

**“SPEAKE, BREATHE, DISCUSSE”: TOWARDS A CRITICAL
BREATH PEDAGOGY FOR SPEAKING SHAKESPEARE**

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to establish a foundation for a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. It examines the practical implications of applying ideas of breath training for speaking Shakespeare rooted in British voice training in a university context. In addition to the drawing on literature and my own pedagogic practice, the methods used are interviews with voice coaches, and observation of a series of workshops as carried out by the researcher. The workshop series, which was entitled ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’, explored the themes and ideas that emerged from the interviews and wider voice studies and practice. In doing so, this research explores the understanding and centrality of breath and breath training to speaking Shakespeare.

More specifically, this PhD thesis performs four key things:

- It examines the significance of, and historical perspectives on, breath within actor training for speaking Shakespeare.
- It makes the case for reframing breath training as a critical pedagogy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare.
- It positions breath training as an inclusive learning strategy for speaking Shakespeare.
- Finally, it explores how a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare might fit into/work alongside existing pedagogies for speaking Shakespeare.

This thesis builds on an existing discourse around breath training for acting and performance, as exemplified and extended by the contributors to *Breath In Action: The Art of Breath in Vocal and Holistic Practice* (Boston & Cook, 2009). Despite the current presence of breath work in actor training programmes there lacks a comprehensive study regarding the

relationship between the pedagogy that is born from training the breath and the act of speaking Shakespeare. There also lacks a discussion of the place of criticality within the pedagogy. This thesis seeks to address these gaps in the scholarship.

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Declaration

I certify that all material in this thesis, unless otherwise identified or referenced, is my original work.

None of the material has been submitted for the award of a degree to this or any other University.

CHAPTER ONE – Research Context, Questions, and Narrative: An Introduction

This research is born from a desire to address the lack of a comprehensive study regarding the relationship between breath training and the act of speaking Shakespeare.

In using the terms ‘critical’ and ‘pedagogy’ within the title of this thesis, this research takes breath training, and strategies in speaking Shakespeare, beyond skill and knowledge acquisition to a place where students are invited to question their training through criticality. This research draws on Henry Giroux’s *On Critical Pedagogy* (2011), discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, in its advocacy for students to approach breath training and speaking Shakespeare according to their own principles and desires. For Giroux critical pedagogy

reject[s] the mainstream assumption that treat[s] pedagogy simply as a set of strategies and skills to use in order to teach prescribed subject matter. Critical pedagogy is not about an a priori method that simply can be applied regardless the context. It is the outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources (2011, p.4).

This research applies Giroux’s definition of ‘critical’ here, as it relates to the ‘specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources’ (2011, p.4) to the act of breath training for speaking Shakespeare. Therefore, the phrase a ‘critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’ indicates a learning space that goes beyond skill acquisition of breath dynamic when speaking, or preparing to speak, Shakespeare. It signifies a resistance of pedagogies where students have practices handed down from masters (either directly or via a trainer versed in a master’s practice) without question or scrutiny on the part of the student.

Factors that span across the realms of criticality and pedagogy, including reflective practice and dialogic modes of teaching and learning, are explored in order to work towards a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare that is student-centred and democratic.

A by-product of the exploration of criticality, in the context of this research, has been its relation to the concept of inclusivity, which is explored in Chapter Six of this thesis. In the context of actor training for dyslexic students, Deborah Leveroy advocates a social model of inclusive practice, whereby the lived experience of the learner is ‘at the heart of curriculum design’ (2013, p.214). For the pedagogy this research proposes, the function of criticality in bringing each student’s lived experience and utilising such as a lens to scrutinise practice (e.g., voice exercises) and material (e.g., Shakespeare’s text) as provided by the trainer, is found to be an important inclusive practice within the breath training context.

At its core, this thesis opens a dialogue between discourses within voice studies, actor training, Shakespeare studies, and wider fields of epistemology and pedagogy. The central aim of this thesis is to propose a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. In so doing, this PhD thesis performs four key things:

- It examines the significance of, and historical perspectives on, breath within actor training for speaking Shakespeare;
- It makes the case for reframing breath training as a critical pedagogy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare;
- It positions breath training as an inclusive learning strategy for speaking Shakespeare;
- Finally, it explores how a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare might fit into/work alongside existing pedagogies for speaking Shakespeare.

The main title of this thesis ‘Speake, Breathe, Discusse’¹ is taken from act four, scene five of William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), and refers to the instruction given to Peter Simple by the host of The Garter Inn demanding an expedient explanation regarding the nature of his visit. The monosyllabic order, and the conditions around it, for Simple to be ‘breefe, short, quicke, snap’² are in ironic contrast to the host’s own loquaciousness within the play. The host here is asking Simple to give voice to his intention, give words to his thought, and give life to those words with breath. While, admittedly, this thesis requires a longer articulation than that perhaps wished for by the host of The Garter Inn, the writing here aims to espouse the dialogic mode that he is promoting and centres the discussion on the themes that his instruction evokes: speech through voice, breath in action, and criticality through discussion. All the while this thesis attempts not to be like the host himself in being overly verbose in its account.

What follows, first, in this chapter is a summary of the key sources, practices, and concepts that this thesis is predicated on. The rest of the introduction to this thesis is broken up into two sections: ‘Research Topic and Research Questions’ and ‘Outline of the Thesis’.

The first section starts by providing the research context in which the current writing is situated; here the research is positioned within its primary contexts and fields: voice studies and practice, actor training, writing on speaking Shakespeare, and pedagogy. It then provides rationale within the contexts of breath, Shakespeare, and pedagogy. Lastly, context from the perspective of the researcher/pedagogue is provided.

¹ From Act Four, Scene Five of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* – using the First Folio spelling (1623).

² As above.

The second section gives an outline of the thesis as a whole. I then provide a roadmap of the chapters with rationale for their content and their structure.

Antecedents to This Research: Key Sources, Practices, and Concepts

Chapter Two of this thesis surveys the literature, and provides a historical overview of practices, from the relevant fields that inform this research. However, what follows here is a summary of key sources, practices, and concepts, which this research is predicated on, from fields including voice studies, actor training, performance of Shakespeare’s text, and pedagogy.

○ **The ‘holy-trinity’ of Voice Training: Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg**

Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg, who Sarah Werner describes as the ‘holy-trinity’ of voice training (1996, p.249), all feature as prominent figures throughout this thesis in their relation to voice practice and writing. McAllister-Viel draws connections between the three³ and writes of the impact they have had on this pedagogic area:

- All three began their writings on practice, just as Alexander began his writing [...]
- [...] bad ‘habits’ were physically realized as excessive muscular contraction, or unnecessary ‘tension’, inhibiting the process of vocalization.
- [...] all three practitioners touch the student’s body in a way similar to Alexander’s use of touch as a part of ‘directing awareness’.
- Once the students became aware of th[eir own] ‘tension’, the three trainers used their Voice exercises to ‘release’ the muscular contraction, in part by using adaptations of Alexander’s process: first, inhibiting the bad ‘habit’ through a process of ‘introspection and analysis’, then substituting a series of instructions called the ‘orders’ which direct the body to perform ‘new and correct’ habits
- One way the body/voice released this ‘tension’ was through a more efficient skeletal/muscular relationship, via Alexander–based spinal alignment practice.
- The three trainers also designed Voice exercises to help ‘recondition’ the student’s body/voice, relearning how to function in efficient ways, similar to Alexander’s ‘reeducation’ process.

³ Please note, McAllister-Viel (2007, p.101) provides a comprehensive list of connections, which is not quoted in full here.

- All three Voice practitioners called this training approach a ‘freeing’ process, similar to the way Alexander described his training as developing a ‘freedom’ in performance.
- All three turned away from the 1950s ‘voice beautiful’ school of training which relied on mimetic training practices toward a more ‘individual’ approach, like Alexander’s rejection of mimetic training traditions in his day in order to develop the student’s ‘own characteristics’ and ‘individual manner’ (2007, p.101).

The final point above in McAllister-Viel’s analysis of the connections between Alexander and the work of Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg refers to a pivotal moment in voice practice in the twentieth century. The turn away from ‘voice beautiful’ towards individuality is also a turn from aesthetic consideration of voice to a practice that has breath training at its heart. Jacqueline Martin locates this moment of change in the 1950s. She pinpoints ‘enormous changes [in voice and speech training], when the theatre changed so radically in Britain with John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956)’ (1991, p.171). She contends that

Suddenly and quite fundamentally, the whole question of accents and social classes disappeared and with it the need for an upper-class ‘beautiful voice’, according to Cicely Berry, who admitted changing her approach to the demands which the new theatre made, where the emphasis was placed on “what” was said rather than how it was said (1991, p.171).

Martin tells us that Berry and Linklater responded to this turn in different ways. She articulates Berry’s point of departure in training actors to speak Shakespeare as the text, ‘whereby the actor is encouraged to involve himself actively in the structure of the thought at the moment of communication’ (1991, p.178). Her approach is ‘based upon a thorough understanding of the text[:] the meaning should inform the sound’ (1991, p.172). In her book *Voice and the Actor* Berry explains

The vocal transformation of yourself into another character must come from the words and rhythms of the writing; if this leads you into a different way of speaking that is fair, providing no tension comes from it (1973, p.32).

Martin compares this approach to Linklater, who, she explains, begins from an approach that ‘is based on the organic functioning of the voice, which, when liberated, receives its impulses from the

senses and consequently informs the text. The words, or what is said, are regarded as a result of what is felt’ (Martin, 1991, p.178). Where Martin connects the two is that both are seeking to achieve ‘some sort of integrated method’ (Martin, 1991, p.178). This PhD research considers both approaches to be viable depending on desires and needs of the actor being trained. Both, in relation to their methods of training actors for speaking classical text including Shakespeare, refer to rhythms within the voice and text – both approaches see breath work as fundamental to their practice, in releasing the rhythm inherent in voice and text, and in realising the integrated method of training actors to speak Shakespeare.

David Carey describes the moment of change Martin writes about in similar terms; extending this he states

In the last 50 years, a more natural, less prescriptive approach to breathing has developed. [...] – it has [...] embraced influences from bodywork practice such as Alexander Technique as well as Eastern meditative traditions and martial arts training in order to create a system which is more integrated with the body’s functioning as a whole (Carey, 2009, p.188).

Carey tells us that these ideas have evolved through Berry, Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg. Rodenburg’s writing indicates a middle ground between Berry and Linklater. In her book *Speaking Shakespeare*, Rodenburg opens her chapter on breath with four aims:

- To have a free, flexible and powerful breath.
- To have a breath system that will respond to any length of thought, passionate feeling, or epic space.
- To have a breath system that moves easily through the body without locks and can change rhythm and pace effortlessly.
- To have a breath system that can support a full range in the voice, change character and recover quickly and silently (2002, p.35).

Rodenburg’s connection of thought and breath evokes Berry’s approach rooted in text; however, like Linklater, Rodenburg connects the act of breathing to character when she states that ‘[e]very human being breathes differently and Shakespeare writes each character with a different rhythm of breath that changes as they change’ (2002, p.xii). For Rodenburg, these considerations that an actor needs to make are not unique to speaking Shakespeare, but they are part of ‘the basic tools even to start work on Shakespeare’ (2002, p.xii).

Extending the thinking above, this PhD contends that a viable starting point in vocal training with reference to speaking Shakespeare, which connects these approaches, is the consideration of breath in training as a mode of integrating voice, body, and text. This study argues that the ability of breath training to account for the inherent rhythms and energies within voice, body, and text makes it well placed to underpin pedagogy relating to training actors in speaking Shakespeare’s text.

Chapter Two surveys in more detail how the ‘holy-trinity’ of voice training deal with breath and their thoughts on how it relates to speaking Shakespeare.

- **Further important sources within voice studies**

In addition to voice manuals written by various practitioners, including Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg, this research turns to theoretical, philosophical, and pedagogic perspectives on the voice and voice training. Jane Boston’s *Voice* (2018) proves essential in framing voice in disparate contexts ranging from assessments of the theatre voice manual, in relation to both its general function within the voice training of an actor, and its reference to ‘voice pedagogues’, to accounting for the multiple and simultaneous locations of voice.

Other important resources include the academic journals: *Voice and Speech Review* (ed. Rockford Sansom) and the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies* (eds. Macpherson and Thomaidis), both of which have served as a contemporary grounding to situate this research within the context of voice studies.

Konstantinos Thomaidis and Ben Macpherson, in addition to editing the latter journal mentioned above, collaborated in drawing together contemporary perspectives in order to locate and define voice studies in their edited collection of essays entitled *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance, and Experience* (2015).

All of the above sources are instrumental in situating this research within the discourse of voice studies and voice practice, as well as marking its place within breath studies as a field of study in its own right.

- **Breath studies**

Jane Boston and Rena Cook’s edited collection of essays and descriptions of practice of breath training as it relates to live performance, *Breath in Action* (2009) is an instrumental source for this research. Written from various perspectives of vocal and holistic practice, the edition gives a foundation of theory and practice relating to breath as it pertains to training the voice and the idea of breathing ‘better’ in everyday life. The chapters from Boston and David Carey are of particular import to this PhD study, due to their relation to verse speaking and responsive breath systems respectively.

Another key source in relation to breathing and the consideration of breath within actor training is Sreenath Nair’s comprehensive study of how prominent figures in nineteenth and twentieth century actor training dealt with the consideration of breath in their practice. His *Restoration of Breath* (2007)

surveys the philosophical basis for perspectives on breath as it relates to performance and actor training.

Both these books identified, at the time they were written, breath as an under-researched and under-theorised area in the context of actor training and are successful in forming a foundation for this research in relation to breath studies. Studies that have followed further strengthen that foundation – examples include philosophical perspectives on air (from the body) and our communal environment (Sloterdijk, 2009); control of air (Connor, 2010); air as it relates to nature and culture (Adey, 2014). Breath and culture is also examined in relation to various media (e.g. cinema – Quinlivan, 2014; literature – Heine, 2021). Work has also been done analyse breath within critical race studies (Braun, 2021). Feminist readings of breath have also been carried out (Cavarero, 2002; Irigaray, 1999; Gorska, 2016). Of particular relevance to this study is Sarah Weston’s work assessing Linklater and Rodenburg from a feminist perspective. In her work with young women across the north of England Weston ‘explore[s] the connection between engaging in voice training and the young women’s own conception of their political voice’ including breath (2019, p.37). In her PhD thesis, Weston locates an intersection where voice, breath, body, text, performance and individual ‘uniqueness’ are brought to the fore (2018, p. 30); this precise intersection is a useful departure point for a critical pedagogy to emerge in relation to breath and speaking Shakespeare.

- **Freire, Giroux, and Boal: Framing Critical Pedagogy**

The philosophies and writings of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Augusto Boal prove instrumental for providing a framework of pedagogy that is democratic and puts criticality at the heart of teaching and learning.

Freire’s seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) introduces ideas around democratisation of the pedagogic space and conscientisation leading to self-awareness and self-determination on the part of the student, that this research utilises in the context of the pedagogy it proposes: a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare.

Giroux provides a framework for criticality on the part of the student within teaching and learning, which this study extends to its resultant model of training actors for speaking Shakespeare. Giroux’s framing of education as an act of intervention is utilised through Boal’s model of forum theatre.

All three hold the individuality of the student (or in Boal’s model – the participant) as the primarily important aspect within their respective pedagogies and philosophies on pedagogy. The concepts here are applied within this research through exploration of a student-centred model of pedagogy as it pertains to breath training for speaking Shakespeare.

Throughout this thesis as well as in the title, the term ‘critical pedagogy’ is utilised, often in reference to, and to draw on, the work of Freire, Giroux, and Boal. Joe Kincheloe tells us that ‘proponents of critical pedagogy understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces’ (2008, p.2). This study extends this explication to actor training and draws on Kincheloe to help define the role of the trainer in the context of this research.

He states that teachers of critical pedagogies

must understand not only a wide body of subject matter but the political structure of the school. They must also possess a wide range of education in culture: TV, radio, popular music, movies, the Internet, youth subcultures, and so on; alternative bodies of knowledge produced by marginalized or low-status groups; the ways power operates to construct identities and oppress particular groups; the modus operandi of the ways social regulation operates; the complex processes of racism, gender bias, cultural bias, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and so on; the cultural experiences of students; diverse teaching styles; the forces that shape the curriculum; the often conflicting purposes of education; and much more (Kincheloe, 2008, pp.2-3).

In this respect the role of the trainer becomes extended beyond traditional master-student paradigms of actor training pedagogies, rather take criticality and the act of listening (in everyday life as well as to the students they train) and keeping up to date with multiple, and ever evolving, as many contemporary contexts as possible.

Central to the pedagogy that I draw upon for this research is what Giroux’s posits as characteristic of critical pedagogy when he states that

critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critically-engaged citizens; it provides a sphere the unconditional freedom to question and assert one’s own convictions is made central to the purpose of public⁴ schooling and higher education (2013, p.157).

It is important for this research that a critical breath pedagogy adopts the Kincheloe call for the extended role of the trainer in order to accommodate Giroux’s notions of critical pedagogy as an open in the terms outlined in his position above. In other words, a trainer must be willing to be an ever-learning, ever-developing practitioner to engage with and meet the contemporary contexts and students they encounter.

○ **Acting and Speaking Shakespeare**

As Wesley Van Tassel (2010, p.1) suggests, the topic of acting Shakespeare is a vast area with many contributions from researchers, practitioners, scholars, and theorists alike. However, one significantly neglected area is that of breath in speaking and acting Shakespeare. This has meant that the literature survey conducted in Chapter Two of this thesis on acting and speaking Shakespeare serves more to highlight the gap in writing that this PhD helps to fill, than presenting specific key sources. Rather it is the aforementioned voice pedagogues in their references to speaking classic text, including Shakespeare that provide the firmest grounding for this research to begin. There is a

⁴ Please note that ‘public schooling’ in the context Giroux is discussing i.e. in the North American context of the early twenty first century, is distinct from British definitions of public school; in the former public schooling means state funded, whereas in the latter it means fee paying.

notable exception to this however, which is Patsy Rodenburg’s *Speaking Shakespeare* (2002) – where she offers an entire chapter on breath. This proves to be a key source within the literature review and in informing the workshop activity as described in Chapter Five.

- **A note on the use of the term ‘trainer’**

The term trainer is used throughout this thesis, as opposed to other potential synonyms such as educator or voice coach – apart from specific contexts where the use of the other was unavoidable. The reason for this is to situate this research within the field of actor training. It is not to say that it does not enter into other realms of scholarship; however, in locating the study in the actor training arena of study, I bring the themes this PhD highlights further into the spotlight of the field – particular its engagement with the concepts of criticality, democratisation and conscientisation.

Research Topic and Research Questions

In this section the discussion is placed into two subsections: ‘Research Context and Rationale’, which explores breath, Shakespeare, and pedagogy as research areas, and ‘Researcher/Pedagogue context’, which provides a personal journey of how this research came about.

- **Research Context and Rationale**

This research is born from a desire to address the lack of a comprehensive study regarding the relationship between breath training and the act of speaking Shakespeare. There also lacks a discussion of the place of criticality within the pedagogy. Therefore, this doctoral study establishes a foundation for a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare, and by virtue frames breath training as an inclusive learning strategy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare. As such, this research engages with key scholarly discourses such as Shakespeare in performance, actor training and voice studies, and the consideration of breath in those contexts. This research also

contributes to wider discussions of pedagogy, and inclusivity within higher education and training practices.

Breath as a Research Subject Area

Jane Boston and Rena Cook open their introduction to their edition *Breath in Action* with the phrase ‘Breath is Life’ (2009, p.13, their emphasis). Sreenath Nair starts his *Restoration of Breath* echoing a similar sentiment: ‘breath is the flow of air between life and death’ (2007, p.7). Surveying the literature more widely, we can see the centrality of breath to human existence and expression at the forefront of books, chapters, and articles dedicated to breath in its disparate contexts, usually in the introduction, and often in the first line. For example, in *Neurology of Breathing* the authors begin with the position that ‘Breathing is essential to life’ (Bolton et al., 2004, p.3); in Patsy Rodenburg’s *The Second Circle*, her chapter on breath begins ‘All human energy is breath’ (2008, p.56).

Canons of voice studies and voice practice in relation to live theatre performance have sought to, as Catherine Fitzmaurice calls it, ‘demystify the process’ of breathing for actors/students, dislodging it somewhat from its ‘spiritual and transformative’ connotations moving towards a more tangible pragmatism ‘whereby presence and power may be achieved’ (Fitzmaurice, 1997, p.247). Jacqueline Martin suggests that the consideration of breathing for performance is not a new phenomenon; she tells us that breathing in relation to ‘effective speaking’ was ‘recognized by the Greeks and Romans of antiquity’ (1991, p.37). Breathing for performance has also pervaded the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries within actor training and pedagogies in Europe and North America (Carnicke, 2009; Nair, 2007; Boston, 2018, p.114).

A key source in relation to actor training is Alison Hodge’s comprehensive study of these European and North American practices within her book entitled *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2010). She suggests that ‘[a]ctor training in Europe and North America is a phenomenon of the twentieth century’ (2010, p.1) and therefore focuses a large portion of her study to actor training practitioners from these locations. In her volume, Hodge has edited a series of essays that examine influences on actor training from Eastern European theatre practitioners such as Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938), Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999), Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), to North American teachers Lee Strasberg (1901–1982), Stella Adler (1901–1992), and Sanford Meisner (1905–1997) as well as British directors Joan Littlewood (1914–2002) and Peter Brook (b. 1925). In Hodge’s volume on actor training breathing is given focus in just one chapter: John Rudlin’s essay on the work of actor training and practitioner Jacques Copeau⁵.

Formal voice training for actors in Britain has a similar timeline to that of Western actor training, starting in 1906 with Elsie Fogerty’s (1865–1945) foundation of The Central School of Speech-Training and Dramatic Art, as it was then (now The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), with Frank Benson (Susi, 2006, p.17). According to Boston, ‘Fogerty’s impact on the development of voice training in twentieth century theatre in the UK [...] cannot be overstated’ (2018, p.120). Boston tells us that, ‘[Fogerty] not only championed voice at the level of actor training, but also enhanced its position as a discrete subject at the highest levels of theatre and educational leadership’ (2018, p.120).

The use of Shakespeare’s text to train actors’ voices has long been an established practice within the context of British traditions of actor training (Whitfield, 2015, p.11). In her volume *The Speaking of*

⁵ For a more comprehensive study of how these practitioners and others deal with breath and breathing within actor training one can read Sreenath Nair’s *The Restoration of Breath* (2007).

English Verse (1929), Fogerty puts forward her veneration of poetry as an art form: ‘The arts of song and of speech owe less homage than any arts to the need for material wealth, they touch the most human, and therefore the most divine, of our capabilities’ (1929, p.241). Fogerty ‘regards Shakespeare a “primary” poet’ and as ‘*the* exemplary verse dramatist’ (Boston, 2018, p.125, her emphasis). Boston continues advising that

Fogerty holds the belief that an encounter with Shakespeare’s work, particularly his verse, will effect something transformational for both speaker and audience. [...] The attention paid to the characteristics of verse over prose also alerts the actors to a set of expectations in relation to the delivery of vocalized sound in Shakespeare (2018, pp.125–126).

Here Boston highlights the connection Fogerty is making between Shakespeare’s text and the vocal delivery in speaking it. When one considers Fogerty’s thoughts on what the four key pillars of voice are – ‘breath; note; tone; vowel resonance’ (1929, p.108) – we start to see how breath becomes central to the practice of speaking Shakespeare, and other classical and heightened forms of playtext. Further to this, Fogerty also highlights the central role of breath within voice training practice when she states that ‘the foundation of all good voice-training lies in the management of the respiratory forces’ (1929, p.108).

Though Fogerty wrote this in 1929, nearly a century later Boston still had cause to reflect on the gap connected to a wider hole in academic research; in her chapter on ‘Breathing the Verse’, she suggests that more theory on breath in actor training is needed despite the location of breath in the practice (2009, pp.199–214).

Fogerty’s writings, teaching and legacy have influenced the work of key voice coaches whose practice started in earnest in the latter half of the twentieth century, many of whom hold breath in a privileged place in their writing and practice. During her leadership at Central School of Speech-

Training and Dramatic Art (henceforth written as Central), she led a team which included Gwyneth Thurnburn (1899–1993), like Fogerty, a proponent of breath training as fundamental to the education of actors relating to voice. Having been taught in voice by Fogerty and William Aiken (1857–1939; pioneered teaching vocal anatomy to acting students), Thurnburn, in turn, became a teacher of, and had significant influence on, Cicely Berry (1926–2018).

‘Arguably the most famous voice teacher in the world’ (Susi, 2006, p.105), Berry studied, and taught at Central for over twenty years before becoming Head of Voice at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), and author of many books on voice. In writing about the importance of breath to the actor she states

breath is fundamental on two levels. Firstly because [...] by taking the breath down to your centre the whole chest will contribute to the sound and make it fuller, richer and more expansive. But also because [...] if you take time to breathe you actually feel your physical weight as a person, you become calmer and you take time to receive and think – it therefore makes you more confident (Berry, 2008, p.34–35).

Another key figure in voice teaching in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is Kristin Linklater (1936-2020). Linklater’s practice was defined by her relationship with Iris Warren, one time teacher at Central, who she describes as having an ear for the ‘sound of truth in the actor’s voices’ (Linklater, 2006, p.6). Like Berry, she discusses the important role breath has to performance stating

You cannot live without breathing – without air. Your breath is the source of your life as well as the source of your vocal sound. Your breathing habits have developed as you developed into the character you are now. The profound goal of a serious actor is to transform into other characters in performance. This entails transforming ways of behaving, ways of thinking, ways of feeling, *ways of breathing* that are true to the behaviour, thoughts, feelings, and breathing of the character you are creating (2006, p.43, my emphasis).

Patsy Rodenburg (b.1953), in her book *Speaking Shakespeare*, opens her chapter on breath with four aims:

- To have a free, flexible and powerful breath.
- To have a breath system that will respond to any length of thought, passionate feeling, or epic space.
- To have a breath system that moves easily through the body without locks and can change rhythm and pace effortlessly.
- To have a breath system that can support a full range in the voice, change character and recover quickly and silently (2002, p.35).

Like Linklater, Rodenburg connects the act of breathing to character when she states that '[e]very human being breathes differently and Shakespeare writes each character with a different rhythm of breath that changes as they change'. For Rodenburg, these considerations that an actor needs to make are not unique to speaking Shakespeare, but they are part of 'the basic tools even to start work on Shakespeare' (2002, p.xii).

The reason these three practitioners are invoked at this point is because, as referred to earlier in this chapter, they were at the forefront of, and sustained, the move from the 'voice beautiful' tradition that dominated before and during the 1950s to, an approach that centred on the individual actor, favouring what they often called a 'free' or 'natural' practice of voice production – something Linklater says, for her, connects to Iris Warren's central enquiry of 'how does it feel?' for the actor as opposed to 'how does it sound?' (2006, p.6).

By taking this idea of 'how it feels' we can work towards a common language of breath training in a way that discussion solely of sound cannot. This PhD study is also cognisant that working on a 'common language' does not automatically make that language universally accessible, and it understands that gauging the universality of such a phenomenon is an immeasurable task. However, it is useful to explore the possibility of a common language in theory in order to move towards

inclusive learning strategies – and this PhD contends that this can be achieved through discussion of felt experience using breath as a catalyst for that dialogue. What the use of the term ‘common language’ looks to attain is an acknowledgement of a reference point that, as far as we are aware, is common to all human beings that are alive: that of breath. This research argues that the breath serves a pedagogy that is individual, student, and actor centred leading to bespoke technique and performance of Shakespeare that is responsive and current to the performer’s own context. This PhD argues that, because of breath’s simultaneous communal and individual characteristics, by focussing the pedagogy of speaking Shakespeare on breath we can work towards a more inclusive actor training environment.

Shakespeare

As we have seen, Boston suggests that more theory on breath in actor training generally is needed despite the location of breath in the practice. Breath training holds a central position in the practice of speaking and acting Shakespeare. This idea was developed, in the context of professional theatre practice, in the twentieth century with the introduction of the voice coach; or what Andrew Wade (1997, p.133) calls ‘the rise of the voice coach’ attributing the phenomenon to the RSC, with the employment of Cicely Berry as voice director in 1969. This rise aligns with the evolution of the ‘more natural’ approach to voice training that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century (Carey, 2009, p.188).

Taking a closer look at writing from voice practitioners (Berry, 1992, p.9; Carey & Clark Carey, 2010, xvi; Rodenburg, 2002, p.14) and renowned directors of Shakespeare (Hall, 2003, p.12), Petronilla Whitfield (2015, p.11) highlights a rationale for the centrality of Shakespeare within actor training syllabi: ‘It is commonly asserted that in an actor training syllabus Shakespeare should play a central role as it can induce a significant advance in student learning due the requirement of intellectual,

physical and technical proficiencies’. Whitfield explains that her aim in using Shakespeare to train actors with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) is to equip them with the tools needed to work as professional actors. She states that her

syllabus aims to give each individual the tools to be employed as professional actors in a classical theatre environment and to enable an acquisition of transferable skills and knowledge which can be further utilised in other aspects of education, performance and life skills. I believe that Shakespeare’s text is a superb tool to work with; his understanding of the human condition encapsulated within exquisite language can illuminate and nourish the mind and soul, whilst engendering a physical impact (2015, pp.11–12).

Like Whitfield, this study advocates Shakespeare’s text as an excellent foundation for work with students new to complex and/or heightened text. In Shakespeare’s text there is a wide range within several registers of vocal performance: long, complex thought structures; a heightened and challenging language both in prose and verse; and drama that deals with a gamut of human emotion. This thesis contends that this range within these diverse areas of performance has the potential to provide a student with, as Whitfield puts it, ‘transferable skills and knowledge which can be further utilised in other aspects of education, performance and life skills’ (2015, p.11). It is a pedagogy that compliments and sits alongside breath training very easily – which is something that this research explores comprehensively.

Pedagogy

The main contribution to knowledge my research creates is to put forward the case for a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. It draws out the theoretical underpinnings and practical application of this pedagogy and positions it within the wider discourse on training actors to speak Shakespeare, serving as an extension, and sometimes challenge, to existing texts instructing actors on ‘speaking Shakespeare’ (Rodenburg, 2002), ‘acting Shakespeare’ (Gielgud, 1997; Tucker, 2002; Van Tassel, 2010; Hinds, 2015), and ‘playing Shakespeare’ (Barton, 1984).

As noted within the early paragraphs of this thesis, this research draws on Henry Giroux’s *On Critical Pedagogy* (2011) to situate the concepts of criticality and pedagogy as applied to the act of breath training for speaking Shakespeare.

Susanne Luhmann highlights the ‘unflattering’ reputation that the word *pedagogy* has attracted in the past, particularly when associated with ‘the better-known *pedagogue*’: she draws on the dictionary definition of ‘the pedantic and dogmatic schoolteacher’ (2012, p.120). However, she points to a recasting of pedagogy: ‘when attached to signifiers such as *feminist, anti-racist, or anti-homophobic*, [pedagogy] is critical of mainstream education as a site for the reproduction of unequal power relations’ (2012, p.120). This thesis posits that the word ‘critical’ in front of ‘breath pedagogy’ could act as a similarly transformative signifier within educational discourse and practice. By adopting critical as an adjective to breath pedagogy we could arguably move towards a more democratic actor training space, a model put forward by Paulo Freire in his seminal work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) in his wider discussion of pedagogy.

- **Researcher/Pedagogue context**

Virginia L. Olesen suggests that ‘multiple positions, selves, and identities [are] at play in the research process’ (2008, p.328). While it is important that the researcher remains as objective as possible in their relation to the research, it is prudent that one does not assume that the two will never meet, collaborate, and, at times, clash. Olesen’s notion of ‘multiple positions’ (2008, p.328) offers a both problematic and enriching state that the researcher must acknowledge and contend with. For this reason, the reader is provided with a sense of the ‘positions [...] and identities’ (2008, p.328) that this research is ultimately born from. The intention here is not to put the researcher forward as *the* primary source, rather it seeks to acknowledge the researcher as a part of the process of exploration, discovery, and output, along with literature review, raw data, and analysis. The memoir style details

below serve to indicate an emerging pedagogy and coalesce into a list of guiding principles for my pedagogy, which underpins this research.

Early relationship with Shakespeare

It would be no exaggeration to say that when in secondary school (high school), I did not much care for Shakespeare. I did not understand him or his text. I did not understand why I had to learn about him in my English classes as a teenager, where I first came across his works in earnest. We were told we had to read *Macbeth* (1606). To me this was a dense and impenetrable text and certainly not for someone who was only starting to get a grasp of poetry, mainly through Irish writers like Seamus Heaney, and William B. Yeats, through the prism of secondary school education in the South East of Ireland, in the late 1990s.

Concurrently, I was taking a history class where I learned about the Great Irish Famine and the Irish rebellion of 1798, with a resounding pride in the history teacher’s voice, that a defining battle of that rebellion was won in our hometown of Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford – narratives that never painted ‘the English’ in a favourable light. Between hearing, and admiring, poetry from Irish writers about poor, oppressed, and the hard-working men and women of Ireland’s past, the Irish nationalist tone to our history classes, and with teenage angst starting to emerge, I saw Shakespeare as something a little too English for my liking (N.B. not a sentiment I feel now, about Shakespeare or the English).

Then a school theatre trip was arranged to see *Macbeth* at the Tivoli Theatre in Dublin in 1998 or 1999. It was transformative – I understood every word. I was amazed by the presence and the grace of the actors on stage in front of me. I could not understand how they were powering such complex words and sentences to their completion, and I would not understand for years to come. This was in

stark contrast to the entirely literary relationship I had with Shakespeare before this moment. From this point on, for me, Shakespeare’s text was all about performance.

The Acting Student

This interest continued into my college years, when I went to study consecutive courses of ‘Theatre Studies’ and ‘Performing Arts’ in Colaiste Dhulaigh in Dublin. It was here that I was first introduced to the notion of acting as a considered practice and it was here that I learned about actor training practitioners such as Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938), Michael Chekhov (1891–1955), Lee Strasberg (1901–1982), Stella Adler (1901–1992) as well as movement practitioners including Moshé Feldenkrais (1904–1984), F. Matthias Alexander (1869–1955), and Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). At this point, I also took part in my first voice classes where I was introduced to the idea of voice training through the works of Cicely Berry, and Kristin Linklater amongst others. Within my studies in Dublin, I was primarily interested in the application of ‘Psychological Realism’ and ‘emotional recall’, both inspired by the Stanislavsky’s system of actor training. This experience opened a world of possibilities and directions for me as an actor and as a student of acting, although I was yet to be convinced that voice training would be a significant part of my future practice.

Within the first term of my drama degree⁶ at Aberystwyth University I took a module entitled ‘Psychological Realism’. At the core of this training was Lee Strasberg’s method acting, heavily influenced by a strand of the Stanislavsky System of acting. In the next two terms I studied voice again with Joan Mills. This experience was transformative in terms of my approach to acting, learning, and discovering the notion of carving one’s own technique. I was no longer in search for best practice amongst practitioners past rather I was now interested in finding an eclectic mix of everything I had

⁶ Due to a college partnership, I went straight into the second year of the programme.

learned and was to learn. In this process of discovery, I moved away from Lee Strasberg’s reading of psychological realism and towards the embodied practice of voice training.

Whilst working as an actor and theatre maker in Ireland and Wales I continued to develop my practice through attendance at various acting and voice training courses, masterclasses, and studying for my MA in Drama before starting my doctoral study, which has coincided with teaching undergraduate students in theatre, drama and performance at the University of South Wales.

The Teacher and Researcher

Within my core teaching practice and through collaborative research projects over the past seven years of lecturing my own pedagogical principles have emerged and developed. This pedagogy manifested primarily out of my work as module leader on the ‘Voice and Movement’ (which became ‘Voice and Body’) module within the Theatre and Drama course at the University of South Wales. As well as this doctoral work, my research project entitled ‘Undisciplined Discipline: A Performer Training for a New Generation’ (2020) with colleague Sarah Crews, has also influenced my approach to teaching and actor training. All of the above informs my pedagogy which has been a driving impetus for this research. The following is an approach that currently determines my practice. Below is a list of key principles focussed specifically on my own Breath Pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare:

1) Ecology as a metaphor for my Breath Pedagogy:

Ecology has its etymological origins in zoology as *oecologie*, a term coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1866 (Egerton, 2012, p.xi), and is defined as ‘the branch of science dealing with the relationship between organisms and their environment; the interrelationships of living things to one another and to their environment or the study of such interrelationships’ (DeSanto, 2012, p.243). Ecology is used here to present a pedagogy that acknowledges the relationship/s between student, space, text, other

participants, facilitators, body, voice and breath. It is also used to describe a method of teaching that uses single exercises to work on a host of skills for the student performer (some conscious, some unconscious). For example, work on text to explore breath, resonance, articulation and so on.

2) A pedagogy where the student is at the centre

This is a pedagogy that allows the individual student’s training to be led by their artistry within the framework of breath training. The pedagogy takes full account of what the student sets out to achieve and aims to work towards those aspirations. The pedagogy resists a diagnostic model, whereby trainers identify gaps in the student’s skill and knowledge to be addressed by prescribed curricula. Instead, the trainer’s role here is to facilitate a space where the student can develop a practice on their own terms; the trainer becomes an informed collaborator to aid the student’s aspirations within the context and framework of the pedagogy to become reality.

3) A pedagogy that is inclusive and outreaching

The use of inclusive here is to indicate a flexible pedagogy – where the pedagogy may be required to change, rather than the student, depending on the desires, goals, and needs of the student, as defined by them. I often visualise existing definitions of inclusivity as a circle that wants to draw people in. I find this concept a little forceful and inflexible. I argue for a pedagogy that reaches out and is responsive to individual needs and desires.

4) A pedagogy that works on training responsiveness, awareness, and openness.

Key to this pedagogy is the development of the student’s ability to respond to the current challenges they face in the world. For this reason, a principle of my pedagogy is that students become aware of their own social, political and corporeal context/s in order that the work that they make has currency within the world they choose to make it. I also encourage an openness to traditional and new theory,

practice and schools of thought in view of finding a praxis that serves them – I encourage that this be an eclectic and ever evolving praxis to reflect the ever-changing educational contexts.

5) A pedagogy with critical thinking and dialogue at its core

I strive for a pedagogy that goes beyond skill and knowledge acquisition towards fostering a student cohort that scrutinises the work we do in the studio, including the exercises we do, the material we use, and its source. Taking heed from Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) I want to democratise studio practice through dialogue, challenging traditional hierarchies within the actor training studio.

6) The pedagogy is based on the student first acknowledging their own breath capacity, rhythm/s, characteristics etc. and then exploring the possibilities therein in terms of performance of text.

This is to ensure the actor’s breath/ing characteristics are not getting trained out of them. Therefore, their own social and political breath are part of a performance of Shakespeare’s text. This model allows for shallow breath, it allows for thought structures to be broken up bringing out the thought structures of the actor and not just those implicit in the text. Shakespeare’s text is important here, not just because of its cultural standing, but also because it has clearly defined thoughts, it has a clear structure (Rodenburg, 2002, p.83).

This list has been developed throughout my own training, my professional practice, my teaching and research. Like the principles encouraged herein my pedagogy aims to be ever responsive, evolving and open to new possibilities.

My Voice Pedagogy

Much of my own voice training, and where the above list of principles has largely emanated from, has been within the lineage of Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg and their pedagogical predecessors. I am particularly interested in the individuality of the actor, and the student actor’s voice, which are preoccupations of the pedagogy of the above lineage. At the heart of the pedagogy of Berry et al. is the relationship between voice and the actor (Boston, 2018, p.135) and in turn the actor’s relationship with language.

It is within this context that I begin my voice practice and pedagogy. The critique that emerges from this thesis, is one that is carried out from within this lineage and one that acknowledges it as well researched and commented upon. Nonetheless, this thesis contributes to the scholarship of voice theory and practice through its departure via critical pedagogy – a pedagogy that invites reflection, scrutiny, and discussion on the part of the student of the pedagogical principles within any given voice praxis – through prisms important to the student/actor (e.g. reading through the lens of feminism, queer studies, race, gender, or sexuality).

Another departure of my voice pedagogy is how the above lineage views the effect of cultural influence on the voice. Tara McAllister-Viel observes how ‘discussions [including writing by Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg,] of cultural influence in relation to vocal development have been focussed almost exclusively on negative influences that resulted in unhelpful vocal habits’ (2015, p.56). My voice practice invites these habits into the learning space and seeks to put it in the hands of the student, whether they embrace the habit or exercise to unlearn those characteristics.

This research locates its contribution to the scholarship on this lineage through the axis point of voice pedagogy, speaking Shakespeare, and critical pedagogy (through the work Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire, and Augusto Boal).

Outline of thesis

- **Telling the story**

The narrative structure of this thesis has manifested in first introducing the thesis, moving then to providing a contextual basis for this research, before outlining the methodology for the empirical research undertaken herein. This is followed by chapters on two of the key concepts brought to bear by virtue of the study having been carried out: reframing breath training as a critical pedagogy; and positioning this training as an inclusive learning strategy in reference to speaking Shakespeare.

- **Chapter areas beyond the introduction (brief summary)**

Chapter Two combines literature review and historical context to, firstly, track the history of breath in disparate contexts relevant to this PhD study, including epistemological development relating to breath and breathing apparatus – giving a sense of the changes in belief systems and scientific endeavour around this area. It also provides a survey of current thinking on physiological and anatomical understandings of breath, philosophical, social and political positions and contexts of breath. It then moves to a literature review of considerations of breath within actor training and speaking Shakespeare.

Chapter Three introduces the methodology of this research project. It provides a rationale for using a multi-method approach and explores the challenges and benefits of researching in a pedagogical setting. Then it turns to the empirical research undertaken: interviews and workshops. It examines both strategy and design before concluding with a short discussion on the ethical considerations of

the methodology used. It was important to me not to simply present the empirical research as the sole endeavour of this research and, therefore, the narrative structure that has emerged within this thesis speaks directly to the nature of a dialogic pedagogy, whereby there is a constant back and forth of theory, practice, and reflection on both.

Chapter Four highlights contemporary perspectives and philosophies relating to breath training for speaking Shakespeare. It draws together dominant themes and ideas from interviews carried out with voice coaches and explores them in the context of a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare.

Chapter Five reframes breath training as a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. The thrust of this chapter is concerned with a shift from breath training as simply an endeavour in skill and knowledge acquisition towards the inclusion of criticality as central to the pedagogy. It discusses fostering criticality within the actor training environment as an imperative skill in its own right, as well as the implications of criticality in training. It does this through the lens of the workshop series carried out for this study.

Chapter Six explores the notion of breath pedagogy as ‘inclusive practice’ (Leveroy, 2013, p.211) in the context of training actors for speaking Shakespeare. The idea of inclusivity is explored considering Christopher DeLuca’s ‘interdisciplinary framework’ towards inclusive education whereby dynamics relating to cultural diversity, gender, and disability are explored. Inclusivity is then examined through the lens of recent actor training scholarship.

Chapter Seven positions a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare within/alongside existing pedagogies. It concludes the thesis first by summarising the story of this. It explains that the overarching finding of this PhD is that by acknowledging, exploring by process of critical reflection

and dialogue within the training studio, and responding to breath dynamics when applied to training actors to speak Shakespeare’s text, participants enter into a student-centred pedagogy that fosters self-awareness, self-determination, and self-direction. It reminds the reader of the research questions that gave impetus to this PhD and provides emerging answers and key findings. The chapter then points to potential future research directions that the current study may give rise to. Finally, a new pedagogical model pertaining to training actors to speak Shakespeare’s text via breath training through criticality is offered.

CHAPTER TWO – Reading and Understanding Breath, Training, and Speaking Shakespeare: A Literature Survey and Historical Overview

The purpose of the current chapter is to provide an overview of the fields of study read and to aid the positioning of this research in the wider discourses of voice studies, breath training, writing on speaking Shakespeare and pedagogy. It highlights the gaps in scholarship around speaking Shakespeare, breath training, and pedagogical practices and points towards bridging the gap by introducing the areas this research aims to speak directly to.

This chapter acts, in part, as literature review and historical context in that it draws primarily on the reading and study of breath in various contexts in order to better locate it in the field(s) of scholarship of voice studies, breath training, writing on speaking Shakespeare and pedagogy. It begins with a note on the approach taken to reading and understanding breath in its disparate contexts. This section will demonstrate how the reading has been used to create a narrative for the thesis – it highlights the interdisciplinary nature of this research and takes the reader through the fields of study at play.

Then the chapter focuses on three areas beginning with looking at breath as a concept and the contexts of breath pertinent to this study: ‘Contexts of Breath’, followed by ‘An Emerging Pedagogy: Breath in Actor Training’; and ‘Speaking Shakespeare’. The first of these, ‘Contexts of Breath’, is broken down into three further subsections, the first of which explores historical perspectives and the epistemological development of breath. Then the survey moves to reading on contemporary physiological and anatomical understandings of breath before discussions on the philosophical, social and political dimensions of breath.

The second area, ‘An Emerging Pedagogy: Breath in Actor Training’ starts by highlighting international perspectives, looking at how early to mid-twentieth century approaches to actor training considered the role of breath in their practices before discussing the migration of these ideas to Britain. Then the influence of Eastern practices and ideas of actor training on contemporary discourse and practice in Britain such as, for example, how yogic ideas have influenced actor training, and psychophysical practices of actor training, are explored. Then the chapter moves towards a discussion on how the role of the voice coach emerged in Britain and how this affected the consideration of breath in training actors.

The final section of this chapter positions the area of speaking Shakespeare as a field of study in its own right by providing a historical overview of twentieth century practices in Britain. Then a discussion emerges on the director-voice coach relationship in the context of speaking Shakespeare. The chapter then moves to twenty-first century practices with this section finishing by surveying considerations of breath in acting manuals dedicated to speaking and acting Shakespeare.

Reading and Understanding Breath

Breath exists within many contexts, under various conceptual guises and as such it has been written about across a vast number of fields of scholarship. It is not possible or relevant to survey all these areas here; however, what this study highlights, is that breath is an interdisciplinary consideration. This phenomenon not only needs to be acknowledged in any research on breath, but active engagement is required in its disparate contexts (e.g., historical, epistemological, physiological, philosophical) towards robust scholarship in the area of breath studies.

The active process of reading and understanding breath and its role in any pedagogy goes beyond theory. It requires a constant dialogue between – and drawing together of – reading, thinking, and practice. As such, what follows is a multifaceted perspective that seeks to include many considerations of breath pertinent to this research, and denotes a research journey that is dependent on, and enriched by, the diversity of its parts (historical, epistemological, physiological, philosophical, social, and political).

Contexts of Breath

- **Historical perspective and epistemological development**

To give a sense of the epistemological development of breath and breathing I have broken this subsection into three areas: a) The ancient Greeks ‘On Breath’; b) Beyond Aristotle; and c) From Middle-Ages up to Enlightenment.

The ancient Greeks ‘On Breath’

In surveying the thinking and writing on breath as carried out by ancient Greek philosophers (circa 800 BCE – circa 600AD) this research gets a sense of the language of breath in various contexts. Understanding the epistemological development of breath, I argue, aids our understanding of the linguistic precedents and legacies of breath, breathing and their synonyms and in turn gives a sense of the varied perspectives and disciplines where breath is a fundamental and performative consideration.

Words like ‘air’; ‘spirit’; ‘*pneuma*’; and ‘*qi*’ are often used, along with terms such as ‘vital energy’; ‘soul’; and ‘essence’ in an attempt to make the intangible material through language. When we see these terms used in reference to, or connection with, descriptions of corporeal matter such as the

breathing apparatus, or respiratory system, the language moves towards a more crystallised image.

Sreenath Nair highlights an example of Aristotle’s thinking telling us that

For Aristotle, breath is the pure substance of the body that activates the process of respiration, and all the psycho-physical movements including emotions and physical animations are the results of the dynamics of breath in the body (2007, p.57).

The title of this subsection alludes to Aristotle’s collection of volumes ‘*Parva Naturalia*’ (Aristotle, 1935), which includes two essays relating to breath: ‘On Respiration’ and ‘On Breath’⁷ (Nair, 2007, p.52). In Hett’s translation of Aristotle’s essays (1935), the views on breath depend largely on metaphysical concepts regarding the soul, positing that the soul and emotions are connected through breath (Nair, 2007, p.52). Nair notes Aristotle’s postulations on the origin of breath and how this might connect to the ‘soul’, noting that

Aristotle describes the origin of breath as having its source from within, either as a ‘function of the soul’ or soul itself or else some mixture of the bodies which by their means cause this attraction [...B]reath and soul are the fundamental principles interlinking the physical and the psychological experience of the body because movement and sensation are the two matching qualities through which the soul operates in the body (p.56).

However, alongside this dependence on the metaphysical, Aristotle moves towards the physiological when he discusses breath in the context of the respiratory system highlighting what he felt was part of the nourishment of the body.

It is in this way and by these means, [...] that the process of respiration takes place [...] Fire cuts up our food, and as it ebbs and flows within the body with the motion of the breath, its ebb and flow fill the veins with the cut-up food which it pumps into them from the belly. And this process keeps the stream of nourishment flowing through the body of all animals (Aristotle, cited in Gandevia, 1970, p.59).

⁷ It is the belief among contemporary Aristotle scholars, including Robert Mayhew (in Aristotle and Mayhew, 2011), that these essays were pseudo-Aristotle. W.S. Hett, the 1935 translator of the book felt there was more evidence to suggest that this work did not originate from Aristotle, than there was in favour of its Aristotelian authenticity (Nair, 2007, p.52).

Parva Naturalia was not the earliest consideration of breath we know about. As Nair points out, there is evidence to show that as far back as the sixth century BCE Greek philosophers postulated about the existence of a gas called ‘air’ and its function to life, in particular to that of animals, including humans (2007, p.52).

Antoine Thivel provides a useful timeline of consideration of breath and respiration up to and including Aristotle which goes further back than Anaximenes:

As for breathing and respiration from Homer to Hippocrates, I think we can divide this long space of time into three periods:

- 1 the archaic period [from circa eighth century B.C. to the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.⁸], Homer and other poets, as well as certain treatises in the Hippocratic Collection;
- 2 the ‘Empedoclean’ period, which goes as far as Plato and has numerous representatives in the Hippocratic Corpus; and then
- 3 the ‘Aristotelian’ period, which includes Diogenes of Apollonia, Philiston, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Diocles of Carystus and others (2005, p.239).

Bolton, et al., provide a historical overview of thinking on breath in *Neurology of Breathing* (2004). Here the reader is told about the sixth century BCE postulations of Anaximenes (b. c.570 BCE), who put forward that air had an essential ingredient, what he called *pneuma*⁹ meaning breath, which was ‘generated from an interplay between air and blood’ (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.3) and was ‘nourish[ed through...] the mouth, the nostrils, the windpipe, the lung, and the rest of transpiration’ (Galen cited in Bolton, et al., 2004, p.5).

Bryan Gandevia reinforces the notion that a move away from the metaphysical had started to occur before Aristotle. He states that ‘it is to ancient Greek civilization that we must look for the first groping steps towards a naturalistic concept of respiration’ (1970, p.57). He notes that a shift to a

⁸ See *Athens Burning: The Persian Invasion of Greece and the Evacuation of Attica* (Garland, 2017, p.xii).

⁹ The term *pneuma*, meaning an essential ingredient in the air (breath), was coined in the sixth century BCE by Greek philosopher, Anaximenes (born c. 570 BCE) (Bolton et al., 2004, p.3).

naturalistic view of science, and a move away from what he regards as ‘Old Testament views’, started to occur with Homer (c850 BCE, disputed¹⁰). Further to this he argues that ‘the essential difference, [in thinking from Homer onwards], is that the basic concept was naturalistic and rational, rather than animistic or supernatural, and it was based in some degree on an interpretation of observed phenomena’ (1970, p.58).

In a further endorsement of the ancient Greeks on the matter of thinking and knowledge on physiology, Gandevia tells us that Hippocrates (c460–370BC) ‘contributed several general principles of vital importance’ (1970, p.60). Hippocrates reinforced the shift from the metaphysical by stating ‘unequivocally that disease was due to natural causes and not to any supernatural agencies’ (Gandevia, 1970, p.60). Gandevia states that apart from these general principles, Hippocrates left us very little apropos thinking on breath and respiration. However, this is challenged somewhat by Eugenio Frixione when he states that

the inaccuracy [...] is readily proved by just looking at the well-known explanations of early Hippocratic texts about the causes of diseases such as epilepsy and apoplexy, both of which would involve perturbations in the normal flow of *pneuma* through the veins, according to some treatises (2012, p.505 – writing forty-two years later).

Frixione alludes to the idea that Hippocrates, and his contemporaries, were concerned with the effects of *pneuma* beyond its merely ontological qualities. He states that

[I]ittle consideration is usually given [...] to the varied Hippocratic views on the natural behavior of this internal *pneuma* in health, or the reasons adduced for its presence within the veins, or why and how it normally moves along these vessels, and whether it performs any other functions inside the human body (2012, pp.508–509).

Frixione tells us that his survey of the Hippocratic Corpus reveals an analytic approach to *pneuma* and ‘closely related subjects’ (2012, pp. 509). As alluded to earlier, Nair tells us that the beginnings

¹⁰ There is no consensus of Homer’s birth and death dates among his biographers. The varied accounts move between the twelfth century and the eighth century BCE (Manguel, 2013, p.1).

of such a critical method towards breathing and respiration, in the context of ancient Greek philosophy, is often attributed more towards Aristotle rather than those that came before him. However, this study argues that the work that predates *Parva Naturalia* is of at least equal historical importance in terms of the epistemological development towards our current understanding of breath, in that it set the foundations of such a physiological study.

Beyond Aristotle

Bolton, et al. suggest that Galen postulated the earliest known theories concerning the physiology and anatomy¹¹ of breathing (2004, p.4). He asserted that cosmic *pneuma* (air) ‘mixed with a second *pneuma*, a natural spirit’ to form a ‘vital spirit’ (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.4). This was thought to have travelled to the brain via the arteries where ‘they formed a third spirit, the animal spirit that was distributed through nerves, which were regarded as hollow tubes’ (Bolton et al., 2004, p.4).

Galen, like Hippocrates and Aristotle, believed that ‘the heat of the body is innate and inexorably linked to life and the soul’ and that this was provided by the heart (Aird, 2011, p.121), a theme continued from Aristotle in *Parva Naturalia* (tr. Hett, 1936). It was also believed that this accommodated the exchange between the ‘spirits’ (Aird, 2011, p.121). These concepts prevailed for the next thousand years through the Middle Ages (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.5) with several attempts made to align them with Christianity (Nutton, 2001, p.25).

From Middle-Ages to enlightenment

‘The Middle Ages’ generally refers to a timeline between 500 A.D. and 1500 A.D. (Pernoud & Nash, 2000; Lindberg, 1978); a span described by scientist William Whewell in 1857 as ‘a long and barren

¹¹ Physiology pertains to functions of and connections between body parts. Anatomy pertains to the structure of body parts.

period, which intervened between the scientific activity of ancient Greece and that of modern Europe; and which we may, therefore, call the Stationary period of Science’ (as cited in Lindberg, 1978, p.1). This claim of ‘barrenness’ has been disputed by scholars on the basis of technological advancement of the period, which led to social change (White, 1962). However, in terms of the medical sciences, it is generally agreed that any pedagogy that persists through ‘the Middle Ages’ was largely based on Galenism, which is itself of Grecian antiquity (Frampton, 2008, p.8). Frampton states that ‘[t]he paucity of medical, anatomical, and physiological content [is due] to the steep decline in classical learned medicine and biology after 400 [A.D.]’ (2008, p.7).

As far as we are aware, it was not until scientific endeavour re-emerged out of ‘the Middle Ages’ that Galen’s theory was first challenged (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.5). The first such questioning by theologian Michael Servetus, had him burned at the stake by John Calvin (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.5), the father of the branch of Protestantism known as Calvinism (McKim, 2004). After the Greek foundations for the study of anatomy and physiology of breathing and respiration, advances in the field appear to have remained stifled by religious dogma until the seventeenth century when William Harvey ‘focused clear light on the problem’ (Bolton et al., 2004, p.5). By developing Servetus’ ideas, Harvey explored blood flow around the lungs (Bolton et al., 2004, p.5). He discovered the ‘circular’ nature of blood flow from the deduction that in half an hour the heart pumps more blood than exists within the entire human body (Bolton et al., 2004, p.5). This discovery countered Galen’s theory of the heat of the body aiding the exchanges between the spirits.

This led the way for a closer look at the role of blood circulation in respiration. Marcello Malpighi and Giovanni Alfonso Borelli examined the nature and function of alveoli (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.6). Malpighi observed that the ‘alveoli were covered in capillaries and that blood and air were kept separate by a continuous capillary barrier. Borelli furthered this by postulating ‘that fluids could pass

the barrier by diffusion’ (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.6). Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke then discovered the gas, oxygen, after Boyle had deduced that air was necessary for life (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.6), progressing the earlier thinking of ancient Greek philosophers discussed. With oxygen now established as the essential source of life; or *pneuma*, as Anaximenes and Galen would call it, along with the seventeenth century discovery of carbon dioxide by Jan Baptist van Helmont (Bolton, et al., 2004, p.8), a clearer picture of the physiology of breathing was beginning to emerge and started to resemble the field of study we have today.

- **Current physiological/anatomical understandings of breath**

Continuing on the curiosities of the ancient Greeks, and the scientists and philosophers of the post enlightenment era, research into many aspects of breath and breathing is just as prevalent now, if not more so, than ever before. This phenomenon is indicated by the major research projects, centres, and conferences dedicated to expanding the discourse and thinking on breath that are ubiquitous throughout the world, in particular, Europe and North America. In June 2018, the MINT centre at Maastricht University, The Netherlands, entitled their annual summit on breath ‘Bridging Breath Research’, in an attempt to reflect and nurture the ‘transdisciplinary’ nature of thinking and writing on breath, telling us that

Since breath research is transdisciplinary in nature, intense collaborations are a prerequisite to take the field to the next level. For this, trustful and enduring relations should be built between different disciplines and time and energy should be invested in understanding the problems encountered in other research areas (Breath Summit, 2018).

The interdisciplinary approach is manifested within current major collaborations happening globally, including in the UK. ‘One such project that illustrates this is Life of Breath’ (Life of Breath, 2015–2020) which is based at the University of Bristol. This brings together scholars and practitioners from backgrounds in dance, performance art, philosophy, phenomenology, voice coaching, product

design, anthropology, respiratory nursing, photography, and music, as well as health professionals and representatives of the British Lung Foundation. On their website they outline their research aims:

Our interdisciplinary team and collaborators are working together to find new ways of answering questions about breathing and breathlessness and their relationship to both illness and wellbeing.

Our research questions include:

What does breathlessness feel like? Does it feel different when you are ill?

How do our thoughts, emotions and beliefs affect our breathing?

Why do people hide their breathlessness?

What can we learn about breath from different cultures?

How is breath represented in literature, art, film and music?

Can the ways people thought about breath in the past help us today?

Would better ways of describing or visualising breathlessness help patients and doctors?

Why is inhaling substances like cigarette smoke pleasurable?

Are industries that affect our lung health being held to account? (Life of Breath, 2020)

The questions the scholars and practitioners within the ‘Life of Breath’ project are asking, give a glimpse into the verdant area of breath research.

Another project that highlights the breath as an interdisciplinary consideration is *‘Breath Catalogue*. This is a collaborative project by artist/scholars Megan Nicely and Kate Elswit, and data scientist/interaction designer Ben Gimpert, together with composer Daniel Thomas Davis and violist Stephanie Griffin. The project combines choreographic methods with medical technology to externalize breath as experience’ (Breath Catalogue, 2018).

There are also currently long-standing projects investigating disparate aspects that range from sleep and breathing (Saunders & Sullivan, 2000); neurology of breathing (Bolton et al., 2004); phenomenology of breathing (Elswit, 2019) and so on. While it is beyond the scope of this research to complete an exhaustive survey of research on breath, this research seeks to focus a light on some of the areas that prove relevant to the current study starting with the anatomical and physiological.

- **Key terms, conceptual clusters and explanations**

Before I examine the current anatomical and physiological understandings within the discourse in the context of breathing and the body, I use this space in the thesis to point to some definitions and interpretations that give the reader a clear picture of those dimensions of breathing, which may prove a useful reference point in reading the rest of this dissertation. I have compiled this non-exhaustive list in order to give a sense of the current scholarly perspective as pertains to this research, and to elucidate some of the more esoteric terms.

Breath

Your breath is the source of your life as well as the source of your vocal sound. Your breathing habits have developed as you developed into the character you are now. The profound goal of the serious actor is to transform into other characters in performance. This entails transforming ways of behaving, ways of thinking, ways of feeling, ways of breathing that are true to the behaviour, thoughts, feelings, and breathing of the character you are creating (Linklater, 2006, p.43).

Part of the function of this chapter is to elucidate the term breath and its precedents, acknowledging that the term is multifaceted and at times obscure in its definitions. Jane Boston highlights a similar problem when she explores definitions of voice. She states: ‘For many, voice remains one of the most elusive and invisible factors among all the visible and measurable knowledge about the body’ (2018, p.5). Nonetheless, the most useful place to start in defining breath, for the present research, is within voice studies.

In my interviews with voice coaches (see Appendices for full transcripts), they stressed the need for voice training and, by proxy, breath training to have its foundations in credible and the most up to date anatomical and physiological understandings available to them. In her chapter ‘Breathing is Meaning’ (in Hampton & Acker, 1997, p.247), Catherine Fitzmaurice, too, sees virtue in the pragmatism that a physiological understanding may have. She defines breath as ‘the energy impulse

that excites the vibration in the vocal folds and the resulting resonance in the body’ (in Hampton & Acker, 1997, p.247).

Voice practitioners, when training actors, often use words like ‘support’ and ‘capacity’ in relation to breath, which speaks to a training/working of the physiology of the body. Heman-Ackah describes the ‘exhaled breath [as] the airflow that provides the power for voice production’ (2009, p.22). She further highlights breath’s role in this process, noting

The voice is the means by which humans express their emotions and communicate with each other. The breath is the means by which the voice is able to convey these sentiments. Thus, the breath, the voice and the emotion are all intimately related and reliant upon each other (2009, p.32).

The terms ‘support’ and ‘capacity’ are often used alongside more abstract and provocative terms such as ‘free’ and ‘natural’¹², which are no less useful in voice teaching and training the breath but do require a move away from more physiologically focused language. For the purpose of this research, I draw on, and subscribe to, Boston and Cook’s declaration that

Breath provides an essential key not just to our being but also to our communicative function. Once we admit breath into consciousness, we become aware that it is no longer just a psycho-physical phenomenon but is also subject to social and cultural values. The conscious use and subsequent management of breath, therefore, whether in the areas of health improvement, holistic practice or performance, begins the process towards creative and health-giving enhancement (2009, p.13).

Breathing

Twentieth century French philosopher Roland Barthes states ‘the breath is the *pneuma*, the soul swelling or breaking, and any exclusive art of breathing is likely to be a secretly mystical art’ (1984, pp.183–184). In locating their ontological characteristics, and the difference therein, it is important to distinguish breath from the act of breathing when arriving at working definitions of the respective

¹² See Werner (1996, pp.249–258) for a problematising of these terms in relation in voice work and speaking Shakespeare.

signifiers. In their comprehensive study *Foundations of Voice Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Voice Production and Perception* Kreiman and Sidtis state why they feel breathing is important: ‘Breathing is an important part of voice production, because the lungs provide the raw power for speech and voice’ (2011, p.27). They begin by defining breathing within its respiratory function as ‘the exchange of gasses’. They then move their focus to, what they call, ‘speech breathing’, which they contend, ‘is overlaid on [the] biologically vital functions [of involuntary breathing, smelling and temperature regulation], and requires modification of the operations used in quiet breathing’ (2011, p.27). A key difference in breathing between human and nonhuman primates, for Kreiman and Sidtis is primarily to do with the aspect of voice, in that

Breathing for speech differs from quiet respiration in several ways. First, we usually breathe in more air when planning to speak than we do during quiet respiration. The relative durations of inhalation and exhalation are also different during speech (Kreiman and Sidtis, 2011, p.30).

Taking this into consideration, the physiological effect that breathing has on speech and voice production becomes clear, and vice versa. In the context of voice training, one starts to see the importance of having a clear understanding of vocal and respiratory physiology.

During quiet respiration, about 40% of a breath cycle is devoted to inspiration and expiration takes up about 60% of the cycle. During speech, inspiration only takes up about 10% of a breath cycle. Exhalation is greatly prolonged (so we can produce long utterances with minimal pausing) and often extends beyond the normal resting capacity of the lungs (Kreiman and Sidtis, 2011, p.30).

It is Sreenath Nair’s explication of breathing that the current study finds itself most akin. He contends that

breathing is an involuntary action that functions as the basis of all human activities, intellectual, artistic, emotional and physical. Breathing is the first autonomous individual action that brings life into being and the end of breathing is the definitive sign of disappearance (2007, p.7).

Nair’s description gets to the heart of what is important about researching breath in the context of performance and pedagogy. The act of breathing responds to, and informs, the individualistic traits that define what it is to be human. It also speaks to the notion that breath can have a common language in the realms of intellect, art, emotion, and physicality. It is in these terms that I talk about the act of breathing and breath training, and its implications for training actors in speaking Shakespeare.

Respiration

While the terms respiration and breathing are often used interchangeably, there is a physiological distinction that I want to highlight here. Where we might define breathing as getting oxygen into the lungs and getting carbon dioxide out, or the ‘exchange of gasses’ as Kreiman and Sidtis (2011, p.27) put it, the term respiration can denote a deeper awareness of the entirety of the embodied experience and process of the act of breathing, in physiological terms. April Pierrot sees respiration as a ‘system’, one that involves all ‘organs of respiration’ (2009, p.43–44). In this system she includes: ‘the nose, the pharynx, the trachea, the bronchi, the bronchioles, the lungs and the alveoli’ (2009, p. 44). She clarifies the role of the diaphragm in this process telling us that

Our ‘impulse’ to breathe is controlled by chemoreceptors in the aorta and carotid arteries, which are near the heart. These monitor levels of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the blood. When carbon dioxide levels are too high and oxygen too low, nerve impulses are sent by the medulla oblongata to the diaphragm telling it to contract, thus activating inhalation (2009, p.44).

Diaphragm

Bolton et al. state that ‘the diaphragm is the most important inspiratory muscle’ (2004, p.21). To give a sense of its structural gravitas and, by proxy, its importance in the corporeal reality of voice production, I draw on Blandine Calais-Germain’s anatomical description of the diaphragm:

The diaphragm drapes like a blanket over the upper abdominal organs, partially touching them. It is in contact with some of them through the peritoneum, a great serous envelope, which wraps most of the abdominal organs:

The stomach [...] attaches to the diaphragm on its lateral and partially on its anterior surface.

The liver attaches to it on its lateral, superior, and posterior surfaces (2006, p.85).

Linklater explains that her ‘starting point[, in discussing the alchemy and art of breathing for voice,] is to pay attention to the centre of the diaphragm’ (2009, p.101). She describes the role of the diaphragm in terms of vocal performance, along with the solar plexus, as being for the purposes of ‘sensitivity and emotional connection’. According to Linklater, a performer must be aware of their own breathing process. She advises that ‘mere anatomical accuracy isn’t enough to effect the alchemical transformation that makes the breath serve the goal of truthful speaking’ (2009, p.102), whereby imagination and imagery, too, play a vital role. For illustrative purposes, she provides this ‘word picture’ for the student performer to give a better understanding of the breathing process in its anatomical and physiological context, when she states that

The tapestry of the breathing musculature wraps around the inside of the ribcage, billows into the diaphragm [...] laces down by the lumbar spine and weaves its way through the webbing of the pelvic floor among the muscles and nerves of its genital neighbours. The interior muscles coordinate in opening the air sacs in the lungs (as the diaphragm drops down) so that the breath rushes in, and closing them (as the diaphragm moves up) so that breath releases out. This is breathing for living (2009, p.102).

The central role of the diaphragm in the physiological process of quiet breathing is clear, and its place in discussions on speech breathing and vocal production start to emerge when discussing the respiration process and apparatus as a whole.

Larynx and Pharynx

‘The structures that make up the larynx play a role in support of an important life-sustaining function, that of respiration’ (Casper & Leonard, 2011, p.1). Unlike the often euphemistic and, at times, metaphorical textual signifiers of breath, breathing, voice, and to a degree, respiration the words larynx and pharynx are explicitly placed within physiology and anatomy of the breathing apparatus. Therefore, consensus on the definition of these is easier to locate in terms of voice production. The role of the larynx and its importance to voice production has been highlighted by Theodore Dimon: ‘The larynx and its intrinsic muscles precisely adjust the vocal folds so that they can vibrate efficiently, creating subtle nuances in timbre, focus, and pitch. As a sound-producing mechanism, the larynx is the principal organ of the voice’ (2018, p.47). Sarah Simblet is more anatomically descriptive in her explanation, noting that

The larynx (or voice box), palpable at the top of the neck, is the entire hard-throat structure, from the root of the tongue to the trachea (or windpipe) below. It is composed of nine cartilages (two arytaenoid, two corniculate, two cuneiform, the epiglottis, cricoid, and thyroid), joined by numerous ligaments, membranes, and delicate muscles, and lined by mucous membrane, continuous with that of the trachea below (2001, p.58).

In the context of the anatomy of breathing, Calais-Germain provides this useful definition when she states that

The pharynx, or throat, is about 12cm in length and connects the posterior parts of the nose and mouth to the top of the larynx and oesophagus. The back of the pharynx is a continuous tube with a fibrous wall composed of muscles and lined with mucous membrane. It runs from the base of the cranium down the anterior surface of the cervical spine[...] Air inhaled through the nose passes through all three levels [of the pharynx: *nasopharynx* (top); *oropharynx* (mid); and *laryngopharynx* (bottom)]; air inhaled through the mouth only passes through the bottom two levels (2006, p.71).

A reason that an actor might consider the physiology of larynx and pharynx in their voice and breath training is that this is where the ‘note’ of sound is formed. As the breath meets the vocal folds (in the larynx), which is housed by the throat (the pharynx), the vibrations make a sound, the pitch of which

is determined by the force of breath travelling through (Turner, 2007, p.26). While it may not be of vital importance for an actor to be aware to the level of intrinsic detail relating to the larynx and pharynx herein, it can be useful in contextualising the health of the actor’s voice and in being mindful in managing that health.

Voice

In finding a workable definition of voice, and one that can be easily applied in discussions about breath and breath training this research again leans towards the field of voice studies. Given the aforementioned problems with defining voice, as expressed by Boston (2018, p.5), I do not provide a definitive answer to the question ‘What is voice?’ as this is not central to the focus of this thesis; however, I point to existing strands of discourse where voice has a central place, on all of which the area of voice studies is dependant. Beforehand, however, I begin, as Boston does, with dictionary definitions of voice, reducing it down to those directly pertinent to sound and speech:

voice /vɔɪs/ I. noun

1. the sound produced in a person's larynx and uttered through the mouth, as speech or song • Meg raised her voice • [mass noun] a worried tone of voice.

2. the ability to speak or sing • she'd lost her voice.

[...]

13. [mass noun] — [Phonetics] sound uttered with resonance of the vocal cords (used in the pronunciation of vowels and certain consonants).

(Stevenson, 2010, Kindle Locations 658278–658310)

As Boston suggests, dictionary definitions somewhat reduce the complexity of the voice in its disparate contexts relating to breath. Boston provides a series of examinations, which she contends are ‘not exhaustive or conclusive’, of the realms in which discourse on voice is pertinent. The areas she explores apropos defining voice are anatomy; physics; neuroscience; socio-culture; pedagogy; and speech. For now, I draw on the anatomical dimension of voice, returning to other contexts where appropriate throughout the thesis.

In her examination of the anatomical voice, Boston tells us that her understanding of voice spans discourse from both the humanities and the sciences; one gives context and support to the other and vice versa. This is manifested when she observes that

The skeleton, and the muscles and cartilages it supports, serves as the *‘what’* in the narrative and provides the material structure around which voice practice in an artistic environment is structured. As part of an individual’s genetic endowment – a *given* for the individual – the lived experience of the skeletal structure has a role to play in the overall production of the voice (2018, p.9).

Boston suggests that an important precept that has come out of ‘a twentieth-century revision of the mind-body relationship that, in turn, serves as a guiding rationale within voice practice’ is that the voice and body cannot be separated: ‘the voice *is* the body as the body *is* the voice’; more on this follows later in this chapter. This means, for the actor, that training the voice and working on voice health involves consideration beyond the vocal apparatus (2018, p.8).

As Boston points out, while any anatomical discussion on voice requires us to separate each part of the body that affects the voice ‘in order to understand their discrete function’, this taxonomy is ‘artificial’. Along with the skeletal structure, Boston highlights how ‘it is the overall combination of factors, including the theatre environment and its behavioural values, that contributes to the vocal function of the individual actor and its impact on the listener’ (2018, pp.8–9).

Voice Studies

In 2015, Ben Macpherson and Konstantinos Thomaidis edited a collection of essays entitled *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance, and Experience*. This volume examines voice studies in five parts, beginning with an introduction followed by more specific lines of enquiry relating to ‘training and process’; ‘voice in performance’; and ‘voice in experience and documentation’ before

culminating in a ‘polyphonic conclusion’ with contributions from various voice theorists and practitioners defining voice studies in their own terms.

While there is cause to refer to various chapters within Macpherson and Thomaidis’ and edition throughout this thesis, for the purposes of this section I draw primarily on the final chapter in search of definitions, perspectives, and points of departure that prove useful in the context of breath training for performance. Before asking the question ‘what is voice studies?’, it is important to take heed of both the problematic and propitious phenomena as observed by Thomaidis: ‘[e]very definition of voice is a working definition’ (2015, p.214). This proposition denotes the shifting landscape of voice studies not only between contexts but also within the disparate disciplines that concern themselves with voice theory and practice.

For Macpherson ‘the idea of voice studies represents the intersection of two concerns: one material, the other metaphorical or methodological’ (2015, p.203). He highlights how voice studies reaches across practice, theory, and philosophy: ‘the idea of studying voice offers us the opportunity to extend our thinking beyond practical or pedagogic concerns and into the realm of the theoretical and philosophical’ (2015, p.203). This emphasises the inherent interdisciplinary nature of the field while reinforcing the problem of static definitions of voice, and by proxy, voice studies. The implication here is that when we embark on a study of voice in any given context, it would be prudent to acknowledge all the practical, theoretical, and philosophical dimensions concerned. This focus on interdisciplinary context is highlighted by others too, alongside the acknowledgement of how voice studies can centre on stand-alone areas of voice. For Lyn Darnley, voice studies can be summarised as something that ‘can be focused on any one of the many specialised vocal disciplines or take a more general multi-disciplinary approach to the voice and its many applications’ (2015, p.210).

I do not depart from the above positions; however, it is Yvon Bonenfant’s explication of what voice studies entails that I am most drawn to, in the context of the current research. For him voice studies

explores the voice as a kind of nexus, where numerous aspects of ourselves, our cultures, our bodies, our creative impulses, our aural perception, language and desires collide. This nexus embodies politics, and this nexus resonates, physically. It acts on matter. It acts on us. (Macpherson et al., 2015, p.208).

Bonenfant’s perspective speaks to the notion of voice studies being espoused as an ecology, dealing with the ‘connectedness’ of all the disparate elements of voice. This is similar to the way that I view my breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis: a pedagogy that acknowledges the relationship/s between student, space, text, other participants, facilitators, body, voice and breath.

Breathing and the body

In her book *Anatomy of Breathing* (2006) Calais-Germain gives account of her observations of breathing from her experience as a dance teacher, particularly examining the movement of the anatomy during the act of breathing. Her study veers towards a physical epistemology on breathing; in other words, an embodied knowledge on breathing. Calais-Germain’s text epitomises how anatomical understandings of breathing have advanced from Galen’s ideas to the twenty-first century. Calais-Germain (2006) breaks down the anatomy and physiology into sections, not only exploring the respiratory organs and their physiology like Galen, but also examining both the skeletal and muscular influences on respiration and vice versa (for examples see Figures 2.1.-2.3. below).

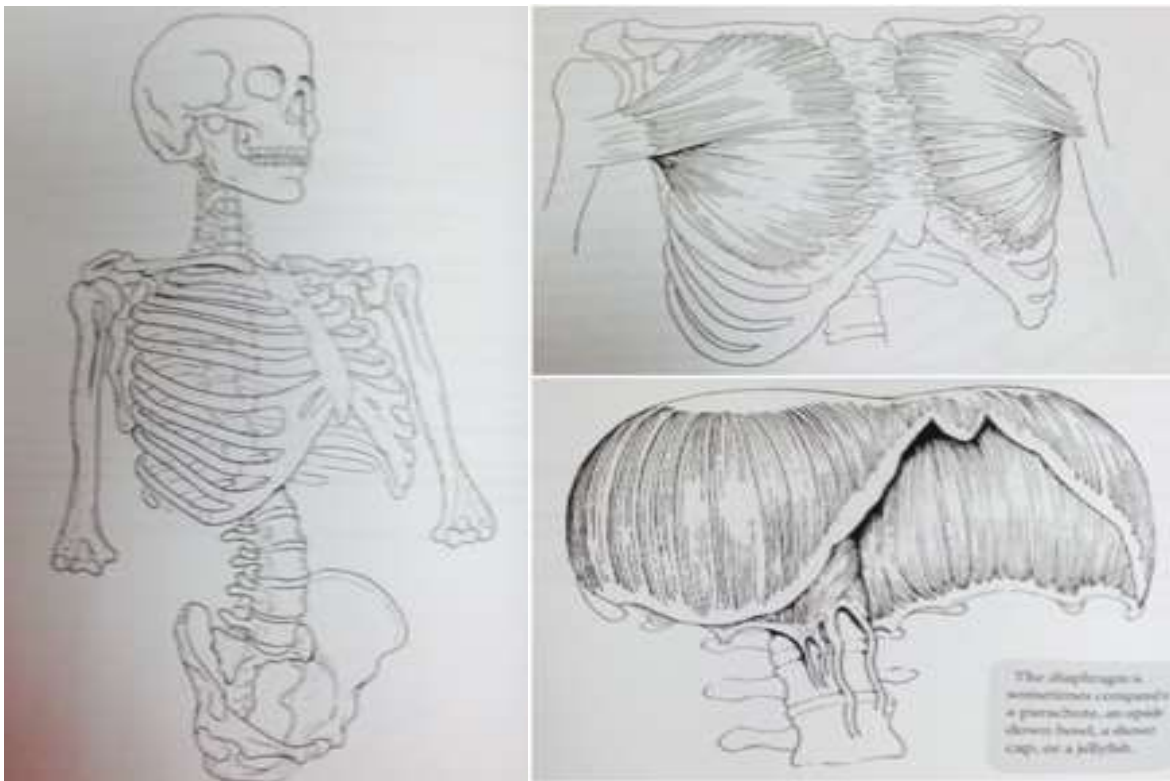


Figure 2.1. (left) ‘Because it is rigid, the skeleton provides a well-defined structure to breathing and stabilizes certain actions’ (Calais-Germain, 2006, p.35). Figure from *Anatomy of Breathing* (Calais-Germain, 2006, p.34).

Figure 2.2. (top right) The pectoralis major. Figure from *Anatomy of Breathing* (Calais-Germain, 2006, p.89)

Figure 2.3. (bottom right) The diaphragm. Figure from *Anatomy of Breathing* (Calais-Germain, 2006, p.81)

While examining the discrete physiological and anatomical elements, and their individual roles in the act of breathing, what Calais-Germain is doing is shedding light on how the anatomy of breathing works as a whole with each element dependent on the next and none of it working in isolation.

Calais-Germain’s account exemplifies a movement of artists and practitioners in the first decade of the twenty-first century towards exploring academic areas of science and anatomical studies beyond what has traditionally been seen as ‘their own’ fields towards an interdisciplinary mode of examining the human body in one’s own context.

Another example of this interdisciplinary approach is Sarah Simblet’s *Anatomy for the Artist* (2001, p.39) in which she includes a section on the respiratory system. Here, Simblet uses photography, artist’s impressions and her own illustrations exploring both present and historical theories and representations of the anatomy. Here, Simblet provides useful and comprehensive images of the lower respiratory system¹³.

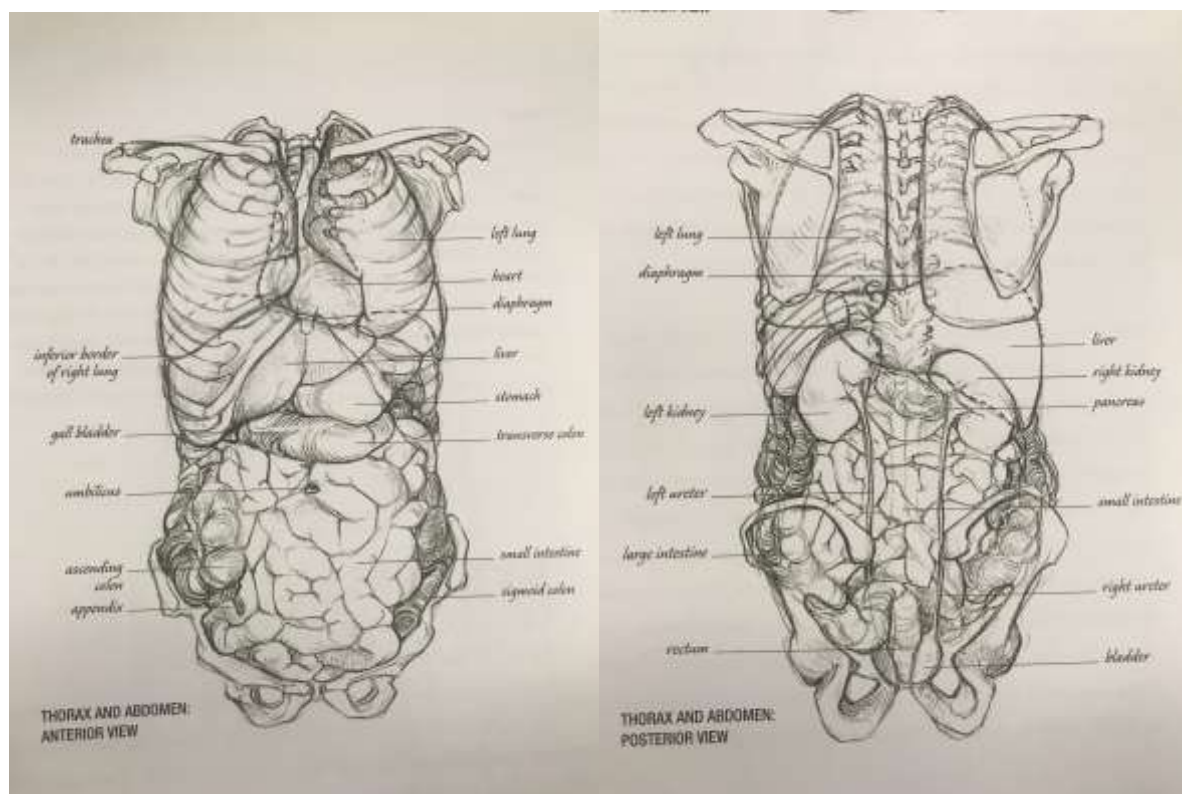


Figure 2.4. (left) Thorax and abdomen: Anterior view. Figure from *Anatomy for the Artist* (Simblet, 2001, p.39)

Figure 2.5. (right) Thorax and abdomen: Posterior view. Figure from *Anatomy for the Artist* (Simblet, 2001, p.39)

Both Calais-Germain and Simblet produce accessible and digestible sources that provide perspectives beyond jargon, and not just in text form, but pictorial too. By virtue of taking something, which traditionally sits in the realm of the sciences, they allow a way into the world of anatomy and physiology through illustration, photography and art history, along with text, that is perhaps more

¹³ Lower respiratory system: any part of the respiratory system that does not include from the bottom of the neck up.

akin to artistic practice, and therefore accessible by the artist. This format also bridges the somewhat expansive gap that can often lay between the sciences and humanities, in terms of breathing research.

Breathing and the Voice

The relationship between voice and breathing is perhaps the most fundamental when it comes to the act of speaking, and for the purposes of the current study. It is hard to find any book on, and/or model of, voice production that does not talk about breathing, with the Estill Model (Benson, 2017) being among the rare and notable exceptions. The simplest physiological explanation is that breath powers the voice, and this is something that can be controlled. Air, having come from the lungs in an exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide, travels over the vocal cords to produce sound and depending on the way the mouth is shaped, the sound can exit in a multitude of potential ways, to do with pitch, tone, and volume.

At its most ‘efficient’ the relationship between breath and voice can be the root of the actor’s expression of their whole intellectual, artistic, and emotional thinking. Though the language used in books by voice practitioners when describing exercises tend towards the metaphorical or figurative and depend largely on the imagination of the actor following the guidance therein, the practices that they denote are most often rooted in the most up to date anatomical and physiological understandings of voice.

Here, I provide a table of metaphorical language used within these voice manuals and point to their physiological underpinnings. For the purposes of this illustration, I focus on writing from three key voice practitioners Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg:

Author: Source	Language used	Physiological Underpinning
Cicely Berry: <i>Your Voice and How to Use it</i> (2011b, p.31)	‘Allow the breath to touch down to your centre’	Here, Berry indicates what she means by telling us that ‘to receive the breath into the deepest part of the chest, so the diaphragm or the floor of the chest take the breath right down, then as you release the breath into sound the whole of your chest cavity will add its vibrations and resonance and contribute to the sound’ (2011b, p.31).
Cicely Berry: <i>Voice and the Actor</i> (2011b, p.22)	finding the ‘I’ of your voice	Connections have been made with human emotion centres of the brain and the lower abdominal muscles of respiration in both voluntary and involuntary breathing - As we see, in the ‘Breathing and the Brain’ section later in this chapter.
Kristin Linklater: <i>Freeing the Natural Voice</i> (2006, pp.43–44)	Freeing the breath/Natural breathing	When Linklater talks about freeing the breath and natural breathing, she is talking about the physical habits that build over the course of one’s life that affect the action of their breath, e.g., posture, emotional stresses, environmental factors and so on. In freeing the breath she aims for actors to release the physical tension that goes hand in hand with these factors.
Kristin Linklater: ‘The Alchemy of Breathing’ in <i>Breath in Action</i> (Boston & Cook, 2009, p.110)	Kindling the breath	This is the title of an exercise that aims to ‘develop responsiveness, strength, agility and flexibility in the whole breathing apparatus’. Like with Berry’s ‘I’ of the voice, Linklater is working on the premise that the breath, and lower respiratory system connects (abdomen area) with the emotional centres of the brain.

<p>Patsy Rodenburg: <i>The Second Circle</i> (2008, p.71)</p>	<p>Second Circle Breath</p>	<p>‘Intimacy with another human being is an equal exchange of air with and to each other through the placing of the Second Circle breath’. While the discussion here verges towards the phenomenological, there is a physiological dimension in the reference to the ‘exchange of air’. This is to do with control and the aspect of voluntary breathing. As discussed in more detail later, Bolton et al. (2004, p.30) note that ‘voluntary control of breathing’ also concerns the brain’s interactions with the upper abdominal muscles.</p>
<p>Patsy Rodenburg: <i>Speaking Shakespeare</i> (2002, p.35)</p>	<p>Flexible breath</p>	<p>The reference to flexible breath is about being able to locate the breath, and controlling the change in its location in the body. For example, it allows a move away from locating the voice in the throat in trying to reach across large space – rather it allows the actor to ‘touch down to their centre’ with their breath to power the voice. This breath is propelled by the lower respiratory muscles. In physiological terms this relates to action of the diaphragm and the capacity of the lungs.</p>

Table 2.1. Table of metaphorical language used within these voice manuals – focus on writing from three key voice practitioners Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg

The above exemplifies how traditions of voice practice, of which these three practitioners have been considered auteurs, take heed of the most up-to-date physiological research relating to voice and

breathing. This is echoed through much of the exercises and overall pedagogy that we come across in theatre voice manuals in the Western and Anglophone world¹⁴.

Breathing and the Brain

On the subject of breath, we can often focus on the body as if the brain is not part of the discussion. However, it is prudent to consider the important role the brain has in the act of breathing. Theories on respiration and breathing make connections between the brain and the upper abdominal organs and muscles such as the diaphragm and intercostal muscles, around the ribcage (Bolton et al., 2004). It is in the brainstem where rhythmic respiration originates (Bolton et al., 2004, p.26) and ‘final respiratory output involves a complex interaction between the brainstem and higher centres’ of the brain (Homma & Masaoka, 2008, p.1011).

Homma and Masaoka (2008) indicate that there are correlations between these high centres and emotional breathing particularly in reference to the amygdala, which is located in the limbic system. Respiration is altered in a wide range of human experiences, from when one looks at a photograph to more extreme events such as a hostile situation (Homma & Masaoka, 2008, p.1012). They refer here to involuntary, or ‘autonomic’ breathing and suggest that ‘it is not only controlled by metabolic demands but also constantly responds to changes in emotions, such as sadness, happiness, anxiety and fear’ (Homma & Masaoka, 2008, p.1012). They also state that ‘[i]t can [...] be emphasized that changes of respiratory rate are related to individuality’ (Homma & Masaoka, 2008, p.1012) having conducted studies where the breathing patterns differ depending on the personality of human subjects within experiments relating to mental stress and physical load. They also observe that this

¹⁴ The subject of the ‘theatre voice manual’ is examined by Boston – she suggests ‘[t]hat the voice manual is best considered alongside a ‘second text’ that arises out of the practice itself. What I mean by this is that where the manual provides the exercise protocols, the ‘second text’ is evidenced in the individuated live vocal outcome in the studio as it arises out of the immersive studio process of which the exercises are a part’ (2018, p.113).

is not due to the need for, or use of, more or less oxygen but is connected to the higher centres of the brain, particularly the amygdala, which controls ‘negative emotions’ such as anxiety and fear (Homma & Masaoka, 2008, p.1012).

Bolton et al. (2004, p.30) note that ‘voluntary control of breathing’ also concerns the brain’s interactions with the upper abdominal muscles. Specifically, this function is ‘mediated by the descending corticospinal tract from the motor cortex to the diaphragm and intercostal muscles which connects to the cerebral cortex (Bolton et al., 2004, p.30). Calais-Germain observes that there are circumstances and actions that require voluntary control of breathing including yoga where, she states, ‘breathing itself is the object of the entire learning process’ (2006, p.17).

The notion of respiration being ‘controlled’ is an important consideration for this research. It could be argued that when one considers notions of voluntary breathing or breathing that can be ‘learned’ particularly when discussing in terms of voice production certain assumptions are taken regarding the terminology used and this brings philosophical, social and political considerations relating to who or what may be in control.

- **The Philosophical, Social and Political Breath**

I breathe, therefore I am: From Descartes to the East

Tara McAllister-Viel (2009, p.65) argues that ‘[m]odern voice pedagogy emerges from a tradition of understanding the self of the actor through a Western biomedical model, which [she] suggest[s] is viewed through the lens of Cartesian philosophy’. Many nineteenth and twentieth century scientists (Damasio, 2006, Ekman, 1992) and philosophers (Søren Kierkegaard, Raymond Williams, Martin Heidegger, John MacMurray) have reassessed Cartesian mind-body dualism and challenged its key proposition: that the mind and body are separate entities. John MacMurray, amongst others,

suggested that we should not depend on mind-body dualism, either as philosophical standpoint or as a method, and argued that the mind and body were one entity (1991 [1957], p.78).

The term *bodymind* was first used in Western philosophy, as far as we are aware, by Ken Dychtwald in 1977 to counter the seventeenth century theory of dualism as put forward by René Descartes (1596–1650), which pervaded Western philosophical thought up until the middle of the twentieth century, with its legacy still prevalent today (McAllister-Viel, 2009, p.165). Michael Mayer (2011, p.xxxvi) states that ‘joining the two words of *body* and *mind* into one word *bodymind* expresses the core philosophical belief of Eastern thought: body, mind, and spirit are one inseparable whole’.

Japanese philosopher, Yuasa Yasuo highlights the key difference in approach to the mind-body relation in Eastern and Western thought noting that

One of the characteristics of Eastern body-mind theories is the priority given to the questions, ‘How does the relationship between the mind and body *come to be* (through cultivation)?’ or ‘What does it *become*?’ The traditional issue in Western philosophy, on the other hand is ‘What is the relationship between the mind-body?’ In other words, in the East one starts from the experiential assumption that the mind-body modality changes through the training of the mind and body by means of cultivation or training. [..]he mind-body issue is not simply theoretical speculation but it is originally a practical, lived experience (1987, p.18, original emphases).

The consideration of *bodymind* has been a prominent force in the discourse around actor training, particularly that of actor training long before Dychtwald’s coinage of the term; the questioning of dualism was prevalent in the West from the beginning of the twentieth century. As Phillip Zarrilli states,

Implicit to [the psychophysical] approach is the assumption that acting is a psychophysiological process in which it is necessary to first cultivate the actor’s *bodymind* in order to develop the awareness and sensibilities necessary to fully embody, enact, and/or inhabit the actor’s tasks in performance (2002, p.182).

I examine psychophysical actor training in more detail later in this chapter. This research argues that engagement with a psychophysical mode of acting or actor training requires a rejection of the Cartesian philosophy of dualism.

Reading/Living the Social Breath

Here I discuss possible routes to analysis of breath and/or breathing. I am primarily mindful of how these methods of analysis might work in the context of live performance, and in reading, and describing the act of breathing. In the pedagogy that I propose within this thesis, and the practice that underpins it, I do not privilege any mode of analysis. Rather, the pedagogy advocates an eclectic approach in order to find what ‘works’ in the context of the contemporaneous space and time. The subsections below highlight some of the considerations that might occur in the analysis of the ‘breath/ing’ event within the actor training studio and beyond.

Towards a semiotics of breath

While theatre operates as a sign-system through its changing use of theatrical components, the actor, throughout the history of theatre, has generally remained dominant in the shifting hierarchy. For this reason, the actor has proved an important subject of enquiry for semioticians (Aston and Savona, 1991, p.102).

The difficulty of describing the breath is, as noted earlier, much like the issue in denoting the experience and/or effect of voice. As Boston notes: ‘Not only are the effects of voice hard to describe, but so is the degree to which the speaker’s “felt” experience of sound impacts on the perceived outcome’ (2018, p.115).

However, she draws on John Russell Brown to highlight the importance of attempting an analysis of vocal performance advising that

Commentary on minutiae of vocal performance is bound to be clumsy because sound cannot be translated into words and can only with great difficulty be described. Yet an attempt to do this is necessary to show how Shakespeare’s texts are continually open to alternative ways of delivery and how choice of these will affect the speaker’s involvement in the action of a play and, in turn, affect an audience’s experience of its drama (2002, p.71; cited in Boston, 2018, p.115).

A semiotic analysis requires a reading or study of signs or symbols (signifiers), which leads the analyst towards an interpretation of those signifiers into meaning (signified). Given the aforementioned difficulties in defining breath, it follows that reading breath in aesthetic terms would seem an insurmountable task, and we might think to turn straight to phenomenology to make sense of our thinking as is discussed later. Like Aston and Savona (1991), I do not seek to put semiotics forward as a theoretical standpoint, rather this research is arguing for its use as a method of analysis.

If we consider breath in terms of how it relates to the body, and the language used to describe that relationship, a picture emerges of what aspects of breath we can see and hear. We might, for example, be able to see someone holding their breath: the mouth closed, the chest bulging, tension rising in the upper body, and so on; there might be a strain on any vocal sound. We might also be able to recognise shallow breathing: chest going up and down, the rhythm of the in breath and out breath appearing quite fast, the breath unable to support long or complex thought (as you might find in classical text). Aston and Savona point towards American philosopher, Charles S. Peirce’s ‘trichotomy’ to provide a useful and accessible sign system (semiotics) to use in analysis of the theatre event:

(i) *icon*: a sign linked by similarity to its object, e.g. a photograph; (ii) *index*: a sign which points to or is connected to its object, e.g. smoke as index of fire; (iii) *symbol*: a sign where the connection between sign and object is agreed by convention and there is no similarity between object and sign, e.g. the dove as a symbol of peace (1991, p.6).

In the same way that the photograph is a sign for the object it represents, the actor may act as a sign for what *they* represent and the processes that exist within the actor – including the breathing process as might be manifest through physical and vocal signifiers as exemplified above.

Aston and Savona suggest considerations of ‘vocal definition’ in their survey of stage direction appertaining to ‘intra- [implicit in the text] and extra-dialogic [explicitly outlined] stage directions’ (p.81). These include: ‘mode of delivery’; ‘tone: quality of voice’; ‘tone: emotion’; ‘pace’; ‘volume’; ‘rhythm’; ‘mannerism’; ‘emphasis’. Kreiman and Sidtis (2011, p.2) provide the following table to denote ‘some kinds of judgements listeners make from voice’, which break down into three areas: physical characteristics of the speaker; psychological characteristics of the speaker; social characteristics of the speaker:

‘Physical characteristics of the speaker

Age

Appearance (height, weight, attractiveness)

Dental/oral/nasal status

Health status, fatigue

Identity

Intoxication

Race, ethnicity

Sex

Sexual Orientation

Smoker/non-smoker

Psychological characteristics of the speaker

Arousal (relaxed, hurried)

Competence

Emotional status

Intelligence

Personality

Psychiatric status

Stress

Truthfulness

Social characteristics of the speaker

Education

Occupation

Regional origin
Role in conversational setting
Social status (1991, p.85).

This research suggests that a semiotics of breath is possible through a synthesis of analysis of the breathing body through visual and auditory reading, and of the breathing voice through reading the aforementioned considerations that are affected by, and in turn affect, the breath – tone, emotion, pace, volume, rhythm (all of which feed into Kreiman and Sidtis’ table of social characteristics/potential connotations: physical, psychological, and social). As Catherine Fitzmaurice suggests

breath is the vital active ingredient for physical sound-making as well as for the expression of ideas. “Inspiration” denotes both the physical act of breathing in, and the mental act of creating a thought. The expiration (breathing out) or expression of the thought is likewise both physical and mental (1997, p.248).

It is the physical manifestation of the act of breathing and the testimony relaying the embodiment of that experience that has the potential to serve as the content of our analysis of breath.

How can one use phenomenology to read the social and political breath?

Where semiotics can give us a framework of breath as text/meaning through a reading of external signifiers towards a ‘signified’, phenomenology offers us the opportunity to assess breath/ing as an ‘event’. As the phenomenological approach (Husserl & Gibson, 2014 [1913]) requires the analyst¹⁵ to think about their first-hand experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.1), there is a significant dependence on testimony in documenting such an experience. This is particularly potent in cases where the researcher is documenting the experience of others. This research proposes, therefore, as a method of analysis both in research terms and within the pedagogical practice, a synthesis of

¹⁵ In the case of the subject of this thesis, the analyst may be, for example, the actor/student.

observable reality, through semiotics on the part of the researcher or ‘outside eye’, and phenomenology via testimony.

A useful area to explore in determining a phenomenological framework, or language, of breath is that of somatic practice. Somatic practice, underpinned by the philosophy of phenomenology, speaks to transformation (‘the event’) within the individual’s body, and descriptions of ‘the event’ are intuitively based¹⁶. Martha Eddy highlights the context of how notions of somatic practice work in professional arenas, and what is included in terms of somatic movement practice. She tells us that

The goal of the somatic movement professional is to heighten both sensor and motor awareness to facilitate a student-client’s own self-organization, self-healing, or self-knowing. Movement includes the subtler movements of the breath, the voice, the face, and the postural muscles, as well as any large movement task, event, or expression. Somatic lessons often use touch to amplify sensory experience through the skin, the body’s largest organ, and therefore more quickly awaken awareness (2009, p.8).

Cheryl Pallant describes somatic awareness as being

accessible to anyone who turns their attention to it. Somatic awareness means turning into sensations, emotions, images, movement, imagination. We uncover memories stored in the connective tissue of our being. We practice being a body, not just any body but our personal play by play, moment to moment, sensing, feeling, moving body (2018, p.27).

In drawing on language related to somatic practice, such as Eddy’s inclusion of the notion of ‘self-knowing’ and Pallant’s incorporation of ‘sensations, emotions, images movement, [and] imagination’, one can begin to build a framework for a phenomenological analysis of the ‘breath/ing event’ (2018, p.27).

¹⁶ For this reason, phenomenological analysis has been criticised for its potential lack of objectivity (Fraleigh, 2019, p.91).

In the workshop series carried out as part of this study, testimony was utilised via focus groups and classroom discussion. These were important devices in collating the felt experiences of the participants and for them to be able to describe the embodied phenomena of training the breath.

The Postmodern Breath

Jacqueline Martin suggests the following ‘leading characteristics’ are what constitute postmodern theatre, observing that

form dominates over content; fragmentation seems to be the aim; there is no linear narrative; time and place are indefinite as in a dream; there is an ‘irrational’ attitude to the series of events; it is a polyphonic theatre; there is a breakdown in stage-audience communication; there is a lack of communication between the characters; heavy use is made of visual images, stylised movements and groupings; many of the characters seem ‘action-paralysed’; it is an archetypal theatre of myth and ritual rather than a socio-political one; it presents a society which accepts suffering and aggression (1991, p.119).

This explication of postmodern theatre is now nearly thirty years old; however, the themes outlined are not only reminiscent of contemporary theatre/live performance but also echo twenty-first century communication practices e.g., Twitter, which is something I discussed with David Carey when I interviewed him:

DC [David Carey]: with tweeting and other forms of communication getting shorter and shorter, although I've just read they've doubled the length of Twitter so it's now 280 words I think you are allowed, but anyway, it does feel as if communication is getting shorter and snappier except when you look at somebody like Barack Obama and you realize okay no it is still possible to have somebody respect and use rhetoric in a very powerful way. And then we get the reverse of that with the next president who likes to tweet all the time.

DCL [Denis Cryer-Lennon]: Yes indeed. And that's an interesting kind of correlation to thought and length of thought, and attention spans and it's quite interesting how an audience... the audience reception to those two things[/forms of communication].

DC: Yes [...] I think an important [consideration] in terms of modern audience is that – are they quite so prepared, willing, interested to sit and listen to long speeches?

The characteristics discussed above, by both Martin and Carey, where appetites for long, complex speeches have been dampened in favour of short, at times fragmented speech patterns, are something actors and voice coaches have had to consider since the postmodern era began. Yet it is the contention of many voice coaches that if the actor trains the voice and breath through heightened poetic text, where the text offers up long complex thought structures, they will not only be able to deliver the ‘big’ rhetorical speeches of *Henry V* or *Julius Caesar* but will have the flexibility to go from long, complex poetic text, to the more fragmented, shorter modes of communication (Berry 2011b, Linklater, 2006, Rodenburg, 2008). This is of particular importance in the consideration of breath because ‘breathing is linked with the structure of thought and phrasing, which implies that the actor who runs out of breath is really not exploring the structure of the thoughts efficiently’ (Martin, 1991, p.172). Considering this, the act of speaking Shakespeare can be framed as a pedagogy for training the voice and breath, whether for work on classical or contemporary texts and modes of speech.

Losing the breath: joy, sorrow, panic, calm

References to emotion in writing about somatic practices are unsurprising when we consider what Joanna Weir Ouston (2009, p.88) calls the body’s ‘pivotal role in our emotional state and our very sense of self’. In her chapter ‘The Breathing Mind, The Feeling Voice’, she states that ‘[t]he direct link between the emotions and vocal musculature is of major significance’ (2009, p.89). She supports this by outlining various scenarios, in the context of voice training she has facilitated, where students have had extreme emotional (crying; uncontrollable laughter) and physical (dizziness) reactions when working on breath. This is supported by Rebecca Cuthberston-Lane’s chapter in the same edition, ‘Breath and the Science of Feeling’ (pp.71–86). Cuthbertson-Lane’s research asks the question ‘Why do people cry in voice classes?’; or ‘the sudden, spontaneous and often uncontrollable release of emotion, most notably in the form of weeping, though it can take other forms as well’: joy, sorrow, panic, calm (2009, p.72). She tells us that ‘invariably, this phenomenon is attributed to a release of

chronic physical tension as a result of relaxation and breathwork and the subsequent liberation of repressed emotions’ (2009, p.72). By ‘address[ing] unhealthy and inefficient habits of breath and body use’ in students, Cuthberston-Lane tells us, we can aid the release of tensions in the body, which in turn will help in achieving ‘good communication and expressivity’ (2009, p.73).

Cuthberston-Lane, in the same chapter, usefully explores a scientific basis for, what she calls, ‘speaking from the gut’ in terms of emotion and its connection to breath/ing referencing the encouragement often given by voice teachers to their students to ‘speak from their centre’ or ‘core’ (p.82). She proposes that this concept is not simply metaphorical, rather it has support in the, albeit relatively recent, scientific theory of ‘neurogastroenterology’ or ‘Enteric Nervous System (ENS)’. In discussing the process of ‘conscious breathing’ Cuthberston-Lane highlights the connection between the ENS and breathwork, telling us that

Conscious breathing [...] can help to normalize [...] hyperactive systems and processes and it is able to accomplish this via various mechanisms. First the diaphragm makes active contact with the vagus [this connects the ENS to the peripheral nervous system (PNS)], repeatedly stroking and stimulating the sensory neurons of the PNS, thus transmitting a message of calm and harmony that spreads throughout the CNS [central nervous system] (p.83, her emphasis).

She concludes by suggesting that ‘conscious breathing can work in deeper, more complex ways to help free the body of both the tensions *and* the trauma [that one goes through in life]’ (p.84, her emphasis).

Breath, Politics, and Performance

On June 20th, 2019, TV quiz ‘chaser’ (on ‘The Chase’) and stand-up comedian Paul Sinha tweeted ‘[w]hen I said I would fight this “with every breath”, I’d forgotten how much [sic] of those breaths are taken up eating chicken wings’ (Twitter, 2019). The ‘this’ he is referring to here is in relation to his previous announcement that he has been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Beyond the implied

jovial approach Sinha has taken to the new circumstances he has found himself in, what strikes me about this tweet is the implied politics of ‘breath’, both through its use as metaphor, and in the thought of the mortality of its material form that this joke evokes. The politics (or power dynamics) here are manifest in a few different ways. Sinha begins by positioning breath as the source of energy he will use to ‘fight’ his disease. He then speaks to the temporality¹⁷ of breath when he refers to the fact that other things are going on in his life beyond his ‘fight’. As a whole, the tweet elicits thinking about breath and its relation to life and death – which has the potential to bring about the most political of discussions with breath at its centre both as metaphor and its material reality.

Within the field of voice studies, and performance theory, much has been said about the role of voice in politics¹⁸ and politics in voice (e.g., Rodenburg, 2015 [1992]; Werner, 1997). The subject of voice in feminism (Werner, 1997; Lipton & MacKinlay, 2016), queer studies (Jarman-Ivens, 2016; Sadowski, 2013), and cultural theory (Gaines, 2000), for example, have been given significant light in the respective discourses. Similarly, as mentioned in the introductory chapter to this thesis, *breath* has been investigated as a political entity, and breathing as a political activity, via various lens within fields of philosophy, cultural theory and within the wider humanities.

While I do not provide a comprehensive examination of considerations of breath through the lenses of feminism, queer studies, or cultural theory, this research further supports the notion that breath is inherently political, and that this idea becomes observable through performance.

¹⁷ See *The Politics of Time* (Rutz, 1992).

¹⁸ In this section I am concerned with ‘politics’ defined as ‘[t]he principles relating to or inherent in a sphere or activity, especially when concerned with power and status’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2019); in particular, I am thinking of how breath sits within hierarchies of scholarship, pedagogy, and performance practice.

The language used around breath is often political, not least in its relation to the metaphorical language used within breathwork (usually in the context of voice training) such as the textual signifiers of ‘power’, or ‘force’. Also, ideas of ‘breathlessness’, and ‘catching one’s breath’, seem at first glance to sit in a hierarchy when it comes to physiological efficiency. In that regard, when we relate physiology to health, we begin to tread sometimes overtly political terrain (Harrison & MacDonald, 2008; Davies, 2012).

As alluded to, the literature within voice studies and performance theory is somewhat scant on breath’s relation to politics. Therefore, I look to the perhaps an unusual area, in relation to the current study; that of artificial intelligence (AI). Millward and Keens, in their article ‘The Visceral Voice: Breath and the Politics of Vocalization’ explore ‘how we hear and understand emotive content in the human and the synthetic voice’ (2016, p.57). They examine

how the breath or vocal energy and the affordance of sound, along with socio-political and cultural factors have impact on interactive vocalizations and what that implies for the development of the artificial emotionally intelligent voice of the future (2016, p.57).

While the current study is less interested in the relation to AI, this research acknowledges how discussing the voice and breath (or there-lack-of) in non-human/virtual bodies can shed light on the opposite. Significant for this study, is their implication that breath is political, advising

the idea is that the breath drives a number of factors when the voice communicates emotion, mood or attitude. Breath is a fundamental visceral component in producing the sound of a voice. Its function also signals the rhythm of a vocal delivery, as “gaps in speech necessary for breathing are governed by syntactic structure of the language” (2016, p.57).

This explanation speaks to the breath’s role in voice production through its material form (air coming from the lungs over the vocal cords to produce sound) and in its relation to the brain in creating rhythms of voice and speech.

While it is true that much less writing is dedicated explicitly to the subject of breath and politics (power dynamics), in comparison to voice and politics, references and inferences to how breath might be political can be found in voice manuals. In her deeply political voice tome *The Right to Speak*, Patsy Rodenburg starts her discussion of the politics of speaking and voice with reference to breath. She states that ‘we all breathe, and the majority of us speak’ (2015, p.1). Here breath takes on an egalitarian quality, a sentiment, as echoed in many books/chapters on breath, that cannot always be afforded to voice. Yet the breath can also be caged or trapped by tensions within the body – tensions that have been fostered over a lifetime of interacting in a demanding, fast paced world. The ‘freeing’ of the breath is a common theme within voice practice and is most notably accounted for in Linklater’s *Freeing the Natural Voice* (2006). For her, ‘freeing’ the breath is about working through the tensions in the body towards being able to respond to impulse. She explains

The actor’s breathing musculature must be able to pick up rapidly shifting thoughts and feelings engendered by an imaginatively created state of being. For the actor who values truthful expression, breathing control must be diverted from muscle to impulse. The ultimate controls are imagination and emotion (2006, p.44).

The language here of ‘freeing’ and ‘control’ politicises breath in its relationship to the body and voice. There are implied power dynamics to notions of tension being held in the body and in breath being used as a catalyst to free the body of these tensions.

An Emerging Pedagogy: Breath in Actor Training

- **European Perspectives – Early- to mid-twentieth century approaches**

Jane Boston proposes that the training and teaching of the actor, around breath, has historically been more focused on the quantity of breath (2009, p.200). Quantity is generally seen as important to reach the end of a thought and to be flexible in the outward expression of voice, as discussed in the

writings of influential voice coaches Kristin Linklater (2006), Cicely Berry (2011a), Patsy Rodenburg (2005), and Declan Donnellan (2005) amongst others. Boston tells us that not enough attention has been paid to the breath’s relationship with ‘artistic expression’ stating that ‘[i]n tandem, quantity and quality can foster ever more effective artistic outcomes from the training on a greater range of levels’ (2009, p.200).

In her chapter ‘Breathing the Verse: An Examination of Breath in Contemporary Actor Training’, Boston starts with a brief history of how ‘great twentieth century theorists [...] acknowledged the place of breath at the heart of their practice’ (2009, p.199). She argues that ‘contemporary acting theorists from Stanislavsky onwards have suggested that any performer’s connection [to the work] will be enhanced when a clear connection is made with an internal physical need that is equated to the impulse of breath’ (2009, pp.201–202). Along with Stanislavsky, Boston includes Jacques Copeau, Antonin Artaud, and the more recent theorist and practitioner Declan Donnellan, in her list of thinkers speaking of the importance of breath in an actor’s training (2009, pp.199–200).

Along with Boston’s contribution, key texts that help to contextualise actor training include Alison Hodge’s *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2010) and Jacqueline Martin’s *Voice in Modern Theatre* (1991). The former includes essays examining key practitioners and acting theorists of the twentieth century, under the general position that ‘[a]ctor training in Europe and North American is a phenomenon of the twentieth century’ (2010, p.1), whereas Martin’s book deals specifically with voice in actor training.

Other than Boston and Cook’s edition, referenced above, books explicitly addressing the topic of breath and live theatre performance, or breath and actor training are scarce. However, another notable exception is Sreenath Nair’s book *Restoration of Breath: Consciousness and Performance*

(2007), which provides the most extensive examination of breath in performance studies, in terms of synthesising practices and philosophical concepts from the East and West. Along with reviewing writing from the practitioners themselves, for the purposes of this section I lean on Nair as a key source in reviewing the consideration of breath amongst European practitioners Konstantin Stanislavsky, Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, and Jacques Copeau. I return to Nair later also in discussing the influence of Indian practices on actor training.

Stanislavsky

It is with Stanislavsky’s System that I want to start the conversation relating to considerations of breath within actor training practices. Bella Merlin (2014, p.3) calls him ‘the father of contemporary acting practice’. John Gillet (2014, p.xi) tells us that there is ‘[n]o theorist or practitioner of acting [...] as widely read, hotly debated, accepted or rejected, used and misused’ as Stanislavsky. In Alison Hodge’s introduction to *Twentieth Century Actor Training* she proposes Stanislavsky as ‘the first [...] to fully investigate the process of acting and to publish his findings’ (2010, p 2,). Sharon Marie Carnicke, in the same edition and elsewhere, locates the moment more specifically to 1912 when he opened ‘the First Studio [in Moscow] to develop his System for actor training’ (2009, p.34). There does not seem to be much dispute in how fundamental Stanislavsky and his work in the First Studio (and subsequent studios) was to Western actor training throughout the twentieth, and into the twenty-first, centuries. Merlin highlights, for us, the importance of the role of breath to Stanislavsky: it was ‘a fundamental tool for Stanislavsky in terms of acting processes’ (2014, p.34). She cites him directly noting that

Till you realise that the whole basis of your life – respiration – is not only the basis of your physical existence, but that *respiration plus rhythm forms the foundations of all your creative works*, your work on rhythm and breathing will never be carried out in full consciousness, that is to say, as it should be carried out, in a state of such complete concentration as to turn your creative work into ‘inspiration’ (p.34, original emphasis).

In his monograph *Acting Stanislavski*, Gillet positions breath with the following list outlining its function in context:

- Breath connects mind, body and voice: we get an impulse, we breathe, we act.
- It can centre and calm us
- It drives the will of the actor through verbal and physical action.
- It enables communication and *radiation*: with the in-breath we absorb circumstances, and with the out breath we respond with verbal action – our impulses and experience are released by breath through the vibrations of sounds and words.
- It connects us, through the solar plexus, to physical and emotional experience.
- It connects us to the space and the audience (2014, p.204).

He states that ‘Stanislavski emphasized that the actor’s thought, feeling, and breathing had to adapt to the rhythm of music or the action of the play’ (2014, p.204).

Nair also recognises the place of breath in Stanislavsky’s theory and practice in training actors:

Stanislavski works with silent moments and non-verbal communication in order to link actors’ breathing into theatrical communication, an approach which is crucial to enhance the actor’s expressive quality rooted in her body-mind dynamics. Another significance of Stanislavski’s understanding of the role of breathing in actor training is that he establishes a link between the flow of breath and the flow of energy into theatrical communication through the actor’s non-verbal physical work (2007, p.139).

Nair tells us that Stanislavsky’s thinking on breath, and the basis of his breath-related exercises are rooted in yogic practices (the influence of yoga on actor training in general is explored later).

Artaud

As Grotowski tells us, French actor and director Antonin Artaud ‘left no concrete technique behind him, indicated no method. He left visions, metaphors’ (2012, p.118). This may be to do with his personality, as Grotowski suggests, or his rejection of what he regarded as ‘the rationalist and reductive tendencies of Western theatre’ (Hodge, 2010, p.6). However, while there may be no method bequeathed from Artaud, what remains is a theoretical footprint through his ‘visions’, as

Grotowski's calls them (2012, p.118). Hodge (2010, p.6), despite her omission of any full chapter on Artaud's theories, does acknowledge that he has 'provided a reference point for many in the second half of the twentieth century', particularly through '[h]is seminal collection of essays *The Theatre and its Double*'. This is picked up by Boston, as she tells us that 'central to the acting theories of Antonin Artaud' were the concepts of breath in the Kabbalah: 'the breath of life that God infuses into His creatures' (Benedetti, as cited by Boston, 2009, p.199). She explains that for Artaud the breath could influence the soul (2009, p.199), a connection that Stanislavsky had made also. Jean Benedetti translates this idea of Artaud's from the original French language version of *Le Théâtre et son Double* (1938), into the following:

I had the idea of using knowledge of the breath not only in the actor's work but training for the actor's profession. For the knowledge of breath illumines the colour of the soul, it can even more rouse the soul and allow it to blossom.
(Benedetti, 2012, p.227)

Boston connects this 'profound relationship between internal impulse and external expression' (2009, p.200) as outlined in Artaud's idea, to the twenty-first century writing and practice of Declan Donnellan (b. 1953). As Boston notes, Donnellan expresses his views on breathing when an actor is portraying a character in simple and concise terms: 'When actors do not take in enough breath, they savage their text and butcher the longer thoughts' (Donnellan, 2005, p.156; and cited in Boston, 2009, p.200). Donnellan also posits that

[L]ike movement, respiration is one of the seven characteristics of all living things. Breathing is crucial for life. We breathe naturally – otherwise we would all be dead. We breathe naturally according to thought. That is simple. What is not so simple is why we interfere with this process. Why do we force ourselves to breathe at odd times? If you want to know to breathe, the answer is simple: 'When you want to' [his emphasis] (2005, p.155).

He advises his reader that the actor cannot decide when the character breathes; not even the character decides when to breathe. This, he tells us, is always dependent on the target: '[t]he target

always decides when to breathe’ (2005, p.155). The target that Donnellan is speaking of relates to the intended recipient of any given action by the character/actor, be it object or subject (2005, p.14).

In Nair’s first chapter of his *Restoration of Breath*, ‘The Location of Breath’ (pp.11–47) he draws on, amongst other things, Antonin Artaud’s ideas of performativity: ‘the dynamics of the actor’s breathing, linking consciousness and performance’ and extends this with philosopher Irigaray’s more detailed explanation of the performativity of breath:

- a. Air is the fundamental element and the only place where all the mental and physical activities of human beings are taking place.
- b. It is the invisible other [Nair’s emphasis] that produces meaning and forms of representation of poetry and thoughts
- c. Without the materiality of air, there is no representation of thought or art and there is no exercising of physical movements, perception and therefore, no cognition (Nair, 2007, p.46).

The connections that Nair provides regarding Artaud and Irigaray’s thinking through notions of performativity are important for this current study as they are expressive of breath having poetic and performative dimensions. It also serves as a starting point for anyone considering the centrality of breath ‘where all the mental and physical activities of humans are taking place’ (Nair, 2007, p.46).

This drives Nair to conclude that ‘as breath is physically located in the body, it is also located, epistemologically, in the functioning of performativity as a process of production and reception of meaning’ (2007, p.47). This locating of the breath in physical and epistemological terms, again, has its roots in yogic practices.

Grotowski

Grotowski ‘berated those teachers who teach a “correct” or “normal” way to breathe’ (Słowiak & Cuesta, 2007, p.147). He believed that a teacher ‘should only intervene in respiration if there is a

clear problem, because any intervention can hinder the actor’s organic process’ (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2007, p.147). However, despite his view that there should be a lack of interference by a teacher or director in the breathing patterns of an actor, Grotowski did recognize a superior mode of breathing; what he called ‘total respiration’, which he noted is how babies and animals breathe: starting in the abdomen and then engaging the chest (Grotowski, 2012, p.148). He maintains, however, that ‘one must not be dogmatic about this’, stating that ‘[e]very actor’s breathing varies according to his [or her] physiological make-up’ (Grotowski, 2012, p.148).

Nair (2007, p.140) points out that Grotowski’s thinking on breath was, like Stanislavsky, influenced by yoga in his view that ‘abdominal diaphragmatic breathing’ is a superior mode. Nair suggests that, despite his thinking and writing on modes of breathing, Grotowski

never fully considered breath as something which could be trained in order to help actors either to achieve a different level of understanding the function of the body and mind or feel them experiencing the emergence of a different level of energy explored through breathing (Nair, 2007, p.142).

Grotowski did, however, believe that ‘breathing exercises [could] help the actor improve their voice power’ (Nair, 2007, p.141).

Copeau

For Jacques Copeau, who was particularly enamoured by the writings of Stanislavsky (Rudlin, 1986, p.xiii), ‘[b]reathing [...] was [...] the *primum mobile*¹⁹ in his quest for gestural sincerity and vocal concord’ (Rudlin, 2010, p.66). He believed that ‘a voice which does not breathe becomes dull, collapses on itself and becomes sad. It flounders like someone dying’ (Boston, 2009, p.199). For him, ‘breathing controls everything’, from reading aloud, to character transition, to sincerity and that

¹⁹ *primum mobile*: the most important source of motion or action.

Reading out loud requires perpetual *tours do force* of breathing. Above all, when a dramatic text demands constant switching from one tone to another, from one movement to another, from one character to another, to different ages and sexes. [...] One has continually to get a grip on oneself, to master one’s own sincerity, change attitude and tonality, posture and rhythm, never let oneself get wrapped up in the text. The gymnastics of the play-wright. [...] Breathing makes lightness possible (Rudlin, 2010, pp.66–67).

Nair suggests that Copeau prioritised ‘voluntary control over an involuntary nature of human breathing. [...] His approach tends towards identifying techniques of using breath in delivering the text successfully and convincingly’ (2007, p.137).

- **Migration of these ideas to Britain**

Martin identifies the moment when actor training in Britain moves from a taxonomy of practices to an interrelated pedagogy of ‘movement, voice and speech’ as advocated by Michel Saint-Denis (1897–1971, nephew and apprentice of theatre practitioner Jacques Copeau), co-founder of the London Theatre Studio with George Devine and Marius Goring. The London Theatre Studio, formed in 1935, was ‘the first school which aimed at training an all round actor’ (Martin, 1991, p.157).

Saint-Denis embraced Stanislavsky’s theories in their ‘rejection of theatrical artificiality’ but was dubious of how his thinking would connect when using the poetic language of the classics (Martin, 1991, p.157). Martin suggests that Saint-Denis wanted to create an integrated practice between Jacques Copeau’s teachings, including in terms of vocal practices, and the ‘discoveries of Stanislavsky’ (1991, p.157). Martin tells us

What [Saint-Denis] was aiming to do was to equip his actors with the ability to interpret the classics as well as modern plays in all their variety, but although the acquisition of a strongly developed technique of body and voice was of prime importance, technique was never to be allowed to dominate or supercede invention (1991, p.157).

While the initial transmission of Stanislavsky’s ideas and practice to Britain was, as David Shirley puts it, ‘erratic and piecemeal’ (2012, p.40), the role of Saint-Denis’ school in bringing Stanislavskian ideas to Britain was paramount. This is acknowledged by Brook et al., when they marry the moment of the school’s foundation to the U.K. publication of Stanislavsky’s *An Actor Prepares* (1937). He notes that

Stanislavsky reaches these shores in 1937 through a book called *An Actor Prepares*, and ... many of us at that time paid great attention to it ... and we put into practice quite an amount of Stanislavsky in 1937 in a school which was called the London Theatre Studio (cited in Shirley, 2012, p.42).

As the ‘British Grotowski Project’ (2006–2009) website points out, there is scant analysis of Grotowski’s influence on British theatre and actor training – something they sought to address²⁰.

Their website states

[Grotowski] has a central position in Britain in theatre studies and a still vital influence on theatre-making, especially devising and actor training in what is loosely termed Physical Theatre. However, teachers, students, academics and practitioners interested in this work both theoretically and practically, struggle with a lack of precise knowledge and access to primary sources, key texts, and good translations of his main treatises, as well as clearly articulated and accessible documents of and reflections on his practices. There is also no systematic analysis of his influence on British theatre-making and university drama studies since 1965 and his initial work with Peter Brook at the RSC (GtR, 2018).

Peter Brook, in the preface to Jerzy Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), tells us of the invitation he extended to Grotowski to work with a group of actors at the Royal Shakespeare Company, teaching them some of the principles of his practice, which he developed in his Theatre Laboratory in his native Poland. Brook did this in part to address the ‘long English tradition of avoiding seriousness in theatrical art’ (in Grotowski, 2012, p.11). While Brook never explicitly shared the precise content of the workshops the group had undertaken with Grotowski, his advocacy of the

²⁰ The project succeeded in ‘enabl[ing] a more embodied understanding of Grotowski’s work, crucial to understanding his actor training’ (University of Kent, 2019).

work and the philosophies that underpin it, is likely to have aided its dissemination amongst British theatre practitioners when *Towards a Poor Theatre* was published in 1968.

It was also, in this publication that Grotowski provided a commendation of Antonin Artaud’s theories and philosophy. This was two years before Artaud’s own *The Theatre and its Double* was first published in the UK. Victor Corti’s preface in a 1999 reprint of the publication states

That this text has been used as basic working material by Peter Brook and the Royal Shakespeare Company, by Grotowski’s company in Poland and by the Living Theatre, gives some idea of its past influence (1999, p.1).

As the canon of ideas and practice above, from Stanislavsky to Grotowski, were being developed, starting in earnest at the beginning of the twentieth century, the foundations for a new actor training institution were being developed. In 1906 Elsie Fogerty established the Central School of Speech-Training and Dramatic Art (now known as the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) – this is something explored further later in this chapter.

- **Influence of Indian practices/ideas**

The Yoga Factor in Stanislavsky’s ‘System’

Nair (2007, p.78) states that ‘Yoga is the means to understand the interdependency of all [...] kinetic ideas’ other than karma, māya, and Brahman²¹. He tells us that Yoga is ‘commonly understood [as] union and communion’ in terms of sharing intimate thought processes on, what is often perceived to be, a spiritual level (2007, p.78).

²¹ Nair tells his reader that ‘the core of Indian philosophy is based on “four interdependent concepts of ‘kinetic ideas’” (2007, p.78) which are: *karma* (universal causality), *māya* (illusory), *Brahman* (absolute reality) and *Yoga* (union and communion).

Maria Kapsali (2010, pp.69–70) highlights the importance of Yoga in the actor training practices of Stanislavsky, as has been mentioned here earlier. She states that ‘[o]ne part of his multi-faceted work is the influence of yoga and the adaptation of various yogic concepts in the exercises he developed’ (2010, p.69). Referring to the Stanislavsky ‘System’ of actor training, Sharon Marie Carnicke presents Stanislavsky’s considerations for actor training as a list of fourteen ‘through–lines’ (2009, p.2), which includes the ‘line of Prana’ (as cited in Carnicke, 2009, p.2). Gharna C. Chang states that ‘in yoga, prana refers to a vital essence in the atmospheric air, which when absorbed by yogic breathing practices, as in pranayama yoga, recharges the human body with energy’ (as cited in Wegner, 1976, p.89). Wegner tells us that in ‘classic yogic discipline’ prana can be translated directly as ‘breath’ (1976, p.88). This definition is supported in the more recent writing and practice of B.K.S Iyengar when he expresses that ‘[p]rana means breath, respiration, life, vitality, energy or strength’ (2001, p.22). Stanislavsky called the transference or sharing of prana between actors, and between actor and audience, ‘spiritual communion’ (Bennett & French, 2016, p.202), which aligns with Nair’s definition of Yoga mentioned above. Bennett & French state, in their recent study of Stanislavsky’s training and rehearsal techniques for the psychophysical actor, that ‘[d]eveloping your awareness of and ability to regulate prana [...] can [...] be advantageous for your use of energy, breath and voice in acting’ (2016, p.202). The connection here of breath and voice, through prana, and the embedding of yogic concepts within Stanislavsky’s theories (Wegner, 1976, p.85), arguably places the consideration of breath central to his acting practices.

As discussed earlier, Gillett highlights breath as a major consideration for Stanislavsky when he tells us that ‘Stanislavski emphasized that the actor’s thought, feeling, and breathing had to adapt to the rhythm of music or the action of the play’ (2014, p.204). Gillett stresses that Stanislavsky’s emphasis on ‘energy flow’ or ‘prana’ and his ‘teaching on speech and voice [...] will come as a surprise’ to those

who associate him ‘erroneously’ with ‘naturalism and tension’ (2014, p.15). To put it into context of live theatrical performance Stanislavsky’s states that

[s]cenic action is the movement from the soul to the body, from the center to the periphery, from the internal to the external, from the thing an actor feels to its physical form. External action on the stage when not inspired, not justified, not called forth by inner activity, is entertaining only for the eyes and ears; it does not penetrate the heart, it has no significance in the life of a human spirit in a role (Stanislavsky, 1981, p.49; also cited in Boston, 2009, p.200).

Jane Boston argues that Stanislavsky ‘clearly associated’ (2009, p.199) the ‘inner activity,’ spoken of here, with breath. As noted earlier, Stanislavsky’s influence (and by proxy the influence of yogic traditions as derived in the East) on the realm of Western actor training is unmistakable, and its legacy is still remarkably prevalent today, including in the practice of psychophysical actor training.

Psycho-physical actor training

As noted earlier, Cartesian theory of dualism has endured from the seventeenth century until the present day, despite resistance emerging from the early to mid-twentieth century onwards within many areas of scientific theory (Chiesa, 1998, p.353) and philosophy (Heidegger, 2012 [1927]; Lovejoy, 1930). It has also met with rejection from many within performance theory, voice practice (Wilson, 2009), and the wider area of actor training (Zarrilli, 2009).

According to Phillip Zarrilli, Stanislavsky ‘was the first to use the word “psychophysical” to describe an approach to Western acting focussed equally on the actor’s psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting’ (2009, p.13). Zarrilli highlights how understandings of the mind (from psychology) and of the self (from philosophy) were seen as separate from the understanding of the physical body, which he states ‘reflected the long-term Western binary dividing mind from body that so problematically crystallized in the mind-body dualism of [...] Descartes’ (Zarrilli, 2009,

p.13). The term 'psychophysical' came out of a post-Darwinian desire of scientists and philosophers to reconcile this split (Gordon, 2009, p.36).

Stanislavsky recognises this reconciliation as something already built in: 'in every physical action there's something psychological, and there is something physical in every psychological action' (Stanislavsky, 2008, p.180). Zarrilli tells us that Stanislavsky drew this conclusion from two key sources: the first being from Theodule Armand Ribot's psychophysical theories, and from his limited knowledge of Indian yoga.

Psychophysical actor training has developed significantly over the course of the twentieth century with Zarrilli being one of its key proponents. For Zarrilli the cultivation of *bodymind* attunement, and the way in to a psychophysical mode of practice begins with the breath – he notes that he has

woven together a complementary set of psychophysical disciplines that begins and ends each day of training with a series of simple, breath-control exercises. The training begins with the breath because it offers a psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind. Attentive breathing provides a beginning point toward inhabiting an optimal state of bodymind awareness and readiness in which the “body is all eyes” and one is able to “stand still while not standing still” (2009, p.25).

For Zarrilli, the methodologies made available to us via yogic traditions and philosophies underpin much of psychophysical actor training practice. Connections, he suggests, are brought to bear between breath, thought, and action –

Being 'on the edge of a breath' captures the moments of necessary suspension always present in acting as the actor rides the breath/thought/action – that moment where the possibility of failure is palpable (2009, p.40).

Gillet furthers this connection of psychophysical training to breath with the reminder that

[i]n ancient Greek, *pysche* is the word for breath, giving a wider meaning to *psycho*-physical. Breath connects our mind, body, and voice. We breathe in circumstances and

action and then interact with others, the space and audience. Breath drives our will through words and action (2014, p.11).

It is here where we start to see the connection of the psychophysical, and its relation to yogic practice in ‘the line of *prana*’, to voice studies and practices.

- **Development of Voice Practice and Rise of the Voice Coach**

As the place of breath training within theatre practice, acting conservatoires, and university acting courses has been dependant so much on the advance of voice teaching, I briefly note some key moments in the twentieth century voice practice, that culminated in, and fostered what Andrew Wade calls ‘The Rise of the Vocal Coach’ (1997, p.133) and its position in the twenty-first century, postmodern and postdramatic context.

The Central School of thought

The idea of voice practice being central to actor training was embryonic, and developed thereafter, from the outset of Central in 1906, where its founder Elsie Fogerty prioritised speech above all and

So came into being the Central School of Speech-Training and Dramatic Art – 1906. We chose our title to indicate the intention of finding a definite central body of principles for a stage training, avoiding extremes of theory of practice: and we held to our conviction that a proper training in Speech must come first (Fogerty, cited in Susi, 2006, p.17).

As noted in the introduction of this thesis Fogerty held poetry as the highest of artforms. She stated of poetry, ‘[t]he arts of song and of speech owe less homage than any arts to the need for material wealth, they touch the most human, and therefore the most divine, of our capabilities’ (1929, p.241). She also believed that the relationship was mutually beneficial as indicated by the opening line of the introduction to her tome *The Speaking of English Verse* (1929, p.ix): ‘The art of poetry owes a great deal and wonderful power to the fact that it has for its medium man’s faculty of speech’.

Fogerty’s veneration of the poetic form is, arguably, a political position – this is evident when she states

[t]he poet [...] whose mastery of words gives them an appeal so universal that it traverses time, race, class, individuality itself. And it is this “universality” that distinguishes above all other qualities the greatest poetry (1929, p.x).

This idea of the poetry, and in turn the performance or speaking of poetry, traversing ‘time, race, class’²² and its move towards universality is still deeply embedded in voice practices today. Fogerty highlights an inability of ‘many scholars’ and ‘the poets themselves’ to effectively speak verse, which she links to a deficiency in utterance (1929, p.107). She contends that ‘[t]he first and foremost important element in training utterance is the voice’²³, which is ‘a musical instrument having for its source of power the breath’. It is the contention of this research that breath serves as a common language, if not the ‘universality’ Fogerty talks about in relation to poetry, and it is in this relationship that a pedagogical approach can be fostered between breath training and speaking Shakespeare. It is Fogerty’s, and therefore Central’s, belief in the importance of voice in speech training that I want to note first as a key moment in the twentieth century history of voice training practices. As noted in the introduction, Boston (2018, p.120) describes Fogerty’s impact: ‘she not only championed voice at the level of actor training, but also enhanced its position as a discrete subject at the highest levels of theatre and educational leadership’.

The Fogerty-Alexander Collaboration

²² There is no mention of gender relations here as Fogerty did not mention it. I, too, do not add gender as a key consideration at this point as it something that needs its own space for debate, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. See Werner (2001) for a feminist analysis of voice practice.

²³ Incidentally voice is something that Fogerty believed could not be taught in a book – it had to be done orally: ‘No description, symbol or definition, no diagram or mathematical calculation will ever convey the sense of the beauty of vocal tone’ (1929, pp.107–108).

The next moment I want to note here as key to the history of voice training, and in turn breath pedagogy, is when Fogerty invited F.M. Alexander to collaborate in carrying out workshops at Central in the early days at Central. There is not much written about this collaboration; however, Tara McAllister-Viel points to an aspect of this work that appears to have pervaded the practice of key voice teachers and their writing throughout the twentieth century, which is ‘Alexander’s rejection of mimetic training traditions in his day in order to develop the student’s “own characteristics” and “individual manner”’ (2007, p.101). McAllister-Viel also highlights the influence of this collaboration on the practice, and writing of, what Sarah Werner has called the ‘holy-trinity’ of voice training: Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg²⁴:

- All three began their writings on practice, just as Alexander began his writing [...]
- [...] bad ‘habits’ were physically realized as excessive muscular contraction, or unnecessary ‘tension’, inhibiting the process of vocalization.
- [...] all three practitioners touch the student’s body in a way similar to Alexander’s use of touch as a part of ‘directing awareness’.
- Once the students became aware of th[eir own] ‘tension’, the three trainers used their Voice exercises to ‘release’ the muscular contraction, in part by using adaptations of Alexander’s process: first, inhibiting the bad ‘habit’ through a process of ‘introspection and analysis’, then substituting a series of instructions called the ‘orders’ which direct the body to perform ‘new and correct’ habits
- One way the body/voice released this ‘tension’ was through a more efficient skeletal/muscular relationship, via Alexander–based spinal alignment practice.
- The three trainers also designed Voice exercises to help ‘recondition’ the student’s body/voice, relearning how to function in efficient ways, similar to Alexander’s ‘reeducation’ process.
- All three Voice practitioners called this training approach a ‘freeing’ process, similar to the way Alexander described his training as developing a ‘freedom’ in performance.
- All three turned away from the 1950s ‘voice beautiful’ school of training which relied on mimetic training practices toward a more ‘individual’ approach, like Alexander’s rejection of mimetic training traditions in his day in order to develop the student’s ‘own characteristics’ and ‘individual manner’ (2007, p.101).

²⁴ Please note, McAllister-Viel (2007, p.101) provides a comprehensive list of connections, which is not quoted in full here.

The final point above in McAllister-Viel’s analysis of the connections between Alexander and the work of Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg is, I believe, a pivotal moment in voice practice in the twentieth century. The turn away from ‘voice beautiful’ towards individuality is, this research argues, also a turn from aesthetic consideration of voice to a practice that has breath training at its heart.

Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg

The importance of these practitioners is noted by McAllister–Viel (2007, p.99) in her article ‘Speaking with an International Voice’, where she tells us that the ‘Western Voice approaches’ founded by them are ‘internationally recognized’ as they ‘had been teaching overseas extensively throughout their careers’. She states in the same article that they are ‘three of the most recognized and respected master Voice teachers of the twentieth century’ (2007, p.100). All three have also written prolifically producing many acting and voice training books further disseminating their approaches to voice training.

In these books, all three discuss breath as a fundamental consideration for training actors’ voices.

Berry addresses what she sees as basic functions of breathing in terms of performance, noting that

breathing is fundamental on two levels. Firstly because [...] by taking the breath down to your centre the whole chest will contribute to the sound and make it fuller, richer and more expansive. But also because [...] if you take time to breathe you actually feel your physical weight as a person, you become calmer and you take time to receive and think – it therefore makes you more confident (2011a, pp.34–35).

Berry’s reasoning here incorporates ideas of sound and physicality and how breathing can get the actor to a point where they are in a state to ‘receive and think’; what David Carey calls ‘the responsive breath’ (2009, p.185).

Linklater reflects on the connection between breathing and what she terms as ‘the profound goal of the serious actor [:] to transform into other characters in performance’ (2006, p.43). She states that

[a]s long as the actor’s breathing patterns are inflexibly held in habitual muscle usage, the hoped-for transformation will only be skin deep. To enter and live the life of a different character, one must be able to let go of deeply ingrained breathing patterns and temporarily allow new behavior from the psyche of the character one is playing to govern the breathing musculature. The events that happen the dramatic character must be experienced in the breathing process if that character is to be believed and his or her voice is to be authentic (2006, p.43).

The unlearning of this ‘habitual muscle usage’ is the starting point for Linklater in the exercises she presents in her now acclaimed book *Freeing the Natural Voice* (2006). This is particularly addressed in the first two chapters (or as she entitles them: ‘Workday[s]’) of her book. Here she introduces her reader to concepts of ‘Physical Awareness: The Spine’ (2006, p.31) and ‘Breathing Awareness’ (2006, p.43).

Patsy Rodenburg also connects the idea of transformation of character with the ‘transformations of breath’. She posits that ‘[o]ur physical and emotional transformations are reflected in the transformations of breath. A finely wrought text will have these changes and rhythm shifts built into it’ (2002, p.170). Like Linklater, Rodenburg concentrates on breaking habitual tendencies concerned with breathing in everyday life. For her

most of us tend to speak in shorter thoughts [than those often found within a playtext] with a fractured rhythm using faster and shorter breaths. A lot of [her] work is about breaking and extending the short breath pattern of an actor in order to release the thought and emotion of the text (2002, p.170).

As McAllister–Viel has highlighted, all three of these voice teachers have started their writing from the perspective of practice ‘by examining physical as well as social and environmental habits as the source of vocal inhibitions’ (2007, p.101).

In focusing here on the practitioners herein, I do so, fully acknowledging the place of the generations of voice teachers and actor trainers that came before and after Berry et al. However, this research argues, that none have done more to raise the profile and shed light upon the discussion of breath training within voice practice.

From training to practice

The final moment I point towards briefly, for now, as one of great import in the history of twentieth century voice training is when in 1969 Trevor Nunn extended an invitation to Cicely Berry to be the resident voice coach at the RSC. This is the moment where the ‘real foundations of voice work in theatre were laid’ (Wade, 1997, p.135) and where voice practice was no longer just a domain for the student in training. Rather this was when the notion that the actor’s work on their voice was a never-ending mode of practice. Before the advent of having a resident voice coach occurred to those in charge at the RSC, the idea of training was already established and very much on the agenda. Peter Hall outlined this when he states that

We believe that a company can only be created if each actor, in addition to his [or her] main work, is continually developed and reexamined by training in the Studio and by taking part in experiments in public. We want to increase this work (Hall, as cited in Wade, 1997, p.134).

This philosophy of having training at the heart of the practice is still at the core of the RSC’s mission (Rsc.org.uk, 2019). This ethos was to prove revolutionary in terms of voice practice and training in the context of professional theatre way beyond the studios at the RSC with many theatre companies across the UK employing voice coaches as common practice to work on individual productions. The act of invitation to Cicely raised the profile of voice within professional theatre ever since.

Living, Breathing Shakespeare

McAllister-Veil highlights how relatively recent developments in voice training practices have the potential to have a ‘major impact [...] on Voice pedagogy [and] assumptions about actor training’ (2007, p.97). This potential has arisen, as McAllister–Veil points out, from the founding of such organizations as the Centre for Performance Research (CPR) in Aberystwyth, Wales, the International Centre for Voice at the Royal Central School for Speech and Drama (RCSSD), and the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA). As I have mentioned McAllister-Viel also highlights the importance of contributions from voice teachers Kristin Linklater, Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenburg, and Arthur Lessac and the dissemination of their ideas through their international teaching and writing (McAllister-Viel, 2007, p.97). This ‘global phenomenon’ is a consequence of a century of work and developments in both actor training and voice pedagogy. The current schools of thought and theories on voice production and approaches to speaking and acting Shakespeare’s text have been centuries in the making; however, it is the twentieth century that appears to have made the acts of speaking and acting Shakespeare an increasingly international and interdisciplinary endeavour.

- **The Shakespeare Acting Manual**

While there is a lack of writing looking specifically at the role of breath work in twentieth and twenty-first century approaches to training the actor in speaking and acting Shakespeare, there is an abundance of manuals on ‘acting Shakespeare,’ ‘speaking Shakespeare,’ ‘playing Shakespeare’ etc. And though these accounts rarely broach the subject of breath they often locate themselves in the context of vocal delivery.

Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it
to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you
mouth it as many of your players do, I had as
lief the town crier had spoke my lines.

(*Hamlet*, Act 3, Sc 2; as cited in Hall, 2003, pp.10–11)

The above lines from *Hamlet* (1603), when the title character is instructing his hired players in how to deliver the lines he has written, are taken by Peter Hall (2003, p.10), co-founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), as the views of the author, William Shakespeare, himself. This is an interpretation that is somewhat reinforced by Carolyn Sale as she expresses, in her article "Eating Air, Feeling Smells": Hamlet's Theory of Performance', that it 'cannot be doubted' that this play 'offers its own theory of performance' (2006, p.145).

Hall goes further in this when he proposes that Shakespeare is communicating instructions through his text telling his reader that

Shakespeare's text is scored precisely, Shakespeare tells an actor quite clearly when to go fast, when to go slow, when to pause, when to come in on cue. He indicates which word should be accented and which word should be thrown away...The actor's task is to engender a set of feelings which will make this textual shape, this end result the true one. This brings us closer to Shakespeare's meaning than any other form of analysis I know (Hall, 2003, p.41).

Hall alludes to the position that Shakespeare was writing his plays as performance, as opposed to, or maybe as well as literature; however, we know that Shakespeare's text as performance, and as literature exists, albeit as a double life, in that it is necessary, at least some of the time to treat these lives as separate entities. Either way, the sense in Hall's instructions is that an actor can gain a lot by looking to the text for direction.

John Barton, the other co-founder of the RSC, took this directional attribute of the text to the small screen in 1984 when Channel 4 screened a series of workshops entitled *Playing Shakespeare* (1984), an account of which was published in book form the same year, with the same title. Barton suggests that Shakespeare was thinking of his actors when he wrote. For instance, Barton believes 'that

Shakespeare wrote in blank verse partly to help actors phrase out of doors, where they perhaps needed to control their breathing more carefully than in indoor theatres, [...] it made life easier for actors’ (1984, p.36). Like Hall, Barton holds that Shakespeare lays down clear instruction on how to speak and act his work. According to Barton, as he writes in his opening chapter, at this point (up to 1984) very little had been written ‘about how to act [Shakespeare]’ (1984, p.6).

It is apparent, however, as highlighted by Petronilla Whitfield (2015, p.47), that since then we have had a multitude of books from directors, actors and voice coaches on how to ‘act’ Shakespeare. Notable examples on the subject of acting Shakespeare come from the voice training books by Cicely Berry (1973, 2011a; 2011b; 2012), where she often refers to speaking Shakespeare for stage in her discussions of the voice and the actor. Kristin Linklater specifically addresses the subject in *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice* (1993), as does Patsy Rodenburg in *Speaking Shakespeare* (2005), and Barbara Houseman in *Tackling text [and subtext]* (2008) amongst others.

Furthermore, there has been a trend from the late 1980s onwards from many actors to share their experiences on acting Shakespeare, from individual actor/authors including Oliver Ford-Davies (2007), and John Gielgud (1997). There is also a series of books called *Players of Shakespeare* (ed. Smallwood, 1985–2007), which is a collection of essays from various ‘mainstream’ actors, including David Tenant, Simon Russell Beale, Frances De La Tour, amongst others. All these accounts focus on the experiences of playing different characters within Shakespeare plays. The tendency of the contributors here is to lean towards an autobiography of a particular part of any one of the actors’ lives where they happened to be ‘playing Shakespeare’. In most cases the essays discuss the actors’ understanding and relationship with any given character and/or text in a search for meaning and emotions to play on stage. They often describe a process of literary analysis as a catalyst for making performance. There are some instances in the collection, however, where performance terms are

used, particularly with reference to the use of iambic pentameter, and there are a smaller number of references to how to manage thoughts via speech. While these essays offer valuable insights to acting processes, there is little consideration of breathing throughout the compendium of books.

- **Shakespeare’s Advice to the Breather**

I use this space in the thesis to review how books dedicated to speaking and acting Shakespeare have considered and dealt with breath/ing.

The title of this section evokes Peter Hall’s book *Shakespeare’s Advice to the Players* (2003). Here, Hall does not spend much time on breath/ing apart from two references in his brief section ‘An Actor’s work on himself’. The first of these is in relation to his instruction to the actor to maintain the line structure within the text. He states

[...] the line structure must always be paramount. The actor should accordingly learn the ends of the lines when he learns the words. Breaths should only be taken at the end of the line. Breathing in the middle of the line destroys the line. Modern actors are used to breathing when they naturally run out of breath.[...] this does not do for Shakespeare (p.55).

The language Hall uses tends to espouse the notion that the actor is an instrument for the text; his second reference to breathing states: ‘The [actor’s] lungs indeed should be for Shakespeare a kind of bagpipe – always full of air and always being replenished. The text can then be sustained and shaped’. This idea of actor as an instrument, is also advocated by Peter Brook (Martin, 1991, p.80). Martin tells us that ‘Brook wanted the text to play [the actor], rather than they the text’.

While this research concedes that Hall’s notion of breathing at the end of a line has been used as a mode of practice in approaching breathing for speaking Shakespeare in terms of its efficacy in making ‘good’ performance, the metaphor of actor as instrument is somewhat problematic in terms of

agency and autonomy²⁵. The pedagogy proposed within this thesis moves away from the primacy of text approach to a performer/student-centred one.

More recent contributions to the field of speaking and acting Shakespeare include Giles Block’s *Speaking the Speech: An Actor’s Guide to Shakespeare* (2014) and *Acting Shakespeare’s Language* (2015) by Andy Hinds. The former deals with two questions, which are, as Block states in his introduction, ‘why does Shakespeare write in the way he does, and secondly, how can actors get the most out of these incomparable plays?’ (2014, p.2). It is in his introduction that he introduces the idea that Shakespeare, when writing, ‘reads [his characters’] thoughts; he hears their breathing; he recognises how their emotions make them hesitate, shaping the expression of a particular thought into several parts’ (2014, p.3). Block addresses the link between thought and breath further in his second chapter ‘Thoughts and Thought-units’ (2014, pp.16–33). Here Block states that

Before we speak, we have a thought. We can ‘see’ someone having a thought; we see them take a breath. They take the breath so as to express the thought, though in practice our thoughts come so thick and fast that many of them never make it into words (2014, p.16).

This concept of rapid thoughts is the same practice that Rodenburg, as we have seen, addresses in her work with student actors. Block’s postulations on breath and ‘thoughts’ have, it would appear, been influenced by Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg. The main difference, however, between his work and theirs’ is that he puts Shakespeare’s characters at the centre of his process, whereas Berry et al. start with the actor through breath.

²⁵ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to problematise the language that is sometimes used in relation to training actors to speak Shakespeare’s text, however, Richard Paul Knowles writes on this subject in his chapter ‘Shakespeare, Voice and Ideology: Interrogating the Natural Voice’ in Bulman’s *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance* (1996).

Andy Hinds dedicates a chapter to ‘Breathing the Verse’ (2015, pp.154–167) in his book *Acting Shakespeare’s Language*. Hinds posits that student actors tend towards two main problems when it comes to breathing the verse: ‘[t]aking breaths in the wrong place’ and [a]ttempting to say too many lines on the one breath’ (2015, p.154). This leads Hinds to introduce his guiding principle in considering the breath in speaking Shakespeare, that is to ‘[b]reathe the line, A) in a manner that will best help to convey the particular explanations, orders etc. that the lines contain; and B) in a manner which does not inappropriately distort the containing form of the verse’ (2015, p.155). While these instructions are perhaps not as specific in their terms as Block’s, they do express ideas on breathing in terms of ‘thoughts’ or ‘explanations, orders etc’ as Hinds puts it.

Within Linklater’s *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice* she underpins the entirety of her instruction on acting and speaking Shakespeare with the importance of breath when she states

The natural voice has two to three octaves of speaking notes capable of expressing the full gamut of human emotion and all the subtleties and nuances of thought. To release its potential we must dissolve the limitations imposed by twentieth-century upbringing and awaken the dormant power that brings breath into every cell of the body and restores largesse of expression and stature to the human-actor-being. Instinctively, actors know that Shakespeare offers them this greater scope (2010, p.7).

All of these texts in some way fill the gap in writing about ‘how to act [Shakespeare]’ that John Barton was speaking of in 1984, albeit from various perspectives. The more recent examples such as Block and Giles, while containing a pedagogical approach lean towards an instructional tone, which seems to exist despite whoever is taking the instruction. In other words, by concentrating on a fixed mode of practice, where the individual characteristics of the actor are not taken into account, there risks exclusion from the pedagogy proposed by this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE – Methodology

This chapter begins by exploring the idea of a multi-method approach explaining the rationale and the characteristic ‘multi-voicedness’ (Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish, 2014) of such an approach.

Focus is then given to the interview process with voice coaches. In this endeavour, this chapter reflects on the rationale for using this method of enquiry before considering the strategy used for interviewing using a semi-structured method of questioning. This brings us to the design and structure of the questions themselves; this chapter reflects on the decision-making process and how this played out when it came to carrying out the interviews in earnest.

Then a review is carried out of the method choice of workshops with student participants. This section reflects on the rationale of using the method before discussing the workshop design and reasoning of such.

The chapter then concludes with the ethical considerations in relation to the recording of material relating to the workshops and a brief note concerning how the findings are presented within the thesis.

A Multi-Method Approach

- **Rationale**

At the outset of this research, the key aim was to explore the potential of, and processes involved in, the creation of a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. An exploratory qualitative

approach has been applied using voice practitioner interviews, workshop design, workshop observation, and researcher reflections.

Through these methods the research sought to undertake the following:

- examine the significance of, and historical perspectives on, breath within actor training for speaking Shakespeare;
- make the case for reframing breath training as a critical pedagogy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare;
- position breath training as an inclusive learning strategy for speaking Shakespeare;
- and finally, explore how a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare might fit into/work alongside existing pedagogies for speaking Shakespeare.

In addition to the framework above, including understanding the historical context in which this research sits, and its effect on the lineage of practice discussed, current perspectives were sought via contemporary voice experts with significant experience in training actors in the realm of speaking Shakespeare. Rooted in the exploration as set out by the framework above was the central enquiry of this research:

- To query/investigate the possibility and viability of ‘A Critical Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’

There was a set of sub-research questions which underpinned the key investigation:

- What potential discussion might arise, that may prove instrumental to this research, from an exploration of breath in its disparate contexts and perspectives; historical, epistemological, physiological/anatomical, philosophical, social and political?
- How do these contexts and perspectives affect breath training within actor training traditions and practices?

- How has breath training been used by key actor training practitioners and voice coaches for speaking Shakespeare?
- In examining how these practitioners have used/use breath training in their practice, how can I apply the ideas and theories to my own pedagogy?
- How can a breath pedagogy be useful in training actors to speak Shakespeare?
- How can a breath pedagogy be implemented in actor training, and performance-related university courses?
- What is the place of criticality within a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare?
- How can breath training be used as an inclusive learning strategy for speaking Shakespeare?

A multi-research method approach reflects the multifaceted nature of the questions set out above, which serve to support and inform the central investigation.

Writing in the context of interactive research approaches, Joseph Maxwell states that a ‘significant part of the research [occurs] before it [becomes] clear what specific research question’ or questions might arise. This proved to be the case with the current research – the questions above emerged as the research activity played out – the set of enquiries were simultaneously driving the investigation as well as emerging anew in view of the changing contexts and narratives of the research as time went by.

For example, when theory and pedagogical approach started to formulate as consequences of the analysis being undertaken of data from the interviews with voice coaches, the decision was taken to create a set of workshops as an experimental platform to test such. Rea Dennis, drawing on Denzin and Lincoln (2017) amongst others, points to the need for the ‘interpretive research paradigm when

the researcher wants to *understand* a social world’ (2004, p.97, her emphasis). In the context of this research the ‘social world’ is situated within the pedagogical realm of actor training in a university context, with specific reference to developing breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare. This emphasis on a social world emerging as a focus for this project was not something that was at the forefront of the investigation when the research began. Rather the research initially set out to theorise breath training for speaking Shakespeare; however, when it came to the application of such a theory, important questions emerged around the criticality and inclusion (or exclusion) in arenas of actor training.

The straddling of the disparate but connected worlds of theory and practice in relation to pedagogy, make the multi-method approach a more robust enterprise on the fundamental level of testing theory in the corporal reality that is being theorised about. In other words, in interviewing, the researcher was able to extrapolate theoretical perspectives, and in carrying out practical workshops a discussion on practice could be founded. By engaging both methods, a dialogue between theory and practice was able to emerge and develop.

- **‘Multivoiced’ research and the challenge of scope**

The idea of utilising a multi-method approach, where those methods include participants and interviewees, heightens the awareness of the multi-voiced nature of the research as a whole. Other voices come to bear elsewhere in the thesis via literature and history, all of which inform the research in various ways.

Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish acknowledge the importance of ‘multivoicedness’ in research analysis and writing observing that

[this] reflects paradigmatic shifts in the social and psychological sciences away from individualistic and mechanistic epistemologies, toward more dynamic, social

alternatives that recognise the situated and intersubjective nature of meaning-making (2014, p.671).

Their argument is rooted in the ‘tradition of dialogism’ (2014, p.683) and recognising patterns and contradictions as being characteristic of the consolidated voice that emerges in a written piece of research.

For this study, this has led to the consideration of the function of the voice of the researcher within the research and the writing. The practice of consolidating these voices has led to recognising the types of voices existent within this research, for example:

- The expert voice;
- The knowing voice;
- The theoretical voice;
- The student voice;
- The uneasy voice;
- The contradictory voice;
- The pedagogical voice;
- The teacher voice
- The researcher voice;
- The participant voice;
- The group voice;
- The developing voice.

The role of the researcher/writer here is not only to consolidate these voices but also to pit them against one another; to support them; to evoke and provoke them and to bring in to focus dominant patterns spoken by them.

In acknowledging the voices within any given study, we also highlight potential absent voices and the inherent challenge of scope that this presents. For example, it is beyond the scope of this research to include all ethnicities, nationalities, or embodied experiences relating to breath training for speaking Shakespeare. This is why it is important to emphasise the contexts pertaining to, for example, location, demography of participants, experience of practitioners interviewed, and researcher bias. However, rather than frame this as a failing of research, we can see this as an opportunity to build on the research in the future – by recognising the gaps, where voices and experience are missing or not accounted for. I hope that this research gives a viable starting point for more voices to be included in research on the topic of breath training for speaking Shakespeare.

Interviewing

- **Rationale**

The central enquiry of this research is to investigate the possibility and viability of ‘A Critical Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’. For this to be tested, it became important to ask, to which field this query is most pertinent. Maggi Savin-Baden and Claire Howell Major describe the researcher’s relationship with their ‘field’ of study noting that

Researchers tend to spend extended and extensive time in a research setting. The length of in-field time is necessary for gaining adequate data. Doing so is necessary for understanding the world of the participants, which in turn is necessary for understanding the meanings that they communicate [...] Data collection involves fieldwork: going out to collect data from people, places of work, homes, and cultures [...] Data collection, therefore, involves looking, asking, noting, describing, listening, and interpreting (2013, p.14).

It was important, therefore, to identify the setting or field one was most likely to find verdant data, in relation to the research topic and where the research questions were more likely to find relevant and worthwhile answers. The field choice was informed by these key factors:

- The subject of the thesis – key signifiers being **breath training** and **speaking Shakespeare**. The first of these sitting in the context of performance pedagogy and the second in the performance of Shakespeare’s text.
- My area of expertise and research interest – as a teacher and researcher in the areas of actor training and voice studies for live theatre.

Therefore, voice practice as it pertains to acting was the most explicit setting to find a route to the data necessary to begin the empirical research for this study. This field is the centre of a Venn diagram of other discourses implicitly connected to the study and practice of voice training for actors: actor training, Shakespeare studies, and pedagogy.



Figure: 3.1 Venn diagram of other discourses implicitly connected to the study and practice of voice training for actors: actor training, Shakespeare studies, and pedagogy.

It was decided that interviews would be conducted with five voice practitioners with experience of teaching students in the context of speaking Shakespeare’s text.

- **Selecting the interviewee/setting out the criteria**

In selecting interviewees there are the competing challenges of specificity in terms of answering a query/investigating a defined area and having a cohort as diverse as possible.

Having established voice practice as the field most central to this research after surveying the literature (breath training and speaking Shakespeare), it was decided that interviewing voice coaches with a great deal of experience in training actors for speaking Shakespeare was key to choosing who to interview.

- **Defining the contemporary voice practitioner**

Jane Boston, in her book *Voice* (2018), sets out a framework for twentieth century voice pedagogies (p.114), which goes some way to helping the reader understand the complexities in defining the voice practitioner and voice practice itself, and how the context of both have evolved over time. Boston uses the example of voice as applied to Shakespeare to highlight the difference between the late nineteenth century voice pedagogue’s approach to that of the twenty-first century stating

Voice applied to Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century, for example, is supported by the instructional values contained in numerous manuals with their clearly stated rules about ‘good articulation’ (Anon. 1894). This shifts by the end of the twentieth century where there is a stronger emphasis on the physical embodiment in actor training (2018, p.115).

Boston illustrates how Patsy Rodenburg, ‘a leading contemporary voice practitioner’ (2018, p.115), exemplifies such a shift in pedagogical approach: ‘[Rodenburg] identifies body, breath, voice, and speech as equal factors in determining the success of vocal production where earlier generations of practitioners put more emphasis on articulation’ (2018, p.115).

A key transcending factor, which underpins the work of voice pedagogues through time, Boston states, is that ‘[v]oice for theatre performance is, in the main, determined within the training studio or rehearsal’ (2018, p.114).

The factors above were driving forces in selecting the demographic of interviewees insofar as both of Boston’s observations gave an insight to what the field of contemporary voice pedagogy looked

like and in what terms the contemporary practitioner may be working. In other words, who is currently working in the context of studio-based voice pedagogy, and who has experience of applying their pedagogy to training actors for speaking Shakespeare.

It is also important to note that, while twentieth and twenty first century British voice pedagogy is described as a ‘global phenomenon’ (McAllister-Veil, 2007, p.97), it is the British context that this study is primarily concerned with as it has been applied in British educational institutions where actor training occurs.

Before searching for voice practitioners to interview, some of the more pragmatic choices needed to be made, for example, how many interviews to carry out. The considerations of time restraints pertaining to qualitative enquiry were factored: interviewee selection; interview design; transcribing the interviews; analysing the data. Other considerations included depth of experience in voice practice and where that was applied to training actors to speak Shakespeare’s text, and diversity of interview cohort. In the initial research design, there was the intention to observe the voice pedagogue’s practice alongside interviewing them about their approaches.

With these parameters in mind, a search within key organisations for practitioners began such as the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA), Centre for Performance Research (CPR), and the International Network for Voice (at RCSSD).

The request of observation of practice was turned down by most perspective interviewees for various reasons; some advised that the current teaching they were embarking did not speak to the research topic; others felt uncomfortable allowing their teaching sessions to be observed without the

collective permission of their students; and for most it was scheduling issues that restricted the observations from occurring.

Given these limitations, the research design was reassessed and amended from an ethnographic investigation: using observation of practice as led by selected voice teachers alongside interviewing those same practitioners as a way to immerse the researcher in the world of the practice and investigate the philosophies that underpinned their practice. The research was then redesigned: first investigating the philosophies and ideas of these practitioners through interview and then applying these to a series of workshops. Characteristics of the methods of observation and pedagogical documentation, and action research were utilised to formulate novel perspectives in the context of creating a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare.

Considering the new design, a list of practitioners was created to approach for interview; this list was shortened by pragmatic dynamics of scheduling. The new design called for four to six interviews to be carried out: five interviews were achieved.

- Simon Reeves, Head of Voice at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
- Lyn Darnley (1949-2020), Freelance Voice Teacher and the Head of Voice at the Royal Shakespeare Company
- Sarah Case, former Head of Voice at Italia Conti Academy, and the then Head of Voice at Fourth Monkey Actor Training Company
- David Carey, resident Voice and Text director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival
- Joan Mills²⁶, freelance voice teacher and Director of the Giving Voice Festival, Voice Director at the Centre for Performance Research and former Fellow in Voice and Performance at Aberystwyth University.

²⁶ It should be noted that I was taught in voice practice at Aberystwyth University by Joan Mills.

All five practitioners have a wealth of experience in training actors for speaking Shakespeare, all leading from the position of voice practice. Three of the five practitioners described above trained and/or taught at Central (Reeves, Case, and Carey); while Lyn Darnley trained in South Africa with Catherine King (a student of Central’s founder Elsie Fogerty and long-time Central principal, Gwyneth Thoburn). Joan Mills followed the University route (Hull, Drama and American Studies) before becoming artistic director at Theatr Powys. The Natural Voice Network website states

Her practice is influenced by her understanding of voice in performance from a wide range of cultures, particularly since 1980, through her research for Project Voice and from 1990 by her experience of directing the international voice project Giving Voice, at the Centre for Performance Research (2021).

- **Interview design and structure**

In considering the structure and content of the interviews, it was necessary to reflect on the purpose of this part of the investigation: to contextualise contemporary voice practice in reference to training actors in speaking Shakespeare and to collate contemporary pedagogical approaches and philosophies within that context.

It was decided to use a semi-structured interview format, to allow for more open-ended questions to be utilised – and to give opportunity for interviewer responses and interactions where appropriate. The semi-structured format balances ‘allow[ing] interviewees to express their perspectives on a topic or issue [with] allow[ing] for comparable data that can be compared across respondents’ (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.359).

A key characteristic of the semi-structured interview is having the opportunity to move between the general to and the specific, allowing for the contextual content to lead into the heart of the enquiry.

The questions were set out under four categories:

- General/Context – used to build rapport; open-ended.

- Narrowing the scope – place of breath within their voice practice.
- Similar to above – changing subject to their thinking on actors training to speak Shakespeare.
- Narrowing further; getting to the heart of the enquiry: the role of breath training for actors in speaking Shakespeare.

The above framework dictated the groupings of the specific questions. The question design was as follows:

General/Context

- How would you describe the work that you do?
- What are you working on at the moment?
- Do you have a specific philosophy, in its broadest sense, that drives your practice?
- Is there a particular exercise or activity that you like working with, or that you find particularly effective with actors/students?
 - (sub question if needed) What is your training/experience background?
 - (sub question if needed) How/Why did you come to voice work?

Narrowing the scope

- Where do you place ‘breath’ in your own practice?
- Some approaches to voice and speech training seem to privilege breath, whereas others almost seem to ignore it. Do you have a perspective on this range of approaches?
- From your professional experience, how do you think one can tell when watching a performance if an actor has considered breath in their training or preparation, or what kind of training they have had in relation to breath?

Narrowing the scope – change of perspective

- In the context of your own practice what is your specific view on Shakespeare?
- What does an actor need to speak Shakespeare’s text?

- Are there any highlights in your work in working on Shakespeare?

Further narrowing – heart of the enquiry

- Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

The final question is the central question and serves as the conclusion of the interview, in part to build the context for the interviewee – in other words, to have already established the realm in which they are answering this question and, also as a point of consolidation of the discussion that has preceded. The question is not pedagogy specific in order for the respondent to give their answer in terms of professional theatre practice as well as framing within their teaching practice. In each interview there was never a need to follow up this question to link to pedagogy because every interviewee responded connecting their pedagogies to professional practice.

- **Some pragmatic choices**

The choice was made to keep the interview between forty-five minutes and an hour where possible, partly to not infringe on the interviewees’ busy schedules more than was necessary (i.e. an offer of an hour long interview is likely a more enticing prospect than two hours), and to ensure a level of focus was maintained within the format.

It was also decided that, where possible, face to face interviews would be preferable to phone or email. This worked out for three of the interviews, and two were held via video link.

- **Transcribing the interviews**

Each interview was recorded for the purposes of transcription and thematic coding. Within the research design it was planned that a thematic analysis would be carried out on material collated from the interviews. For this reason, the form of transcription focussed primarily on the words said and did not take account of other characteristics such as tone, pace, pauses etc. or paralinguistic features (e.g., ‘um’; ‘ah’). It was more important to capture context/s, ideas, and diversity of

pedagogical approaches and philosophies that emerged from the data – setting up for thematic analysis of the words said and descriptions given.

- **Thematic Analysis**

Braun and Clarke describe a process of thematic analysis as follows:

- Familiarise yourself with your data
- Generate initial codes
- Search for themes
- Review themes
- Define and name themes
- Produce the report (2006, p.87)

In the context of this study, the first step of this process was achieved by listening to the interviews before, during, and after transcription. This immersive process of becoming familiar with the data allowed for a more dialogic mode of analysis between each stage set out above. In other words, themes and ideas emerged in conjunction with the codes or theme groupings – the process was not one after the other, rather it was a constant back and forth. The codes/groupings found were:

- Training the breath: philosophies/approaches;
- Student-centred approach to training;
- Technique (not systems);
- An integrated practice;
- The breath/thought correlation; and
- Breath and Shakespeare’s text.

These codes were used as umbrella terms that encapsulated more specific themes and ideas that were within the data. These also served as the defined themes, which formed the foundation for writing of the interview analysis.

- **Producing the report**

Using a thematic mode of analysis allowed for a synthesis of empirical research and surveying existing literature. For example, in the analysis chapter I discuss the theme of technique as it emerged within the interviews alongside drawing out what has been written before to set up context as well as monitoring potential shifts in perception over time. This was a useful approach in that it served as reference point to view the pedagogical perspective that emerged from the interview data.

Workshops: Researching Pedagogy

- **Rationale and methodological basis**

Having carried out the interviews, and studied the data via a thematic analysis, the decision was made to run a series of workshops with the title ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’. The objective of this was in part to test themes and ideas that emerged out of the interview data in addition to what I have learned from reading and the development of my own practice and pedagogy.

Undertaking the workshops and generating data for analysis spanned several different methodological approaches. While the process shared some characteristics with the research method of observation, labelling the research approach as such was not without issue, given that the context was more controlled. However, I do want to acknowledge similarities in the approach taken in this research to that of observation, where the researcher is deemed a complete, active participant. Complete participation is described by Savin-Baden and Major as a process where

The researcher is fully immersed and is an active participant; it also means that the researcher is an accepted member of the community at the research site and is engaged in insider fieldwork (2013, p.396).

In the context of this research, I acted as a complete participant by designing and leading a series of pedagogical workshops to be observed and reported on for research purposes.

Similarly, there are characteristics of the approach of ‘pedagogical documentation’ as described by Nind, Curtin, & Hall as

A combination of observation, record-keeping, analysis and reflection on the pedagogical process (often carried out in collaboration) to inform understanding and action for teachers and researchers (2016, Location 205 of 5915).

All the activities described above occurred within the context of the workshop series carried out. However, similar to the method of observation, pedagogical documentation traditionally works from the perspective of an ‘outsider’ looking in, which could not be said for this research.

Another method that has similarities to the approach in relation to the workshop is that of action research. I use the term action research here to denote the collaborative nature of the workshops in terms of generating data and perspectives on pedagogical practice; I draw on the definition outlined by Reason and Bradbury where they note that

Action research is a framework for inquiry that seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people (cited by Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.245).

Drawing on various definitions including the above, Savin-Baden and Major come to a description of action research which denotes the approach taken in the current study. They define action research

as a method of qualitative research the purpose of which is to engage in problem solving through a cyclical process of thinking, acting, data gathering and reflection. Action research at its heart is about changing and improving practice and understanding of practice through a combination of systematic reflection and strategic innovation (2013, p.245).

As this section of the study is heavily dependent on the actions and perspectives of its participants, a collaborative approach to enquiry was adopted. This approach is supported by Kemmis and

McTaggart, when they suggest that ‘the approach is only action research when is it collaborative’ (1988, p.5).

It is important to recognise this dynamic to position the participants as co-investigators; and the researcher as a consolidator of perspectives to inform the overall research proposition. This study takes heed of Reimer and McLean’s position, in the context of pedagogical research. They state that

When we conduct educational research, students are, to varying degrees, implicitly engaged as co-researchers. As co-researchers, students observe, ask questions, describe situations, and analyze concepts. Through questionnaires, interviews, observations or other means they offer their expertise to us, the official university based researchers. Most researchers rarely think of students beyond their role as participants, albeit critical ones, in research (2015, p.69).

As with the position outlined here, in the context of the workshop series, the student participants were instrumental as co-investigators, where their observations, lines of enquiry, and analysis formed part of the research output through the various modes of data gathering used. This ultimately informed the pedagogy and pedagogical approach this research proposes.

While I acknowledge the similarities of the research activity carried out here to that of the methods of observation, pedagogical documentation, and action research, it is important to note that I resist labelling the methodology here as one thing or another because the approach does not fit into any of the categories seamlessly.

- **Workshop Design**

The workshop design derived, predominantly, from themes, ideas, and approaches to breath training with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare that emerged from the interview data. The manifestation of this took various forms; for example, one workshop was based on a thought proffered by Simon Reeves: that, as a general rule of thumb, one thought equals one breath. Other workshops were based on exercises that the interviewee discussed where breath and Shakespeare

were used in tandem. In addition, there were workshops that were based on the work of voice practitioners not interviewed, e.g., Patsy Rodenburg’s work on her second circle concept (2008), and her thoughts on breath within her book *Speaking Shakespeare* (2002). Below is an extract (in italics) from the researchers field notes relating to the workshop series outlining of the structure and content of the workshop series.

The workshop series took place from November 2018 to February 2019 in the Atrium building at the University of South Wales, Cardiff city centre.

WORKSHOP ONE – 13th November, 2018

This was an introductory session where I went through the consent form and asked the participants to spend a little time reading it and to call me over if they had any questions or needed anything clarified further. Once everyone had gone through the forms, I introduced the research topic, working title, and principles of my pedagogy followed by a question-and-answer discussion on such. The main activity of this workshop was a word association exercise whereby participants were asked to write or draw their associations with the words ‘Breathing’ and ‘Shakespeare’ on Post-it notes, and then stick them to the corresponding ‘Breathing Board’ or ‘Bard Board’.

WORKSHOP TWO – 20th November, 2018

In this session, we had a recap on the previous workshop; I advised that ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’ were back and any time in any session the participants had a new discovery or thought to please feel free to ‘post-it’ on the board.

*We then read some text from Shakespeare’s **Romeo and Juliet** – prologue to Act Two, Scene One – I explained at this point that all text I will be using within the series will be from the first folio (1623).*

Participants walked around the room familiarizing themselves with the text. We then met in a circle and read the speech together. We also had volunteers read the text aloud by themselves. Then we noted our observations of the breath/ing dynamics when married with reading this text, from both perspectives of experience as performers and observation of others.

I then introduced the work of Patsy Rodenburg’s Second Circle concept (2008) – explaining the realms of first, second, and third circles – with the second being the optimum for Rodenburg; the second circle, for her, is about being connected to others, and being present.

On this basis, participants were asked to pair up and to consider six questions Rodenburg poses, considering both on breath/ing in everyday life and breath whilst doing the reading exercise we had just undertaken:

- 1) Where do you feel physical movement in your body as you breathe?*
- 2) Do you regularly hold your breath?*
- 3) Can you hear your breath?*

- 4) *How often are you aware of your breath, either in panic or in joy?*
- 5) *Are there situations when you know your breath will fail?*
- 6) *Are there environments that block your breath?*

We then re-joined the wider cohort in a circle and discussed some of our responses to these questions. We then carried out the key exercise of the session, The Second Circle, with the participants given the following instructions:

Holding your hand up approximately a foot and a half from your face – move through the following states: a) First circle: breathe halfway to your hand; b) Second circle: breathe to your hand; c) Third circle breathe beyond your hand

Then back to breathing to the hand; then take the hand away and pick a point across the room and breathe and connect with that; then take in and connect to the entire space.

We then read the text with this connection in mind. We compared this reading experience to the one pre-exercise.

After this we had a volunteer read the text in Second Circle with their piece of paper (in place of the hand). Then in Second Circle with a point in the room, and then taking in the entire space.

We discussed our observations and post thoughts/phrases/words on to the ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’.

WORKSHOP THREE – 27th November, 2018

The objective of this session was to explore Joan Mills’ exercise, what she calls ‘A load of old balls’, which was discussed in my interview with her.

*We started by looking at some text – **Hamlet** – Act One, Scene Two – first folio. I later explained the logic for this: It is not in iambic pentameter like previous text we have used, it is also not the most famous speech associated with Hamlet – as not to be ringing in our ears from performances we may have seen.*

We read it to ourselves, we read it together and then we had some volunteers read it individually. We made some observations – sometimes comparing the text with the text from last week.

We then started the exercise, putting the text aside for now. I introduced a giant inflatable ball for us to work with. We started by gently throwing the ball to each other – the instruction given by me was to follow what I do and I asked participant to pass the ball back to me from time to time for me to change the rules every so often.

When the ball came back to me, I started to put the intake of my breath on the catching of the ball, I chose someone in the room to throw to, making eye contact to connect and then focused the outbreath on the throw. After doing this for a few times, and when a lot of the room started to catch on to the rules, I said the rules aloud to make it explicit and we threw for a little longer with the out breath staying focused on the throw. We then took some time to make some observations. I then asked that participants pick a word from the text to send on the out breath (throw, outbreath, and word all connecting) - we threw for a while sending the outbreath and word to another person in the circle.

We then moved on to a full line of text – or a line up to the punctuation mark whichever participants felt more comfortable doing on one breath. The action for this was to begin the line at the back of swing of the throw and to release the ball (end of the swing) on the last word of

the text. For those sitting (on a chair, on the floor) there was some adaptation to this, e.g. rolling the ball, instead of throwing and so on. The key here was to have the breath coincide (in length, pace and rhythm) with the line you were saying (one line, one breath). We then took some time to make some observations.

I then introduced a tennis ball – and asked that participants gently throw the tennis ball instead of the giant inflatable ball. We then introduced the idea of letting the ball/line/breath go at end of the line instead of throwing. So again, retrieve ball, connect with someone, start saying the line on the back of the swing, and let go of the ball/line/breath at the end of the line.

I then asked participants to pick a word within the line and send the ball on that word making sure to say all the text even once you let the ball go. We then took some time to make some observations.

Then, returning to the ‘one breath, one line’ concept and bringing back the ball, I asked participants to give the lines using the tennis ball to each other in chronological order with the text in hand. We then took some time to make some observations (purposefully not written out here). I then asked that we retain the concept and getting rid of the ball – and just read all together – ‘one breath, one line’, not worrying if this means there is a pause (however long) between lines. This time, however, if there was a punctuation mark within the line, I asked that participants to still use the same breath to get to the end of line – and observe the phenomena that occur. We then took some time to make some observations.

The last thing we did was to post some thoughts on the ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’ with new discoveries, comments, feelings, and observations. We discussed some of these at the end.

WORKSHOP FOUR – 4th December, 2018

The core objective of this session was to look at David Carey’s exercise exploring ‘the responsive breath’ – he also sometimes refers to this as ‘tidal breath’ – which he does by getting students/actors to acknowledge their own ‘natural’ breath rhythm – more on the specifics in a bit.

*Due to the responsive idea within the exercise I chose a duologue as the text for this week. The text was Demetrius/Helena in Act Two, Scene One, from **A Midsummer Night’s Dream**. I explained that ‘traditional’ gender roles that may be implied in the text didn’t matter to me, so the choice in pairing/casting was up to the participants. We had two pairings and one trio. The trio, serendipitously, served as a different kind of experiment/exploration beyond what was planned – each actor took the lines in turn; therefore, the line one actor was saying was from a different character from the last.*

The participants were given around 10 minutes to run through the lines in their pairs/trio to familiarize themselves with the text. We then saw each pair/trio perform the text. After each one in turn, we discussed how the actors experienced the breath dynamics in performing the piece. We also discussed how the listeners experienced the performance both in narrative and in performance terms.

We then went through the exercise with the following instructions:

Seated on a chair, feet grounded on the floor if possible. Begin to pay attention to your breath cycle, noticing how your body moves as you breathe in and out – e.g. where in your body moves as you do this action? We are not looking to change the breath rhythm here, rather we are acknowledging it. Bring your focus to the moment of change from the in breath to the out breath. Notice the sensation in your body as you move from one type of activity to the other. Notice the deepest point in your torso that you can feel this happening.

Mark the moment of change with a little sound - ‘huh’ on the out breath – it can be quite quiet at this stage just to mark the moment, just enough voice to hear it. Repeat this several times then bring in stronger commitment to the sound so that it gets slightly louder – then play with the lengths of the vowels, play with the pitch of the sound. Note these dynamic shifts and then go back to the original marking of the moment with the quiet ‘huh’ – and relax. We then took some time to make some observations.

We then went back to the text – the first pair, we went through the exercise (shortened) and straight into the text. We then took some time to make some observations noting, in particular any marked different in reading the text pre- and post-exercise. We then had the trio perform, again we went through the exercise (shortened) and straight into the text and reflected similarly.

We then had the final pair, again serendipitously, with a different kind of experiment – both participants had English as their second language - having performed the text in English pre-exercise – I asked that, if they wouldn’t mind, they translate some of the text into their respective first languages (Bulgarian and Romanian). In both cases the participants found pre-existing translations online and used them. They then performed the text in their own respective first language. We then reflected as a group – noting in particular dynamic changes in the breath/ing between reading in first and second language.

The last thing we did was to post some thoughts on the ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’ with new discoveries, comments, feelings, and observations.

WORKSHOP FIVE – 15th January, 2019

*Text used was from **The Tempest** – Prospero – Act Five, Scene One. The choice of text was mainly because the text has varied punctuation making way for potentially varied physical challenges (to do with voice and breath). I thought this may marry well with the way Sarah Case uses breath in her practice of integrated voice – which was the core theme of this week’s workshop.*

We started by getting familiar with the text, walking around saying the text to yourselves – some antiquated/obscure words (and spelling of words) needed clarification during this exercise e.g. eis = eyes. We then read the text together and had a couple of volunteers read the text on their own. We then took some time to make some observations.

The objective of the session was to explore Sarah Case’s practice of training the integrated voice – she has written a book on the subject.

I interviewed Sarah in 2017 and asked her what exercise she found most effective. She responded with ‘the baby f’ (sometimes ‘the little f’) – taking the ‘f’ on a journey. What she means by this, she explains, is that the student/actor shapes an ‘f’ with the mouth letting breath

drop out through the ‘f’ on the out breath. Another part of this exercise is to take the ‘f’ on a physical journey around the body from tip to toe.

We started by me asking participants to find a comfortable position in the room where they were able to have one hand resting on their navel, and the other resting on their back (around the kidney area) and to firstly, acknowledge and visualize the space between their hands as the centre, as a space of possibility – the possibility of the breath coming into the whole area between their hands, without it being forced.

The following instructions were given:

Stream the breath out on the little ‘f’. Take the ‘f’ on its journey first externally (tracking the breath with your fingers around the body) and then internally (through visualization). Bring the ‘f’ around the whole body – head to toe. Repeat with a ‘v’, then a ‘sh’, then a hum, and then back to the ‘f’.

We then read through the text again – firstly altogether, then each participant read 4 lines of the text; chronological going through the speech. We then took some time to make some observations.

As ever the last thing we did was to post some thoughts on the ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’ with new discoveries, comments, feelings, and observations.

WORKSHOP SIX – 29th January, 2019

*The text used for this workshop was Kate’s monologue at the end of **The Taming of the Shrew** (Act Five, Scene Two). The objective of this workshop was to explore the idea put forward by Simon Reeves when I interviewed him, that as a general rule of thumb, one thought equals one breath.*

The participants were asked to walk around the room reading the monologue to themselves to become familiar with it. Then they were asked to pair up and examine a section of the monologue – each pairing having a different third of the monologue to explore. I asked the participants to identify and discuss where they felt the thoughts began and ended in the text – they did not have to agree on where the thoughts were – they were only to discuss and make notes on their printouts indicating where they felt the thoughts lay.

We then came back into a circle and each pair together performed their respective monologue sections. We then reflected on where the thoughts lay in each section of the monologue. They were then asked to return to their pairs to apply the one thought/one breath rule using the thought structure they had just come up with. Within their pairings one participant would perform the text followed by discussion and feedback from their partner.

The last thing we did was to post some thoughts on the ‘The Breathing Board’ and ‘The Bard Board’ with new discoveries, comments, feelings, and observations

WORKSHOP SEVEN – 5th February, 2019

The main aim of this workshop was to explore the relationship between breath and character – with the overarching question ‘does the breath change as the character changes?’

As a starting point we reflected on Patsy Rodenburg’s proposition: ‘Every human being breathes differently and Shakespeare writes each character with a different rhythm of breath that changes as they change’ (2005, p.35).

*To investigate this, we looked at two monologues from **Macbeth** both spoken by Lady Macbeth. The first of these was from Act One, Scene Five and the second from Act Five, Scene One.*

First, all the participants walked around the room familiarizing themselves with the first monologue before joining together in a circle to read the text together. We discussed the character in terms of personality, mood and objectives within the scene. We then repeated this process for the second monologue.

Then the participants were asked to pair up to discuss any changes that the character may have gone through from first scene explored to the second. This is before any consideration of breath dynamic.

Then the above quote from Patsy Rodenburg was introduced and discussed. The participants were then asked to create performances in their pairs with Rodenburg’s proposition in mind. We then played back the performance and reflected on the viability of Rodenburg’s statement.

We then post thoughts/drawings/phrases on to the breathing and bard boards and discussed those responses.

○ **Group Demographics**

The workshop cohort was recruited from performance related courses at the University of South Wales, which include BA (Hons) Theatre and Drama, BA (Hons) Performance and Media, BA (Hons) Performing Arts, and MA Drama courses. The recruitment was done via email and announcements at the beginning of lectures, through the kind permission of the convening lecturers. Initially, twenty-two participants joined up and attended the first workshop, with a core group of ten that stayed for the entire series. Of this core group the age range was from nineteen to fifty, seven identifying as female and three identifying as male. There were four international students all of whom regarded English as their second language. Two of the participants identified as people of colour, whereas the rest as white/Caucasian. All participants had previously been taught by me or were being taught by me at the time the workshops were being carried. All participants had either been taught by me on the Voice and Movement module or had attended one off voice workshops that I had led. Participants having prior knowledge of me – and I of the participants – is an important factor to acknowledge. It

benefitted the research in that rapport had already been established with the group meaning it was easier to have the work begin in earnest from the first session. My familiarity with the cohort, and vice versa, also brought challenges and consideration needed to be given to the ethics of such an endeavour (Comer, 2009). Shirley Comer warns researchers against using their own students within research as it runs the risk of increased intimacy between student and teacher/researcher (2009, p.100). For this reason, consideration was given to how the workshop series was framed in communication to the students/participants. I was careful to ensure that a pedagogical framework was outlined to the participants including potential learning outcomes to replicate their more formal university experience, and by doing this position myself as pedagogue/researcher within the space.

- **Breathing and Bard Boards**

Each workshop included the ‘Breathing Board’ and ‘Bard Board’: whereby students were able to write/draw their thoughts relating to the work we were doing on Post-It notes and place them on the relevant boards.



Figure 3.2. The Breathing Board



Figure 3.3. The Bard Board

The introduction of the boards was carefully framed, in that I wanted to be as playful as possible in bringing them into the space in order to take the ‘weightiness’ of the terms away. This served a particular function in that the introduction of the playful approach allowed the participants to unpick the concepts of breathing and Shakespeare. This showed dividends from the first workshop, for example, when one of the participants posted on to the ‘Bard Board’ that ‘*King Lear is a terribly shit play*’ and then spoke at length in the discussion section about why he thought this was the case, without his thinking being invalidated by the facilitator or other participants.

We used these Post-It notes as a foundation for our discussions at the end of each session. This device served as a pedagogical tool while also capturing the perceptions of the participants relating to the work we had done in each workshop. The participants were told that a key principle of posting to the breathing and bard boards was that they had freedom to post whatever they wished on the board. In every workshop all participants kept to the parameters implied by the theme of the individual boards (breathing and bard), the context of the workshop series central theme, and in relation to the work just carried out in each workshop.

- **Group Reflection**

As noted above the breathing and bard board provided a foundation to start discussing the exercises carried out within the workshops. We were led by the content of the boards but there was a semi-structured mode adopted, as there was an allowance to respond to the discussion of the moment, as opposed to being confined to the topic. The reason for this was to tease out the pedagogical, social, and political underpinnings of the perspectives emerging from the participants.

- **Focus groups**

Similar to the boards, the focus groups were used both as a pedagogical device (reflection and consolidation of learning) and a research tool. The first focus group took place after four workshops and the second took place after all seven workshops had been carried out. The question set within the first focus group was as follows:

- **Enquiry 1:** Why did you choose a performance related course to do in University?
 - **Enquiry 1A:** Why did you want to do the workshops?
- **Enquiry 2:** Where did you place breath in your own practice before attending this series of workshops?
- **Enquiry 3:** Have you ever noticed breathing dynamics in a performance, how did it manifest itself and what does that mean, if one does notice?
- **Enquiry 4:** What are your thoughts on Shakespeare?
- **Enquiry 5:** In relation to this workshop series - what has been the most effective moment/exercise/workshop, or have you struggled with any of it in particular?
 - **Enquiry 5A:** Moving away slightly from the specifics for a moment, what about the journey you have been on from day one of the workshops up to this point? How would you describe any differences in your practice or approach to performance?
- **Enquiry 6:** Do you think there is particular role for breath in speaking Shakespeare?

In pedagogical terms these questions required the students to not only reflect on the content of the workshop series but also to consider their own individual context for doing the workshops in the first place. In research terms, the first focus group gave insights into the effects of the workshop series on the participants as a developing pedagogy.

The second focus group, which took place at the end of the workshop series, was again designed within the framework of reflective practice. The question set for this was as follows:

- **Enquiry 1:** How would you describe the pedagogy:
 - as a whole;
 - in terms of any benefits for you;
 - in terms of breathing;
 - in terms of performance;
 - in terms of speaking Shakespeare?
- **Enquiry 2:** How has the classroom discussion, and dialogic mode of the workshops affected your learning in relation to Breathing and Shakespeare?
- **Enquiry 3:** How would you describe the place of breath within the practice of speaking Shakespeare?

The responses within the focus groups were transcribed, and then analysed, through the lens of Thompson and Thompson’s three dimensions of reflective practice:

Cognitive: understanding the importance of thinking in general and analysis and creativity in particular.

Affective: appreciating how significant emotional concerns are in shaping practice and how dangerous it can be to fail to take account of them.

Values: becoming aware of the moral-political factors that are ever-present in our work and which should not be neglected (2008, p.27).

This mode of analysis was used to identify whether there were any shifts in participants’ perceptions relating to the material and content of the workshops, and the workshop series as a whole, between focus groups one and two.

Ethical Considerations

Interviews

This study consisted of in-depth interviews with experienced voice coaches to acquire the most current viewpoints in relation to the central enquiry. All interviewees were above the age of eighteen and it was made clear at all stages to them, what the data would be used for and how it would be

analysed in relation to the study. It was also be made clear that they could opt-out or withdraw their consent at any stage and they would be given the necessary contacts to do so; at which point any data collected as a result of their participation would be destroyed and ultimately not used. This information was provided within a detailed consent form which was given to the interviewees to sign to express their permission, with their informed knowledge of the research objectives, that data from the interviews be used in the research. The consent form was designed utilising the University of South Wales guidance on research ethics. The key points given within the consent form were as follows:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.
- If requested you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors.
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Denis Lennon as research investigator.
- The interview transcript will be included the appendix of the PhD thesis.
- Any direct quotations from the interview, or paraphrasing of interview data, that is made available through the completed PhD will need to bear your name in order to identify you as an expert in your field and to contextualize your training background.
- The researcher may wish to use the interview material in the future for publication use, however, in this instance further approval by you would be sought and the material not used until such approval was given.
- The actual recording will be kept by the research investigator, Denis Lennon.
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

(Extract from approved interview consent form – see Appendix C for full form).

Workshops

The British Educational Research Association outline their guidance in relation to seeking consent from participants of educational research, when they state

It is normally expected that participants’ voluntary informed consent to be involved in a study will be obtained at the start of the study, and that researchers will remain

sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish, for any reason and at any time, to withdraw their consent. The Association takes voluntary informed and ongoing consent to be the condition by which participants understand and agree to their participation, and the terms and practicalities of it, without any duress, prior to the research getting underway. It should be made clear to participants that they can withdraw at any point without needing to provide an explanation (2018, p.8).

As shown, this research involved carrying out a practical investigation through workshops with performance students. In the gathering of information and observations recorded video and audio material of workshops formed an important tool for further analysis and presentation. For this reason, it was important that transparency of the process was accorded to the participants from the outset of their involvement. No information, other than the hypothesis, needed to be withheld from the participants regarding the process for the research to be effective. It was important to make them aware how any video or audio material, writing communication and/or reflective writings would be used. The participants were asked to sign a consent form, which included the following key points:

- the workshops and any subsequent focus group/interviews will be recorded on video and/or Dictaphone
- the participants may be asked to record some reflections in writing
- the content of the recordings/reflections will form part of the workshop data and be analysed by Denis Cryer-Lennon as research investigator
- the analysis may be included in the appendix of the PhD thesis, and in the thesis, in part or full.
- Recordings may also be used in part or full in research presentations (e.g. at academic conferences etc). In such cases names will remain anonymized.
- any direct quotations from the participants, or paraphrasing of workshop data, that is made available through the completed PhD will anonymized
- the researcher may wish to use the workshop material in the future for publication use (e.g. in book or journal article form), whereby the anonymity of the participants will remain protected.
- the actual recording/s will be kept by the research investigator, Denis Cryer-Lennon.
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

(Extract from workshop consent form – see Appendix D for full form)

In the initial workshop, the participants were briefed by means of a question and answer session regarding the research process and methodology. The purpose of this was to offer the courtesy of explaining the reasons why they are taking part and provide them with any further information; such as suspected outcomes. The participants were reminded before and after the question and answer session that they could withdraw from the project at any time should they have any concerns regarding the objectives of the research and the manner in which it will be conducted.

The University of South Wales’ guidance on GDPR has been adhered to relating to the workshop participants, and to previous legislation (Data Protection Act) regarding the interviewees and interview material.

How the findings are presented/used

The main findings of this research are presented, for the most part, within Chapters Four and Five and conclusion (Chapter Seven) of this thesis. However, as already stated, the progression and development of thought and the logic therein should be read as an interwoven narrative throughout the thesis.

The qualitative nature of the research has meant that a structure has emerged whereby the context informs the empirical research and then a new context is proposed. For that reason, my reading is presented both as literature review and historical context (Chapter Two) with the thrust of the argument in the following chapters. Then an analysis of empirical research is presented to inform an expansion of current discourses. The findings are then shaped into a conclusion that resists a mere summative form, rather it proposes an application of this research and in so doing puts forward a new context where the underlying pedagogy could sit.

CHAPTER FOUR – Contemporary Perspectives and Philosophies relating to breath training for Speaking Shakespeare

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the interviews with voice coaches carried out as part of this doctoral study. A thematic analysis of the interview data has been carried out and whilst in this chapter I focus on key selected thematic insights, the full range of themes that emerged is listed in the appendices of the thesis (p.267). In undertaking this analysis, I also draw on my own voice teaching to draw connections and comparisons to my pedagogical practice.

The voice coaches that were interviewed were Simon Reeves (SR), Head of Voice at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama; Lyn Darnley (LD), Freelance Voice Teacher and former Head of Voice at the Royal Shakespeare Company; Sarah Case (SC), former Head of Voice at Italia Conti and at the Fourth Monkey Actor Training Company; David Carey (DC), resident Voice and Text director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and Joan Mills (JM), freelance voice teacher and Director of the Giving Voice Festival. As highlighted in the methodology chapter of this thesis, the rationale for selecting these interviewees was that all have worked in the context of studio-based voice pedagogy and have extensive experience of applying their pedagogy to training actors for speaking Shakespeare.

The Interviews

The list below consolidates key themes and ideas, which are identified as pertinent to the current research. This is not an exhaustive list of everything discussed, rather it is a list compiled through closely analysing and comparing the transcripts of recorded interviews, drawing out perspectives that are relevant to, and inform, the current study.

In light of the themes identified through the analysis, the following subsections offer a synthesis of key perspectives and a more focused examination of themes. These are:

- Training the breath: philosophies/approaches;
- Student-centred approach to training;
- Technique (not systems);
- An Integrated Practice;
- The Breath/Thought Correlation; and
- Breath and Shakespeare’s text.

- **Training the breath: philosophies/approaches/guiding principles**

As noted in the methodology chapter of this study, one of the interview questions asked of the voice coaches was **‘Do you have a specific philosophy, in its broadest sense, that drives your teaching, and/or wider practice?’** While this question does not address breath training directly, it proves pertinent to the current study in that it elucidates pedagogical approaches engaged with in the interviewees’ respective practices. It should be noted that some of the interviewees pondered over the word philosophy and whether or not they had one in relation to their teaching practice, some opted to reframe this question/their answer as their ‘approach’ or their ‘guiding principles’ as opposed to a philosophy. For the purpose of this investigation and in the context of this study, I am drawing on the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of ‘philosophy’: ‘a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behaviour’ (OED online, 2019). In this respect, the semi-structured format of the interviews allowed for a broader understanding of philosophy to be articulated as ‘guiding principle[s]’.

In response to this question, Simon Reeves told me he does not really think he has a philosophy to his teaching/practice. However, he went on to reframe his answer to tell me what he wants from his

actors/students: ‘conviction’; ‘to believe what they are saying or what they are doing, what they are thinking or feeling’ and he sees his job as a teacher to ‘distil [this work] down’ and get the actors industry ready. While Reeves did not suggest a philosophy within this particular answer, the discussion that followed, and the answers to some later questions, elucidated some of the principles he holds relating to voice and breath work. For example, in response to the question ‘is there a particular place for breath in your practice?’ he responded: ‘... it changes student by student. Always, for me, you are looking to find what unlocks that particular person’ and he suggested that this is often to do with breath, although not always. He also stated: ‘if I did have any particular insistence in my staff and in my conversations that I have with my colleagues at work as well, it is to make sure that what you are teaching is anatomically sound and backed up by the best research’.

This piece of advice that Reeves gives to his staff regarding having a sound anatomical and physiological foundation to their work is a position that aligns with much twentieth century British voice practice, which appears to be particularly rooted in the work done at Central starting with Elsie Fogerty, as Lyn Darnley told me in our interview:

My training, because of my age, was very rooted in anatomy and physiology and very much based on the teachings at Rada and Central because my own teacher had been trained under Elsie Fogerty [...], Professor Aikin [and] Clifford Turner. So that – so my initial training was very, I suppose, of its time, you know, and very much rooted in the British system although my teacher – I was taught in South Africa by [...] Kate King who was a South African and had come to England and had worked at Central and Rada.

Darnley, while not going as far as to challenge the apparent primacy of the physiological and anatomical approach to voice training, suggested how her own thinking has developed in terms of going beyond this approach towards a more ‘eclectic’ process, whilst stating that she ‘believe[s] in the physiological approach’. She continues:

But my experience was that – and because of the way she [Kate King] talked to me a lot about the things she had experienced during the 50s [...], I felt very much that it was important to look wider. So, I got very interested in Linklater quite early. I obviously had read all the Cicely Berry books, but the Cicely Berry work, voice work, is actually Central voice work, it was. And then she's moved away from it in terms of the formality. So [...], I would say my own work is very eclectic and that my concerns are that we teach students not systems.

Darnley's approach of teaching 'students not systems' suggests a student-centred approach, which is one that is prevalent within all of the interviews.

Sarah Case, like Reeves, pondered as we spoke as to whether she would call what drives her practice a 'philosophy'. Rather she used the terms 'methodology' and 'process'; 'call it a philosophy if you will', and told me it 'is about integrating voice, body, and what you are using it for'. In answering my question, she referred to her 2013 book *The Integrated Voice*. In her introduction, 'A Philosophy of Voice', she identifies a purpose for voice work –

The aim is to empower you from the outset to see the voice as being an outward expression of your inner world, and to be able to use the voice without judgement. So we need to introduce voice and the notion of the whole body; the principle of breath and truth, and the importance of truthful thought; and how voice and your thoughts are affected by the breath (2013, p.2).

The rationale for this, as Case outlined in our interview, is that 'unless you marry body and voice together; voice, breath, body, soul, thought, the lot, unless you integrate it.... you can end up with very competent actors but not very creative or interesting actors'.

This idea of creativity came up in my interview with David Carey. In telling me about the philosophy of his practice, Carey connected voice and breath to the creative process of an actor, a position also proposed by Lyn Darnley, one that is served by his eclectic approach to technique. Carey told me

for me the voice, and breath in particular, are really central to the creative process for an actor. And so enabling actors to, first of all, perhaps in a student context to discover the connection to breath and through breath a connection to the creative use of

breath for language and in particular heightened language such as Shakespeare or other verse text. That seems to me to be at the heart of what I do but connected to that I would also say that my approach is one which is not specific to one technique. I believe that everybody learns in different ways, that maybe, you know, groups of ways that people learn but it's actually to do with the individual and what their needs are. And I prefer to have an eclectic approach to teaching and/or working with actors that draws on the breadth of pedagogies that are available to a voice teacher.

Carey elaborated on how notions of individuality, which is at the heart of his approach, are connected to the breath. He stated

I think breath is something that's very personal, people don't necessarily realize how personal it is, and how connected it is to the emotions and also to how we express ourselves; our expressivity. And I find working with first year actors in particular or professional actors who haven't really examined that aspect of their work, particularly rewarding because it's about opening people's eyes and ears and hearts and minds to not only what's happening inside them but to their connection to, as I say, expressivity in language.

The connections Carey made here between breath, emotion, and expressivity, and the inherent individuality this connection espouses, are manifest in the exercises he describes in his writing. This is evident in his chapter ‘Transformation and the Actor’ in Boston and Cook’s collection *Breath in Action* (2009, pp.185–198). Here, Carey works on what he calls ‘the responsive breath’. Within this exercise he asks that students/actors to tap into their own breath rhythm, without changing it – they are not to alter this rhythm, just acknowledge it using the point at which the in-breath changes to the out-breath as a focus; by marking the change a student can engage with the rhythm of *their* breath. Carey believes that this acknowledgement is enough for the start of a transformation to occur – this transformation is one that connects breath and thought together as directed by the student/actors’ own internal breathing rhythm.

Lyn Darnley told me that she believes she has a philosophy that drives her work, and she started her answer with the notion that ‘the voice is not something that happens in isolation’. She continued –

it's a whole person at training and [...] it takes everything into consideration and, well, it *needs* to take everything into consideration from the anatomical and physiological things like posture, alignment, [...] relaxation, tension, release ..all those things. And therefore, you have to deal with the individual on a personal level as well because they – they have to trust you, they have to – because it's something – it's something very vulnerable about the relationship somebody has with their voice if they're going to release it and release tensions, you know, it's something we protect. So, [...] you have to develop that working relationship so that they know they're safe, I think that's very important. I don't believe in push, push, push[ing] people over the edge because they've got to free everything up all at once. Some people might like that but for most of the people [...] I've worked with you need to build your relationship with them and you need to learn to understand them and not just physically but mentally and emotionally too because you can't separate any of these things – voice is like a Gestalt²⁷.

Darnley's use of Gestalt as a simile for voice, extends the idea of voice beyond its physical characteristics. In her description preceding her reference to Gestalt, Darnley reinforces her perspective of the voice as something that does not work in isolation and should be thought about in holistic terms.

This approach reflects Sarah Case's integrated voice practice in terms of working on the 'whole' person when training anatomically/physiologically and on a personal level (emotionally, intellectually), and supports Darnley's own eclectic approach as mentioned above, similar to David Carey.

The notion of freeing is also alluded to here: 'free everything up all at once' – which is reminiscent of Berry and Linklater's voice practice, and its inclusion reminds us of the prevalence of those ideas that started in the British conservatoire tradition in the latter half of the twentieth century.

²⁷ Gestalt: 'an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts' (OED online, 2019).

Joan Mills connected the philosophy of her practice to the human condition (health and wellbeing, and in terms of happiness through expressivity) – it should be noted that Mills is a singer as well as a voice teacher but the voice for singing and for speech are, for her, often connected –

everybody has the right to sing and should be encouraged, nobody should be judged or made to feel bad etc. or belittled. I'm very conscious of the importance of singing in wellbeing in health and whole wellbeing and also the effect that being expressive. Now, I'm not really talking just about singing, I'm now moving back to speaking – how the ability to articulate and express is vital, really, as a human happiness, I think. I think it's very difficult for somebody who, for whatever reason, is having enormous problems articulating.

She elaborated on this, connecting her pedagogical approach to her profound belief

that human beings are *made* to speak, we're unique. We are the only creature that can articulate voice [...] in the complex way that we can [...]. In some way it's about the prime reason why human beings are on the earth. I feel that strongly about it and that if we ignore that or let any of that atrophy, well what ungrateful beasts we are. I suppose that's one thing. In terms of working with performers, with actors and other performers, my philosophy or my approach is that I am not there to tell them how to speak or sing or to say this is right or wrong way. I'm there to encourage them to go forward to experiment and explore their own vocal abilities that the power of range and delicacy of their own voice.

This, again, echoed the student-centred approach as seen from the other interviewees. Mills seemed to position herself, here, as a facilitator towards discovery in her work with students in their own exploration of *their* voice and artistry.

Considering the perspectives discussed above, this section has illustrated that the philosophies and approaches of the voice coaches interviewed do not diverge too far from the writings, teachings and legacies left from the mid twentieth century (Berry, Linklater et al.) keeping with the shift from an emphasis on articulation and ‘voice beautiful’ towards ‘a stronger emphasis on physical embodiment in actor training’ (Boston, 2018, p.115).

A key insight that has emerged here, however, which is not as prevalent in the voice manuals, is that systemisation of voice and breath work is not favoured by the voice coaches interviewed, rather there is more importance placed on finding the right technique for the individual actor/student.

This difference between the perspectives by the voice coaches interviewed and that seen within voice manuals, appears to be more to do with limitations of form (text *versus* studio practice). Within a book on using the voice for performance, an expert is likely to propose a technique (i.e. their ‘system’) and argue the benefits of doing it ‘that way’ based on their experience of teaching this technique over a (usually) long period of time. In contrast, in open discussion with voice coaches interviewed they suggest that their everyday work with students/actors is informed more by an eclectic approach. Boston suggests that there is a dynamic shift between what is written in a voice manual and the reality within studio practice, as mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis, in her discussion of the ‘second text’ she states

[t]hat the voice manual is best considered alongside a ‘second text’ that arises out of the practice itself. What I mean by this is that where the manual provides the exercise protocols, the ‘second text’ is evidenced in the individuated live vocal outcome in the studio as it arises out of the immersive studio process of which the exercises are a part (2018, p.113).

Here, Boston is speaking to the difference between the ‘rules’ or ‘protocols’ outlined within voice texts and their live material form or outcome within studio practice. I would further this in respect of the ‘student-centred’ approach to training advocated by my interviewees. In addition to a voice manual being followed in the context of studio practice, this interaction is often changed by a number of other factors including an eclectic approach to training. In other words, if a student is being trained using a voice manual, with a trainer in a studio, certain considerations need to be taken into account. For example, the instructions outlined in the voice text and the needs (e.g., physical), desires (e.g.,

career), and objectives (e.g., within performance) of the student may not coalesce as straightforwardly as wished for.

Considering the above, this study argues that philosophies and pedagogical approaches relating to space; language (used within training spaces); the trainer’s experience as a practitioner (whether consciously or subconsciously manifest); the trainer’s approach to pedagogy (e.g., eclectic approach); the student/actor’s experience and/or previous training are more easily accounted for within the live studio experience, as opposed to training as communicated solely from a voice manual.

Despite some initial hesitation, on the part of some of the interviewees to suggest that they had a philosophy, all accounted for guiding principles where it came to training voice and breath with students. An overarching theme was the connection made to the speaker (student), whether it was referencing the vitality of ‘the ability to articulate and express’ to ‘human happiness’ (JM), or the suggestion that when you train the voice it is ‘a whole person at training’ (LD), or the integration of voice, body, and text. Throughout all the approaches, the student was at the centre of the practice.

- **Student-centred approach**

In a truly student-centred approach, one that respects the needs, artistry, creative processes, and learning style of a student, as opposed to an approach whereby one must follow an exercise as written to the letter, it is inevitable that exercises as they are written will be changed by their physical realisation (Boston, 2018, p.113). In such a scenario, whilst the objective/s outlined in an exercise within a voice class/training studio may be retained, it may end up completely altered or even discarded. However, no matter how the voice manual is engaged with within the realisation of the objective/s therein, this research suggests that it remains an important part of the eclectic approach. A trainer in the student-centred approach must, this research suggests, remain open minded in this

regard, and not be rigid in terms of their planned process. Therefore, the trainer must be equipped with the knowledge (of a broad range of practices and theories) and skills (e.g., to recognise needs/desires/objectives of a student; be able to adapt/change planned sessions; be able to articulate this flexible mode in a pedagogically effective manner) required to engage eclecticism as an effective pedagogical tool, as well as having a sensitivity of approach to the live experience of the student.

Baeten, Struyven, and Dochy (2013, p.14) highlight the growing prevalence of student-centred approaches to learning and teaching in higher education and outline the constructivist theory that underpins this pedagogical practice, stating that

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing interest in developing teaching methods to involve students in the learning process due to the influence of the constructivist learning theory (Hannafin, Hill, & Land, 1997). This theory defines learning as an “active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organised knowledge” (Mayer, 2004, p.14). As such, it views learning as an active process of knowledge construction rather than as a passive reception of information (2013, p.14).

In literature on actor training student-centred learning has not often been discussed. The present thesis argues that this is down to two key factors, which at first glance seem somewhat paradoxical. First, is the notion that as within actor training the student is taking on an embodied practice (Camilleri, 2019), whereby the student’s physical form and condition is inherently at the centre of the learning process and outcome and that this is already a necessarily active process, and therefore the adoption of a student-centred approach may be deemed unnecessary. Second, is that the focus of ‘how to’ books on performance and training for performance tend to be based on the expertise and experience of the practitioner or ‘master-teacher’ (Fleming and Evans, 2019), the unquestioned utilisation of which may be deemed a passive mode of reception on the part of the learner. Considering Boston’s ‘second text’, this research argues that the line between passive and active

modes of learning is somewhat blurred. It is then down to the facilitation of studio practice as to what level of agency and autonomy is given over to the student.

In analysing the perspectives raised in interviews, it is worth noting issues and features of student-centred learning raised by Rachel Sweetman. Sweetman provides a comprehensive and useful table exploring the key issues and features of student-centred learning drawing on literature from the field (2017, p.47):

Key Issues	Defining features of student-centred learning
What is meant by learning?	<p>Type of learning: Deep learning and understanding (Lea et al., 2003), powerful or transformational learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995) active engagement with knowledge (Kember, 2009; Ramsden, 1992).</p> <p>Nature of learning: Knowledge not ‘out there’ but constructed by/within students, not ‘transmitted’ by teacher (Barr & Tagg, 1995);</p>
Practice/activities involved?	<p>Approach to learning: Developing an environment supportive of learning with a focus on the learner’s experience; offering variety of teaching and student activities (Kember, 2009); emphasising creativity and discovery (Ewell, 2007), active rather than passive learning (Lea et al., 2003) and developing holistic not fragmented/atomistic understanding (Barr & Tagg, 1995).</p>
What roles are expected?	<p>Role of the student: Students as active participants not receivers (Tangney, 2014) with increased responsibility and autonomy (Lea et al., 2003; Hodge, 2010); some role in shaping learning goals and approaches to be used; the ability to make use of variety strategies to meet varied needs (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Wright, 2011).</p> <p>Role of the teacher: Designer of environment that supports learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995) and facilitator of learning working with students as catalysts/ advisers (Wright, 2011); empower</p>

	students and develop the individual student (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Wright, 2011).
Are there implications for power and choice?	<p>Shifts in power: Shift away from teaching to learning encourages power to move from the teacher to the student (Barr & Tagg, 1995); empowerment and emancipation (Tangney, 2014).</p> <p>Choice/agency: Choice of what to study and how to study it (Gibbs, 1995; Burnard, 1999, both as cited in O’Neil & McMahon).</p>

Table 4.1. Issues and features of student-centred learning from Sweetman (2017, p.47)

The language used and issues raised by Sweetman relate to a discourse of student-centred learning within the wider context of higher education in the UK. While the tendency towards an active language of learning (e.g., ‘knowledge constructed by/within students’; ‘Students as active participants not receivers’) enters into the fields of actor training and voice teaching, there are additional factors that are more specific to these pedagogies, such as creativity and embodiment. As the issues highlighted in Sweetman’s table above do not preclude discussions of student’s creativity and embodiment in the learning process, I am offering original material drawn from interviews which supplements (and could be incorporated into) such a table.

1. Creativity – student as a resource for themselves

Creativity is not a new concept in the wider field of student-centred learning. Brandes and Ginnis’ (1996, p.197) ‘ground rules for meetings’, in the context of the student-centred approach, include the idea that ‘talents and creativity of each person are valued, so everyone pools their resources and does their thinking together’. Creativity is also given focus in their notions of brainstorming in a classroom (p.36). However, the context in which it is discussed is usually towards problem solving as opposed to artistry. This is where the perspectives of the voice practitioners interviewed for the current study tend to depart. As my analysis of the interview data shows the belief in, and importance

of, the creativity of a student/actor is central to the approach to the respective pedagogies of Sarah Case and David Carey.

The idea of creativity being fostered within the actor training environment mentioned here is reminiscent of an aspect that Ian Watson (2013, p.7) highlights, in relation to the ‘experimentalists’ amongst the ‘master’ practitioners of the twentieth century –

Experimentalists like Grotowski and Barba especially, who have been deeply concerned with acting and the acting process, have moved away from the idea of developing a system of training consisting of skill development and perfected techniques. Their concerns are with the individual actor, with providing a means for each actor to explore his or her own creative potential and extend his or her psycho-physical limitations as a performer rather than with developing a universal training model that can be transmitted from teacher to actor (2013, p.7).

This connection to the creativity of the actor being central to extending their psycho-physical limitations is reflected in David Carey’s perspective on creative process of the student-actor as it relates to voice and breath training, with reference to speaking Shakespeare. In my interview with him he stated

for me the voice, and breath in particular, are really central to the creative process for an actor. And so enabling actors to, first of all, perhaps in a student context to discover the connection to breath and through breath a connection to the creative use of breath for language and in particular heightened language such as Shakespeare or other verse text.

2. Embodiment – student as art

The idea of embodiment has been explored by a number of different writers such as Campbell and Maynell (2009), Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury (2013), and Niskanen and Barany (2021). However, to define embodiment in terms of student-centred learning and creativity, this study takes heed of pedagogical discourse within musical composition. Nagy usefully states that

When using the terms “embodiment” and “embodied” in this context [musical composition and creativity], first and foremost I relate them to the etymology of the active verb to “embody,” which indicates the compound structure of the word

“embody,” while originating in *inbodie* and *inbody*, that is comprised of the prefix *en* or *in*, followed by the term’s main constituent, *body*. What transpires here is that the initial analysis of the word’s etymology suggests a close semantic rootedness in the notion of the body, with the body serving not as a passive suffix but as an active carrier of the term’s meaning (2017, p.11).

This definition is relevant to the embodied practice of voice training for performance given the interconnectedness of voice, body, breath, and thought and the integrating of these as proposed by Sarah Case. This research suggests that, considering the definition of “embody” outlined above, the pedagogy of voice training, voice practice itself, and breath training are inherently embodied, and therefore necessarily active and student centred.

In terms of actor training the concept of ‘embodied learning’ is discussed by Rea Dennis in the context of Viewpoints, which is ‘a training approach [that] begins with a disciplined engagement of the body in space and time’ (2013, p.336). Here, she ‘interrogates the demands of embodied learning of the movement/structural system on non-dancers and examines student-actor experiences of embodied learning from multiple subject positions: observer/participant/creator/reflector/actor’. Dennis acknowledges that when training ‘novices’ in actor training (she speaks specifically about Viewpoints) ‘one of the considerations [...] with undergraduate drama students is the contemporary reality that they are frequently not familiar with their bodies let alone fluent in the language of the body in motion’ (2013, p.339). Through a sustained pedagogy, with Viewpoints as the subject, Dennis (2013, pp.350–351) charts how strategies used in her experiment helped towards resolving some of the issues relating to embodied learning:

- Making ‘physical demands on [students] leading them to an embodied approach’.
- A systematic training ‘opened spaces for learners to test their ego, question their perception, invest in their creative colleagues, and establish a more tangible relationship with their embodied knowledge’.

- ‘The action and exploration approach [...] led the students to a range of perspectives from which to learn: actor, observer, creator, and reflector.

Dennis’ account here highlights that students must be at the centre of their own embodied learning, without the need to cast aside other entities in the training space: collaborators; facilitator/trainer; text or space.

While Case did not mention, in our interview, the notion of a student-centred approach to her teaching in explicit terms there was a sense of her being led by the student’s embodied experience of the work as she described her pedagogy. When I asked ‘**where do you place breath in your practice?**’ a discussion emerged about aspects that pertain to the individuality of the student/actor: breath’s relation to physicality, cerebrality, and spirituality. This research argues that engagement on these three levels apropos voice and breath training means that students are involved in a deeply active and embodied mode of learning akin to the process outlined in Baeten, Struyven, and Dochy’s description of student-centred approach to learning, as seen above. It also reflects the ‘nature of learning’ in the student-centred mode defined by Sweetman as ‘Knowledge not “out there” but constructed by/within students, not “transmitted” by teacher’ (2017, p.47). As Case described these processes, it became evident that she adopts a measured approach in the training studio environment. On the connection of breath to spirituality she said

it’s incredibly spiritual in the sense that without breath we, I mean breath in inspiration – literally, physically, metaphorically, spiritually – and when we come to use breath on voice – whether it’s on voiced or *un*-voiced sounds, there’s a very deep spiritual element to that, which sometimes we touch on in class and sometimes we don’t, it depends – you don’t want to scare the horses. Some people will respond instantly to that and others won’t.

This idea of being led by the student’s experience of the work also came to bear when I asked Case to describe any highlights of her career in relation to working on Shakespeare. In response to this she went on to describe some teaching moments in relation to exploring some of Shakespeare’s text

with her students. She described an example of a student who told her she was struggling with the text –

[the student] said ‘I can’t understand a word of it’ – ‘Right, really? Okay’ – ‘So if I said to you something like “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” what do you get out of that?’ – she said ‘well you’re talking about summer’ and I said ‘so you do understand something’ – so, it immediately dispels myths and long held beliefs that ‘I’m not very good at it because I’m not very clever’ which is what you often get – so when we do the exercise, and her face lights up and she says in front of everybody, she says ‘Oh my God, I’ve completely changed my opinion of Shakespeare’ and that’s after five minutes of getting up and working on it – and that for me was one of those hallelujah moments of teaching – to see somebody profoundly change, it doesn’t mean to say she can do it yet, of course it doesn’t, it is going to take her a long time but it was so thrilling to see this complete revelation that it’s not an intellectual process.

This engagement with the student’s cultural frame of reference to make connections between her embodied experience and tacit knowledge to Shakespeare’s text is again, this research argues, in line with an active mode of learning.

While, as mentioned, Case did not talk about a student-centred approach directly, other voice coaches interviewed were more explicit in their language in terms of their pedagogy, their tendency towards student-centred approaches and taking learning styles into account when it comes to voice training.

Lyn Darnley explained the importance to her practice of assessing how a student learns –

So, we actually work from the starting point that [...] you’ve got to understand how a student learns so you’ve got to take time to assess that before you suddenly foist something on them. And particularly as I’ve worked most of my life with actors you also have to know how they were trained and to respect that because that’s really important. You can’t come to somebody and undermine their... you know... have an opinion that undermines their training because for most people that training is very important.

The importance Darnley places on understanding how a student learns and has learned reflects Sweetman’s notions on the role of the teacher in the table above. Sweetman describes the teacher

as the ‘Designer of environment that supports learning [...] and facilitator of learning, working with students as catalysts/advisers [to] empower students and develop the individual student’ (2017, p.47). Darnley told me that ‘we teach students not systems’, which is a sentiment shared by Simon Reeves, as he stated when I asked him ‘if there is a particular place or where do you place breath in your practice?’ He responded observing

That is a really difficult question, and it changes student by student. Always for me you are looking to find what unlocks that particular person, so whilst I might do some general work on problems that might have arisen on breath and what degree of muscularity one might need with your breathing in order to work – on stage or on TV or film or whatever, radio – how much I work on it and how much I focus on it will depend on that moment and on that student, on that actor in training.

Reeves’ responsive approach to the context he is working in, and to the individual student he is working with, again, reflects what Sweetman proposes as the role of the facilitator as ‘catalysts/advisers’; someone to ‘empower students and develop the individual student’.

Like Darnley, David Carey refers to how students learn and how their individual needs drive his eclectic approach to his practice as a voice teacher and coach. He said

I believe that everybody learns in different ways, that maybe [...] groups of ways that people learn but it's actually to do with the individual and what their needs are. And I prefer to have an eclectic approach to teaching and/or working with actors that draws on the breadth of pedagogies that are available to a voice teacher.

Joan Mills, in our interview, also placed importance on the needs of the individual student in the context of voice training – she indicated that this can be decided by the individual themselves, while also highlighting the significance of the desires and curiosity of the student. She told me that

It's great when you're working with students... you should say ‘what do you want or what do you need, what do you want to know?’ Be selfish, don't you think it's for other people's good... it's patronising. It can be, not always, but I mean ... I think you have to think – what am I really interested in – and actually if you don't have curiosity, I don't think you can learn.

Considering the above perspectives, a picture emerged of what student-centred training means to these practitioners and how they may manifest in their practice. To illustrate this, I have created a table of considerations reframing the key issues and characteristics of a student-centred approach in Sweetman’s table above to reflect the context of voice/breath training from the perspectives of the practitioners interviewed.

Key Issues	Defining features of student-centred learning in the context of breath training for actors with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare
What is meant by learning?	<p>Type of learning: Voicing of, and breathing through, Shakespeare’s text as an embodied practice; led by students not systems.</p> <p>Nature of learning: Learning through practice. Through breathing exercises and in conjunction with Shakespeare’s text.</p>
Practice/activities involved?	<p>Approach to learning: Being led by the students’ own cultural frame of reference and using this as an access point into the work. Investigating the student’s relationship to concepts of breath work and Shakespeare.</p>
What roles are expected?	<p>Role of the student: Committed and engaged participant; collaborator; increased autonomy – willing to scrutinise exercises, established practices and voice and breath training as well as viewing Shakespeare’s text with a critical eye.</p> <p>Role of the teacher: Informed facilitator – informed in established practice relating to voice and breath work, and actor training traditions for speaking Shakespeare. Flexible in allowing space for intervention via students’ criticality towards the work and ability to adapt and respond.</p>
Are there implications for power and choice?	<p>Shifts in power: The shift here, like above, moves towards a more democratic and collaborative space. Shifting the balance of power from teacher towards students also from text towards student, from prescribed practice towards student.</p>

Table 4.2. My own adaptation of Sweetman’s table to reflect the context of voice/breath training for speaking Shakespeare based on interviews.

As suggested at the outset of this section, a truly student-centred approach, is one that respects the needs, artistry, creative processes, and learning style of a student. All interviewees embraced the concept of the student carving out their own technique within the training studio as a route to a student-centred mode of learning – the technique, like how Sweetman frames knowledge, ‘is not ‘out there’ but constructed by/within students’ (2017, p.47).

- **Technique (not Systems)**

Jaqueline Martin (1991, p.157) relays to us Saint-Denis’ position on technique; she states that ‘although the acquisition of a strongly developed technique of body and voice was of prime importance, technique was never to be allowed to dominate or supersede invention’. The rule she describes here is one that Saint-Denis had in his First Studio in London, which was founded in 1935. ‘Technique’ within actor training is a cornerstone in canons and schools of thought within the theory and practice of acting, actor training, and voice practice. However, its place in, and relationship to, actors’ artistry, agency, and autonomy within training contexts, particularly when said technique emanates from ‘master teachers’, established systems and traditions, and the inherent hierarchy that these espouse, has only been examined in recent years in the context of research conferences (Crews and Cryer-Lennon, 2017; Cornford, 2019; Oram, 2019). This study, investigating these aspects in pedagogical terms, helps to address this gap in research. Somewhat unflatteringly, the term ‘technique’ within this context as communicated in actor training books and voice manuals can appear rigid and hierarchical in its expression through its relation to the idea of ‘system’, whilst also contributing to a potentially unequal power dynamic within the training environment between student, trainer, and canons of practice. This hierarchy is something that is examined in the context of actor training within the special issue of the *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal* entitled ‘Against the Canon’ (eds. Evans & Fleming, 2020). The call for this issue highlighted that these systems are often manifest in the works of ‘canonical figures’ such as ‘Stanislavsky, Copeau, Laban,

Grotowski and Lecoq’ (Evans & Fleming, 2019). As Pitches (in Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011, p.139) points out, in reviewing Watson’s (2013) observations on Grotowski and Barba’s experimental mode of training against the backdrop of the phenomena of actor training in the twentieth century, the ‘simple binary of *system/ individual*’ (his emphasis) provides a ‘valuable [...] lens’ through which to analyse actor training practices (2013, p.7). Watson connects the notions of ‘system’ and ‘technique’ as being on the same side of this binary when he describes how Grotowski and Barba ‘have moved away from the idea of developing a system of training consisting of skill development and perfected techniques’ (2013, p.7). However, the viewpoints collected in the current study reflected a separation between system and technique in the context of voice training; the former was framed in a somewhat negative light and the latter as a necessary part of the vocation of the actor. Elsewhere, David Carey has talked about where the difference between schools of thought on systems lay; when asked by Nancy Saklad if he found ‘differences between American and British actor training in voice and speech?’ he answered stating

Historically, America has tended to favour *systems* of training as opposed to Britain, which has tended to say, “Well there is *the training*.” There is no name attached to it. There is no Meisner. There’s no Lessac. There’s no Feldenkrais. There’s just the training. There are great advantages to having systems, but it does tend to compartmentalize (2011, p.61).

What emerged amongst the perspectives of the voice coaches interviewed is that the notion of technique does not need to preclude individual creativity, rather it provides a foundation on which the creative process(es) of the actor can flourish.

As I have reported, Darnley stated, in our interview, her position is that ‘we teach students, not systems’. However, while acknowledging resistance to the word, she placed ‘technique’ in a favourable light and separated the term from how she regards the notion of ‘system’ stating

I know technique is a word a lot of people don’t like to use but actually as far as I’m concerned, you know, actors need technique and by that [...] I’m not saying it’s

anything rigid but, you know, if somebody's running a race who wins is going to be the guy with the better technique [...] I think technique for me is important because it allows for ease. And then you can forget about it, and it allows the performance to be effortless. So it's not something that means that the actor is just trying to speak well, it's so – it's so ingrained in them that they have [...] the opportunity to relax and think about the things they need to think about, you know, it's like riding a bike.

Given Darnley's commitment to assessing how students learn within her practice, her eclectic approach to training, and her rejection of systemisation of voice work, one can assume that the notion of technique here is something that is constructed within/by the student, which reflects Sweetman's (2017, p.47) notion of the 'nature of learning' within the student-centred approach, which in turn speaks to the individuality of the student/actor.

The repudiation of the systemisation of voice work is a theme that was also evident when I spoke with Simon Reeves; he stated

I am quite nervous of the systemization of voice work, Linklater or Fitzmaurice or Lessac or Estill, some of them maybe I don't particularly like at all but generally I found bits and bobs from each of them that are useful to me and most of my training was Linklater based with a big, big, healthy dollop of classic Cicely Berry work when I trained as an actor and as a voice coach.

As we can see here, Reeves alluded to an eclectic approach to his teaching practice like Darnley and Carey, doing what the latter described as 'draw[ing] on the breadth of pedagogies that are available to a voice teacher'. It was also evident that Reeves wishes to instil this eclectic approach to the students' own practice – he told me that he believes 'sticking to one [practice or practitioner] is dangerous'.

David Carey referred to the benefits of working on Shakespeare to the actor's technique, while reinforcing its connection to creativity –

there's something about working on Shakespeare which creates demands on the actor which I feel draws on the deeper creative wellsprings of anybody's technique and

artistry. And in a training situation I think it's kind of essential to challenge the young actor with that kind of material because it's really... it demands depth of breath, it demands a breadth of creative and emotional response.

He offered the following caveat to his position on technique linking his approach to the beliefs he holds about how people learn:

my approach is one which is not specific to one technique. I believe that everybody learns in different ways, that maybe, you know, groups of ways that people learn but it's actually to do with the individual and what their needs are. And I prefer to have an eclectic approach to teaching and or working with actors that draws on the breadth of pedagogies that are available to a voice teacher.

What Carey told me would appear to sit on the ‘individuality’ side of the binary as described by Pitches, above, and while he does not subscribe to any one technique – the idea that an actor should have a technique is still important. The distinction, it would seem, lies in the notion that the teacher must be able to adapt via an eclectic approach ‘draw[ing] on the breadth of pedagogies that are available’.

For Case, technique is important but an actor, for her, needs to be able to forget about this during certain processes of the training, a view that Darnley also expressed in our conversation. Here she exemplifies what she is talking about in reference to her exercise ‘the baby f’, which she described as

The point about the baby ‘f’ is that it.. the key is in the imagination. So it’s about breath capacity, and breathing and all of it – you know really really basic stuff. But I found that people were so fixated on worrying about the mechanism that they were forgetting that it’s actually a creative process and they became very tied up with and bound by technique. And you need technique and you need to understand the technique but it [...] partly [...] came out of the students pushing [...] but as they did that, [used the baby f – a gentle f being breathed out past the lips], *now* not only were they engaging their imagination, which actors have to do, but they weren’t pushing, but equally they got much further and they had much more breath and it lasted much longer because they weren’t thinking about their technique.

Given the viewpoints above from the practitioners interviewed in relation to technique (positive) and systemisation (generally not encouraged) of voice training, what appeared to be emerging is a privileging of an eclectic pedagogical approach in finding, rather than imposing, a voice training/practice for an individual student/actor. Two key principles came to light in reviewing the interviewees notions of technique within the context of voice training:

- 1) Technique does not preclude an actor’s artistry and creativity and as such sits on the individuality side of the system/ individual binary.
- 2) Eclecticism as an approach to voice pedagogy is fundamental in aiding the students to find their own technique that fits their desires, needs, and objectives.

If we return to Sweetman’s ideas regarding ‘the role of the teacher’ in the context of student-centred learning and think about it in terms of voice training, I propose an extension to the notion of eclecticism as it was discussed in the interviews carried out as part of this study: responsive eclecticism. While the signifier ‘responsive’ was not used explicitly by any of the interviewees in view of eclecticism, the context in which they described their use of this pedagogical approach was responding to the live experience with students taking into account their needs, desires, and objectives. The reason I believe that the term eclecticism alone does not describe the happenings within this training environment is because alone eclecticism can still simply be a fixed montage of practice/s that work for the teacher – whereby the addition of ‘responsive’ requires the teacher to be able to draw on many pedagogies and schools of thought, as well as the student’s own context and artistry.

- **An Integrated Practice**

There is a tendency within writing for voice (voice manuals) to break it down into disparate parts, and quite often there will be three key cornerstones to voice indicated in this endeavour: a) breath; b) resonance; and c) articulation and musculature. That is not to say that authors wish for these to

always be used or worked on in isolation and some will say as much, often through outlining a unifying objective (e.g., Linklater, 2006 – connecting voice to emotional impulse; Rodenburg, 2008 – being present in the moment). However, on the surface it can sometimes denote a taxonomy breaking down the voice into component parts. The key problem here, this research argues, lies in the focus of the student/actor reading and carrying out any given exercise. For example, drawing on my own experiential and embodied knowledge of teaching voice, if the student believes they are merely focussing on breath they often push too much and miss their objective. Or if they are concentrating solely on articulation, they might forget to support themselves through breath. However, when work is done on integrating the different aspects of voice through exercises designed to be holistic in their focus, often through play, this research argues that the training becomes ecological in its endeavour. The focus shifts from isolating each aspect of voice to acknowledging and nurturing the relationships between them.

As referenced in Chapter Two of this thesis, Lisa Wilson exemplifies how language of integration is used in the discussion of voice performance when she states that ‘integration of body/mind/voice is key in acting. All action on stage, whether verbal or physical, must have a purpose and is best executed with a free, integrated and expressive instrument’ (2009, p.217). She states, in the context of this integration, that ‘breath is the foundation, the gas and the power of all voice work. Restriction of breath inhibits both living and performing’ (2009, p.217).

There was a holistic view of ‘the voice’ and working on the voice for performance that was implicit in some of the interview data which spoke to this language of integration. For example, Lyn Darnley describes the voice as a unified whole and she told me the implications that has on how she approaches her students. She told me that

the voice is not something that occurs in isolation. So, it's very much part – it's a whole person at training... it takes everything into consideration... well it needs to take everything into consideration from the anatomical and physiological things like posture, alignment [...], relaxation, tension release, all those things.

David Carey talks about the notion of the actor as ‘a whole’, in the previously mentioned interview with Nancy Saklad. Here he states

If the actor is not functioning as a whole, skilled instrument and creative being, then the imagination won't actually be fully realised, and the audience may be excited but may not be moved, because they're not actually receiving vibration that is being released in a full, dynamic way. The body and voice need to be free for the imagination to be realized (2011, p.61).

Joan Mills, too, talked about integration in terms of connecting the technical work on voice to the artistry of the actor observing that

Because that technical side of it ...and the ability to really identify the muscle groups and everything else, really supports the belt voice and so on... but this whole idea of the artistry being a separate bit that you finally get to – I don't believe. Of course, I think if you notice something about Kristin's [Linklater] work, you will immediately say you could see that she is not going to like that – she thought it [referring to Jo Estill's voice teaching] was a terrible idea because she feels it's so integral to the whole process, as do I.

Mills went on to further explain what she means in terms of the actor integrating their development of voice practice and artistry stating

I think that the same would be true of Zygmunt's work and so on. There was never this separation. [...] You have to know exactly what to do with your pallet, your tongue, the jaw [...] all of that. As I said it's got a place and some people have used it alongside other work and used some part of it and found it very effective. I'm never discarding anything but I'm saying in terms of what we are talking about when you come to play like that and the actor is solving the problem in a way that this can give you, ‘how do I find this shift in feeling’ and ‘vocalize this’ and ‘make this clear’... then I think if you haven't integrated your development and if you like the exploration of your voice technically and all the range of it and so without an understanding of that in performance, then you are in trouble.

Sarah Case was more explicit in this when she told me that

unless you marry body and voice together; voice, breath, body, soul, thought, the lot, unless you integrate it, you end up, you can end up with very competent actors but not very creative or interesting actors.

A key aspect of my own voice teaching is to *play* using voice in as full a range as possible; playing with the aesthetics of voice – pitch range, volume, intimacy and so on and playing around with different contexts (e.g., what if Hamlet was a seven year old) then the ‘breaking it down’ comes after in our discussion of the work. At this point I ask students to acknowledge what the differences were in, for example, the breath rhythm of the seven year old Hamlet, to an eighteen year old Hamlet; or was there any difference in dynamic of articulation speaking across a small space to that of a larger space. I argue for a pedagogy that combines the notion of an integrated voice practice that Case, in particular, advocates with critical reflection.

- **The Breath/Thought Correlation**

Whenever our acting takes an unpredictable, magical turn, it is because, somehow, the breath has touched our intuition and come up with what had been hidden in our thoughts and emotions (Manley, 1998, p.3).

Beatrice Manley’s provocation above makes a connection between breath and thought in relation to acting, something that many voice teachers and actor training practitioners have written about and been discussing for some time, particularly from the latter half of the twentieth century onwards. Manley addresses this connection a number of times in her book *My Breath in Art* (1998). Here, she draws on her experience as an actor and teacher towards a colourful, and often figurative, account of what she sees as the relationship between breath and acting. While her writing, in general, tends towards analogous and sentimental modes of expression she does provide worthwhile provocations to start with in terms of the present theme under discussion: breath and thought. She tells us that when ‘breathing naturally, we let th[e] breath receive our thoughts. This is an organic, natural response, requiring nothing from us. Breath and thoughts will be folded into words and gestures’

(1998, p.7). The notion of this connection happening naturally ‘requiring nothing’ from the actor is challenged somewhat by the active engagement described by the wider field of voice practice.

In her book *Speaking Shakespeare*, Patsy Rodenburg argues that there is a deep connection between thought and breath and the importance of this connection when embarking upon Shakespeare’s text. A central aim for her is for the actor taking on Shakespeare’s text ‘to have a breath system that will respond to any length of thought, passionate feeling or epic space’ (2002, pp.35–36). Addressing her writing to the student actor, she tells them

You are about to embark on some of the most passionately felt plays ever written, full of long and often complex thoughts. You will need oxygen to be able to explore them. [...] Without a free, powerful and flexible breath, actors will often resort to shouting the text – power from the throat, not the breath and the whole body. They cannot sustain the energy of a thought: they break it up, rendering it nonsense to the audience, and shattering the rhythm and the music of the verse. Verse needs air. (2002, pp.35–36).

Kristin Linklater, too, talks about this connection between thought and breath, making clear what she feels is the best use of voluntary breathing –

Voluntarily the best contribution we can make is to create fertile conditions for the intricately coordinated activity that delivers accurate communication (thought into word; brain-waves into sound-waves: through breath) (2009, p.102).

Beyond voice theory and practice, the breath/thought correlation exists in notions of psycho-physical acting, which can be linked back to the discussion of integrated practice above (e.g., Wilson’s views on body/mind/voice integration). Phillip Zarrilli draws on yogic practices to highlight ‘a means to overcome the separation between the mind and body’ through ‘the physicalization of thought’ (2009, p.38). In the context of this process, he states that

Practice of disciplines such as *taiqiquan*, *kalarippayattu*, and yoga allows actors to discover the breath-in-the-body and, through acting exercises, to apply this qualitative body-awareness to performance (2009, p.38).

What appears to connect these perspectives is that the work in nurturing this breath/thought correlation all takes place in the body through physical exercises, which includes the realisation of the voice through breath. For example, Linklater talks about the use of unvoiced and voiced sighs to connect breath to feeling and thought respectively, and tells us what happens when we put words to it. She notes that

An unvoiced sigh is all feeling: relief. A voiced sigh starts to engage thought. A sigh with words is equal parts feeling and thought. It can be said that voice picks up emotion and speech picks up thoughts. Emotion must be freely expressible if thoughts are to be freely expressed. But habits of repression and inhibition often block the initial desire to communicate. A sigh of relief undoes both physical and mental restrictions. (2009, p.106)

Although the notion of breath and thought as a correlation was not asked about in the interviews carried out for this study, it emerged as a recurring theme within the answers given. In terms of a consensus of there being a connection between breath and thought, the views collated do not tend to diverge from already established thinking on this, particularly amongst the writing of leading voice coaches: Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg. The following perspectives reviewed make connections between breath, thought and text reflecting, in particular, Linklater’s notions of speech’s evocation of thought through breath and voice.

Simon Reeves told me how he could recognise if an actor is committing to a thought on stage, and its relationship to breath. He stated that

Notionally, this is a loose rule, a breath equals a thought equals a sentence, so the role of breathing when the actor is on stage... I will know whether an actor is not really committing to that thought if they are not really reaching the end, they start tailing away at the end of it, so if they haven’t got the pressure from the breath there to sustain the voice through right to that very last word particularly important in a classical type like Shakespeare.

The notion here of being able to tell whilst watching a performance if the breath is connected to the thought, and the importance of this in maintaining the intent within the line, was echoed by other interviewees.

Lyn Darnley explained the importance of breath support in relation to long complex thoughts, which are common in Shakespeare’s text advising

if you're playing a very small part [...] and you've got like three short lines then it's not going to be necessary to have a huge breath support [...] – but if you're playing a character that has long complex thoughts yes then you do need it. It is much the same way as you do if you're an opera singer [...] you're going to need that [...] It is a complexity of thought, yeah, and [...] it's also the rhetoric.

Darnley used an example from a performance she had been to see to exemplify her thinking further on this, whereby an actor was not committing to the breath and therefore could not reach the end of the thought as indicated by the text –

there were three actors of a certain age... three actors... same age. And two of them had the technique so they do what they wanted to do without a lack of breath control, lack of phrasing, lack of dexterity articulation getting in the way, it was easy, and we weren't aware of it. So, they could speak the verse because they have the breath control to phrase and to keep [...] a whole thought alive. First this [third] actor was chopping the verse at the ends – there was no breath to get to the end of the thoughts that was falling off the end and [...] it was one of those situations where what was said could have been two different things because there wasn't a definition of the end of the word, there wasn't enough breath to propel things forward onto the lips.

David Carey drew a link between the active mode of breathing and the active mode of thinking and how these work in tandem observing that

from a breathing perspective [...] there's sort of twin track that I tend to use, and another exercise which comes into mind is one where after some period of working with breath and with alignment and the sense of sort of just being present to enable actors or student actors just to think about that sense of actually being here now to allow the breath and the thought process to be connected so that as one breathes in one is thinking I am here and as one breathes out you are saying I am here. But there's just a development of that connectivity because it's very easy where one's just doing muscular exercises or doing as it were, improvisatory exercises that one isn't connecting that to actual intention to express a thought. And to simply express a

thought such as I am here, I am ready to work, or I feel this, or I want that just some simple statements on the out breath can feel – students can start to tap into the power of what that connection between thought and breath and expression can be.

Sarah Case echoed the theme emerging here when she told me that ‘you certainly can’t communicate a centred true thought without breath’. As she continued it became evident that her thinking about the connections between breath, thought and speech aligned with Linklater’s proposition that ‘speech picks up thoughts’ (2009, p.106). Case stated that

Changing the shape of the breath, how we chop it up, whether it is an ‘f’ or an ‘s’ or a ‘hello’, and ‘how’s your father’. That’s a physical process... What were the other two... cerebral and spiritual. So, cerebral, yes in the sense that we have to learn how to breathe efficiently and effectively for voice, therefore we have to think about it. It’s cerebral in the sense that we need to connect and thought, because you never speak without a thought, even if you’re speaking, even if you are improvising, even if it’s off the cuff ‘Hi, there’ you’ve had a nanosecond to think you are going to say hi even though you don’t.

- **Breath and Shakespeare’s Text**

There is no lack of discussion connecting the act of speaking Shakespeare to voice practice. This is exemplified, as previously mentioned, by Boston when she tells us how early twentieth century voice and actor trainer Elsie Fogerty regarded Shakespeare and how she ‘holds with the belief that an encounter with Shakespeare’s work, particularly his verse, will effect something transformational for both speaker and audience’. This ‘encounter’ has manifested in actor training programmes throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Petronilla Whitfield states, ‘it is commonly asserted that in an actor training syllabus Shakespeare should play a central role as it can induce a significant advance in student learning due the requirement of intellectual, physical and technical proficiencies’ (2015, p.11).

A key question asked in the interviews was ‘**Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?**’. What became apparent was that, for the voice coaches interviewed, there was a

connection between the notion of a breath/thought correlation and the role of breath in speaking Shakespeare.

While there has been much focus on the relationship between voice and speaking Shakespeare, less of a light has been shone on the role of breath in this endeavour. There are some brief but notable exceptions to this general rule.

The lungs indeed should be for Shakespeare a kind of bagpipe – always full of air and always being replenished. The text can then be sustained and shaped. [...] Shakespeare demands a defined breathing pattern which is not in any sense natural (Hall, 2003, p.55).

Peter Hall’s ideas around breathing for speaking Shakespeare illustrate a tradition of obedience to the text and its structure and the place of breath in that obedience. He advises

Breaths should only be taken at the end of the line. Breathing in the middle destroys the line. Modern actors are used to breathing when they naturally run out of breath. Then they break up the text unthinkingly whenever their lungs need refilling. It is a personal and idiosyncratic need. But it does not do for Shakespeare. Because he requires the line structure to be preserved, he asks that the actor should always have enough breath in his [of her] lungs to deliver the full line (2003, p.55)

Sarah Case connected this idea with the length of thought within Shakespeare’s text compared to that of contemporary thought structure telling me that

it is particularly important for actors to understand the role of breath in Shakespeare. The main reason for that is that the thoughts are a lot longer than the thoughts we have today. We live in a split-second culture – that’s how I describe it to the young kids I’m teaching, because they are bombarded with images. They see stuff, they don’t hear it [...]. And if we’re doing contemporary plays, the thoughts are very, very short. You often get three words, or five words, or one word or whatever. Whereas in Shakespeare you have very, very long thoughts – and you need the breath to ride the thought because they are so interconnected.

This interconnectedness Case drew on in our conversation, of breath and thought, reflects the previous theme of one thought/one breath discussed earlier. What Case has done is place the breath/thought correlation at the heart of what connects breath to the act of speaking Shakespeare.

David Carey placed the role of breath in speaking Shakespeare to the wider area of language. He stated that

[breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare] because the language is heightened and lengthened, it is demanding in terms of the [...] expressive power of the language that's heightened but it's also demanding in terms of the length of the thoughts. And so much modern dramatic text is counting short chunks and it's very easy not to think about breathing because it feels so naturalistic to speak that language particularly if you're working in television and film. But Shakespeare – in a sense, Shakespeare's theatre, the Elizabethan theatre – celebrated great thoughts, great language, [the] size of it all, in all directions. And so we need to embrace that, we need to be prepared in breath at the core; what we require is that depth and size of breath to fulfil that language.

For Carey the demands of the language (being heightened and lengthened) require the actor to ‘be prepared in breath at the core’ in order to deal with the ‘size of it all’.

For Joan Mills and Lyn Darnley, the question is not as much about the particular role breath has in speaking Shakespeare, rather it goes broader than that. For Mills it is about the role of breath in speaking text. She stated that

... the writer had in mind something that was very important that he was trying to say or she was trying to say, and it's indicated often by the phrasing, where the breath comes, how the verses stops at their breath, how there's a pause or the lines just run one onto the other and the other and the other because the person is just in such flow, such joy, or such misery that they can't stop. If you ignore all of that [...] you're not going to make sense of it. I think it is important and there are other writers I think equally that [this applies to] – so I think also if you learn to do that with Shakespeare then you can apply that also then to some of the best modern writers too. Certainly, again someone like for example Samuel Beckett completely understood, I mean he's a good example I think where in a way you breathe, what the pattern is, the rhythm, the structure of the text is absolutely vital. Look at any of his plays, and I think from *Waiting for Godot* to *Not I* I mean if you were not thinking about what's the breath pattern and shape and what's going on here and letting that inform you, then you'd be way off what you think he was thinking.

Mills linked the notion of what the writer had to say with the ‘phrasing’ within a text – which is ‘where the breath comes’. While this connection is not unique to Shakespeare, what Mills alluded to, was

the notion of using Shakespeare’s text as a pedagogical device: ‘if you learn to do that with Shakespeare then you can apply that also then to some of the best modern writers too’, which reflects Whitfield’s observations above about the ‘proficiencies’ required for speaking Shakespeare.

Mills then spoke about embodiment, and for this she was more explicit in identifying Shakespeare’s text when she noted

... why Shakespeare is so extraordinary and so interesting to work on is because it is embodied text somehow. It allows for embodiment, and I don't think all texts do and you might struggle to – you might be able to embody it, but you're going to have to work very hard and you're supplying a lot whereas in a way I think [with Shakespeare] so often it is supplied.

While Mills did not draw a line from her notion of Shakespeare’s text being embodied to breath, I argue that with any embodied practice one cannot escape the acknowledgment of breath. Darnley reframed her answer to the same question to encapsulate all performance:

DCL: Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

LD: I think breath has a particular role in *performance*.... Would be my answer to that. And because of the nature of Shakespeare, it is more important perhaps to – I don’t know if I really believe this – I think it's important for everything but [...] I suppose it's a little bit like classical music, music in general. If you're playing jazz there are certain things that are important for the jazz, there's something else that's important, you know, for Mozart or Bach. And the demands of Shakespeare are bigger than the demands for kitchen sink drama or certainly television or film they don’t make demands on the breath in same way Shakespeare does. So yes, I suppose in that way if you phrase it like that then it is, I still think breath is fundamental to all performance, but the demands of Shakespeare are greater.

Darnley acknowledged that Shakespeare’s text makes greater demands on the breath of the actor – however, for her, breath is fundamental to all performance. She advised that she believes that if you work on any aspect of performance you are working on breath; that breath, voice, body, work on text is all integrated.

Interviews with voice coaches: Patterns, contrasts and conclusions

The findings that have emerged from carrying out interviews with voice coaches, in relation to the consideration of breath in training actors in speaking Shakespeare, are a combination of reinforcing existing ideas (e.g., breath/thought correlation) and new perspectives relating to the role of breath in speaking Shakespeare. The findings also highlight the possibility of building a coherent and useful breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare, which makes way for the next phase of this research: running a series of workshops entitled ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’.

Here is a summary of key findings having analysed the data from the interviews:

1. Student-centred approach to training actors for speaking Shakespeare

A pattern emerged within the interview data analysed, in that the voice coaches interviewed all approach training actors for speaking Shakespeare taking account of the needs of individual students in the context of training the student’s voice for speaking Shakespeare. In table 4.2. set out earlier in this chapter, a number of key factors are illustrated in the context of the interviews carried out by adapting Rachel Sweetman’s table of issues and features of student-centred learning (2017, p.47).

Key issues redefined under the terms of the analysis currently being outlined are as follows:

- a) What is meant by learning?

Type of learning: Voicing of, and breathing through, Shakespeare’s text as an embodied practice; led by students not systems.

Nature of learning: Learning through practice.

Through breathing exercises and in conjunction with Shakespeare’s text.

- b) Practice/activities involved?

Approach to learning: Being led by the students’ own cultural frame of reference and using this as an access point into the work. Investigating the student’s relationship to concepts of breath work and Shakespeare.

c) What roles are expected?

Role of the student: Committed and engaged participant; collaborator; increased autonomy – willing to scrutinise exercises, established practices and voice and breath training as well as viewing Shakespeare’s text with a critical eye.

Role of the teacher: Informed facilitator – informed in established practice relating to voice and breath work, and actor training traditions for speaking Shakespeare. Flexible in allowing space for intervention via students’ criticality towards the work and ability to adapt and respond.

d) Are there implications for power and choice?

Shifts in power: The shift here, like in Sweetman’s original table, moves towards a more democratic and collaborative space. Shifting the balance of power from teacher towards students also from text towards students, from prescribed practice towards students.

A departure emerges from Sweetman’s model, when factoring in the perspectives of the voice coaches interviewed – two new issues emerge as an extension on Sweetman’s table:

e) Creativity – student as a resource for themselves

As illustrated earlier in this chapter, my interview with David Carey gave insight into his perspective on the connection between breath, creativity, and speaking Shakespeare. He stated that

for me the voice, and breath in particular, are really central to the creative process for an actor. And so, enabling actors to, first of all, perhaps in a student context to discover the connection to breath and through breath a connection to the creative use of breath for language and in particular heightened language such as Shakespeare or other verse text is really important.

It is evident here that the learning within Carey’s training requires the creative process to be driven by the voice and breath, framing the performance of Shakespeare’s text as an embodied practice.

f) Embodiment – student as art

Sarah Case, in our interview, describes breath’s relation to physicality, cerebrality, and spirituality of the actor in training. This research argues that engagement on these three levels apropos voice and breath training means that students are involved in a deeply active and embodied mode of learning akin to the process outlined in Baeten, Struyven, and Dochy’s description of student-centred approach to learning

as an “active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organised knowledge” (Mayer, 2004, p.14). As such, it views learning as an active process of knowledge construction rather than as a passive reception of information (2013, p.14).

2. Responsive eclecticism

Two key principles came to light in reviewing the interviewees’ perspective on technique within the context of voice training:

- 1) Technique does not preclude an actor’s artistry and creativity and as such sits on the individuality side of the system/ individual binary within voice training.
- 2) Eclecticism as an approach to voice pedagogy is fundamental in aiding the students to find their own technique that fits their desires, needs, and objectives.

This research proposes an extension to the notion of eclecticism as it was discussed in the interviews carried out as part of this study: responsive eclecticism. While the signifier ‘responsive’ was not used explicitly by any of the interviewees in view of eclecticism, the context in which they described their use of this pedagogical approach was responding to the live experience with students taking into account their needs, desires, and objectives.

3. Resistance of compartmentalised approaches to voice training: an integrated voice

In relation to the eclectic approach to voice training the interviewees were clear in their resistance of treating voice as a compartmentalised aspect of actor training, for example, Lyn Darnley suggests that voice training does not happen in isolation, while David Carey and Joan Mills talk about voice and voice training in ‘holistic’ terms. As stated earlier, Sarah Case describes this approach to voice training as an integration of voice, breath, body, and text to prepare students for performance of classical text. The emphasis here is that in voice pedagogy it is, as Darnley put it, ‘the whole person at training’.

4. **Acknowledgement of one’s own breath rhythm is enough to start the transformation connecting breath and thought together as directed by the student/actors’ own internal breathing rhythm.**

As we have seen Patsy Rodenburg argues that there is a deep connection between thought and breath and a central aim for her is for the actor taking on Shakespeare’s text ‘to have a breath system that will respond to any length of thought, passionate feeling or epic space’ (2002, pp.35–36). David Carey describes this connection as something that drives a transformation within the actor that is driven by the actor’s own breath rhythm. This research argues that this connection of thought to be expressed from an actor’s interpretation of text, and their own breath rhythm privileges an approach to breath training that is focused on the individual, in that the performer’s own context is brought to the performance of Shakespeare’s text via their breath.

5. **The legacy, of the mid-twentieth century shift away from ‘voice beautiful’ practices of vocal training, holds firm amongst contemporary practitioners.**

It is evident from the interview data analysed, and from wider reading on practice, that contemporary voice pedagogues embrace the student-centred approach to teaching voice. This can be at times difficult to decipher within the ‘how-to’ books on voice practice, where the form is limited to breaking

down the voice into compartmentalised parts and speaking to the hypothetical ‘every-student’, therefore, it is easier to embrace and realise this concept within studio practice.

The interviewees all expressed a rejection of systemisation of voice and breath work, favouring instead a method of training that encourages each student to find their own technique. The notion of ‘technique’ within actor training is a cornerstone in canons and schools of thought within the theory and practice of acting, actor training, and voice practice. However, its place in, and relationship to, actors’ artistry, agency, and autonomy within training contexts, particularly when said technique emanates from ‘master teachers’, established systems and traditions, and the inherent hierarchy that these espouse, has only been examined in recent years in the context of research conferences (Crews and Cryer-Lennon, 2017; Cornford, 2019).

This research argues that the encouragement of technique as it sits within a student-centred approach to training actors’ voices paves the way for the student to embrace a critical mode of learning about their individual practice. Room can be made, therefore, for the student to enter into a pedagogy that encourages self-awareness, self-determination and self-direction through criticality, reflection and dialogue within the learning space.

CHAPTER FIVE – Reframing Breath Training as a Critical Pedagogy with Specific Reference to Speaking Shakespeare

Considering the analysis of this study within a broader pedagogical context, this chapter highlights a novel perspective on breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare that has criticality at its core. The chapter is divided into two discussion areas apropos pedagogy. First, it examines theory relating to skill acquisition, and the role and function of such within the pedagogical framework that this research is putting forward with particular reference to actor training. The chapter then moves to introducing key conceptual frameworks that have informed this thesis in relation to pedagogy and criticality.

This chapter uses a series of moments, referred to as ‘critical moments’, to form the core building blocks of the pedagogy that this research proposes. These are:

- ***Critical Moment #1 Self-Awareness***
- ***Critical Moment #2 Self-determination and self-direction***
- ***Critical Moment #3 Pedagogical Intervention***
- ***Critical Moment #4 Self-Reflection Towards Criticality***

Each of these moments has been created in relation to pedagogical frameworks, which are examined here, and then explored in the context of the workshop series carried out.

The first of these frameworks relate to Paulo Freire’s democratisation and conscientisation as outlined in his seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which positions pedagogy as a radical intervention to liberate ‘the prisoner of a “circle of certainty”, within which he [or she] also imprisons reality’ (1972, p.18). In other words, as I have argued for elsewhere, this research advocates democratic actor training pedagogies that are not mere templates of past traditions (Whitfield, 2019,

p.15), but are responsive to the contemporaneous contexts within the training space, led by a student-centred approach to pedagogy, where the student is a conscious and active agent within the pedagogy (Crews & Cryer-Lennon, 2020).

The second key conceptual framework reviewed here is the idea of intervention within Augusto Boal’s extension of Freire’s work into the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000). Boal positions theatre as a ‘weapon’ for liberation, much like Freire does with pedagogy, and provides a model of intervention via theatre and theatrical convention in order to ‘fight’ for social change (Boal, 2000, p.ix). Here, the role of the trainer is considered in relation to ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’. This section then culminates into a consideration of the notion of the concept ‘actor training of the oppressed’, by examining teacher/practitioner-led traditions of actor training that treat the student as an empty vessel (Rodriguez, 2012) for skill acquisition only, with the absence of criticality on the part of the trainee.

The chapter then assesses the prefix ‘critical’ as a transformative signifier to breath pedagogy. Here, this research is drawing on Henry Giroux’s *Critical Pedagogy* (2013) as a framework for learning before examining the pedagogy at the centre of this research.

To conclude the chapter, the notion and place of reflective practice is assessed with reference to the workshop series undertaken.

Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition has become an important part of the trainee actor’s education and is usually delivered through the teaching and learning of technique and established traditions, which, in the

West, is predominantly a twentieth century phenomenon (Hodge, 2010, p.1). This section examines the idea of expanding and going beyond notions of skill acquisition in the context of actor training.

Approaching pedagogy as a critical and political practice suggests that educators refuse all attempts to reduce classroom teaching exclusively to matters of technique and method. In opposition to such approaches, educators can highlight the performative character of education as an act of intervention in the world (Giroux, 2013, p.79).

The two sentences of Giroux’s statement above reflect the way in which this chapter deals with the balance of skill acquisition and criticality within the actor training studio. Giroux’s acknowledgement that pedagogy must go beyond skill acquisition merely as a hand-me-down process of teaching and learning of technique and method is important when we consider exercises within voice training for speaking Shakespeare. This research takes heed of Giroux’s position and proposes that there needs to be scrutiny of what is imparted within the training studio and within voice manuals (Boston, 2018) on the part of student and the trainer must make space for that scrutiny.

The second thought he offers here is the idea of pedagogy being delivered as a critical and political practice that can intervene in the world as a practice of social justice. Similarly, this research argues that an overarching principle of voice training must be for the students to understand the wider social context and potential impact their work may have.

First though, skill acquisition needs to be examined in its own right. It is apparent that the field of skill acquisition theory, when it comes to pedagogic discourse, is most verdant in the context of second language learning. Therefore, it is there that this research looks to for a comprehensive definition. It is important to note; however, that ‘Skill Acquisition Theory is not just a theory of the development of language, rather it is a general theory of learning ranging from cognitive to

psychomotor skills’ (Taie, 2014, p.1971) and, therefore, is useful when discussing notions relating to wider pedagogic theory and practice.

Robert DeKeyser offers a summary of skill acquisition theory, suggesting that

[t]he basic claim of Skill Acquisition Theory is that the learning of a wide variety of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behavior to eventual fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behavior, and that this set of phenomena can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to the acquisition of all skills (DeKeyser, 2015, p.94).

DeKeyser points to three stages of development within skill acquisition: ‘cognitive, associative, and autonomous’ (sometimes referred to as ‘declarative, procedural, and automatic’ or ‘presentation, practice, and production’). He explains

[t]hese three stages are characterized by large differences in the nature of knowledge and its use, as reflected in various ways through introspection, verbalization, and most importantly various aspects of behavior especially under demanding conditions (DeKeyser, 2015, p.95).

It is useful to think about the ‘cognitive, associative, and autonomous’ stages within actor training in order to assess how strategies might be utilised towards effective teaching and learning. DeKeyser helpfully breaks down the stages further advising that

Initially, a student, learner, apprentice, or trainee may acquire quite a bit of knowledge ABOUT a skill without ever even trying to use it. That knowledge may be acquired through perceptive observation and analysis of others engaged in skilled behavior (e.g., learning a new dance move), but most often is transmitted in verbal form from one who knows to one who does not (as in a parent or driving instructor teaching a teenager how to drive a car), and often through a combination of the two, when the “expert” demonstrates the behavior slowly while commenting on the relevant aspects (e.g., teaching a child how to swim or how to play tennis) (DeKeyser, 2015, p.95, his capitalisation).

Two of the examples used here by DeKeyser, of driving instruction and swimming, are necessarily prescriptive in that if you do not execute the task correctly then there may be drastic consequences.

This illustrates that there is a need for certain tasks to be carried out in a certain way and this in turn could limit approaches to training and to who can be trained in such tasks, although advances in technology can lead to less exclusionary outcomes. When it comes to the examples of tennis, and learning a new dance move, there is potentially more room for manoeuvre in that, whilst the trainer needs to encourage and impart safe practices, the consequences of getting things wrong are more often less profound.

Then when we come to discuss the areas of acting and voice, like the examples of tennis or learning a new dance move, there is a need to encourage safe practice (e.g., not to damage one’s voice; working safely with others), but there is again perhaps less of a need to be as prescriptive as with driving or swimming. Where skill acquisition, as described by DeKeyser, falls short is the lack of questioning the role of the teacher, or the wider context of the learning environment: ‘most often [skill] is transmitted in verbal form from one who knows to one who does not’ (DeKeyser, 2015, p.95). This has various implications in relation to power dynamics within a training space, where questions of autonomy and agency come to bear (autonomy within actor training is explored in Chow, 2014; Camilleri, 2015; and Crews & Cryer-Lennon, 2020).

This thesis, therefore, posits that there is room for more criticality within pedagogies that are not as necessarily prescriptive. In other words, there is space for processes including (but not limited to) that of examination, contextualisation, experimentation, failure and the unpicking of failure. This mode of teaching and learning, where process is valued over ‘finished product’, has the potential to be more open and align with what political scientist Samir Amin calls ‘democratization’. Amin tells us that he prefers the term ‘democratization’ to democracy as it ‘stresses the dynamic aspect of a still-unfinished process [whereas] democracy [...] reinforces the illusion that we can give a definitive formula for it’ (Amin, 2001). The aim here is not to move away from skill acquisition within actor

training pedagogies, not least because of certain expectations and commitments of these pedagogies pertaining to higher education (via student recruitment; module validation processes; employability blueprints etc.). Rather it is to expand the pedagogy to a) include criticality as a skill in the context of actor training through the inclusion of discussion of metacognitive processes, and b) to invite criticality into the training space in relation to the material used (e.g., playtexts; actor training literature) as well as the context and the contemporary and physical environment we find ourselves within in any given training situation.

This extends to the ability, and willingness, to enable a criticality to enter discussions of traditional elements of actor training. Whitfield posits that

Many of us, as teachers of acting and voice, are trained professional performers and teach our subject as we were taught it, at drama school, in the theatre, or in our teacher training. The received ideas and routines of others (often originating from traditions and cultures embedded many years ago) are regularly implemented and often unquestioned in their effectiveness in assisting (or undermining) a broad range of individual needs (Whitfield, 2019, p.13).

Like Whitfield, this research proposes a pedagogy that breaks with processes of teaching and learning that go unquestioned both on the parts of the trainer and the trainee. It needs to be stated that this is not to disparage any established practice, rather it is to provide balance in terms of hierarchy in its functionality within any given training context. In other words, what this research advocates is the inclusion of established practice/s, as a resource and as a device that can be used, but which can be altered or discarded to suit the needs and desires of the student within their contemporary context and environment (Crews & Cryer-Lennon, 2020).

If we consider common expectations (from ‘how to’ books on acting and voice) of what skills a ‘proficient’ actor might need to hold to be successful, we start to get a sense of perceptions the task/s

evoke. The following often appear within various voice and actor training manuals; all of which have their own politics and issues attached (Gee and Hargrave, 2011; Conroy, 2009; Werner, 1997):

- Stage presence (Rodenburg, 2008)
- Engagement with character (Stanislavsky, in Bennett & French, 2016)
- Memory (Krasner, 2010)
- Proficiency in voice (Berry, Linklater, Rodenburg et al.)
- Proficiency in movement (Grotowski & Barba, 2012; Meyerhold in Pitches, 2018)
- Understanding of text (Berry, 2008; 2011)
- Grasp of Psychophysical modes of performance (Zarrilli, 2009)

Questions arise of who is included and excluded when we put parameters on notions of what it is to be a ‘proper actor’ (Gee and Hargrave, 2011). There are also questions around the mental health of students (e.g., inducing anxiety within students with learning difficulties – see Whitfield, 2019) and how they might manage the ‘mental, physical, and emotional’ (Chow, 2014) side of actor training.

Whitfield, in the context of training actors with dyslexia to act Shakespeare’s text, usefully examines ‘the purpose of education in actor training’ (2019, p.15). She questions the role of performer trainers as she poses the query whether ‘teachers [should] merely [...] confine themselves to training templates, aiming towards fulfilling an expected skill set for the professional performer, or might education of the actor serve a wider, more holistic purpose?’ (Whitfield, 2019, p.15). She also makes an observation relating to the ‘several prominent books’ apropos ‘an actor’s approach to speaking Shakespeare. The majority of them center on meticulous observation of the language and its influence on acting choices’ (Whitfield, 2019, p.56).

In proposing that the education of an actor be more holistic, she offers up the following question: ‘Should the role of educators also aim to nourish the selfhood and possibility of all those they teach?’

(Whitfield, 2019, p.15). Whitfield points to a moment where writing on/of voice practice starts to look at the holistic approach to actor training. She describes Kristin Linklater’s work as ‘tak[ing] a radically different approach to the text, stating, “my guide to speaking Shakespeare is experiential rather than prescriptive”’ (in Whitfield, 2019, p.57). As stated in the introduction to this thesis, Linklater, takes heed of her mentor’s (Iris Warren) words relating to how the voice feels rather than how the voice sounds. This line of enquiry exemplifies how a student might interrogate their voice practice beyond skill acquisition – it represents a shift from an intellectual endeavour to a more embodied and experiential route to training.

There are a multitude of books and manuals prescribing the skillset required by an actor including those discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. An example of the sometimes-prescriptive nature can be found in Elsie Fogerty’s *Speaking of English Verse* where she describes a list of ‘defects’ that need to be addressed in the early training of an actor (this is in line with Whitfield’s observations relating to the skillset that an actor is required to have within much of the actor training literature and practice):

- i. Lack of flexibility in inspiratory movement.
- ii. Poor chest development, often resulting from nose or throat trouble.
- iii. Lack of control and rhythm in expiratory movement, resulting in [the following]:
- iv. Breathy tone.
- v. Harsh attack or "shock.
- vi. Nasal tone caused by weak palate-movement, or conversely by nasal obstruction which impedes true nasal resonance.
- vii. Throaty tone due to narrowed throat passages, and weak respiratory force.
- viii. Faulty vowel shapes; inaccurate use of subordinate vowels.
- ix. Defective articulation, often due to defective dentition.
- x. False stress, generally on prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns, due to scanned accents instead of rhythmic phrasing.
- xi. Mechanical falling inflections at the close of every sentence or at the end of every line.
- xii. Singsong inflection following the mechanical scansion of the line.
- xiii. Colloquial delivery, exaggerating the sense-stress and destroying rhythm.
- xiv. Meaningless variety in tone, stress and movement (Fogerty, 1929, p.169).

While Fogerty was writing almost a century ago the tone she strikes here of ‘defects’ that need to be addressed, can be seen within writing and teaching on voice through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. This is perhaps not too surprising given the fact that the most prevalent lineage within voice practice and writing has at least some connection with Central, the school Fogerty founded. To mirror an earlier point regarding established practice, this is not to be disparaging towards what she, and the voice teachers that followed were, and are, trying to do; rather, this research wants to insert a critical way of thinking about such writing and teaching on the part of the student and teacher. If, for example, we take the second point from Fogerty’s list above ‘Poor chest development, often resulting from nose or throat trouble’ – on one hand we could see the role of the teacher to aid the student in developing the chest resonator. On the other hand, and perhaps in addition, we could ask if the student, in this case, has some medical ailment restricting them beyond their control. Another question we could consider is if this ‘defect’ cannot be resolved – what does that mean for their wider practice? – do they abandon their aspirations of being an actor or can we reimagine what acting is in their circumstance? This hypothetical conversation may seem to have taken big leaps from the actor having trouble with chest development to the contemplation of their acting career; however, it is included to reflect conversations I have had with students in my time teaching voice practice that have read various voice and acting books that they feel ask for, what it feels like, for them, insurmountable targets to be achieved.

Whitfield highlights another task that can intimidate actors, in this case where actors/students are neurodivergent; she discusses Adrian Noble’s advice to the actor in relation to work on text, giving a list of ‘rules’ the performer of Shakespeare’s text must contend with:

- Apposition (the juxtaposition of words, phrases, and ideas)
- Metaphor (similes, comparisons)
- Meter and pulse
- Line endings (rhyme, alliteration, and assonance)

- Word play
- Vocabulary
- Shape and structure (Noble, 2010, p.4-5; in Whitfield, 2019, p.56).

Whitfield points out that these are examples of ‘an intellectual study of the form of the word’ and as such these ‘rules’ set out by Noble can be troublesome for students with dyslexia. In the same way, when we consider any skill to be intellectual or something traditionally seen as embodied, part of the role of the teacher must be to consider how their pedagogy might be exclusionary or inclusive.

When we consider Giroux’s proposition that ‘educators [should] refuse all attempts to reduce classroom teaching exclusively to matters of technique and method’ (2004, p.41) and apply it to the context of actor training for speaking Shakespeare, we gain insight on how we might make the process more inclusive. If in the pedagogical space, like in the context of Whitfield’s above, we can move away from sticking rigidly to teaching technique and method, we may make room to use other reference points available to us. This research advocates the students using themselves (their ideas, their imagination, their embodied experience, and their criticality) as routes into how we train and facilitate their relationship with Shakespeare’s text.

By opening up the space to a democratic and conscientious mode of learning and teaching (Freire, 1972) we can make a pedagogical space that is more inclusive for those students that may not fit into the ‘mold’ as deemed necessary by some traditional actor training practices.

Paulo Freire’s Democratisation and Conscientisation

Before utilising the positions of Paulo Freire, as manifested in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), it is instrumental to note the background, conceptual framework, and metaphors at play within his writing.

- **Background**

Freire explains, in the preface to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), that his observations are based on his time working as a teacher in Brazil, whilst spending six years in political exile. Ronald Arnett tells us that

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, connected literacy education with political life. Poverty, imprisonment, and exile never diminished his concern for the Other. Literacy education opened the path from poverty to political voice. He dedicated his life to education as liberation (2002, p.489).

In the years of his exile, Freire observed that his students had an apprehension of freedom – he notes that this apprehension is not always apparent to the students themselves, rather it was demonstrated in their behaviours and attitudes. Such apprehension, or fear, he suggests, served as an ‘attempt to achieve security, which [the student] prefers to the risks of liberty’ (Freire et al., 2014, p.16). It is at this point Freire begins to embrace the concept of ‘conscientisation’ as something that can disrupt the *status quo*. Conscientisation is described in a translator’s note of the 1972 publication as ‘refer[ring] to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality’ (p.15). He connects wariness around ‘conscientisation’ to the ‘fear of freedom’, within what Freire describes as ‘training courses which analyse the role of conscientisation and in actual experimentation with a genuinely liberating education’, as participants deem critical consciousness as something that leads to anarchy and disorder.

- **Conceptual Framework**

To get to the heart of Freire’s ideas we need to examine the words he chooses to use within the title of his project. Namely, what he means by *pedagogy*, who are the *oppressed*, and who are their oppressors. The first two of these terms are elucidated by Freire himself, when he states, speaking of the oppressed, that

[p]ropoganda, management, manipulation – all arms of domination – cannot be instruments of their re-humanisation. The only effective instrument is a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed. In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teacher (here, the revolutionary leadership) can manipulate the students (the oppressed), because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves (Freire, 1972, p.44).

Freire’s wider goals include the fight for humanization, or at least fight against dehumanisation. Here he describes some features of dehumanisation and why it should not be seen as merely historical:

Those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, [it] is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to accept dehumanisation as an historical vocation would lead to cynicism or total despair (1972, pp.20-21).

The risks, for Freire, in confining the concept of dehumanisation to history is to forfeit the ongoing ‘struggle for humanisation’ which includes: ‘the emancipation of labour, [...] the overcoming of alienation, [...] and] the affirmation of men as persons’ (1972, p.21). The ideas that Freire proposes may seem a little revolutionary in the context of actor training; however, this research contends that without the realisation and fostering of conscientisation within the actor training studio, we run the risk of merely providing bank learning, where students accept what the teacher says without question. We, as teachers or trainers, run the risk of not having to explain our positions and arguments in full. This is not to suggest that students are the sole arbiters of ‘good’ training and teaching practices, rather through conscientisation within the training studio the teacher can begin to gauge whether the student understands the theories or practices put forward as open for discussion.

- **Freire’s banking education concept and its effect on democracy**

Freire uses much provocative language in relation to his thinking on pedagogy such as democracy, humanising and dehumanisation, bank education, transformation, liberation and so on. Freire’s language relating to democracy and conscientisation can be useful in analysing actor training

practices and in doing so exemplify how this language might enter the actor training space towards the acquisition of criticality as a skill on the part of the trainee.

Freire defines his ‘banking concept of education’ as follows:

In [it], knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence (1972, p.46).

Within the wider metaphor of bank education, he also uses the metaphors of depositories (the students) and depositor (the teacher), which are involved in a process he describes as follows:

[i]nstead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and ‘makes deposits’ which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposits (Freire, 1972, p.46).

The banking model, for Freire, lacks ‘creativity [and] transformation’ on the part of the student. A key aspect of bank learning, as an educational framework, is the passivity of the student. Freire provides a list of ten characteristics that show the active role of the teacher versus the passive role of the student:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
4. The teacher talks and the students listen - meekly.
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
8. The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects (1972, pp.46-47).

The above descriptions, describe a system whereby the student lacks autonomy and agency. Freire notes that the banking system

regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world (1972).

This research contends that those training actors, where they use any preconceived practice, must be mindful of the potential for passivity and lack of agency on the part of the student. In the actor training space ‘passivity’ can be disguised behind students’ physical engagement with an exercise they are being instructed on or the reading of a text. However, there are still issues relating to colonization within voice and actor training (Oram, 2019, p.279), where the experience or the assumption of the teacher, or assumptions embedded in the practice they may subscribe to, can take precedent over the student’s thinking and experience. Phillip Zarrilli highlights how there can be pre-existing agents at play in any given performance context, which, he tells us, extends to the acting student. He states

[e]very time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a “theory” of acting – a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of actions which he or she performs, the shape that those actions take (as a character, role, or sequence of actions as in some performance art), and the relationship to the audience. Informing these assumptions are culture-specific assumptions about the body-mind relationship, the nature of the “self”, the emotions/feelings, and performance context (Zarrilli, 2002, p.3).

This research advocates a pedagogical model for training actors whereby, students are aware and have the space to scrutinise and discuss the ‘culture-specific assumptions’ embedded in the practices that they become exposed to and are asked to engage with. This research argues that in facilitating students to cast a critical eye over pre-existing assumptions and the contemporaneous context in which the assumptions were made, students will more likely gain critical awareness as a skill and be able to apply it to future contexts they find themselves in, and therefore be taking part in a pedagogy that is more democratic, fostering a more conscientious student cohort.

Analysis of Pedagogy: Democratisation and Conscientisation within ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’

This section is the first report reflecting the analysis undertaken of the workshop content. I do not report on the analysis and findings of the workshops in a strictly chronological order, rather I run through a series of moments (referred to as ‘critical moments’), which lead to ‘teaching strategies’, a term borrowed from Petronilla Whitfield in relation to teaching dyslexic and neurodiverse acting students in speaking Shakespeare (2019), which I found to aid criticality (illustrated in the current chapter) and inclusivity (see Chapter Six).

Within this report I reflect on my analysis of workshop material (video footage and researcher observation notes) through the lens of Freire’s notions of democratization and conscientisation, working on the basis that the successful fostering of the latter can move towards the former. I first focus on the initial workshop, where I introduced the principles of my pedagogy to the participants including the primacy of criticality within the pedagogy.

When using democratization as a basis for analysis in an educational context, it is important to acknowledge the difficulties in attaining ‘pure’ democracy²⁸ in any given teaching circumstance or, as in the case of this study, pedagogical research workshop series. By virtue of certain parameters having already been decided before the recruitment of volunteer participants such as the framework of the workshop series or the space in which the workshops are to be held, there is some agency taken away from the participants already. In the case of my workshops there were also some content

²⁸ The term ‘pure democracy’ is borrowed from political science and is defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary as ‘democracy in which the power is exercised directly by the people rather than through representatives’ (2020).

choices made before we began. For example, the exercises that would be investigated were chosen before the series commenced, as were the extracts of Shakespeare’s text to be used. These choices were made primarily to reflect some of the research questions this study was looking to explore. This is not to say that these decisions should not be scrutinised within the pedagogical context they are situated in, rather to be consistent with the pedagogical approach this research advocates, it was important that these finer points were discussed with the participants taking part. In addition to this, I made space in the first workshop to outline how I saw my role, and that of the participants, within this simultaneous research and pedagogical space, to discuss the principles of my pedagogy, and to elucidate that these perspectives were up for discussion.

The Freire Institute provide a useful outline of the concept of dialogue, as promoted by Freire:

To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created (Freire Institute, 2020).

To aid the dialogic mode I wanted to encourage through the workshop series, I designed the initial session in a way to invite such an approach on the part of the participants. I made it clear to the participants at this early stage that their thoughts, feelings, and impressions were legitimate and important to the pedagogy, the research project, and their learning. Having received their consent for the workshop to be video-recorded and their experiences to be documented we discussed the nature of research as a process of examination and investigation, and the place of documentation within this process. Some of the participants openly talked about their own research projects that they were/had been engaged with during their undergraduate degrees and the discussion also entered into the notion of documentation around their artistic practice (e.g., making notes on scripts; or using mind maps within devising). I took the opportunity here to ask the participants to reflect on the function of the discussion we just had so they could start to become aware of the metacognitive

processes that this research and resultant pedagogy were engaged with and encouraged. I took a cue here from the editors of the *Handbook of Metacognition in Education*, when they reflect on an earlier book of their *Metacognition in Education Theory and Practice*, telling us that

A common theme running through all these chapters is the notion of agency: successful students take charge of their own learning. At a minimum, taking charge requires students to be aware of their learning, to evaluate their learning needs, to generate strategies to meet their needs, and to implement those strategies. Self-awareness, self-determination, and self-direction are the characteristics that Kluwe (1982) used when he described people as ‘agents of their own thinking’ (p.222). As agents of our own thinking, we construct our understanding of ourselves and the world, we control our thoughts and behaviours, and we monitor the consequences of them (Hacker, Dunlosky and Graesser, 2009, p.1).

As an introductory exercise I asked the participants to introduce themselves, asking if they would like to share with the cohort their career goals, and why they decided to take part in the workshop series. This is in line with the principles of pedagogy, outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis, where I advocate ‘a pedagogy where the student is at the centre’. This is a useful device, which I also use within my voice teaching, to make connections between the work we do within workshops and the students’ aspirations and goals they inform the group about.

Within the first workshop participants relayed career aspirations such as acting, teaching, and voice coaching. In terms of why they wanted to take part in the workshop series, reasons included having not worked on Shakespeare’s text before, as well as the notion of spending time working on breath in the context of performance. It was important to me that efforts were made to find opportunities to refer back to these earlier conversations throughout the workshop series.

A similar rationale lay behind the reasons for incorporating a word association exercise for ‘Breath/ing’ and ‘Shakespeare’. What follows is an analysis of this exercise and discussion of how this

led to a *conscientisation* on the part of the student relating to their existing knowledge and experience, as well being exposed to others’ knowledge and experience of the same.

Analysis of Workshop – Word Association of ‘Breath/ing’ and ‘Shakespeare’: Critical Moment #1 Self-Awareness

- **Key exercise/theme being explored: Word association**

The idea of word association techniques being used in a pedagogical setting is not new (Novak & Gowin, 1984; Mervis & Rosch, 1981). In the context of learning, Kostova & Radoynovska tell us that free word association is ‘a reliable technique used as a procedure for measuring number, direction and strengths of connections’ (2010) within testing a student cohort on their knowledge of a subject. They explain that a ‘[f]ree word association test requires responses that are not restricted to any specific category or class of words’. This is the basis that I approach the word association within this pedagogical model.

I have used word association exercises in my teaching employing the keyword of ‘voice’ (usually within the first day of class) for a number of years and have found it beneficial as a pedagogical device on a number of counts including those outlined below:

- It generates reference points that are personal to the students;
- It invariably brings repetition of words, phrases and themes, which can be drawn as connections from one individual’s experience to another within the discussion section of the exercise;
- It gives the sense of the class group being a melting pot of ideas, fostering a collaborative mode of practice;

- It legitimises students’ own thinking in relation to what voice means to them – often leading to them having more confidence in their own ideas within the context of the class;
- It is a self-generating pedagogy – that is, the tutor can use the language to respond to their knowledge, to build ideas on to create pedagogical/learning moments;
- It engages the students cognitively and displays an active mode of pedagogy;
- It is helpful in giving the teacher a sense of the student’s knowledge base around a particular subject or concept.

While the terms examined within the workshop for this study were more specific: using the keywords of ‘Breath/ing’ and ‘Shakespeare’, the exercise resulted in similar positive pedagogical outcomes.

The word association exercise allowed the participants space to write/draw (on post-its) as liberally as possible without having to immediately articulate their thoughts in front of people they potentially did not know. It was evident that the participants found it easy to engage with the ‘Breathing’ and ‘Bard’ boards in this way.

The Breathing Board



The Bard Board



In my role as pedagogue/facilitator, in the discussion part of the exercise, I responded to each post-it on both boards, making clear that each word (or picture) was a legitimate response. It was important that I limit any interference on my part at this stage of the pedagogical experience to gauge any shifts in the language used from this point and through the workshop series to the end.

In the extracted table below, I indicate field-note observations of the key exercise of the session and the framing for each observation. The word association exercise in relation to the themes of ‘Breath/ing’ and ‘Shakespeare’ was set with as few boundaries as possible in relation to what the responses could or should be. There was a mix of associations made in terms of form, including one-word responses, drawings, and lines of original poetry. After the participants had written or drawn their responses, they posted them onto the board. We first did this process with ‘Breath/ing’ followed by the same process with responses to ‘Shakespeare’. As a core principle of this pedagogy is discussion of what we do, we spent the majority of this first session in this mode. This was facilitated by allowing the students to speak to each other’s observations alongside my own responses, as pedagogue/facilitator/informed “authority” in the room, to the contributions via post-its, as the researcher/pedagogue.

Framing of Observation	Observation
Spatial	A bright fluorescently lit room. A central space in the room had been cleared of tables and before the students entered the space. As soon as the researcher/pedagogue sat on the floor – most of the participants followed suit forming a circle, with some participants opting to sit on chairs.
Atmosphere	The atmosphere was relaxed, but full of energy. The participants appeared eager to be there. There was a lot of laughter and fun throughout the session.
Pedagogical factors	Researcher/Pedagogue drawing out the responses from participants and connecting to theoretical concepts to do with breath as a pedagogical device for performance and actor training.
Language used by participants	In relation to breath – there was a mix of technical, metaphorical, figurative, and philosophical language used. Some responses leaned towards the physiological breathing apparatus. There were also connections made between breath and voice.
Second Language students	Thinking about the ‘universality’ of breath and how it transcends language

Table 5.1. Extract from Field Notes relating to Session One: ‘Breath/ing’ Word Association

Framing of Observation	Observation
Spatial	As above
Atmosphere	As above
Pedagogical factors	It was made clear that all opinions on Shakespeare were valid in this space. These opinions were then teased out. The researcher/pedagogue is using the word association both as a research tool, in that the responses give insight as to what the participants think of Shakespeare, and as a pedagogical device by opening the discussion and responding to each post-it in teaching mode (as the informed ‘authority’ in the room).
Language used by participants	In relation to Shakespeare, students tended towards descriptive words e.g., ‘OVERRATED’ ‘UNCOMPARABLE’ (sic) ‘IMPORTANT’ Some students used intertextuality (e.g., <i>Doctor Who</i>) and film adaptations (<i>Ten Things I Hate About You</i>) to access their thinking on Shakespeare.

Second Language students	Talked about being confused by the language within Shakespeare’s Text at times (although, this was not limited to non–UK domicile students). One student expressed that they felt that the Shakespeare canon was important in the context of world literature.
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Table 5.2. Field Notes from Session One: ‘Shakespeare’ Word Association

It was important for both the research and pedagogy, that I created a comfortable space as quickly as possible in order for the participants to feel they could share any reflections as openly and honestly as the context would allow.

It was clear from the language utilised within the first session that the majority of the cohort were more proficient in their terminology around breath/ing than Shakespeare. When speaking about breath they readily spoke of it in relation to voice – especially in technical and physiological terms. There were some participants that spoke in metaphorical language in relation to breath and breathing – for example, one participant referenced Cicely Berry’s idea of taking breath down to the centre for stability; others talked in terms of their experience of taking part in a voice class. Whereas when talking about their experience of Shakespeare, the majority of the group talked about and/or referenced his work through the lens of popular culture and intertextuality (e.g., references to *Doctor Who* and *Ten Things I Hate about You*). Others talked about Shakespeare’s text in relation to its place in literature; there was a consensus among the group the work held importance amongst literature and poetry. The words and phrases often reflected commentary on the status of Shakespeare as if the work was very far removed from their experience in education or life in general, whereas when discussing breath and breathing there was an easier route to their responses which was to do with embodied experience.

The word association exercises yielded significant information of the participants’ intellectual relationship with notions of breath/ing and Shakespeare. It revealed access points used by members

of the cohort for both concepts in an informal and relaxed setting, which led to fruitful discussions of both topics. The students responded well to the tasks, with all participants able to contribute to the discussion. Essential to the success of the pedagogy being explored was that all participants felt they had something concrete to offer (evidenced by their contribution to the discussion at the end of the workshop) - laying the foundation where all members have a chance to take part before moving on to more specialised material and exercises.

A key component of the word association exercise was to reflect to the students what they already knew and for them to engage with their individual experience of breathing and Shakespeare. Through raising their awareness of what they already knew and had experienced, as well as making it clear that all responses were legitimate and up for discussion, the students were able to see that they had something to offer and that they had a foundation of experience to begin work. This was exemplified in the discussion at the end of the session, when many of the students noted that they did not realise what they already knew and that they had forgotten about many of the experiences they were talking about now. If we remind ourselves of Freire’s concept of conscientisation as being something that is ‘refer[ring] to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality’ (Freire, 1972, p.15), an important step to make this experience of conscientisation complete in any given context is through self-awareness of our own experiences (Lake and Dagostino, 2013, p.105). I found that the word association exercise led to increased self-awareness on the part of the student regarding their knowledge and experience, and how they are accessing that knowledge and experience, of the concepts of breathing and Shakespeare, and therefore can be described as a metacognitive process. It was clear in the discussion part of the session that the students were surprised by their knowledge and understanding, and how they were able to access that knowledge and experience.

If we remind ourselves of the characteristics Kluwe suggests are attributes of people who are ‘agents of their own thinking’: ‘Self-awareness, self-determination, and self-direction’ (1982, p.222), we see agency starting to emerge within the word association exercise, when participants become aware of their existing knowledge and begin to accept the legitimacy of their own experience.

Analysis of Workshop – ‘My thought, my breath’: Critical Moment #2 Self-determination and self-direction

Text used: *The Taming of the Shrew* – Act five, scene two – Kate’s monologue (First Folio, 1623).

Key exercise/theme explored: One thought/one breath.

While I reference the experience and responses of a few of the participants, the focus here is on a specific participant, referred to as ‘Participant A’.

This was the sixth workshop of the series and having completed five workshops and one focus group I observed that the cohort were gaining confidence in challenging the concepts introduced within the series. This appeared to be as a result of the dialogic mode adopted within each workshop; that is, each conversation seemed to reference previous observations and discussions made by the participants in earlier workshops and the first focus group. This was exemplified in this session particularly in response to the text we were using. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to refer to a literary analysis of the text – it is worth noting that within this workshop some participants were ready to challenge the motives of the author in writing this text – and scrutinised, in particular, any readiness to perform a classic text ignoring the contemporaneous context in which the performance occurs, as opposed to yielding fully to the context in which it was written.

When interviewing Simon Reeves (Head of Voice at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), he suggested a ‘loose’ rule of thumb when speaking classical or heightened text is that ‘notionally [...] a breath equals a thought’ adding that he

will know whether an actor is not really committing to that thought if they are not really reaching the end, they start tailing away at the end of it, so if they haven’t got the pressure from the breath there to sustain the voice through right to that very last word particularly important in a classical type like Shakespeare.

This idea was presented to the participants primarily as an experiment that may lead to discovery about the text they are working on, their potential performance of a text, and their thinking about breathing in relation to speaking Shakespeare and, therefore, the utility of such an exercise was about more than the final performance, but a process of exploration and discovery.

Within this workshop the participants were asked to read Kate’s monologue at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act 5, sc 2) to themselves to become familiar with it. Then they were asked to pair up and examine a section of the monologue – each pairing having a different third of the monologue to explore. I asked the participants to identify and discuss where they felt the thoughts began and ended in the text – they did not have to agree on where the thoughts were – they were only to discuss and make notes on their printouts indicating where they felt the thoughts lay.

We then came back into a circle and each pair together performed their respective monologue sections. Two of the pairs matched each other in pace and rhythm but one pair did not. Evident from this reading was that most participants broke the thoughts down either by using the sentence structure or following the punctuation. However, this changed when Participant A exclaimed within the discussion after the performance that she felt as though the whole speech was a single thought. After I encouraged her to explore how this might manifest in terms of performance, the other participants began to re-evaluate how they approached the text. They were then asked to return to

their pairs to apply the one thought/one breath rule using the thought structure they had just come up with. Within their pairings one participant would perform the text followed by discussion and feedback from their partner.

We then returned to the circle, to see if any of the performances changed when performing on their own, rather than pairs, and applying the one thought/one breath rule. Each in turn performed and the speech patterns that emerged were from stream of consciousness (long speech presented as a single thought), to testimony (as if responding to a question or a given context), to recital (a character repeating what they heard before). Participant A struggled initially to apply the one thought/one breath rule and feared that she would run out of breath mid thought – I encouraged her to stick with it to see what effect it would have on the meaning and intention of the text. In the resultant performance Participant A ran out of breath as she feared but then took an audible inhale and continued to ‘run through the thought’ (a comment she made after the performance). Once she had performed the text, the feedback from the group was that they now heard the speech as a resistance to the literal meaning of the content and as such a resistance to the character’s ‘imprisoned situation’. In contrast, when her partner performed the same section applying a different thought structure and using the same rule of one thought/one breath – the group agreed that the meaning came across as a much more emotional ‘cry for help’.

In the discussion afterwards one of the participants expressed that they felt liberated in the shift from obeying a rhythm to tapping into their own rhythm through breath as performers. Another observation was that they were surprised by how the ‘consideration of thought and breath in approaching speaking a Shakespeare text could have such an effect on the meaning’, particularly when they did not change the words. This also highlighted for one of the participants ‘how the punctuation in a text controlled the thought structure and breath rhythm within a performance’. I

took this opportunity to ask the participants how comfortable they felt challenging punctuation within a text. Some found this a very easy process, and others noted that they initially found it jarring to go against the rhythm they felt that was already set out in the text; however, they found it useful to examine how it might be explored through the breath/thought correlation and that they found connections that they had not before.

From the beginning of the workshop series Participant A expressed that she was ‘not a fan of Shakespeare’, although it was evident that her knowledge of his plays and text was greater than most of the rest of the cohort. However, she advised that after this experience of being able to choose where the thoughts lay and to give voice to those thoughts – or as she put it: she could apply ‘*my thought, my breath*’, she said she felt a little more ‘on board’. This is not to say that she is right or wrong to come down on either of liking or disliking Shakespeare; however, it is interesting to note the shift that can occur when the pedagogical framework shifts from text or author based to student-centred approach via their breath and thought.

The interesting thing here is not just that she began to engage more with the work via breath, but also it was the appetite for self-determination and self-direction in approaching Shakespeare’s text, which was accessed via applying a consideration of breath and thought. This was highlighted in the discussion at the end of the session by Participant A and the rest of the cohort when they agreed that by accessing their breath in conjunction with their interpretation of the thought processes of the character, their performance became grounded, and as one participant put it – the performance felt as though it was theirs.

The notion of one thought/one breath brought up various challenges for the participants, not least in making decisions about where the thoughts were, and therefore where a breath may be taken, in

reading/reciting/speaking of the text. The journey of identifying where the thought and breath were within the text, to the description of feeling as though the performance was theirs was an important critical moment within the pedagogy here. It not only exemplified to the researcher/pedagogue that self-determination and self-direction occurred within this specific pedagogical space; it also showed the participants that a process where they were told to make decisions about whether to subscribe to established authorities or traditional approaches (around punctuation) resulted in them ‘owning the performance’. Themes such as ‘liberation’; ‘freedom’, and ‘choice’ were the main topics of discussion brought up by the participants, at the end of this session. One participant stated that ‘having the freedom of choice, within this space, in relation to breath, which is already my own – not that it has always felt that way – meant that I could play the part on my terms’; another added ‘yeah, I feel as though I was in control rather than the text’. These discoveries made by the participants, and the subsequent group reflection on such, highlighted that the participants were more aware than they had been before about the power dynamics inherent in studio practice and pedagogical spaces. The shift in centrality that followed, from text instructing the breathing (where to place breath), to a student orientated and directed approach fulfils, at least in part, the self-determination and self-direction characteristics of Freire’s conscientisation.

Analysis of Workshop – A Responsive Breath Pedagogy: Critical Moment

#3 Pedagogical Intervention

- **Intervention within Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed: The role of the trainer in ‘A Breath Pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’.**

The critical moment outlined above, where Participant A found a freedom to apply her own thought through her breath to the performance of Shakespeare’s text, was in itself a resultant factor of intervention along the lines of Freire and Boal. If we look at Boal’s notion of intervention within theatre, we can apply it to the pedagogical situation to help elucidate the role of the trainer.

This research advocates for a practice that moves away from practitioner/trainer centred practices of actor training in relation to speaking Shakespeare; however, there is a distinct and important role the trainer takes on in the student-centred approach, which can be defined using Boal’s model of intervention as a guide.

The intervention model exists within Boal’s Forum Theatre, which is a format whereby participants (a group of local people or community with a unified purpose/attribute; a forum) decide on an issue they wish to address from their lives, which gets developed into short scenes played by actors. This form of theatre uses role-playing to stimulate debate and work towards solutions that the community can use going forward. Boal defines Forum Theatre as an act where ‘the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action’ (2000, p.126) and where actors have to be ready for whatever intervention comes about. Defining elements within the intervention are:

- The forum, community or cohort;
- Issue/subject they wish to address;
- The spec-actor/s;
- An actor or actors;
- Room for debate and discussion.

Forum Theatre model of intervention	Equivalent in ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’
The forum, community or cohort	Student cohort
Issue/subject they wish to address	E.g., The ‘one thought/one breath’ rule
The spec-actor/s	The student/s performing
An actor or actors	The trainer or facilitator ²⁹
Room for debate and discussion	The dialogic mode running through workshop.

²⁹ In this application the trainer or facilitator also takes on the role of the Joker – as a moderator of proceedings – ‘his function is the only one that can perform any role (Boal, 2000, p.182).

Table 5.3. An example of the application of this in my own research, is reflected in the below table.

The model above reflects a responsive mode of pedagogy, which requires the trainer to be able to adapt any workshop or lesson plan reacting to the events of any given session. This may include dramatic shifts in their plans moving towards a teaching situation that is responsive to the contemporaneous context in which they are faced. What follows is a reflection on a critical moment within the workshop series that saw plans needing to change to accommodate the needs of individual students, and how the intervention model can help the trainer in an environment where these changes can happen.

Workshop Analysis

Text used: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Act two, scene one – Helena/Demetrius duologue (First Folio, 1623).

Key exercise/theme explored: David Carey's exercise exploring the 'inspirational response'.

In this section I focus on an instance within this workshop where the envisaged plan of the trainer/pedagogue was shifted by the context of the contemporaneous training situation.

In this workshop the participants were asked to pair up (or three up) to explore the duologue and each pair/trio were asked to familiarise themselves with the text before performing it for the rest of the group. In one of the pairs, we had a student from Bulgaria and a student from Romania both of whom considered English to be their second language. Once they had performed the text for the group one of the participants reported that she was nervous performing and as such felt her breath 'tensed up' in performance. The other expressed that she felt 'breathless' in performing because she did not know the text. While discussing the breath/ing dynamics they had experienced performing

and how the rest of the cohort received the performance – the nature of difficulties in performing were examined by the participants. Another participant, also working in her second language, observed that perhaps the challenges they found may be because they were not performing in their first language. We agreed as a cohort that an interesting experiment could be to perform some of the duologue in their respective first languages. They took the task to translate and explore the first few stanzas of the duologue in their own language to investigate any resultant difference in breathing dynamic.

Before they carried out this task we engaged with the key exercise of the session: David Carey’s ‘Inspirational Response’, which he tells us is a development of an exercise he learned from Meredith Bunch Dayme (Carey, 2009, p.193). Carey, speaking in reference to an actor he was working with, elucidates why he believes this exercise is important for the actor

Because he is a human being with his own emotional, psychic and physiological history that he is experiencing difficulty in performing. As a human being he had been ‘holding his breath’ in rehearsal – out of fear, anxiety and ambition – and this had bled into his characterisation and then into his performance. Through troubleshooting his problem with breath, he discovered the need to breathe fully and deeply, at one with the character and himself (2009, 193).

Carey’s notions of troubleshooting problems with breath, and reflecting on the student actor’s own emotional, psychic, and physiological history allows for an informed intervention to take place within the pedagogical space, which is rooted in the actor’s personal history. The discovery Carey speaks about in relation to a need, and the idea of locating what the need is in relation not just to the character an actor may be playing, but also the actor’s own embodied experience, means that the student actor is required in this circumstance to explore and reflect on their own breath/ing dynamic. This is the basis of how we approached the following exercise ‘inspirational response’.

The instructions given to the participants were as follows:

Seated on a chair, feet grounded on the floor if possible. Begin to pay attention to your breath cycle, noticing how your body moves as you breathe in and out – e.g., where in your body moves as you do this action? We are not looking to change the breath rhythm here, rather we are acknowledging it. Now bring your focus to the moment of change from the in breath to the out breath. Notice the sensation in your body as you move from one type of activity to the other. Notice the deepest point in your torso that you can feel this happening.

Now mark the moment of change with a little sound – ‘huh’ on the out breath – it can be quite quiet at this stage just to mark the moment, just enough voice to hear it [repeated several times]. Now bring in stronger commitment to the sound so that it gets slightly louder [repeated several times], now play around with the lengths of the vowels – and now play with the pitch of the sound [some time spent in this ‘playing’ mode]. And now go back to the original marking of the moment with the quiet ‘huh’ – [spent and little time on this] and relax.

As a group we discussed how the participants experienced the exercise. There was consensus amongst the participants that when the exercise began, they felt they would intellectualise the experience making it difficult to get past the notion of following instruction. However, they agreed that once they were able to play around with the vowel sounds the breath became more dynamic and freer: the breath easily went with the sound rather than it being forced. One of the participants advised that she really struggled not to intellectualise the task, commenting that this is something she struggles with in general, and therefore found it difficult to mark the moment of change; however, once the vowel sounds were incorporated this became easier – she advised that if she were to do the exercise again, she would spend more time on playing with the vowel sounds.

When we came out of doing the exercise the participants tasked with translating some of the text into their respective languages performed – I asked that they maintain the work we did with the exercise as best they could to see how it applied in this context. While the rest of the cohort including myself did not speak Bulgarian or Romanian, we used print outs of the English text to subtitle what we were hearing, therefore we had an approximate sense of what was being said and when. It was immediately clear a degree of the tension they spoke about in reading the English text had lifted.

There was a greater ease, and the breath was being carried to the end of the lines. There was also far more colourful and pronounced intonation within the speech. Both participants advised that the translations they were using were structured poetic text. Asked how it felt to perform in their home language, with particular reference to breath, one participant advised that they felt there was much more energy in the text, and that the breath was more dynamic. Both participants agreed that they felt more confident in their native language and this had a bearing on the ‘flow’ of breath – with one of the participants stating that ‘she felt freer and more grounded with the breath’ in her own language.

Those watching the performance reported that they found the speech more nuanced compared to when the participants that performed in English. They also agreed that the performance was more theatrical and physical than before, which another participant watching the performance queried if that was a cultural difference between the languages of the performance to the English language.

It was clear that the intervention (responding to the contemporaneous pedagogical context) led to a mode of exploration and discovery relating to one’s own breath dynamic for speaking Shakespeare, and that these discoveries could then be used as a template for achievement in performance. Pedagogical questions can emerge from such an experiment, for example, how does a student replicate the desirable aspects of their performance in their own language within an English language performance? It also highlights wider questions for performer trainers such as: how can the act of speaking Shakespeare be more accessible using engagement of home languages of international students within actor training programmes in British institutions? One such way has been exemplified by the experiment detailed above; troubleshooting problems with breath, and reflecting on the student actor’s own emotional, psychic, and physiological history (in this case, through breath and language), which as mentioned above is promoted by Carey.

- **‘Critical’ as a transformative signifier to Breath Pedagogy**

Writing in the context of higher education, Giroux echoes Boal when he frames critical pedagogy as an

act of intervention [which] needs to be grounded in a project that not only problematises its own location, mechanisms of transmission, and effects, but also functions as a larger project to contest various forms of domination and to help students think more critically about how existing social, political, and economic arrangements might be better suited to address the promise of a radical democracy as an anticipatory rather than messianic goal (2011, p.76).

In other words, Giroux is suggesting that higher education practices should not be “democratic” in title alone, rather for him it must strive to seek democracy starting with opening up pedagogic spaces to the practices of anticipatory democracy: for example, the allowance of space for the act of questioning the context and content of the learning itself on the part of the student.

Susanne Luhmann, as highlighted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, shows the transformative effect of signifiers (via prefixed adjectives) to the word ‘pedagogy’ e.g., feminist or anti-racist pedagogy. This research argues for adopting the word critical as a prefix to ‘breath pedagogy’ in order to move towards a more democratic actor training space, in line with Freire’s position as detailed earlier in this chapter.

The word ‘critical’ as a prefix for the wider notion of pedagogy has been promoted by scholars such as Freire and Henry Giroux from the 1960s onwards. Giroux highlights the reason for this, stating

Critical pedagogy takes as one of its central projects an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices in which social agency has been denied and produced. [...P]edagogy might offer educators an important set of theoretical tools in support of the values of reason and freedom (2011, p.3).

To engage with and examine how Giroux’s model of critical pedagogy might work in relation to actor training, and subsequently voice and breath pedagogy, it is worth looking at how he frames it, which

he does in the introductory essay of his *Critical Pedagogy* book, entitled ‘Critical Pedagogy in Dark Times’. He explains the central belief of all essays in his book is that

education is fundamental to democracy and that no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgements and act in a socially responsible way (2011, p.3).

Taking heed of Giroux’s argument, this research proposes trainers making clear the role that actor training, including training the actor for speaking Shakespeare, has in serving democracy in its function of creating critical and self-reflective, knowledgeable and active citizens. This principle should be put to the students to consider when they embark on training so they can be equipped to start work with these principles in mind.

Giroux’s position aligns with Kluwe’s description of people who are ‘agents of their own thinking’ (1982, p.222) as mentioned earlier in this chapter, which itself incorporates characteristics of Freire’s conscientisation. Kluwe explains his rationale in this regard:

It is important that human beings understand themselves as agents of their own thinking. Our thinking is not just happening, like a reflex; it is caused by the thinking person, it can be monitored and regulated deliberately, i.e., it is under control of the thinking person (1982, p.222).

If we examine Kluwe’s notions here through the lens of Freire’s praxis – we start to see parallels between what Kluwe professes to be true of what it is to be a ‘thinking person’, and what Freire, and subsequently Giroux, want to facilitate through pedagogies that allow for the cognitive (Freire, 1972, p.53) and agentic students (Giroux, 2011, p.6).

Sharon Bailin points out that drama education is at times characterised, in part, by its engagement with, and promotion of, critical thinking on the part of the student (1998, p.145), which may lead one to accept that within the field of actor training, being closely connected with drama education,

criticality is inherent. However, as Bailin warns, critical thinking is ‘highly contextual and is intimately connected with the acquisition of knowledge and skill in the area’ (1998, p.153) in which one is working. A concern of the current research is that within some actor training practices the idea of mastery, and consequently following a ‘master’, returns actor training to some of the characteristics of bank education – and moves away from Kluwe’s idea of the human being ‘agents of their own thinking’. This study argues that the word ‘critical’ serves as a transformative signifier within the particular context of ‘a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’, to, in part, serve as a reminder that we must acknowledge preconceived and unchallenged assumptions that make their way into this pedagogical space about the context in which the pedagogy is delivered, and make room to scrutinise these assumptions, in a positive and open way. This position aligns with Giroux’s model of critical pedagogy, in that it serves as a project of intervention in the world by acknowledging and constantly debating the context in which the pedagogy finds itself (2011, p.74).

Shu-hwa Jung helpfully summarises some of the traits that Giroux calls for within a critical pedagogy:

1. interdisciplinary in nature;
2. the concept of cultural politics, link to ideologies shaped by power, politics, history and culture;
3. emancipatory;
4. teachers should be transformative intellectuals, questioning the fundamental categories of all disciplines;
5. schools as democratic public sphere, restoration of a community of shared progressive values;
6. public mission of making society more democratic, fostering of a common public discourse linked to the democratic imperatives of equality and social justice (2008, p.23).

The list above that Giroux calls for focuses on the context in which education occurs as a subject that should be considered and scrutinised within the pedagogical setting itself. Giroux explains how

[s]ome phenomenological critics have charged that teaching practices are often rooted in “commonsense” assumptions that go relatively unchallenged by both teachers and students and serve to mask the social construction of certain forms of knowledge[...] Teachers and other educational workers, in this case, often ignore

questions concerning how they perceive their classrooms, how students make sense of what they are presented, and how knowledge is mediated between teachers (themselves) and students (2011, p.19).

Giroux’s position can be applied to an analysis of actor training pedagogies too. As alluded to within Zarrilli’s proposition (2002, p.3), mentioned earlier in this chapter, acting and actor training pedagogies lend themselves easily to implicitly enacting assumptions, which belong to another, and which are informed by culture-specific factors which do not necessarily align with the culture of the student performer. In this regard, this research returns to the notion Carey posits relating to the actor needing to acknowledge their own ‘emotional, psychic and physiological history’ in order to troubleshoot breathing challenges within the context of acting. Within Carey’s example, only when a deliberate intervention was made, acknowledging the history of the actor (emotional, psychic, and physiological), as well as the character, was the actor able to continue confidently in their performance. This act of self-reflection being applied to challenges of breath and performance is at the core of the pedagogy proposed by this research.

The Role of Reflective Practice within ‘A Breath Pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’: Critical Moment #4 Self-Reflection Towards Criticality

In this section I outline ways in which criticality was fostered within the workshop series: through embedding reflective practice as a key mode of enquiry and consolidation. As discussed earlier, this research advocates for a dialogic mode of practice within actor training. Rather than this section concentrating on a singular moment within the focus groups, the critical pedagogical moment being highlighted here is the result of a culmination of different moments within the sessions all pointing to the idea of self-reflection towards criticality.

A key reference for this research within reflective practice literature is Thompson & Thompson’s *The Critically Reflective Practitioner* (2008). Here, drawing on Brechin, Brown and Eby’s definition of ‘reflective practice’ in forming their own concept of ‘critically reflective practice’, they state that

Reflective practice is more than just a thoughtful practice. It is the process of turning thoughts into a potential learning situation “which may help to modify and change approaches to practice” (Schober, 1993, p.324). Reflective practice entails the synthesis of self-awareness, reflection and critical thinking (2000, p.52).

Here we see echoes of Freire, Kluwe, and Giroux in the engagement and advocacy of self-awareness and critical thinking on the part of the student or practitioner. What Thompson and Thompson add to Brechin, Brown and Eby’s definition above is the emphasis on the criticality of the practitioner (or student). They use the term ‘critical’ in the sense of ‘an approach that is characterised by questioning and not taking things for granted – especially social arrangements that are based on inequality and disadvantage’ (Thompson & Thompson, 2008, p.27).

In line with this, my approach to the designing of the breath pedagogy, and planning of associated workshops, was based on principles within literature on ‘reflective practice’ (Burnard & Hennessy, 2009; Rushton & Suter, 2012). By using Rushton & Suter’s (2012, p.12) model of reflective practice within the pedagogical space we can encourage a mode of reflective practice that can show dividends to the students quite quickly. This model works on an ongoing process: **practice – reflection – revised practice – reflection – further practice** and so on.

Alongside this approach, Burnard and Hennessy’s description of ‘reflection as a form of conversation’ is utilised, which they suggest ‘turns experience into meaning learning when a person is able to actively construct and find personal meaning within a situation’ (2009, p.6, citing Falk et al., 2000, p.41). This sits within a constructivist philosophy of teaching (Kinsella, 2009, p.265) which aids the student-centred pedagogy (Lea et al. 2003). Virginia Richardson helpfully points to a consensus of

what constructivist teaching entails: ‘It suggests that individuals create their own understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact with’ (1997, p.3).

- **Reflective practice within a critical breath pedagogy**

An important principle of the pedagogy proposed within this research is an awareness on the part of the student actor of the metacognitive processes at play within the workshop studio. For this reason, I prioritised, within the workshops carried out for this research, Thompson and Thompson’s three dimensions of reflective practice:

Cognitive: understanding the importance of thinking in general and analysis and creativity in particular.

Affective: appreciating how significant emotional concerns are in shaping practice and how dangerous it can be to fail to take account of them.

Values: becoming aware of the moral-political factors that are ever-present in our work and which should not be neglected (2008, p.27).

With this in mind I included three key devices to aid and encourage the dialogic and reflective modes within the workshop series. The first of these was to introduce the participants to my pedagogical principles within the first session of the workshop series (and later emailed to the participants) – transparency of the intentions and beliefs of the trainer was an important aspect to aid the democratisation (Freire, 1972) of the teaching space. The second was, as mentioned and pictured earlier in this chapter, the inclusion of the ‘Breathing Board’ and ‘Bard Board’: whereby students were able to write/draw their thoughts relating to the work we were doing on post-it notes and place them on relevant boards. The third was the implementation of focus groups, not just as a research tool, but also as a pedagogical device towards enquiry and consolidation. Each of these contributed to the intention of reflective practice being at the core of the pedagogy.

What follows is a brief analysis of moments of reflective practice that occurred relating to the focus groups through the lens of Thompson and Thompson’s dimensions of reflective practice outlined above: **cognitive, affective** and **value**.

The first focus group occurred after four of the practical workshops had taken place; a little over halfway through the workshop series. We had ten of the participants in attendance and there were seven lines of enquiry for discussion:

- Enquiry 1: Why did you choose a performance related course to do in University?
 - Enquiry 1A: Why did you want to do the workshops?
- Enquiry 2: Where did you place breath in your own practice before attending this series of workshops?
- Enquiry 3: Have you ever noticed breathing dynamics in a performance, how did it manifest itself and what does that mean, if one does notice?
- Enquiry 4: What are your thoughts on Shakespeare?
- Enquiry 5: In relation to this workshop series - what has been the most effective moment/exercise/workshop, or have you struggled with any of it in particular?
 - Enquiry 5A: Moving away slightly from the specifics for a moment, what about journey you have been on from day one of the workshops up to this point? How would you describe any differences in your practice or approach to performance?
- Enquiry 6: Do you think there is particular role for breath in speaking Shakespeare?

For purposes of this analysis, I concentrate on Enquiry 5, 5 A, and Enquiry Six of the first focus group session, as they, in particular, exemplify a reflective mode of enquiry. Here is an extract from the transcription and analysis notes relating to these enquiries – highlighted are notes ascribing which of Thompson and Thompson three reflective practice dimensions are identified (cognitive, affective, or values):

Enquiry 5: In relation to this workshop series - what has been the most effective moment/exercise/workshop, or have you struggled with any of it in particular?

P.A:

- *‘I think probably when we had the very first workshop, and we were trying to figure out what is the breath, what is the voice, that made me think ‘Oooo’ because normally you don’t really understand, normally you don’t really focus on what is breath, what is voice but then when you told us to do it – first my mind was blank but then all of a sudden I had so many ideas playing around in my mind – then it was like ‘there is this, and that’ and I went into really big things and I was like ‘Wow’ and got really interested. So, I think that was the point where I started to think about it more – in my private time as much as in Uni and I found that very interesting’. **COGNITIVE***

P.B:

- *‘I think last week, when we did the breathing [David Carey’s inspirational response exercise], and then immediately went straight into the text. That really helped me because it was kind of like you go from breathing and focusing on the breath and then you are hurled into the deep end ‘alright, now just immediately start talking straight after, don’t even think about it and – I noticed the huge change in that I had more control over how I was doing it and it made me realise just how much meaning is conveyed through the way something is said – I mean obviously you know that but when you actually think about it and you put it into practice, and the way you breathe and the way you say certain words – whether it is in passion, anger, sadness etc., it is all different, all because of the way you’ve breathed through it. So, I think last week the pinnacle moment for me really’ **COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE**.*

P.C:

- *‘I like the one with the hand getting closer to your face [Patsy Rodenburg’s Second Circle breathing] – I like the idea of creating a connection through the way you breathe’. AFFECTIVE*

P.D:

- *‘My favourite was the one with the balls [Joan Mills’ ‘A load of old Balls’] – where we were able to hear other people’s emphasis on certain words – so I started to understand the text more when other people were emphasising words’. AFFECTIVE*

P.E:

- *‘I found that exercise the most difficult, kind of like a multitasking thing, and I was focused on one thing, which was wrong, I didn’t do it in the right way – I would try to improve if I did it again, but I think it would take me a lot of time’. AFFECTIVE*

P.F:

- *‘A little bit interesting with the ball exercise and the multitasking, like when you give someone the ball, and remember the line, then say the line on the release of the ball, and getting the ball to a person – all of those things sort of made breathing harder because you are thinking about so much you almost forget about the breath, which is good but also sometimes you could think about it too much – and then when you took away the ball, it returns back to how it was – but it is about that acknowledgement’. COGNITIVE*

P.G:

- *‘It was last week for me³⁰ – it was absolutely fantastic – it was sort of like afterwards people describing it [the difference between pre-exercise performance and post-exercise], in a very unselfconscious way, in a true way, and almost like, after the breathing people seemed to have more courage to say exactly what happened and the quality of the sound was really enhanced, it was fantastic’. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE*

Enquiry 5B: Moving away slightly from the specifics for a moment, what about journey you have been on from day one of the workshops up to this point? How would you describe any differences in your practice or approach to performance?

P.A:

- *‘I feel like I am way more aware of breath, because normally every day you would just breathing and not really focus on it. But at the very beginning, doing those workshops I was just layering breathing on to theatre and Shakespeare; but didn’t really focus on breathing and just living at the same time. So now I am at the point, whenever I am doing something I am also focussing on my breath and when I have strong emotions, I acknowledge the effect on my breath – for example, if I have strong emotions, my breath might be quicker. AFFECTIVE*

P.B:

- *‘There is a certain day that I would like to comment upon, because it helps me with the generalisation; I remember coming here and we did the breath thing and all that kind of stuff, and then I went to Tesco, bought some stuff, but I felt confident – like usually you know I am very secluded, I don’t really want to talk to anyone but someone accidentally stepped on my*

³⁰ This refers to the workshop on David Carey’s responsive breath as outlined within the thesis (see p.179).

foot, and I said ‘Oh, It’s all good’ and then we had a conversation and I walked away feeling that through breath I gained a certain level of confidence and I don’t know why, I don’t know what link that has in the mind ... I haven’t mentioned it to you before but it was a huge part of that day – a huge realisation, in that moment to think ‘God, breathing has made me feel more alive more vibrant, and more willing to actually step out of my shell – I thought that was pretty cool. I think it might be because breathing deeply takes you out of yourself and allows you to push out all your problems with every exhale’. **AFFECTIVE**

Enquiry 6: Do you think there is particular role for breath in speaking Shakespeare?

P.A:

- *‘The way it is written means you can’t go too fast, and you get into a particular rhythm – I think speaking and knowing about the breath helps you to know about the text and think about what you are saying before you rush into’.* **COGNITIVE**

P.B:

- *‘With the iambic pentameter, it means you can’t go too fast or too slow, or you’ll mess up the rhythm, and if you mess up the rhythm then the words, it seems boring, and has no energy and I think that is linked with breath’.* **COGNITIVE**

P.C:

- *‘I think it is about making it accessible as well – if you were to read Shakespeare or hear it and don’t know what it means – it can suck! But if you breathe through it then you make it alive then it doesn’t suck anymore even if you still don’t quite know what the words mean and still*

don't quite understand it – it doesn't matter because the words are beautiful and if you breathe them, then they live as well and it makes it not suck'. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

P.D:

- *'I believe you try to break the iambic pentameter in modern day Shakespeare – because I don't think the rhythm has any real heart behind it. I think you can really slow it down or speed it up – and whether 'To be or not to be' is done over five minutes or two minutes – it should depend on how you interpret it, and how you interpret the atmosphere in the scene. I suppose that comes into breathing in that you have to a) you have to have the meaning behind the words, but breath really helps drive it forward, and b) how your emotions control how say something and how you breathe – it is all connected'. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE*

The majority of the answers given fall across two of the three dimensions: cognitive and affective. There is, however, one example above of the reflective mode of **values**, whereby a participant reflects on the notion of accessibility within speaking Shakespeare and identifies breath as the catalyst for that access in this context. It was in this moment that I could see a coherent and critical pedagogy emerging.

There is dynamic shift, however, when we apply a similar analysis to the focus groups that occurred at the end of the workshop series where we begin to see the **values** mode of reflection take a more central role in the discussion. The final focus groups (2A & 2B) took place after all seven workshops of the series had taken place. There were eight attendees between the two sessions; just one of whom had not taken part in the earlier focus group.

The following is an extract of focus group 2A, and I have indicated where the discussion included the **cognitive**, **affective** and **values** modes of reflection:

Focus group 2A:

How would you describe the pedagogy as a whole, in terms of any benefits for you; in terms of breathing; in terms of performance; in terms of speaking Shakespeare?

P.A:

- *I found that I am a lot more confident in myself after; because I remember going through all the exercises, we did one session, and afterwards I just felt a lot more confident, much more vibrant, walking through the city afterwards. But I found that nowadays – because you are never really aware of your breathing through day-to-day life, sometimes in performance as well you never really aware of that – but it has me so that when I am having some anxiety I know exactly what I need to do to get back to a place of calm and relaxation. So, I am not always aware of my breathing but I’m aware when it is not what it usually should be. To me breath is one of the leading factors because your heart starts to beat and as that starts to happen you lose breath, you’re struggling or fighting for breath and these sessions have been really good in helping me trying to unlock that place in which I can just take a step back, I guess and think about the importance of “okay I need to breathe”, because otherwise I am going to pass out. And in performance, I still do the whole speaking from a certain place within myself to go through all the resonators, but now I am much more aware of all that stuff and how the breathing affects that because – today in [the] Voice and Movement [module], I found that I was trying to push out all this breath that I didn’t have, so I repositioned myself somewhat and I was, you know, being carried as it was happening, so that repositioning made it so that I much more well versed I suppose or more knowledgeable of the fact that the breath comes from certain places within the body, it is not just **gestures to the chest, and enacts a panting motion with short shallow breaths**. It has affected performance, but it is hard to*

articulate or figure it out consciously how it has, as when I perform I am not myself and therefore I am not thinking about my own thoughts towards things but, for example in the play that we are doing for the drama society, I found that the breathing helps me get into character because it embodies me in a certain way; I stand in a certain pose and it helps me focus and then when I move up to my podium and it is my time to speak because I have the breath 100% nailed I suppose, or I have got it under my complete control, I am able to fully encapsulate the character and not worry about how others are doing it – I am just in the moment. So, it not so much me thinking about the character, it is about me thinking about a character anymore, it now about me being a character – a kind of embodied experience, as opposed to intellectual. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE

P.B:

- *I will try to explain my thoughts, probably not in the perfect way because of my English and I probably need a little more time to think about it, and to structure. I feel we need breath control – or we need our breath in good shape when we read the speeches, performances or to form our thoughts, because sometimes we have these emotions that make us nervous and it takes more breathing, and it sounds like we are tired when we are talking with very important people, or let’s say that we are interviewing someone in a very bad weather or we are running somewhere but we need to deliver our speech in a very nice way that people can understand us – it is not easy to control your breath while you are doing some exercises, while you’re dancing or singing or even just as a speech – for me it wasn’t easy to do these exercises and probably it would take a lot of time to do it very well but as an actor you, if you go through these exercises every day or at least a couple of times in a week, I will become a better performer, practitioner or actor – and if we are living, in my opinion, in an informal life we talk as fast as we want or whatever but when we this formal places we are visiting we to talk in a*

proper way or heightened way of speaking, in my opinion – so breath is very important. Also, in terms of relaxation and meditation it uses breath – one of the exercises to calm down or just to relax before performance is to just breathe out the whole breath you have got in your body for four seconds and then breathe in – I just know these exercises – I hadn’t tried it before this week until I had an assessment – this why I did not know how or why it works, because I haven’t had time to think about it – I wonder is it because I was now thinking about my breath and not the assessment – as I was distracted or was it something the breath was doing to calm my body. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

P.C:

- *I am thinking about your thesis in general – the thing about believing about breath and the thing about how you might transfer conservatoire practice into university, then I think your study could really consolidate that you do the breathing practice before you come to the lecture as in you do breathing exercises beforehand and you are ready to work and for work, and to always do this and that is how I think this work could be applied.*

[...] In terms of access to Shakespeare, I think about what you said about Rodenburg I agree with her in terms of the breath being connected to what it written and the way something is written – and that is a way to access it. A couple of the sessions – the one of The Integrate Voice, and The Second Circle exercises. I think the phenomenon that happened, which we saw when we all discussed it after the exercise was that the meaning of the words was now integrated or embodied within us. I think it is all about connecting the breath and meaning, and the responsibility to the word – and there a power dynamic in that, a control over the word, and I think that is connected to the breath – and that is what these sessions have shown me. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

How has the classroom discussion, and dialogic mode of the workshop affected your learning in relation to Breathing and Shakespeare?

P.A:

- *Usually when you get taught something you take it on board, you walk out the room, the second you pass by the arch of the doorway it's gone – that's it, you don't really care about it anymore. But you are made to really analyse it at the end of it, and to write down your thoughts, and having complete liberal freedom to write whatever you want down on those post-it notes, there is no higher being that's saying 'write this'. When we sit down and have a choice what to put on the Breathing board and Bard board – having absolute choice to write whatever we want down – we can agree with the exercise, we can disagree with the exercise, whatever it is it comes from our own perspective of what has been – and it is that that makes you go 'so, what does all this mean to me?' and 'How does this help me?' in daily life, in performance, and it is that that makes me walk out the room thinking 'okay, do I really agree with everything I wrote on that?', 'do I agree with what other people wrote down?' – their thoughts and their opinions. It is a really effective method of having us really think about it and really take something from it that isn't just going to disappear into the ether in about an hour's time. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES*

P.C:

- *When you talk about the word 'pedagogy' – it makes me think of something as childlike and I think about the idea of play that went through the workshop series – the ball game, the colourful pens and paper, and notion that I am learning something – and it feels as though the*

atmosphere has been enabling to learn something like a child would learn something new, and even giving the chance to unlearn something but not in an aggressive way – and that enables you to hold what you are learning a bit more. And I think of those drama warmups and the idea of doing things like a child or keeping that liveness, that vitality in you – and I think that a lot of this, the workshops, are like that – the way it was presented, it has been very much about really creating learning for people – you couldn’t possibly forget it. I think it is about the teaching style, and it is to do with the topic and the notion of belonging – the integrity of the topic – and the fact that it about breathing, you have to breathe to be alive so there is nothing truer than that. There is something formative that connects it all – play, childlike, breathing.

- *In terms of the role of discussion, the role of the teacher within that is so important, and idea of inclusion whereby you bring everybody in is so important – because you could have the most amazing topic, but if the discussion is not facilitated in the right way or at all, then it amounts to nothing. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES*

Focus group 2B:

How would you describe the pedagogy as a whole, in terms of any benefits for you; in terms of breathing; in terms of performance; in terms of speaking Shakespeare?

P.A:

- *I think the workshops were very accessible and I like the way it was presented in that there wasn’t a right or wrong way – it was like what we do in the research project module where each week there was a provocation; and that what it felt like -it was like there’s not one right or wrong way – there was a provocation where there’s lots of different theories behind it and*

it is about finding which one suits your body, or a combination of those and kind creating a hybrid practice for yourself. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

P.B:

- *Yeah because it seemed like through exploring the process of it as a whole; like if you see the workshop series as a process and if you imagine doing with one character, for example, and you do everything we did for all those weeks with one character or one text it would be a means of finding a way to perform – giving agency to a performer within a performance – for a performer that may be looking for that through Shakespeare; I think that from start to finish, as a process – especially as we got towards the end where we had the ‘one breath/one thought’, and then we moved on to the actual text, which at the start we didn’t think about what it meant, but at the end it was impossible not to – it was about how breath changes what it means. So, I suppose I am saying that by working through the breath like we did through all the workshops from start to finish you can get a comprehensive character if you use the same text all the way through. COGNITIVE/VALUES*

Another thing I would like to say in relation to what [P.A] said earlier about it being accessible – I think it was clear that it was accessible because of its experimental nature but also it didn’t stop it from all making sense at the same time. COGNITIVE/VALUES

P.A:

- *Yeah, it wasn’t like it was confusing or contradictory, it was just sort of – and I think I’ve said this to you before coming from being trained chorally and it being drummed into you that there is one way to breathe and if you can’t do that then you can’t sing and that ruined my relationship with my voice and my breath for a really long time; so it is really refreshing to*

come and do something where you have agency over your own breath and there is not a right or wrong way to do that. AFFECTIVE/VALUES

How would you describe the place of breath within the practice of speaking Shakespeare?

P.C:

- *I think it was good that with the text that we spent a bit of time on it – we had time to read it to ourselves several times and then out loud – because to me it really helped to relax about it and focus on it more because if I read it out loud first, I would forget to breathe, so I think that was really helpful – especially because it was such hard text, because it was Shakespeare. So, having the time was really important – and it gave us an opportunity to see different ways of breathing in the text – because there are several interpretations – which leads to breathing the text differently because English is not my first language, whenever there is a comma I have to breathe, because that is what I have learned ‘there is a comma, so there is a breath’ and in English it probably not like that – as in there are not the same amount of commas – so, for example, one thing I’ve learned is that I can take a breath even if there is no comma so I don’t choke. And I think about the example in the workshops where we were doing the one thought/one breath experiment, and I saw the speech as one continuous thought rather than the thought being one thought there and another here and so on – COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE*

P.A:

- *So one train of thought rather than lots of different thoughts?*

P.C:

- *Yeah, yeah because the way we said it before was like underlying words = new thought, and I couldn't quite get that because this to me was one continuous thought. I think that's where I misunderstood it.*

DCL(facilitator):

- *But then when you performed it like that it seemed to make sense on the ear – for me it is right to look at it that way, because that was your true interpretation of the text – I don't think it was that the character in your performance wasn't able to think of anything else, I think it is that she had such clarity in that moment but that is the way you read the character. So, that brings me back to how important the performer is in this creative endeavour, it is not just Shakespeare, or the director, or the teacher – and breath is the way you got to that point, breath is how you brought the performer to the performance.*

P.A:

- *Yeah, because I feel like the way that you approach these different texts with breathing, whether it is to do it line by line or punctuation, or by thought, I feel like every time you do that you are approaching the text in a different way so although you start going from breath that informs lots of different ways that you can approach the text as well and I think that's the only way, when you are adapting or performing text that has been around for a long time, you can make they stay innovated and different is by not doing it in the same way they've always been done and I feel like here, not to be too cheesy, but I feel like breathing was innovating the text. **COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE***

P.D:

- *When I was writing my research project last year; one of my questions was comparing the practices of Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg – I found that Rodenburg had a more integrated idea of how breath works in relation to the actor; whereas Cicely Berry is more regimented and I think that Rodenburg’s ideas work better and especially in how we used them in these workshops because it doesn’t just depend on how it has been written or performed in the past, it depends upon lots of different variables that other practitioners in the same field don’t necessarily consider – from reading Rodenburg’s book and doing these workshops at the time, you could see similarities and the differences and I think it seems to work better in the workshop form. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES*

DCL:

- *I suppose what might be happening is that Cicely Berry is talking very much about voice, she is talking very much about text and whilst she does mention breath, she probably doesn’t mention it as much as Patsy Rodenburg. And text comes from a single place and is instructional, voice is also something that can be instructed but I am not sure that breath can be instructed, and therefore has to be performative in the ontological sense of performance, insofar as it is gone upon consumption, it is ephemeral, whereas because voice has a whole semiotics to it – in that you can describe voice, for example, you can talk about it terms of phonetics and sound whereas breath exists almost only in performance – I mean that as in everyday life as much as theatrical performance – and that is probably why Cicely Berry’s writing goes broader than discussion on breath. It is not that they don’t work together, and it is not that she doesn’t find breath and individuality important, it is just that she is talking about a particular thing and Patsy Rodenburg is concentrating on another particular thing.*

P.A:

- *I think it is interesting because, like you say, I think we tend to underestimate the performance that our bodies are doing – my dissertation looks at the ontology of bodies – what we derive from bodies – because we have them we never consider what they are and what they are doing constantly and I think that is really interesting in terms of using something that we already have, trying to hone it to have a purpose, even though it is something that we are always performing. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES*

P.B:

- *It is also interesting in terms of the audience because, say, you went to the theatre you might immediately as an audience member relate to a person whose body language seems similar to yours or physically you can relate to them, so then does it mean if breath is this individual thing but is still a language for everyone do you, without perhaps even knowing it, then relate to characters more because of the way that they breathe and consequently the way they deliver text – so perhaps then the individual performer in their means of using breath can have a different impact on audience members as well. COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES*

How do feel the role of discussion within the workshop series effected the learning?

P.B:

- *It aids the memory of what you are talking about – otherwise it would just go away. For example, I found it particularly important in the last workshop – when we were looking at the Lady Macbeth speech, I found the discussion in that really interesting, especially because breath is controversial – who would have thought it – and it is individual and everyone does have something different to say about it and a different experience with breath as well – like for some people it is natural to project and for some people it isn't – so if you don't discuss that then you know if you are doing it right but really there is not a right way which makes the*

discussion of it more important especially with this particular pedagogy.

COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

P.A:

- *Yeah I think it would be a bit hypocritical I think to say everyone’s breath is different but to then have a hierarchy in terms of teaching breath – it kind of defeats the purpose – and that was the good thing about the discussion was that everyone’s contribution and everyone’s breath was listened to.* **COGNITIVE/VALUES**

P.C:

- *It was really interesting to see how other people perceived it differently in the discussions because I would read the text and think this is the way I think the breath works here, and then to hear someone’s view of how they see the breath working in the same speech was really beneficial.* **COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE**

P.B:

- *But also, what you said about not being able to describe breath, it is really interesting then when you come to discuss what you get from certain exercises when people say things, and you discover that you experienced it in a similar way, and you think ‘how did that happen? – it is just breath’ – so it is not just like good to discuss when people are different but when people are experiencing the same thing and then you can probably see the effects of the exercises on the text – and I think that is helpful for everyone as well as whoever is facilitating.*

COGNITIVE/AFFECTIVE/VALUES

Where discussions within the practical workshops tended to evoke responses from the participants that display **cognitive** and **affective** dimensions of Thompson and Thompson’s model of reflective practice, the more consolidatory sessions, whereby there were no preceding practical exercises saw responses that showed an awareness of the **values** dimension of the model. This awareness of the political (power dynamic) relating to practices of actor training, and in particular a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare seemed to grow in potency between Focus Group 1 (after four workshops had taken place) to focus groups 2A and 2B (after all seven workshops had taken place). The participants displayed a confidence in speaking about their embodied experience and were able to articulate themselves more readily in terms of body, voice, training and Shakespeare, as well as commenting on the role of the facilitator. It was clear from the earlier focus group discussion that there was an appetite for experimentation; whereas within focus group 2A and 2B there was an increased awareness of the benefits of such, in particular, in how it led to autonomy and agency on the part of the student.

If we remind ourselves of the aspirations that should be embedded within a pedagogy as laid out by Giroux (creating critical and self-reflective, knowledgeable and active citizens), Kluwe (nurturing people who are ‘agents of their own thinking’), and Freire (working towards conscientisation), we can see that reflective practice as realised within the workshop series ‘A Breath Pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’ works towards a democratic educational space that has the students’ interests and needs at the forefront.

Conclusions and Implications

This chapter reframes breath training as a critical pedagogy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare via the workshop series carried out as part of the research design. Using a series of

‘critical moments’ as a pedagogical framework it highlights how the concepts of **self-awareness, self-determination and self-direction, pedagogical intervention, and self-reflection towards criticality** were realised in the pedagogical space towards a student-centred mode of training students for speaking Shakespeare through breath.

- **Self-awareness**

Using the word association exercises as a route to self-awareness on the part of the participants, revealed that the participants were able to access their existing intellectual relationship with concepts of breath/ing and Shakespeare beyond what they had expected to find. Essential to the success of the pedagogy being explored was that all participants felt they had something concrete to offer (evidenced by their contribution to the discussion at the end of the workshop) - laying the foundation where all members have a chance to take part in the main exercises of the workshop series.

The important finding here was that by using the word association exercise to get participants to engage with their relationship with breath/breathing/breath training and Shakespeare on their own terms led to greater levels of self-awareness both in embodied (breath) and intellectual (Shakespeare) terms of reference.

- **Self-determination and self-direction**

In reference to the second critical moment discussed above, the important aspect here was not only that Participant A began to engage more with the work via breath, but also it was the appetite for self-determination and self-direction in approaching Shakespeare’s text, which was accessed via applying a consideration of breath and thought. Participant A utilised her contemporary feminist understanding of the text used (Kate’s monologue at the end of Act 5, Sc 2 of *Taming of the Shrew*),

to decide on the thought structure of the speech and apply the ‘one thought/one breath’ rule to her performance.

As observed earlier in the chapter, once Participant A performed the text after exploring and considering the breath dynamic, she found a viable route to performance. In other words, her exploration of breath in relation to her contemporary reading of the text, led to a performance where she could embody (through breath) her contemporary perspective and help her to create a performance that adopted the rule of, as she put it, her one thought equals her one breath.

This highlighted a pedagogical dividend whereby participants begin to engage with *their* contemporary political, social, and experiential perspective and engaging that in an embodied way via breath towards making performance. It is important to note that this ‘critical moment’ was predicated on six weeks of training the breath for speaking Shakespeare, where in each session participants were encouraged to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusions about breath through criticality, Shakespeare’s text as used in the sessions, and the exercises and ideas brought into the pedagogical space.

- **Pedagogical Intervention**

In the case of the participants translating the original English text to their home languages of Romanian and Bulgarian, it was found that pedagogical intervention as it emerged from the instinct of members of the cohort proved beneficial in realising an objective. Both the performers and audience members within the group were keen to change the plan in order for the performers to release tension they held when performing in English.

It was clear that the intervention (responding to the contemporaneous pedagogical context) led to a mode of exploration and discovery relating to one’s own breath dynamic for speaking Shakespeare, and that these discoveries could then be used as a template for achievement in performance.

The finding here is that participants were keen to listen to the embodied experience of breath dynamic to troubleshoot their relationship with speaking Shakespeare’s text and to work as a cohort to find innovative ways to explore breath dynamic even when it means moving away from the planned exercise/schedule of the workshop.

- **Self-reflection Towards Criticality**

A key finding, and something that consolidates the idea of reframing breath training as a critical pedagogy in specific reference to speaking Shakespeare, is that when the participants are given the tools and space for self-reflection, they start to consider the wider contexts of their learning. This was highlighted when one of the participants responded to the following question within the first focus group: ***Do you think there is particular role for breath in speaking Shakespeare?*** Her answer was:

I think it is about making it accessible as well – if you were to read Shakespeare or hear it and don’t know what it means – it can suck! But if you breathe through it then you make it alive then it doesn’t suck anymore even if you still don’t quite know what the words mean and still don’t quite understand it – it doesn’t matter because the words are beautiful and if you breathe them, then they live as well and it makes it not suck

Here we see the participant go beyond the content of the sessions, and beyond the performance of Shakespeare’s text to consider the wider context and bringing a resolution through her thinking on breath and Shakespeare. This aligns with Thompson & Thompson definition of ‘critical’: ‘an approach that is characterised by questioning and not taking things for granted – especially social arrangements that are based on inequality and disadvantage’ (2008, p.27).

The notions of ‘questioning and not taking things for granted’ were evident in more of the responses in the second focus group, once the workshops were concluded, than the first focus group, which was conducted midway through the series. The idea of the training being more than about performance of Shakespeare, and the concept of agency, as well as engagement with the wider concept of pedagogy as a whole, were brought to the fore in the second focus group. There was a confidence amongst the participants in the second focus group to make convictions, challenge each other, and offer their embodied experience relating to breath and Shakespeare that was not as strong in the first focus group. The most important distinction in this context was that the participants recognised that the conclusions they drew were born from a critical engagement of their embodied experience of breath training for speaking Shakespeare.

CHAPTER SIX – Breath Pedagogy as an Inclusive Learning Strategy for Speaking Shakespeare

At the outset of this study the notion of inclusivity relating to a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare was not a planned exploration; however, in the examination of criticality in this context, ideas of inclusivity were brought to the fore. This chapter opens up an area of discussion that, having gone through the empirical research process, emerged as important to the pedagogy that is the subject of this study, and as such serves as a key contribution to the research findings.

This chapter explores the notion of breath pedagogy as ‘inclusive practice’ (Leveroy, 2013, p.211) in the context of training actors for speaking Shakespeare. The idea of inclusivity is explored in the context of the workshop series carried out considering Christopher DeLuca’s ‘interdisciplinary framework’ towards inclusive education whereby dynamics relating to cultural diversity, gender, and disability are explored (2013). Inclusivity is then examined through the lens of in the recent realms of actor training scholarship.

The case is then put forward for reframing breath pedagogy as an inclusive teaching and learning practice in the context of speaking Shakespeare. Drawing on research carried out for this study, this chapter frames breath training simultaneously as a common language and individual embodied experience.

Deborah Leveroy, in her thesis ‘Enabling performance: dyslexia and acting practice’, explores a ‘way forward’ for inclusive teaching and learning in the context of actor training (2013, p.211). Writing in the context of working with neurodiverse acting students, Leveroy concludes that

All curriculum design [for actor training], teaching and directing practice should, at its core, aim to foster positive identities and independent learners, who can go on to devise their own innovative and enabling ways of working (2013, p.214).

Leveroy advocates a social model of inclusive practice, whereby the lived experience of the learner is ‘at the heart of curriculum design’ (2013, p.214). To bring this a step further in the context of a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare, this thesis argues for a curriculum design that allows for responsivity on the part of the tutor and embraces the consequential change in relationship to the learning material and training space however transformative.

Christopher DeLuca, in the context of Canadian educational systems, seeks to build an ‘interdisciplinary framework’ towards inclusive education. He argues for

a framework for educational inclusivity based on four disciplinary perspectives: (a) special education and disability studies, (b) multiculturalism and anti-racist education, (c) gender and women’s education, and (d) queer studies. The constructed framework elucidates four conceptions of inclusivity—normative, integrative, dialogical, and transgressive—positioned on a continuum with each conception representing a different approach to inclusion (2013, p305).

While the workshop series carried out as part of this research did not set out to address issues around inclusivity within the realm of training actors for speaking Shakespeare specifically, as a result of the key principle of criticality amongst the student cohort being encouraged, some matters concerning notions of inclusivity (and exclusivity) were brought to the fore. Similar to DeLuca, this chapter assesses inclusivity through the lens of three themes in reference to breath pedagogy as we moved through the workshops: (a) Disability (b) cultural diversity, (c) gender and women’s education.

Here I set out three examples, one for each theme as it presented itself within the context of the workshop series. It is not the intention here to unpick these themes rather they are used to show the potential of the pedagogy when students’ criticality is fostered and engaged with towards a more inclusive practice in the context of a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare.

Disability

The theme of disability within the breath pedagogy was highlighted when one of the participants expressed that she was unable to carry out one of the exercises due to a physical impairment relating to her leg. She advised how she could not stand for long periods of time. The exercise being explored was one which I had learned from Joan Mills called ‘A load of old balls’. The exercise requires the group to stand in a circle throwing a large inflatable ball to one another; starting by throwing the ball on the breath before imposing a line of text also *on* the breath. As the participant chose to share her concerns relating to doing the exercise with the group – we were able to talk collectively and openly about how some exercises need to be adapted so that the whole group could engage with the work. We also discussed what might happen if we found that the exercise could not be done by everyone – solutions came forward such as splitting the group in two, with one half exploring an alternative exercise that could have similar outcomes; to discarding the exercise altogether. The general consensus amongst the group was that the exercise itself was not the important aspect, rather it was the facilitation of all students’ development within the context of their learning. In this case, the participant found that once she grasped what the exercise was designed to achieve (i.e. to work towards unity of breath, voice, and text), she was able to adapt the exercise by sitting on a chair and rolling the ball and, as she stated, ‘tapping into the rhythmic challenge of the exercise’ as opposed to matching the aesthetic reality of the exercise.

Within this experience, I found that through criticality the students were able to formulate their own solutions relating to inclusivity by virtue of reflection and discussion. The key moment here was when they realised it was not mastering the exercise that was important, rather it was about working towards an agreed objective; and therefore, how one got there was less important. In the discussion afterwards I asked, ‘What if we had not found a route to the objective?’ and one of the participants

answered by saying ‘Well, I suppose it is about widening the scope a bit – why are we doing this in the first place? and working on that and then narrow the scope’. Another participant then added ‘yes, when I think about what I want to achieve, like a supported voice, I need to think about how my body reacts to a particular exercise and not just *any* body, if that makes sense’.

It is not the contention here that what this group achieved is replicable in every actor training scenario; however, what this part of the study has found is that the utilisation and fostering of criticality to challenge established practice (in this case an exercise) can have a role in exploring and highlighting the inclusive and potentially exclusionary dynamics within a space. This includes unpicking what may foster inclusive and exclusionary training environments, and work towards solutions that aid more inclusion in the shared objective within the pedagogic space.

Cultural Diversity

Within the participant cohort there were four students who advised that English was not their first language, and two students that expressed that they identify as people of colour³¹. The theme of cultural diversity in relation to breath work for speaking Shakespeare was implicitly explored through discussion of language and how the level of confidence in one language or another can affect the breath dynamic both in everyday life and within the performance of Shakespeare’s text. This notion was tested when two of the students contrasted how they performed a piece of text first in English (First Folio) and then in their respective first languages. In both cases it was found that the students were better supported in voice by their breath when speaking translated text (from English to their first language) and this in turn made the speeches sound ‘more convincing’ (as was the opinion of

³¹ The term people of colour is used here as an indicator of how the participants in question identified. For further reading on this see Dunn, Luckett, & Sicre’s (2020) ‘Training theatre students of colour in the United States’ in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal*.

the rest of the participants). The participants who took part reported back that when they spoke the translated text (Shakespeare’s English text into their first language) they felt more in control of their breath and therefore their voice felt more supported.

Another student, who was watching the performance, suggested that the students performing might assess the qualities achieved in terms of breath in the first language reading of the text and apply it to the English language text. For example, in examining the pace, rhythm and tempo of how the text is read/performed and use the breath dynamic to replicate or achieve the desired qualities in the performance of the English text.

Here again, critical thinking, reflection and dialogue played key roles in the students working collaboratively in the context of breath training for speaking Shakespeare and finding an access point to the breath dynamic they wished to explore and achieve. There was also a responsiveness, and adaptability applied on the part of the cohort and the facilitator in relation to changing course of the workshop to ensure that explorations concerning participants’ own context and lived experienced was utilised within the pedagogy.

This responsiveness was evident throughout the workshop series and was commented upon by one of the participants, when they stated that

the ability to critically ...assess... I suppose is the word, the work or material, makes me feel as though I can reflect where I see *me* in all of this. And I think when it comes to identity that is important – so me as a woman, me as a person of colour, me as a student even – it can all be in there, if that makes sense.

This led to a discussion amongst the cohort about a) if and how they saw themselves within the Shakespeare texts, and b) if and how they saw themselves in exercises prescribed by practitioners in actor training manuals. At this point, I took the opportunity to introduce some material that I had no

plan to before the workshop. This was relating to ideas within an online essay entitled ‘Training with a difference’ written by Nicola Brewer, and in introducing her ideas to the student cohort I paraphrased the following:

Asking students to constantly disregard race, cultural context, perspective, and history in their training implies that white cultural identifiers are the default, and non-white identifiers have no inherent value and therefore should be suppressed. Examples of such oppressive erasure can be found in the lack of diversity in the most commonly taught acting methods—Hagen, Meisner, Adler, Strasberg, Chekhov, Stanislavski, and Meyerhold—where European and Euro-American theatre history are the default (Brewer, 2018).

Participants were impassioned by these ideas and there was a consensus the methods alluded to by Brewer should not go unchallenged. The students appeared to embrace and enjoy the notion of having a critical eye when it came to well established texts, be they play texts or actor training text.

Whilst bringing these discussion topics into the workshop space was unplanned and ultimately may not have happened if the facilitator had not read a particular online essay, the idea of allowing a workshop to follow a conversation that was worthwhile proved important in highlighting to the participants the importance of criticality when it comes to their learning.

Gender and women’s education

Gender and women’s education was not explicitly examined within the workshop series; however, the theme of performing women³² was presented in relation to the cohort’s contemporary reading³³ of Shakespeare’s text and how this can affect the breath dynamic and how a speech is then voiced.

³² The term performing women here is used to describe the act of performing as a particular woman or role of women as opposed to women who are performing.

³³ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the full depths of modern/postmodern readings of *Taming of the Shrew* and its performance history; however, I draw the reader’s attention to Paul Yachnin’s chapter ‘To kill a king’: the modern politics of bardicide’ in *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity* (2005); and Sarah Werner’s *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance: Ideology on Stage* (2005).

The example in this case is Kate’s closing monologue from *Taming of the Shrew*. As discussed in the previous chapter, this speech evoked a strong reaction from some of the participants and effected creative choices in relation to how the breath dynamic was used and manipulated to express discrete thoughts and subtext in performance.

For the cohort questions arose about the potential meanings of the text, and the possibilities of performance. As a group they explored how to apply their own reading of the text through exploring the relationship between thought and breath. As the cohort explored the monologue and discussed the play as a whole, a discussion about the role of women within the play emerged. One of the participants, without prompt, adopted a hermeneutical approach to reading the text and her performance of the text. She explained that she saw value in bringing the text to life from a contemporary perspective. The core exercise for this workshop was to explore the idea that one breath is equal to one thought in the performance of Shakespeare. The participant in question explained that from her contemporary reading of the monologue she felt it was a single thought. After initially expressing that she felt this meant the notional rule of one thought equalling one breath would not be workable – I encouraged her to apply her thinking using the rule.

In this example, the notion of inclusivity related to the material used and how it led to an exploration of how the breath was embodied when performance was born from a contemporary reading of an old text. This was contrasted via a performance of the same text by a participant who explored the idea of separating thoughts out by clause – marking out each breath/thought to each punctuation mark. When comparing the two performances, it was observed that the former was less controlled but impassioned – using the one breath, one thought rule whereby the whole speech was notionally done on a single breath meant that the performance took a semiotic value that was infused by the

performer’s hermeneutical reading of the text. The performer ran out of breath part way through and took an audible gasp for another breath to quickly ride on the same thought. In the latter performance, the expression was much more controlled and there was a sense that the performer/performance was *inscribed*³⁴ by the text – there was an efficiency to the breath dynamic. In the first performance the character, as one participant watching put, seemed exasperated by her situation, contrasting with the second where the character appeared resigned to her fate. Another participant watching comparing the performance explained that for them in the first performance, it seemed difficult to predict what the character might do next, whereas in the second there was a ‘submissive’ quality to the text – another participant agreed adding ‘yes, the second seemed like a performance you might see in Shakespeare’s time, whereas [the first performer’s] seemed of now’.

What followed was a discussion about breath control, and the idea that there could be external factors controlling an individual’s breath, which extended to a conversation about the relationship between breath, body and text. An impassioned debate ensued between participants; however, the cohort came to a consensus that the most important aspect was not about discarding any practice, rather it was about the acknowledgment of potential power dynamics at play and what this could mean for an individual’s autonomy and agency. The cohort agreed that being armed with as much knowledge and context as possible allowed them to make their own decisions in a critical way.

³⁴ Here, when I use the word *inscribed*, I am thinking about play text and material in the same way Zarrilli thinks about theories of acting: ‘[e]very time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a “theory” of acting – a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of actions which he or she performs, the shape that those actions take (as a character, role, or sequence of actions as in some performance art), and the relationship to the audience. Informing these assumptions are culture-specific assumptions about the body-mind relationship, the nature of the “self”, the emotions/feelings, and performance context’ (Zarrilli, 2002, p.3).

The important moment here, in the context of this research, was not whether the cohort were right or wrong about how to play the speech; rather it was the pedagogic moment – that criticality towards the material (in this case Shakespeare’s text) can lead to greater degrees of autonomy and agency in both how they train to perform and in how they perform.

Inclusivity within Recent Performer Training Scholarship

In April 2019, Sarah Crews and I hosted a one-day symposium entitled ‘Embodied/Embodying Performer Training: Practices and Practicalities’ at the University of South Wales, Cardiff in conjunction with the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA). The keynote speaker to that event was playwright and dramaturg Kaite O’Reilly. The title of her talk was the same as the recently published chapter ‘Border control – framing the atypical body’. In it, O’Reilly argues

that the atypical body is not neutral. Whenever one or more individuals with physical, cognitive, intellectual, or sensory impairments “appear”– whether on the “stage” of daily life or on the stage in a theatre– those bodies invariably signify more than the seemingly simple corporeal reality of “the body itself” (2018, p.258).

O’Reilly acknowledges that the atypical body in performance is not a benign or arbitrary inclusion and argues for a ‘(re-)framing [of] disability and disability arts culture’. O’Reilly contends that the reason this is fundamental to performance (be it in everyday life or within live theatre) is because

[d]isability is the norm. If not through birth, then through age, accident, strokes, warfare, physical conflict, or general wear and tear, the vast majority of us will acquire physical or sensory impairments, if we are fortunate to live long enough (2018, p.258).

This thesis argues that these performance terms and the critical lens that O’Reilly offers should start life in the pedagogic spaces of performance training as well as in the traditionally more cerebral realms of university seminars.

When I interviewed Lyn Darnley, she pointed to the idea that rib-reserve as a mode of breath training, as used in many twentieth century actor training studios, was designed for the male body and was rarely much use in training female bodies. Here we see Darnley casting a critical eye over a well-established mode of training in reference to differing bodies. This research, in view of O’Reilly’s position, advocates extending this idea, and to ensure that part of training a performer includes training their critical function and responsiveness to canonical figures and practices in reference to their own bodies.

Recent actor training scholarship acknowledges that there is a disconnect between some dominant actor training traditions and some of the students of said practices. In the special issue of *Theatre, Dance, and Performance Training Journal*, ‘Against the Canon’ – the editors bring together works that explore this. Of their edition they state

[it] explores strands of performer training that emerged for artists whose needs, and/or identities, have been poorly catered for, marginalised or damaged by the dominant trainings and institutions in the twentieth century (Evans, Fleming, & Reed, 2020, p.245)

They go on to position this endeavour in the context of wider historical research:

The intention of this special edition to re-position some of those practitioners marginalized by gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, socio-economics or disability follows larger, and older, feminist, post-colonial, Afrocentric, materialist and queer projects in relation to historical research (Evans, Fleming, & Reed, 2020, p.245).

It is the contention of this research that scholarship aiming to re-evaluate and critically assess ‘dominant [performance] trainings and institutions’, both within their historical contexts and in the contemporary world of performance pedagogies, should have a direct correlation within the performer training studio itself.

Kristine Landon-Smith, within the same issue, summarises her perspective on how actor training pedagogies should move forward into the twenty-first century:

In order to speak back to the dominant paradigm of performance, actors must be empowered to experiment with and through their cultural context. I suggest that theatre training for the twenty-first century seeks to position the varied cultural contexts in classrooms as a source of power instead of as a barrier. In place of an assumed neutrality implicitly aligned with the hegemonic power, I promote individuality as a new goal in theatre arts training. [... The] potential power and impact must be explored by actors in their training, in order that they move into the professional industry carrying this power and able to show their best profile in audition, rehearsal and performance. By developing practice broad enough to afford all actors the conditions to work from a place of confidence and knowledge, theatre can begin to be enriched by the diversity of all who practice it. Theatres are spaces where we can be different together; artists are change makers, and all artists must be given the same opportunity as each other to make change (2020, p.349).

The theatre that Landon-Smith describes here is one that this research contends starts in the specific pedagogic spaces of actor training and performance related modules in both conservatoire and university frameworks. In the context of a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare, this research argues for a classroom that allows ‘the plan’ or curriculum to be interrupted by elements of the individuality Landon-Smith advocates, and as described in the anecdotes of workshop activity earlier in this chapter.

This chapter has been written on two basic assumptions. First, is the premise that everybody that is alive has breath. Secondly, not everybody alive has access to actor training. This chapter is not an attempt to close this gap and it does not assume that everyone that either has or does not have access to actor training wishes to take part in it. Rather it is to critically examine the place of breath as a catalyst for inclusivity within training for speaking Shakespeare. There is no escaping the fact that the notion of speaking Shakespeare has its own exclusivity to it; as not least of all not everyone can speak or communicate how they might wish to do so, or how others expect them to do so. However, this chapter highlights, through anecdotal evidence from workshops carried out, the

benefits of fostering breath and breathing dynamics in the context of speaking Shakespeare through modes of critical assessment. This criticality can serve as inclusive practice by virtue of its association with democratic modes of pedagogic practice e.g., shared reflection, discussion, and collaborative responsivity to problem solving. This chapter also emphasises the role of individual breath dynamics via gender, race, and body³⁵ in creating performance of Shakespeare’s text. This study advocates for a pedagogic space that marries discussion of breath as common language with breath dynamic as individual embodied experience to move towards an inclusive practice that, as Leveroy puts it, ‘aim[s] to foster positive identities and independent learners, who can go on to devise their own innovative and enabling ways of working’ (2013, p.214) in the context of speaking Shakespeare.

³⁵ This is not an exhaustive list of aspects that effect breath dynamics – examples not explored here include environment, family, socio-economic circumstance.

CHAPTER SEVEN – Positioning a Critical Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare within/alongside Existing Pedagogies

This chapter is a consolidation of the findings from the research carried out, while exploring the contexts, applications, and perspectives where this research is relevant. It also points towards future directions and possibilities for further research that this study may serve as a platform.

The first section provides a note on the main contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes. This is followed by an articulation of the research story, telling the reader why and how the story has been told, as well as outlining the research questions that gave impetus to this research enquiry, before summarising the emerging answers and key findings that this PhD offers.

To close the thesis the focus narrows, exploring how this research can be applied to the wider research fields of voice studies and actor training, before offering a new pedagogical model pertaining to training actors to speak Shakespeare’s text.

A Note on the Contribution this PhD makes

The aim of this PhD has not been to replace any mode of teaching actors for speaking Shakespeare, or to suggest that the pedagogy this research proposes is ultimate. Rather, the key contribution it makes is in its development of a conversation about breath training and its virtue in teaching actors to speak Shakespeare, while encouraging self-awareness, self-determination, and self-direction on the part of the student through criticality. The elements drawn together here enter discourse, either separately (e.g., using some of the pedagogic principles set out within existing educational programmes) or as a unified whole (e.g., the creation of a new teaching model) within actor training,

voice studies, and the wider field of pedagogy. The ideal audience for this research are actors and their trainers, who are interested in understanding how engagement with their breath dynamic, as it relates to speaking, can be utilised in their training and preparation for performance of Shakespeare’s text.

The Research Story

- **Why the story has been told**

The opening line of this thesis refers to a desire to address the lack of comprehensive study regarding the relationship between breath training and the act of speaking Shakespeare. The impetus for this desire comes from my experience as an acting student, as an actor, and as a lecturer of voice. As an acting student, I found the most worthwhile experiences were those moments of experimentation and enquiry in learning about acting practices and to speak classical text. As an actor, I discovered that each piece of work required a flexible and responsive approach to technique and previous learning. Subsequently, as a voice lecturer and trainer I have found that students have an appetite for constructivist learning methods, whereby they actively construct knowledge rather than passively accept the word of masters, no matter the form (e.g., lecturers, books, dramatists). As my methods for teaching voice utilised Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets – this was the area I found most verdant in relation to generating research questions and hypotheses.

- **How the story has been told**

The key working hypothesis of this study can be summarised as the following: the consideration of breath can form the basis of training actors for speaking Shakespeare’s text, as it has the ability to draw together voice, body, and text in preparation for performance. The research design is reflected within the structure of this thesis. Initially, the research is situated within its contemporary, historical

and epistemological contexts through a process of reading and exploring the concepts of breath; acting Shakespeare; pedagogy; and criticality, which Chapter Two of this thesis addresses. This work has enabled me to better understand the realms in which this study is situated and aided me in articulating where the gaps in writing were regarding the relationship between breath training and the act of speaking Shakespeare, which is the main original contribution that this PhD makes.

This in turn facilitated the design of the research beyond understanding the literature and historical contexts of the research. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology, outlining the research design and the rationale for such. It recounts the process of creating a semi-structured question set, selecting interviewees, performing the interviews, transcribing, and analysing data. It also reflects how the interviews, wider reading on voice practice, and my own pedagogy has influenced the design of the workshop series carried out as part of this study.

Chapter Four captures contemporary perspectives and philosophies relating to breath training for Speaking Shakespeare by consolidating key themes that emerged from the interviews with voice coaches.

The themes explored are:

- Training the breath: philosophies/approaches;
- Student-centred approach to training;
- Technique (not systems);
- An Integrated Practice;
- The Breath/Thought Correlation; and
- Breath and Shakespeare’s text.

Interwoven with the viewpoints emerging from the interviews are theoretical, practical, and pedagogical perspectives as gleaned from literature as it pertains to each theme. This forms the basis for the workshop design entitled ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’.

Chapter Five, through the lens of the workshops carried out, reframes breath training as a critical pedagogy with specific reference to speaking Shakespeare. It reflects a shift from the initial hypothesis, where criticality was not a focus for enquiry; rather this emerged as the research processes of reading, digesting, designing, and carrying out interviews and workshops. Likewise, inclusivity, as it relates to the specific pedagogy this research is engaged with, was not a theme in the initial purview of this study. However, while carrying out the workshops, it was clear that certain participants’ relationships with established actor training practices and Shakespeare’s text had a bearing on their breath dynamic and this was found to be related to their specific contexts and how they identify (gender, cultural diversity, and disability). This important finding resulted in the creation of a chapter where breath pedagogy is framed as an inclusive learning strategy for speaking Shakespeare (Chapter Six).

- **Emerging answers and key findings**

As much of these areas has been explored in the previous chapters, this section is brief in its summarised conclusions.

The overarching finding of this PhD, is that by acknowledging and responding to breath dynamics when applied to training to speak Shakespeare’s text, participants enter into a student-centred pedagogy that fosters self-awareness, self-determination, and self-direction.

In examining the various contexts of breath, it is important to note why exploring breath in its disparate contexts and perspectives is relevant to the current study. At the heart of this research, and the pedagogy it proposes, is an approach to teaching and learning that equips students with the tools and knowledge to approach material and methods with a critical eye. It is instrumental, therefore, that students of such a pedagogy have access to as much information and from as many different perspectives as possible.

A review of literature on breath that sits outside of the current context (training actors for speaking Shakespeare), be it on historical, epistemological, physiological/anatomical, philosophical, social or political contexts of breath, has helped me understand how such an endeavour can assist students in developing their own practice in relation to breath training. This has also aided my own pedagogy as I seek to reassess and redefine my role as trainer to being an informed facilitator within the actor training studio.

Sreenath Nair reminds us that

Breath is located in the body and serves as the basis of theatricality in everyday life, through combining speech, action and thoughts in relation to an explicit level of meaning. The psycho-physicality of human embodiment is activated through the act of breathing. Breath as the fundamental source of energy to all human actions, reactions, emotions, and speech, is an inseparable element in the nature of human embodiment (2007, p.51).

Nair’s explication of breath in its performative and embodied context, highlights the utility of understanding the philosophical underpinnings as breath relates to everyday life. These underpinnings, as Nair points out, are often drawn from the historical and epistemological development of the concept of breath from Aristotle’s philosophical writings on breath, to medical understandings since ancient Greek philosophers, Galen and Anaximenes.

Understanding the historical contexts and epistemological development of breath, for example, helps to locate our own hermeneutical grasp of breath and offers us perspectives that we may not have considered. Insights into philosophies in relation to meaning-making help to highlight ‘the relevance of the body for performance, the relevance of breath for the body, and thus the relevance of breath for performance’ (Nair, 2007, p.7). Here we can see there is a shift from the philosophical being merely located in theoretical terms, to having currency in the pedagogical space of training actors.

From the literature on voice training, we can see how perspectives on breath, as being a fundamental consideration for the actor in training has emerged, in particular from the mid twentieth century onwards. Jane Boston gives an insight into this phenomenon as it relates to speaking Shakespeare.

She suggests

that Voice applied to Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century, for example, is supported by the instructional values contained in numerous manuals with their clearly stated rules about ‘good articulation’ (Anon. 1894), This shifts by the end of the twentieth century where there is a stronger emphasis on the physical embodiment in actor training. For example, Patsy Rodenburg [...] identifies body, breath, voice and speech as equal factors in determining success of vocal production where earlier generations of practitioners put more emphasis on articulation (2018, p.115).

As we have seen, from the interviews carried out, there is evidence of this shift holding firm as it serves the student-centred approach of contemporary voice practice. The key findings relating to the interviews, and supporting literature, as outlined in Chapter Four, give insight into how breath is considered by voice coaches in training actors for speaking Shakespeare. These findings can be summarised as:

1. Contemporary voice coaches favour a student-centred approach to training actors for speaking Shakespeare.

2. To realise the student-centred approach, as mentioned, a **responsive eclecticism** of technique is required. This means the role of the trainer is that of an informed collaborator equipped with a wide-ranging knowledge of practices and skills that can be adapted for the students’ needs and desires; and applied to the context they find within the training studio.
3. There is a resistance to a compartmentalised approach to voice training, in favour of an integrated voice, whereby voice, body, breath, and text are unified.
4. A viable starting point for work on speaking Shakespeare is an acknowledgement of one’s own breath rhythm. This starts the ‘transformation of the actor’ (Carey, 2009, p.185), connecting breath and thought together as directed by their own internal breathing rhythm.
5. The legacy of the mid-twentieth century shift away from ‘voice beautiful’ practices of vocal training holds firm amongst contemporary practitioners.

The themes and pedagogical perspectives that emerged from the interviews, and reading, informed the design of the workshop series. The process of workshopping these themes and ideas, including the focus groups carried out, gave instrumental insights from the perspectives of students into the pedagogy that developed.

Key insights gleaned from the workshops can be summarised as follows:

- Using the **word association** exercise (as detailed in Chapter Five) to get participants to engage with their relationship with breath/ing and Shakespeare, on their own terms, led to greater levels of self-awareness both in embodied (breath) and intellectual (Shakespeare) terms of reference.

- **One thought = one breath exercise: a route to self-determination and self-direction within the training**

As we have seen in Chapter Five, where the workshop using Kate’s monologue from Act Five, Scene Two from Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* was described, we saw a shift of perspective occur for a participant, when she felt that she could take ownership of the performance by applying, as she described it ‘her thought=her breath’.

As stated in Chapter Five, the important finding in this case is not just that the participant started to become more interested with the work via breath, but also she began to see the value in self-determination and self-direction in approaching Shakespeare’s text, which was accessed via applying a consideration of breath and thought.

- **Pedagogical intervention**

As a mode of teaching and learning in the context of training actors for speaking Shakespeare, it was found that pedagogical intervention, as it emerged from the instinct of members of the cohort, proved beneficial in realising an objective. Where participants were working in their second language, it was found that both the performers and audience members within the group were keen to change the plan set out for the workshop, in order for the performers to release tension they held when performing in English. With the case in question, the performers switched to performing in their respective first languages – resulting in the release of ‘held’ breath and easing of resulting tensions in the body.

It was clear that the intervention (responding to the contemporaneous pedagogical context) led to a mode of exploration and discovery relating to the students’ own breath dynamic for speaking

Shakespeare, and that these discoveries could then be used as a template for achievement in performance.

The finding here is that participants were keen to listen and respond to their own embodied experience of their breath dynamic to troubleshoot their relationship with speaking Shakespeare’s text. They were keen to work as a cohort to find innovative ways to explore breath dynamic even when it means moving away from the planned exercise/schedule of the workshop.

- **Self-Reflection Towards Criticality:**

In Chapter Five it is explained that when the participants were given the tools and space for self-reflection within the workshops, they started to consider the wider contexts of their learning. They went beyond the content of the sessions and the performance of Shakespeare’s text to consider the theme of accessibility and bringing a resolution to related issues through their thinking on breath and Shakespeare. An example of this occurred in the final focus group: when the participants were asked *‘Do you think there is a particular role for breath in speaking Shakespeare?’*, – one of the participants responded engaging with notions of accessibility and inclusion. She talked about what she felt was the sometimes inaccessible nature of Shakespeare’s text, offering the following solution: *if you breathe through it then you make it alive then it doesn’t suck anymore.*

It was found that after the workshop series had concluded, participants felt able to critically evaluate their relationship with their bodies, their breath, the space, and Shakespeare’s text.

Future Directions and Applications of this Research

This PhD has provided me with the opportunity to generate research that, I believe, can be applied by voice coaches, acting students, and those desiring a new access point to explore speaking Shakespeare’s text that gives them the prospect of using their embodied experience as a starting point via breath. It has also, I argue, opened up avenues for further research to be carried out, some of which is proposed as follows.

- **‘Speake’: An Inclusive Breath Pedagogy**

It was never the intention of this PhD to explore inclusivity as it relates to breath training for speaking Shakespeare; however, in its engagement with the concept of criticality on the part of the student, as investigated within the workshop environment, questions relating to gender, cultural diversity, and disability came to the fore. While this research was able to comment on the specific context of inclusivity as it related to the activity of the workshops, and how breath training served as an inclusive learning strategy for actor training to speak Shakespeare, a worthwhile further study would be how breath training may be utilised in wider actor training practices. An equally interesting prospect for further research would be to examine in socio-economic terms who may be excluded in this pedagogy by virtue of investigating breath training for speaking Shakespeare – how, for example, might it include or exclude those with respiratory conditions.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the subject of voice in feminism (Werner, 1997; Lipton & MacKinlay, 2016), queer studies (Jarman-Ivens, 2016; Sadowski, 2013), and cultural theory (Gaines, 2000) has also been given significant light in the respective discourses and, particularly in the past decade, this has extended to breath studies and notions of breath’s inherent power dynamics, which this study supports as a field of research in its own right, and how this idea becomes observable through

performance. A potential further study may take the form of practice as research; disseminated as performance of Shakespeare’s to observe and share the temporal realities of breath with an audience followed up by focus groups with those audiences. This has the potential to further explore the intersection highlighted by Weston – voice, breath, body, text, performance and individual ‘uniqueness’ (2018, p.30), and extending to a practice as research mode of investigation and dissemination.

- **‘Breathe’: A Critical Breath Pedagogy within Actor Training**

In addition to the research possibilities in relation to breath pedagogy and inclusivity, further studies examining the concept of criticality on the part of the student within various traditions of actor training would, I argue, prove fruitful. How, for example, might the acts of reflection, and Freire’s concepts of democratisation and conscientisation work in relation to the pedagogies of Stanislavsky, Grotowski, Artaud, or Copeau’s actor training practices? And what is the place of critical breath pedagogy within this landscape?

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, examples of how breath studies, particularly in the past fifteen years, has influenced existing pedagogies is evident across philosophy (Sloterdijk, 2009; Connor, 2010; Adey, 2014), culture (Quinlivan, 2012; Heine, 2021), race studies, (Braun, 2021), and feminism (Cavarero, 2005; Irigaray, 1999; Gorska, 2018). Within performer training, and of particular relevance to this study is Sarah Weston’s work assessing Linklater and Rodenburg from a feminist perspective. In her work with young women across the north of England Weston ‘explore[s] the connection between engaging in voice training and the young women’s own conception of their political voice’ including breath (2019, p.37). In her PhD thesis, Weston locates an intersection where voice, breath, body, text, performance and individual ‘uniqueness’ are brought to the fore (2018, p.

30); this precise intersection is a useful departure point for a critical pedagogy to emerge in relation to breath and speaking Shakespeare.

- **‘Discusse’: A Critical Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare**

At the heart of this study is the desire to create a training space that listens and responds to students’ needs and aspirations in the context of learning and exploring the act of speaking Shakespeare’s text. This PhD has drawn together Freire’s concepts of democratisation and conscientisation, and Boal’s intervention towards a breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare that allows the student actor to be critical, reflective, and responsive. Chapter Five of this thesis offers a framework for this pedagogy to start from. Here, I point to the four ‘critical moments’ that serve as learning strategies in the context of the pedagogy proposed:

- ***Critical Moment #1 Self-Awareness***
- ***Critical Moment #2 Self-determination and self-direction***
- ***Critical Moment #3 Pedagogical Intervention***
- ***Critical Moment #4 Self-Reflection Towards Criticality***

In relation to, ‘A Breath Pedagogy for Speaking Shakespeare’, the above framework was successful in that participants developed a sense of self-awareness, and the appetite for self-determination and self-direction as their engagement with their breath dynamic in relation to speaking Shakespeare was realised and developed. The application of such a model would work, I argue, either in-part within existing modules that taught performance of Shakespeare text, or as a module in its own right. It may also work as a mode of rehearsal for speaking Shakespeare’s text within the professional sphere by applying the various considerations of breath to a text. One of the guiding principles of my pedagogy is the idea that breath training is an ecology for actor training for speaking Shakespeare. This is supported when we take heed of what Lyn Darnley told me: she advised that she believes that if you work on any aspect of performance you are working on breath; that breath, voice, body, and work

on text is all integrated. This was also reflected within the second focus group of the workshop series when one of the participants expressed that they felt that if they had a role in a Shakespeare play and applied all the ‘breathing’ exercises to the text they were to speak, they would be ready to perform that role.

While it is not the contention to offer this model as a fully realised rehearsal itinerary for taking on a Shakespeare text – I argue that this model has something to offer both the pedagogical and professional sphere as they pertain to speaking Shakespeare. Returning to the description set out in Chapter One of this thesis: the phrase ‘a critical breath pedagogy for speaking Shakespeare’ indicates a learning space that goes beyond skill acquisition of breath dynamic when speaking, or preparing to speak, Shakespeare. It signifies a resistance of pedagogies where students have practices handed down from masters (either directly or via a trainer versed in a master’s practice) without question or scrutiny on the part of the student.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Theme Table

In Chapter Four of the PhD thesis, I provide a condensed list of dominant themes from the interviews carried out. Below is a more comprehensive offering to illustrate the richness of the conversations undertaken.

Interviewees were Lyn Darnley (LD), David Carey (DC), Simon Reeves (SR), Joan Mills (JM), and Sarah Case (SC).

Theme identified from interviews	Definition of theme in context	Which interviewees talk about this
Student-centred approach to voice/breath training: ‘teach students, not systems’; ‘individual needs’; ‘different people learning different ways and different things’; ‘there are many routes, many paths and they are all individual’	An approach that identifies what skills gaps there are in any given student and addressing this directly with them.	LD, DC, SR, JM, SC
Working physically	Floor work; working 'in' the body for the purposes of developing vocal skills; thinking through anatomy and physiology	LD, JM, SC
What an actor needs to speak Shakespeare	Set of skills or attributes an actor needs to speak Shakespeare	LD, JM, DC, SR, SC
Fundamentality or centrality of breath in training and performance	Physically; vocally; spiritually and cerebrally	LD, DC, JM, SC
The place of the text	The phenomena of text on breath; verse, prose, contemporary	LD, DC, JM, SC
Central School of Speech and Drama	RCSSD (prev CSSD) – The significant role of Central on development of 'the voice coach' and voice studies in Britain	LD, DC
Cicely Berry	(of Central as student/teacher) – legacy	LD, SR, JM, DC
Anti-technique feeling amongst actors/students etc	resistance of technique in place of intuition and artistic expression (not that they need be mutual exclusive).	LD
Integration of body and voice	Integration of voice and body	LD, SC

Control	Breath control; physical control; autonomy; agency	LD, SC, JM
Eclectic approach to teaching	Using more than one system of voice coaching/practice; anti systemisation (not anti system)	LD, SR, DC
Self of the actor	Actor as person; working on self to be actor/performer; personal	LD
Taking away ‘bad’ habits	Born from the relationship between a person and their environment/culture/physicality – processes of unlearning physical habits	DC, SR
The body	Working with/through, and considering the physical flesh and bone of the performer/student	LD, SC, JM, SR
‘Dealing’ with Shakespeare	Culturally/physically/vocally – the weight of Shakespeare as icon	DC, JM, SC, SR
Breath pressure	The literal air pressure from the lungs over the vocal folds to create vocal sounds	SC, SR
One thought = one breath (general rule of thumb)	A general rule but not hard and fast – in performance of Shakespeare an actor should take one breath for each thought.	SR
Shakespeare = long complex thoughts	Particular challenge with Shakespeare relative to the one thought=one breath concept is the length and complexity of some of the thoughts within the text meaning thought needs to be given to aspects of breath such as control/capacity; in breath, out breath; flexibility; tempo and rhythm	LD, DC, SC, SR
Breath being central to the creative process of an actor	Cognitively; artistically; and aesthetically (e.g. see breath catalogue ³⁶)	SC, DC
How one learns/Learning/Different learning styles	How to most effectively train any given student/actor	LD, SR, DC
Breath is personal	Breath is individual; potentially can tell us things about character/personality; habits; culture	DC
Creativity	Creative impulse of the performer	DC

³⁶ *Breath Catalogue* is a collaborative work by artist/scholars Megan Nicely and Kate Elswit, and data scientist/interaction designer Ben Gimpert, together with composer Daniel Thomas Davis and violist Stephanie Griffin. The project combines choreographic methods with medical technology to externalize breath as experience’. (Breath Catalogue website, 2018, <https://www.breathcatalogue.org/about/>)

Expression of thought	Through voice; through breath; through action	LD, JM, SR, DC
British tradition – working on breath	Ideas/concepts/theories/practices originating, or having being developed/nurtured/used primarily in Britain	LD, DC
Language is heightened and lengthened	Ideas around verse/poetic/classical text	LD, JM, DC, SR, SC
Rhetoric	Language meant to be persuasive; in context of Shakespeare – rhetoric is often a device used within longer speeches; argument	LD, DC, SR
Thought structures of 20 th and 21 st centuries	Idea that Shakespeare's longer speeches were more popular in early to mid twentieth century, because of war and post war era(s) – e.g. Churchill's rhetoric similarity to Henry V and so on. Conversely the notion of the shortening of thoughts in postmodern culture – American Presidents that tweet.	DC
Thought structure in Shakespeare	More towards rhetoric	DC
Healthy voice	LD: 'investigating that from a scientific point of view is a good idea'	LD,
Communication/communicative voice	All the tools at the actor's disposal in order to communicate	DC, JM, SC, LD
Physical/Cerebral/spiritual	Body/Mind/Breath	SC
Metaphor	Breath as metaphor: inspiration=in breath/epiphany; expiration=out breath/expression; expiration=running out of breath=death Through language connection to the word 'spirit'	SC

Efficiency/effective use of voice/breath	SC: 'technically an efficient breath is one that you don't hear on the in breath, [make in breath sounds] – you don't want that. Why? Because you're constricting the airway before you get the breath in – so that's inefficient. So, an efficient breath is one that comes in without constriction – that's physiologically efficient. The outgoing breath on voice – it's efficient if it's supported in the various ways in which we support our voice. If we are not engaging our proper support system – that is inefficient. If we take too much breath that's inefficient – so we need to take the amount of breath we need for what we are going to say, which obviously in life we do – when it comes to text – we have to work it out. So, you need the right amount of breath for the right amount of thoughts – that's what I mean by a technically efficient breath'	LD, SC, SR
Training as a collaborative process	Training in ensemble; teacher/student collaboration; actor/director learning experience	SC
Academic vs training	Critical thinking vs intuition and technique One in the head/one in the body	SC
Contemporary text = short thoughts; classical text=long thoughts		SR, DC
In the moment	The idea of presence	DC, JM
Character/Breathing (with) the character rather than self	Breath pattern/rhythm/pace of a character	JM, LD, SR, DC
Embody the language /Embodied text		JM, LD

Appendix A Table 1 : Themes identified from interviews

Appendix B - Interview Transcripts

○ Interview with Lyn Darnley

Denis Cryer-Lennon (DCL): So, first question, I'll just have a look here, okay so the first one was just really for you to be able to articulate in whatever way you want the work that you do in – in the context of voice work really.

Lyn Darnley (LD): Do you mean in terms of breath?

DCL: Well – an overview.

LD: Okay, so I would say that I don't follow a system, and that my work is eclectic. Although my own training because of my age was very rooted in anatomy and physiology and very much based on the teachings at Rada and Central because my own teacher had been trained under Elsie Fogerty. And then had gone on to work at Rada with Professor Aikin I don't know if you know – I think he was at central wasn't he Professor Aikin. So yeah, Professor Aikin and she worked with – she was taught by Clifford Turner and then she worked with him. So that – so my initial training was very, I suppose, of its time, you know, and very much rooted in the British system although my teacher – I was taught in South Africa by this woman Kate King who was a South African and had come to England and had worked at Central and Rada. But my experience was that – and because of the way she talked to me a lot about the things she had experienced during the 50s and whatnot, I felt very much that it was important to look wider. So, I got very interested in Linklater quite early. I obviously had read all the Cicely Berry books, but the Cicely Berry work, voice work is actually Central voice work, it was. And then she's moved away from it in terms of the formality. So, I was – yeah, I would say my own work is very eclectic and that my concerns are that we teach students not systems.

DCL: Yeah okay.

LD: So, we actually work from the starting point that, you know, you got to understand how a student learns so you got to take time to assess that before you suddenly foist something on them. And particularly as I've worked most of my life with actors you also have to know how they were trained and to respect that because that's really important. You can't come to somebody and undermine their, you know, have an opinion that undermines their training because for most people that training is very important. You also do meet actors who are terrified of voice people because of the experiences they've had, so yeah you get it both ways.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: I do believe in the physiological approach. I think that imagination is hugely important but it's finding that balance between imagination and the physiology and the science, science and the art bringing these two together. And the ratio and proportion to which you do that is dependent on the student because that student might or might not need to know the facts, they might or might not enjoy imagery. And even some actors don't, some actors need to know – they will say I need to know what's actually happening, so that's important. But I've also worked a lot with speech therapists, so I – I'm concerned with healthy voices, keeping voices healthy but at the same time extending that into the art of the Olympic actor so that the Olympic actor who finds and learns the techniques or

the opera singer learns the techniques so that they can do what they need to do without hurting their voices.

DCL: Just to pick up a little more on the healthy voice, how would you – would you define it, would you characterize it – healthy voice?

LD: Yeah I think that, you know, a lot of speech therapists will hear a sound that they think is unhealthy and you can cart them off to an ENT [ear, nose and throat doctor] – and it's not unhealthy it's a sound they are able to make maybe because of their particular makeup or maybe their technique is good. But obviously if there's any problem of not just losing the voice or if there's any suggestion that it doesn't sound as if they are coping or they feel they're not coping, then investigating that from a scientific point of view is a good idea.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: Because it puts people's minds at rest and what you don't want is an actor to feel in any way limited by their voice. So, I think you have to on the other hand stop people being so worried about their voices that it impinges on their imaginative use so that transformational identities. So, it's thought – thought balance, about getting balance right, and sometimes it's about really trusting your instincts and if you think there's a reason to have somebody checked out have them checked out.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: You know, and if they ask for it then you know that something's worrying them because actors are very reluctant to be seen not to be able to use the voice effectively.

DCL: Right.

LD: It really seems, you know, to impact on them when – because it's almost as if they don't have the tools they need, and they feel in some way that they're failing. So, if they – if they tell you that they're worried, well then put their minds at rest.

DCL: Yeah, yeah okay I mean you've answered some other questions that I have here which is great because of the fullness of the answer there. The next question kind of, doesn't butt up against it but it just asks if is there anything in particular, whether it would be – be production work or teaching anything in particular that you're working on at the moment and project wise or --

LD: Well because I'm now freelance and have retired, I'm working on specific projects. And, you know, the one I've just worked on was with a specific kind working on a video and a public speech so that was that whereas before that I was working on a youth festival. So, you know, everything for me now is very different, you know, it's not like it was when I was production based and company based which is a, you know, it's a very different thing.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: It's an extremely different thing it's more – I suppose more like what you do, well you take a year group and you follow them through and – when you're working with a company it's a long term thing.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: Whereas now for me working with individuals I mean yesterday for example, I was working with a group of students from Bethal University in the United States, and last week I was working with another university group. So my work now is very different and it keeps you on your toes because – but it also means especially the university work that you can only do what you do, what you can do in an hour, you're not going to be up to change somebody whereas, you know, you or when I was working with a company or when I work with my private clients if you have them for a period of time you can – you build their skills which is very different.

DCL: Yeah, the way I would describe that kind of difference in the past is one perhaps is a toolkit and one perhaps is training.

LD: Exactly.

DCL: And, you know --

LD: You can't do training – certainly the work I do at the institute is not training because I'm working with a group of students who are over here to see shows at the theatre and then I'm developing – I'm developing workshops for them around those plays as well. So, there are other things I have to think about and some of them are not even drama students, some of them are English students. So, you know, it's – but they're interested in the life and the work of the actor, so that's what I'm focusing on.

DCL: Okay, and just – because you've talked a little bit about when – obviously I'm thinking about when you were at the RSC you know, was there any particular – just in terms of if you're – say the artistic director says to you I want this particular thing. Do you find that more freeing to not have that or to – or is it – does it serve a purpose?

LD: Well I think, you know, what the artistic director wanted if I was working on his show is one thing but also the artistic director had – has the overview of the entire company, so I enjoyed that very much because particularly working with Michael Boyd we were working on ensemble. So, ensemble gives you the opportunity for the long term, you know, which is something that you don't get in freelance work, you get the overview and the opportunity not just to work with an actor on a specific vocal challenge in a rehearsal room but you also even if you're not in their other play you're seeing them at warm-up and they'll come to you if there's a problem and you can help them to find ways of solving whatever issues they're dealing with.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: So, I find that rewarding, I find that very rewarding.

DCL: Fantastic.

LD: Time consuming.

DCL: Yeah absolutely, absolutely.

LD: Yeah time consuming.

DCL: Okay, and – I mean the next question with those full answers you’ve kind of answered really but I’ll ask it anyway just in case it spurs anything. So, do you have a specific philosophy in its broadest sense that drives your practice, would you articulate?

LD: Yeah I think I believe that – well I think I believe, I know I believe that, you know, the voice is not something that occurs in isolation. So, it’s very much part – it’s a whole person at training and it’s, you know, it takes everything into consideration and well it needs to take everything into consideration from the anatomical and physiological things like posture, alignment, you know, relaxation, tension release all those things. And therefore, you have to deal with the individual on a personal level as well because they – they have to trust you, they have to – because it’s something – it’s something very vulnerable about the relationship somebody has with their voice if they’re going to release it and release tensions, you know, it’s something we protect. So, you have to – you have to develop that working relationship so that they know they’re safe, I think that’s very important. I don’t believe in push, push, push people over the edge because they got it free everything up all at once. Some people might like that but for most of the people I’ve learnt – I worked with you need to build your relationship with them and you need to learn to understand them and not just physically but mentally and emotionally too because you can’t separate any of these things voice is like a Gestalt

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah fantastic. So, to kind of move on a little bit – is there any particular exercise or activity that you like working with or that you find really effective in working with those – I would say a more the perhaps younger students or actors that you work with that you find most effective or that you prefer working with?

LD: Well, I certainly like to work physically, you know, I think it’s – it’s very difficult to meet somebody and sort of immediately have them lying flat on the floor, you know, before you really even understand what they need and what they want. And if I’m working with actresses, well no that’s not true whoever I’m working with, I would start – I would probably start them standing up working on stretch and posture and from a standing position before putting them flat on the floor. And I think it’s different in a training situation where you’re in a college – but even then, I think a variety of approaches for everything is important because there again you, you know, you can handle every – or embrace everybody’s learning styles if there is variety. If you put everybody on the floor some people get very tense on the floor, they don’t all – they don’t always like that. So, working and moving using the imagination for breath as well as floor work for breath, using partner work so that it breaks people’s – breaks down barriers so that when we stretch you don’t just stretch yourself you work with a partner and stretch with a partner on as much variety as possible I think. Just so that you can really get people’s – get all those different learning styles having – finding some benefit in what is done.

DCL: Fantastic, okay I’m going to move on to get more specific things to do with breath. Just that – so, within your own practice then where do you place breath?

LD: Well I think what I said last time is that, you know, breath is so important that I find it difficult to sort of think about breath in terms of Shakespeare or breath in terms of any specific style of performance because it’s so fundamental, I mean it’s absolutely fundamental. And it’s so linked to an individual’s levels of tension, it’s so linked to, you know, the expression of emotion, it’s completely necessary for phrasing, for understanding and, you know, for speech to be understandable. And so, it is at the beginning and, you know, it’s part of all those things. So, if I’m doing a warm-up almost everything is related to breath in some way because if we start the warm-up by stretching, well stretching is related to breath, you know, we’re stretching the body so that the body can breathe and

everything we do is connected to the breath. So, it's completely – well it's totally necessary to address it, it's how you address it and the variety of ways in which you address it. There are very first things, and in saying that don't connect with breath.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: Even if you are releasing the back of the neck, you know, you're releasing the back of the neck so that you can drop the breath. You know, if you are working on exercises that loosen the hips and loosen or free the ankles and free the knees there again you are – you're working on breath. So – and you can't really separate it from anything if you're working on consonants you're working on breath, if you're working on toe you're working on breath, you know, if you're singing, you're working on breath and if you're speaking you're working on breath. And so, you know, the – I don't know how you separate it.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: And I think too much separation you, obviously isolation of muscles is necessary, so you have to do the isolation work, but as soon as that isolation work is – has been not even achieve the practiced, then you have to go back to integrating it with every other aspect of the voice.

DCL: Yeah, yeah. And is there any particular, you know, could we have, you know, traditions of rib reserve and things like that, is there any – in terms of breath now any particular tradition that you would think that's very effective or that's –

LD: No.

DCL: No?

LD: No, well – well I think, you know, I think just as you brought up rib reserve of – rib reserve only suits certain bodies, it was invented by men. You know, it's a typical male breath pattern – no not – not, actually I'm wrong, not typical male, male – males of a certain rib structure will breathe like that. But, you know, most women it just makes them hugely tense, and once you've got people really released and then the rib cage is loose and responsive and the breath is low they can do all you need to do without having to do with rib reserve. I was taught rib reserve - I mean that's what they did, you know, it was made my shoulders go up around my ears when I was training. But now because I worked my ribs in so many different ways I can do it easily.

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LD: If called upon I can do it easily because I've got springy ribs and so it's – again it's, you know, it's labelling isn't it?

DCL: Yes absolutely, yeah.

LD: It's about labelling, and I think that's – that's a real problem to me, with a lot of the – the systems is that they label things that we either do normally or come from another tradition, you know, all that we all trace back. All these exercises come from somewhere else, they're all – you know, you can trace them back to the singing root even before then, you know, a lot of people's training depends on the body that you're dealing with at any one time. But forcing is for me – forcing is to be

avoided at any cost, but also resisting any form of control I think is a mistake because sometimes particularly for Shakespeare and singing and poetry verse speaking of any sort you need a bit of control, you need to be able to control that. And it's linking that control that physical control with the mind so that you can phrase properly and it's very important. And when I say properly, I mean according to the text that you're working on.

DCL: Yeah, I see, okay. So yeah, I think you've kind of got into the next question as well which is very helpful. So again, I'll articulate it – some approaches to voice and speech training seem perhaps to maybe privilege breath, you know, use it as a real base whereas others sometimes seem to ignore it and – while explicitly maybe slightly there implicitly as you say. But the question is: do you have a perspective on this range of approaches?

LD: Yeah and, you know, the thing is I have – I have been at conferences and on workshops where people are saying, you know, we don't talk about breath, and we don't want to draw attention to the breath. But in fact, they're doing it in another way, they're still working on breath, you can't speak and not use breath. And it's interesting that I once went to a workshop where somebody I worked with, you know, this particular person had trained as an opera singer and therefore had huge amount of breath control. So, it's how we get there really, and I can see that for some people too much focus on anything anatomical is – it just doesn't work for them, so there again it goes back to find out what that student needs or that actor needs and work with them their way.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: I think it's very dangerous to impose too much on somebody, but then you have to do the work, you have to do the homework and find out what they know, what they like, how they like to work. But I also think that's a good question, you know, what sort of exercises do you enjoy most, is there a – are there voice exercises that you really don't like because then you get some idea of their learning style.

DCL: Yeah, yeah okay. And from your professional experience – how do you think one can tell when watching a performance if an actor has considered breath in their training or preparation or what kind of training have they had in relation to breath. Is there a way of recognizing it or —?

LD: Yeah, I think there is with verse speaking because if they don't have the breath phrased properly you don't understand them, you may hear them, but you don't understand them. You know, also as I say I was at a theatre last night and I was watching a performance where the act was really promising, really promising but, you know, they had no 'R'. And when you don't have an R it was a weak, weak R and that's a breath situation – breath and coordination obviously with a – coordination of organs of articulation but it's interruption of the breath stream, so there hadn't been the work. This particular actor didn't have the dexterity to deal with the language. So, you heard the words, but they have no dexterity, is the word I'm thinking of, I mean they hadn't – they were nimble. Now all your consonants are, you know, all dependent on breath as well, so we don't just need breath for tone we need it for everything, we need it for speech as well. And so, I could tell immediately that nothing had been done by this actor or by, you know, those working with the actor to – well I won't say 'nothing', not enough had been done to actually give that performance the underpinning that it needed, the breath wasn't underpinning the performance. And, you know, breath takes a long time to come right, it's not something that happens overnight. I mean there are a few people naturally well-coordinated in breath in terms of speech, but not everybody has that. And this particular actor just – I mean the role was too big for the experience and I didn't think that's – that's a problem

because it doesn't do any good, doesn't do the actor any favours if they give something that is beyond their technical ability. And I know technical is a word a lot of people don't like to use but actually as far as I'm concerned, you know, actors need technique and by that it's I'm not saying it's anything rigid but, you know, if somebody's running a race who wins is going to be the guy with the better technique.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: ...nine times out of ten because it's just allows for ease, well I think technique for me is important because it allows for ease. And then you can forget about it, and it allows the performance to be effortless. So, it's not something that means that the actor is just trying to speak well, it's so – it's so ingrained in them that they have, you know, they have – they have the opportunity to relax and think about the things they need to think about, you know, it's like riding the bike.

DCL: Yeah I was just at a conference TaPRA and I was in the performer training working group and the theme was 'the end of training'.

LD: Where were you?

DCL: In TaPRA, so it's the University of Salford this year.

LD: Oh, oh right, okay.

DCL: And so a lot of questions got thrown around, but somebody I think defined it in similar terms that what is trained perhaps means that it's where something you do professional is done with such ease that the next person can't do. You know, so I think it's similar to what you're saying there.

LD: Exactly what I'm saying, that's exactly what I'm saying. I mean, you know, this particular performance I saw there were – there were three actors of a certain age; same age three actors same age. And two of them had the technique so they do what they wanted to do without their lack of breath control, lack of phrasing, their lack of dexterity articulation getting in the way, it was easy, and we weren't aware of it. So, they could speak the verse because they have the breath control to phrase and to keep, you know, keep whole thoughts alive. First this actor was chopping the verse at the ends – there was no breath to get to the end of the thought – that was falling off the end and, you know, it was one of those situations where what was said could have been two different things because there wasn't a definition of the end of the word, there wasn't enough breath to propel things forward onto the lips. And it's that – and people give technique a nasty name because they associate it with something that's rigid and old fashioned, but it isn't – it's incredibly freeing. Technique is the most freeing thing because when you have it you don't think about it anymore, you know, I mean when I get back on a bike now I am wobbling, a little bit, you know, because my technique is not so great, must come back to me but half an hour I'm – I know what I'm doing again. And it's – it's the similar thing, it's when actors come back from after years and years and years you're working on television then come back to work on a stage, it takes them a little bit of time to adjust to the demands of the job, but if they have a broad solid basis of – in their training, a good structure to their training - fundamentals of underpinning of their technique it comes back pretty quickly.

DCL: Yeah, yeah very good. Okay so the next questions kind of get to the nub of it. So in the context of your own practice then do you have a specific view on Shakespeare, it's quite a big broad question but it's a —

LD: Are you talking about in terms of breath?

DCL: No, just in general do you hold Shakespeare in a particular place or do you —

LD: Oh okay, all right I think the thing is that the more you do Shakespeare the easier it gets, the problem with it is that most young actors haven't had enough practice.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: They need practice. When a young person – when I was at the RSC a young actor might come in and they'd had very little practice. But if they were lucky enough to stay with the company for couple of years by the time they left because of the – and mostly because of the understudy system they gained a huge amount of experience. And by doing that they got better at it. Now I think the thing is that it's just different way of word order, word order is different, phrases are longer, you know, sentences are longer, emotions are compounded and impacted, and we are using metaphor and simile and alliteration and rhetoric all the time. So, it's a bit different from doing, you know, a piece of new writing that might be very domestic or, you know, something like the angry young movement, it's just different. And it's something that actors get very good at and begin to really enjoy once they have practice at it, but that's the problem. And the other thing is that it's more of a problem for young women than it is the young men, because young men get so many more opportunities because the plays are very male dominated. Young women get fewer and fewer opportunities because there are so few women in the plays that, you know, there are not only fewer parts but fewer understudies as well for the young women to learn from. So, I think you have to – that's – it's not a problem as such it's just the lack of opportunity for exposure. But the ways around that are for drama schools and training institutions to teach people about verse. And, you know, you don't even have to teach people about verse, you have to expose them to verse because that's the main difference in the plays that verse plays – yeah, and the more you learn about verse the more you learn about Shakespeare. And public speeches as well, you know, anything that involves rhetoric and the opportunities to play with language because that's the other thing that we – well not we but people hold Shakespeare of this incredibly sort of sacred separate thing, but it isn't, you know, it's great stuff it's wonderful words. And that's why, you know, things like rap should be encouraged in schools.

DCL: Oh yeah, yeah.

LD: Because you – that makes people into wordsmiths.

DCL: Yeah absolutely.

LD: Shakespeare was a wordsmith, and you just need to learn to play with language the way, you know, he does and that's why I think that Cicely Berry made such a contribution to the world of voice which she picked up Peter Brook's ideas and turn them into voice exercises.

LD: Yeah, you know, when she worked with him and that's great because those sorts of games are a great way of releasing language, and they work for everything. I mean now that I'm working with private clients, if I'm working on presentation with them or a video or film with them, I'm still working using the same sort of exercises because they are applicable to any language.

DCL: Yeah, yeah. I find myself going back particularly with new students going back to Cicely Berry more than anybody I would say just because they get it quicker.

LD: Interesting, yeah.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: They're playing, you know, and that's what's so important about it, it's instead of it being something that's hard and difficult it's – you release it and so you release the breath as well.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: You know, and they begin to open up phrases and they open up long thoughts which is connected absolutely to phrasing. They release rhythms and, you know, that releases breath and that releases the whole soundscape of what you're working – you know, that's why I say Shakespeare it's just complex because it's so layered. But then if you look at Dylan Thomas you're going to get the same sort of things, Gerard Manley Hopkins any, you know, any exposure to those writers. What's the American leaves of grass, you know who I mean? Leaves of grass...

LD: It's just exposing people to complex language.

DCL: Yeah, Walt Whitman.

LD: Who am I thinking of?

DCL: Walt Whitman.

LD: Walt Whitman that's the man, that's the man Walt Whitman. So, you know, Walt Whitman, all of those writers and if you expose young people to that sort of verse all wrapping or whatever is going, you know, at the time Benjamin Zephaniah, Ben Zephaniah.

DCL: Zephaniah, yeah.

LD: Zephaniah, that these guys they've got the same sort of energies, you know, and if you listen to – what's her name this young girl Kate Tempest is it Kate Tempest?

DCL: Kate Tempest yeah, yeah.

LD: She's amazing, she's amazing and any sort of exposure to strong rhythms and complex language instead of the sort of text stuff, you know. I hate texting I really hate it, I just think it's so lacking.

DCL: Yeah very reductive.

LD: Yeah absolutely it doesn't have any – you know, it doesn't communicate it just – it's sort of how can we get a message across not sharing anything else of ourselves.

DCL: Yeah I think it's the equivalent to grunting really.

LD: Yeah it is.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: Yeah it is absolutely.

DCL: Okay. So the next question of course all these questions are all connected but what does an actor need to speak Shakespeare's text?

LD: You need exposure to complex ideas, verse, rhythm they need to be able to feel the rhythm and they need to connect with the soundscape on all levels. So that may be consonants or assonance, dissonant, you know, whatever, alliteration, and rhythms. They need to find character through language as oppose to imposing character on language, does that make sense?

DCL: Absolutely, yeah, yeah it did, find it through rather than imposing.

LD: Yeah, yeah that's it's all there I mean, you know, the – that is what Shakespeare's actors had – they had the text. So, the text needs to be the starting point and then you build the other things, that doesn't mean you completely ignore modern acting techniques of course you don't, but your starting point is what – your attention to the text, I think that's – you know, the thing is here I could go on for hours.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

LD: But it's – I think those are most important things and they didn't need to – not just be able to speak but to listen to it from others, you know, it's that a whole idea that the communication and this isn't just Shakespeare it's any language is dependant listening and returning and receiving and transmitting, you know. So, they need to, you know, they also need to find that place in themselves where language is joyous so, you know, where you really – the actors who really, I think impact on me are actors who enjoy language, I don't mean indulgently but who actually enjoy the act of speaking language.

DCL: Yeah, I think that the actors who do that tend to find the colour in it, then I think that's where the character tends to – for me anyway it tends to come from through the colour of the language because each character has a different way of speaking. Shakespeare just manages that very well, you know, to get characters to butt up against each other to get them to, you know, to go along with each other, you know, yeah.

LD: Yeah, and also think just need confidence though, in themselves as well so that they don't have to feel that there was a right or a wrong way and that we can – they can just embody that language and let that language then create for them something interesting.

DCL: Okay.

LD: Exciting.

DCL: Yeah, yeah. So my last – or not, last but one question is kind of the crux really. Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

LD: I think breath has a particular role in performance.

DCL: Right okay.

LD: Would be my answer to that. And because of the nature of Shakespeare, it is more important perhaps to – I don’t know if I really, really believe this I think it's important for everything but, you know, it's like, I suppose it's a little bit like classical music, music in general. If you're playing jazz there are certain things that are important for the jazz, there's something else that's important, you know, for Mozart or Bach. And the demands of Shakespeare are bigger than the demands for kitchen sink drama or certainly television or film they don’t demand – make demands on the breath in same way Shakespeare does. So yes, I suppose in that way if you phrase it like that then it is, I still think breath is fundamental to all performance, but the demands of Shakespeare are greater.

DCL: Okay and —

LD: Sorry, just to say it depends, even though if you're playing a very small part you probably – and you got like three short lines then it's not going to be necessary to have a huge breath support as such or need – but if you're playing a character that has long complex thoughts yes then you do need it. It is much the same way as you do if you're an opera singer, you know, you're going to need that. And I think the other thing is, you know, in what space are we playing these Shakespeare plays - when you're playing them in a very big space in a – or a space where, you know, people can't see your mouth all the time or you're having to fill up 2000-seater space, yes of course if you don’t want to be on mic. But yeah, it's relative to the size and scale of the performance but yeah, I do think that, you know, Shakespeare does make particular demands on the breath and those demands are as I've already said I'm banging on it but, you know, about being on about it but those demands are about phrases, complexity of emotion, you know, the verse form. The fact that he doesn’t use one word to express an emotion, he uses about 25.

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah and is he unique amongst his contemporaries then or among? —

LD: No.

DCL: Yeah that's a –

LD: Marlowe, if you speak – if you're doing Marlowe if you're playing Tamburlaine, you know, it's pretty much the same. And the Greeks as well, the Greeks have huge expansive thoughts and ideas and, you know, there are all sorts of metaphors going on in these plays. You know, we call these plays dense text or elaborated text and it is the complexity of these texts and the stretch of the classic structure I supposed it's the classical structure. But, you know, if you're playing Chekhov then you've got lots of other things going on.

DCL: Yeah different set of challenges, yeah.

LD: Yeah, they all require... you know, and any actor should be able to turn their head at these different styles, now look at restoration.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: If you're playing restoration, you really need good breath control, you really do. So I wouldn’t say Shakespeare's on his own out there, but I do think, you know, there are all slightly – it's all like a different composer of classical music, they all have their own idiosyncrasies.

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah I think for me Shakespeare lands somewhere in the thought structures that – that's what I find probably because I've work more on Shakespeare than any of them, that's where the difference between working on Shakespeare and your kitchen sink and –

LD: No absolutely, yeah.

DCL: It's the length thought and the complexity of thought, so yeah.

LD: It is a complexity of thought, yeah, and you know it's also the rhetoric.

DCL: Yeah.

LD: It's the rhetoric, you know, the way he structures language is so interesting. The way he structures argument, it requires – I was working on a – *Julius Caesar* workshop yesterday with young people, and we were looking at the tent scene. You know, when you have these Cassius Brutus, Cassius Brutus, Cassius Brutus, Cassius Brutus and then suddenly Brutus has a speech like this, or you have Portia, you know, and she's arguing with him about the fact that about – with Brutus about the fact that he's gone quiet and he's not talking to her, and she knows that there's something going on and she's trying to get him to unburden himself. And nothing works, he just stops, stops, so she's constantly looking for new ways and the nuance in her argument is just extraordinary. And the actress has to go to different parts of their voice all the time. So just that size of speech, with the odd Brutus line here and there, it's scale of it, it's huge.

DCL: Yeah, yeah okay. And just the last one just to on a light-hearted note - is there any particular highlight for you in your career working on Shakespeare, you know, with actors or –

LD: So many, so many I mean I think for me one of the highlights is being the opportunity to watch really, really skilful actors. And skilful actors who have the technique to back them up, to back up their ambitions, you know, to – it's having the technique to support the freedom of imagination to take a performance in the direction they want to take it in. And I – you know, I think I've had – I'd been so lucky because I've worked on productions with wonderful people who've been able to do just that. So those have been the highlights for me.

DCL: Fantastic yeah, great. Now that's all the questions there but yeah, we've actually spoken for longer this time, yeah. And it's all recorded so that's great.

LD: Good show, good show yeah.

DCL: All the best, thanks bye. Fantastic that was a interview with Lyn Darnley former Head of Voice at the RSC and a freelance and semi-retired on the 20th of September 2017, thank you.

○ **Interview with David Carey**

Denis Cryer-Lennon (DCL): Yeah, thank you so much for agreeing to do this.

David Carey (DC): No, that's fine.

DCL: The first few questions are really just opener questions and then it goes into breath in a broad sense and then more specifically to do with Shakespeare at the end.

DC: Okay.

DCL: Yeah, but I don't want you to feel like the questions are restrictive in any way, just talk about whatever you want to talk about, and anything would be of great insight I'm sure, so that's great. The first question is for just a bit of context really, how would you describe the work that you do?

DC: Well in terms of the work that I do at the moment working with the Oregon Shakespeare festival, it's very much largely work on text with actors principally around Shakespeare text, but the festival also mounts contemporary plays as well. So, I'm working with modern language text as well often working on dialect support for actors who might be doing dialect either American, British or in some cases African or Asian. So, it's quite a broad spectrum of work that I'm doing at the moment.

DCL: Okay good. In terms of the Oregon Festival just for the purposes of tape, when do you go out to do that?

DC: Yes. I work essentially seven months of the year January through to the end of July, that's during the build of their season which builds over several months. They open four plays and then another couple of plays, and then three plays and another two plays, so it's continuous process.

DCL: Yeah fantastic. Is there anything in particular in the UK you're working on at the moment?

DC: What I've recently been doing is teaching at the Central School of Speech and Drama working with the MA Voice Studies students there on some vocal anatomy sessions. So that's the sum of it at the moment.

DCL: With Jane –

DC: With Jane Boston that's right, yeah.

DCL: She's great. Yeah, so do you have a specific philosophy – and it's kind of broader sense that drives your own practice, philosophy or approach perhaps –

DC: Yeah, for me the voice and breath in particular are really central to the creative process for an actor. And so, enabling actors to, first of all, perhaps in a student context to discover the connection to breath and through breath a connection to the creative use of breath for language and in particular heightened language such as Shakespeare or other verse text. That seems to me to be at the heart of what I do but connected to that I would also say that my approach is one which is not specific to one technique. I believe that everybody learns in different ways, that maybe, you know, groups of ways that people learn but it's actually to do with the individual and what their needs are. And I

prefer to having an eclectic approach to teaching and or working with actors that draws on the breadth of pedagogies that are available to a voice teacher.

DCL: Fantastic. I read, and I use your contribution to Jane's breath and action, the transformation of the actor, and the responsive breath – I love the idea of a responsive breath. And in my own classroom I kind of tease out the, you know, as you said the natural rhythms of the student. I'm just wondering what has your experience in working with that kind of practice and if you want to give examples?

DC: Yeah, I mean, my experience covers both the student actor and the professional actor in a number of different situations. I think breath is something that's very personal, people don't necessarily realize how personal it is, and how connected it is to the emotions and also to how we express ourselves our expressivity. And I find working with first year actors in particular or professional actors who are haven't really examined that aspect of their work, particularly rewarding because it's about opening people's eyes and ears and hearts and minds to not only what's happening inside them but to their connection to as a I say expressivity in language. And, you know, when it works in the right way when it works to serve people the individual is not blocking that process then it's – it's very rewarding for that person to really discover oh this is how I can make use of a technical facility with breath but in a creative way which then feeds speech and language and connection to acting. So yeah that – you're reminding me about the responsive breath, that is, you know, it's enabling that process to work at a deepened and creative level it's that – for the teacher it's also rewarding to see that happening.

DCL: Yeah fantastic, yeah and I find that myself and it opens up possibilities that can – it's interesting because this is the word creative coming up and it – and I find that's where the students are very surprised – that it connects with creativity rather than it been a fixed aspect.

DC: Yeah right. Well for me it's very much about being in the moment and that – that being in the flow of creativity and if breath is flowing and not *held* or not *deliberate* then actually it releases flow of energy and flow of creativity and that's the great discovery.

DCL: Yeah.

DC: But sometimes what you – a student has to go through a technical process in order to develop that facility of allowing the breath to be there that they have to discover that breath is something that they have habits with which can be obstructive rather than constructive. So, it's often a process of unlearning and deconstructing those habits in order to build something that is more positive and helpful when created, yeah.

DCL: Yeah fantastic. So, in that regard is there any particular exercise or activity that you particularly like working with that you find really effective?

DC: Yeah, I find – one exercise I often come back to is just one where one is working with the basic inflow and outflow of breath just the tidal breath. And getting students actors to be conscious of that realizing that that's an instinctive process, not getting them too caught in their heads about it but just enabling that tidal breath to be developed in a way where actually just through some imaginative exercises there just taking a deeper breath and vocalizing and taking that vocalization into something which is more creative maybe playing with pitch ranges, playing with vowel sounds, playing with consonants of other continuing nature. So that they build up a kind of muscle memory

instinctually without thinking deliberately about now I'm going to breathe in and now I'm going to breathe out. Having said that I also think, no we need to exercise those muscles consciously of the diaphragm or the intercostals muscles. So, I would as well as something which a more instinctual creative bases to it I would parallel that with more conscious muscular development of the breathing muscles along the lines of Cicely Berry's work or work that I've written about elsewhere. So from a breathing perspective there is a – there's sort of twin track that I tend to use, and another exercise which comes into mind is one where after some period of working with breath and with alignment and the sense of sort of just being present to enable actors or student actors just to think about that sense of actually being here now to allow the breath and the thought process to be connected so that as one breathes in one is thinking I am here and as one breathes out you are saying I am here. But there's just a development of that connectivity because it's very easy where one's just doing muscular exercises or doing as it were – excuse me, improvisatory exercises that one isn't connecting that to actual intention to express a thought. And to simply express a thought such as I am here, I am ready to work, or I feel this, or I want that just some simple statements on the out breath can feel – students can start to tap into the power of what that connection between thought and breath and expression can be, does that make sense?

DCL: Yeah absolutely, absolutely, yeah because I often – just lately with first years when talking about Patsy Rodenburg's work and – on the second circle and to do it presence and things like that, and kind we have of being using breath as a catalyst for that conversation to how – you know, which is great. So I mean the next question you kind of covered it already but I'm going to ask it anyway in case you've had any further thoughts. So where do you place breath in your own practice?

DC: Well, I place it centrally in my practice as much as possible. In terms of working with professional actors let's dwell on that as oppose to working more the student actors. I think breath is often something which one can assume that an actor of – a trained actor and an actor of many years' experience will have developed their own connectivity to breath and to be conscious of that and to be working with that. But every now and then something will happen which will just come up and make me realize oh that actor isn't breathing, you know, not that they're literally not breathing but they're not actually breathing in relation to the scene or in relation to what the characters intentions are. And it's just – from an acting coach or text coach point of view it's just useful to be paying attention to the actor's breath and realizing where they're connected and where they're not because that can then inform how I might coach them in a particular way. I might actually ask the question or say do you realize in this scene you're not really breathing that much, and it – it may just be something about bringing that to their consciousness not in a critical way but just in – I noticed you're not really breathing here, is that something that you're aware of? And they might say oh my god no I haven't realize that, you know, it's – I just really have a problem with that scene and it's to do with this and then it opens up an opportunity to talk about what I can help them with perhaps, yeah.

DCL: Fantastic. So my conversations with Jane before we kind of discussed that some approaches to voice and speech training seem to sometimes privilege breath whereas others sometimes seem to not sidestep it or ignore but it's not – doesn't seem as central perhaps.

DC: Right.

DCL: Do you have a perspective on this range of approaches?

DC: Yeah I mean I – I feel certainly those practitioners it seem to come from the British tradition, I would say have a strong connection to breath and, you know, I would include in that Kristin Linklater

because of course he does and Catherine Fitzmaurice because of course she does too. But somebody like the Estill method which are still if you're familiar with that approach, I know having attended some sessions of hers and talking with people from her background she often sort of says oh well I don't do – I don't do breathing, I mean she – her focus is on the larynx and I understand that. I – my interpretation of that is that as a trained singer herself she's not concerned about breathing because she expects singers to know about breathing. She doesn't expect singers to know about that larynx and the detail that she does, but I think to – as it were say oh I don't do breathing – that maybe paraphrasing what she says but it tends to give the impression that actually to her breathing is not an important issue. I think if you really questioned her on it she would probably say oh no I – but I just take it for granted it's given, you know. For her it's much more, you know, there are so many things at the laryngeal level that that can be more – that singers can be more informed about.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

DC: And, you know, I think it is often from a perspective of perhaps people who come from more of a physical background – excuse me, or a signing background where breath is less emphasized, I don't know what's your opinion?

DCL: Yeah, no I think that's really interesting point. It's quite an interesting point that – a point you've made to me before that sometimes in a – like the books for example from John Barton you know, perhaps they're focus just in that particular publication isn't – on breathing it doesn't mean that they don't think about it but – but –

DC: Well I think – you're focusing on books by acting, teachers or directing teachers and – yeah, they're far less interested in breathing.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Those – I mean acting teachers who work in drama schools I think have more kind of awareness and respect for the need to emphasize, you know, don't block your breath, don't hold your breath. But, you know, somebody like John Barton came much more into working on text from an academic background, had much less awareness of or contact with actor training and that sort of Oxbridge approach to the text is a great tradition of British directors but it doesn't necessarily mean that they've got a great understanding of actor training.

DCL: Yeah, yeah fantastic. Okay, and so just to follow on from that then – and you have actually mentioned it slightly– from your professional experience do you think one can tell when watching a performance for example if an actor has considered breath in their training or preparation or what kind of training perhaps they have had in relation to breath?

DC: I think usually one can tell an actor who has had training for – for vocal usage. And certainly, you know, if you're putting two actor side by side one who is thinking about their breathing and one who isn't, it's pretty clear which is which. And from an acting, you know, as a vocal coach with professionals as I said earlier that's something that I am paying attention to with them even if that's not primary concern of mine it is something that I will be aware of. It's less something, you know, if I'm just going to the theatre for pleasure it's less something I'm thinking about, but it may be something that unconsciously I will think back and think yeah I know what it was about that actor's performance that I didn't like. It was just that they weren't connected to their breath or they weren't connected to their voice or they were forcing things, there wasn't a sense of ease there. So yeah it's

something that I'm either conscious of – because I'm professionally paying attention to that or I'm aware of as a professional in a more sort of busman's Honeymoon kind of situation.

DCL: Yeah very good, interesting words – a force and yeah those kind of words that you think of breath in a kind of restrictive way so if someone's forcing that it is quite – you can see it and it seems that they don't get perhaps to the end of the thought really.

DC: Exactly yeah, yeah.

DCL: And particularly with verse speaking I think, with those longer, complicated thoughts, it's very interesting, okay. So – so we're getting into the latter part now just about Shakespeare then. So just a general question and in the context of your own practice do you have a specific view on Shakespeare just his text his work –

DC: Yeah I mean I feel Shakespeare basically optimizes the – the kind of heightened text in its optimum mode. You know, it's – I mean Shakespeare's language of course changed and evolved over the course of his career. But there's something about working on Shakespeare which creates demands on the actor which I feel draw on the deeper creative wellsprings of anybody's technique and artistry. And in a training situation I think it's kind of essential to challenge the young actor with that kind of material because it's really it demands depth of breath, it demands a breadth of creative and emotional response. And also because if you enter into that language you discover what the creative potential is of any language, if you're sensitive to Shakespeare's verse then you're sensitive to Alan Ayckbourn, you know, or Caryl Churchill, you know, you're aware of what language is doing, and how you can effect change on people – fellow characters with that language. So it's never just something that you take for granted.

DCL: Yeah, yeah. It's interesting when you, you know, talk about training so it almost gives an actor an optimum range I suppose. If we can reach Shakespeare then we can reach –

DC: Right, yes yeah. I always remember something that Patsy Rodenburg said which is that 'Shakespeare asks us to be better'. And I thought that put it in a nutshell I mean whether we're actors or directors or voice coaches or members of an audience 'Shakespeare asks us to be better'.

DCL: That's it, that's quite sweet –

DC: As human beings, so yeah.

DCL: Fantastic. Okay, that's great – and again you've touched on this, but I'll ask it again and so what does an actor need to speak Shakespeare's text, not just in breath but –

DC: Sure, sure well I think it's a sensitivity to language, an understanding of how language works at the poetic level and I don't just mean the flowery sense of poetry but the kind of mythological level of poetry that it is something deeper, richer, higher, stronger however you want to use that word mythological or poetic. It is drawing on something deep in your psyche. And so an actor needs that sense of creative imagination, that sense of play, that sense of ability or willingness to expand themselves to go beyond the everyday to experience something really profound the depths and heights of emotion. And to have an instrument whether that's a physical instrument or a vocal instrument which is able to be responsive to that. They can appreciate all of those things but the body and the voice out there to respond then, you know, it's still going to be a dull performance.

DCL: Yeah, yeah fantastic, okay. So the kind of the last question on the technical level I suppose is the crux question I suppose. Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

DC: Yes because the language is heightened and lengthened, it is demanding in terms of the, you know, the expressive power of the language that's the height but it's also demanding in terms of the length of the thoughts. And so much modern dramatic text is counting short chunks and it's very easy not to think about breathing because it feels so naturalistic to speak that language particularly if you're working in television and film. But Shakespeare – in a sense Shakespeare's theatre the Elizabethan Theatre celebrated great thoughts, great language, size of all – in all directions. And so we need to embrace that, we need to be prepared in breath at the core that is what we require is that depth and size of breath to fulfill that language.

DCL: Okay.

DC: Just simple as that.

DCL: And do you think his – in any sense with in terms of breath Shakespeare is – is he unique in that or do we –

DC: He's not unique in that I mean you look at any text from that period. And you've got Marlowe, or you've got Ford, you've got Ben Jonson, you know, all of them in their own way very challenging also some of those restoration texts can be very demanding as well in similar ways. I just think Shakespeare has that for our modern sensibilities certainly 20th century as opposed to 21st century sensibilities Shakespeare spoke to our culture. I think with the 21st century things are changing so quickly, so rapidly, Shakespeare begins to feel like he's not necessarily as current in terms of the emotional ranges of people's experience, maybe the Jacobean are more opposed to that because it's interesting thinking about the gunpowder plot and terrorism and the connections between those. Yes, Shakespeare was writing at the same time, but he wasn't really dwelling in on those emotions whereas it was something like *The Duchess of Malfi* you've really got very powerful emotions which take people to the extremes. And it feels as if that that kind of Jacobean sensibility might be something which would speak more to at least this part of the 21st century whereas Shakespeare because of the first and second World Wars and the post-World War period spoke much more to something which was deeper, richer, had both a sense of romance, but also of the connection to war. Shakespeare's connection to war certainly through the history plays is really so powerful to Britain, any nation perhaps that's gone through that. And therefore, has resonance for that post-war 20th century feeling. For us in a period of terror, it feels that maybe he doesn't quite speak to us in that way.

On the other hand, you take a play like *Julius Caesar* or maybe *Macbeth*, and those plays which are dealing with assassination, which are dealing with politics and power, *King Lear* there's something in those tragedies, those tragedies, I am not thinking *Hamlet* so much, but there's assassination at the heart of *Hamlet* as well which again can speak to us in a contemporary way. And particularly, I know many European countries find Shakespeare speak so much to their recent political experience that we can forget that Shakespeare has an international appeal. And so he speaks on a variety of levels to a variety of cultures and in different ways at different times. It's fascinating to talk about it and think about it.

DCL: Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

DCL: Yeah. And as you are talking about in particular the 20th century, let’s just talk the word rhetoric and that kind of the big speeches like Winston Churchill and *Henry V* kind of once more out of reach, and that was kind of –

DC: Yes, you know, with tweeting and other forms of communication getting shorter and shorter, although I’ve just read they’ve doubled the length of Twitter so it’s now 280 words I think you are allowed, but anyway, it does feel as if communication is getting shorter and snappier except when you look at somebody like Barack Obama and you realize okay no it is still possible to have somebody respect and use rhetoric in a very powerful way. And then we get the reverse of that with the next president luckily who likes to tweet all the time.

DCL: Yes indeed. And that’s an interesting kind of correlation to thought and length of thought, and attention spans and it’s quite interesting how an audience... the audience reception to those two things.

DC: Yes.

DCL: Yeah.

DC: And yeah I think that’s an important point in terms of modern audience is that are they quite so prepared, willing, interested to sit and listen to long speeches. It’s been fascinating watching the series, the comedy series on BBC *Upstart Crow*, I don’t you caught any of that.

DCL: A couple of episodes.

DC: Okay. They continually make fun of the length of Shakespeare’s speeches, and yeah it is something I think modern actors grapple with, modern directors grapple with and modern audiences grapple with in their own different ways is often directors feel they have to cut long speeches and actors will feel yeah I’d really like to cut that and not – there is a lot of tendency to want to cut things and audiences. It depends on the size of the theatre as well and the nature of the production, whether the audience is prepared to stand or sit and listen to lengthy speeches, but I think you tamper with Shakespeare at your peril because he knew how the dynamics of the speech and the scene worked very intimately from a theatrical point of view. And if you undercut cut that in some way you need to be almost as artistic practitioner or Shakespeare himself to be able to do it and get away with it.

DCL: Yes, good luck with that. Brilliantly full answer there. The last question really was just an indulging question. Are there any highlights in your own work on working on Shakespeare?

DC: Sorry yeah, could you repeat the question?

DCL: Yeah. It’s just that to see if there is any – if there are any highlights in your work on working on Shakespeare?

DC: Right. I think going back many years now, I mean, certainly one of the highlights or a couple of the highlights was when I was working with the Royal Shakespeare Company back in the 1980s to be

working on Kenneth Branagh’s *Henry V*, and Anthony Sher’s *Richard III*. I mean those were iconic productions, performances, and just to be a small cog in those wheels, as it were, was very satisfying. I think more recently it's often been similarly productions of those two plays most recently at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival a very good strong production of *Henry V* by the chap who's the current artistic director of the Guthrie Theater, Jo Haj. And then again a production of *Richard III* which was directed by the artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. So it's interesting that those two plays and productions should come to mind because in one case they're quintessentially British and the other quintessentially American. But both productions or both sets of productions really brought those plays fully to the audience in a way which I think audiences fully connected to. And just speaks to how Shakespeare works with it in any context really.

DCL: Yeah fantastic. That's pretty much all the questions I have. I just want to thank you again.

DC: It's been a pleasure.

DCL: For such generous answers, and just being generous with your time.

DC: All right. Is it helpful for you?

DCL: Yeah absolutely. And that's it really.

DC: Sure. Well if you've got any follow up questions, please do get back to me, yeah.

DCL: Yeah, indeed. And thank you very much. Thank you, David.

DC: All right.

DCL: All the best. Bye, bye.

DC: Bye.

[End of Interview]

○ **Interview with Sarah Case**

Denis Lennon (DL): I’m Denis Lennon, it is the 12th of July 2017, and I am in Fourth Monkey Actor Training Studios with Sarah Case, Head of Voice here. Thank you, first of all, for agreeing to do this

Sarah Case (SC): You’re welcome

DL: Basically, I have a bunch of questions, but really, they’re just to aid the conversation along so anywhere you feel the desire or need or anything to go on th..that would be fabulous... em..the more I hear the better. [Indicating to consent form] I have obviously put in this that I will provide to you any transcript you want and I think it’s more because it is interesting rather than anything else. As I say I have a bunch of questions so we can just go from there.

So just to start how would you describe the work that you do, in any context including being here or in a freelance context?

SC: When you say the work that I do, you all of it or specific aspects of it, are you talking about what I do?

DL: Yeah, in terms...

SC: As an overview...?

DL: As an overview, yeah.

SC: ‘Cos it’s quite complicated. So as an overview, obviously I am a voice and text coach...but what does that mean? In the context of Fourth Monkey Theatre Training Company and any other similar institution, which for the purposes of this would be a drama school or actor training, what that means is I train the voices alongside other coaches. It’s not just me of course, but I am responsible for running the department. But in terms of teaching, I train voices for actors to be able to be heard, to be clear, to be resonant, to have all the different facilities that a voice might need to... in order to act – and not just to act actually – I mean obviously it’s all aimed at performance but we also train voices that are then able to be used in different contexts and as far as I’m concerned training a voice means that someone’s got a healthy voice whether they become an actor or no, so the voice itself I mean I can talk in detail about what we do in how to train a voice and come back to that in a moment if you want to ask me detail on that. In terms of text I work with students and actors, for that matter, to enliven text, to bring it life, to discover how to use text and text right across the board so from classical, and when I mean classical, yes Greek stuff, but essentially we are talking Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and a little bit later as well but also right up to modern day so text that was written yesterday as well as text that was written four hundred years ago and of course there are many differences and many similarities in terms of how you access text, in how use it, what to look for, why to look for it, and what it does for the actor and the character work and all the rest of it. Um, so that my fundamental, in very broad terms, what I do train actors, and then when I am working, for example I work at the globe, so there I’m still training, I’m in the higher education department so I would train actors in a similar way, much short – ‘cos that tend to be short term seminars and workshops, masterclasses, that kind of thing so it’s a flavour really and occasionally I will work with professional actors and other voice users like public speakers and so on.

DL: Very good, – is there anything in particular that you are working on at the moment? This might be chance to be more specific

SC: As it happens, no because my projects are finished so I’m teaching a couple of groups at the moment but it’s not project work

DL: So, about the teaching then – is that just kind of on exercise work or –

SC: Yes, yeah – what you mean by exercise work – The nuts and bolts?

DL: Yeah, so kind of the mechanisms of voice...

SC: That’s right, yeah. Really about – I mean the group I am working with short term work I’ve got with them – it’s a fairly short contract. I am working on getting them to breathe and support their voices basically cos that all I’ve got time to do, we can’t go into the detail of – the sort of multi layers of voice work. So it’s basically getting breathing and support in order to heard in a space. So it’s really. It is absolutely nuts and bolts stuff, but’s it’s the basis of everything because you haven’t got that you can’t do anything.

DL: So I do have a bunch of breathing questions in a moment. Just in the broadest sense possible or more specific if you wish – do you have any specific philosophy that drives your practice or any approach maybe?

SC: Well yes, in that, see I don’t know if I call it a philosophy. In terms of methodology as you’ll know, I don’t know if you’ve read my book but you’ve certainly looked at it, the title tells you everything – The Integrated Voice – so my whole process if you like, my whole methodology, call it a philosophy if you will, is about integrating voice, body and what you are using it for, so ultimately in terms of actor training we’re using it in order to be able to get them to act, to become good, better actors, in order to be able to speech on stage, be heard bla bla bla – but unless you marry body and voice together; voice, breath, body, soul, thought, the lot, unless you integrate it, you end up, you can end up with very competent actors but not very creative or interesting actors. So, the integration of skills is absolutely at the heart of what I do.

DL: Which is, when we read about older teachers in the early days at Central, it kind of was fighting against a taxonomy, a kind of categorisation of what we do as actors, but actually putting that together is, sounds more holistic.

SC: It is, much more, I think that’s a battle that’s always – I think you are right to say earlier practitioners will have fought those battles but it’s much more common nowadays for people to try and integrate – I mean, I can’t speak for other teachers, but I know other people’s work, obviously – I’ve seen it and read about it and looked at it and discussed it for ever, along with other voice coaches but not many do quite so much, quite so early on as I do – I am quite unusual, in that I’m working very physically right from the beginning. It’s a very physical process to me.

DL: I mean I came across your book because I run a voice and movement module, now they asked me in on it because of my interest in voice, not thinking that I had an interest in but my main goal was this integration and that how I, that’s how I came across your work so it’s lovely to hear that in a little more detail.

So, is there a particular exercise or activity, on that note actually, that you like working with or that you find really effective in terms of perhaps basing this integration?

SC: It's very hard to pick one out because everything I do is – it's all important, it's all essential – if I had a favourite, that would, I don't want to sound woolly or anything, it's just that it depends on what I'm doing, who I'm doing it with, and what I'm doing for. So, a favourite, I couldn't say one exercise, there's no catchall, there's no one thing that I could say. I mean I always, I love what I do, I'm very fortunate, and I love the work and there are very few aspect of it I don't like, in fact I can't think of anything I don't like – in terms of favourite, if you were to pin me down – it's really hard – I mean the signature exercise in my book, I wouldn't say it's my favourite but it was a key moment, and if I talk about the key moment and why I came across – why I came to this, is the baby 'f' – now I only do that a very small amount – it used to be a huge part of the work but of course I wrote that book, well it was published four years ago, but obviously, I wrote it at least 2 years – 10 years – before that, I mean you know what that's like as a writer, presumably, that it takes a long time – and certain exercises, you know some of the book I don't do all of it and some of it I'll always do. The point about the baby 'f' is that it – the key is in the imagination. So, it's about breath capacity, and breathing and all of it – you know really, really basic stuff. But I found that people were so fixated on worrying about the mechanism that they were forgetting that it's actually a creative process and they became very tied up with and bound by technique. And you need technique and you need understand the technique but it came out of, partly came out of the students pushing – so I'd ask them to do a little 'f' and they would get 'fffff' [forcefully] – for the purposes of the tape I will do that on another sound so if I wanted them to do a 'sssss' [softly] they'd do a 'sssss' [forcefully], for example, and you might need a very strong 's' or 'f' or a voiced sound, you might need to shout but if you start that way, you'll end up being incredibly tight, incredibly tense and not connected to your centre so I kept saying – I found myself saying, over and over again, less, gentle, little, and one day it just came out you know “just let it be just a little baby 'f'” and then as we worked we that I said “Oh, take it for a walk” it was complete instinct. And when they started to do that they got – it's very endearing, it's a very sweet thing to do. But as they did it I realised that – and they taught me this, obviously, because you learn from them all the time. That as they did that not only were they engaging their imagination, which actors have to do, but they weren't pushing, but equally they got much further and they had much more breath and it lasted much longer because they weren't thinking about their technique. So, then when we went back to the mechanical, if you like, mechanistic/mechanical exercise they could put the 2 together because integration isn't just about voice, body, everything, it's also about integrating the techniques with creativity. Um, in terms of today, for example, like where I am in 2017, I would say the shaking and releasing and the sounding through the shaking is one of my favourites – because it works, it just does. It is not a quick fix but it's a very quick way in – if you understand the distinction.

DL: Yes, because they can relate to it, and as students they can pick it up very easily, I believe. Obviously, your book goes into breath support, but on the specific question of breath, where do you place breath in your own practice.

SC: My practice as a teacher – where do I place it? At the heart, it's absolutely, without breath you have nothing. You can't speak properly... well you can just about speak without breath but you can't communicate without it and you certainly can't communicate a centred true thought without breath you also have no stamina and you have no facility to develop the voice without breath. It is absolutely everything.

DL: So, it's physical then? But it's also cerebral, well, spiritual perhaps?

SC: Well, okay, right – spiritual, physical, cerebral. Take the physical first – of course it's physical, because the diaphragm is a muscle so therefore it's physical, I mean even though we have no control

over the diaphragm, the control of the breath comes from the abs, or intercostals bla bla bla. Again I can talk detail if you want, but the physical is the physical taking the breath in, or letting the breath in, it's passive when you let the breath in, but that's still a physical process because air is coming in from the outside into the inside and changing the physics, it's changing the pressure in your lungs compared to the outside – there's an imbalance and we need to balance it. So, that's a physical process – sending the breath out on a supported sound is physical so yes breath is physical – it cannot be anything but physical. Changing the shape of the breath, how we chop it up, whether it is an f or an s or a hello, and how's your father. That's a physical process. What were the other 2, cerebral and spiritual. So, cerebral, yes in the sense that we have to learn how to breath efficiently and effectively for voice, therefore we have think about it. It's cerebral in the sense that we need to connect and thought, because you never speak without a thought, even you're speaking, even if you are improvising, even if it's off the cuff 'Hi, there' you've had a nanosecond to think you are going to say hi even though you don't. It is not an intellectual process but it is a cerebral process, I guess if there's a... if I were to make that distinction. And certainly when we go to say something I am constantly think what I am about to say – how I say it comes out in the wash. Unless I have prepared in advance, which is different. So when I'm on text which is prepared, given, and those are the words I have to say as an actor – that's immensely cerebral in the sense that it's going through my cortex, it's being processed cerebrally, if you like, before I then physicalize it. When it comes to the spiritual breath – where do you start – it's incredibly spiritual in the sense that without breath we – I mean breath in inspiration – literally, physically, metaphorically, spiritually – and when we come to use breath on voice – whether it's on voice or un-voiced sounds, there's a very deep spiritual element to that, which sometimes we touch on in class and sometimes we don't, it depends – you don't want to scare the horses. Some people will respond instantly to that and others won't. So, how you express that – you have to be very careful I think because misunderstand what spiritual means, they think you are going to get all religious – it's not that at all

DL: Absolutely, this is actually going back to the ancient Greeks isn't it, in terms of their relationship with their bodies and so on as oppose to a metaphysical level, but actually what's going on in the body.

SC: Yeah, Yeah!

DL: Fantastic, I am loving the full answers, they are really, really lovely.

SC: Do cut me off at any point if I –

DL: Not at all – I was going to go on to the next question but I do want to pick up on something you've said - Efficiency: So what would you mean about efficient breathing or efficient breath?

SC: Well, an efficient breath – there's a technical answer, if you like, and a creative answer

DL: I'll take both

SC: Ok, so, technically an efficient breath is one that you don't hear on the in breath, [make in breath sounds] – you don't want that. Why? Because you're constricting the airway before you get the breath in – so that's inefficient. So, an efficient breath is one that comes in without constriction – that's physiologically efficient. The outgoing breath on voice – it's efficient if it's supported in the various ways in which we support our voice. If we are not engaging our proper support system – that is inefficient. If we take too much breath that's inefficient – so we need to take the amount of breath

we need for what we are going to say, which obviously in life we do – when it comes to text – we have to work it out. So, you need the right amount of breath for the right amount of thoughts – that’s what I mean by a technically efficient breath. And there all sorts of other – it’s also having enough to sustain a sound, having to convey the thought – that starts to become a little more creative. So, the creative efficiency if you like is... I suppose the way I could express that is, it doesn’t draw attention to itself. A healthy efficient breath, a healthy efficient voice for that matter, is one that doesn’t attract attention for the wrong reasons – does that make sense?

DL: Absolutely, yeah, yeah

SC: So, it’s really about – it’s so easy to say – you just let it in and then use it in order to power what you want to say – but that’s ultimately what we are aiming for. And if we are aware of the mechanisms in the same way if we see a dancer, if we can see that they do lots of pliés we don’t care, they might have a wonderful turnout – but so what? It’s what they do with that counts – And I think that’s quite useful – sometimes it’s good to have analogies. The reason why I, I mean I don’t know what your interests are but sports people – we don’t care that Roger Federer’s spent about 3000 hours doing a single stroke – what we do care about is that it is beauty in action. It’s very efficient but it is far more than that.

DL: Absolutely. Fantastic. Keeping on breath then – as you’ll obviously be aware, there are some approaches in to voice and speech training that seem to privilege breath, whereas others almost seem to ignore it. Do you have a perspective on where those range of practices, perhaps, lie?

SC: First of all, I’d like to know who or what you are referring to where people ignore the breath

DL: I mean when it comes out in what’s written about them, in the Peter Hall/John Barton school where they’re writing a little on breath but more privileging the rhythm work, which obviously is connected to breath, I suppose being explicit about working on breath and then they are being less so, perhaps...

SC: the reason for that I suppose is that they are writing from a director’s point of view and an acting/directing point of view rather than a voice coaches point of view. So, it’s not that they privilege one – I mean I would say I would privilege – I mean I said it is at the heart of everything – but there’s no point in having fantastically wonderful breath mechanism if you don’t have a creative process. I don’t separate them. The only reason they don’t mention it in their books very much is because they don’t have time, because that’s not what they are writing about in the same that you are writing a book on, or writing a PhD on ‘the role of breathing work in twentieth century approaches to speaking and acting Shakespeare’s Text’ – that doesn’t mean to say that you don’t think that, I don’t know, Sarah Kane or Beckett are not important or interesting, that just happens to be your thing right now. And if Peter Hall is writing – he is writing for actors – he is writing for professional actors as well as for students but mainly for professional actors and he is writing about what he has discovered as did John Barton – people like that are writing about what they have discovered about the creative process in the rehearsal room. And the work that people like me do comes in to that, obviously, and it supports that, to me it’s a two way process, I have a real thing about that, I can’t see the one without the other – but you can’t put everything into every book. It’s actually about, I think probably about that than saying they favour, or what was the word you used? [DL: privileged.] ... privileged. So they will privilege that because that is the context of the book rather than. Does that answer...?

DL: that absolutely makes sense. That’s perfect for this kind of research. That’s really great.

From your professional experience then, how do think one can tell when watching a performance if an actor has considered breath in their training or preparation or what of train have they had in relation to breath? So, in your experience as an audience member and being in the field and so on – do you recognise it, I suppose?

SC: Well, that’s a huge – I mean that’s a whole can of worms – it’s big. Now I know when someone is on voice and on breath simply because I have been doing it long enough to know that they are either warmed up, and/or they’ve done plenty of work before, or they been trained, you can’t always tell if they been formally or informally or if they have just figured it out on their own. There are very few people who can do it without training. And occasionally you get someone who can just do it, where it’s instinctive – but that’s incredibly rare in my experience. An awful lot of people who have had training won’t keep it up and you can nearly always tell, and how do you tell? Because, you might tell because there are technical issues with their voice, because it’s a slightly strangled sound, or it’s creaky or it’s croaky – or they haven’t quite got a clean onset sound – that means that it’s not a clean sound that they are running out of breath. That they are chopping up thoughts in ways that not necessarily creative choices and you can usually tell with experience if it’s creative choice to chop up a thought or it’s just that they don’t know how to do it. Or they haven’t kept up the work – that sounds judgemental, it is okay – I make no excuses for saying ‘you need to do this work’ because as an audience member I expect to see somebody who is prepared. You know, I don’t want to pay to see somebody warm-up. I find it insulting and annoying – how can I tell both as a professional and as a punter – I’ll give you an example, I won’t mention any names, I won’t even mention where it was or who it was but just last night I was watching something and I was with someone who is not trained, who is not in the business at all – and I said, oh so and so, I’ll say them rather than she or he, such and such a person, such and such an actor, “it was sooo” and before I said anything the person I was with said, the word I think they used was “strangled sound” – it sounded so tense and so tight it was unbearable to listen to. And said, “yeah, I can tell why, they weren’t breathing” - So, the person who doesn’t know can hear it instinctively – can hear this really tight irritating sound and the person who does know says – “Just go and do some bloody work, mate” – you know. Yeah, so you can just tell by, either by the sound, the quality of the sound, the quantity of the sound, and the quality and quantity of what they’re doing with it – the art, if you like, or lack of.

DL: Where I’ve noticed it before is when you go see a production, particularly when it’s classical text, and they’ve got in a celebrity actor, to bring in tickets – for obvious reasons – but it’s very noticeable because usually the company they are in are much more proficient. And I thought that it was more to do with me knowing that I am going to see a celebrity – I best to give them a little leeway, however, I’ve noticed some celebrity actors who have done the work and they are proficient so it doesn’t seem to be my own subjectivity but it is something that I feel is there.

SC: Yeah, often they get caught out because they haven’t had the training and they don’t know that, you know. Its like, I’m sorry but really, this might be off the record or, you can decide or I’ll decide when I hear it back – [name redacted] recently said “I think I’ll be an actor” and you go – you have absolutely no idea – you think that because you are, it would as stupid as me saying I think I’ll become a professional footballer tomorrow. I mean it’s ludicrous because there this complete lack of understanding of what it is that makes an actor. And very often, just on a simple level, people aren’t breathing, whether they are celebrities or not for that matter, you can’t hear them. Even when it comes down to, I mean I have talked about quantity and quality, but sometimes you just can’t hear them. And I have been brought in - again this is completely, I am not going to mention who, what, why or where – but I was asked to come in to a professional show a person had been brought in for said name, celebrity star quality, and nobody could hear even in the rehearsal room and they

certainly weren't going to be heard in the theatre – so they had to bring me in to do a bit of what I call 'band aid' – stick a plaster on it. Dry bit of bread, see if we can heave – I mean we got it, just about but – [DL: emergency work] – yeah pretty much. It is not very satisfactory.

DL: Especially when you work in this kind of context – in teaching kind of context, when people are going through the paces

SC: Yeah, yeah – and spend tens of thousands of pounds in training, and as you say they call these people in because they put bums on seats and we know that but it's a bit of a slippery slope.

DL: Okay, I am going draw in some questions getting closer to the title, probably of the PhD. So in the context of your own practice what is your specific view of Shakespeare? And again this can be broad

SC: My view of Shakespeare in terms of? [DL: how you feel about the work; the text] – How I feel about Shakespeare and his text? [DL: working on the text or teaching] – well, first of all, I love it but I didn't always. When I was at school I couldn't stand it. I absolutely hated it and that's because - and they're probably since gone and even if they haven't I don't mind saying it – I was very badly thought, there was never a, I mean it was partly the school environment, I went to a bit of an old-fashioned girls' grammar school, so was all about passing exams and none of it was about inspiring us, or, there was no drama to speak of – it was 'this is the text we're studying and this is what it says and this is what it does' – and if you didn't get you were pretty much left to your own devices. The people who could speak up – I mean it's funny now – maybe this is why I do what I do but at the time because I couldn't speak it I was never asked to speak. You know it's like being in a choir and being put in the back line of the choir – just hidden at the back and I was very much hidden because I didn't get it and I wasn't helped to get it. So, I couldn't stand it because I didn't understand it, and I just thought it was just a load of crap. And then just towards the end of school I started to go, 'oooo hang on a minute, maybe there's something here but I don't know what it is' And then over time I eventually, I started doing a bit of amateur acting, and then I went to university – and that's when I started to look at it in some detail because I had to – I mean I had done A level and I was very lucky, I am telling you this because I think it's relevant [DL: Absolutely] – I mean you can just delete it – I am giving you a bit of context for me – I did A levels at night class because with one, with an E grade – it was terrible- it was a disaster, my school was a disaster. So my mid to late 20s I went to night school and I did an English lit A level and my brain exploded with joy really because I had a teacher who was brilliant – I shall name her wherever she is, I shall name her - Her name is [name redacted] and she taught me at the York further education college and she was extraordinary and she, well a) most importantly she gave me confidence, she made me believe in myself, she was an ultimate teacher – she made you feel able, confident, clever, interested, all those things you need in order to learn and she opened my eyes to text, and then I went to university, she got me to university. It was her who encouraged me to go – and I went and read drama at Manchester and then of course 'Ah, this is what it's about'. And then I started to understand – and about half way through that I realised I didn't want to do academic work at all, I wanted to become an actor so I went and trained and I became competent at it but it was when I retrained as a voice coach I started teaching it that this incredible love appeared – so I liked it and thought it was good and clever and marvellous and all those things in a very kind of received way. And then I started teaching it and realised I had to go back to the basics I had to go right back to square one and unpick it and learn what it is you need to learn to be able to do it because there's a few – when you teach something you need really get it yourself – otherwise you shouldn't be doing it in my opinion. Um, and it was through teaching it and working with students, of course for me it is a collaborative process, I mean certainly in drama schools, it might be different in academic, I mean it is different in academic study – I know that from university – that's a not

collaboration, this is the information, we'll discuss it, I'll tell where you are going right and where you are going wrong – that's my experience of it and it was fine. But here, it's very much, we learn from each other and we explore together and now because I have developed this very physical process I realised, you know that this light goes on realise, and in a university lecturer told me, drama means to do. It does mean to sit around and analyse, there's nothing wrong with analytics, we need the academics in their ivory towers, to use an old fashioned phrase, we need those people, people like you perhaps, I don't know – depends where you are going with this, but you know we need the academic study in order to give us context and some understandings but we certainly don't need them in the rehearsal room. I mean, that's your homework if you like – but when it comes to the actual nitty-gritty of getting it up on it's feet it's physical and it's practical – I mean does mean to do, it doesn't mean to sit around analysing. I mean when you get it up on it's feet, you just go 'Oh my God' and I just got absolute –, so the short answer to your question is I love it – and that was the long answer leading up to – and the reason I love it is because it's endless in it's possibilities – it's not all great I mean some of it is rubbish – there's no question – there are 154 sonnets, quite frankly half of them, well a few them really 'did you really write that? You must be joking' – but where they're good they're exquisite and they're extraordinary things – not all his, I mean I don't think he was very good at telling jokes, personally, I don't think he told very good jokes in his plays, I don't his humour is particularly brilliant, it takes an awful lot to make them very funny in some cases. In terms of tragedy I could take or leave some of them but where it works it's unbeatable. And the reason is, you can do the same piece of text again, again and again and somebody, you'll always find something different and that's why I love it – that's why I love it – because I keep being taken by surprise and I like that because it's like a kid in a sweet shop in a way “ah, I hadn't spotted that” and that's the joy of it, that the joy of working it actually, it needs work, I like the, I do like the delving into the text, the finding out what it means, that kind of stuff – I do enjoy that as well. I mean it's very exciting – I mean discovering characters, discovering how he creates characters from just a few words, how he creates emotions from just a few words – I just find it extraordinary.

DL: Fantastic, something you said just reminded bit a little bit of – there was a guy Stephen Brown, he did a Ted talk around the Olympics, Canadian professor – he is actually an English professor, so he is very much on the literary tradition, but he was talking to students and he saying stop trying to comprehend and apprehend. So, when people used to write about Shakespeare, in their diaries after seeing a Shakespeare play, in – his contemporaries – his contemporary audience - they would say “I went and heard *Hamlet* last night” – “I went and heard *Macbeth* last night” - so, for him it is much more a performance script than a literary endeavour. So, it just seemed you were aligning with that, and it is where I feel at home as well.

SC: I do think that it is important to acknowledge that it is not all brilliant, as I've said, but where it is, it is exquisite. And I say that to students, I think it's very important that they don't feel that they are supposed to love it – I don't ever say, that I expect you to love this by the end – it is up to them whether they love it or hate it – it is really none of my business. What is my business is to help them understand it and if they grow to love it that's a bonus, and I hope they will – but I would never put it in that context because it is unfair – it is irrelevant in a way – it is for them to find out.

DL: So, what do feel an actor need to speak Shakespeare's text?

SC: Heart, actually. Imagination - you need, in the context of performing live on a stage, so to speak Shakespeare's you need buckets loads of energy – you need buckets loads of breath capacity – you need support, you need resonance – you need pitch range – you need very good articulation – you need creative articulation – it's not just about being clear – so you need all the nuts and bolts, you

need all the technical, mechanical if you will, processes in order to be able to speak Shakespeare. But none of that matters if you don't connect it to your centre, that if you don't use your imagination – and if don't you let yourself go to the text. I say that about all text, but I think it is particular important with Shakespeare – that you go to his world – that you go to the world of the play, you go to the world of those words – rather than trying to force it into your one. That's not to say that you can't muck about with it. Put it in different context, or update it, that's fine but heart and imagination are essential with this stuff I think. Because he writes from the heart – see for me – I'll just add this – for me Shakespeare is heart and guts.

DL: With emotion, I always think of 'guts' – so that's quite lovely. Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

SC: Yeah! I mean, everything I've said before is applicable to Shakespeare, but it is particularly important for actors to understand the role of breath in Shakespeare. The main reason for that is that the thoughts are a lot longer than the thoughts we have today. We live in a split-second culture – that's how I describe to the young kids I'm teaching, because they are bombarded with images. They see stuff, they don't hear it, to go back to that quote. And if we're doing contemporary plays, the thoughts are very, very short. You often get three words, or five words, or one word or whatever. Whereas in Shakespeare you have very, very long thoughts – and you need the breath to ride the thought because they are so inter-connected. How you do that is open to huge debate and I've been having discussions with a colleague about this – I mean we disagree, we work together but we disagree and that's fine, there is nothing wrong with that – some people get their knickers in a twist about disagreement and I – there are some things I think are wrong and some things I think are right, and an awful lot of it is in the middle and is up for grabs but you need to know your options. And I think unless you know the options and the possibilities you really don't have business being on a professional stage, in a way. And I know some people don't think that is necessary – I do because it is how you discover what those characters are. Thinking, feeling, talking about – because it is not – what he wrote is not accidental. When students say to me 'do you really think he knew what he was doing when he phrased it in that way?' and I'll say 'I've no idea, I didn't meet the bloke' – I think he probably did know but I also think there was an enormous amount of instinct cos he was an actor and he had a feel for it – he was a bit of both – I don't know what you think about that?

DL: Yes, he was an actor, and he was working *with* actors. I think that's very important – he wasn't writing in isolation – he was writing and sometimes the next day, what he wrote last night was onstage. And I think there is something in that kind of urgency within the texts and within performing the texts.

SC: Yeah, and yet it is so dense and so complex you think 'how the hell did somebody – how did he write so much so quickly?' – it was a very short span of time that he wrote all those words. It is phenomenal – some of it must have been pure instinct and some of it, I dare say, had lots of rewrites.

DL: This last question is just to end it in a nice way. Are there any highlights in your career in working on Shakespeare in particular? In directing or teaching?

SC: Oh, gosh! It is one of those 'what do I pick?' Okay I'll give you a couple of examples – the best bit is to see somebody's face light up. So, when I begin with my first years – when I first introduce them to Shakespeare – when they have their first class with me by which time they have learned some breath and support and all that stuff – and we have done other texts – we have done poetry and all that. So, we've warmed up, obviously, and I say 'right, Shakespeare, who likes it, who loves it, who

hates it?’ whatever – and we deal with that. I say ok we’ll do some text – I ask first of all – ‘so what is the first thing you do?’ – So, you are given a speech by Shakespeare, a scene you are going to work on – and you get all sorts of rubbish. You get ‘I sit and work out what it means. – really? – yeah, yeah, and I work out the iambic pentameter – do you? Okay – I look words up - fine – I read it – good, okay not a bad start – I go through all the punctuation, I mark all the punctuation’ – You get all this stuff and it’s all analysis, it’s all cerebral, it’s all brain work, it’s all research. ‘I go and read the play, fine, go on sparknotes, Shakespeare for Dummies – all fine – anything else?’ Occasionally, you’ll get someone who says, ‘I’ll read it out loud, well, we’re getting somewhere’ And I say – ‘well, I don’t do any of that’ so I get them and we jump around and we do some exercises and I get mucking about with different words and I throw a piece of text at them and I say right, do that, like that, and their physicalizing it and then they sit down and we talk about it and they go ‘oh my god, okay’ and they get very excited – and this one girl said to me – it’s happened more than once – but this one girl I remember, she said, only two years ago, we had done the ‘like, love – whatever’ and she said, ‘I can’t stand it’ and I said ‘why?’ And she said ‘I can’t understand a word of it’ – ‘Right, really? Okay’ – ‘So if I said to you something like “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” what do you get out of that – she said ‘well your talking about summer’ and I said ‘so you do understand something’ – so, it immediately dispels myths and long held beliefs that ‘I’m not very good at it because I’m not very clever’ which is what you often get – so when we do the exercise, and her face lights up and she says in front of everybody, she ‘Oh my God, I’ve completely changed my opinion of Shakespeare’ and that’s after five minutes of getting up and working on it – and that for me was one of those hallelujah moments of teaching – to see somebody profoundly change, it doesn’t mean to say she can do it yet, of course it doesn’t, it is going to take her a long time but it was so thrilling to see this complete revelation that it’s not an intellectual process and I say ‘don’t worry, we will sit down and do all those things you’ve suggested’ – same thing with a small actors’ company I worked with recently – and they were getting very anxious about the iambic pentameter – ‘So, what’s an iambic pentameter?’ and they tell you, and I say ‘okay, how do you do it? I really know’ So, I get up and I dance – which I am sure you’ll appreciate from the book – we dance and we waltz, and we muck about and we step it out and we gallop, and we do all those things. And then I reduce it and reduce it and reduce it and they get what it is, and I talk about the foot, and all that with the feet – you know, I didn’t know what a foot of verse was at University because nobody told me that the foot comes down on the strong beat – why the hell didn’t they tell me that? It makes so much sense, but I had to work that out for myself years later – and I thought that it was some clever intellectual construct, it’s not at all it just means diDUM – the foot comes down on the strong beat. You know, that tells you I wasn’t a very good student or a bit dumb – and I think I was really dumb until my imagination opened, I think that is perhaps what it was – that’s honest for you, but yeah. But just to come back to this breath and thought lark – I’ve changed my opinion on some of these things and I just wanted to say that because I think it is important – so in the book – I have these three passages – I wouldn’t expect you to have a working knowledge of the book obviously but we look at these passages and how they breathe and I trained to be able to do them to punctuation – or to a full stop – so for example this speech by Othello – ‘Memory I go’ fullstop, is one thought, one breath and I go from there to the end is one thought – now that’s really hard – I make them learn – I make them do it – and it takes them weeks and then I say ‘this one is four breaths’ ‘this one is three or four’ I can’t remember now – and then I say right – once they can do that, once they can say those lines on one breath, then I say breathe how you like – an then they’re like – they really grumpy and say ‘OH, SARAH, after all that’ and I say but now you have the option – so if you want to breath at every comma, which I completely disagree with – I just had a big debate with a colleague of mine – she breathes at commas – well if you look at Ophelia, ‘the courteous **comma** soldiers **comma** scholars **comma** I **comma**...’ you know – it’s a fantastic line but if you breathe on every comma well we’ll be here everyday – the play will last about 6 years – however quickly you breathe you are going to keep stopping it. And, yes she is chaotic, but I think you find the chaos

through the physicality not through taking new breaths everytime – I think there is a different way of doing it but I make them do that. You might know this, I’ve got a question for you, now. I’ve read this, it’s anecdotal but it might be written somewhere that you might know about – I was told by an old voice teacher, years ago, when I was training as an actor that Lawrence Olivier, when he became artistic director at the National – the first National Theatre – the old Vic – when he was auditioning people he would take people if they couldn’t do twelve lines of iambic pentameter on one breath

DL: It was told to me also, so I think it is anecdotal, I think I was told by Jane Boston, or maybe it was Lyn Darnley.

SC: It was told to me by a voice teacher who worked with Olivier, so that the nearest progeny I can get. And I tell them that, and they ‘that’s impossible’ – I say ‘no it’s not, it’s training, it’s muscle and it’s stamina’ but the thing is that if you have got that you can use that as a choice. [DL: It is in your armoury, then] - Exactly. And that’s what it’s all about – it’s about having choices. [DL: then the creative process can start].

End of questions

○ **Interview with Simon Reeves**

Denis Cryer-Lennon (DCL): Denis [Cryer-]Lennon, the June 7, 2017. I am here with Simon Reeves. Thank you Simon for agreeing to be interviewed for my PhD research. As I said earlier, these are a bunch of questions, but it is more just to aid the conversation along.

Simon Reeves (SR): Sure, sure.

DCL: First of all, how would you describe your own work?

SR: Well, I don't know, I would probably just tell you what I do, which is as you know my name is Simon Reeves, I am the Head of Voice, but also Senior Lecturer in Acting at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. The main thing I do is train actors to act really. And that's how I define my work. Some people I suppose will probably define me as a voice coach, but that might have been true once but may be less so now I think as my practice has evolved and evolved within an institution and what you do for the college changes so does your skill base of where you specialise in your areas of work. And yeah, so I am less of a straight voice coach now I think, more of a text and acting coach really.

DCL: Okay, very good.

SR: I still do some of the voice work, I manage the voice provision here, but I have a large team, quite a large – I say a large, it is a small team but large for a voice department, the staff that help me deliver our provision.

DCL: Very good, very good, and is there anything in particular that you are working on at the moment?

SR: Well, right now, I am working on BA1 poetry. So really back in the voice department, it is probably the first time we work with the first year, it's the end of their first year on individual and quite more demanding pieces of a text really, compressed language as it were. So that's what I am doing at the moment and the work that we are trying to do with them is very individual. So, I have done very few joint classes this year, where you have got the whole group together. So, we have done a couple mainly on thought structure and relish of language, and now I am trying to apply that in one-to-one sessions, and they will have 4 one to ones with me before the end of term, when they present that work--

DCL: Okay, and just picking up on that, poetry and you know verse and things like that. Is there any particular challenge from you as a teacher in your perspective with the students of doing poetry rather than contemporary text, or prose text?

SR: I don't think the challenge is different except it is probably focused on in different ways, highlighted by that kind of language. For me there is no difference between a contemporary text and a Shakespeare one or a classical or a poem or a Wilde or whatever. They are all language which is basically a complex series of grunts, but the way in which we use that language probably can be focused in a slightly different way depending on what it is. So in terms of using poetry, we use poetry because they have to be so specific in their thought and treatment and phrasing and the language itself probably has a richness that in everyday life we might not use except in particular moments or when we want to speak particularly deep thoughts whereas this is just full of that, it is wall to wall so they have to work a bit harder and it brings out the problems that they have in a little more ...yeah

in a little more focus than it might be if they just got added bunches of ‘I like’ and ‘whatevers’, and whatever it is that they want to say.

DCL: Okay so, I am going to pick up on that a little bit - in your experience when they come to it and do they feel a little bit differently about in the first instance about –

SR: Oh Yeah.

DCL: Yeah.

SR: I mean they have been doing bits of text all the way through the year with us, so it is not totally alien to them and some of this stuff has been set down already in the class work, but it is really individual now, so we get to focus more particularly on them and that is essential because all the actors are different and they all need to learn to work with themselves and where they are at and the challenges facing them are different. I can’t teach that through group classes all the time, so I suppose that is part of it, but I think I do but only because I suppose most of our life especially because they are young or maybe not they are plenty of old people, that’s bollocks actually. I think probably because in everyday life we are not used to expressing ourselves really clearly except in really quite specific moments from when we’re being interviewed, from speaking to a lover or having an argument, we need to garner a different kind of articulation of our thought but in everyday life it is just ‘whatever’ isn’t it – ‘yeah okay’ maybe you know so –

DCL: Kind of paralinguistics?

SR: Yeah most of the time they are used to hiding what they are thinking, and they are feeling. The poetry that we choose generally tends to be a really articulate expression of their thought and feelings and that is the difference, they are not used to expressing themselves quite so fully, so the struggle is probably more with naturalism versus style than it is with anything else and you just have to try to explain. For me from textual perspective, style is only what words you are speaking, there is no difference in what is going on underneath, the strength of the feeling will be conveyed by the words. If the feelings are not that big, or they are being hidden, the words are likely to be quite dull. If actually – you are in a Wilde or you are in Shakespeare and you are expressing what is going on in your mind as you are working it out, out loud, then it is all there for you and that needs a different commitment so commit to the words on the page, the style will kind of take care of itself, that is the theory anyway.

DCL: Very good and just to, in terms of your teaching then and your broader practice, do you have any specific philosophy in a broader sense that drives your practice?

SR: No. No, I don’t really think I do. I don’t teach very much, I mean there is not a wide range to the things that I teach really. You want conviction from the actors, you want to believe what they are saying or what they are doing, what they are thinking or feeling, and it needs to be detailed and specific. That is really all I do to just distill it down, but it is not really a philosophy because I just think training actors is just about getting them ready for the industry and no matter what I might like or not like about work or different types of work or whatever, that that’s not my job, my job is just get them fit for what they will hit when they get out there, some of that is pretty naff actually. So, and it is not even training them for that you just have to make sure that they are ready to work, well there is no philosophy in that, really it is just it is vocational, and it is genuine in sense.

DCL: Okay and is there a particular place or where do you place breath in your practice?

SR: That is a really difficult question and it changes student by student. Always for me you are looking to find what unlocks that particular person, so whilst I might do some general work on problems that might have arisen on breath and what degree of muscularity one might need with your breathing in order to work on stage or on TV or film or whatever, radio. How much I work on it and how much I focus on it will depend on that moment and on that student, on that actor in training, I think breath is a really tricky area to work on and teach the physiology of it and how it links to what is happening in phonation in terms of in your larynx is really complex and much warred over by different practitioners.

I have lost count of the amount of arguments at various voice symposiums and things I have had – not that I have been involved in, I tend not to get involved in them but I have witnessed people talking about breathing and then you have got students coming in and done voice work for pumping their tummies in and out with totally the wrong sets of muscles or thinking that they are breathing into their tummy when really they are not, there is no lung in your tummy, you can't breathe into your tummy you need some muscular release there, you know it is a really complicated area to teach. I suppose if I did have any particular insistence in my staff and in my conversations that I have with my colleagues at work as well, it is to make sure that what you are teaching is anatomically sound and backed up by the best research really which I think tends to have been done for me by Ed Blake, recently in terms of what is really happening with musculature, how much energy you really need in the breath to drive to support it and fully and that is what support means, support is another confusing term - to provide enough pressure at the vocal folds to get a good tone from them and get them functioning at their maximum efficiency and the maximum vibration that they can kind of set up, so a lot of the work earlier on in the course is really about taking away some of the bad habits that people have developed.

They think they are breathing in the sternum and there is no room up there for breath, really there is some movement that other people are locking this area down because they know they shouldn't move, which is wrong as well, trying to get to encourage to think about moving the lower ribs where they got the most capacity in their lungs where there is most flexibility. And also, obviously because that is only about 20% capacity, but it helps the movement of the diaphragm which is 80% of the capacity. But they may need to have a correct release of the transversus abdominis muscle in order to let the stomach contents move out away from the diaphragm. But when you get them coming in and a lot of them are trying to do that by pumping their tummy in and out because they think that is what you are asking for. But it's not, you want it to be released because I can move my tummy in and out as much as I like but it is not really going to make that much difference to the breath pressure.

So, it is complicated, and you lay down some kind of general laws which you are to do with finding ease and releasing the breathing musculature and getting to listen to what their natural breath is like when they are not fiddling with it and gradually trying to work patterns of producing sounds and I mean gradually take those sounds into words and then the words into more and more expressive use of those words, so they don't go overwrought with it really. So, it has a key place but our emphasis on it tends to be quite light touch. I don't think it is the be all and end all. I have seen too many techniques, like the Estill technique, which doesn't deal with breath in anyway whatsoever which have got brilliant results out with people, so I am quite, I try to be quite eclectic in my view of this, but it has to be anatomically based, it has to be sound. I am very nervous of teachers that are doing received work, they have just done it like that from someone else and they are just doing that again and it doesn't work, they have to be able to listen to the body of the person so yeah.

DCL: Fantastic – very full answer- which is great, you probably touched on all the breath questions which is great. So, again I think particularly this next point – some approaches to voice and speech training seem to privilege breath others almost seem to ignore it and do you have a perspective on this range, I mean you have touched on that?

SR: Yeah, it doesn't matter what you are doing, voice work or action work or anything, it is different people learning different ways and different things will unlock the problems or strengths that they have so you got to be able to draw on different ones. I am quite nervous of the systemization of voice work, Linklater or Fitzmaurice or Lessac or Estill, some of them maybe I don't particularly like at all but generally I found bits and bobs from each of them that are useful to me and most of my training was Linklater based with a big, big, healthy dollop of classic Cicely Berry work when I trained as a voice... as an actor and as a voice coach. But sticking to one I think is dangerous, and in terms of the emphasis they place on the breath, I don't know, I don't really feel one way or the other about that really. I have read let's say a certain practitioner's books and I just give up on already, on this breath thing and yet when I have worked with them one to one and I have the privilege to deal with many of the people that publish, it makes perfect sense, you really get it and that has always been a strength of voice work in this country. It is not the publishing or the system that one teaches, it is just working with that practitioner and how good they are at listening to a person and figuring out what is going to help them. So yeah no I think heightening any particular aspect of work ultimately is going to lend itself towards a kind of cult approach training which only suits some people but doesn't suit everyone, that is fine for those people, it is great for them actually, but I need to train everyone that comes to me, I can't be fussy in that way.

DCL: Okay, great so from your professional experience, how do you think one can tell when watching a performance if an actor has considered breath, if you can tell in the training or preparation or what kind of training have they had in relation to breath?

SR: I think when you are watching a performance, if you notice what is going on with their breath, they have been taught badly or they have not grasped the technique properly, that is very simple in that sense. The only thing that actor should really be thinking about when they are on stage is probably being in the moment with the other person on stage with them, they shouldn't be thinking about their technique that consciously, undoubtedly like any art, there are moments that are going to crop up in the play or different places or when they are not feeling it as it were, they I've got my problems as well, but where they might need to rely on that technique and think about it a little bit more actively and may be when they are shouting or something like that, they need to make sure certain things were in place but generally you want them to be committing to the moment of drama which is that communication between two people, not what is going on with their breath. You can sometimes tell I suppose because a good example might be something like Sam Wanamaker festival which is a festival that happens each year in the globe, where each drama school sends two students to do a scene 5-minute scene of Shakespeare on that stage.

And it is fascinating seeing those schools trying to bump up against each other because they are all so different and they have all got different styles and some of that has to do with acting but sometimes you can see a technique a grasp of technique which is really admirable and really solid and you go wow, I wish I could get my students to do that but maybe not quite like that because you can also see it, it is getting in the way of you feeling absolutely engaged by what is happening in the scene and you can nail a few schools and not all of them and not every student from that school I think because different people have different grasp on techniques but you can sometimes pick it out

but I would say it is probably not a good thing really. Yeah, really the breath – if I worry about anything when it really gets to the far end of that, the idea of voice work for me is to free the expressive instrument of the actor so that in response to the impulses that that character is trying to express, so you want to get the voice to a state where it is released enough just to be able to do what the actor wants it to do without having to think about it very much and the breath’s role in that is probably is to be able to support the thought through to its end in the right way. Notionally, this is a loose role, a breath equals a thought equals a sentence, so the role of breathing when the actor is on stage, I will know whether an actor is not really committing to that thought if they are not really reaching the end, they start tailing away at the end of it, so if they haven’t got the pressure from the breath there to sustain the voice through right to that very last word particularly important in a classical type like Shakespeare.

Also maybe if they are chopping the text up into lots of little chunks, you will find that they haven’t got enough capacity or they are not thinking about it in the right way to take that for all the way through the end, and then they are not really expressing what that character is expressing, they are pulling back what that character is expressing to their own rhythm and not the rhythm that the author has written which it should be good, but of course it depends on the author with Dennis Kelly it is you know, it is all punctuated the same, it is all full stops and it is three words in a sentence and not that I am slugging off Dennis’ work, it is very good but it is a particular thing.

DCL: Yeah, yeah very good, I mean this kind of moves us on to the Shakespeare side of things, so in the context of your own practice what is your specific view of Shakespeare?

SR: It is wonderful, not all of it, I don’t know that I have a specific view on Shakespeare really. In terms of our training here, so we talked about first year. Our second year of training, they start the year with..., as well as their class work that they do in the morning which is what I have been talking about so far, they do project work in the afternoons which focuses on the specific, I suppose particular challenges in drama and we make that more complex as they go to the course. The beginning of the second year, starts with a Shakespeare project which they do for five afternoons a week you are with the voice coaches here. But it is on the text really and so that work, that starts their year and then they go much of the way through the year and then they end the year with a second project on Shakespeare and in that first one in particular, we try to concentrate a great deal on decoding it for them. A lot of them will be really nervous of it because it is this other language which it is, even though it is in English, it is poetry and it is expressed in a slightly more archaic and also structured form than we are used to speaking in everyday life most of the time. So that scares them, so that is one thing you have to deal with. You have to give them some ownership of it, so they realize that they can connect to it and that connection, they also in gaining that need to realize that it is more expressive than they used to be, and their habit will be, that will be about emotion that the emotions are bigger, but they are not, they are still human beings, they have the same problems and that problem will be the same whether it is happening in contemporary Iraq or medieval England. The problem is not that it is how good they are at articulating that feeling or that problem that’s in front of them and they use language as a means to solve it, but we don’t tend to do that nowadays. We don’t express our problems. We just mull over them in our head and get therapy which is about trying to get us talk about our problems so that we can solve them which is what Shakespeare already knew he was doing. So, there is that part of it as well which is to do with the freedom of engagement with more heightened language.

The other bit is then getting them to understand all the different theories and ways to approaching Shakespeare that they are likely to encounter. So, the other half, if that is the first half of it which one

of the teachers deals with, the other teacher deals with the technicality of it which will be meter, and rhythm and all of that stuff; what does Peter Hall say about it, and what does Cicely Berry say about and what does Janet Nelson say about it today at the national theatre or what really is cesura, does it really exist. What are the different theories about that and what does antithesis mean? And what does anaphora mean? And what is rhetoric? And how do you rhetoric? And so, when they get a director that comes up with oh you missing antithesis there and they don't know what that bit is about until you need to get this role of three, and there is an intensity and they're not there and they are going on, have got no idea and they know what that language is. But we don't tend to teach a specific way of dealing with it because every director of Shakespeare will have their theory on it and they will be convinced it is theirs and it is the right one and that everyone else is getting it wrong.

Everyone gets on their high horse when it is to do with teaching Shakespeare and what happens in Shakespeare and it is all a lot of nonsense. They have got no better idea than anyone else. Shakespeare did not write down how to deal with blank verse, you know, you just need to deal with it and the truth of the matter is that any rule that you give someone is only going to be as useful to them as it works in that particular interpretation and that particular character and that particular production, so it is about giving them the tools to cope rather than actually telling them this is what we think of Shakespeare, undoubtedly I have particular types of Shakespeare that I might enjoy more than others and I have to say they don't probably just so you know what my context is, it is not one of being particularly precious about it, I am not – I have to say I find really great technical speaking of Shakespeare's language rather dry and dull and uninteresting and that is why people don't go to watch a lot of it I think but I suspect even if I had the ability to construct the most amazing free exciting piece of Shakespeare that I could create which I would go yes I have that and that is perfect, impossible but if it were possible, I suspect I would still struggle to encourage a lot of people in to see it because it is not for everyone. So, I don't get my high horse about it, it is what it is, my students need to learn to deal with it and in the second project they will then deal more with, we apply back to scenes, they do a 5 minute scene which they present where we kind of apply as many of those rules as possible to the scene, we use those rules as a way of analysing a scene rather than direct them.

In the second Shakespeare project at the end of the year we try and marry those two things together so it's that classic kind of thought Barton quote about how do we marry naturalistic acting with heightened language. And they work with a director or with one of us in the directorial role to see how these rules and things can mash up against the needs of contemporary drama really because ultimately when you get to Shakespeare, it wasn't written now. They have a different understanding of people, they didn't have psychology in the way that we have it, so there are some areas where it is a little tricky Ann and Richard's scene in *Richard III* is wonderful but it doesn't really work on a psychological basis unless you twist it out a little bit and that is in the direction and the performance really Richard wins Ann's hand because he traps her in a trick of rhetoric not because he wins over her heart and nowadays we wouldn't understand that. In the Elizabethan drama, I feel they would have just gone with that because that was drama. They just come out of morality plays, breath's role within that I think is exactly what you kind of – we talked about already, which is just how does it support the thought and those thoughts can be so terribly long so if they – specifically with Shakespeare, because he was a good writer, if you start chopping up into nice manageable bite sized chunks, then you are not expressing the thoughts of that character and it is hard for the audience to follow the argument let alone to see the pictures or to understand the nature of that thought and you have just got to look at the punctuation in something like which is slightly different from the thought - sonnet 18 verses 129 when you look at the two well this is really regular and easy and

comfortable, and the line nice and precisely and this one I changed direction when I do Cicely Berry’s exercise and it is 5 times in one line. So, there is that.

The other point about breath in a classical text I think is probably you need enough pressure over the folds to get a good sound. If you don’t commit to the sounds of the language, again it is the same for anything it is not different for Shakespeare. If you don’t commit to the sounds you have gotten in that word, you are depriving yourself of a huge tool, a huge part of your expressive range, in terms of expressing that text, why would you do that to yourself, it is hard enough as it is, you need to have a whole voice if you are ready to engage with the sounds of the words and a lot of information about what that word means is encoded in the sound of it so you have got to sound it out you can’t just creak your way through it, it just won’t feel the same and it won’t express that word then fully to the audience. But again, that is no different from contemporary text, the words just are not quite so poetic all the time. There are still moments of poetry in our everyday speech. We all come up with a piece of phrasing, we go wow, well we say we pick the right words, the right moment for a change and surprise ourselves, it doesn’t matter what period or language it is from or what language you are speaking in. Shakespeare has just managed to hone it, refine it, structure it, compress it, happens a bit more often.

DCL: Fantastic. I think that actually – I think you’re pretty much gone through all those questions particularly the last big question there, but I’d just like to finish on one, just a general one. Is there any highlight for you I mean for the example you can think of from working on Shakespeare in any context?

SR: I don’t think there is a highlight. As with any student depending on whether any exercise will..it can be mind blowing that you can just see them just go – ‘Ah’ the penny just drops and you’re just ‘Ok, done some work today that’s good’. Unfortunately, the truth today is that they will probably get it tomorrow, that probably won’t apply to the next piece of text. It’s I’m not – I don’t feel particularly like voice work is going to change the world. It could do but it might not. But the truth is the same exercise sometimes doesn’t hit home, they just don’t get it. So, there’s no specific one. You just wait for those moments where you think yeah they have got that and there’s any number of exercises where that can happen, even so but we start – I have started this week just working on – I asked the students, I gave them a piece of Robert Frost *Two Roads, The Road Less Travelled* – no not the *Road Less travelled*, the *Road Not Taken*. People always get the title of that wrong, which I nearly did just then that because it’s about the road not taken.

So, we gave them that text and asked them to divide it into thoughts for themselves. One group did actually they just – I got them to do on their feet, the other group we got them to do as a paper exercise beforehand just to see what the difference is, there wasn’t a lot of difference. But they fought their way through it. They use slashes, they divided the text up into what they thought the thoughts were and then they spoke it to the person making sure they were letting the breath drop in between each thought moving from one chair to another. It’s a classic Cicely Berry exercise.

So, then I said okay these are my thoughts. It took them minutes to do this and these are well I think the thoughts are and I gave the words which were basically the words with key punctuation semicolons and colons, arguably the beginnings of new thoughts. But certainly, full stop, exclamation marks, question marks. Far fewer than what they had used, so they do it again. And you could just see things slotting into place for them. They all of a sudden ‘oh I understand what he’s on about now’. ‘Oh, I really understood what that picture was of the two roads and that they diverge, and he looks at both of them’... all of sudden the images became clearer their thoughts are more structured.

And hopefully they are working if not on one breath per thought even if this is a particularly long one on the first verse, they pick the right moment just to talk it out because they know that thought is running right through to the end. So, top up rather than re-centre themselves and everything. So that really works for something. And that's an example of that. Then similarly you can make that exercise more complicated. You have a different kind of movement for a semicolon and a colon and a comma. You start to deal with commas because they think commas are new thoughts and, but they are not, they are sub clauses – we all know that. We've have done grammar, we know. So, then you give them a different movement vocabulary so full stop, they have to turn around, stop, turn around and move off in a different direction. And then you've got a comma, they change direction when they are still moving, semi colon may suspend and then may go back in other direction. If it's a colon – and they walk in the same direction. There's loads and you build up this code in them, so they start to then think how those thoughts are linked to each other.

DCL: Yeah.

SR: So, they get where the new thoughts are. They get where the changes in thought direction are and they start to understand then what punctuation wasn't what we started with. It's there to show us how we pause, find pace, energy, or inflection in order to indicate where this new thought is going. And then off the back of that they start to realize unconsciously without doing any work on the breath how that they are working with the breath because they need more or less. Or there is a bit more energy in the lines, so the breath is probably pushing through a little bit more at the beginning than the end or whatever they start to as they can't carry it away at the end because those big words there may need to land the end of the thought rather than launch straight into the next one because it's a full stop or comma or whatever.

So, you can build up the complexity of it, then start linking it to how the exercise was structured, and the same kind of things happen. Things start to become clearer. That's why it's written on the page that way and how it can help them make choices as actors and how then the breath links to who their character is or whatever and it doesn't really, it doesn't on that level of you know 'your character breathes like this', it's just there in the text for them to discover. Their character doesn't breathe in any particular way about apart from however, way they speak - I don't even know there is such a thing as character to be honest it's just what's on the page. So, every exercise you'll find some people that get that and some of them just don't, they just walk, and they go 'nah nah nah nanah' it still doesn't make any sense to them. So, I haven't got highlights, I haven't got exercises that always work or always don't, just works with different people. Another one we do is a dialogue exercise where they repeat the final word of the previous line as the beginning of their line which again just helps them more to listen to each other than to work with the breath. But then when they really hear that line, it changes how they want to launch into the next one which changes the amount they breathe. More breath something that's more enthusiastic and more committed to, less breath something I don't really care about. And so rather than them thinking about okay I need to breathe properly to do Shakespeare which tends to get them all just taking really bigger breaths for everything. And so, they have got too much and then they bellow the beginning of the line and they fall off the end.

You just want to not get them to think about the breath really because you have got to link it to the text which is why I said I don't really teach much voice work anymore because most of my work is getting them to apply what they do with language, really. And as I said I've moved, I have moved into directing a little bit more because of that really because it's sometimes an easier way to get them to handle technique without thinking too technically about it. The complaint always when they do technique is it is getting in the way of my acting.

DCL: So context is this something if you frame it ‘this is a voice class’, or ‘this is -you are just doing play’.

SR: Yeah, most of my work has been about tricking them into doing the things I want and thinking it's the stuff that they want to do.

DCL: Yeah.

SR: And they having a moment like ‘so how does that link with that’ and then so they can make the link and just go oh rather than trying to approach it from mechanical side. We do, do technical work. I don't want to pretend we don't because we do. It is always about with voice work - it's a bit of dirty word nowadays really. No one wants to think about techniques, got a feeling, got a meaning, it's naturally it's Stanislavski or whatever and they are so bound up with wanting to be truthful and they mistake that for naturalistic but when you start getting them to engage with technique, they think it's going to get in the way which has been the same in all of my time. Even when I trained as an actor when I felt the same way about back then as I do now and that was over 20 years ago. I think probably at some stage prior to that maybe in the 70s or the 60s good technique was still the... good voice technique, voice teachers had a lot of sway I mean all those drama schools were set up by voice teachers weren't they so it had a lot of power then but it's become a dirty thing nowadays – so with the students you have to kind of trick them into thinking they're doing something that is not quite technique and then drop the bomb on them that that's what they have been working on all the time.

DCL: Yeah. Well, that's great – I just want to thank you, and really for the full, full answers.

○ **Interview with Joan Mills**

Denis Cryer-Lennon (DCL): Yeah, so there we go, we are starting now.

Joan Mills (JM): Okay.

DCL: I have a bunch of questions, but they really are just to get the conversation going.

JM: Okay.

DCL: If you feel you want to go off anywhere to related subjects, I don't mind at all. There are specific questions that come to the crux of the research towards the end. Even with those whenever you want to draw away that's fine.

JM: And it's breathing through the text, right? the role of breathing work in 20th century, 21st century British speaking and acting Shakespeare's text – particularly Shakespeare.

DCL: Yes, it is particularly Shakespeare, and those last questions go into that kind of cross-section at the end. Just for the purposes of the tape, I know you very well – so, mainly for the tape – how would you describe the work that you do?

JM: Do you mean my general occupation and all that?

DCL: Yeah.

JM: Well, it's been mixed over the years, I suppose, I generally describe it as primarily, I was mainly a theatre director. I've always had a wider remit to sort of be involved in wider arts projects. I've always had a real particular interest in voice, but I guess that particularly developed once I began to work with what was then the 'Cardiff Laboratory Theatre'. It's now the Centre for Performance Research. Because I went there to do some research for them into the voice across the world really on time and culture. I did that for about a year to prepare something for originally 'Project voice'. About ten years later I began giving voice. That's particularly what fired up my real interest in the voice and throughout the time that I was with Cardiff Lab and CPR. I was fortunate enough therefore to have all kinds of interesting voice training partly because we brought people to the UK and I took part in the workshops. In a way I've had a kind of self-generated training. What else can I say? Well I've always sung and performed mainly, mainly as it turned out through singing because although I originally thought, when I went to university - I went to do drama and writing studies at Hull. I suppose I thought I was going to be a performer, but by chance I became a director in a quite strange sort of way, but I've always been particularly interested in the voice of the performer. I've worked quite a lot with text. Maybe that's obviously why the voice has been particularly... but I'm not solely concerned with the voice speaking at all. I've also done a lot of work to promote community choirs. I started community choir of my own. I also sing with my own small ensemble.

DCL: Fantastic. We talked a little earlier, but just again for the tape, what are you working on at the moment?

JM: Well, at the moment, I'm no longer teaching full time in university. I have been teaching a series of modules for Falmouth University for the academy of music and theatre arts over the past few years. What I do still, is direct the 'Giving Voice' project. This is an international celebration for voice.

It's one of the prime projects of the Centre for Performance Research. In 2019 it would be the 30 years since we thought of it.

DCL: Right okay.

JM: It's had its 25th anniversary already, but that will be its 30th because we began it in 1989.

DCL: Right.

JM: That has had 14 editions, most of them have been in Wales. They were based originally first at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff then at the Welsh College Music and Drama and sometimes Chapter and other venues in Cardiff. Then later in Aberystwyth, and Aberystwyth *and* Cardiff. Then at a much later stage we began to work more with international collaboration. We've done two, so the latest one was back in Poland in Wroclaw. We did another one in 2007, I think it was, in Wroclaw, this latest one was for– the Wroclaw was the European Capital of Culture and Giving Voice part of voice encounters. For that project I lead the project. It involves thinking about whatever theme we've come up with or frame I suppose you could say because we're interested in voice and *something*.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: In relation to something else because this can illuminate voice work in a way that perhaps is unusual and surprising. I think it has surprised people over the years and it's the whole voice in performance we're interested in, not just speaking, not acting voices only by any means, but the voice really, the total voice. It can range very far and wide and so I mainly do that. I'm also still occasionally - I teach the community choir as I began but gave over to other people. Occasionally, I'm still recording the odd thing, or I sing with a small ensemble of my own called Bright Field. It's acapella entirely. I rehearse with them. On and off I gave some concerts with them and Frankie Armstrong, the singer Frankie – with whom I've recorded works a lot over the years. I still go to workshops. I have a particular interest in Georgian polyphony. For example, this year I gave quite a large workshop for people who are interested in that and I am at the moment thinking about how to bring the archives of giving voice into the public domain and into – particularly for professionals and scholars and we're working on various ideas towards that and I'm thinking about the next edition of giving voice which I hope will be in Cardiff and also probably a book for the 30th anniversary, yes.

DCL: I do know that the archives will be very much appreciated.

JM: Yes, I mean it's tragic to have them you know mostly inaccessible.

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That kind of actually brings us nicely onto the next question – do you have any kind of specific philosophy in the broader sense, or some we could call it an approach maybe, that drives your own practice?

JM: Well that's interesting. I suppose, I feel I do, yes. I suppose it's so innate and has developed so organically in my work and in myself and in my being that it's not something I would sort of think about that consciously apart from one thing, I think. I am a member of that Natural Voice Practitioners Network and certainly when it comes to singing you know their philosophy is pretty well *my* philosophy which is that everybody has the right to sing and should be encouraged, nobody should be judged or made to feel bad etc. or belittled. I'm very conscious of the importance of singing in wellbeing, – in health and whole wellbeing and also the effect that being expressive has. I'm not

really talking just about singing now I'm now moving back to speaking. How the ability to articulate and express is vital really as a human happiness I think. I think it's very difficult for somebody who for whatever reason is having enormous problems articulating. Now, that could be it is a disability and I have worked with people with vocal disability. I know the frustration they feel and the misery it can cause. I'm talking also about people who just never had the opportunity to recognise their own voice, to express their feelings and ideas through their voice. That's one thing. I think that human beings are made to speak, we're unique. We are the only creature that can articulate voice in the way, in a complex way that we can. Others have beautiful voices, creatures, birds and other animals and they can communicate, but the complexity and detail of the human voice is beyond anything really and therefore that's there for a reason. I mean in a way it's for me it's vital. In some way it's about the prime reason why human beings are on the earth. I feel that strongly about it and that if we ignore that or let any of that atrophy well what ungrateful beasts we are. I suppose that's one thing. In terms of working with performers, with actors and other performers, my philosophy or my approach is that I am not there to tell them how to speak or to sing or to say this is the right or wrong way. I'm there to encourage them to go forward to experiment and explore their own vocal abilities that the power of range and delicacy of their own voice. I'm a kind of guide because I have some knowledge and I have knowledge partly from my own studies and my own experience and training but also from just many years of working with different voices and so I feel that I can help but I'm always giving this caveat to them. I will not, I can't do it. I will not be changing your voice. You will be changing your voice if you want to and developing it, but what I will do is I'll come along that path with you and sometimes give you a little shove or I'll go off into the undergrowth for a bit and then pop up later on in the path or I'll rather run ahead of you a little bit and say come on, come this way and there are many routes, many paths and they are all individual and so I don't and I feel also I've never felt drawn to one single type of voice work. It's just simply it's like saying I only like eating chips or I only like eating caviar. Why would you do that, when there's a world of food out there? On the other hand, I don't eat just anything and there are some things I definitely don't like, and you know I would despair if you made me sit down and eat a pig's heart or something. I'm sorry to say that but very well and various other foods that I don't like, or I could nibble on, but many but you know I have the – and again there's a kind of parallel here with food, are we open to the unknown? Would you try a food you've never tasted before? What happens if you go to another country? Do you go well where's the fish and chip shop? Where's the bacon and eggs? Or do you say, oh what do you have for breakfast? Oh, can I try that and see how that sits with my digestion.

I feel like that about the voice and partly obviously giving voice is an international project. I have curiosity at the heart of my voice work and I would like to pay a tribute here to Richard Gough who is the director for the Centre for Performance Research and was of Cardiff Laboratory Theatre and who first asked me to come and work on this project of the voice. Why I say that is because that's his philosophy, but I think, it's not that I didn't necessarily have that myself, but he articulated that in conversations with me very well. The power of curiosity to drive you and a certain kind of – he once described this as a selfishness. I remember thinking, gosh that's weird because he's so generous. He gives out so much. He's always creating extraordinary projects.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Again, this is a philosophy I think I certainly developed by working alongside Richard. It's great when you're working with students you should say what do you or what do you need, what do you want to know? Be selfish, don't think it's for other people's good – it's patronising. It can be, not always but I mean I think you have to think – what am I really interested in and actually if you don't have curiosity I don't think you can learn. I think that was a kind of slightly wild venture into the

philosophies, but I think I've covered some of them. I mean there are probably many more things I could say because I've worked in this field for a very long time. I think this curiosity, I would just say one other thing and that's the principle of generosity. This is another thing that I find very helpful when I'm working with people. You could say that person is very confident, or you could say that person is really generous. I don't think people who seem confident are not afraid. I think they're willing to give and take a risk. I would call that generosity of spirit. I sometimes I'm very hard on people I'm training because I say things like well now you are going to be selfish, mean spirited you know and you could say and timid really and under confident or you know let's, let's not say “we're confident or over confident” let's say, “let's think about generosity” and that can make a person take a big step. When you say in front of an audience are you going to take the risk and give, be generous, offer yourself emotionally, vocally whatever. Most audiences don't want to be horrible. They don't want to be disappointed, they don't want to kill you, they don't want to make you feel bad. They are hoping the performance is going to be good that's what they want. Now if they want that, they're on your side. Only if you truly can't be bothered or you're so timid, so selfish that you won't share, then they might feel not so good about you but almost always I think if you are generous spirited in the way you sing, speak, perform its recognized and the audience meets you and it brings out that if you like generosity in them too. I think that's another sort of pillar in my philosophy. Is that the sort of thing..?

DCL: Yeah absolutely. It's interesting because myself and a colleague we just put in a proposal on the subject of generosity. It's generosity as cultivating in a generous atmosphere, environment for studio practice.

JM: Yes, it is funny, I was thinking of writing something for that I know what you mean, it's for –

DCL: Yeah, the Performance Research Journal, yeah.

JM: Yeah, I was thinking of writing something about my practice in it whether I'll get to it, it's always time and things but because it has been very important in my work this notion of never being mean spirited.

DCL: I remember a lot just hearing you talk reminds me of a class back in Aberystwyth with you and you played an Einaudi track.

JM: Oh yes.

DCL: You just asked us to move around the room with our eyes closed and just to breathe through the room and at that point I forgot about acting, I forgot about text, I forgot about everything and when I came from this – I had been, I had kept moving but everybody else had stopped but I think you said no let him go without me hearing. I just realized and it was that class that made me realize because I did training in Dublin I was told, no you might be a production manager but you're not an actor, you are not a performer but that class made me realize that actually I could be an actor and I realized lately actually what, what I think Patsy Rodenburg articulates it with the second circle stuff, the kind of presence work – I totally got what will happen then.

JM: You were in the moment.

DCL: Yes, yeah, yeah.

JM: You were precisely in the moment because you were in the moment and your body was in flow, your mind was in flow actually because it's also about this flow neurologically speaking. The body and the breath and the emotion were all one right at that moment and literally the body just flows, doesn't it? You kind of tumble and roll through space and your eyes are closed but your inside your body, but the body is actually expanding as we do this and at that point of course you are present and because you are present we can't take our eyes off you or listening and if your voicing because of course I don't know if you remember but the next part of the work is that you do that but the music isn't playing, your breath and voice is travelling through you.

DCL: Yes, that's right.

JM: You're voicing this, and you are the voice. At that point, you can't take your eyes off and you can't take your ears off the person – I have seen it many times. Work which I developed over many years, I used to work, I've sort of invented, if you like, when I was working at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, and I particularly remember a few people, and quite often it's men that I remember. The reason I remember is because maybe the restraints that are put on men emotionally and physically. I think in one young man and I can't remember his name, but he was from Bala and he was the build of a young rugby player. He was in his first year and he was Welsh speaking. He had actually hardly spoken in English very much at all because he'd gone to Welsh Primary School. His family all spoke Welsh, and it was only really in the sixth form at his school, they started to really say but you've got to start to do things in English too. He realised when he got there – he didn't want to do the Welsh course. He wanted to do the English course at the Welsh College because he wanted to have flexibility to work both in Welsh and English. He realised his English needed help. There were two things about it, one was he had a very restrained voice in English, quite held and I began to realize that in a way he was translating in his head. It wasn't his heart language, it wasn't his first impulse, of course not, because truly he was a Welsh speaker. I said to him “well somehow we've got to work with you so that the language becomes embodied, the English language, you'll start to love those English words, it will never be quite the same as the relationship with the Welsh words, but you can't just have them in your head because otherwise it doesn't work for you”. Part of the work was of course this work I was developing then the ‘soft breath work’ or the ‘liquid breath’ – that is what I call this work. As I say, he was kind of – well you know he was the sort of boy – I remember another chap it wasn't him but from a mining village and he said that he once hung his tights, when he was at drama school, he hung his tights on the line at home and his father who was a miner nearly died of shame to see the tights of his boy on the line. Well, this boy was bit like he was a farmer's son or whatever and very chunky and still had an adolescent chunky body and felt really awkward.

DCL: Right.

JM: This was anathema to him, what we are doing, and then at one of the classes, one day a similar thing that happened with you happened. I think I was engaging with him, I was pushing him – you know how I sometimes... I will slightly I'll just give a little nudge to the body as its rolling across the floor or flip you up a bit and down. I was doing this and suddenly – you know it was quite far into the first term I think – and he suddenly began to let go and let his breath go with the body and the music and everything and then I stepped back and the class were watching because I was working with individuals more and there was this extraordinary, I mean, it was like magic in a way I have to say the look and think look at the grace on him and there was this graceful solid, solid body moving and it reminded me when I saw it. I remember thinking “oh yes” – and I'd seen a piece by Strider, the company – the dance company Strider, and then it came Second Stride that dance company many years ago.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: I remember this piece and funnily enough I think I saw it somewhere like Aberystwyth actually. I think I saw it at the arts centre and in it was a piece with two men, which was incredibly liquid, but two big men and one of them was a Canadian dancer and he was huge. I mean like he looked like a weightlifter. He was about 6 foot 6 and broad. Those two men working together was the most moving thing. It was fabulous, and it was to do with water and rivers or something and they just flowed so it was completely – it was you know this somehow that, that had stayed with me, maybe that was an influence. I try to think in the timeline whether that would maybe of influence what all they did. It might have been that way around. I think I might have been still at Theatr Powys then. It might be that that always stayed with me and therefore this work that I began to develop was influenced by that. I wouldn't be at all surprised. I like to know my roots anyway but this boy at this point doing it and it changed everything because after that then his breath began to be freer, then his connection with the words and the English words developed, he relaxed, he began to walk differently, sit differently and engage with people differently. I tell you an absolute truth, and he was one example and the other one was that guy in the MA – well it wasn't MA then it was an advanced diploma course. Graduates, postgraduates, and again really a big guy he was both tall and broad and I remember you know you can see people thinking well he can't do this work. You can see all the students even thinking he was tall, great big bloc, not at all. You can do this with any shape, size, and pretty well age. Again, actually people suddenly viewing him completely differently because they saw him do this in the class and felt this presence and saw his presence engage in a way that was fluid and whole. I used to say that it's about coordination, flexibility, it's about the flow connection.

DCL: Yeah fantastic.

JM: Does that makes sense? Right.

DCL: Yeah, I do love a good full answer.

JM: What you get from – I'm sorry it will be terrible to transcribe.

DCL: Oh, it's wonderful. No, that's fantastic. We've talked about the liquid breath but is there any other particular exercise or activity that you like working with or that you find really effective with actors and students?

JM: Yes, it's the work because I sometimes disparagingly call “a load of old balls”. It's the ball work. This is ball breath work that I've also developed. I mean let me backtrack slightly and say of course, in my work are lots of exercises that you could trace back to different practitioners I've worked with and I fully acknowledge and when I'm doing that teaching, I will often say well of course this isn't – they will say a great exercise, it was not my exercise because it's Kristin Linklater – a version of it, it's not her and it's not even her official training because I've never done the full Linklater training but I've trained with Kristin a few times obviously and she was the first person I ever invited to the Giving Voice project. There's a very strong influence from the work I did with Zygmunt Molik of Grotowski's Laboratory and of course Zygmunt was their main vocal training person really. He was key to their – I mean they all do wonderful voice work but Zygmunt kind of led it really. The training I did with him in the 80s particularly was very, very important to me. So, I did what is termed “the alphabet” – it's kind of a series of – you can't even call them postures because they're kind of not still but gesture, postural.

DCL: Gestus –

JM: Yes, anyway yeah gestus. If you put them together you can kind of make sentences in a way that's the notion, why it's like an alphabet because each one is separate but then it's how they flow together, and you improvise and so on. I know – I of course I learned all of those and worked through those with him, but – and some people then went on to kind of perfect that work and become people who if you like protégé's of Zygmont. I never felt I could do that partly because I mean when I first did the training with him I was, I was already well into my 30s and I had never done dance training. I have done quite a lot of Tai Chi work and that was quite important. I went on to do quite a bit, but I felt that there were younger people who definitely went into that. But what I did do was take principles of that and certain elements of those exercises and developed those further and also kind of let those inform the things I was already doing that were my own developments which included the liquid breath. It wasn't then called that anyway but the work with soft breath, the moving breath. It was very interesting when I met Zygmont's work in relation to that because in Zygmont's work this was like a huge amount of impulse and the breath is used in very particular ways. Certainly that underlay things, and then the other thing that was quite influential was just one workshop that I did with Cicely Berry when she came to Cardiff and it was at that point I remember when that was the workshop space and she was throwing vowels, – throwing the vowels and just miming you didn't really have a ball or anything but you know just this haaah would have been throwing them in and catching them and so on. It was only a weekend doing that with her and of course the lovely thing – she did all sorts of fabulous things on working on text and the opening for the voice – and the importance of the vowels and so on, but something in that triggered something in me and I began to think yes but what if it is a ball. I can't even remember when I first started doing this, but I began to try working so that in fact I wasn't just imagining, but I was actually – because she did sometimes throw objects.

I mean, I remember hurling lengths of objects at some poor person who was doing *King Lear* or something, chucking stuff like newspapers and packets of crisps and I don't know - things. I began to experiment, and I was lucky enough then of course to be working at the Welsh College of Music and Drama and I could develop these things as part of my work and I started with juggling balls and then, but then I really found the notion and what if it was very soft and larger. The beach ball became very important a particular size of beach ball it's about 18 inches round, and balloons. I work quite a lot using balloons and they're encrypted with lots of delicacy and of course they are not dangerous as well I mean none of these things I mean the juggling balls are a bit more dangerous. It's of course – so this work I am describing the ball work which is pretty well impossible to describe just by sound - to kind of but in essence what I'm doing is training through the use of the ball a free use and spontaneous use of the breath, a surprising way, where when you're surprised you don't hold your breath, but you release. Actually, this is fundamental to playing text. I would say this is probably some of the most important work that I've developed and that I feel in a way does belong to me if I was to say you know as I say lots of exercises I do from friends and other practitioners that I've worked with, I've done bits of training with, I've helped and things I've read and I've done a version of. But I think this liquid breath and the ball breath, I think I very much have developed and I am, I should say I'm hoping to be writing about it – I meant to be writing. I have actually written the kind of the book proposal about it but haven't got much further than that at the moment, it's kind of on the cards. The problem is I think I really need to do. It really needs to be seen I need to do – it needs to be filmed.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Because in a way you have to see exactly at what point the ball is taking and how and hear what's happening. It will have to have that with it, so I'll need to work with a group of practitioners —

DCL: Like a DVD or something.

JM: Or group of students probably to do that and it will have to have something online to go with it. Well but that's the proposal, that's what will happen but that work is both about the open voice and so you can use it for training just opening the voice and stop clumping down and shutting down the voice but it's about again it's about the same thing coordination, flexibility, the interaction of breath, emotion and sound and thought. They all have to be together in it, but instantly. In that sense you can't prepare or think, the minute you think or let your left brain get too involved you can't do this game. I call it a game that I've set up. Of course, people who over think and are not able to be spontaneous have huge problems with this work.

DCL: Yeah, I find some students want to intellectualize everything that you give to them. “Why are we doing this” – they want context straight off the bat rather than their body practice and then the context which is interesting.

JM: Yes, because first, well you know, well that's what Grotowski said – first you strike the table and then you shout.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: Ah yeah, because and Zygmunt was very good on this. You know people get sort of precious about being in the moment and we're doing this work and it's all fabulous. This is the other way round – people go then oh no let's not talk, let's not talk that will spoil it. Kristin is very good on talking about this, Zygmunt was very good on saying no she will do work and then she'll sit down and say and say let's talk about what we just did. You could see people like oh no because I'm in that I'm loving it, I'm loving it, I don't want to destroy it by talking and she and Zygmunt said the same thing. If you – this is training for professional reasons particularly it's not, not just for your health or just a lovely day out or whatever, you have to come to this place again. You can't just rely on oh once it happened. You have to think how to do that. You have to then rationalise and use the part of the brain that can really analyse.

DCL: Yes.

JM: Now of course it's that way around what just what you've said. If you start by saying let's discuss what we are going to do blah, blah, blah. I've seen people do this at workshops and then but I'm going to do this, well you've already set up loads of barriers. No, I won't let people talk. In fact, I don't even describe how to play the game, I don't know if you even remember this, but I don't even say what I'm going to do. I just say “I want you to play ball with me”. We'll begin and what I actually say, and this is my instruction – “now again throw the ball back to me” and after a bit I begin to think is it different? What happens when I receive and throw it, and what happens – can you work out, what the rules are? They have to work the rule out by doing it. After a bit you can see that some people have got it with – occasionally I get somebody within seconds, he or she has got it and we go “yes” and I just then feel that absolutely “good, you have it”, and we carry on and nobody has a chance to talk because we're playing it, and somebody else is still going ****baam**** with their hands on the ball and chucking it and after a bit that person begins to think “oh God what am I doing” – and

then I sometimes stop saying “you’ve got to think – what are you doing that’s different then”, then I’ll sometimes answer. Now what’s the difference when people will begin to say things like “well, I don’t know, I think that your hands are very soft on it and then we begin to get eventually to which way am I breathing”.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Eventually they get it, the breath is in the throw, “oh I see”. You get that lovely and I think that’s also fun in training that you get. It’s like an “ah” moment; they begin to get it. Oh, I begin to feel what’s happening. I’m recognizing this in myself not being taught or told what to do. - there are the kind of key methods and I think – oh I should say I mean Kristin had a very big influence on me in terms of her attitude and because I read her book *Freeing the Natural Voice* before I ever met her.

DCL: Right. Yeah.

JM: It had just been published when I was working as Director of Theatre Powys in Mid Wales and I was miles away from everywhere. I had a bunch of actors who, like me, had trained at university most of the year and actually the one that went to Bristol Old Vic afterwards, had one of the worst vocal difficulties that I had to work with. It was really his fault that I began to get interested in the voice because, particularly, one day in the rehearsal room with him and I realized that – it was exactly getting to what you just talked about – no amount of analysis of this scene was going to change the way he played it. He understood the scene perfectly at an intellectual level. He could tell you what happened at the scene, he could tell you how that person felt. It sounded like it was going to some rather grand play – it was actually *Sleeping Beauty and the Beast*. It was a 19th century pantomime that was from 1899. It was so successful it ran till 1901. It was taken off because Queen Victoria died, and it was Dan Leno the comedian actor Dan Leno’s pantomime and he put the two pantos together *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*. The first half is *Beauty and the Beast* I think. No, *Sleeping Beauty* I think. Then the second half is the *Beauty and the Beast*. But the kind of link it’s all but one pantomime and he was playing the beast who is the prince. It was a moment, he has a speech in it where the prince is dying, the beast is dying because of a broken heart and because he’s a beast and because no one ever loved him. He has this beautiful speech – he wasn’t at all moving, not even slightly. He was a lovely actor, really a very nice actor, very bright, very clever, totally intelligent. What happened was that – I have a very strong image come into my mind about what I wanted to do with this actor and basically what I wanted to do was to pick him up and smack him against the wall. He broke into lots of little bits, or it’s like Tom and Jerry you understand I didn’t really want to do but to reconstitute them, but he need – I knew that something needed to shatter, or it was a barrier, it was like an armour.

In fact, what I did, and I had just been reading *Freeing the Natural Voice* and thinking about more and more about the philosophy of what Kristin was talking about and particular exercises – so, I was beginning to try and use a few and also because when I read it I kept thinking “oh that’s what I do”. I had been already living on voice work and I kept thinking great. I felt really encouraged like “oh Jesus what am I doing it’s in a book”, then what I did was right, thank God for that and I feel better now but I got a hold of him and I ran him around the studio just round, round and round till his breath was – so he was really exhausted. This is the beginning of this breath work because I rolled him across the floor and I picked him, and I did chuck him slight against the wall gently and till his and asked him to speak so that he couldn’t hold onto his breath or his throat. This speech kind of tore out of him, in gasps and sobs and then a bit more a bit more and then by the time I had done that I really had broken the back, this also you know what – this is what Grotowski talks about, about going

through the barrier and breaking the resistance. I broke the resistance. It wasn't Molik's work, I hadn't even met him then, but it was that same principle. His resistance had gone, he was exhausted, he was now fully breathing and everything and then I said right now on the couch, he was lying on the couch and I said speak, the only people in the room was myself and the stage manager. He spoke and simultaneously both of us – tears rolled down our faces. I've never forgotten him, so I didn't – there was no resistance in me or her. We both began to cry just, just quietly just, just tears just popped into my eyes as he spoke. He never did it like that again, but it was better. In other words, of course, years of resistance can't be broken in one session. But it was possible when he did the performance and he held some of that, some of that retained, but I learned something that day that was key to everything I've ever done since. Really, I really did – so I thank him for that and as I say the difference between just than saying the speech and I know this man this beast speaking, I came to tears, you can't resist.

DCL: It just reminds me of something I discovered in Aberystwyth again, but I use it with my students now. When somebody puts the label tragedy on anything, they come up with this gravitas. I say, do it as a four-year-old, and then suddenly this energy comes alive and it does, it reminds me a lot of resistance idea where all context is gone and they're actually you're listening to the sounds, you're listening... rather getting obsessed with meaning.

JM: Yes, and those received ideas. This is the problem – but then we have so many received ideas about what a tragic voice would sound like. Yes, another one is, I always find this grace to laugh all the way through. Also, I've said when have you ever, if you're angry say or if you're really grief stricken what happens? Well you go through a gamut of emotions. I've always said if you think Oh! Page 42 this is the angriest speech, this is death. I mean immediately, no it's not page and you get to whole worked up thing, this is oh this is the speech I've really got to lose it, this is the speech where he really tells me how he thinks, right, right, and the person gets more and more tense and geared up for it. Actually, it's the opposite, what we should be doing is this is the speech, so this is where I need to open. Now I need to really open to this. I need to let go completely because now I'm coming to this thing where I'm going to release my feelings but also the release of feelings causes the weirdest things to happen in real life. You know there are countless stories of somebody who has told your father has died and the person bursts out laughing or faints or takes a great breath and sobs and then laughs or whatever – laughing and crying so close to each other because that is in our own breath you know that's it. I mean yes, I was thinking I was working on a version of this piece that I made *Falling Silent* about the First World War pics that I made and I was asking people to find speeches – genuine speech their real accounts from the First World War both the men and the women, some were of nurses for example out on the battlefield and so on and one person found – here is an example you know and then I would get them to compress the speech and then they worked on speech with me and some of this text was going to go into the piece. I still remember finding one, I found this really awful story – it is true story of this nurse. A shell fell, she went out and what she found – how horrible, it was basically a detached leg and so on and I remember she did it and it was a great speech, but you know she overlaid it with all this, which was this and I just – my note was, it's a joke. It has to be a joke. You have to tell this. I remember people looking at me and saying like I said I can't, I can't, I said “it is” – then I did say look often when something's horrible, people can't help and think how many other things you have seen and think about medical students.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: The awful things you hear about where they are taking bodies apart and the awful tricks they play on each other and I said you know she is a nurse she can never have asked, I don't mean that

she's feelingless. I just mean it's almost got to come out in another way. She took the note brilliantly and when she did this people were astounded. I remember what happened and she did it and she was, and it was both and it was awful because we all started to laugh straight away you know while she did it, it was funny, and it was that awful laugh that you will think oh God that is terrible don't, don't. Then in the end we all felt sick and felt like weeping. You are absolutely right that this approach to you know trying to get past received ideas of how something should be performed and then what that causes the voice and the breath to do which is completely unauthentic and boring and grim – there has to be many approaches how to do it and certainly one of them is yes to find the *naïve* and actually discovering it.

DCL: Yeah, fantastic so I mean I think we've covered the next question. I'll ask it anyway in case you have any more you want to say. But where do you place breath in your own practice?

JM: Oh well it's absolutely fundamental because I mean that's precisely where the voice comes from. Well of course it comes from an impulse in the brain first. Of course, we always have to ask this question what's first because it's not the breath, it has to be a response in the brain that triggers the diaphragm in the ribs and everything else and the breathing mechanism. But I mean breath is fundamental in that you know of course you are caught up with the involuntary breathing is going on all the time unless you are very unfortunate and so yes, it's fundamental to life. I think it's therefore fundamental to performance, all kinds of performance. It is fundamental to dancers of course, tremendously so, and certainly to the voice. And if you don't have an understanding of the breath, I mean a practical understanding it can't just be a notional understanding of oh yes I know what the breathing mechanism does, it has to be something felt and experienced, then I think it's very difficult to develop a really free and expressive and communicative voice really, and also because you might want to control. I mean, well there is a paradox here, in order to be in control, you must be able to completely free it and be out of control, to be out of control. If you can't and your breath is being controlled by something in you, past fears, just your own psyche, your left brain won't let go etc., then you are not in control, it is in control, but you are not and therefore you can't be really reflecting what's going on in the text. I mean because otherwise you are breathing with your breath and not the character.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Yeah, so actually understanding the way this character breathes and speaks is very important. I mean actually just to come to Shakespeare for a moment, let's move to Shakespeare for a second. Why is Shakespeare a genius? Because he understands breathing in one sense. Because he understands and has this wonderful knowledge about how the human voice behaves and the human emotions that he reflects in the poetic text. It's a template for how to speak – basically if you just pay attention, he's done all the work. It is almost like he's marked up the text and that's because he must have been a fabulous listener, I think. His ear is so tuned so just as a great composer working with a great lyricist can make fantastic sung performance or you know occasionally you get someone who is both a lyricist and a composer and you think gosh that sounds so extraordinarily right when they are saying that word or that sentence and then you get others you think oh that's a way out, they don't work together.

Well Shakespeare is able to do that. His musicality and his intellect and his understanding of human emotion and everything they all coordinate beautifully. The breathing is in there for you, it's ready made. Unfortunately, people want to ignore it quite often and therefore, they're struggling with the text because they're in a struggle against somebody who's a far better composer and lyricist than

they are – you know what I mean – and then they need to just come right and understanding it. I think yeah breath is fantastic, fantastically important and also because for durability.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: You have to think as a performer. You've got to spend your life doing this and you need stamina and endurance. If your breathing is not well coordinated and supporting your voice, you will wear out and burn out. When I was at Welsh College, there was one of the actors who was a bit naughty about not coming to some of the voice classes. I would tell him off, and we used to have tutorials and things obviously with students and so on and he would think he kind of knew what he needed, and he didn't need to know anymore – a lot of young people think that, and also they get that notion that well “I've done that” or “we did that”. You think yeah well you know you need to do it probably a thousand times to get it really.

DCL: Train it, yeah.

JM: Absolutely. It's like me saying I've done oh I've done that bit in the Tai Chi, well you know you spend your life perfecting exactly what that is and discovering more things about it if you got any sense, any intelligence. Anyway, so he didn't and then he got to the third year and he was cast in a Shakespeare play actually in a very key role and after about a week and half, he came to me with a terrible vocal problem, hoarse and saying okay I admit it, I got this wrong. I said what, what, what and he told me he said, “Joan I am just I'm just I'm in a terrible state, I get it now, I see what you mean, it's because now I'm doing this every day working on this text and having to roar and shout and fight it, I just, I can't do it, I am wrecking my voice.” I was very nice, I didn't – I said, “Well you know this is the moment I should say I told you so, but I am certainly not going to say that, I'm going to say good because you've discovered what the purpose of it was and it's not too late.” I had to give him quite a lot of support. He went on, he is actually a director really these days and I think he still acts but he is the director. He has obviously realized that now he must think about it and I didn't think it was valuable. Another experience I once had was I went to see a performance of the Sherman which will be nameless – well I'll tell you this much – it was *Winter's Tale*, it was years ago, years ago and I can't remember the actor's name anyway so that's okay but he was playing Leontes and if you think of *Winter's Tale* – very quickly, within minutes he's furiously jealous out of nowhere. It's a very difficult transition for this actor to make, any actor to make.

DCL: Two words really, isn't it..

JM: Yeah, he is just gone, he suddenly, one minute he is there and then suddenly this thing surges and this violent sort of speech appears and bitterly jealous and so well I went to see his production and funny enough I had been because I went to see somebody in the Sherman backstage or something. I'd heard this actor warming up in his dressing room and he was doing lots of Ma ma mi mi mi mo mo those things you know he was doing lots of sort of very technical ma ma ma ma ma mo mo mi mi doing that sort of fair enough, but it was so interesting the moment he came on stage, when he got there he started wrecking his throat and it was so obvious to me, I thought oh my God this actor knows how to do voice exercises. He doesn't know how to apply any of them in the moment, in the text or with them. The moment there is an emotion in – deep emotions surging in him and he's now trying to deal with what's going on in the character, he has separated the voice work from his acting work and thinks there is something and he thinks if you just see technical things that all somehow come into play but of course it doesn't, in my opinion, I'll say in my opinion doesn't

work. Kristin Linklater that's exactly what her work is about she knows full well there is no point in things which are separated.

I mean obviously in Giving Voice, we have explored Jo Estill's work because we explore all types of voice work and it's very interesting and I know people particularly in musical theatre who think it's been very valuable.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Because that technical side of it and everything and the ability to really identify the muscle groups and everything else, really supports the belt voice and so on but this whole idea of the artistry is a separate bit that you finally get to. Of course, I think if you notice something about Kristin's work, you will immediately say you could see that she is not going to like that – she thought it was a terrible idea because she feels it's so integral to the whole process as do I.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: I think that the same would be true of Zygmunt's work and so on. There was never this separation. I mean because they are like skating figures. You have to do numbers one two three four five. You have to know exactly what to be able to do this with your pallet, your tongue, the jaw blah, blah, blah, blah all of that. As I said it's got a place and some people have used it alongside other work and used some part of it and found it very effective. I'm never dissing anything but I'm saying in terms of what we are talking about when you come to play like that and the actor is solving the problem in a way that this can give you, how do I find this shift in feeling and vocalize this and make this clear. Then I think if you haven't integrated your development and if you like the exploration of your voice technically and all the range of it and so with and understanding of that in performance, then you are in trouble.

DCL: Yeah, yeah, fantastic okay and this sounds really interesting that you talk about this Estill because the next question is some approaches to voice and speech training seem to privilege to whereas others seem to ignore it in a sense, do you have a perspective on this range?

JM: Well I do, I mean I am, oh I see hang on a minute. That's okay, I am trying to say well can you give an example of something that ignores the breath?

DCL: I suppose with this it is the method is this sense that breathing should be assumed are inherent and then perhaps separated as you say. I suppose there is other kind of rather than voice approaches, there is director approaches where there is the text-based approach rather than breath may be.

JM: It's not just working as a director, if I am working as voice coach, if the text leads.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Well it's interesting, somebody once asked Cicely Berry in a meeting that I was at, what about emotion? What do you do when the actor becomes overwhelmed may be with emotion you are working with the actor? She said oh how do you work on the emotions of the voice etc. and she said oh I don't do, don't do that. She just dissed it completely and just said, “Oh I don't work on their emotions, I am not interested in them, I just work on the text dear.” Well the thing is of course she works with emotions but what she meant was she works through the text to that. She doesn't try to

do therapy on them. We are not equipped to do that that's not, it's a strange thing, because in a way I've always found this an interesting part of what we do, and Kristin and I have talked sometimes about this, it's about the bit that the moment you go near someone's breathing you are in the world of therapy.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: To some extent because everything that's ever happened to us is bound up in this breath, emotion, continuum and sometimes you do reveal things and it certainly happened to me you know I mean. The first time I ever worked with Kristin, I mean a huge kind of overwhelming experience happened to me that kind of came through the breath and she carried me through and out to the other side and it was rather wonderful, so and I have often found people becoming rather overwhelmed. You're working on the text and you are working with that somewhat technically but nevertheless this breath will disturb you know because it's the root of so much. I feel that – so we have to kind of know that but what is the text? The text is the riverbank. You're in the water and you are being carried along maybe and it's maybe deep water and it is flowing fast or maybe it's ripple and nice and you can splash about a little bit. I don't know but you're safe if you stay with the text and you work through that text. Now I mean obviously know all voice work is with text I mean I do general voice work but I'm just trying to help somebody open up their voice whether it's going to be used for speaking, singing, making a speech at a dinner or whatever sometimes or give a lecture.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: But if I'm directing or I'm voice coaching and I'm working with text, it's the text that leads and tells us everything really and reveals everything. We are not laying anything on the text. We are finding our way with the guide and as I say it's like the river banks – looks like the road that carries you and therefore it's safe because if we stay with that, you won't get lost in the person's other emotions that have nothing to do with this and to do with what happened yesterday with lover or the day before when they went round their mom's house so or the argument they have with their child or you know or their past history. I mean we can't be doing all of that and trying to do this. You know they need to go and see their therapist about that and get it sorted there. At the same time of course, many people find voice training and actor training is highly therapeutic and they do have to face their demons because they kind of emerge partly because of the text or the song that you are singing and suddenly it's coming home to you. But I think my approach is as I say I know the breath is paramount really but it's not that I'm focusing all the time on the breath, it's just that I'm very aware of what it's doing and I'm very aware of its evidence in the text. Does that make sense?

DCL: Yeah that makes sense, yeah and that gives me a perspective so that's fantastic. We've kind of just brushed on this as well and so from your professional experience, how do you think one can tell them watching a performance if an actor has considered breath in their training or preparation or what kind of training they may have had in relation to breath?

JM: Well, I don't think you can go – you can't look at anything 'Ah yes, they have done' – I mean sometimes I think you can possibly guess who they might have trained with, but I think it's a difficult thing. I think you can tell when somebody hasn't had – well the example I gave you about the play *Winter's Tale* all those years ago at the Sherman, he really needed some work, this actor really needed somebody to help him and clearly, he hadn't had any help and the process of rehearsal hadn't helped him because he was in trouble. By the way they had to take him off, I mean they had to close – I think I don't think he understudy, he lost his voice completely two days after that.

It was gone, it's completely shot. He wrecked his voice, so I think you can certainly tell there that was a problem.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Interestingly I remember going to see – oh I know what it was it was whilst I was at the – it was – was it 2002, I think it was 2002 God. It was a voice meeting at the Royal Shakespeare Company and they invited about 48 voice teachers from all around the world. I was Wales, basically I was the one from Wales and Kristin Linklater was there and there were people from Australia and from England and France, Belgium, – lots of places, anyway it was a very interesting meeting. We did lots of things and we discussed lots of things and we tried things out. Somewhere there's a recording by the way of us all reading one line of a sonnet in our own accent.

DCL: All right.

JM: Which is very fascinating, I've got it at home it's like a CD they made. We just – each person that was there, so there were 48 voices, just – and it was – because there was a bit about accent and could you do Shakespeare in different accents and everything, I'm standard northern apparently.

DCL: All right.

JM: Anyway, I was – but we also went to see something. I remember we saw a very nice piece in a the kind of studio, as it was then of course – it's all changed now anyway, but in the main house it was – sorry it wasn't there it was the new sort of main house that they had I seem to remember which I forget the name of now not the Old Swan, it was the other one the bigger one, anyway.

DCL: The other place.

JM: Right, The Other Place was where I saw the one I liked but then this was another thing. Anyway, I think it was there, might be on the main stage I can't remember. I think it was *The Alchemist* may be which I'm not absolutely certain but anyway one of the main actors and it was an older actor had the most extraordinary difficult vocal problem going on and very, very tight sound and after a bit I realized, I was sitting in a row with all these voice teachers, Kristin was sitting next to me. We began to notice she and I began to nod at each other, people began to clear their throats, some people going [illustrative cough] – they didn't know they were doing it but his – we were – trying to clear his voice and I've heard it happened since in other performances. The people are in the audience they don't even know it consciously, but they're so disturbed by this unclear tight voice going on or slightly coarse or something that the person in the audience begins to do it for them. I was really shocked because he was an RSC actor, he's an old RSC actor that had been there many years, but I didn't know what was going on with him that night or whether something had happened in his life or he was just not very well, but it was really poor and certainly not everybody was like that, but he was, and he was key to it. Sometimes you see things like or you hear things like that and you think well at the moment this is a problem. It may not be – it's always a problem in the actor's life, sometimes I just feel that somebody is very disconnected. I don't really feel anything about –you know in the performance and you're thinking well that's yes that was all very clearly spoken.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: But actually, the connection with this sort of impulse to speak which I think is completely connected to the breath isn't there. Then I'll say one more thing. I spent quite a bit of time in Berlin in the last few years because I was going there because Richard, my husband had this fellowship there. On and off we're there quite a lot at the Interweaving Cultures Institute and it was great because I got to see a lot of really wonderful theatre, but I was quite often hearing, I was going to performances that were in other languages quite – sometimes there was sub text or super text or whatever. There's one company in particular that we began to see and I saw several performances by and one actor in this company who was excellent, just so interesting, such a good performer and they're all very interesting performance pieces, there was text in them, there was choreography and one there were two opera singers and orchestra, dancers, they had all sorts of aspects to them these pieces they've made and they're all very communicative and full of understanding and full of interesting ideas. I just think about one moment when he had a speech where he stood and just spoke by himself for a moment kind of on a microphone I seem to remember but he wasn't right on the microphone. I think maybe there was an English text, but I didn't even look at it because the way he spoke, the way he performed this was so beautifully integrated and such a wonderfully great piece, just such a well-articulated emotionally if you understand me and I didn't even want to read the thing really.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: That was a really good example. He'd also by the way during this he'd already done things like racing across the set and scaffolding layers running up and down there jumping up that, he played an instrument, he had done this fantastic session of choreography that he was in and then ran and then he spoke his text and that was a powerful example of presence and a voice that so communicated. I almost didn't need – I didn't know what he was talking about of course I missed some details of course I did. But I was so interested in the way he spoke and this – and the ripple of the feeling and through him and the way his emotions were shifting that I was loath to spoil it by reading the text. I think you can tell and actually after that particular performance, I remember saying to Richard, I really want to know who their voice teacher is, and I was going to try and find out. I did do some work on it and I never quite get to the bottom of where they train, they've been – quite a few of them have been at a particular theatre school I think because they were all so able. So on top of their – they trained very physically so I suppose that's the other thing I was going to say yes finally sorry on this topic on this bit. A huge amount depends on how physical the training has been. If it has been at a very what used to be I think in the past kind of voice training in Britain which was rather cerebral, precise, a lot about speech about the voice beautiful in the very old days I'm talking now, and it wasn't really physically based. It was much more of course there was a physicality to it, but it was all kind of little bit from the neck upwards and a bit on the breathing. It took time for a more physical approach to enter British theatre training and of their obviously the influence of Grotowski was very strong for certain people that trained seeing the work or then been to some of the workshops that filtered in and gradually other ways of thinking about the voice but in a much more practical way. The training now is much more physically based and also just the development of physical theatre as a performing genre has had a strong influence, so people have to be able to speak and sing on the move. Whereas ones they perhaps weren't and different sorts of text have demanded it and different sorts of productions. For example in the old days everybody was being placed nicely on the stage to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but they might not be doing an awful lot of running about and then you get Brook's *Dream* where they're killing each other and racing it down the ladder and smacking into each other, there's the difference. Suddenly when you get that kind of work, you have to have a different kind of vocal training, must be physically breath based.

DCL: Yeah, fantastic. Okay so now we're just shifting on to the Shakespeare specific questions, so it's only a couple, but so just in general then in the context of your own practice, what is your specific view on Shakespeare?

JM: Genius – I have told you. Well I love him, I love him. Of course, I studied Shakespeare at school, I was a child, and I was pretty impressed then actually even as a kid. I had some quite good teaching in the grammar school I went to and we did perform, and we got up and did speeches and that makes a difference. I had a very important experience in the sixth form at my secondary school because I moved schools after GCSE and in the second school, the role I was – it was in Solihull so it's quite near Stratford and they did *The War of the Roses* on tour or *The Hollow Crown*, it might be the Old school Hollow Crown. Members of the Royal Shakespeare Company came into our school hall and we at the drama club of course had to set it all up and help them – we got to carry things. They set up the stage – I don't know if Guy Woolfenden himself was there but he had composed, and there was big kettle drums and musicians and trumpets and actors pouring through with swords and you could smell them, they're sweating and the breath was there and the voices and I was transported into ecstasy. This was the best thing ever and it was so fantastic.

Well if you want a lesson in that Shakespeare is a physical force that was it, it was fantastic. That was really amazing and then, because I lived there, I used to be able to go sometimes – me and a girl called [name redacted] used to go after school sometimes to go on Fridays, I suppose, and we would go straight to school and to get this bus that took you into Stratford and we would go and change out of our school uniform, put our jeans and other things on in the loo and we go to Stratford and we used to go and buy tickets. And you stood at the back of the stores, they were five shillings and you had to go on that night to buy the ticket and then we were really naughty, we go in the Dirty Duck – you know The White Swan. We would just have half a cider and actor spot that's where I first saw David Warner. I remember thinking well he is not much cop, because look he looks a bit greasy and sweaty and he's a bit spotty and he's got big glasses and a funny leather coat and long greasy hair. Debbie was saying, “God it's DW, look it's DW.” Then I saw him on stage. I think it must have been in *Henry IV*, oh God and Ian Holme was playing Buckingham or whatever. I'm completely blown away. The second I saw him on stage I was in love with him. Absolutely fell! Of course, I was in love with the character actually because there was the actor he was that guy who looked rather boring, but when he was performing and then I went to see him at Hamlet that famous Hamlet it was just fantastic. This was very important. Early on my relationship with Shakespeare was very strong and passionate, and I had the posters on the wall and stuff. Then, I am trying to think, at university – I went to Hull University, I did drama and American studies. Interestingly, we did Greek – yeah I remember I was performing in *Aeschylus*, in Greek plays and things. I played Electra in a very stylized production of that and there were lots of things going on that we did, but I honestly don't remember very much the Shakespeare funnily enough. Obviously, we studied it and discussed it and so forth. Probably would be a while before I actually got to kind of really get the grips of it myself and began to work on any of the text really although I saw quite a lot– because I didn't do any Shakespeare plays when I was directing at the Theatr Powys – oh well that's not true no actually it's not true, we did do a project that was about how to think about plays and we did sections and in that I played – oh dear what's her face, in *As You Like It*, not Horatio, the main one – anyway you know who I mean.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Her, I was playing the bit where she is a being a man and she is rehearsing even how to talk to a woman that bit.

DCL: Yes, yeah.

JM: I remember loving that and actually deconstructing the whole scene and playing with it and playing with the actors and we performed this as a sort for sixth formers about – it was called something like the play off the page or something and try to get not just to read it, but to realize that it's a template, that it's a blueprint, that it's a script, that it's not a piece of literature on the page and sort of it is as well and that's what the piece was about. That was a very important project for me because I formed a lot of ideas by presenting that and we took it around schools in Mid Wales. Then when I was at Welsh College, I did various things. At one point I did a very compressed version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* with the same cast. In other words, the same cast played and they played major roles in one and smaller ones in the other and I did it for 13 and 14 year olds. I think probably doing sets or something, and they came to the Welsh College, they had to come on a bus to see it.

I do remember being delighted when a 13-year-old boy who's sitting at the back – we had a little raked auditorium for them and it was quite a small studio – and this boy turning to another boy at the end saying, “That's the best thing I ever, ever seen in my life I love that” and he was just absolutely enthralled. I remember thinking wow and I told my students of course, listen this is the effect you just had on a 13-year-old boy, what do you think? They were thrilled to bits and thinking that's like when I have this RSC it changes your life. I loved working and I worked with some very talented actor fairly enough in that particular year of Welsh College, there was a very extremely good, well, performances were developing very well. It was a second-year project, not a final year project, and I had people – many of them have gone on to perform to work at the RSC and the National and the Globe and do some fantastically good work. You could see their love of this. You could see they like me were highly enthused by working on this text. We talked about how working on Shakespeare text teaches you. I mean I think it was Kristin who said, I am not sure it was Kristin who said the sonnets and she said they are like a gymnasium. I remember thinking wow what a great phrase. I'm sure it was about the sonnets particularly but I would say that any of Shakespeare. You kind of you can swing around inside them and leap and they let you power up and train yourself within them because the structures are so brilliant. I mean they're like a piece of architecture, his plays.

DCL: Yeah and they are contained –

JM: Yes they have got containment.

DCL: They have a story within them and they have the poetry within them and they have –

JM: Yeah, they have so many leads, and so many things that demand things that then you have –and it's great, because you've got to come up to his standard. Again, working with actors and students on these things, I always find myself saying this no actually, yeah, you know in a way you have to think you have to be good enough. You can't wing it or mumble your way through it or trick your way around it. You have to be at his level, he's pulling you up to his level all the time speaking from the grave, it's fantastic. When you get things – and it's interesting at the end of ‘since brass nor stone’ that sonnet at the end that in ‘black ink my love may still shine bright’. This monosyllabic last line moves me to tears. It's is doing even now, even not even saying the rest of the sonnet just that bit. How extraordinary to have written that 400 and whatever years ago and I'm still saying it, people are still saying it, people are still reading it, and the little black squiggly things just as he says and he makes it monosyllabic. It's a tiny, just little black squiggles, but it's carrying so much power and

emotion and love – in this case love for that’s lasted 400 and whatever it is years, it moves you to tears, it's fabulous.

So I mean I haven't directed that many Shakespeare plays actually I worked on a lot of those I was voice coaching on it alongside other people. But every time I do, I think God this is the best material ever. Because sometimes it's frustrating you do work on plays you think well this is quite a good play but oh my God this bit I couldn't, well I'm not going to do some of this. There are certain writers I really love, I am very – I really love working on Caryl Churchill's plays, but I think again she has got a fabulous connection with language. People like Seamus Heaney that I've worked on them you know *Burial at Thebes* that play, I mean beautiful language to work with and so on or whoever. But there is something about the – yes, both the freedom and the discipline of Shakespeare and the classic thing is art is made from limits, was it Leonardo or Michelangelo that said it but one of them did anyway and they probably both did, but it's a classic saying and it's true, art is made from limits. If you can do anything, you don't know what to do, the minute you have a structural limit and as you say it's kind of like a fortress of – it's so strong it can – and because the language, the structure of these plays, I say most of them. I think there are some weedy bits and some bits – you did that off day or maybe that was his apprentice I don't know, but on the whole it's just fantastic. Therefore, you feel safe, you can get inside this play and you can do what you like with it, you're not going to break it, other plays will crumble very quickly you start to mess about with them.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: They're just – they're okay, but they're okay in that moment and also some types some plays are great today, they are plays for today. In a few years' time, no one will look at them again because – or there will be a kind of footnote, a little – and I know lots of plays like that for example, when I worked at the Royal Court, there were plays that was deliberately done it's almost like pop up theatre where political people Howard Brenton and David Hare, Steve Wilson would write these things and make you laugh and tear into the government and everything. But now if you perform, nobody would know what you are talking about. Well actually having said they probably would will comeback here.

DCL: They will come back.

JM: Having said that, but Shakespeare will be speaking about the same things they were talking about essentially about humanity and right and wrong and everything. But in a way that is so universal that it's never out of fashion if you like. I mean apart from the jokes about hunting and which are tricky to get these days they are a bit tricky. I have done a little bit about falconry to get some of the jokes but really the majority of it sings loud and clear to us. I don't know if that's kind of what you meant about –

DCL: Yeah, no absolutely.

JM: My relationship to Shakespeare but –

DCL: Yeah, your relationship, it is good.

JM: Oh yeah I loved it.

DCL: Fantastic. What if you are to articulate this, what does an actor need to speak Shakespeare, Shakespeare's text?

JM: Well, I think they need – they need to be – I think they need to be very open to the text. Not come with a lot of prejudice and not come like you said with, “Oh it's a tragedy” *King Lear* that's going to be. There have to be open, read it, freshly and think about it in a fresh way, they have to think about in context of who we are now. You can't reinvent the past, but nor should you be trying to be – and this is also true definitely for directors you shouldn't try to be – if you start to be fashionable, then you very quickly got fashion. Again, Edward Bond said a very good thing years ago in fact it's in a letter to me somewhere this thing where he said he's fed up off – he was talking about what he called couture direction, fashion direction. He then went on to say something like, “Oh what shade of blue should we do with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this year”. I know just what he means, of course, of course. You simply get a bit of a thing that everybody has to sort of – oh yes we're all going to set everything as if it was in the First World War this year so on or whatever it is, because they're worried about relevance and accessibility and big letters. I think the actor does as I say need to be open, I think you need to be prepared to work hard. I think that you have to bring intellectual rigor to Shakespeare and really actor should be able to do that work. I don't think you should just be relying on a voice coach or a director to tell you what's going on.

I think quite a lot of actors are a bit lazy and will do that if you let them get away with it but I think a lot of actors, it maybe that they lack confidence to do that and they think perhaps that that's overstepping the mark if they do that research, but less so I think because of the way the training has gone, because of all the – because there are many courses now which are both practical and theoretical and have a balance and even the most practical have some theoretical aspects these days. You do get an intelligent actor who is well able to have that kind of discussion with the director who hopefully also has that sort of intelligence but practical knowledge, and the discussion and experimentation goes side by side. But they're willing to do the hard work and really look at the text take it away, really do the homework, but at the same time not be afraid of the very simplest thing. I mean when I was at Welsh College – Anthony Hopkins came for a visit and people asked him questions some of the students and they asked him how he – what his approached to text was, and it was – as talking about Shakespeare and was there any special tips or anything and how did he – how did he know how to find the character and everything. He said, “Well, I have a very special method” and he talked about this method of where he has the piece of text and then there's all these kind of numbers and colors all around it and people ask him about this and everything. What he's actually doing is keeping a record of how many times he's read it aloud.

DCL: Right.

JM: He said after a 100 times I've usually got it. He didn't just mean that he knew the text because he does mean that what happens he means he knows everything.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: But it's not read as in quite read but as in Shakespeare's day – out loud.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: He's just spoke on the text and let it speak to him and if you take Kristin's notions and understandings which I think have been proved right as neuroscience has developed people like Kristin and myself and other voice people who've always known that certain things work, but you couldn't necessarily prove why, now we know why and we were right, if I may say. We see, we

recognize why, so the very speaking of the language is sending signals. It's moving very small muscles, all the 48 that are involved in producing sounds in your mouth and so on shifting them around, touching all the little nerve endings, racing back and forth to the brain and the limbs, and all the stuff around the diaphragm and the ribs and breathing, they are all connected. If I'm right about what I said earlier that Shakespeare has done it all for us, it's all there, it's all marked in where the breathing is happening, where everything happen, then if you begin to just speak it out loud, but with obviously your experience and intelligence behind all of that you're not just reading it like the telephone directory, but you're not trying to overlay it with anything, you just speaking very gradually, it reveals itself to you. I do think that is true and I think in a certain way that's possibly what David Mamet means when he talks about you don't rehearse, just do the text and again writes.

DCL: Don't bump into the furniture.

JM: Yeah, and don't bump into the furniture. In a way he means if the text, and he's obviously speaking as a writer as well as a director, if it's really, really good text and you are a well-versed kind of intelligent performer as you speak it, it comes to life in you and – with a kind of great, and this is where it connects back to the ball games and the spontaneity of the breath and the flow. That is a training rather than trying to tell people how to save them letting them find it. I think on one level willingness to experiment with how you approach the text is one of the things that I think a good actor brings to it. This is what I do. But finding various methods and some actors want to come up with them even – they'll come at all plays with this psychological understanding research they want to do, some people might say well that doesn't really figure in Shakespeare why would you do that because and in one level it's true because the psychology is in the lines. You don't have to make up what Macbeth had for breakfast the day before really did he have porridge and did he have whisky in it or whatever all of that a bit of cream or whatever, if not was he grumpy. I mean you could but in one sense it doesn't make sense because they're not naturalistic plays, they are heightened language. I'd rather say that rather than poetry. The minute you say poetry people get the wrong idea, but they are poetic of course text, but they are – it's heightened language and structures. To some extent every scene exists in its moment, it may not even quite connect with the rest of the play really when you look carefully.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: But it's shifting us in the audience to understand things and don't worry too much about, “well hang on a minute is that right”. People – and Shakespeare gets this notion that people will change and in this scene they might be like this, but actually they are rather mercurial and for various reasons in this scene they're very different, and sometimes actors say I don't know why he's saying that because the way I see the character he wouldn't do that.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Well he does. It's tail wagging dog or what, you have to go back and work out how is that possible. Again, it's like in a way I think Shakespeare gave us an understanding of being in the moment, the character being in the moment and in that moment that's what's happening.

JM: I think he really understands how quickly emotions can change, hence Leontes. If you think how quickly he changes back once she's dead, he thinks she's dead, I mean once she's dead, and in seconds he sees it all, what have I done. It's like that just as it was at the beginning and people say well people don't behave like that, yes they do, of course they do.

DCL: I mean Antony Sher wrote a piece about playing Leontes and it's actually linked it to a condition that's just been found of this jealousy.

JM: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

DCL: It is interesting science, so maybe he observed somebody and –

JM: Yes, he probably did. I think he was a great observer, and it's interesting how I remember – I think really good writers are very observant of the particular not of the general. They can then use the particular and actually speak the microcosm and in turn speaks of the macrocosm, and I was thinking years and years ago when I did work at Royal Court I used to see various writers about plays obviously all the time and watching, well I wasn't watching, but I was sitting at a table with a few people which included Edward Bond realizing he wasn't at all in the conversation. He was watching somebody. I became aware of this, and he had just lost all interest in the conversation – he was completely knowing what everyone else was thinking and I could tell but he was just looking across the space at something and someone, interesting. I think it was the woman making the sandwiches, – there was a very few places to eat in those days. There was a woman who used to be behind a little bar, it was the main bar, and then there's a little bar that was sort of a sandwich bar, that's the one little bit right next to the Royal Court that's the only place you get any food quickly. We go in there and in those days people went drinking at lunch time; it's not like now health and safety whatever. You have been there having a drink and order a sandwich, and she did two things. She did that thing of cutting a loaf towards you with a big knife. Have you ever seen people do that, my grandmother used to do that, and they don't cut them – they cut the loaf like this, she's doing that, and she used to cut a cucumber – she had a really sharp knife and a cucumber and then she would slice it again towards like this at high speed and it would fly off this cucumber to go on the sandwiches. It was relative, that's if I remember rightly what he was watching.

DCL: Right.

JM: Interestingly, you think about some of the details of some of his plays and there is a moment in one of his plays and I think it's – *The Pope's Wedding*, – well, I can't remember which one it is. A woman is cutting a loaf of bread and talking to her husband and he's very angry and all he do is watch that knife. That's the sort of thing I mean, I mean when a writer sees something like that well, I think you're right, Shakespeare saw this man who went in seconds and decided his wife is having an affair with somebody and thought maybe talk to him.

DCL: Well, the last –

JM: Right, what time is it. We've got 20 minutes.

DCL: No worries. The last question where it crosses breath and Shakespeare. Do you think breath has a particular role in speaking Shakespeare?

JM: Oh yes, I do definitely. I mean obviously Cecily Berry has done all this fantastic work and other people working with her and it's been taken up by the people like Patsy Rodenburg and so on. Kristin has done a huge amount on this, on just how the text itself – where you breathe in text – and where it's indicated actually you breathe by the things like the punctuation and the structure of the text. How important that is in finding what this text means, what the character is feeling and so on. If you

go blazing through that and ignoring it and those heightened language structures, then that's a great pity because I think you lose so much by doing that. I also think as a training it's great because this is why it's so useful for training actors and performers to work on Shakespeare, but not to be clever and not to be doing your training where they're saying oh well what could we, you know, what shade are we doing or how can we impress ourselves on this text, then it's not very useful. I mean you can do that if you like it will stand it, but I mean in terms of training if you really let the text teach you it will be very, very helpful. There is absolutely no doubt that noticing and it doesn't mean to say it's a rigid structure so there are still many ways, I mean it was Peter Brook I think who said there's a million ways to say any line of text, and I think Cicely Berry thought actually there's a billion ways – they both write about this at some point. But of course, because every human being would take this little phrase or sentence and it will be different because the human voice is so individual as we know.

But there is something that the writer had in mind, the writer had in mind something that was very important that he was trying to say or she was trying to say, and it's indicated often by the phrasing, where the breath comes, how the verses stops at their breath, how there's a pause or the lines just run one onto the other and the other and the other because the person is just in such flow, such joy, or such misery that they can't stop. If you ignore all of that, then you're not going to make sense of it. I think it is important and there are other writers I think equally that – so I think also if you learn to do that with Shakespeare then you can apply that also then to some of the best modern writers too. Certainly, again someone like for example Samuel Beckett completely understood, I mean he's a good example I think where in a way you breathe, what the pattern is, the rhythm, the structure of the text is absolutely vital. Look at any of his plays, and I think from *Waiting for Godot* to *Not I* I mean if you were not thinking about what's the breath pattern and shape and what's going on here and letting that inform you, then you'd be way off what you think he was thinking. I think if you write, I mean you know I write, I have written often with collaboration of students by setting up the brief as you know and then creating plays over a number of weeks but I have written quite a lot or I sometimes help students to rewrite and edit because they might come up with very good ideas, but again the writing itself in terms of playing it would've been quite boring. It's too much about the content and they haven't heard the voice. I think as a writer that really likes the joy in the voice I'm really aware of that when I'm writing that I can hear that voice, the nuances and the pattern and so on. It's still great when someone else speaks, it isn't me and I find other things, but if they paid attention to the basic structures that I was working with, it's a joy for me because then it's a kind of different voice, but that structure is there and I like to think, I mean I just – if one could have a sort of fanciful wish it would be that Shakespeare could be listening in and looking and seeing and hearing all these different versions. He could pop in and see any of these versions in the 400 and something years since and I bet some of them he would probably go wow that's – I didn't think it like that that's great. Where others he would be thinking what a load of shit that thing or he would call it something much more colourful I expect.

But I think– and again – I mean once you are doing you can't be thinking about it – this is true of all voice work. The problem is you can't – at the moment you're doing it. If I find a student saying this, “Oh I was trying to think about my voice as I did” I think well disaster that's terrible then. You could only work, train, and rehearse and work and experiment and then really you can only be in that text, and you have to let all that go. Hopefully it's become second nature, it's become embodied, and I suppose that's what I think is that in a way, why to come back to your original question really, why Shakespeare is so extraordinary and so interesting to work on because it is embodied text somehow. It allows for embodiment, and I don't think all texts do and you might struggle to – you might be able to embody it, but you're going to have to work very hard and you're supplying a lot whereas in a way I think so often it is supplied. The other thing is there's so many details in it and it can shift meaning,

it's so wonderfully open, you know, as we said it is really fixed structure on one level. It is so wonderfully open. Actually you can see the play again, the play that you already know or I – I've worked on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for example several times and *Romeo and Juliet* and I'm amazed. I think well where's that line, I don't remember that line like that because now somebody has found a different interpretation because they have a breathing and moving in a slightly different way within this context and suddenly a whole extra meaning or a different meaning and the whole thing slightly shifts like the kaleidoscope. It's not wrong, it wasn't wrong before and it's not wrong to shift this. It's just that there are so many possibilities, and there are so many details and nuances that actually you kind of – I mean that's really – I could go on working on one Shakespeare play, I think probably anyone really, but for the rest of my life, and I wouldn't get bored

DCL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JM: I think but if – every time you work with another group of performers for example or maybe you've thought of it now in a slightly different setting or something, then it all opens up again, it's like a different play because it's so rich and detailed and weirdly at the same time so simple, one level some things are so simple, they are so clear. Again that makes me think about Samuel Beckett, who I think sometimes you think there is no other way – but having said that, you could say it anyway, there are many ways, there is something sometimes about heightened language and poetic writing that you could say it in other way but you got any heart or soul because of the way it's been configured and written and how it is written in a way there's only one way and it will be found again by the right performer. It will be different because it's different voice, but something about its structural pattern or something. I know that I mean I think I am sure I told you this, I know I told you this. I once watched Samuel Beckett direct *Waiting for Godot* and it was in Germany it was the Schiller Theatre, but it was at the Royal Court and he was almost conducting and he had this small notebook and funny enough, there's now an exhibition and they've got these notebooks. Did you see this his exhibition?

DCL: I saw something coming up about it recently.

JM: It's going into some archive somewhere.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: These little notebooks that I was talking about that I saw because I was close enough to see his very neat writing, and he was giving them the – so he was not being very – he wasn't going oh do you like, not at all. It was sort of and it was – the pattern of the voice he was talking about – as if it was – and this perhaps is the thing that made me come up with the phrase choreography of the voice which I often use when I'm talking about working with a lot of voices together, and also the kind of architecture or sometimes I talk about the geography of the text, does that make sense? It's the landscape of it so –

DCL: Yeah, kind of a topography and the texture.

JM: Yeah, the topography and also it's rising and then suddenly dropped and it's – and then there's a sort of bit lost in a bit of a forest around here.

DCL: Yeah.

JM: Which again I suppose leaping back to methodology that is another methodology that I've often applied which is to when I'm directing or voice coaching or working with somebody with voice on something used to think about it geographically text and through texture and landscape. That probably comes because of all this work on the giving voice project and seeing the voice in other contexts like and we did of course do a project a geography of the voice. We did two on that and archaeology of the voice and we did two on that, a divinity of the voice and so on and then obviously there were others like philosophy and psychology of the voice and so on. But particularly geography deeply affected me I think. It was one of the early ones, but I – so that's kind of been a bit of a long-term things on me I think. There we are I'm not sure I can say much more to you.

DCL: No, it's all fantastic.

JM: We're very good time [CROSSTALK] anything else, any last thing? No?

DCL: No just a kind of comment really the sense of embodied text, embodied breath that seems to be really an interesting avenue and in terms of why we get so many different expressions of the same thing.

JM: Yes.

DCL: I think what sometimes Shakespeare gives us most of time probably is these rhythms, these wonderful rhythms, and then when you take this breath, this embodied practice of a single actor for example, then you have this kind of cross-section of something wonderful and it's just – when it's – when it does happen –

JM: Yes when it really happens, yes.

DCL: It really is something to watch and something to hear. I think another thing – that's interesting you're talking about Beckett as well it's – because it may have been you that told me – but he heard plays before he wrote them. He would hear –

JM: Yes after he wrote radio plays, didn't he? Well, Caryl Churchill wrote radio plays before she ever had anything on stage for some years. Yes and I think also you have to think some of those writers of my generation what did we grow up with radio.

DCL: Yeah, yeah.

JM: We didn't grow – we did grow up with films and films, and so for me the biggest influences on me are the radio and it would have been – both music stuff but also a lot of – it was the home service it's the radio four now. I still endlessly listen to radio four and the other thing is films. Then the whole thing of kind of cutting and moving through scenes and everything, and therefore the work I've made and the kind of theatre pieces I've made that's the comment sometimes they say oh it's a bit like live film, it's like a film, but it's not it's live, and that's because almost certainly, and I mean I never used to think about that, it's just people said that, and I felt well I suppose yes I am working. If you think there's always an audio score on my work underneath that's rising before you even see the next scene, you are in the audio world and then it's taking you into the next thing just and that's exactly what films look like. I'm very aware of these charted pieces, but particularly listening the person who talks as much as me. I am also a big listener so when I'm not with people and talking, I'm listening and I do try to say the other thing I think this is really important when you say what an

actor needs is they need to listen, not just hear, but listen, they need to really listen and work with that important sense you know because the eye is so dominant in our culture, but it's inaccurate compared to the ear.

DCL: It reminds me of something I wrote for the TaPRA Research Conference about apprehending Shakespeare rather than comprehending Shakespeare. It's like that's striking the table if I stub my toe at home, I shout out a word with two harsh consonants and a vowel to carry it through. I am not trying to understand its metaphor, I am not trying to write an essay on it I am trying to deal with what I just have done to my toe – I feel like actors could do that when they listen to the other actor or whatever else is going on and apprehend and respond.

JM: Yes, and I mean so many actors spend so much time thinking about what they are going to do, not – they're acting, that is acting not reacting, not listening and it's absolutely important because – and one of the things I'm always doing when I'm teaching, when I'm working and teaching and they say the person just gallops through this text and if you take something really, really obvious like, “To be or not to be that is the question”. The person says to be, to be or not to be that's it. You say to be or what and things just stop a second say oh go down the shops or make a banana sandwich or – and of course they laugh and they said. I say, but why are you giving it all away? What does a good narrative do? It says once, just go once upon a time there was snow bear and it was standing on the – it goes once or once upon a time there was – and I just, I love that there was what, we don't know yet. That's also about listening because you're imagining the person listening –

DCL: Yeah it's the breath from thought to thought as well, isn't it?

JM: Yes, yes.

DCL: Once.

JM: Once and then was what and even though I know what it is because I know the text that I'm going to say that was a snow bear or something. There was a snow bear I find what it was, yes, it was a separate. Ah, where was it, and all of that and that's sort of meticulous work. Sometimes you have to make people do to just stop assuming and giving it all away but constantly in a way narration, it both satisfies because it's going the way you want it to possibly or the predictable way which maybe – and the mythology it often is you think ah because I knew it would be a year and a day when he returned I knew because it should be but nevertheless it's full of surprises so – and all texts should have that thing. I think if we want to go on listening because we think what next and if that's true every performance, that's the other thing, then of course the text is always new whereas if you are saying it like well yesterday I am doing, it's not tomorrow so it's–. Why am I bothering to be there?

DCL: Yeah.

JM: Now I must go – but..

DCL: Well thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me and being so generous in your responses.

JM: That's no problem at all– thank you

[End]

Appendix C – Approved Interview Consent Form



Professor Julie E Lydon, Vice-Chancellor
Yr Athro Julie E Lydon, Is-Ganghellor

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: ‘Breathing Through the Text: Investigating the Role of Breathing Work in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Approaches to Speaking and Acting Shakespeare’s Text’

Research investigator: Denis Lennon

Research Participants name:

The interview will take approx. 1 hour, but follow up questions may be required at a later stage. I don’t anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produce
- If requested you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Denis Lennon as research investigator
- the interview transcript will be included the appendix of the PhD thesis
- any direct quotations from the interview, or paraphrasing of interview data, that is made available through the completed PhD will need to bear your name in order to identify you as an expert in your field and to contextualize your training background.
- The researcher may wish to use the interview material in the future for publication use, however, in this instance further approval by you would be sought and the material not used until such approval was given.
- the actual recording will be kept by the research investigator, Denis Lennon.
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don’t have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don’t expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Printed Name

Participants Signature Date

Researchers Signature Date

Contact Information

Name of researcher: **Denis Lennon**

Full address: **19, Aberystwyth Crescent, Barry, Vales of Glamorgan, CF62 7EH**

Tel: **07521 240081**

E-mail: **denis.lennon@southwales.ac.uk**

You can also contact Denis Lennon’s Director of Studies:

Name of Director of Studies: **Michael Carklin**

Full address: **University of South Wales, Cardiff Campus, 86-88 Adam St, Cardiff CF24 2FN**

Tel: **01443 6 68601**

E-mail: **michael.carklin@southwales.ac.uk**

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact Denis’ Director of Studies, Michael Carklin, as detailed above, or the University of South Wales, Faculty of Creative Industries ethics champion, Steven Higgins (steven.higgins@southwales.ac.uk).

Appendix D – Approved Workshop Consent Form



Professor Julie E Lydon, Vice-Chancellor
Yr Athro Julie E Lydon, Is-Ganghellor

Workshop Consent Form

Research project title: 'Breathing Through the Text: The Role of Breathing Work in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Actor Training for Shakespeare's Text'

Research investigator: Denis Cryer-Lennon

Research Participants name:

As part of his PhD research Denis Cryer-Lennon has recently conducted interviews with voice coaches looking at the subject of breath work for speaking Shakespeare. Having now recorded and explored the themes and ideas that came from the interviews – Denis will now be conducting workshops with students to explore the theme ideas therein.

The workshop series will take place on Tuesdays evenings from 6-7.15pm from 13th November to February 5th – with a three-week break over Christmas. There will be 7 workshop each lasting approximately a one hour and 15 minutes. As well as the workshops, there may also be a follow up focus groups and/or interviews with participants should they wish to take part in this further activity.

I do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be to be part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that workshop participants explicitly agree to taking part of the research and how the information resulting from their participation will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Please read the accompanying **information** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following (this form will also be explained verbally to all students in the initial workshop session):

- the workshops and any subsequent focus group/interviews will be recorded on video and/or Dictaphone
- the participants may be asked to record some reflections in writing
- the content of the recordings/reflections will form part of the workshop data and be analysed by Denis Cryer-Lennon as research investigator
- the analysis may be included in the appendix of the PhD thesis, and in the thesis, in part or full.
- Recordings may also be used in part or full in research presentations (e.g. at academic conferences etc). In such cases names will remain anonymized.
- any direct quotations from the participants, or paraphrasing of workshop data, that is made available through the completed PhD will anonymized
- the researcher may wish to use the workshop material in the future for publication use (e.g. in book or journal article form), whereby the anonymity of the participants will remain protected.
- the actual recording/s will be kept by the research investigator, Denis Cryer-Lennon.
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

By signing this form, I agree that

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and withdraw my participation at any time

2. The workshop data or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participants Printed Name

Participants Signature

Date

Researchers Signature

Date

Contact Information

Name of researcher: **Denis Cryer-Lennon**

Full address: **University of South Wales, Cardiff Campus, 86-88 Adam St, Cardiff CF24 2FN**

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You can also contact Denis Cryer-Lennon’s Director of Studies:

Name of Director of Studies: **Michael Carklin**

Full address: **University of South Wales, Cardiff Campus, 86-88 Adam St, Cardiff CF24 2FN**

Tel: **01443 6 68601**

E-mail: **michael.carklin@southwales.ac.uk**

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact Denis’ Director of Studies, Michael Carklin, as detailed above, or the University of South Wales, Faculty of Creative Industries ethics champion, Steven Higgins (steven.higgins@southwales.ac.uk)