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## **Digital perspectives for actor training**

### **Abstract**

This article explores how actor training, and physical actor training especially, can shift from the well-established historical norm of live workshop interaction to embrace online possibilities. It briefly examines some of the contextual issues around institutional approaches to training, including students' expectations, and charts some digital innovations in the field. It then traces the author's own evolutionary history of publishing using analogue and then digital tools, from drawings, through CDROMs and DVDs to online materials. This has culminated in the publication pre-pandemic, though anticipating subsequent shifts online, of 'Physical Actor training – an online A-Z' (PATAZ), for Methuen Drama Bloomsbury. PATAZ is introduced as a case study, showing how the project team developed film material as a means to articulate key aspects of training practice; for example by showing the learning and training process, for presenting voice work and for actors' explorations of space and movement. The article describes how the project's films were augmented with various digital tools, such as on-screen animation and it introduces some of the range of approaches in filming and editing that were adopted to differentiate each term. It concludes by suggesting that we are only at the beginning of a digital revolution regards actor training, its documentation and analysis and related publishing practices.

**Key Words:** digital; training; online; publishing; physical acting; film.

## **Physical Actor Training 2.0. New digital horizons**

Training is a malleable word that shifts and changes according to its many contexts and those involved, be they teachers, trainees, students, workshop leaders or others in a range of institutions and countries. Semantics aside, what training comprises in practice is less mutable. Since formalised or institutionalized actor training first began, it has been predicated almost exclusively on the core principle of live person-to-person coaching and guidance<sup>1</sup>. The iterative process of accumulating expertise and experience under the watchful eyes of teachers, often theatre directors or current or former performers themselves, frequently cross-generationally, is still widely considered the only model by those who train or teach today. I would not refute the need for such live human interaction. Yet surely post-pandemic, if that is indeed where we actually are, there are new digital ways to support and even enhance such processes, if not replace them? At the close of the twentieth century, it seemed highly speculative that driverless cars would imminently be transporting us around. Who then might have thought that performances would regularly be live streamed simultaneously to large global audiences as is now commonly the case?

There are few precedents of digital training approaches, as Caroline Wake reveals in her survey article (2018). To explore some implications of how actor training might be transformed by digital tools, methods and resources, I will use my own project as case study<sup>2</sup>. ‘Physical Actor Training – an online A-Z’ (PATAZ) was led by myself with co-trainer Frank Camilleri from the University of Malta and a camera crew of Peter Hulton (of Arts Archives) and Stacie Lee Bennett-Worth (who also worked as Research Associate and editor of all the films).<sup>3</sup>

The project asked several questions: given the need for and established dominance of live presence in training, how can students also

be trained online or remotely; how might digital tools extend possibilities for those who are perhaps less fortunate, able or indeed not considered talented enough to enter formal training; how might they assist those who do not want or are unable to explore physical processes across the three or four-year commitment to a full course?

Many training institutions with long legacies have proved their sustainability and importance. But just as approaches to education are rapidly evolving, accelerated by the pandemic ‘pivot’ online as it was called in Higher Education, so has the broader educational and social context in which training now happens changed extensively. Stefan Collini has articulated the cultural shift that has turned students into customers, as teaching has increasingly become perceived as a commercial transaction<sup>4</sup>. One significant consequence is that students often have to work part time to pay for their studies and are, for a multitude of reasons, less likely to read books, something which affects the humanities and social sciences in particular. Learning is increasingly bite-sized, modularised, perhaps even piecemeal. Rather than lament such a change or loss as it is commonly perceived, might we be able to capitalise on this?

Much research has been published on how mobile phone use is affecting concentration and attention spans, how we are becoming dependent on smart phones and technology, and how this is affecting the quality of personal interactions<sup>5</sup>. Yet the digital age also offers numerous opportunities beyond the pleasure and value of instant access to information in a range of formats. German scholar, dramaturg and Rimini Protokoll collaborator Imanuel Schipper has suggested in relation to performance that

Contemporary theatre practitioners inhale possibilities of digital cultures and adapt how technologies and their use are changing the viewing habits for their productions. The strongest impact of digital

cultures on the field of theatre is documented by the fact that the audience has become more and more a real coproducer of the performance.<sup>6</sup>

Schipper's point applies to much work beyond the specific practice of his own highly influential company. Similar changes in behavioural patterns are visible in more popular cultural domains too: the widespread global growth of digital streaming of live performance is just one example of the changes affecting how people attend events today.

'Coproducing' for Schipper, just one aspect of what is now more widely referred to under the umbrella of 'cocreation', has a political dimension too: breaking down hierarchies, hitting back against culture's increased marketisation and commodification and taking steps towards common ownership of the means of production. If we assume that trainers and teachers are responsible for training students for the theatre that exists 'out there in the profession', and more and more of this exists online, surely the modes of training also need to alter? The growth of devised theatre and theatre-making, as well as the widespread prevalence of new digital media and tools combine with a much more open educational 'market' to challenge not only the assumed dominance of well-established specialist institutions that train performers, but also long-held notions of how students might be trained<sup>7</sup>. I do not have space to focus on this aspect here, but such questions and consequent changes in practice have been further precipitated by serious issues raised by the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements. Have trainers and institutions really caught up with this shift and made appropriate adjustments? There is still much that actor training can do to engage with the digital.

## **Digital Teaching: thoughts on evolution**

Drama has always been at the forefront of deploying interactive models of learning. Notions of interactivity are today firmly understood and widely adopted in pedagogy and encompass so much more than simple role playing or acting out<sup>8</sup>. The model of the teacher as transmitter, which, I would argue, is the basis of most models of actor training, is increasingly being challenged by the ‘teacher as facilitator’ model. Teachers in the latter mold provide access to carefully curated resources and give guidance on how to navigate, interpret and use them with sound critical judgement – part of what is now called ‘flipped learning’<sup>9</sup>. With multimedia learning, teaching extends well beyond classroom activity to rely on online materials and platforms, perhaps evolving into ‘blended learning’ which is part face to face/part remote, then extending even further into ‘distance learning’ which is almost exclusively remote. The pandemic has made all teachers aware of such modes and possibilities, irrespective of whether they regard them favorably or not.

Increasingly frequently in my teaching over the last 25 years I have become aware of the disjuncture between how I myself was taught in a very small cohort with intensive long contact hours and how my own and other students today are themselves learning and training. I completed a university drama degree in the mid-1980s in the UK which was intensely practical, a kind of training of sorts, though it was never pitched as such<sup>10</sup>. The core academic resources, beyond the teachers themselves, were studio spaces and books, the latter a ragbag assembly of a kind of familiar canon of directors’ reflections: the usual suspects of Jerzy Grotowski, Konstantin Stanislavski and Bertolt Brecht. We were of course encouraged to read these, though with minimal guidance or follow up from most teachers. Thirty years later, students can draw on a vast range of academic sources supported by extensive digital material, from youtube clips of theatre performances and workshops to posts by gymnasts, pranksters and a whole host of others

related to physical practices. It's all performance and it's all out there; and, as a bonus, much of it is free. Moreover, curated access is wrapped around with guidance and support for students, including from information services and library specialists that go well beyond anything available to me in the 1980s.

Given this digital plethora, the still dominant notion of a 'reading list' seems alarmingly anachronistic and limiting. Most non-library-based material is, though, uncurated, not always permanently available or legal, and also very variable in quality; however useful, engaging or inspiring it might otherwise be. Though not open source, websites and online offerings like those of Alexander Street, Digital Theatre+, Drama Online, and the Routledge Performance Archive (RPA) have been pioneering in attempting to counteract this dispersal<sup>11</sup>. All are predicated on a commercial model and depend on institutional rather than individual subscription. They are also mainly targeted at the huge English-speaking market, so how much these penetrate beyond these in an affordable or language-appropriate way is uncertain. Somewhat ironically, because of the nature of the subscriptions, their viewership is also unlikely to include the professional groups and artists who provide or create much of their material.

It is not surprising then that the nature of the canon is more and more contested, if even the very idea of a canon has any standing at all today. This returns us again to the democratizing potential of the internet and online materials. Taking extracts and clips into the studio on phones and tablets to practise, imitate and embody, students can self-educate, perhaps even self-train, the auto-didacticism that Camilleri's 2015 article describes so positively. This is something that we increasingly need to acknowledge, especially since the pandemic by necessity made related techniques and digital modes of creativity and sharing widespread and common. What might training become in such virtual terms, where live practice is supported and

enhanced by digital media of all kinds and qualities? Could it perhaps even replace it? Total online delivery of actor training might be inconceivable, but with the relentless marketisation of education, the need to offer flexible or modular learning, and increasing costs for students and institutions alike, it could become the norm. We need to address and adjust for such demands ourselves rather than have them foisted upon us too late, perhaps in response to a crisis such as another pandemic.

### **Digital Publishing: thoughts on a revolution**

This evolution in pedagogic methods has gone hand in hand with radical changes in academic publishing of which ebooks are just the tip of a large iceberg. Pedagogy has evolved but publishing seems to have undergone a more seismic revolution. To help illustrate one aspect of this, I will use my own publication history as an example. From the beginning I incorporated images in my works and was an early adopter of emerging digital platforms. Stage designer Rae Smith drew some pencil sketches of a 3-hour workshop I led based on Gardzienice Theatre Association's training approach which I included in my book on the company<sup>12</sup>. I then collaborated with Peter Hulton of Arts Archives on a CDROM about Tadashi Suzuki's training, the Suzuki method, in which the viewer could opt to hear me elaborating on details at relevant moments on the CDROM's timeline. (Allain 2001) The commentary, rather like that of a Director's on a commercial DVD, allowed the viewer/auditor to understand more of the performer's process. In 2011, Hulton and I collaborated again on a DVD with booklet of and about Russian teacher Andrei Droznin's movement practice. Even as this was published, it seemed nonsensical that this was not streamed on the web instead, as indeed the films now are on the RPA<sup>13</sup>. My 2015 book of Jerzy Grotowski's actor Zbigniew Cynkutis's approach to acting and directing included over 70 photographs, posters and illustrations, many of them sketches by Bill Ireland

of Cynkutis's workshops from the 1970s, of which no film exists. (Cynkutis 2015)

With this Cynkutis book, things had come full circle, a reminder that digital formats need not replace more traditional modes of publishing but can instead perhaps help us have greater appreciation of non-textual modes of communication for our highly physical field. Even if digitisation has led to a publishing revolution in certain aspects of the making process and distribution especially, the direction of travel is not one way: a simple well-executed line drawing in a paper book, as in the Cynkutis or Litz Pisk's 1974 *Actor and his Body*, can capture volumes, suggesting movement, atmosphere, space and an epoch. Bill Ireland's drawings of Cynkutis's training moved artfully beyond literal representation to suggest weight, trajectory, emphasis and what Cynkutis called 'vectors', broadly meaning the direction of travel for the body or its specific parts. **Fig** We cannot create films where none existed, as with Cynkutis, although we can be creative with the past: photographic colourisation projects reveal how technology can be used in ways that fundamentally alter past documents, giving them an entirely new life and quite another sensibility. (Carroll 2017)

It is important not to perpetuate a position that digital=new=good and analogue=old=bad. Yet several elements were elusive or non-existent in all these aforementioned sketches, illustrations or photographs. My own experience and research in physical actor training underlines how voice and sound can barely be captured in purely visual media. Voice work is a dominant feature of the practices I research, something I discussed in 'Ways of Hearing: Listening again to Polish Theatre' (in Tomasz Wiśniewski and Martin Blaszk (eds), *Between Page and Stage*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2017). Whilst good at fixing isolated instances of motion, these media also struggle to capture sustained or durational movement, flow, different qualities of energy and weight, tempo, or complex spatial

dimensions. I had as a young lecturer read Tadashi Suzuki's description of the 'stamp' in 'The Grammar of the Feet' in his *The Way of Acting*. I only realized how little of the stamp's actual force and technique I had grasped from my reading when I undertook Suzuki training in 1995, well before such video materials were widely available. Static images and textual description struggle to fully articulate many aspects of physical actor training.

These forms also failed, ironically, to encapsulate failure as part of the process of learning. As a university lecturer, I am painfully aware of both success and failure in learning. Much of my research has been into and around long-established theatre groups or laboratories that were initially auto-didactic: a notable example is that Barba formed Odin Teatret from drama school 'rejects'. I was curious in PATAZ to explore how we could show students doing, failing, repeating and succeeding, the core components in any learning or training process<sup>14</sup>.

### **PATAZ: an overview**

The A-Z came out of this publishing revolution, which my own research had shaped and fed into, as well as this digital evolution in pedagogical practice. It was also an attempt to somehow document and pass on something of my nearly three decades of experience and professional practice as teacher, actor trainer and movement director, the latter most notably with director Katie Mitchell early in her (and my) career.

A book seemed both inappropriate and insufficient to capture this. How could I write sounds? Digital film on an online platform seemed suited to present process and show learning/training. We could add commentary and observations and supplement the films with additional guidance and reflection: highlights or directional arrows, onscreen textual instructions or summaries reiterating key points, and graphics such as spatially defining spheres – all elements we used. The project also aimed to document but also

actively instruct and guide, to both show and do. A digital format made this possible, going beyond the boxed instructions for classroom tasks found in many paper textbooks, and building on rather than following the more familiar and rather reductive ‘how to act’ dominant textual model.

We deemed it important to foreground the differences between Camilleri and my approaches as co-trainers. We had worked together closely as teachers and lecturers in university contexts, had shared roots in Grotowskian and physical traditions, but had very different pedagogic styles. Conservatoire and other training models are often predicated on the presence of charismatic figures. This can go so far as key teachers and their approaches becoming synonymous with specific institutions, even sometimes enshrined in institutions’ names. We hoped to move away from a top-down hierarchical teaching model to show diverse approaches to working with similar material or topics and the benefits of dialogue with the students and difference. Some online material, particularly when it showcases competitive virtuosity, can be off-putting for foundational students (‘foundational’ is how we described our primary target audience, meaning students near the start of their training). Such explicit virtuosity might also reinforce the value of over-directed, coercive and hierarchical training processes – principles which my work has never espoused and which have since been harshly questioned and reevaluated.

We could have published the materials on our own bespoke open access website. This would have had advantages in terms of being able to design a suitable platform from scratch and it being free to view, but it would probably have weakened the funding application. It also would have been, initially at least, relatively invisible, with the need to build an audience from nothing. Finding a UK publisher for PATAZ was relatively straightforward: few were working with digital materials to any extent beyond ebooks and therefore able to host such an A-Z. I feared that the films might get lost in

the wide range of audiovisual materials in the RPA, which housed some of my previous research<sup>15</sup>. Alexander Street had a quickly expanding platform but were not commissioning new materials. Digital Theatre+ was only just shifting towards generating more Higher Education-focused material. Methuen Drama Bloomsbury's Drama Online platform, initially and predominantly a play resource, was well established and used by students across schools, universities and conservatoires worldwide. Drawn to the publisher's combined academic and industry focus, our A-Z seemed to be a good corollary to this play collection.

The downside of this decision was three-fold: there was no interactive potential, as no one could respond to us or comment on our material directly through embedded social media channels; the need to fit broadly into their web format; and, most problematically, the films would sit behind a paywall. We set up our own companion website, *The Digital Performer*, in part to encourage engagement but also to present a small selection of our films for free alongside wider aspects of our research<sup>16</sup>. With the place of publication settled, filmmaking could start.

### **Creating the A-Z**

The concept of an A-Z structure arose from my previous publications. My coauthored book *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* has three sections, People, Events and Concepts, with short entries in alphabetical order. I was thus familiar with a dictionary-like structure and had myself frequently used Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese's *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. I envisaged our A-Z as a comparable entity, though where the *Dictionary* has extensive visual images and text we would replace these mostly with film. Not all our terms were decided in advance, but we aspired to be as comprehensive as

possible regarding the range of elements training covers, using all the letters of the alphabet and some more than once<sup>17</sup>.

An A-Z is a helpful, albeit constraining, structure, yet some organisational shape was needed, not least to help viewers navigate the substantial amount of material generated (we were trying to distil decades of my and Camilleri's experience). The format was also inspired by Tadashi Suzuki's notion of the 'grammar of the feet', which he explains thus: the method is just a grammar, its significance being how one speaks with it (i.e. what kind of performance one creates using the method)<sup>18</sup>.

We understood that every term and thus film had to have its own structure, tone and style, according to the specific demands of each term: no single format would work across, say, **Imagination**, **Craft**, **Voice** or **Zoning Out**<sup>19</sup>. Each film had to stand up and out as a useful or inspirational 'gem' (or in Barba's terminology – amulet) of embodied knowledge (Barba 2002). Whereas some films might be a fairly straightforward rendition of an aspect of studio practice (though carefully shot and severely edited and shortened – **Hands** is a good example in that it shows a demanding though structurally simple sequence of hand exercises), others could articulate the term by means of their selected form as much as content. **Fig**

We also knew the films had to be short. We worked initially to a notional three minutes maximum as our norm, based on our research into (ever-decreasing) attention spans for online films. Our intention to capture the process this way did affect how we approached the workshops: we were aware of avoiding long durational sequences and the need to present principles and exercises in a precise, condensed form. This made the process more teleological than our usual practices, though perhaps only to the extent that in teaching any workshop one might bear in mind students' learning outcomes, their final assessments or an intended performance.

Holding onto this temporal awareness, we then tried mostly to ignore the cameras and the filming. We wanted the films and the fragmented A-Z structure not to mask the organic flow of training, where participants build incrementally on what has been done years, weeks or days before, as much as in the preceding minute. We realized that the fragmentation in the structure of our films would inevitably be joined up in the viewers' own practices, and that a sense of this flow could also be generated through the subsequent editing process, reinforced also by the term **Flow** and its related film. **Fig** We needed to dispel any notion that things could be done in isolation or piecemeal, that **Rhythm** does not also have everything to do with **Space**, as just one example, or that training could be pick-and-mix. In filming the workshops we worked fluidly at first. Only later in the process and in the second filming phase especially did we break our work down into shorter sequences. Bennett-Worth often asked Camilleri and I to be clearer and more succinct or to telescope something we had just done previously at greater length. Even so, there is not one film that has not required substantial editing.

As regards our target viewer, we quickly settled on the idea of creating a foundational resource, even as we hoped it might contain something for everyone. Our notional audience was dictated in part by our sense of those who already subscribe to Drama Online. Viewer analytics were not provided, though we did ask for them, so this had to be based on personal experience and guess work, as well as evaluating similar resources and their reach as well as Drama Online's own provision. It was of course beyond our control who would view the films, but, bearing a target audience in mind, we assumed that our ideas and practices would be new to many of them. Camilleri and my practice is not mainstream in any sense of the word, based on experimental European theatre and laboratory traditions, from Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba through Gardzienice and Ingemar Lindh. We are both university lecturers but teach as much through practice as through

seminars. This approach is common in the very practice-heavy model typical of many UK university drama departments and is emulated in Malta with its close ties to Britain and delivery in English. Drama Online is an international resource, with Bloomsbury having offices in New York, New Delhi and Australia as well as London, so we understood that our training approach might be unusual for many viewers, even whilst notions such as **Warm Up**, **Movement** or the **Voice** are ubiquitous.

This international reach and a shared understanding of the need to be mindful of diversity was always factored into our planning, though it was often hard to achieve aspects of this in practice and to break out of our habitual Euro- and Anglo-centric thinking. Our team was relatively culturally diverse and we were especially pleased to have Nouf, a mature Arab woman from Kuwait involved. Nouf speaks in the films about the importance of this practice to her both physically, as a mother of two young children, and culturally, as she is from a strict religious background and culture where women have defined roles with very circumscribed expectations.

Although the studio practice was led by two male trainers, a key collaborator and architect of the whole project was a young woman, Bennett-Worth, editor of all the films. She was given and eagerly took a free hand in selecting how to shoot and represent the terms, perhaps best exemplified by her interpretation of **Imagination**, **Layering** and **Fundamentals**. In **Layering**, Bennett echoes and reinforces the process of montage which Camilleri and I articulate in the film by splitting, overlapping and merging our headshots. **Fig .** **Imagination** uses a series of stock images compiled by Bennett that often playfully visually repeat or pun on the process of using the imagination which Camilleri is describing. **Fig.** Bennett is close in age to the trainees and thus understands well current student experience and expectations. She and I met regularly, viewing multiple iterations of the films and occasionally co-

editing them together, actively making and then instantly evaluating choices. It was a close collaborative process.

To gain feedback in the early stages we previewed some of our initial films widely after the pilot phase of filming. This took us to Barcelona, Malta, Warsaw and Singapore, and was supported by an online survey based on sample films. The most revealing presentation and response was in Singapore, with its cultural difference and a university context less practice-focused than that in the UK. Here we were strongly encouraged to use more onscreen animation. This request was validated for me in my hotel room one evening when viewing a reality television programme, in fact from Korea, about inept fathers ‘caring’ for their young babies. The screen was littered with animated figures, emoticons, textual prompts and information. Such feedback made us sharply aware of divergent cultural approaches to internet design and usage. All we could do was be mindful of this diversity, knowing that our A-Z might resonate differently across the world, whilst trying to keep it as clear and foundational as possible. Accessibility and context when publishing in the digital sphere are conceptually very different from the more familiar universal models of paper-based publishing.

## **Conclusion**

German Professor of Media and Cultural studies Marie-Luise Angerer has drawn attention to certain scholars’ continuation of Donna Haraway’s work on cyborgs to suggest that ‘media can no longer be defined as prostheses which amplify the senses, but that instead, they have attained a new immersive dimension, that they replace our senses, that they also make our senses more intense and more subjective, more intimate’<sup>20</sup>. To suggest that we even begin in PATAZ to approach such immersion or replacement is going too far, though VR technologies are shifting us swiftly towards more immersive possibilities. However, often during the project we questioned

how we might foster such affective sensations, using the potential of digital media and tools. We tried numerous ways to pass (metaphorically of course) through the barrier of the screen, to narrow this ontological gap: using GoPros, both onfilm and audio spoken and textual commentaries and direct address, the trainees' personal reflections, and a sophisticated A-Z of filming techniques. We never intended to replace the live studio experience or make a resource predicated on removing the teacher from the training equation, as some initial feedback responses had assumed. We always questioned to what extent such a digital resource could even approach such a possibility. We anticipated that the majority of our viewers would be guided somehow by a notional figure of a teacher/trainer: whatever form that might take, whether the role was still active or not, was just a past formative memory, or whether it existed in some other mutual pedagogic relation.

No longer does studio practice have to be filmed at a distance with a wide angle with patchy audibility. Possibilities are numerous for filming and trainees can do all or any of the following: interact with the camera as a partner (in **Text Work** one trainee speaks Beatrice's soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Act 2. Sc.1, 26-31) directly to camera as her active studio partner); wear miniature cameras; reflect on their experience, in the moment or afterwards; be tracked around the space by small mobile cameras; and trainers can wear microphones relatively discretely. In our A-Z editing we added non-diegetic sounds to heighten the mood (enhancing **Flow** with waves), used **Images** as creative stimuli, and suggested and ourselves adopted multiple ways of working with **Technology** in that term. **Fig** In such recorded work, the viewer is never physically going to be present live; but they should at least feel immersed or engaged enough to approach their own practice with new inspiration, techniques and with the helpful backing of a sophisticated resource.

Any desire to share knowledge and experiences, both practical and theoretical, is necessarily determined and shaped by the means with which one can do so. In training this is usually limited to those within the room, at least before the advent of any posthoc reflection, documentation or publication. With rapid advances in digital technologies impacting all pedagogic approaches compounded by the pandemic, PATAZ posits some different ways of publishing and passing on practical knowledge. Books with or without drawings and photographs will still be written. Teachers and trainers will still train students and actors live in the studio. But the new means of transmission and training that have emerged more widely can transform the way we teach, learn and train. Projects like PATAZ require resources of a different order from writing books, but not everything needs to be done on this scale. Whether, as Camilleri noted in his 2015 article, they are part of a pedagogic and training revolution it is too early to say, but it is clearly vital to keep exploring new methods and consider their implications.

I have focused here extensively on the practicalities of the A-Z project, its planning, decisions made during its formation, and how it eventually unfurled. PATAZ can help us think more broadly about the digital and online potential of such practice research, exploring as a consequence how training might adapt within an increasingly accessible range of global practices.

I perceive there to be five different, though interconnected, main challenges and opportunities. Firstly, such projects reveal the democratizing potential of the digital: anyone with a smartphone owns a megapixel high quality camera with which to record their work; and when and where learning or training can take place is increasingly in the trainees' hands. Secondly, it questions the ontological premise of training as exclusively a live iterative process. Thirdly, such endeavours highlight the need to listen more to those being trained, to give them a voice. Fourthly, they validate the idea of auto-didacticism, questioning what form the role of the teacher,

broadly construed, can take. Finally, they embrace new models of publication of acting and theatre research using online tools, with revolutionary potential. Long may the revolution continue.

5,974 words

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- <sup>1</sup> Frank Camilleri's 2015 article 'Towards the study of actor training in an age of globalized digital technology' in *Theatre, Dance, Performance Training*, 6 (1), 16-29, gives a comparative overview of institutional differences. It also asserts the value of auto-didactic training.
- <sup>2</sup> Physical actor training aligns more to the tradition and domains of Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba and physical and dance-theatre, rather than that of Konstantin Stanislavski with his focus on realist acting, characters and the interpretation of plays.
- <sup>3</sup> PATAZ was a two-year funded project which took place pre-pandemic. Ironically, many of its axioms anticipated the shift online we subsequently had to make. We filmed three pilot days of workshops (September 2016) then a five-day period (January 2017). The first test phase was critical in order to obtain and then act on feedback before the next phase. The result is 65 films of 5 hours 45 minutes duration (including a 45 minute-long project documentary) as well as related materials such as an extensive bibliography, all published in July 2018. Readers of this article might not have access to the films available at <http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/pages/physical-actor-training-an-online-a-z> which is institutional subscription only. A selection of the films and further information on the project can be found at <https://thedigitalperformer.co.uk> [Both accessed 1 November 2022]
- <sup>4</sup> See for example his 2018, *Speaking of Universities*. London: Verso.
- <sup>5</sup> See as one example of many Daniel Goleman's 2013 *Focus: the Hidden Driver of Excellence*.
- <sup>6</sup> Leeker, Martina, Schipper, I. and Beyes, T., eds. 2017. 'From flâneur to co-producer: The performative spectator'. In: *Performative and the Digital*. transcript Verlag: Bielefeld. p.207
- <sup>7</sup> Students do graduate from UK university drama and theatre courses and set up theatre companies or work professionally as performers. This comes nowhere near the scale of what the conservatoires have been achieving for decades in terms of employability within the profession but does show the potential of different institutional training models. A Polish example of online lectures in which I have been involved is available here <https://www.mik.waw.pl/projekty/mistrzowska-akademia-teatru-symposium-aktor-xxi-wieku/> [Accessed 5 November 2022]
- <sup>8</sup> One of the foundational sources in this area is Tapscott, D., 1998. *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill. The publication date proves the longevity of such thinking.
- <sup>9</sup> See [https://flippedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FLIP\\_handout\\_FNL\\_Web.pdf](https://flippedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FLIP_handout_FNL_Web.pdf) for a definition [Accessed 1 November 2022].

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- <sup>10</sup> After finishing my degree at the University of Exeter I was immediately employed as a performer for a year in the local [Theatre Alibi](#), then a Theatre-in-Education Company. Later I worked in Poland with Gardzienice Theatre Association as a performer, besides having had no formal actor training as such.
- <sup>11</sup> See <https://alexanderstreet.com>, <https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/education>, <http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/pages/physical-actor-training-an-online-a-z> and <https://www.routledgeperformancearchive.com> [All accessed 5 November 2022].
- <sup>12</sup> Smith is perhaps best known for her drawings and set design for *War Horse* (2007). See her sketches in my book: Allain, P., 1997. *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*. Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, plates between pp.77 and 78.
- <sup>13</sup> Allain, P., 2011. ed. *Andrei Droznin: Physical Actor Training*. London: Routledge and now <https://www.routledgeperformancearchive.com> [Accessed 1 November 2022].
- <sup>14</sup> Something which will no doubt inform future understandings of training, if it hasn't already, is the huge popularity of films of 'epic fails'. Supposedly incidental, some of these are actually noticeably contrived and rehearsed, spoiling their impact as everyday hapless occurrences.
- <sup>15</sup> The RPA also uses my coauthored book *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* as its framework. Talia Rodgers, who set up the RPA, moved in 2015 to Digital Theatre+ as Publishing Director.
- <sup>16</sup> <https://thedigitalperformer.co.uk> [Accessed 1 November 2022]
- <sup>17</sup> Unlike the *Dictionary* which uses only 15 letters, though some of these repeatedly.
- <sup>18</sup> See his 1986 *Way of Acting*, New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- <sup>19</sup> I am putting the initial letter in bold here and following to denote that these are terms from the online A-Z.
- <sup>20</sup> 'Speculation about 1.0. On the productive difference of the interval'. In: Leeker, Martina, Schipper, I. and Beyes, T., eds. 2017. *Performative and the Digital*. transcript Verlag: Bielefeld.

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