

**Towards *Vivencia*:**

**A dance training methodology that generates a peak performative state  
through the ritualisation of actions.**

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Elena Crecis, who has always supported and believed in me every step of the way.

# Declaration

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Jorge Crecis



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There would not be dance without dancers.

# Abstract

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This thesis establishes the basis for a dance training methodology entitled *Towards Vivencia*, which aims to allow performers to modify their initial state of being in order to achieve peak performative experiences through the ritualisation of their actions. This practice as research draws from theoretical investigation and, primarily from the author's current professional practice as a choreographer/director and from his background in different somatic practices such as martial arts, sports, and contemporary dance. The findings apply a new working term for the peak performative state the author associates with performance presence: *vivencia*, to refer to this particular state, as well as the experience that remains engraved in the performer's existence as a result of an episode of extreme awareness of praxis during the continuous present moment in performance. The examination of whirling dervish dance and research on ritual behavior explain the process of ritualisation as an elaboration of the neurobiological propulsion towards constructing temporal communities. The way in which ritualising can be used to reify abstract concepts such as *vivencia* is explored. By contextualising what constitutes performance training and by analysing the methodology certain other directors and choreographers have employed to train performers, this research distils, condenses and reconstructs selected elements from dance training as well as from selected acting methodologies and adapts, synthesises and applies these for the purposes of *Towards Vivencia*. The last three chapters of this thesis, together with the videos that accompany it, form the kernel of a training methodology aimed at ritualising action in performance whose objective is to render the concept of *vivencia* real.

# Table of Content.

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<b>Declaration</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Table of Content.</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Interrelationship Between the Written Theory and Practice Component</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A Note on Use of Names, Terms and Syntax of this Thesis</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Preface. Active Surrendering</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Introduction. On the research process</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Research Enquiry and Research Methodology.</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Performance as a Transformational Experience</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Rituals</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Training and Training Methodologies: A Brief Contextualisation</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Actor Training</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Dance Training</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Towards Vivencia. Entering Performance</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Entering performance</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Acquiring Necessary Skills (Specific Physical Training)</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Collateral Training: The Performer Within a Wider Reality</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Demystification of the Act of Performing</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Towards Vivencia. During Performance</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Games Are Serious Things</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Multitasking, Decision Making and Problem Solving in Real Time</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>'The Doer': The Creator. Commitment &amp; Ownership:</b>	<b>110</b>

<b>Chapter 4. Towards Vivencia. Exiting Performance</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Cooling Down. Reversing Axis Mundi</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Heuristic Enquiry</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>The Ritualisation Trace</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Why Ritualising?</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Performance Facilitators</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Final Notes</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Appendix A. The Performative State</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Identifying States of Being</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Biofeedback</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Alpha/Theta Neurofeedback Research in Bf (Based on Tony Steffert's notes)</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>States of Mind Taxonomies</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Appendix B. The Creative Aims and Process for 36</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Appendix C. The Creative Aims and Process for Kingdom</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Appendix D. List of the workshops and creation processes</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Appendix E. Quoting Conventions for Experiences</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Appendix F. Feedback Form</b>	<b>197</b>

# The Interrelationship Between the Written Theory and Practice Component

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The reader is requested to refer to the audio-visual examples, the description of the exercises and the recording of the two pieces of work attached to this document as the main research material. It is recommended that the reader view video-clips before engaging with the description of each example, in order to fully grasp the methodology I propose. After reading each example, I would then suggest going back to the visual documentation in order to best understand all the subtleties the practice involves, focusing especially on the direction the writing has established. Please notice that the same activities have been used with dancer of different skills and that the level of expertise shown in the videos is only related to when and where it was possible to record each specific example.

Throughout this thesis the productions *36* and *Kingdom* are constantly mentioned and referred to in order to illustrate a particular aspect of the methodology proposed here. When a particular section of any of the works is mentioned in this written work, it will come accompanied by the time frame of the video for easy access.

Appendix B and C offer the full written description of *36* and *Kingdom*. The integral recordings of these two works as well as the exercises, examples of the practice research and short documentaries of this research are available through the following channels:

- USB attached to this written thesis

- YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoGfSLpvrAI1AuUMqAJg-QHKbDSw3cYCs>

## A Note on Use of Names, Terms and Syntax of this Thesis

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This investigation focuses mainly on practitioners who belong to the discipline of dance, therefore the terms dancer(s), and performer(s) are used indistinctively. This research has been developed across three different continents. Therefore, English is not the mother tongue of a large number of the participants who were part of the workshops dedicated to the development of *Towards Vivencia*. For that reason, this thesis will cite their remarks as faithfully as possible, even with grammatical errors. Most of the foreign terms that appear in the Introduction are phonetic representations of Turkish words loaned from Persian and Arabic. Moreover, capital letters do not exist in Arabic, therefore all terms will be written in lower case, except those referring to historical personalities or deities.

I have chosen to capitalise and italicise the title of my practice, *Towards Vivencia* in order to distinguish these words from other uses of the same words.

## Preface. Active Surrendering

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While performing, I am totally aware of my praxis and the environment that surrounds me. I regard the discipline and the arduous practice entailed in the training and the rehearsal process as part of my performance. I consider the choreography I am dancing as a separate entity that needs to be nurtured and taken care of, but also with a distinct identity that has to be respected. I become an empty vessel for it to exist. I allow the dance to exist through me. I do not disappear. I am not the dance, I am not the dancer, I am not the person who is dancing this dance. I am all of those things. I am something new.

I spent many years as a professional performer trying to understand and consciously replicate the very elusive performative quality often referred to as ‘presence’. Having experienced this state as a practitioner, particularly in dervish whirling, I sought a technique to be able to locate and replicate this consciously and willingly, and also to be able to transmit how to do so to the dancers I teach and direct. My earliest memories of sensing this transformative state are associated with competitiveness in sports, particularly in martial arts.

From the age of six I practiced *Goju Ryu*. This variation of karate,<sup>1</sup> whose name literally means “Hard and Soft Style” (IOGKF, 2014), is mainly taught through the study of *kata*.<sup>2</sup> *Kata* are very detailed and fixed series of attacks and defences without a rival. Its execution is primarily judged on accuracy, precision and exactitude, leaving no room for personal input. *Kata* are taught by oral tradition from master to student as the path to wisdom, and variation from

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<sup>1</sup> Originated in Okinawa (Japan).

<sup>2</sup> *Kata* is a loanword in English. The word has the same singular or plural form.

practitioner to practitioner is not permitted. The student must surrender to the requirements of the *kata*, it should be “performed with the proper spirit, that is, with confidence and humility, the student will come to understand the ideas present in the language of the *kata*” (McCarthy, 1987, p. 55). During training, each practitioner presents the *kata* he/she is working on to peers on a regular basis, to then be part of a competition, or a friendly exhibition. For me, the *kata* presentation started long before the event itself; I arrived at the venue already in a heightened mood and, during the actual moment of the execution, I was nervous enough to feel activated, but not so much that I felt anxious; above all, I felt confident. I remember the challenge of carrying out the set movements as fiercely as if the combat were real, but letting the subtle nuances of intensity appear by themselves. During those moments, I paid attention to the aesthetic components associated with form, accuracy, sharpness, and sensuality. I followed my breath as an ever-present tempo to be understood but not tamed. I felt as if my body increased in size, I felt stronger and unstoppable. Despite my young age, my focus was solid, my balance strong and steady, and my movements were precise and reliable. During my execution, my body was a compendium of kinaesthetic qualities in between a strictly trained willpower and a total surrendering to the actions determined by the *kata*. Regardless of the external observations, the result of the competition or what I observed from other practitioners involved on the day, I always knew whether I was content with my performance or not.

I practised karate until I was 14 years old, and although I have not returned to martial arts since, the discipline of the training; the combination of confidence and humility; the difficult balance between actively doing an action, while at the

same time letting the action to take over my body; in short, the feeling of actively surrendering to the moment, has stayed with me. The balance between executing my routine confidently but not in a mechanical way, making the *kata* appear through me, is what, later on, during my years studying dance, I called being 'present'. The perfect execution of a *kata* is not the final goal of karate; *kata* is the learning process, and personally I could perceive how, studying, practicing and executing the *kata* relentlessly and meaningfully had also an impact on my life outside the *dojo*.<sup>3</sup>

I now think of *kata* as dances without music and with a clear purpose.

During my late teens, I tried to make a career in the army. Due to a scoliosis, I was declared medically unfit. As a consequence, I decided to study Sports Sciences at Universidad Politecnica de Madrid. This degree focuses on the realm of human motion from an informed and healthy perspective instructing how to minimise the risk of injuries and maximise the efficacy of efforts. The terminology and customs originated by, and widely employed in sports science, were extremely relevant to my subsequent dance training: how to devise and carry out a comprehensive warm up or cool down routine, the difference between a general, neutral or pure approach to movement and a specific functional training, etc.<sup>4</sup> During my studies I was also introduced to sports psychology, which in turn presented me with two key ideas: (1) the existence of an ideal performative state associated with the concept of flow (2) that the most effective competitive frame of mind required a balance between somatic anxiety and cognitive anxiety arousal that was trainable; a balance that later on, I expanded

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<sup>3</sup> The term *dojo* primarily refers to a training place for martial arts such as *aikido*, *judo* or *karate*. In Japanese, any physical training facility may be called *dojo*.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2 expands on this terminology and approaches to movement training.

through the practice of whirling dervish dance and the ritualisation of actions to define the attitude of the dancer during the training as 'active surrendering'.

During my second year at university, I was introduced to contemporary dance. Despite having no previous dance experience, and it being customary to start dancing while very young, I was accepted into the Royal Conservatoire when I was 22 years old. In all the lessons where dance technique was the focus - Graham, Limon or Cunningham technique, ballet, etc, - it was evident that I lacked too many years of early training. I struggled to follow the group progression.<sup>5</sup> However, during Contact Improvisation or choreography, I felt confident and at ease. During those classes, I could use my existing set of skills to override the technical abilities I lacked. I remember vividly how sometimes, when I had to show my recently created sequences, the music, the teamwork and the inspirational framework set by the teacher directed me into a very special state. I felt stronger and unstoppable. Attaining that state was never predictable. Sometimes it happened, sometimes it did not. Retrospectively, I can acknowledge that what helped me to achieve that special state that I associate with performative presence was to recall the feeling and frame of mind of my karate competitions, and to approach the presentation of our choreographed sequences in the same way: carefully preparing my sequences for days or weeks, summoning my confidence through hard work, concentrating in each movement, make them meaningful to me and finally allowing the dance to appear through me.

Approaching dance training in this way had an extremely positive impact on my technique classes. I started to receive more attention from my teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 2, lack of technical proficiency is one of the obstacles that many performers encounter in being able to reach a peak performative state of being.

This confirmed that something had changed in me for the better. Sometimes I felt that their notes were in accordance with my sensations, and other times not. I started to develop a clear inner feeling of right and wrong. In public presentations, onlookers remarked that their attention was directed to me even if I did not move, or mentioned that I appeared “taller on stage than in real-life”.<sup>6</sup> This process of gauging what I was feeling and comparing the results with my teachers, peers and/or audiences’ feedback, helped me to attune my sensations and begin to deduce that performative presence is a particular state of being that could be convened. With time, I started to realise that my performances were considered more successful and attracted the praises of teachers, peers and audiences when my inner self reached a state of pure commitment, concentration and humility. Sometimes, my execution was impeccable; but the most surprising revelation occurred when I encountered unforeseen obstacles or made mistakes in my performance and yet, I was able to keep the same state of pure commitment, concentration and abandonment. However, I could not always access that state voluntarily or know whether the comments I received (or did not receive) were a product of my performance or a product of the subjectivity of the observer. Nevertheless, I started to transfer those qualities to my studies in sport sciences and even how I related to family and friends. My learning process was not reduced or limited to the dance studio, it also permeated other areas of my life.

I now think of dances as musical and meaningful *kata*.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not only similar to my sensation in karate competitions of an increase in body size, but also seems to have an association with how others perceive this experience of presence-of-mind. For instance, Dymphna Callery (2001) describes in her book *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* how “some actors simply appear bigger than their physical reality” (p. 85).

In 2004, I was asked to join *Compagnie Thor*, the second largest company in Belgium under the direction of choreographer Thierry Smits. I was part of a cast of eight male dancers for a new dance piece entitled *D'Orient*. The group included a Turkish-born dancer/choreographer of Syrian origin and Austrian nationality, called Ziya Azazi. As part of our daily training, Azazi led a session in which we were initiated into the practice of what is commonly known as 'Sufi Whirling Dervish dance'.<sup>7</sup> Azazi's introduction to whirling dervish dance was purely experiential and no formal training was set; we never discussed the different origins, spiritual practices or philosophies rooted in this gesture. During the months in which we were touring, Azazi and I would meet and spin together, sometimes to warm up before our performances and sometimes just for the sake of practising together. This, in turn, instilled in me a routine in which spinning became an essential part of my personal training for performance.

During my years as a martial artist and through my dance training, I only encountered that specific state of being that I associated with presence in performance from time to time. Although I had started to locate specific scenarios that helped me achieve it, it still remained unpredictable. Assiduous practice of whirling dervish dance brought me to the realisation that spinning for a sustained period of time always offered a faithful way to reproduce the same heightened state of being that I had previously achieved only randomly. This realisation led me to suspect that these previous experiences were connected, that there is in fact a specific state associated with peak performance, and that it

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<sup>7</sup> I am aware that the words 'dervish' and 'Sufi' are laden with connotations and implications. It would be beyond the scope of this research to delve into those meanings. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, whirling dervish dance is understood as the practice in which the dancer turns around on his or her own longitudinal axis for sustained periods of time, varying from a few minutes to more than one hour. In this context, whirling dervish it is not always necessarily associated with any religious practice.

is possible to reproduce it at will. I found that spinning gave me the time to experience movement fully, and in perfect corporeal equilibrium. The simplicity of the gesture, the difficulty of keeping one's balance and the exhaustion of spinning for 30 minutes to an hour, gave me the sensation of remaining grounded. My ensuing exposure to spinning led me to physically comprehend the concept of carrying out an action, but at the same time, letting it happen. Turning on the spot for a long period of time allowed me to understand, locate, isolate and replicate the performative experience of extreme awareness, liveliness, control and submission I pursued for years. This, in turn, not only improved my ability as a performer but also increased the level of consciousness in my daily life.

Since 2008, when I became a full-time lecturer at London Contemporary Dance School, and thereafter throughout my career as a choreographer, my main objectives have been to increase my understanding of performance presence and to convey that quality to my students, collaborators and fellow dancers. My ultimate goal has been to devise a series of tools that allow me to guide other performers towards recognising, locating, and reproducing similar peak performative experiences that I had as a karate practitioner, dancer and whirler.

In my working notes, the word 'ritual' is often found buried amongst sketches, scribbles and other random jottings. The intuitive meaning of this concept has held an important place within my way of performing, teaching and choreographing, probably even more so when referring to the very moment of the performance itself. The notion of 'ritual' kept coming to mind as the only way to explain the necessary process to reach that experience. It was no accident that

I was pointed in that direction. Karate, contemporary dance<sup>8</sup> and whirling dervish dance had in common a non-analysed implicit ritualistic environment. By concentrating on the experiential aspect of rituals and the process of ritualisation as a path to achieve presence in performance, I could articulate why this concept has remained innate within my creative attempts and delineate the core of a self-training methodology.

This thesis summarises how I extrapolate the process of ritualisation to devise specific tasks and exercises that I use to train personally the quality I associate with peak performance, and how I transmit this performative quality that I seek as a teacher, director and choreographer to the performers I work with. The introductory chapter will define the key terms used throughout this research: the spectrum of human states of mind; how the ritual of whirling dervish dance has informed this research, and what is the state of being in Sufi tradition associated with this particular practice; the philosophy of experience; and the working term *vivencia*. The first chapter will contextualise the training methodologies within the realms of theatre and dance, focusing on the latter, and revealing the lineage of this research. These previous contextualising chapters have prepared the ground for Chapters 2 to 4, which detail the kernel of a training methodology I devised as a didactic tool for dance training and to enhance my performative state and then used to transmit to my performers the performative quality I seek as director.

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<sup>8</sup> In the introductory chapter I will expand further on this idea of contemporary dance as a ritualistic environment, exploring how from the point of view of Genetic Structuralism, ritual procedure matches perfectly the chronological systems of performance and *vice versa*.

# Introduction. On the research process

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## Research Enquiry and Research Methodology.

### *Practice as Research and the Written Component.*

This thesis is the outcome of the practical exploration that resulted from pursuing how to reproduce the performative experiences sketched in the preface consciously and willingly. This document is the recording and the written product of a non-structured,<sup>9</sup> long term qualitative practice as research that started with the following questions:

- Is there a particular state of being associated with peak performance?
- Is it possible to locate that state?
- Is it possible to replicate that peak performative state at will?

This research was undertaken between 2008 and 2016, via (a) 30 workshops with a total of 469 participants; (b) continuous observation and comparison of the different performative qualities of approximately 1500 dancers,<sup>10</sup> including professional performers, prospective students, undergraduate and postgraduate students and (c) 20 new dance creations involving 136 professional performers. The work developed over the last eight

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<sup>9</sup> Unstructured qualitative data collection includes group discussions, personal communication and participation/observations, where I gather in-depth information from a usually not pre-planned agenda, but angled towards the interests of the research at hand.

<sup>10</sup> Workshops and classes were implemented at a range of recognised vocational schools including, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, Universidad Europea de Madrid and Beijing Dance Academy. But, mainly at London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS) where I was a full-time lecturer between September 2008 to March 2012. This research has been carried out with individuals whose main background is dance. Thus, to avoid confusion, this chapter refers to the inquiry participants as dancers, without discerning whether they were students, professional performers or workshop participants.

years spans three different continents and it has been developed in partnership with major national and international institutions including Royal Opera House, British and Arts Council, Beijing NINE Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Scottish Dance Theatre. Appendix D contains the list of the workshops and creation processes,<sup>11</sup> through which *Towards Vivencia* was devised, applied and/or tested.

The goal of this research, and by extension of this thesis, is not to define performative presence in absolute terms, but instead, to use my professional experience, together with the academic exploration of philosophy, cognitive sciences, ritualistic behaviour and performance studies, to contribute new perspectives to existing definitions of presence, and to describe my own approach as to how to train this quality. Whether or not it is possible to locate objectively and define what might characterise ‘presence’, the question of what performers, directors and audiences refer to when they speak of this quality, and what this ideal way to perform might constitute, remains not only valid, but represents a compelling and enduring search for what constitutes the ‘magic’ of live theatrical performance.

This introduction will define the working terms used throughout this research, particularly in this written component, delineating the confines of what I understand by the act of performing and performance states. Under the light of cognitive sciences and Sufism I will narrow down what state of consciousness matches my personal experience of peak performance. I will then identify a simple and efficient term to encapsulate this experience. Through examination of

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<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this research, ‘creative process’ will refer to the devising of new dance material, while ‘creation process’ will refer to the development of the practice that aims to achieve a performative result at the end of the process.

ritual theories and ritual behaviour, this will set the foundations of how I constructed the methodology accompanying the artistic research described in Chapters 2 to 4.

### *The Dance Studio as a Research Lab.*

The core of this inquiry deals with the individuality of how experiences are felt and perceived, in particular, the performer's experience of performance.

Francisco Varela and Jonathan Shear (1999) refer to the common objection: "How do you know that by exploring experience with a method you are not, in fact, deforming or even creating what you experience?" (p. 13). They counter:

No methodological approach to experience is neutral, it inevitably introduces an interpretative framework into its gathering of phenomenal data. To the extent that this is so, the hermeneutical dimension of the process is inescapable: every examination is an interpretation, and all interpretation reveals and hides away at the same time. But it does not follow from this that a disciplined approach to experience creates nothing but artifacts [sic], or a 'deformed' version of the way experience 'really' is. (*ibid.*, p. 14)

Hence, this thesis is not neutral. It is an interpretative methodical research of my own experience, in which I dissect my practice as performer, teacher and choreographer, and rationalise the core of my artistic work. Throughout this process I made notes, wrote journals and explored the themes that emerged from my practice, using a range of academic fields to find the most suitable approaches to complement the knowledge acquired through my practice as a performer, lecturer and choreographer. This new information has influenced my practice, and my new practice has influenced the way I write about these academic fields. The result of this praxis investigation takes two forms: a comprehensive training

methodology, that inspired a new teaching practice and influenced a number of choreographic works; and a written document that describes, frames, complements, reinforces, and summarises the key discoveries to the research enquiry.

This thesis focuses specifically on two of my dance creations: *36*, created for EDge, the post-graduate company at LCDS and later re-created for companies in seven different countries; and *Kingdom*, commissioned by Scottish Dance Theatre.<sup>12</sup> My experiences and the discoveries made through the creation process of these works that informed the development of the training methodology, are described in Chapters 2 to 4, which detail more practical investigations into the ritualisation process of performance. Each ritualisation phase and its subsections will be firstly introduced in order to then offer a practical, phase-by-phase application of *Towards Vivencia*. Testimonies of the dancers involved in the processes of creating this methodology are also included. Finally, using *36* and *Kingdom*, I will expand on the choreographic result of implementing the ritualisation process during the creation of these dance pieces. In these three chapters, I will describe how I employed *Towards Vivencia* within the creation of *36* and *Kingdom*, and how I arrived at my compositional processes to devise the structures and movement vocabularies employed in these two works. However, it is important to note that the focus of this research is to develop a training methodology to develop the state of being of the performer, rather than in creating a choreographic method.

Please refer to page 9 for a short guide on how to use the audio-visual examples that illustrate all the phases. These videos are available on the attached

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<sup>12</sup> At the moment of writing this thesis, I am in negotiations with Acosta Danza to re-stage this piece in Cuba in Summer of 2018

USB, and also online on the following YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoGfSLpvrA1uAuUMqAJg-QHKbDSw3cYCs>

### *Towards the Appropriate Working Terms*

The nuances of personal transformation, peak experiences and heightened states of consciousness, such as those described in the preface, are widely varied and personal. Nowadays, one can access a vast collection of records related to peak experiences of actors and dancers in performance, what directors and choreographers require from them, and how individual members of the audience perceive performers and performances.<sup>13</sup> Some accounts are written in scientific form,<sup>14</sup> some follow a philosophical or logical reasoning,<sup>15</sup> while others present a mix of religious,<sup>16</sup> spiritual,<sup>17</sup> and/or magical perspectives.<sup>18</sup> It is questionable whether this plurality of voices has channelled the discussion as to what actually makes a performer exceptional beyond his/her technical abilities. It certainly does not represent a consensus or a single truth as to what constitutes being fully present in performance, nor how this can be achieved.

The following subsections are dedicated to establishing a vocabulary with which to work towards conveying the performative inner experience. Due to Descartes' legacy of body-mind dualism, I am aware that using the expressions

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<sup>13</sup> This is due to the proliferation of documentation (and ways of documenting) that new technologies have allowed over last three decades. As a general indicator, in 2012, 13,873 students of dance, drama and music were accepted into higher education institutions in the UK alone (UCAS, 2013). Consequently, and drawing only on the material generated within higher education institutions, the number of essays, dissertations and theses solely dedicated to the performing arts has exponentially increased in the last three decades. Additionally, the expansion of the Internet, and in particular video streaming, has further facilitated an explosion of archiving and self-documentation without historical precedent.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Gruzelier (2010)

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Buckingham (2005)

<sup>16</sup> E.g. McKim (2007)

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Hay (1994)

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Martínez and Albarracín (2003)

'state of mind' or 'presence of mind' can be seen as suggesting a purely mental process. However, throughout this research these terms appeared often as a result of an habitual use of the term in everyday language, including working in the studio. For that reason, I would also argue that the term 'mind' can also be understood as an holistic expression; implying that the whole being is at play.

According to Damasio, the intangible mind is the process which "encompasses both conscious and non conscious operations" (Damasio, 1999, p. 12). These processes are operated by our neural system, which, on a very reductionist level, can be described as a gigantic number of highly-specialised cells that are interconnected to conduct and process information, in fact just another part of the body. In order to be able to become an integrated device, the architecture of the brain is built according to the other bodily systems with which it interacts. Therefore, the way in which we experience the world is shaped by how our bodies are built, including, and especially, the brain.

Jumping from the structure of the physical brain to the existence of the intangible mind is a precarious scientific endeavour, yet one that is in process. As Damasio (1999) poses, "elucidating the mind is the last frontier of the life sciences" (p. 4). But following the previous reasoning, talking about the reflective mind, does not, and could not, exclude the brain and by extension the whole nervous system, meaning: the body. Hence, be it hunger or a mystical experience, the brain is the part of the body in charge of processing all bodily information, analysing that information and responding to it, which coincides with Damasio's definition of the mind, giving way to the use of, for economy of language, the

expression: 'state of mind',<sup>19</sup> and the possibility of understanding it as implying an holistic state that includes the physical form.

Having discussed and rejected Cartesian dualism, highlighting that, nowadays, it is widely accepted that the mind is an inseparable part of the body, encountering the expression 'state of mind' repeatedly in the literature accessed, and recognising that, due to habits and loosely established conventions, the expression 'state of mind' is commonly used when discussing personal experiences, during the following pages when the term 'state of mind' appears, I categorically refer to a psychophysical experience linking consciousness with the body and/or bodily happenings connected and reacting together, even if we cannot yet explain how those networks are formed or how they interact.

That notwithstanding, the expression 'peak performative state of mind' is too wordy and complex to be used continuously in the studio. Therefore, as part of this research, I had to overcome another semantic obstacle - to find a single term that adequately conveys the idea 'to experience an experience' mindfully and that is less generic than 'presence of mind' when referring to the experience I wanted to train on myself, and the state of mind I require for my work as choreographer/director.

### *What State of Mind?*

One of the goals of my research was to review the literature dedicated to the study of a performer's peak experiences in performance, and how to improve on it. Such literature often draws on the work of psychologist Mihaly

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<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, in the realm of cognitive sciences, human experiences are labelled as 'states of consciousness', in order to comprise the holistic experience. However, this term is too confusing to be used as part of our daily practice.

Csikszentmihalyi, who coined the term 'flow' to describe an optimal state of experience.<sup>20</sup> 'Flow' is defined as:

A dynamic state - the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement ... he experiences [the action] as a unified flowing from one movement to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and the environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future. (in Hefferon, 2006, p. 142)

While Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow', as I understand it, refers to a moment that can happen during the performance, the experience I am interested in is constructed from all the particular moments that happen before, during and after a performance. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi considers that 'flow' is always a rewarding experience, related and linked to successful and pleasurable states of mind. My experience as a dancer, as outlined in the preface, it can be a pleasurable experience, but it can also be a frustrating and painful one. Whatever the experience, the state of being I mastered through spinning is one of acknowledgment and acceptance. Therefore, the state of mind I seek as a dancer and teacher and is not always aligned with Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow'. In short, mine is not a training methodology to develop 'flow'.

Exploring alternatives to Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow', I investigated two different methods used in cognitive sciences<sup>21</sup> in order to: (1) identify and

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<sup>20</sup> The first publication reporting studies of the 'flow experience' was an article in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, which was followed by the book *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* by Csikszentmihalyi, both in 1975 (Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988, p. 3).

<sup>21</sup> These two methods are Biofeedback and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Appendix A describes these two different methods of studying the individual state of mind, and offers a detailed account of how I used them in this research.<sup>21</sup> In this appendix, I relate why, due to technical difficulties, I failed at using biofeedback to measure the state of mind in performance, but more importantly concluded that for the purpose of the artistic work intended, the use of external assessors was not appropriate. Therefore, the training methodology described in this thesis employs exclusively IPA methods, as explained in Appendix A.

catalogue the different states of mind that one can experience and (2) help me to create the right definition for the experience I associated with peak performance. Regarding the latter, the state of mind I refer to might resemble what Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. D'Aquili and Vince Rause (2001) describe as the *hyperarousal* state, characterised by keen alertness and fierce concentration (p.40). However, this does not fit completely, since the authors believe hyperarousal will occur spontaneously and that “conscious thoughts could be disastrous distractions” (*ibid.*, p. 41); while the state of mind I pursue is task-oriented but also the simultaneous *reflection on experience*.<sup>22</sup> My personal experience of peak performance sits between the two pairs of categories of the modified SOMIFA proposed by John Kerr, Hakuei Fujiyama, George Wilson and Kayo Nakamori: *Hyperquiescence with Arousal Breakthrough* and *Hyperarousal with Quiescence Breakthrough*. (*ibid.*, pp. 40-42).<sup>23</sup> However, none of these methods recognised the permanent transformation of those who experience the altered state of mind to which I refer. Once again, the answers found in neurology and cognitive sciences did not completely match what I was experiencing.

With whirling dervish dance being key to my research, I also examined the states of mind described in Sufi literature. The manifestation of the peak experience in the Sufi tradition is often described as ‘embodied ecstasy’ (Lewisohn, 2014). Finally, I encountered a doctrine where the different states that the practitioner can achieve are not only hierarchically classified but also differentiated between being temporary states or permanent stages or stations:

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<sup>22</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>23</sup> For a full description of this categorisation see Appendix A.

the term *ḥāl* refers to more temporal states of trance or ecstasy, while *maqām* refers to more stable stations of enlightenment.

The term *ḥāl*, or plural *aḥwāl*, is normally used followed by another expression that refers to the cause of the *ḥāl* or to how it manifests. Sufi literature recognises hundreds of grades of *aḥwāl*,<sup>24</sup> however, the most recorded are: (1) the *ḥāl* of *murāqabah* (watching);<sup>25</sup> (2) the *ḥāl* of *qurb* (nearness);<sup>26</sup> (3) the *ḥāl* of *wajd* (ecstasy);<sup>27</sup> (4) the *ḥāl* of *wudd* (intimacy).<sup>28</sup>

The framework of spiritual arousal related to Sufi practices, summarised in the following table, Qureshi's framework of spiritual arousal (Qureshi, 1986, pp. 119-120) became highly pertinent to my research question. This taxonomy defines four stages connected by a continuum of increasing intensity and related to the practitioner's self-control:

STAGE	SPIRITUAL STATE	TERM	SELF CONTROL
o	Neutral, receptive to spiritual arousal	No term	present
I	Activated devotional attitude Enthusiasm Incipient or mild arousal	<i>kaif</i> <i>halki kaifiyat</i>	present
II	Deeply moved, overcome with spiritual emotion Intense spiritual experience Strong arousal	<i>rūhāni kaifiyat</i> <i>rūhāni taraqqí</i> <i>ālā darje ki kaifiyat</i>	present
III	Transported, self obliterated Trance, ecstasy	beqābū, behāl behosí, wajd, hāl	absent

<sup>24</sup> This descriptions of *aḥwāl* have been constructed with the support of the literature available and personal communication with Shomik Mukherjee.

<sup>25</sup> Which induces in the practitioner fear or joy.

<sup>26</sup> Where the individual is not conscious of his own acts but can see God's bounties toward him.

<sup>27</sup> A trance-like state which physically is characterised by various and unexpected movements, agitation, and all types of dancing.

<sup>28</sup> Characterised by what the Encyclopædia Britannica (2001) describes as "the removal of nervousness, together with the persistence of awe. The Sufi becomes calm, contented, and reassured, but the overwhelming sense of the divine presence fills his heart with the kind of awe that is free from fear".

In Qureshi's taxonomy, the identity and control of the practitioner disappears into ecstasy during the last stage, which is not what I experienced during my practice. More approximate to my experience would be Friedlander's statement: "the dervish knows exactly where he is at all times. He does not lose himself in ecstasy but *becomes ecstasy*" (p. 146).<sup>29</sup> As Newland poses, enlightenment comes from practice, and practice sharpens the intellect (1999, p. 8). He also further explains how the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism maintains that wisdom cannot be acquired by attaining a "kind of spacy, non-conceptual state. If enlightenment were simply a matter of stopping the stream of conceptual thinking, then a hammer blow to the head ought to produce some very profound wisdom" (Newland, 1999, p.8).<sup>30</sup>

During my investigation, I did not identify with any of the narrow, conventional, limited, scientific or religious idioms I encountered. None of them encapsulate accurately the holistic, atemporal experience I described in the preface. In particular, I do not totally subscribe to these religious descriptions, as the state I associated with dervish dance that I pursue to be invoked in training performers is not uncontrolled ecstasy and loss of consciousness, but the realisation of submission and/or surrendering to the action, which is associated with pure consciousness, transformation and therefore enlightenment.

At first sight, it might seem that I am not referring to a unique state of mind but to a wide compendium of them. However, from experience, I am

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<sup>29</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> This research makes use of different religions and how they describe altered states of mind because, according to biogenetic structuralism, spiritual and religious practices is genetically engrained in our codes, therefore I consider that all those descriptions are different angles to explain the same human behavioural tendency and are not different cultural manifestations.

referring to a unique phenomenon with multiple manifestations. Retrospectively, and similarly to how Sufism recognises the different stages achievable under the umbrella of a divine experience, I conclude that the different manifestations I describe of peak performance state of mind are different degrees of the same heightened state of being occurring in performance, and, as Sufism describes, are the way towards the transformation of the performer.

In order to explain this, I often compared the state of mind I associate with peak performance with the psychophysical experience of hunger and the spectrum of nuances and states of mind that can accompany this sensation. From a slight to intense awareness; from famine to satiation; from the panic provoked by the threat of starvation to the lethargy experienced after a huge meal – all different manifestations of the same psychophysical experience.<sup>31</sup>

Drawing from my own practice, and establishing the foundations for the rest of this thesis, I can assert that the confidence and power I experience while executing a *kata* with an attitude of active surrendering, only differs in quality and intensity (but not in identity) from those moments where I experience simultaneously frustration and playfulness in my dancing. In both situations, I actively provoke, reveal and surrender to what is happening; I am aware of summoning a specific experience known to me through my training and concurrently I surrender to it, perceiving everything as an entirety. I step out of that particular event transformed. Based on my experience as a performer, the different stages of learning, executing and living the moment of performance are

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<sup>31</sup> The same applies to the electromagnetic spectrum, which spans from radio waves to gamma rays. Between both ends of the spectrum, there is a very small and clearly delineated range that humans can perceive. We speak of blue, red, white and black, but these are only different manifestations of a much bigger and isolated natural phenomenon that is the electromagnetic spectrum.

only the different landmarks of one unique spectrum when the state of mind associated with peak performance is intended, perceived in real time and leaves a mark on the person who undergoes this experience.

### *Vivencia*

In order to solve the semantic obstacle of how to refer to the experience of peak performance, I studied how other practitioners conveyed their own peak experiences. Sheets-Johnstone, in her book, *The Phenomenology of Dance* (1979), uses either the verb 'to live' in its adjective form 'lived' or the formula 'lived through'. She describes this experience as: "what is created and what appears is a cohesive flow of energy, not in the sense that the dancers continually change relationships and positions, but because the dancers and the dance are one" (p. 6). Turner (1985) offers extensive research concerning what 'experiencing' means in anthropological terms. His chapter "Experience and Performance" contains a thorough analysis on Dilthey's work and that of his exponents, and adds a postscript on the meaning of the word 'experience' (pp. 205-226).

Stanislavski suggested to his actors: "You who were playing . . . gave [yourselves] up completely to what was happening on the stage"<sup>32</sup> (in Carnicke, 1998, p. 107). Stanislavski used the Russian word *przeżywanie* to describe what the actor is experiencing in those unique moments. Sharon M. Carnicke (1998) explains how *The Dictionary of Contemporary Russian Literary Language* attributes one of the meanings of this term to Stanislavski alone, in the definition: "The genuine penetration of a psychic state in a represented character" (p. 109), and highlights the difficulty in finding a satisfactory

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<sup>32</sup> [originally: ourselves].

counterpart in English. *Przeżywanie*, which grammatically acts as a name depending on the context, has been translated as ‘the art of living a part’, ‘to live the scene’, ‘living and experiencing’, ‘emotional experience’, and ‘creation’, and has been aligned with emotions such as ‘the capacity to feel’ (Hapgood in Carnicke, 1998, p. 109).

When conveying my experience to other performers, I found that the use of the terms ‘to live’, ‘to experience’, ‘peak performance’, ‘presence’, ‘unique performative state of mind’ etc, was not only limiting but confusing. Due to the connotation of acquiring knowledge through practice, the etymology of the simple term ‘experience’ makes it a strong candidate to express fully the state of being I refer to.<sup>33</sup> However, its use is so generic nowadays that I don’t believe it can stand on its own to convey the same intricacies that *Przeżywanie* seems to do.

Moreover, terms borrowed from phenomenology, neurology and cognitive sciences were far too complex and alien for us practitioners to be used in our daily practice. As Jean Benedetti (1998) poses: “Whatever term we use, we must create an easy, simple, unpretentious working vocabulary to be used in the classroom and the rehearsal room” (p. ix).<sup>34</sup> Hence, at a very early stage of this research I sought a new vocabulary both resulting from and defined for my praxis in order to convey the experience I associate with peak performance, within one unique term. In order to do so, I turn back to my Spanish heritage.

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<sup>33</sup> From Latin *experientia* "a trial, proof, experiment; knowledge gained by repeated trials" (The Sciolist, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> Benedetti has researched and published a comprehensive analysis of Stanislavski’s works, in which the problem of finding workable terms in other languages remains unresolved.

Ortega y Gasset in his article entitled “Sobre el Concepto de Sensación” responded to the scholastic works of his contemporaries in Germany,<sup>35</sup> posing the question as to whether a new idiom might be coined to express what it is ‘to experience an experience’. By the end of the 19th century, philosophers such as Dilthey and Nietzsche frequently used *Erlebung* (German term, now obsolete) to convey ‘to experience’. However, it was Husserl who, in the third of his logical investigations, moved “[t]owards a theory of wholes and parts” (Husserl, 1913), and modified *Erlebung* to create the specialised term *Erlebnis*. Husserl coined this term to highlight that the experience has left an indelible mark on the one who lived it (Ortega y Gasset J. 1983, p. 257). Ortega y Gasset himself completed his article by establishing a new term that would be added to the Spanish dictionary in 1956. He converted the verb *vivir* (to live) into the noun *vivencia*,<sup>36</sup> whose definition remains the same to the present day. The Dictionary of Literature, published in 1949, in the journal *Revista de Occidente* edited by Julián Marías and Germán Bleiberg, defines *vivencia* as a neologism introduced into the Spanish language by Jose Ortega y Gasset, and frequently used in philosophical and aesthetic texts, mainly related to artistic creation. The word *vivencia* illustrates an episode that becomes immanent within the consciousness of the person who experiences it. A *vivencia* marks a ‘before and after’ in the personal history of

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<sup>35</sup> In particular, he responded to Heinrich Hoffmann, whose work at that time focused on Wilhelm Wundt’s descriptive psychology.

<sup>36</sup> *Vivencia* is a word that incorporates the process of living and the lived experience in one. In Spanish, the verb *vivir* (to live) becomes *vivencia* in its nominative form. Grammatically there is no difference between *vivir* and ‘to live’. In contrast, ‘lived’ is an adjective while *vivencia* acts as a noun that blends the words ‘lived’ and ‘experience’.

those who go through an experience of this kind. Whether dramatic or subtle, it always indicates a change.<sup>37</sup>

The value and necessity of using a non-English word here lies in the implications of these different semantics and the usefulness of this one unique word. Both *vivencia* and *przeżywanie* describe ideas that in English need several words to adequately express.

For the purposes of this research, when focusing on the performative practice, *vivencia* will refer to a particular experience lived by the performer, understood as: *the episode that remains engraved in the performer's existence as a result of an extreme awareness of his/her praxis during the continuous present moment.*<sup>38</sup>

### Performance as a Transformational Experience

Peter Brook states that: “the actor has himself as his field of work” (Brook, 1968, p. 66). Performers, along with religious figures and athletes, are rare cases in which the role of being the generator and the receptor of the action is accomplished by the same person. As I understand it and argue, performance is a reflexive event, whether or not an audience is present; it can be shared or witnessed by others, but its direct effects will always be upon the performer. Performances, of course, can also have an effect on those who are witnessing them, their audiences, but here the event, and therefore the experience, is that of

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<sup>37</sup> Regarding the use of the term '*vivencia*', it will mostly appear without the determiner 'a'. However, when referring to a particular experience of it, as opposed to the concept of it, it will appear as "a *vivencia*".

<sup>38</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

witnessing rather than that of doing.<sup>39</sup> Hence, if the act of performing falls to the performer, and if the performer must perform intentionally, it is only the performer who knows whether or not *vivencia* has been achieved or generated through his/her actions.

The holistic peak performative state of being the subject of this research, the term 'performance' here cannot be limited to the temporal, spatial and conceptual constraints of the popular use of the word.<sup>40</sup> From the 1970s, and within the domain of artistic practice, 'performance' is a flexible term. According to Matthews "[it] is quite proper that we have no agreed definition of 'performance' seeing as it is our 'object' of study, and also appropriate that our definition, descriptions and conceptions of performance should remain 'in development'" (2011, p. 33). Focusing on the experience of performance, I am perhaps extending the term 'performance' to that of 'performance behaviour'. Therefore the term 'performance' is used here to highlight the experiential notions of performing. In the words of Victor Turner:

Performance behaviour is known and/or practiced behaviour or 'twice-behaved behaviour', - 'restored behaviour' - either rehearsed, previously known, learned by osmosis since early childhood, revealed during the performance by masters, guides, gurus, elders, or generated by rules that govern the outcomes as in improvisation, theatre and sports. (1982, p.106)

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<sup>39</sup> According to Chalmers (1996), consciousness comprises '*qualia*' instead of knowledge. The individual's conscious experiences are called '*quales*'. A tooth pain is a *quale*, one's vision of red is a *quale*, etc. Chalmers poses that knowledge or understanding cannot substitute one's individual experience of what it is like, for example, to feel the heat of the sun on one's skin. For the purposes of this research, I consider that when an individual acquires a new *quale*, or experiences an old *quale* once again, he/she gains knowledge about him/herself. Following Chalmers' reasoning, what it is like to be oneself can really only be understood through one's consciousness. Therefore this thesis will continue using the term 'knowledge' to indicate a result of reflecting upon one's experiences.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, when the performance of a car, or the performance of an athlete is mentioned, it refers to how efficiently they execute their actions.

In accordance with Turner, the aim of this research is to create a method to ‘generate’ and then ‘restore’ what I understand as peak performative state and therefore train the dancer to become the ‘master, guide or guru’ that is capable of ‘revealing’ his or her peak state through his or her performance.

In order to explain the transformational aspect of this experience, this investigation draws to an extent on the sociological perspective of performance proposed by Erving Goffman that refers to “the social construction of the self as a presentational process akin to the construction and enactment of a theatrical role” (in Bauman, 2011, p. 712). Using the metaphor of life as theatre, Goffman proposes that the individual identity is:

A collaboratively crafted construction, produced and reproduced for presentation, recognition, and ratification before an audience, with part of the production process conducted backstage, as it were, before it is enacted front stage. (2011, p. 712)

Goffman continues incorporating a reflexive attitude that matches the creation of the performance with the creation of the self: “the performative construction of identity foregrounds the reflexive capacity of the self” (2011, p. 713). According to Page (2015), reflexivity is a quite mature form of reflection, that also carries out the connotation of self-change.<sup>41</sup>

The pioneering theatre director Richard Schechner sustains that performance can be explained by the attitude of the performers, rather than by which elements it utilises (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, Philip Auslander refers to the Aristotelian notion of performance as catharsis versus the psychoanalytical: “whereas the former sees catharsis as a type of learning, the latter sees it as a form of healing. The emphasis in Aristotle is on the ability to perceive oneself in

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<sup>41</sup> However, for the purpose of this research and for simplicity of language, both forms: reflective and reflexive will be used interchangeably.

terms of something greater” (1997, pp. 14-5). Both authors highlight the foundational notions of performance as a reflexive experience: Schechner defines performance as behaviour, while Auslander also includes the possibility of performance being a learning mechanism, a medium through which knowledge is presented or can be acquired.<sup>42</sup>

The idea of creating knowledge through performative behaviour automatically indicates the potential for change and therefore a transformation of those who perform. Taking this logical statement back to the idea of performativity, and drawing on Turner and Schechner’s ideas and the Aristotelian conception of performance used by Auslander, it is possible to conclude that a performance voluntarily experienced can constitute a transformative event.

Hence, for the rest of this thesis, when the term ‘performance’ appears I refer to an episode experienced by the individual which contains the potential to create a peak state of being that is transformative in nature and thus engenders insight; a type of knowledge/knowing.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cognitive theory asserts that learning can happen unconsciously as well as consciously. Varela and Shear (1999) suggest: “The notion of consciousness itself is clearly meant primarily to designate the fact that the subject knows about, is informed about, or in other words is aware of, the phenomenon” (pp.3-4). As awareness in performance is one of the main themes of this research, I will only focus on conscious learning that is produced through real time reflexivity, including different forms of learning such as skill acquisition; sustained attention, awareness and reflection on the action; as well as the attention state directed to all the activity occurring at any given moment. All of these encompass what I call *vivencia*.

<sup>43</sup> Although it might seem a rather complicated journey through logical statements and philosophical theories to delineate the angle from which ‘performance’ is studied here, it is important to note that this research is not aligned with the esoteric, magical, New Age or ungrounded art-therapy literature that I have encountered. While I understand the existence of those texts and the communities that surround them, in my opinion this can hamper the understanding of such a powerful experience, and even provoke rejection from more reticent and sceptical communities of opinion.

## Rituals

Inspired by d'Aquily's genetic structuralism,<sup>44</sup> Newberg *et al.* (2001) argue that ritual behaviour has biological roots. Ceremonial rituals are an elaboration of the neurobiological need of all living things to escape the limiting boundaries of the self. Thus, rituals perform an important survival function, offering a sense of special destiny. Rituals maintain group identity, thereby enabling a community to function more cooperatively and successfully. On the other hand, Newberg *et al.* also pose that everyday rituals are automatic behaviours that allow us to be more efficient in our daily chores, a resource for effort economy. This is a problematic description of both secular and religious rituals, as it does not make distinction between ritualistic and habitual behaviours. According to John C. Lyden (2003), "a habit or a custom is not a ritual unless it has some significance attributed to it beyond the fact that 'I always do this'" (p. 105). Therefore, for Lyden the difference lies in the aim that drives the action. Using the term *vivencia* to explain the voluntary experience of peak performance accords with Lyden's point of view on ritualisation. For actions to become ritual, the individual should drive those actions purposefully and willingly, but also, he/she should do so in a mindful way.

Grimes (2006) poses: "we ritualized in order to render the event real" (p. 74). Hence, we ritualise to devise, rehearse, stage and perform a series of actions in order to capture a particular concept, notion, idea or belief and enable it to become real (Newberg *et al.*, 2001, p. 80). In other words, ritualisation is used to integrate a new model into our existence.

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<sup>44</sup> The foundations of genetic structuralism are described in Appendix A.

By transforming a simple action into something meaningful for us, we are incorporating the capacity of transformation. As an example, Anna Halprin's main reason to call her practice 'rituals' is to find a purpose:

At the beginning, I wanted to break boundaries, go beyond limits . . . I wanted to find why to dance. The experience with cancer shifted the question. I wanted to find why to live, what is the meaning of life and being alive . . . I found how to use my art to live my life. The use of the word ritual allows me to use art to make changes, to have a purpose, dance for rain, dance for being successful. When dance has a purpose, it became so much more powerful and meaningful. (Personal communication, 16 January 2010)

Thus, it seems that ritualisation can be used as a mechanism by which to understand concepts otherwise difficult to comprehend. Rites of passage are a perfect example of embodied metaphorical transitions. It is easy to find examples of such expressions in our daily western customs. From weddings to gang initiations, there are multiple manifestations in which a group of individuals carries out a series of actions to convert an abstract concept into more palpable reality, such as the union of two people or the transmutation of an outsider into a member of a given community.

The ritual procedure matches perfectly the chronological systems of performance and *vice versa*: actions have to be devised, rehearsed, staged and performed. I am not suggesting that ritual and performance are equivalent, but, rather, that ritualisation, within my methodology is an effective mechanism to use in performance so that the performer enhances his/her labour and thereby renders *vivencia* through his/her actions consciously and willingly.

Ritualising a performance *per se*, however, does not transmute a piece of work into a ritual. Due to constraints of space, I will not discuss this in depth.

However, as an example, Maren Hoffmeister (2007) proposes a series of elements that a ritual must contain in order to be considered a ritual: symbolism, powerful actions, community involvement, defined by a temporal as well as a spatial frame, autonomous logic, repetition, atmosphere or mood, which can be described as religious, magical or transcendental (p. 225). A performance may or may not contain these elements, and ritualising performance does not necessarily transfer those qualities to an existing piece of work. In this sense, my work does not intend to either choreograph or perform a ritual, but instead, and as regards *vivencia* and its location, to ritualise performance itself.

# Chapter 1. Training and Training Methodologies: A Brief Contextualisation

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Respect your elders and predecessors. Treat us with tenderness, and then, when the time comes, kill us ritualistically. (Gómez Peña & Sifuentes, 2013, p. 186)

The need for training in performance is born out of the needs of individual practitioners and directors; it is based on their own views of the performing disciplines, and is normally conceived in order to satisfy the particular demands of their works (Bremser & Sanders, 2011, pp. 4-5). When a new methodology is presented, the emphasis is normally given to the individual activities that compound the method. However, according to Matthews (2011, p. 3) a training methodology constitutes more than just a series of exercises that will result in acquiring a specific set of skills. Creating a training methodology implies “the construction of social identities and the self-identification of individuals with ethical and aesthetic paradigms” (Matthews, 2011, p. 6). Hence, training can be considered *a particular practice experienced by a group of individuals, who form a self-contained, permanent or temporary community identified by the particular ethical, pragmatic and aesthetic models that this practice promotes and that that can be differentiated from the rest because it has an autonomous personality.*<sup>45</sup> This is clearly recognisable through the stereotypical communities created around different practices: yogis, martial artists, dancers, actors, etc. And the sub-communities that exist within: ballet dancers, contemporary dancers, improvisers, etc. Following Matthews’ perspective that training is more an

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<sup>45</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

identity than a series of exercises, the methods I explore throughout this chapter, and my own methodology, will not be described as a series of interconnected exercises or activities, but rather as conceptual approaches. This chapter offers a contextual analysis of some training methodologies that have been particularly relevant to the development of *Towards Vivencia*. It is not an exhaustive description and/or analysis of the entire body of work developed by each of the artists referenced. It is not my intention to assemble a new categorisation of artists and find a common ground for them, neither is it a classification of the type of performances they created. The aim of this chapter is not to judge or assess the efficacy of existing methods, hence, the systems that resonate with my own methodology will be described, but not critiqued. The only curatorial principle applied here is how influential working with these artists, witnessing their work, or researching their creative ethos has been in developing my own artistic practice.

Although my background is in dance, I have made use of selected actor training methods due to the emphasis they put on achieving peak performative states of mind in performance. I have encountered countless artists who categorically refuse to be positioned as part of the field of dance or theatre, and instead just concentrate on the body (Jans, 1999, p. 8). For instance, Belgian artist Wim Vandekeybus, whose work will be explored in the following pages, is commonly considered as a choreographer. However, he calls himself a 'director', and speaks about his performances as 'pieces' rather than dances (ibid., p. 10). Another very interesting case is the international company RootlessRoot. Even if the extremely virtuosic use of the body is the only path their work takes, they refuse to refer to themselves as a dance company:

We could describe it as a white cloud always changing, disappearing, appearing and flowing, as it needs... It's a structure through which we realize our practical philosophy in order to further expand and discover our artistic capacities and desires to dive into the emotional landscapes of the human being. (RootlessRoot, 2014)

Although I consider the boundaries between the disciplines of dance and theatre are more blurred than defined, for easy reading (and it not being the focus of this research to distinguish what belongs to one or the other) I will separate training for dancers and for actors as clearly distinct realities. According to Gordon:

all theatrical performance starts from the assumption that a performer is using her body to represent a virtual body. The actor's creation of a virtual body transforms an actual place demarcated as a playing space into a virtual place. Real time is transformed into virtual time for the duration of the performance. For the actor, the central paradox of acting is always the way in which her real body is used to represent a virtual body. (2006, p. 2)

Therefore, in theatre "the aim of a systematic approach to training and rehearsal is to help actors to create characters who can live (or at least seem to) on stage" (*ibid.*, p. 38). *Towards Vivencia* is centred on the act of performing, focusing on pure somatic/non-expressive tools. In short, this thesis concentrates on the creation and implementation of that training methodology with and for dancers. Nevertheless, selected elements from training methodologies for actors, described in the next section, have been distilled, condensed and reconstructed to create *Towards Vivencia*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> I also acknowledge the existence of other genres such as dance-theatre (Tanztheater), circus art, etc. However, I will not delve into the differences or concentrate on how *Towards Vivencia* can be applied in other contexts.

## Actor Training

One of the most important contributions of Stanislavski to the Western tradition of performance is “the idea that the actor’s imagination can be developed through systematic training” (Gordon, 2006, p. 38). In a similar vein, *Towards Vivencia* follows Stanislavski, emphasising that one can train to achieve the ideal performative state. As mentioned previously, Stanislavski coined a term to refer to the peak performative experience: *przeżywanie*. Similarly, I found the term in my native language: the Spanish *vivencia*, to refer to the state of being that is at the core of the act of performing. Stanislavski’s training method can be considered as actor-centred, as opposed to the ideas of Appia, Dalcroze and Copeau, where the actor was a scenographic instrument (*ibid.*). *Towards Vivencia* equally recognises the performer as the ultimate individual responsible for performance to happen, placing this methodology at the service of the performer.

Given the very nature of theatre, a codified training methodology focuses on how to perform a role better for representational purposes only. Stanislavski’s method poses nothing different; however, Stanislavski’s method stresses that what all performers need is a creative state of mind permitting “a state of heightened awareness that minimizes the possibility of being distracted by events in the real world and enhances her sensitivity to the fictional world that it is her task to inhabit” (Gordon, 2006, p. 46).

Grotowski built his performer research from Stanislavski’s study on physical actions. He studied Stanislavski’s ideas alongside those of Meyerhold and Vakhtangov as a student in Cracow (1954-56), and at GITIS (State Institution of Theater Art) in Moscow (1955) (*ibid.*). Some might argue that there is no such a thing as a Grotowski training system as such because:

Although a series of exercises were elaborated, he did not leave actor manuals behind. His approach, and his writing about this, provides us more with examples of how his research might be/had been/was being put into action. I consider Grotowski's writing more philosophical manifesto than methodology, whilst Cynkutis's book, published only recently, provides closer insight into how the company actually worked *in camera*. (A. Furse, personal communication, March 9, 2016)<sup>47</sup>

However, I would counter-argue that, according to Matthews' perspective on 'what training is called', Grotowski's life-long work has such a clear and distinctive identity that I do not consider it a sum of individual and isolated items, but rather, as interlinked concepts that might be understood as a method *per se*. In this light, Thomas Richards (1995) explains the essence of Grotowski's actor training:

The culmination of Grotowski's life-long research involving the potential efficacy of ritual performance, Art as Vehicle focuses on the subtle process of energy transformation that can be activated within an appropriately skilled and prepared doer working with vibratory songs linked to ritual traditions, in the framework of a precise and repeatable artistic structure. (p. 134)

In the previous chapter I outlined how the intuitive concept of ritualisation informed my creative work as performer and choreographer. Specifically, Grotowski's (1995) notion of 'Art as Vehicle' and also the 'objectivity of ritual' or 'ritual arts', directed my research to identify the performer's actions as the most important instrument in directing the self towards ritualisation:

When I speak of ritual, I am referring neither to a ceremony nor a celebration, and even less to an improvisation . . . Nor do I speak of a synthesis of different ritual forms coming from different places. When I refer to ritual, I speak of its objectivity, this means that the elements of the Action are the instruments to work on the body, the heart and the head of the doers. (p. 121)

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<sup>47</sup> The appropriate way to refer to his legacy would be something along the lines of: 'Grotowski-influenced training', or 'Grotowski-based exercises'. However, for the continuity of the text and for clarity, I will refer to 'Grotowski's training'.

In Grotowski's work a spirit of extreme absorption into the task and long hours of physically demanding training prevailed. By working at the limits of human capacity, Grotowski's aspiration is "to put the body into a state of obedience by taming it" (Richards, 1995, p. 159), not so that the body becomes rigid and shaped to one particular style, as in ballet training, nor as a medium to accumulate abilities for the sake of it, but in a way to challenge the body towards 'the impossible'. The goal is that:

the body becomes obedient without knowing that it should be obedient. It becomes a channel open to the energies, and finds the conjunction between the rigor of elements and the flow of life ('spontaneity'). Thus, the body does not feel like a tamed or domestic animal, but rather like an animal wild and proud'. (*ibid.*, p. 159)

Demanding exercises are directed towards removing unnecessary mental or physical obstacles that might hamper the performer's expression. This is the essence of Grotowski's *via negativa*. In his own words:

The actor must discover those resistances and obstacles which hinder him in his creative task. Thus, the exercises become a means of overcoming these personal impediments. The actor no longer asks himself: 'How can I do this?' Instead, he must know what **not** to do, what obstructs him. By a personal adaptation of the exercises, a solution must be found for the elimination of these obstacles which vary for each individual actor. This is what I mean by **via negativa**: a process of elimination. (1968, p. 101, original emphasis)

The ultimate aim of Grotowski's *via negativa*, is to reduce "the actors' fear of taking physical and, even more importantly, mental and emotional risks" (Papadelli, 2013, p. 59), in order to allow them to achieve what he called a 'total act'. For him, a 'total act' is the result of "accessing pre-conscious states of mind, resembling animal states or heightened (altered) states of consciousness" (*ibid.*).

For instance, seeking instinctive movements, he extensively worked on reflexes through external objects, such as throwing and catching sticks, which I will expand in the next chapter.<sup>48</sup> Grotowski's search for altered states of consciousness to enable the 'total act' (Papadelli, 2013, p. 59) was influenced by his study of Eastern spiritual practices: yoga, Kathakali, Chinese opera and also whirling dervish dance. 'Art as Vehicle' aims for the actor persona to disappear, to surrender to the 'total act' and therefore to experience a self-transcendental state.<sup>49</sup> "Unlike Antonin Artaud's anarchic and uncontrolled trance, Grotowski emphasised the importance of the 'conjunction of opposites', (*conjunctio oppositorum*) that is, spontaneity and discipline, for the total act to be possible" (*ibid.*, p. 60). In Grotowski's tradition the surrendering of the actor to the 'total act' represents the ultimate "act of self-penetration, [the actor] reveals himself and sacrifices the innermost part of himself" (Grotowski, 1969, p. 35). My description of the path towards *vivencia*, 'active surrendering', might also be considered a 'conjunction of opposites' from Grotowski's perspective.

It was my encounter with Jerzy Grotowski's approach, and the performative work of his successors, that enabled me to identify the performer's actions as the most important instrument in directing the self towards ritualisation. However, this is also one of the main differences between Grotowski's training and *Towards Vivencia*: the understanding of the term 'action'. For Grotowski, if a physical action does not have a psychological objective, then it is only an activity (such as eating, cleaning, smoking a pipe).

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<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed account of the individual exercises employed in Grotowski's training, Zbigniew Cynkutis has recently published a book entitled: *Acting with Grotowski: Theatre as a Field for Experiencing Life*, in which Cynkutis captures his own first-person experience of Grotowski's training method.

<sup>49</sup> Here, transcendental refers to a 'beyond the ordinary or common experience', not a trance-like state where the actor loses control of his actions.

However, “an activity can *become* a physical action” (in Richards, 1995, p. 74).

Grotowski defines the difference between an activity (described here as a movement) and physical actions:

If I am walking towards the door, it is not an action but a movement. But if I am walking toward the door to contest ‘your stupid questions’, to threaten you that I will break up the conference, there will be a cycle of little actions and not just movement. (in Richards, 1995, p. 76)

In Grotowski’s method, the term ‘action’ appeals to the previously referred expressive/virtual world. In this sense, action is embodied intention. Lisa

Wolford (2010) affirms that:

Physical action consists not of the bare fact of walking, which in itself is only an activity, but in the actors’ awareness of *why* and/or *for whom* they are walking; the movement itself is only a pretext or a means (p. 212, original emphasis)

As a dancer, I believe I encountered those precious moments defined by Grotowski as ‘total act’ or self-transcendence. I experienced these as a fine balance between pragmatic precision, commitment and full dedication to my actions in performance, without the need to give my actions a significance beyond themselves. Wolford speaks of the actor’s awareness of *why*. *Towards Vivencia* concentrates on the way, not on the why, of executing the actions. Once this difference is established I pose that, as in Grotowski’s approach to training, my methodology makes use of very demanding physical activities that require the skills of a trained dancer, executed in this delicate liminal space between spontaneity and discipline (active surrendering) in order to lead the performer to a self-transcendent state. Grotowski’s definition of the state of being associated with his concept of the ‘total act’ corresponds with my concept of *vivencia*. If

Grotowski's 'total act' is the result of applying *via negativa*, in contrast, the training methodology I propose does not use *via negativa* to help the dancer to get rid of unnecessary habits or elements. On the contrary, *Towards Vivencia*, and particularly the components: "Acquiring the Necessary Skills" and "Multitasking", argue for the accumulation of a particular set of skills and mechanisms to allow the performer to execute confidently his/her actions with the maximum attention to detail and with the highest possible technical proficiency. I do not heed the need to neutralise the dancer's habits when they are trained in somatic movement but rather to build upon them.

*Towards Vivencia* seeks utmost versatility, coordination and virtuosity in the gesture and attuned rapport in ensemble work. My research combines the notion of altered states with self discipline and a complete synchronisation with the environment, included and most importantly the other members of the team. The purpose is not to free the performer, but to allow the performance of technically demanding routines, and the accomplishment of a series of tasks that would not be possible without the total commitment to the action and the rapport of the group.<sup>50</sup>

Stanislavski's, Meyerhold's - and particularly Grotowski's - methods of working have been especially relevant in reaching a definition of *vivencia* and delineating the process of ritualising performance. However, the actual content of my methodology in action draws mainly from the body of work of the contemporary choreographers described in the following pages.

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<sup>50</sup> The use of ensemble work in dance-related training is one of the most unique concepts that differentiate *Towards Vivencia* from other training methods. This will be further expanded in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

## Dance Training

Rudolf Laban's Eukinetics is conceivably the breakthrough that marks the liberation of dance from dramaturgy and expressiveness. Eukinetics allowed for the understanding of dance as movement alone (Martin in Lepecki, 2006, p. 4),<sup>51</sup> paving the way towards the non-narrative, modern, contemporary, Post Modern, conceptual, somatic, and other forms that inform my own heritage.<sup>52</sup> Laban created a system whose aim was to analyse "the expressiveness of the body's motion in relation to space and time" (Bremser & Sanders, 2011, p. 4). Laban's work has influenced a multitude of practitioners since, with Post-Modern dance of the Judson Church artists in the USA, emphasising the discipline as principally somatic (Burt, 2006). Among contemporary choreographers whose work is widely influenced by Laban, the most notable and highly relevant to my research is William Forsythe.<sup>53</sup> Developing, codifying, systematising and disseminating an original dance technique are arguably Forsythe's most remarkable contributions to the history of dance. His technique was first systematised in 1994, when the ZKM/Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe collaborated with him to produce a

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<sup>51</sup> Prior to Laban's Eukinetics there are other examples such as Nikolai Foregger's physical training system. However, his legacy is not as relevant for this research.

<sup>52</sup> The pinnacle of this emancipation is probably represented by Merce Cunningham, who worked to respond to the excessive theatricality of dance pioneers such as Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss and Martha Graham. Cunningham explored the non-representational in dance that is 'performed for the sake of satisfaction in the movement' (Fraleigh, 1987, p. 111).

<sup>53</sup> In a series of videos by Megan Reisel (2001), Forsythe states that his technique, understood as how to organise movement in the space, has been inspired by Laban's theories. "Forsythe expands on Laban's notion of writing by producing a set of choreographic exercises that show bodily movements that are less balletic and less choreutic" (Salazar, 2015, p. 63). While Laban fixes the relationship between the dancer and a geometrical form, such as a cube and the movement is generated within and around those objects, Forsythe is continuously changing the position from where the movement originates. The main difference between Laban and Forsythe's techniques, is that Laban is interested in finding the laws that facilitate harmonic, systematic and architectural proportions to the movement and the body as a whole, while Forsythe is interested in using the same system in order to create movement, breaking and re-constructing classical movement vocabularies (Botana, 2010, p. 120).

'digital dance school'. The result of this project was a CD-ROM entitled: *William Forsythe: Improvisational Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*.<sup>54</sup>

Although Forsythe's dancers are known for their impeccable ballet technique, Forsythe (1996) states that his interest does not lie in using ballet technique as a choreographic tool, but rather as a starting point. Forsythe's choreography is understood not only as the generation of movement but the organisation of the body, the body in the space and "how his dancers produce the material in performance" (Bremser & Sanders, 2011, p. 164). Of particular relevance to this investigation is how Forsythe directs his dancers in order to become the creators of the choreography in real time. Forsythe does not teach his technique through direct visual information about the movement, but through improvisational work and personal problem-solving. He focuses on the kinaesthetic perception (Botana, 2010, p. 115). In his own words:

I give the dancers my thoughts and not the results of them. I don't tell anyone what to do. I just tell them how they should do it. I have only created the conditions, but the movements are made manifest by the dancers themselves. (in Bremser & Sanders, 2011, p. 164)

As with Stanislavski's and Grotowski's training methods, Forsythe's "dancers are not considered instruments to be moulded by his whim but an integral part of his creative process" (Bremser & Sanders, 2011, p. 164). In Forsythe technique, movements are generated by a dancer in the moment of the performance following very clear guidelines, but nonetheless generated on the spot, affecting how the rest of the choreography unfolds. For instance, movement

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<sup>54</sup> This CD-ROM contains 60 video chapters in which Forsythe himself executes and explains the fundamental principles of his movement language. This compilation of videos is possibly one of the most comprehensive and technologically complex, but still accessible, systematisations of a motional vocabulary in the history of dance.

can instigate and can be instigated from the movement of other dancers.

Forsythe terms this “cue giver” and “cue receiver”, creating in this way a complex movement score that can only happen when it is performed.<sup>55</sup>

This creation in real time has a clear impact on the performers’ experience in performance. According to Peter M. Boenisch (2006), Forsythe technique not only allows for an infinite number of possible relationships, but also pushes the dancers to move not as if on ‘auto-pilot’, thus “they present instead of represent... allowing it [the body] to act as an agent - but one that is still working within clearly defined limits” (p. 159).

Forsythe’s codification of his technique is the most comprehensive yet accessible training methodology I have encountered. Witnessing his work, studying his technique and listening to lectures and interviews, stimulated the idea of structuring the different practices that have helped me to achieve *vivencia* in a simple and comprehensive way. Whilst there are no similarities between Forsythe’s vocabulary and the one I use in my compositions, there are nonetheless similarities between his approach and my own, in that: (1) both consider the performers as the creators of the performance in real time; (2) both require the performers to consciously present their performance, rather than casually re-present an automatised routine they are executing; and (3) both require an exquisite and virtuosic proficiency in the use of the body to maximise the effect of these two working methodologies.

The difference between the notion of presentation in Forsythe technique and that in *Towards Vivencia*, is that the gestures the dancers perform in

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<sup>55</sup> The website <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu> designed by Maria Palazzi, Norah Zuniga Shaw and Forsythe himself, unfolds the organisational structures found in Forsythe’s work *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, allowing the viewer to understand all those relationships (2009).

Forsythe's work have been abstracted to become movement without an ulterior message. In this way, the dancers present movements, they do not re-present geometrical shapes. In my work, I do not equip the actions with a message to be conveyed, but I also do not abstract the movement from its origin: if the performer is throwing bottles, tying up knots or dodging obstacles in performance it is precisely because movement is generated by those actions, and it is this pragmatic movement (action) that interests me.

### *Belgium*

By the mid 1990s, after two decades characterised by an extraordinary creative energy, Belgium became the European reference for contemporary dance and theatre. Many dance-artists chose this city as their base and many more travelled back and forth to perform, attend workshops and performances.<sup>56</sup> Between 2002-2008, two experiences I had whilst based in Brussels were particularly influential for my practice, and represented the type of work I was interested in researching: the repertoire of Ultima Vez and an intensive research/creation period lead by Adibi.

Ultima Vez was founded in 1986 by choreographer, director and filmmaker Wim Vandekeybus (Ultima Vez, 2002). Although the company does not have a codified methodology of training, their style of work is distinctive and their

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<sup>56</sup> Erwin Jans (1999), in the introduction of a publication dedicated to Vandekeybus, describes the development of the Belgium performing arts scene in this way:

Jan Fabre, Jan Decorte, Jan Lauwers with the Epigonen theatre and later the Needcompany, among others, each developed their own strongly visual theatre language. The overlapping of genres and interdisciplinarity were two central ideas of the new aesthetics developed at the beginning of the eighties which sought to link up with the international theatre avant-garde. Also (and especially) in the field of dance, Flanders awoke violently from a long hibernation.... Just a few years later, with Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, Jan Fabre and Vandekeybus, Flanders had taken its place among them at the avant-garde top. With reference to *What the Body Does Not Remember*, a Dutch dance journalist wrote in 1987 of Vandekeybus: 'He obviously belongs to the new bunch of theatre-makers . . . who have made the Belgians the Masters of the Body for the last few years (p. 8).

movement vocabulary is unmistakable. This uniqueness originates from the creative process that Vandekeybus applies in each of his works.<sup>57</sup> His unique movement vocabulary is not inspired by, nor reacts against classical and modern dance traditions. Instead, Vandekeybus “draws his inspiration from other domains: his familiarity with animals, the stylised dance-fight of the tango, physical effort, physical risk, the bizarre and magical world of writers such as Paul Bowles, Italo Calvino, Milorad Pavić, Julio Cortázar” (Jans, 1999, pp. 10-11).

Vandekeybus’s motto is: “Back to reality. A return to ‘real’ movement” (in Jans, 1999, p. 8). The precision, the speed at which the actions are executed, and the fact that they are not improvised, but previously set and choreographed, established the idiosyncrasy for which his work is known. This ‘back to reality’, and this choreographic aesthetic, founded a unique trend that has been continued, imitated, expanded and celebrated widely by the international community of dance and theatre.<sup>58</sup>

My first direct contact with the work of the Brussels based Ultima Vez company was in the summer of 2002, at a two-week intensive repertoire workshop with Iñaki Azpillaga. Here, we not only learnt a number of sections from the company’s first creation: *What the Body Does Not Remember* (1987) but we also applied principles of Ultima Vez’s work such as risk, danger and ‘back to reality’ to the creation of new movement material. This gave me a deeper insight into what Vandekeybus requires from his performers, along with the realisation

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<sup>57</sup> Vandekeybus is one of the most prominent examples of a choreographer/ director whose training or movement vocabulary is embedded in the creation process rather than being codified.

<sup>58</sup> Many ex-Ultima Vez performers are now prominent names in the dance world, including Carmelo Fernandez and Juan Benitez, co-founders of the company El Ojo de la Faraona; Rasmus Ölme, head of dance of The Danish National School of Performing Arts; Hans Van den Broeck, artistic director of CIE SOIT; and RootlessRoot led by Linda Kapetanea and Jozef Fruček.

that although his work fascinated me, and I consider Vandekeybus's work revolutionary, I rejected the way the company trains and performs. The body is used as a platform for tension, threat, chance and impulsivity. The physical risk and repetition of such an extreme movement vocabulary puts considerable strain on the body, often materialising in injuries. Risk and physicality are the principles of the company and this is what fascinated me as a spectator, but as a practitioner, I take all possible measures to avoid injury, even if that means not joining a company whose work I so admire. This made me realise the importance of creating a safe environment around my own practice. Although in my own work I too employ the concept of returning to the authenticity of the movement, and to the pragmatism of the gesture, I also pay attention to how to train the body in order to prepare for the stress that it is about to endure. Therefore, with *Towards Vivencia* I aim to build in part on aspects of Vandekeybus's work, putting in place a series of mechanisms that provide a regulated learning environment even when the gesture and the setting employed in the work carries tension and risk for the performer. By structuring a training process, and establishing a methodology where the first steps are (1) the accumulation of the skills needed for the performance to happen safely and (2) a collateral training that allows the members of the group to create a temporal community, *Towards Vivencia* is a methodology that increases the physical and emotional safety of dancers. Each component has been carefully researched, devised and implemented, as will described in the following three chapters.

In the same summer of 2002, I was also part of a creative research process led by Kosro Adibi. Adibi's main interest at the time was Contact Improvisation (CI), to which I had been introduced at the Conservatoire in Spain and practiced regularly at ad-hoc contact jams. Steve Paxton, who is an athlete, gymnast, martial artist, dancer, and choreographer, is regarded as 'the founder and initiator of Contact Improvisation' (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, p. 21).<sup>59</sup> CI was born following one of the main characteristics that defined the Judson Dance<sup>60</sup> collective: the rejection of dance techniques. They "jettisoned the traditional language of dance and used every day, "pedestrian" movements such as sitting, lying, rolling, falling" (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, p. 18). Their interest lay in a kind of movement which did not require a trained dancer and that everybody could do and perform. Forty years later, CI has evolved widely and been used in limitless ways for an infinite number of artists. It is now commonly used for many dance-artists to create and set very athletic, physically complex and highly precise dance phrases. As with the work of Vandekeybus, CI helped me to train the body's autonomous intelligence and realise that "it reacts independently, has instinctive reflexes and functions most effectively therefore with minimum interference from 'will-power'" (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, pp. 55-56). However, CI is a much safer practice than that of Vandekeybus. CI departs from anatomical and kinaesthetic principles to direct towards the human aspect of these forces: emotional states, communication and sharing (*ibid.*, pp. 42-43). Many dancers, choreographers and

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<sup>59</sup> Paxton's experiment Magnesium, that constituted the foundation of CI, took place at Oberlin College, Ohio, in January 1972. It entailed 12 men colliding, falling and jumping. Building on research for a solo he had created prior to Magnesium, Paxton became interested in finding safe ways of reaching the floor with high momentum and of colliding with other bodies, thus exposing them 'safely' to great danger (2008). Ultimately, as he notes, their question of "how to survive what [they] were trying to do ended up being Contact Improvisation" (2008).

<sup>60</sup> Steve Paxton is one of the founders of the dance collective Judson Dance Theatre (1960 – 1964).

performers, Adibi included, have dedicated long periods of their practice to study and gain control of CI, therefore this long tradition has made of CI a highly efficient and safer technique (Papadelli, 2013, p. 78). This influenced *Towards Vivencia* in that it demonstrated the value of systematising a practice, thereby making it more effective as it can be corrected and tuned.

In order to align my own work to those of my contemporaries, I often turned to RootlessRoot and Fighting Monkey Practice. Linda Kapetanea and Josez Frucek performed together as part of *Ultima Vez* between 2002 and 2005. In 2006, they formed RootlessRoot as “a vehicle for their own productions, research and teaching” (RootlessRoot, 2014).<sup>61</sup> The use of strength, speed-reaction and commitment to the moment are constants in their work. As directors, Kapetanea and Frucek demand a very wide set of skills from their performers, varying from production to production, in styles ranging from martial arts to circus. The requirements of each work are always at the highest virtuosic level; their training is strict and demanding. For Kapetanea and Frucek, devising a new work also means devising a specific training for it. They do not differentiate between that and the creative process. For instance, in *Sudden Showers of Silence* (2007), Kapetanea and Frucek execute an exceptionally fast choreography based on Kali.<sup>62</sup> This choreographed fight lasts nearly five minutes. To achieve the essential speed and precision, Kapetanea and Frucek dedicated much of the overall creation process to gaining the necessary skills, training and to rehearsing this

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<sup>61</sup> Their work has often been compared to that of Vandekeybus, but it is important to note that Kapetanea and Frucek were already formidable performers, highly athletic and virtuosic, when they became part of *Ultima Vez*, rather than becoming exceptional athletes and virtuosic performers during their three years with the company.

<sup>62</sup> Kali is a Filipino martial arts discipline in which the weapons used are two baton sticks, generally made of rattan, a species of palm tree.

section of the piece. Over the years, their work started to focus less on creating and more on training, to the point that RootlessRoot is currently more known for their training methodology called 'Fighting Monkey Practice' than for their choreographic works. Kapetanea and Frucek are currently working on systematising 'Fighting Monkey Practice' (J. Frucek, personal communication, July 19, 2013), hence the information available about it is still scattered and disconnected. The most striking component of their work is the use of multiple disciplines. As Kapetanea and Frucek create, train and perform together, working in couples is essential to their training. They promote this kind of work to expand physical capabilities beyond usual habits, and their training is deeply rooted in unpredictability. In this way, the idea of play in 'Fighting Monkey Practice' is directly related to that developed by Lecoq, as will be described in the section "Games Are Serious Things", in Chapter 3. While 'Fighting Monkey Practice' focuses on pair-work, my interest is broader than the dynamics of two people working together. For me, the notion of group and ensemble work is essential, as explained in Chapter 2, section "Collateral Training: The Performer Within a Wider Reality". That aside, 'Fighting Monkey Practice' is, to my knowledge, the most recent attempt to codify an artistic practice, aiming to design a comprehensive dance training methodology. Throughout the next three chapters, I will refer to RootlessRoot again to expand on how their approach to dance training has informed the creation of *Towards Vivencia*.

As with all the training methodologies described in this chapter, I consider that *Towards Vivencia* is more than just the sum of the activities explained in the next three chapters. Its formulation and, by extension, the working tasks that I have devised to engender it, are there to serve a transformational process.

*Towards Vivencia* exercises what is at the heart of the act of performing: the state of being of the performer him/herself. This training methodology aims to enhance the performative experience; therefore, it is not a substitute for traditional movement training more focused on drills, acrobatics and/or specific manoeuvres. On the contrary, *Towards Vivencia* builds on more traditional training methodologies in complementary fashion, providing a series of tools for dancers. Moreover, only thoroughly technically trained performers will be able to maximise the effects of the training I propose, as they already have the means to work on the necessary skills and the capacity to dive fully into a new mechanism of work.

So far, this thesis has laid out my personal experience of the state of being this research is investigating, as described in the preface. The introduction explained the main key concepts for this work including the term *vivencia*. To complete the initial phase of my investigation, Chapter 1 has reviewed the work of those artists and scholars who have influenced the creation of the methodology *Towards Vivencia*, which aims to provide tools by which such optimum state of being in performance can be achieved. The preface, introduction and Chapter 1 have prepared the ground for Chapters 2, 3 and 4, which will detail practical investigations into the ritualisation process and resultant methodology.

# Chapter 2. Towards Vivencia

## Entering Performance

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An actor requires methods which will produce a believable 'human' performance every single night, irrespective of what the actor is actually feeling. (Oida & Marshall, 1997, p. 57)

### Introduction

This and the next following two chapters outline the training methodology I have devised in order to facilitate access to the peak performative state that this research refers to as *vivencia*. In the first instance, this methodology was devised to allow myself to replicate at will the experience that I associate with peak performance, and later on to be able to direct the professional dancers I worked with, or the dance students I taught, *Towards Vivencia*.<sup>63</sup>

*Vivencia* is a subjective encounter with experience and/or a private aesthetic value. Hence, I would agree with Oida, that “just as there are many levels of performance, there is no one ‘right’ way to perform, but many” (Oida & Marshall, 1992, p. 72). In this way, “acknowledging that there is no single truth does not mean there are no truths. Instead, there are many” (Claid, 2006, p. 5). Thus, considering how “diverse, contradictory and idiosyncratic theories and approaches to acting have historically been in the West, from the early Greek theatre to the late twentieth century” (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2013, p. 5), there are clearly many truths as to what constitutes any performative state and how it can be achieved. This research is the result of looking for *a* truth as to what performance

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<sup>63</sup> *Towards Vivencia* is aimed to individuals whose main background is dance. Throughout the next three chapters I discuss how the more skilful these dancers are the more effective the training. However, to avoid confusion, this chapter refers to the inquiry participants as dancers, without discerning whether they were students, professional performers or workshop participants.

presence is, heuristically, and how it can be achieved or enhanced. Hence, the exercises proposed here, or the choreographic examples are only the beginning of this research. The ritualisation process is the result and it can remain valid if applied to different artistic works.

*Towards Vivencia* has been created as an open structure because it reveals a path, not *the* path, for the performer to become a conduit through which a given piece of choreography can exist. It articulates an experience that can be taken onwards by the dancer, since it is built on a methodological approach that in turn can be understood retrospectively. Devising an open methodology does not make it any less strict or rigorous than a closed one might appear to be. *Towards Vivencia* presents a number of methodological approaches which a performer grasps and modifies to fulfil their own unique needs. This plasticity is what makes this methodology even more challenging, as it demands the performer's full participation, from its conception to its application. Throughout this thesis I pose that it is the performer's responsibility to bring the performance to life.

The ritualisation process I identify as key to my methodology can be employed in any developmental stage of a performance work's life, from rehearsals and devising process to performances. I propose that ritualisation, in my own practice, is a cyclical rather than a linear process. It can be viewed as a macro-cycle, embracing the entire life of a particular work, from its conception to the final time it is performed: a meso-cycle, employed for a particular period of work (devising, touring, etc.); or a micro-cycle, such as a one-off creative

workshop or any one specific performance.<sup>64</sup> According to each individual performer's expertise, skill set and situation, they can use the ritualisation process that consists of: entering, experiencing during and exiting, to devise their own exercises. They can customise their own process to engender the necessary conditions for *vivencia*: collateral training, demystification, playfulness, multitasking, commitment and reflexion. This methodology offers a unique first-person orientated perspective with an open structure through which performers can apply consciously and mindfully all the embodied knowledge they have accumulated throughout their practice.

I must stress that ritualisation, as described comprising *Towards Vivencia*, is not a choreographic method. The exercises devised to ritualise performance will always be directed towards training dancers to access the performative state I require as a choreographer. However, they could be disconnected from the aesthetic values of the work in which they are applied. Regarding the two finished works comprising part of this thesis, I can argue that *36*, it is in fact a choreographic product of this training methodology. It was created in the midst of this research and therefore the choreographic result is fully influenced by this methodology. However, *Kingdom* is an example of how ritualisation has been applied to a choreographic process and, therefore, how specific tasks had to be created to ritualise the creation process as it progressed. This thesis, and by extension *Towards Vivencia* as a training methodology, is not a ready-made recipe of tasks and exercises to apply from a manual. It is, rather, a compass to

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<sup>64</sup> This terminology is directly borrowed from sports training methodology, where a macro cycle can be a prolonged period of time of several months; a meso cycle is a sub-cycle of the macro cycle and is normally of 2-6 weeks in duration; and a micro cycle is a sub-cycle of the meso cycle and is a training period of 2-10 days (Galvin and Ledger, 1998).

guide performers *towards* an ideal performative experience; and a proposal as to how to devise exercises in order to ritualise performance. In short, *Towards Vivencia* is the training of the nine aspects in which I divided the ritualisation process and that they are unfold in the next three chapters: Acquiring necessary skills; Collateral Training; Demystification of the act of performing; Games are serious things; Multitasking; The doer; Cooling down; Heuristic Enquiry; and The Ritualisation Trace.

Throughout this investigation I conceived and tested an extensive compendium of exercises in order to locate, replicate and enhance the necessary outcome for each phase of the ritualisation process. Due to lack of space, it is not possible to offer a complete itemisation of all the exercises created and applied during this process, or the testimonies collected.<sup>65</sup> The following examples are the result of my creative need to train the particular sensations that in my experience comprise *vivencia*.<sup>66</sup> In the following pages, I offer one or two examples of exercises for each phase of *Towards Vivencia*. These have been selected for their specificity to illustrate each of the ritualisation phases. The description of each exercise is brief as the evidence of the research is mainly patent in the videos attached to this thesis, therefore the reader is requested to shift between the reading and the visual aids to gain an adequate understanding of the training proposed.

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<sup>65</sup> *Towards Vivencia* is based on the individual and his/her unique experience, and therefore the testimonies recorded and the tendencies exposed in this chapter are intended as a framework that might guide future trainees in their own experiences, and not as a statistical validation of the methodology.

<sup>66</sup> From trial and error, testing and evolving initial ideas, these tasks are the product of adapting some of the practices I borrowed from other disciplines or artists, or originally created from my own need as a performer.

## Entering performance

Often building on superstition and/or by replicating habits, many performers develop their own preparation routines before going on stage. *Towards Vivencia* expands on this custom with the aim of rendering *vivencia* by ritualising not only the entering of the performance but also the actual performance and the exiting it.

Usually, well-defined borders are delineated between the everyday world and the performing domain. The Noh-trained performer and director Oida begins with the daily labour of cleaning the workspace (Oida & Marshall, 1997, pp. 1-2).<sup>67</sup> Oida's preparation of the space emphasises the existence of the inner dimensions of the performer's work and I consider it a perfect exercise to help the performer to consciously decide to enter the performative mode. Moreover, cleaning the workspace is an act of humility,<sup>68</sup> that corresponds with the idea of 'surrendering' to the action.

To elaborate on what I mean by 'entering': in 2009, I attended a workshop entitled *From the Shaman to the Actor*, by Rachel Karafistan, in which I was introduced to the concept of *Axis Mundi*. Karafistan explained how some actors use this concept to literally 'walk into' a performative mode. She described how some actors use the action of walking a corridor or climbing a staircase leading to the theatre in order to leave his/her normal life behind and enter a new world as a character.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> I personally experienced the same introduction to a workshop held by Fabulous Beast director Michael Keegan-Dolan, 11-13th March 2011.

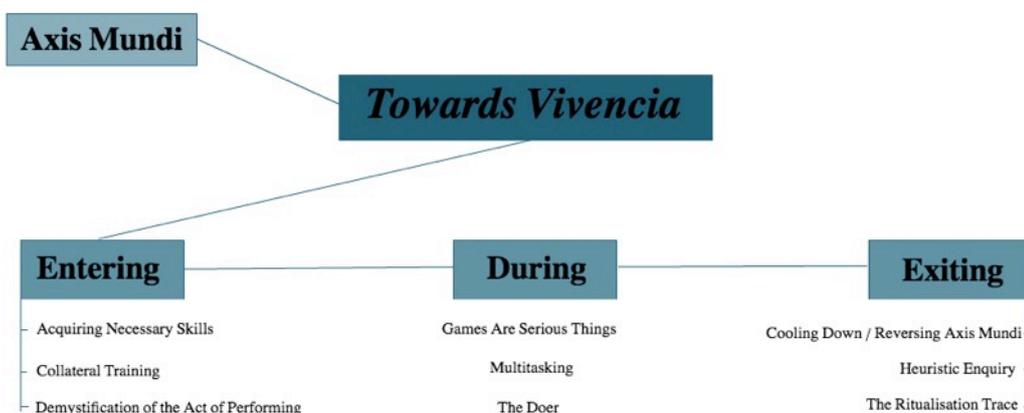
<sup>68</sup> Which I see as a fundamental characteristic of the ritualisation process and related to the notion of executing a *kata* described in the Preface.

<sup>69</sup> In the section "Games Are Serious Things", in Chapter 3, I explicate how rituals require stepping out of 'real' life into a temporal sphere of activity; entering a new world as ritual performers.

As a performer, I had always carried out a warm-up that helped me to confront not only the physical demands of the work, but also to trigger my performative state. Even before I heard of *Axis Mundi* as a concept, I had a similar mechanism in place: I normally consciously used the door of the dressing room to leave my ‘normal’ life behind and returned through it after the performance ended. It was not the first note of the music or the curtain rising that triggered my performative mode. That physical location and the simple action of ‘stepping out’ of a known place to walk the corridor towards the stage marked the beginning of my performance.

This concept is widely employed in my work. The beginning of *36* and *Kingdom* were devised as a choreographed *Axis Mundi* (*36* 00:32-02:00 and *Kingdom* 00:00-08:00). However, as with any other phase of this method, when performers are introduced to my work, it is their responsibility to create and implement their own specific actions in order to step into the ritualisation of their performance.

Once the first step has been made, the rest of the ritualisation methodology unfolds as follows.



## Acquiring Necessary Skills (Specific Physical Training)

Theories associated with athletic training differentiate between a general (sometimes called ‘neutral’) approach to movement training and a specific one (Evans, 2009, p. 29). The former refers to a system located at the foundational level of a professional education. It aims to provide mastery in different approaches. It develops over a significant period of time. It is sustained, intensive and systematic. The latter refers to a punctual study of particular skills required within a specific work. The ritualisation phase “Acquiring Necessary Skills” involves the second approach. As a professional choreographer, I assume the dancers I am working with have already been exposed to a ‘neutral’ training during their education.<sup>70</sup> Although these professional performers might have been trained in a number of techniques and acquired a number of skills,<sup>71</sup> each new piece of work requires a period of adaptation in which the performers need to dive deeper into their capacities or assimilate new skill(s) as individuals and collectively. Therefore to become an expert on the skills displayed in a given work is the very first step to be able to achieve the peak performative state in that specific work.

In 36, I employed 12 skilled dancers, all of whom were graduates from principal conservatoires and with recognised professional experience in the sector. This particular piece involves throwing, dodging and catching 36 filled water bottles, each toss being equivalent to throwing a hammer. In my search for ways to replicate *vivencia*, my choice of using bottles of water as a working prop,

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<sup>70</sup> As a former lecturer at LCDS and guest lecturer in other international higher education institutions, I am familiar with the components of a dancer’s training in professional educational institutions; therefore, *Towards Vivencia* builds on this knowledge.

<sup>71</sup> These may include stage combat, voice, acrobatics, martial arts, somatic therapies, circus skills, ballet, and contemporary dance.

was a direct result of my search for actions that, by involving a calculated risk would always require a total dedication to the present moment. At the time I initiated this creative process, I was not aware of the throwing exercises that have been used to hone reflexes in actor-training<sup>72</sup>. Therefore, and considering that no dance institution known to me offers a specific training that includes throwing, dodging and catching water-filled plastic bottles, I had to devise my own exercises to allow the performers to familiarise themselves with and become skilled in the use of these potentially dangerous flying props. The other set of necessary skills the dancers had to acquire at the beginning of this choreographic process had to do with strength and stamina. The piece requires the dancers to be strong and physically fit, as the thirty-six bottles of water, weighting 750 grams, are thrown and caught approximately 1000 times over a period of 20 minutes, equating to one bottle thrown and caught every 1.2 seconds. Additionally, each dancer covers an average distance of 2 kilometres of intense stop-and-start running. In conclusion, for the dancers to be able to access *vivencia* while performing *36*, they needed firstly to learn how to throw and catch bottles accurately and develop enough stamina and strength not to have to encounter obstacles with that in performance.

Another example of the need for dancers to train/adapt to each piece comes from *Kingdom*, in which the performers are required to tie around 600 metres of rope in 52 knots to assemble a structure composed of 80 bamboo canes. This 3 metre high structure must be assembled in under 16 minutes in a way that can safely be climbed upon, rotated and tilted. Once again, the choreographic/artistic choice of using a bamboo structure was the point of

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<sup>72</sup> The last section of this chapter expands on this idea.

departure;<sup>73</sup> acquiring the specific skills for this work was the first step to ritualise the process of Kingdom and, therefore, train the dancers towards achieving *vivencia* through performing this work.

Before creating these two works, I was aware that the performers needed to feel confident in their skills, and must be conscious of the holistic effect that the training would have on them in developing as individuals. These pieces taught me that the safety and wellbeing of the performers lay, most of the time, in the dancers' own skills and their confidence to perform. Once performers feel confident in their abilities and are physically trained, they are able to direct their concentration comfortably towards other areas of the performance. Therefore I cannot stress enough how important is the dexterity of the performers in order to render *vivencia*. The whole mind-body-complex process involved in generating *vivencia* cannot occur unless the performer is at ease with the technicalities of the work at hand. The stronger the performer's technical skills, the stronger his/her *vivencia* can be.

As a summary, the first step in the ritualisation process of entering performance consists of recognising the exclusive and specific abilities that a given work requires. Therefore, depending on the context, it will be the teacher, the choreographer, the performer<sup>74</sup> (or all of them together) who will identify the necessary set of skills to work on in order to apply the ritualisation process.<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>73</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the artistic motivations behind this choice of working with an installation made out of bamboo poles; nor it is directly related to my research towards constructing a training methodology to locate, replicate and enhance *vivencia*.

<sup>74</sup> The more mature and experienced the performer is, the more autonomy they will have to make this decision.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, as a dancer for Candoco Dance Company (2007–2008) I had to learn a few sentences in sign language for a piece by Arthur Pita (Pita, 2007), and in a work by Rafael Bonachela I had to learn how to manoeuvre a wheelchair (Bonachela, 2007). Part of the process was to learn those new skills. I had some external help from professional sign

phase is the foundation of the rest of the process of ritualisation. In order to secure comprehensive and complete skill development, ritualisation should strip down the most relevant requirements of a work and start from the most basic element. This subsection will present two examples, describing how two specific skills - throwing bottles and tying bamboo canes - were broken down to be assimilated in two different contexts: the re-creation of 36 and the devising of *Kingdom*.

TABLE 1: FAMILIARISATION WITH THE BOTTLE

*Name of the activity:*

Familiarisation with the bottle: transportation

*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*

- First sessions of the re-creation of 36
- Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



**Video 1**

And

36: 02:02-02:25

*Description:*

The bottle becomes another performer. Its texture, its reactions to gravity and inertia will lay the foundations of the piece.

Each dancer is asked to take three empty bottles of 1.5 litre capacity and fill them with tap water to between 500 and 750 ml. Then, avoiding being patronising, I ask the dancers to be like babies again and discover what a bottle is, how it feels, what can be done with it, feeling the weight and how the water moves inside, the flexibility and/or fragility of the material, etc.

*Goal:*

- discuss the easiest and cleanest way to do the task
- test the weight of the bottles and make all equal
- acquire the skill of handling three full bottles
- assess the security of the bottle lids.

## Variation / Progression (1)

### *Name of the activity:*

Familiarisation with the bottle: throwing

### *Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Walking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



Video 2

### *Description:*

The dancers are asked to pair up, facing each other whilst approximately 2 metres apart. One stays stationary, while the other moves, throws one bottle back and forth.

### *Goal:*

This task is set without providing any specific information as to how to throw and/or catch the bottles, allowing the dancers to find their own technique, learning through trial and error.

### *Participants' reflections:*<sup>76</sup>

**Question posed:** What have you found in these few minutes that make throwing and catching easier?

### **Participants' answers:**

- keeping eye contact with your partner
- using the whole body to receive and throw, cushioning with the upper body when receiving and using the lower body against the floor when throwing
- catching with two hands
- finding a rhythm that suits both dancers
- using the breath to throw and catch
- throwing the bottle with the correct angle: 45 degrees against the floor is the ideal angle.<sup>77</sup>

Through this task the dancers discovered the best ways to throw and catch bottles, thereby facilitating the rest of the ritualisation process to achieve vivencia in 36.

<sup>76</sup> As the session guide, once the question has been posed, I keep myself on the periphery of the group. If I am leading the session with an assistant, he/she is briefed not to add information at this stage of the process. In that way all these parameters and explanations come solely from the dancers' experimentation with the bottles. My only contribution is to encourage the group to offer more answers and finally to make sure that everyone understands and agrees with those principles.

<sup>77</sup> Appendix E outlines, quoting conventions for all works. In this case Interviews (E1, 2012), (E2, 2013) and (E7, 2013).

**Learning emerged:**

It is always remarkable how fast the participants learnt the most efficient way to throw and catch the bottles by just experiencing within an open exploratory environment and then reflecting upon it.

Through continuous conscious practice the skill is rapidly embodied fully, giving them the opportunity not only to become more dexterous with each rehearsal but more importantly allowing the next phases of *Towards Vivencia* to develop without pragmatic interferences.

Notably, the later stages of the ritualisation process were found to be much more successful if we dedicated enough time to this training, not only at the beginning of the process, but throughout.

<b>Variation / Progression (2)</b>		
Name of the activity: Specific physical training		
<i>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</i> Devising, re-creation, rehearsals and performance of 36		
<i>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</i>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto; width: 150px;">Ritualisation</div>		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



**Video 3 and 4**  
And  
**36: 00:50-02:01**

**Description:**

Once the basic technique has been learned, it needs to be practiced and refined. At this point not all group members are equally dexterous, but all are already working within the same information and knowledge base about the technique of the new skill they are acquiring. During the subsequent sessions of the re-creation of 36, the exercises become more specific and complex, narrowing down the objective of the exercise and expanding the possibilities that the bottles offer.

<b>Goal: Conditioning</b> <b>Task:</b> hurling a number of bottles from one side of the room to the other	<b>Goal: Accuracy.</b> <b>Task:</b> propelling a bottle vertical and catching it with only one hand	<b>Goal: Risk</b> <b>Task:</b> passing through a corridor where couples are carrying out fast short throws
<b>Goal: Risk</b> <b>Task:</b> not looking where one is throwing	<b>Goal: Chance</b> <b>Task:</b> changing who to throw to	

**Learning emerged:**

When the performers are on tour, the bottles change as different bottled water brands create different kind of plastics, shapes, etc. Therefore continuous training was compulsory throughout the life of this work.

TABLE 2: LEARNING KNOTS

**Name of the activity:**

- Learning knots

**Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:**

- First sessions of the creation of *Kingdom*
- Beginning of each session of *Kingdom*
- Dancers of Scottish Dance Theatre

**Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:**

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



Video 5

**Description:**

Learning how to make bamboo tripods, and connect two bamboo poles together. Tying and lashing. For this learning process we used online video-tutorials, one of the dancer’s knowledge of sailing knots, my own knowledge of climbing knots, and the instructions given to us by the set designer.

**Goal:** In the second (20:00-23:50) and third section (30:20-31:17) of *Kingdom*, the dancers interact with the structure, swirling in and out, climbing to the top, and tilting the structure to balance it on one of its narrower ends. It is important not only to fasten the bamboo canes, but also to do it safely, as the wellbeing of the dancers depends on how firm the knots are. This, in turn, depends on the dancers’ expertise in building the structure.

**Learning emerged:**

Due to tying and lashing being difficult skills, this phase of *Towards Vivencia* required more time and practice in *Kingdom* than in 36. This piece required an extra level of safety. Therefore, only when the dancers felt confident with this skill were we able to focus on the subsequent ritualisation phases. This was a clear example of how important is to work with dexterous performers in order to successfully render *vivencia* through their performance.

As this work was a commission, I did not have the luxury of choosing dancers who I felt aligned with my core practice. Therefore, most of what little time was left during the creation process, after the practical training to construct the structure and developing the choreography, was geared towards training these dancers to develop the particular skills needed to perform my work. Unfortunately, in the limited time (five weeks in total), not all of the dancers were able to fully develop the skills necessary to fulfil the requirements of the work. This is not to say that they were not skilled dancers; it is simply to acknowledge that it was one of the struggles of this work, and did impact my choreographic choices.

## Variation / Progression (1)

### Name of the activity:

Communal knot

### Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:

- Creation process of *Kingdom*
- *Kingdom* finished piece
- Dancers of Scottish Dance Theatre

### Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace

**Video 5**  
And  
**Kingdom:**  
03:56-05:43

### Description:

Once the basic technique of learning a given knot has been learned, I made the task more complicated by asking them to tie the knot in couples and by changing positions in the space. This is extremely difficult, as it requires knowing where the other one has stopped the tying and therefore how to continue. With complex nautical knots each step is crucial, resulting in either a perfect knot or a faulty one, which could cause the whole construction to fall apart.

### Learning emerged:

The risk implied by doing one knot wrongly pushed the performers into a state of heightened concentration. With practice they became more confident, but the danger was still present. This translated in the dancers confronting the performance with a certain degree of anxiety, but confident, knowing that they had the skills and that with extreme commitment nothing bad could happen. This was the gate for them to start accessing an attitude of 'active surrendering'.

TABLE 3: STRUCTURE AS A PARTNER

**Name of the activity:**

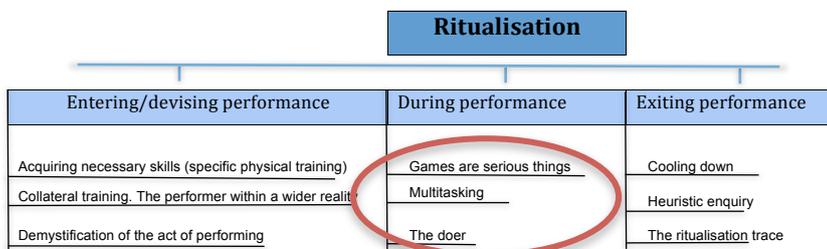
Structure as a partner

**Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:**

- Creation process of *Kingdom*
- *Kingdom* finished piece  
Dancers of Scottish Dance Theatre



**Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:**



**Video 6**  
And  
***Kingdom:***  
20:08-31:17

**Description:**

In the second (20:08-24:10) and third section (30:20-31:17) of *Kingdom*, the dancers interact with the structure, swirling in and out, climbing to the top and tilting the structure to balance it on one of its narrower ends.

Although bamboo is a very resistant material, it was necessary to establish certain parameters for health and safety. Some of those parameters were:

- a dancer should not stand, or step with both feet on the centre of the bamboo cane
- a dancer should not jump onto a bamboo cane
- a dancer should always distribute his/her weight on two or more canes at the same time
- if a dancer perceives any vulnerability within the structure, he or she will stop the performance and together with other dancers assess the hazard and decide whether the performance can carry on or not.

**Goal:**

The ability to dance within the structure is another skill that the dancers have to acquire. In some ways, the structure becomes like another dancer who can be lifted, can receive weight, and can protect and be protected by the other dancers.

**Learning emerged:**

All these parameters make it evident that the performers have to be very comfortable handling the canes, tying them together and weaving in and out of the structure. To learn, master, and above all, regularly practice the necessary skills for a given piece of work are the basic steps to allow the dancers to carry on ritualising their performance.

## Collateral Training: The Performer Within a Wider Reality

Collateral training refers to the necessity of fostering a broader awareness of the context in which the group of performers/collaborators live and work, and additionally, to operate in conjunction with its current tendencies. Every new creation usually involves getting to know new members of the group (performers, designer, musicians and so on). Becoming familiar with the team and the overall environment helps performers to feel more comfortable and confident, enabling them to concentrate their efforts towards the performative experience (Hefferon, 2006, p. 154). Although this happens in virtually all new creations, and some companies include group activities from time to time, I consider this an overlooked aspect implemented only randomly. Therefore, *Towards Vivencia* includes this practice systematically as part of the working routine. Stimulating regular and clear interactions within the group, encouraging familiarisation with what each member brings to the ensemble and awareness of existing socio-political realities beyond the studio will nurture the performers' imagination and promote the efficacy of the group.<sup>78</sup>

When I was 18, I attended pre-military school, and my days were filled with the study of sciences as well as intense physical exercise. The behavioural code was very strict, and a high value was placed on team spirit. The enhanced sense of belonging was bolstered by the notion that we were exceptional

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<sup>78</sup> I am not suggesting here that every new work must have a thematic base in the quotidian or follow a didactic art-making process that speaks directly to social issues. I am merely proposing that part of the ritualisation process will include immersion in a specific contemporaneity in addition to immersion in the subjects related to the new work. As Stanislavski suggest to his actors: "Read voraciously (newspapers, novels, anything in print), visit museums, concerts and art exhibits. In short develop your experience of the world and your ability to empathise with others through a broad, liberal education" (in Carnicke, 1998, p. 20).

individuals training to become an elite force. The rivalry between the different army divisions (navy, air force and infantry) was also a constant condition that fed our communal pride at belonging to our own group. Caforio (2003) explains how individual stress is compensated by the physiological and affective support of the group and how the group protects the survival of the individual.

When I discovered that I was no longer eligible for the army I left the school and, despite having had a very intense relationship with my peers while being a part of the programme, I have not had contact with any member of that group since. The strongest bonding element for us during those years was the desire to fulfil our goal of becoming army pilots. The sense of belonging to the group and the prestige we felt as group members strengthened this bond. Once this was gone, there was nothing to connect us. This personal episode helped me realise that a collective, when united by a common goal or desire, can form a strong temporal community, making their teamwork more efficient and reducing internal group competitiveness.

One of the survival functions of ritual is maintaining group identity in order to function more cooperatively and successfully, as well as “reducing acts of aggressiveness between the members of the group” (Newberg *et al.*, 2001, p. 81). This aspect of the training helps to eliminate or nullify the effect of external factors – in this case the group factor - that might interfere with performers’ abilities. In that sense, by creating a temporary, pragmatic community, we are in fact also ritualising performance and this contributes to enabling the performers to be more likely to achieve *vivencia*.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Matthews notes Julia Whitworth’s descriptions of the training developed by Suzuki’s company: “Suzuki’s notion of ‘personal metamorphosis [has] to do with the relationship between the individual and the training... as well as the individual and the group”

Even in the case of a solo performance, I suggest there is nonetheless a community. It can be other professionals involved: collaborators such as composers, set designers, script editors, etc; or it can be circumstantial depending on the exact space and time where the performance takes place. In either scenario, the performer needs to relate to, negotiate, and be at peace with his/her surroundings and collaborators in order not to jeopardise reaching *vivencia*. Therefore, promoting a healthy, coherent, and vibrant group dynamic immensely benefits each individual member of the team and, by extension, the work itself.<sup>80</sup> The objectives of this phase are firstly, to increase the creativity of the group, and secondly, to foster group cohesion with the aim of working towards a common goal to secure a high probability of success.

Some artists and organisations take the concept of the shared experience to the point of communal living. Theatre abounds with examples, with Grotowski's 'paratheatre' experiments offering temporary versions of such intense cohabitation (Kumiega, 2007).<sup>81</sup> However, Grotowski's paratheatre experiments are very different to the collateral training I propose, as he deliberately removed participants from daily life, focusing on the paratheatrical as a temporary community:

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(Matthews, 2011, p. 121). He continues: "Whitworth explains how the collectivity of the exercise and the relationship between the group and the individual enable the individual participant to accomplish things that they simply could not accomplish alone" (*ibid.*).

<sup>80</sup> Extensive literature is dedicated to group dynamics. See Berne (1968), Forsyth (2010) and O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009).

<sup>81</sup> Examples of cohabitation residencies for artistic purposes include Roy Hart, Centre Artistique International, in France; Proyecto Pencca in Spain; and many residency training and creation projects throughout the UK, Europe and USA.

In Holy Day, the first paratheatre 'stage' I participated in France in 1976, we were explicitly forbidden to bring newspapers or radios or any intellectual stimulus that would remind us of the outside world. For the duration of the project we lived communally, if autonomously, feeding ourselves when hungry from the food provided and sleeping in a communal area only when we needed to rest. Speech and conversation was forbidden. (A. Furse, personal communication, December 20, 2015)

In my own approach, I do not propose to create a working environment that requires communal living in addition to close working, but rather, to bond, and to create a sense of shared objectives whilst keeping the external world as a real reference point for all in order to collaborate and help each other towards our common goal.

Both in *Kingdom* and *36* it is possible to observe that the identity of the works relies heavily on tasks that would not be possible to undertake without the rapport of the group. The identity of the works resonate with team sport practices in which the focus is on developing responsiveness, mutuality, group responsibility and team relationships. As an example of this, at the beginning of the creation process of *36*, I devised a simple exercise to enhance the capacity of the performers to work collaboratively, which then became a whole section of the final work (9:13 to 11:10).

TABLE 4: SHAPES

<i>Name of the activity:</i> Shapes		
<i>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First sessions of the creation of 36</li> <li>• Choreographic work</li> </ul>		
<i>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</i>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Ritualisation</div>		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



**36:**  
9:13 to 11:10

**Description:**

This is the fifth section of the piece, and contains the final choreographic manifestation of the exercise that prompted it. Upon hearing a music cue, the dancers rush to the centre with their bottles, as a group, draw the necessary shape with the bottles and return to the opposite side of the stage that they came from. The aim is complete all three tasks (enter, draw, and exit) before the music goes silent again, a time limit of approximately 8 seconds. This task is repeated seven times. While the shapes are set, which dancer places/picks up each bottle is not predetermined, therefore the team must make quick decisions collectively.

Based on their lack of knowledge of how the task will be accomplished, performers need to be ready to both help others and receive help where necessary in order to complete the task. The time limit adds another level of difficulty, and to push this limit even further, the music fades in. This tests the dancers' listening skills and necessitates higher degrees of aural concentration.

**Goal:**

- team relationships
- individual and group responsibility
- problem-solving decisions together
- developing responsiveness and mutuality

**Learning emerged:**

Often, in their anticipation the dancers would move too early, thus not remaining true to the task. This emphasised the need to keep grounded, something that is trained through the 'during performance' phase of ritualisation.

Interestingly, some friction within the group has always emerged in the first few attempts at this or similar exercises. I will expand further in the section "Games Are Very Serious Things". This friction is the result of eagerness to fulfil the task perfectly. As a result, some blame and recrimination arises among the dancers. This is also part of the collateral training, finding a way to communicate with each other and arrive at a communal way of working.

I personally find it extremely rewarding when, by the end of a given process, I am no longer capable of understanding the instructions or advice that the performers share. By naming moments of the performance and ways of dealing with potential problems, the group creates its own vocabulary, and internal logic - something that is extremely noticeable to an outsider and once again highlights the unique identity of the group.

TABLE 5: COLLATERAL TRAINING

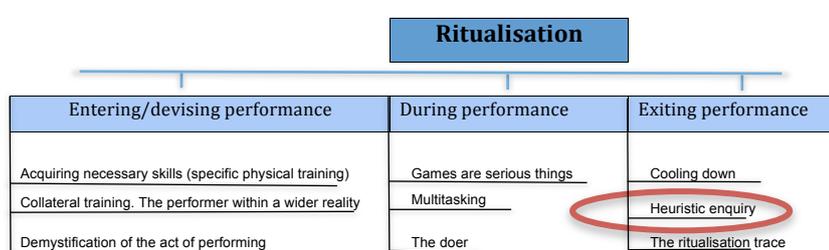
*Name of the activity:*

Permeate

*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*

Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*



Video 7

*Description:*

Reading a short text. After a general and a specific warm up, I usually ask one of the dancers to read a short text aloud.<sup>82</sup> The text can be related to the work, recent news, or something totally unrelated. In any case it is important to find a starting point to incite a post-reading discussion among the group.

*Goal:*

The text and the discussion will hopefully nourish the group imagination and promote creativity.

*Learning emerged:*

Whether the group holds similar or different attitudes toward the content of the text is irrelevant as “interpersonal communication function[s] as self-definition and interpersonal bonding” (Cushman & Cahn, 1985, p. 129). Hence, social connections are nurtured by discussing or even arguing about a given topic. Language is, after all, one of the most ancient ways to develop inter-personal bonds (Monaghan & Goodman, 2007).

This activity also allows the group to learn about each other’s ideas, opinions and behaviours. The conduct of each member during the discussion can also be an indication of his/her behaviour in performance: daring, aggressive, understanding, etc. In that way the group can familiarise with the tendencies of their peers, predicting to some extent different individuals’ manners from the way they express

<sup>82</sup> When the group is consistent and has been working together for a considerable amount of time, the dancers have brought texts that they selected to be read.

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themselves.

*Towards Vivencia* aims to offer a conducive environment that increases positive interaction among group members. At the end of the first re-creation of 36, the dancers were interviewed. The last question was whether they would like to be asked any question in particular. This is the question requested, and answered, by one of the dancers:

Did [the process] help for the group EDge to become a group?

The answer to her own question was:

Yes

(E1, 29th June 2011).

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, ritualising a performance helps to provide a frame, a context and sometimes a purpose. In this way, collateral training: reading texts and inciting group negotiations, provides a semiotic process (my actions signify/indicate/symbolise this or that) and a pragmatic reasoning (I do this for that reason, or to fulfil a particular goal). If the work becomes meaningful for the performer, his or her involvement is irrevocably deeper and therefore the possibility of rendering *vivencia* increases dramatically as Anna Halprin did during her Cancer.

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TABLE 6: COMMON ENEMY

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*Name of the activity:*  
Common enemy

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*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*  
Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

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*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious thing.	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Wundtworking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace

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Video 8

**Description:**

Setting a task that needs to be completed by the group is often the easiest way to achieve this strong sense of 'group'. For instance, the group is challenged to keep a soft ball airborne for as long as possible by hitting the ball to each other. No one can hold the ball, nor is the same person allowed to hit the ball twice in succession. I proposed this activity at the beginning of the creation process of *Kingdom* and challenged participants to reach at least 20 touches without dropping the ball. Months later the dancers from Scottish Dance Theatre still maintain this exercise as part of their daily routine, challenging themselves to reach ever higher scores. By the end of the creation process they had reached 64 touches without dropping the ball.

**Goal:**

Creating and maintaining the coherence of a group.

**Learning emerged:**

If an external body challenges the group as a whole, "the group is induced to fight basically for itself in order to save its existence and internal cohesion" (Caforio, 2003, p. 15). In turn this defiant entity becomes the 'other'. The existence of the 'other' reifies the group, who identify themselves as working against this strange element.

For instance, a few weeks before the premiere of *36*, we were told that the piece might not be performed because of the electrical risk caused by the use of water and plastic bottle caps. At that moment and for days afterwards, the performers came together in an incredible way and the amount of bottles dropped during rehearsals decreased dramatically.

Also, the group discussed different mechanisms that we could employ to avoid spills of water during a performance, and the real time solutions if this were to happen. When this protocol was presented to the risk assessment manager, he could no longer see a threat for the performers or the audiences.

TABLE 7: TIE MEDITATION

**Name of the activity:**

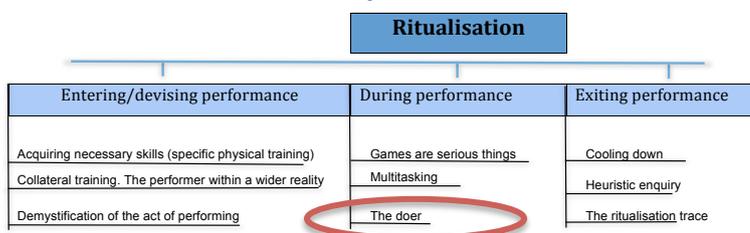
Origami meditation

**Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:**

aLL tHE nAMES; LCDS PG students

Whistleblower. Students of the conservatoire of Granada (Spain)

**Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:**



Video 9

**Description:**

During the four weeks of the creation process for *aLL tHE nAMES* and *Whistleblower*, the dancers worked individually to create origami men's ties and birds. This was undertaken every day at the beginning of the rehearsal session for 15-20 minutes. By the end of the process of *Whistleblower* we gathered around 1500 objects which ended up being the scenography of the work.

**Goal:**

This activity introduced a strong sense of continuity within the process and infused the level of concentration required for the consequent phases of *Towards Vivencia*.

**Learning emerged:**

In this case, collateral training is not only used to unite the group but also to nurture the performers' creativity and to help them to work towards *vivencia* in an individual way.

This is another example of how this research is an organic symbiosis between a practice as research into ritualising performance and a creative artistic process; a relationship of mutual inspiration.

## Demystification of the Act of Performing

One of the difficulties in applying ritualisation is the danger of sacralising the subject of study, thereby shielding the essence of the experience behind a veil of mystery and magic. Grimes (2006) stresses that to investigate sacred things “is to search out the ordinary beneath the special and sacred” (p. 90),<sup>83</sup> and that “however true it is that altar screens embody deities and saints, mediate between heaven and earth, and visually constellate cosmic mysteries, it is also true that they are merely wood, stone, and plaster” (*ibid.* p. 90).<sup>84</sup>

Part of the effectiveness of *Towards Vivencia* lies in avoiding the consecration of this methodology. Ritualisation is concerned with actions that cultivate the performers’ concentration and awareness and consequently their performative state of being towards *vivencia*. It should not be tackled from a superstitious perspective in which the process is reduced to an esoteric invocation beyond our control. Ritualisation facilitates finding the pragmatism inherent in actions, which entails carrying out necessary actions as a matter of fact - ‘doing’ instead of ‘acting out’. This is part of the process by which the performer facilitates or is facilitated to present rather than re-present.

For the purposes of this research, it is necessary to discuss the difference between presentation and representation in performance. Henceforth I will use ‘presentation’ to describe when a performance is generated in real time, without implying that it needs to be improvised,<sup>85</sup> much less unrehearsed. I understand

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<sup>83</sup> For further examination of the relationship between ordinariness, ritual and the sacred, Grimes suggests the texts *Ordinarily Sacred* (Sexson, 1982), and *Marrying & Burying: Rites of Passage in a Man’s Life* (Grimes, 1995).

<sup>84</sup> The same notion is expressed in Tibetan Buddhism by the concept of the Two Truths, in which ultimate truths are only accessible through the lens of ordinary truths, i.e., everyday realities (Cowherds, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> See below in this section for a deeper discussion about set material as opposed to improvisation.

that a performance is presented when it is generated in real time, when a performer *executes a series of actions*<sup>86</sup> that lead him or her to a particular effect, *state of being or reaction that is genuinely a product of those actions, and consequently and more importantly, consistently unavoidable.*<sup>87</sup>

Presentation and representation are understood as two oppositional concepts throughout my research. Representation, or more accurately, re-presentation, takes place when the performer re-enacts a series of actions that, in a certain moment during the past, led him or her into a particular state; or, in the case of conventional theatrical representation, the performer speaks on behalf of others and the drama is an act of make-believe. The re-enactment no longer has the same effect as the original actions did. The performer can imitate the steps, the voice tone and all the other external circumstances which surrounded that moment, but if the original state of being is not felt or embodied, his/her actions will be a mere re-presentation of that memory rather than a presentation of an actual experience.<sup>88</sup>

The idea of the pragmatic action and how it is employed in my work is described throughout Chapter 1, where I described the difference between my work and Vandekeybus', Forsythe's or Grotowski's. As an example, during a

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<sup>86</sup> No matter how previously rehearsed these actions are or not.

<sup>87</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>88</sup> To illustrate the difference, I will describe a rehearsal for a new theatre production included in the book *Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts*. Grimes (2006) talks about a very successful rehearsal in which Jeff (the lead actor in this new play) improvised a scene. Through movement and sound he re-created the powerful stance of a polar bear. Everyone suspected that this polar bear was so fantastical and yet real because Jeff created a unique moment through his acting (Grimes, 2006, p. 96). Following previous reasoning, the danger for Jeff in performance would be to attempt a re-production of such a powerful moment in subsequent occasions. If Jeff were to try to imitate the polar bear that resulted from that rehearsal, he would be only re-presenting that rehearsal. More precisely, he would be presenting the memory of his improvisation. In contrast, if Jeff developed his evocation of that polar bear through conscious methodology, he would be able to present a polar bear every night in performance instead of a memory of it. This is particularly relevant to those performers who have to perform the same role over a long period of time.

rehearsal for *Trans la Valo* (2013), one of the tasks represented this idea very well as one of the dancers has to avoid being whipped by the other dancer. As a result the movement is primarily pragmatic and the resulting aesthetic just the by-product of the doing (Video 18 in the USB attached).

This pragmatism is a constant in my work and probably the principal example is the use of throwing and catching work in 36. Many other artists and companies have also made use of similar reflex exercises, for instance, and to cite just a few: the Peking Opera, Meyerhold, Barba and Brook. In particular Romanian theatre and opera director Andrei Serban counts with a large repertoire of exercises in which throwing sticks is the main action. This is well documented in the film: "The Use of Sticks in Performance Training Andrei Serban" (1999). I was not aware of any of those works before starting the creation of 36, and I discovered them whilst contextualising this research. However, after experiencing first hand Vandekeybus' use of instinctive movement and immediate danger, it became in fact an inspiration for my search for pragmatic and reflex-led movement. *What the Body Does Not Remember* (1987) is the first piece ever created by Ultima Vez, and it was my main reference for 36. In this work, the performers need to dive and roll to the floor to avoid having a brick land on their heads. The choreography responds to a situation that requires specific actions - if this particular action does not take place, the dancer will be harmed. As explained in Chapter 1, Vandekeybus uses this reflex-work in order to convey a message and fulfil a narrative. My work, on the other hand, just focuses on the pragmatism of the action, expanding this over time and making it the leitmotif of a given work.

Equally, my approach to whirling dervish dance includes consciously offloading the situation from associated philosophies, religious practices or imagery. I do this because my primary interest lies in practising the movement, concentrating on the actions and experiencing the outcomes. As outlined in the introduction and Appendix A, actions can trigger specific neural pathways. Therefore, the mere experience of these actions will inevitably have an effect on the performer. I also believe that dispensing with any imagery at this point will economise the performer’s effort. This does not imply that I do not value the power of imagery. I nonetheless believe that in the early stages of ritualising performance, discarding narrative and imagery in general will enable greater concentration in experiencing the experience of the actions fully, thereby aiding the attainment of *vivencia*.<sup>89</sup>

TABLE 8: WHIRLING DERVISH DANCE

<b>Name of the activity:</b> Whirling dervish dance		
<b>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towards <i>Vivencia</i> workshops’ participants</li> <li>• During the phase “Demystification of the Act of Performing” in most of the processes</li> </ul>		
<b>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</b>		
<b>Ritualisation</b>		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)</li> <li>Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality</li> <li>Demystification of the act of performing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Games are serious things</li> <li>Multitasking</li> <li>The doer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooling down</li> <li>Heuristic enquiry</li> <li>The ritualisation trace</li> </ul>



Video 10

<sup>89</sup> This will be further expanded in the next Chapter, subsection “The doer”.

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### **Description:**

In order to demystify such a charged activity, I condense the dervish practice to the action of turning on the spot. In order to objectivise the action even further, I ask the dancers to imagine a three-quarters full bottle of water swirling around - the water will keep moving even when the bottle stops. This is similar to what happens to the body when we spin; the human body is made up of 70-75 % water, and therefore the sensation is that the majority of the body is in motion while spinning, and indeed after the spinning stops. The practice has to carry on after the action has finished, as the body needs to normalise and let the liquid-self settle down and become stable again - like the water in a bottle that takes time to settle after being churned about. The sense of balance is greatly affected when we spin because the endolymph<sup>90</sup> is agitated and stirred just like the water in the bottle. The affected balance can be a disconcerting feeling for those new to spinning, as, unsurprisingly, the body sends messages of danger to the brain. Knowing about the physiological process triggered while spinning helps the dancer to keep calm and let go of fear.

Once I have described the basic physiological principles as well as the simple tools to be able to sustain the activity for a long period of time, the participants are asked to spin for 10 to 12 minutes the first time, extending that, in some cases, to 30 to 40 minutes in subsequent sessions.

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### **Learning emerged:**

Sustaining any repetitive action for extended periods is demanding in itself, but improvement is rapidly noticeable with practice. The action is essentially very simple - you just spin. Each spinner can find their own manner in which they like to spin: the placement of the arms and head are free, and it doesn't matter if both legs are actively propelling the body around or if just one leg is working as an axis. It is the repetition and duration of the chosen stance that is important. In whirling dervish dance the spinner does not focus their eyes on a fixed point searched for with each revolution (like 'spotting' in classical ballet). Instead, they allow their eyes to relax, not focusing on any specific point, which results in a blurry stream of colour that whizzes by, a bit like being in the centre of a zoetrope. Spinning is a very unique sensation for the body, and is sometimes difficult to assimilate.

By demystifying this or any other action, one can recap the experience of the actions by itself. Individuals who experience 'flow' normally describe that they are not conscious of it at the time, but they can subsequently realise when it happened (Hefferon, 2006). I imagine that whirling dervish dance is similar to flow, but with the difference that this practice allows one to attain a state of flow willingly and consciously.

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### **Participants' reflections:**

The experience we had spinning like the Dervishes was for me a full representation of what Jorge has been transmitting throughout the seminar. Once experienced this, you can determine whether you get to the Big Performance mental state or not. This experience is clearly suitable because from this action creates a result that leads to physical reflection. (E6, 12th may 2013)

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<sup>90</sup> The endolymph is the inner-ear fluid.

## Summary

The arena for this first stage of ritualising performance is the extended liminal space between the ordinary state of being and the performative. Laying the foundation for the necessary stages of ritualising performance begins with the conscious decision to perform; identifying the relevant skills for that piece of work; solidifying the technique of those skills; building a solid group around the work; and concentrating on the practicality of the action, demystifying the act of performing. These initial stages of entering the performance unlock the following possibilities: (1) *playfulness*: performers continue to explore and therefore combat the rigidity associated with technique and/or anxiety of public performance; (2) *multitasking*: performers are able to direct their direction to other demands of the work; and (3) *the doer*: performers are able to use their actions to create the performance in real time.

# Chapter 3 Towards Vivencia

## During Performance

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To surrender to the flow of the action is the ritual process. (Schechner, 1981, p. 89)

In the introduction of this thesis, I explained how the act of ritualising allows us to integrate a new conceptual model into our consciousness; how ritualisation can lend coherence to performance; and how it moderates external factors that might impede performers performing at the top of their capabilities. While the ritualisation process of 'Entering Performance' is an active preparation, 'During Performance' requires a voluntary modification of the performer's attitude to render *vivencia* through his/her actions. This entails fostering three different qualities:

(1) A playful attitude to emerge. I borrow from the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* to name this phase 'Games Are Serious Things'. This ritualisation phase centres the intention on the individual and how she/he should deliver his/her actions.

(2) An acute awareness of the present moment. The performer perceives what is being experienced while simultaneously responding to stimuli provided by the surroundings and reflecting in real time how the environment is affected by actions. This will be further explained in the section "Multitasking, Decision Making and Problem Solving in Real Time".

(3) The commitment and the acceptance to become simultaneously the generator and the recipient of the performative experience. The section "The Doer': The Creator" expands on this.

## Games Are Serious Things

Huizinga (1970) portrays the importance of games and playful behaviour, not only as a cultural or social happening, but as a phenomenon *per se* beyond human societies:

Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing . . . It goes beyond the confines of purely physical or purely biological activity . . . In play there is something ‘at play’ which transcends the immediate needs of the life and imparts meaning to the action. (p. 1)

A playful attitude can therefore help lend significance to the performers’ actions. It “contains its own significance, it expresses values, its spiritual and social association” (ibid., p. 9). Play also “creates order . . . into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order, absolute and supreme” (ibid., p. 10).<sup>91</sup> By creating this frame, games, like the process of ritualisation, also help to regulate external factors, because “play is not ‘ordinary’ or ‘real’ life. It is rather stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporal sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own” (ibid., p. 8). Therefore, when performers intentionally<sup>92</sup> exercise a playful attitude, this assists them in disregarding any irrelevant concerns.

Nowadays, the use of games is common practice within performing arts. According to Evans (2012),<sup>93</sup> Lecoq’s pedagogy is probably one of the first formal

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<sup>91</sup> This concept of play as a gateway to another reality echoes the notion of the *Axis Mundi*.

<sup>92</sup> Using the word intentionally I want to stress the idea that *vivencia* and therefore the training that leads to it has to be consciously accepted and executed by the performer.

<sup>93</sup> Evans, in his article “The Influence of Sports on Jacques Lecoq’s Actor Training” (2012), reports that Lecoq might have been influenced by the post-Second World War humanist unifying project, and of course his background as a physiotherapist (p.168).

studies that used games and playfulness as a tool to train performers.<sup>94</sup> Evans made it very clear throughout his article that Lecoq was more interested in a playful attitude than the construction of games, or in purely athletic exercises:

[For Lecoq] sports and movement are not ends in themselves but an expression of a physical need to move and to engage with the environment in a manner that is efficient and that brings the body into interesting play with the fullness of its environment.  
(p. 176)

In Lecoq's work, the concept of play is essential. The notion of 'jeu' ('play' in English) triggers "a sense of playful complicité" (Peacock, 2009, p. 17). The word 'play' is exploited to allow associations with children's play, games and sports, as well as with acting and performance (Evans, 2012, p. 169).<sup>95</sup> Lecoq favours the attitude of 'playfulness' above the event of 'play': "play, therefore, is not a technique but a state of being, a readiness to perform . . . [for Lecoq] play exists in a space between the real and the imagined containing elements of both but belonging to neither" (Peacock, 2009, p. 33).

In Chapter 1 it was mentioned how 'Fighting Monkey Practice' uses deceiving tactics and unpredictability to help participants discard their habits. One of their mottos is "The more you confuse your partner the more they evolve" (RootlessRoot, 2015). Their training has a strong component of playfulness, and although the word "play" is often used as advice and command in their workshops, it is a concept not extensively acknowledged in their interviews, or on their website. Based on my personal experience of their training methodology, playfulness is more than an aspect of their work, it is a constant, deeply rooted

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<sup>94</sup> A discussion of the difference between games and sports is beyond the scope of this research. Thus, for the purposes of this research, and following Suits' theories on sports and games (2005), it will be assumed that sports and games have a similar effect upon those involved in them, and also that those who participate in sports or games approach them similarly.

<sup>95</sup> Of note, the French word for 'theatrical action/business' is also 'jeu'.

within 'Fighting Monkey Practice'. Similarly, *Towards Vivencia* promotes infusing performance with a playful attitude, rather than playing, or transforming the performance into a game. As this methodology has been devised to allow performers to plunge fully into the most profound performative state through their actions while performing, a playful attitude is essential in capturing this state. *Towards Vivencia* highlights the voluntary nature of games that provide a meaning for the events they enclose. And a playful attitude creates a separate and exclusive establishment whilst directing the player into complete absorption in the task at hand.

In my personal trajectory, two aspects have maintained my interest in games as a way of working. The first is the feeling of enjoyment that accompanies the player throughout the game.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, games, as played out in a simulated setting with a determined set of rules, provide a stable and measurable environment that permits one to test and assess one's own improvements. Furthermore, games are ideal tools to facilitate a learning process: through them it is possible to break down the particularities of a given skill and work on each separately and almost inadvertently. Games also spur players on to develop general and specific abilities to become better players. For instance, at the end of the creation of my piece *Labyrinth of Hawara* (2013), one of the feedback forms contained the following comment:

Games and the enjoyment of the tasks Jorge was using as a creative source of inspiration made [me] forget I was in a 'working' context, made me freer. It opened my mind to find the pathways to create new material (E3, 13th March 2013).

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<sup>96</sup> To clarify, and honouring the title of this phase, the enjoyment of the game does not take away the seriousness of it. On the contrary, it increases the game's effectiveness.

Just as with the core ethos of this research - ritualising performance instead of performing rituals - my choreographic processes follow a similar path with games, infusing a game-like attitude to the new piece instead of just playing games as part of the piece. *36* was conceived as dance-sport<sup>97</sup>, where the dancers are the team who play against a variable compositional structure of time and space and flying objects. *36* captures the artlessness and concentration required in highly physical games whilst the unpredictability and the use of chance lead the performer into a unique performative state of playfulness. In *36*, the bottles serve as the primary tools for creating an environment on stage where the dancers have no choice but to be constantly alert. Throughout the course of the work, the dancers worked in intensely complex patterns that involved throwing, catching, and moving around each other. All of the patterns and their permutations, explained in detail in Appendix B, are derived from either mathematical or graphic logic. Along with a high level of mental activity, *36* is also extremely physically demanding. This aesthetic choice comes from my interest to incorporate my background in sports with dance.

In the following tables I describe one well-known game, which can facilitate a playful attitude in general, and another playful activity devised to support the learning and practice of a specific skill necessary for *36*.

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<sup>97</sup> Inspired by how Simone Forti described CI as an 'Art-Sport' (2010).

TABLE 9: SOCK TAG

<b>Name of the activity:</b> Sock tag		
<b>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</b> Towards Vivencia workshops		
<b>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</b>		
<b>Ritualisation</b>		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
<p>Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)</p> <p>Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality</p> <p>Demystification of the act of performing</p>	<p>Games are serious things</p> <p>Multitasking</p> <p>The doer</p>	<p>Cooling down</p> <p>Heuristic enquiry</p> <p>The ritualisation trace</p>



Video 11

**Description:**

Each participant tucks a sock in his/her trousers, imitating a tail. The objective of the game is to collect as many socks as possible while avoiding having one's own taken. If a player loses their tail, they should steal another sock as soon possible and place it back in their trousers.

**Goal:**

This game is usually aimed to train spatial awareness. For *Towards Vivencia* this and similar games are used to experience a playful attitude. By infusing a playful attitude we are creating a concrete, limited reality in which the performer is fully rooted and therefore fully committed. This is reflected on the participants' reflections. To the question:

*Did you have any time to think about your shopping list, your boyfriend or girlfriend, any family issues or anything outside of the game while you were playing?*

The answer has always been unanimously: "no".

This shows that the dancers' immersion in the game is always total.

**Learning emerged:**

By creating a frame where the rules are simple and agreed unanimously, the activity allows and promotes a total immersion in the action.

It is rare to find choreographic works with a predetermined series of objectives as simple and specific as the game proposed here. Therefore, in order to allow the dancers to be playful, I realised the importance of giving them a simple criteria to focus on during their performance, facilitating a sense of direction during performance and fulfilment when the goal is achieved. When these two aspects are implemented in performance, we are facilitating the rendering and embodiment of a specific concept in this way: *vivencia*.

One of the obstacles emerged from the use of these games, is that the attention and commitment of the dancers wore out rather quickly as the tasks proposed were seen as not challenging enough. This in turn made me realise the importance of adding a new layer to the ritualisation process, the one I came to call: "The doer"; to train the internal commitment and resilience completely independently to how engaging a given activity is by itself.

TABLE 10: SCORE THE BOTTLE

<b>Name of the activity:</b> Score the bottle		
<b>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</b> Re-creation and rehearsals of 36		
<b>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</b>		
<b>Ritualisation</b>		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



Video 12

**Description:**

Half of the group (A) position themselves in a circle and each takes a bottle. The other half (B) stays inside the circle. B participants have to move quickly, receiving a bottle from any member of group A who makes eye-contact with them, and returning it to the same player. They are not allowed to receive from the same person twice in a row. Members of group B score one point each time they successfully receive and return a bottle. They lose one point if the bottle drops. If a member of group A throws a bottle to a member of group B, another member of group B can steal this bottle and give it back to the same member of group A, scoring five points. Each participant has to keep track of their own score.

**Goal:**

I devised this game with the objective of training the dancers to get used to throwing and catching bottles as fast as possible, whilst also keeping track of what is happening in their surroundings.

**Learning emerged:**

Each group has two minutes to score as many points as possible. At the end of the game each participant is asked their score. I have encountered very few dancers who can fulfil this task *and* keep an accurate track of their own score. Dancers who play this game frequently not only become much better at throwing and catching bottles, but also at remembering their scores.

During the development of 36, dancers have occasionally become upset with other members of the group, or with themselves, over losing a game or not playing it well. This is a crucial moment when they need to be reminded that, ultimately, a game is only a game, that what is really important is their individual development towards *vivencia*. Everyone involved has, directly or indirectly, consented to play,<sup>98</sup> hence it is assumed that all have given their best to the task at hand. Games in the studio are of great importance, and are as important as the creation or education activity in progress, but in the wider scheme of things, our games as well as our

<sup>98</sup> Given the settings and mechanisms of this research, subjective games in which the player is not aware that he is part of the game are not considered. The players' behaviour within those pervasive games is documented in Halpern & Leandro (2012).

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work are only relatively important. Games are not a matter of life and death, and there are many more important - and more upsetting - things in the world than losing a game or having one unsuccessful performance.<sup>99</sup> This also connects with the notion to be discussed in Chapter 4: that the only one who can assess their own performance is the performer him/herself.

During the development of this research I noted that mistakes in performance (or within a game) could be considered a manifestation of an issue or a problem with one or various elements trained within *Towards Vivencia*. For instance, not having the necessary skills for a given piece of work, not trusting the group or not being able to solve problems in real time. As a concrete example, if during a performance of 36, a given dancer drops more bottles than usual, then probably that dancer is concentrating less than on other days. The exercises that form part of *Towards Vivencia* are designed in a way that can provide clearly identifiable feedback to the performer as to whether they are training *vivencia* or not. During the implementation of *Towards Vivencia*, I emphasise that mistakes mark a failure, but are not the failure itself.<sup>100</sup>

If the activity is directly related to the result, the task can be negatively identified with the mistake and criticism (Hall & Kerr, 1997). However, if the task is orientated towards the process, it normally results in personal fulfilment and a positive impact on the performer's concentration (Newton & Duda, 1995). While applying *Towards Vivencia*, it is important to acknowledge that the next day we will have another chance to play, and therefore another chance to be better, to take risks, and to explore further, or indeed to fail.

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When it was performed as part of "Exposure: Dance 2012 at the Royal Opera House", the piece was described as follows:

36 is a new dance-sport in which the dancers are the team who play against a variable compositional structure of time and space . . . 36 equally combines chaos and order, desperation and hope, pain and relief, concentration and madness, but is, above all, an exciting display of problem solving in real time. (Exposure Festival programme notes, 2012)

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<sup>99</sup> This can also be reinforced through collateral training.

<sup>100</sup> The failure itself is to not attain *vivencia*.

The game-based concept was also appreciated by external reviewers, for instance journalist Luke Jennings, at *The Observer* (2012), described the piece as “frantic . . . ludic”. Also, Katie Fish (2011), from *Londondance*, wrote:

With 36, Spanish choreographer Jorge Crecis has masterminded a live problem solving exercise . . . This is Sudoku brought to life but with no margin for error and with a pinball like focus. Described in the programme notes as a dance-sport, the piece strikes a balance between the two – the deftness of the dancer and the winning drive of the athlete. Dodging and shooting have never been so well choreographed.

### **Multitasking, Decision Making and Problem Solving in Real Time**

Multitasking is commonly known as the ability to juggle many activities simultaneously. However, if we think carefully about our daily routine, there is no such a thing as multitasking. While we are writing an email, we cannot maintain a proper conversation. In certain moments, it seems we are doing two things at once, but in reality we are switching very quickly from one to another (Salvucci & Taatgen).<sup>101</sup> An example of how ‘multitasking’ really works is found in the way that computers function. The Central Processing Unit (CPU) is the brain of a computer. To run each program, it carries out four basic steps, known as the ‘machine cycle’. Each ‘machine cycle’ consists of two beats. The speed of the CPU is rated by how many beats per second it can accomplish. One million beats per second is referred to as 1MHz. Common CPUs available today can perform at 3.7GHz, or 3700Mhz. This means that a 3.7GHz CPU can execute 3,700,000,000 instructions in a single second. From a human perspective, it appears that the

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<sup>101</sup> In their book *The Multitasking Mind*, Salvucci and Taatgen cite a study carried out at an information technology company. This study examined the average continuous, uninterrupted amount of time spent on a variety of common office tasks: talking on the phone, managing email, reading paper documents, interaction with colleagues, and so on. The result of this study was that, except for formal meetings, employees spent an average of only 3 minutes per task before switching to another task (Salvucci & Taatgen, 2010).

CPU does indeed multitask, but in reality, it only switches between tasks incredibly fast. It never performs two tasks at the same moment. The human brain works in a very similar way, although on a smaller scale. In this case, multitasking is only the scheduling of which task may be the one running at any given time, and when another waiting task will start (Epstein, 1999).

*Towards Vivencia* has allowed me to help performers to gather all the actions that they have to accomplish simultaneously into one, and only one, task. To illustrate this, we can think of typing. Typing might seem to constitute a number of actions: thinking of the words and the structure of the text that is being written; each finger to target and press one key at a time; that the writer keeps checking the screen in order to verify what has been written. However, when someone is immersed in the act of typing, the result is not the sum of the individual actions, but a single task in itself. Acquiring a set of skills, in conjunction with extreme concentration on the task at hand, allows humans to turn a series of tasks into one sole task.

Building from the previous ritualisation phases, *Towards Vivencia* requires that the performer is already proficient at any given set of skills. Being an expert in certain gestures might require a certain kind of automation in order to economise attention and awareness. And although this training is opposed to the notion of automatic behaviour, it benefits from working with highly skilled dancers. Their proficiency allows dancers to present their actions in real time, instead of 're-presenting' what has been devised in rehearsals or creative processes.

Furthermore, I tend to set every single action rather than improvise the actions within a determined context. I am aware that the benefits of set, versus

improvised, material and *vice versa* is a controversial issue in the realm of performing arts. In my work, I try to devise as much set material as possible. I believe that, by fixing the choreographic movements, the performers increase their chances of solving unforeseen situations and/or enhancing their decision-making skills in performance. Not having to make creative decisions on the spot, but pragmatic ones appropriate to the set task, allows pre-learnt movements to create an economy of mind that in turn facilitates an increased awareness of everything else. Neurological studies support the premise that repeating a gesture is “the training to become safe practice and deep engagement with material. By repeating physical patterns every day, specific neuromuscular pathways are reinforced and actions become increasingly automatic” (Buckingham, 2005, pp. 7-8). Similarly, I suggest here that working with set material permits rehearsal and tuning of the performing actions to a degree of precision that might not otherwise be possible with improvised material. Finally, and more importantly, set material allows us to find a way to replicate the specific actions that will lead to *vivencia*.<sup>102</sup>

Through my exposure to spinning, I realised that carrying out a repetitive yet demanding movement allowed me to be consciously aware of the experience. I understood that experiencing an experience or, as Ellen Langer proposed, to practice mindfulness, is a desirable state in itself. Mindfulness refers to “the human ability to be thoughtful, rather than automatic, about one’s experience

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<sup>102</sup> Improvisation might facilitate awareness via different means. For instance, when speaking about CI, it can be considered that when improvising under the motto ‘dance what you want’ it is easier to be creative. However, Kaltenbrunner (2004) argues that in CI “it is mostly not the case. We are hesitant, restricted to habitual movement patterns or simply resort to showmanship . . . Teaching experience shows that freedom, new discoveries and distinct statements often come about within a clearly defined structure or ‘score’” (p. 153).

and actions, and to be cognizant of alternative modes of construal of situations” (in Varela et al., 1993, p. 22).<sup>103</sup> *Towards Vivencia* is premised on the idea that mindful awareness can lead to unique states of being, and therefore can be used to achieve *vivencia*. Mindfulness might be considered the opposite of multitasking (Epstein, 1999). Mindfulness refers to the human capacity to be fully conscious of the task at hand. Here, my interpretation of the task at hand also includes the environment that surrounds us during the continuous present time (and space), when (and where) one is carrying out a task. To accomplish an action mindfully entails consciously not switching our attention back and forth, regardless of how fast we can divert the focus of that attention. To attain *vivencia* it is necessary to channel our full awareness towards the totality of the present moment. *Towards Vivencia* trains this capacity of transforming the fallacy of multitasking into an authentic ‘presence-of-mind’. This is achieved by devising a series of situations in which a number of variables are added to a given choreography. In order to train this mindfulness, I propose that to embrace different activities, that initially might seem disconnected, as one unique act is best practice towards *vivencia*. For instance: I would not ask my performers to move their upper body and lower body in different tempos or directions to improve coordination, I would ask them to execute a dance phrase while counting backwards and dodging flying objects, adapting the dance material in real time without losing its inherent qualities as they go. This concretising of risk elements pushes the performer to make decisions and solve problems in the moment because everything that is happening is incorporated into the

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<sup>103</sup> Over the last decade we have seen a proliferation of texts, courses and teachings from gurus on the subject of mindfulness. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the topic in depth here. The term is used throughout to refer to awareness in action; the human capacity to be fully conscious in the performance of any activity.

performer's reality. If the performer's concentration is totally channelled to his/her actions and surroundings, he/she will experience the experience mindfully and so will achieve *vivencia*.

Before describing some of the exercises I implement with my dancers in order to activate this ritualisation phase, I return once more to 36 to illustrate the need for this capacity to fulfil the demands of my work. Throughout this piece, the dancers are exposed to all the following events at the same time:

- remembering their own and other performers' numbers
- throwing a bottle the correct distance to the correct performer
- not obstructing other performers
- dodging others' flying bottles
- keeping track of where the next bottle is coming from
- being aware of the direction that one is throwing to and receiving from to avoid accidents with the audience
- keeping track of how many bottles are left before proceeding to the next section of the piece.

Equally, in *Kingdom*, during the section I call 'Women', all the female dancers of the company, except one, climb in canon to stand straight on the long pole across the front of the structure (*Kingdom* video attached, 24:10 - 27:19). The task, from the outside, appears fairly simple: they perform a unison phrase of arm gestures while facing the audience. However, in reality, it is much harder. They are balancing at 1.5 metres off the ground, and, because of the lights which are directed into their faces, their sense of sight is impaired, making it difficult to

keep their equilibrium. The gestures they perform, from an anatomical standpoint, take them off-balance and away from the support of their centres. Above all, they are aiming to perform these gestures in complete unison. On top of these technical demands, they also have to manage their fear, which is visible in their faces and in their movement (24:44). There is a great element of risk, since they could fall. Yet, paradoxically, since they cannot help but reveal the mental process behind the task, the dancers fulfil my choreographic aim: to realise a particular state of being while performing, as opposed to achieving a technically perfect rendition of the movements. Interestingly, some of the dancers were able to achieve this state more easily than others. Murray, the oldest dancer performing this section, exudes both a calm and vibrant energy in her movement (25:55) and successfully completed the task with no mistakes; in contrast, Hollinshead, the youngest performer, struggled the most. By the time of the performance, they were all still making mistakes as they had not managed to develop all the necessary skills to accomplish the task (similar to the skills needed to assemble the structure). Despite this, they committed themselves to their actions while in performance, persevering to accomplish the task.

From my perspective as director, I consider these two examples of complex 'multitasking' to be the core of what creates the success of my work. I devised situations in which the dancers are completely immersed in the moment of performance and, regardless how many times these situations are repeated in rehearsals or performances, the dancers had the tools to replicate the experienced lived through the creation of *36* and *Kingdom*. The following tables describe two different ways to train this in a more controlled environment.

TABLE 11: AROUND THE CLOCK

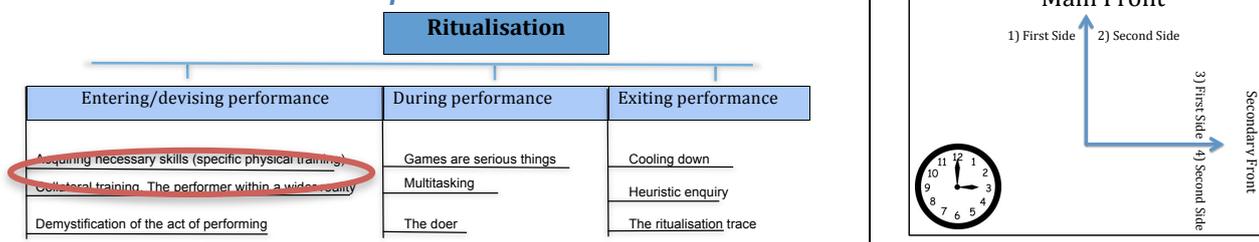
*Name of the activity:*

Around the clock

*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*

Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*



*Description:*

After the general and specific warm up, the class normally contains a short loop of movements. This is usually taught using one of the walls of the studio. Then, I ask the dancers to repeat the same sequence using opposite sides of the body. This is referred to as the second side. Then a group of dancers are asked to do the combination four times: first side, second side and first side, second side again. However, when the loop resets and the dancers are about to start the first side for the second time, the wall used is changed. Sometimes this change is sequential, clockwise or anti-clockwise, and sometimes it is more complex. It can be predetermined, random or announced by the session leader seconds before the group needs to start the loop.

*Goal:*

This training compels the dancers to maintain a multi-dimensional awareness including self-command and perception of their surroundings.

*Participants' reflections:*

During the studio practice, the dancers reported that this and other similar exercises enhanced their sense of concentration and awareness. Thompson-Smith reports that this exercise "deepened [their] sense of presence in that moment" (Thompson-Smith, 2013, p. 10).

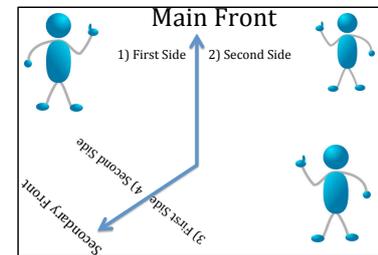
## Variation / Progression (1)

**Name of the activity:** Around the clock + numbers

**Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:**  
Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

**Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:**

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



### Description:

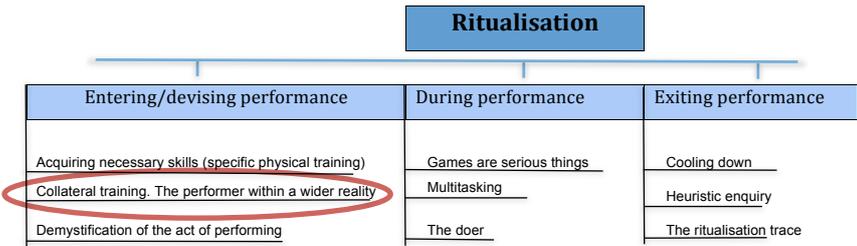
Once the sequence is learned and the dancers show a certain familiarity with the material, they are asked to follow a particular tempo, marked by the music, and they need to try to dance in perfect unison. At the same time, three or four other dancers are placed in each corner of the studio. They have previously agreed on three numbers between one and five, and in which order these numbers will be displayed. Together they will raise their hands three times throughout the duration of the exercise, showing the agreed number of fingers in the agreed order, each time. The first group of dancers must at the same time execute the four loops in unison, changing fronts. Additionally, at the end of the exercise they must repeat the numbers that the second group has shown on their fingers. This activity can become more and more complex, with more and more layers added to the exercise.

### Learning emerged:

Such exercises prepare the performer to amalgamate individual tasks that might be included in a certain situation: dancing in unison, following the tempo of the music, challenging the concept of traditional space, and being aware of external elements, into only one: the act of performing. By building upon the skills acquired during the previous ritualisation phases, performers increased their expertise, by playfully executing all the actions required and by encompassing the whole experience into the present moment, the performer is drawn towards *vivencia*.

The following example illustrates how this ritualisation phase has been used as a compositional tool:

TABLE 12: CLAIM YOUR ROLE

<i>Name of the activity:</i> Claim your role														
<i>Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:</i> 36														
<b>Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:</b>			<b>Video 14</b> And <b>36:</b> 2:30-3:19; 5:20-6:30; 12:13-12:50.											
<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #e1eef6;">Entering/devising performance</th> <th style="background-color: #e1eef6;">During performance</th> <th style="background-color: #e1eef6;">Exiting performance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)</td> <td>Games are serious things</td> <td>Cooling down</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality</td> <td>Multitasking</td> <td>Heuristic enquiry</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Demystification of the act of performing</td> <td>The doer</td> <td>The ritualisation trace</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance	Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down	Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry	Demystification of the act of performing	The doer
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance												
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down												
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry												
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace												

**Description:**

In 36, the dancers must claim a number in ascending order from 1 to 12 to find out which role they have to dance in each part of the piece. The dancers do not know when or who is going to claim the next number, therefore sometimes two performers unintentionally call out the same number simultaneously. In that moment the group should find a solution to this situation.

Different groups arrive at different solutions: someone else claiming the disputed number, one of the dancers claiming the same number twice to make sure that this will be his/her number, and so on.

Initially the dancers carry out this task in a circle, which makes it easier to see who comes before and after each dancer. The exercise is repeated in increasingly complex contexts - while wandering through the space; while running; with loud music in the background, hindering communication between the dancers; while executing a set dance material; and/or within a determined predetermined time frame.

**Goal:**

The final goal is that all the dancers end up with a specific role. Once the dancers know their numbers, they need to remember who has claimed the number either side of theirs as they will receive the bottle from the number before theirs, and they have to throw to the number after theirs. Each dancer not only has to concentrate on his/her individual role, but also needs to be aware of everyone else's, as that will determine their interactions, timing and position in the space for the entirety of the choreographic section.

The ultimate aim of this aspect of 36, is to train, enhance and put into practice problem solving in real time and group building.

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*Learning emerged:*

During the creation of 36, I kept adding layers to make the basic task more complex. During the re-creation of 36 in Hamar, Norway, a dancer asked:

“What will happen when the dancers get used to the final layers and the actions become more and more automatic?”

At that time, my assistant answered:

“We will never reach the final layer. We will always keep adding more layers.”

(E2, 25th August 2012)

Personally, I was not sure whether this answer was accurate, and it was only on reflecting back on the ethos of *Towards Vivencia* that I could articulate that simply adding layers, and therefore making the task increasingly more difficult, is not the ultimate goal of this ritualisation method. Adding further layers will necessarily involve the constant presence of an external arbitrator,<sup>104</sup> however this methodology overarchingly aims to give full responsibility to the performers for their own individual performance. Hence, this and all the other phases of *Towards Vivencia*, are just prelude to a particular state of being to be reached by the performer, and which later on has to be implemented by the performer him/herself.

Problem solving and multitasking are recurrent factors in my work. This research proposes to access both, by layering basic actions and transforming them into progressively more complex tasks. This written thesis encounters a problem in conveying this particular phase, as it is not possible to write or read several instructions at once. But the goal of this ritualisation stage is to perform only one action composed of all these different layers. In conclusion, the objective of this phase is the same as the previous one: to direct the full attention of the performer to the situation at hand. By overloading the conscious mind of the performers, I intend to ensure that unnecessary mental processes - such as memory, feelings, emotions - do not interfere in the work, thereby hampering the performer's attainment of *vivencia*.

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<sup>104</sup> Roubicek states that teachers in a dance context are often placed in the role of 'arbitrator'. Roubicek also poses that this may in turn lead to a dancer's dependency upon these 'arbitrators' to affirm their performance as successful, and in turn disempowers the dancer's ability to be self-sufficient within their own practice (in Thompson-Smith, 2013, p.18).

TABLE 13: BUILDING AND SINGING

*Name of the activity:*

Building and singing

*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*

- Creation process of *Kingdom*
- Kingdom finished piece
- Dancers of Scottish Dance Theatre

*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*

Ritualisation		
Entering/devising performance	During performance	Exiting performance
Acquiring necessary skills (specific physical training)	Games are serious things	Cooling down
Collateral training. The performer within a wider reality	Multitasking	Heuristic enquiry
Demystification of the act of performing	The doer	The ritualisation trace



Video 13

*Description:*

As with 36, the creation of *Kingdom* also included tasks where the performers had to carry out a series of actions in an increasingly complex scenario.

To construct the bamboo installation, the dancers need to negotiate in real time which part of the installation they are taking care of, which part has already been laid out, and which part needs to be done at each particular moment. At the same time, the dancers are singing, in canon, in three different languages: Spanish, German and English. As such, they need to pay attention to the tempo of the music and to the other dancers' tempos. Finally, they simultaneously need to tie the knots safely and quickly, to complete the installation in less than 16 minutes. The tasks are accompanied by an element of stress, as the safety of the dancers depends on the solidity of the bamboo structure.

*Goal:*

This phase intends to develop problem-solving skills in three different areas. (1) the task that individually each dancer must fulfil; (2) the task that the group as a whole must complete; (3) the limitations imposed by the environment, time and space.

### **'The Doer': The Creator. Commitment & Ownership:**

Grotowski transformed the actor first into the performer, and then into 'the doer'. He also stressed the personal, even private, nature of an actor's work, redefining the spectator as 'witness' rather than the object at which the performance is directed (Shevtsova, 2012).<sup>105</sup> *Towards Vivencia* has been developed to ensure that there is emphasis placed upon the performer as an individual who is 'doing' and, even if being witnessed, is both having the experience of performing, whilst actively and willingly experiencing that experience.

This ritualisation phase aims to illustrate the notion of 'active surrendering', introduced previously as a mechanism that facilitates performing with the minimum interference of willpower while at the same time requiring all the performer's commitment to happen. Building from the demystification of the act of performing, *Towards Vivencia* makes use of particular experiences such as spinning, or risky scenarios, as tools to train the surrendering of all personal history to the task at hand and the total commitment to the action as a matter of fact. Oida's account of one of his performances is exactly the action-paradigm that I transmit to the performers when we are devising a new piece of work. Therefore, at some point during almost every project I am involved in, I read the following quote:

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<sup>105</sup> See introductory chapter for the viewpoint this research has taken regarding the concept of audience.

In the suicide scene, Drona took off his outer garments, and then poured a large jar of blood-red water over his head, as a kind of purification. The liquid ran down his entire body and then soaked into the earth. The audience felt the grief, love, and despair of the father very strongly. But for myself, I didn't think, 'What should appear in this moment?' or 'What psychological state should I use?' As the scene started, Toshi Tsuchitori (the Japanese musician who was involved in the production) began a steady drum beat. I used this as my focus, and simply concentrated on relating my movements to the beat of the drum. For me, there was nothing else. Only the link between the sound and the actions of my body. Of course, . . . I remembered the nature of the situation. It was a bleak moment, not a cheerful one, so I retained awareness of the sad quality of the scene. I didn't play 'the sadness'. It was simply acknowledged as being present. For me the work was to create a relationship with the drum.

On reflection, I suspect that this moment worked because I had been so firmly concentrated on one single thing. As a consequence, there was a lot of space 'inside' me. Space which allowed the audience's imagination to enter. I didn't fill my interior with too much psychological material. I simply respected the situation, and then concentrated on the music. In turn, this concentration created an inner void. Into this emptiness the audience could project their own imagination. They could make up all sorts of stories about what I was feeling.

The empty space of theatre exists inside the actor, as well as on the stage itself. (Oida & Marshall, 1997, p. 64-5)<sup>106</sup>

My research maintains, just as Oida suggests, the firm commitment and resilience of the performer to keep extremely focused and aware within and of his/her actions, allowing *vivencia* to unfold naturally.

On order to train this resilience and commitment and connecting with the first component of this 'during performance', a playful attitude not only requires but also facilitates an intentional commitment: "play is superfluous . . . It is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty" (Huizinga, 1970, p. 8). In other words, play is a voluntary activity. In the framework of this research, performance

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<sup>106</sup> This notion of acting without the use of imagery is in direct contrast to what Stanislavski demands from his actors. In his own words: to treat fictional circumstances as if real, to visualise the details of a character's world specifically, and to daydream or fantasise about the events of the play (in Hodge, 2010, p. 11).

needs to be voluntarily delivered and *vivencia* has to be willingly achieved.

Playfulness and multitasking ignites the dancers' awareness, not only in their individual tasks, but also in how these relate to the whole group, thus promoting commitment to the (temporary) community. It was my aim to create scenarios such as this throughout the work. Where dancers are subject to so many variables and stimuli that their concentration is pushed to the limit, they actively maintain their awareness to create the piece of work in real time. It is this immediacy in the situation that creates the work as it unfolds, rather than creating a repetition.

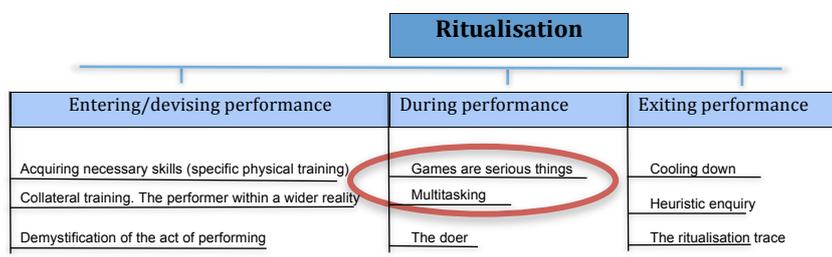
While the metamorphosis of the performer into 'the doer' might be facilitated by the previous phases, it is paramount to complete the transformation consciously and willingly. Acknowledging previous outcomes and firmly committing to actions, the performer must maintain a solid determination to fulfil the given task, a reverent respect to his/her duty, and pay full attention to detail in order to become 'the doer' and to bring his/her transmutation to a successful conclusion. As Alain Platel (2010) states: "when performers are willing, [performance] did happen" (Sadlers Wells, January 17). In order to train this commitment, *Towards Vivencia* makes use of demanding activities that are sustained by a long period of time, such as spinning for 30 minutes, skipping with a rope for 45 minutes like a boxer or throwing and catching bottles relentlessly. Resilience and exhaustion-coping are the key paths to train commitment.

I now describe an activity that might seem not very demanding physically, but that gathers together the previous ritualisation phases and directs the performer to understand what I mean when I speak of embodied commitment.

TABLE 14: PEELING THE EGG

**Name of the activity:** The boiled egg<sup>107</sup>  
**Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:**  
 Towards Vivencia workshops' participants

**Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:**



Video 15

**Description:**

I ask the dancers to each bring a hard-boiled egg into the studio. The dancers are asked to take their egg each and find a place around the room.

They are given the task of peeling the egg without damaging the egg white. This is a competition. They all start at the same time and raise their hand when finished. I note how long it took each individual.<sup>108</sup>

**Goal:**

The competition element adds certain arousal to the task, which is short and easy enough to avoid any distraction, but at the same time is challenging and complex enough to require total and exclusive attention to the task.

**Participants' reflections:**

When the task is over and the eggs are examined, the majority of the eggs are perfectly peeled, indicating that the majority of the dancers paid full attention to their actions. Then, they are asked what they were thinking during the task. The answer is usually: "I was thinking about peeling the egg."<sup>109</sup>

**Learning emerged:**

36 was created during this research. During the process, the performers were introduced to most of the concepts described throughout this thesis and this impacted on their understanding of performance and their roles. In conversation with one of the dancers I asked: "How do you transform a pedestrian movement such as throwing or running, into a performance?" The dancer responded, "I think it's the commitment and the engagement" (E1 28th June 2011).

36 was also designed in a way that offers a peak experience to the dancers every time they perform. Rapisardi, one of the original cast members of 36 reported: "It is like this, you don't have to recreate this sensation for yourself because it is there already. You don't have to make this effort of trying to make it interesting or new today because it is always". (E1, 12th July 2011)

<sup>107</sup> This exercise appeals to the reference that Watts (1989) made to Zen Buddhism: "Zen does not confuse spirituality with thinking about God while one is peeling potatoes. Zen spirituality is just to peel the potatoes" (p. 2).

<sup>108</sup> This is the playful component.

<sup>109</sup> Notes collected in Personal Journal after teaching performance studies at London Contemporary Dance School in 2008, 2009, and 2011.

This thesis argues that there is no performance unless someone performs, and that the performer is the only possible assessor of his/her own practice in performance. This is why the ritualisation of the performance, and therefore the transmutation into 'the doer', must fall to the performer. The previous steps (acquiring specific skills, collateral training and demystification of the act of performing) do not redeem the individual from taking accountability for his/her own training. This methodology has been constructed for the performer to be able to locate and replicate the ideal state of being I associate with peak performance. However, once the performers have been guided to experience this state and offered a number of tools with which to replicate it, it is up to them to carry on its exercise regularly and to maintain this practice rigorously; in other words, they are encouraged to become independent and to master their practice in order to be able to reach *vivencia* at will by their own means. The exercises proposed throughout this written component of my research are only examples of how these principles can be applied, and it is important not to see these tasks as the only way to render *vivencia*. On the contrary, each performer, director and piece of work will pose different challenges that will need to be tackled using these ideas, but creating new practical ways to implement them. This entails not only following this methodology in order to ritualise performance, but also having to revise, adapt and amend it into the best possible means by which to ritualise performance.

Then, and in order to maximise the effectiveness of the transformation that occurs during performance, the individual must consciously decide and voluntarily mark the end of his/her performance by closing the ritualisation process.

# Chapter 4. Towards Vivencia

## Exiting Performance

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I am I and my circumstance  
(Ortega y Gasset, 1970, p.30).

A piece of performance work is usually marked by the end of the music, the end of the text, the end of the choreographic score or a silence followed by a lighting fade out. However, this research findings indicate that this is not a valid end for the ritualisation process unless performers accompany this external ending with their own intentionality to exit the state of being associated with the performance. If the performer does not complete the process, the training effect will be limited. During the practical component of this research, a dancer proposed the following metaphor to illustrate the former affirmation:

Performing can be compared with cooking; in concrete, with the physical and chemical transformation of ingredients that occur while cooking. If an ingredient is not cooked enough, it will experience very little or no change at all. If the same ingredient is cooked for too long, it will burn and eventually it will disappear into ashes. (E5, 4th May 2012)

Rites of passage normally include “a separation from the community, a liminal phase during which one exists outside the community, and a reintegration into the community at a new level” (Lyden, 2003, p. 95). Exiting Performance is the integration phase where generation of knowledge happens, the ritualisation process is properly closed, and the performer re-enters life transformed outside the ritualisation process.

The following stages of this methodology endeavour to safeguard the wellbeing of the performer, maximise the positive effects of the previous ritualisation phases and increase the rate of success in future performances.

### **Cooling Down. Reversing Axis Mundi**

Throughout this thesis, I present performance as an experience with the potential to change or transform the individual. I also determine that performance towards *vivencia* demands a total commitment from the performer. From these two perspectives, if performers fully commit and surrender to the performance experience, they are pushed out of their quotidian state of being as an individual, thereby creating the possibility of imbalance in their physical and/or mental stability.

The variable intensity of a dance performance often results in the dancer undergoing “a high rate of blood flow around the body and a fast (sometimes near maximum) heart rate, with the metabolism and the nervous system in a heightened state of activity” (Quin *et al.*, 2015, p. 62). There exists abundant literature and widespread awareness about the importance of physically cooling down after exercise. This awareness is directly related to preventing injuries, sustaining high levels of demanding work, and extending performers’ active lives. Bulimia, anorexia, depression, stress, and so on, are just a few examples of common health problems among performers (Thayer Sataloff *et al*, 1991). In sports and dance, such awareness is extensive, but through this research I have found that cooling down is spoken about, but rarely practiced in the theatre, music or performance art fields.

The essential purpose of a cool-down is to return the body gradually to a stable psychophysical functioning whilst maximising the effects of the training. Those are the objectives of *Towards Vivencia*'s last phase. According to Edel Quin, Sonia Rafferty and Charlotte Tomlinson (2015), there is limited research on the benefits of cooling down. Moreover, the existing literature is exclusively dedicated to the physical wellbeing of the performer (p. 62-65). A typical cooling down session may involve a series of exercises to reduce heart rate, some strengthening exercises, an icing regime, hot/cold showering, and/or the wearing of compression garments. It is essentially a time for realignment, proprioception training, and re-addressing technique corrections. However, during the course of this research I have not found any performing training methodology that contains a systematic cool-down routine specifically directed to relieve any mental tension that may have built up during the dance session. According to Helen Laws, "cooling down appears less popular than warming up . . . Perhaps this is in part due to the somewhat contradictory nature of the findings" (in Quin *et al.*, 2015, p. 62).

Despite the benefits of a healthy practice being extensively promoted, I have witnessed many dancers not warming up thoroughly before a show and, even more often, not cooling down afterwards. Those dancers who do cool down are likely to limit their actions to stretching different muscle groups.<sup>110</sup> When it comes to winding down mentally, there is a widespread practice among performers to finish the daily routine by socialising with other company members. My own experience as a performer, corroborated through many

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<sup>110</sup> This statement is based on my experience as professional dancer, teacher and choreographer, and includes company class before rehearsals and performances for companies such as Rambert Dance Company, Akram Khan Company and Punchdrunk, to name a few.

informal conversations, indicates that this need to share time together with colleagues or friends immediately after a performance is often the result of feeling 'too wired' to go home or face the 'come down' from a heightened state to a mundane normality of commuting, grocery shopping and house cleaning.

Exiting from the performative state, therefore, often becomes a by-product of socialising, rather than a consciously pursued outcome. This approach might work for some, but there will always be the danger of not exiting completely. This will result in an incomplete ritualisation process, which will jeopardise the continued development of a performer, compromise and/or limit the success of future performances and in extreme scenarios might seriously harm the individual (mentally or physically) due to the demands of the work. A performer who is stuck in a non-exit state, a sort of limbo, might resort to self-medication through alcohol and recreational drugs, sometimes with fatal consequences.<sup>111</sup>

While dance science has borrowed and applied sports research to describe possible models to safeguard dancers' health after an intense working session, these models mostly focus on physical aspects. Building upon the previous phases of ritualisation, *Towards Vivencia* proposes to cool down and exit the performance through giving full attention to the detail of the actions that mark the end of performance. *Towards Vivencia* urges dancers to follow those models and, doing so mindfully, directing their attention and concentration to the precision of the actions in order to make sense of their actions and exit the

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<sup>111</sup> Social interactions, such as joining other dancers for a post-performance drink or dinner would sometimes help me to 'unwind'. At other times, this was not enough, and I could exist in a state of unease for some hours, days, or even weeks. Later, as a teacher and choreographer, I became concerned as I encountered a relatively high number of performers who used drugs to deal with performance-related stress, or, even more worryingly, were harmed physically or mentally due to the demands of their work.

performance mode in a productive way. What *Towards Vivencia* adds to existing guidelines is the recommendation to devise a series of actions that not only allow the body to return to its normal physiological functioning, but also to consciously reverse the intentionality of entering *vivencia* to the intentionality of exiting this performative state of being. Through this methodology, dancers are encouraged to enter and exit performance through their own *Axis Mundi*. The first step towards exiting the performance would be to walk back and pass through the landmarks, real or imaginary, that marked the beginning of it. After marking the end of the performance, the dancer should carry out a series of actions or exercises that allows them to put an end to the performance and re-enter the daily world, not as they left it, but transformed through their performance; in Lyden's words "a reintegration into the community at a new level" (2003, p. 95).

Stephen Wang (2000) describes his experience of rehearsal with two young actors, immediately after working on a scene in the play *Paper Dolls* by Elaine Jackson:

When they had finished the scene, I asked them to take a long time 'warming down.' . . . 'Then take some more time to put it away, to let it go, to physically shake it out and return to your own body.'

When they are ready, I ask, 'Well, how was that?'

The two of them say nothing. They just turn to each other and hug.

'Yes,' I say, 'after that scene you many need to make some human contact with your scene partner. It is like a nightmare, and it takes some time to wake up.' (p. 286)

This example illustrates how some directors might propose that performers to take time to cool down, and how necessary it might be to do so. My experiences as a professional dancer, and when working with other choreographers/teachers, did not include any form of directed cool down, and

during this research I did not find any systematised way for dancers to ‘unwire’ totally, both physically and mentally, and according to the specifics of the demands of a given performance, once it is finished. However, I incorporate this phase of the ritualisation process both in my workshops and in my choreographic work encouraging these dancers to incorporate this ritualisation practice along with all the previous ones and as important as the previous ones.

My work is usually extremely demanding, to the point that sometimes even the physical safety of the performers depends on their skills and the accuracy of their actions. Although I make all possible efforts to devise dance material that is anatomically safe, the overall choreographic composition implies risks that can only be avoided by prior acquisition of the necessary skills,<sup>112</sup> and the total immersion by the dancer in the action. My choreographic work always demands full commitment and awareness for safe practice. Throwing bottles of water (equivalent to throwing a hammer), or building a 3 metre high bamboo installation and then dancing on it, are clear examples of the physical condition, necessary skills and also extreme concentration and awareness that my work requires from the performers. To be able to sustain these challenging demands with confidence, it is necessary to assess each and every aspect of the performance, and also to find a way to unload oneself from the burden of responsibility for one’s own wellbeing, and that of others.

The following subsection shows how *Kingdom* ends in a way that allows the performers to reverse the *Axis Mundi* devised to start the same piece.

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<sup>112</sup> See Chapter 2, “Acquiring Necessary Skills (Specific Physical Training)”.

TABLE 15: UNDOING AXIS MUNDI

*Name of the activity:*

Undoing Axis Mundi

*Context in which it has been used and who was designer for:*

- Dancers of Scottish Dance Theatre
- The end of Kingdom performance

*Other ritualisation phases where it could be used:*



Video 16

And

Kingdom: 34:54 -

36:30

*Description:*

Once the piece is finished and whilst the audience is leaving the theatre, the dancers must untie the knots of the structure and systematically arrange the ropes, protect and pack the bamboo canes for the next performance.

*Goal:*

This task requires all the performers' concentration and gives them a framework through which to exit the performance through their actions.

*Learning emerged:*

This last section of the piece demands the individual taking responsibility for the procedure of finishing what they have started, not only from a physical pragmatic point of view of undoing the bamboo installation, but more importantly gives them space to reflect individually or comment about the piece communally.

### Heuristic Enquiry

Throughout this written thesis, I have argued that it is only possible to experience one's state of mind via kinetic happening, and that *vivencia* is a consciously embodied state of mind. I will now formulate how performers must not only be satisfied with experiencing the experience, but also how they should examine their experiences in order to build knowledge and exit the performance enhanced. This task can be accomplished through heuristic enquiry. It can also

be implemented together with the physical exercises connected to the cooling down process, to maximise its effects.

The title of this section of *Towards Vivencia* is borrowed from the research methodology developed by Clark Moustaka: “The heuristic inquiry deviates from the traditional phenomenological paradigm in that it actively encourages the researcher to connect to and to immerse himself in the human concern or issue under investigation” (Bockler, 2011, p. 90). In this light, I propose to use heuristic approaches to analyse, study and articulate the experiences and the meanings that performers assign to their experiences. In Jessica Bockler’s words: “the heuristic quest culminates in a creative synthesis which is imbued with personal significance.” (*ibid.*, p. 12).<sup>113</sup>

*Towards Vivencia* not only encourages performers to reflect upon their recent experience of performance, but also offers them very specific tools to do so. In 2013, I carried out a series of activities that were funded by Arts Council England and consequently involved evaluation of the implementation, and impact on the participants, and I therefore devised a feedback form.<sup>114</sup> During this research process I also started to use this form to monitor the creation of a work, and also to assess and adjust my training methodology accordingly to the notes gathered. However, during this research I realised that the form was a much more valuable tool for the performers as a mechanism for self-evaluation than an instrument for me to measure the impact of my methodology. Thus, I abandoned the idea of standardised and/or statistically collected forms, and used them

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<sup>113</sup> Borrowing this term does not mean that I have employed heuristic methodologies throughout the course of this investigation. The research methodology followed to develop *Towards Vivencia* is explained in the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>114</sup> It is important to point out that because the form was originally created to fulfil funding demands, no relevant models from psychology or anthropology were utilised in its construction.

instead as an instrument for the performer to analyse their own performance. This contributed to the basis of my work focusing on the idea that the performer is the generator and the recipient of the experience. Hence, focusing completely on the first-person experience and how to calibrate this reflexively rather than trying to prove scientifically that all experiences generated using one methodology are identical in nature.

The original form was modified and incorporated as part of *Towards Vivencia*. I have used this mechanism at the end of creation processes but also at the end of workshops to allow people to reflect upon their experience. Using their completed forms, I help the dancers observe their answers, celebrate success and set up future aims and objectives. Through subsequent informal conversations, it became clear that the process of filling out an evaluation form made the dancers reflect upon their experience and therefore help them to transform a purely embodied information into conscious knowledge. In this way it became easier for them to replicate their successes and avoid mistakes in future performances. The final version of this document can be found in Appendix F.

Analysing the performance immediately after performing helps to objectivise actions, which means that success and failure can be gauged in the right measure. This prevents future errors and creates a way to reproduce and increase the achievements accomplished. An heuristic enquiry helps performers to detach emotionally from mistakes and triumphs, and to view these from a more technical and unbiased point of view. The most important reason though for reflecting upon the performance is because, as previously stated, the performer is the only one able to assert whether or not they reached *vivencia*.

As a choreographer/facilitator, in order to help the performer locate and replicate the required state of being for my work, I initially impose the criteria to assess performance. However, it is my hope that once dancers have experienced *Towards Vivencia* intensively and thoroughly, they can independently adjust and customise the entire training methodology, devising new tasks and actions to implement all the ritualisation phases including formulating their own criteria to assess their performative experience.<sup>115</sup>

During both my professional practice as performer, and during my theoretical research, I have not encountered any training methodology, choreographer or company that encourages performers to question and assess actively their practice on a regular basis. I have worked with companies who implement a sort of collective evaluation on selected occasions. The norm, however, is to dedicate a short period of time to what is commonly known in the dance world as 'notes'. That is, the choreographer or the rehearsal director giving corrections to the dancers from their previous performances in order to continue developing the work or to correct mistakes, with little or no participation from the dancers.

*Towards Vivencia* suggests that the post-performance investigation should be carried out individually in the first instance, and then also collectively; individually, because the performer is the direct recipient of the experience, and collectively, because this experience is, almost always, shared.<sup>116</sup> I consider that

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<sup>115</sup> Over the last seven years, my work has focused mainly on training dancers into ritualising performance. Further research would be necessary to explore how many of the dancers I have worked with carry on employing this methodology independently, and how they do it. My research is currently limited to reflection upon the goals imposed by myself and the actual construction of the training methodology *Towards Vivencia*.

For a full list of the projects wherein I have applied this research methodology, see Appendix I.

<sup>116</sup> Chapter 2 "Collateral Training".

gathering different points of view regarding the same event will help the performer to enhance his/her future work. Seeking feedback from other sources will provide performers with “comprehensiveness and accuracy” (Bockler, 2011, p. 18), and will help them to amend their self-evaluations where necessary.

Without doubt, external feedback can be very useful at different moments of a performer’s life. That is why, during the devising process of a new piece of work, I dedicate some time to encouraging all the dancers and facilitators to observe one another and to offer their observations to each other. Sometimes I gather all participants together in a group discussion. The tendency in this group briefing is to talk about the work as a separate entity<sup>117</sup>, and to focus afterwards on each performer as an individual. Sometimes it is difficult not to get stuck in the first part of this conversation and focus only on the obstacles of the production as such. To counteract this, I will act as moderator to direct the group discussion towards the performer as creator in real time of the piece, rather than the choreographic product itself and also acknowledge the situations and/or actions that went well in order to be able to reproduce them and build upon them.

Additionally, I have devised a protocol that the dancer must use constantly as a compass, before, during and particularly after his/her performance.<sup>118</sup> In order to gauge whether they are moving in the right direction towards achieving

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<sup>117</sup> During the devising process, I usually talk about the piece of work as a separate entity that needs to be taken care of, nurtured and protected by the performers. The piece is something more than the sum of the individual performances, but at the same time it cannot exist without each and every one of the performers involved. See Preface and my approach to *kata*.

<sup>118</sup> In this way, it is important to remember that the notion of performance used throughout this research is independent from public showings.

*vivencia*, I ask the performers to map their own rite of passage by answering the following questions:

**- *Why am I doing what I am doing?***

Assessing whether a particular action serves the purpose of their performance emphasises, whilst at the same time personalises and endows meaningfully, the pragmatism of the gesture.

**- *What am I experiencing doing this?***

By reflexively interrogating their actions, performers can measure whether the ritualisation process is modifying their experience towards achieving *vivencia*.

**- *Who am I after doing this?***

The ultimate goal of *Towards Vivencia* is to gain insight by actively surrendering to the action. Knowing what is the development we want to accomplish or what is the actual change we have experienced through ritualising performance help us to close the cycle by incorporating a new model into our existence.

During *vivencia* training the performer would have to alternate between external feedback and their own self-assessment. Throughout this thesis I have posed that the performer is the only assessor of whether or not he/she has reached *vivencia*, but I have also contemplated commenting on the performance of others to facilitate the training process of self-assessment. For these reasons, during this research I rarely offer direct assertion as to whether a performer has reached his/her peak performative state. However, as an external aid, I usually pose questions, offer an account of my past personal experiences, and/or follow

the feedback method proposed by Liz Lerman (2003)<sup>119</sup> to facilitate each individual development. My personal experiences provide me with a solid starting point, but observing many other dancers throughout this research has brought me closer to identifying reference points in dancers' execution to deduce whether or not they have reached *vivencia*, and thus to focus my questions in that direction. These reference points are:

- the way dancers initiate their execution, whether there is a moment where a slight change in their commitment is observed between a non-performing attitude and the performing experience;
- the precision and the devotion towards their actions;
- an attitude of playful engagement;
- the way they end a sequence of movements, scene, or dance piece they are performing.<sup>120</sup>

Since I cannot assert unequivocally that I am capable of discerning when a performer has reached *vivencia*, my judgment, or by extension any other external judgment, is incapable of fully assessing a first-person experience. For this reason, training the dancers' articulation and feedback is very important.

To illustrate this point, I return to 36. During the second night that 36 was performed at the Royal Opera House,<sup>121</sup> the performers made a number of

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<sup>119</sup> Lerman calls it Critical Response Process. The process has four steps: (1) Statement of meaning by the group; (2) Questions by the dancer for the group (3) Questions by the group for the dancer; and (4) Opinions.

<sup>120</sup> Due to space constraints, and to maintain coherence with the rest of the research, this thesis only focuses on the first-person experience. This thesis concentrates on the way to achieve the specific quality I term *vivencia* and it is not a manual as to how to coach *vivencia*. Devising a comprehensive guide towards recognising, from an outside point of view, when a performance (or performer) is on a successful path or not, and ways to assist them is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>121</sup> Festival Exposure: Dance, February 23-25, 2012.

mistakes when choosing their numbers at the beginning of the piece.<sup>122</sup> It took them longer than in previous performances, but they finally got the numbers distributed correctly. For the rest of the performance I saw them pushing themselves harder, dropping more bottles and making more mistakes than they ever had before. I suspected that during this particular performance the dancers did not render *vivencia*, as they were constantly aware of previous mistakes, instead of leaving them behind and focusing on the present moment. The burden of their first mistakes was not laid to rest for the duration of the piece, and this load was only increased as further mistakes occurred. The next day, my suspicions were confirmed during our daily meeting. Through a number of conversations after the performance I was told by some of the dancers that they kept blaming themselves or others, instead of acknowledging what was happening and moving forward. Although the performers were not worried about the mistakes as such, they were devastated at how badly they performed. They realised that the mistakes - bottles dropped or errors claiming numbers - were just the result of not having the right concentration throughout; hence, not achieving *vivencia*. This collective reflection allowed the team to express and develop collective awareness of the situation to inform future performances.<sup>123</sup> This was a defining moment for me, that experientially convinced me of the truth in the assertion that the performer is ultimately responsible for judging the success or otherwise of the performance. That day, all the dancers agreed without my intervention that it had not been a good performance, not because they dropped more bottles than usual, but because they had not achieved *vivencia*.

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<sup>122</sup> See Table: "Claim your role".

<sup>123</sup> The corrections of the performance become part of the performance, making it as an organism very much alive, and preventing immutability.

## The Ritualisation Trace

Thus far, the performer has been given all the responsibility for the whole ritualisation process, and therefore attaining *vivencia* depends on the performer's actions and intentionality. Ritualisation has to be applied rigorously and with discipline, as the performer's own wellbeing and that of the group, rests on their skills, actions and awareness. This extreme and consuming labour does leave a trace within the performer. That is, the transformation that has been mentioned throughout this thesis. The last steps in the ritualisation process aim to allow the knowledge accumulated through the previous phases to be integrated into the performer's models of understanding.

This very last step of the ritualisation process is the only one that requires no active effort from the performer other than his/her acceptance of the transformation. One of the most difficult and exciting requirements of rituals, and by extension ritualisation, is the maintenance of balance between permanence and impermanence, a continuous liminal state between consciousness and automaticity. It is this I refer to as active surrendering. The Ritualisation Trace is yet another illustration of that balance. All of the previous phases have required the total, active involvement of the performer. This last step, like the *savasana* pose in yoga, requires a total surrendering in order that the performer might engage with the intuitive unconscious mind, accessing deep-seated memories, and completing the cycle of change (Long, 2008, p. 186).

I am not proposing here to do so through silent meditation or long walks. Throughout the thesis I have proposed a number of tasks and exercises to bodily render each and every step of the ritualisation process. Conversely, the Ritualisation Trace only demands the acceptance of the change. The performer

has been transformed through the methodology applied in the aforementioned stages: acquiring the skills, collateral training, demystification of the act of performing, being playful, reducing multitasking to one unique action, reflecting, and cooling down. All these steps undoubtedly leave a trace within the performer which better equips them for the next performance, provided they complete the ritualisation process. Thus, for this last ritualisation phase, there is nothing that this research can suggest, except acquiring a humble and receptive, yet brave, attitude in order to harvest the results of all the hard work undertaken to this point, and hence accepting the transformation.

If performers become servants to the ritualisation process and to the performance, despite being a conduit, they do not exit the process empty-handed. This methodology feeds from the performers becoming an empty vessel for something else to exist, but it mainly serves them. *Towards Vivencia* facilitates a profound understanding of a range of life experiences that are otherwise seldom or never explored: in everyday life this categorical and uncompromising engagement in the action at hand is rarely experienced (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Hence, *Towards Vivencia* offers the possibility to live a richer life, in which the performer navigates a wider spectrum of states of mind rather than remaining in the narrow confines of a conventional and limited consciousness.

# Conclusion

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This thesis has explored the relationship between consciousness and peak performance; it has delineated a new way to define and classify a peak performative state as *vivencia*; it has investigated other artists, such as Halprin and Grotowski, who have employed the term ‘ritual’ to endow their practice with sense, meaning and purpose; and through practice as research I have been able to propose a methodology to locate and replicate that particular peak performative state. Through this investigation, I have also modified my initial conception of performance and the act of performing. Now, I consider that performance is a transformative experience generated in real time.

This training method is based on the ritualisation process, understood here as a tool to reify abstract thinking, and therefore facilitate the integration of a new model into our existence. This model, by turn, empowers the performer by providing them with a new yardstick by which to measure success rather than the traditional, virtuositic ones within a competitive field.

## Why Ritualising?

I have encountered many colleagues who stress the difference between a peak performative state and marking or executing dance material. This is something that every performer, director or choreographer will come to know, intuitively. Kate M. Hefferon and Stewart Ollis (2006) state that every performer can “report they have entered a calm state of being, or a ‘zone’, while executing their greatest performances and personal bests” (p. 141). However, as yet, I have not encountered a dance company that has devised a methodology to help its performers to present, rather than re-present, their performance consistently.

The real challenge for the performer is in presenting his/her experience every time, in every performance, instead of re-presenting a memory of the experience from when the scene or the work was devised. The ritualisation of one's actions is a way to achieve this. Hence, *Towards Vivencia ritualises in order to render, not to remember.*<sup>124</sup>

During my research I identified four significant reasons to justify my conviction that ritualising performance is not a superfluous luxury, but rather an essential component of my artistic practice.

### *1-Quieting external factors that might interfere with the performer's abilities during the moment of performance*

According to Kate F. Hays (2002), "arousal and tension management are central skills both in sports and in performing arts" (p. 301). The somatic aspects of performance tension can directly affect performance itself and, what is worse, concern about the symptoms of physiological arousal not only exacerbate the symptom themselves, but also can directly affect concentration and memory (Lockwood in Hays, 2002, p. 301). During a person's life, circumstances beyond one's control are an inevitable constant. Anyone's standard conditions can be affected by a wide spectrum of circumstances, from extreme dramatic events such as bereavement of a loved one, to more ordinary occurrences, such as feeling unwell. These conditions may impair an individual's performance.<sup>125</sup> As it is not possible to control the daily events of life, ritualisation offers a strict methodology to cushion the effects of these circumstances in order to reach an ideal level of arousal by creating a controlled, almost alternative, reality.

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<sup>124</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>125</sup> It is important to note that not only unfortunate incidents will alter the performer's capacity; over-excitement or increased arousal will also disturb performance quality.

## *2-Establishing a new way of assessing performance*

Ritualisation provides new qualitative assessment criteria for the performer. Traditionally, the performer's training was very much focused on acquiring technical skills.<sup>126</sup> It is not my intent to deprecate this aspect of training, and even less to suggest that learning technical skills should not be a major component of training programmes, on the contrary as seen throughout this study, proficient skills are the foundations for this work. However, the reality is that in the performer's lifetime the focus on technique and ability possibly causes the performer to direct their attention only towards achieving the correct execution of a performance, rather than towards the quality of their experience in performance. This emphasis on technique might disrupt and obscure the goal of performing, aiming to achieve perfect form and forgetting the content and the experience of performance.<sup>127</sup> In a worst-case scenario: "The emphasis on flawless technique . . . puts an extraordinary demand on performing artists. Whether as student or professional, the artist's life is permeated with judgement about performance" (Hays, 2002, p. 300).

In this context, *Towards Vivencia* provides the tool for evaluating one's performance through introspection. In Ute Hüsken's (2007) words, "the 'state of mind' of the performer is considered an important factor in ritual evaluation" (p. 73), therefore, "there are 'good rituals' (performed at the right time with the correct state of mind) and 'bad' or 'unsuccessful rituals' (performed with an 'inappropriate' state of mind)" (*ibid.*, p. 73). This perspective calibrating one's state of mind is also found in Oida's approach to working:

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<sup>126</sup> My experience as lecturer and guest lecturer in higher education institutions around the world tells me that this practice is still widespread in current dancers' training courses.

<sup>127</sup> This focus on technique can also unbalance the ideal level of arousal for performing.

A good physical action is one that makes you change or enables you to understand better. And when you do the right kind of voice and movement exercises, you may find that your life feels happier, or your mind seems clearer, or your awareness become more sensitive. You somehow become stronger. (1997, p. 46)

Both, Hüsken and Oida recognised and stabilised a more or less loosely criteria to define a good -or bad- performance. By locating and directing the performer towards a particular state of being, this practice also serves to establish new criteria by which to assess performance. By contrasting their experiences, performers can make a comparative evaluation. I argue that ritualising a performance not only induces and facilitates reaching *vivencia*, but also helps to develop knowledge, making introspection a means of evaluating the success or failure of a performance.

### *3-Meaning Maker*

Daniel Chandler (2002) poses that as species, we are not *Homo sapiens* anymore but *homo-significans*, in other words, “meaning-makers” (p. 13), which means that in any aspect of life, performance included, it is inevitable that we will attempt to give meaning to our actions.

Mark Evans (2009) proposes that “sport constantly challenges the athlete with the question – what am I searching for through this physical activity, is it perfect execution of the activity or is it something more?” (p. 176). It is inherent in human beings to try to make sense of our surroundings, thus seeking to find coherence within any series of neutral random actions. In this sense, rituals serve a very important function in survival and are used in order to understand the environment. Abstract concepts are better embedded in one’s consciousness

when they are embodied,<sup>128</sup> and ritualisation is one of the main methodologies to bodily experience a particular concept, notion, idea or belief. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, ritualisation could be seen as a cathartic process with the potential to generate a healing<sup>129</sup> or a learning process.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, ritualising performance could provide a semiotic process (my actions signify/indicate/symbolise this or that) or a pragmatic reasoning (I do<sup>131</sup> this for that reason, or to fulfil a particular goal). Ritualising a performance helps to provide a frame, a context and sometimes a purpose. In the same way that Anna Halpin's experience with cancer did.<sup>132</sup>

It is important to clarify that it is not the goal of this research to enunciate potential tools for narratives in creation. In this study, the term 'meaning' is not concerned with the director or choreographer's interest in portraying an event, conveying an idea, producing characters or developing a story. This research is concerned with the performer's ritualisation in order for him/her to make sense of his/her own actions *per se*. Lyden (2003), describes how religion employs ritual in order to make sense of actions: "Ritual is the doing of religion . . . Essentially, religion must be performed to become meaningful" (p. 80). In short: *ritualisation is not employed to lend new meaning to a work, but to enable a work to become meaningful in itself for the one performing this work, to move a step closer towards a phenomenological performance, rendering the concept of vivencia real.*<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Note the statement from Lakoff and Johnson in the section "Phenomenological Experience" that "experience does not always come prior to conceptualization, because conceptualization is itself embodied" (1999, p. 139).

<sup>129</sup> Here I refer to healing in the sense meant by the psychoanalytic tradition.

<sup>130</sup> A learning process in terms of an Aristotelian notion of performance. See introductory chapter.

<sup>131</sup> With this 'I do', I refer to Grotowski's 'doer'.

<sup>132</sup> Introductory chapter.

<sup>133</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

#### *4-Enriching the experience of performers and audiences*

The ultimate purpose of *Towards Vivencia* in performance is to cultivate and improve the performing experience itself. Ritualising facilitates *vivencia*, and *vivencia* is a peak experience, a rare transforming event. As seen in the previous section of this thesis, rituals provide meaning, and therefore ritualising should result in more meaningful performances. According to Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2011), qualities of peak experiences include uniqueness, unity, and profoundly impact on the individual (p. 43). These same effects are achieved through ritualisation. Meyer-Dinkgräfe's text continues to explore similar experiences in audiences. For instance, in 1980, Panzarella published a study where music and visual art audiences had to report on "intense joyous experiences" (in Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2011, p. 44). He comments: "The ability of music, including opera, to lead to joyous experiences in their listeners has never been in doubt, but the Panzarella study was one of the first to put such insights into a conceptual framework" (*ibid.*, p. 44-45).

Moreover, if the performer presents his/her experience, audiences will benefit empathically. Spectators will not only witness a work but will also have an experience of the performer's experience. Therefore, the enhancement of the performer's experience might have a positive impact on audiences, leading to a deeper connection with the performer, and potentially also to experiencing higher states of consciousness, even if the objective of my own research methodology is not to attempt to measure this. As stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis focuses only on the first-person experience, both from the performer's point of view and that of the choreographer/director.

## Performance Facilitators

This methodology would not be complete without considering how important external factors can be to the individual performer in enhancing their performative experience, and so their performative state. Costumes, make-up, music, scenography, lighting, and so on, are all unique elements that can, and do, help the performer to leave behind his/her normal state of being and step into the performative world. During the development of this research, I tried to isolate the performer's experience to the maximum. However, I have to acknowledge that, during the later stages of the creation process of *36* or *Kingdom*, the performers and their experience of the performance grew considerably when music, costume and other external factors were included in the rehearsals. I cannot deny or ignore the value that these components contribute to the experience of the performance. Nevertheless, I still maintain that the performer's will and his/her actions are the main roots from which *vivencia* originates. I therefore refer to all other external elements as facilitators of *vivencia*, keeping the performer and his/her actions as the primary tools to render *vivencia*.<sup>134</sup> As an example of this aspect in my daily work, Thompson-Smith reports:

Shifting from process to performance within Jorge's work did not feel like a transition in itself, but a merging or incorporation of the two contexts, specifically in our conscious approach. Although performing was recognised as an act different to the act of rehearsing, it was not perceived as a separate entity to the process and contextualised as a layering of various aspects. It was understood that the experience of the work itself should remain as it was in rehearsal, however extra layers were added such as audience, lights, and costumes, in order to build upon and enhance the experience of the performer. We allow these things to inform us as opposed to influencing and directly affecting. (Thompson-Smith, 2013, p. 27)

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<sup>134</sup> Cf., Hefferon (2006) and Stanislavski (1950).

## Final Notes

I emphasise again, *Towards Vivencia* is not a technique, but rather a training methodology towards an optimum performative state of being. *Towards Vivencia* distils, condenses and reconstructs dance training and choreographic techniques in order to pose performative questions that dancers need to answer themselves. Each of their anatomical bodies, backgrounds and interests are unique and are permitted to enter into the process, building upon their own understanding of virtuostic technique. *Towards Vivencia* aims to be an introduction of concepts and sensations in order to guide performers to find their own technical and/or creative result rather than enforcing a single, dogmatic and overriding path. This perspective opposes traditional education in dance where the teaching environment is often perceived as authoritarian (Quested & Duda in Thompson-Smith, 2013). This “may in turn lead to a dancer’s dependency upon [external judgment] to affirm their performance as successful and in turn disenables the dancers [sic] ability to be self-sufficient within their own practice” (Thompson-Smith, 2013, p. 18). I believe that only thoroughly trained performers should implement ritualising performance, as they already have a wide compartmental knowledge of the individual mechanisms necessary for ritualising, e.g., the means to work on the necessary skills and the capacity to work playfully.

Through my research I found that the process of extensive devising, applying, and testing my thesis in practice conferred legitimacy on the methodology proposed in this research. I conclude that this research has provided me with new ways of teaching and choreographing. The enormous spectrum of perspectives on experiences of peak performance states has assisted in the development of this

research, as well as in enhancing my work overall. I initiated this research with three very specific questions: Is there a specific state of being associated with peak performance? Can I locate it? Can I replicate it at will? I then devised a methodology to help myself, and in turn my performers, to attain that particular performative state and thereby access *vivencia* through a methodological approach. As a result, I have created an experiential protocol and *transferable* methodology through which performers can understand and experience what I have personally sensed as an altered state of consciousness applied to performance. Currently, I often lead workshops on *Towards Vivencia*, and this methodology has become very much a part of my continuous professional practice not only as a teacher, but also as a choreographer/director. During the last stages of this research, I have started to create a pool of trainers who can also deliver workshops exclusively dedicated *Towards Vivencia*. These trainers possess a profound knowledge of the ritualisation process and they have experienced it themselves in numerous workshops and/or creative processes with me. Now, they also create new exercises and tools to apply this methodology to new contexts. This approach, that effectively empowers - and deliberately so - my collaborators to develop my methodology for themselves, might be compared to the democratisation of dance that Steve Paxton introduced with Contact Improvisation: a form with origin but whose evolving practice is without author (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, pp. 19-20).

This research is based on more than 20 years' personal experience and seven years dedicated to the PaR documented in this thesis, including over 1500 direct participants from three different continents. *Vivencia*, and my methodology for accessing this, that I have called *Towards Vivencia*, although very much alive and in constant evolution, is also my contribution to the field of dance... for now.

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# Appendix A

## The Performative State

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As seen in the body of this thesis, this research considers performance as an event consciously experienced by the performer in which there is the potential to acquire knowledge. If the individual consciously and willingly replicates the experience associated with performance and s/he is aware of, feels, and if s/he reflects upon the indelible mark that this experience is leaving on him/her within the continuous present moment of the performance, then this will be called *vivencia*.

### Identifying States of Being

The state of being associated with *vivencia* is different to that experienced in everyday life. In the realm of consciousness studies, these out-of-the-ordinary states are labelled as ‘altered states of consciousness’. Before the 1970s, altered states of consciousness (ASC) were linked to mental illnesses. This perception has slowly changed. For instance, in 1971 Roland Fischer wrote one of the first articles attempting to classify mental states, including ASC related to mystical experiences. Later in 1983, John H. Clark constructed a map of mental states. Both authors recognise ASC as desirable mental states (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005, p. 20).

Varela (1999) offers us the perfect bridge between neuroscience and phenomenology, with what he has termed neurophenomenology, defined as a research direction “in which lived experience and its natural biological basis are linked by *mutual constraints* provided by their respective descriptions” (p. 112). In

his book *The Embodied Mind*, Varela tracks the historical evolution and the conceptual epistemology of phenomenology in order to propose an embodied perspective of modern cognitive science. In the same text, Varela *et al.* (1993) describes the Buddhist practice named mindfulness, or awareness, the aim of which is “to experience what one’s mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one’s mind” (p. 23). Empirically speaking, mindfulness/awareness practice matches entirely the ontology of *vivencia*. Varela describes a practice in which the practitioner reflects upon the actual experience in any given moment. *Vivencia* is the idea of being aware of oneself and one’s surroundings.<sup>135</sup> *Vivencia* is to live the performance and be conscious of it. In the words of Depraz *et al.* (2003), it is:

a life that is lived both innerly and in relationship with the outside world (in phenomenological terms: immanently and intentionally), that is, a life related to itself and related to objects, be they perceptive, affective or indeed for that matter, apperceptive, self-reflective. (p. 3)

Depraz, Varela and Vermersch also claim that someone is intending an ASC when s/he “is doing something to get away from his usual mundane, unconcentrated, unrelaxed, nondissociated, lower state of reality” (Varela, *et al.*, 1993, p. 23). There are many examples in humanity's history of practices whose main aim is to induce ASC. For instance: yoga, sadomasochism, sports, religious and everyday rituals. If other states can be experienced at will, *vivencia* should not be an exception. Therefore, it is already possible to claim that it lies within the performer’s ability to reach *vivencia* voluntarily. We have

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<sup>135</sup> Being aware of oneself and one’s surroundings is the simplest standard dictionary definition of consciousness. Damasio also defines consciousness as “the sense of the self and the transition from innocence and ignorance to knowingness and selfness [sic]” (1999, p. 4). There are other authors such as Steven Rose who propose that “awareness is the ability to direct attention selectively to specific aspects of the environment and to be able to manipulate these aspects cognitively . . . perhaps a precursor to consciousness, self-awareness may be a more complex phenomenon” (Rose, 2005, p. 88).

the capacity to excite and suppress the activity of specific areas of the brain at will, in order to perform and consciously reflect simultaneously. Moreover, this reflection needs to be subjective, otherwise “if we weren’t able to identify the subjective phenomena of consciousness directly, that is, subjectively, we would have no way to know which externally observable phenomena were relevant to what phenomena of consciousness, or in what ways” (Shear & Jevning, 1999, p. 189).

## Biofeedback

The latest advances in cognitive science, due mainly to the technology available today, make it possible to recognise and measure bodily physiological responses, with the goal of being able to manipulate them at will. This methodology is known as biofeedback. Among other variables, biofeedback usually focuses on heart rate variability, eye movement, metabolic rate, galvanic skin response, breathing capacity and variability, alpha/theta brain waves — measured by electroencephalography (EEG) — and blood pressure variation. The measurement of these responses has led to studies concerning what activities or mental processes can modify them in order to enhance any human activity. This has resulted in a training scheme called neurofeedback: a psychophysiological intervention to optimise any activity (Raymond *et al.*, 2005, p. 66). Clinical applications of neurofeedback have been extensively investigated, but “less attention has been paid to the effects that neurofeedback training has on healthy subjects looking to alter their neural activity to enter a state of peak performance” (*ibid.*, p. 65). In order to investigate and use neurofeedback to enhance any skills in the performing arts, a group of university research centres

gathered into an integrated project funded under the European Sixth Framework Program, which was called PRESENCIA (Slater & Brunet, 2006). Within this project, a number of authors developed an alpha/theta neurofeedback training.<sup>136</sup> The research encompasses “sensory enhancement, neuroscience, cerebral-computer interfaces and software applications in order to enhance flow<sup>137</sup> in dancers and musicians” (Egner & Gruzelier, 2003, 2009, 2010. Also Raymond *et al*, 2005).<sup>138</sup>

Part of this practice as research has also involved the use of biofeedback to explore whether the first-person experience can be externally measured in order to find a specific range of physiological variables that are linked to *vivencia*. During the academic year 2009-2010,<sup>139</sup> and together with fellow choreographer Freddie Opoku-Addaie, I co-choreographed the piece entitled *Bf* with the objective to render *vivencia* in performance. Using this choreographic work as a starting point, and on the basis of the PRESENCIA project, I gathered a group of experts<sup>140</sup> to use biofeedback and explore whether the brain activities of the two dancers involved in *Bf*, matched the brain activity of two expert whirling dervish dancers. My goal was to collect enough data in both situations to be able to

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<sup>136</sup> For more information about and credits for this training, see <http://www.presencia.org/>.

<sup>137</sup> Flow will be described and analysed in the following section.

<sup>138</sup> The study was implemented at the Royal College of Music, Trinity College of Music and Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, also in collaboration with Emma Redding and Rosemary Brandt, working with Laban Dance Centre students.

<sup>139</sup> On the basis of the PRESENCIA project.

<sup>140</sup> These experts included Tony Steffert, Shama Rahman, and Laura Etienne. With a background in engineering and design, Steffert was a PhD Psychology student in 2009 at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is an EEG specialist and trained in neurofeedback at the University Hospital, Groningen. Rahman, also an EEG specialist, was a PhD Psychology student at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2009. Etienne is a former national karate champion, the only qualified Awakened Mind practitioner in the UK and neurofeedback sport trainer.

compare them from a physiological point of view; hence to verify if performing *Bf* corresponded to the actual *vivencia* of whirling dervish dance.<sup>141</sup>

My premise was that if the physiological responses were similar, this would prove that it is possible to construct and consequently to render a *vivencia* on stage through a particularly devised performance. We initiated the investigation knowing that our limited access to adequate technology may cause problems, and after three preliminary testing sessions, our concerns were corroborated. The computers we were using were not powerful enough to process the amount of information generated in a durational activity such as whirling dervish dance. Due to a lack of financial support, we could not access to the computing resources that would enable us to carry out the test successfully. We thus suspended our explorations.

#### **Alpha/Theta Neurofeedback Research in Bf (Based on Tony Steffert's notes)**

During the autumn of 2009 and winter of 2010, Steffert, Rahman, Ettiene and myself, held a few meetings in order to devise a protocol that could measure the brain activity of dance practitioners in two different movement-based activities. The first was to be whirling dervish dance and the second a dance piece called *Bf*, especially devised to render *vivencia* on stage. We ran two tests in order to verify if the machinery available would be able to offer a clear reading of brain activity in motion. The machinery used was: nexus 4 with the BioTrace software; 2-channel of EEG wireless amp;<sup>142</sup> PET EEG 2-channel bipolar EEG amp, suitable for wireless measuring of EEG, EMG or ECG, used especially suitable for tele-

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<sup>141</sup> The peak state of mind associated with whirling dervish dance and other ritualistic practices is discussed in the introductory section of this thesis.

<sup>142</sup> See <http://www.mindmedia.nl/english/nexus4.php> for more information.

neurofeedback;<sup>143</sup> and the software BioExplorer, used in order to process the data. One of test sessions was held at the Harrow campus of the University of Westminster, and the other at the Royal Opera House, London.

Two professional contemporary dancers and experts in whirling dervish were the subjects of the above tests. The aim of the study was to compare the brain activity of movement based activities. Whirling dervish dance is used throughout this research as a subjective reference point, because of its proven efficacy in my personal practice to render *vivencia*. The particular nature of the whirling dervish dance required at least 20 minutes of continuous activity in order to reach the level of concentration required. The tests concluded that we were not able to measure the brain activity accurately in motion. One of the main problems was that one of the computers kept on crashing mid-recording due to the sheer mass of data collected in 20 minutes. Steffert affirmed that it is not possible to get good EEG readings when the subject is moving, which is caused by several factors:

- The EMG activity for muscle artifact is 10 to 100 times larger than the EEG signal measured from the scalp, so it can interfere with the recording.

- If perspiration on the skin builds up it can 'bridge' the electrodes. All EEG amplifiers have 'common mode rejection' to reduce external electrical noise, which means any signal that is the same in all electrodes is rejected. When perspiration builds up it links the electrodes, therefore most of the real EEG signal gets rejected.

- As the subject moves, the electrode moves in relation to the scalp, creating large 'spike' artifact in the EEG signal.

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<sup>143</sup> See [http://www.brainclinics-products.com/brainquiry\\_pet](http://www.brainclinics-products.com/brainquiry_pet) for more information.

### *Methodology*

We chose Cz. electrode placement with reference to the mastoids. This was placed on the top of the head and furthest away from the reference electrode. We taped the electrode in place and fixed all loose leads. The EEG frequency range we were most likely to be interested in would be Alpha and Theta and there was a good chance that, even with the artifice and electrical noise just mentioned, this band would be 'clean' enough to measure accurately, as the artifice is mostly low frequency below 3 Hz and high frequency above 18 Hz. Fortunately, the even spinning movement meant most of the muscle movement was in the lower body far from the head, and this mitigated some of the issues described above. Nevertheless, we still experienced difficulties keeping the sensors in place.

### *Test results and conclusions*

Although there was some noise in the EEG signal, we were surprised how good the signal was. To be successful in this, we would have needed more powerful computers to prevent crashing and loss of data at critical moments. The other problem was that the two sets of equipment we used were designed as neurofeedback machines and so had limited options for signal analyses. Optimally, we could have to export the data to a program like MATLAB/EEGLAB in order to best analyse it.

Steffert felt that overall the project showed promise and, with a bit more testing, it may be possible to achieve the objective. It would be a matter of finding the appropriate funding that would allow us to carry out and finalise the experiment. From a personal point of view, the two subjects of study — myself and another performer — believed that the greatest difficulty laid in having all

the machinery attached to the body. This created an uncomfortable situation for practicing dervish dance. Additionally, the practitioners commented on the difficulty in reaching the adequate state while being observed, especially without having had previous training to transform the fact of being observed and measured as part of the practice.

Despite this setback, neurofeedback nevertheless remains a rich area worthy of further investigation within performance studies. The information that biofeedback can provide regarding physical responses will be very valuable for researchers interested in the state of mind of the performer while performing. Nonetheless, as a practitioner, and following David Chalmers' reasoning (1996), I do not think that neurofeedback as a methodology employed to improve flow in performance is sufficiently relevant to this study. This is because, as have explained in the body of this thesis, this investigation considers the performer as ultimately responsible for the evaluation of his/her own practice in performance. I also believe that performance training should include the active involvement of performers in their capacity to reflect upon their experiences. This is very important in fulfilling the needs of my choreographic works, because I do not normally have access to the necessary machinery to use it during my creation process. Moreover, my artistic interest lies in the fact that performers achieve, by their own actions, that special performing quality on stage and that they are able to assess their state of mind in real time. The basis of this reflective process is explained in the following section, and further developed in relation to my own choreographic practice in Chapters 2 to 4 of this thesis.

## Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

In order to train performers in a more reflective practice, it is arguably necessary to use an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis —known as IPA — method. Phenomenology is an approach that enables the individual to ponder one’s own experiences using scientific methods, or as Kerr *et al.* (2006) put it, “Phenomenological approaches focus on the person’s subjective perception and interpretation of events which is thought to be closely related to both cognitive and emotional factors in human functioning” (p. 126). Phenomenological research has enabled today’s scientific community to reach beyond the quantitative restraints of past psychological research. Instead of only testifying that an experience has occurred, phenomenology and IPA have accurately discovered how it feels to experience the experience itself. IPA is inductive in nature, with no pre-existing hypothesis; it is also interpretive, thus subjective (Hefferon, 2006, p. 142). As Reid notes, “IPA aims to capture and explore the meanings that participants assign to their experiences” (in Hefferon, 2006, p. 144). On the other hand, Vermersch makes a clear distinction between phenomenology and introspection; the former being the epistemological tool and the latter providing the know-how and practical methodology. It is not the aim of this research to review deeply the different methods of studying experience, but it is necessary to stress that IPA as well as introspection or any other first-person method utilises the participants themselves as experts in the chosen experience being analysed.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Varela and Shear also propose the need to find third person studies which can be linked to first-person description, in order to cultivate objective, empirically based methodologies to study subjective phenomena (1999, p. 2-3). This research concentrates on first-person methodologies, as they focus on phenomenal consciousness or *qualia*; in other words, experiences that the individual can account for.

On the other hand, it is at the core of this research to facilitate mechanisms to the performers to study, reflect and gain knowledge of their own states of mind in performance. To reiterate, and based on Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sheets-Johnstone's work (2009), the statement 'I am a performer' reveals the final truth that there is no performance without a performer, and the performer is the only one who can describe his or her experience in performance.

### *States of Mind and the Brain*

Even though this research defends that the analysis of psychophysiological variables should not be used alone to assess one's state of mind, it does recognise that the human brain is the headquarters of experiences, reflections, and so on. Human reactions and perceptions "have been assembled piece by piece by the processing powers of the brain from the swirl of a neural blip, sensory perceptions, and scattered cognitions dwelling in its structures and neural pathways" (Newberg *et al.*, 2001, p. 36). No matter if it is hunger or a mystical experience, the brain is the part of the body in charge of processing the information received from other parts of the body, making sense of that information and responding to it. We experience the world through our cognitive mechanisms, and we also reflect upon the world through these mechanisms. These mechanisms are operated by our neural system, which, on a very reductionist level, can be described as a gigantic number of highly-specialised cells that are interconnected to conduct and process information — in fact just another part of the body. In order to be able to become an integrated device, the architecture of the brain is built according to the other bodily systems with which it interacts. Therefore, the way in which we experience the world is shaped by

how our bodies are built, including, and especially, the brain. “What is important is not just that we have bodies and thought is somehow embodied. What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 19). Again, here it is the body that is point of departure from which to conceptualise one’s experiences. Different areas of the brain are dedicated to different functions, but each of them cooperates with the rest of the brain too. The combined functions give us the ability to channel, interpret, and respond to the amount of information inundating the body’s neural pathways. These complex brain structures allow us to interact with our surroundings, which is tantamount to saying that they allow us to be conscious of our environment. The ensemble work of the different areas of the brain “are the neurological anchors of the mind” (Newberg *et al.*, 2001, p. 47).<sup>145</sup> In short, the structural brain constructs the mind.<sup>146</sup> When a particular state of mind is mentioned, it is because the workings of the nervous system are motivated towards one specific direction. This means that certain structures are stimulated in opposition to others, which are suppressed. In physiological terms, ASC occur when a particular area of the sympathetic or the para-sympathetic systems show extreme activity (Newberg *et al.*, p. 40). There are a number of taxonomies that attempt to classify these states of mind. Two of such taxonomies will be described in the following subsections: one developed by Newberg *et al.* (1), and the other developed by Kerr *et al.* (2). The first is important because it originates directly from Eugene G. d’Aquili, one

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<sup>145</sup> For more information on the evolutionary and developmental approach of the relationship between brain and mind, see Rose (2005).

<sup>146</sup> Mind is here understood as the process which “encompasses both conscious and no conscious operations” (Damasio, 1999, p. 12). In addition to this, this research elaborates notions of the mind gleaned from the following authors: Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 6; Newberg *et al.*, 2001, pp. 35-7; and Rose, 2005, pp. 87-8.

of the fathers of biogenetic structuralism.<sup>147</sup> This investigation found the biogenetic structuralism approach relevant to the subject of study because of its foundations. One of its pillars is that ASC are ingrained in our genetic code as a survival tool. Therefore, it not only supports the idea of ASC as a desirable state, but an unavoidable one. The second taxonomy is introduced because it is the only example found in which an interpretive phenomenological analysis used in sports has been modified to study dancers' experiences.<sup>148</sup> These two taxonomies are presented as examples to match the two methodologies of studying the individual experience that were presented at the beginning of this section: physiological and interpretative. None of the states described in these, nor any other taxonomy, are absolute or mutually exclusive. Whatever methodology we would use to measure them, values and boundaries need to be settled so as to draw a conclusive study and/or catalogue different states. In any case, it is vital to keep in mind that those values are approximate, and that the only person able to describe and assess the experienced event is the person who experienced it.

### States of Mind Taxonomies

(1) Biogenetic structuralism is described as “a body of theory and research projects that integrates anthropology with the neurosciences, phenomenology and quantum physics. This interdisciplinary perspective attempts to account for the structure of consciousness and culture by reference to the neurobiology of cognition” (Laughlin, 2008). The three

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<sup>147</sup> Biogenetic structuralism is described as “a body of theory and research projects that integrates anthropology with the neurosciences, phenomenology and quantum physics. This interdisciplinary perspective attempts to account for the structure of consciousness and culture by reference to the neurobiology of cognition” (Laughlin, 2008). The three authors that have been the primary driving force of biogenetic structuralism are Charles Laughlin, Eugene d’Aquili, and John McManus.

<sup>148</sup> This test is the State of Mind Indicator for Athletes (SOMIFA).

authors who have been the primary driving force behind biogenetic structuralism are: Charles Laughlin, Eugene d'Aquili and John McManus.

d'Aquili, along with Newberg et al., identifies four autonomic states:

- *Hyperquiescence*: State of extraordinary relaxation. It is normally experienced during sleep or certain states of meditation.

- *Hyperarousal*: Sense of excitement, keen alertness and fierce concentration. People in hyperarousal states often feel as if they are effortlessly channelling vast quantities of energy through their consciousness, resulting in the flow experience.

- *Hyperquiescence with Arousal Breakthrough*: Under certain unusual conditions, the *quiescent* branch of the autonomic system can be driven to such intense levels of activity that the normal antagonistic reaction between the sympathetic and para-sympathetic systems is overwhelmed. The arousal system becomes highly stimulated. This neurological 'spill over' or 'breakthrough' can lead to intensely altered states of consciousness.

- *Hyperarousal with Quiescence Breakthrough*: The maximal stimulation of the arousal system can also cause a spill-over effect, which causes quiescent responses to surge. The resulting trance-like state is experienced as an ecstatic rush of orgasmic-like energy (Newberg *et al.*, 2001, pp. 40-42).

(2) The tendency of relating performance and cognitive science has been growing over the last few years. Therefore, the second taxonomy is important because it represents one of the first attempts to modify a questionnaire used in sports to be applied to the dance field. This system differentiates pairs of

motivational states called the serious–playful, negativistic–conformist, mastery–sympathy, and self-oriented–other-oriented pairs. Someone’s state of mind would be identified by picking one concept from each pair (Kerr *et al.*, 2006, p. 125). The first two pairs of states (serious–playful, negativism–conformity) are modulated by an individual’s perception of their own level of arousal (felt arousal). The latter two pairs (mastery–sympathy, and self-oriented–other-oriented) are concerned with the outcome of interactions with others. Behaviour in the serious state is typically goal- and future-oriented, often involving planning ahead and a preference for low felt arousal; behaviour in the playful state tends to be spontaneous, impulsive and sensation-oriented, with a preference for high levels of felt arousal. Rebellious, stubborn and defiant behaviour is typical in the negativistic state; agreeable and cooperative behaviour is typical in the conformist state. In the mastery state, a person feels the need to be strong, tough, masterful and in control, while in the sympathy state, a person feels the need to be harmonious and feel sympathy or empathy with others. In the self-oriented state, the outcome of any interaction is seen in terms of net gain or loss to oneself; in the other-oriented state, one is concerned with net gain or loss to others in interactions. A short scale, the State of mind Indicator for Athletes (SOMIFA) (Bellew & Thatcher, 2002; Kerr & Apter, 1999) has been developed to identify which motivational states individuals are in during sport and other performances (Kerr *et al.*, 2006, pp. 127-128).

# Appendix B

## The Creative Aims and Process for 36

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36 began as a commission for London Contemporary Dance School's postgraduate company EDge in 2010. In 2012, I was asked by the Royal Opera House to restage the work. Along with the 12 dancers, the work features thirty-six plastic bottles that were filled with between 750ml and 1L of water and a glow-stick for lighting purposes. These bottles serve as the primary tools for creating an environment on stage where the dancers have no choice but to be constantly aware and in the moment. Throughout the course of the work, the dancers carried out intensely complex patterns that involve throwing, catching, and arranging the bottles, and moving around themselves and fellow dancers. All of the patterns and their permutations, which I will explain in detail, are derived from either mathematical or graphic logic. Along with a high level of mental activity, the piece is also extremely physically demanding, which as an aesthetic choice, comes from both my desire to incorporate my background in sports with dance, creating a dance-sport, and to match the physical intensity of the bottles; when thrown, their velocity can match that of a hammer. As the work was created earlier on in my choreographic practice, the work is primarily an experiment in testing the dancers' limits and aims to aesthetically highlight what the body does to pragmatically accomplish the apparent impossible.

The work begins with all 36 bottles of water arranged in three rows in the downstage right corner and a single dancer walks towards them from the opposite side. When she reaches the bottles, she throws them one by one behind her without looking. The rest of the dancers come onto the stage to catch the

bottles one by one and place them in the space, resulting in an even spread of bottles across the stage. The aim was to prevent any bottles from crashing to the floor. However, the dancers were not given specific instructions as to who was to catch which bottle. As a result, they needed to communicate and collaborate with each other in real time to ensure that the task could be fulfilled. Regarding performativity, this brought the dancers into a state of being present in the moment, which was continued and tested throughout the work.

Once all of the bottles are thrown, the dancers collect the bottles and place them in three sets of six on either side of the stage. At the same time, the dancers begin claiming numbers (1-12), identifying their number to the other dancers through an audio cue (shouting) and a visual cue (raising their hand) as this was crucial for the following section. The numbers were not previously determined and the dancers chose their number on the spot, which as seen on the video (2:08), could result in more than one dancer choosing the same number. As a real time problem solving strategy, the dancers repeated their numbers in ascending order, taking responsibility for any mistakes made previously. The dancers then all began what was called the “uncomfortable phrase”, where the movement stems from finding uncomfortable ways into uncomfortable positions. In the video, the numbers were still unclear by this point, one of the dancers shouted “Numbers again!” (2:53) and in response, the numbers were repeated a third time, which serves as an improvised yet essential example of both problem solving and engagement with the present moment.

This claiming of numbers is a device used four times throughout the work in total. While at no point during the process were the numbers assigned to specific dancers, the specific task required of that number with that particular

section was choreographically set. As such, each dancer had to know every role of every number (48 in total) and be prepared to perform that role as proficiently, in an instant; otherwise the piece would fail.

Upon hearing the first of a particular musical cue, numbers 2, 3, 4 would stand. Without speaking, two of the dancers would run to each side of the stage, while the remaining dancer would find number 1 on the floor. Taking turns, the dancers on the side would throw a total of six bottles, one at a time, to the dancer in the middle who would then place the bottles closely around number 1, trapped in an uncomfortable position. This had to be completed as quickly as possible, ideally before the next musical cue, where this task was repeated by a different set of numbers. The pattern occurs as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> music cue: numbers 2, 3, and 4 stand and shape number 1
- 2<sup>nd</sup> music cue: numbers 6, 7, and 8 stand and shape number 5
- 3<sup>rd</sup> music cue: numbers 10, 11, and 12 stand and shape number 9
- 4<sup>th</sup> music cue: numbers 1, 5, and 9 stand and shape number 6
- 5<sup>th</sup> music cue: numbers 2, 6, and 10 stand and trap number 7
- 6<sup>th</sup> music cue: numbers 3, 7, and 11 stand and trap number 12

The dancers who were trapped remain in their uncomfortable shape until they are needed to throw or catch the bottles again. However, they weren't allowed to touch the bottles that were around them which resulted in a pragmatic movement vocabulary. Once the dancers involved in the throwing and catching of bottles completed their tasks, they perform a unison phrase that is known by every dancer. As a result of whatever number they have chosen, the dancers potentially had to join in at different point in the phrase every time the work was performed. Therefore, it was essential for the dancers to not only know

the phrase extremely well, but also to remain alert to what was going on around them.

The next section begins again with the dancers claiming different numbers to those previously. After cycling through three times, the “Basketball” section begins. Each odd number (1,3, etc) immediately pick up a bottle and throws it to the even number directly above their number (i.e. 1 throws to 2, 3 throws to 4, etc). After this first pass, the dancers continually catch bottles from the number below them and throw to the number above them. As an example, the dancer who claimed the number 5 would immediately pick up a bottle and throw to number 6, then catch from number 4 and throw that bottle to number 6, and so on. In essence, the dancers would constantly be throwing and catching bottles at the same time. The two exceptions to this rule are number 1, who is the only individual who picks bottles up from the floor and does not receive any bottles, and number 12, who, having caught bottles from number 11, places them in groups of three in a semi-circle along the sides and back of the stage. As a final limitation, the dancers were not allowed to remain in the same location for more than 3 seconds and therefore were constantly moving throughout the space and around their fellow performers. The dancers were encouraged to talk amongst each other, whether it was to shout their numbers as a reminder or to verbally encourage each other to stay on task: rehearsal director/performer Nathan Johnston shouts “Got to go faster guys!” (7:56).

The physical result of “Basketball” is something that I found very aesthetically pleasing. The sheer concentration of completing such a complex and dangerous task resulted in extremely pragmatic movements from the dancers (shifts of weight, changes of direction, etc) that carried a highly specific electric

energy. From this pragmatism and performative state, the dancers constantly responded in unexpected and highly pleasing ways in an effort to complete the task and problem-solve along the way.

After a brief moment of standing in a line at the back, exposing themselves to the audience (a similar motif is repeated in *Kingdom*), the dancers go into “TLC” (11:28), where upon the first music cue, four dancers are lifted and on the second music cue, the dancers are dropped in order to catch bottles. Then, in the only entirely set section of choreography, in which the dancers perform the same role during each performance, both bottles and bodies are thrown around the space. This section was specifically choreographed because certain lifts only worked with certain dancers; also it made sense in terms of safety.

Once “TLC” is completed, two duets are executed, one of pre-choreographed material, the other of throwing and catching bottles throughout the stage, while the remaining eight dancers go into “Twitching” (12:03). A sequence made of 12 gestures, pausing every other gesture, is performed twice in regular time and then repeated double time. The aim, however, was to have the same amount of stillness, despite the increased speed of execution, resulting in an extremely physically and mentally demanding task. On top of this, the dancers began claiming numbers again, with the increased difficulty of loud music and not being able to stray from their task to confirm who claimed which number.

Upon a music cue, the next section “Basketball with Phrase” begins (12:50). Number 1 breaks away from “Twitching” to grab a bottle to throw to number 2, thus beginning the “Basketball” pattern again. At the same time, the four dancers involved in the previous two duets begin a set phrase in unison stage left. At the same time as number 1, number 12 breaks from “Twitching” to join the phrase. As

only four dancers are to be doing the phrase at any given moment, the dancer with the highest number, and subsequently the dancer who has been there the longest, breaks from the phrase and runs to stage right to catch bottles and arrange them in six groups of six. If there is already another dancer in that role, then the next dancer who leaves the phrase, stands in the centre facing the back until they are replaced by the next dancer. Essentially, the dancers join and leave the phrase in descending order (12, 11, 10, etc) while throwing and catching bottles in ascending order (1 to 2, 2 to 3, etc). Again, they have no idea who has claimed what number prior to the performance and, while they all previously knew the phrase, they cannot predict where they will join in or leave. The difficulty of this particular pattern is increased by the purposefully loud music, and again, speed is a factor as all of the bottles must be cleared by the end. As such, the phrase can only be repeated twice and every dancer only joins the phrase once.

To prepare for the final section, the dancers arrange themselves in two lines, with the bottles in the middle. A series of hammers plays in the sound score and the dancers closest to the wings, stage right, throw a bottle to the dancer across from them on every other hammer strike. The dancers catching the bottles set them down in precise vertical lines across the stage. As the lines progress further along the stage, the throwing and catching becomes more dangerous.

It is important to note that from this point on, the roles of the dancers (i.e. the numbers) are completely set. While I wished to add another set of permutations into the following section, primarily the act of claiming numbers again, it became too complicated for the dancers to cope with, despite the adaptability they had already shown in handling extremely complex situations. Even with setting the roles, this section took two full days to work out when and

where, if I had had more time for rehearsals, I might have been able to work with the dancers further in order to develop the necessary skills to perform such an extreme task (i.e. the training).

The final section of the work is known as “Corridors” (14:56). At the music changes, number 1 and number 12 enter from opposite sides of the stage, while the other dancers arrange themselves in a line in numerical order, numbers 6 and 7 the furthest downstage. Numbers 1 and 12 enter first, doing a fast footwork phrase that I choreographed (the original), crossing over to the other side of the stage and back again. Then number 2 enters a pathway upstage of number 1, and number 11 enters downstage of number 12. Everyone does a different fast footwork phrase that was created by the dancers (the new), which also crosses the stage twice. This pattern of dancers coming in for each new set of passes continues until every dancer is on stage; numbers 3 and 10 enter on an original, numbers 4 and 9 enter on a new, numbers 5, 8, 6, and 7 all enter on an original. After completing one pass of the original, the dancers move one spot either downstage or upstage in their corresponding line in order to move further away from their starting position in the line. By the end of all of these first passes, the order of the lines should be reversed; number 1 is the furthest downstage their line and number 12 is the furthest upstage in theirs. Each dancer shares a new phrase with another dancer, which becomes apparent when numbers 4 and 9 enter (15:58) and very clear once everyone is in the space and opposite their “clone” (16:40). However, partially through the last pass of the new phrase, five counts in, all the dancers stop and face the back for four counts, then have three seconds to run back to their original positions (16:54).

At this point, the pattern shifts and the dancers leave the “Corridors” in reverse order of how they entered; numbers 6 and 7 leave first after two crosses of the original, followed by numbers 5 and 8, etc. Once they have exited the stage, the dancers on the side can stand bottles up again if they have fallen down, but have to cross the stage if this is the case (17:21). Also, the pattern regarding the material is also broken slightly by introducing different pairings (see the “duet” (17:28) and the “Rosas Women” (17:58)). This continues through the numbers until number 1/12, finish their final pass.

At the heart of this work, I was exploring how to manage success and failure. The intense detail of the tasks used to create this work are meant to overwhelm the performers. One of the dancers in the process mentioned that it would become easier as time passes and the task becomes automatic, to which the rehearsal director responded that I would add another layer when that happened. However, it goes deeper than that, as it was never my intention to simply make a complex work. My goal was to create a space where the performers had no choice but to be invested in the moment and this performative space would be the key element of this work. I was fortunate to have been able to audition dancers for this project, seven of which participated in the creation process a year earlier with EDge. It is because of this that I could spend more time testing the limits of this performance space through choreography, as opposed to helping the dancers find it through training, which enabled me to make the work so complex.

# Appendix C

## The Creative Aims and Process for *Kingdom*

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*Kingdom* was commissioned for the 2013/2014 season of Scottish Dance Theatre. The work begins with a “prologue”, during which the audience enters the theatre to see the dancers already on stage, working to build the structure. This was devised as a performative/choreographic Axis Mundi. The dancers have been given a time limit of approximately ten minutes to complete construction, which is the minimum amount of time it takes to build it. As such, the dancers not only face the pressure of correctly assembling it for safety purposes, but also to do so before time runs out; if any mistakes are made, there is no time to correct them. There are already eight pre-made triangles or “tepees” stage left, and the dancers complete the finishing touches to a large frame, composed of triangles, which will be the base of the completed structure. These components had to be constructed before the work began, as there was not enough time to construct with the necessary accuracy. Each dancer took on specific tasks during this construction and performed those same tasks every time the structure was made, thus enabling maximum efficiency. The music provides cues so the dancers can track their process in time. Given the intensity of the task, all of the dancers moved in an extremely pragmatic way with highly charged energy and focus. As time begins to run out, this energy only increases as they start to panic (4:56). At a certain point (4:08), the dancers begin to incorporate more stylised movement to construct certain components of the structure. This movement is an aesthetically evolved version of what the dancers were pragmatically already

doing, so as not to interfere with their efficiency. Performing this choreographic element, however, adds another complication to the task, demanding more of the dancers' attention and intention. It is interesting to note that the canon of this particular movement material (4:46), which is highly aesthetic, came as a result of the pragmatism of the building of the larger structure, as the four dancers became available to complete the aesthetically evolved task at different times. This is an example of the influence the individual roles each dancer had on both the construction of the structure and the structure of the choreography. This is further exemplified when, at this point, a single dancer (Greiner) assumes the role of "The Other", removing herself from the group, foreshadowing her role later on in the piece (6:25).

The piece officially begins when the music reaches its climax and drops out, along with the flash of lights (8:15). The lights and music slowly fade back in, representing the dawn of a new day for the tribe (the dancers), to reveal a solo figure (Grabarczyk) known as "The Architect" (8:43). His movement material comes from the act of drawing the shape and exact dimensions of the structure, using his whole body to, in essence, construct the structure with movement. While mapping the structure's design, he also maps the trajectory the structure will take, as it will be moved over the course of the work. In a way, he is foreshadowing how the performance space will evolve over time. While The Architect is pragmatically describing the structure, another solo figure (Greiner), begins embodying the aesthetic qualities of the structure, balancing in challenging positions to demonstrate power and moving slowly to represent the transformation of the structure over time (9:20). It is important to note that the rest of the dancers are still working to finish the structure.

It is at this point that four other dancers become available to perform two duets of different themes. The first (featuring Ganneau and Murray at 10:30) represents power and collaboration, and the second (featuring Hollinshead and Kerremans at 10:55) represents power and struggle. Certain elements of these duets directly represent these concepts in a pragmatic way. For example, when Murray leans away from Ganneau (11:15), she could not have achieved that movement without Ganneau's collaboration. Another example is when Hollinshead stretches Kerremans' arms in an extreme way, which forces Kerremans to struggle to stay present despite the pain (13:17). The Architect plays a role in these duets as well, whether mimicking others' trajectories and actions (10:56 or 11:28), or designing a position/situation for the others to assume, thus initiating the continuation of the duet (11:03). At a certain point, his movement becomes improvised as he directly responds to the action happening around him. All five dancers are involved in a complex web of power relationships, where the roles of puppet and master change in an instant. This, in a way, mirrors their relationship with the structure, as while they are, in a way, responsible for the structure's existence and its architectural integrity, they depend on the structure as well, as most of their action during the work comes from their interaction with the structure. In fact, most of the material of these two duets comes from how the dancers will pragmatically move on and within the structure once it is completed. Amy crouches on Kerremans' shoulders, mimicking the safest way the dancers will eventually crouch on top of the structure (11:25). Similarly to The Architect's role, these duets serve to foreshadow what will occur later on in the work. As the five dancers are so intensely focused on each other, Greiner,

representing the structure, provides a contrasting presence in her solidity and openness.

It is at this point that the construction of the structure is complete and the dancers can be seen testing the strength of the joints (18:04). However, to further test its strength, Greiner climbs to the very top of the structure and sits there, claiming her space (18:12). She begins to sing a German harvest song that is looped and manipulated into the soundtrack live during the performance. She then drops down to hang and climb around inside the structure, making pragmatic choices regarding her supports, but testing her limits by moving in a highly acrobatic way (19:30). Then, as the ultimate test, the other dancers lift the structure from its base and move it throughout the space while slowly rotating it. This is this more than just a pragmatic choreographic choice, in order to change the stage setting. It is the ultimate test of the dancers' proficiency as individuals within the group task of constructing the frame. If the structure is not sound, it would break and Greiner would fall, injuring herself. If the structure does not break, then the dancers have achieved their task as a team. It also can be seen as an act of faith in the collective on Greiner's part, that she would risk her life for the sake of the group.

Once the structure has been moved and rotated across the space, and on a music change, the dancers begin the section known as "Hamsters" (21:00). Using extremely choreographed pathways and movement vocabulary, the dancers weave in and out of the structure, aiming to complete their pass in only 12 seconds, a task that takes extreme strength, speed, and accuracy. Greiner places herself within the middle of the chaos, sitting on one of the sticks close to the centre, providing a static obstacle for the dancers to avoid. The "Hamsters"

section is repeated three times in total; some of the dancers break away during the third pass to begin what was known as “Flux” (21:25). This section has a ritualistic quality in that the dancers repeat the same movements that travel great distances, exhausting themselves through both strict form and rhythm. This serves a narrative purpose, acknowledging the dancers’ relationship to the structure; they could be viewed as a tribe of people devoting their life to a kind of deity. It also reflects my own personal experience with such repetitive movements in a spiritual context (such as with whirling dervishes). The aim was to give the dancers a method to experience the moment, whether that be the movement itself or the joy that the structure is completed. The resulting canon is in the nature of a complex mathematical construction, which requires even more presence from the dancers to execute (21:22). Continuing the feeling of celebration, two dancers begin a duet where one dancer (Gao) claims her dancing partner (Koenen), similar to how Greiner claimed the structure earlier (23:02). While the other dancers move the structure to face the front, Gao continues to climb over Koenen, who constantly shifts his body to both help her and prevent her from touching the ground, representing the act of climbing through the structure.

Needless to say, I am of the firm belief that this is a beautiful display of the feminine strength of the dancers within the environment of their own creation, which is immensely gratifying to witness. The four women are made extremely vulnerable throughout the “Women” section. To bring back the sense of community, the rest of the dancers join them on top of the structure to gaze out at the audience, brightly lit from the front. At the same time, Greiner recites a poem in order to add another layer of sound to the space, the content of the

poem secondary to the sound of her voice (27:27). This moment was terrifying for me as the choreographer because it is extremely dangerous; the combined weight of the dancers on the structure could cause one of the poles to break and, in the worst case scenario, the dancers could be impaled. The dancers were frightened too, and only a few were willing to climb to the top. The audience was surprisingly unaware of how difficult and dangerous climbing on the structure was. Given the illusion of performance, the audience trusted that the dancers were safe, that they would not have taken such risks in reality. This is a testament to the dancers' collective achievement in building a structure that supported them. As they sit and look out at the audience, they both claim the structure as their work, but also claim the success of their collective work to build the structure, testing its form yet again by having ten dancers rest their full weight on it.

To further celebrate their success, the dancers begin what was called "Pandas" (28:10), climbing throughout the structure, pausing in certain places, as a means to become part of the structure itself. It is an act of great trust in the structure, but also requires great accuracy and precision to protect themselves from falling, the shapes the dancers find themselves in resulting from a pragmatic approach to the task. The lights are quite dim and only certain body parts are visible so as to further remove the individuality of the dancers, as they became one with the structure.

The public ending of the work is when the dancers come down off the structure and move to it to its final position, rotated and tilted to rest on one of its sides, reaching its maximum height (31:10). However, with a change of lighting and music, the dancers begin the epilogue, known as the "Exhaustion Phrase"

(31:22). Each dancer was asked to create one gesture that, due to its strenuous nature, could not be repeated for any longer than one minute. These movements were then organised into a personal score for each dancer that lasted for seven minutes. There is a larger score that takes all of their individual phrases and pairs them together, so that there are moments of unison and overlap (Grabarczyk, Koenen and Ganneau at 31:28). It is useful to think of each gesture the dancers made to be a brick, their individual scores to be walls, and the whole “Exhaustion Phrase” to be the house made up of these components. The moments of unison, especially these last few moments, serve to highlight the ensemble collaboration that made this work possible.

The task of the “Exhaustion Phrase” is extremely difficult by itself, given the complexity of the score to be carried out and the extremely physical demands of the movement. However, given that this section occurs at the end of the work, it requires even more focus from the dancers to accomplish this task. That being said, a sense of abandonment to the task was also required; given how tired the dancers are, they had no choice but to surrender to the movement and let it carry them through to the end. This is an extremely sophisticated approach to performance, which only a few of the dancers were able to accomplish. For example, Kerremans was able to give into the movement and perform in a very animalistic way simply as a result of surrendering to the movement, whereas Ganneau, still committed to performing the movement ‘well’, was, as a result, unable to access the depths of the movement (33:00). As in the “Women” section earlier, this comes as a result of each individual’s experience, either in the profession of dance, or in life. As this work was a commission, I did not have the luxury of choosing dancers who I felt aligned with my core practice. Therefore,

most of what little time was left during the creation process, after the practical training to construct the structure and developing the choreography, was geared towards training these dancers to develop the particular skills needed to perform my work. Unfortunately, in the limited time (five weeks in total), not all of the dancers were able to fully develop the skills necessary to fulfil the requirements of the work. This is not to say that they were not skilled dancers; it is simply to acknowledge that it was one of the challenges of this work, and did impact my choreographic choices.

That being said, overall, this is the first work of mine dealing with the performer's presence through extreme tasks that has an overarching aesthetic layer. This layer was directly inspired by the nature of the tasks I asked of the dancers, however, for me to have acknowledged the aesthetic possibilities within this work took a level of experience and sophistication in dealing with my practice. As such, I feel this work is a milestone in the development of my core practice into choreography.

# Appendix D

## List of the workshops and creation processes

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This is an inventory of all the workshops, classes and creations processes where the methodology described in Chapters 6 to 8 was devised, applied and/or tested. I differentiate between participants and dancers due to the emphasis of the project. Participants were involved in projects in which stronger emphasis was given to the process — developing the methodology. On the other hand, dancers were involved in projects which focused on the result of the process — application of the methodology.

Please note that this list only includes the workshops or processes where ritualisation was directly applied or developed. In addition to this list, I taught at least two daily contemporary dance technique classes at LCDS from September 2008 to March 2012, and many contemporary dance technique workshops, professional classes or company classes, which I continue to lead regularly. The most prominent examples are detailed below.

### **2008**

s\_in\_fin. Studio num. 1. (5 participant/performers)

Choreographic research led by Jorge Crecis and developed in conjunction with the Laban Student Union, January – March.

Premiered at The Space, London, UK, 9 March

Arenas. (2 performers)

Choreographic research led by Jorge Crecis and Athina Vahla, March –  
May

Work in progress showing: GDA, London, UK, 22 May

*Performance studies.* (10 participants)

Module belonging to the second year of the BA at London Contemporary  
Dance School, London, UK, September – December.

Re-opening event at Richmix. London, UK. (8 performers)

9 October

Workshop at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, London, UK.  
(26 participants).

9,10 December

Bf. (2 performers)

New creation. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis and Freddie Opoku-  
Addaie

Supported by Arts Council of England, Royal Opera House, Swindon  
Dance, East London Dance and The Place.

Premiered at Swindon Dance, Swindon, UK, 21 November.

**2009**

Workshop at Dancentrum – KıpırKıpırDansPlatformu. (8 participants)

Istanbul, Turkey 12- 14 April.

Workshop at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, London, UK.

(32 participants)

1, 2 June

Performance studies. (12 participants)

Module belonging to the second year of the BA at London Contemporary  
Dance School, London, UK.

September – December

HTAP. Studio n° 3. (2 performers)

New Creation. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at 'Canarios dentro, canarios fuera' festival, Tenerife, Spain

21, 22 December

## **2010**

Workshop at Goldsmiths University, London, UK. (4 participants)

January – March

Workshop at Kairos. Venice. Italy. (42 participants)

27,28 February

Workshop at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, London, UK.

1, 2 June

(32 participants)

*I love you... not.* (4 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by the Ballet Contemporáneo de Burgos.

Choreographed by Jorge Crecis and Freddie Opoku-Addaie

Premiered at Teatro Municipal de Burgos, Burgos, Spain, 15 July

Workshop at Format 1 Ufa. Russia. (24 participants)

25-27 October

Workshop at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, London, UK.

(29 participants)

6, 7 November

*What Happens between us.* (10 performers)

New Creation. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Commissioned by London Contemporary Dance School. Premiered at Robin Howard Theatre, London, UK. 7 March.

## **2011**

*Trade Fair.* (2 performers)

New Creation. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis. Supported by Spanish Ministry of Culture, The Place and Let's Dance Festival. Premiered. C'est pas de la danse. #2 festival. Grenoble France, 9 February

36. (12 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by EDge. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Dansstationen. Malmö, Sweden, 23<sup>rd</sup> March

Performance studies. (6 participants)

Module belonging to the choreography department at Real Conservatorio Profesional de Danza de Madrid, Madrid, Spain. (April – June)

Workshop at Format 1 Ufa. Russia. (29 participants)

1-5 August

**2012**

Tres. We don't know what this piece is about yet. (3 performers)

Choreographic research led by Jorge Crecis

12- 29 August.

Supported by Falmouth Research Centre, Falmouth, UK.

Work in progress showing: Falmouth winter symposium 28 January 2012

36. (12 performers)

Re-creation for Exposure Festival. Royal Opera House. London, UK.

Commissioned by EDge. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

23, 24 and 25th of February.

Performance studies. (8 participants)

Module belonging to the choreography department at Real Conservatorio Profesional de Danza de Madrid, Madrid, Spain. April – June

Seminar at Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain. (6 participants)

April-May

Workshop at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. (9 participants)

21-25 May

Workshop at Independence Dance, London, UK. (19 participants)

5 July

Workshop at Artiria. Lefkada, Greece. (11 participants)

30 July -3 August

36 Re-creation at SkisseriBevegelse dance lab.Hamar, Norway. (11 participants)

20-24 August

*Aqui y Ahora.* (8 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Roger William University (USA).

Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at the Roger Williams University spring festival

Workshop at Centro Andaluz de Danza. Sevilla, Spain. (16 participants)

8,9 November

Workshop at Conservatorio de Danza. Granada, Spain. (23 participants)

12,16 November

**2013**

Labyrinth of Hawara. (9 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Mapdance. Choreographed by Jorge

Crecis

Premiered at Roehampton University, London, UK, 13 February

Thick and Grey. (1 performer)

New Creation. Commissioned by Piedad Albarracin. Choreographed by

Jorge Crecis. Premiered at Teatro Central de Murcia, Spain, 14 February

aLL THE nAMES. (11 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by London Contemporary Dance School.

Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Robin Howard Theatre, London, UK, 21, 22 March

Through & Out. (3 performers)

New Choreographic research. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Work in progress showing: Swindon Dance, Swindon, UK, 6 March

854 14' 59"=57bpm [it's complicated]. (11 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Intoto. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Artsdepot, London, UK, 9 May

Seminar at Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain. (4 participants)

22-26 April

Workshop at Proda. Tromsø. Norway. (7 participants)

3-5 April

Trans la Valo. (10 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Beijing NINE Contemporary Dance Theatre. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis.

Premiered at The Rose Bud, Beijing China, 7-9 June.

Workshop at Leshan Song & Dance Troupe. Leshan. China. (34 participants)

11, 12 June

Workshop at Proda. Oslo. Norway. (5 participants)

25-28 June

Workshop at Kalamata Dance Festival. Kalamata. Greece. (40 participants)

17-25 July

Workshop at Scottish Dance Theatre Outreach programme. Dundee, UK. (9 participants)

29 July – 2 August

I was going to tell you my story. (1 performer)

New Creation. Commissioned by Benedikte Onarheim. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at En Kvled, Oslo, Norway, 6-8 November

**2014**

*Kingdom.* (10 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Scottish Dance Theatre. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Dundee Rep, Dundee, UK. 20-22 February 2014

In addition to these events, I have trained a team of four dancers who were spreading the same methodology throughout Canada between 2012 and 2014. See below for list of workshops:

Nanaimo, British Columbia  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
Sydney, British Columbia  
Charlottetown, Prince Edward

Island  
London, Ontario  
Rimouski, Quebec  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Edmonton, Alberta

**2015**

Workshop at Goldsmiths postgraduate department. London, UK. (8 participants)

29 February – 2 March

*Whistleblower.* (10 performers)

New Creation. Commissioned by Conservatorio profesional de Danza de Granada. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at FEX, Granada, Spain. 26-25 June 2015

Through & Out<sup>2</sup> (1 Performer)

First phase of creation process. Directed by Jorge Crecis

Work in progress showing: Deda Dance, Derby, UK, 26 September

# Appendix E

## Quoting Conventions for Experiences

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Below is a description of the conventions followed when quoting interviews, conversations, or feedback forms from different works.

E.g. (E1, 29th June 2011) refers to a quote from a 36 performer from an interview recorded on the date described.

### **E1: 36**

- New Creation. Commissioned by EDge. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Dansstationen 23<sup>rd</sup> March. 2011 Malmö, Sweden

(12 performers)

- Re-creation for Exposure Festival. Royal Opera House. Commissioned by

EDge. Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of February. London, UK. 2012

(12 performers)

### **E2: Workshop at Proda. Tromsø. Norway**

3-5 April, 2013

(7 participants)

### **E3: Labyrinth of Hawara**

New Creation. Commissioned by Mapdance. Choreographed by Jorge

Crecis

Premiered at Roehampton University, London, UK. 13 February, 2013

(9 performers)

**E4:** aLLtHEnAMES.

New Creation. Commissioned by London Contemporary Dance School.

Choreographed by Jorge Crecis

Premiered at Robin Howard Theatre, London, UK. 21,22 March, 2013

(11 performers)

**E5:** Seminar at Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain

April-May, 2012

(6 participants)

**E6:** Seminar at Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain

April-May, 2013

(6 participants)

**E7:** Workshop at Kalamata Dance Festival. Kalamata. Greece

17-25 July, 2013

(40 participants)

# Appendix F

## Feedback Form

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Date completed:

### ABOUT THE PROCESS

On a scale of 1 to 4, please rate the sections accordingly

1. Were you satisfied with the process?

☹️ 1 2 3 4 ☹️

2. How clearly the objectives of the process were explained?

☹️ 1 2 3 4 ☹️

3. How organised was the process?

☹️ 1 2 3 4 ☹️

4. How motivating was the process?

☹️ 1 2 3 4 ☹️

5. How challenging was the process?

Very little 1 2 3 4 too much

6. How much time was spent discussing the most important topics?

Very little " 1 " 2 " 3 " 4 too much

7. Would you have needed more time of discussion?

" NO " YES

8. Was the material presented too quickly, too slowly, or at about the right speed?

Too slow " 1 " 2 " 3 " 4 Too fast

9. Can you rate the duration of the process?

Too short " 1 " 2 " 3 " 4 Too long

10. Could you summarise the concepts that Jorge emphasised during the process?

11. How well were the topics related to each other?

⊗ " 1 " 2 " 3 " 4 ⊗

12. How safe did you feel in the studio?

⊗ " 1 " 2 " 3 " 4 ⊗

13. can you summarise the most challenging aspects of the process?

14. What would you have change in the process?

15. Are you happy with the ending result?

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

### **ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE**

16. Could you describe with two/three words your experience before doing the combination, during the combination and after the combination :

Before:

During:

After:

How much do you agree with the following sentences:

17. I am challenged, but I believe my skills will allow me to meet the challenge.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

18. During the combination, it is really clear to me how I am doing.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

19. During the combination, I am very aware of the people watching.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

20. During the combination, my attention is focused entirely on what I am doing.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

21. During the combination, I feel like I can control what I am doing.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

22. I dance automatically, letting the movement happen naturally and without thinking.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

23. I know what I want to achieve.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

24. I know what I have to achieve.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

25. I am completely focused on the task at hand.

⊗ 1 2 3 4 ?

26. Could you name another situation where the experience is (was) similar.

27. Any other comments.