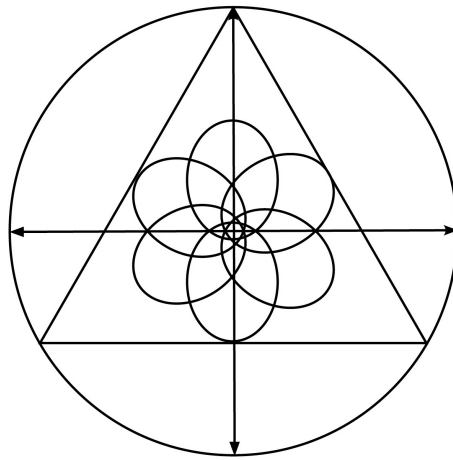


**Inside a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training:
Development and Implementation of Contemplative Actor Training**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

Dec 2023

In dedication to:

My daughter Olivia Violeta

May she have the courage to make her dreams come true.

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a systematic study of how mindful attention operates onstage. The research stands under the Practice as Research (PaR) methodology model. It uses a multi-mode inquiry approach for developing, testing, and critically reflecting on how to elaborate a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT).

The research is conducted from the perspective of both practitioner and researcher. A contemplative pedagogy is developed to aid actors in enhancing their performance skills by helping them to self-regulate attention onstage. This takes the form of psychophysical actor training embedded with mindfulness techniques. The thesis describes an extensive practical research phase of *workshopping* (Schechner). Twenty-one MBPT workshops worked as prototypes, combining proven contemplative exercises with new material to instil mindfulness techniques in performers.

Through the magnifying glass of self-reflection and critical examination of practice, a path is delineated to incorporate contemplative pedagogy in the actor-training arena in the context of higher education. Mindfulness-based interventions from the performance field and other related disciplines are critically analysed and revised to inform the research.

The dissertation presents an original contribution to the field of actor training by offering the first dedicated mindfulness training designed specifically for actors. It details a multi-layered and dynamic model for mindfulness-based performance training. This model presents a conceptual apparatus from which to read the practice and is intended to be used by other contemplative performers to inform and illuminate their practice.

Acknowledgements

Although developing a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training was a solo activity. This research made me understand the phenomena of interconnection and interbeing, as this research evolved throughout the interplay with numerous people with whom I interacted along the way.

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1) CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1) Rationale

This research emerges as a response to a foundational need I have identified: that, as actors, we inevitably encounter the necessity of abiding in the present moment onstage. The theatre theorist David George proposes that one of the distinctive elements of performance practice is that it "only lives in the present" (George, 1999, p.14), happening at the unceasing threshold of the present moment. Accordingly, numerous theatre practitioners and academics agree that it is crucial to cultivate the performer's ability to be present on stage. (See, *inter alia* Stanislavsky, 2008; Zarrilli, 2006, 2013; Brook, 1996; Schechner, 2006, 2001; George, 1999; Mnouchkine, 2007). Evidence shows that Stanislavsky, who developed the foundations of professional theatre, had a particular interest in directing actors towards the present-moment experience (Carnicke, 2008; Chamberlain et al., 2014). For example, according to Carnicke, the terms *experiencing*, and *I am*, central in Stanislavsky's system, are related to "the actor's sense of being fully present in the dramatic moment" (Carnicke, 2008, pp.218-219). Along the same line, French theatre director Arianne Mnouchkine states, "theatre is the art of the present. For the actor, there is no past, no future" (Mnouchkine in Féral, 1989, p.91). Accordingly, the performer's core task is maintaining attention in the "here and now" (Núñez, 2019, p.24). Furthermore, Zarrilli defines an actor as one "who psychophysically embodies a performance score in the moment of its enactment" (Zarrilli et al., 2013, p.42). This research emerges from the curiosity of examining the phenomena of entirely existing within the moment-to-moment experience. By using mindfulness techniques, I will delineate a path for actors to learn to navigate the immediate moment experience onstage.

This prevalence of the importance of abiding in the present moment while acting may partly explain why the attention problem onstage has not been left unattended in actor training (see, *inter alia* Schechner, 2006; Grotowski, 1995; Hodge 2010; Richards, 1995; Zarrilli, P. B., Daboo, J., & Loukes, R., 2013; Plá, 2019; Worley, 2006; Brook, 1996; Britton, 2013, 2013a, Schechner, 2006, Núñez, 2018, 2019; Chamberlain et al., 2014; Middleton, 2017). Furthermore, the interest in understanding the movements of actors' minds can be tracked since the nineteenth century. Stanislavsky was interested in "discovering methods that prevent actors' minds from wandering out of the circle of imaginative

creation on stage" (Fovitzky in Wegner, 1976, p.85). Accordingly, the interest in understating how the actor's attention works onstage is considered by some contemporary practitioners (Zarrilli, 2006, 2013; Britton, 2013, 2019; Núñez, 2018, 2019; Foley, 2016) as a fundamental building block in actor training. For example, Núñez states that "acting is becoming aware of our physical and psychological attention. Actors then must develop strong focus and learn how to direct their mind to [a] specific task" (Núñez, 2019, Sacred Theatre Workshop). Along the same line, the American actor and director Kevin Page suggests that the actor, regardless of their background training, "must have superlative control over her attention span and the precision with which she can focus that attention" (Page, 2018, p.3). This research arises from a classical problem in actor training: managing attention and distraction onstage. I will contribute to deepening the understanding of how to pay attention in actor training by developing and implementing Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT). During this dissertation, I will present a systematic study of how mindful attention operates onstage.

I am interested in examining how a particular kind of attention, which I will refer to as 'mindful attention', relates to actor training. Kabat-Zinn defines this kind of attention as attention to the present moment, on purpose and not judgmentally. (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Mindfulness practice and theory stands in thousands of years of investigation on the movements of the mind (see, *inter alia*, Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Hart, 2013; Dunne, 2011, 2015; Maex, 2011; Khoury, 2017, 2018, 2019). Additionally, thanks to the rapid spread of mindfulness techniques in the west (Boyce, 2011), there is cumulative evidence of the synergic relationship between mindfulness and performance (see Blum, 2016; Moyle, 2016; Baltzell & Cote, 2016).

Thus, I intend that this research works as a bridge, as a *pontifex* that contributes to making mindfulness techniques accessible to actors so they can perform better onstage. In this way, this Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) aims to enhance actors' performative skills by helping them self-regulate attention onstage.

1.2) Motivation for the research

The motivation for this research comes from my experience as an actor and meditation practitioner. I was not schooled on how to combine these two practices, but I have pursued simultaneously study and practice in theatre and meditation for twenty years. I met my first meditation teacher, Verónica Guzman, in 2000, three years before I started formally

studying theatre. At that time, I was a first-year psychology student and took an elective course called *Buddhist Psychology*. In that course, I learnt to meditate and began studying the human mind from a Buddhist perspective. The experience of relating directly to my mind touched me deeply. My interest in Buddhism was ignited, and I continued to practice and study meditation within the Shambhala tradition. The primary meditation practice within this tradition is called *Shamatha Vipassana*. *Shamatha* means 'peaceful abiding'. This practice consists of directing one's attention to the body breathing while becoming aware of thoughts and sensations that occur in the present moment. Practising this mental training can develop mental stability, clarity, and strength (Mipham, 2003, pp. 23-31).

By the time I graduated from acting studies in 2007, I had been practising meditation for seven years, attended multiple meditation retreats, became a Buddhist, and was a Vajrayana student in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition¹. My continuous engagement with this tradition has influenced how I address my profession and life. Although I am currently not an active member of the Shambhala community, the motivation for this research springs from the Shambhala teachings and practices, especially the ones related to Dharma Art² that I will describe further.

In 2003 I began to study theatre but continued my studies in Buddhism and Buddhist psychology. I studied at the Universidad Diego Portales, a recently formed acting school. The approach of this acting school focused on crossing Eastern and Western techniques. The university had a robust psychophysical approach to acting. Raúl Osorio, the school director, had an approach to acting influenced by Eugenio Barba and Jerzy Grotowski.

During my acting school years, I practiced meditation daily. I noticed how attention was a critical aspect of actor training. Still, it lacked the nuances and insights about the present-moment experience I was learning through

¹The Shambhala tradition is a form of Tibetan Buddhism introduced in the west by Chögyam Trungpa Rimpoché. The Shambhala tradition was introduced as a secular path where meditation practice is presented as “a pathway to connect to our innate dignity, kindness, wisdom, and strength—and apply them on a journey of personal, cultural, and societal transformation”. People can practice the Shambhala path without the need of becoming a Buddhist. At the same time, the Shambhala teachings are grounded in Tibetan Kagyu and Nyingma lineages. Thus, in the Shambhala tradition one can also access more traditional practice and study of Buddhist teaching that are known as the three yanas or vehicles from Buddhism. This set of teachings are Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. I practiced the three of them. The Hinayana, or foundational vehicle, emphasizes personal liberation and focuses on the development of mindfulness and insight through practices such as meditation and ethical conduct. The Mahayana, or great vehicle, emphasizes the bodhisattva path, which is the commitment to attaining enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. This yana emphasizes compassion and the cultivation of the six perfections, including generosity, patience, and wisdom. The Vajrayana, or diamond vehicle, is a more advanced form of practice that utilizes tantric techniques such as visualization, mantra recitation, and deity yoga to awaken the innate wisdom and compassion of the practitioner. For further information regarding the Shambhala lineage see: (Trungpa, 2003, 2004).

² Dharma art refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state. It is an attitude of directness and unself-consciousness in one's creative work.

meditation training. Therefore, from the beginning of my training in theatre, I suspected that the secret to becoming a good actor resided in being able to 'ride' the present moment on stage.

At the same time, as an actor-student and meditation practitioner, I experienced a painful gap between wanting to be present and being able to be present on stage. Often my expectation of wanting to do the exercise right or the fear of doing it wrong hindered my ability to be fully present. Before approaching a scene, I could sometimes hesitate or overthink; after finishing a performance, I could be self-critical, and I often worried about getting external validation and feared rejection. Accordingly, Zarrilli proposes that the most common struggles that actors experience when performing are "problems of anticipation, pushing, not listening, inattention, etc. [which] are all manifestations of not entering fully into the state of being at play at the moment" (Zarrilli, 2009, p.100).

As an actor and meditation practitioner, I have fostered the question of integrating mindfulness techniques into acting training for years. Twenty years ago, I was a beginner in meditation and acting, so I did not have the language to name these experiences. Since then, through a crafty trial and error system, I followed my intuition, discovering, what worked for me. I included meditation practice as part of my actoral training. Also, during performances, I often found a quiet place to sit between scenes; sometimes, I practised returning to my centre after an intense scene.

Additionally, I began to apply the same principles from my meditation practice to my acting practice. Whenever my thoughts took over me onstage, I deliberately brought myself back to the present moment. It is relevant to mention that, at that point, I did not have the skills to share this learning process with others.

The process of assimilating mindfulness principles and applying them to acting was not a conscious decision. On the contrary, it was a slow and intuitive process of macerating *experiencing* (Stanislavski, 1999) that took years to ripen through practice. At the same time, since the beginning, I already longed to share these practices with my colleagues. That was why, in my undergraduate thesis, *La cacería del vacío: una incesante búsqueda del principio femenino en el teatro* (Fuentes, 2006), I explored the role of emptiness in theatre practice.

Once I graduated from acting studies, I focused my exploration on physical theatre, street theatre and improvisation. Externally, I did not mix the two fields of acting and meditation, but I continued to explore them privately for a decade. In parallel, in the field of meditation, I continued practicing and became a meditation teacher

accredited by the Shambhala tradition. Additionally, I began to teach mindfulness in a secular context at Instituto Mindfulness (Chile).

From 2013 onwards, I began offering workshops exploring blending theatre and meditation practice. I offered these workshops to a general audience under the umbrella of Instituto Mindfulness Chile. In 2015, I began offering a method I named *Presencia Auténtica*, authentic presence. I delivered these workshops in acting and dance schools.

Simultaneously, in 2014-2015 I participated in research where we implemented mindfulness training for athletes. There I worked with Victor Cepeda, a sports psychologist. We adapted the Mindfulness Acceptance Commitment (Gardner & Moore, 2007) protocol. We implemented a programme called *Flow, mindfulness training for runners* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This research was an antecedent for the current investigation, as I could witness the positive effects that mindfulness training had on athletes' performance.³ This positive experience reinforced my motivation to elaborate a mindfulness-based training specially designed to fit the needs of performers.

The starting point for designing workshops for performers was to combine several exercises from contemplative trainings rooted in the Shambhala tradition - Mudra Space Awareness and Social Presencing Theatre - with gathered scientific research regarding the benefits of mindfulness in mental health and sports psychology.

I want to reflect on embodying these contemplative traditions by using Kozel's understanding of the pull in opposite directions of respecting and disrespecting these teachings.

This amounts to a cyclical corporealizing of the thought of our predecessors and is compelling for seeming to pull in two directions at once: both respecting and disrespecting the tradition. The tradition is respected because the ideas are deemed meaningful or relevant to our embodied experience rather than simply out of blind adherence to their place in the canon, but creative disrespect is demonstrated as the ideas are interpreted, adapted, expanded, and elaborated (Kozel, 2008, p.6).

I recognise a creative disrespect in interpreting and adapting the contemplative traditions embedded in MBPT. For example, as I previously mentioned, my approach to mindfulness techniques and practices comes from Tibetan Buddhism. Consequently, the MBPT ethos I propose in this research is rooted in Buddhist ethics and comes from a component of *dharmā* that should be embedded in the content and how I facilitate the MBPT workshops. However, at

³ While delivering this training, I became aware of the similar challenges that athletes and actors face. For example, competition; high stakes; unconventional style of life that includes extensive hours of training/ rehearsing, and travel for competition/performances were some points of intersection between athletes and actors.

the same time, I aim to present MBPT as a secular training focusing on actors' self-regulation of attention in a vernacular language detached from religious connotations.

The main currents influencing my practice are Trungpa's teachings on Dharma Art. Especially two contemplative trainings that spring from Dharma Art teachings and that were developed by performers - Mudra Space Awareness (Worley, 2001, 2016, 2018, 2019, Duquette, 2017, 2020) and Social Presencing Theatre SPT (Hayashi, 2017, 2020, Fernandez, 2016) - that I will address further in detail. I respect and follow the example of their leading practitioners (Worley and Hayashi) who "laid down a path in walking" (Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. xii) and built the foundations from which I address contemplative training in performance. However, although in the MBPT, I use various exercises from Mudra Space Awareness and Social Presencing Theatre, I do not attempt to transmit these pieces of training literally. I use some of these training exercises and principles to help actors better understand how their mind works onstage.

This adaptation feature highlights a particularity of this research as a "situated" intervention. I, as a Latin American actress, was not formally schooled in these traditions. Additionally, when I became interested in the intersection between mindfulness and theatre practice in the early 2000s, Mudra Space Awareness and Social Presencing Theatre leading teachers Lee Worley and Arawana Hayashi were no longer teaching at performance schools. The teaching occasions were scarce, and the training occurred exclusively in the northern hemisphere. Due to travel and tuition prices, I could not pursue the certification to become a teacher of those contemplative trainings, as attending face-to-face training was mandatory. In contrast, I claim that MBPT does not reproduce pre-established training, but, in this research, I act as a 'spiritual bandida' (Núñez, 2019), gathering an eclectic compound of exercises and conceptualisations from several backgrounds to design a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training which aims to help actors self-regulate their attention onstage.

In further stages of the dissertation, I will examine closely the influences and differences between MBPT and the contemplative training that preceded it. Here I want to stress that this research emerged when I decided to discover in practice what was *my* way of implementing mindfulness training for actors.

The Mindfulness and Performance Symposium hosted by the University of Huddersfield in June 2016 was a vital antecedent for this research. There I offered a Mindful Acting workshop. I regard that workshop as the seed of the current research. That was the first time I formally presented my version of applying mindfulness techniques to actors.

There, I met people from different continents and contemplative traditions who all shared the same interest in finding ways to permeate theatre with contemplative practices. Additionally, this event had a transformative effect that catapulted my motivation to develop the current research, as I mention in the following extract from a letter that I sent to the organising team shortly after returning home.

Knowing that you exist, that we are alive simultaneously, that we are breathing, and that our cells are burning oxygen in different countries worldwide, makes me smile. I am not alone anymore. (...) The feeling of belonging, partnership, and recognising my soul in the eyes of others will follow me wherever my feet touch the ground. I had found my gang! (Fuentes, 2016, unpublished).

This event was reassuring as I realised there was a network of performance practitioners and researchers dedicating their lives to understanding the intersections between mindfulness and performance. I returned home determined to develop Mindfulness-Based Performer Training.

In 2017, Funded by a Chilean Scholarship, I initiated a master's by Research in Drama Dance and Performance at The University of Huddersfield. That research aimed to develop dedicated mindfulness training for actors. Due to the research's potential to contribute to mindfulness and performance, this research was upgraded to pursue a PhD in Drama Dance and Performance at The University of Huddersfield.

Over these six years, I deepened my understanding of how mindful attention operates onstage. In this dissertation, I will present the process of developing and testing Mindfulness-Based Performer Training. One of the aims of this research is to offer significant evidence on integrating mindfulness techniques into actor training.

1.3) Field Review: Mindfulness & Performance

1.3.a) Introduction

This research springs from the nascent niche of performing arts practitioners exploring the intersection between mindfulness and performance. Specifically, I investigate how to apply and incorporate mindfulness-based techniques into

actor training. The wider field of mindfulness and performance is defined by Middleton (2018b) in the article 'Mapeamento de performances com base em mindfulness' in which she coins the term "mindfulness-based performance" to refer to performative actions that focus on practices linked to the management of attentional states. Thus, the mindfulness-based performance field encompasses practitioners who include contemplative practices in their creation process, producing contemplative performances, contemplative writing or plays, and contemplative pedagogies. However, I am exclusively interested in practice and research that aims to find ways to apply contemplative practices to actor training. Accordingly, I will review the work of contemporary and historic performers who explicitly address the intersection between mindfulness and actor training.

I have decided to call this section a field review instead of a literature review, as one of the particularities of this emergent field is that the available literature is not extensive, and there are performing artists actively engaged in the field who have not yet written about their approach, nor had it investigated by other researchers. I will include such practitioners below.

Through thoroughly surveying the field, I aim to present the variety of practices and discourses available and identify the similarities, connections, and differences to my own approach. I will also signal the principal authors, books, articles, practices, and unpublished interviews that significantly impacted my investigation by shaping the understanding from where I approach contemplative practice. I also aim to identify the gaps in the field to indicate where my research can make an original contribution.

There are some challenges in delineating the scope of this field review. The influence of contemplative practices in the development of modern theatre is complex, embracing a wide range of specific techniques and practices from diverse lineages practised and incorporated by numerous actors/directors in the history of Western actor training. As we shall see, in many of these cases, there may be historical evidence of the influence of contemplative practice but no detailed account of the ways in which that influence was carried out. As my research is practically based, I have been mostly interested in sources which provide sufficient detail to inform the development of a methodology.

In what follows is an overview of the field, beginning with more historical examples and increasingly focusing my attention on sources which are closest to my project. First, though, I include a short discussion of two themes which have informed the scope and articulation of my research: the rejection of the categories of 'Eastern/Western Theatre' and the role of embodied practice.

The rejection of the categories of 'Eastern/Western Theatre'

As a Latin American, I consider the geographical definition of Western and Eastern forms of theatre problematic. Although this categorisation is a convention widely used by Northern theatre makers, it omits a wide range of pre-colonialist forms of performance present in the cultures that inhabited the continent of "America" before 1492. It also fails to convey the range of performances and rituals that take place on the continent of Africa. That is why, instead of using the category of Eastern and Western forms of theatre, in this dissertation, I prefer to use the category of contemplative theatre, regardless of geographical origination.

Daniel Plá, a Brazilian Theatre pedagogue and researcher, in an article titled "Mindfulness, Meditation and Dharma Art: Clues for the Pedagogy of the Actor" (2019) defines the term *contemplative* "to refer to those artistic practices which share some characteristics, such as introspection, body-mind attunement technologies, focus on self-integration, refining attention, contact" (Plá, 2019, p.5). This category best serves my research purposes, as it focuses on the characteristics of the artistic practice instead of highlighting the geographical place where these practices occur.

Through this research, I am interested in examining contemplation as "a quality of apprehending reality, a mode of perception that can be cultivated by the artist and form a foundation for the creative process" (Sydow, 2018). Therefore, it is worth mentioning that the term 'contemplative' may trigger resistance in theatre practitioners when understood as a passive approach, as performance theory and practice emphasise action. That is why I would like to clarify that contemplation does not imply a withdrawal from society. On the contrary, the Latin word *contemplation* can be translated as "to gaze attentively". Thus, the contemplative approaches provide technologies of the gaze (Han, 2020), enabling actors access to the direct experience of internal and external phenomena. A final remark on the term contemplative is that several authors propose (Arden, 1985; Han, 2015, 2020; Williams, 2011) that returning to contemplative activities or *vita contemplativa* while recovering the capacity to linger in the present moment experience is highly pertinent to counteract acceleration, hyperkinesia, and restlessness of the current times. Accordingly, theatre teachers have reported decreased

actors' attentional scope due to incorporating technological devices (see Page, 2018). I propose that mindfulness-based techniques can contribute to actors improving their attention management in these hectic times.

Embodiment of contemplative practices

Another problem in addressing contemplative approaches in actor training is that each contemplative lineage has a specific cultural imprint that derives from an imbricated network of signs, practices and vocabulary, a set of values and an epistemological approach that makes it difficult to translate into other cultures that do not share the same network of symbols.

The contemplative approach relies heavily on the teacher's embodiment of contemplative principles and practices, supposing extensive training in a particular practice (see Middleton, 2017; Middleton & Plá, 2018; Kabat-Zinn, 2006; Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Therefore, this research particularly favours practitioners who have undergone significant training in the contemplative practice they bring to bear on their actor training.

Thus, the wide diversity of practices that this field encompasses brings about two major obstacles: the lack of conceptual consensus to address the contemplative practice in the performance field and the necessity to draw on practices with which one has extended experience.

To overcome these problems, I narrowed this field review focus to investigating the current research closest to my embodied knowledge. I approach the contemplative practices in the performance arts from my experience of 20 years of practising and studying mindfulness from a particular Buddhist-based approach. Ultimately, sources who share that background have been the most directly relevant to my research.

1.3.b) A Historical Perspective - The Underground River

Stanislavski's understanding of contemplative practices systematically remained obscured by the Western mainstream theatre schools of acting. In *Stanislavsky in focus: An acting master for the twenty-first century* (2009), Sharon Carnike proposes that the main interest in Stanislavski's methods was culturally drawn towards realism; "Neither of the two approaches [Russia and USA] found Stanislavski's study of avant-garde and Eastern arts of more than a passing interest" (Carnike,

2009, p.8). However, several authors studied how the influence of yoga (White, 2006; Carnicke, 2009; Zarrilli, 2009; Kapsali, 2014) and his understanding of Buddhist meditation (Fovitzky, 1922; Wegner, 1976; Carnike, 2009; Chamberlain, 2014; Ingleson,2022), laid the foundations for the development of Stanislavski's psychophysical System of actor training.

In addition to the above-mentioned articles, there is substantial evidence that crucial aspects of Stanislavski's acclaimed System of acting, such as core concepts of *experiencing* and *I am*; the probe of the actor's double consciousness (See Carnike 2009); the exploration of attention and concentration (See White, 2006; Fovitzky, 1922; Wegner, 1976) and the incorporation of concepts such as prana and the projection of rays of energy (Kapsali, 2014; Zarrilli, 2009; White, 2006) are directly connected to Stanislavski's interest in and study of contemplative practices. For example, Wegner (2006), in his article 'Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka: The Influence of Yoga and Turn-of-the-Century Occultism on the System', explains how Stanislavsky adapts techniques from Yoga on the cultivation of attention for incorporating them into his famous exercises in "Circles of Attention" (*krugi vnimaniia*), which are designed to cultivate the "public solitude" (*publichnoe odinochestvo*) both needed for concentration and the eradication of an actor's self-consciousness. (Wegner, 2006, p.85). Furthermore, in the book *My life in art* (1980) Stanislavski stated that he intended to generate a spiritual order of actors. Although a nuanced exploration of the contemplative traces in Stanislavski's method is a quest that exceeds the bounds of my research, I argue that the contemplative influence on the actor training approach has acted like a subterranean river, secretly nurturing performance training from beneath since the ninetieth century.

Contemplative Practices in actor training

Several twentieth-century theatre practitioners played a significant role in incorporating contemplative practices into actor training. Expanding on the metaphor of the underground river, I propose that these theatre makers who engaged in personal encounters, travelled, witnessed, and practiced contemplative practices served as geysers, giving rise to their embodied experiences coming to the forefront. This group includes Meyerhold, Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, Barba, Brook, Schechner, and Zarrilli. Their travels to Asia, and long-term engagement with specific performance and performance-related disciplines rooted in contemplative practices led them to reformulate their training methods and productions.

This transformational process, characterised by an extended assimilation of contemplative practices through rigorous training and cultural interchange, mirrors the gradual accumulation of pressure in an underground contemplative river. Eventually, some practitioners act as geysers, releasing the pressure of water is heated over prolonged periods of geothermal activity to the surface of acting practice.

A close examination of how the branches of contemplative disciplines have pollinated modern actor training would require an examination surpassing this field review's limitations. That is why, assuming the risk that this quest might be incomplete, I narrowed the exploration by examining authors closer to my embodied practice. In the following pages, I will provide examples to demonstrate how contemplative technologies have proven to provide crucial techniques to train the actor's attention and self-observation.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no single text which traces the underground river of contemplative influences on contemporary theatre; rather traces of this influence are found throughout many texts. Ralph Yarrow's *Sacred Theatre* presents a series of texts from different authors that reflect on the sacred component of theatre, related to the incorporation of contemplative techniques. Two book chapters which go some way toward tracking the contemplative as it played out in so-called Western culture from the 1950s and '60s onwards are Barbara Sellers-Young's 'Motion in stillness-stillness in motion: Contemplative practice in the performing arts' (2013) and Parts 1 and 2 of Christopher Bigsby's *Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama: Volume 3 – Beyond Broadway* (1985).

Similarly, to what I presented with Stanislavski, other historical figures have been revisited from the perspective of contemplative practices; for example, Chamberlain (2002, 2012) and Monica Cristini (2015) have explored Michael Chekhov's approach to spirituality. For example, Chamberlain's article, 'Michael Chekhov: Pedagogy, Spirituality, and the Occult' (2002), explains that actor training can provide the grounds for its own spiritual basis. In the book chapter 'Meditation and Imagination: The Contribution of Anthroposophy to Michael Chekhov's Acting Technique' (2015), Monica Cristini reflects on the influence of Rudolf Steiner's notions of meditation on Chekhov's understanding of concentration. According to Cristini, Chekhov defines concentration as 'a special thing', not an ordinary concentration but a spiritual one, where actors can learn 'being with'. This genuine concentration requires the utilisation of all five senses.

This particular kind of concentration in Anthroposophy, called meditation, serves as a pathway to enter the realm of the creative spiritual world (see Cristini, 2015, pp. 71-73).

Several works, such as *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (2013), have noted contemplative influences in the work of Grotowski.⁴ Herein I would like to examine Grotowski's (2013) chapter titled 'Theatre of Sources', within the book *The Grotowski's Sourcebook* (Wolford & Schechner, 2013. Eds), where Grotowski explains how he relates his understanding of actor training to different contemplative traditions. According to Grotowski, the theatre of sources is what "precedes the differences" in order to help the actor to suspend their habitual or daily life techniques to reach the "decondition of perception". My contemplative approach to acting is a continuation of this search in the Theatre of Sources as I also investigate those techniques that enable actors to explore their own solitude with others. However, the main difference with Grotowski is that I include sitting meditation as one of the foundations for developing the MBPT. In contrast, Grotowski discards sitting meditation as an effective practice for actors. He stated that sitting meditation was not dramatic or ecological.

Here, it is necessary to underline that the techniques of sources that interest us are not those most closely related to techniques of sitting meditation, but those that lead to activity, in action - for example, the martial arts techniques related to Zen. Therefore, the techniques that interest us have two aspects: first, they are dramatic, and second, in the human way, they are ecological. (Grotowski, 2013, p. 259).

The reason for excluding sitting meditation was that, according to Grotowski, this technique fails to compel the elements of organicity, action and live force that are key to performance. However, I disagree with the Polish theatre master. Sitting meditation can help the actor better understand their dramatic and ecological self with others. The underlying difference is that for me, sitting meditation does not imply a withdrawal from the world. Still, on the contrary, it enables a deeper awareness of oneself and our relation to others.

Another argument that Grotowski used to exclude still meditation practice into actor training was his concern regarding the difficulty of addressing the specific cultural and religious bias that meditation practice implies. He states, "It would require many very complicated translations and almost manipulations to arrive at some common territory of work

⁴ For a comprehensive presentation of Grotowski's contemplative sources see the book chapter: 'Asian theatre and Grotowski' by Donald Richie (2013).

on deconditioning the mind" (Grotowski, 2013, p.260). Although the reservations regarding the difficulty of translating a spiritual practice to a secular approach are legitimate, it is worth noting that this text was written in 1980⁵. However, in the past fifty years, the scientific exploration of mindfulness techniques (see Varela et al., 1991; Varela & Shear, 2002; Petitmengin, 2009) and the scientific validation of mindfulness-based initiatives in various fields (see Williams & Kabat Zinn, 2013; Boyce ,Ed, 2011) have contributed to providing a comprehensive language to present a secular approach to meditation practice. In this dissertation, I use some of the terminology developed in the mindfulness field to present a secular approach to mindfulness practices in actor training.

I consider that Grotowski's research and conceptualisations greatly contribute to illuminating key aspects of my practice. The main touchstone of Grotowski's framework for my Practice as a Research process is his understanding of the ripening process as a main component of actor training. In the book *Towards a poor theatre* (2002), Grotowski introduces "*via negativa* - not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks" (2013,p.31). He proposes that actor training should lead actors towards a complete stripping-down process that enables them to access the most intimate layers of their being. I suggest that mindfulness-based technologies may aid actors towards exploring a direct connection with themselves and others.

I identify the major touchstone between Barba's extensive exploration of contemplative techniques and my research as the fact that he signalled the potential that contemplative practices have in enhancing an actor's pre-expressivity. In the book *The Pre-expressive Level* (2007), Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese define pre-expressivity as the state in which an actor's presence is fully prepared to perform. Barba asserts that pre-expressivity is a fundamental level of organisation that exists in all performers (Barba and Savarese, 2007, pp. 255-258). Based on that definition, the MBPT practice as related to attention management, aids actors to access and sustain pre-expressive states. Thus, this research's focus is narrowed to examining the effects of mindfulness techniques in the pre-expressive experience of actors. Therefore, I am conscious that the MBPT scope does not encompass the full complexity of actor training as I do not address several aspects of the acting techniques such as character building, voice techniques, and the study of the

⁵ The Theatre of Sources text was written based on a series of extracts, including texts and talks where Grotowski explained the Theatre of Sources Project from 1979 to 1982 for more details see Grotowski (2013).

dramatical text, among others. Thus, the study of the extent to which MBPT can be applied to the expressive aspects of acting should be addressed in further research.

Other books that have contributed to enriching the psychophysical approach to acting by bridging specific techniques from contemplative practices are as follows: *The Empty Space* (2019) by Brook, where he defines the Holy Theatre as “The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible” (Brook, 2019, p.19). *The Invisible Actor*, (1997) - in this book Oida describes his unique approach to acting; he proposes that the work of the actor consists of becoming invisible to be able to ‘reveal’ something else, and he connects the actors' states of concentration to the Buddhist notion of “Samadhi”. *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki* by Suzuki (1993) and *The Art of Stillness* (2002) by Ellen Lauren, were described by Suzuki as the best teacher of his method. Both books offer a valuable analysis of the practical and theoretical underpinnings of the Suzuki method. This method emphasises awareness of the actor’s lower body, especially the legs and feet, through a series of psychophysical exercises that come from traditional Japanese theatre forms, such as Noh and Kabuki. *A Korean Approach to Acting* (2018) - here Jeungsook presents a clear approach to how to present meditation in an actor training context. *El Arte del Presente* (2007) by Mnouschkine where she presents that the most critical skill that actors should embody is the ability to abide in the present moment experience. The previously mentioned authors have contributed to narrowing the gap between contemplative and acting practices, by making contemplative technologies accessible to actors. However, although I deeply value their approaches, and I am inspired by how their practice and work left a legacy in the understating of theatre as a sacred tool for transformation, I have not been trained in their methods. Thus, I do not have the embodied understanding to transfer their knowledge into my practice. In this dissertation I will privilege working with contemplative training closer to my embodied practice.

1.3.c) Attention in actor training

My research intersects with practice in the broader field of actor-training, which also investigates how attention management, consciousness and presence operate onstage. Significant examples include: Mnouchkine (2007); Rodenburg (2007); Donnellan (2013); Britton (2013, 2013a); Yarrow (Ed) (2007); Bogart & Landau (2014); Hunter, L., Krimmer, E., & Lichtenfels, P. (Eds.) (2016) and Sherman (2016). It is beyond the scope of this research to investigate all such instances

of practice. However, I will describe the books and articles by four contemporary practitioners who address attention within actor training.

There is a significant actor-training practitioner who does not identify as a mindfulness practitioner but whose work nonetheless can significantly contribute to an understanding of mindfulness in performance practice. I am thinking about Philip Zarrilli. His award-winning book, *Psychophysical Acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski* (2009), has contributed to articulating acting and actor training from inside the act of performing. His research and writings have shed light on the intricate aspects of attention and its role in actor training and performance. Based on his long-term encounter and understanding of contemplative techniques - from martial arts, meditation, and traditional art forms such as hatha yoga, the Indian martial art kalarippayattu, kathakali dance, and the Chinese martial/meditation art tai chi chuan - that he has incorporated into his actor training method, Zarrilli proposes an *enactive* approach to acting and actor training, addressing these phenomena from the actor's perspective as a doer. In this book, the author reconsiders the essence of acting and its execution. Rather than focusing on acting as mere representation, he emphasises the energetic aspect of performance. Zarrilli explores the pre-expressive qualities of the actor, explaining how fully engaging the body/mind involves harnessing heightened awareness stages onstage. In the book, *(Toward) a Phenomenology of Acting* (2020), specifically in Chapter Three titled 'Attention and Perception in Action' Zarrilli expands his understanding of the role of consciousness and attention management in actor practice and actor training. He proposes that "when undergoing foundational modes of psychophysical training, actors are optimally being attuned and directed toward a variety of specific and sometimes multiple modes of embodying attention and opening awareness" (Zarrilli, 2020, p.119). The article 'Mindfulness and Heightened Consciousness in Phillip Zarrilli's Psychophysical Approach to Acting' (2018) by Tsu-Chun, brings to the fore the aspects of mindfulness and heightened consciousness imbricated in Zarrilli's approach to psychophysical acting that enable actors to become 'totally' open to the present moment experience. Zarrilli's phenomenological understanding of addressing attentional management onstage has significantly illuminated my practice-as-research process. However, as I mentioned previously this author has never identified himself or this training as using the category of mindfulness.

Another author that addresses attention as a key aspect of his actor training is John Britton, in the book chapter 'Self-with-Others' he signals the relevance of an interpersonal approach to attentional training where the attunement of

the self can be complemented by the sensitivity towards the other. He presents that the two critical elements of acting practice are “what we do and how we pay attention” (Britton, 2013, p. 283). He states that these interconnected elements require specific training. Additionally, in the article, ‘The Pursuit of Pleasure’ (2010), Britton relates actors' states of mindfulness or a heightened quality of attention to actively searching for enjoyment or pleasure while performing a task.

From the outset this demands that she places herself into a conscious relationship with her work. She becomes mindful, through observing a task and making conscious decisions about how she will engage with it (Britton, 2010, pp. 47,48).

This author connects the pursuit of pleasure to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow states, specifically with the autotelic quality recalled in a state of flow, where the activity becomes an end in itself. He proposes that this "pleasure-based rationale" (Britton, 2010, p.48) can help actors revert their avoidance mechanism towards unpleasant tasks. I find that Britton contributes to an understanding of how to help actors enact states of receptive presence while interacting with others. However, it is important to note that he does not consider himself a mindfulness practitioner. Thus, he has not explicitly connected the mindfulness mechanism and actor training system. In an interview that I conducted with Britton at The University of Huddersfield in October 2019, this author mentioned the pertinence that mindfulness practitioners, from their embodied knowledge, should be the ones to unravel the ways to apply mindfulness onstage.

In *The Actor and the Target* (2013), Declan Donnellan examines the role of attention in acting. He presents that there is a difference between concentration and attention onstage; “Attention is about the target; concentration is about me” (Donnellan, 2013, p.43). This author suggests that actors should embody attention, which he states should always be directed outwards to a specific target rather than concentration.

This difference between ‘seeing’ and ‘looking at’ is crucial for the actor. ‘Looking at’ implies that I choose where to place my focus. ‘Seeing’ pays attention to what already exists. I can look at something without seeing it, like the trouserless vicar. Seeing implies that what is seen will have freedom to surprise me, to be different from what I expected. (Donnellan, 2013, p.44).

He explains that concentration gives the actor the illusion of control. However, it narrows their ability to connect with others. Similarly, the Buddhist-based approach to attention also privileges attention rather than concentration.

During this research, based on the Buddhist understanding of attention I will understand *Attention* as the quality of the mind that enables actors to sustain and shift attention at will (Shapiro, 2006).

A fourth example of an actor training where attention is a key element can be found in *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2005) by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. Viewpoints offers a system for theatre artists to make choices based on awareness of time and space, not limited to character psychology. The Viewpoints' technique, developed by choreographer Mary Overlie, provides a vocabulary for actors to explore and analyse the elements of performance relating to time and space. However, I have not researched nor practiced this method enough to feel comfortable teaching it. Therefore, although I identify with some promising points of intersections between the MBPT, and Viewpoints I will leave this training out of my practical exploration.

Herein, I would like to state that attention is considered the holy grail of actor training, and accordingly, most actor training refers to ways of refining attention onstage. There is consensus that actors should have strong attention that is malleable and responsive to the circumstances. However, there is no agreement on the ways of accessing such attention. I propose that mindfulness theory and practice can inform the process of attentional management onstage. That is why in the following section, I will examine the research of performers closer to my embodied practice who have connected Buddhist theory and practice to actor training.

1.3.d) Buddhist-based Approaches to Acting

Books

If we narrow our scope to look specifically at the literature pertaining to Buddhism and performance, there is a limited number of dedicated texts. David George's *Buddhism As/In Performance* (1999) explores connections between Buddhist epistemology and the nature of theatrical performance and analyses examples of Buddhist performance forms. A philosophical perspective is also provided by Yuasa Yasuo in *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory* (1987) in his chapter exploring the contemplative basis of Noh Theatre as a form of mind-body cultivation. Neither book operates as a practical guide to theatre practitioners. Chogyam Trungpa's *True Perception* (2008) comes closer to providing artistic guidance in that he explores the ethical and attitudinal basis for a Buddhist-inspired approach to artmaking, but theatre

specifically is not addressed. Trungpa did, in fact, develop a contemplative training form specifically for actors and this shall be discussed below. Harrison Blum's book *Dancing with Dharma: Essays on Movement and Dance in Western Buddhism* (2016) contains several essays and case-studies, some of which are directly relevant to my research. The main contribution of this book to my research is that it provides evidence of the fertile terrain of exploration that emerges in the intersections between mindfulness and movement. Herein Blum proposes, "The immediacy of the body offers a universal gateway to the present moment and the possibility of peace in that moment" (Blum, 2016, p.7). Several essays bring to the fore the connection of movement-based practice with the pivotal Buddhist teaching of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, where Buddha presented mindfulness of the body as the first foundation for mindfulness practice; among them: 'Gesture of Awareness' by Genoud; 'Body: The Foundation of Insight by Thanasati; Body as the Dharma Gate' by Miller; 'Somatic Meditation: Rediscovering the Body as the Ground of the Spiritual Path' by Reginald Ray. In this last essay, Ray conveys how somatic practices help us to 'explore the body from within', signalling that these practices enable us to contact our body or Soma, in a new way, beyond and outside of the conceptualized body or image of the body that we habitually interpose between our conscious, ego selves and the direct, unmediated, naked, nonconceptual experience of our body (Ray, 2016, p.188).

My approach to mindfulness-based practices is grounded in the body and it intersects with a wide range of somatic practices presented in this book. I share with them the approach of considering the body as a gateway towards accessing the present-moment experience. However, as the title of the book suggests *Dancing with Dharma*, this work focuses almost exclusively on dance and somatic practices. Therefore, it does not include acting or theatre more broadly. In this research, I propose a path towards the incorporation of somatic-based practices into actor-training.

Several books by theatre practitioners have drawn explicitly on Buddhist contemplative practices. Nicolás Núñez's *Anthropocosmic Theatre* (1996; 2019), especially in its extended later edition, provides an account of his research into Tibetan theatre and descriptions of some of the actor-training tools and 'dynamics' he subsequently developed. Prendergast's *Conscious theatre practice* (2021) connects the practice of yoga and meditation to performance-making production. Still, it does not address how to train actors from this perspective besides through incorporating the practice of meditation. Kevin Page's *Advanced consciousness training for actors ACT: meditation techniques for the performing artist* (2018) includes Page's nuanced diagnosis of the need to introduce mindfulness practice to train actors' attention directly. By interviewing several teachers from renowned drama schools in the US, this author presents how mindfulness-based training can fill the gap in actors' training in higher education by reinforcing actors' attentional span. The final chapter of the book presents a year-

long ACT programme. In his words, it consists of “a very specific set of methods for training, or “attuning,” the actor’s ability to deploy, focus, and sustain attention” (Page, 2018, p. xxii). However, I consider that the exercises Page proposes in his ACT are neither original nor explicitly developed for actors. Instead, he presents ‘conventional’ mindfulness exercises, including sitting meditation, open monitoring, mantra, and chant. Thus, this book fails to present a concrete path for actors to incorporate these techniques into their acting practices besides the requirement of 5 hours of weekly practice of ACT exercise.

There are three other books which detail performance training forms that were developed based, in part, on their connection to Chogyam Trungpa (mentioned above). Lee Worley's *Coming From Nothing: the sacred art of Acting* (2001); Arawana Hayashi's *Social Presencing Theatre: The art of doing a true move* (2021) and Barbara Dilley's, *This Very Moment: teaching thinking dancing* (2015). I shall discuss these three books as they directly inform my practice. I want to highlight that, unlike Page's approach in which mindfulness techniques are presented separately from acting practices, these three authors propose training where mindfulness and awareness techniques are imbricated into performance exercises. This aspect of narrowing the gap between contemplative and acting practices is one of the main inquiries that I pursue during the dissertation.

Additionally, some books that gather research on mindfulness include chapters about the application of mindfulness in the performing arts. For example, *Mindfulness and Performance* (Baltzell, 2016) incorporates theoretical frameworks from Jon Kabat-Zinn and Ellen Langer and features contributions from leading scholars who present cutting-edge research and practical approaches to mindfulness. For example, Tremayne & Morgan (2016) suggest that mindfulness training can improve one's self-regulation of attention and, as such, positively influences performance in its broader sense of the capacity to carry out a task effectively. However, only three of the twenty-two articles collected/ included in this book address mindfulness-based initiatives in performing arts. These are ‘Mindfulness and Dancers’ by Gene Moyle; ‘Mindfulness in Music’ by Tim Patson; and ‘Attention, Centering and Being Mindful: medical specialities to Performing Artist’ by Tremayne and Morgan. This last article presents a case study where one actress practises meditation to improve her confidence while recovering from a knee injury. Similarly, the book *The Mindfulness Revolution* (2011) by Boyce (Ed) includes only one chapter ‘Making Music’ by Madeleine Bruser, related to performing arts. Here, she presents how mindfulness practice enables one to “shift towards greater receptivity [which] unlocks our natural musicality and coordination” (Bruser, 2011, p.107). Although these books bring supportive evidence that back up my research by offering

a wide range of “successful” mindfulness-based interventions, they do not address the question of applying mindfulness directly to actor training.

Journals

A dedicated journal gathers mindfulness-based initiatives in the performance field; the *Journal of Mindfulness and Performance* is a project elaborated by the Mindfulness and Performance Project MAP from the University of Huddersfield. This journal aims to counteract an uninformed application of mindfulness techniques in the performance field. They have published five volumes and seven issues of this journal to date. The main contribution of this journal to the field is gathering articles from authors currently researching this field worldwide, making this kind of research accessible to a larger audience. A notable feature of this journal is that it is new, it started in 2017. Before that, isolated articles were published in various journals, which made research in the field very difficult. Additionally, the existence of this journal and the active publication also indicates the crescent interest and creation of knowledge springing from this field.

The number of articles published to date amounts to forty-two. From these the articles that directly address mindfulness-based approaches to actor pedagogy are ‘Mindfulness, Meditation and Dharma Art: Clues for the Pedagogy of the Actor’ (2019) by Daniel Plá; ‘Contemplating Arts Education: An Interview with Lee Worley by Daniel Plá’ (2021) Plá & Worley; ‘The emergence of the Gaze: Mindfulness and Self-Cultivation Practices (Intertwining Theatre and Education)’ by Matteo Bonfitto (2019).

The *Special Issue on Improvisation* (2021) is particularly relevant to aspects of my research, whilst both Volume 2 Issue 1 (2019) and Volume 5 Issue 1 (2022) are dedicated to research in Brazil, which is of interest to me because of the Latin American context. The more recent of these two volumes include Maria Luiza Tavares Cavalcanti's paper 'Trajectories of a research on Mindfulness and its crossings in the actor's work', which reflects my own interests.

I want to highlight the four articles that have contributed to shaping my understanding from where I present this dissertation are Middleton, (2017) ‘Mapping Mindfulness-based Performance’; Plá (2019) ‘Mindfulness, Meditation and Dharma Art: Clues for the pedagogy of the actor’; Quilici (2017) ‘Proposals for a dialogue between performative arts and contemplative traditions’; and ‘Entering the Heart of Experience’, from Middleton and Chamberlain (2012).

In chronological order in 2012, Middleton and Chamberlain (2012) examine first-person accounts in performance and spirituality in their article 'Entering the Heart of Experience'. The first-person approach shapes this research's framework, as I will describe in detail in the methodological section. In 2017, Middleton's article contributed significantly to the mindfulness and performance field, by providing the first "provisory definition" of the field. Additionally, Middleton argues this nascent field is under-researched. This investigation springs from the need to provide a systematic approach to how to apply and access mindfulness onstage. Quilici (2017) explains how interincisal aspects of Buddhist teachings and practices, such as attention to the body and perception, can enrich the performance practice. Plá (2019) offers a conceptual framework for approaching contemplative pedagogies. During this dissertation, I use the terminology coined by these researchers to illuminate my approach to developing a contemplative pedagogy. However, I must stress that none of the above has developed a conceptual apparatus for how mindful attention operates onstage. In that way, I propose that this research goes a step further by presenting multiple practical applications of contemplative practices in actor training and developing a conceptual framework that aims to illuminate the complex phenomena of how to address mindful attention onstage.

Other written material

Several articles and book chapters outside the 'Journal of Performance and Mindfulness' have addressed the intersection between contemplative practices and performance practices. Feit (2016) discusses the role of form and formlessness in the performance process in the article titled 'Her Heart Can Lift Mountains by Beating'. Middleton (2008) explores the concept of "Secular Sacredness" in the ritual theatre of Nicolás Núñez. Brioc (2018) presents a context-oriented theatre approach to mindfulness in the Journal of Context Oriented Arts. Quilici (2018) proposes a dialogue between performative arts and contemplative traditions in an unpublished work titled *Contemplation Reconsidered*. Sellers-Young (2013) explores contemplative practice in the performing arts in his book in the chapter 'Motion in Stillness-Stillness in Motion'. The above-mentioned work offers valuable insights into contemplative-based interventions in the performance field. At the same time, they all signal a need for further research to delve into the specific workings of mindful attention onstage. Addressing this gap will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how mindfulness can effectively be incorporated into actor training and performance practice.

Dissertations

I identified a series of Ph.D. research projects that relate Buddhist terminologies and practices to performance practice and actor training. Several previous Ph.D. research projects have explored the connection between Buddhist terminologies, practices, and performance art, specifically in the context of actor training. Sandström (2013) conducted a doctoral thesis at the University of Huddersfield, examining the role of ideas about the self in actor training. Similarly, Clark (2016) conducted Ph.D. research at the University of East Anglia, investigating 'Buddhism as a pedagogy in contemporary performance art'. Plá (2012) conducted a Ph.D. thesis at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, exploring the contributions of 'Buddhist meditation in the actor's training process'. Camuti (2016) also conducted a thesis externally prepared at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, focusing on the relationship between meditation practices and the actor's system of knowledge.

While these dissertations provide valuable insights into the intersection of Buddhism and actor training, none of them directly addresses my study's specific research questions. Thus, there remains a gap in the existing literature regarding incorporating mindfulness in actor training and its practical applications. My research aims to fill this gap by examining the translation and application of mindfulness practices in actor training.

Practical Sources

Finally, I would like to mention some practitioners that I have had the privilege to work with or relate to, who have enriched my understanding on how to apply contemplative practises onstage.

Daniel Bradford: Canadian/Australian actor and director, who is also a Buddhist from the Triratna lineage. Together we created an 8-week course in Mindful Acting. Although we come from different lineages of acting practice and Buddhism, we share a passion for finding ways to relate mindfulness to acting practice. Sadly, due to the time limitations and the need to narrow the scope of the research I decided to leave the material gathered in these workshops out of the bounds of this dissertation. However, I must acknowledge that the experience of designing and facilitating those workshops informed the way I developed the Mindfulness- Based Performer Training. We adapted and created a series of exercises to present in the Mindful-Acting Course, some of which I incorporated in the MBPT framework. However, I must clarify that the systematic development of the MBPT practice and the subsequent model that I will present in this dissertation is the result of the close examination of my research process and therefore I claim ownership.

Pasquale Esposito: Italian Zen teacher and Actor. He founded and is the director of “The research company art and awareness”. He approaches actor training and practice informed by his experience as a meditation teacher from the Buddhist Zen tradition. I took a workshop with him in November 2018, and I also interviewed him about his method. The most illuminative concept that I took from his approach was that he does not plan the sessions’ structure but lets them unfold responding to the circumstances that take place in the present moment. In further chapters of the dissertation, I will explain how I incorporated that approach into the MBPT context.

Jaya Härtlein, actor, clown, and meditation teacher, with vast experience in Buddhist Triratna Lineage. She has developed a practice called “Dancing the Unknown” where she combines Buddhist-Based concepts and practices with improvisation exercises. I took one of her workshops in Manchester. I mention her as one example that has coined a way of presenting a practice where the contemplative aspect is integrated in performance-based exercises but has not yet articulated a system that provides a theoretical framework to encompass their practice.

Ana Manriquez the Actor, Dancer and Contemplative practitioner recently released her book *Ballet Consciente* (2023). In her approach, she combines academic techniques of ballet with a contemplative teaching of non-aggression or *maitri* and feminist theory. Her book is a contribution to incorporating a kinder approach to teaching the academic technique of ballet. I mention Ana as a practical source because we worked together on an artistic project that preceded my research and her book. She was the director of an autobiographical piece I performed called *Oniscidea Chanchito de Tierra*. Together, we explored the possibilities of devising a piece grounded in mindfulness practices.⁶

I wanted to present the previous examples because one of the characteristics that I identified in this nascent field is that it is populated by many isolated practitioners who have created their paths in integrating contemplative and performance practice based on their embodied understanding and practical exploration. The number of people who write about their embodied practices is limited, as most of the contemplative practitioners are not academics. Additionally, the elusive quality of contemplative practices makes it even more challenging to describe the experience in words. Thus, face-

⁶ An interesting topic I have recurrently discussed with these two contemplative artists (Härtlein, Manriquez) is the role of female artists towards sustaining a critical approach regarding the power dynamics and gender roles implicit in Buddhist teachings. However the socio-political implications of woman in Buddhism is beyond the scope of this research.

to-face workshops are the preferred way to transference knowledge of contemplative-based practices. Therefore, I am aware that this field review will fail to convey numerous initiatives that have not been published by their authors nor researched by other practitioners. To help to connect the threads between isolated contemplative practices I have developed a conceptual framework that aims to unravel key features that take place in applying mindfulness onstage.

1.3.e) Performer Training within Shambhala Art

Two performer training methods are extremely relevant to this research - Mudra Space Awareness (MSA) and Social Presenting Theatre (SPT). These methods and their exercises are considered “seminal material” for this research because of their applicability to performance. For years I have gathered material related to these methods: from books, articles, interviews, and workshops. Both approaches belong to the lineage of practice within which I have trained as a meditation teacher.

Mudra Space Awareness (MSA):

Mudra Space Awareness (MSA) is a psychophysical training developed by a Tibetan Buddhist master, Chögyam Trungpa, based on his experience in practicing and teaching the Chakrasamvara dance of the Surmang monastery in Tibet (Worley 2006, p.122; Trungpa, 1966 pp. 92-93). Trungpa developed this training as a response to the artificiality and inauthenticity that he perceived in performers. “Graceful human beings in ordinary life, on stage, these same people looked grotesque and awkward” (Worley, 2001 p.123). Mudra’s exercises help actors to remain synchronized (body, speech, and mind) under the pressure of performance. Trungpa's writings on Mudra Space Awareness can be found within his *Collected Works* (Vol. 5). Additionally, several sources on MSA are collected in Fabrice Midal’s (2012) *Chogyam Trungpa: His Life and Vision*.

Lee Worley is a teacher of MSA and was invited by Trungpa to set up the Theatre Arts department at Naropa University in Colorado. Worley's book, *Coming from Nothing* (2001), provides some details of MSA as well as outlining other aspects of the Buddhist-inspired actor-training she developed. *Teaching Presence: Field Notes for Players* (2018) presents details of several contemplative exercises, many of them drawn from her performance experience, but addressed here for non-performers. An account of MSA, as taught by Worley, forms one half of the journal article ‘Adapting the Dharma’ (2018a) by Deborah Middleton and Daniel Plá. Additionally, she has written book chapters in, ‘Co-creating with Space’ (2016), and articles such as Mudra Space Awareness (2012) and ‘Harnessing the Wild Horses of Neurosis’ (2021), where

she describes her unique approach to connecting Buddhist teachings to actor training. An important feature of my understanding of Mudra Space Awareness teachings is that as I previously mentioned in the introductory chapter, as a Latin American I have not had many opportunities to access and participate in mudra workshops directly. Although I contacted Lee Worley in 2006 while writing my undergraduate thesis and since then I have actively exchanged emails with her for more than a decade, I only received teachings directly from Lee Worley once in 2016, within the context of the Mindfulness and Performance Symposium that took place at The University of Huddersfield. I mention this, because Worley emphasises that the training in mudra cannot be fully transmitted by words, you need to experience it “Mudra is like kissing” (Worley, 2001). My way to forge the understanding of Mudra teachings has been formed by testing them in my practice as an artist and a teacher, rather than being formally trained in the Mudra Space Awareness curriculum. Another aspect that might be important to highlight is that over the years I received Mudra Space Awareness training by other accredited Mudra teachers, such as Suzanne Duquette and Craig Smith. These workshops have helped me to deepen my understanding of Mudra Practice.

In this research I incorporate several exercises from Mudra Space Awareness teachings within a fully developed and systematic MBPT framework.

Social Presencing Theatre - SPT

Social Presencing Theatre (SPT) is a method where embodied practice and theatre exercises are used as tools for social transformation. These practices are based on the principles of Shambhala Art, Mudra Space Awareness; Vipassana teachings; and Space Awareness, which is a Dzogchen practice (Hayashi 2017). Since 2014 I have taken several workshops with Arawana and her associates in the United States (2014), Brazil (2014), Chile (2015) and Berlin (2019), to deepen my understanding into these practices. However, similarly to what I presented in the previous section, by incorporating practices of Social Presencing Theatre into the MBPT system to illuminate some areas of the MBPT practice. Thus, I do not claim to teach SPT, but I present several exercises within the MBPT framework.

A final remark about these two trainings is that both MSA and SPT emerged from the exploration that took place in the '70s and '80s within the Naropa University, a Contemplative-Based University funded by Chögyam Trungpa. Here,

the artists were actively searching for ways to connect contemplative practices to arts. However, currently, neither Worley nor Hayashi are currently teaching these practices to performers. Worley has expanded her research into the applications of MSA in an educational context, and Hayashi's teaching has been disseminated in the field of social transformation. I believe this research is a continuation of that inquiry. One of the contributions of this research is bringing these practices back to the actor training area. . Additionally, by incorporating exercises from MSA and SPT within a fully developed and systematic MBPT framework, I aim to help to disseminate these precious practices beyond the boundaries of the "Shambhala art" by bridging them to a contemporary approach actor training.

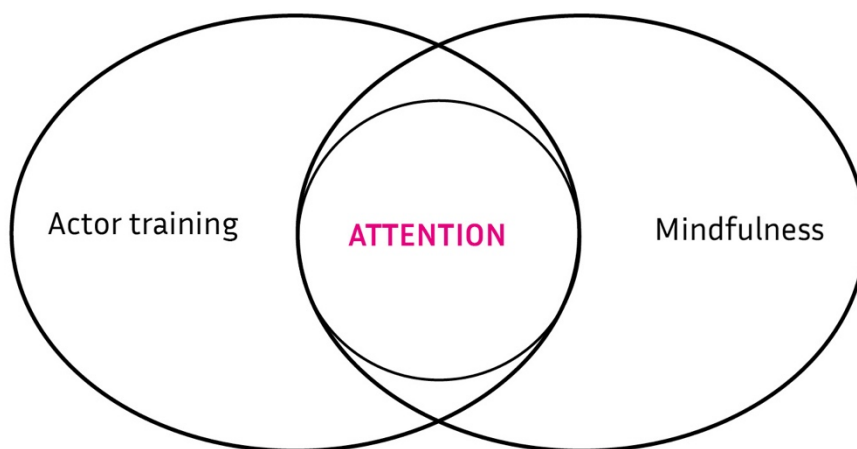
1.3.f) The Gap in the Field

Through thoroughly examining the mindfulness and performance field, I could identify the following gaps this dissertation can contribute to narrowing.

Firstly, I identified that the biggest issue in this field is that contemplative practices rely on long-term training that often manifests a set of practices depending on a specific vocabulary and cultural traditions that limit the knowledge transfer between different contemplative clusters. To address this problem, this thesis seeks to provide a secular approach to mindfulness in actor training, making it accessible and applicable to actors without requiring a long-term commitment to meditation.

Additionally, as presented in Figure 1, I identified that managing attentional skills is a central aspect of both actor training and contemplative practices. This thesis proposes a systematic approach to helping actors manage their attentional skills in a secularised vocabulary that connects mindfulness to acting phenomena. Therefore, the research findings may also interest individuals from other contemplative disciplines and actor training in general, highlighting transferable aspects of mindfulness to performance.

Figure 1: Attention as the area of intersection



Furthermore, there is a lack of conceptual apparatus to address mindfulness onstage, including the absence of an operational definition and clarity on which elements of mindfulness practice are the most useful to be incorporated into actor training. The thesis aims to fill this gap by articulating a theoretical framework that identifies the main features of mindful attention onstage. Drawing upon concepts from disciplines with a more substantial background in mindfulness-based initiatives, the research seeks to provide categorisations that shed light on phenomena of mindful attention within the field of performance.

In addition, existing research on mindfulness predominantly focuses on the effects of mindfulness meditation, which is a static practice. However, actor training requires an active approach. While mindfulness meditation is included in the Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT), most of the design responds to a mindfulness-in-action approach. The thesis addresses the gap by exploring how mindfulness can be integrated into the dynamic and active nature of acting.

Another clarification that came from discussing the current state of the field is that while applied mindfulness techniques are essential in actor training, actors are not expected to endure a long-term relationship with meditation or continue practising outside the confines of training. The thesis focuses on presenting mindfulness techniques that can be integrated into actor training without the need for prolonged meditation practice.

Lastly, the thesis acknowledges the need for a flexible definition of mindfulness for performance, one that reflects the dynamic and multi-layered and dynamic quality of performance itself. Understanding mindfulness in the context of

performance requires considering the interaction of various elements. The research aims to illuminate these interactions and provide a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness in the performing arts.

1.4) Research Questions & Objectives

1.4.a) Research Questions

How to develop performer training that incorporates mindfulness techniques as an approach to attention management onstage?

- What mechanisms enable incorporating contemplative techniques into performance training exercises?
- How to develop a contemplative pedagogy?

1.4.b) Research Objectives

The research's **main objective** is to **develop a dedicated mindfulness training designed specifically for actors: Mindfulness-Based Performer Training**. I address this central objective from two perspectives as a researcher and practitioner.

As a researcher my objective is to **delineate a path to incorporate and apply contemplative techniques into actor training in the context of higher education**.

- Identify the critical components of the MBPT practice.
- Develop an understanding of how mindful attention operates within actor training.
- Develop a conceptual framework to address my practice that could be potentially transferable to other contemplative practices.

As a contemplative theatre pedagogue, my main objective is to **help actors improve the management of their attentional skills through the systematic incorporation of mindfulness techniques into their acting practice**.

- Aid performers to self-regulate their attention onstage.
- Help performers foster an embodied cultivation of mindfulness states.

1.5) Methodology

1.5.a) From Master's to PhD. research

An interesting point to highlight about the particularities of this research is that it started by being a master's project which evolved towards a PhD. In 2017 I went to the University of Huddersfield, funded by a Chilean Scholarship, FONDAART, to pursue a master's in research. The objective of my research was to develop *a* Mindfulness-Based Performer Training. I italicised the word "a" as, at that point, I aimed to create a series of workshops that formed a fixed programme, which could be replicable in the actor training arena. At that point, my research was confined to a year's scope, and due to time limitations, I abandoned the idea of developing a prototype of a MBPT programme. I focused my efforts on developing and trying out multiple MBPT sessions.

At the end of that academic year (2017-2018), my research progressed into a PhD. after being awarded a Research Scholarship from the University of Huddersfield. The support of Professor Franc Chamberlain, my supervisor at that time, was crucial at that stage. With the new period of a PhD. project, I adjusted my research goal towards delineating a path to incorporate MBPT into higher education. During the two following academic years (2018-2019 and 2019-2020), I developed and implemented three Pilot Programmes and continued to deliver multiple MBPT sessions.

A methodological challenge that came from this upgrade of the research framework was that the extensive practical phase was not uniform. It covered a wide range of participants such as acting students, professional actors, dancers, musicians, and general audience. Additionally, the workshop structure and content varied depending on the audience and context. Therefore, making comparisons between MBPT workshops was not only difficult but problematic. Thus, instead of comparing results, I focused on finding common denominators, making explicit the content and exercises present in every MBPT session.

1.5.b) Practice as Research

The research stress has been focused on the practice; in other words, delivering MBPT workshops has been the main activity. Following the method of 'learning by doing', I delivered sixty-four MBPT sessions between 2018 – 2020, to twenty-one different groups. Through that process I was learning to refine a method to both design and deliver MBPT. The main strategy that I used to perfect the MBPT instrument, refining the exercise, was the constant exposure of MBPT content to the public. Through the process of workshopping that I will further address, I could identify the selected criteria to filter exercises to the MBPT. Additionally, through this extensive practice, I refined my teaching skills, by identifying the underlying principles that I needed to embody to adequately "teach MBPT".

I have delivered one hundred and fifty-one hours of training, which has allowed me to explore the balance between the practical and the scholarly aspect of this training. Schechner (2006) "the ability to integrate all kinds of information and to know what and how to give to each student is the mark of a good teacher" (Schechener, 2006, p.233).

C) Multi-mode approach

MBPT stands within the Practice as Research (PaR) model, and it presents a multi-mode inquiry approach that enables a double articulation between theory and practice to happen. The research is, therefore, structured around an iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing' (Nelson, 2013, p. 32). As Bolt states "theory emerges from a reflexive practice and at the same time, practice is informed by theory" (Bolt in Nelson, 2013, p.29).

Under the structure of PaR, in this project, I play the dual role of researcher and practitioner. As a practitioner, I design and develop MBPT workshops to instil an experiential understanding of mindfulness techniques in order to stimulate creative states in performers. Therefore, the practitioner role of this research is to be a contemplative theatre pedagogue by mastering the transmission of my embodied knowledge 'know-how' (Nelson, 2013) from a meditation background to performance practice. As a researcher, I aim to translate the lived experience, the know-how delivered in workshops, into what Nelson calls 'know- what' by making the tacit knowledge explicit. Additionally, by making the way

explicit I use contemplative techniques in actor training, I intend to delineate a path to incorporate mindfulness-based initiatives into the performance field.

In this way the double articulation between practice and critical self-reflection operates around an iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing' (Nelson, 2013, p. 32). The constant interaction between theory and practice is a way of perfecting my practice and how I articulate the theory on the mindfulness-based techniques instilled in this actor training pedagogy.

Additionally, this multi- mode approach also enables to use a variety of methods which relate to the specific needs for each phase of the research. For example, during the practical phase of the research, the three main methods deployed were self-reflection, workshopping, and documentation.

In the later stages of the research, while writing the dissertation, phenomenotechnique. and video essay, became useful methods to expand self-reflection of my practice, enabling hermeneutical understanding of my research process.

General methods

Self-reflexive approach

Self-reflection is an essential method in this research. As this project aims to delineate a path to incorporate contemplative pedagogy in actor training, mindfulness and awareness techniques are a self-reflective process to be transmitted by MBPT. Therefore, self-reflection is already imbricated in the project's structure, and it is present at all phases of the research while preparing, delivering, and analysing MBPT workshops.

Thus, the first-person approach seems to be a logical method to choose from, as advised by Middleton and Chamberlain "This method is particularly useful for research into those aspects of performance which emphasise internal and experiential phenomena" (Middleton and Chamberlain 2012, p.96). Self-reflection is a core aspect in the process of designing and delivering and reflecting about the MBPT workshops. Let us develop this idea a bit further. First my subject of study is mindfulness practice, and most of the phenomena that mindfulness addresses are "pre-reflexive". Vermersch defines a pre-reflexive consciousness as phenomena that "normally is invisible in the present moment" and in order to become visible, requires that the person engages in a process of reflective consciousness.

(Vermersch, 2011, p.36). For example, in the case of MBPT, in most of the exercises I actively encourage participants to become aware of their thought process while performing a task. This is a self-reflective practice as it implies a “transition from a pre-reflective consciousness of the lived experience to a reflective consciousness of the same lived experience” (Vermersch, 2011p.32). Therefore, self-reflection is embedded in the MBPT practice but can also be heightened by making the participants become aware of what happens in their pre-reflexive experience.

Additionally, as a researcher, whose field of study addresses attention and therefore consciousness, my own self-reflection in the process of designing and delivering MBPT workshops is the guiding thread of the research. Paraphrasing Vermersch (2011) the researcher who is also practioner becomes an expert through practical application. Analogous to practitioners in the field, the researcher systematically gathers pertinent information from their experiential endeavors. Herein, through the magnifying glass of self-reflection, I translate the lived experience, embodied knowledge - the know-how - into what Nelson calls 'know- what'.

The know-what is the product of the continuous engagement in the process of self-reflection on MBPT. The know-what entails making MBPT practice and theory explicit and transferable. In the case of this research, the main products or results are twofold, the MBPT workshops and the MBPT model. In the MBPT workshops, I will present a set of transferable practices. In the MBPT model, I explain three main features that define the MBPT practice. It is worth noting that to the best of my knowledge, this is the first model in the performance field that explains how to apply contemplative practices in the actor training area.

Workshopping

Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) is a psychophysical training that aims to enhance performance skills by helping performers self-regulate attention and awareness on stage.

The primary method to develop this MBPT is by designing and delivering a series of MBPT workshops to a broad sample of actors. According to Schechner (2006) workshops are an active research phase of performance, where you can introduce people to skills or techniques. He asserts, "To workshop something is to produce a prototype or experimental model (...) A prototype combines already proven engineering and design along with what is new'

(Schechner, 2006, p.234). Therefore, MBPT workshops work as prototypes, combining proven contemplative exercises with new material to instil mindfulness techniques in performers.

Additionally, using workshops as the main research method resonates with the element of 'knowing through doing', an essential characteristic of both actor training and mindfulness practice. Schechner (2006) suggests that getting performance knowledge into the body is usually better, rather than 'talking about' the subject. He asserts, "The proper use of imitation and repetition in training is indirectly transmitting performance knowledge without the need for verbal explanation or theorizing" (Schechner, 2006, p.233). Both in mindfulness and performance, there is an emphasis on practice as a way of knowledge. Therefore, Mindfulness-Based Performer Training presents a practical exploration of mindfulness techniques to self-regulate attention onstage.

MBPT is a contemplative pedagogy that focuses on training the management of mindful attention. MBPT content is presented in a secular language detached from religious connotations. Therefore, there is a deliberate effort to translate Buddhist and mindfulness content and philosophy into a vocabulary and practice familiar to performers.

However, as I explained in the previous sections of the dissertation, MBPT is not a reproduction of an existing method, but a creation of a new training based on the principles and exercises of contemplative pedagogy. As you will read in more detail in Chapter One of the dissertation, developing Mindfulness-Based Performer training consists of developing a curriculum, identifying the main principles embedded in the training, recognising the core modules, establishing a class structure, and selecting and adapting a series of exercises to meet performers' needs.

During the initial phase of the research, my focus was on the improvement of performative skills through the incorporation of mindfulness techniques into actor training. However, due to the nature of the phenomena of study, *mindful attention*, I expected that this training would have desirable secondary effects of improving the relation to oneself and others. Additionally, due to the gathered evidence from other fields (Penman, 2015), I assumed that helping actors to self-regulate attention onstage should trigger mindfulness and creative state.

Based on the literature I gathered and my experience delivering contemplative training to actors, some of the beneficial components of mindfulness that this training could encompass are increased focus, enhanced body-mind synchrony, a decrease in the adverse effects of the judgmental mind, development of collaborative response and

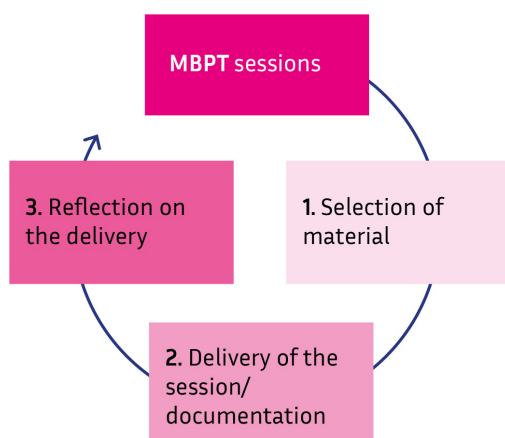
enhanced creativity. However, I cannot test all of the above benefits in one research. Therefore, my strategy is to focus on helping actors self-regulate attention onstage. Additionally, while developing the MBPT, I incorporated exercises that have some beneficial aspects of mindfulness embedded in their fabric. In this way, MBPT is intended to provide actors with an experiential understanding of mindfulness techniques that should help self-regulate attention whilst experiencing some of the benefits of mindfulness onstage.

Workshopping as a refinement process to perfect the MBPT device

During the whole research, but especially within this practical phase, I played the double role of practitioner and researcher. As a researcher, I aimed to delineate a path to incorporate contemplative pedagogy in the actor-training arena. As a practitioner, following the 'learning by doing' method, the extensive workshopping phase was a way to forge a personal style as a contemplative teacher.

During the practical phase of the research, I followed Schechner's (2006) approach to workshopping. Accordingly, MBPT workshops were an active research device to develop prototypes to test, improve and refine specific contemplative methodologies to enhance actors' attentional management. Thus, through workshopping, I built a path to continuously refine the MBPT practice and device.

Figure 2 Refinement process of the MBPT device

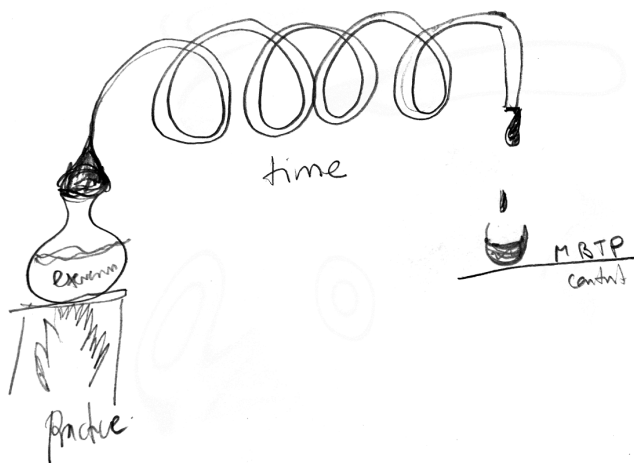


The above figure shows the mechanisms for developing the MBPT device. This mechanism consists of three

main stages: selecting material, delivering the MBPT workshops and reflecting upon the documented material of the session. Additionally, this iterative refinement process was a way to perfect the MBPT instrument and MBPT pedagogy. Both the MBPT instrument - what is taught (content, exercise, structure, principles) - and the MBPT pedagogy - how it is taught (modelling, embodied practices, ethos) - are two distinctive but inseparable parts of mindfulness practice (Kabat Zinn & Williams 2011, Brown University) and therefore of this research.

Therefore, the workshopping methodology served my double research purposes. On the one hand, I introduced actors to the experience of a contemplative approach to acting. On the other hand, I intended to perfect the MBPT device by constantly exposing MBPT content to the public. I could refine the MBPT exercises, test conceptualisations, and critically reflect on how I imparted these workshops.

Figure 3 distillation process



At the same time, the image of a distillation process, as presented in figure three helped me to illustrate the development and constant refinement of the MBPT over time. In Figure 3, I show that the MBPT content results in selecting contemplative exercises heated by practice and cooled by time.⁷ This image graphically illustrates the refinement process of the MBPT from session to session. Additionally, this image can help us understand the research

⁷ I made this sketch in January 2021, describing the MBPT process. Drawing is one of the strategies that I use to describe my thought process. The practice of drawing, sketching, and making doodles accompanied my whole research process. For example, when preparing a class, I usually accompanied the content with drawings that helped me illustrate the essence of the exercise. This method or embodied knowledge of thinking by drawing became part of this research.

process as a whole. I had an extensive practical phase, followed by a long process of critical reflection on the experience. I propose that these drops of condensed embodied knowledge are the substance from which I write this dissertation.

Documentation

As this research lies within the learning-by-doing method, the subject of study is my learning trajectory. Due to the ephemerality of performance arts, documentation is needed. Therefore, I used a combination of multiple documentation methods to make the critical reflection on the practice undertaken possible. I chose to document the MBPT pilot programme through audio-visual recordings, observation notes, interviews, supervision feedback, students' reflections in immediate writing and questionnaires. During the analysis, in chapters two and three of this dissertation, I privileged audio-visual documentation as the primary method for analysis. The other documented evidence complements and informs what the camera has captured.

There are three main reasons to privilege the analysis of the audio-visual material. First, during the dissertation, I share short clips of my practice. The reason for doing so is that the audio-visual documentation lets the reader watch the sessions and interviews. In that way, the reader gains access to "something that without being recorded would be inaccessible and unavailable" (Reason in Clark 2006, p.26 p.80). A second reason to prioritise the recordings is that they are a valuable input for my self-reflection process, as they activate what Husserl calls 'secondary remembrance', which according to Vermersch (2011), is a contact with the past lived experience. Nevertheless, to activate this mechanism, it is essential to remember the "very specific nature of lived experience as an object of recall, as a subjective anchoring" (Vermersch, 2011, p.45). Following this thought, I use the recordings to activate my 'embodied memory'. By watching the sessions' footage, I can recall a specific lived experience that activates the secondary remembrance process. Herein, introspection and self-reflection are part of the techniques that I use as a researcher to gather information about my practice but additionally through mindfulness-based techniques I also promote actors to enhance their introspective and self-reflective process.

Specific methods

Phenomenotechnique

Inspired by Spatz's (2017) approach to phenomenotechnique, in some chapters of the thesis, I will use audio-visual recordings to clarify the hidden techniques that allow the practice to function.

For example, in Chapter Two of the dissertation, I delve into a microanalysis of a specific exercise developed during the practice-as-research process. The reason is that it is supposed that by thoroughly examining an aspect of my practice in detail I may better understand how mindful attention operates onstage. In Chapter Three I engage in a phenomenotechnical exploration of "The Feather Exercise" to examine the "network of fractally branching pathways that vein the substance of practice" (Spatz, 2015 p.44). Specifically, I am interested in unravelling what mechanism enables the incorporation and embodied cultivation of contemplative techniques into performance training exercises.

An interesting aspect of unravelling the hidden techniques of embodied practices is that according to Spatz (2015) technique involves identifying material possibilities that can be consistently replicated, allowing for the potential transferability from one context to another. In the case of The Feather Exercise, I became interested in investigating whether the mechanisms of attention discovered by this phenomenotechnical approach was transferable to the MBPT. In Chapter Four of the dissertation, I elaborate on that idea further.

Video Essay

In Chapter Five of the dissertation, I use the video essay technique to examine another branch of my practice, self-compassion.

A video essay is an audio-visual work that explores the relationship between textuality and audiovisuality. This is often done by adding nondiegetic textual elements (such as voiceover or annotations) to audio-visual material, but the juxtaposition of textuality and audiovisuality can also happen within the diegetic or nondiegetic layers themselves. A large critical literature exists on the video essay and its predecessor, the film essay (Spatz, 2022).

Here I use the footage from the delivery of a self-compassion exercise I developed during this research to help actors embody a friendlier relation to themselves. The exercise is called "Seeing yourself through your friend's eyes"⁸. I selected this research technique as it allows me to embed a layer of critical analysis into the video. I used Spatz's

⁸ For more details, please refer to [Chapter Five, section 5.2.c](#)

technique of illuminated videos to explore a hermeneutical reflection on how self-compassion can help actors soften the way they relate to themselves.

1.6) A guide to the dissertation's trajectory

Through this dissertation, I will guide the reader through the iterative process of developing the MBPT, which consists of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing' (Nelson, 2013, p. 32). This double articulation between practice and knowledge is the strategy I used during the whole research to examine the complex and multi-layered phenomena of using mindfulness techniques for regulating actors' attention onstage. The dissertation trajectory has an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

The sequence of the dissertation is from general to specific. In Chapter One Introduction, I commence by giving a panoramic view of where this research stands regarding the field of contemporary mindfulness-based actor training. Chapters One, Two and Three are practice-based. Here I analyse specific elements of the MBPT practice and correlate them with specific features of the MBPT model. In Chapter Two, I describe the work undertaken in the practical phase of the research so that the reader can understand the research trajectory and main shifts. In the third chapter, I present a phenomenotechnological analysis of the mindfulness mechanism embedded in 'The Feather Exercise'. In Chapter Four, I present an analysis of the MBPT model where I synthesise and integrate the primary features of MBPT practice. In Chapter Five, I reflect upon self-compassion as a crucial component of the MBPT practice. Finally, in Chapter Six I present the research's conclusions, explaining how this research provides a substantive contribution to the nascent field of Mindfulness and Performance by deepening the understanding of how mindful attention operates within actor training.

An original aspect of the thesis trajectory is that I progressively lay out the features of the MBPT practice and model throughout the dissertation.

Chapter Two, through the magnifying glass of self-reflection, I zoom in on the practical phase of the research is presented. Here I reflect on the question of How to develop a performer training that incorporates mindfulness techniques as an approach to attention management onstage. This chapter describes the development and refinement

process of MBPT workshops. I centre the analysis on reflecting upon what were the critical components of the MBPT practice that I identified and refined while presenting the MBPT sessions and the MBPT Pilot Programmes.

Correspondingly, I divide this chapter into two sections. In the first section of this chapter, I describe the MBPT sessions presenting the main shift and reflecting on the learning markers. I also explain how, from the critical reflection of the MBPT sessions, emerged a feature of the MBPT model called the four-dimension MBPT Matrix. In the second section of this chapter, I describe and analyse three MBPT pilot programmes I delivered to acting students from the University of Huddersfield. I share the primary learning hallmarks I got while developing the three MBPT pilot programmes. Additionally, I present how the six-petal flower of attention feature emerged to categorise the field of practices addressed within MBPT Pilot Programmes.

In Chapter Three, I zoom closer into the MBPT experience. I present “The Feather Exercise” as a case study to illustrate how I apply mindfulness techniques in actor training. Therefore, regarding the research’s trajectory, in this chapter, I go a step further, delving into the substance of practice. I use The Feather Exercise to explore **how** I did what I did. The methodology that I use is a combination of first-person approach with “phenomenotechnique” as I aim to unravel the implicit techniques embedded in the MBPT. Herein, I present a nuanced analysis of the delivery of this exercise stage by stage. Through this examination, I make explicit what mindfulness techniques are imbricated in the exercise’s texture. Additionally, through a nuanced examination of The Feather Exercise, I unravel the mechanism of mindfulness embedded in this exercise. Furthermore, I claim that the mindfulness mechanism Attention, Awareness, Attitude (AAA) is transferable to MBPT practice as a whole.

Chapter Four presents the MBPT model as the main result of this practice-as-research, process. The MBPT model illustrates how I defined and addressed the multi-layered phenomenon of cultivating mindful attention onstage. I state that the MBPT model synthesise the complex dynamics, mechanism, and layers of practices that I found to operate within the MBPT practice. In the first section of this chapter, I recapitulate the main features of the training discovered throughout the different stages of the research. The second section of the chapter presents a nuanced description of the field of practice signalled by the six-petal flower. I present how explain how the AAA mechanism operates within each petal. Additionally, I present the main exercises used and explain the potential to apply these fields of practise to inform and illuminate other contemplative pedagogies.

In Chapter Five, I examine a topic which the research process revealed to me as necessary to address directly: self-compassion's role in actor training. In this chapter, I present the hermeneutical process of reflecting on how I instil self-compassion implicitly and explicitly within the MBPT. In this section of the dissertation, I present five subsections to help the reader understand how self-compassion as both an attitudinal component embedded in the MBPT mindfulness mechanism and one content of the MBPT training, represented by the sixth petal of attention from the flower, attention to the heart. Additionally, this chapter includes a video article titled *developing friendliness towards oneself*. In this audio-visual piece, I reflect on the relevance of encouraging actors to develop self-compassion practices.

Finally, Chapter Six concludes this dissertation by showing how this research contributes to the field of mindfulness and performance. I explain the relationship between the research questions and compare them with the results. Additionally, I signal the main obstacles encountered and specify this research's boundaries. I show what future research could be developed following the pathways of exploration that I opened in this PhD. research.

2) CHAPTER TWO: DEVELOPING A MINDFULNESS-BASED PERFORMER TRAINING (MBPT)

2.1) Introduction

This dissertation chapter describes the development of Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT). I will begin with a brief introduction where I provide a panoramic view of the research, encompassing three layers in which I was actively engaged during the research process: MBPT Workshopping/Learning Experiences/ Sharing Research.

Then, I focus the rest of the chapter on describing the practical phase of the research. I introduce how I approach *workshopping* as the critical method to refine the MBPT devices based on a process of ‘doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing’ (Nelson, 2013, p. 32). This chapter presents the foundations of the MBPT, clarifying the main concepts and dimensions with which this training operates. Additionally, I present the research’s trajectory by explaining the research turns and learning markers; I intend to demonstrate this training's originality. Finally, by offering a nuanced description of the three kinds of MBPT workshops (MBPT sessions, MBPT pilot programmes and Mindful Acting Courses), I aim to contribute to delineating a path for incorporating contemplative techniques into actor training in higher education.

2.1.a) Overview of the research process

The following image, titled *the research map*, shows my work during this research. This figure shows three parallel arrows that represent three layers of research that are interrelated: MBPT workshops or practical phase, learning experience, sharing research. The development of the MBPT workshops that took place in the practical phase (yellow arrow) is the core aspect of this dissertation, and as such, the material gathered during those workshops constitutes most of the body of this research. However, I wanted to provide the reader with a panoramic view that encompassed some areas of the research that helped me to inform, question and clarify the MBPT practices and scope.

Figure 4 Research Map



The yellow/red arrow encompasses the practical phase of the research that consisted of designing and delivering MBPT workshops. I devised three versions of MBPT workshops: MBPT sessions, pilot programmes and Mindful Acting Courses. This arrow signals the central arena of the research, and the body of the dissertation focuses on this area to clarify the process of developing, testing, and refining the MBPT.⁹ The green arrow shows the learning experience that complemented and informed the development of the MBPT. I included two categories under this green arrow that helped me to enrich the research process: workshops and interviews. These activities enabled the deepening of my understanding of topics related to the research. For example, the face-to-face workshops I attended, helped me expand the MBPT content. I also witnessed how these practitioners embodied, modelled, and presented their exercises. Thus, I could access not only *what* but also *how* they taught. This is a crucial aspect of teaching in mindfulness-based initiatives and actor training.

Additionally, the interviews were an opportunity to clarify unpublished aspects of their training related to MBPT. For example, with Arawana Hayashi (2017) we discussed the genesis of the core practices of Social Presencing Theatre. Núñez (2019) revealed details about Grotowski's approach to meditation. Esposito (2018) explained some key features of his approach to contemplative pedagogy. I asked Britton (2019) what his understanding of the similarities

⁹ Please see Appendix One for a detailed version of the Workshops developed during the practical phase of the research.

between his actor training and mindfulness practice and concepts was. Thus, interviewing experts in the field was part of the methods I used to gather relevant information on how to develop a performer training that incorporates contemplative practices. During the dissertation, I briefly mention some material gathered in the interviews, when it directly connects with a concept or theme, I am addressing in the MBPT. However, it is worth mentioning that I consider the material collected in these interviews to be of great value to the field of mindfulness and performance. Therefore, I would like to publish some of it in further research.

Finally, the blue arrow shows the instances where I shared this research with others. This arrow includes three categories: conferences, performances, and articles. This arrow is a catalyst of the MBPT, as these activities involved formally or informally presenting my work to others. These instances of socialisation of the research were great opportunities to articulate and test ways to present the research and discuss preliminary results of the MBPT with colleagues. Additionally, while working in interdisciplinary performances I had the opportunity to apply the MBPT to rehearsal processes and devising processes. However, to narrow the research scope, I decided that I will not address these activities as part of the research.

2.1.b) Practical Phase

The practical phase covers the work undertaken between 2018-2019, which corresponds to three academic year periods (2017-2018/ 2018-2019/ 2019-2020). For analysis purposes, I decided to frame the practical phase of my research by delimiting as my research sample the MBPT workshops that I delivered in Chile and the UK in a face-to-face format from March 2018 until January 2020. These limits were both strategic and natural, as I deliberately planned to concentrate on practical activities between 2018 and 2019. Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced this trend as face-to-face activities became increasingly tricky, due to social distancing restrictions.

During those years, I designed and tested MBPT workshops with 21 different groups. The MBPT workshops include MBPT sessions, MBPT pilot programmes, and Mindful Acting Courses. I taught one hundred and fifty-two hours of MBPT. Two hundred and sixty-three people in the UK and Chile participated in the different versions of the MBPT workshop. I delivered MBPT workshops to a broad sample of actors and acting students, inside and outside the higher education context. I worked with actors from a professional and mixed background, delivering sessions to professional ensembles, acting students and general audiences in the UK and Chile.

Figure 5 MBPT Workshops

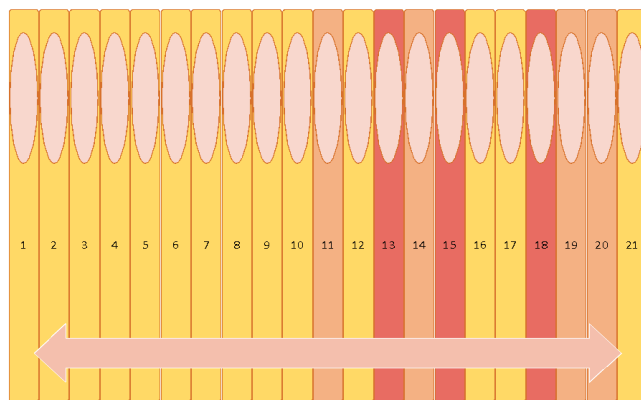


Figure 5 shows the twenty-one groups that participated in MBPT workshops during the practical phase of the research. This diagram should be regarded as a zoom-in of the yellow arrow previously presented in Figure 3, the research map. Herein, I use three colours to identify the three types of MBPT workshops. The fourteen yellow columns

represent the groups that I gave Mindfulness-Based Sessions. The orange columns show the four pilot programmes I designed and delivered. The red columns show the three Mindful Acting courses delivered in Manchester.

As the practical phase was so extensive, I suggest using *Appendix One: Gallery of Workshops MBPT sessions and Pilot programmes* as a guide to complement the reading of this chapter. That document encompasses a table that presents the core information of each MBPT workshop. Additionally, this document includes a gallery of the workshops where I briefly describe each workshop, clarifying the group profile and contents per workshop.

2.1.c) MBPT workshops

At this point you might wonder ; what is a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT)?

I present the MBPT as psychophysical training, which aims to enhance performance skills by helping performers self-regulate attention on stage. Accordingly, MBPT content is presented in a secular language detached from religious connotations. Therefore, in all three manifestations of the MBPT workshops, there was a deliberate effort to translate Buddhist and mindfulness content and philosophy into a vocabulary and practice that is familiar and, therefore, easy to assimilate and apply to acting practice. Finally, the MBPT in all its versions should be considered a contemplative pedagogy as this research aims to delineate a path for integrating contemplative practices and principles into actor training. According to Barbezat & Bush, “Contemplative pedagogy uses forms of introspection and reflection to [enable] students (...) to focus on personal awareness, which leads to insight” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, pp. 9,10). In the case of MBPT, this contemplative pedagogy focuses on practices of introspection and reflection centred on attentional management for actors.

Based on gathered evidence (Worley 2001; Middleton 2008, 2012, 2017; Núñez et al. 2019; Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Worley, 2018; Hayashi 2021; Penman 2015) of mindfulness interventions related to the performance field and supported by my experience as a contemplative teacher, some of the potential benefits the MBPT training can bring are: increased focus and concentration, increased body-mind synchrony, diminishing of the damaging effects of a judgmental mind, enhancement of creative states, and fostering of collaborative responses, experience of mindful states

onstage. In these ways, I propose that MBPT should positively affect the performers' scenic *bios*, resulting in *bodyfulness* or *embodied presence*. Thus, the MBPT workshops focus on the pre-expressive level of actor training.

Three kinds of MBPT workshops

It is essential to clarify that within this dissertation, I use the term **'workshop'** to describe activities of various lengths, from a single session to several weeks of programmes and courses. I have decided to use the word 'workshop' to denote the provisory aspect of the MBPT device, which has an open format and is deliberately malleable through and by the practices, the context, and the participants with whom I deliver this training. I categorise these three displays of the training as **MBPT sessions**, **MBPT pilot programmes** and **Mindful Acting Courses**.

The **MBPT sessions** are the simplest version of the MBPT workshops. They consist of **one or two practical sessions with a group of actors**. Each session's duration is between two to three hours. The pedagogic objective of these sessions consists of **presenting an introduction to the MBPT contemplative approach to acting**. In these, I present a set of exercises that can help the actor explore how mindfulness techniques can help self-regulate attentional states onstage. I offered MBPT sessions to a broad sample: acting students, professional actors, theatre ensembles, dancers, and a general audience.

The **MBPT pilot programmes** are a series of MBPT workshops rather than standalone or one-off sessions, as was the case with the MBPT sessions. **I designed the Pilot Programmes to present the MBPT in acting schools within the context of higher education**. The pilot programmes aim to **aid actor students in applying the MBPT content to their acting practice**. The length of each pilot programme varied from four to nine sessions. The average duration of a PPM session was one hour, which I delivered weekly. The participants of the pilot programmes that I will further analyse were undergraduate drama students from The University of Huddersfield.

Mindful Acting was an **eight-week course for professional actors** that I designed and taught in collaboration with Daniel Bradford, a Canadian Actor and Buddhist practitioner. Each session lasted three hours. This course **aimed to help professional actors strengthen their confidence and improve their performance by applying mindfulness techniques and principles to their acting practice**.

An important note is that, for methodological reasons, after I had completed the practical phase, while examining the documented material, I realised it was too ambitious to try to cover two kinds of actor training: actor students and professional actors, within the confines of this research. Thus, although I worked with a wide range of people in the practical phase of the research, I decided to narrow the dissertation's scope to analyse the contemplative training material that could be implemented in higher education. Accordingly, I decided not to include the material I gathered while developing and implementing the Mindful Acting Courses in this dissertation. However, although I have consciously excluded the description and analysis of the material related to the Mindful Acting courses, the reader should consider that some of the themes and questions that I address in the development of MBPT training were triggered and informed by my experience of co-designing and delivering Mindful Acting courses to professional actors in Manchester.

2.1.d) MBPT starting point

To understand the research journey and the close examination of the MBPT sessions and MBPT pilot programmes that I will describe sections of this chapter in further detail, I think it is important to present the MBPT starting point.

This research aims to narrow the gap between mindfulness and performance practice. My initial question was, “How do I develop a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training where the actual training shows the way into a mindfulness practice?” (Observations notes, Nov, 2018). I used a strategy to present exercises where the mindfulness content is embedded in their structure (Hayashi, 2017). An implicit assumption for this research, as presented in the introduction is that attention is a trainable skill. The Tibetan notion of *lesu rungpa* means that the mind is ‘workable’ and can be trained. Mipham (2003) states, “we can train the mind to work in order to do something in particular” (Mipham, 2003, p.6). Within the MBPT context, we want actors to train their minds in order to be present in the moment-to-moment experience onstage.

Attention and Awareness as two main elements of Mindfulness Practice.

An important conceptualisation that derives from how I learned meditation in the Shambhala Lineage is the understanding that meditation entails training two components: attention and awareness. Herein, I provide a provisory

operational definition of attention and awareness where I combine the understanding of the terms that came from the Shambhala lineage with a contextualisation of those concepts related to actor-training.

Attention The Shambhala tradition comes from the Tibetan term 'trenpa' that refers to the mental ability to focus on a particular phenomenon (Mipham, 2011). Accordingly, Ganeri states that “The verb ‘attend’ (Latin: *attendere*) is best pictured as the stretching out of experience onto and upon a part of the world” (Ganeri in Zarrilli, 2016, p.118). Within this dissertation, I will understand **attention as the effortful component that enables actors to stretch out, place, sustain and shift their attentional focus in the phenomenal field, at will** (Shapiro, 2005, Zarrilli, 2016).

Awareness: The understanding of awareness comes from the Tibetan term *Sheshin*, defined by Mipham as "the intelligence that tells us what we are doing" (Mipham, 2003, p.50). Zarrilli acknowledges the importance of awareness training for enabling optimal performance states to appear. He defines this state of readiness as “a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to both my body/mind/breath in action, as well as the immediate environment” (Zarrilli, 2002, p.184). In this dissertation, I understand **awareness as a sense of heightened awareness, a total sensing that enables actors to notice what is happening in their stream-of-consciousness, which includes acknowledging their thoughts, emotions, body/mind sensations and immediate environment.**

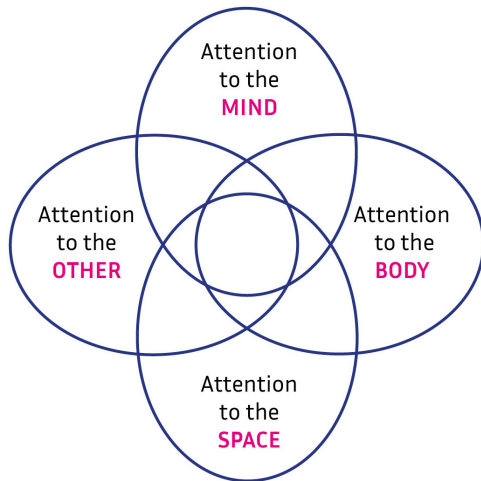
In this dissertation, **I will understand mindful attention as the interaction of the components of attention and awareness.** However, for explanatory reasons in several parts of this dissertation, I present *attention* (focused attention) and *awareness* (open awareness) as two distinct elements from the MBPT practice.

2.1.e) MBPT areas of training

Another strategy I used to draw the contemplative practice near acting was identifying four core areas where acting practice collided with mindfulness training. These were: meditation, mindfulness of the body, spatial awareness, and

interpersonal mindfulness.¹⁰ These four categories became the foundational content from which I developed the first series of MBPT workshops.

Figure 6 Initial core MBPT modules



Attention to the mind (Meditation within MBPT)

The MBPT springs from the motivation of making meditative states accessible for actors. Thus, presenting meditation to actors appeared as a “must” content to address within the MBPT practice. Within the MBPT, I present two ways of understanding meditation - as a practice and as a state. To avoid misunderstandings, it is crucial to note that *meditation* and *mindfulness* are interchangeable terms within the mindfulness literature.

I approach **meditation practice** as a tool for enhancing actors’ self-reflexive process of becoming aware of what is happening in the moment-to-moment experience, which includes their mind, body, and environment. I homologue the **meditative state** to the state of mindfulness - “a kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centred awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is” (Bishop, 2006, p.232).

¹⁰ In further stages of the research, where I describe the MBPT model, I refer to these core modules as part of the six-petal flower where I classify the MBPT content depending on their point of attention. Thus, I changed their names, from meditation to attention to the mind; from mindfulness of the body to attention to the body; spatial awareness is encompassed in attention to space; I address interpersonal mindfulness in the area of attention to other.

Meditation as a state.

In the Shambhala lineage, the meditation state or “*samadhi*” means "working with this situation, this present state of mind, here and now" (Trungpa, 1987, p.155). In the field of psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002; Bishop, 2006), this meditative state is homologous to the state of mindfulness as a kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centred awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is (Bishop, 2006). Therefore, in MBPT, we use meditation to aid actors in cultivating and experiencing mindfulness or meditative states.

I believe the meditative state, which in Buddhism is known as an ‘empty’ mind, is intrinsically connected to actors’ creativity. Worley relates an empty mind with a fresh mind; she states, “An empty mind means the fresh mind of this moment - attentive but not judgmental. In the creative process, openness gives birth to fresh insight and new forms” (Worley 2018, p.109). Accordingly, Langer connects mindfulness practice with the experience of the new - being intentionally aware of novelty. This empty mind is not ego-oriented, meaning that its centre does not reside in the person’s fears and hopes. Instead, an empty mind is open to what is happening in the moment-to-moment experience. Regarding the importance of cultivating a state of openness, and disposition to action, that “blankness” from which creativity emerges, Trungpa is emphatic, "Absolutely nobody can become a good craftsman or a good artist without relating to the practice of meditation” (Trungpa 2014, p19). I agree with Trungpa that, as artists, we must find means of engaging directly with our minds and reality. There evidence is gathered that meditation practice propels a state of openness towards experience—an acute sense of sensitivity and awareness of our environment. Accordingly, Penman (2015) proposes that meditation can help ignite creativity. Therefore, the pertinence of meditation practice in actor training is justified by the possibility of accessing the present-moment experience. Additionally, meditation practice in an actor training context can positively affect the forming of an ensemble; as Worley points out: “Including meditation as part of the theatre training can help the process of tuning into the ensemble work” (Worley, 2016, p.110).

- Meditation as a practice

In the MBPT context, I approach meditation as a practice which generates the conditions for actors to see themselves and their environment clearly. As Gunaratana (2012) states, meditation training enables us to become aware

of our “body, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness exactly as they are, from moment to moment” (Gunaratana, 2012, p.22). Stanislavski was aware of the importance of teaching actors the art of self-observation (Chamberlain, et. al, 2014,Wegner 1976) as a way of propelling creative states to "enter the temple of that spiritual atmosphere in which alone it is possible to create." (Stanislavski in Wegner, 1976, p.85). In the MBPT context, I expect meditation practice to enhance actors' ability to access the present-moment experience.

Meditation practice consists of simplifying the external activity to a minimum, often by taking a still position and directing one's attention to the somatic sensation of the breath. (Trungpa,1987; Mipham, 2003; Bishop, 2006).

As sitting meditation is practised, there is an emphasis on simply taking notice of whatever happens to the mind. Meditation implies accepting each object that arises in awareness without judging it or elaborating on its implications, additional meanings, or need for action. (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002 in Bishop 2006).

I teach meditation practice from my training as a meditation instructor in the Shambhala lineage. Meditation comes from the Tibetan term *gom*, which means familiarisation. From this understanding, the mind constantly meditates or familiarises itself with an object. Depending on our life experience, our mind gets familiarised with rage, sadness, happiness, or fear. Herein, meditation training intends that we learn to familiarise ourselves with the present moment experience.

The primary practice I present is called *basic meditation*; it derives from a Tibetan meditation called Shamatha Vipassana, hereinafter referred to as Shamatha. *Shamatha* means ‘peaceful abiding’, this is a mental training that slows down “the torrent of thoughts, opening the mind to the immediacy of the living moment” (Worley 2016, p.110). Through practising Shamatha, the person can develop mental stability, clarity, and strength (Mipham, 2003, pp. 23-31). These three qualities are desirable for actors to develop a strong focus onstage. Additionally, I expect mindfulness practice to help actors access states of openness that could promote their creativity.

To have a taste of the practice, you can listen to guided meditation in the following link.

Audio: *Guided meditation 1* [Guided meditation](#)

For all the reasons previously exposed, during this training, I expect that by practising meditation, actors should train to self-regulate their attention in the present moment. Alongside, MBPT participants might experience other beneficial effects of mindfulness, developing mental stability, clarity, and strength, manifesting as a strong focus onstage. Additionally, when practised in a group, meditation should enhance collaborative responses among the group members, stimulating the generation of an ensemble.

Attention to the body (mindfulness of the body).

Contemplative training overlaps with actor training as both intend to restore actors' presence by recovering the synchrony between body and mind (Zarrilli, 2007, 2008; Middleton & Plá, 2018; Barba, 2007; Trungpa, 2014). In the MBPT context 'attention to the body' exercises encompass a series of psychophysical exercises that aim to restore the synchrony between the body and mind. I understand the body as the unified field of bodily sensations (Johnson, 1996, 2000).

In the theatre terrain, Middleton and Plá (2018) have pointed out that the process of synchronisation between mind and body relates to actors' pre-expressivity (Middleton & Plá, 2018). Accordingly, Hayashi defines embodied presence as the body-mind coherence that emerges from synchronising body and mind. (Hayashi, 2021, p.92).

The Buddhist teachings of the Satipatthana Sutta (Trungpa, 2014) present attention to the body as the first foundation of mindfulness. The body is a foundation for being present as it resides in the present moment. The mind can travel to the future and past, but the body remains in the present moment. Accordingly, Trungpa states that *mindfulness of the body* provides the psychophysical anchor to mindfulness practice, which endows us with a sense of existence. When we pay attention to the body, we become aware that it is populated by feelings that emerge and dissolve in the present moment (Trungpa, 2014). In other words, if one wants to be present, the first step is to become present in the body. That is why attention to the body plays a critical role in the MBPT.

At this point, it is essential to clarify the elements that distinguish the MBPT approach to attention to the body from the wide range of other contemplative embodied practices. Synchronisation of the body and mind in the MBPT context should not be regarded as a technique to master but as a way to reclaim our humanity. Accordingly, the 'attention to the body' exercises do not require the actors to master technical abilities or to learn complex pre-determined postures to experience body-mind synchronicity. For example, unlike other actor training that enhances

body awareness using a challenging series where actors must follow a series of pre-determined psychophysical exercises or dynamics (Zarrilli, 2002, 2009, 2013, Núñez, 2019). Conversely, I selected exercises with open interpretation and no fixed forms, for actors learn to connect with their bodily sensations gently and effortlessly. To prevent the actor's attention from getting trapped into trying to do it right or fearing failure, I selected exercises that there is no wrong or right way of doing.

Another difference with other psychophysical approaches is that I do not encourage actors to access extraordinary states of presence through engaging in activities that demand challenging physical effort. Conversely, I prefer using contemplative and somatic-based exercises, which re-orient actors' attention to the sensations, bodily feelings and body shapes already happening in the present moment. These exercises promote in actors the awareness and confidence that the body and the mind are already connected.

The exercise I often present in this module is called the 20-minute Dance. This is an exercise from Social Presencing Theatre. The 20-minute Dance consists of paying attention to the body's feelings while moving and being still. This practice emphasises moving by following the body's impulse without thinking about it or judging it. The practice begins with lying on the ground, and the person has 20 minutes to dance, exploring movement and stillness until reaching a standing position. (For further details of this practice, refer to Hayashi, 2021, pp 91-109).

Attention to space.

I propose that there is a clear intersection in the interest in space awareness among mindfulness and acting training. A common understanding of spatial awareness in theatre is the “exploration of the relationship between the body of the performer and the space of performance” (Frost & Yarrow, 2016, p.6). Commonly, actor training methodologies incorporate spatial awareness exercises to propel actors' connection to the environment and others. Research in mindfulness (Penman, 2015)¹¹ provides evidence on how this quality of open awareness ignites creativity, whilst conceptual mind, opinions and critical judgments hinder our ability to create.

In the MBPT context, spatial awareness is informed by my understanding of Tibetan Buddhism; Trungpa describes the state of space awareness as “the fickle quality of being willing to associate itself with something other”

¹¹ For further studies from cognitive science that reinforce the positive connections between mindfulness and creativity, see: Ding et al, 2014; Horan 2009; Colzato et al.,2012; Capurso, 2014

(Trungpa, 2004, p. 443). Therefore, space awareness illuminates the liminal process of betweenness where theatre occurs. Space is the place where interaction happens; therefore, through space awareness training, an actor becomes more sensitive to interaction, learning to connect with the other, fellow actors and audiences from a place of open receptivity.

As Worley states, these teachings highlight the understanding that “We are surrounded and bound by space” (Worley, 2001, p.127). Therefore, from this perspective, space is considered fertile and full of potential, which is why it is referred to as the element of creation (Trungpa, 2004, p.403; Worley, 2001, p.126; Fuentes, et al. 2020). In the performing arts fields, there are some contemplative trainings (Worley 2001, 2018; Hayashi, 2021; Dilley, 2015, 2016) that integrate this particular vision of space awareness into performance practice. Following Trungpa’s teachings on Dharma Art, these authors propose that spatial awareness can enhance performers’ receptivity towards the present unfolding moment. In other words, they suggest that spatial awareness could aid actors in responding to the external stimulus authentically.

In one example, Dilley proposes that space is the container that can accommodate our experience; “Open Space holds each of us just as we are” (Dilley, 2015, p.94). Therefore, by relating to space, performers can gain confidence in who they are. Lee Worley (2001, 2016, 2018) proposes that being aware of space is essential for performers; “Like fish in the water, space is the element that we swim in” (Worley, 2001, p.126). She suggests that spatial awareness exercises highlight the kinaesthetic experience of our bodies, providing a clear experience of our boundaries. Therefore, following the analogy of the figure/background images, by connecting to space, an actor can become aware of her figure onstage from a non-self-conscious approach. In this way, space becomes an ally onstage for inhabiting form with openness.

Accordingly, these contemplative trainings - Mudra Space Awareness, Contemplative Dance and Social Presencing Theatre - offer multiple exercises and practices for performers to acknowledge and develop their relationship to space. The main argument for investing in space awareness training is that although we are surrounded by space, we have very little understanding of what the experience of space conveys. Therefore, a training in spatial awareness should aid actors in learning to directly relate to space. The purpose of training in spatial awareness is that it

becomes a support that enables actors to open up, empty their minds and embody a “receptive presence” onstage by experiencing the qualities of ephemerality, vastness, and potentiality of space.

Lee Worley defines *receptive presence* as attention without superimposed thinking (Worley, 2018, p.112). This means that awareness onstage propels receptivity and openness, which acts as an antidote for being ‘caught in thoughts or self-consciousness onstage. In this way, space awareness exercises enable what Grotowski (2013) calls it 'passive readiness'; “A passive readiness to realise an active role, a state in which one 'does not want to do that' but rather ‘resigns from not doing it’”.

Actors trained in space awareness do not grab at space or impose themselves onto it, nor ignore its richness. They act with economy and directness, but in their approach, there is a certain hesitance, as one might manifest in reaching towards one’s beloved. This hesitancy invites the audience to come forth and share in the event. The receptive presence of the actors provides a channel for the audience to awaken into a direct experience of the moment (Worley, 2018, p.112).

In this way, spatial awareness is critical for actor training. When enacted during the performance, it can become a threshold for connectivity, highlighting the feeling of betweenness among the performers and the audience. Therefore, space awareness illuminates the liminal process of betweenness where theatre occurs; “Performances are created in between”.

One of the exercises that I often use to enable space awareness is called Duet Practice: This exercise consists of developing a duet by acknowledging the interplay of their movements with the Japanese concept of MA as a time and space interval or gap. This word, ma, “refers to the moment in which the actor does nothing, and in which the maintenance of silence is exactly the artistic presentation” (Morioka, 2015, p. 30). In Hayashi’s exercise Duet practice, actors explore ma principles by alternating movements of the body (gestures) and moments of stillness, this practice emphasises interacting with an open heart. (For further details of this exercise see Hayashi, 2021. pp. 111 -120).

Attention to the other (interpersonal mindfulness)

This area of the MBPT training encompasses exercises and practices that address inter-subjectivity or interaction.

Hereinafter, I propose that the underpinning skill for human interaction resides in how we pay attention to others.

Theatre is an interpersonal and collaborative endeavour. Therefore, we bring the MBPT closer to theatre practice by

applying mindfulness to the interaction. This area of training is a pivotal aspect of the MBPT. Here, I explore applying mindfulness techniques to the interpersonal terrain where acting practice takes place.

I consider that the performance field provides more cumulative research regarding *attention to others* than the research available on this subject in the mindfulness field. The performance field requires that performers become experts in interaction. Accordingly, *attention to the other* is transversal in most actors' training. That is why in the theatre field, one can find gathered research that explores the nuances of attention training in the interpersonal field. Teachings and practices are multiple and encompass concepts like attunement (Zarrilli), ensemble (Britton, Copeu, Zarrilli), social field (Arawana Hayashi), and social body (Grotowski, Núñez). On the contrary, although often taught in a group, mindfulness meditation is conventionally presented as an intrapersonal practice (Kabat Zinn). Consequently, except for relational mindfulness and other isolated initiatives that address mindfulness from the Buddhist principle of interconnectivity and inter-being (Nhat-Hanh), the majority of research from the mindfulness field focuses on the intrapersonal aspects of this practice.

An exercise that I recurrently used during the MBPT workshops was Hayashi's exercise, The Village. This group improvisation consists of mindfully interacting with others by enacting ordinary gestures: sit, stand, walk, and turn. Sometimes, you may also add the gestures: lie down and bow. The invitation is to redirect our attention from ourselves towards extending our attention out to others. (For the full description of this practice, see, Hayashi, 2021, pp 153-169).

2.2) MBPT Sessions:

As a researcher, I extensively explored these workshop formats during the practical stage of the research. I found that the MBPT sessions were a suitable format for testing ways to build bridges from contemplative to performative practices. These were practical workshops of one or two sessions that lasted between two to three hours. During 2018 – 2019 I worked with fourteen different groups, and two hundred people participated in these sessions within the UK and Chile. The hours I delivered MBPT sessions between 2018 and 2019 amounted to forty-eight hours.

The pedagogic objective of these sessions was to present an introduction to the MBPT contemplative approach to acting. These sessions should provide actors with an introductory experiential understanding of how mindfulness techniques can help them to self-regulate attention onstage. Through the MBPT session, I present a panoramic view of the themes that MBPT can cover.

As a researcher, the design and delivery of the MBPT sessions enabled me to test and design various contemplative exercises for performers. Additionally, I identified the core MBPT content and modules, which helped me clarify the training's scope. I also identified the main features of the MBPT structure, which illuminated the similarities and differences this training has with other kinds of mindfulness-based interventions. Finally, while designing and delivering the MBPT sessions, I focused on discovering the novelty of the training, specifying how MBPT can contribute to the actor training field by delineating a path to present and apply contemplative practices within actor training.

In order to distil the understanding gained from these forms of the contemplative workshop, I sub-categorised the fourteen MBPT sessions into three series of five or four sessions. I grouped them chronologically, considering the stage of the research where I delivered them, and pondering in what ways each of those series of sessions contribute to the development of MBPT training as a whole.

An overview video of the MBPT sessions may be found in the following video ¹²

Video 1 [MBPT first series of MBPT sessions](#)

2.2.a) First series of MBPT sessions

During the first academic year (2017-2018) of the research, I designed and delivered MBPT sessions to five groups in the UK. The participants from this first series of MBPT sessions were a diverse audience, including acting students, professional actors, and undergraduate students from mixed backgrounds. It is worth mentioning that these sessions

¹² I elaborated this video for a Progression Monitoring Report in the first year of the research. This video conveys the main features of this form of workshop. The footage includes the first series of the MBPT sessions. For more details See Appendix One Group 1 to 5.

were the first MBPT devices or workshops I developed and delivered in the context of this research. Therefore, this first series of MBPT sessions had a heightened exploratory character.

Figure 7 MBPT Group 3, Acting Students, University Campus Oldham

Group 3 (A & B) exploratory session
Place : University Campus Oldham
Date: 26/04/18
N° session: 1
N° of participants: 12
N° of hours: 4

Group Profile :

Group A: Second Year Drama students, 2 hour session.

Group B: First year drama students, 2 hour session.



Exercise in picture: presenting yourself to an audience Group B

Other exercises : Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/ Presenting yourself to an audience

Learning markers from the first series of MBPT sessions

One of the most important contributions of this first series of sessions to the research was associated with the MBPT structure and the other learning marker was linked to the MBPT content.

As a researcher, one of the learning hallmarks that I drew from these preliminary sessions was that “Devising a performer training system cannot be the solo intellectual achievement (...) .It occurs through dialogue among performers and between performers and directors.” (Allain, 1998, p.66). In the case of MBPT I realised that the participants were active co-creators that helped me to refine the MBPT content.

Additionally, the fact that English is my second language highlighted the importance of listening to the participants’ use of language while naming their MBPT experience.

As a researcher, I highlight the importance of searching for the suitable language to transfer the training's content, in order to bring this contemplative training closer to the actor's life. I use the biologist Humberto Maturana's term of 'linguaging' as a verb, alluding to a network of coordination that arises from coexistence (Maturana, 1990).¹³ In this way, actors were showing me the way towards coining a particular MBPT vocabulary and use of language that helped to illuminate certain aspects of actors' experience.

Another insight from these sessions was that I realised the importance of managing the participant's expectations by clarifying what this training is and what it is not. For example, after the first MBPT session¹⁴, I wrote the following paragraph in my observation notes:

Perhaps it is important to warn the participants that these exercises are not meant to relax or make you feel better. As a mirror, they will reflect what is happening to you. These might be an intense experience, a dull experience, you might experience deep insight, irritation, pain, or joy. But in any case, you would have an experience. You can regard your experience as valid, just as it is. This is the beginning of the accepting path. Without altering or manipulating it you can embrace your experience as present. Just like a dream, you always can take something out of it. (Field notes annotations, Group 5, 26th May 2018).

While delivering the 360° exercise¹⁵, one of the participants experienced intense emotions during that first session. My reaction was to validate her experience. Saying that "We have the right to be exactly as we are. Therefore, we can notice and accept whatever we are feeling" (Field notes annotations, Group 1, 2nd May 2018). This was a good sign to remind the participants that there is no right or wrong way to do a MBPT exercise, there is no fixed outcome, but on the contrary, part of the exercise consists of learning how to acknowledge and accept our experience just as it is.

2.2.b) Second series of MBPT sessions

The second series of MBPT sessions took place in Chile between August and October 2018. Here I replicated the format of the MBPT sessions developed in the UK. The main objective of these sessions was to present an introductory session of the MBPT in different cities in the country. In this second series of sessions, I expanded the

¹³ In Chapter Two, I provide examples of how I further elaborate on the use of language to identify important components and mechanisms of mindfulness practice.

¹⁴ Group One: I delivered the first session of MBPT on the 23rd of March 2018 to three professional actors with a previous interest in contemplative practices. For more details, see Appendix One.

¹⁵ 360° is an exercise from Mudra Space Awareness Training. It consists in paying attention to the environment, while slowly turning on one's own axis at 360° degrees.

scope of MBPT's audience by working with performing artists related to dance (professional dancers and youngsters interested in dance)¹⁶. However, most of the people who participated in MBPT were acting students and professional actors.


I delivered MBPT sessions to acting students at Universidad de Chile. I worked with young audiences from a cultural centre called Balmaceda Arte Joven. I delivered MBPT sessions in two cities, Concepción, and Valparaíso. I delivered an introductory session to professional actors at the Cultural Centre Espacio Checoslovaquia. Also, I delivered a session for actors from a mixed background at SIDARTE O' Higgins, the actors union in Rancagua city.

During this series of sessions my strategy was to replicate the structure and exercises that I used in the MBPT sessions delivered in the UK. However, the adaptation feature came to the fore once again, as I had to accommodate the training's content and structure to a different context and language.

Figure 8 MBPT Group 10, Acting students, University of Chile

Group 10
Place : Universidad de Chile
Date: September
Nº sessions: 1
Nº participants: 28
Nº hours: 3

Group Profile:
First-year acting students from Universidad de Chile



Exercise in picture : GAP Grounded Aware Present

Other exercises
Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/ Grounded Aware Present (GAP) / Field of Presence /Presenting yourself to an audience /

¹⁶ I delivered MBPT sessions to acting students at Universidad de Chile; young audiences from Balmaceda Arte Joven Bio Bio and Valparaíso; I delivered an MBPT session at the cultural Centre Espacio Checoslovaquia. Also to professional actors at Sidarte O' Higgins. For more details, please see [Appendix1](#), Group 6- 10.

Learning markers from the second series of MBPT

Additionally, an outcome of delivering MBPT in two countries was that I could observe the dissimilarities in the way performers in the UK and Chile reacted to the training. I became aware of cultural differences in the way actors approached some MBPT exercises. There was a remarkable difference in the way performers engaged with: use of personal space, eye contact, proximity, touch, and emotions. Although a detailed examination of the actors' cultural imprints while assimilating the MBPT training exceeds the scope of this dissertation, it could be a fascinating feature to explore in further research. Additionally, when planning to reproduce or scale the MBPT workshops, one should ponder the cultural implications of presenting the MBPT training to a particular audience.

At the same time, this experience of presenting the MBPT in a different culture helped me to test and bring supportive evidence to understand that there were certain features from the MBPT that remained unchanged, notwithstanding the context in which I delivered the sessions.

The four core modules (meditation, attention to the body, interpersonal mindfulness, and spatial awareness) proved to be a solid foundation from which to present the training.

One exciting aspect of having the opportunity to present the MBPT sessions in another country was that I replicated how I organised the progression of contents in the workshops I offered in Chile. For example, I tended to present first intrapersonal exercises like meditation, body scan or twenty minutes dance. And then I progressed to presenting exercises that included interpersonal mindfulness techniques.

2.2.c) Third series of MBPT sessions

The third and last series of MBPT sessions took place during 2019 and at the beginning of 2020. In this stage of the MBPT sessions, I worked with four groups, three of them were in the UK and one in Chile. As a researcher, I was interested in expanding the MBPT repertoire. Therefore, during this last series of sessions, I focused on exploring and including new material, working with exercises and methodologies that came from contemplative lineages and actor training that I was not previously familiar with.

Figure 9 MBPT group 12, The University of Huddersfield

Group 12
Place : The University of Huddersfield
Date: 4/2/2019- 5/2/2019
N^o sessions: 2
N^o participants:40
N^o hours: 6

Group A: First year drama students (Monday)
20 students/ 3 hours session
Group B: First year drama students (Tuesday)
20 students/ 3 hours session



Exercise in picture: The Feather Exercise

Other exercises : Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing
Dialogues/ Feather alone with partner and in small groups/
Feather with big Groups/ Presenting yourself to an audience

Learning markers from the third series of MBPT sessions

The three main learning hallmarks of this series of sessions were: Firstly, I could expand the repertoire of MBPT exercises and contents. Secondly, I incorporated unstructured interventions as part of the training's methodology. The third learning outcome was identifying that inner criticism, the illusion of control, and lack of self-compassion appeared as an emergent field of interest that was pertinent to address through the MBPT.

It is essential to mention that these sessions took place at an advanced research stage, where I had already developed and delivered other versions of the MBPT training: Pilot programmes and Mindful Acting courses. Accordingly, because of this extensive practice, I gained confidence in my skills as a contemplative pedagogue, and I better understood the MBPT content and structure. Therefore, thanks to this embodied knowledge of MBPT, I adventured into trying new exercises, taking risks, and doing things differently.

At this stage of the research, I was well aware that the delivery of the MBPT training was mindfulness-in-action practice or, in other words that "The teacher's presence is the heart of teaching" (Barbezat and Bush, 2014, p.91). Therefore, the contemplative teacher should embody contemplative principles to encourage students to develop these qualities.

Thus, I knew that the MBPT “success” greatly depended on my ability to practice mindfulness and embody contemplative principles while teaching mindfulness. Students are perceptive and expect to find coherence between the teachers’ instructions and actions. If the student notices that the teacher is not embodying these qualities, it will discourage them from practising. Thus, for a contemplative teacher, every moment of the class becomes a chance to actualise and embody what we ask students to practice. Teaching is a two-way practice. Teaching mindfulness requires being fully present, suspending judgment, intense listening, and being open and receptive to what is happening as it is happening.

This last point reinforces the importance for the MBPT teacher to have a sustained contemplative practice; this is a vital aspect of the training. Accordingly, Barbezat and Bush state:

With contemplative practices, it is even more important to be soundly grounded in the practice, since practice not only affects how students inquire and learn but also how teachers teach and how they act in the world (Barbezat and Bush, 2014, p.91).

Additionally, inspired by a workshop and interview with Pasquale Esposito (2019), actor, director, and zen teacher, I started incorporating non-structured interventions during the MBPT sessions¹⁷. When I asked him how he structured his lessons he replied that he does not structure the sessions, but he allows his interventions to be a way to respond to what is happening in the moment-to-moment experience (Esposito, 2019, unpublished).

Accordingly, Barbezat and Bush, (2014) support the importance of approaching contemplative teaching as a structured improvisation, “Plan the structure of the exercise but hold it lightly, more like a structured improvisation, so that you can be present at the moment with student responses” (Barbezat and Bush, 2014, p.90). A result of actualising the “beginner’s mind” principle during the MBPT sessions was being able to integrate unstructured interventions as part of the training’s structure.

2.2.d) Learning markers from MBPT sessions

From the three series of MBPT sessions I obtained five main results that helped me to clarify the structure and content of the MBPT.

¹⁷ In Chapter Three I explain how this feature of incorporating unstructured interventions was key for the development of The Feather Exercise.

Adaptability feature

The first result of the MBPT sessions was that I discovered the adaptability feature present in MBPT sessions put tension on the objective of developing a MBPT with a fixed structure that could be replicable and scalable. I decided to let go of the idea of developing “a” MBPT training with a fixed structure and contents. Instead, I became interested in finding principles and features that I could use to help actors self-regulate their attention onstage.

Embodiment of the teachings

The content of the MBPT training was built on a personal exploration of the subjects. I approach teaching the MBPT sessions as a mindfulness-in-action endeavour. While presenting the exercises, there is a need to model by example. Congruency between what you teach and how you teach is a key skill to develop as a contemplative teacher.

In my case, my daily practice was to support teaching through experience. Additionally, on the day of the sessions, I usually arrived early and practised meditation to prepare my mindset to deliver the lessons I needed to embody. When teaching mindfulness the facilitator must be a contemplative practitioner, as we are supposed to teach from experience. One of the consequences of the embodiment of the teachings is the ability to model the content you are transmitting through presence. Additionally, I realised the importance of directly addressing self-compassion within MBPT.

Self-compassion as an area of exploration

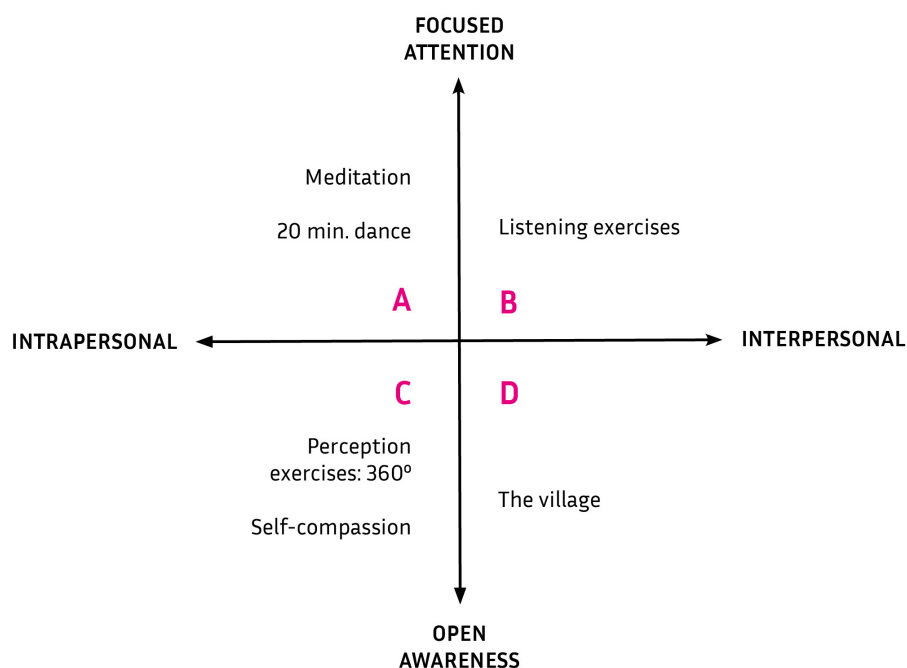
I have just described the necessity to base contemplative teaching that one will share with others on one's practice and personal experience. In other words, to teach self-compassion, you must commit to practising self-compassion yourself. As Kabat-Zinn proposes, a mindfulness teacher should never ask a student to do more than what they themselves practice. In my case, during the third year of the research, and until finalising the dissertation process, self-compassion became one of my central practices, together with sitting meditation.

My interest in self-compassion techniques for actors continued to deepen through the research process. In further stages of the research, such as pilot programmes, I explicitly incorporated self-compassion techniques. Progressively, self-compassion became an essential element of the MBPT practice, becoming part of the MBPT model. Moreover, I dedicate Chapter Three of the dissertation to unravelling the threads of self-compassion within the MBPT.

2.2.e) MBPT matrix: four dimensions of the training

I discovered that there was a way of categorising the MBPT exercises by considering where I placed them between four variables: Intra-personal and Interpersonal (horizontal axis), Focused Attention and Open Awareness (vertical axis). Combining these variables generated four categories of exercises A, B, C and D. This matrix is an effort to represent each exercise's characteristics by unveiling their dimensions.

Figure 10 Four-dimension of the MBPT

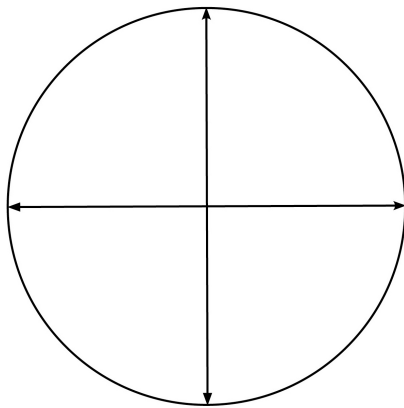


I show examples of categorising exercises following this four-dimension Matrix in Figure 10. In **Quadrant A**, I placed exercises that operated in an intrapersonal terrain (me-to-me) and mainly trained on focused attention. For example, meditation. In **Quadrant B**, I located exercises that functioned in an interpersonal terrain, that is, working with others (me and you) and that mainly privileged the focused attention. For example, listening exercises. **Quadrant C** includes interpersonal exercises that activate open awareness. An exercise like the 360° from Mudra Space Awareness, which consists of activating space awareness while slowly rotating on your centre, is an example of dimension C of MBPT training. Finally, **Quadrant D** encompasses exercises that work on an interpersonal level, work with others, and

simultaneously activate open awareness. For example, Hayashi's exercise of *The Village* (Hayashi, 2022) and Britton's *Ball Game* (Britton, 2013) meets those characteristics.

The MBPT matrix offers a dynamic way of categorising exercises that I used while preparing and delivering MBPT workshops. The MBPT matrix provides a map to evaluate what a person or group needs. For instance, if I identified that a person/group struggled with distraction, I could offer exercises to train focused attention either at an intrapersonal or interpersonal level. Conversely, if I identified that a person/group was self-conscious and overthinking, I would privilege the use of exercises that trained open awareness and connection with others. Due to the versatility of the MBPT four-dimension matrix, I not only used this Matrix for this section of the practice that entails the MBPT session, but I continued to use this categorisation model to organise exercises in further stages of the research.

Figure 11 BPT Matrix 4-dimension Diagram



Within the MBPT model, I use the figure of a circle with two perpendicular axes to represent the MBPT matrix. The horizontal axis represents the intrapersonal (me/me) to interpersonal (we= me & other/s). The vertical axis represents the transition from focused attention elements to open awareness techniques. Within the thesis, whenever I want to refer to the dimensions of the training, I use Figure 11, as it is a simplified version of the MBPT matrix.

2.3) Pilot programmes

2.3.a) Introduction

There is growing evidence (see: Barbezat & Bush, 2014) of mindfulness-based interventions' potential in an educational context. Some of the proven benefits of mindfulness in higher education are described thus:

Professors across disciplines report transformative changes after integrating mindfulness into their classes: increased concentration, greater capacity for synthetic thinking, conceptual flexibility, and an appreciation for a different type of intellectual process, distinct from the linear, analytical, and product-oriented processes so often valued in contemporary education. (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 96).

As a researcher, the pilot programme was the format that I designed to explore alternatives for presenting MBPT in higher education. The pilot programmes are a series of MBPT workshops rather than standalone or one-off sessions, as was the case with the MBPT sessions. I called these programmes 'pilot', relating them to Schechner's experimental model of developing prototypes to test, improve and refine specific methodologies (Schechner, 2006). In the case of the MBPT pilot programmes, referred to as PPM, I could refine these methodologies over time. Through three versions of the PPM, I delineated ways to present MBPT in a university actor-training environment.

Specifically, I designed and delivered three pilot programmes in 2019, working with second and third-year undergraduate drama students from The University of Huddersfield. Each PPM consisted of four, seven and nine sessions, respectively. The average duration of a PPM session was one hour, which I delivered weekly.

As a practitioner, the pedagogic objective of the PPMs was to promote the assimilation of MBPT content to acting students. I structured the PPMs as a series of sequential MBPT workshops that I delivered weekly to different groups of undergraduate drama students from The University of Huddersfield.

In this way, I developed the mindfulness-based pilot programmes as a strategy to offer a mindfulness-based device designed to aid actors to self-regulate attention onstage in the context of higher education. The mindfulness techniques should help actors to increase body mind attunement and increase focus. Based on the experience of the MBPT sessions I also aimed to explore how the introduction of self-compassion techniques could help actors to decrease the detrimental effects of the judgmental mind by softening the inner critic. Additionally, by working with pre-formed groups, I wanted to test if mindfulness techniques could have an effect on enhancing collaborative skills. Thus, The PPM format enabled me to test the potential of mindfulness-based initiatives regarding enhancing pre- expressive

skills and self-reflective abilities in actor-students. Additionally, by using the learning-by-doing method, I was keen to explore the obstacles and challenges implied in the process of incorporating contemplative training in a university background.

Mindfulness-based Interventions in an academic context

Based on gathered literature (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Moyle, 2016; Batzel 2016) regarding contemplative initiatives in higher education, I was aware that arranging favourable circumstances for the contemplative training could promote “that students are open to learn and have the space to discover their own responses” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p.90). That is why great lengths were placed on considering the selection of a language, timing, and the involvement of other academics, as they were critical features to secure the success of PPMs in higher education.

Accordingly, I could identify that the drama school of the University of Huddersfield presented favourable circumstances for delivering the MBPT pilot programmes. Firstly, the university hosted a centre for mindfulness and performance research.¹⁸ Secondly, The University of Huddersfield has a relatively small drama department where staff are encouraged to help and assist postgraduate students with their research, not exclusively those under their supervision. Therefore, lecturers support postgraduate training initiatives within this culture of collaboration, promoting them to undergraduate students. At the same time, undergraduate students were used to participating in postgraduate research. In this way, there is a culture of validation and collaboration toward PaR initiatives.

Furthermore, some staff members (Calvert, Middleton and Spatz) provided me with crucial information to articulate the three versions of PPM. Their embodied knowledge of the institution and their acknowledgement of the students' needs and schedules was essential while designing the PPMs.

Additionally, one of the challenges of presenting contemplative techniques is that resistance is to be expected in learning these practices. Therefore, having people in the teaching staff with embodied knowledge of contemplative techniques is valuable. These teachers can work as allies to encourage the students to take, and persevere during, the

¹⁸ They publish in the *Journal of Performance and Mindfulness*, hosted a symposium (2016), and invited relevant practitioners in the area.

training and also to assure other staff members that might have reservations regarding the pertinence of contemplative practices in actor training.

From the experience of delivering MBPT sessions, I learned that one critical feature of the success of the MBPT was the extent to which I could adapt the training to meet the needs of a particular group of actors. The adaptability component was reinforced through the design and delivery of each PPM. Accordingly, finding direct ways to apply the MBPT content to the student's acting practice was crucial when designing and implementing the PPMs. The following section will describe the major adjustments I made to the MBPT training to accommodate the format to one suitable for a university context.

Pilot Programme Zero

Before I present a detailed description of the work undertaken while developing and implementing pilot programmes for acting students within higher education, I will mention that a valuable antecedent for the PPMs was the work I sustained with the MBPT group 11. In this intervention, I designed and delivered five one-hour sessions for professional dancers that were devising a contemporary dance piece called *Hyperkinesis*. The director of this project contacted me to deliver MBPT training. She asked me to develop a training that could “help dancers engage with the present moment and familiarise themselves with the art of not doing” (Prieto, 2018).

Although, as I previously explained, I narrowed this research's scope by focusing solely on acting students in higher education, I decided to include this group, as it marked a pivotal point of the research where I transitioned from delivering MBPT sessions to developing the first Pilot Programme, which I refer to as Pilot Programme 0 - PPM0. Additionally, this intervention contributes with evidence on the emergent interest in contemplative practice in the Chilean performance art field. At the same time, the experience of developing a version of the MBPT for professional dancers confirms the potential that the application that the MBPT has in the professional field of performance.

Figure 12 Pilot programme cero



Group 11
Pilot programme 0
 Place : Espacio
 Checoeslovaquia
 Date: August-September 2018
 N^o sessions: 5
 N^o participants: 5
 N^o hours: 5

Group Profile:
 professional dancers working on a project called Hyperkinesia
 five one-hour session

"La hiperkinesia cotidiana arrebata a la vida humana cualquier elemento contemplativo, cualquier capacidad para demorarse. El tiempo carece de un ritmo ordenador. La dispersión temporal no permite experimentar ningún tipo de duración.
 No hay nada que rija el tiempo. La crisis temporal solo se superará en el momento en que la vita activa, en plena crisis, acoja de nuevo la vita contemplativa en su seno."
 "El aroma del tiempo", Byung-Chul Han

"Everyday hyperkinesia robs human life of any contemplative element, any capacity to linger. Time lacks an ordering rhythm. Temporal dispersion does not allow you to experience any duration. There is nothing that governs time. The temporary crisis will only be overcome at the moment in which vita activa, in full crisis, welcome the vita contemplativa in your bosom again."
 The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerig, Byung-Chul Han

This project's starting point was Byung-Chul Han's book, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerig*. This author redeems the importance of contemplation in this hectic society. This Chilean ensemble chose the following extract from Byung-Chul to present their performance.

Everyday hyperkinesia robs human life of any contemplative element, any capacity to linger. Time lacks an ordering rhythm. Temporal dispersion does not allow you to experience any duration. There is nothing that governs time. The temporary crisis will only be overcome at the moment in which vita activa, in full crisis, welcome the vita contemplativa in your bosom again.

(Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerig*)

The aim of their performance - to criticise the role of hyperkinesia in the contemporary way of living - resonates deeply with the motivations of my research. Through the development of the MBPT, I aim to provide actors with techniques that enable them to become confident in just being. Most actor training focuses on action, overlooking the importance of stillness. There is evidence (Sellers-Young, 2013; Hayashi, 2021) that contemplative practices help to develop stillness. Thus, helping performers to incorporate contemplative techniques in their training routine might be a

small contribution to contrasting the current hyperkinesia (Byung-Chul Han, 2017) of these hectic times (Williams & Penman, 2011).

The dancers were satisfied with the results of the training. In an interview conducted with the project director after finalising the training, she highlighted that the contemplative practices I shared with them helped clear away some interpersonal problems they had experienced previously in the rehearsal process. She asserted that the exercise “Presenting yourself to an audience” (Worley, 2001) which consists of standing in front of an audience and experiencing how it feels to be seen, helped the ensemble members to see each other at a deeper level, accepting their complexity and valuing their presence. She mentioned that the exercise had a “healing” effect.

The major challenge I encountered while developing this training was accommodating the MBPT content to a one-hour format. I was used to presenting MBPT three-hour workshops. In an hour I could only present one or two exercises properly. I learnt that presenting more than two exercises felt rushed, which contradicts the contemplative approach. Therefore, having enough time to present and reflect on the exercises is mandatory; one cannot teach a contemplative technique with a hyperkinetic and hectic approach.

In the following pages I will **present Three versions of MBPT Pilot programmes** that I delivered within the practical phase of the research.

2.3.b) First Pilot Programme (PPM1)

The first pilot programme, PPM1, was a four-week voluntary training offered to final-year students devising their Final Year Projects. I presented the PPM1 on four consecutive Fridays from February 8th until March 1st. In addition to the four sessions, I ran an interview with the PPM1 participants two weeks after they finished the pilot programme.

The participants of the PPM1 were in the final semester of Drama at the University of Huddersfield. They were engaged in the creative process of devising their final year project. Accordingly, one common concern among them was how to trigger and sustain creative states. Therefore, based on the results of previous workshops and supported by studies about mindfulness in performance training (Penman 2015; Colzato et. al, 2015), my strategy was to offer this contemplative training to explore how mindfulness techniques could help actors trigger and sustain creative states. In

addition to the expected results of the training previously mentioned,¹⁹ in this case, I also offered to tailor the training to tackle the specific creative needs that each group had.

Figure 13 Pilot programme 1

Group 14: Pilot programme 1
Place : The University of Huddersfield
Date: 08/02/2019-01/03/2019
N° sessions: 4 + interview
N° participants: 15
N° hours: 6

Group Profile :
Group A: two final year projects, 6 people
Group B: two final year projects, 5 people
Group C: One Final year project, 4 people



The pilot programme consisted of four one-hour MBPT sessions delivered on four consecutive Fridays from February to March 2019. In order to be able to have a personalised approach to each Final Year Project, further referred to as FYP, I decided to configure three small working groups, groups A, B, and C.

¹⁹ Increasing body-mind synchrony, improving concentration, decreasing the detrimental effect of the judgmental mind, and increasing collaborative responses.

Figure 14 Table PP1 working groups & session structure

Group	FYP	Session 1 08/02/19	Session 2 15/02/19	Session 3 21/02/19	Session 4 01/03/19	Interview 15/03/19
A	A1 3 S	1 hour	1 hour		1 hour	1 hour
6 Students	A2 3 S					
B	B1 3 S	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
5 Students	B2 2 S					
C	C	1 hour	1 hour		1 hour	1 hour
1. Students	4 S					
Total Students	Total					
15	FYP 5					

Regarding the number of participants, it is important to note that I initially thought about working with three FYPs an hour weekly. However, due to the high interest²⁰, I decided to work with five groups instead. As you can see in the above table, in group A there were two FYPs amounting to six students. Group B also had two FYPs that added up to five participants. The module leader, Dave Calvert, helped me to configure the working groups for the PPM1, pairing FYP groups that could have an affinity and keeping the groups to less than six participants. Fifteen students took the training altogether.

The structure of each one-hour session consisted of three units: meditation, contemplative exercise, and

²⁰ Seven FYPs showed interest in participating in the MBPT training. After a selection process, I decided to work with five FYPs. I selected the FYPs that were going to participate in PPM1 considering two criteria: Firstly, their FYP projects seemed compatible to work simultaneously. Secondly, to secure the process of tailoring MBPT to the participants' needs, I decided that the working groups should not exceed six members in total.

reflection. The content varied from session to session. As a researcher in the PPM1, I aimed to present contemplative exercises that could serve a dual purpose: aid actors to self-regulate attention on stage, and, at the same time, these exercises should have a direct application to their Final Year Projects.

The first session was an introductory lesson where we discussed the crossings between mindfulness practice and performance training, and we performed a contemplative exercise. In the second session, I introduced the importance of mindfulness of the body as a channel to direct actors' attention toward the present moment. In the third session, I presented the interpersonal applications to mindfulness, I briefly introduced the importance of developing friendliness towards ourselves to foster a sustainable mindfulness practice, and I presented strategies for applying the MBPT to their scenes. The fourth and final session was centred mainly on applying the MBPT content to their scene work. We also reflected on the interpersonal patterns of interaction that emerged in the previous session. An interesting output from this PPM was “The Feather Exercise”²¹, which emerged as a product of adapting the MBPT content to students' needs.

A closing interview with the groups brought valuable evidence of the students' self-reflection process and insights that were triggered through this training. As I explained in the methodology section, introspection - both mine and from the students - is one of the guiding threads of this research. During these interviews I explored introspective techniques to help actors bring their lived experiences to consciousness (Vermersch, 2011).

Another detail to highlight from PPM1 participants was that they had pre-existing groups when I started working with them. In this way, the participants had worked together for two months before the PPM1, defining their FYP genre style, delineating their roles and responsibilities. And while I delivered the PPM1 the groups gathered in parallel to rehearse their projects.

Regarding the five selected FYPs, it is important to be explicit that these projects covered a wide range of theatre styles: comedy, drama, text-based, and physical theatre. Therefore, this diversity in the theatrical genres from the FYP forced me to find creative ways to adapt the MBPT content to match the different needs of each project. At the

²¹ Chapter Two of the dissertation presents a nuanced examination of this exercise's phenomenotechnique in order to unravel the mindfulness techniques imbricated in my practice.

same time, this process of adaptation of MBPT content to different theatrical genres helped me to clarify that I did not want the MBPT to have an aesthetic imprint or bias. Or, in other words, the imprint of the contemplative training should not affect the aesthetic output of a creative process; rather, my intention of this training is to help actors with the management of their attentional states.

In this way, I do not aim to generate “contemplative performances” as a product of MBPT. Rather, the purpose of MBPT is to ignite contemplative processes that help to enhance performing skills. This means that I aspire for the MBPT to benefit acting students and potentially professional ensembles in their creative endeavours, notwithstanding the kind of theatre they produce or the theatrical genre they ascribe to.

Finally, during the PP1 delivery, the importance of directly delivering exercises infused with self-compassion techniques that could tackle actors’ inner criticism became evident. As I noted,

Inner Critic is the most debilitating obstacle to good acting. If actors fight or identify with the inner critic, they cannot do their job. We must find a way to develop a more effective relationship with it. You cannot direct yourself while acting. (Field notes annotations, Group 14, 08 February 2019).

These annotations from the fieldwork mark the emergence of self-compassion as part of the MBPT content. I realised that there was supportive evidence (Penman, 2015) on how emotional aversion, driven by the inner critic, harms creativity; “emotional aversion closes down the mind, reduces creativity and leaves behind it a deep-seated sense of fear and caution.” (D. Penman, 2015, p.108). Accordingly, I rapidly commenced integrating self-compassion exercises into the MBPT sessions to help actors soften their inner critical voice.

In this stage, the objective of enhancing creative states in performers through self-compassion techniques emerged. In Chapter Five of the dissertation, I critically reflect on the role of self-compassion within the MBPT.

2.3.c) Second Pilot Programme (PPM2)

I delivered the second pilot programme, further referred to as PPM2, to second-year students from the University of Huddersfield that were following an acting module called *Theatre and Performance Making*. I worked with a group of twelve students led by Dr. Deborah Middleton. The course aimed to devise a performance based on a short poetic text called *The Dream Shedding*. The text, written by Deborah Middleton, addressed the loss of one's dreams while becoming

an adult.

Figure 15 Pilot Programme Two (PPM2)

Group 19: Pilot programme 2
Place : The University of Huddersfield
Date: 01/10/2019-16/12/2019
N° sessions: 4 + interview
N° participants: 12
N° hours: 12

Group Profile:
Second year acting students. I offered the course as part of the training for an acting module called Teaching Performance.
Therefore **this course was not taken on a voluntary basis**

Exercise in picture
Adapted Version of The Village exercise
Session 5th: 05/11/19



I decided to develop the PPM2 within an acting course module as a strategy to overcome the tight curriculum of art students (Moyle, 2013; Patson, 2013) which often prevents them from taking extracurricular activities. Some benefits of placing the mindfulness training within the *Dream Shedding* project were that it provided the pilot programme with captive participants, a concrete timeline, and a definite purpose. However, the same fact that the students were obliged to take the MBPT implied a risk, as there is evidence (Kabat Zinn, 2006) that suggests that mindfulness training has better outcomes when taken voluntarily.

The *Theatre and Performance Making* course focused on practice (Course Workbook, 2020, p.1). Accordingly, my main challenge as a researcher was to explore ways of making the MBPT assimilable into devising and acting practice. That is why I focused my efforts on presenting the contemplative content in a format and language accessible to young actors so that they could apply it directly to their performance practice. Therefore, the four criteria for selecting exercises for the PPM2 were the following; First, the exercises should help actors regulate their attentional skills.

Secondly, those exercises should be transferable to acting practice. Thirdly, the exercises should enhance ensemble work. Fourthly, the exercises should help generate group material that actors could use in the performance.

Another interesting feature regarding the selection of material for the PPM2 was that the format of consecutive weekly sessions enabled me to present not only exercises, but I could also introduce practices. Interestingly, a significant amount of the exercises that met the selection criteria mentioned in the above paragraph were contemplative practices. By practice, I mean a series of instructions that one can follow and repeat several times to gain an embodied understanding. For example, actors had the opportunity to practice meditation, 20 min Dance and the Village exercises repeatedly. The iteration of these exercises enabled actors to deepen their understanding of contemplative practices.

I structured the PPM2 in three stages (intrapersonal, interpersonal and application), where actors could explore different manifestations and applications of the MBPT training. Each phase lasted three sessions. During the first three sessions, I presented the training's foundations, working with exercises that explored an intrapersonal approach to mindfulness. For example, I presented content from the MBPT core modules of meditation, mindfulness of the body and spatial awareness. Then, during the second stage of the programme, we worked with exercises that explored the interpersonal aspect of mindfulness and could help actors develop their characters. For example, here I presented The Village exercise. Then, in the last three sessions of the PPM I focused on finding strategies to help student actors to apply the MBPT content to their scene work. In this way, during the process of designing and delivering the PPM2, I expanded considerably the exercises and material related to the module on interpersonal mindfulness.

In addition to the expansion of interpersonal mindfulness, another innovation of the PPM was that I became interested in exploring MBPT guiding principles. I present the principles as phrases that condense a message for applying the MBPT training into acting practice. Through the training, I delivered exercises where actors can explore their way of understanding and embodying the principle in practice.

For example: To foster openness to the present moment experience, I presented the phrase 'cultivating a beginner's mind', referencing the idea that "In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, but in the expert's, there

are few” (Suzuki, 1970,2007). Then, by practising meditation and 20 min Dance,²² actors gain an embodied understanding of the principle, enabling them to make their associations to acting practice.

Another exciting aspect of the PPM2 version was that the Performance Making course included formative and summative assessments. The students engaged in a critical self-reflection process about their contribution to the ensemble aesthetic. This context enabled me to share with the group relevant bibliography about contemplative training (Worley, 2001; Palmer, 2013; Oida,1997) to complement the PPM2’s sessions. Additionally, the process of written reflection provided a unique opportunity to gather evidence of the acting students' reflection process while incorporating the MBPT, in a first-person approach.

Finally, it is relevant to mention that Deborah Middleton, one of my supervisors on the research project²³, played a catalyst role in the PPM2. She has broad experience as a drama teacher at the University of Huddersfield (25 years). Additionally, Dr Middleton is actively engaged in the field of mindfulness and performance research by producing articles and contemplative pieces (Middleton, 2013,2013a, 2016, 2018, 2019).

Her collaboration was crucial for the PPM2 in four aspects. Firstly, her extended stay in the institution, alongside her technical knowledge as a theatre teacher, helped me design a programme that could fit the acting students' needs and schedules. Secondly, she had a panoramic view of the process by being the course leader and witnessing the PPM2 sessions. Thus, she could help actors actively link the mindfulness practice into their performative work when appropriate (Moyle, 2013, p.376), reinforcing actors' application process. Thirdly, by being an expert in the field and witnessing the PPM2 sessions, she provided me with valuable feedback that I could use as a *second person approach* input while delivering the sessions (View from within, and Chamberlain). Finally, she facilitated my access to materials and infrastructure (meditation cushions, yoga mats and blocks) that I needed to deliver the course.

2.3.d) Third Pilot Programme (PPM3)

I delivered the third pilot programme, referred to as PPM3, simultaneously to PPM2, to the second-year drama students

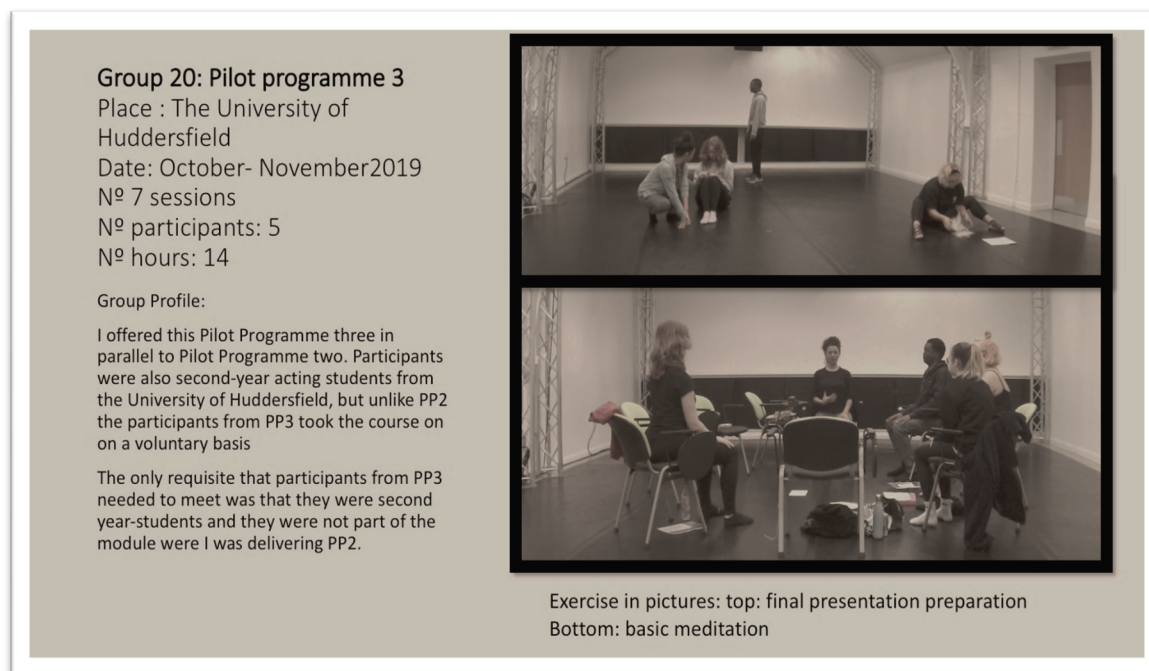
²² For explanatory reasons I decided to present the MBPT exercises' description in Chapter Four. Where I explain the role of the exercise within the MBPT Model. Additionally, In Appendix 3, I provide a list of the exercises that I explored during the practical phase of the research.

²³ At the time that I delivered the PPM2, from September to December 2019, she was my second supervisor.

following the *Theatre and Performance Making*. PPM3 participants were second-year students who were part of the *Theatre and Performance Making* groups led by Bridie Moore and Ben Spatz who was working with Ilona Krawczyk.²⁴

During the PPM3, I worked with a group of four students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The PPM3 design was an 8-week programme, and each session had a two-hour duration. I offered PPM3 sessions from 9th October until 27th November, from 10 am to noon on Wednesdays. Here, I encouraged actors to develop monologues based on the *Instruction Manual* of Julio Cortazar to channel the training's application towards a performative interpretation.

Figure 16 Pilot Programme 3(PPM3)



In PPM3 I decided to offer two-hour sessions instead of the one-hour session. This change in the session length was the result of considering the comments from the participants of the previous PPM. In PPM1, several students commented that I could try a two-hour format; for them, the hour session felt too short, and the three-hour

²⁴ At the University of Huddersfield, second year drama students were divided into three groups. Each group is led by a teacher and is conducive to performance.

session was too long.

PPM3 shared two criteria for selecting exercises with PPM1 and PPM2. Firstly, the exercises should help actors regulate their attentional skills. Secondly, it was desirable that these exercises should be transferable to acting practice. However, a distinctive quality of PPM3 was that this programme did not focus on ensemble work but had an emphasis on personal coaching. Therefore, another criterion for selecting materials for PPM3 was that these exercises should help actors unlock their creativity by stimulating their self-reflection upon the hindrances that debilitated their performance, such as distraction, inner criticism, lack of confidence and excessive control.

The most relevant finding of PPM3 was the innovation of including one-to-one sessions.

My way of responding to students' nonattendance was to adapt the group format into one-to-one sessions. During these one-to-one sessions, I worked with students by identifying their needs and offering exercises infused with a contemplative approach that could match their demands. As a result of the one-to-one session, I included exercises to address different stages of the creative process: learning lines, generating material for a scene, rehearsing a scene, preparing a scene for an audition, and performing. To incorporate these performative tasks into the MBPT, I approached them by stressing how attention management operates in each task.

For example, to help a student learn their lines, we worked with a ball so that they could learn to respond with openness towards the experience. To prepare a student for an audition, I presented a version of the *I am enough* exercise²⁵ to help develop confidence in stage presence. Also, to help a student develop a psychophysical score to address a monologue, we worked with spatial awareness and visualisation exercises.

The PMMS had repercussions on the training's content, expanding the MBPT exercises from the pre-expressive category, by including exercises that served expressive endeavours. Another shift of the MBPT content that is worth mentioning is that I introduced mindfulness-based exercises that worked with self-compassion as a strategy to overcome states of inner criticism and lack of confidence in actors.

The main challenge I encountered as a researcher during the delivery of the PPM3 was to conciliate the friction

²⁵ Described in Appendix three

between the PPM3 training and the “formal” requirements that the acting students had from the *Theatre and Performance Making* course. Two effects of this friction were the difficulty of finding people willing to engage in the PPM3, resulting in a low subscription²⁶. Only six people enrolled in the training. However, only four students attended the course due to the lack of commitment to voluntary courses that sometimes occur. Additionally, only one student showed up in five of the seven sessions, two students showed up in four sessions, and one student came three times. Due to this problem with attendance, I considered that PPM3 was the least successful pilot programme. The low attendance had a detrimental effect on the course’s progression, the programme’s learning trajectory was interrupted, and participants received uneven content. Additionally, I decided to shorten the programme by delivering seven instead of eight sessions. I discussed this issue with my supervisor and other postgraduate students, and they agreed that non-attendance is common behaviour due to the time constraints that acting students face. Therefore, if I wanted to offer another voluntary course for acting students, I should think about strategies to mitigate actors’ difficulty to persevere in a training that implies a long commitment ²⁷. Additionally, this problem brings to the fore the tensions and apparent contradictions of offering contemplative trainings in the context of higher education, where students and teachers are constantly pressured on getting “good” results in a semester timeframe. Acting students struggle to find time to commit to extra-curricular activities as the acting curriculum often implies numerous hours of rehearsals outside the class.

Due to the inconsistent attendance, I recognise that I only partially reached the objective of delineating the path to apply the MBPT towards a performative interpretation during PPM3. When we finalised the PPM3, the student’s monologues were still at the raw stage of interpretation. These “bad” results regarding the quality of the artistic production made me question the possible friction that I might encounter while offering future versions of the MBPT in the context of higher education that works under a system of marking where there is an emphasis on the artistic result. In contrast, how I designed MBPT focuses on a better understanding of the self-regulation of attention. I hypothesise that helping to regulate their attention should lead actors to improve their performance. I have gathered strong anecdotal evidence that actor-students felt the training was helpful, improving their focus, body-mind synchrony, and collaborative skills. However, the MBPT focuses on the process of making actors aware of their attention onstage

²⁶ In June 2019, during the progression monitoring report of the second year of my research, the internal examiners who evaluated my project warned me about the potential difficulties that I might encounter while offering a voluntary PPM to second year students. However, for administrative reasons and encouraged by my supervisor’s advice who told me that “every result is valuable” (Chamberlain, 2018), I decided to go ahead with the plan of working with second year students.

²⁷ At that point of the research, I remembered that I was warned by my internal examiners that I might encounter difficulties when offering voluntary courses.

rather than achieving an artistic result. Thus, in the context of higher education, reservations might arise in the MBPT effectiveness regarding standardised methods of marking and evaluation.

Although the results of the training were not what I had expected, participants reported being happy with being part of the PPM3. Student actors positively valued their experience and were able to link the MBPT training and their acting practice. Additionally, the PPM3 participants highly evaluated the opportunity of having MBPT individual sessions. The success of the one-to-one sessions made me consider the possibility of including a personalised session as part of a future version of the PPM structure. In addition to that, I could work with one-to-one sessions for future research, investigating the potential that MBPT has as an acting coaching methodology. The programme's apparent failure unexpectedly delineated a path towards the application of MBPT in the format of one-to-one sessions.

Additionally, in the level of contemplative pedagogy, the incorporation of one-to-one sessions into the structure of PPM3 can be seen as an example of a contemplative approach to actor training. A desirable hallmark of contemplative facilitation could be “semi-improvised” interventions. Therefore, the MBPT facilitator should have the ability to let go of the plan to serve what is co-emerging in the moment-to-moment experience. Therefore, as a facilitator in those one-to-one sessions, I adapted my behaviour to what students needed from me at that moment. Thus, I prioritised being useful to the student rather than sticking to the session’s plan. Although the ability to constantly adapt and respond to what is happening is a desirable skill that any actor should embody, in the case of the MBPT, there is stress on developing this open receptivity to stimuli. Therefore, the ability to engage is part of every MBPT session, the one-to-ones brought the facilitator's flexibility to the fore.²⁸

Therefore, on the one hand, the PPM3 did not meet my planned expectations regarding a MBPT application to the performative practice. However, on the other hand, the delivery of this course was successful from the participants’ point of view. In addition to that, the PPM3 contributed to discovering innovative solutions as one-to-one interventions that contributed to expanding the scope of the MBPT device.

²⁸ In Chapter Three, I present a nuanced analysis of the importance for MBPT participants and teachers to embody open receptivity.

2.3.e) Learning markers from the delivery of PPMs

In this section, I present the three main areas where one can see the results from designing and delivering three versions of PPM.

Flexibility

The delivery of the three PPM confirmed that performance students “do not usually have the time to dedicate to mindfulness as a discrete activity, meaning taking studio time to practise meditation or any other mindfulness practices” (Patson 2013, p.414). Therefore, I might face resistance while introducing mindfulness-based training as an extra-curricular activity in higher education. The changes in duration and frequency of PPM sessions were to adapt the training to the university learning environment.

As a response to the time limitations that acting students have in the context of higher education, I reduced PPM sessions from three hours to a one-hour lesson. Additionally, the more extended format allowed me to sequence sessions into programmes. Therefore, I designed a learning trajectory for each PPM, which enabled me to plan a progression in how I presented the MBPT content weekly. I selected the activities and content for each lesson following that traced trajectory following the needs of the student actors. The weekly sessions offered a frequency that provided time to present in-class exercises and content. There was enough time for the participants to make associations with their acting practice. Another strategy that I used to diminish any student resistance to taking part in a PPM was to reduce the “homework” to a minimum. In that way, actors should not feel that they increased their in-home responsibilities by participating in a PPM.

Another feature that I had to consider while designing the PPMs was the number of participants for in-person training. In general terms, I think that the PPM group of participants should be from six to fifteen students. However, that number might vary when working with pre-existent groups.

From delivering the three pilot programmes, I realised that presenting the PPM to student actors from a pre-existent group was remarkably different than working with actors that have not worked together before. For example, in PPM1, group C consisted of four acting students, and in PPM3, I also worked with four students. However, the participants from PPM1 were a pre-existent group that shared a creative project. Conversely, the participants from

PPM3 were from two different acting classes, and as such, they did not share a common creative endeavour. Therefore, although I worked with four acting students in both PPMs, the way the actors assimilated the training's content and their engagement in the contemplative training varied when working with the pre-existent groups that conformed to the group training. The first group from PPM1, as they were devising their FYP, worked as an ensemble collectively reflecting on their project. In addition, PPM1 participants had a sense of urgency, which positively impacted their engagement in the training as they were eager to find resources that could help them create. Whereas, while working with the participants from PPM3, I worked individually with the four participants. Additionally, in PPM3, I had the opportunity to do one-to-one sessions with three of the four members of the training. Therefore, for future PPM, I should consider the difference between presenting the training to individuals within a group or working with ensemble members.

Assimilation and application

One strategy to overcome the possible frictions between the PPM and acting classes was to highlight the PPM's applicability to acting practice. In that way, the idea was that acting students perceived the PPM as training that would complement their conventional actor training, enhancing their performance skills.

Therefore, the common denominator among the three versions of PPM was their stress on encouraging the application and assimilation of MBPT content into acting practice. A consequence of this emphasis on practice was an enlargement and refinement of the MBPT content where I gradually incorporated exercises from diverse contemplative and actor training backgrounds and created new material and exercises.

This growth in the content of MBPT affected the training's structure. During the PPMs I was interested in presenting exercises that included interpersonal mindfulness techniques. This resulted in considerably expanding the content related to the interpersonal mindfulness module. Another result of implementing PPM was that in the three versions of the PPM training, I presented self-compassion exercises as a strategy to overcome states of inner criticism and lack of confidence in actors. Due to the significant contribution of self-compassion to the research process I decided to incorporate this emergent content as a MBPT module. Additionally, the Feather Exercise, opened the MBPT

practice to incorporating a new category of exercises, attention to the object²⁹, *self-compassion* and *attention to the object* emerged as two new categories of MBPT modules.

Additionally, another shift in the MBPT content was the inclusion of not only pre-expressive content, but, due to the PPM stress on the application, I started including exercises that served expressive endeavours such as character development, space dramaturgy, and direction cues to trust their presence onstage. This experimental stage of incorporating expressive exercises, raises the question of how to approach character building, working with a text and rehearsing scenes from a contemplative perspective. This question signals an important field to be addressed in further research. However, based on my experience running PPMs and while teaching Mindful Acting courses, I can assert that a key feature in applying the MBPT content to acting is to continue to reinforce the process of offering mindfulness techniques to refine actors' attentional management and encourage a self-reflexive approach while working on a scene.

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Therefore, a consequence of the growth and refinement of the MBPT content through the PPM sessions was that the scheme of four core modules ceased to serve the function of helping to select the exercises for the PPMs sessions³¹. I address this problem with strategies described below, using selection criteria to filter the MBPT exercises and activities. Moreover, I developed a six points of attention model that organises the exercises by relating them to their attentional focus.

Selection criteria

Another strategy that I used when the four core modules were no longer a useful way to classify the content for the PPM was to come back to using selection criteria as a filter. At this research stage, I applied four criteria for selecting material while devising the PPMs. The first three criteria were the same as previously identified for the MBPT sessions:

1) The essence of the exercises should be the management of attentional states; 2) The MBPT exercises should be

²⁹ This expansion of the MBPT content was the antecedent for the further elaboration of the Six Petal flower, a way of grouping the MBPT content that I conceived in further stages of the research, and that I will explain in further chapters of the dissertation.

³⁰ In the last section of Chapter Three, while analysing the reflection stage of [The Feather Exercise TFE](#), I provide examples of a case study where I used attentional strategies to help actors overcome interpersonal obstacles that hindered their performative skills.

³¹ This problem was also the antecedent for the creation of the six points of attention model. In [Chapter Four](#) I present an expanded version of the six-petal of attention model.

transferable to acting practice. 3) I should have practised the exercises enough times so that I feel comfortable teaching them. The fourth criterion was related to the attitudinal component of the exercise: 4) The exercise should help actors to orient their experience towards embodying certain attitudes (curiosity, receptivity, non-striving). In the following chapter, I will unfold attitude's critical role within the MBPT.

2.3.f) Six points of attention

In this section, I will describe the range of points of attention deployed within the multiple practices and exercises I explored and developed during the MBPT practical phase. As Zarrilli states, “When undergoing foundational modes of psychophysical training, actors are optimally being attuned and directed toward a variety of specific and sometimes multiple modes of embodying attention.” (Zarrilli, 2016, p. 119). In this section, I present six points of attention that an actor should embody during the MBPT.

The idea of specific points to direct the actor’s attention onstage springs from my understanding of attentional training from a contemplative background. For example, when practising mindfulness, there is always a concrete point of attention to which a person should constantly direct their attention. The most common object of attention while practising sitting meditation is the breath. Other points of attention from a contemplative background are perceptions (touch, smell, sight, taste, sound); sensations of bodily feelings (body scan, yoga); and space awareness.

Herein, I propose a way to group six types of MBPT exercises depending on their object of attention. In the MBPT model, the feature that represents the points of attention is the diagram of a six-petal flower. Each petal represents a specific mode of embodying attention that is implicit in the MBPT. These are: attention to the mind, attention to the body, attention to space, attention to the object, attention to others, and attention to the heart - self-compassion.

It is crucial to keep in mind that this diagram emerged from practice. Specifically, it results from the critical reflection on the practice undertaken during the MBPT pilot programmes. I decided to present the diagram that illustrate the six points of attention as I believe this information will help the reader better comprehend the development of the MBPT pilot programmes.

Figure 17 Six points of attention, six petal attention flower

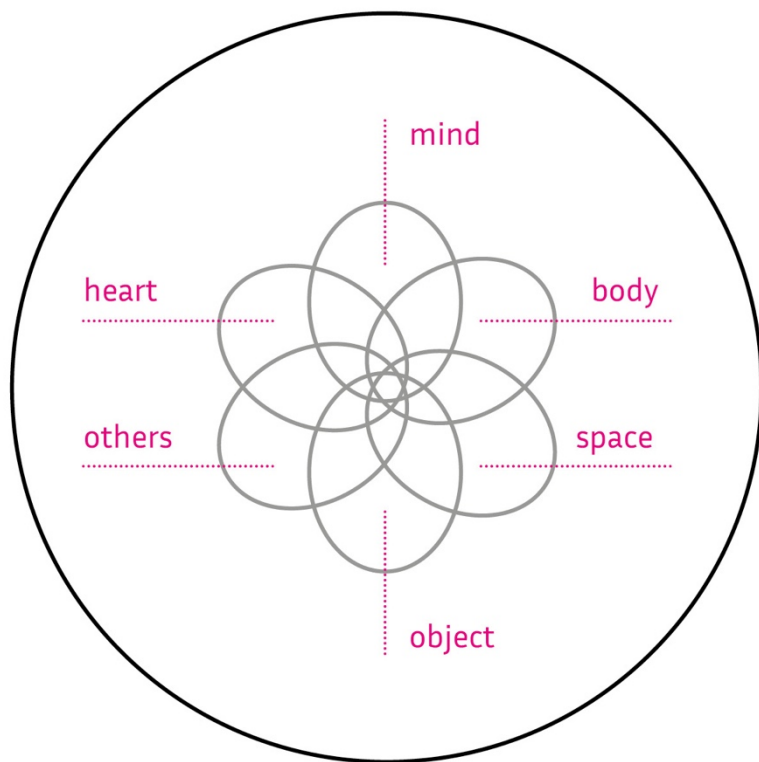


Figure 17 presents the six areas of natural intersection between performance and mindfulness practice that I explored within the MBPT practice. In Chapter Four, I provide a nuanced description of how I address each area of practice.

2.4) Conclusion Chapter Two

In conclusion, Chapter Two of this dissertation showcased the extensive practical phase of the research, focusing on developing a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) that integrates mindfulness techniques for attention management in performers. I delivered MBPT workshops to 21 groups, working with over two hundred people in the UK and Chile. Through these workshops, I continually refined the MBPT practice and its implementation, forging a

path of ongoing improvement and evolution. Throughout this phase, various aspects of the MBPT training were clarified and refined.

The initial inquiry that guides this practice-as-research process was to develop a MBPT that integrates mindfulness techniques and practices into performer training. The goal was to create a training program that provides a direct pathway for actors to experientially understand the connection between regulating their attention and cultivating mindfulness onstage. To achieve this, I followed Schechner's (2006) workshopping approach. This methodology was a valuable research tool, allowing me to develop and test prototypes of specific contemplative methodologies to enhance actors' attentional management. Workshopping played a crucial role in refining the MBPT. These workshops encompassed various formats, including MBPT sessions, MBPT pilot programs, and Mindful Acting Courses.

Through the process of delivering and refining MBPT workshops, I identified four key criteria that serve as a conceptual strainer or 'mindfulness filter' to select and create MBPT exercises. First, the exercises should prioritise the management of attentional states. Second, the exercises should be applicable and transferable to acting practice, bridging the gap between mindfulness and performance. Third, as the facilitator, I needed to have personally practised the exercises extensively, enabling me to teach them to actors confidently. Lastly, the exercises should encompass an attitudinal component, encouraging actors to embody specific attitudes such as curiosity, receptivity, non-striving, and self-compassion. The significance of these attitudes will be further explored in the subsequent chapters, especially in Chapter Four where I examine the critical role of self-compassion within the MBPT framework.

The main difference between the MBPT session and the MBPT Pilot Programmes was the durational aspect. The MBPT sessions are presented as a stand-alone workshop where I introduced a mindfulness approach to acting to a broad sample of people. Although, this format had a favourable reception among the participants and served me to test and refine the MBPT methodology and practice. The time scope of a sole intervention provided limited information about the potential of this training to be integrated into higher education. That is why I developed the MBPT Pilot Programmes. The pilot programmes are a series of MBPT workshops that I designed and implemented for acting students in the context of higher education.

The primary outcome of delivering three Pilot Programmes was to test what features of MBPT proved to be more beneficial for students. The outcomes were positive, 90% of the PPM participants said they would recommend this training to colleagues. When asked what aspects of the training were more helpful, students reported that the

training helped them to be in a better “headspace” before performing. They also highly valued how mindfulness techniques enabled them to enhance body-mind synchronicity. Additionally, they recognised that being in the present moment enabled them to create from a place of bigger receptivity and creativity. The central reservation about the training’s efficacy came from participants of PP2, three students questioned the training [in the current state] applicability to performance training. Several students who were happy with the training results also mentioned friction in spending time in MBPT training as resting time to devising the performance. This points to a grey area for further exploration. In future applications of the MBPT, I would like to emphasise applying these techniques to acting practice.

Another relevant realisation that emerged during the delivery and critical reflection of the MBPT sessions was the adaptability feature of the training, which challenged the idea of developing a fixed structure for MBPT. Instead, the focus shifted towards developing a systematic approach towards identifying the techniques and mechanisms of mindfulness that could aid actors in self-regulating their attention during performances.

For example, a distinctive feature of how I elaborated on the MBPT is that, unlike other approaches that separate mindfulness training from acting practice, the MBPT aims to bring contemplative techniques directly into performance training. To do so, I initially identified four fields where mindfulness and actor practice collided: attention—mind, body, space, and others— during the practice-as-research process, I tested that actor positively received the exercises that I presented in each of these four areas. Additionally, through the iterative process of presenting and critically reflecting on the MBPT workshops, two more fields arose: attention—object, and heart. I systemised these six fields of intersection between performance and mindfulness practice as a core feature of the MBPT training that I called six petals of attention. In Chapter Four of the dissertation, I elaborate on the significance of the six petals as a critical component of the MBPT practice.

Another result of this phase of the research is that to organise the MBPT content and better understand the scope of the MBPT practice, I developed the MBPT matrix, represented by a circle with two perpendicular axes, symbolising the intrapersonal to interpersonal continuum and the transition from focused attention to open awareness techniques. The MBPT matrix provides a conceptual framework to address contemplative practice in actor training. I further expand into the MBPT matrix's potential to illuminate other contemplative practices in Chapter Four of the dissertation.

Principles of the MBPT pedagogy, such as embracing a beginner's mind, recognising individuality, and accepting experiences without judgment, were explored. The facilitator's role was highlighted as one that allows for semi-improvised interventions, responding to the co-emerging experiences in each moment.

The extensive practical phase presented a significant challenge in organizing, systematizing, and analyzing the substantial data collected during the workshops. To address this issue, I made strategic decisions. One such decision was to narrow the research focus and analyze the feasibility of integrating contemplative pedagogy into higher education actor training methods. This led me to set aside the analysis of data gathered from the Mindful Acting courses. In future research, I intend to explore the potential implementation of MBPT in professional actor training. A strategy I used to address this challenge was to examine the connecting elements that tied the workshops together rather than analysing them separately. This approach led me to develop the MBPT model, which will be presented in Chapter Four. By exploring these linking aspects, I aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the MBPT approach and its implications for actor training.

In summary, Chapter Two presented the practical phase of developing the MBPT, emphasising the integration of mindfulness techniques for attention management in performers. The iterative process of refinement of the MBPT workshops highlighted the unique features and principles of the MBPT training. While the effectiveness of MBPT within academic contexts warrants further exploration, the focus on attention self-regulation and the positive anecdotal evidence from participants offer promising prospects for enhancing performers' focus, body-mind synchrony, and collaborative skills. In Chapter Four of the dissertation, I present a nuanced discussion of how I incorporated beneficial aspects of mindfulness into the fabric of MBPT practice.

3) CHAPTER THREE: THE FEATHER EXERCISE

3.1) Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a concrete example of how I apply mindfulness techniques in the acting context. To do so, I present a case study of the Feather Exercise.

The main reason for selecting this exercise was to identify what new insights and technologies appeared through “the differential reproduction of the known” (Spatz, 2017, p. 203). The Feather Exercise emerged in the practical phase of the research while delivering MBPT sessions; therefore, it is original. However, at the same time, I propose that this novelty lays upon my embodied understanding of how to enhance mindful attention onstage. Thus, I assume that by closely examining the branching of techniques imbricated in The Feather Exercise I can clarify the MBPT technical “heritage” while identifying how it differs from other contemplative practices in the performance field. Additionally, I assume I will be able to extrapolate some of the insights and techniques unravelled while examining The Feather Exercise to the MBPT more broadly.

Methodologically, I will use a combination of first-person accounts (Middleton & Chamberlain, 2012) and phenomenotechnique (Spatz, 2015, 2017) to unfold the micro-dynamics of mindfulness techniques imbricated in this exercise’s fabric. As explained in the methodology chapter, the first-person methodology, developed by Varela and Shear (1999) and further articulated by Claire Petitmengin (2009), enables the pre-reflective micro-dynamics of lived experience to become an object of study.

This chapter focuses on unravelling the mindfulness mechanism embedded in The Feather Exercise. I will use audio-visual recordings from the delivery of this exercise to share and evaluate the techniques imbricated in this practice. In this way, I aim to bring the pre-reflexive phenomena of mindful attention in The Feather Exercise to the reflexive territory. This chapter's first-person account has a phenomenological approach that aims towards a technical understanding of my embodied practice. This means that unlike other first-person accounts in the performance field that focused on a phenomenological description of their attentional shifts, see Zarrilli's (2009) phenomenological approach describing his process of awareness of their attentional shifts while preparing and performing Beckett's *Ohio*

Impromptu. The phenomenological approach in my research is bound to a technical query. In other words, I do not only wish to describe the phenomena that happened during TFE, but most importantly I focus on unravelling the embodied techniques that enable these phenomena to occur. That is why I will complement the first-person approach with Spatz's (2017) method of phenomenotechnique. I aim to be able to 'read' these phenomenological accounts to examine the "embodied knowledge and habit, [which] had to have been incorporated in order to make that particular experience possible." (Spatz, 2017, p. 211). Herein, I understand technique as the specific branching of pathways imbricated in practice that can be identified and repeated; and potentially can work in another context similar to where they arise (Spatz, 2015, pp.42-44).

In this chapter, I radically zoom into practice; through a full description of The Feather Exercise structure and substance, I aim to unravel the micro-dynamics and the subsequent 'gestures' of awareness imbricated in the exercise that enable actors to access mindfulness onstage.

3.1.a) The Feather Exercise

The Feather Exercise referred to as TFE, is an exercise where the actor explores their mechanism of self-regulation of attention, by deliberately placing their attention on a feather.

Exercise Summary

During this exercise actors receive a feather and I guide them through a series of instructions to interact with this object based in mindfulness principles. At the beginning of the exercise actors are asked to hold the feather in their hands and refrain from doing, the cue is to notice the feather's characteristic. Then, the exercise's instructions evolve towards asking actors to interact actively with the feather through breath and movement. Herein, actors are encouraged to play with the feather by touching, blowing, dropping, and moving it through space. During the exercise, actors are also requested to interact with the feather by enacting attitudes of openness, care, and curiosity, emulating the Child's state of mind. When the exercise is finished, I ask actors to write about their relation to the feather. Then actors are asked to reflect on their interpersonal patterns based on their experience while playing with the feather.

In the following pages, I will present a nuanced analysis of the exercise's fabric. Additionally, when it corresponds, I will present footage and provide anecdotal evidence from the students' commentaries that support the expected results of the exercise.

Note: I strongly recommend complementing the chapter by reading [Appendix Two, The Feather Exercise Protocol](#), where I present the full version of the exercise's protocol. Additionally, in case you would like to see the whole deliver of the exercise you can use the following links:

Video 2 [The Feather Exercise \(part one\)](#)

Video 3 [The Feather Exercise \(part two\)](#)

The Feather Exercise Origin

This exercise emerged in an advanced stage of the practical phase of the research when I had already developed and delivered multiple versions of the MBPT workshops. In Chapter One, I presented this phase as the third series of MBPT sessions. I was actively invested in expanding the MBPT repertoire by trying new exercises and methodologies I was unfamiliar with³².

Specifically, the first time I presented The Feather Exercise was on 2nd February 2019 while working with Group 12. This was an MBPT session that I developed for first-year drama students at the University of Huddersfield. While preparing for that session, I wanted to connect meditation practice with acting practice. As a strategy, I was looking for actor training exercises that worked with the placement of the breath. I asked my supervisor at the time, Professor Franc Chamberlain, if he could share some "breath exercises" that I could use with the first-year students. In that session, he shared with me five exercises, one of them involving feathers.

In the following video, you will see how Chamberlain presented an exercise with feathers as a game for actors to explore their relation to breath. "The task is to keep the feather in the air using your breath. You try to find the

³² For more details see Chapter One, third series of MBPT sessions.

breath and the placement of the breath that enables you to keep it in the air” (Chamberlain, 2019). I consider this interaction as an important antecedent of the TFE technique.

Video 4 [Franc Chamberlain explains a game with feathers](#)

The above video shows how Chamberlain delivers the instructions before and during the exercise. I learned this exercise by following his instructions while playing with the feather and trying to keep it in the air using my breath. Franc’s instructions were formulated in questions that guided my exploration of the exercise. For example: How much [air] does it need? How little breath can you give it to keep it in the air? What about lightly sustained breath? Another interesting detail of Franc’s exercise delivery was the combination of practice and reflection. After playing with the feather first, we briefly discussed what my experience with that feather was. I mentioned feeling hyperventilated and Franc replied “How do you feel being hyperventilated” he pointed out that the exercise consisted of exploring what happens with the breath. He suggested how I might slow down.

After he mentioned that “some people will have disastrous feathers” I selected a feather that looked difficult to play with. This feather was faster than the previous one and was harder to keep in the air. In the reflection phase after playing with this second feather, Franc signalled, “I let someone struggle with that while somebody else has a lovely one because it won’t always be apparent to people that it is the feather that is the problem”. Franc Chamberlain pointed out the pre-reflexive process while playing with the feather. I examine this process closely in the following sections of this chapter.

However, how I present The Feather Exercise differs considerably from the original, resulting from a process of incorporation into the MBPT context. I will share footage from the first time I presented this exercise to first year acting students at the University of Huddersfield.

While watching this footage, it is crucial to note that I consciously took a risk during the delivery of that session, deviating from my usual structured approach. I drew inspiration from an interview with Pasquale Esposito, an Italian actor, director, and Zen teacher. Esposito shared his preference for presenting his teaching based on the unfolding events in the room rather than adhering to a rigid plan. Intrigued by his teaching style, I wanted to

experiment with responding to the spontaneous and emerging experiences of the present moment. Consequently, this video serves as a documentation of the inception of the exercise, capturing its genesis.

Video 5 [The birth of the exercise](#)

TFE structure organically unfolded as a direct response to the specific circumstances of that moment. As you can see in the video, although paying attention to the breath is still part of the exercise, TFE is not a “breathing exercise”. In TFE the placement of attention is not in the breath but in the feather. Afterwards, the placement of attention shifts towards interaction. In that stage, breath, movement, and stillness become means for interacting with the feather. I categorise TFE as a mindfulness-in-action exercise that works as a self-exploration tool to unravel the interaction patterns that arise while interacting with the feather.

During the practical phase of the research, while delivering MBPT workshops, I tested and refined this exercise with more than a hundred people from nine different MBPT groups³³. Through this iterative process of reflecting-doing-articulating-doing, I clarified the exercise’s instructions and structure until I developed a protocol for this exercise³⁴.

3.1.b) Attention placement

The following video shows how I introduce the exercise. In this footage, I introduce the feather as an object of attention. Then I share a story encouraging participants to approach the feather as a new friend. I included the analysis of this exercise stage as it sets the tone of the exercise.

Video 6 [Introduction of TFE](#)

Up to this point of the research, I regarded mindfulness practice as consisting of two main components that worked together: Attention (i.e., attention placement) and Awareness (noticing one's thoughts, sensations, and

³³ I delivered the feather exercise to nine groups: See [Appendix One](#): Group 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. These groups encompassed a diversity of participants: acting students, professional actors, and open sessions to a mixed audience amounting to one hundred and ninety-one participants.

³⁴ See [Appendix 3.2a](#)): Exercise protocol I recommend the reader use the protocol as a guide to better understand this chapter, as it summarises the topics that I will address in detail in the following sections.

environment) seen as the two central components of mindfulness practice. Thus, by examining the exercise's footage, I held the implicit assumption that I would be able to unravel how Attention and Awareness operated in practice. However, an unexpected result from the close examination of the delivery of TFE was that Attitude appeared to have a central role in aiding actors to self-regulate attention.

A characteristic of the mindfulness technique is that it requires an object at which a person "deliberately" directs their attention. The most common object of attention for mindfulness practice is the breath (Kabat Zinn, 2003), as its elusive quality helps the mind to cultivate a precise and soft attitude towards the present moment (Shapiro, 2006; Bishop, 2005). In the case of this exercise, actors train the mental qualities of attending with a light touch and precision to what is happening in the present moment by "deliberately" placing their attention on a feather, an external object. As a concrete yet malleable object constantly being affected by the environment, the feather appears suitable for practising mindfulness for the stage.

At the beginning of the video, I explain the **Attention placement** mechanism while handing out the feathers. **I clarify that the attention should be placed on the feather.**

When we sit, the object of meditation is the body breathing. When we were experiencing walking meditation, the object of attention was our feet touching the ground. Here **the object of attention will be this feather** (Video transcript, Introduction of TFE).

Then, over that foundation of Attentional placement, I introduce the **Awareness** component of the exercise.

Awareness

Acknowledge what is there in front of you. **Notice if you judge whether this is good or bad, and return to observing for a direct experience.** Notice that this feather is already expressive (Ed. Transcript, Introduction of TFE).

In the following exercise stage, I will further examine how these elements interact in order to help actors enact the experience of mindfully attending to an object. Hereinafter, I will focus on the Attitudinal component that I found to have a crucial role while introducing TFE.

An important antecedent of the delivery of this exercise in the context of Pilot Programme One, which I mentioned in Chapter One, was that at that research stage, I was actively searching for ways to infuse self-compassion in actor training. Reflecting on the delivery of this exercise, I attribute the emphasis on presenting the feather as a friend as an intuitive strategy towards permeating the exercise's fabric with the attitudinal components of mindfulness practice that Bishop defines "as a particular orientation towards the experience which involves curiosity, openness, acceptance" (Bishop 2004, pp.233-234).

The story of meeting a new friend adds a specific **Attitudinal component** to TFE. While sharing that story, I held implicit assumptions that could mould actors' attitudes towards embodying the excitement and curiosity they felt as a child when they met a new friend. Thus, through a critical reflection on my practice, I unravelled that **this story aimed to encourage actors to embody openness towards direct experience by connecting with friendliness**. I propose to return to the footage to examine what phenomenotechniques were implied for encouraging actors to cultivate a particular orientation towards experience.

Video 7 [meeting a new friend](#)

While watching the video an element that stands out is how I model the gesture of holding the feather. This non-verbal gesture of holding the feather embodies the attitudinal component of care. I hold this feather with a ceremonial stance. I embody the gesture of holding something small and precious with interest and respect. My words reinforce this gesture:

Back in Chile, when I was five, I went to a park and met a **child** my age. I immediately had a new friend. Is it like that here? This [the feather] is your **new friend**. You just met her, so I encourage you **not to touch** her that much. Just be **simple**. Hold it in your hands but **do nothing**. Just **acknowledge what is already there** (Ed. Transcript, the meeting a new friend video, 0:25-0:43).

I invite the students to explore the attitudinal components of mindfulness using analogies and images instead of giving direct instructions. For example, instead of saying "Be curious" I say, "Acknowledge what is already there". Instead of saying "Be innocent" I suggest "The feather is your new friend".

Another interesting feature of the use of language is that instead of asking them to “be playful” I gave a seemingly contradictory instruction. I ask them to “**do nothing**” and “**just hold it in your hands**”. In this way, I am infusing the exercise with a contemplative approach, where through attentive stillness and acute observation, I encourage actors to shift their perspective from a doing mode towards **enacting a receptive approach to experience**.

Using the analogy of a child meeting a friend helps encourage actors to foster an orientation towards openness, curiosity, acceptance, and innocence, which should ignite a beginner mind in actors. In the field of performance, Worley (2001, 2003) identifies the willingness to **be open as the first foundation of the creative process**. Furthermore, the image of the child as a novice is a metaphor for an enthusiastic beginner. For example, Nietzsche presents the **child as the most refined state of mind a human could reach**, "Innocence is the child" (Nietzsche, 2014, p.91). At the same time, the emphasis on the continuous cultivation of a state of openness, that curiosity and innocence towards experience, relate to a seminal Buddhist teaching called ‘beginners’ mind’, which states “**In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few**” (...) If your mind is empty, it is always ready for everything; it is open to everything “(Suzuki, 2017, p.1).

Additionally, some characteristics of the feather, such as **lightness and playfulness**, contribute towards reinforcing the attitude of openness during TFE.

The most important **learning marker that emerged while examining the introduction of TFE was the importance of the Attitudinal component**. This discovery transformed how I conceptualised mindful interventions from a two-fold to a third-fold approach.

In the following section, I will present how, based on the discovery of the importance of incorporating the attitudinal component of mindfulness in the way I approached mindful-in-action endeavours, I articulated the conceptualisation of the Mindfulness Mechanism.

3.1.c) The mindfulness mechanism AAA

The mindfulness mechanism, Attention Awareness Attitude, referred to as AAA, describes how I found that self-regulation of attention operated within TFE. For the elaboration of this mechanism, I was informed by Bishop’s (2004)

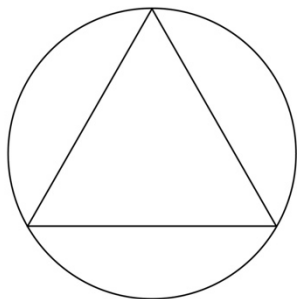
conceptualisation of mindfulness as a two-component model (self-regulation of attention and orientation to experience) and Shapiro's (2005) model, IAA (Intention, Attention and Attitude). However, I did not attempt to force-fit Bishop's and Shapiro's concepts, which emerged in a clinical context, to the MBPT model which resides in the creative arena. On the contrary, I used those concepts to illuminate some areas of experience that emerged in the closed examination of TFE. For more information regarding generic models of mindfulness mechanisms, I recommend reviewing models from clinical psychology and behavioural psychology such as: Intention Attention Attitude (IAA) model (Shapiro, et al, 2006); Wells' Self-Regulatory Executive Function (S-REF) model (Myers & Wells, 2005; Wells, 1999); and Teasdale's Differential Activation Hypothesis (DAH) (Sheppard & Teasdale, 1996; Lau, Segal, & Williams, 2004; Teasdale, et al., 2002).

It is important to consider the previously mentioned research from the psychology field about the mechanisms of mindfulness, which conventionally addresses mindfulness as a sitting meditation practice. However, I present the MBPT as mindfulness in-action training. Therefore, the AAA mechanism should not only describe what happens with actors while they are practising sitting meditation, but more importantly, I designed this mechanism to encompass mindfulness-in-action endeavours.

Bishop (2004) defines self-regulation of attention as "the ability to focus on an aspect of a task as an experience without negative bias, and the ability to allow the experiences to occur in a non-judgmental way" (Bishop et al., 2004, p.233). This two-fold aspect of the regulation of attention is also noticed in the performance field by Zarrilli, who states "This process of stretching out experience is a way of both *attending to* and a standing open to an *awareness* of the world." (Zarrilli, 2019, p. 118). Whilst Zarrilli and Bishop bring the two components, attention, and awareness, together, based on my experiences during the delivery of MBPT and supported by gathered literature (Boyce,2011; Britton, 2013; Hayashi,2021; Worley 2001) I decided to present *attention* (focused attention) and *awareness* (open awareness) as two distinct elements within the MBPT mindfulness mechanism.

Figure 18 is a diagram of a triangle inside a circle to describe how self-regulation of actors' attention operates in the TFE. I selected the figure of a triangle as I discovered three primary components of the mindfulness mechanism: Attention, Awareness and Attitude (AAA).

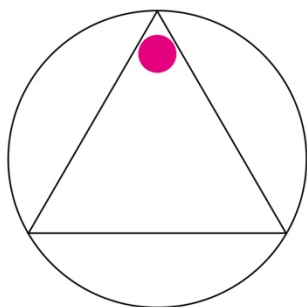
Figure 18 Mechanism of mindfulness AAA diagram



It is important to understand that in practice these three elements work together. However, for explanatory reasons, I define and address these elements separately to clarify their role in the context of the MBPT training and to stress their influence within the context of the mindfulness mechanism.

I understand **Attention** as the effortful component of mindfulness practice that enables actors to stretch out, place, sustain and shift their attentional focus in the phenomenal field, at will (Shapiro, 2005; Zarrilli, 2016).

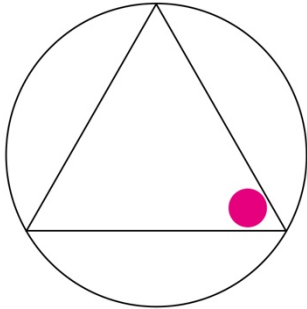
Figure 19 Attention within MBPT mindfulness mechanism



In contrast, **Awareness** in the context of the mindfulness mechanism, refers to a sense of heightened awareness; total sensing that enables actors to notice what is happening in their stream of consciousness and sensory

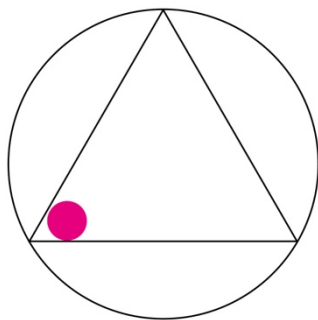
perceptions. Awareness is the quality of the mind that enables actors to notice “both my bodymind/breath in action, as well as the immediate environment” (Zarrilli, 2002, p.184) onstage.

Figure 20 Awareness within MBPT mindfulness mechanism



The third element I found to operate in MBPT practice was Attitude. **Attitude** relates to Bishop’s second component of the mindfulness construct, which is “**a particular orientation to experience that involves** curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (Bishop ,2004, pp.233-234). Other authors like Kabat-Zinn (1990) and Shapiro & Schwartz (1999, 2000) refer to the qualities one brings to attention as the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness. In the context of the mindfulness mechanism, I identified **four core foundational attitudes imbricated in TFE practice: curiosity, openness, acceptance, and self-compassion.**

Figure 21 attitude within MBPT mindfulness mechanism



3.2) Mindfulness on the Object

At this point of the research, I radically zoom in to practice in order to find examples that can illustrate my approach to applying mindfulness techniques in the actor training context. The degree of detail I go into the reflection about practice is like using a magnifying glass that enables me to analyse microscopic phenomena entailed in practice. Therefore, I strongly recommend complementing the information provided in this chapter by reading Appendix X (The Feather Exercise protocol), where I present the full version of the exercise's instructions. In the following sections, I will share selected footage from the delivery of TFE to Group 14 within the third session of Pilot Programme One, delivered to third-year drama students from the University of Huddersfield, to illustrate specific aspects of the TFE.

3.2.a) Mindfulness mechanism AAA

I will now examine how the mindful mechanism AAA operates within mindfully attending an object. Based on gathered literature (Middleton & Núñez, 2018; Penman, 2015; Grotowski, 2020); supported by the anecdotal evidence I gathered from the participants' commentaries after experiencing TFE, I propose that this stage of the exercise ignites the process of deconditioning of perception in actors. Thus, In the following section, I examine the micro-dynamics and embedded techniques implicit in the delivery of this exercise stage. I will examine this through a phenomenotechnique approach how the mechanism AAA enables actors to recover from the habitual displacement from direct experience (Middleton & Núñez, 2018).

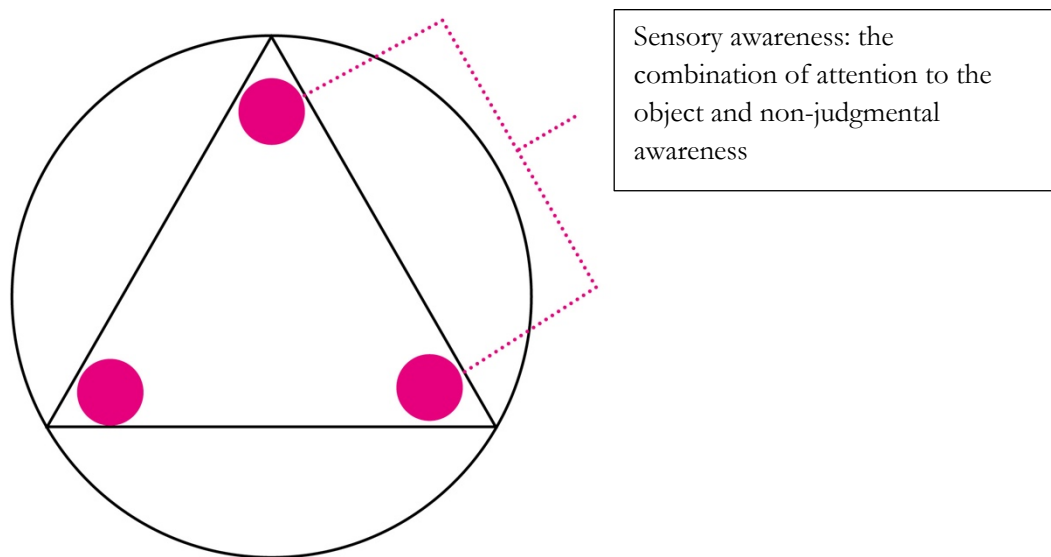
3.2.b) Mindful attention ignites deconditioning of perception.

In this phase of TFE I used mindfulness techniques to help actors experience mindful attention to the object. The difference between the regular and mindful perceptions is that the first one is pre-determined by past patterns of interaction that act like a fog for perception. In contrast, consciously engaging in the perception process results in mindful perception. The mindfulness jargon also refers to this as 're-perceiving' (Shapiro, et al 2006). Penman describes this state as when "you are experiencing through your senses without thought acting as an intermediary. That is when you are experiencing something first hand rather than thinking about it" (Penman, 2015, p.39). Accordingly, in The

Feather Exercise, I use mindfulness-based techniques to encourage actors to experience the direct perception of the feather.

Additionally, I propose that the mindful mechanism of attention to the object resembles the deconditioning features from Grotowski's *via negativa* which focuses on the process of ripening the actor towards their bare intimacy (Grotowski, 2002) to enhance the experience of direct perception (Middleton & Núñez, 2018). Similarly, Sydow proposes that "Contemplative exercises provide a form for the actor to develop perceptive abilities and recognise their automatisms, opening up space for discovering a more vivid and conscious relationship with external and internal events" (Sydow, 2017, p.7), Worley states that contemplative exercises should encourage actors to recognise their immediate direct perception of the moment. "The contemplative actor trains towards this openness to experience the world fresh, moment to moment" (Worley, 2003, p.41). Following this line of thought, I propose that the AAA mechanism implicit in this exercise helps actors to remove the unnecessary filters between self and others. Thus, in this exercise stage, mindful attention to the object relies on the process of deconditioning perception or re-perceiving.

Figure 22 mindful attention to the object.



Attention: to the feather

Awareness: non- judgmental awareness

Attitude: Openness, generosity, and care

In the following pages, I unpack how the three elements of the mechanism of mindfulness - Attention, Awareness and Attitude - work together to activate mindful attention, enabling the deconditioning of perception to take place within this stage of TFE. It is important to note that these three elements are intertwined in practice. However, for analytic purposes, I will address them separately. Thus, I selected the footage where I delivered the instructions on the mindfulness of an object stage. As you will see in the video, the elements of Attention, Awareness, and Attitude are interwoven while delivering the instructions. To unravel the specific branches of techniques imbricated in each of the elements of the mechanism of mindfulness, I will use the same quotation extracted from the footage from three different angles. In the following pages will use bold to highlight the relevant sections for each element Attention, Awareness and Attitude.³⁵

Video 8 [mindfulness on the object](#)

Attention to the sensory aspects of the feather.

Through closely examining the exercise documentation, I discovered that combining Attention to the feather with non-judgmental Awareness provokes the process of re-perceiving which activates sensory awareness. Hurlburt defines the phenomena of sensory awareness as the experience of “paying attention to a particular sensory aspect of his or her external or internal environment without particular regard for the instrumental aim” (Hurlburt, 2009, p. 239).

Hold it in your hands but do nothing. Acknowledge what is already there. Notice if you are judging (...) and come back to **observe, to have a direct experience. Notice that this feather is already expressive. Maybe it is moving slightly because it receives subtle changes in the air.** Each time the attention drifts, just be generous and offer your attention to this new friend (Transcript from mindfulness to the object video).

This is an example of how I encourage actors to cultivate a receptive state towards the sensory aspects of the feather. These instructions show how I guide actors towards their **Attention placement in the feather's sensory**

³⁵ Please note that I will use the footage from Video 8: mindfulness on the object, to analyse the exercise from different perspectives.

aspects without an instrumental goal. A result of this conscious engagement in perceiving is the enhancement of sensory awareness³⁶.

Non-Judgmental Awareness

The element of noticing one's thoughts non-judgmentally is a key feature of mindfulness training that I constantly encourage actors to cultivate during this exercise. I understand **non-judgmental awareness as a mental quality that enables actors to become aware of whatever arises in their field of consciousness without judging, attaching, or identifying with the mental content.**

Hold it in your hands but do nothing. Acknowledge what is already there. **Notice if you are judging (...) and come back to observe, to have the direct experience.** Notice that this feather is already expressive. It may be moving slightly because it receives subtle changes in the air. **Each time the attention drifts, be generous and offer your attention to this new friend.** (Transcript from mindfulness to the object video)

I used bold to signal the instructions encouraging actors to notice the pervasive mental activity that arises while deliberately focusing on the feather. As Goldstein (2011) explains, an important part of mindfulness training “is becoming aware of our thoughts and emotions, those pervasive mental activities that so condition our minds, our bodies and our lives” (Goldstein, 2011, p.23). The component of non-judgmental awareness is a critical feature of mindfulness training embedded in this exercise.

Attitude: Gentleness, non-aggression, and generosity

The element that favours the deconditioning of the perception process is the affective qualities or Attitudinal components embedded in this exercise. Let us watch the same footage for a third time, now focusing on unravelling the implicit attitudinal gestures that condition how I ask actors to self-regulate their attention.

In the verbal instructions, I endorse attitudinal qualities by relating paying attention to the feather as a gesture of care and generosity.

Hold it in your hands but do nothing. Acknowledge what is already there. **Notice if you are judging (...) and come back to observe, to have the direct experience.** Notice that this **feather is already expressive.** It may be moving slightly because it receives subtle changes in the air. **Each time the attention drifts, just be generous and offer your attention to this new friend** (Transcript from mindfulness to the object video).

³⁶ For more details on sensory awareness, see: Hurlburt (2009)

I propose that the bold sentences point towards embodying the quality of gentleness. The feature of gentleness directly relates to non-aggression and self-compassion which are critical components of mindfulness practice (Penman, 2015; Neff, 2012; Trungpa, 2008). Moreover, Trungpa defines dharma art as “the activity of nonaggression” (Trungpa, 2008, p. 2). He proposes that to foster a contemplative approach artists should “give up aggression, both towards ourselves, that we have to make a special effort to impress people, and towards others, that we can put something over them” (Trungpa, 2008, p.2).

In this exercise, actors enact the gesture of nonaggression by letting go of expectations and worries about the exercise and staying with what is happening in the experience of the present moment. **Hold it in your hands but do nothing.** In this way, through mindful perception, I implicitly train actors to become willing to appreciate things as they are. **The feather is already expressive.** Actors also train in nonaggression by gently returning to the present moment each time they notice they were distracted. **Each time the attention drifts; just be generous and offer your attention to this new friend.** Furthermore, in TFE I ask actors to emulate the attitude of paying attention as a caring gesture. When we love someone, we pay attention to them. In further delivery of TFE I even present Attention as the action of love.

The learning marker of this exercise stage was that though mindfully perceiving the feather, actors reported enhanced sensory awareness and increased focus. Additionally, regarding the progression of the exercise, deconditioning of perception develops the foundations for a mindful interaction with the feather. The following are some testimonies showing how actors experienced heightened sensory awareness and increased focus.

“You are caught up in the momentum, and the world disappears. There is only you and the object of focus” (Student G14:15, C).

“I found my attention becoming widely observant of the feather. Due to having this attention, I was able to discover the feather’s characteristics” (Student G:14,7, B1).

“My mind was more focussed on the appearance of the feather (the way it looked). Visually this was easier to do in contrast to the sitting meditation. It gave me something to focus my eyes on” (Student G14:12, C).

“I focused on this feather, I was invested” (Student G:14,7, B2).

“With both feathers I was content, and I was extremely focused” (Student G: 14, 2, A1).

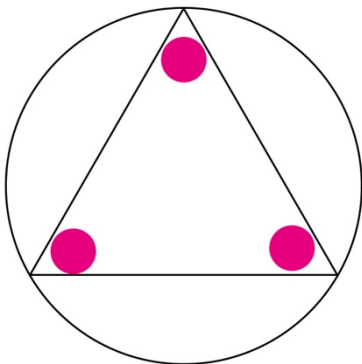
3.3) Mindful Interaction

Mindful interaction is the central aspect of this exercise; it consists of developing a mindful interaction with the feather. Here, actors are asked to play with the feather through touch, breath, and movement. This exercise phase is a mindfulness-in-action endeavour and as such, should enable actors to explore the possibilities of interaction that emerge from developing a responsive attitude towards interaction. Furthermore, one expected outcome of this stage is that actors should experience mindfulness states.

This stage of interaction begins by the gesture of bringing the feather closer to the face. This gesture of proximity between the doer and the feather begins by noticing the communication between the feather and the out-breath. In the following video, we can watch how I present interaction with the breath as a threshold to begin the active interaction with the feather.

Video 9 [HYPERLINK "https://www.youtube.com/embed/yTAMt0kdvao?start=210&end=277"](https://www.youtube.com/embed/yTAMt0kdvao?start=210&end=277) [breathing as a starting point for interaction](#)

Figure 23 Mechanism of mindful interaction



Attention: betweenness

Awareness: responsive awareness

Attitude: Let go of control

The above figure shows the configuration of the elements of Attention, Awareness and Attitude in this stage of TFE.

Here I encourage actors to focus on the relation to the feather. I ask the actors to **place their Attention on what happens between them and the feather**. The aspect of awareness I highlight here is the state of **responsive Awareness that enables the actor to respond to what is happening in the moment-to-moment experience** with authenticity and surprise. Concerning the **Attitudinal component**, at this phase of the exercise, I emphasise the importance of **gradually letting go of the control of the interaction**. I ask actors to “allow the feather to become the protagonist as the actor becomes the air that allows the feather to fly” (Exercise protocol).

Watching the footage of the exercise, I discovered two mindfulness-based techniques that I used to aid actors in enacting the previously mentioned AAA mechanism. The first technique was that I encouraged actors to alternate between an active and receptive role while interacting with the feather. The second technique was the emphasis in letting go the grip of control while dancing with the feather.

3.3.a) Active and receptive role

Video 10 [active and receptive using the whole body](#)

This dance is about being active, proposing and being receptive and noticing what is offered by the feather... you can explore this relationship at different levels—lower-middle-upper level. Find different ways to play with your friend: your hands, your head, your legs, the whole body (...), and your breath (Ed. Transcript from the video active and receptive).

A combination of stillness and movement is a technique widely used in contemplative training (see Sellers-Young, Hayashi). Grotowski also identified the importance of actors acknowledging movement and stillness, stating:

That movement which is repose is perhaps the crucial point where different techniques of sources begin. When we are moving, and when we are able to break through the techniques of the body of everyday life, then our movement becomes a movement of perception. One can say that our movement is seeing, hearing, sensing; our movement is perception. (Grotowski, 2013, p.253).

Herein, I propose that this stillness and movement mechanism helps actors engage in a mindful interaction.

The main difference between ordinary and mindful interaction is that our past experiences condition ordinary interaction. However, mindful interaction emerges from a response to perception actualised in the present-moment experience. In TFE I propose that through the combination of Attention to the relation, Responsive Awareness and Attitude of letting go of control, actors' action becomes a receptive response to what they are experiencing in the present moment.

3.3.b) Letting go control

Video 11 [let go control & dialogue](#)

Notice when you are trying to control- how much do you let the feather express? Try to make it even, so it is a dialogue. Do something and then watch the reaction, doing nothing, just observing how the feather falls. You don't need to control everything. (...) offer your attention to the feather. Notice if you are distracted, how to come back to simplicity. Each time that you are distracted do less. (TFE, footage)

As you can see in the video, the exercise's design introduces mindfulness techniques of letting go and simplifying activity to prevent actors from getting distracted, this mechanism helps actors to disengage from the aversive thoughts and feelings that emerge because of conceptualisation.

This exercise uses the mindfulness mechanism of noticing thoughts to help actors cope with aversive thoughts and feelings. There is evidence (Penman, 2015; Neff, 2012) that the mechanism of learning to identify and let go of thoughts can help people to lessen the detrimental effect of their judgmental mind. For example, in sports psychology, there is evidence (e.g., Baltzell et al. 2016; Gardner and Moore, 2007, 2009) of how mindfulness practices prevent athletes' minds from going into worries and expectations by mitigating the aversive consequences of thoughts related to anxiety, fear of failure. Such interventions have led to improved performance (Jhon, et al.,2011), increased flow

experience (Kaufman et al. 2009), and a modified relationship towards aversive feelings in response to mistakes in competition.

In this way, the feather exercise presents a practical exploration of how to self-regulate attention onstage. The mindfulness mechanism of noticing one's thoughts and redirecting actors' attention towards the interaction with the feather helps actors identify and let go of their conceptualisations, becoming more available to others. Additionally, this exercise might help actors gain an experiential understanding of how mindfulness techniques help prevent self-consciousness and distraction onstage. Other benefits that participants reported after doing the exercise were: increased focus, experience of mindfulness states of absorption and enjoyment of the task, and diminished self-consciousness and inner criticism.

In the next section of the chapter, I present the reflective stage of TFE. There I will present a case study to help unravel the techniques imbricated in the self-reflexive process that enable actors to become aware of their patterns of interaction that emerged while playing with the feather.

3.4) Reflection

3.4.a) The reflective phase

The feather exercise transitions from intrapersonal mindfulness techniques towards interpersonal mindfulness techniques. In the first stages of the exercise, introduction, and attention to the object, I presented the feather as the object of attention. For each initial phase of TFE, I presented how the AAA mechanism operated in the actors' intrapersonal awareness. It is worth noting that the intrapersonal mindfulness techniques set the foundations for further stages of exercise where I introduced intrapersonal mindfulness techniques. In the mindful-interaction stage, I ask actors to shift the attentional placement towards attending to what happens between them and the feather. Thus, because the actors enact the AAA mechanism, the feather becomes their interaction partner. Thus, although the feather is an inanimate object, I consider the interaction patterns that emerge when actors interact with the feathers to bring valuable information transferable to the actor's interpersonal interaction.

In the reflection stage of TFE, I focus on promoting the actors' self-reflexive process of bringing to awareness the patterns of interaction that happened at a pre-reflexive level while playing with the feather.

Due to the actors' reflection on this exercise, I discovered that while actors played with the feather, they unconsciously projected their interpersonal patterns onto it. The following video presents the group's reflection immediately after they finish the exercise. To promote self-reflection, I asked them what they noticed regarding their attention and awareness.

Video 12 [reflection after the exercise](#)

I realised that the patterns of interaction actors identified could bring valuable information regarding how they relate to acting.

You can tell the difference between the first and the second feather (Student G14:5: A2). I connected this student's reflection to Worley's notion of "You are your own Mudra" to make him aware that expressive qualities are available, and that communication is constantly happening.

"My attention was solely on the feather—me, the feather, and nothing else." (Student G14:15, C) I reflected that the student could be there with the feather, pointing out that he experienced mindful attention to the feather.

"The first feather was my dance and the second was the feather dance. (...) I preferred when I was making the feather dance. My body felt more comfortable. (...) I felt that when I was moving my body, I was moving it for the sake of moving it whereas I felt that the feather needed to get somewhere" (Student G14:3, A1).

I connected this commentary with the difference between approaching acting from a self-conscious "me mantra" where the actor's attention is on their inner dialogue, evaluating their performance regarding their self-imposed goal - "What about me? Am I doing it right?". Conversely, I pointed out the possibility of relating to the feather from a selfless approach, where the actor's attention is directed outwards, in this case, to the feather. The actor's purpose is to serve the scene's needs; therefore, their action emerges as a response to what is happening in the present moment experience.

“I didn’t get distracted. With the feather is easy to be present because it was moving. That is what I am doing right now. I am focusing on this” (Student G: 14:8; B2). I connected this commentary to the importance of having a clear focus of attention to avoid getting distracted on the scene.

After listening to students’ commentaries and relating them to acting practice, I realised there was potential for amplifying the reflection stage. Therefore, I asked them to write down a piece titled “The Feather and Me”. It is important to note that I did not plan to give actors that written task—but this part of the exercise emerged as a response to the interaction in the classroom.

The following video shows how I asked the students to write this piece titled *The Feather and Me*. This was the first time I incorporated writing as a self-reflective practice for this exercise.

Video 13 [The Feather and me](#)

Refinement of the reflection stage of TFE

Due to the interesting insights that actors from Pilot Programme One had while reflecting on the written piece, *The Feather and Me*. I incorporated this reflective methodology into the exercise protocol. During the further delivery of the exercise, I was amused by how this self-reflective tool promoted actors to have deep insights regarding how they function onstage. That is why I decided to delve into the micro-dynamics embedded in the reflective stage of TFE.

The design of this reflexive stage of the exercise is divided into three sections. First, I ask the actors to write a piece describing their experience of relating to the feathers during the dynamic stages of the exercise. I regard this piece of writing as a first-person technique which gathers actors' experience of the exercise from a phenomenological approach. A critical aspect for this writing to work is that the actors should write the piece immediately after they have done the practical part of the exercise while their experience is fresh. The writing then works as a testimony of the actors' experience. Thus, it helps to activate the actors’ embodied memory of the exercise.

In the second stage, I ask the actors to read their pieces and interchange some words in their writing. Specifically, I ask them to replace the word "feather" with "colleague". I use this strategy to ignite the potential of actors reflecting on their interpersonal patterns. Herein, I understand that the feather works as a transitional object, enabling

the actors' reflection on the feather to illuminate the liminal territory of interaction between the self and the other. I will further unpack the concept of transitional objects in the following section.

In the third phase, I ask actors to read their modified texts aloud to the group or partner. After reading their piece, I encourage actors to identify the interpersonal patterns that emerged while playing with the feathers/colleagues and reflect upon how those patterns can illuminate aspects of their relation to acting practice.

That three-step process of self-reflection (write/ read-change words/ read-reflect) helps to bring the patterns of interaction's pre-reflexive phenomena to actors' consciousness. In a further section of this chapter, I will present a case study to examine this three-stage self-reflection process closely.

However, before I present that case study in the following pages, I will explain why I borrowed terms from Western psychology (transitional object) and Buddhist psychology (habitual patterns) to illuminate my understanding of this complex phenomenon of projecting and interpreting interpersonal behaviours on a feather. Once again, it is important to highlight that I was unaware I was using this categorisation while delivering the exercise. I only became aware of the importance of making explicit this conceptual framework in a posterior research stage when critically reflecting on the exercise's footage. An interesting aspect of this process of making explicit the branching of techniques imbricated in The Feather Exercise was that, in this case, these terms came from psychology.³⁷

3.4.b) The Feather as a Transitional Object

I decided to use the concepts of transitional objects and transitional phenomena formulated by Winnicott, a psychoanalyst, to understand better the process of projecting interpersonal patterns onto an object that took place during TFE. In the 1950's, this British psychoanalyst coined the terms *transitional object* and *transitional phenomena* to explain an infant's first possession of a not-me object. He defines transitional objects as "objects that are not part of the infant's body yet are not fully recognized as belonging to external reality" (Winnicott, 2003, p.204).

³⁷ In the introduction of the dissertation, I briefly mentioned that I have studied western and Buddhist psychology. I studied western psychology for three years at the Universidad Diego Portales. Being a psychology student introduced me to Buddhism and Meditation. But what I did not mention was that although I decided to leave my formal psychology studies and studied drama, I continued studying Buddhist Psychology informally for over five years. Through a critical reflection of my practice, I became aware that although I claim that the MBPT does not have a clinical approach, but a creative one, my embodied understanding of how the mind works derives from Buddhist and western psychology that has imprinted my practice.

However, I am not interested in the conventional use of transitional objects and phenomena related to the psychic developmental studies of infancy. Rather, I am lured by these concepts' potential to illuminate the interactional phenomena displayed in the liminal space between the actor and others. In Winnicott's words, that liminal space is the "intermediate territory between "inner psychic reality" and "the external world as perceived by two persons in common", that is to say, over the whole cultural field" (Winnicott, 2003, p.208).

In the interactive exercise stage, I propose that the feather operated as a transitional object in the liminal territory between the actor and the other. The specific qualities of the feather as an object, being light, responsive, and challenging to control, resemble the expected features of a transitional object: "Yet it must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own" (Winnicott, 2003, p.208). This last feature described by Winnicott as *having a reality of its own* is a crucial feature of the feather that propels the interactive stage of the exercise. Thus, my interpretation of the feather as a transitional object helps to understand the mechanism whereby the actor projects their interpersonal patterns of interaction in their play with the feather. At the same time, this status of the transitional object enables me to encourage actors' self-reflection on their interpersonal behavioural patterns by using the feather as a mirror of the way they relate to others.

Habitual patterns of interaction.

The idea is that through reflection on how they interacted with the feather, actors can become aware of their habitual patterns of interaction. Here I want to pause to establish a concept I might have overlooked. Western and Buddhist psychology explains that people develop specific patterns of interaction throughout their lives. The term *habitual* denotes that one can become accustomed to enacting these patterns through repetition. According to Buddhist teachings, those patterns are problematic as they "keep our minds small, solid and fixed" (Mipham, 2003, p.86). In the Shambhala tradition they use a cocoon metaphor to explain that habitual patterns shield us from the rawness of direct experience.

"The way of cowardice is to embed ourselves in a cocoon, in which we perpetuate our habitual patterns. When we are constantly recreating our basic patterns of behaviour and thought, we never have to leap into fresh air or onto fresh ground" (Trungpa, 2004, p.52).

I interpret Trungpa's words as pointing towards the importance of identifying and letting go of the habitual modes of being and responding in order to access the present moment experience. I propose that TFE helps actors to identify their habitual patterns of interaction by making the pre-reflexive phenomena conscious. Actors can then identify how that pattern affects their performance. In this way, the reflective stage of the exercise helps actors identify and unravel how their habitual patterns of interaction affect their performance practice.

For example, one interpersonal pattern that usually emerges during the interactive part of the exercise is that actors tend to control the feather's movement. Through the reflective stage, actors can unravel how this behavioural pattern of wanting things to be "their way" could potentially obstruct their performance. For example, actors can realise that when they tried to control the feather's movement, the object lost aliveness. Conversely, the interaction became more enjoyable and unpredictable when they embodied a responsive attitude towards what was happening to the feather. In this way, reflecting on the behavioural patterns that emerged while playing with the feather could precipitate insights transferable to acting practice. Continuing with the same example, by acknowledging that the interaction with the "feather-colleague" weakened each time they imposed their ideas, actors can realise the importance of letting go of their desire to control the interaction in order to develop an open and responsive interaction while working with others onstage.

Analysis methods

To analyse the reflective stage of the exercise, I decided to continue to work with the material collected in the context of an MBPT pilot programme delivered to third-year acting students at the University of Huddersfield. Specifically, I will analyse the footage of the fourth session, delivered in March 2019. This session happened one week after the interpersonal patterns that emerged in their writings titled "the feather and me" occurred.

Case study: Focusing on a specific delivery of the exercise provides a concrete example for identifying some interpersonal patterns that may arise while presenting this exercise to actors. The case study that I selected to analyse involves four actors, three females and one male, who worked together in their Final Year Project.

Context: When I delivered the MBPT sessions to these acting students, they were a pre-existing group that had been working together for two years. Contextual information is relevant when delivering the feather exercise as it can

determine the group's level of insight and reflection. In the case of this group, one could assume that they will probably have encountered each other's interactive patterns on a pre-reflexive level. Hence, the reflective stage of the feather exercise provides the opportunity to identify and socialise their interactional patterns. Additionally, making those interpersonal patterns explicit is the first step in finding strategies to soften those habitual responses to recover the connection to the environment and others. The self-reflexive process of acknowledging their interpersonal patterns could help actors soften their habitual reactivity.

When working with pre-existing groups, there is the possibility of stimulating collective awareness about relevant topics for their creative process. Furthermore, their working together to devise their FYP gives them a concrete orientation with high stakes and shared motivation. Potentially, that these students chose to work together and had been working together for a while suggests a level of intimacy and willingness to reveal themselves to each other. There is also the confidence for the students to reflect to each other on what is being discovered. Finally, another relevant contextual aspect of the training was that this group voluntarily took the MBPT pilot programme.

3.4.c) Objectives for the reflection stage

The reflection stage of the exercise aims to make explicit how the interpersonal patterns that arose during the active phase of the exercise are transferable to a performance context. I will divide the analysis section into three steps to present specific examples.

1. Identify the interpersonal patterns that arose while interacting with the feather.
2. Understand how those interpersonal patterns hinder actors' connection to the environment and others, obstructing their performance.
3. Arrive to attentional strategies to help actors to re-establish the connection with others.

3.4.d) Four examples of interpersonal patterns

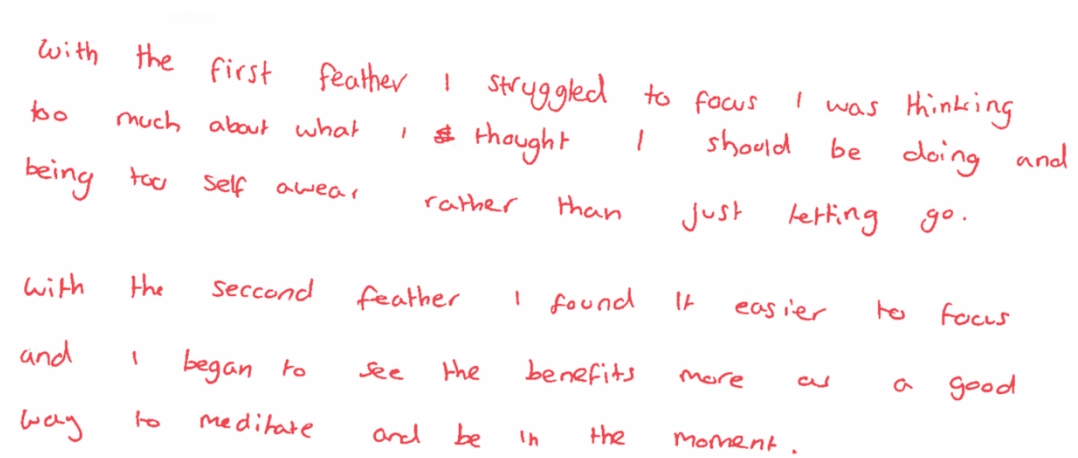
For each of the four actor students, I will identify their interpersonal pattern, clarify the connection between the pattern and their stage practice and elucidate strategies to overcome that particular obstacle. It is worth underlining that I will use attentional strategies to overcome the identified obstacles.

In this process, I start from the Buddhist practice of identifying our habitual patterns, from there I direct the understanding into the actor training arena, by identifying what patterns serve and do not serve our craft.

I will repeat the procedure for each actor. To protect the actor's identity, I keep their interventions confidential by referencing them as Actor A, B, C & D.³⁸

Interpersonal mindfulness diminishes Self-consciousness states.

Figure 24 The Feather and Me: Actor A (G14: S12, C)



With the first feather I struggled to focus I was thinking too much about what I thought I should be doing and being too self aware rather than just letting go.

With the second feather I found it easier to focus and I began to see the benefits more as a good way to meditate and be in the moment.

Actor A: "I struggled to focus I was thinking too much about what I thought I must be doing and being, I was too self-aware rather than just letting go."

This student identifies her behavioural pattern as being "too self-aware", which can be interpreted as a manifestation of a state of self-consciousness, where a person is absorbed by their own thoughts and judgments, which

³⁸ [Appendix 1](#): List of workshops, presents the notation that I use to identify the students. These four students correspond to (G14:12, C; G14:13, C, G14:14, C, G:14:15, C) Group 14, Student number in the PP2 group, C: corresponds to the sub-group.

prevent them from relating in an open way to experience. Trungpa defines this state of self-consciousness as when awareness is directed inwardly towards the self. He states, “if you are aware of yourself, it is awareness of yourself being aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself. There is some kind of incest taking place”. Conversely, there is evidence (Penman, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) of how mindfulness techniques can operate as an antidote to self-consciousness, one of creativity's biggest burdens.

How this pattern hinders performance

In the group reflection, the actor realised how the pattern of becoming self-absorbed was an obstacle to her performance. She realised that self-consciousness weakens her ability to maintain awareness of the play as a whole. In addition, she identified that what often triggers the self-consciousness pattern is her desire to do things the right way, which can be an obstacle to engaging fully in the activity.

Actor A: “I am too self-aware when I am acting. I struggle to think about it as a piece, I just focus on me, on what I am doing.” (...) Not in a “myself” way. I just want to make sure I’m doing a good job”.

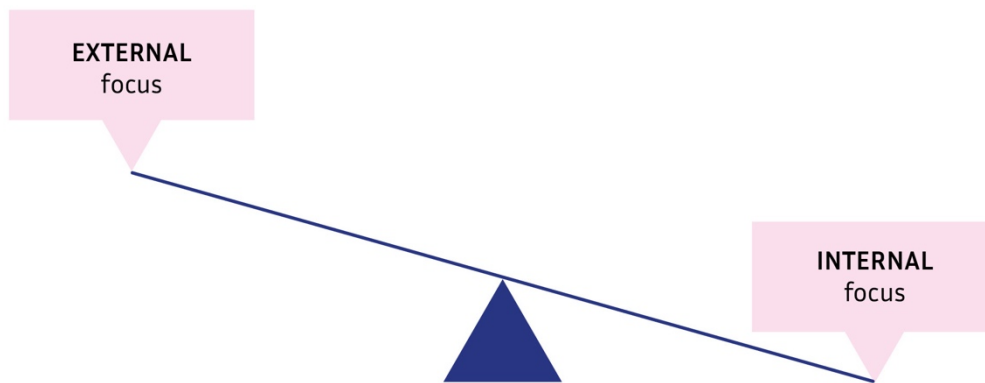
In other words, paradoxically, when actors focus their attention on the result of their performance, this becomes a distraction for their performance which drives them off the task of acting. In this way, wanting to do things right while performing can be an obstacle for performance as it might reinforce the actor’s tendency to direct their attention inwardly, exacerbating the monitoring of their own performance and losing connection to the environment and with others.

The actor’s phrase “I struggle to think about it as a piece, I just focus on me, on what I am doing” denotes the consequence of self-consciousness states, which often is experienced as a sense of separation and isolation (Neff, Germer).

Arriving at attentional strategies that can help actors re-establish the connection with others

In this actor’s case, her obstacle can be seen as an imbalance between internal and external focus. She tends to get caught in herself (internal focus), losing her connection with others (external focus). A metaphor that I often use in the MBPT sessions to help actors understand how to balance internal and external focus is the see-saw.

Figure 25 See-saw - unbalance between external and internal focus



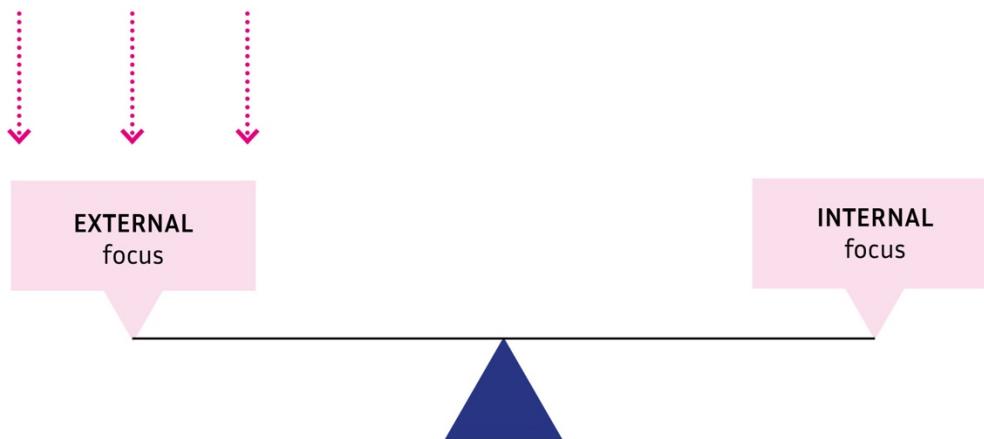
The attentional strategy I proposed to counteract her tendency towards self-consciousness was that each time the actor noticed that she was losing her connection with others by becoming self-obsessed, she could deliberately place her attention outwardly.

Along the same line, I consider self-consciousness a manifestation of self-absorption, which impels a dislocation from experience. Actors describe this state as acting inside a thick bubble that prevents the environment from permeating their performance.

The additional problem is that self-absorption states are often related to other phenomena obstructing performance practice, such as overthinking, self-criticism, doubt, and isolation (Germer 2009; Neff, 2012, 2015). In Chapter Five of the dissertation, I further explain how mindfulness techniques embedded with self-compassion can help actors ease the grip of self-consciousness and self-criticism.

Teacher's suggestion: "Each time that you notice that you are overthinking, being self-conscious, bring your attention back to the place, to the space, to the room, to the other. To whatever is already there, waiting for your attention." (Notes from fieldwork). I want to emphasise that the solution I am giving the student to overcome her obstacle is based on becoming aware and consciously modifying her direction of attention. This underlies the MBPT approach.

Figure 26 Balancing internal and external focus



Interestingly, during the group discussion the actor remembered a piece of feedback that she had received in the last show that she performed in: “Think about everyone else on the stage the entire time as well, not just yourself”. The similarity between feedback provides evidence that the pattern that emerged while playing with the feather was not an isolated case, but, on the contrary, that pattern might prevail throughout her performance practice. In the same line, the actor brought anecdotal evidence to reinforce the claim that the feather operates as a transitional object where actors project interpersonal patterns imbricated in her subjectivity.

Actor A: “That [pattern] is definitely a part of me, which is creepy”.

In this way, the previous example of the actor’s insight presents evidence of the exercise’s potential for identifying interpersonal patterns and arriving at attentional strategies for re-establishing the lost connection with others onstage. It is important to specify that I am giving strategies based on the work on attention onstage.

Letting go of judgment an essential aspect of mindfulness training

Figure 27 The Feather and Me Actor B (G:14, S15, C)

One was a stubborn dancer, who loved the air.
The other showy and gentle, tips and
someraults, and soft landings in unexpected
places.
It's easy to develop an external relationship
especially when it's hard to judge a feather.
You get caught up in the momentum, then
the world disappears. Only you and the object
of focus.

Identifying an interpersonal pattern.

Actor B acknowledged that the pattern that prevented him from connecting to others was his tendency to judge others. In his writing, he expressed that.

Actor B: "It is easy to develop an external relationship especially when it's hard to judge a feather/ colleague."

Then, in the reflective part of the exercise, the actor identifies that the way he relates to judgment is an obstacle for him on an interpersonal level.

Actor B: "I'm right when I say that is hard to judge a feather but it's easy to judge a colleague. I'm just a little judgmental at times and actually I should calm down"

This actor raised the issue of judgement and its role in the interaction. This provides an opportunity to understand why letting go of judgments is an essential mechanism of mindfulness practice. For example, Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as "Paying attention to the present moment without judgment". Accordingly in the previous section of this Chapter One presented how judgments and habitual patterns are bound to past experiences. Therefore, when a strong judgmental element or conceptualisation taints our perception, the perceived element reflects the past, not the present moment.

How judgments hinder performance

This actor can recognise how the tendency to judge a colleague easily can be an obstacle to his work as an actor.

Actor B: “it’s easy to judge a colleague” (...) “I’m just a little judgmental at times and I should calm down [...]”

Herein it is important to note that we inevitably encounter our world based on previous conceptualisation.

Language enables the process of categorising experience, to avoid danger, keeping us safe. Thus, judging or labelling our experience is not “bad” as it is an inevitable mechanism implied in our thought process. However, the mindfulness theory proposes that the judgmental elements prevent us from accessing present moment experience. Previously, I explained that the concept of the cocoon in the Shambhala exemplifies how the pre-determined labels and conceptualisations enclose reality in a crystallised version of what a thing or person is and prevent us from experiencing things first-hand. That is why cultivating non-judgmental awareness helps actors to identify and disengage from their preconceptions. In the chapter's previous section, I explained that the AAA mechanism encourages actors to suspend their judgments and opinions to foster a direct relation to the object in the present moment.

Arriving to attentional strategies to help actors to re-establish the connection with others

In the case of this actor, the mechanism proposed for re-establishing the connection with others was to suspend his judgement. In the group discussion session, I suggested,

Teacher: “Each time that I notice that I am judging someone, how can I let go of the judgment? It’s not about the other person; it’s about my judgement”.

Let us disentangle the different elements of this recommendation by breaking them down into three aspects: base, path, and fruition.

- Base: Noticing our judgements.

Firstly, in order to suspend judgment, which is a pre-reflexive phenomenon, one must become aware of our judgments.

Figure 28: becoming aware of one's judgments.



The conceptualisation mechanism that generates judgments happens on a pre-reflexive level. Therefore, noticing that we are being judgmental and recognising the content of our judgment is the foundation for suspending this pattern. An interesting point is that the judgment's content can be positive or negative. For example, we can regard someone as a bad, unreliable, and tedious actor while considering another actor talented, intelligent, and responsible. However, regardless of the content, both conceptualisations will have the same effect of distancing us from direct experience.

- Path: Suspending judgments.

Acting occurs at an interpersonal level; there, letting go of judgments is presented as a strategy that enables a contemplative approach towards acting. According to Rodenburg, in the second circle energy, which represents the ideal state for actors, they should embody communication with their scene partners as a two-way alley, where actors actively balance giving and taking information from the environment. According to Rodenburg (2007, 2009), this balanced interaction with the environment is a strategy that conduces the actor to second circle energy.

Figure 29 *suspending judgments.*



- Fruition, State of complete immersion in the task

Finally, the actor that revealed the importance of letting go of judgments also described the experience of being fully immersed in the experience while interacting with the feather.

“Caught me in the momentum, then the world disappears, only you and the object of focus”

I relate this mindful state of absorption to the task as a consequence of the enactment of the AAA mechanism, which results in the merging of action and consciousness. Additionally, there is a strong resemblance between the mindful attention state experienced by this student and the experience of flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

[...] you begin to get immersed in what you are doing, and you forget the usual problems. One of the things you forget is yourself, in the sense that the ego, the kind of facade that we all try to present to the world, no longer matters, because, again, that’s not something you can think about while you are doing these things (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p.136).

Herein I state that the mindfulness technique imbricated in non-judgmental awareness that consists of consciously identifying and suspending the judgments onstage propitiates actors to experience total engagement with the task. This phenomenotechnique branch opens a path to further exploration of the connection between mindfulness-based initiatives as activators of flow states.

Loosening the grip of expectations

Figure 30 The Feather and Me: Actor C (G:14, S:13, C)

- I struggled to build the 'relationship' with an inanimate object.
- I preferred my first feather.
- I couldn't feel the feather - this was my focus.
↳ My mind was more focussed on the appearance of the feather (the way it looked).
- Visually, this was easier to do in contrast to the sitting meditation. It gave me something to focus my eyes on.

Identifying interpersonal patterns.

The third actor presented another layer of discussion for this exercise. She played the double role of director and performer for the Final Year Project. In the discussion about her written piece about the feather exercise, she identified as an interpersonal pattern her struggle with reconciling how things should look with the direct perception of the feather. Her tendency to concentrate on the thing's appearance prevented her from connecting with the feeling aspect of the experience.

"I couldn't feel the **colleague** (...) my mind was more focused on the appearance of the **colleague**".

On further discussion she elaborates further on this dichotomy between her tendency to over-focus on the appearance, on how things “should” look, versus the ability to accept things as they appear, “letting things be”. She speaks

“Just looking (...) Not concentrating on how things should look. Letting things be”

Here, this actor brings to the fore a pattern that often arises in directors, the balance between proposing the play’s score versus the degree of space given to the actor to shape the scene. The way the director responds to this dichotomy (closed / open score) will be determined by the play’s genre and company’s style of work and their ability to trust.

How this pattern hinders performance

When the actor was asked if she could relate the pattern of just looking versus concentrating on how things should look to her acting practice, her answer was ‘Definitely!!’.

I asked for further details about how she could identify that pattern in practice. She replied:

Actor C: “I am directing the piece and acting. And I really struggle to sit back and let things happen. I have ideas in my mind of how things should look and how things should be.”

In this case, I did not mention a specific strategy to cope with this pattern. There was a feeling that with the insight, it was enough.

An interesting detail that appeared during this interaction was the level of awareness that the actor and the group of student actors had of her interpersonal pattern. Acting is an interpersonal endeavour, and this exercise helps us to bring awareness to our common experience of getting caught by interpersonal patterns. When I asked this actor if she could recognise the interpersonal pattern of being able to see what is happening versus wanting things to appear as she wanted them to be, it was easy for her to identify an example. Additionally, another member of the group could also recognise the presence of Actor C’s pattern. This brings evidence that although the interpersonal patterns operate on a pre-reflexive level when they are identified and socialised, their dynamics become visible to the entire group.

In this way, Actor C’s experience reveals the potential of reflecting and naming interpersonal patterns within ensembles. It can help the actors identify and name pre-reflexive patterns that mould their interaction.

Awareness of the self with others

Figure 31 The Feather and Me, Actor D (G:14, S14, C)

- I found the second interaction with the feather to hold my attention more as it was solely focused on making the feather move around me rather than me around it.
- Actively working with an inanimate object can be difficult as when you're on stage with another person, they are also active whereas an inanimate object is not.

Identifying interpersonal patterns.

Actor D's pattern was similar to what we previously discussed with Actor A about the challenge of balancing internal and external focus. She felt it was her [the actor's] dance with the first feather, whereas with the second, it was the feather's dance.

Actor D: "I found the second interaction with the feather/colleague to hold my attention more, as I was solely focused on making the feather/colleague move around me rather than me around my "colleague".

Additionally, she became aware that the task felt more enjoyable with the second feather than with the first "feather/colleague". I encouraged her to reflect on the possibility of transferring that mechanism to the interaction with her colleagues.

Teacher: But how can you serve a colleague? How can you be there for a colleague? Instead of trying to do your dance?

Actor D: 'It's about finding the middle ground between the two interactions. Being aware of yourself as well as being aware of the person you are on the stage with, rather than being one or the other and finding the middle ground between the two'.

Through the reflective process, this actor pointed out an important aspect of managing attention onstage: balancing the external and internal focus. This phenomenon has been addressed in detail by Zarrilli (2007, 2009, 2015) and Oida (1997, 2007). A critical characteristic of the attunement process between internal and external focus is that actors must constantly re-calibrate this interaction considering the present moment experience.

In the case of this intervention actor's insight into the importance of cultivating a middle ground for interaction was the end of that group reflection. In the following video, you can see how I encouraged actors to apply the patterns they had discovered in this reflection towards performing their scene.

Video 14 [applying interactional patterns to their scene](#)

3.5) Conclusion Chapter Three

In conclusion, Chapter Three micro-analysis of The Feather Exercise (TFE) provided valuable insights into the mindfulness mechanisms at play within the exercise. By using phenomenotechnique to zoom in and examine the structure, substance, and micro-dynamics of TFE, I achieved a deeper understanding of the embodied techniques and gestures of awareness that enable actors to access mindfulness onstage.

Through the meticulous examination of TFE, several key findings emerged. Firstly, the mindfulness mechanism identified within TFE, known as Attention Awareness Attitude (AAA), sheds light on how self-regulation of attention operates within the exercise. Drawing from Bishop's (2004) two-component model of mindfulness and Shapiro's (2005) IAA model, the AAA mechanism in TFE has been adapted and tailored to the context of Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT). This adaptation allows a deeper understanding of how mindful attention operates within the creative arena.

The AAA mechanism implicit in TFE helps actors remove unnecessary filters between themselves and others, facilitating mindful attention to the object and the process of deconditioning perception.

Furthermore, TFE encourages mindful interaction, enabling actors to explore the possibilities that arise from developing a responsive attitude towards interaction. This phase of the exercise aims to cultivate mindfulness states and foster a contemplative attitude.

Based on the above features revealed by the analysis of the technical branches of this practice, I categorized TFE as a mindfulness-in-action exercise that serves as a self-exploration tool to uncover interaction patterns that emerge during the engagement with the feather.

The principles of contemplative pedagogy, such as maintaining a beginner's mind, alternating between passive and active roles, and letting go of control, are incorporated into TFE to enhance the reflective process. During the reflection stage, actors are guided to bring awareness to the patterns of interaction that occurred at a pre-reflexive level while engaging with the feather.

The findings from this micro-analysis of TFE not only contribute to the understanding of mindfulness mechanisms within the context of performance but also inform the development of the Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) model. By unravelling the intricacies of TFE and mindfulness mechanisms, this chapter lays the groundwork for further exploration and refinement of MBPT as a transformative approach to actor training.

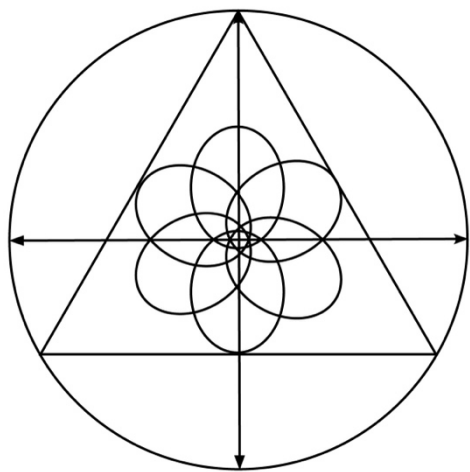
4) CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS A MBPT MODEL

4.1) Introduction

The MBPT model emerged from the critical self-reflection about the MBPT practical phase. In previous chapters of the dissertation, I progressively laid out the different features of the MBPT model.³⁹ Figure 37 represents a way to condense the multi-layered and dynamic approach that I developed to address mindful attention onstage in one image.

To avoid repetitions, the purpose of this chapter is not to describe the MBPT features, but to present the MBPT model as a conceptual compass that opens up new perspectives and original ways of understanding-thinking-addressing-embodiment contemplative practices onstage.

Figure 37 The MBPT model diagram



In the first section of the Chapter I use Deleuze's (1968) understating of the creative power imbricated in thoughts and images to discuss how each feature of the MBPT suggests a path for the incorporation of contemplative techniques to

³⁹ In Chapter One, I presented the **circle** as the intersection between mindfulness and performance training which **illustrates the research field**, In Chapter Two I explained how the **MBPT matrix**, and the **six-petal flower** emerged in the practical phase of the research as way of categorising the MBPT exercises and practices. In Chapter Three, I presented a nuanced examination of the **triangle**, explaining the underlying **mindfulness mechanism** that operates within The Feather Exercise (TFE).

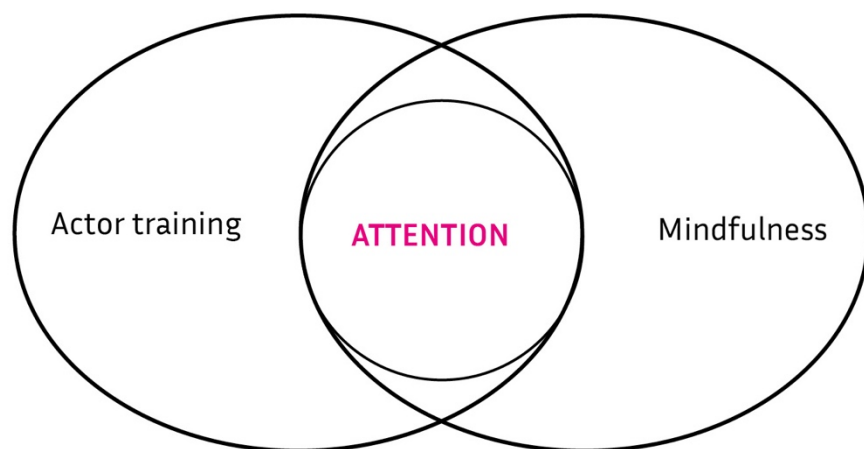
acting practice. Additionally, I present an interpretation of how the AAA mechanism operates within the six petals of attention model.

4.2) Four features of the MBPT

4.2.a) Circle: Attention as the field of research

The circle represents attention as the intersection between performance and mindfulness training. Regarding the circle's creative power, it operates as a zenithal spotlight, a beam of light that illuminates a specific perimeter where the action takes place. In the case of this research, the MBPT circle illuminates how actors enact the process of self-regulation of attention onstage.

Figure 1: attention as an area of intersection



Through the Practice as Research process, I realised that the intersection between mindfulness-based exercises and actor training was a richer and more extended field than I had initially thought. At the same time, narrowing the research's focus brought clarity of the bounds of this research.

Inside the circle of Attention in actor training.

This research focuses on attention in actor training. I am interested in how actors enact, embody, and manage a particular kind of attention, mindful attention onstage.

Mindfulness in action: I present MBPT training as a mindfulness-in-action approach to acting. Therefore, there was a need to develop a conceptual apparatus to capture how mindfulness operated for actors while performing. Herein, I propose that the features within the MBPT model present the mechanisms and elements of mindfulness that I found to operate in the dynamic and multi-layered terrain of interaction.

Pre-expressive: I decided to narrow the research focus towards to the pre-expressive level of the actor training, focusing on how the process of self-regulation of attention could positively impact the performers' scenic bios or embodied presence.

Outside the circle:

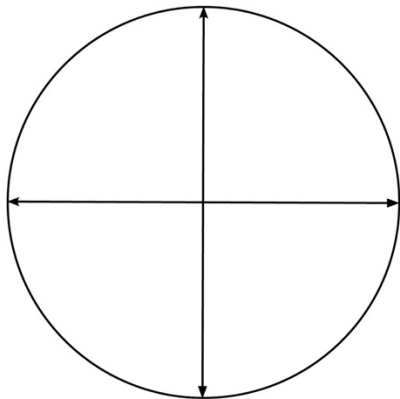
The applications of the MBPT model related to the expressive endeavours of acting were left out of the scope of this research. I look forward to applying the features of the MBPT model to expressive endeavours such as devising pieces and directing actors in further research.

4.2.b) MBPT Matrix, dimensions of the training

I propose that the degree of organisation and systematisation is one of the distinctive elements of the MBPT training. I subdivided mindfulness techniques into two variables represented two perpendicular axes - focused attention and open awareness: the intra-personal and interpersonal techniques.

The creative power of the MBPT matrix is that it works a conceptual cupboard, where the practitioner can collect and store their practices. Through the practice as research process, I corroborated that the MBPT matrix can be used as a self-reflexive tool to understand better and refine one's contemplative practice. Furthermore, I tested three applications for the MBPT Matrix that could be of use for other actor trainers and contemplative pedagogues.

Figure 32 MBPT Matrix: 4-dimension Diagram



First, making the 4 dimensions of the training explicit is a useful tool to marry the student's needs with contemplative exercises. For example, in group 19, students expressed their interest towards finding ways to directly apply mindfulness techniques into their ensemble work, therefore during the delivery of PP2 I privileged presenting exercises from quadrant C (Interpersonal-focused attention). The efficacy of this strategy was confirmed by the PP2 participants. In the questionnaire when asked what exercises of the training they found more useful, seven out of twelve, mentioned "The village"⁴⁰ (Hayashi, 2021). This marked preference indicates the exercise's potential to be applied for creative endeavours. In the PPM2 process 2 scenes were generated from improvisation process triggered by "The Village" exercise.

Secondly, can use the MBPT matrix to plan the learning trajectory of a class or course. For example, both in MBPT sessions and Pilot Programmes I commence by presenting intrapersonal exercises where actors can explore their focused attention and awareness. From that foundation of the experiential understanding of how attention operates on an interpersonal level, I transition towards presenting interpersonal exercises where actors can train their focused attention and open awareness. However, depending on the teacher embodied techniques, and the student's needs, other practitioners might prefer to start their training at a specific quadrant from MBTP, matrix.

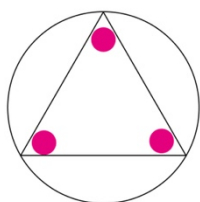
Thirdly, this matrix provides a contemplative trainer with a conceptual framework that can be used as a template to organise their battery of exercises. Gathering exercise is this matrix offers the practitioners of a panoramic view of their

⁴⁰ [Appendix 3](#); is a protocol of The Village exercise

set of tools for facilitating a specific learning goal. In this way, though the research process I could corroborated that the MBPT matrix contribute to delineate a path to incorporate contemplative pedagogy to actor training. However, the extent to which the MBPT matrix has the potential to be used by performing artists such as actors, directors, choreographers into creative endeavours is un-explored, which opens a path for further research.

4.2.c) Mechanism of Mindfulness

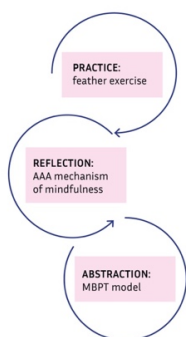
Figure 33 Mechanism of mindful interaction



The discovery of the AAA mechanism is one of the main contributions that this research provides to the mindfulness and performance field, as it lays the conceptual framework to analyse how actors enact mindful attention onstage. During the previous chapter I demonstrated how the mindfulness mechanism involves a specific interaction between three core elements of mindfulness practice: Attention, Awareness and Attitude Attitude.

Herein, I propose that the creative power of the triangle guides actors into accessing mindful states onstage. Figure 35 illustrates that the mechanism of mindfulness that I found to operate in a specific exercise, could be transferable to other MBPT practices. In the following pages, I use the AAA mechanism to unravel how the self-regulation of attention takes place in each field of MBPT encompassed in the six-petal of attention model.

Figure 34 AAA mechanism

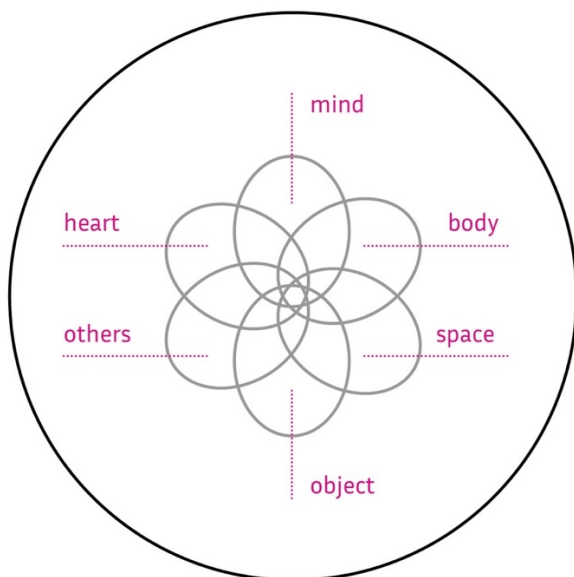


Hereinafter in the following section of the dissertation I expand the application of the AAA mechanism by analysing how it operates in each of six petals of attention from the MBPT model. By doing this, I aim to demonstrate that this set of categorisations entangled in the figure of the triangle has the potential to transform acting exercises into contemplative practice.

4.2.d) The six-petal model of placement of attention

The six-petal flower is a way of categorising the MBPT practices regarding their placement of attention. Each petal or field of practices, represents an area of the training where the actor should deliberately place and sustain their attention. Figure 36 illustrates the MBPT fields of practices: attention to mind, body, space, object, other and heart. Herein, I propose that these petals operate as thresholds, demarking entry points that other contemplative practitioners can use to access the MBPT training from their embodied practices.

Figure 35 Six points of attention, six petal attention flower



Development of the Six petal feature within the Research:

An interesting aspect of the development of this feature was that it evolved during the dissertation journey-four of the petals were part of my initial approach towards developing the MBPT. In Chapter Two, I introduced attention to the mind, body, space, others as foundational components of the MBPT. However, during the practice-as-research process, two other petals emerged. These were attention to the object and attention to the heart.

Another significant feature I learned through the critical review of the practice undertaken is that in the MBPT workshops, there is a clear transition from intrapersonal to interpersonal techniques. I often commence the MBPT sessions with meditation practice, followed by attention to the body exercises, and then gradually introduce exercises that incorporate spatial awareness, attention to the object, followed by excises where actors can explore their interacting with others. Attention to the heart or self-compassion exercises were introduced in later stages of the MBPT practice. Accordingly, I organised the petals to emulate the progression I found to operate in my practice. However, other practitioners may organise these petals differently or incorporate other practice fields' 'petals' to access a mindfulness-based approach to actor training.

4.3) Beneficial aspects of mindfulness within the six petals of attention

In the following pages I present a nuanced description of how I approach each petal of attention. Herein, I will emphasise which are the beneficial aspects of mindfulness that I incorporate in each of the six-field of practices. Additionally in order to analyse how attention placement operates within the MBPT, I unravel how the AAA mechanism functions within each petal of attention. Thus, clarifying my pedagogical approach to addressing these training areas can help other practitioners that might or may not share similar contemplative backgrounds. I propose that each petal be considered an entry point to the MBPT practice.

It is worth highlighting that during the practical phase of the research, it became evident that different students find different areas of the training more accessible as entry points.

I will also use this framework of the petals of attention to discuss how the participants received the concepts and practices corresponding to each field of practice to do so, I will use information gathered in questionnaires, session footage and interviews from the participants of the MBPT workshops.

As most of the exercises presented in the petals are practices, I decided to prioritise reviewing the feedback gathered in the three versions of the PPMs. As explained in Chapter One, the participants of those workshops had the opportunity to practice the core MBPT exercises like meditation, 20 min Dance, The Village and The Feather Exercise, on several occasions. It is worth highlighting that by presenting anecdotal evidence of how the participants experienced the MBPT training I am not claiming to demonstrate the training's efficacy. Proving the MBPT results would require different research methods other than the ones I utilised. Thus, verifying the MBPT results in actors is not part of my research objectives. However, I think presenting the actors' comments on the MBPT practice will help the reader to understand how the participants received the MBPT content. Additionally, the participants' testimonies will help the reader to better understand this research process.

4.3.a) Attention to the Mind

“Absolutely nobody can become a good craftsman or a good artist without relating to the practice of meditation.”
(Trungpa, 2014, p19).

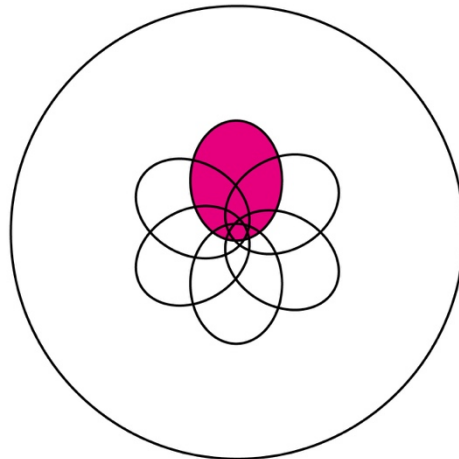


Figure 36 Attention to the Mind

This petal signals a core aspect of the MBPT training that enhances an actor's ability to notice what is happening in the present moment experience. In the Buddhist tradition, meditation practice is presented as the best way to train our

attention. As explained in Chapter Two, meditation practice is a core element of the MBPT. Proof of that is that I offered meditation practice to all the 21 groups I worked with.

Meditation within the MBPT

An interesting insight that I gained through that process was realising that although I presented the same technique, the objective of the practice varied depending on the circumstances. For example, in MBPT sessions, starting with meditation practice was a way to introduce an experiential understanding of mindfulness principles that I will use during the session. In more prolonged versions of the MBPT, such as the Pilot Programmes, I presented meditation as a recurrent practice, enabling participants to notice how their thoughts, worries and emotions varied daily. A key feature of how I addressed meditation practice with the MBPT pedagogy was that I tried to link mindfulness terminology to acting practice. Accordingly, a deliberate effort was to encourage actors to connect their meditation experience with their craft.

Although the scope of the research was focused on enabling actors to access mindfulness states and not trait mindfulness, several students reported that they would like to continue to explore meditation practice after the training was finished. Thus, this result shows a path for further research regarding the possibility of developing versions of the MBPT where students could incorporate meditation as a habit.

What do MBPT participants say about meditation practice and meditation state?

During the series of MBPT workshops, I gathered anecdotal evidence to support the initial claims made in Chapter Two, confirming that meditation practice can help actors strengthen focus, ignite creative states, and be more present onstage.

- Stronger focus

“Meditation creates a focused, less distracted mind for performance” (G:14, S7,B1)

“Made me realise how important a fresh mind helped focus” (G:14, S6, B1)

“It is useful in training the mind” (G:14,S10, B2)

“breathing in the present” [I found to be the most useful exercise] (G19: S3)

“the training on how to bring my mind back to the present, taking all other thoughts away and allowing full concentration” (G:20,S1)

Enhanced Creativity

“Creating an open mind and having clarity opens creativity” (G:14, S11, B2)

“The mind is key to connect with the body. Allowing the mind to be present creates a better work” (G:14, S8, B1)

“The most useful aspect was that we were able to stop our minds from drifting and allowed us to focus on what we were creating” (G:14, S9, B2)

“I found the meditation most beneficial as it made me feel awake, motivated and ready to perform” (G:20, S1)

Calmness

“It helped to relax me mentally even though there were times when my personal life distracted me from my work” (G:19, S1)

“They concentrated on not rushing but be present in the now, not the end and goal. (G:19, S4)

“I became more embodied and can use breathing exercises to help prepare for a show, helped me relax” (G:19, S10)

The AAA within meditation

Using the AAA nomenclature, the core aspect of meditation practice resides in self-regulating one's attention towards the present moment experience. Conventionally, the object of Attention is breath. That is combined with non-judgmental Awareness. And the Attitude of acceptance.

As an experienced meditation teacher, I know that what most people notice when they first meditate is the wildness of their minds. What is described in Buddhist teachings as the ‘monkey mind’. An untrained mind will be restless, constantly jumping from stimulus to stimulus. Thus, while introducing meditation, actors will struggle to place and sustain their focus on the body's breathing. In other words, the first insight that I expect actors to experience due to mindfulness practice is becoming aware of their mindlessness state. That is why, to prevent actors from becoming discouraged, I often highlight that there is no good or wrong meditation.

One of the main obstacles that I encountered while presenting meditation within an actor training context was to dispel the widely spread misconception of understanding mindfulness as a relaxation technique. From the MBPT scope, the objective of meditation is not to relax but to help actors to self-regulate their attention. This distinctive element could be key in preventing future misinterpretation or wrong applications of contemplative techniques in actor training.

One of the innovative aspects on how I presented Meditation within the MBPT session is that I often used a circular setting with participants facing inwards, rather than the more conventional setting that in the Shambhala tradition that consists of sitting in intercalated rows of people. That way, you only have a person's back in your view, implying fewer distractions. Similarly, practitioners face the wall in the zen setting to minimise distractions even more. However, in the MBPT setting, I preferred using a setting where participants practice in a circle facing inward to enhance the sensation of a shared group practice. I attribute this way of presenting meditation as an influence of my embodied knowledge of Social Meditation, a technique developed by Nick Kranz to explore the interpersonal components of meditation practice.

Other attention to the mind exercises that I explored within the MBPT workshops

- 1) Basic Meditation (Shambhala)
- 2) Breath Meditation (Pema Chödrön)
- 3) Meditation on emotions (Pema Chödrön)
- 4) Body scan
- 5) Standing Meditation

Embodied Practice

Meditation has been part of my daily routine for over twenty years. My practice is one of the main foundations upon which this training lays. A noteworthy element from behind-the-scenes of the MBPT is that I usually practised meditation before I delivered the MBPT workshops. As I have previously mentioned, teaching MBPT is a mindfulness-in-action endeavour. Practising meditation before the session helped me ground myself and enabled me to tune in to the session mode. Meditation is necessary training for delivering the MBPT training.

4.3.b) Attention to the Body.

"Synchronisation of the body and mind should not be addressed as a concept or a technique but as a basic principle of how to be a human being".

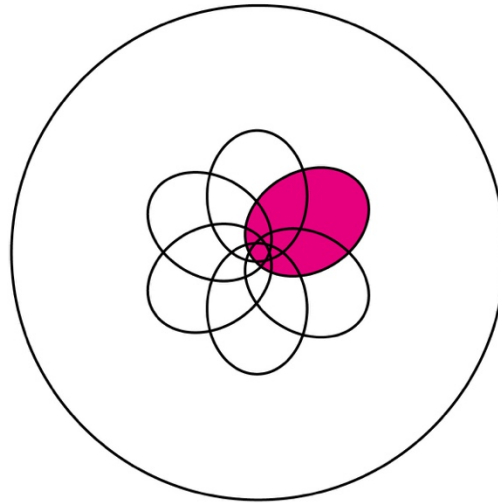


Figure 37 Attention to the Body

Attention to the body is a core component in how I approach the MBPT practice. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the attention to the body petal encompasses a series of psychophysical exercises that aim to restore the synchronicity of the body and mind.

A remarkable element of the practice-as-research process is that the attention to the body petal presented a fertile ground of intersection between mindfulness and performance practices, as in both disciplines, synchronising body-mind plays a critical role. Furthermore, during the process, I could confirm that this area of training of the MBPT has great potential to be explored by dance and somatic-based practitioners who have been researching this area of intersection.

Additionally, I could verify that it is possible to incorporate exercise from other contemplative backgrounds to the MBPT. Through these years of practical research, in addition to the primary currents, Mudra Space Awareness and Social Presencing Theatre, I gathered and tested a series of contemplative-based and somatic exercises, many of which are derived from the Shambhala tradition but not exclusively (Johnson, 1996; Palmer, 2009; Dilley, 2015; Esposito, 2019; Núñez, 2018; Chamberlain, 2014; Middleton, 2019).

Herein, the attention to the body signals a gateway for practitioners from diverse contemplative and psychophysical backgrounds to access the MBPT practice. Additionally, I propose that enhancing the body-mind connection relates to the pre-expressive level of the actor by positively affecting the performer's scenic *bios*. Therefore,

the expected benefit that actors could experience from engaging in attention to the body exercises is that they should enhance actors' *bodyfullness or embodied presence*.

What do MBPT participants say about attention to the body?

Through the research process I gathered anecdotal evidence to support the initial claims made in Chapter Two, confirming that mindfulness-base exercises can help to actor to gain experiential understanding on how to synchronise body-mind onstage.

Body-mind synchrony

“I learned that physicality is related to the mind” (G14, S2, B1)

“Allowed me to think what the body wants and how to find peace I needed to lose the distractions.” (G:14, S5, B2)

“You can use mindfulness to be truly present in the body and mind when performing”. (G19, S8)

“ I am able to focus whilst on stage, and I can harness my body and movements more confidently”. (G19: S3)

How they access

“They were a lot less intense than what I have done previously. They were more focused on focusing inwards.” (G19: S4)

“My favourite exercise was the 20 min dance. I felt relaxed without worrying about what anyone thought of me since I was focused solely on myself.” (G:19, S5)

The AAA within attention to the body

In the MBPT nomenclature, The AAA mechanism for the "attention to the body" requires actors to shift their focus of attention from thoughts to bodily feelings. "In this way, we draw our mind away from the constant habit of fixating on thoughts. We let it rest in the feeling of the body" (Hayashi, 2021, p.93). Adults usually focus their daily activities on cognitive and interpersonal space. Instead, I ask actors to focus on a specific area of intrapersonal awareness: the body's feelings (Blaser, 2013, p.60). Thus, the second element is non-judgemental Awareness, which enables actors to notice their experiences as they unfold. The third element is the Attitude of acceptance, appreciation, and self-compassion for our human nature. Accordingly, this set of exercises should aid actors in restoring the connection between body and mind, helping them to become in touch with their human nature.

MBPT approach to Attention to the body

As mentioned in Chapter Two, I selected exercises with no fixed forms to help actors connect with their bodily sensations to experience body-mind synchronicity. Through the research process, I could validate that the exercises with no correct and incorrect way of doing them were coherent with this methodology. However, even in these exercises with open interpretation, the actor's attention still got trapped into trying to do it right or fearing failure, which warrants an area for further exploration.

Another characteristic of this area of the training is that actors could perceive how body-mind synchronicity enabled them to re-establish a connection to the earth. Hayashi explains the connection between our body and the earth's body as follows: "We cultivate an embodied presence by feeling our individual body grounded and connected to the earth" (Hayashi, 2021, p.8). Thus, through mindfulness in the body exercises, actors recover their sense of ground and stability. At the same time, attention to the body exercises increase actors' confidence in accessing the moment-to-moment experience from a gentle approach.

Attention to the body exercises.

The preferred exercise I used for introducing actors to the attention to the body is Hayashi's 20 min dance.

Additional exercises are:

5 min Feeling a sense of moving and being still.

Walking meditation

Ride the axis

4.3.c) Spatial Awareness

"Like fish in the water, space is the element that we swim in."
(Worley, 2001, p.126).

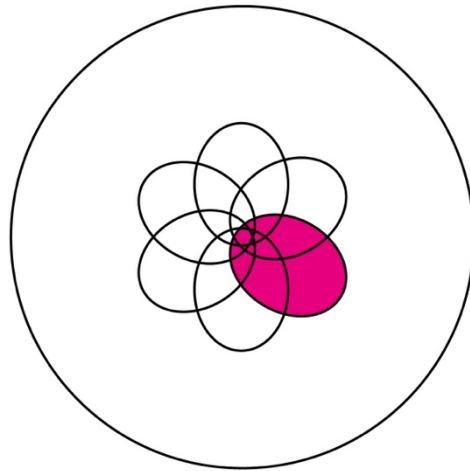


Figure 38 Attention to Space

I included attention to space as a core element of the MBPT practice. The working premise that I use in this training area is that becoming sensitive to space can help actors foster open receptivity. During the research process I could confirm that this set of practices help actors to enhance their ability to connect with others and cultivate a more profound sense of presence.⁴¹

It is essential to remember that it would be more accurate to call this area Spatial Awareness rather than attention to space. My understanding of space awareness is influenced by the conception of space from Buddhism which is inapprehensible due to its vastness; therefore, it is contradictory to ask actors to place their attention on something immaterial. On the other hand, we have established that awareness is the ability that enables one to notice what is happening internally and externally. Thus, describing this petal as spatial awareness would be more precise. However, for explanatory reasons and to maintain the unity of the system, we will understand that attention to the space petal signals the heightened awareness that enables actors to notice what unfolds and dissolves within that ungraspable area of experience called space.

I could corroborate that Attitudes that enable actors to enact space awareness are curiosity and openness. For example, in Chapter Three while examining TFE, I realised that a principle that helps actors remain open to the unfolding experience is to encourage them to embody a beginner's mind.

⁴¹ For a nuanced description of my approach to Attention to the Space see Chapter Two: Attention to the space.

What do students say about attention to space.

“[[the training] works on the connection between body and space in more detail, allowing the mind to connect with movements and action.” (G14: S3: B1)

“I am more aware of space, my connection to others and my connection to myself.” (G19: S3)

“Mindfulness differs from other actor trainings as it’s all about being focused on the space and how you feel inside your body” (G19: S8)

“A sense of self-recognition by inhabiting the empty space” (G8: S4)

“The most useful [aspect] of the session was to recognise the space as a mediator between two or more people.” (G:8, P2)

“I feel the movement as a root towards the present moment. It helps me to detach from my expectations.” (G6; P3)

The AAA attention to space (Space Awareness)

Another noteworthy aspect is that interaction happens in space; therefore, through space awareness training, an actor becomes more sensitive to interaction, learning to connect with the other, fellow actors and audiences from a place of open receptivity. Some space awareness exercises can signal a path for transitioning from intrapersonal to interpersonal mindfulness techniques within the MBPT.

Under the attention to the space category, I selected practices that enable actors to become aware of space by ripping away the frantic activity, both physical and mental, that prevent us from experiencing it in the first place.

One strategy widely used in the contemplative pedagogic methods to help performers become aware of what is happening in space is intercalating movement and stillness, including unexpected pauses. I incorporate the technique presented by Arawana Hayashi within Social Presencing Theatre, which involves the concept of Ma, referred to as an "interval in time and space", as this is one of the distinctive techniques that I utilise to aid actors' access to heightened states of spatial awareness onstage.

Ma, as an interval in time and space

Ma is a Japanese aesthetic principle that is defined as “an interval, a gap in space or time through which something can appear (...) an intersubjective occasion that provides an empty space and silent place to encounter the other” (Akama, 2014, pp.22-24). This principle of an interval in time and space as a place of encounter prevails in the Japanese culture, surpassing the arena of performing arts into architecture, poetry, and calligraphy.

I first heard the concept of *ma* from Arawana Hayashi, while taking a Social Presencing Theatre Workshop. According to the author, the concept of *ma* is used to acknowledge the shared space, quality of relationship, resonance, and connectivity. She also supports the relation between space awareness and creativity; “Awareness in the *ma*, and this space is the basis for creativity (...) in my training in Dharma Art, true gesture arises from the immediate moment of nowness” (Hayashi, 2021, p.114).

But what is *ma*? And why is it beneficial to performance?

According to Pilgrim, the Chinese character that composes the written word *ma* symbolises the opening that lets the light shine through. The ideogram *ma* is made by two elements: the first meaning gate or door (mon) and the second one is sun (hi) or moon. Therefore, its Japanese kanji symbol already denotes that sense of openness and potentiality. *Ma* can be understood as a ‘negative space’ which holds the stillness and emptiness between a unit of movement or sound. *Ma* is an illuminated crack, an opening pregnant with potentiality.

This negative capability is crucial for the creative process in artists, and it is equally important in contemplative practices (Penman, 2015) as this gap, which is empty of specific content, is not empty of awareness (Rome, 2014, p.14). On the contrary, *ma* enables a threshold for experiencing awareness.

Lee Worley and Arawana Hayashi have developed contemplative training that integrates the *ma* principle - this negative space/time - into performance practice. For example, Worley (2011) proposes that inhabiting pauses connects performers with the rawness of the present moment, strengthening stage presence. Hayashi (2021) emphasises the relational component of spatial awareness. In the description of her exercise duets, she states that relationship quality,

resonance, and connectivity emerge by sensing the shared space. According to Hayashi, *ma* is experienced as “aesthetic, immediate and relational” (Pilgrim in Hayashi, 2021, p.113), and these three qualities are inherent to performing arts.

Attention to the space exercises.

360° Scan_x (Duquette, Mudra exercises, 2017) is an exercise from Mudra Space Awareness that consists of turning on one axis 360 degrees at a very slow pace. While turning, the person should maintain peripheral vision. There is an emphasis on noticing what comes up and what disappears from the field of visual awareness while turning.

-GAP (Grounded, Aware, Present) I adapted an exercise from David Rome, (2014, pp. 14-15). In Rome’s version of the GAP, he uses techniques from Focusing, a psychological approach to the physical sensations, to help people become aware of those three fields of consciousness while practising meditation. In my version of the exercise, I adapted Rome’s version to a dynamic and interactive actor training exercise to help actors explore an embodied connection to spatial awareness.⁴²

-Duet practice: This exercise involves developing a duet by acknowledging the interplay of their movements with the Japanese concept of MA as a time and space interval or gap (Hayashi, 2021, pp. 111 -120).

The intercultural element of space awareness

As mentioned in Chapter One, through the practical phase of the research I had the opportunity to present this training in the UK and Chile. Although I am aware that a thorough examination of the challenges that applying this training interculturally will entail is beyond the frame of this research, I wanted to share that an element that stood out while delivering the MBPT sessions was that actors in the UK and Chile had dissimilar ways of relating with spatial awareness.

Specifically, when delivering the Duet practice, I could notice that actors in Chile tend to work with smaller spaces of interaction between them. Although one of the instructions of this exercise was to keep the awareness of the space between them, they often explored positions where their bodies touched. Conversely in the UK, actors tend to work with

⁴² In Appendix 3 I included the adapted version of GAP Exercise.

bigger spatial gaps between them and it was rare that their bodies touched during the interaction. These observations gathered in the field work signal a rich terrain for further research into the intercultural aspects that the incorporation of the MBPT practice entails.

4.3.d) Attention to the Object

“The contemplative actor trains towards this openness in order to experience the world fresh, moment to moment”
(Worley, 2003, p.41).

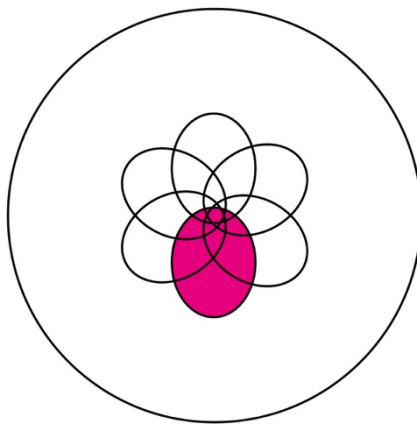


Figure 39 Attention to the Object

This fourth petal, attention to the object, was a field of intersection between performance and mindfulness practice that arose in the practical phase of the research. As a nascent field, this area of the MBPT signals a fertile ground for further exploration. Many acting methods incorporate objects such as batons and balls to training actors' awareness. Herein I propose that for those training methods, the attention to the object petal could become a point of entrance towards the MBPT practice.

I placed this petal between attention to the space and attention to the others as I found that working with an object can be helpful to aid actors' transition from intrapersonal mindfulness techniques towards incorporating others in their field of awareness,

In Chapter Three, I presented a nuanced description of the refinement process of The Feather Exercise, which is the primary content of this petal. I incorporated this exercise as part of the battery of practices I present in the context

of the MBPT. Additionally, through the practice-as-research process, I elaborated a protocol for The Feather Exercise, as I expect other practitioners can incorporate this exercise into their acting training methods.

What do students say about attention to an object.

"The feather is a metaphor for the creative process which can't be controlled." (G14: S3, A1 interview)

"You are caught up in the momentum, and the world disappears. There is only you and the object of focus."
(Student G14:15, C)

"I found my attention becoming widely observant of the feather. Due to having this attention, I was able to discover the feather's characteristics." (Student G:14,7, B1)

"My mind was more focussed on the appearance of the feather (the way it looked). Visually this was easier to do in contrast to the sitting meditation. It gave me something to focus my eyes on." (Student G14:12, C)

"I focused on this feather, I was invested." (Student G:14,7, B2)

"With both feathers I was content, and I was extremely focused." (Student G:14,2, A1)

The AAA attention to the object

The AAA mechanism that operates in the attention to the object petal refers to the process of deconditioning of perception. This process of direct perception is an area of interest to both actors and meditators as both aim to connect with the world through perception (Trungpa, 1986, pp.54,55). The main obstacle to direct perception is related to all the subjective filters of fears and expectations that make us relate to the idea of the object more than the object. Therefore, both disciplines, mindfulness, and performance, are interested in finding strategies to "cuts across the habitual dislocation from direct experience which is a result of the predominance of discursive thinking" (Middleton & Núñez, 2018, p. 221).

True contemplation, as opposed to ordinary discursive thinking and rumination, involves what biologist and cognitive neuroscientist Francisco Varela called a "reversal attention". One suspends one's habitual flow of thought and feeling so we make room for a different way of paying attention (Rome, 2014, p.5).

In the MBPT, the AAA mechanism for enabling "reversal attention" or direct perception consists of Attention to the object that, combined with non-judgmental Awareness and the Attitude of acceptance, leads towards experiencing heightened sensory awareness. In the chapter of the thesis titled The Feather Exercise, I describe in detail this AAA

mechanism. There, I also unfold the interpersonal patterns of behaviour that appear by addressing the feather as a transitional object.

I propose that the AAA mechanism that I found to operate in the feather exercise can shed light on how to present actor training exercises with objects from a contemplative approach.

Attention to the object exercises

The Feather Exercise: In Chapter Three I could verify that this exercise enables actors to enact mindfulness practice in an acting context. I could confirm how this this exercise has mindfulness techniques imbricated in its fabric that aid actors in strengthen their attentional skills and experience mindfulness states while playing with a feather.

4.3.e) Attention to the Other

“What, in fact, creates life on the stage is the actor’s awareness of his relationships – spiritual, imaginative, perceptive, physical – with other actors”.
Michel Saint-Denis

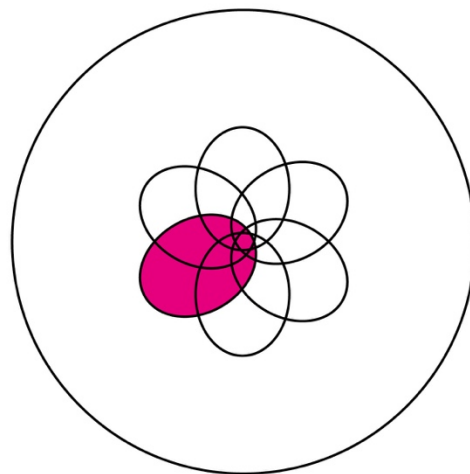


Figure 40 Attention to the Other

The fifth petal of this diagram signals one of the research objectives: how to apply contemplative techniques in actor training—most actor training operates in an interpersonal arena. During the research process, I could test that the underpinning skill for human interaction resides in how we pay attention to others. This petal contributes to narrowing

the gap between contemplative and acting practices, bringing the MBPT closer to acting practice. The petal most clearly delineates possibilities for applying the MBPT content to devising and performance practice. Accordingly, MBPT participants valued positively this area of the training, as they found these exercises ‘useful’ to acting practice.

The MBPT contemplative approach to interaction contributes to the performance field by offering a specific nomenclature of elements unravelled by the AAA mechanism. This mindfulness-based approach of paying attention to the other might illuminate other interactive practices and instil a receptive approach to interaction, a hallmark of contemplative interactions.

What do the participants say about attention to the other?

“I felt much more awake, aware, sensitive, and connected to the group. Their movements, looks, sounds...etc.” (G:6, P1)

“The thought and feeling that remained was the vital energy of each movement and the flow with and towards the other person, totally involuntary at times.” (G:6, P5)

“Most of my issues as an actor come from being closed off from other people. Mindfulness activities that are group-oriented, exercises to break down that wall could be very useful.” (G:5, S3)

“Mindfulness can often positively influence performance and improve it. Perhaps because it makes us more present onstage and aware of our scene partners.” (G19, S3)

AAA attention to other

By identifying the mechanism and detecting what components enable mindful interaction in the theatre arena, the MBPT can enrich the research on mindfulness-based interaction.

In the MBPT nomenclature, the mechanism beneath the *attention to the other* consists of a specific interchange between the AAA elements—attention into the other, receptive Awareness, Attitude of curiosity and generosity.

The first element is to deliberately, on purpose and willingly make the decision to place their Attention into the person they are interacting with. This other, in a training/rehearsal environment, most of the time will be our scene or exercise partner. At the same time, this phenomenon of placing our Attention outwards is one of the hallmarks of mindfulness-based initiatives and it has the effect of diminishing self-consciousness. Therefore in practical terms, each time an actor notices that their attention has drifted inwardly into their thoughts or expectations of how the scene should unfold; or if they notice that they are trying to manipulate their experience by trying to generate an emotion; or if they feel that they are waiting for their turn to say their next line or do their next action; or if they are feeling isolated inside of

their minds; or if they are hoping for external validation, it means that it is time to gently bring their attention back to their scene-partner/colleague/classmate.

In this way the other becomes the object of attention, the anchor to the present moment experience. A key aspect for sustaining the attention into the other is to *let go* of our expectation and fears regarding the interaction. In the MBPT training I present the working principle '*It's not about me*' as a reminder that can help actors enact this process of renunciation that entails continuously re-directing our attention outwards into the other.

However, this mechanism is easier said than done. In my experience as an actor and acting teacher, most of the hindrances one experiences while acting spring from the patterns that inhibit our openness towards the other. In this way, the MBPT resonates with Grotowski's *via negativa*, approaching the training as eradicating blocks rather than learning skills.

In relation to the Attitudinal component of this mechanism, there are two main attitudes to sustain the attention to others - curiosity and generosity. I understand curiosity as relating to what is happening with attentiveness and care. This requires one to sustain an open mind towards what is happening in the moment-to-moment experience. Additionally, generosity can help one to approach acting as an offering. Here, generosity means to offer your attention to the other without holding back, without limitation, without hesitation.

Regarding the element of Awareness manifest as responsive awareness which ignites acting, creating life on stage, "what, in fact, creates life on the stage is the actor's awareness of his relationships – spiritual, imaginative, perceptive, physical – with other actors". (Saint-Denis, Michel, in Britton, 2013). An MBPT participant described this quality of responsivity as "staying grounded and in my truth as I relate to others" (G:5, S5). I consider this description accurate as it points out that paying attention to others entails a certain quality of presence (Rodenburg, 2017).

Exercises and practices of attention to the other

As attention to others is the MBPT petal that is closer to performance practice, I have paid special interest to gathering exercises and practices that could help the actor calibrate their attention towards their liminal encounter with others. I organised these gathered materials into Listening, Presence, and Interaction. Depending on the characteristics/needs of

the group of student-actors and the length of the MBPT intervention, I present the three kinds of exercises or emphasise only one of them.

Interaction

The exercises from this category are the core aspect of this module, as they provide a practical exploration of mindful interaction in actor training.

The ball game, as taught by Britton, focuses on the relationships between performers, and between a performer and her task, that appear while throwing and receiving balls. Britton describes the exercises' instructions as "Standing in a circle, evenly spaced, we throw balls to one another in random patterns" (Britton, 2013, p.247). I have incorporated this exercise as part of the MBPT content as I recognise that it contributes to actors' understanding of how their attention operates in the interpersonal and dynamic realm of interactions.

The Village, (Hayashi,2021, pp. 153-169). I include a full description and protocol of the exercise in Appendix 3.3. During Pilot Programme 2 (Group 19), we explored the possibilities of devising parts of the piece based on the group improvisations that emerged from The Village Exercise in the interview and questionnaires that they completed after finalising the training. Several actor-students identified The Village as the most useful exercise as they could apply this methodology for devising.

"The village exercise provided a decent base for the dream sequence." (G:19, S4)

"The village provided good moments for the dream sequence." (G:19, S5)

"The village exercise was fun. However, we spent too much time on this." (G:19, S10)

"The village was interesting to me as it covered communication as well as individual physical movement."
(G:19, S8)

Presenting yourself to an audience (Worley, 2001; Hayashi, 2021): According to Lee Worley, this exercise consists of walking onto the stage and standing still while allowing yourself to be seen (Worley, 2001, p. 63). Hayashi (2021) presents a version of this exercise called *Field Dance*. Hayashi (2021) states that this exercise helps to show up genuinely as who we are.

Listening Exercises

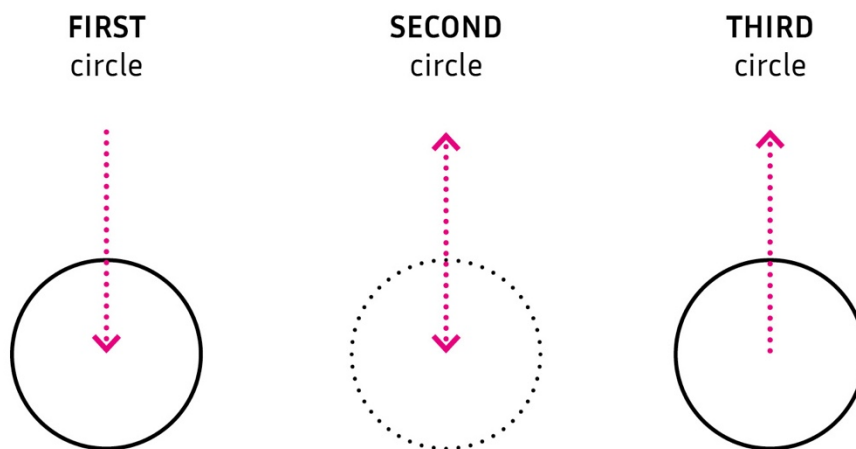
Listening is a foundational skill to develop through actor training as it connects the actor with the inter-subjective realm of experience. Listening requires stretching our tentacles of attention towards the other. Listening onstage does not just happen with our ears but with all of our senses; we can listen with our eyes, with our skin. We should listen to the silence and the sounds. I am pointing towards the experience of 'kinesthetic listening' (Zarrilli, 2019, p.13). For this experience to happen, actors must suspend their judgment, lose control, take a risk and be open to experience. Alan Alda, North American director, and actor, states that real listening is a willingness to let the other person change you. He expresses only when actors listen to their colleagues from that place of openness interaction becomes alive, a pair of duelling monologues become a dialogue. (Alda, 2005)

Symphony of silence. A five-minute meditation that consists of perceiving the sounds as they appear, develop and dissolve in our environment. This exercise's objective is to make the actors aware of the impermanent nature of sound. Thus, through directing their attention to sound actors become present with the environment. This is a preliminary exercise that prepares actors to listen to others.

Presence:

Three circles of presence (Rosenburg, 2007, 2009). Rodenburg presents presence as a two-way alley where you are balancing receiving and giving information.

Figure 41 Circles of attention (Patsy Rodenburg)



It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full description of this practice.⁴³ However, I decided to share the diagram that I elaborated to present this author's theory as I think it summarises the core aspects of this teaching. First Circle Energy is human energy connected to itself. In "First Circle Energy you are preoccupied with yourself, you are probably in the past and in a place of taking [energy] and being unable to give. From the First Circle energy, people take more than they give" (Rodenburg, 2009, p3). Conversely, this author proposes that when actors are in the Third Circle they are not receiving the information of the environment, they give more than take, and they are only focused on text "declamation" without a specific focus. "It is an energy of force and control. It is of the future. In its work manifestations, it means that people feel like objects rather than individuals" (Rodenburg, 2009, p3). The Second Circle signals the state of interpersonal mindful attention as it refers to a state of presence where the actor is aware of themselves whilst open to interaction.

Incorporating the Three Circles of Presence into the MBPT training is a clear example of how I integrate exercises that do not come from a "contemplative" approach to illuminate some aspects of the MBPT training. In the practical phase of the research, I test how this exercise helps the actor understand how their attention works in the interpersonal realm of interaction. For example, in the discussion I presented in Chapter Two, specifically, Actor D, while reflecting on her work with the feather, she became aware of the importance of approaching acting from this "middle ground" when one is aware of oneself and simultaneously open to others. I believe Rodenburg's strategy of balancing inward and outward focus offers a practical exploration of how to embody the mindful attention onstage.

"Wangthang": Field of power. (Trungpa, 2004) This notion comes from the Shambhala teachings. Trungpa presents the Tibetan term *wangthang*, which translates to English as *field of power*, to introduce authentic presence, a core teaching of the Shambhala lineage. Authentic presence signals a state "of simplicity, being uncomplicated and, at the same time approachable (...) Therefore the warrior feels self-contained, with no need of external reference points to confirm him" (Trungpa, 2004, pp.188-189). I think that this state is highly valuable for actors. To introduce this teaching, I use Palmer's exercise of the field of power (Palmer, 2013). She presents the image of our body as an atom's nucleus and the field of power as the permeable surface that surrounds us at 360°. I found that this practice helps actors to understand

⁴³ It is worth noticing that this diagram is my interpretation of Patsy's teachings on the Three Circles of Presence.

and manage their stage presence. This is an example of how I translate Buddhist teaching into an embodied practice that I found to apply to actor training.

4.3.f) Attention to the Heart

“Self-Compassion is hard”.
Fuentes, field notes, Nov 2022

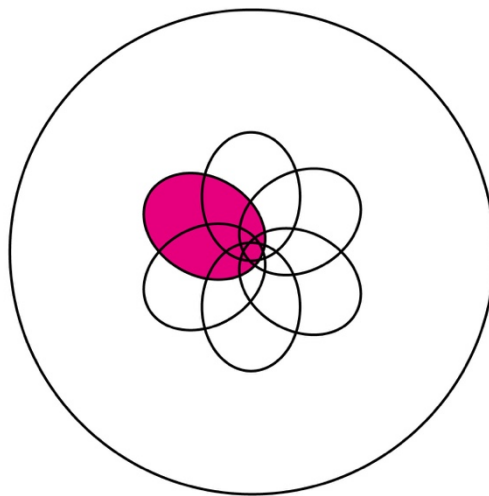


Figure 42 Attention to the Other

One of the unexpected results from the development of MBPT was realising the importance of deliberately presenting practices to foster self-compassion in actor training. This field of research emerged strongly from anecdotal evidence gathered in the practical phase of the research. Due to the impact that the incorporation of this field of practice had to my research I decided to expand the understanding of this topic in a separate chapter, Chapter Five.

4.4) Conclusion Chapter Four

In conclusion, Chapter Four of the dissertation presents the development of the Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) model, which emerged from critical self-reflection on the practical phase of MBPT. The aim was to address the research questions by providing a comprehensive framework synthesising the intricate relationship between mechanisms, categorisations, and conceptualisations at the intersection of mindfulness practice and actor training. Overall, I claim that the MBPT model significantly contributes to delineating a path for incorporating contemplative pedagogy in the performing arts.

By delineating the main features of the MBPT practice, this model contributes to carving a path for integrating contemplative practices into actor training. It provides a roadmap for educators and practitioners in the field, offering insights into effectively incorporating mindfulness techniques into performer training methodologies. Within the Chapter I presented substantial anecdotal evidence on how actors experienced and reported the beneficial aspects of each petal of attention. However, it is important to clarify that I do not claim that I scientifically corroborated the effects that MBPT has on actors as that would require a different methodology. However, the substantial anecdotal evidence opens a pathway for further interdisciplinary research where the effects of this method could be scientifically tested and corroborated. As further research and implementation of the MBPT model take place, it is expected to advance the understanding and application of contemplative practices within and possibly beyond the realm of actor training.

5)CHAPTER FIVE: SELF-COMPASSION IN MBPT

*Self-compassion is the key,
Self-compassion is the path,
Self-compassion is the practice.*

(Dream, February 2020)

5.1) Introduction

One of the hallmarks of the practice research process is that it takes you to unexpected results. Incorporating and developing self-compassion as a critical feature of the MBPT training and model presents an exciting example of my Practice as Research process worthy of examining closely.

The constant interaction between the process of ‘doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing’ (Nelson, 2013, p. 32) made me realise that an intrinsic element of mindfulness practice, self-compassion, appeared to have an essential role in introducing mindfulness techniques to actors. Following the traces that emerged during the research journey, where I could witness the need for actors to soften their inner-critic and self-consciousness states; in addition to actors’ commentaries reported in the questionnaires and interviews, I decided to incorporate self-compassion as one of the central features of the MBPT practice and MBPT model.

To present a nuanced comprehension of the role of self-compassion within MBPT I wrote five sub-sections. Segment 5.2.a, describes the learning markers that appeared through the practical stage of the research that led me towards incorporating self-compassion as an explicit content of the MBPT practice. Section 5.2.b, unravels the hints from the research journey that led me towards including self-compassion as an attitudinal component implicit in the MBPT practice. Segment 5.2.c, presents a video essay *Developing Friendliness towards Oneself*, which shows a hermeneutic reflection on developing a self-compassion exercise for actors. Section 5.2.d addresses my personal exploration of Self-compassion practice. Finally, segment 5.2.e presents a series of self-compassion exercises that I incorporated in this field of practice, additionally, it offers anecdotal evidence of participants' insights regarding self-compassion.

5.2) Self-compassion within the MBPT

5.2.a) Explicit content of the MBPT model

In the initial stage of the research, specifically during the first series of mindfulness sessions delivered within the 2017-2018 academic year, I presented mindful-attention training as a two-fold phenomenon encompassing the interaction of two elements: focused attention and open awareness⁴⁴. Although, as a meditation teacher, I was trained to cultivate compassion and teach self-compassion techniques, I decided not to instruct MBPT participants in practising self-compassion explicitly. However, as a mindfulness teacher, I knew the importance of embodying those qualities while delivering the MBPT sessions (Kabat Zinn, 2004; Trungpa, 2004, 2014). Thus, I was aware of the importance of modelling these qualities so that the participants could feel that they were in a safe environment that encouraged them to explore the movements of their minds. Therefore, during the initial stage of the research, self-compassion was an implicit quality of the MBPT practice.

However, during the delivery of MBPT workshops, after witnessing how the students' emotional aversion reduced their ability to create, I gathered anecdotal evidence on how actors' inner criticism and states of self-consciousness appeared as recurrent hindrances that prevented them from accessing present-moment experiences⁴⁵. Thus, those insights from the fieldwork led me towards incorporating self-compassion techniques into the MBPT content.

For example, according to my field note observations, after presenting the first series of MBPT sessions, I reported that the most common difficulties that performers presented were: *lack of concentration, self-consciousness, physical tension, self-criticism, and fear of failure*. (Field notes, June 2018). Additionally, those fieldwork annotations were supported by gathering evidence on how emotional aversion harms creativity; “emotional aversion closes down the mind, reduces creativity and leaves behind it a deep-seated sense of fear and caution” (Penman, 2015, p.108). That discovery marked

⁴⁴ For more information regarding this initial phase of this research, please refer to [Chapter Two, section 2.1.d\) MBPT Starting Point](#)

⁴⁵ For more details, please see [Chapter Two](#)

an inflexion point on the research trajectory that drove me to actively search for mindfulness exercises and practices that could help actors notice and accept those aversive feelings.

Based on my embodied understanding of mindfulness practice and gathered literature on self-compassion (Neff, 2012; Germer, 2009; Penman 2015), I realised that self-compassion was an excellent technique to help actors counterbalance their tendency to criticise and harshly evaluate their performance. Within Buddhist meditation, self-compassion practice aims to transform a moment of suffering into a moment of love, compassion, and connection (Germer, 2009; Neff, 2012). It is precisely that possibility to transform the discomfort that an actor experiences while facing difficulties into cultivating a kinder relationship towards themselves and others that has impelled me towards incorporating self-compassion-based exercises and techniques into actor training.

During the later stages of the practical phase of the research, while delivering the MBPT Pilot Programmes 1,2,3 and the third series of MBPT sessions, I had the opportunity to test and refine several self-compassionate exercises. As a strategy to bring self-compassionate techniques into actor training, I incorporated exercises that explore self-compassion at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level. In further sections section of this chapter, I will present a video essay that reflects upon the development of a self-compassion exercise called *Seeing Yourself Through Your Friend's Eyes*, which should aid actors in cultivating friendlier relation towards themselves.

What do students say about self-compassion?

“Stop the judgmental point of our mind and from there we were able to create more ideas for our performance.” (G:14, S,6 B1)

“I became less judgmental of myself and learned to let go of my mistakes to a certain extent.” (G14: S:10, B2)

“I learned to be kind to myself.” (G:15, S,3)

“I found it helped me to trust the other people in my group and to be less judgmental towards myself.” (G:19, P12)

5.2.b) An attitudinal component of the MBPT model.

Implicit traces of self-compassion within *Presenting yourself to an audience* exercise.

Worley (2001) suggests that the exercise *presenting yourself to the audience* trains the actor in developing the willingness to be seen. This exercise consists of walking onto stage and standing in front of the “audience” without doing anything. “allow yourself to be seen, experience those who are looking at you, experience being seen and walk off the stage” (Worley, 2001, p.63). She proposes that mindfulness enables the transformation of self-consciousness into the consciousness of self. Based on the experience of delivering this exercise within the MBPT, I have witnessed the transformational effect of this exercise. I propose that this exercise connects the actor with an inherent paradox of our craft, as actors we want to be seen but at the same time we fear being seen. Thus, this exercise highlights the uncomfortable feelings that arise while standing in front of an audience. I propose that self-compassion is an implicit component of this exercise, which can help the actor to overcome self-consciousness and connect to others from a place of vulnerability and authenticity.

Testimonies of openness, connection, and vulnerability after performing presenting yourself to an audience exercise.

The following are some of the testimonies from participants in Group 5. This was a MBPT workshop that consisted of two three-hour sessions delivered in Manchester to professional actors from mixed backgrounds. I delivered the Presenting Yourself to an Audience exercise (Worley, 2001) to conclude the workshop's first session. I extracted the following testimonies from the group discussion that happened immediately after they performed the exercise.

“I felt really emotional because it felt like everybody came and shared their heart, I felt like I was seeing people's hearts and their essence.” (Participant, G:5, S1)

“When I got up it felt very spiritual and watching it was very spiritual—that gap. We were open with each other without saying anything.” (Participant, G:5, S2)

“Useful, useful in the sense that when I'm on stage, I'm making a deliberate point of not looking in the eyes of the audience because our fear it's going to distract me. Some faces I know. So, I look at the horizon, just over the heads. But that was a useful experience of looking into the eyes of the audience. And feeling the warmth. And being the trust, the support.” (Participant, G:5, S3)

“It was a privilege as an audience to watch someone do that as simple as what you've seen. And that's, I mean if you feel that as a member of the audience watching things on stage, then well, it's a privilege, it's an amazing thing to watch. If you really get it, you know, that openness and vulnerability. When I did it, I felt

panicked the first time and the second time, you felt more secure and were able to follow the instructions.” (Participant, G:5, S4)

“For there to be a connection. It doesn't have to be, you know, the contrivance of positivity. You know, "I'm here for you" is just that, and that's fine. You know, there's a connection just in being.” (Participant, G:5, S5)

“I felt very relaxed, totally transparent.” (Participant, G:5, S7)

While the effectiveness of MBPT techniques to infuse self-compassion in actors warrants further exploration, the above comments from participants present anecdotal evidence of how this exercise has the potential to aid actors in transforming a moment of suffering, such as the uncomfortable feeling that arises while facing an audience into a moment of love, compassion, and connection.

5.2.c) Video essay

The following video is an audio-visual experiment I developed under the supervision of Ben Spatz. Herein, I present a hermeneutic reflection on the cultivation of self-compassion in actor training. As I explained in the methodology section, to create this video, I used the ‘illuminated videos’ methodology (Spatz, 2021); exploring the interplay between text and audio-visual elements, employing voiceover and annotations to reflect upon the implications of developing a friendlier relationship with oneself while acting.

It is worth highlighting that I do not approach this video from a documentation point of view as I do not aim to faithfully reproduce a moment in a session captured by the camera. Conversely, I use the footage from a delivery of an exercise called *Seeing Yourself Through Your Friend's Eyes* as a canvas to reflect-upon new ways of incorporating self-compassion in actor training.

It is crucial to warn the reader/watcher that there is not much external action in the selected exercise; as in many conventional mindfulness practices, the activity in this activity is primarily internal. However, I decided that the unedited recording of the delivery of that exercise was the perfect canvas to engage in a hermeneutic reflection. Therefore, in the following video, I use textual annotations and voiceover to augment, enhance, investigate, and critique

a primarily audio-visual work (Spatz, 2021) to amplify my reflection on ways for developing a self-compassion exercise for actors and enquiring about the relevance of incorporating self-compassion techniques in actor training.

As noted above, this video has a considerably different format than the previous videos presented in this dissertation. Up to this point, I presented unedited footage from specific moments of the MBPT workshops to examine aspects of the MBPT practice. This video works in a dialogue with the written text. However, this more sophisticated piece is supposed to work as a stand-alone video as I incorporate the dialogue between footage and textual annotations within the video essay.

A final remark is that I presented this video at a Conference of Practice as Research at the Catholic University of Chile in November 2022, which is why this video includes credits and a bibliography.

Video essay: Developing friendliness towards oneself.

Video 15 [Video essay Developing friendliness towards oneself](#)

5.2.d) My embodied practice of self-compassion

To enrich the discussion of this petal of the MBPT, it is worth sharing that I consider self-compassion the hardest aspect of meditation and mindfulness practice. Although I have practised meditation for over twenty years, I must confess that I still struggle to embody a self-compassionate approach to my life and work. At the same time, in the Shambala tradition, the process of “taking difficult situations and actually practising on them.” (Mipham, 2013, p.20) is presented as the seed of transmutation that enables the possibility of blending practice and life. Herein I will share some “behind the scenes” events where I used self-compassion practices to approach the unforeseen difficulties, I encountered during the research journey. I include these examples as they sensitised me to the role of self-criticism in the actor's work and helped me recognise the potential of integrating self-compassion into the MBPT practice.

Facing the fear of failure while writing a dissertation in academic English is another. While writing this dissertation, I often faced challenging feelings of inadequacy, and inner criticism, when I realised that my written work failed to convey the richness of the experience within the MBPT workshops.

Although the inner critic can seem harsh, cynical, and hostile, it is not trying to undermine you. It is trying to protect you in the only way it knows how: by attacking the thoughts, feelings and emotions that may open you up to the risks of pain and disappointment (Penman, 2015, p.108).

These deep feelings of incompetence showed me that if I was to finish this dissertation, I needed to soften the way I treated myself. In my office, I printed out and made a poster with Kristin Neff's words: "This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment. May I give myself the compassion that I need". This practice became my personal mantra.

The second challenge I experienced during this research journey was a scandal that involved the head teacher of the Shambhala lineage so I decided to withdraw from the sangha (community of practitioners). This heart-breaking event affected my research as the MBPT is founded under my embodied knowledge of Buddhist practices that I learned during my continuous engagement with this lineage of practice. I continued to practice *shamatha* meditation, but I incorporated self-compassion practices into my daily routine.

The third transformative event I faced during this dissertation journey was becoming a mother in the first peak of the COVID Pandemic (April 2020). Becoming a mother when the world was falling apart challenged my beliefs and shattered my daily routine and I had to let go of the daily meditation practice I had cultivated for over two decades. Once again Self-compassion practices proved essential, enabling me to cope with the heightened uncertainty that followed the Pandemic with sanity.

Over the past three years, self-compassion became my main practice. I have incorporated a series of structured meditations, contemplations, and short practices into my new daily routine. Still, I do not claim that I am more self-compassionate than when I started this research, but I am certain that my understanding of self-compassion has deepened through this research process. I propose that incorporating self-compassion as part of the MBPT method can be seen as an example of the paradox that we teach best what we most need to learn (Bach, 2001).

In Chile we use the term 'nanay' which comes from the Quechua language, means both wound and caress.

Finally, I am encouraged by the acceptance of self-compassionate practices in MBPT participants. I identified a need in the actor training field to include technologies for actors to foster a healthier relationship with themselves. I hope that the MBPT petal of attention to the heart contributes to signalling a field for further research incorporating self-compassion practices into the actor training area.

5.2.e) Self-compassion practices and exercises.

Self-soothing practices. (Neff, 2012)

Meditation - from my best friend's eyes.

Letter from a best friend (Neff, 2012)

Self-compassion mantras: In the Buddhist tradition mantras are phrases that serve to stabilise the person's mind. Similarly,

I use the following phrases to direct actors' attention to a place of confidence onstage.

- We don't need to be afraid of who we are (Trungpa, 2004).
- I am enough.

5.3) Conclusions Chapter Five

To conclude this chapter, I have two comments. First, based on the acceptance that actors had of self-compassion practice presented in the MBPT context, I could confirm that self-compassion techniques fill a gap, pointing towards an almost unexplored terrain in the field of actor training, offering a concrete possibility to treat ourselves better. I suggest that cultivating the attitudinal component of accepting our human imperfections with kindness can contribute significantly towards deepening the actors' work on themselves. This Attitudinal component of the MBPT practice is an affective quality of attention manifesting as care, gentleness, respect, and acceptance for the difficulties and struggles we experience in our professional and daily lives. Additionally, based on the observations on the MBPT workshops and gathered evidence, I suggest that incorporating self-compassionate techniques can aid in developing an actor's resilience. Identifying the intersection between self-compassion and actor training as a fertile ground for further research is a notable contribution to the field.

As a final remark, I consider developing an audio-visual experiment an extremely valuable research process (leaving aside the modest contribution of the resulting piece). Through the process of creating this audio-visual essay, I was able to have a taste of the enormous potential that this methodology has for examining embodied practices. Each

stage of the illuminated videos: gathering material, selecting footage, doing trials, discussing the video with my supervisor, finding quotes, writing a script, recording the voice, and then editing the pieces together, and finally presenting the audio-visual essay in a PaR conference, contributed to refining the understanding of my embodied practice. I plan to continue exploring this methodology further.

6) CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I will organise this conclusion by addressing each of my claims for original contribution to the field, the development of dedicated mindfulness training for actors and the MBPT model as a conceptual framework to address the complex multi-layered phenomenon of mindfulness onstage.

6.1) A dedicated Mindfulness Training for Actors

Through this study, I have sought to interrogate how to apply mindfulness techniques to acting training. Through the practice-as-research process, I developed what I understand to be the first dedicated mindfulness training for actors. Together with developing, testing, and refining a contemplative training method, I articulated a systematic understanding of what it means to apply mindfulness onstage. Additionally, I demonstrated that my research results are transferable to other contemplative practices. Therefore, this research significantly contributes to the performance and mindfulness field by delineating a systematic approach towards incorporating contemplative initiatives in actor training.

This research emerges as a response to a foundational need of the performance field: the necessity of abiding in the present moment onstage. Through the practical phase of the research, I demonstrated that MBPT helps the actor develop focused attention and open awareness and cultivate foundational attitudes such as curiosity, openness, acceptance, and self-compassion. In this way, I corroborated that mindfulness techniques and practices are an asset for actors to learn how to navigate the elusive present-moment experience onstage.

A significant contribution of this research is that it proposes a way to resolve what I identified as the main gap in the mindfulness and performance field: the need for conceptual consensus to address contemplative practices within performance. This lack of clarity hindered knowledge transfer from one contemplative practitioner to another. To overcome that problem, I deduced that “self-regulation of attention onstage” lay at the heart of mindfulness for actors. Additionally, investigating how mindful attention operated onstage provided me with a conceptual framework to address my specific practice, which proved to be transferable to other contemplative practices and actor training.

During the research process, I could confirm the Mindfulness-Based Performer Training aids actors in self-regulating their attention onstage.

I entered the practice-as-research process working intuitively out of my previous training experience both as an acting practitioner/teacher, interested in the psychophysical approach to acting and as a contemplative practitioner/teacher in the tradition of Shambhala with extensive experience facilitating mindfulness training in a secular approach. My embodied cultivation of mindfulness techniques was the foundation for developing the MBPT. However, through the practice-as-research process, I designed, tested, and refined the MBPT device, demonstrating that using mindfulness techniques to help performers self-regulate attention on stage is an asset to incorporate in actor training.

This thesis proposes a systematic approach to helping actors manage their attentional skills in a secularised vocabulary and practices that connect mindfulness to acting phenomena. This research highlights transferable aspects of mindfulness to performance practice. As acting is an active and dynamic endeavour, I developed the MBPT as a mindfulness-in-action device which aid actors access pre-expressive states. Accordingly, the MBPT practice goes beyond solely presenting mindfulness as sitting meditation. Instead, I developed and tested an encompassing curriculum of exercises where the contemplative elements are embedded in their fabric⁴⁶.

As presented in Chapter Two MBPT, through the extensive practical phase of the research, while working with more than two-hundred participants, I could corroborate that using contemplative techniques does not imply a passive approach to acting but offers techniques for actors to deepen their understanding of how their minds operate onstage. Accordingly, the MBPT curriculum explores passive and active techniques operating in intrapersonal and interpersonal terrains The research results presented in Chapter Four, provided strong evidence that mindfulness practice compels trainable skills and mechanisms that, when enacted onstage, help actors access mindfulness states. In this way, this research contributes to delineating a path for making mindfulness techniques accessible to actors.

One challenge of this research process was finding ways to approach, process and analyse the extensive information gathered in the practical phase of the research. Thus, faced with this problem, I had to make choices. Instead of focusing my research on analysing the participants' experience within the workshops, I became more

⁴⁶ Please see Appendix 3.1) **Catalogue of exercises** (pp.237-238)

interested in investigating the trends of mindfulness techniques common to all MBPT practices. Similarly, I boldly decided to dedicate Chapter Three to analysing one exercise in detail instead of intending to address my whole practice equanimously. Additionally, this extensive amount of gathered data forced me to search for features and conceptual frameworks that could apprehend the complexity of mindful attention.

A remarkable feature of this research was the stress of testing and refining, and critically reflecting on the MBPT applicability to practice. During the dissertation, I have presented sufficient evidence to corroborate this training's applicability. However, I must acknowledge that I do not claim to have solved the gap between contemplative and performance practice. The modest contribution of this training is that I could confirm that contemplative techniques helped actors manage their attention and access and cultivate mindfulness states, heightening actors' pre-expressive states. However, there is still an open gap to investigate how these techniques apply to expressive aspects of acting, which signals a fertile space for further exploration.

An innovative aspect of the multi-mode methodology I used during the PaR process is that I could test how a phenomenon technical approach paired with first-person techniques enables unravelling the contemplative techniques embedded within my practice. For example, Chapter Three's thick description and critical reflection of The Feather Exercise made me realise the enactive approach to mindfulness implicit in the MBPT practice. I used a video essay in Chapter Five to present a hermeneutical reflection on incorporating self-compassion in actor training. The previously mentioned methods proved efficient in making explicit the contemplative elements intertwined in the MBPT practices. Therefore, I encourage other performers who wish to investigate their contemplative practices to explore these methods.

An original contribution to knowledge lies in the exercises developed within this research process. I introduced two exercises throughout the dissertation: 'The Feather Exercise' and 'Seeing Yourself through Your Friends' Eyes.' I anticipate disseminating these exercises will prove fruitful among acting teachers. I have demonstrated the beneficial aspects of mindfulness practice, such as the deconditioning of perception, responsive awareness, and self-compassion, ingrained in the fabric of these practices.

6.1.a) Tension between instrumentalisation v/s deeper ethical approach to mindfulness

As mentioned previously, the research process confirmed that Mindfulness-Based Performer Training (MBPT) enhances actors' performance skills by facilitating the process of self-regulation of attention on-stage. However, concerns may arise regarding the potential conflict between instrumentalisation and the ethical underpinnings of mindfulness. The argument posits that making mindfulness techniques available to actors might compromise the transformative essence of contemplative practices. As a Buddhist and an acting instructor, I share apprehensions that the naïve applications of these practices might lead to reinforcing the status quo, unintentionally strengthening consumer capitalism.

Thus, it is crucial to emphasise the ethical considerations inherent in mindfulness to mitigate the risk of misinterpreting MBPT as a mere commodity for the entertainment industry's quest for more proficient actors. In my view, mindfulness is not a "neutral" technology confined solely to improving actor's attention; instead, I approach the contemplative practices as technologies of the self. Consequently, MBPT hinges on the transformative nature of the self as an ontological approach to mindfulness practice. It transcends being a mere "attention training" method and assumes a pivotal role in actor training, offering a transformative approach beyond conventional techniques.

The driving force behind this research is not to produce "better" actors in a narrowly productive sense but to equip actors with tools that foster a broader understanding of themselves. I posit that this research introduces a contemplative approach to acting, providing actors with "skilful means" to connect, through mindfulness, with a more profound sense of self that has the potential to alleviate actors' suffering. Therefore, I underscore that the foundation of this research lies in compassion not in competition as the ground for developing an actor training pedagogy. The way I found to address the underlying challenge in bringing mindfulness to acting was to use the pull in opposite directions (Kozel, 2008), the friction between instrumentalisation and the ethical implications of mindfulness, as a generative force to develop the MBPT training and the MBPT model.

For example, in Chapter Two, I defined the bounds of this research towards developing mindfulness training that could be implemented within higher education. Due to the tight curriculum of acting students that often prevents from taking extracurricular activities, I had to simplify the MBPT content, reducing the length of the session from three hours to one hour. Due to this methodological adjustment, developing trait mindfulness in actors was left out of this research scope. In other words, I do not expect actors to become mindfulness practitioners by participating in the MBPT sessions or pilot programmes. Therefore, unlike most mindfulness trainings that have requirements of

participants to commit to practice mindfulness practice daily, to incorporate the habit of practicing meditation. Within the MBPT training meditation practice is not imposed, as the focus is to apply mindfulness techniques to acting. Therefore, the MBPT workshops stresses on generating favourable circumstances for actors to experience and cultivate mindfulness states while acting. My intention is that the MBPT open actors to the experience of mindful attention, which can serve as an invitation for them to go further into exploring the transformational aspect of this practice in their work and life.

Another example of how I used this tension between ethics and instrumentalisation to elaborate the MBPT training was the flexible feature of this training. Instead of applying a fixed curriculum, I adapted the training content and language to meet the specific needs of the twenty-one groups. An interesting result from the refinement process was to corroborate that it is possible to separate the contemplative techniques from their aesthetic imprint, as the purpose of the MBPT is not to generate “contemplative performances” but to aid actors and acting students with the management of their attentional skills, notwithstanding the theatrical genre they are working.

6.1.b) The MBPT Model

I claim that the main contribution of this research to the field of actor training is the MBPT model. The features outlined in the MBPT model clarify and illuminate what was previously unclear, shedding light on the complex dynamics imbricated in the multi-layered phenomenon of how mindful attention operates onstage.

As presented in Chapter Four, the MBPT diagram can serve as a tool to help guide performers in finding their unique way of applying contemplative techniques to acting practice. I address mindful attention onstage as a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon. Through these four features, I could verify mindfulness's specific elements, dimensions, and beneficial aspects of mindfulness that can be applied to acting practice.

The six-petal flower is a way of categorising the MBPT practices regarding their placement of attention. They provide the teacher and the practitioner with concrete places to direct, sustain and shift their attention at will, which is one of the core mechanisms of mindfulness practice. Additionally, I propose that each petal operates as a portal towards accessing the MBPT from the practitioners' embodied knowledge. In this way, the potential of this categorisation is that it opens ways of bridging a contemplative practice to actor training.

For example, under 'attention to the body', I selected exercises that enhanced body-mind synchrony and sensitised actors towards perceiving the body as a field of immanent sensations. In attention to the other category, I chose activities that helped the actors cultivate a responsive attitude towards interaction, enhancing collaborative responses. And under the 'attention to the heart', I explored exercises that helped actors soften the detrimental effects of the judgmental mind. In this way, through the six-petal flower, I could demonstrate what specific elements of mindfulness practice were transferable to each area of practice.

I must clarify is that I do not intend that other contemplative pedagogues use MBPT to learn “my” way of teaching mindfulness to actors. On the contrary, the purpose of the MBPT model is to serve as a reflective tool that other actors and actor teachers could use as a guiding compass to develop their own way to apply contemplative techniques onstage.

6.1.c) The role of the Mindfulness facilitator

Mindfulness-based initiatives rely heavily on the facilitators' ability to model the practices. Therefore, as contemplative pedagogues, the triangle signals a way of delivering teaching that is actualised in experience. By embodying the AAA mechanism while we teach, we open the portal for the students to understand that mindfulness is not a theory, but a practice enacted in the moment-to-moment experience. In other words, the facilitator has a great responsibility while presenting the contemplative techniques. One cannot teach mindfulness from a mindlessness state. The teacher should, therefore, commit to addressing the teaching of contemplative techniques as a mindfulness-in-action endeavour. Thus, this triangle can be an excellent image to remember while teaching, as it reminds us to notice how we manage our attention, awareness, and attitude while teaching.

6.1.d) Self-compassion in actor training

I demonstrated that these foundational attitudes significantly contribute to guiding the actor's attention to the present moment experience. While qualities like curiosity, openness, and acceptance have been acknowledged in other actor training methodologies, I discovered a noteworthy gap in the literature regarding the incorporation of self-compassion in actor training. I considered that gap as an opportunity to contribute to opening a field of exploration into how

mindfulness-based, initiatives, specifically the MBPT practice, can provide technologies to address actors' challenges related to self-consciousness and self-criticism onstage. Recognising the relevance of this research finding, I dedicated Chapter Five of the thesis to illustrate how I explicitly and implicitly addressed self-compassion within the MBPT practice and model.

This research deepened my understanding of self-compassion. As explained in Chapter Five, explains how self-compassion practices can guide actors to connect with uncomfortable feelings from a place of acceptance and care. In Chile, we use the term 'nanay', derived from the Quechua language, meaning both wound and caress⁴⁷. Nanay signifies a caress from the heart, is associated with tenderness, and is a mother's gesture when comforting their child. As presented in [the video article](#), feelings of care, gentleness, and support spring naturally with our friends. Unfortunately, we often use a harsher tone and language with ourselves, particularly in moments of mistakes or failure. Learning how to approach my feelings of inadequacy and accept this text's imperfections, errors, and limitations with kindness and humbleness enabled me to complete this dissertation.

Given that we will be in our own company until our last breath, it becomes essential to acquire the skill of treating ourselves with kindness, a particularly crucial aspect in a profession like acting, where encounters with failure are frequent. These research findings show that self-compassion practices emerge as a vital tool for cultivating enduring strategies to navigate the challenges inherent in our career journey. My modest reflections on incorporating self-compassion into actor training contribute to opening a new and unexplored field of research with an enormous potential for development and application.

6.1.e) Final thoughts

While the effectiveness of MBPT within an academic context warrants further exploration, through the different versions of the MBPT workshops (sessions and pilot programmes), participants consistently reported that the training strengthens embodiment, stimulates body-mind synchrony, activates perceptual skills, and improves receptivity and sensitivity in creative collaborations, making them more confident in their performative skills. Ninety per cent of the actors who took the Pilot Programmes would recommend it to other acting students. I attribute the MBPT training

⁴⁷For more information, see: Lenz (1904-1910) Etymological Dictionary of Chilean Voices Derived from Native American Languages

success to the methodological effort of building training based on the motivation of making mindfulness techniques and states accessible to acting practice. Additionally, the positive results of this training confirm the need for actors to train their attention through contemplative practices, especially in these hectic times when the attention span is getting shorter.

I hope that this research contributes to laying a stone towards building a reliable approach to accessing mindfulness onstage. The findings, diagrams, and conceptualisations are intended to inspire practitioners to explore and implement contemplative practices onstage. Gratitude is extended to the hundreds of individuals who played a pivotal role in shaping this research; their invaluable contributions stemming from their participation in the MBPT workshops provided the experiential foundation for articulating these ideas. Furthermore, as I immersed myself in this investigation, I realised that what was initially perceived as multiple isolated initiatives investigating the mindfulness and performance field are more like interconnected parts of a whole. Rather than isolated 'islands,' a more accurate analogy is to see them as connected 'trees' with roots deeply intertwined beneath the surface. My aspiration is that this research assists in unravelling the hidden connection among these practices to foster mutual support growth, like a forest.

Although this research primarily caters to student actors in higher education, the systematic approach to mindful attention onstage holds the potential for broader applicability. This approach sheds light on fundamental human needs such as cultivating focus, enhancing body-mind synchrony, fostering creativity, and nurturing responsive awareness. Consequently, I expect future research endeavours to explore the varied applications of Mindfulness-Based Performance Training (MBPT) within and beyond performance arts borders. May we find a way to connect with others with authenticity and care, allowing actors to find a kinder way to be present onstage

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APPENDIX 1 : Mindfulness-Based Performer Training Workshops

List of workshops

GROUP N°	PLACE	N° SESSIONS	DATES	N° PARTICIPANTS	N° HOUR	GROUP PROFILE	NOTATION
GROUP 1	Hope Studios/ Manchester, UK	2	23/3/18 5/4/18	3	5	5-10 years of professional experience. +3 years of meditation practice gender: 1 man 2 women	(G1:S1/ G1:S3)
GROUP 2	Make, Do Theatre Huddersfield, UK	2	18/4/18 25/4/18	8	6	Psychophysical Acting Ensemble +3 years of professional experience, 1 year working together. 2 of them had participated in meditation sessions that I delivered at the University of Huddersfield gender: 4 men, 4 women	(G2:S1/ G2:S8)
GROUP 3	University Campus Oldham (Second and first-year drama students), UK	1	26/4/18	12	4	Group A: second-year drama students gender: 6 women. 2 hours session Group B: first-year drama students gender: 3 men, 3 women 2 hours session	(G3.1:S1/ G3.1:S6) (G3.2:S1/G3.2:S6)
GROUP 4	The University of Manchester Mind full of art, UK	1	2/5/18	6	1	Social science students 2 participants had amateur theatre experience. 2 participants had practised meditation before. gender: 1 men, 5 women	(G4: S1/ G4: S6)
GROUP 5	Hope Studios (open session 1) (open session 2) UK	2	26/05/18	9	6	Actors Mixed professional background From 20 to 60 years old gender: 2 men, 4 women.	(G5: S1/ G5:S9)
GROUP 6	Balmaceda Arte Joven, Concepción, Bío-bío Region Chile	1	September	20	2	Participants of physical theatre workshop 16 to 25 years old amateur	(G6: S1/ G6:S20)
GROUP 7	SIDARTE O'Higgins, Rancagua, O'Higgins Region Chile	1	September	16	2	Actors Union from Rancagua Mixed professional background 25 to 60 years old	(G7: S1/ G7:S16)
GROUP 8	CHECOESLOVAQUIA Santiago Metropolitan Region Chile	1	September	9	3	Mixed professional background Actors and acting students 20 to 40 years old	(G8:S1/ G8:S9)
GROUP 9	Balmaceda Arte Joven, Valparaíso, Valparaíso Region Chile	1	September	20	2	Young participants of a dance company 16 to 25 years old amateur	(G9:S1/ G9:S20)
GROUP 10	Universidad de Chile Santiago Metropolitan Region Chile	1	October	28	3	First-year students from one of the most prestigious acting school from Chile	(G10:S1/ G10:S28)

GROUP 11	Hiperkinesis Santiago Metropolitan Region, Chile	5	August/ September	5	5	Professional dancers five one-hour session	(G11:S1/ G11:S5)
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GROUP 12	The University of Huddersfield Huddersfield first-year drama students UK	2	4/2/2019-5/2/2019	40	6	Group A: First year drama students (Monday) 20 students 3 hours session Group B: First year drama students (Tuesday) 20 students 3 hours session	(G12:S1/ G12:S40)
GROUP 13	Mindful Acting 6-week course Awol Studio Manchester UK	6	21/1/2019 27/1/2019 04/2/2019 04/2/2019 11/2/2019 18/2/2019 25/2/2019 04/03/2019 (interview)	10	18	Mixed professional background	(G13:S1/ G13:S10)
GROUP 14	MBPT Pilot programme 1 The University of Huddersfield Huddersfield third-year drama students UK	4	08/2/2019 15/2/2019 22/2/2019 01/03/2019 15/3/2019 (interview)	15	6	Group A: Two final year projects 6 people Group B: Two final year projects 5 people Group C: One Final year project 4 people	(G14:S1/ G14:S15)
GROUP 15	Mindful Acting 8-week course Awol Studio Manchester UK	6	13/05/2019 20/05/2019 27/05/2019 03/06/2019 10/06/2019 17/06/2019 24/06/2019 01/07/2019	7	24	Mixed professional background	(G15:S1/ G15:S7)
GROUP 16	Threadbear theatre Huddersfield UK	1	01-04-2019	8	2	Improvisation Ensemble/playback theatre over +10 years of professional experience, 7 year working together. 1 of them had participated of meditation sessions that I delivered at the University of Huddersfield	(G16:S1/ G16:S8)
GROUP 17	Mindful-Acting trial session Awol Studio Manchester UK	1	08-04-2019	13	3	Mixed professional background	(G17:S1/ G17:S13)
GROUP 18	Mindful Acting 8 week Course Awol Studio Manchester UK	8	16/9/2019-4/11/2019 (interview)	10	24	Mixed professional background	(G18:S1/ G18:S10)
GROUP 19	MBPT Pilot Programme 2 The University of Huddersfield second-year students UK	10	1/10/19-16/12/2019	12	12	Second-year students Training inside Performance making module. Teacher: Dr. Deborah Middleton	(G19:S1/ G19:S12)
GROUP 20	MBPT Pilot Programme 3 The University of Huddersfield second-year students UK	7	1/10/19-16/12/2019 (interview students) Interview deb. & assitant teacher	4	14	Second-year students Voluntary course	(G20:S1/ G20:S4)
GROUP 21	MBPT open session Café Victoriana Santiago-Chile	1	17-01-2020	8	3	Mixed professional background	(G21:S1/ G21:S8)

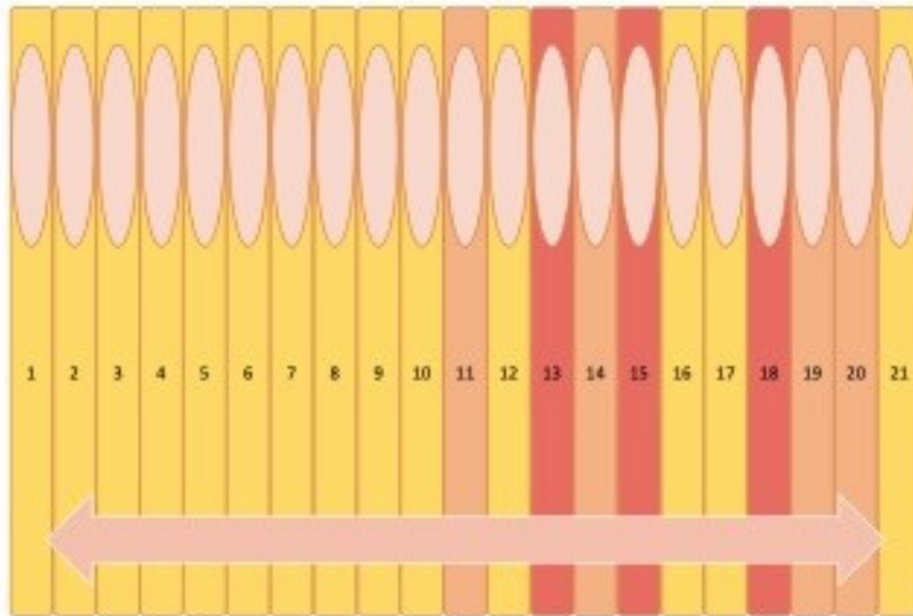
Gallery of MBPT workshops

APPENDIX ONE
Gallery of workshops
MBPT sessions
and Pilot Programmes

MBPT

Inside the process of developing
a Mindfulness-Based Performer Training

MBPT workshops



- 21 workshops
- 14: MBPT sessions (yellow)
- 4: Pilot Programmes (orange)
- 3: Mindful Acting Courses (red)

Group 1: exploratory session

Place: Hope Studios/
Manchester

Date: 23/03/18 – 05/04/18

Nº sessions: 2

Nº participants: 3

Nº hours: 5

Group Profile :

Professional actors 5-10 years of
professional experience +3 years
of meditation practice

Note: I did not record this session

• *Feedback*

Q: What aspects of the training did you find useful?

A: Staying grounded and in my truth as I relate to others. Combining together the dropped and open focus created a listening quality that felt like a steady, grounded base to work from". (G1, P1)

Q: Which of the exercises do you think is applicable or irrelevant for daily life? Why? How?

A: All of them it is vital to know where our awareness is. This helps us truly experience our experience (thoughts, emotions, impulses) So that we can access and allow them while performing (G1, S2)

Exercises: Meditation / Walking meditation / Ride the Axis/360°

Group 2: exploratory session
Place: Make do Theatre/
Huddersfield
Date: 18/04/18 – 25/04/18
Nº sessions: 2
Nº participants: 8
Nº hours: 6

Group Profile :

Psychophysical acting ensemble +1 year working together. Professional actors +3 years of experience. 2 of them participated in the meditation sessions that I delivered at The University of Huddersfield



Exercises in pictures: Top left: stones that I used to exemplify stillness while meditating and moving / bottom right: Dancing dialogues
Other exercises : Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/ The village/ Presenting yourself to an audience / Spoon and water

Group 3 (A & B)

Place : University Campus
Oldham

Date: 26/04/18

Nº session: 1

Nº of participants: 12

Nº of hours: 4

Group Profile :

Group A: Second Year Drama students,
2-hour session.

Group B: First year drama students
2-hour session



Exercise in the picture: presenting yourself to an audience Group B
Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/Dancing
Dialogues/ Presenting yourself to an audience.

Group 4:

Place: The University of Manchester/ Mind full of art

Date: 25/05/18

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 6

Nº hours: 1

Group Profile :

Social science students

2 participants had amateur theatre experience.

2 participants had practiced meditation before.



Exercise in picture: walking meditation

Other exercises: Meditation/ Presenting yourself to an audience

Group 5

Place: Hope Studios (MBPT open sessions) / Manchester

Date: 26/05/18- 02/06/18

Nº sessions: 2

Nº participants: 9

Nº hours: 6

Group Profile:

Actors Mixed professional background

From 20 to 60 years old

Feedback:

Q: Do you have any suggestions of themes that you would like me to address in following sessions?

A: Mindfulness activities that are group oriented. I find most of my issues as an actor come from being closed off to other people. Exercises to break down that wall could be very useful (G5, P1)



Exercise in picture: Spoon and Water

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/ Presenting yourself to an audience / Spoon and water

Group 6: Concepción

Place: Balmaceda Arte Joven

Bio-Bio Concepción

Date: September 2018

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 20

Nº hours: 2

Group profile

participants of physical theatre workshop

16 to 25 years old



Exercise in the picture: GAP Grounded Aware Present

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/
Presenting yourself to an audience.

Group 7: Rancagua
Place: Sidarte O'Higgins
Rancagua
Date: September
Nº sessions: 1
Nº participants: 26
Nº hours: 2

Group Profile:

Actors Union from Rancagua
Mixed professional background
25 to 60 years old



Exercise in the picture: 20 min Dance

Other exercises

Meditation / Dancing Dialogues/ Presenting yourself to an Audience

Group 8: Santiago

Place : Espacio

Checoeslovaquia, Santiago,
Chile

Date: September

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 9

Nº hours: 3

Group Profile:

Mixed professional background

Actors and acting students

20 to 40 years old



Exercise in picture: Heightened visibility

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ DancingDialogues/
Presenting yourself to an audience

Group 9: Valparaíso

Place: Balmaceda Arte Joven,
Valparaíso, Chile

Date: September

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 20

Nº hours: 2

Group Profile:

Young participants of an amateur dance
company

16 to 25 years old

Exercise in picture: Meditation / Dancing Dialogues

Other exercises: 20 min Dance / Presenting yourself to
an audience.



Group 10: Santiago

Place: Universidad de Chile

Date: September

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 28

Nº hours: 3

Group Profile:

First-year acting students from Universidad de Chile



Exercise in picture: Presenting yourself to an audience.

Other exercises

Standing Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogues/
Grounded Aware Present (GAP) / Field of Presence

Group 11
Pilot
Programme
0
PPMO



Place: Espacio
Checoeslovaquia
Date: August-September
2018
Nº sessions: 5
Nº participants: 5
Nº hours: 5

Group Profile:

professional dancers working on a project

"Everyday hyperkinesia robs human life of any contemplative element, any capacity to linger. Time lacks an ordering rhythm. Temporal dispersion does not allow you to experience any duration. There is nothing that governs time. The temporary crisis will only be overcome at the moment in which vita activa, in full crisis, welcome the vita contemplativa in your bosom again."

Byung-Chul Han

The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerin

Group 12

Place: The University of
Huddersfield

Date: 4/2/2019- 5/2/2019

Nº sessions: 2

Nº participants:40

Nº hours: 6

Group A: First-year drama students

(Monday)20 students/ 3 hours session

Group B: First-year drama students (Tuesday)

20 students/ 3 hours session



Exercise in the picture: The Feather Exercise

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing
Dialogues/ Feather alone with partner and in small groups/
Feather with big Groups/ Presenting yourself to an audience.

Group 16

Place: Quackery church

Huddersfield

Date: 01/04/2019

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 8

Nº hours: 2

Group Profile:

Improvisation Ensemble/playback theatre

Over +10 years of professional experience, 7 years working together. One of them had participated on meditation sessions that I delivered at the University of Huddersfield.



Exercise in the picture: Dancing Dialogue

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ Dancing Dialogue/
Presenting yourself to an audience.

Group 17

Place: Awol Studios,
Manchester

Date: 08/04/2019

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 13

Nº hours: 3

Group Profile:

Mindful Acting Open

Session Actors, mixed

Background



Exercise in picture: The Feather Exercise

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ The Feather exercise

Group 21

Place: Café Victoriana,
Santiago, Chile

Date: 17/01/2019

Nº sessions: 1

Nº participants: 8

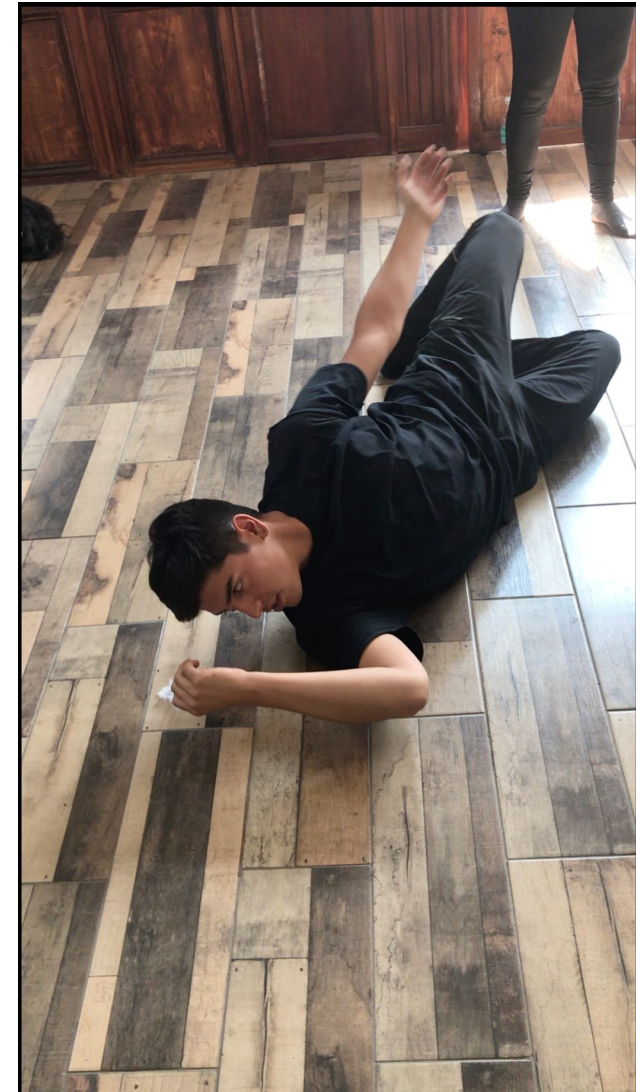
Nº hours: 3

Group Profile:

MBPT Open Session. Mixed Professional Background

Exercise in the picture: The Feather Exercise

Other exercises: Meditation / 20 min Dance/ The Feather exercise



Group 11

Pilot Programme 0

Session	Exercises
Session 1	Meditation and 20 min Dance
Session 2	Presenting yourself to an Audience
Session 3	5 kinds of sight
Session 4	The Village / Circles of Presence
Session 5	GAP / Village

Group 14: Pilot programme 1

Place: The University of
Huddersfield

Date: 08/02/2019-01/03/2019

Nº sessions: 4 + interview

Nº participants: 15

Nº hours: 6

Group Profile :

Group A: two final year projects, 6 people

Group B: two final year projects, 5 people

Group C: One Final year project, 4 people



Structure of the pilot programme

This was a voluntary 4 session workshop offered to third-year-drama students from The University of Huddersfield

Group	FYP	Session 1 08/02/19	Session 2 15/02/19	Session 3 21/02/19	Session 4 01/03/19	Interview 15/03/19
A6 Students	A1 3 S	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
	A2 3 S	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
B5 Students	B1 3 S	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
	B2 2 S	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
C 4Students	C	1 hour	1 hour	3 hours	1 hour	1 hour
Total Students 15	Total FYP 5					

PPM1 CONTENTS	Group A	Group B	Group C
Session 1	Meditation /PYA/ You are your own mudra”	Meditation /The Feather “Finding the middle ground”	Meditation /PYA You are your own mudra
Session 2	Meditation / 20 min dance	Meditation / 20 min dance	Meditation / 20 min dance
Session 3	Meditation Walking meditation The Feather Balancing the Space. Seeing yourself through your best friends’	Meditation Walking meditation The Feather Exercise Balancing the space. Seeing yourself through your best friends’ eyes Scene work	Meditation Walking meditation The Feather Exercise Balancing the space. Seeing yourself through your best friends’ eyes Scene work
Session 4	Reflection featherScene study	Reflection feather Scene study	Reflection feather Scene study
Interview	Group interview	Group interview	Group interview

Group 19: Pilot Programme

2Place: The University of
Huddersfield

Date: 01/10/2019-16/12/2019

Nº sessions: 4 + interview

Nº participants: 12

Nº hours: 12

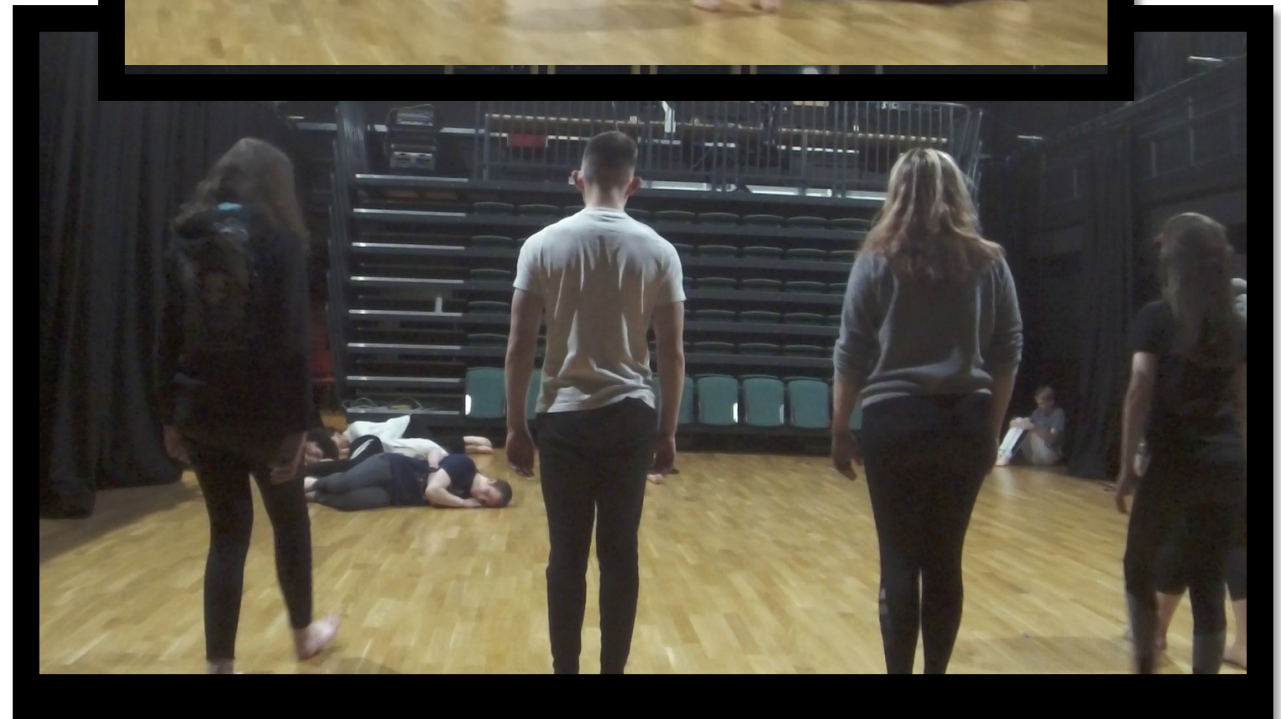
Group Profile:

Second-year acting students. I offered the course as part of the training for an acting module called Teaching Performance. Therefore, this course was not taken voluntarily.

Exercise in picture

Adapted Version of The Village exercise

Session 5th: 05/11/19



Group 19: PPM 2 PROGRAMME	Objective	Exercises
Session 1 Attention to the mind	Explore the relationship between mindfulness practice and acting.	Guided Meditation GAP (Grounded Aware Present)
Session 2 Attention to the body	Discover how the body and the physical sensations can act as an anchor towards the present moment	Meditation /20 min Dance/ Presenting yourself to and audience
Session 3 Attention to space	Explore awareness as an innate/trainable ability that enables one to notice what is happening as it is happening.	Meditation/ Dancing Dialogue/ MAprinciple
Session 4 Attention to others	Apply interactive mindfulness to a scene	The village applied to dreamsequence
Session 5 Application	Apply mindfulness to character building	The ball game (Britton) Heaven Human an Earth (Worley,2001, p89)
Session 6 Self-compassion	Explore self-compassion	The Feather exercise

Group 19: PPM 2 PROGRAMME	Objective	Exercises
Session 7 Presence	Interpersonal mindfulness	The Village Three circles of attention (Stansilavsky)
Session 8 Stillness and movement	Exploring stillness and movement	Different sights as points of attention on stage Points of attention while acting on a scene. Sports presence
Session 9 Day Rehearsal	Apply the content of mindfulness training at their scenes	Meditation Contemplative siesta 3 circles of Presence Scene study (application of MFN principles on stage)
Session 10 Voice	synchronising body, speech, and mind.	Exploring sound in space Use the text
Group Interview		

Group 20:Pilot programme 3

Place: The University of
Huddersfield

Date: October- November2019

Nº 7 sessions

Nº participants: 4

Nº hours: 14

Group Profile:

I offered Pilot Programme Three in parallel to Pilot Programme Two. Participants were also second-year acting students from the University of Huddersfield, but unlike PP2, the participants from PP3 took the course voluntarily.



Exercise in pictures: top: final presentation preparation/
bottom: basic meditation

Group 20 Pilot Programme Three PPM3 (G:20, S1 /G:20, S4)	Objective	Exercises
Session 1	Relate MFN to acting practice	Meditation 20 min dance
Session 2	Interpersonal Mindfulness	Short Meditation/ Gap 20 min Dance/ Presenting yourself to an audience/Introducing text
Session 3	One to one G:20, S1	20 min Dance The Ball to learn texts
Session 4	One to one G:20, S2	Meditation The Feather exercise I am enough/ audition preparation
Session 5	One to one G:20, S3	Meditation Spatial awareness score
Session 6	Performance Preparation	The Feather exercise/performance score
Session 7 & interview	Performance & Interview	Performance Monologues

APPENDIX 2

APX2.1) Learning Experience

APX2.1.a) Attended Workshops

Teacher	Workshop	Place	Date
Nicolás Núñez	Sacred Theatre	Huddersfield	31-10-19
Pasquale Esposito	Something for nothing	Huddersfield	10-11-18
Arawana Hayashi	Social Presencing Theatre	Berlin	16-11-17
Nick Kranz	Social Meditation	Amsterdam	20-05-18
Suzane Duquette	Mudra Space Awareness	Online	Jan-Feb 21
Jhon Britton	Self with others	Manchester	March 19
Jaya Harlem	Dancing the unknown	Manchester	10-03-19

APX2.1.b) Interviews

Name	Place	Date
Arawana Hayashi	Oxfordshire	16-11-17
Pasquale Esposito	The University of Huddersfield	10-11-18
Jhon Britton	The University of Huddersfield	06-03-19
Nicolás Núñez	The University of Huddersfield	31-10-19
Daniel Bradford	Manchester	19-07-19

Deborah Middleton	The University of Huddersfield	06-12-19
Franc Chamberlain	The University of Huddersfield	02-02-19

APX2.2) Sharing Research

APX2.2.a) Published Article

Frank, C. Fuentes, C., Krawczyk, I. and Moroz, S. (2020) “Devising Interaction and Improvisation in *Motion Studies* project”, *CeReNeM Journal*, , Vol 7, pp. 82-103. (co-author)

APX2.2.b) Conferences & presentations

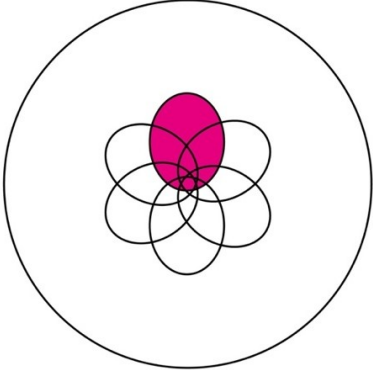
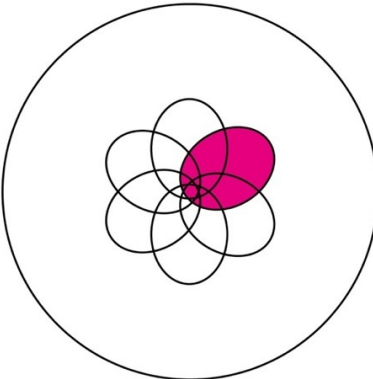
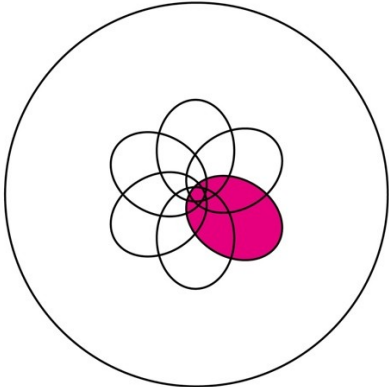
1. Presentation: first symposium Performative arts, modes of perception and practices of the self:
MBPT A model of performance training based on mindfulness practice
18 April, 2023, Brazil, Rio University (Online)
2. 1st Congress of Practice as Research, November 2022
- Presentation: *Self-compassion in actor training*, video article.
- Organiser: Intra/inter/in/in/ disciplinary laboratories in the arts:
Contact and contamination. Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
3. Presentation: Dialogues from the south, contemplative arts in South America, University of Santa Maria, Brazil
21- may.2021
4. Echoes do Silêncio, *Contemplative Practices for Contemporary Theatre*, Federal University of Santa Maria, Brazil
26, October, 2020 (Online)
5. PGR Conference at The University of Huddersfield, *Mindfulness practice to boost creativity in actors, UK.*
2019 June

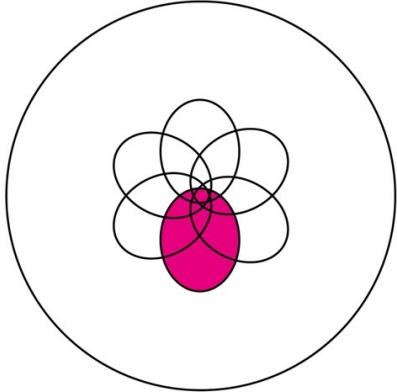
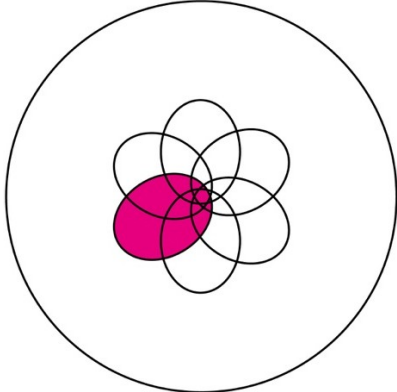
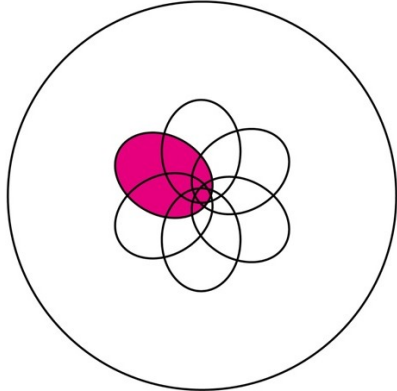
APX2.2.c) Performances

Performance	Place	Team	Date
Motions Studies	Sir Patrick Stewart Theatre. University of Huddersfield	Ilona Krawczyk and Cristina Fuentes - movement and voice; Colin Frank - percussion and movement; Solomiya Moroz - flute and movement	2018-19
Dream Voice	Sir Patrick Stewart Theatre, University of Huddersfield	Ilona Krawczyk (Director; performer); Brice Catherin (Cello; performance) Cristina Fuentes, (actress; multimedia); David Velez (Sound composition)	07-03-19
Ddūwewe, synesthetic invasion	Teatro del Parque Cultural, Valparaíso Chile	Manuel Contreras, Composer Paola Muñoz, recorder player Cristina Fuentes, movement director, performer Laura Bisotti, Scenography	29, 30 – 08-21

APPENDIX 3: MBPT Exercises

APX3.1) Catalogue of exercises MBPT

Point of Attention	Exercise
<p>Mind</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basic Meditation 2. Breath Meditation 3. Mountain meditation 4. Stone meditation, (Fuentes) 5. Breathing on emotions (Pema Chödrön, 2013, 113-116) 6. Body scan 7. Standing Meditation 8. Awareness of the body standing 9. Resting in awareness
<p>Body</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 20 min Dance, Hayashi 2. Walking meditation 3. Slide your axis, (Fuentes) 4. Ball in the back, Rolfing exercise 5. Attention to the body exercises, Johnson, 1996.
<p>Space</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 360° Scan (Duquette, MSA manual) 2. Ground Aware Present, (Rome, 2014, p.15) 3. Dancing Dialogues (Hayashi, 2021) 4. Circles of attention, Stanislavski 5. Resting in Being, MSA

Point of Attention	Exercise
<p>Object</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Feather Exercise, Fuentes 2. Attending an object, (Worley 2001 pp.45-46) 3. The stick, (Esposito, 2019)
<p>Others</p> 	<p>Interaction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Village, Hayashi (2021) 2. The ball game, Britton 3. Social Meditation, (Kranz, 2019) 4. Presenting yourself to the audience, (Worley, 2001, p.63-68) <p>Listening exercises</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Symphony of silence <p>Presence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. First second and third circle, Rodenburg (2007, 2009) 7. Field of power, (Palmer, 2009) 8. Shaping your personal space, (Palmer, 2009)
<p>Heart/ self-compassion</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am enough, (a)in front of others (b)while performing a scene (Fuentes & Bradford) 2. I love you (to the mirror) 3. Self-soothing practices (Neff, 2012, p.47) 4. Meditation from my best friend's eyes. (Fuentes) 5. Exploring Self-Compassion Through Letter Writing (Neff, 2012, pp19-21) 6. Mocked Auditions (Fuentes & Bradford)

APX3.2) Exercises developed during the research.

APX3.2.a) THE FEATHER EXERCISE

By Cristina Fuentes,

The development of this exercise is part of the current PhD research.



Overview

“Like the traceless imprint of a bird in the sky”

Chögyam Trungpa

Within MBPT this mindfulness on an object exercise is used to activate creativity. In ‘the feather’s flight’ exercise, we use mindfulness techniques to make the feather the object of attention. The open and direct attention state towards the feather provides the foundation for developing an interaction with the feather. The interaction stage begins by noticing the communication between the feather and our breath. The exercise evolves into engaging in a dancing-dialogue with the feather. During the dialogue, there is an emphasis on letting go of control. Gradually, we are encouraged to allow the feather to become the protagonist of this duo as we become the air that shapes the feather’s flight. Through the feather’s flight exercise, we explore the multiple possibilities of interaction that emerge from holding an open and responsive state of mind.

PURPOSE

The invitation is to redirect our attention from ourselves (our thoughts and worries) by placing our attention on an object (the feather). Maintaining a curious, respectful and caring perspective, we will learn to engage in creativity from an uncontrived perspective.

The feathers’ flight is an opportunity to experience how the underlying principles of mindfulness and awareness naturally stimulate creativity in actors. We train our minds to be present in the moment by resting our attention on a feather.

Also, by emphasising letting go of control, we notice how mindfulness can generate the mental space required to stimulate creativity.

PRINCIPLES

- We continuously offer our attention to the feather. As if it were a new friend. We sustain a genuinely curious, respectful and caring relation towards the feather.
- Each time we notice that our mind wanders in thoughts of the past or future, or when we get caught on our opinions or judgments, we gently bring our attention back to the feather.
- We let the feather guide the movement. Do not plan nor manipulate the relation.
- We alternate between having an active and passive role. Notice the difference between being a doer a mover and being a witness, responding to the feather's flight.

USES AND OUTCOMES

- clears the mind from worries and expectations.
- improves concentration.
- triggers creativity.
- diminishes your inner-dialogue, reduce inner-critic and self-judgment.

SET UP Place, People & Objects

- Theatre studio or clear room without tables and with a clean floor.
- Enough space to move around.
- One feather per person.
- Time: The length of the exercises varies in accordance with how many stages are presented per session.

EXERCISE SCRIPT

Introduction.

Remember when you were a child and you met a new friend.

When I was five years old when I went to the park I knew that I could potentially make a new friend, that made me feel curious and excited. When I met a boy or girl for the first time, there was a process of establishing a connection that often consisted on attentive observation and mutual recognition. If we both gave and received clear signs of wanting to play together, the process of acknowledging was successful, that led into beginning an interaction or game.

Do you have an experience like that? Meeting a new friend is the essence of this exercise.

Instructions

1) Meditation on an object

- Be simple: Begin by choosing a feather and hold it on your hands. The feather becomes the object of your attention. Offer your attention fully while allowing the feather to rest in the palm of your hands. Look at it as if you are meeting a new friend with curiosity and care. Be simple; do nothing. Offer your bare attention; acknowledge what is already there, waiting to be seen.

- Notice your distractions: Train your attention to come back to the present moment. When you notice that you are judging, or labelling the feather, or if your attention has drifted and you are thinking about something else, gently bring your attention back to observe the feather as it is in this present moment.

- Be generous: Renounce to your self-obsession and distraction. When you notice that your attention has drifted, be generous, and offer your full attention to this new friend. Enjoy the feather's expression, it is moving, capturing the subtle breeze that we cannot perceive. The feather does not need me, it already exists, and it is constantly changing, it never remains the same.

II) The feathers' flight

- 1) Breathe: Notice how your breath affects the feather. Begin by acknowledging this simple interaction. Pay attention to what happens between you, notice how your out-breath affects the feather and how it each out-breath,
- 2) Develop the interaction: Once you feel that you have established a connection with the feather, you can start a dialogue with it.
- 3) Active & passive: Consciously alternate from the active role of doing to the passive role of attending and perceiving. Lead and follow. No one is leading the dance For example, while the feather falls to the ground, you can simply witness the fall. You can also propose a movement and acknowledge the way the feather responds.
- 4) Train your attention: If you get distracted, come back to placing your attention to the feather,
- 5) Explore multiple interaction possibilities: Use your whole body: breath, head, chest, hands, uncles, legs, back, and knees.
- 6) Let go of control: Avoid the temptation to manipulate or control the relation. Be responsive and allow the feather to guide the movement. Do

not control. Allow the feather to be the protagonist, help her to find her flight through you. Become the air that allows the feather to fly. Be a servant of reality, only do what is needed.

7) Finding an ending: allow the feather to find a final position and rest is stillness. Thank the feather for the moment that you shared together and let it go.

*) Changing feathers

It is advisable to have the experience of trying the exercise with another feather. With the second feather, please start the exercise from the beginning. Following stages I) and II). This time you can vary the time you spend in each step, according to what you feel is needed.

III) Reflection:

Allow time for a brief reflection.

Share in duos or trios your experience. What did you notice? What did you learn about yourself? Allow each person to speak for one or two minutes while the other listens.

An alternative way to reflect is by writing a piece about the interaction with the feather or feathers and discussing it with a partner.

Share your insights with the group.

WRITTEN REFLECTION

The feather and me:

Write a couple of paragraphs describing relation with your feather(s)

APX3.2.b) GAP: Grounded Aware Presence.

I adapted this exercise based on the homonymous exercise from Rome, D. (2014) in the book *Your body knows the answer* p.15.

According to Rome, this exercise aims to generate an open psychophysical state. I use this exercise to help actors develop an embodied awareness of space, which should lead to open receptivity onstage.

This exercise has three stages:

1- Grounding (feet):

Align your body and be aware of gravity. Take a moment to feel the contact of your feet touching the ground. Notice how mother earth supports your weight. We all have a place on earth. Appreciate the simplicity of being bodily present here and now.

2-Awareness (head):

Bring your attention to the head region. Listen to the environmental noise. Sense the space around you. Be aware of the space behind, above, below, to the sides and in front of you. Extend your spatial awareness even beyond the walls. Experience the vast panoramic quality of awareness.

3- Presence (heart):

Place your attention in the center of your chest. You can place your hand over your heart area. Experience your basic existence. Acknowledge how does it feel to be here, alive and breathing. Appreciate your presence.

Delivery:

I ask the actors to wander around space, I usually use claves to

stimulate actors to explore different rhythms.

Stop: place their attention on their feet. (Follow instructions 1: Grounding)

Walk: with awareness of their feet touching the ground.

Stop: Place their attention on their head. Noticing the holes that connect us with the environment: eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. Become aware of the senses. (Follow instruction 2: Awareness)

Walk: with awareness of their open head towards the environment.

Stop: Feel your heart, actors can place their hand on the chest to feel their heartbeat.

Walk: how does it feel to walk with an open heart?

SOCIAL PRESENCING THEATER: 20 MINUTE DANCE



OVERVIEW

Mindfulness of body is a foundational skill for Social Presencing Theater. And like any skill, we learn it through practice. The 20-minute Dance is a practice in which we pay attention to the feeling of the body, without thinking about it or judging it. We are not trying to fix or change or accomplish anything. We welcome every moment.

PURPOSE

The invitation is to become more present and grounded in our bodies. To support fully being present in the moment by resting our attention (mind) on the feeling of the body. When body and mind are synchronized, we have access to a holistic intelligence.

- Slowing down and becoming more grounded, appreciating the moment to moment experience
- Body, mind and heart become more open and aligned, resulting in greater emotional intelligence and heartfelt listening

PRINCIPLES

- This is a practice to restore the natural synchronicity of the body and the mind.
- When we become lost in thoughts of the past or future or we fixate on our opinions and judgments we lose touch with the present moment.
- Throughout the practice, the attention is on the feeling of the body; the sensations involved in movement and stillness. (It doesn't matter *at all* what it looks like.)

USES & OUTCOMES

- Increase in confidence, clarity, and creativity
- Preparation for Stuck and 4D Mapping

AN EXAMPLE

This can be used as a personal mindfulness of body practice (as one might use yoga). Participants in leadership programs engage in this practice to transition from the speed and pressures of work life into a more grounded and receptive state of mind

SET UP

People & Place

- Room with a clean wooden or carpeted floor
- Sufficient space so that everyone has room to lie down on the floor without feeling crowded

Time

- Everyone begins the practice together. Use a gong or bell to indicate the beginning time.
- Ideally the practice is 20 minutes long. It is fine to practice for 10 minutes.
- Allow time for a short reflection.

Materials

- Encourage people to dress comfortably
- Bell or gong to indicate beginning and end of practice.

PROCESS

Lying down

- Begin by resting on the floor with the eyes closed. Feel the body resting on the big body of the earth. Bring some attention to abdominal breathing. Experience your body, simply, without judgment or a goal.
- Let a movement begin. Do whatever the body feels like doing without planning anything. For example, the body might feel like stretching, rolling over, or wiggling its fingers. Keep the movement close to the ground. Any movement is good. Pay attention to the sensations, the feeling of the body, as it is moving.
- Then, pause and feel the body as it is resting in a shape or a posture.
- Then begin to move again, paying attention to the feeling of the body moving.
- Continue in this way, alternating resting and moving, paying attention to the feeling of the body. As we move or rest, our attention can be on part of the body (we feel our lower back or knee or shoulder) or on a sense of the whole body.
- When you notice that you are thinking, labeling, or judging the experience, let those thoughts go. Simply rest your attention on the feeling of the body.

Sitting

- After several minutes, let the body rise to a sitting position. Continue alternating stillness and movement, allowing the eyes to remain closed.

Standing

- Again, later in the practice time, come to a standing position. Continue to alternate moving and stillness. You might include bending or twisting, maintaining a sense of standing on one spot.

Moving through space

- Open your eyes and begin to move around the room. Keep your eyes downcast with a soft gaze so that your attention remains in your body and is not drawn outward into what others are doing.

Finding an ending

- At the end of the 20 (or 10) minutes, stop and hold the still shape. Wait in the still shape until the others have found their ending shape and place in the room. Feel the back of the body. Feel the full three-dimensional shape of the body. Then become aware of the space above and below and around the body.

Reflection

- Reflect briefly in pairs, or in trios. Allow each person one or two minutes to speak. The others listen with their full attention. What did you notice? What did you learn about yourself?
- Speak from the first person voice about what you noticed, felt or did. Remember, there is no ideal dance or particular “better or right” experience. Experience is not the same as interpretation or thoughts about the experience. Each person’s experience is the perfect dance for them at that time.

Continue the practice

- As you go about the rest of your day, sitting in a chair or standing in line or walking to your car, remember to be aware of the body. Feel the whole body – the feet on the floor, the upright posture, the top of the head.
- Notice that once you feel embodied, there is a natural sense of being and of presence.

VILLAGE



OVERVIEW

In the shift from “Ego to Eco”, there is a development of awareness that attends to the wellbeing of all beings in a system.

When mind and body are synchronized, awareness is naturally present. In the Village, we move from feeling our individual body to experiencing ourselves as part of a social body. Awareness in the social field gives birth to creativity and respectful interest.

The Village exercise arose from the question: before changing a larger system, how might we bring out the best in a group of people? While participating in the village itself, how and where is attention and action required to enable the potential of the group to emerge?

PURPOSE

The invitation is to redirect our attention from ourselves and what we think, to engaging all of our sense perceptions in the process of extending our attention out to others. By extending our sensing ‘antennae’ into the space we can learn and practice to make choices in an uncontrived and natural way.

When we notice our relationships with others and with the whole group we can engage in the process of group co-creation. The Village is an opportunity to attend to the underlying principles of curiosity, respectfulness, and caring that can bring about the creation of a sane social system. By removing verbal language and goals, we notice how much can be communicated by embodiment and the spatial relationships that we choose. We can make “true moves”.

PRINCIPLES

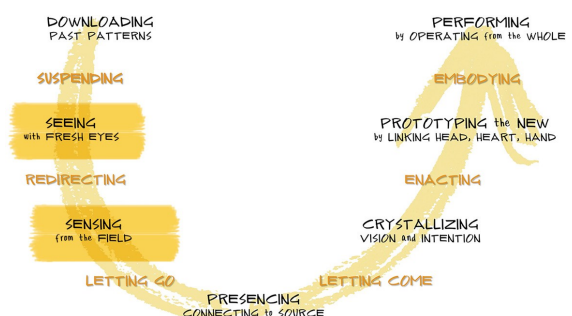
- Non-verbal communication happens in every situation.
- Investigate communication in groups by exploring topics such as spatial distance, leading, initiating, following, supporting, enhancing, magnetizing, including, excluding, interrupting, controlling, manipulating, etc
- Notice how and where to pay attention to care for the whole
- Develop and engage in moment-by-moment sensing and emergent co-creating

USES & OUTCOMES

- Learn flexibility in leading, initiating, following, supporting, and joining
- Gain understanding about inclusion and exclusion
- Learn and experience adapting to change.
- Balance “inner-self” experience with “outer-group” engagement
- Build capacity to work with whatever comes without being thrown off balance.
- Expand the ability and responsibility to suspend downloading (VoJ, VoC, VoF)
- Engage in curious, respectful play

AN EXAMPLE

Everyday application: Notice how frequently we are part of a social body – in our homes, at work, shopping, attending meetings, etc. Notice where we are sitting or standing in relationship to the others. Notice how our presence affects others and how others affect us. Notice not only how we are, but also where we are in the space. Balance being grounded with openness.



SETUP

People & Place

- Room with a clean wooden or carpeted floor
- Sufficient space so that everyone has room to move around and stand without feeling crowded
- Good to have at least 5 people, and can be practiced by large groups.

Time

The Village practice may vary between 10 to 20 minutes.

RESOURCES

www.arawanahayashi.com

PROCESS

Always maintain mindfulness of the body and awareness of the space.

Give attention to three things:

1. Level
2. Special proximity
3. Direction (which way you're facing)

Each person uses seven ordinary activities to make the dance. It is good to limit the activity to just these seven, so that the attention of the group is on spatial relationships and timing – not on individual, personal gestures (particularly arm gestures).

The seven gestures are:

1. Stand
2. Sit
3. Lie down
4. Walk
5. Run
6. Turn
7. Great

Part 1 - Begin

By yourself, mindfully practice the first four gestures: sit, stand, walk, and turn. Sometimes, you may also add a fifth gesture: lie down. Let your awareness expand out from the body 360 degrees – front, sides, and back. Feel present, connected to the earth and aware of the space around you.

You can practice this with your eyes closed. You can coordinate with the breath – inhaling when still and exhaling with movement – in order to support embodiment and a sense of being grounded.

After some time, shift to natural breathing and let the eyes open, without losing a sense of grounded presence.

Part 2 – Groups of 5

Next practice these five gestures in groups of five, extending awareness out to feel part of the social body. Notice your choices of spatial proximity, level and direction. We are doing each movement as fully and completely as possible with an awareness of the group social body. Stop and reflect on the experience. What did you notice? What did you

Part 3 – Begin The Village Dance

With the whole group, practice running through the whole space (make sure people do not wear slippery socks so they do not fall down). Keep your attention on the whole space. Use peripheral vision. Then add walking, so people can run or walk. Notice where your attention goes when you turn from one direction to another. Then add standing. Now you are working with running, walking, standing and turning. Continue to extend your awareness out to the whole space.

Notice two basic ways people self-organize to communicate non-verbally: clustering and imitation.

People create sub-groups (trios, small "neighborhoods") but moving closer to others. Notice where the space is dense and where it is open. Notice where people are standing still in small groups. We also communicate by imitating others who might be across the room. Notice those who are walking at the same as you or running when others begin to run.

Notice also that something that appears early in the practice time might be repeated later, so that a theme emerges.

Notice the patterns. Notice that the group is self-organizing and making coherence with each person's choices. Notice what the group is co-creating in the whole space. Stop and reflect on this.

Part 4 – Noticing Others

Then add the seventh gesture, the greeting, which is a nod or a bow. It can be done standing or sitting. Offer this to a person who is directly in front of you in the Village as an acknowledgment of the shared space between two people. The greeting has three parts: acknowledge each other with eye contact, offer your greeting in the shared space, return to standing or sitting.

Part 5 – The Village Dance Practice

Now use all seven gestures. Sense yourself as part of a collective body. We shift from a group of separate individuals to a group operating as a whole. Besides paying attention to doing the movements clearly and completely, notice spatial arrangement, direction, focus, rhythm, tempo. Notice that without thinking, the dance is arising from the field.

Experienced practitioners can add complexity (movement/words) as long as the view of 360 degree awareness is maintained.

Reflection

Ask people to reflect on their experience. Speak from body. Speak from space. Keep the same sense of spacious attention in the verbal conversation that was present in the Village.

First round: open-ended questions

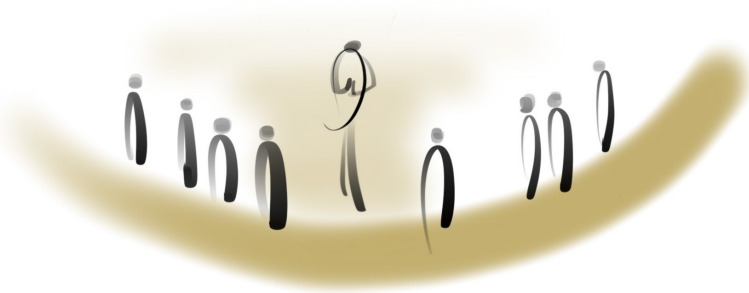
- What did you notice or learn in this Village?
- Share events that occurred (seeing) and feelings (sensing).

Additional questions for individual journaling or in extended group dialogue:

- What did you notice or learn regarding intimacy, distance, connection, disconnection?
- How did thinking, pre-planning, judgment, and cynicism get in the way of fresh engagement and interaction?
- In some cases, was there is an agenda-less connection? If yes, what did this experience feel like?
- What does it mean to experience a sense of freedom? How did this affect the whole?

Version 5_2016_V1_1

FIELD DANCE



OVERVIEW

Presencing is attending and relating from the field.

The Field Dance is an inquiry into the question, “What is a social field?” What does it mean to attend to the field and allow the expression of the field to become visible and motivate us?

The invitation is to be present on behalf of the whole group. We let come the feeling of the space and oneself in the space. We act from naturalness. Each person can stand and offer their expression without being restricted by assumptions around “performance.” Each is acting from the whole.

Since many of us work in front of groups of people, the Field Dance is a high potential opportunity to transform levels of leadership and embody the deeper capacities available to us.

PURPOSE

The invitation is to be present and make a gesture that comes from tuning into the field. We let go of any notions that separate us from the group. We let go of any need to perform or deliver. We let come the feeling of the space and oneself in the space. We act from naturalness.

Field dance is a shift from the “what about me” mentality to paying attention to the whole. We come to realize how much downloading we put into spatial relationships and cultural conventions. Often times, people standing in front of groups are leaders, teachers, entertainers. Often people who are sitting are passive receivers. The Field Dance explores the co-creative potential in groups.

PRINCIPLES

Acting from the field requires letting go of our expertise and allowing a beginners’ mind to express itself in a fresh and spontaneous way. This demands trusting the situation, as well as relying on unconditional confidence in one’s own embodiment and its innate interconnectedness to the collective body, the field.

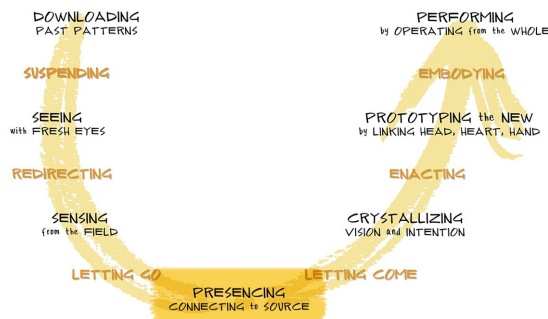
Each person is part of a social system and is also holding the whole. Each person can stand and offer their expression without being restricted by assumptions around “performance.” Each is acting from the whole, not delivering, performing or selling something to the group. Everyone can feel confident unconditionally.

USES & OUTCOME

- Feeling the power of genuineness
- Cuts the sense of separation between individual and group (presenter and audience)
- Cultivates the ability to speak from the space rather than feel that we have to manufacture something from our limited perspective
- Experience letting go, letting come, and acting in an instant

RESOURCES

www.arawanahayashi.com



SET UP

Participants are arranged as an audience. Ideally no more than 15 in a group. Begin by having them sit in a semi-circle shape, facing towards the "stage" area. The sitters should be able to have a peripheral view of all sitters as well as a view of the stage area.

Timing

For a group of 15 people, allocate 1 hour and 15 minutes, including the introduction and reflection.

PROCESS

Part 1

1. Brief conversation about assumptions held in this spatial setup – one stander in front of a group of sitters [school, theater, church, trainings, political meetings, etc.]
2. They are invited one by one and walk in from one side of the "stage." In the center, they turn to face the rest of the community, stand, pause, notice and then turn away and walk to the opposite side of the stage.
3. Both the "sitters" and the walking-standing person practice six things:
 - Feeling the vertical – the body grounded on the earth and upright to the sky
 - Feeling the back of the body
 - Feeling the horizontal – 360 degree awareness field
 - Staying in the present moment – in nowness
 - Balancing groundedness and openness – natural presencing
 - Courage to be seen
4. Reflect in the whole group.

Part 2 (Optional)

The second time, each person, one by one, walks to the center of the space, as before, and turns to face the community, sensing the whole field. Then each person can make a simple greeting gesture – a bow.

They are invited one by one to walk in from one side of the stage. In the center they turn to the rest of the community, stand, pause, then turn away and walk to

the opposite side of the stage.

Remember that the bow has 3 parts – holding the space, giving (bending), and returning to standing. They would then turn and walk to the edge of the space as before.

Reflect in the whole group.

Part 3

The third time, each person walks from the edge of the space to the center and turns to face the rest of the village, as before. They stand and wait. Then they make a spontaneous gesture, clearly, that emerges from the "field."

1. The person waits until the gesture arrives or emerges, without thinking or planning. They make a clear beginning, continuing and ending and hold the ending shape.
2. Then they return to the simple standing shape, sensing that their gesture has been received.
3. Then they turn and walk to exit.

Part 4

This practice can continue with five phrases of movement – walking and turning to enter, allowing three phrases of movement to emerge, with clear endings after each phrase and spaces between phrases. Then stand to receive, turn and walk to exit.

Variations: The field dance can be done as a "post card" with three short sentences – "movement gestures". It can also be done with a gesture and a word or phrase. The gesture may inspire the words, the words may inspire the gesture or both can arise at the same time.

Reflection

First people speak about their experience as a walking-standing person. Then the sitters can speak about what they experienced. What did we notice? Seeing with the heart, not with the eyes. What was the feeling quality of each person

