

**Body of Knowledge: Interrogating Physical
Intelligence and the translation of memory into
motion in *Coming To***

Athena Fatseas

A Research Report submitted towards a MADA by Dissertation

23 February 2009

ABSTRACT

Framed by the experiences of the creation process of *Coming To*, this study aims to articulate the integral role of the performer's personal archive within Physical Theatre practice. As such it investigates the notion of Physical Intelligence and its role in the engagement of the performer's experiences and history within improvisational processes.

This investigation constructs a theoretical frame that allows for a reformulation of the understanding of the mind - body relationship. With reference to the areas of phenomenology, somatics and somatic body work this research argues for an integrated body-mind that recasts 'thought' and 'memory' as embodied processes. It interrogates the notion of the 'body as archive' by exploring the bodily roots of memory, examining the central role of Physical Intelligence in the way memory is inscribed into the body-mind.

It sutures this body-mind integration perspective with a constructionist perspective to explore the ways in which memory, or experience, is layered in and manifest through the body in complex ways. Weaving together the scholarly and experiential voice, the study explores the way in which Physical Theatre processes rely on and harness the performer's Physical Intelligence and in so doing inherently enable the 'excavation' of personal archives.

Through an analysis of the multiple layers of embodied inscription in *Coming To* and their relationship to 'technique', the research makes explicit the principles that implicitly underscore the creation of Physical Theatre works and reveals the extent to which personal archives determine the unfolding of such devised work.

DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts (Dramatic Arts) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before in other degree or examination in any other university.

Athena Fatseas

23 February 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Warren Nebe, for his guidance, encouragement and support during the process of this degree.

Thanks also to Jay Pather for his supervision of *Coming To*. His insightful mentorship of the creative process assisted me in mapping the area of investigation that drives this research.

My thanks go also to my parents for the interest and support they have shown in the writing of this research.

My deepest thanks go to my partner, Ashleigh Harris, for her untiring support and advice throughout this process, for her generous and incisive insights and for all the containing over-coffee-discussions. But most of all, for creating the space for me to complete this degree.

CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Declaration.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Contents.....	v
A note on terminology and key words.....	viii

INTRODUCTION

<u>Anatomy of the research</u>	1
Methodology.....	7
Chapter Breakdown.....	11
<u>Anatomy of a Creator-Researcher</u>	12
Grounding in Physical Theatre.....	12
Physical Theatre as a dialogue of Thinking Bodies.....	19
Grounding in Scholarship.....	22

CHAPTER ONE: TOWARDS A THINKING BODY

<u>Physical Theatre and the Mind/Body Dilemma</u>	26
<u>Reconfiguring body/mind/body-mind/mind-body</u>	31
Phenomenology and the <i>Lived Body</i>	31
Somatics and the <i>soma</i>	33
Somatic Bodywork: BMC approach.....	34
<u>Towards Physical Intelligence</u>	36
Perception.....	39
Thinking in Motion.....	43

CHAPTER TWO: THE BODY AS ARCHIVE

<u>Memory: Bodily Roots</u>	47
<u>Inscribing the Archive</u>	52
<u>Moving the archive</u>	55

CHAPTER THREE: PHYSICAL THEATRE: EXCAVATING THE ARCHIVE

.....	60
<u>Physical Theatre: Recasting improvisation – recasting training</u>	63
<u>Training</u>	64
Heightened Awareness: <i>The feeling body</i>	65
Holistic perception.....	67
Integration.....	69
Agency.....	71
Words of caution.....	72
<u>Improvisation</u>	74

CHAPTER FOUR: COMING TO

.....	79
<u>Approach and stylistic choices</u>	79
<u>Coming To: Intention, context and thematic concerns</u>	81
<i>Anatomical Cartography</i>	83
<u>Plotting the Journey</u>	84
Preparation.....	84
<u>The Excavations: tools and layers</u>	88
Structured and Unstructured Improvisations.....	89

Collaborative Improvisations.....	92
The cine trigger.....	96
<u>The Presence of the Archive.....</u>	99
Kneading / Needing.....	100
Analysing the 'paradox of kneading / needing'	107
The Body written and The Body writing.....	108
The illusionary-fixed point: technique and the archive	113
Locking.....	117
CONCLUSION.....	122
REFERENCES.....	128
APPENDIX A.....	135

A Note on Terminology and Key words:

Please note that a definition of key concepts and key phrases appears in alphabetical order, as Appendix A, at the end of this Research Report. This list is not provided in the Introduction since a large part of the argument deals with developing and contesting many of these terms. A closed definition at the outset would foreclose the nuanced shifts in understanding that transpire through the writing process. The definitions contained within Appendix A capture my understanding of these terms as they stand at the end of this research process.