, dance, mime and storytelling to forge a varied, eclectic and powerful style, yet it could be said to be tacitly based on African cosmology and is humanistic in its efforts. To view the two poles of African centred work and the work of Stanislavsky as binary would be to deny a possible and exciting fluidity.

5.11. Integration

Brugal (2017), whose work focuses on dramatic action as conceived and practiced by Stanislavsky and considers its application to African ritual processes as performed in contemporary Cuban theatre, remarks that acting in all its different genres, styles and expressions does contain an element of possession. Stanislavsky's contributions to literary theory and the "structure" of action, his focus on the score of a piece of work are recognised by Carnicke, "the words, style, literary images and rhythms of a text provide clues to its potential performance, just as a musical score implies an orchestra's potential sound. These he calls the "facts" of the play to which the actor must accommodate to performance" (Carnicke, 2009, p. 198). Brugal cross references the two, acknowledging that they each come from different traditions with "the magic-religious theater driven by parameters which are related to mythology of African origin, which transcends

everyday reality" (Brugal, 2017, p. 256). She notes that his exercises and analytical tools such as emotive memory and highlights those such as: concentration, organic nature, sense of truth, imagination, objectives, subtexts, through line of action and given circumstances help the actor to achieve a creative state in "a search for the actor's spiritual state, putting it in connection with characters identified as divine forces" (Brugal, 2017, p.256). Rather than seeking essential similarities, her research is an effort to discover methods which will compliment and apply in working in an ancestral culture, stating, "we have to re-formulate the system from our own practice, while keeping in mind developments made in the sciences of human behaviour". Interestingly, she relates the actor's physical efforts to connect to ancestors in ritualistic practices as creating an internal protagonist within. She concludes that in dealing with trance like states of mind which fall between the conscious and the subconscious both methods apply: the traditional method of trance induced through contact with a guide as well as Stanislavsky's assertion, "through conscious techniques one searches for an unconscious state until full identification is achieved" (Brugal, 2017, pp. 256-257). Brugal's work speaks to the potential fluidity which may be found if one can go beyond binaries into syncretisation.

I would like to include Halba's description of a Māori performance, although it is long, as an example of the very potential which can be found in syncretic theatre:

> An open space–a bare stage–the dimming theatre lights illuminate a woman's haunted face. Wordlessly she makes a decision to walk into the ocean to end her life and to return to the spirit world of her ancestors. The moment is alive, the actress engaging, beautiful, moving, determined, defeated and the clarity of her intention is limpidly apparent. Stanislavsky himself might have given his approbation to this moment as one in which 'the life of the human spirit' is communicated to us 'onstage in an artistic form' (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 19, italics in original). Nevertheless, another layer of signification complicates the moment, situating it between theatre and life-world experience. The lights dim as the woman takes her last steps and the eerie strains of a chant, karakia (incantation, sometimes translated as 'prayer') are heard faintly; this karakia closes the door to the world of the dead, removing the tapu (sacred, subject to restriction) associated with death, and has a material significance in the Māori world. Indeed, in Māori thought, theatre itself arguably occupies a blurry site between representation and lived experience… (Halba, 2017, p.367)

The fluidity of syncretic theatre (Balme, 1999) is a part of the third space articulated by Bhabha (1994) and speaks to the dynamism noted by Ravengai in Southern African theatre:

> Binary oppositions that are affirmed in both formalism and liberation theories can no longer explain adequately hybrid cultures and identities found in new terminologies such as creolisation, third space, new ethnicities, syncretism, heterogeneity, carnivalesque, ruination, border culture and transversality. (Ravengai, 2011, p. 16)

The third space is one of surprises, unpredictable, and, as such, one of discovery. The discoveries in research, such as Brugal's, centered on Afrocentricity and an African world view, combined with what is perhaps the salient point of Stanislavsky's technique, encapsulated as the concept of intentionality, are significant, not only in terms of embodied acting/performing but also in the intentionality of what is created.

5.12. Intentionality

The philosophies of intentionality deal with the idea that our consciousness is intentional, focused on objects, whether within or without. First espoused by Brentano (1981) and, as well, by Sartre in *Ego and Consciousness* (1991) and in his essay, *Intentionality* (Hatzimoysis, 2011), all three conceived of consciousness as an awareness which is subjective and intentional. Our thought, perceptions and desires are oriented towards objects, both inner and outer images and an intrinsic part of our neurophysiology. The root of the word 'intention' or 'Intentionality' is from the Latin verb 'intendere', meaning "to point to" or "to aim at" and is directed towards an object (McIntyre, 2018, p. 148).

In the chapter, Concentration of Attention from *An Actor Prepares* (2013), Stanislavsky as Torstov, the teacher, demonstrates his use of intentionality in acting, noting, "intensive observation of an object naturally arouses a desire to do something with it. To do something with it in turn intensifies your observation of it. This mutual inter-reaction establishes a stronger contact with the object of your attention" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 91). By focusing on objects of attention, the actor creates their subjective sense of truth and reality, from images, sensory details felt in the body and affective memories. For Stanislavsky, these elements are creative

triggers, essential in creating, “if you remember our demonstration of objects of attention, on the stage and in the audience, you will realize now that living objects can be a real stimulus” (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 206).

In terms of cognitive science, his insights have proved prescient. The actor, in selecting images, objects and sensory details from the imagination, can manipulate them creatively to spur them to intentional action. Intention can be conceived as a biological imperative, the biological urge for survival in an organism. Included in these definitions are also that an organic entity has an innate need to connect with others as well as to objects (Wagner, 2017). Intentionally, of course, speaks to this phenomenon in humans as well. Damasio has scientifically mapped how our emotions come from images in both the mind and exterior reality (Damasio, 1999, p. 9). The creative images actors form in intentionality are found in the work of Stanislavsky, in his focus on nature, objectives, action and through lines, all of which are included in intentional behavior, and are part of a deep need in the psyche to project outward. If, in an animated world, energy is found in all things, including not only other humans but also in rocks, trees, places, it follows that our conscious intentionality lies in our outward focus and interaction with objects. For the actor, who along with and beyond physicalisation, is invested artistically in the search for actions and objectives, this correlates the pouring out of energy, with the imagination placed outside in the scenic life of the imagination to endowing objects with personal meaning and searching for analogous triggers which connect their actions to the role.

Increasingly in studies of what actors do, cognitive science has come into play, with the recognition that, however ill defined, Stanislavsky was onto something when he theorized that human beings are motivated creatures and they are stimulated to emotions and actions by both inner and outer objects. This inner and outer focus in the construction of a part is the actor’s artistry, a lure to taking action in regard to the logic of the role and the piece performed. In discussing the “psycho-technical store of riches” found in inner and outer stimulus, Stanislavsky believed our artistic emotions are hidden in the depth of the soul, that the actor must coax them out, luring them to consciousness, with the lure as a stimulus. As well, he urged it is a useful

technique to be developed in learning how, in particular, your sensory memory responds (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 207).

The value of interpersonal interaction between others and between objects for the system, as also valued in the African world view, either within or without, is at the same time both a neurophysiological process and one of the human spirit. Carnicke quotes Damasio as reminding us that knowing this as a biological phenomenon does not diminish a sense of wonder, “feelings form the base for what has been described for millennia as the human soul or spirit” (Carnicke, 2009, p. 169). This link between the natural, the biological, and the spiritual considered in the expression of spirit or energetic force in play with another creates an organic synthesis between a world view rooted in African values, a world view found in the values of a theatrical tradition and a world view found on neuroscience.

5.13. Conclusion

The cosmology of the African world view and the spiritual concepts underlaying Stanislavsky’s approach are avenues and possible maps of exploration for theatre artists in Southern Africa. Stanislavsky’s aesthetic of performing is that of the soul of the actor, which Carriere describes as “the discourse of the System, during the creative process of *tvorchestvo*, the *dusha* [soul] of the actor imbues the actor‘s ideation (which is —the life of the human spirit" of the role) with a life force that allows the actor to experience these conceptual forms as if they were living truth” (Carriere, 2010, p.4). The questions surrounding the concept of *Ntu* in African belief systems, for me, raises the idea that perhaps *Ntu,* if defined as a creative life force (Bhengu, 2016), can be related to the concept of *tvorchestvo*, whose root word, *tvorit*, means the active process of creation and is both nominative and a verb (Carriere, 2010, p. 35). For the theatre practitioner in South Africa, relating these concepts do not deny but expand and extend. The African aesthetic, if viewed with a reflection on the spiritual and supernatural found in an African world view, reveals a syncretic parallel to the spirituality found in the values and methods of Stanislavsky’s system, which previously have been deemphasised. The problems of translation effect both

translations of African languages and the Russian language where historiographic mistranslations lead to historiographic misunderstandings (Graham-Jones, 2020, pp.313-314). Such integrated points of experience include: the value of the inter-relatedness of community in participation, from the collaboration of the theatre artists to resonant affective connection with the audience; the idea of life as imbued with energetic forces, the *Ntu*, as expressed in both the spiritual beliefs which are part of both the African world view and an African aesthetic; Stanislavsky's idea of communion between actors alongside the communal as found in the African community and the high value placed on interrelations; the 'incarnation' of both ancestors and in characterisation; the associative and analogous processes of creativity posited in neuroscience, as in Damasio (1999) and Brentano (1982); and, finally, the invisible made visible in both an African concept of spirit and Stanislavsky's idea of the inner life of the human spirit energetically revealed in the physical.

The acknowledgment that, as such, these observations are, as Hall has asserted, a conjectural analysis put together as a way of a mapping of African values as distinct fromm a Western narrative, one must, as Grossberg has observed, "imagine one's work as a contribution, perhaps a small one, to an ongoing conversation" (Grossberg, 2019, p. 42).

In Chapter 6, the process of rehearsing and performing the creative research project of the play, *Izilo,* which was written for the project, will be analysed. This inquiry will centre on the techniques of Stanislavsky which have created a nexus when embedded in an African aesthetic. With an exploration of points of convergence which have helped and inspired the actors, coming from who they are and what they desire to express, the question is that of what they can take forward into their future practices.

Chapter 6: Working Through the Veil of Language: Rehearsing and Performing *Izilo*: Afrocentricity, African Aesthetics and the Path of Stanislavsky



(https://susiejhc.wordpress.com/category/coming-of-age-2/rites-of-passage/)

6.1. Introduction

The search for the intersection of Bhabha's third space of hybridity (Bhabha, 2004), a place of redefining the structures of colonial relationships and essential in recognising and being liberated from ridged cultural definitions, in the creative process of rehearsing and performing a piece where African aesthetics is the mode of performing, writing and design and blended with the methods and philosophy of Stanislavsky, provides the opportunity to consider how such praxis leads to new conclusions and possibilities. In initiating the creative research project, my purpose was to apply and interrogate the methods and the concepts of Stanislavsky's system in both the

rehearsal and the performance of a piece deploying a strong African aesthetic, one that incorporates ritual and African spiritual beliefs, including song and dance. It entails not only the aesthetics of the play but the techniques and values of Stanislavsky we emphasized in rehearsal, with analysis of how the values and aesthetics of Africa illuminate the actor's journey, either alone or in combination with Stanislavsky's values, philosophy and methods. Does his aesthetic of organic truthfulness for the actor work with an African aesthetic and 'magical realism' or does it primarily create a realistic performance?

Aesthetics in theatre is composed of many elements: the play itself, the design, light, costumes, the actors, the directing and the style of production; fundamentally it is the values of the artists involved which create the aesthetic. The general term of African aesthetics is an umbrella of many diversities as well, however the African aesthetic in South Africa is composed of both traditional African elements such as dance, singing and ritual, as well as in the presentational style and workshopping of a play, as has evolved from township theatre. It has been informed, as well, by the Black Consciousness Movement and its efforts during the anti-apartheid movement of consciousness raising which advocated for the Africanising of South African theatre (Steadman, 1994).

Aesthetics in theatre can be said to be the form which results from the content of a piece, which would include the values of the personas portrayed. If a group of people presented onstage value simplicity, it is reflected in their behavior, choices, dress and interactions. If they relate beauty to goodness, then the expression of beauty would be intertwined with a sense of goodness; the aesthetics are, in part, determined by who the people portrayed are, be they performance artists or characters in a play. In the case of our production of *Izilo*, the characters were Xhosa, from the Eastern Cape, and the all over design of the piece reflected the culture in behavior, sensibility, song, set and costume. At the same time, the cast are modern day South African actors, at the beginning of their careers, navigating and articulating their artistic and personal values.

In both form and content, theatre in South Africa often depicts the spiritual aspects of an African world view inherited from traditional beliefs and practices. Among these are: the inclusive and interrelated connection of community, the individual and the family, human beings conceived as spiritual beings, the universe made up of animate energetic forces interacting, and acceptance of the supernatural with gods, ancestors and spirits impacting lives. The elements also can be contained and embodied in the actors and performers, in their acting choices, their interpretations of material and their physical expression.

Locality encompasses the specific present in our tacit knowledge, ingredients that only we who are local know. Whether it comes from an inheritance or from an immersion, we swim in a culture, in its totality. I have conducted my research from the point of view of enhancement, the idea pointed out by Pitches that, in the training of actors, the more important purpose is to benefit the actor in the pursuit of their theatrical vision, in locality (Pitches, 2017, p. 19). The theory that spirituality is an intrinsic part of African creativity is, for this creative research, placed in relation to the theory that Stanislavsky's system is an approach rather than a style, one that emphasises finding the spirit of a role. The question is, then, in what ways do the two viewpoints converge: is there a kinship?

6.2. *Izilo*

The original script of *Izilo*, rehearsed and performed for my creative research project, was written by Sifiso Ngwane. I have known Sifiso as a fellow graduate student and as playwright/director. Her command of the Xhosa language and her talent as a playwright lead me to ask if she wanted to write a short play about two sisters, one which would take place in a traditional African setting in the past. As a result of our conversations, part of the story of *Izilo* is taken from the Antigone myth of Greek mythology, depicted in Sophocles' Antigone and Aeschylus's Seven Against Thebes, but placed in the Xhosa culture. The Greek myth concerns two sisters facing the dilemma of performing the burial rites for their murdered brother when it has been forbidden by decree. The play was created out of our initial conversations about Antigone, about bees symbolising

ancestors throughout various cultures and discussions about Apache initiations of young women where bee pollen is part of the ceremonial rituals. We found that each of us related this to our ancestors who were affiliated with bees: Sifiso's mother's clan has the bee as a totem, and I have a great great grandmother who dedicated her life to raising bees – her greatest loss in life was when her bees died in a large fire.

The play, as written by Ngwane, is in *isiXhosa* with occasional use of English. It tells of two sisters whose parents have been killed by their mother's uncle in his desire to rule the kingdom, an imaginary kingdom of the past set amongst the Hlubi people. The conflict centers around Khusela, who, in spite of the usurper's decree forbidding their burial, wants to perform the required rituals to bury their parents and her sister, Nobulali, who believes that to do so would insure death. The theme considers which is the greater obligation: the law of a ruler or a higher law, the imperative of a spiritual tradition. The spirit of their murdered mother is present and appears to Khusela in a dream. She urges her to fulfill her destiny by burying them and performing the proper rituals of honouring the ancestors. The ancestors are represented as bees, with Khusela accepting them and Nobulali fearing them; the sound of bees is heard from the opening and throughout the performance. The play begins with the sisters sitting by their parent's bodies in mourning and traces the ensuing conflict between them. The piece culminates in Khusela's performing the ritual of burying her parents and fighting the uncle, Zwelibanzi. Both die in the battle and Nobulali ascends to the throne.

A primary qualifying mark of the project is based on the experience of the South African actors in working with Afrocentricity when combined with Stanislavsky's techniques and approach: how successful was the process for each of them, individually and as a whole, in the creating of this specific piece of theatre? While the success of the production in creating meaning for the audience is significant in evaluating the process, it is significant mainly in terms of how the process worked for the actors. The questions I intend to reflect upon include: What was necessary to the actors involved in entering a creative state? How did music, song and dance apply towards helping the actors achieve a creative state? Was commonality found between

African modes and the state of experiencing, that of working with conscious methods to access the subconscious? Did the techniques of intention/action, Active Analysis, physical actions, communion and imagination work in the creation of the actor's role and, additionally, were they able to experience the role?

In the relationship between African based modes and Stanislavsky's experiencing, Ukala (Ukala, 2001) speaks of the Law of Joint Performance in African folkloric theatre where the actor has to deal with the audiences' spontaneous reactions in an improvisatory fashion, requiring actors to respond in the moment, the 'here and now'. Halba (2017) also indicates the improvisatory nature of Māori performance which values the connection of empathy and reciprocity between the actors and the audience and ties it to Stanislavsky's experiencing, specifically his stressing that theatre is the exchange of spiritual energy in performing with an audience, that they are held together by invisible threads of energy. Additionally, this creating of an emotional resonance with the audience which, according to Stanislavsky, is achieved through the concentrated onstage interaction between the actors, with an uninterrupted flow of feelings, thought and images which reflect the inner life of each character/actor, translated into physical action (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 213). The event of such theatre speaks to a remarkable kinship of community found when the audience relates to a piece and identifies with it: they too experience and respond with empathy. As discussed, this theoretical connection stirs the affective memories and emotions of the audience but does so only indirectly when the actor is concentrated on the onstage actions and objects towards which their intentions and desires are focused. By emphasising intense focus between the actors, on the inner images and the imagined space, we were able to ascertain how and if this approach worked with the audience through performance and relate it to the sense of community, as described by Shutte (2001) and Chinweizu (1983).

The actors involved were students whom I had taught in 2021, students who were interested in combining the methods of Stanislavsky with a play which would be primarily performed in *isiXhosa* and centered on an African aesthetic. Likhona Mepepo, who played Khusela, Anita Matwa, who played the mother and Bonani Ngamlane, who played Zwelibanzi are all *isiXhosa*

speaking and Masego Matiko, who played Nobulali, speaks the language but it is not her home language. Each of these actors are talented and rooted in their African identity, with an integrity as to the kind of theatre they wish to do. From my experience with them in class, I knew that they were able to bring their whole selves to their work, whether the work was African based or Western based.

The central theory that drove the project centers around the African aesthetic, African spirituality within the African world view, and the techniques and values of Stanislavsky with the question of how to apply his work in context: how do we begin, from what angle? The aesthetics of South African theatre are, in part, solidly political, as exemplified, for examples, in such plays as *Black Dog Inj'emnyama* (1984), *Woza Albert* (1981) and *The Coat* (1966). Inevitably because of the long struggle against apartheid, the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan African perspective, much of the theatre has been centered around oppression and political protest. Yet, it is important to note that African aesthetics are naturally, organically, infused into such pieces. There are also plays such as Xolani Mkonko's *Nongqawuse* (2000), Brett Bailey's *The Prophet* (2003) and Msomi's *UMabatha*, produced in 1970, all of which expressed a more unalloyed African aesthetic. Currently, in 2023, the African aesthetic expressed by students and many contemporary theatre practitioners delves into the past, referring back to traditional methods and knowledge while making use of ritual, dance and song woven into the narration, which reaches back to a traditional aesthetic while at the same time searching for a contemporary voice. The realization that there are certain useful organic rules in the presentation of traditional folkloric African theatre is delineated by Ukala (2001) in his definition of the laws of performance. The law of opening, where a play is boldly introduced is, for example, one that can be seen in stories currently being told in South African theatre. Just as the *Noh* theatre in Japan follows certain laws of structure, so it is in traditional performances in Africa.

In the instance of this research, the political elements of South African theatre and their tradition are not included as the subject is instead one of Afrocentricity and aesthetics, although ultimately the choice of an aesthetic can be considered political. The aesthetics of a theatre production is a

created system of aesthetic and ethical values which determine the nature of a piece. Arguably Stanislavsky's work is another form of cultural imperialism, held up as a fundamental truth from the West and imposed through a colonial attitude, yet, in spite of colonialism, his work continues to be important in actor training with worldwide influence. From an Afrocentric point of view, does his practical aesthetics of acting, his search to determine the nature of the art of acting through creating a system work in Southern African theatre? Can the System's unique emphasis on following 'the organic laws of nature' (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 18) in the actor's contextual search for truth, finding the action through embodiment, apply in such a context? If so, how then do these two systems work together? Obaje notes, in her research into African aesthetics, that not only is African aesthetics connected to rhythm and functionality but as well:

> The African cosmology is the foundation upon which African aesthetics is built. African aesthetics is consequently connected to the African worldview (…) Hence the life force or the cosmological energy is at the centre of African aesthetics and thus, permeates all things. For this reason, it is firmly held that everything in the African worldview is interconnected. (Obaje, 2018, p. 52)

As the director/researcher of *Izilo*, along with the cast, who were creative researchers as well, I was hopefully approaching the project with a more comprehensive view. Previously, my work in South Africa has focused on bringing out the stories the actor wanted to tell: emphasising their tacit knowledge in locality and experience by focusing on finding the verisimilitude of the experience. Here, I was collaborating in a search for more concrete answers, with a greater understanding of both African aesthetics and the holistic approach found in Stanislavsky and focusing on the 'how' of Stanislavsky's theory and practice: how to comprehend them, to use them, where and when, in our effort to create alongside African aesthetics.

Izilo is not realism but because of the language and the story, can be identified as African magical realism. In the staging, we discovered degrees of formalistic behaviour of the two sisters, as they sat by the bodies and worked on how each mirrored the other in their movements. The lamentation of losing parents, the need for rituals to appease the spirits, the conflict in breaking both traditions and decrees and the placement of the events in a distant past called for an approach that combined both heightened and truthful acting: truthfulness in context.

In both acting and directing a script, the effort centers around what we termed ‘wrestling the words to the ground and owning them’, through the chosen actions, the vectorization of the piece. As discussed previously, the event of a play occurs when the dynamic of action contains the story and moves it in time. The actor knows the details, as in the character of Khusela: ‘here I must fight a battle and be a warrior, here I say I fight with sticks, here I defy’; yet the journey towards the actions, when determined by Stanislavsky’s ‘sense of truth’ (Stanislavski, 2013, pp. 141-144), is not immediate. Likhona, in discussing her approach to Khusela, notes how she was daunted by the idea of playing a warrior and could only proceed with the search by starting with the question, ‘who am I?’, which she could only find in the given circumstances, the process of finding herself in the human person of her character. The actor’s sense of truth entails a period of creative wandering through life, through the subconscious images which may or may not offer up images and affective feelings: it could be said they are looking for clues. She stated in our discussions after the rehearsal and performance that only by finding the day-to-day person, could she find the warrior in her character.

This search of an artist/actor, be it in Africa or in India or throughout the world, is a search for their own artistic truth, especially if they are a serious actor/performer with a calling for discovery. Stanislavsky reiterated that “there is no genuine art without truth and belief” (Stanislavsky, 2008, p. 154). This sense of truth is not a naturalistic truth, but an artistic one which resonates in their spirit and is tied to the feelings. A *Bharatanatyam* dancer from India has acquired the skills of their art form and, in the storytelling, aims to tell it with integrity and genuine truth: it is not naturalism, but from the art of the dancer. If the dancer is reenacting Sita lost in a forest from the myth of *Ramayana* or Draupadi being stripped of her clothes in the king’s court, from the *Mahabharata*, the dancer is aware of both the story, the *Abhinaya*, and the *Nritya*, the dance movements (Ganesh, 2019). So, it is to the actor in Africa who uses song to create a moment in a piece of theatre: the song and the intricate harmonies are pertinent to the veracity of the moment created and the story, thus part of the acting score and the action.

During our rehearsals, what was authentic and true to the story was important to both the acting process and in determining if the action was true to the Xhosa culture. Thus, I depended on the actors to guide me and provide the cultural context from where we would operate. The songs sung, as well as the dances, were from what the actors knew in the context of the piece; the playwright, Sifiso, lead us in song and dance and I found the drum. The barriers of language, as the script was performed in *isiXhosa*, required that I could not assume that I understood what was being said and I had to constantly ask for clarification. The use of *isiXhosa* throughout was a choice initially made by Masego, although it is not her home language, as she felt it took her deeper into the character. We all agreed to use *isiXhosa*, with only an occasional use of English, reversing the way South African theater often uses primarily English with only a smattering of other languages. Yani, in his study of the Nongqawuse saga, discusses the problems of language in Southern Africa, noting both that indigenous languages are frequently suppressed in favour of English, as well noting the dislocation of thinking in one language and writing in another, concluding that there is, "a creative dilemma of having to select a particular linguistic code especially in a society that is confronted with multiplicities of languages" (Yani, 2018, p. 133). While I did miss subtleties of understanding in the structure and intonation of meaning, the dependency on the actor's interpretation gave them agency, allowing them to own the work. A mentor once said to me that it is better for the director to think of themselves as a janitor than a dictator: directors should arrive early, set up the space and listen well.

6.3. Discovering the Creative State Through Music, Dance and Abstract Improvisation

At the beginning of rehearsals, after reading and discussing the script, we stood at the daunting point of every rehearsal: where to now? We began working with breath as a way of connecting with emotions, movement and action: imagining the emotions held within the solar plexus and breathing in while pushing the diaphragm down into the lower stomach as a way of connecting to an awareness of the emotions. Throughout the rehearsal, this was used as a method of the breath connecting to both the self and the content of the play in embodying the characters.

Because the acknowledgment of the necessity for rituals in the passages of life is an essential element of both the play and an African world view and is contained in the theme of the piece and in the lives of the actors for both the doing of theatre and for their personal spiritual beliefs, it became important to the process. Thanking the ancestors, receiving their blessings and wishing them to speak through us in the creative work was considered a viable approach. It
became a conscious approach to actively thank the ancestors, ask for their blessings and invite them to speak through us. Likhona felt that the work of placing herself in the given circumstances allowed her to feel as if she became an open channel for the character she played.

Dance and song were used as an opening to rehearsals. Sifiso came in as both playwright and musician to work with Xhosa songs, specifically the hymn the sisters sang by their parents' bodies, as well as with other songs and lullabies. Music became an engine to generate not only the atmosphere and to link the cast together but also an active creative state which projected the piece into action. Dance, movement and song are intrinsic to not only *Izilo* but to much of Southern African and African theatre; they are theatrical techniques which create an emotional bridge that brings the action to a new phase, providing immense power in the telling of a story. Dancing at the beginning of rehearsals and at the start of the performance of the play became a way for the actors to enter a creative state. For them, it was a way of connecting which enabled their imagination to flow, at first to past associations and eventually with their roles. Both Masego and Likhona recalled first dancing from memories of the past in church or community groups, then arrived at a stage where they were expressing the characters and how they would move in context of the story, with finally moving in connection with expression of their actions, in a creative state which Stanislavsky called 'I am', where both the actor and the role are together in action (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 311).

At the beginning of rehearsal, actors initiated an improvisation where they worked with sound and rhythm to find the creative state not only in themselves but in the piece as a whole. The improvisation went on for some time, ebbing and flowing, with free use of movement and sound. It was a profound and altering experience but, as revealed in later discussions, left them with a

sense that they were swimming in a sea of unfocused emotions. As Anita stressed later, “the formlessness of the emotions we experienced showed us that we needed structure to bring the play to life” (Johnson, 2023).

6.4. Structuring and Vectoring: Active Analysis/The Method of Physical Actions

In this instance, we had a completed script, unlike much of Southern African work where the play is devised by means of the collaborative workshop process, with the actors working together without a director or at times with a director and/or a writer. Steadman (1994) has claimed the workshopping of a theatre piece in South Africa is a legacy of apartheid. Gready describes this workshop process as a search for liberation, collaboration and the construction of identity, he also notes that, “workshop theatre is a political act, a movement towards an essentially democratic production process and communal vision” (Gready, 1994, p. 179). Ideally, the workshop period of creating and devising ends with the script and the cast can then go on to interpreting it.

The workshop part, with *Izilo*, existed simultaneously with the rehearsal of the play as we brought the selected elements of Stanislavsky’s system to the work, which included creating the structure, through intention/action, which would work in the realization of the play. We applied Active Analysis as a tool for finding the dynamic action underpinning the play. This endeavor, sitting down and analysing the script, seemed counterintuitive: we want to get onto the action, but we need the analysis, to look at the details of behavior and consider the why. There is a tension therefore between the talking and the doing, however it was a stage, one where the effort was not to pick apart every small element but to paint in broad strokes so that we could explore physically. We began by naming the event for each scene and determining which character had the impelling action/intention and which character the resisting action/intention of each scene, then proceeded break down each line to determine what specific action they were doing (in the form of a transitive verb) to achieve their goal. The precision of the work made me anxious about too much table analysis and I felt it was necessary to begin the improvisations with the broader actions, then returning to the verbs. We moved on to the improvisation of the

scenes, using the determined actions and pushing the conflict, to create the words and actions - going back to check the script to see if we were accurate. This is tied to the essential notion that words come out of actions and are actions as well. Carnicke believes that this process allows the actors to organically approach memorization of the script while the same time experiencing the dynamic inner structure of the piece (Carnicke, 2009, p. 196). The approach of discussion and analysis and then 'getting up on the feet' is, of course, one many actors and directors use in South Africa: in this case it is only distinguished in that it is taken in toto from Stanislavsky's exploration, as detailed by Maria Knebel (2021), with the highlighting of initiating action and resisting action, etudes and recognising that action is psychophysical. Much of what Stanislavsky has done in his work is the consolidation and making conscious that which many talented theatre practitioners have done intuitively. His study of what it is actors do and the describing and naming their creative process, is possibly why the System continues to be relevant around the world.

We came to a point in the structuring where the inner motivation of the characters had to be fully physicalised to heighten the circumstances I introduced exercises which forced physical behavior in response to the interaction. In the more presentational Protest Theatre of South Africa, where often the audience is directly challenged to action through song, dance and words, the structure is formalised, the stage movement often comes from the center downstage area where the audience is included in the action and dialogue and the actors are physically powerful in expression and characters are sometimes depicted mimetically. There can be entire scenes where the actors play as if there is a fourth wall but the action switches back to interacting with the audience or alternatively, a scene may be distanced, with the actors doing the scene facing out to the audience. In *Izilo*, however, the action was made up of sustained interaction and, while we used the audience when the mother sings to them, Anita, as the mother, acknowledged them as spirits witnessing the story. Because of the small size of the theatre, we realized the audience could become intimately involved in the telling of the story and therefore relied upon the method of being guided by the emotions and impulses evoked in the actors to discover truthful actions.

The moment of physicalisation is when we began 'wrestling the words to the floor', as we termed it, so that the words were submerged into the action. Because the play dealt with lamentation and mourning, we felt we had to go against the grain of simply expressing grief and find the spirit of activeness in what the characters were doing. The prevalence of song in both African theatre and in the community life is a powerful and emotionally stirring form of expression: it corresponds to the idea of what we were attempting, the spirit of *activnost*, where the energies and life force of the performer are actively pouring forth in communication- this is the power of action we were seeking.

We, as well, improvised on imagined scenes not included in the play but centered around the given circumstances. The improvisations included the two sisters' life as playing games as children, exploring where and what happened when they found the bodies of their parents as well as the surrounding grounds where they lived, traditionally called the Great Place where the Inkhosi would reside (Yani, 2018, p. 19). For Stanislavsky, this muscle of imagination is developed by the actor as it leads the creative process (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 62), with the caveat that it is not an inner fantasy but found in outer reality, on the stage in real time, through action. It can be said that in theatre, the effort is to take a story and to make it visible in present time by making the invisible visible - taking the spirit and actions of a story and bringing it to life. This is similar to Lebaka's notation that, in an African view, there is the duality of seen and unseen:

> Every human person is believed in Africa to have non-dichotomous physical and spiritual aspects. The physical aspect of the body is the body that is seen. The spiritual is invisible but observable. Man's spirit serves as a link between the human person and the spirit world. (Lebaka, 2014, p. 34)

The search for the logical sequences of the physical actions of the play was a method of encoding the activities which would lead the actors towards interaction and behavior and towards the rituals which culminate the play. The link between the activities, the psychophysical, the analysis and the emotions are intertwined: if the actions/intentions are connected to the emotion which rises from the given circumstances, they will be revealed in simple but animated activity such as sweeping the floor. In the traditional African view, as contended by Shutte (2001), the intermingling of the energies of our existence forms a network of energy, a force field, with all things interacting, including not only between people, animals, plants and objects but also

emotions and ideas. This is a physics of existence and can apply to creative work in theatre, with focus on the active state with energy flowing out and being received. With an awareness of this world view, it seemed that the threads of this network are contributed to by the energy of intention, imagination and formulated with the choice of activities and actions which will drive a play. In scoring the action, I recognized and used the concept of vectorization of Pavis, who views a piece of theatre as a musical score, noting that the actors exchange energy rhythmically, part of the creation of an activated network of signs (Taylor, 2005, pp. 101-102). Pavis himself defines vectorisation as, "the dynamic momentum created in a narrative or chronology between the various parts of stage work, the itinerary of meaning through the labyrinth of signs, the ordering of the performance" (Pavis, 2003, p. 127). He sees the actor as divided between the trajectory of magnitude and force of the linear vector, which is the path of the movement of the actor, and drives which cannot be channeled, a constant dance between "mimetic desire and drive-ridden flux" (Pavis, 2003, p. 127). This ordering of a performance between actors in creating the dynamics of a scene, when understood as vectoring, is a method that links to the actor's actions. Executing an action with Stanislavsky's technique requires the use of a transitive verb; in the action, for example, of 'to persuade', the actor creates a momentum of movement and behavior which drives the chronology of action between themselves and their partner. The flux and flow of the continuous action between the actors, grasped as a part of creating the all over dynamic of action, and the tension between the sub-textual desires of a character engenders acting which does not hold onto the desires but rather trusts that the drives which cannot be channeled will organically remain. This allows for acting which does not depend on interiority but depends on the expressing of the energy of action.

In actioning the play, we discovered that if Masego as Nobulali and Likhona as Khusela choose actions that drove their conflict with targeted power to the climactic point where Nobulali deserts her, then Khusela as the protagonist could organically and truthfully fulfill her intention, her desire, to prepare the rituals to bury her parents. This turning point would give the story the emotional impact we felt it needed. As Nobulali confronts and threatens her, Khusela realises that her sister will not help; she accepts that she will have to bury them alone and, while her

sister is still there, begins the physical actions of the ritual with a realization that she is completely alone. Nobulali has no choice but to recognise her sister is lost to her and she must leave if she wants to live. With her acceptance of her sister's position, Khusela is free to start the physical actions of the ritual even while Nobulali watches her. The contrast between her determination and Nobulali' s horror further impels the action to the ending. The physical actions done by Khusela and Nobulali, in her attempt to stop her, allowed the scene to have tension but through the actions rather than through a wordy confrontation.

Masego, as Nobulali, was at first overwhelmed by her emotional reactions to the given circumstances of the scene and struggled to find a powerful enough through line of action. The emotions evoked by the threat of losing her sister after losing her parents engendered only wanting to beg her sister to stay with her. This sense of loss, however, could not drive the action, when she leaves Khusela to what she knows is Khusela's death. In structuring the actions, I had to ask myself if the necessity for strong action on her part, painting the scene in broad strokes, superseded working with her inner feeling of loss. I had initially taken the mechanistic view that if Masego could pound the platform in anger, she would arrive at the necessary emotion to impel her to strong actions. However, as much as we tried, it did not work for her. The inner focus on the sorrow of losing her sister rendered her helpless, only able to deal with how she felt. As actors call it, she was not 'in the moment', unable 'to get out of her head'. She did not yet have a clear "unbroken line of action" (Stanislavsky, 2008, pp. 298-290). We improvised, relying on the circumstances of the play and the conflict. The solution was found in improvising on the rivalry between siblings and finding the through line of two battling sisters. We agreed to follow the demands of heightened acting, an element of both Protest Theatre and classical theatre, allowing the dynamic of the action to pull the actors to where they had to go and trusting in the magnitude of the 'vector'. I realized the importance of a willingness to not hold on to the interior feelings but to physically release them in an active and creative state. Carriere labels this tendency as: "this problem of inward directionality" (Carriere, 2010, p. 186) and notes that attention must be focused on the dimension of the stage with the energy directed out. This relates to the onstage need for active physicalisation in focused relationship in order to signify meaning.

The complexities of the body/mind split, viewing the two as separate, is the challenge for actor training when confronting how to encourage and develop free physical expression. Wyman distinguishes two theories of how we process emotions: the James-Lange theory where we experience a reaction in our body and then feel the emotion and the Cannon-Bard theory where the emotion is experienced simultaneously, both in the body and in the emotional reaction in the brain. She notes how Michael Chekov and Stanislavsky dealt with the gap between the flow of inner and the outer expression, with Chekov developing the Psychological Gesture and Stanislavsky, possible under the influence of Pavlov, experimenting with tempo and rhythm. While Chekov was searching for the harmony, Stanislavsky was experimenting with the more mechanistic view that through recreating the rhythm and tempo of an emotional state in movement, the truth of emotion/action would be found. Whyman also argues that both Stanislavsky's incorporating of yoga and prana and Zarrilli's concept of breath creating oneness between mind and body are an effort to close the gap between the two in an attempt of overcome the fallacy of dualism (Whyman, 2015, pp. 3-9). The body and mind continuum is addressed in an African world view in the belief that the invisible and visible exist together can be expressed if viewed as the vital energy of expressing and, like Stanislavsky, and found in tempo and rhythm as well. Stanislavsky sought to find the life of the human spirit in a role; Grotowski, in his *via negativa*, believed that, by stripping away tension and resistance, the spirit of the actor is fully expressed. The idea of *seriti*, which posits a person's essence as present, beyond and presented before us, in interaction and radiation, parallels both Grotowski and the activnost of the System.

6.5. Communion

Similar to the interaction and exchange of energy is the concept of communion as reflected in views of an African cosmology and as practiced by both Stanislavsky and Michael Chekov in radiation exercises, where the actor is introduced to the possibility that we are energetic beings and can control, direct and receive energy. Because everyone in the cast understood both the theory and practice, it became an element of our work, with it being central to the rehearsals.

From the start of our rehearsal, we worked with communion exercises directly related to radiating and absorbing energy and in improvisation, thinking of the intention as radiated out to and absorbed by the other actor. We focused on the interactions of energies between them to direct us, concentrating on the outer dimension in radiating and absorbing. This method of communion relates to the idea that the universe is made up of energetic forces and, when correlated with action/intention, concentration and imagination, theoretically the actor can draw on these energies.

Anita, in the role of the mother, effectively used the exercise of communion in her desire to be heard and seen by her daughter when she appears to Khusela in a dream, radiating her intention as she approached, in doing so, she found the physicalisation of the character she was playing; Likhona's task, on the other hand, was to receive and absorb her energy. As we had worked on communion in the class I taught in 2021, the actors were able to use it effectively in their interchanges with one another. Radiation is an active effort and is connected to and contains both the subtext and intention of a character in that the desire is intertwined with the conflict (whether internal or external), includes unspoken images, emotions and impulses and is a motivating force in behavior. Central to the task is the understanding that, in radiating or absorbing the energy of another person, the actor focuses on the spirit of the person rather on the nose, the eyes or other details which, in this instance, are not significant.

In considering the conscious interaction implied in communion, I am struck by how, in everyday life in South Africa, there is the thread of contact between people that is notable. It exists in the experience of encountering and exchanging in relationship with one another, a kind of community feeling that is unique and not easily found elsewhere. As we are people, we have our people-ness in common and we share it more easily and intensely than, say, in New York. It becomes a part of our humanity, as in the Nguni phrase, umuntu *ngumuntu ngabantu,* 'people are people through other people'.

In the African world view, energy is found in all things: people, animals, nature, all is animate. De Graft sees this as central to the roots of African theatre (De Graft, 1976, p. 14). With the animation of all life and the idea of communion, we concentrated on endowing objects with meaning and energy, on objects such as baskets, bowls, the sticks, including all props that we used in the performance. These objects became treasured. Likhona carried her sticks with her to rehearsal and back; I purchased special black bowls for the rituals. The bodies of the parents, as well, had to be endowed with both meaning and with details from the imagination, although they were just burlap sacks. This followed Stanislavsky's idea that an actor communes with themselves, with objects of their attention and with their acting partners.

6.6. Imagination

The actor's use of the imagination in relating to their onstage environment is essential in Southern African theatre as often there is little or no set. Here, the Black Theatre parallels the Poor Theatre of Grotowski as it's values of simplicity and focus on the actor were similar, especially in South Africa because there was little support for their work. This theatre did have, through a lack of scenic properties, a concentration on the centrality of the actor. It could be said, as well, that lighting has evolved in South Africa to tell the story in a direct way, allowing the actor to do the work and the lighting designer takes the cues from the action. I have worked with lighting designers from overseas and have experienced that they play with and layer the lights, rather than telling the story. This focus on the actor, where the theatrical performance is located in the body, has prompted a reliance on the imagination in creating: a wooden plank can become a stream of water, a stick can be an umbrella or members of an ensemble can form a door through which someone enters. Simultaneous action is used also, to signify integrated relationships to the central narrative.

Discovering the given circumstances through the imagination, be it in inner images or in the outer stage dimension, is an associative process and culled from the actor's life, from events, observations, books, from a variety of things. It consists of multiple elements, such as emotion,

memory, images, sensations, ideas and possibilities, including who they are, where they are and their world view. In English, the root of the word imagination comes from the Latin verb, 'to picture oneself'. From an Afrocentric view, imagination, the picturing of the self, may be tied to further multiple elements: the specific beliefs, traditions, myths and experiences. An example which may be part of the equation of imagination is a belief in the guidance of ancestors or the belief in animate form, perhaps more accepted in African culture than in some other cultures. For the actor in Africa, like the actor in India or the USA, all these factors enhance their imaginative perspective. An additional factor in South Africa is the open-mindedness of the "cosmopolitanism space", as articulated by Mandela and Tutu, which considers all people as part of one single community and reflects the spirit of ubuntu (Eze, 2016).

When the actor is able to create a life on stage infused with imagination, the wall they look at has meaning, the song they sing resonates and evokes emotions and images, even the shoes they wear have context. If the actor is surrounded by an environment of the imagination, whether from a sensory detail of cold or heat, an inner image from the past which evokes an emotion or a bowl placed on stage that has been endowed with meaning, the life of the story is made animate and thus communicated.

While speaking with the actors after the play was performed about how their imagination worked for the piece, Anita recalled that she associated the lullaby she sang with her mother's love for her, which came from an image of her mother. Masego worked on the surrounding herself with sensory details of where they were, the land, the stars and the cold. She said she could exist in the world created through imagination. Likhona worked on the valley where they lived, seeing beyond the audience and imagining who had killed her parents. The rituals she performed echoed the rituals of her grandmother, and she could recall all that she had observed. Bonani imagined he was applying muti to his hands to give him special powers as he approached Nobulali to persuade her to marry him. We researched the places where it might have happened, discussed the layout of where things were: a mountain, the streams, the homes and where they lived. The associations an actor makes may be present in the subconscious, but we intended to

make them conscious and use them. This is a network of the imagination that allows the actor to live in the here and now of the story, found through the work on the circumstances, as given by the writer or the collective, without which the actor cannot find the actions and intentions of the character.

6.7. Resonance

In *Izilo*, we did not have direct presentational contact with audience, although during the performance the audience did speak to the actors, which is not uncommon in South African theatre. The uniquely *isiXhosa* word, '*Camagu'*, which Khusela says during the ritual, was repeated by the audience in agreement with her actions and, at the close of the play, was repeated many times in response to what had happened. The various meanings of *camagu* are complicated and can mean: it is done, Amen, to bless, to forgive, to appease or to thank. It may mean more in different contexts but it is a word associated with the ancestors and often used in rituals. Mndende (2002, p. 48) observes: "*camagu* is also used during rituals of reconciliation between the living and the spiritual world (…) it is always used on sacred occasions and has a spiritual meaning as it is always used to draw the attention of the ancestors". The word exemplifies what Khusela intends to do throughout the entire play.

The call and response of the audience signified that Likhona as Khusela had connected with the audience; they heard her through a kinship, through affective identification. An affective response is made up of both imagination and empathy (Carnicke, 2009, pp. 213-214). However, the actor has a choice, they can open themselves up to a character or they can pull it into their self, to personal experience. In the USA, actors will reenact a personal memory on stage or in film to solve the problem of emotionally connecting to a character, yet as Carnicke claims, the System considered the use of primary emotions and experiences as unfiltered and can distract from a play. To Stanislavsky, the use of affective memories are choices the actor as the artist makes - a stimulus to action. Rather the emotions need to be secondary, artistically filtered by the actor and therefore controllable. The notion of what is controllable in theatre is challenged when considering trance in traditional African theatre and performance. As they re-enact myths or

perform in a festival, actors may put on the masks of gods and be transformed, in what Agra puts forward as “imaginative hypnotic impulse” (Agra, 2013, pp. 2-3). The hybrid space of contemporary theatre aims to mix the two, combining the methods of Stanislavsky with trance. This raises the question of the trained actor and how they manage a synthesis, as discussed by both Brugal (2017) in Cuba and Halba (2017) in New Zealand. While in *Izilo*, we did not attempt to invoke a trance like state, as we were not qualified and did not have a guide, we recognized moments in rehearsal where the giving over to the in between state (liminality) was on the verge of happening and regarded it as a possibility.

Thabede (2008, p. 235) discusses an African world view which accepts both rational and affective thinking and is not split into binary systems of thought and emotions but recognises phenomena through varied ways of being and thinking. This acceptance of a fluid continuum between the rational and emotional or the intuitive and the analytical echoes the acting process, where the methods of associating affective experience are part of the inquiry, as well as a method for connecting to the audience. It also echoes the high value placed on relationship, where the actor’s saying that ‘you find your character in the other actor’s eyes’ is applicable. While this may be especially relevant in film acting, it is also a fundamental aspect of the System that the actor’s concentration should be on the object of their attention and not on a self-conscious concern with how the audience is responding.

As a part of our exploration, we accentuated the theory that communicating the meaning of the play would be found in the interpersonal relationships and an intense relationship to all that was taking place onstage. Meisner’s repetition exercise (Meisner, 1987) was used from the beginning of rehearsals. In the exercise, two actors closely face each other in a relaxed way, one actor makes a comment on what they observe, and the comment is repeated between the two until a new observation arises on its own. The effort is to react truthfully, to not manipulate what is happening but to let the changes happen naturally. This exercise takes away the everyday mask, allowing actors to be vulnerable to their partner, to live in the moment and to not cover their feelings. While running a scene, I would ask them to freeze in space and start the repetition,

which grounded the action in moment-to-moment interaction. In my past experience in teaching, this exercise is a way of teaching the actor to not focus on themselves but to concentrate on the partner and the circumstance. The actors knew the exercise from class, and it deepened their moment-to-moment relationships in the play.

By concentrating completely on the stage reality, we hoped to indirectly bond with the audience. The dancing and singing at the opening of the play was, in an African aesthetic, a welcoming and an opening for the audience but was also a way for the actors to enter into a creative state. Anita, who was sitting in the audience alone and waiting for the audience to enter, later said she had entered a liminal state, just as the mother was in a liminal state waiting for her daughters to bury her.

Resonating with an audience is not the single mark of success, but if an actor senses a strong unity between audience and the actors, it indicates that they are in a space where they are experiencing. This unity is then a result of achieving what Stanislavsky called a creative state of action, "*tvorchestvo*" (Carriere, 2010, p.35). A similar unity of communities in South Africa and in an African view is found in theatre and in the responsiveness of audiences and generates a participatory and unified feeling. Theoretically, for the actor, this mutual reception occurs only when they are able to direct and use the responses of the audience towards the object of their intentional communication. Each of the actors involved worked towards consciously surrounding themselves with the imaginary circumstances and did so in detail so that an atmosphere was created throughout. This atmosphere was created to pull them deep into the action, through their associations and imagination, a theoretically positive vortex, which could potentially allow the audience to join them in the journey of the story.

6.8. Conclusion

The primary element of the work on the play was centered on how to underpin the story through action and to do so with the knowledge of epistemology found in African literature, African aesthetics and an African centered world view. These included valuing the spiritual elements

present in the work such as: the connectedness between people, the holism found in community, the rituals of ancestral/spirit communication and the intermingling of the visible and the invisible. As well, we identified values that directly work with Stanislavsky's methods and theory. The concept that a person is an energetic force, interacting with others both physically and spiritually, where the spirit is expressed through the physical and extends before and beyond the body, the *seriti*, a concept where the interpersonal is valued, works easily with Stanislavsky's exploration of communion. This calls to mind the image of the Bunraku puppet theatre from Japan where the puppeteers present and manipulate the puppets, working from behind and anomalously dressed in black. They are presenting the distinct persona to the audience.

The importance of interpersonal relations and interaction, as Setiloane states, "a vital force in participation" (Setiloane, 1986, cited in Shutte, 2001, p.23), enabled and grounded Stanislavsky's belief that the focus onstage is outward, in radical participation with the acting partner. The images, thoughts and emotions of the actors, which came from an inner and outer connection with the material, was concentrated by intention/action with the aim of penetrating the other actors with the energy of their character's needs. Working from an Afrocentric awareness of locality highlighted the given circumstances of the play, it was guided by the actor's detailed sense of what was correct or incorrect, even to the colours we brought to stage. The actor's knowledge of culture, integrating it with their present-day sense of self, became significant in discovering the given circumstances.

Ravengai (2011, pp. 8-9) has pointed out that a person is shaped by both their individuality and their culture in the habitus of the body, which implies that, for the actor, the body is the material from which they create. In the expression of a person from a culture deeply known, behavior may be observed or ingrained, but actors either consciously or unconsciously reflect it. The actor uses their body and voice as a medium through which they work. There are as many different kinds of actors as there are visual artists. Each of the four actors in the project had an individual approach but, as we were querying the supposition that the path to the subconscious lay in the conscious work, the focus for all was to discover the physical actions from the starting point of finding the

truth of placing the self in the circumstances and activating the imagination. From improvising the 'here, now and today' of given circumstances, we found the intentions and objectives, the inner actions, which lead to actions. I encouraged them to actively pursue impulses no matter how inappropriate. We were operating from concepts of networks: the networks of energy in African cosmological beliefs, that idea that actions are from the network of associations the actor has taken from their life, along with the primary and secondary emotions/feelings which arise and are then honed into active verbs and, finally, the network of vectoring actions to create the dynamic of the play. This process of conscious exploration occurs by active physicalisation and behavior; without physicalisation the result would have been only a theatre of the brain rather than theatre of the whole body and self.

The relationships and tensions between analysis and doing is present in all theatre and in the wide range of theatre done in South Africa, as well. A colleague has said to me, in regard to Stanislavsky, that he can become impatient with analysis, which he called the cognitive processes, and relies instead on music, movement and improvisation. However, in my experience of observing and participating in the process of rehearsing *Izilo*, the cognitive process of imagination, affective and associative thinking, awareness of space and interpretation were integrated and channeled into the improvisations, the dancing and the songs. I would argue that, in actor training, physicalisation and cognitive processes need to be integrated and conceived of holistically. Such training allows the actor a creative opening towards their full potential. In realizing theatre and acting as an ongoing process, both an art and a craft, the actor can conceive of themselves as an artist who collaborates on the horizontal, as opposed to being dependent on the director, in a vertical relationship - they have been given, by training, greater independence.

The use of active analysis as a rehearsal technique for *Izilo*, particularly that of determining action through improvisations, allowed for the actor's artistic agency. We began the improvisations both exploring events not directly related to the play and the specific scenes, where we had to name the events and establish who did the initiating action and who the resisting action. In retrospect, if we had first improvised around the prior life and then moved on to the events of

the play, instead of going back and forth between the two, it would have provided a more organic transition to embodying the written scenes. As method, it did allow the actors to grasp the action and to communicate it through their understanding the needs and desires, which then prompt the intentions and inner/outer actions in their role. The method of asking, 'what do I want and what must I do?' propelled their action. It did not determine what they choose to do, nor did it determine the style and the way of performing. The task was to realize, in the action/intention and the all-over objective, what tasks were needed in fulfilling the role. I became aware of Stanislavsky's concept of the actor's 'grasp': in breaking down of the trajectory of the story into events and naming them, we could then tie the events together by tracing the emotional sequences. We named the first event, 'realizing all that is lost' and the second, 'the divide' when the two sisters argue about what they must do. We were testing the veracity that, "if the actor establishes a coherent chain of such feelings, it will eventually become so powerful that you will have achieved what we call grasp. Then you're giving out and absorption will be much stronger, keener and more palpable" (Stanislavski, 2013, p. 244). The idea of having a grasp on the line of action requires emotional connection concurrent with the physical power to fully express it.

Drawing on the oral traditions of African theatre, the fable and stories told by grandmothers, is a 'sitting around the fire' kind of theatre, one that honours the past, exists in the present and can imagine the future. It is communal in the experience, as well as open to all. Noncommercial, it represents the very heart of theatre amid a mechanised and digital world. The use of ritual in African theatre, and the possibility of the appearance of gods and spirits, is naturally acceptable and a matter of the speculation for the human soul. These are a part of the African imagination and, as such, were embraced. This imagination has been expressed in Afrofuturism in literature and film by writers such as Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* series (Okorafor, 2015). The process of decolonization creates a dialectic between domination and self-determination, as defined by Mazizi Kunene in his epic poems of Shaka Zulu, his use of culture as a weapon and, as well, by intellectuals, writers and poets of the New African Movement in the first half of the twentieth century. This intellectual movement, through the talents and imagination of the participants,

transformed the socio-political and the artistic context of South Africa and elevated the power of culture as a means in pursuing the task of liberation (Mphande, 2022, pp. 103-119).

These roots are the inheritance of the actors I have worked with in this project, and I would argue that, while Stanislavsky himself has come from the package of colonial culture, his work appears relevant as an artistic method for both learning to act and as a reference point for the community of theatre in South Africa. The resources of African culture, its storytelling, experiences, aesthetics and values are the means, style and content. In the instance of our work, the techniques and holistic values of Stanislavsky were flexible and organic enough so that, when applied in context, they were a means towards a creative goal. We found the invisible threads, as in the assertion that: "'theatre lives by the exchange of spiritual energy, which goes continuously back and forth between audience and actor', uniting them with 'invisible threads'" (Stanislavsky, 1914, cited in Benedetti, 1990, p. 193). As similar values exist in African aesthetics and culture, which we accentuated and centered our work on, we were able to combine the two. Because the play can be identified as a magical realism, where interaction between the actors was primary, we could not explore presentational structures but, in the creating of structures and the through line of actions revealed within the story, we found a complicity that was not linear but curves towards a synthesis in "combining body, thought and emotion through energy and spirituality" (Merlin, 2007, p. 74). Halba contends, "hybridity is not a distant and abstracted concept; instead, it is rooted in very specific articulations of action and is contingent upon embodiment" (Halba, 2017, p. 385). This articulation of actions, in the specific, and the embodiment the actors found within the created imaginary world of *Izilo*, rooted in African experience, speaks to our amalgamated world where Stanislavsky's fluid approach can be subsumed into techniques of African theatre.

The discoveries which have emerged in the creative research lead towards the possibility of a theatre energised by a fusion of the concepts of the active energy found in both African aesthetics and in the applied philosophy of Stanislavsky, where both the inner and outer life of a piece are animated in communication. In finding a synthesis between the holistic view of the spirit in both

the African world view and in current research into the concepts underpinning Stanislavsky's work, the possibility has emerged for a theatre of energy that imbues the actor and the piece with a human power that goes beyond the set, the lighting or the spectacle into the realm of meaning through animation of the spirit.

There are numerous possibilities for the actor animated through a fusion between the traditional African belief in an energetic force field of a world infused with spirit and Stanislavsky's view of the creative state, *tvorchestvo*, as the active energy of creation onstage, and *aktivnost*, as the active energy of the life force functioning in action and intention. This is an acting approach where the actor is focused on the outer expression of the inner state of being, particularly in the idea of the intention of the actor as infused with the energy in communion, in radiating and receiving, but also including such concepts where the actor is, through use of the motivating and interconnected engines of mind, will and feeling, connected, "with the self, the other performers, audience and gives life to the spirit of the role" (Carriere, 2010, p. 147). This animating force creates a theatre in harmony with both the aesthetic of African theatre and with Stanislavsky's deeper meaning and does so consciously, where the actor is trained to view expression on stage as the interaction of energetic forces, not only between the actors and with the audience but, as well, by endowment of meaning in objects through imagination and with the scenic world which surrounds them.

The adjustments required in such a process begin with an emphasis on communal collaboration of a play and a mutual acknowledgement of African aesthetics and an African world view within a structure of production which is horizontal, rhizomatic, where the actor and director are equal. The actor is empowered to understand their place in the collaboration and conceive of the work as creating vectors of action in energising the *muthos* of the story, animating it into action. Thus, the cognitive analysis is adjusted to conceptualise action as energy in intention, as well as the energy of radiating and receiving found in the value placed on both interrelating and communion. The internal and external are not separate but the inner is expressed externally in a continual and fluid relationship. Stanislavsky is not viewed as psychological but as behavioral and causal,

through expression. Additionally, the 'scenic world' of the play is understood to be more than the set or the costumes but significant in allowing the actor to operate onstage with a sense of truth in what they do. Stanislavsky notes, as Torstov, in *An Actor Prepares*, that it does not matter if a knife is made of paper mâché, "we are not concerned with the actual naturalistic existence of what surrounds us on the stage, the reality of the material world! This is of use to us only in so far as it supplies a general background for our feelings" (Stanislavski, 1989, p. 141). This scenic world, which may, in South African theatre, include a broom that becomes a crutch or a weapon, requires the adjustment of highlighting the use of imagination, sensory work and endowment as techniques for outer concentration, emphasising the need for the actor to focus on the outer dimension of where they are. In the creative research and in teaching, I have become aware of the necessity for the actor to develop not only the muscle of imagination in animated relating to partners and objects, but also in the realm of imagined circumstances, so that they are able to completely surround themselves with the imagined world of the given circumstances, as it is there that they will find themselves, the "I Am' in the role.

In the process of rehearsal and training, adjustments are made in terms of locality, in the important and specific details of place where the distinct is found. Peimer notes the disparate interpretations possible in the use of Stanislavsky's emotional memory by the actor, from the more psychological, as in a Hamlet with Oedipal feelings towards Gertrude, to the more banal memory of anger at being scratched by a cat and finally to an emotional memory of a South African actor who has been told that his father's spirit was wandering over the land and water of his ancestral home and calling him home to take his position as a village elder (Peimer, 2017, p. 314). Recreating an emotional memory does not determine the content of the memory, there is no dictate of the type of memory, in that the memory is found in the adjustment of location. Likewise, intention/action needs adjustment in a process of understanding how to implement and analyse in terms of the story, the created action that supports the *muthos*/plot, the context. *Tvorchestvo*, as the creative state which the actor enters into when rehearsing and performing is an active state. The creative state is achieved through the actor doing what is necessary in

locality, whether it be summoned in dance, meditation, breathing or chanting and praying. The transformation occurs in putting it in an African worldview.

Graft (1976, p. 13) names the defining forces which exist in the traditional beliefs of Africa as animate and elemental forces of earth, air, water, fire, people and spirit which once bonded humanity together, before the intervention of outside forces. It is both the animate and energised spirit of these beliefs and, as well, the work of Stanislavsky which permeates the idea of an 'animated theatre' based on the African world view and Stanislavsky, one which creates, perhaps, a dynamic way forward.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

> Let each nation, each people, reflect in its heart its most subtle, national, human traits, and let each art preserve its own national colouring, tones, and distinctive features and let this be the way to disclose the soul of each and every nation. (Stanislavsky, 1968)

This thesis has posed the question, can Stanislavsky's methods and techniques be synthesised into contemporary South African theatre and if so, how? In a post-colonial world, with the legacy of apartheid and racism, and its ensuing concerns, which include the need to put the African world at the center of the narrative, does the approach and methods of Stanislavsky further the needs of South African theatre or is it, rather, a cultural imposition? Additionally, does Stanislavsky serve the work of heightened, physicalised performance so often present in South African theatre and in an African aesthetic, where physical action may be mimed, narrators interrupt the story, spirits intermingle with the living and dance and song create transitions of action? Can his work accommodate the actor in a theatre which often uses the presentational and deconstructs traditional storytelling, as in, for example, placing a climactic scene between two characters outward to the audience where the chopping of wood or the eating of an orange become metaphorical symbols to signify the meaning of the interaction? Is it flexible enough to work in locality and in the cultural context?

My investigation into these questions has been based on research into the surrounding literature on post-colonial thought, including Afrocentricity, African aesthetics in South African theatre and the work of African writers and playwrights in considering the transmission of Stanislavsky in Africa and the world. As well, his approach and methods from both his written work and recent discourse as to the meaning of Stanislavsky in performing in the 21st century alongside relevant writings on interculturalism and cultural imperialism in theatrical practice have been queried. The creative research project of rehearsing and performing the play, *Izilo*, my experiences as an acting teacher and as a director in South Africa and interviews have also informed the process.

The possibilities of a syncretic theatre where elements of separate practices are fused, as related in Knowles (2010), applies to South Africa with the caveat of Asante's paradigm of putting South Africans at the centre of the narrative. The redefinition of Stanislavsky, as found in current research into his work and as newly understood in his writings, has provided a fresh perspective of the holistic conception of his system in Africa through his creative concepts of experiencing, *activnost*, *tvorchestvo* and communion. Through the unity of the inner and the outer found in physical expression and through a comprehension of the dynamics of dramatic structure, as found in activating a script through the actor's actions/intentions, the means to discovering the spirit and soul of the role can be realised. The divergent interpretations of his original work have called into question the near to binary split of the psychological and the physical found in interpretations which would emphasise only the inner psychology of a character - in lieu of the possibilities of a fully animated and heightened hysical and scenic world.

South African theatre and Stanislavsky are no strangers to one another. Stanislavsky has been taught in South Africa, initially in all white universities and presently as part of the curricula in many universities and independent training programs but, with the exception of Ravengai's work (2011), there has not yet been thorough exploration, research and writing into how the entirety of his work can or cannot support the work of contemporary South African theatre. Currently his work is indeed taught, yet, from my experience, his work has conceptually existed at one end of a continuum, alongside - but not integrated with - the effort towards an African based approach.

The possibility of synthesis requires that distinctions be made between divergent interpretations of Stanislavsky's work. When viewed through the lens of an African aesthetic and an Afrocentric approach, the specifics of his techniques have been challenged in that his technique, especially as it has been transmitted from the Strasberg approach, results in Realism and in internalised and individualised performances that do not work in the contemporary theatre, particularly for South African theatre in the context of a rigorous and energetic presentational theatre piece, such as have evolved from Protest Theatre. The actor trained in Strasberg's interpretation of Stanislavsky approach, where the psychological is valued over active and connected interrelating, is

unequipped to be able to switch from, for example, a narrative travelling from a riot in a prison, then back to the past with a mother holding an imaginary child in her arms and finally forward to a dance where the grown-up child is leaving home.

Juxtaposed to the psychological, as I have found in this research, is Stanislavsky's concept of learning to grasp the actor's dramatic action as a heightened level of communication and concentration. This grasp of the action/intention in communication is an active creative state of concentration and focus on the scenic and imagined surroundings, is both physical and verbal, and was considered by Stanislavsky to empower the actor towards the state of experiencing. This understanding of his actual meanings presents a potential for presentational theatre, where transitions are rapid paced and the audience is part of the action, if actors have the requisite concentration and focus to transform the drive of intention into physical actions. This ability, according to Stanislavsky, is simultaneously inner and outer, achieved through mind, will and feeling and is an engine which generates emotional connection, associative imagining and thinking into physical action. The method of asking 'what would I do if I were in these circumstances' takes on greater meaning if the resultant action is realized as a vector, as conceived by Pavis (Taylor, 2005), made up of both magnitude and direction which results in the creating of more powerful dynamics. In considering Stanislavsky's approach, my research has indicated that he can be understood not in terms of psychology but in his own stated terms of the active creative state of *activnost* where the actor is not concerned with the hesitancy of an inner psychological state but in the outpouring of the energy of action. In performing with a presentational style, the distinction must be made between the method of Strasberg and the actual work of Stanislavsky, where the focus is on the actor communicating outward with the entire outer scenic world of a piece.

Through a rereading of Stanislavsky in the context of discourse around contemporary understandings of his work and reflecting upon both teaching and directing in South Africa and in applying an African aesthetic, the significance of his concept of experiencing as the goal of the actor becomes a flexible focal point for a synthesis which can be explored in both modern and

traditional work. Much of the modern-day discussion of Stanislavsky's system indicate his methods of training are taught without acknowledging or highlighting the significance of the underpinning ideas and values which inform the process. As well, the strictures of Soviet ideologies and mistranslations have limited the depth of our understanding. At this juncture, however, more thorough research into the Russian meanings has been made available which has deepened our understanding of his intentions. Taken in the entirety of the meaning of experiencing in Russian - that of living the part in a flowing improvisatory connection to the subconscious, which consists of the outpouring of the energy of intention and requires entering a creative state, *tvorchestvo*, where the soul of the actor connects to imagination - I have come to realize this as a view imbued with the spiritual. Recognising, through the literature and the creative research, that the notions of spirit and soul at the foundation of Stanislavsky's work and methods are the means to discovering the life of the spirit in the actor's work, has led to realising these methods as applicable, both theoretically and in practice, to the performative elements of an African aesthetic.

The theory that spirituality is a component of African creativity and intrinsic to the philosophy of an African world view placed in relation to the theoretical stance that Stanislavsky's system is an approach rather than a style, one that emphasises finding the spirit of a role, as found in the writings of Carnicke, Carriere, White, Halba and Brugal, have provided a significant link. The discussions surrounding an African world view is that of both noting the unity of values, traditions and belief coinciding with the great diversity of languages and cultures found in Africa. My research has focused on the world view as expressed by Chinweizu, Soyinka, Mbiti, Nobles, Shutte and Lebaka, with Chinweizu and Soyinka, in particular, speaking to the unique expression of such a worldview in African plays and novels. What is referred to as the African cosmology, is referenced as containing principles of the unity of community, the belief in the spiritual and the universe conceived of as a force field of energy where all things are animated by the energy of spirit. As well are the concepts of *Ubuntu*, of the presence of spirits and ancestors interacting with our daily life and, finally, of the interrelatedness of all things, including human beings. Central to my investigation is the potential interrelatedness, found in research, between the

African world view reflected in an African aesthetic and the holistic view found in Stanislavsky's philosophy, approach and methods. The focus on interrelatedness and interaction within a community, the idea that the universe is a force field of animate and interacting energy and the spiritual sense that a human being is a manifestation of energy related to spirit parallels the concept of communion, the method of radiating and absorbing energy between actors, between the actor and the surrounding objects, real or imaginary, and between the actors and the audience. Notable too are the similarities between Halba's writing on the Māori theatre, her descriptions of Stanislavsky's methods practiced in synthesis with the values of the Māori culture, and Brugal's investigation of creating pieces which employ both trance, ritual and ancestral memories from the Yoruba culture of Cuba integrated with Stanislavsky's theories of dramatic action and physical action. These studies have offered insight and indicate that, in locally created work, his methods do not need to determine what circumstances the actor is in or what it is that the actor does but why they do it, which is to fully experience the role.

The contentious issues of cultural appropriation, the tension between sameness and difference amid the collocations of a globalised contemporary theatrical culture can create an illusion which homogenises, generalises and internalises universalist assumptions, without acknowledging divergent pathways and imbalances of power or inequities. At the same time, our humanness, humanity and human commonality remain a sustaining force of theatrical life. Within this dynamic, ideas of the syncretic, the hybrid and the intercultural have informed and offered ways of experimentation. Yet the assumptions made as a result of the historical imperialism of Western theatre can easily slide into Hall's characterision of 'the West and the Rest', as well as a disinterest in the specific and the idiosyncratic.

Thus, determining the scope of how and if Stanislavsky can be integrated into an Afrocentric world, where African aesthetics are an essential part of theatre practice, has required that the discourses of contemporary thought and the practice of theatre making are researched and comprehended within the context of post-colonialism, which include considerations of liberation, agency and self-determination and articulation. These concerns contribute to the

creating of theatre and the training of actors and are a significant component of the ongoing process of artistic exploration: what has happened in the past, what is happening in the present and what could potentially happen in the future. In this evolving process, the actor is central in that they are capable of embodying and articulating both ideas and characters.

The conclusions I have drawn in putting Stanislavsky's system in the context of South African theatre speaks to working from the specific and local in terms of African philosophies and in terms of an aesthetical interpretation of the needs of the artists and theatre practitioners. Stanislavsky cannot be taught vertically but through interrogations, transformations and challenges from those who are being taught or being directed, with regard for the particular tone distinctive to the culture.

In post-rehearsal discussions with the actors in the creative research, we spoke of the emphasis put on the spiritual aspects of Stanislavsky. In the previous semester, they had devised plays, many of which dealt with magical elements and were immersed in an African aesthetic which they had created through focusing on an ensemble unity of spirit, both in entering a creative state and in physical preparation, as well in creating rituals. In our discussion, they recounted the methods used in our rehearsals which had led them towards our goal of experiencing their roles and felt that the techniques of communion, in radiating and absorbing, physical actions in both ritual and in the dramatic action of intention, when combined with expressing vital content often held within, had had a profound impact of their understanding and approach to acting. The pointing out of the theoretical effort in our process, that of connecting the spiritual of African aesthetics to the spiritual found in Stanislavsky, helped in understanding the approaches which lead to experiencing, that of the conscious leading to the creativity of the subconscious, of finding the connection between the soul of the self-analogous to the soul of the character and the focus on *activnost*, the outpouring of active energy in expression. Anita, who played the mother, recounted how, in her first year of class, she could not relate to the work of Stanislavsky as she could not locate it and the methods seemed arbitrary and disconnected. For her, the rehearsals for the creative research resulted in making sense of the interrelated connections in a framework

that she, as an actor, could use. Together, the actors exhorted me to openly teach from the view of the connections. When I admitted I was often hesitant, having not been born into the culture, they responded that I must then propose the theoretical view as a researcher and combine it as a teacher. They stressed that, in dealing directly with the actors embodied knowledge and beliefs as passed down from tradition, Stanislavsky's work had inspired them and opened up new approaches.

As I have discovered, the mutual relationships found between the African world view within the African aesthetic and the search for the soul and spirit of a role portrayed by an actor applies when the totality of Stanislavsky's output is holistically comprehended. The concepts of a sense of truth and belief, the soul of a character, communion, action and energy are not idealistic generalities but are based on what Maxwell (2004) calls 'Stanislavsky's practical philosophy' when the methods of achieving what Stanislavsky named as experiencing are taught in detail with purpose - that of opening up the actor to organically live a part in the presence of others. By acknowledging the aim of experiencing, the conscious leading to the subconscious in the creative state, his methods are given directionality. These purposes can then be correlated in the specifics of South Africa and with respect to culture, whether a theatre piece be created phenomenologically, in behavior and emotion, or whether created semiotically, in signs and symbols, or in a combination of the two. The correlations of the spiritual energy of *prana* (which potentially can be referred to as *Ntu*) and the actor, of the incarnation of the spirit in the role and in ancestors, of the energetic interrelationships and the deep connections between human beings, of the endowment of life in an object and in the animate world and communion alongside community are both beliefs and creative concepts.

The dramatic structure of a play is considered a composite musical score which consists of the words, images, rhythms and aesthetic and is decoded in terms of action, the primary element which brings a play, 'the plot', to life. As conceived of by Stanislavsky, the basis of drama is action and conflict and is the anatomical structure of both the play and the actor, as understood in his ideas of finding the 'spine' of the all over action and the 'skeleton' of a role. The dynamic of action

within the actor, present in both African aesthetics and a presentational style where the actors and the action are primary, is transformative if actors are trained to embody the spirit of *activnost*, are able to see themselves as instruments of vectorization and are conscious they are creating the structure. With song and movement understood as a bridge, whether in emotions or transitions, of the dramatic structure, the dynamic can be explored in a greater dimension. The production of African aesthetics benefits from the ideas of a force field of energy with the actor giving and receiving this energy, learning to project the inner scenic content found within the power of intention outwards to the scenic world of a piece.

These concepts which correlate to the African aesthetic provide a language and a framework for communication of the acting process in training and teaching, a method of 'naming and doing' which allows the actor to understand Stanislavsky's purpose and follow the process with clarity of intent. My experience of directing my creative research project, identifying the concepts and implementing them in relation to African centered aesthetics, created a space where we could mutually implement methods with a clear goal. We could find the physical actions which lead the rituals, we could endow the surrounding objects with deeper meaning, and we could work towards intention and actions by radiating and absorbing and with grasp of intense interaction. Naming the phenomena of the interaction which occurs between the audience and the actors in the resonance of affective memories and naming the method of intense concentration of the scenic surroundings, which include the other actors and may include the audience, especially with the unity of community which is present in South Africa, is a vital tool for the actor. It becomes the means towards an aim. The knowledge that the actor does not close off the energetic forces of the audience when using a fourth wall in both realism and presentational theatre but instead receives and gives energy through deep concentration on interaction opens the actor to being present in the moment of performing. The ability to make use of a technique happens through the naming and doing of training, that of communicating simultaneously both the theory and the process and relating it to their aesthetic vision.

The radical power of physical expression in South African theatre and performance, the ability to form a character through physical expression and freedom of movement can be nurtured and developed even further, despite the draw of a digital universe of Instagram, Tik Tok and artificial intelligence. Stanislavsky's approach and methods are a descriptive language for communicating the acting process, based on the laws of nature and related to an African world view, which gives substance to discovering the full potential of the acting student in South Africa. Alongside the development of original South African approaches in physical movement, dance and physicalisation of character, there is further potential to quantify and develop approaches which are African based in acting through comprehending, connecting and distinguishing, through a deep look into the interrelated concepts which form an African aesthetic, the spirituality of an African world and the acting process as conceived of by the System. While often confounding and complicated in connecting the relationships between the methods that form the whole of the approach, the implications of communing, energy, creativity and action remain profound and valuable to the South African actor when communicated as a language for the related concepts and considered in context.

Taking the basic principles of Stanislavsky and proposing them for classroom experimentation in training actors, one that interrogates and explores aesthetics, both of Africa and of the actor, is a significant tool and can be considered in the following ways:

- Relating the idea of the non-duality of the body, that the mind and emotions are intricately connected, as found in neuroscience, Stanislavsky and the African world view, opens up the actor's understanding and practice. Thoughts and emotions are continuously expressed, consciously or unconsciously, as physical behavior. Testing, in reverse, is also possible: the physical impacts the mind and emotions, leading to a recognition that there is a sensate relation which is continuous.
- Investigating the principle that for the actor, the imagination ignites physical engagement by discovering the analogous relationship in embodying the question of 'what would I do if I were in these circumstances?'. The method of using this simple question reveals how,

in finding the soul of a role, the 'I am', drives expression and emphasises the necessity of working from the self in the specifics of locality.

- Developing and understanding of the actors need for expressive fluidity in physical training so that emotions, intentions are fully realized in action, *aktivnost*, leads to a significance link between methods of presentational theatre and the African aesthetic.
- The actor's path in the ongoing search of finding the motivation in a role via discovering action/intention, the breaking down of the actions/events and understanding analysis as a process done 'on the feet' in a conscious effort to explore the effect of the choices made, considered in tandem with dramatic structure and the networks which are created in the entire scenic world of a piece, allows for both holistic understanding and the value of interrelationships between the methods.
- The notion of energy and the exchange of energy in the techniques of radiating and absorbing is an active state of expressing energy. When related to the African world view and aesthetics, it presents opportunities for discovering new dynamics of artistic interrogations and dialogue which can be explored, as well, through endowment, concentration and grasp.
- The body seen as the medium for the embodiment of a character, combined with expressions of song and movement and related to outpouring of energy and action to other characters/actors, can liberate the restraints of internality, tension and close the gap of between the inner impulse and physical expression.
- Improvisation, as used in the method of Active Analysis, with the actor deciding who does the impelling/initiating action and who does the resisting counteraction and then feeding the actions into the all over action of both the role and the entire play, gives the actor the ability to comprehend the all over action of their role and their purpose as a part of the whole. This process affords actors agency and independence, where they view themselves as artists and deciders in the process of working on a role.
- Communicating the idea of the interrelationship and the communion between the actor and the audience, as found in the theories of the connectedness of the community in an African world view and the view of Stanislavsky, challenges the actor to open up to the

expression of action, no longer shutting off the audience but taking in the interchange of energy which happens between them to intensify and deepen the scenic interaction onstage.

- When teaching the practice of physical actions in a role, a sense of truth, a sense of belief and an intuitive sense of what seems false, can be presented and considered, not as a general ideal for the actor but as a specific method of living truthfully in the moment. The actor is searching for actions, tasks and activities; it is a subjective process which comes from within. When the sequence of the physical actions is enacted with truth and belief in the details found in the living circumstances and with a faith in the reality of the sensations felt, the actor begins to convince their physical self that it is true. This is not in an attempt to create Realism but an attempt to create the actor's faith in the physical actions and needs of a role.
- Stanislavsky's assertion that the actor work from a linkage of the three elements of the mind, the will and the feelings to create an engine of action forms a holistic center from which various methods spin out.

The limitations of time are a factor to be considered, but if an actor can manage uninterrupted training for over a consistent period of two years, the language of African aesthetics and the language of Stanislavsky will become important instruments for creative learning and exploration in Southern Africa. The limitations of my research with acting students in the creative research project have, as well, been determined by time, in that the research could ideally have taken place over a year simultaneous to using the literature to interrogate the process, as opposed to my exploration process taking place after the research into the literature. While I have taught as a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Performance at University of Witwatersrand the curriculum with its specific needs and the limitations of a large class meeting once a week resulted in a choice to focus on primarily teaching of action/intention as a central idea around which ideas of subtext, communion, space and script analysis were introduced and practiced. The method of communion in relationship to intention was introduced in class when I began to relate it to an African aesthetic with a deeper understanding of its effectiveness. The discoveries made

occurred in the process of my research, with the resultant knowledge of the significance of training actors from an integrated and holistic point of view in implementing the methods of Stanislavsky.

Cultures are a complex mix; we are pulled in multidirectional ways. Southern Africa seems to be many things, and it is mirrored in its theatre as well. Pantomime shows in Johannesburg are performed every year at Christmas, they have been performed since the 1860's and, although they adhere to the traditional rules of British pantomime genre, they have evolved into a particularly South African form, a kind of smash up of South African contemporary culture (Maria Kruger, 2003). Regardless of the commercial and *opera buffo* form, the actor who is able to bring the entirety of who they are as a theatre artist is at an advantage, not an imitation, but wholly themselves. Now that all actors operate on a more level playing in South African theatre, who they are in spirit becomes more integral. The process of decolonisation allows for greater expression of all the parts of the actor's being. The many cultures in Southern Africa, despite the efforts of the apartheid governments, have been blended throughout its history and have bounced off one another into something new and often surprising. This variety, blending and fermentation exists in the students I have taught and in the artists of South African theatre: for example, Shabangu' s play, *Ten Bush*, with the supernatural driving the tragedy of events in an isolated village; an adaption of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* to *Meis Julie,* by Farber, on an Afrikaans farm estate; and a recent play, *Hanging Pieces of Flesh,* on female circumcision, performed for a directing module at University of Witwatersrand and created by Lebogang Chauke, a directing student. Despite the differences, all three contained song and ritualized movement, the presence of watching spirits and all carried elements of an African aesthetic, composed of both the traditional and the modern, in a syncretic form. The commonality is that the characters portrayed all call for depth in the performing, whether in sustained interaction or in shifting between addressing the audience and enacting a scene. These elements of the fantastical are enhanced when done by actors who perform in depth, who are able to drive a play through what is revealed in the motivation of character and who are able to use all methods available in order to create.

The spiritual in African creativity and in finding the spirit of a role work together when Stanislavsky's system is seen as an approach which names what actors do and allows the two viewpoints to merge. The pathways between the aesthetics of South African theatre, Afrocentricity and the works of Stanislavsky requires depth of understanding of all three. The resultant journey, for the actor, winds in many directions but holds future possibilities.

The discovery of 'a theatre of animation' found in the creative research through the synthesis of African aesthetics and Stanislavsky is made up of the fluency of methods: entering a creative state which can be found in song, dance and physicality; communication/communion is emphasised, as discussed in Shutte (2001), in an interchange of energy which reflects the understanding of the human personality as not existing on its own but in relationship to others and to the surroundings, 'I am because we are'; Stanislavsky's intentionality in performing and the ensuring action that it engenders are conceived as a life force in an energised field of the outer scenic world, where actions are vectorised in creating a piece; the surrounding world of a piece is energised into a force field; and finally, our existing in relation to others, with a high value placed on relationships and interactivity creates the fertile ground where collaborations happen. This energises the actions of the actors and creates the animated world in which a play occurs, thus it can be referred to as 'an animated theatre'.

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Appendix A

Creative Project Journal: *Izilo*

Audio Rehearsals/Videos of Rehearsals/Research Photos; Rehearsal Notes/Methods

A. Rehearsal Audio/Video/Research Photos:

1. Audio Rehearsal/mother's lullaby:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ph1ZYINkU7L6qrKULBw-cwYk3WAcfyqZ

2. Audio Rehearsal/drum/dance:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T0dlVXfwDQZVFEyMaKdjKPCTrKnZsLEM/view?usp=share_link

3. Audio Rehearsal/clan names:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/133pgHvdu_RINiCAOXI_b-jEx5iItszo7/view?usp=drivesdk

4. Videos of Rehearsals:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZwLXzSNGviPVQVwaCGcGK-jhEQWWzApw/view?usp=drivesdk

5. Research photos for Rehearsals:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Rw0iHBkcyA-8SUjInWwpWcA0qO1DxCBP

Rehearsals Notes and Methods:

1 Introduction to process

Our initial discussions centred around African aesthetics and the African world view. The actors were not only grounded in recent performances of their devised pieces and the discoveries they had made in regard to African spirituality, but also in their past experiences growing up in societies which were either very urban and not connected to their roots or in a society where the roots of their beliefs were connected to the African world view, in rituals, in the solidity of the community, in belief in the spiritual as a link to the world and to the ancestors. Anita is from the Eastern Cape where the Xhosa beliefs, rituals and ceremonies were an everyday part of the rhythms of her life, as was Bonani and Likhona. They all have grandmothers who told stories, followed traditional ways and who passed down traditional values. Masego grew up in Johannesburg with an urban experience - more disconnected to her family's roots. Her recent experiences in terms of traditional beliefs have been that of discoveries.

The belief in the life force which emanates from each person and is deeply connected to others, the seriti of a person and how that relates to the idea of community as well as the belief that the land connects the people of a community to their ancestors and to those that will come after them are connected to techniques of Stanislavsky at each point: communion/interpersonal relations/life force; intention/*aktivnost*/energy as an animating force; nature and surroundings as animated/endowing objects and the scenic life/ communing to objects both within and without. Additionally, we explored Stanislavsky's notion of *tvorchestvo,* the creative state, and how it can be explored in an African context.

The stages from the creative state to experiencing which include the idea of using intention and objectives as *aktivnost*, the active state of pouring out and projecting what you, as the character, want, was interrogated conceptually and through improvisation. All four of the actors had previously been in class with me and understood the techniques but, in this case, we were making analogies between African aesthetics, traditional beliefs and Stanislavsky's techniques. We also

went over the techniques of Active Analysis in dissecting scenes, that of resisting and initiating action and improvisation.

We searched the play for meaning, finding the themes, the basic conflict and the function of each character in the whole and discussed if the values found in Antigone could be applied to *Izilo*: those of the right of human agency over the power of the state in contrast to that of the safe way forward, as exemplified by Nobulali, versus the opposing call for the actions demanded by the ancestors, as exemplified by Khusela. The Xhosa traditions surrounding communal obligations to the ancestors in ritual and burial, Nobulali's fear of performing them and Khusela's call to honour both her parents and their ancestors provided the visceral sense of the conflict of the play.

The process of sitting at the table analysing happened both initially and throughout. It was mutually agreed that, after all, it was necessary but alongside improvisation, both abstract and specific to the play.

While the idea of vectoring the script, connecting it to energy, intention and action, was something that we all were new to, it was considered in terms of focusing energy in creating and driving the structure, based on driving discovering energetic intention, which would enable the story to be told.

2. Rehearsal methods

- Use of dance/drumming/song in warming up.
- Breath: working on the solar plexus as centre of emotion, taking in breath to solar plexus and sending down on the exhale to the lower stomach as a way of connecting to the self.
- Abstract impulse improvisations with sound/movement.
- Mirror exercises and repetition exercises.
- Table discussions as preliminary active analysis
- Improvisations based on active analysis:
    - Silent etudes
    - Script/scene-based improvisations with initiating action/resisting action

        - Improvisations on the character's life separate from script
    - Communion exercises in radiating and absorbing and in consciously radiating and receiving/absorbing objectives and actions executed between the actors.
    - Creating a total and surrounding outer scenic life through the imagination, focusing on the concept of a force field of energy which is animate.
    - Animating and relating to props as having energy in their meaning to the characters portrayed: subject to object.
    - A conceptual base line of recognition of the intense community and interrelationships valued in an African world view, feeding into the use of intention and communion and Stanislavsky's concepts of *aktivnost* and *divestivnost*
    - Acknowledgement of ancestors and spirits as present.
    - The goal of finding the human spirit in the role.
    - Exercises in finding the physical impulses within the scenes.
    - Understanding intention and action as the method where we find the vectors of the play, activating the script through creating magnitude of energy in directional movement of action.
    - Improvisations around the concept of a character's seriti.
    - Emphasising the use of radiation and absorbing while doing scene work.
    - Understanding and work on the intention/objective as an outpouring energy, where what is inside is revealed outside, in action and physicalisation.
    - Focus on doing the physical activities as a result of the inner action/intention.
    - Highlighting the actor's traditional knowledge as inherited from their families and as understood in context and locality.
    - Creating an intense focus on acting partners and on the scenic world of the play as a method of bringing the audience into the story and action, as opposed to reaching out to them, with the theory that the audience is indirectly affected by the associative memories evoked.

Performance Videos and Photos:

a. Pre-show warmup:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hSm8pW7VbrL-mdfimlpuGROw8uTvIP5R

b. Photos/actors in costume:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1l7Ud7loTV9ljDSOBFCnadz7FWVVKoQ2a

c. Performance Video of *Izilo*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nnROlX8sSSSqReliFGI5qVRkFeQVjA6L/view?usp=drivesdk

Post Show Questions/Topics and Interviews with the Cast

Questions and Topics.

1. Our process of rehearsals included, within the African aesthetic of the play, the techniques of communion, intention, the creative state and active imagination in the scenic world of the play, as well as the idea of finding the spiritual energy common to both African aesthetics and the approach of Stanislavsky:
    - How did it or did it not work for you as an actor?
    - How can you apply it in the future?
    - From a cultural point of view, how do you think about the process?
    - What are your conclusions about the process?

A. The interviews were held in a post-show meeting, in an unstructured discussion. in order to analyse how the process worked for the actors. Participating were the members of the cast:

Likhona Mpepo

Masego Matiko

Anita Matwa

Bonani Ngamlane

Background of the discussion, the experience

> The play was performed in a small theatre with the audience on platforms surrounding the acting space in a L-shaped pattern. There was only room for 60 people. The set was simply done with a back piece and African baskets, which were used for the rituals, bees stood on small sticks in the entrance and around the stage. It communicated the feeling of a ritual gathering. As often happens in performances in Southern Africa, the audience is responsive in their experiencing the play. That the play was performed in isiXhosa and that it told a story from the past, along with the drumming and dancing beforehand, created an atmosphere of anticipation. The mother, traditionally dressed, sat in the audience and waited for the audience to settle. When she began singing the lullaby and slowly walked onstage, preparing the space for what was to happen and blessing it, with the two sisters sitting centre on the platform in mourning over the bodies of their parents which lay below, a hush, a palpable silence fell on the audience. Murmurs of sympathy and if agreement continued throughout from the audience and culminated with many repeating the word, 'Camagu', so often used in traditional rituals when connecting with the ancestors.

The discussion began with the actors recounting their experiences in performing the play and the 'energy' they were aware of in performing the piece. We asked each other: did you experience the piece as animated with the energy we endeavored to create? Did you, in fact, send energy to one another and receive from the audience as asserted in Stanislavsky's method of communion and in the notion of the African world view of an energy force embodied in each person, which is continuously shared, which interacts and animates?

Anita: we energised the performance by the work in rehearsal, the performance was the result of all we worked on: the dancing outside, our unity in taking time before we started by holding

hands in a circle, the drumming was an energy I felt even though I was seated inside and separate from it. It charged my imagination, put me in a creative state and we were more aware of it, the energies and the force of it, because of our work in rehearsal…

Masego: For me, the dancing to enter a creative state, just the idea that I need to enter that state when working, was so important and that I could use it in acting, the creative state as an openness to begin. And then with intention, connecting to it, to what Nobulali does and that I, me, as the actor can send it out, put it out and connect. The dancing brought me back to childhood and then later to her. The experience, the entire experience, was a turnaround for me, in performing and in the creative energy I felt charged with throughout. It changed the way I do theatre, view performing and making theatre.

Likhona: I felt I was a channel for Khusela to appear, she is an ancestor. All that we did in rehearsals led me to that. I was a channel for the audience too. The dancing then the knowing what I wanted as the character and the work of imagination- also that I felt inside the play - the physical actions that came from what I needed to do. The audience pushed me further when they said 'camagu' again and again with me, they were with me all the way through, and I went deeper into the play. Knowing about resonance, using it, made me aware of what was happening.

Masego: I grew up in a non-traditional way, Johannesburg and, there's so much my family never talked about, my father was an atheist -so working with African spirituality and traditional ways has changed me. And this now too, it's an even more electric atmosphere and we need the two. Our first improvisation, when we were using sound and movement, was really profound but I realised we had to have the structure- the improvisations all helped us is connect to what was beneath, but we needed the actions and the intention to tell the story and to make it work. The connecting to each other is energy, so is the outpouring you talked about, with the objects too. But though it was hard to understand, the vectoring is important. I've thought about when watching other plays and I see it. It's a directing of energy by intention.

Bonani: For me, it's intention and imagination. I knew him and what he wanted. I imagined muti and smeared it over my hand and face when I went to ask Nobulali to marry me – I felt the power of the muti as I entered. The unity of our work is what happens when we do a play, we know how to make this unity and the intentions and use of energy and making the atmosphere, imagination, only made it stronger, better.

Anita: these things, the way we worked made me see understand Stanislavsky, what you mean when you teach but you need to discuss it openly, even if you are not African and didn't grow up the way we did. If you feel shy to speak about a culture you didn't grow up in, then address it as a researcher, a teacher, because it all makes sense to me. I used to wonder why this white guy was so important and now I know but it's in the context that makes it work, so it must be taught and used that way.

Original Script, *Izilo*

IZILO

Written by: Sifiso Ngwane

CHARACTERS:

KHUSELA MTHIMKHULU – The first daughter of the late king and queen of the amaHlubi tribe

NOBULALI MTHIMKHULU – The second daughter of the late king and queen of the amaHlubi tribe

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU – The late king of the amaHlubi tribe

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU – The late queen of the amaHlubi tribe

ZWELIBANZI ZULU – The maternal uncle of Khusela and Nobulali and the counsellor of the late king of the amaHlubi tribe who is usurping the throne

PLATOON OF GUARDS – in the palace

MTHIMKHULU – The guard that betrays the royal family and sells them out to Zwelibanzi

BHUNGANE – The remaining guard after the swarm of bees attacks the platoon of guards and Zwelibanzi

VILLAGERS – at the wedding

SYNOPSIS:

Khusela Mthimkhulu and Nobulali Mthimkhulu are 21-year-old grief-stricken twins mourning the death of their parents. They know their parents were killed in Zwelibanzi Zulu's rebellion who forbade anyone from burying the king and queen, as an act of demanding respect from his constituents and stripping them of their culture.

Khusela is adamant to bury her parents as she is made aware of the fact that the burying ritual will avenge her parents' death. Nobulali is hesitant and tries to convince Khusela from doing the ritual, but Khusela cannot be stopped.

She performs the ritual and faces the wrath of Zwelibanzi who kills her after he marries Nobulali. Zwelibanzi is attacked by a swarm of bees and dies. Nobulali is left to rule the amaHlubi tribe, as the wife of the king and the true royal blood of the throne.

SCENE 1: Grief – UKUZILA

KHUSELA and NOBULALI are sitting by their parents' grave, crying.

KHUSELA:

I have felt many kinds of pain in my life as a warrior, but ayikho eyodlula lena. I cry for umama notata, laying in front of this royal homestead, the king and queen being made a spectacle of shame. Ikumkani nekumkanikazi yamaHlubi, betrayed and murdered by their own. I cry for amaHlubi, stripped of a true king and queen. I cry for us. UZwelibanzi Zulu, yhini ukusithathela abazali bethu? I cry for the ancestors of our land. A dark cloud hangs over umhlaba wokhokho bethu and we are just supposed to sit here and accept defeat.

NOBULALI:

… Ukhohlakele umalume uZwelibanzi, bendicinga ebesithanda. Ebesoloko enobubele kanti he is a wolf in sheep's skin… How could he do this right under our noses? How could utata not see? How could umama with her sharp sixth sense not see that umalume is plotting a rebellion behind their back? … I am left with so many questions… but what is the point? They're gone. Umnkile umama notata. Kushiyeke usizi lodwa… And we cannot even bury our own parents. As if it was not enough that he killed them… is his heart so cruel that he would really deprive them of a proper royal burial? How dare he? That coward.

KHUSELA:

If this is how he treats our parents in their death, kubekisela phi thina who are alive? What will become of us? Will he marry us off? I was never built for marriage. Ndilibutho lamaHlubi. I was to be the heir to my father's throne as umafungwashe, the first daughter of the Mthimkhulu royal family, ruling over amaHlubi. How can I, a princess, find myself stuck with a random old man, married off with a herd of cattle and leave my father's throne to an imposture? Isiqalekiso esingaka?

NOBULALI:

And death to whoever is a fool enough to go up against the usurper, king Zwelibanzi Zulu. Sisiqalekiso sokwenyani. Ikamva lamaHlubi lisezandleni zeKumkani who is a ruthless tyrant and there is nothing we can do. Absolutely nothing… It's too late for us. We have no one left to take care of us… Yhini ukusenza iinkedama?... I will miss our parents so much Khusela… Remember when we were growing up and you would get lost in the forest and mna notata would always come looking for you? Umama would always know exactly where you are; "Fuz'ba usemlanjeni ke lo unguKhusela! Andimazi kutheni engoyiki nto nje kwelilizwe libi kangaka!"

KHUSELA:

UTata would say "Awu! Idelakufa lam madoda!" When he found me practicing my stick fighting by the river. I was dedicated to being the best stick fighter and defeating all the boys.

NOBULALI:

One day, when we were looking for you, I bumped into a beehive and the bees stung me all over my body until I ended up jumping into the river!

KHUSELA:

(laughing) Ndaphela yintsini! The look on your face was priceless. That day I was forbidden to go to the river ever again. Umama was so upset, she sent me to bed with no food that day. I was hurt by her putting the blame on me, until I saw you on the bed. Udumbile mntasekhaya. Puss from the stings dripping everywhere. You looked like hell. Ungakwazi nokushukuma. I felt your pain. Ndaziva ndizisola.

NOBULALI:

I remember you slept next to me that night. And although I appreciated the rare affection, you've always been a restless sleeper. I was in pain the whole night, but I loved having you by my side.

KHUSELA:

Umama woke me up with a slap across the face; "Uzothunuka umntanam wena sbhanxa ndin! Tshi utheni na Khusela?" (laughing)

NOBULALI:

From then onwards I hated bees. I never want to see bees ever in my life. Even when there are funerals, you know I never leave my room. Those swarms that come every time the hearse goes down, look like the epitome of death more than the actual funeral to me. I don't know nihlala njani, kukho a whole swarm of bees surrounding you. My whole body becomes paralyzed as soon as I hear that buzzing sound they make.

KHUSELA:

I don't understand why you don't just tell yourself that those are our ancestors, there's nothing they will do to you if you don't do anything to them. They never attack any of us. They only come to fetch the soul of the dead family member. And pollenate us with blessings.

NOBULALI:

I don't even want their pollen! Andifuni nokuyibona inyosi! Those things almost killed me. I will never embrace them noba kunini na!

Khusela laughs and they quickly go silent and stare at their parents' grave with sadness.

<u>SCENE 2: INTSWELA MVISISWANO</u>

KHUSELA starts singing a prayer and NOBULALI sings along.

BOTH:

Lukhangela kuwe
(Lukhangela kuwe)
Mvana yekhalvari
Ukholo lwam
Ndive ndithandaza
Susa ityala lam

Kususela namhla
Ndenz'owakho

Ndinike amandla
(Ndinike amandla)
Kwane ndzondelelo
Solufefe
Uthando lwam kuwe
Maluvuthe
Maluvuthelele
Ekubeni wena
Wandifela

Ndisacanda
Ndisacand'udada
Olwentlalo enzima
Ndikhokhele
Khanyisa (Khanyisa ubumnyama)
Sula (Sula inyembezi)
Mandingaze (Mandingaze)
(Ndimke kule ndlela)

Kwakuphela (Kwakuphelu bomi)
(Kwakuphelu bomi)
Kwakufika ukufa (Kwakufik'ukufa)
(Ndivelele)
Msindisi (Msindisi wothando)
Shenxisa (Shenxis'uloyiko)
Ndise (Ndise ezulwini)
(Ndiphunyuzwe)

Msindisi (Msindisi ngothando)
Shenxisa (Shenxis'uloyiko)
Ndize (Ndise ezulwini)
(Ndiphunyuzwe)

NOBULALI:
Sometimes… the things we took for granted when we were children, become so meaningful later on in our lives… Umama would never make it to the end of this hymn. Tears would swell up and choke her by the time sisithi “kwakufika ukufa” … Maybe she knew… You know kuthiwa you can sense xa ixesha lakho lisezofika… And at the last prayer session we had, now that I look back, I remember mama was not her usual self. She was very morose.

KHUSELA:
I remember. I asked her who it was that was causing her so much sadness, while I instructed uGundi to go fetch my sticks for me. I was ready to fight whoever it was that was causing her to be so upset. But uyamazi umama. Always a soldier. I will avenge you MaMnguni. I will avenge both you noRadebe. Ela veza'ndlebe linguZwelibanzi lizondazi kakuhle. (beat) I don't care for this royal decree Nobulali. I have made my decision. (she stands up)

NOBULALI:
What decision is this, Khusela? For you to put your life at risk? You know exactly what will happen if you choose to do this and yet you want to be a hero?

KHUSELA:

Uthini? A hero? Our parents deserve a dignified burial and no foolish coward can take that away from them. Do you know what will happen to them in the afterlife if we do not do this?

NOBULALI:
Why must you always be so reckless Khusela? Hm? Is it not enough that you almost killed me? Now you say to me, that you have decided all by yourself, to walk straight into a death trap just to get applause by the ancestors in the afterlife. What good will that do here, for us right now? What will happen to me if you die… Khusela? Do you ever stop and really pay attention to how your actions make me feel? Do you even see that I'm here… and that everything you do affects me! Ufuna ukundishiya apha noZwelibanzi? How can you even consider that? Njani? Ndibengumntu oyintoni ukushiywa nanguwe dadethu? The only person I have left?

KHUSELA:

Lali, masilale. I'm not doing this with you right now. If you cannot see why this is important then you clearly do not understand what is going on here. This is all part of a greater plan, and we cannot afford to make this about us. Can't you see? Things have changed! We're all alone now. If we do not do this, we will lose even the little we are left with. If you can't trust me with this, then that is very unfortunate. Nonetheless I will do it alone. (beat) I am not scared of dying Lali. I am scared of our people losing who we are as a nation, because of a foolish coward sitting on the throne of our ancestors. I am going to sleep. This conversation is over. (she turns over in her sleeping bag and sleeps)

NOBULALI:
(Looks at Khusela feeling annoyed. She ends up getting into her sleeping bag and sleeping.)

As they sleep, Khusela begins to dream. Drums start to play. She gets up as if being in a trance. She is moving as if being led by something with each movement. She begins to sneeze over and over again. Suddenly dust appears and rises to the air, we hear the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing. The dust makes way for two separate swarms of bees to appear, which then take the shape of her parents.

KHUSELA:
(in shock and confusion) Mama? Tata? Nini aba?

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:
Awu! Idelakufa lam madoda!

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Sondela mntanam. Ungoyiki. You've always been so brave. You should not be scared now.

KHUSELA:
Why would I be scared Ma?

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Size nendaba mntanam. There is something you must know.

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:
Kuzofuneka uvume ukufa MaRadebe!

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Isizwe samaHlubi siyafa ngelityala. Buyisa izilo. Uvume ukufa.

KHUSELA:
Izilo kudala ndizimisele ukuzibuyisa. Kodwa ke isizwe samaHlubi sakubayintoni xa ukufa kuvunywe lidelakufa?

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:
Ilifa lizobasezandleni zendlalifa yamanyani. Leyo ibhaliwe kwinkwenkwezi. She will rise and sit on the throne abuse as the true heir of this kingdom. AmaHlubi ame ngawe Ndodakazi.

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Wena Khusela sana lam, you were born to be the protector of this kingdom. Ukhusele isizwe samaHlubi. The time has come for you to make the greatest sacrifice of all. Yourself. Zwelibanzi Zulu usurped the throne of your ancestors. This is how we will defeat him. Nobulali shall reign. And our kingdom shall return to its glory. We promise you this; your death shall not be in vain. In fact, it will change everything for generations to come. In you, amaHlubi are protected. Uyandiva Khusela sana lam?

KHUSELA:
(accepting her fate) I had made the same promise, to avenge your death Mamnguni. If this is what it takes, so be it. AmaHlubi shall not die in the hands of inja enje ngoZwelibanzi Zulu. Ndyafunga!

(She wakes up from the dream and starts to cry quietly. Nobulali, hearing Khusela's quiet crying, wakes up. Khusela quickly wipes her face and starts to prepare for the ritual.)

NOBULALI:
Hawu! Dadethu? What's wrong? Ukhalelani?

KHUSELA:
Nothing is wrong. In fact, I just received the best news ever Nomdade. Our parents came to visit me in a dream. Bathi I must go ahead as I have planned.

NOBULALI:
And what exactly is it that you have planned?

KHUSELA:
Ukubuyisa izilo, Lali. It is time.

NOBULALI:
(She screams at Khusela) Why are you lying, Khusela? And you dare drag our parents into this! You have decided all of this by yourself. You have decided to abandon me and you have the nerve to say that our parents gave you the go ahead for such a ludicrous plan? You know, I always knew you were selfish. But I thought there would always be a part of you that would one day consider me. How can you accept death Khusela? Ukhetha njani ukundishiya ndikudinga dade? What breaks my heart the most is knowing that there's no way I can change your mind is there? You have decided to leave me.

KHUSELA:
Listen Lali, I am not leaving you. I am doing this for all of us. You don't have to understand now. But soon you will. In the meantime, I must prepare for this ritual. The safety of amaHlubi is at stake. We need to do whatever it takes. Our kingdom needs us now more than ever.

NOBULALI:
I've never heard anything more selfish. Go ahead and die. You never listen to me or see me anyway. Just know I will never forgive you for this.

Nobulali leaves the open grave in the front yard of the royal homestead and goes inside, leaving Khusela next to the bodies of her parents.

<u>SCENE 3: Acceptance of fate/Defiance – IMVUMAKUFA</u>

KHUSELA is speaking to the ancestors of the amaHlubi tribe. She is burning the sage plant, while applying pollen all over her arms and face. as she recites her clan names. At the same time NOBULALI hurries over to the palace where ZWELIBANZI ZULU has taken residence, in the hopes of saving her sister from his wrath. NOBULALI enters the grand throne room and ZWELIBANZI ZULU is sitting on the throne arrogantly.

ZWELIBANZI:
I've been expecting you.

ZWELIBANZI:

(He begins to recite her clan names as she walks further into the throne room towards him, in a soft bellowing tone and red spotlight.
Radebe
Bhungane
Bhungane kaNsele
Zikode, Gob'izembe
Makhulukhulu, Mehlomakhulu
Umkhulu Bhungane
NoNkulunkulu mkhulu, kodwa akangengoBhungane,
Ziyengane eziyeng'umuntu, zimyenga ngendaba
Mthimkhulu
Mashiya amahle, amade anjengawenyamazane
Mafuz'afulele njengelifu lemvula
S'goloza esimehlo abomvu esibheka umuntu kube sengathi siyamujamela
Ndlubu zamil'ebubini, ngoba zesab'ukwehlela
Ingab'emhlabeni zesabani?
Nina enindlebe zikhanya ilanga
Nina enindlebe zintle zombili
Nina bosiba olude olungakhothami endlwaneni kodwa kwezinde luyakhothama
Nina bomagawula imithi emincanane emikhulu ivele iziwele
Mahlubi amahle
Nina maHlubi anzipho zimnyama ngokuqhwayana
Mashwabadela owashwabadela inkomo kanye nezimpondo zayo
Ngelengele!

(ZWELIBANZI ZULU is on one knee.)
ZWELIBANZI:
Ngishade MaRadebe!

(KHUSELA is speaking to the ancestors, and she also recites her clan names at the same time as ZWELIBANZI. Drums are playing. She uses her warrior voice as she recites them while also in tears. The lights are pulsating on her skin under the spotlight (Blue hues). As soon as she recites the last line she waits for a beat.)

ZWELIBANZI:
Vuma MaRadebe.

(Both the sisters are in a blue spotlight.)

NOBULALI:
Ndiyavuma.

KHUSELA:
Ndiyavuma.

SCENE 4: The Transition Ritual – IZILO

It is the morning of the Royal wedding. The Royal court is abuzz as the wedding proceedings are happening. ZWELIBANZI is panting up and down and has an uneasy look. He asks around if anyone has seen his Fiancé's sister, KHUSELA.

ZWELIBANZI:

(Addressing the guards)

Uphi uKhusela?

GUARDS:

(All in a monotonous shrug)

We haven't seen her today Nkosi.

(KHUSELA is at the burial site and is reaching to get her parents' bodies down the podium they are placed on. She drags them down and begins to drag them on two pieces of cow hide towards the royal's section.)

KHUSELA:

(She performs a warrior movement sequence, in tears. She screams and falls onto her knees. She places her hands into a woven basket and then looks at them. She then starts blowing pollen around her parents' graves)

KUGQITYIWE!

(Back at palace the celebrations are at their peak. People are lining up to congratulate NOBULALI on her marriage giving her gifts. ZWELIBANZI is secretly gathering a platoon of troops to hunt KHUSELA down.)

ZWELIBANZI:

I know where exactly where to find her. To the burial grounds we go!

(KHUSELA has just finished burying her parents, she is pouring the last bits of sand over their graves. ZWELIBANZI approaches her.)

KHUSELA:

Ah! You are too late, my false king! It is done.

ZWELIBANZI:

I am not too late; I still have you to finish off before that can happen.

(ZWELIBANZI signals to one the troops to kill her.)

KHUSELA

(KHUSELA gets up slowly from her parents' graves.)

Just know that I have already won, whatever you plan to do has already failed. My people will ascend again. oRadebe will rule again! It is time!

(Guard Mthimkhulu hesitantly stabs her in the back with tears in his eyes.)

(Khusela slowly turns around)

I always knew Zwelibanzi had an inside man. Kanti oko inguwe Mthimkhulu? My parents trusted you with their lives.

(And she falls to the floor.)

The lights go to black. Suddenly there is lighting and the blue light from the lightning is all that illuminate ZWELIBANZI and the guards. There is a huge cloud of buzzing coming towards them. The buzzing gets louder as it approaches them. Zwelibanzi and the platoon are all struck down by the swarm of bees. They are all left motionless on the ground, all but one troop. Left to carry the news of the one true heir.

Scene 5- The true heir rules – ILIFA

Back at the palace, the remaining troop barges into the palace dance floor where the wedding party is still happening. Nobulali is sitting on the throne thinking pensively…

BHUNGANE:

(He falls to the floor.)

Ukumkani uwile! The false king has fallen.

NOBULALI:

What do you mean? Zwelibanzi is around here, probably near the drinking area.

BHUNGANE:

No Kumkanikazi, He led a platoon of troops to kill your sister. She completed the Izilo ritual and he saw fit to kill her but then, then…

NOBULALI:

Spit it out Bhungane!

BHUNGANE:

They… they got attached by a swarm of bees that came out of nowhere, Kumkanikazi.

Nobulali's face changes as she hears this. A tear falls down her cheek but she holds her emotions back. She begins to clank her glass in order to draw attention to herself.

NOBULALI:

A great sacrifice has taken place today, a sacrifice made by my own sister for all of us. For me. Khusela has ventured into the world of our ancestors. She will be protecting us in spirit from now on. I always blamed her for being selfish. Kanti all along, she knew… She knew what was going to happen and she still went ahead and did what was right for the future generations of amaHlubi. She has given her life to save us all from living under a false and foolish king with nothing but money and power in his mind. Camagu MaRadebe! Izilo zibuyile! Let us make our land great again so that the death of my parents and my beloved sister is not in vain.

(Bees surround her as she speaks and fill up the castle. Drums play behind her. The presence of the ancestors is palpable. It is the dawn of a new day for the village as they celebrate their new queen.)

END OF PLAY

Adapted Script of *Izilo*

Characters:

KHUSELA – The first daughter of the late king and queen of the amaHlubi tribe

NOBULALI - The second daughter of Sivuyile the late king and queen of the amaHlubi tribe

MOTHER OF KHUSELA AND NOBULALI – the late queen, Kumkanikazi Mthimkhulu

ZWELIBANZI -Usurper to the throne

SCENE 1: Grief – UKUZILA
KHUSELA and NOBULALI are sitting by their parents' grave, crying.

KHUSELA:
I have felt many kinds of pain in my life as a warrior, but ayikho eyodlula lena. I cry for umama notata, laying in front of this royal homestead, the king and queen being made a spectacle of shame. Ikumkani nekumkanikazi yamaHlubi, betrayed and murdered by their own. I cry for amaHlubi, stripped of a true king and queen. I cry for us. UZwelibanzi Zulu, yhini ukusithathela abazali bethu? I cry for the ancestors of our land. A dark cloud hangs over umhlaba wokhokho bethu and we are just supposed to sit here and accept defeat.
It's painful to face this, I cry for all, the shame, parents, the people, all, ancestors.
And we must accept?

(These are just some fooling around w script and ignore unless it's useful
I have felt many kinds of pain in my life as a warrior, but ayikho eyodlula lena. I cry for umama notata, (thrown laying here) in front of this royal homestead, (the king and queen!) made a spectacle of shame, (slaughtered like animals). Ikumkani nekumkanikazi yamaHlubi, betrayed, murdered by their (her own brother). I cry for amaHlubi, stripped of a (their king and queen. I cry for us, stripped of our parents. UZwelibanzi Zulu, yhini ukusithathela abazali bethu? Translate I cry for the ancestors of our land. (Looking up and out) A dark cloud hangs over umhlaba wokhokho bethu and we (they or he wants/ want us (are (just) supposed) to sit here and accept defeat.)

NOBULALI:

... Ukhohlakele umalume uZwelibanzi, bendicinga ebesithanda. Ebesoloko enobubele kanti he is a wolf in sheep's skin... How could he do this right under our noses? How could utata not see? How could umama with her sharp sixth sense not see that umalume is plotting a rebellion behind their back? ... I am left with so many questions... but what is the point? They're gone. Umnkile umama notata. Kushiyeke usizi lodwa... And we cannot even bury our own parents. As if it was not enough that he killed them... is his heart so cruel that he would really deprive them of a proper royal burial? How dare he? That coward.

he is a monster to have done this- how parents. could this happen-how did no one see- I just don't know- he's so cruel we can't bury them- he will forbid it- a coward.

KHUSELA:

If this is how he treats our parents in their death, kubekisela phi thina who are alive? What will become of us? Will he marry us off? I was never built for marriage. Ndilibutho lamaHlubi. I was to be the heir to my father's throne as umafungwashe, the first daughter of the Mthimkhulu royal family, ruling over amaHlubi. How can I, a princess, find myself stuck with a random old man, married off with a herd of cattle and leave my father's throne to an imposture? Isiqalekiso esingaka?

He kills them and what will he do to us- marry us- I can't do that- I won't.

NOBULALI:

And death to whoever is a fool enough to go up against the usurper, king Zwelibanzi Zulu. Sisiqalekiso sokwenyani. Ikamva lamaHlubi lisezandleni zeKumkani who is a ruthless tyrant and there is nothing we can do. Absolutely nothing... It's too late for us. We have no one left to take care of us... Yhini ukusenza iinkedama?... I will miss our parents so much Khusela... Remember when we were growing up and you would get lost in the forest and mna notata would always come looking for you? Umama would always know exactly where you are; "Fuz'ba usemlanjeni ke lo unguKhusela! Andimazi kutheni engoyiki nto nje kwelilizwe libi kangaka!"

Anyone who goes against him- will die-we must just be quiet- it's too late- oh god I miss will miss them- remember remember

KHUSELA:

UTata would say "Awu! Idelakufa lam madoda!" When he found me practicing my stick fighting by the river. I was dedicated to being the best stick fighter and defeating all the boys.

Yes, I remember.

NOBULALI:

One day, when we were looking for you, I bumped into a beehive and the bees stung me all over my body until I ended up jumping into the river!

I do too

KHUSELA:

(laughing) Ndaphela yintsini! The look on your face was priceless. That day I was forbidden to go to the river ever again. Umama was so upset, she sent me to bed with no food that day. I was hurt by her putting the blame on me, until I saw you on the bed. Udumbile mntasekhaya. Puss from the stings dripping everywhere. You looked like hell. Ungakwazi
nokushukuma. I felt your pain. Ndaziva ndizisola.

It was a happy memory now even though it was sad then- you were so hurt!

NOBULALI:

I remember you slept next to me that night. And although I appreciated the rare affection, you've always been a restless sleeper. I was in pain the whole night, but I loved having you by my side.

KHUSELA:
Umama woke me up with a slap across the face; “Uzothunuka umntanam wena sbhanxa ndin! Tshi utheni na Khusela?” (laughing)
These are still happy memories.

NOBULALI:
From then onwards I hated bees. I never want to see bees ever in my life. Even when there are funerals, you know I never leave my room. Those swarms that come every time the hearse goes down, look like the epitome of death more than the actual funeral to me. I don’t know nihlala njani, kukho a whole swarm of bees surrounding you. My whole body becomes paralyzed as soon as I hear that buzzing sound they make. Bees as our ancestors scare me.

KHUSELA:
I don’t understand why you don’t just tell yourself that those are our ancestors, there’s nothing they will do to you if you don’t do anything to them. They never attack any of us. They only come to fetch the soul of the dead family member. And pollenate us with blessings. Why, they are good- they bless us.

NOBULALI:
I don’t even want their pollen! Andifuni nokuyibona inyosi! Those things almost killed me. I will never embrace them noba kunini na! No

Khusela laughs and they quickly go silent and stare at their parents’ grave with sadness.

SCENE 2: INTSWELA MVISISWANO

KHUSELA starts singing a prayer and NOBULALI sings along.

Lukhangela kuwe (Lukhangela kuwe)
Mvana yekhalvari Ukholo lwam Ndive ndithandaza Susa ityala lam Kususela namhla Ndenz'owakho
Ndinike amandla (Ndinike amandla) Kwane ndzondelelo Solufefe
Uthando lwam kuwe Maluvuthe Maluvuthelele Ekubeni wena Wandifela
Ndisacanda
Ndisacand'udada
Olwentlalo enzima
Ndikhokhele
Khanyisa (Khanyisa ubumnyama) Sula (Sula inyembezi) Mandingaze (Mandingaze) (Ndimke kule ndlela)
Kwakuphela (Kwakuphelu bomi) (Kwakuphelu bomi)
Kwakufika ukufa (Kwakufik'ukufa) (Ndivelele)
Msindisi (Msindisi wothando) Shenxisa (Shenxis'uloyiko) Ndise (Ndise ezulwini) (Ndiphunyuzwe)
Msindisi (Msindisi ngothando) Shenxisa (Shenxis'uloyiko) Ndize (Ndise ezulwini) (Ndiphunyuzwe)

NOBULALI:
Sometimes... the things we took for granted when we were children, become so meaningful later on in our lives... Umama would never make it to the end of this hymn. Tears would swell up and choke her by the time sisithi “kwakufika ukufa” ... Maybe she knew... You know kuthiwa you can sense xa ixesha lakho lisezofika... And at the last prayer session we had, now that I look back, I remember mama was not her usual self. She was very morose. Maybe mama knew.

KHUSELA:
I remember. I asked her who it was that was causing her so much sadness, while I instructed uGundi to go fetch my sticks for me. I was ready to fight whoever it was that was causing her so much pain. I will avenge you MaMnguni. I will avenge both you noRadebe. Ela veza’ndlebe linguZwelibanzi lizondazi kakuhle. (beat) I don’t care for this royal decree Nobulali. (I have made my decision). (she stands up) WE NEED TO COME TO A DECISION I have to do something; I won’t sit here and wait for them to be eaten by birds; we must bury them - we need to come to a decision.

N: they will kill us if we do
K: Nobulali, then I will bury them, if you won’t help me- this is my decision

NOBULALI:
What decision is this, Khusela? For you to put your life at risk? PUT OUR LIVES AT RISK You know exactly what will happen if you WE choose to do this and yet you want US to be a hero?
What are you talking about, you think you’re some hero?

KHUSELA:
Uthini? A hero? Our parents deserve a dignified burial and no foolish coward can take that away from them. Do you know what will happen to them in the afterlife if we do not do this?
What do you mean? We need to do this!

NOBULALI:
Why must you always be so reckless Khusela? -NO QUESTION-Hm? Is it not enough that you almost killed me? Now you say to me, that you have decided all by yourself, to walk straight into a death trap just to get applause by the ancestors in the afterlife. What good will that do here, for us right now? What will happen to me if you die... Khusela? Do you ever stop and really pay attention to how your actions DO TO ME make me feel? Do you even see that I’m here... and WHAT YOU DO that everything you do affects me! Ufuna ukundishiya apha noZwelibanzi? How can you even consider that? Njani? Ndibengumntu oyintoni ukushiywa nanguwe dadethu? YOU ARE The only person I have left?
You’re reckless- you you have decided all alone WE MUST DO SOMETHING SO YOU’LL GET APPROVAL IN THE AFTERLIFE…WHAT WILL HAPPEN- all you do affects me- we are alone we dare not act- we only have each other.

KHUSELA:

Lali, masilale. I'm not doing this with you right now. If you cannot see why this is important then you clearly do not understand what is going on here. This is all part of a greater plan, and we cannot afford to make this about us. Can't you see? Things have changed! We're all alone now. If we do not do this, we will lose even the little we are left with. If you can't trust me with this, then that is very unfortunate. Nonetheless I will do it alone. (beat) I am not scared of dying Lali. I am scared of our people losing who we are as a nation, because of a foolish coward sitting on the throne of our ancestors. I am going to sleep. This conversation is over. (she turns over in her sleeping bag and sleeps) Wake up this is not about us but about our rights our obligations- things have changed we have to do this- I will do it alone even if you won't help me or we will lose everything- I don't want to talk about it.

NOBULALI (Looks at Khusela feeling annoyed. She ends up getting into her sleeping bag and sleeping.)

As they sleep, Khusela begins to dream. Drums start to play. She gets up as if being in a trance. She is moving as if being led by something with each movement. She begins to sneeze over and over again. Suddenly dust appears and rises to the air, we hear the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing. The dust makes way for two separate swarms of bees to appear, which then take the shape of her mother. Mother speaks in jumps and starts as if she is possessed by spirits.

KHUSELA:
(in shock and confusion) Mama? Tata? Nini aba?

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:
Awu! Idelakufa lam madoda!

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Sondela mntanam. Ungoyiki. You've always been so brave. You should not be scared now.

KHUSELA:
Why would I be scared Ma?

KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Size nendaba mntanam. There is something you must know.

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:
Kuzofuneka uvume ukufa MaRadebe!
KUMKANIKAZI MTHIMKHULU:
Isizwe samaHlubi siyafa ngelityala. Buyisa izilo. Uvume ukufa.
KHUSELA:
Izilo kudala ndizimisele ukuzibuyisa. Kodwa ke isizwe samaHlubi sakubayintoni xa ukufa kuvunywe lidelakufa?

KUMKANI MTHIMKHULU:

Ilifa lizobasezandleni zendlalifa yamanyani. Leyo ibhaliwe kwinkwenkwezi. She will rise and sit on the throne abuse as the true heir of this kingdom. AmaHlubi ame ngawe Ndodakazi.

MTHIMKHULU:
Wena Khusela sana lam, you were born to be the protector of this kingdom. Ukhusele isizwe samaHlubi. The time has come for you to make the greatest sacrifice of all. Yourself. Zwelibanzi Zulu usurped the throne of your ancestors. This is how we will defeat him. Nobulali shall reign. And our kingdom shall return to its glory. We promise you this; your death shall not be in vain. In fact, it will change everything for generations to come. In you, amaHlubi are protected. Uyandiva Khusela sana lam?

KHUSELA:
(accepting her fate) I had made the same promise, to avenge your death Mamnguni. If this is what it takes, so be it. AmaHlubi shall not die in the hands of inja enje ngoZwelibanzi Zulu. Ndyafunga!

(She wakes up from the dream and starts to cry quietly. Nobulali, hearing Khusela's quiet crying, wakes up. Khusela quickly wipes her face and starts to prepare for the ritual.)

NOBULALI:
Hawu! Dadethu? What's wrong? Ukhalelani?

KHUSELA:
Nothing is wrong. In fact, I just received the best news ever Nomdade. Our parents came to visit me in a dream. Bathi I must go ahead as I have planned.
I dreamt and it's a good sign- I must go ahead even if you won't help me- my destiny, you don't understand yet.

NOBULALI:
And what exactly is it that you have planned?
What are you going to do?

KHUSELA:
Ukubuyisa izilo, Lali. It is time.
You know…it's time.

NOBULALI:
(She screams at Khusela) Why are you lying, Khusela? And you dare drag our parents into this! You have decided all of this by yourself. You have decided to abandon me and you have the nerve to say that our parents gave you the go ahead for such a ludicrous plan? You know, I always knew you were selfish. But I thought there would always be a part of you that would one day consider me. How can you accept death Khusela? Ukhetha njani ukundishiya ndikudinga dade? What breaks my heart the most is knowing that there's no way I can change your mind is there?
Lying? Don't drag our parents into this- it's about you- you're leaving me- it's selfish.

You have decided to leave me. - I know there's nothing I can say to change your mind.

KHUSELA:
Listen Lali, I am not leaving you. I am doing this for all of us. You don't have to understand now. But soon you will. In the meantime, I must prepare for this ritual. The safety of amaHlubi is at stake. We need to do whatever it takes. Our kingdom needs us now more than ever.
I'm not really leaving I'll be with you still-you will understand I promise-

NOBULALI:
I've never heard anything more selfish. Go ahead and die. You never listen to me or see me anyway. Just know I will never forgive you for this.

Nobulali leaves the open grave in the front yard of the royal homestead and goes inside, leaving Khusela next to the bodies of her parents.

SCENE 3: Acceptance of fate/Defiance – IMVUMAKUFA

KHUSELA is speaking to the ancestors of the amaHlubi tribe. She is burning the sage plant, while applying pollen all over her arms and face. as she recites her clan names.

(At the same time, ZWELIBANZI: begins to recite NOBULALI'S clan names as she walks towards him, in a soft bellowing tone and red spotlight.)

Radebe
Bhungane
Bhungane kaNsele
Zikode, Gob'izembe
Makhulukhulu, Mehlomakhulu
Umkhulu Bhungane
NoNkulunkulu mkhulu, kodwa akangengoBhungane,
Ziyengane eziyeng'umuntu, zimyenga ngendaba Mthimkhulu
Mashiya amahle, amade anjengawenyamazane Mafuz'afulele njengelifu lemvula
S'goloza esimehlo abomvu esibheka umuntu kube sengathi siyamujamela
Ndlubu zamil'ebubini, ngoba zesab'ukwehlela Ingab'emhlabeni zesabani?
Nina enindlebe zikhanya ilanga
Nina enindlebe zintle zombili
Nina bosiba olude olungakhothami endlwaneni kodwa kwezinde luyakhothama
Nina bomagawula imithi emincanane emikhulu ivele iziwele Mahlubi amahle
Nina maHlubi anzipho zimnyama ngokuqhwayana Mashwabadela owashwabadela inkomo kanye nezimpondo zayo
Ngelengele!

(KHUSELA is speaking to the ancestors, and she also recites her clan names at the same time as ZWELIBANZI who walks towards NOBULALI standing center right. Drums are playing. She uses her warrior voice as she recites them while also in tears. The lights are pulsating on her skin under the spotlight (Blue hues). As soon as she recites the last line she waits for a beat.)

ZWELIBANZI (as he approaches Nobulali):
Vuma MaRadebe.)

(All three are in a blue spotlight.)

Ndiyavuma.
Ndiyavuma.

SCENE 4: The Transition Ritual – IZILO

(KHUSELA is at the burial site and is reaching to get her parents' bodies down the podium they are placed on. She drags them down and begins to drag them on two pieces of cow hide towards the royal's section.
She performs a warrior movement sequence, in tears. She screams and falls onto her knees. She places her hands into a woven basket and then looks at them. She then starts blowing pollen around her parents' graves)

KHUSELA:
KUGQITYIWE!

She has just finished burying her parents, she is pouring the last bits of sand over their graves. ZWELIBANZI approaches her.

KHUSELA:
Ah! You are too late, my false king! It is done.

ZWELIBANZI:
I am not too late; I still have you to finish off before that can happen.

KHUSELA
(She gets up slowly from her parents' graves.)
Just know that I have already won, whatever you plan to do has already failed. My people will s has given her life to save us all from living under a false and foolish king with nothing but money and power in his mind. Camagu maRadebe! Izilo zibuyile! Let us make our land great again so that the death of my parents and my beloved sister is not in vain.

They fight and both are killed.

<u>Scene 5- The true heir rules – ILIFA</u>

Nobulali enters as the new ruler, she stands in front of the bodies of Zwelibanzi and Khusela:

NOBULALI:

A great sacrifice has taken place today, a sacrifice made by my own sister for all of us. For me. Khusela has ventured into the world of our ancestors. She will be protecting us in spirit from now on. I always blamed her for being selfish. Kanti all along, she knew… She knew what was going to happen and she still went ahead and did what was right for the future generations of amaHlubi. She has given her life to save us all from living under a false and foolish king with nothing but money and power in his mind. Camagu maRadebe! Izilo zibuyile! Let us make our land great again so that the death of my parents and my beloved sister is not in vain. Camagu!

END OF PLAY

Appendix B: Profile of Students, University of Witwatersrand

Excerpt from University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, AIRU, Biographical Questionnaire Report: Student Background Information, 2020, pp. 11-14:

Demographic Profile of Students

The demographic profile section gives an overall view of the first-time first-year students' demographic characteristics. The section includes a description of the students' race, gender, citizenship status, special needs status, first generation status and home location.

4.1 Gender

As displayed in Figure 3 below, females make up more than half of the first-year students (57%) while males account for 43%. These results are consistent with the 2019 BQ results.



Figure 3: Student distribution by gender

Source: Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020

4.2 Race

African students continue to make up the majority of the first-year student population. African students account for 69% of the first-year students which is an increase from 66% in 2019. White students account for 14% of the students which is a 1% decrease from 2019 (Figure 4).

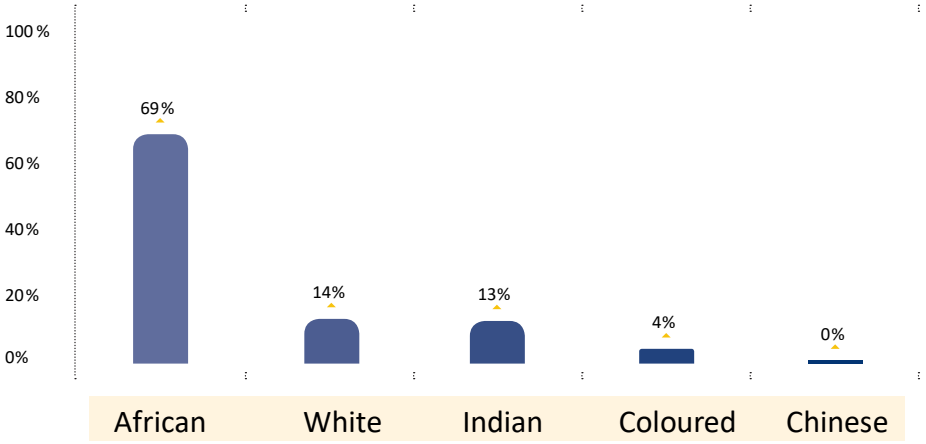


Figure 4: Student distribution by race

4.3Citizenship

Consistent with the 2019 results, Figure 5 reveals that 96% of the first-year students are South African while 4% are international students.

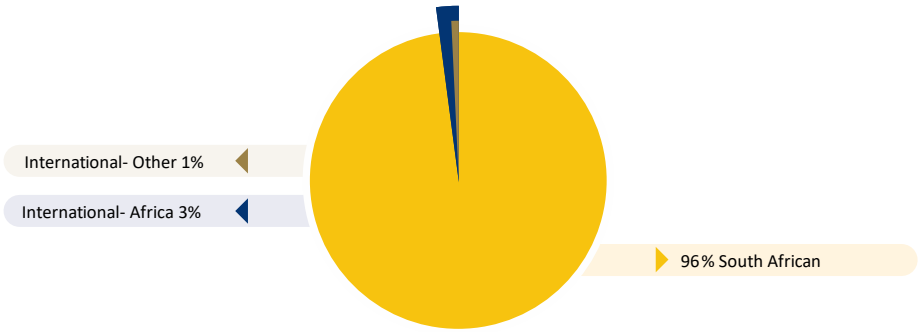


Figure 5: Student distribution by citizenship status

Source: Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020

4.4Special Needs

Consistent with the findings from 2019, the 2020 BQ reveals that 3% of the students reported to have special needs (Figure 6).

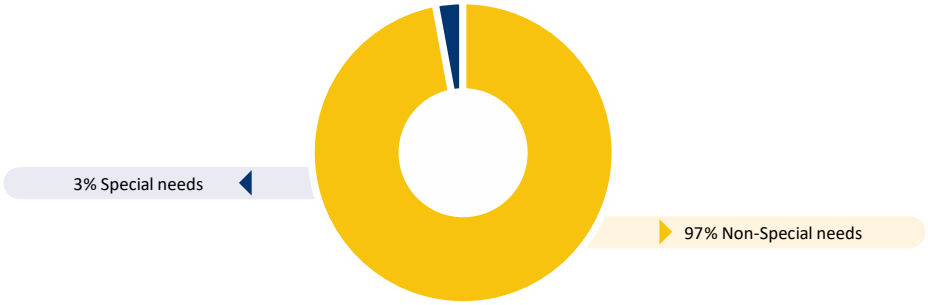


Figure 6: Student distribution by self-reported special needs status

4.5 First-Generation Status

Being a first-generation student means that you are the first in your family to attend university. These students usually have difficulty adjusting to the university environment as they do not have support from family members who have also gone through the higher education system. It is thus important to identify these students, as early as possible, in order to assist them with their transition.

The proportion of first-generation students being admitted into the university has been declining annually since 2016. The 2020 BQ shows that 37% of the students are first generation and this is a significant decline from 43% which was recorded in 2019.

Source: Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020



Figure 7: Student distribution by First-Generation status

Source: Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020

4.6 Family Members with Tertiary Education

The non-first-generation students reported on their family members who had gone through tertiary education. The results show that there are more mothers (29%) than fathers (27%) who had been to tertiary and that there were also more sisters (20%) than brothers (15%) who had been through tertiary education (Figure 8).

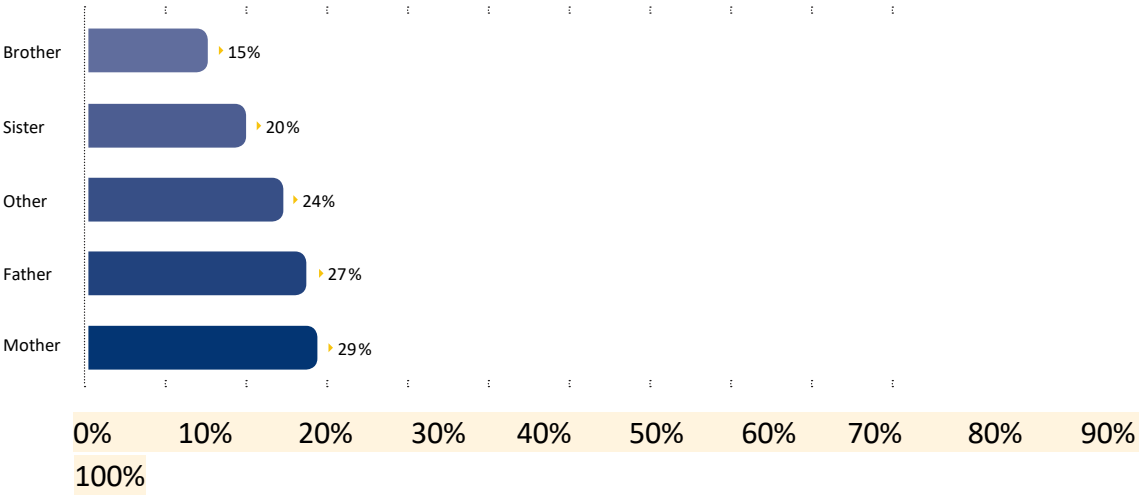


Figure 8: Distribution of family member with tertiary education

Source: Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020

4.7 Home Location

A large proportion of the first-year students come from homes located in the suburbs (40%) followed by the township (30%). Informal settlements and farms account for the lowest proportion with 2% and 1%, respectively (Figure 9).

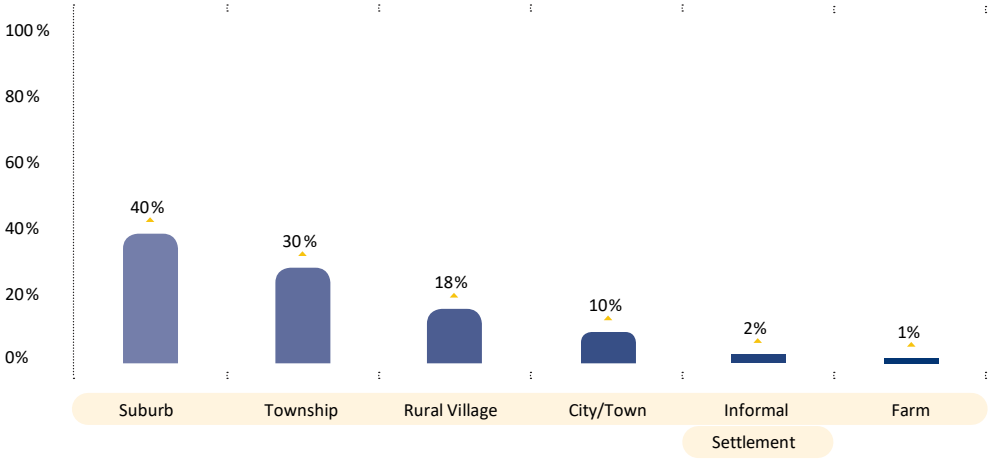


Figure 9: Student distribution by home location

(Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, 2020, pp.11-14).