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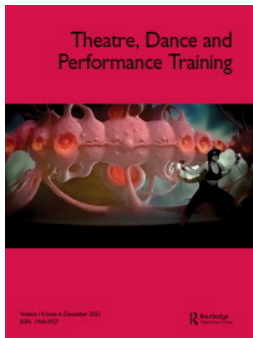
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Filming process: questions and considerations

Paul Allain 

Online resources in theatre and performance have increased greatly since even before the pandemic, including those that document process: rehearsals, workshops, training or teaching. In spite of this growth, how to film process is not well understood. The article offers 6 areas and related questions to consider in advance of recording such a film document: how to engage with temporal and spatial aspects of the practice; ethical dimensions in relation to all participants; what needs to be captured live and what could be added/changed post-production; relationships between audio and visual elements, here called the Content Ratio; how the film connects to or reflects the live process; and what the camera and film should focus on. It examines these ideas in practice using specific examples of warm up exercises by Frantic Assembly as well as on the National Theatre YouTube site, amongst others. It analyses what these do well and how they might better capture aspects of the process. The article offers some questions and considerations for those documenting their own or others' process for training and educational purposes.

Keywords: documenting, film, process, training, warm up

Introduction

If you want to film a training workshop, acting class or series of exercises, not so much as a document for your own reflection but so that others might use it for developing their process, how might you go about it? What do you need to bear in mind? What sources might you go to for advice or as best practice examples?

There are so many film documents available for free on platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo or performance company websites, it is hard to know where to start and what is valuable, navigating between promotional or advertising content, brief trailers perhaps, ad hoc recordings

(which can offer insights), and those that have a dedicated purpose in transmitting techniques or learning with a specific audience in mind.

As for more commercial, well financed endeavours, even pre-pandemic there had already been a substantial increase of digital resources in publishing, not just e-books and electronic journals. Many of these are marketed to educational institutions with their extensive libraries and budgets rather than individuals or industry, even though, rather ironically, the latter provide the backbone material of these endeavours. In the field of theatre and performance, Digital Theatre+, DramaOnline, Alexander Street and Routledge Performance Archive have been leaders.¹

As well as such academically targeted resources, many theatre companies now offer subscription content such as The Old Vic, London or Frantic Assembly's Studio.² The digital consolidation of the Frantic Assembly Method is a standout British example. Another UK industry leader is the National Theatre, which as early as 2011 began to upload extensive free content to its YouTube channel, much of it educational and about process rather than performance films.³ In spite of the lengthening history and growth of such multi-platform digital delivery, do we understand well enough the complexities involved in documenting process: teaching, rehearsals, training and other exploratory workshops?

Approaches to filming process

A distinction needs to be made between bespoke training/teaching or educational films and those that document aspects of a creative process or which arise from staff research or practice research doctorates. The *Journal of Embodied Research* is interested in such research and is designed for presenting on film research about or through process and practice although if such research is pedagogically oriented or training-based, this boundary becomes blurred. *JER* has a different focus from this article, a distinction perhaps exemplified by this request in the journal's style guidelines: 'Music: Please avoid using nondiegetic (background or incidental) music, as is commonly done in mainstream documentaries. All elements in a video article should arise from or substantively engage with the research content'.⁴ In several of the films I analyse here, which are often commercially oriented or pitched at (usually young) students, 'mainstream' perhaps, music might be used as background or in a linking sequence. Differences aside, we can learn much from such journals and other academic practices.

Peter Hulton (2014), founder of the now closed Arts Archives platform, was a pioneer in this area. His work had many admirers, including Dick McCaw (2021).⁵ Hulton focused on (usually) singlehandedly capturing on film training and workshops, often presented at great length. His recordings require viewers' time and effort, something few (especially busy students) might be keen to put in. His long-term practice was based on a very different model from many of today's repositories or archives with their institutionally focused imperative. Arts Archives was aimed as much at individuals as libraries, available for practitioners too.

1 <https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com>, <https://www.routledgeperformancearchive.com>, <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com>, and <https://alexanderstreet.com> All accessed 9 December 2022.

2 <https://www.oldvictheatre.com/discover/the-hub/> and <https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/frantic-assembly-studio> Accessed 9 December 2022.

3 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUDqIXzCY0NIOYVjvEMQjqw> Although free, the films are interrupted by short advertisements. Accessed 9 December 2022.

4 <https://jer.openlibhums.org/media/journals/9/JER-StyleGuide-v1.pdf> Accessed 9 December 2022. Founder of *JER*, Ben Spatz, has written extensively on what he calls the 'AV Body', including in, for example, his *Blue Sky Body: Thresholds for Embodied Research*, London and New York: Routledge, 2020.

5 McCaw, Dick. 2021. 'Peter Hulton and arts archives – an appreciation, *Theatre, Dance and Performance*

Training, 12 (1): 40–44. For more on Hulton, see his (2014) *Essai, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5 (1): 87–90 and <http://theatredanceperformance.org/2020/11/arts-archives-and-theatre-papers-available-to-own-at-cost/>

6 <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/physical-actor-training> Accessed 18 September 2022. Hulton and I had previously worked on two smaller digital film projects: Andrei Droznin's *Physical Actor Training*, DVD with booklet, Routledge, 2012 and *Suzuki Method: A Demonstration*, (2000/1) originally published on a CDROM by Arts Archives, now available here: <https://vimeo.com/channels/tadashisuzuki/111650705>. PATAZ was the most ambitious of our collaborations. All websites accessed 11 December 2022.

7 Peter Hulton (2014) *Essai, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5 (1): 89.

8 See my article "Physical Actor Training 2.0: New Digital Horizons" in the 2019 Special Issue 'Digital Training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 10 (2): 169–186.

What lessons might we take from such forms and practices to analyse or create educationally oriented films? Hulton's experience and insights were confirmed for me personally in his work as consultant filmmaker for my own practice-based project 'Physical Actor Training – an online A-Z (PATAZ)', published by DramaOnline in 2019.⁶ In his appreciation piece, McCaw mentions some of these strengths, which I identify as follows: his uncanny ability to know where to point the camera and when; his intuitive sense of how long to follow an action or sequence; his interest in tracking down and documenting the processes of more experimental but nevertheless highly influential figures or practices; his belief in minimal editorial intervention.

In conversation with McCaw, Hulton identified a few principles that guide him, some of which I return to in more detail later. One is about positionality: 'P is performative, in the sense that any documentation has to include what I myself as a documentor [sic] bring to it – all my prejudices, all my ways of being. It is my performative'.⁷ This article is also 'performative' to the extent that I, as an academic with extensive practice research and teaching experience in actor training and movement, as well as documentation projects across different media, bring my own biases and interests to these reflections on others' work. This prejudice is true of all academic research, but I wish to emphasise it because it has specific bearing on how I judge the films engaged with here.

Questions and considerations

My own interests and prejudices are also evident in PATAZ, which had multiple aims.⁸ One of these was that we wanted to foreground the students' voice and experience, even showing them failing at times. We also wanted not only to show training but also reveal how training works, establishing core tenets and principles as well as practices. PATAZ's highly exploratory creative and publishing process has assisted me with drawing up the following 6 areas and related questions which we might ask ourselves when attempting to film process. These grow out of lessons learned from PATAZ but also from analysing other workshop recordings, something I will do shortly:

ETHICS: How can a film honestly and accurately reflect a process and acknowledge all its participants and contributors, helping reveal where such work sits within a wider nexus?

SPATIALITY: Where should the camera/s be placed to give viewers access to and insights into what happens as well as the way spatial relationships are established and evolve during the process?

VERACITY: To what extent should a workshop either be adapted for film or be as true to life as possible? What are the losses and gains of each? How might the process be enhanced or clarified with additional materials: interviews, commentaries, on-screen text, safety warnings etc?

TEMPORALITY: What are the gains and losses in presenting a workshop or process in real time? How might time be compressed, extended or altered using digital/filming techniques and editing? How might the time of studio practice differ from that for viewing?

FOCUS: To what extent should the camera focus on the student/participants or the teacher? For each, when and to what end? Where does the learning lie and how best can this be captured, including with student/participants involved in demonstrating this?

CONTENT RATIOS: How to balance what is said and heard with what is done and seen?

Considerations in practice

These 6 areas are by no means definitive but hopefully offer a useful starting point. What, though, do they mean in practice? And why these specific questions? Some issues can be more easily addressed, the representative aspect of Ethics being a case in point. In a performance film, the cast are always identified in credits. Why should this not be the case for a workshop? The workshop could not happen without them which must be acknowledged. Information about who we are watching can enhance a film, not just in terms of professional insights: human stories or empathy help us engage with technical or demanding work.⁹

JER has a very specific view on this matter: 'we expect that those whose audiovisual bodies appear onscreen will be credited as coauthors of the resulting article'.¹⁰ This might well pertain to research-based films where the participants often *are* collaborators, but probably does not reflect accurately many films where students or participants are being trained or taught. This is not to deny the participants' importance in such cases, only to note that this needs to be acknowledged otherwise.

Amongst its many interviews, performance documents, articles and process films, Digital Theatre+ hosts substantial material by and about Frantic Assembly, including an almost hour-long video titled 'Warm Up'.¹¹ The film begins with six student participants, to whom we are not given any introduction: neither their names, experience level or reasons for participating. They are also not named in the closing credits. One (a latecomer – he is not present at the start) is wearing a FranticIgnition T-shirt, representing Frantic's youth company. Someone who is later referred to as Ish in the film is a participant in a different National Theatre film made with FranticIgnition students.¹²

It seems probable that these students are not new to this work. The warm up teacher, Jonnie Riordan, sometimes assumes knowledge: that they know the plank (from Pilates) or that they have done star jumps previously. Given this apparent familiarity, acknowledgement of the students' relationship to the company and this workshop seems vital. It would also help viewers (teachers and students) judge the level of the work shown, and whether these students' engagement might match, be below or beyond that of a teacher's own students or of a student themselves. If they have had previous exposure to this work, as the T-Shirt and Ish's presence indicate, this helps us appreciate how easily and willingly the students assimilate the very evident physical challenges in the workshop. Sita Thomas's Warm Up films for the National Theatre's YouTube channel state verbally at the start (in one case) and always in the credits that they are 'produced directed and presented by Sita Thomas with

9 Annual viewing data for PATAZ reveals how much interest there is in the actors who participated: their short filmed autobiographical introductions frequently receive more views than many of the other A–Z terms.

10 <https://jer.openlibhums.org> Accessed 9 December 2022.

11 This all sits behind a paywall and is not available Open Access. <https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com> For this and other films I will refer to time codes, mindful that this is only useful for those with access. Open Access is a very live topic of debate, too complex to enter into here. Accessed 15 December 2022.

12 In that film, Ishmael Khan is listed in the credits as a member of the Ignition 2014 Company <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4mXhVW7TXQ8&t=684s> Accessed 13 December 2022.

- 13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E9-UhcwgVA> Accessed 9 December 2022.
- 14 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4mXhW7TXQ8&t=684s> Interestingly this is also produced and directed by Sita Thomas. Accessed 9 December 2022.
- 15 <http://passthesound.com/videos> Credits explain that 'These exercises have been developed by the following institutions offering a leadership program or the Master NAIP: Royal Conservatoire The Hague and Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen, The Netherlands, Iceland Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, United Kingdom'. At the time of viewing some of the website's links were broken, so information about the project is missing. Details about the Master's programme are here <https://www.koncon.nl/en/programmes/master/naip/master-naip> All accessed 9 December 2022.
- 16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQUI04CIZ0M> See 42". Accessed 13 December 2022.
- 17 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpmBFqEoCWc&t=33s> See for example 1' 16". Accessed 10 December 2022.
- students from the Young Studio', citing their full names.¹³ Naming does at least happen in Frantic Assembly's National Theatre films.¹⁴ Participants' names should always be given as a matter of course, as ethical practice. Offering more information is an extra but can be enlightening, if not clarifying.
- The question of how to film process from a spatial perspective is more complex. I would suggest, however, that spatial planning is always needed: thinking through sightlines, levels, angles etc. though not necessarily storyboarding every moment. Many physical workshops will be inward-looking, the students in a circle perhaps or scattered around the space usually looking at the teacher/leader. Such use of circles or a fragmented dispersed space and flowing organicity makes it difficult to know where to situate a camera or cameras if resources allow.
- An example where this is awkwardly managed is on a project website developed internationally and collaboratively in the Netherlands called passthesound.com. This is a rich website full of videos as a 'shared learning resource, offering free warm-up, skills, creative, and workshop exercises for musicians to use whilst facilitating group music-making contexts'.¹⁵ Exercises are often filmed in a broken circle in an open V shape in order to make the flow of actions around the group visible by giving access to the camera. In one film, the teacher describes this as a 'perfect circle', ironic given that it is nothing of the sort.¹⁶
- A better solution is visible in the National Theatre An Actor's Warm-Up Part 2 film led by Sita Thomas where adding height to the camera angle is used to overcome the problem of penetrating the circle.¹⁷ Whilst this choice works well for this specific aspect, a lack of thinking through the filming process in terms of space is manifest elsewhere. In her film 'Warm-up Your Body Shake Out', Thomas's instruction to the students to use all the space (4' 52") does not seem to be enacted, perhaps because of their awareness of a conflicting need to stay in the camera's focus or because of a tacit counter instruction.¹⁸ Is this request only partially represented for the sake of the film?
- An indication that this might be the case comes at the end of the same film (6' 15") in an exercise called 'Rubber Chicken'.¹⁹ Thomas asks students to shake the right then left arm, followed by the same legs. In fact, she does and thus shows the opposite, whilst looking directly out to camera. For us, as viewers, her left equates to our right, but this enactment in the form of a breach of the camera's 'fourth wall' and the film's veracity is potentially confusing. The film begins with her direct explanatory introductory address to camera, and all participants face the camera for a large part of it. She never looks at or corrects the students who are carefully positioned in a V formation behind her so that they are all visible on screen. This placement would rarely, if ever, happen in a live workshop. There is sleight of hand here, just as there is in the *passthesound* film. It might be better, or at least more honest and ethical, to acknowledge such discrepancies if they cannot be reconciled.
- Such issues, along with their pragmatic attempts at solutions, beg the question of whether the camera is an invisible eye that is to be ignored or a mechanism that is openly acknowledged. This question has been

- discussed extensively in relation to performance recordings or live streams, where sometimes characters acknowledge the camera and it then somehow replicates being an audience member.²⁰ Thomas's decision to mislabel Left and Right might be considered a logical consequence arising from the framing of the workshop, with much action directly addressed to the viewer. Indeed, this Shake Out film has a very different aesthetic from her two later warm up films: with its colour coordinated T-Shirts, dark background, and all participants facing forward most of the time. Some carefully taken close ups and shifts in angles or focus help us see details.²¹ There is, though, little relation between her and the participants, beyond their shared enjoyment. The visual aesthetic is reminiscent of a Jane Fonda fitness film, even down to some students' awkward fixed smiles.²² The anodyne fast tempo music that appears in Thomas's An Actor's Warm-Up: Part One reinforces such a work out aesthetic, though the content is generally more aligned with an actual studio-based physical acting warm up.²³ What do the approaches enacted in these films say about acting, relaxation and honesty/veracity, presumably also key aspects to be encouraged as part of any theatre warm up?
- In PATAZ, in a film titled Technology, we reflected on our relationship to the cameras, explaining how we sometimes gave the students GoPros amongst other experiments with angles, filming and space.²⁴ In our film Text Work, at 11' 46" you can see student Mara Morgantti-Minchillo working with a handheld camera as a scene partner for a Shakespeare soliloquy.²⁵ Frantic Assembly in their Warm Up workshop video mix registers. The students and teacher never look at the cameras, possibly following instructions, apart from the repeated exception when Riordan directly addresses a camera for contextual or additional explanations. To this extent and beyond Riordan's interjections, the cameras are invisible, maintaining a sense of the coherence of the workshop happening in real time with minimal overt editorial intervention. When Riordan does speak to camera, though, it is neither clear where the students are (they are not visible) nor when this was filmed. Riordan is sweating so it appears to be contemporaneous to the warm up, possibly after each chapter was shot. In relation to veracity, the film could be more transparent.
- Continuing this important consideration of space, knowing what to focus on in body-based group practices is not straightforward, as it might be in a film document of a performance, where camera crews can be guided by the dialogue. The Frantic Assembly film has a section called 'Mobilising' – a series of exercises to get the joints moving.²⁶ It begins with the feet, but as we hear instructions to work with the right ankle, the camera stays on Riordan from the waist up only. We briefly see some detailed foot and ankle movements, but as with the feet, just as we begin to focus on the relevant body part, the camera travels up again to the above-waist view. Trainer Riordan mentions how the footwork opens up the knee and hip, but as he points to his own hips, showing us the impact 'here', the camera cuts away. Because of the tight circle and the cameras' awkward positioning, we cannot really see how the participants are engaging with the task and remain too often unclear of the wider impact. Fortunately, we then get a wider view (4' 53") before the foot
- 18 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et0RGcrqkA&t=356s> Accessed 9 December 2022.
 - 19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et0RGcrqkA&t=356s> The Shake Out film has had 207, 270 views since 2014, seemingly very popular. Accessed 9 December 2022.
 - 20 Anne M. Martinez makes interesting points about this regarding an NTLive *Hamlet* in her chapter in Aebischer, Pascale, Susanne Greenhalgh and Laurie Osborne, eds. 2018 *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*. London: Arden Shakespeare, Bloomsbury, p.203.
 - 21 Credits reveal that the film was made by a 4-person camera crew, a well-resourced endeavour.
 - 22 See for example in the trailer here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM3SslJP3IY> Accessed 13 December 2022.
 - 23 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E9-UHcwgVA> Accessed 9 December 2022.
 - 24 <https://thedigitalperformer.co.uk/digital-studio-2/> Accessed 9 December 2022.
 - 25 <https://thedigitalperformer.co.uk/creative-tasks-2/> Accessed 12 December 2022.
 - 26 Thomas also uses the term mobilisation in her film 'Warm-up Your Body Shake Out'. Does this come from Frantic Assembly? It seems likely as the term is not otherwise widely used and she did produce some of their films. This raises the issue of citation

and appropriate referencing on film. Those like the National Theatre ones for a more popular rather than purely academic audience eschew such acknowledgement of sources and contextualisation. PATAZ used an extensive Bibliography of further reading and viewing for each term <https://www.dramaonlineibrary.com/physical-actor-training#further-reading> JER emphasises the need to cite fully and offers considerations on how best to do this on film <https://jer.openlibhums.org/media/journals/9/JER-StyleGuide-v1.pdf> Accessed 9 December 2022.

- 27 If we look at the Frantic Assembly videos that accompanied their 2009 *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre*, we realise how far such film work has come. Their simplicity and poor resolution (sound has been disabled on one of the films for an unexplained reason) are quite telling. Thirteen years is a long time in the digital world. See <https://routledge-textbooks.com/textbooks/9781138777019/videos.php> Accessed 12 December 2022.
- 28 Peter Hulton (2014) *Essai, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5: (1.): 89.
- 29 Ben Spatz, *Blue Sky Body: Thresholds for Embodied Research*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020, p.215.
- 30 <http://passthesound.com/videos/following-hands> Accessed 9 December 2022.

changes, allowing us some insight into the process. The camera often prioritises the teacher speaking with an upper body shot. Were camera positions discussed in advance? These problems are not present in the multiple films available on Frantic Assembly's other platforms (for example the National Theatre sponsored films or those on their own website), so this film appears to be an exception.²⁷

The notion of focus, another of my recommend areas for consideration, cuts across issues of spatiality, temporality and to some extent ethics. Unsurprisingly, given the complexity of working with film and recording live process, these three are interrelated and have to be considered as much interconnectedly as separately. Hulton explains his approach in his dialogue with McCaw: 'A is the alignment. You have to align yourself to the event. Basically this means listening to what is on offer'.²⁸ We might have considered alignment in this context to be a primarily spatial concept but, for Hulton, listening is seemingly used metaphorically as much as literally, implying the need for the film-maker's total awareness: visual, aural as well as kinaesthetic and spatial.

Focus is then about this alignment, about understanding the subject matter, the process, principles and ethos of any training or teaching session and how best to present this. The filmmakers need to understand who and what viewers should watch, avoiding the tendency which appears in Frantic Assembly's Warm Up film of focusing too much on the teacher speaking rather than the students doing. It would have been more useful to see the students and how they work, or at least Riordan demonstrating what needs to be done. Viewers could have listened to his instructions whilst watching the participants, a more balanced and helpful Content Ratio.

JER guidelines offer some insights into how to present complexities such as the mode of teaching, what learning is, the relationship between voice and body, and what an exercise can be and do. The term the journal uses, 'Annotation', denotes the layering on top of video content of texts of many different orders and purposes. Such layering allows questions, emphases and specific focuses, all whilst the training/teaching is itself captured being done or demonstrated. It adds what Spatz (2020) calls 'density'.²⁹ Annotation processes, like careful editing, enable deeper insights into the work. A film can then become more than a set of moves or exercises to be imitated. What I call Veracity implies making a document that is responsible and accountable to the live practice being presented, which does not oversimplify it, and which is respectful and truthful to the participants, the practitioners leading it and the viewers too. This is also an ethical issue.

More literally, focus is about how long the camera should stay in close up or observing a specific task, movement or practice, in order to see it working (or not). Too many quick jump cuts can lead to disorientation, and an inability to follow the process through or see its result. In the passthesound Following Hands Warm Up film, the camera struggles to focus, jumps about and sometimes misses the best 'landing place' in the body to show the process clearly.³⁰ The editing seems to want to emulate the live action, the sharp changes in movement by the leader which students are expected to follow instantly and exactly. On film, rather

than live in the studio, this becomes hard to follow, and we miss crucial moments: the fullness of the teacher's first clap at 12'' and a similar transition at 56''. The rhythmical development is not captured precisely.

Sometimes, from my perspective at least, more information is needed, or at least can help. Temporal and thus informational complexity and richness might be added postproduction through editing the different perspectives of two or more cameras, thus 'stretching' or deepening the real time of the process. In order to make this easier or even possible at editing stage, camera operators must be primed: to capture both individuals and the group; to consider close up or wide-angled perspectives; and to know how long to stay on a particular movement or action in order to understand first what it is, then how it works and finally what its effect is or could be. Reactions or responses cannot be added in afterwards if they have not been caught. Good general coverage can obviate omissions but needs to be balanced with specific shots. Familiarity with the process is a must.

Basic lighting, costume or design concepts should also be worked out in advance. The twenty seven films that accompany Vanessa Ewan and Debbie Green's *Actor Movement* are well conceived and often beautifully executed.³¹ This book/video combination was unusual and pioneering in 2014 when first uploaded to Bloomsbury's Vimeo site, but there does not seem to have been enough consideration of some matters, including the Content Ratio. The voiceovers needed further thought in terms of style, audience, content and consistency: verbal delivery is sometimes pitched at students as in-session instructions (though this is not applied uniformly across all such training films); sometimes it is much more reflective for deeper analysis, for teachers perhaps; sometimes the authors read out what we can ourselves read on screen, duplicating. In many films, the performers wear black in a poorly lit studio with black walls and floor, meaning that details of movement and the body are lost. Film 13 *Raising the Stakes Inhabiting a Physical Dilemma*, like Film 14 *Examples of Transitions*, is a beautiful recording of actors moving but makes little sense without reading the book's Chapter 7, and thus does not work autonomously. The hyperlink beneath each film takes you only to the book's marketing page, which surprisingly does not provide a link back to the films. Under each film it is stated that 'The video content offers readers of *ACTOR MOVEMENT: Expression of the Physical Being* a visual insight into the experience of this exercise as outlined in chapter 2 [or whichever relevant chapter]'. The films are made subordinate to the book, undermining the value they carry as independent documents of process. Why is only the visual highlighted? More overall guidance and clarity about the online offer would help, not least explaining how the book and films do, or do not, work together, and the relative status of each within the whole.

Health and safety is a key consideration which tests the borders of veracity. Remote or digital training and teaching raise the question of whether or not filmmakers have a duty of care for viewers. If they do, how to enact this responsibility? Where does it begin and end? The National Theatre Warm Up films are prefaced with text on screen and

31 <https://vimeo.com/channels/actormovement/99331058> Accessed 9 December 2022.

beneath the video window: 'PLEASE NOTE: Not all warm-ups are suitable for everyone and this or any other warm-up may result in injury. To reduce the risk of injury, never force or strain, use the exercises only as intended and demonstrated, and follow all instructions carefully'. This is something we also adopted after much consideration for the start of every PATAZ film through brief onscreen text. We hoped it would at least make viewers think about risk and safety, even if we could then do nothing concrete about this, beyond the cautions and mechanisms explained or demonstrated in the films themselves.

In Frantic Assembly's Warm Up film, there is no general disclaimer or information either on screen or in Riordan's introduction. Whilst the importance of doing things at an individual's own pace and according to their needs and other safety parameters are emphasised briefly verbally, little attention is paid to this aspect. Early in the film (5' 37''), Riordan introduces in passing the idea that the next movement will encourage a bit of 'burn' in the thighs. Later this is phrased as a 'Nice bit of fire'. Further explanation does come eventually almost halfway through the film, but it is only partially justified in Riordan's comments direct to camera as being mainly about getting the muscles working. He highlights that everyone is going through this together, thereby 'celebrating' the fire and the 'challenge' of 'hard work'.

How might this 'burn' be managed by those attempting the exercises themselves, perhaps unsupervised? What is missing for me is the students' own experience of the burn, how they work with or through the 'fire'. Pain thresholds and experiences of pain vary immensely. This idea of collective burn is difficult to justify, especially for the solitary viewer. Later, isometric exercises (they are not called this by Riordan who speaks rather about resistance) are described and encouraged to the point of making the muscles shake. More explanation and justification would have been welcome. Such a complex responsibility cannot be solely delegated to a generalised health warning on screen, but it can at least trigger a useful train of thought, emphasising the need for caution and technique. A duty of care seems to be missing here.

With such judgements and questions, we stray into what I identified earlier on, following Hulton, as my own bias, my 'performative' prejudice. The lack of attention to care and detail evident in this specific Frantic Assembly film raises questions about the nature of training/teaching and the trainer's role. In the 'burning' thigh exercise, several students do not have their hands placed on their thighs, as Riordan initially requested, but this is not picked up by him. What difference does the hand position make then? The need for precision, for following instructions precisely is not reinforced. More care is articulated in other Frantic Assembly videos available elsewhere, but the dominance in several films of muscly able-bodied young men to the exclusion of women or those differently abled, seems now, from today's perspective, somewhat limited. Perhaps this has helped create a slightly carefree attitude to such issues as risk, challenge, abilities and strength, as evident in the Warm Up film.

For Hulton, a further key principle is that 'I is individuated. This means that any particular event that you are documenting can be totally

- 32 Peter Hulton (2014) *Essai, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5 (1): 89.

individuated'.³² As I interpret this, for Hulton, filmmakers should not generalise, not homogenise and should seek to represent the work being captured fairly, accurately and ethically, according to its own terms. This underpins both Ethics and what I call Veracity, something we tried hard to encapsulate in PATAZ with its sixty plus terms. In PATAZ, every term and thus film had its own demands and criteria, and ultimately its own aesthetic. I extend this sensitivity to making explicit what a film intends to do, who it is primarily for and any constraints or tacit assumptions that underlie it.

- 33 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E9-UHcwgVA> Accessed 11 December 2022.

In Thomas's National Theatre Warm Up Part One film, the students have to follow or imitate the teacher with minimal explanation or theorisation, no feedback or manual or verbal corrections.³³ The film's purpose is clearly explained by brief text beneath the video window and a short introduction by Thomas to camera: 'This is a short physical warm-up that is suitable for actors to do before auditions, rehearsals or performances. It will work your body in different ways, getting your heart rate up, stretching, and connecting the breath'. The film is well made. It is to the point, dynamic and fast-paced, with multiple filming angles. Thomas's voiceover where we see her teaching the students is particularly insightful.

There are some points where the imagination is engaged, for example Arm Swings at 3' 54'', where students are asked to imagine throwing a bowling ball. But what makes this an acting warm up rather than a general gym work out? Is this warm up useful for the theatre? This partly depends on what kind of theatre you are preparing actors for, something that is not explained or acknowledged. It would certainly warm up the body physically, and to a small extent the imagination. As part one of two, this aerobic, muscular emphasis makes sense, but it is mainly the textual frame, its title, and its placement on the National Theatre's YouTube site that reinforces the applicability to theatre.

The film reveals little about the nature of warming up or how students/viewers might use it, and beyond mentioning the breath, it says nothing about the voice. Near the beginning (1' 29''), Thomas asks to see the student's 'down position', but does so with no comments or corrections, and nothing is made of this. This issue is reinforced by a comment beneath the film by Ruzickaw, posted 'three years ago', one of 54 at the time of writing: 'This is aerobics with some Yoga. Because it goes to [sic] fast it does not give the actor time to really go inside his body. These exercises are imposed from outside, they don't come from inside the actor'. A reply states that one should adapt it and take time with it, but this interpretation or advice is never suggested by Thomas. Several comments indicate that students have used the film and its processes when instructed by teachers to do so.³⁴ Part Two makes the theatre context much more evident as the students pass imaginary impulses and clicks and work the imagination and group connection. Here we have definitely moved from the gym into the theatre studio.³⁵

- 34 Part One has had 179,000 views since October 2014, Part Two 74,800. It is a puzzle why the second film has under half the number of Part One. Maybe viewers look at the first out of

My concern about the omission of voice relates to my own bias and is not an issue of veracity if indeed the voice is not foregrounded in the live workshops either. The Frantic Assembly Warm Up film also gives the

curiosity which it sates. To better understand use and popularity, we would need to know watch time amongst other matters. See this blog for more information on analysing film data <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/youtube-analytics> What such data does not tell us is how such films are used. Comments beneath YouTube films can provide some insights into this. Accessed 13 December 2022.

35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpmBFqEoCWc&t=33s> Accessed 9 December 2022.

36 Personal email correspondence 23.11.2022.

37 Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2006, pp. 73–91.

voice scant attention, though here the issue is of a different order. That film has no instructions or guidance about what to do with the breath other than occasional basic comments such as ‘Take a nice deep breath’. Almost fifteen minutes from the start, we do get some initial insight into the voice and text, but the main point made by Riordan is that the cardio warm up allows actors to speak without being out of breath after intense physical work. This is pragmatic but reductive, confirmed by the next comment about how the voice and body are all ‘connected’, and how ‘if you’ve got a warm body, you’re going to warm up the voice as well’. The importance of a vocal warm up may be stressed but the approach in practice is very limited.

Conclusion

A process snapshot, as in all these films, depicts a small part of many hours of developmental work, be it training, teaching, rehearsal or otherwise. Yet something changes when an aspect is recorded and fixed. The film document and the process it communicates accrue gravity. The document takes on particular responsibility in relation to the broader activities for which it stands in. Some of this status accrual is inevitable, it comes with the form and the distillation which film enables. Might there be ways to work against an inevitable fixity and any reductive simplification, either by explaining the nuances and complexities of teaching and training or by more clearly signalling changes and compromises made for the purpose of film? Steps can be taken to mitigate this selectivity, either in a film’s presentation or its wraparound elements. Annotation can help here, as also can textual framing either outside the screen or inside it through voice overs.

At an earlier stage of this article’s genesis, I shared my observations on the Frantic Assembly Warm Up film with Talia Rodgers, Head of Higher Education at Digital Theatre+. She had not been involved in its original commissioning but was interested to read my reflections. Rodgers passed these on internally and later responded by saying how ‘invaluable’ these pointers were for the production crew, enabling them to work more closely with editors.³⁶

Matthew Reason’s (2006) chapter ‘Video Documents’ solely analyses the recording of performances but rereading it today shows us how far we have come in this area.³⁷ Toni Sant (2017) updates things further. Comparatively, though, filming process is still in its infancy. It is also an under researched but growing area, especially as the technology becomes increasingly accessible and available. Considering the nuances, complexities, ideas and practices contained across Ethics, Spatiality, Veracity, Temporality, Focus, and Content Ratios might help. Whilst some of these will be more or less pertinent, depending on the work being documented, the ethical dimension is something that must not be ignored. We are all still learning to adjust to new ways of thinking, making, reflecting and documenting, post the eruption of the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements. Recognising the input everyone has to such film documents and the power dynamics which have created them, which

they perform or from which they have arisen, is just one small, though no less important part of this continuing revolution. That, though, is for another article. Here we are, as they say, just warming up.

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