

Abstract

This thesis draws upon Performance as Research (used interchangeably here with Practice as Research, or PaR), theoretical physics, and body studies, in order to propose a series of practices that transform the molar view of the body within performer training to one that lies beyond separations and fixities. The work examines the relationship between research and performer practice such that the distinctions between the two are blurred and reconfigured. By proposing a system of practice called ReTransLiminality, I seek to extend perspectives on the body as an ongoing process of research.

The work aims to illustrate how engaging in practices produces knowledges that can be then held by theoretical frameworks. The primary focus of the work is upon the practices laid out throughout the document. By engaging in these practices, the reader is introduced to ways in which particular acts produce hunches that can then be solidified through further theoretical investigation.

The project is built in such a way that it is intended to destabilise and contradict traditional research models, which are often relayed through theoretical explorations as text. The theories that are explored through text are here in so far as they emerge as containers or holding spaces for the insights that arise through practice. The practices themselves are the research, the theoretical work that comes to frame them is gathered to account for the knowledge that is transmitted in practice. There is a sense here of practice as text, practice as theory – such that how we understand text moves towards an embodied reading – perhaps hinting towards the ways we may begin to view practices themselves as kinds of text.

By exploring performer training as an embodied research, knowledge as a discursive-material engagement, and the body as a process of differential intelligibility, the work outlines a potential view towards performer training that undoes binary conceptions surrounding the body of the performer. Distinctions between mind and body, inside and outside, material and immaterial, are undone as I expand upon the body in terms of its action – its doing rather than being.

By introducing the concept of forming as a means to understand knowledge as neither predetermined or fixed, I expand upon the body and its practices, techniques and artifacts as equally formed rather than given.

The concept of agential cutting emerges as a means to better understand the processes whereby the performer becomes more attuned to, and aware of, their experiences – by accounting for the ways in which we differentiate parts of our process from others.

The work comes out of my practice as a performer, teacher and researcher, where my focus has been upon training actors. Through my practice I have developed particular forms or exercises that are included here as an ongoing (differential) embodiment of research. These practices emerged during my process of research following the hunch that my sense of my body was beyond the constraints of the skin, as well as my view that my life is an ongoing act of research. My previous perspectives around the body had been clouded by a splitting between mind and body, brain and body, and internal and external. Through the practice what emerged was a view towards a body in process, in becoming.

In summary, the thesis explores the relationship between research, bodies and becoming, through a series of practices whereby the performer is trained to undo and establish limitations in ways that may develop their capacity to produce the phenomena that are embodied in their performances and practices.