CHAPTER FOUR

Performing Stories: Narrative, Performance and Playback Theatre

> The Master gave his teaching in parables and stories which his disciples listened to with pleasure—and occasional frustration, for they longed for something deeper.
>
> The Master was unmoved. To all their objections he would say, 'You have yet to understand, my dears, that the shortest distance between a human being and Truth is a story.'
>
> (de Mello 1986:23)

> If the drama is to provide its full potential value, the art form needs to be respected and care taken of all the aesthetic elements.
> (O'Toole & Lepp 2000a:29)

Chapter Structure

Whereas the previous chapter reviewed the limited literature specifically addressing issues in PBT, this chapter begins the process of locating PBT within broader research communities by considering Narrative and Performance—two of four core concepts in the model of PTB being formulated here—and Cultural Studies as an interesting way of bringing them together. Narrative and performance are important to consider because they reflect and link *voice, body, story* and *event.*

First, I propose Orality as a way of foregrounding and contextualising *voice* in PBT with an emphasis on the spoken and performed word and the performative aspects of story(ing). This is important because voice is the embodiment of story and so links narrative, performance and PBT together. Secondly, I discuss Cultural Studies as an additional theoretical resource for considering the nature of PBT. This is important because not only does the subject area of Cultural Studies illuminate popular culture, everyday life, and

symbolic creativity, it also links narrative and performance together in a way that foregrounds the communicative aspects of story, the processes of telling and *re*telling, and the imaginative construction that is part of both (Rosen 1986:230).

Third, I describe the field of narrative, which is an area whose theorising both helps to describe PBT and some of its constituent elements, and further reveals how PBT as a "text" is created and understood in a space that exists between the teller and the audience, the actors, musician, and conductor. Furthermore, an understanding of narrative also illuminates how *story* in PBT is told, listened to, replayed and enacted.

Fourth, I discuss performance as a field that circumscribes theatre, drama and ritual (Carlson 1996; Phelan 1993), and foregrounds the *body* in contrast to voice. PBT has, of course, elements of all three. In addition, the notion of performance emphasises the *event* nature of PBT, and how it is embodied, enacted, played out, performed and experienced. Furthermore, performance can be seen as a way of linking both theatre and narrative. Indeed, the relationship between them has been referred to as "intimate" and "self-referential" as one can reflect the other (Maclean 1988:11) and both deal with issues of "representation".

Finally, I argue that it is important to note that narrative and performance are two strands of a double helix, each intertwined and lending strength to the other, particularly as they reveal the phenomenon of PBT itself.

Orality

Orality has been described by Ong (1982:1) as a way of managing knowledge, "thought and its expression" in oral culture. Historically, theatre and drama, narrative and storytelling have common roots in oral performance (Maclean 1988). Indeed, PBT has been described as "interactive, improvised, storytelling" (Sydney Playback Theatre 2000).

PBT relies on members of the audience volunteering to tell a story from their lives. This story then becomes the first of a number of "texts" that are part of the PBT event. In this sense, PBT is a storytelling process. This element reflects in part Fox's own experience as a Peace Corps worker in Nepal, where improvised storytelling was an important part of the traditional culture. It is also important to understand the wider role that Orality (Ong 1982) plays not only in PBT, but also as a precursor to story, narrative and theatre itself. Ong (1982:1) suggested that Orality—that is, "thought and its expression in oral culture"—historically was a critical way of managing knowledge in traditional societies. Oral language has an important organising function. More than that, Heidegger (1977) also

highlighted that language is the house that we dwell in. That is, language, thought and expression are all facets of communication and inseparable from what it means to be human. What Ong (1982:14) emphasised was that language was first and foremost an oral phenomenon, and that oral performance, being firmly vocal, would be felt as "voicings". This means that sound, as a communicative event, occurs in time and also has a dynamic quality so that oral story can never be the same twice, has evocative power, and is close to the human lifeworld. This is in contrast to writing which is more neutral and separates the "knower from the known" (p.44). Hence, sound is a sensate performance that is able to contextualise and personalise, and in this way, "oral communication unites people in groups" (Ong 1982:69). In short, the storytelling and "voicings" that occur as part of the aesthetic event unite the audience with the teller and each other.

PBT, in Fox's (1994:9) words, is a "theatre without scripts"; that is, it is an oral theatre with traditions much longer than the literary forms of theatre we are used to. In addition, PBT reflects these traditions in the way that it entertains, has an educational function, is improvised, and ritualistic (Fox 1994:13-17). What this means is that while some stories in PBT "feel the same", they are also "constantly being *re*created … *in* performance" (Fox 1994:14-15, emphasis added).

Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies is a contemporary field of post-modern endeavour that brings together narrative and performance in interesting ways, and therefore provides theoretical tools useful for an understanding of additional dimensions of PBT. Because the boundaries between theatre and other cultural domains are constantly being challenged and reassessed (Fischer-Lichte 1997), one shapes, informs and reflects the other. Cultural Studies, according to Berry (2000:35), has become

> an umbrella term for a host of theories and practices that attempt to challenge and surpass the various crises of modern life without assembling the same patterns and structures as those originally interrogated and dismantled.

While it is beyond the scope of this investigation to discuss in detail the constituent elements of Cultural Studies per se, it is important to consider how some of these elements allow a critique of the wider milieu in which PBT exists. I will briefly consider three relevant elements of Cultural Studies: the importance of *questioning*, critique and interrogation; the notion of *text*—both in performance and context; and finally, the issue of *multiple voices*, positions and meanings.

First, just as the dramatic arts allow us to be playful and explore ideas, so to do contemporary theories—albeit with a serious intent (Berry 2000). Berry, for example, described this playfulness as a way of looking differently at the future (through the dramatic arts) with these words: "Through the agency of the dramatic arts informed by cultural studies and criticism, we can consider the crises of modern life and rehearse possible re-imaginings" (p.6). Therefore, Cultural Studies not only critiques the social constructions of modern life that shape and frame our world, but through the very process of engaging in this critique, allows us to think about difference and change. What this means in terms of social constructions is that in PBT the social context of a teller's story is highlighted through the teller selecting the important people (not always physically present) who help "shape" that story. This contextualisation highlights the connectedness (and influences) of the individual to those around him or her, in this sense foregrounding the "system" or relationships rather than just the individual as a unit (Wright 2000). In addition, the ludic or playful quality of PBT allows new ways of being or thinking to emerge unfettered by traditional roles and stereotypes.

Next, PBT uses a variety of dramatic forms to symbolically represent the world of the teller and his or her story. This symbolic representation, using a variety of visual, kinaesthetic, or aural elements, becomes a performance text[17] that illuminates the **context** in which the story has been created or constructed. It is also important to understand that text is full of signs and symbols that generate meaning and, in this way, is embedded with cultural constructions. Thus the context not only has a social dimension, but also historical, political, economic and intellectual dimensions (Berry 2000). This may be evident in PBT by the actors playing different genders, or "placing" the story in a different "world" in order to invert the status quo or uni-dimensional nature of an individual's story.

Thirdly, the interrogation of these contexts through this critical lens reveals that all individuals are bounded by the contexts in which they live, and that multiple perspectives exist depending on what these contexts are. For example, in one PBT performance, a teller told a poignant story about his partner's death. In the playback of this story, different actors portrayed different "realities" of the death according to who they were. What this meant was that the lover's perspective or reality of the death was different to that of his partner's mother.

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[17] The word "text", before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscript text, meant a "weaving together". In this sense, there is no performance without text (Barba 1985:75).

Both characters were present at the death, but their reality differed because of each one's particular context. In this way, PBT offers the possibility of multiple meanings, informed by multiple voices and positions. Therefore, the processes of PBT provide a forum where the world is seen as socially constructed, text has a variety of forms (depending on context), and multiple perspectives exist—all-important notions of post-modernism (Berry 2000).

Furthermore, PBT as a post-modern form allows a critique of the teller's story, or his/her "truth", to occur. What this means is that the teller's "truth" of the death, a much loved partner's sought-for dying "interrupted" by a distressed mother, is questioned and scrutinised through dramatic action revealing another truth—a grief-stricken mother distraught at watching her only child die before her. In this sense, the post-modern turn of PBT is educational in that the "world" is enlarged rather than reduced. Berry (2000:10) described the process thus:

> With each presentation of truth through the dramatic arts, interrogation includes: Whose truth? What truth? Whose interests are these truths serving? When where they constructed, by whom, at what time, and in what space?

PBT's interaction between the real and the imaginary and the audience's collective imaginative interpretation of the staged action encourages the construction of alternate worlds, where different voices, experiences and histories are not marginalised, but honoured and witnessed. With this possibility of multiple meanings, the members of audience are moved out of their own worlds into an "as-if" world filled with possibility—in this way, community is also developed.

Finally, while PBT cannot be seen as a strictly post-modern or post-structuralist form—indeed the very recursive questioning and self-reflexive natures of both of these theories do not allow us to say what these forms look like in an explicit sense—PBT can be seen to facilitate (in the Latin sense to 'make easy') the challenging questions of each.

Signification

In the field of theatre, the study of signification or "sign systems" and communication is usually studied as semiotics. Elam (1980), has described theatre as one of the richest and most complex forms of signification and communication. Importantly for PBT, he differentiates between "text" produced in the theatre, and "text" composed for the theatre. These texts are labelled "performance text" and "dramatic text", respectively. PBT clearly falls within the former of these two conceptualisations, and the term "performance text" goes some way

towards clarifying PBT itself. This is because, as we have seen, PBT, according to Fox (1994), is technically Non-scripted Theatre.

While Fox is accurate in referring to PBT as non-scripted theatre, he misses an important feature of the text of the playback. That is, the term non-scripted theatre implies that "text" is an unimportant part of PBT. On the contrary, text is very important. However, the nature of the text is different: this text is not a dramatic text written for a production, but rather a performance text devised in the theatre by those present. In this sense, text comprises all distinct units that convey meaning—including gesture, movement, sound, words, props, and the "set".

When text is conceived from this enlarged point of view, PBT's non-scripted text increases the potential for communication—that is, the channels of communication are multiplied. It is also the case that the use of different forms of text and the audience's ability to decode that text depends on the audience's previous experience with the text. Understanding PBT, then, depends on both the prior experiences of the audience and the intertextual nature of PBT itself.

The intertextual nature of PBT is such that each of the different forms of text used, for example, movement, words, sound and gesture, contain traces of the others. In this sense, no form of text can ever be "pure", and indeed, the intertextual, multimodal interactions are important for the meaning-making process. For example, consider an actor, playing the part of a father, who places his hand on the heart of his son. This gesture is rich in meaning from the action and dialogue that has gone before, and lays the seeds of meaning for what will come next. In this sense, the potential for meaning and understanding is significantly amplified. Furthermore, the theatrical frame in which this gesture occurs, like life itself, reflects the world in which the audience sits. That is, it is contextually bound and interrelated. It is the theatrical frame, or the organising structure that allows the audience to view PBT as such, that provides a set of conventions around the roles that are played and the level of reality present. This frame, deriving in part from the work of Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974), helps the audience organise understanding of the sorts of reality involved in the dramatic/theatrical action that they see and participate in.

Bennett (1990), in one of the first studies to consider the theatrical audience as an entity in itself, described two theatrical frames. The first was the outer frame. It is concerned with theatre as a cultural construct, produced "through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance"

(Bennett 1990:1-2). The second, the inner frame, contains the event itself, and reflects one of the core concerns of this investigation, that is, the audience's experience of the "fictional stage world" (p.2). Bennett described this frame as encompassing "production strategies, ideological overcoding, and the material conditions of the performance" (Bennett 1990:2). It is important to realise, however, that it is the intersection of these two frames, that is, the inner and the outer, which leads to the audience's cultural understanding and experience of PBT. It is, in other words, the nexus between and interweaving of narrative (story) and performance in PBT that creates such a strong intersection between these two frames in this art form.

Finally, Jackson (1997:55) points to a third function of frame. In this function, theatrical frame points not only to what is contained in the frame, but also the "point of view of the onlooker". Hence, it is important to consider both the perspective and the attitude of the audience to the events that may be tacit in the frame.

Non-scripted elements of narrative are present in everything that occurs on stage in PBT because of the way humans expect interactions to unfold in real life—expectations that are stimulated by an interaction or gesture, like the father who places his hand on his son's heart. What this means is that any number of topical, current or popular references may assume an "extra-theatrical competence on the part of the spectator" (Elam 1980:93) and become important in the meaning-making process. PBT, then, by virtue of its close linkage between these inner and outer frames, is rich in potential to alter perspectives, view-points and previous mind sets.

The science of semiotics, by identifying and describing theatrical signs and sign-functions, has also revealed some other important facets of PBT. Pierce (1931-1958), one of the founders of the field of semiotics, described three types of "standing for" based on the degree of similarity between a sign and its point of reference—the iconic, the index, and the symbolic. Indeed, each of these is present in PBT. That is, a teller's story when "played back" can: (a) stand for the story itself, (b) draw attention to some underlying theme or sign present in the story, and/or (c) express, through suggestion, an idea that otherwise may remain incomprehensible. The "iconographic convention" particularly has more recently been theorised by Eco (1977:111) through an exploration of how the attention on stage shifts from a character to a sign, or what the character might stand for. This is important in PBT, as these conventions underlie the educative potential of the form, and what Eco's model foregrounds, in particular, is the multilayering that occurs in a performance.

It is also important to point out that some of the early work done by semioticians, in particular the "Prague School" (Elam 1980), also highlighted that the performance text is a macro-sign in itself. This sign or signification points to a meaning constructed as a result of the total effect of going to the theatre and seeing a performance, and also talking about it afterwards. This level of meaning is constructed in both the individual *and* collective consciousness of those attending the performance.

The second important thing to come out of the Prague School is that when an object or phenomenon appears on stage, it is its symbolic or signifying role that is important, not the object's practical value (Elam 1980). What this means is that, in PBT, a particular story or event can represent something much wider than itself.

Thus, the notion of "standing for" or connection is of particular interest in this investigation as it is illuminated through a relationship between actions, events or episodes that convey and construct meaning. Hence, in PBT, the metaphoric and symbolic communicative levels of the performance are closely linked with the making of meaning. Indeed, not only do individuals construct meaning, but so too do groups, organizations and cultures. What is common to all of these compositions of humans is that meaning is usually transmitted through stories among and between the constituent groups. These meanings are also constantly being made and remade. Furthermore, as Polkinghorne (1988) highlighted, individuals only have direct access to their own meanings, and hence indirect access to others' meanings. Indirect access can only occur through the representation of a person's meaning, and this is usually language-dependent. For PBT, language is only one of the forms of representation. Hence, in PBT, stories (Narrative), and their representation (Performance) provide a way that individuals can gain access to a wider world of meaning that lies beyond them, and in this way, communication is enhanced, insight is achieved, and community is developed.

PBT can be seen, then, to be a distinct narrative form. First, individuals tell stories from their lives. These stories exist in a personal and cultural realm that is constantly being configured and refigured. Second, PBT is constructed out of an individual's ability to arrange their life as expressed through narrative in temporally meaningful episodes, based on their perceptions when their story is told. Third, PBT draws on metaphor to enlarge the individual's experience, as contained within the story—to make connections with a wider community, and to allow new meanings to occur. Fourth, these processes occur through the ability of PBT to

symbolically and metaphorically connote something more than the literal dimension of the story.

PBT, like stories generally, not only increases knowledge of human behaviour; it also enhances the skills in perceiving such behaviour. This increase in perception occurs because the audience can see more clearly the portrayer *and* the portrayed. Hence, the potential is enhanced to present a point of view and look at one's own actions in the context of meaningful action directed toward some desired outcomes. This means that the enhancement occurs in the context of human experience, that is, storied experience (narrative↔performance), and each story is, as Virginia Woolf noted, "like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners" (as cited in Tyrell 1990:120). This attachment matters—not only because it reflects how a story links with experience, but also because it tells how story adds to the ability in interpreting events (Gersie 1997).

Playback Theatre as Narrative

Narrative is one of the most important disciplinary fields and traditions within which PBT sits. As a developing theoretical construct, narrative highlights issues of signification, temporality, education, imagination, relationship and identity development, and how these concepts reveal aspects of PBT. Furthermore, narration acts to maintain a relationship between the teller and audience.

Not only is PBT composed of stories, as is all theatre, but also the stories that are told are the individual stories of those people who are present at the performance. Hence, these stories have special significance to the tellers. Also, PBT functions to make the individuals' stories expansive—that is, representative of more than just one person's experience. Thus, story becomes the thread that unites all participants. In PBT, stories are told, "played back" or retold, and recreated. Hence, personal "life-stories", when artistically reframed through the playback process, have the potential to "rescript" the teller's life through generating some new understanding or insight. Story thus lies at the heart of the PBT process.

The difference between story and narrative is significant in understanding the nature of PBT. Franzosi (1998:518) described it this way: "A story refers to a skeletal description of the fundamental events in their natural logical and chronological order". It is story that provides the basic building blocks of narrative. The narrative act, by way of contrast: "sets up a frame

[where] the story informs, entertains, teaches, challenges, [and/or] asserts" (Maclean 1988:72).

Narrative, then, takes the chronological succession of events and transforms them, usually with an emphasis on action (Todorov, 1990 as cited in Franzosi, 1998:520). This action reflects the privileged position of actions and events over words that has existed since Aristotle's Poetics, and is clearly visible in PBT itself. What PBT does is to take "what is said" by the teller and reconfigure the verbal account, through movement, into "what is done".

In addition, PBT has a second function for narrative. This function is an evaluative one and flows on from the "action/transformational" quality just described. This evaluative function deals with the question of why an action occurred; more deeply, what is the story's point? Why was the story told? This reflective component of narrative is an integral part of PBT, and in this way PBT can be seen to create narrative. Polkinghorne observed: "narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (1988:13). That is, narrative is the universal medium from which humans understand and appreciate the complexities and commonalities of their world.

The uniquely human ability to have one thing stand for something else lies at the heart of the Playback process. That is, a story that is told is artistically played back, so that a movement can represent a conversation, or an action can encapsulate an attitude that dominates an entire scene. It is this "signification" that also allows a particular story, told by an individual, to become a universal story to which a wider group of people can relate. Already it can be seen that the narrative↔performance axis in the conceptual model of PBT (Figure 2) is inexorably crossing the education↔health axis. This latter axis is elaborated in Chapter Five, but reference to it cannot be avoided in this chapter.

Temporality

The semiotic processes of "sign", "sign function" and various forms of "standing for" that are an inherent part of PBT, are particularly important as they enhance the ability of the Playback form to both compress and extend time. What this means is that the artistic process allows the element of time in stories to be compressed, so that a story that chronologically spans a week may be played back in minutes. Conversely, a poignant moment in time that occurs almost in an instant can be played back over a much longer period of time.

These distortions serve very different, but equally important, functions. First, a compression of time functions to provide what Bruner (1986:11) calls "paradigmatic understanding"—understanding that refers to the search for conditions of universal truth on which people rely to derive meaning. Secondly, compression of time functions to enable an individual to make cognitive connections between events so as to combine the events into a unifying whole. Thus, for Bruner, narrative is dependent on the concept of time. That is, temporality is the primary dimension of human existence and narrative configures a sequence of events into a unified whole that is comprehensible. This element of "time" in PBT is important, then, because it is through the ability to either focus time on one specific event, or stretch time more globally, that cognitive links may be made by audience members—links that are essential for aesthetic appreciation and understanding.

What PBT does is collapse to expand time in order to connect and explore how human actions are linked sequentially into meaningful wholes—Gestalts that convey a higher order meaning packed with insight and revelation. Conversely, expansion enables the teller to examine an episode or situation in far greater detail than would be possible when living the situation in real time. Thus, the affective features of a story are released. Hence, PBT can be seen to shift time in order that an event can be understood in terms of the larger human condition, or to access the feeling submerged below the story itself. So, PBT can be seen to have both a narrative and a paradigmatic form. That is, PBT has the ability to: (a) shift explanation from logical thought where understanding comes via established laws or patterns of relationships between temporal events; and (b) seek relationships that hold irrespective of the spatial and temporal context in which the events exist.

Imagination

The telling of stories through PBT also serves another purpose—that is, the exercise of the imagination. This exercise is becoming increasingly important as television, radio and the internet take over from the traditional stories that have been told among humans face to face—stories, in effect, that have served to instruct, heal, entertain and mystify the listener. While it is now commonly accepted that physical needs of humans require a certain amount of bodily exercise in order to remain healthy, it is not commonly accepted that imagination, one of our most important psychic functions, also needs the same workout. Gersie and King (1990:23) described the implications of this lack of exercise in this way:

> The production of images by our inner eye cannot be compared to the absorption
> of prescribed images with which television programs present us. When the inner
> eye is closed we lose the capacity to generate dreams, ideas and visions; our
> ability to imagine begins to atrophy. We become receptacles and reproducers,
> deprived of any contact with our original and unique voice.

Not only does this ability atrophy, but one's sense of wholeness and well-being is also diminished. Gersie and King underlined this point when they described human imagination as a "primal source of vitality, which nourishes our creativity, requires stimulation and use in order for us to experience well-being" (p.23).

PBT uses the imagination, then, to connect and express fantasy and reality, possibility and plausibility. When a story is told in PBT, the teller and the audience embark on a journey of inner and outer exploration. In this exploration, imagination is the tool whereby each participant connects with the content of the story, and through which he or she is able to discover his or her personal meaning or truth. Furthermore, personal expressive abilities are stimulated and the psyche is nourished by the evocation, stimulation and expression of "actual inner imagery" (Gersie & King 1990:24). Implicit in this stimulation and expression is the potential for active connection, not only with personal experience, but also with the collective experience of other people. Thus, imagination is important for one's sense of wholeness and health and the ability to transform the future. This transformation is a creative process, one that begins with an act of creation, and unfolds in the (re)telling of the story.

The transformation of experience is not only implicit in the telling of a story, but also in the artistic rendition of that story. Indeed, PBT can be a site for transformation, change and development, occurring through the use of imagination and a different form of knowing that is only accessible through the Arts. In short, PBT animates story. This animation is important because all stories contain multiple levels of meaning. However, these meanings will remain latent unless activated in some way. Telling a story is the simplest way to activate a story. Presenting a story in a multi-modal form where a variety of senses are engaged (as in PBT) enables multiple possible understandings of a story's social dynamics to emerge. These understandings are intimately connected to both the intrapsychic and interpersonal world of both the teller and the audience, and are important if transformation is to occur.

Importantly, this transformation exists in a climate that is both respectful and safe when rendered in PBT—a climate that is essential if a story's potential for instruction and inspiration are to be manifest. As Gersie and King (1990:31) highlighted, it is these two functions of stories (i.e. respect and safety) that consistently stand out with clarity and continuity.

Relationship

While it is somewhat of a paradox, the stories told in PBT are both the product and the "end" of an experience, but also the "beginning" of a journey towards understanding. This journey is one that is informed by the images, emotions, experiences and ideas that are given through the act of "playing back" the story in an artistic way. This act enables the teller to have a voice, be heard, and understood in a community of listeners. Thus, a relationship develops between all the participants in PBT—the conductor and actors through their attentive listening to the story and the respectful way they recreate the story as art. This re-creation creates and models compassionate relationships between the teller and the actors, and members of the audience. A wonderful closeness is generated by the interconnection between the one who tells and those who listen. In PBT, particularly, the very act of sharing highly (individual or collective) symbolic material with another, to whom this same symbolic structure matters, means that a special bond is created which lasts for as long as the story continues. Thus, both the teller and the actors have an investment in the story told, and the potency of the story comes from the relevance that the story holds to the actual experience and interpretation of a participant's own life.

And, yet, the audience bears witness to this process, being drawn in by the risk that the teller takes in making him or herself vulnerable through the disclosure of his/her inner world. Risk is also transparent among the actors as they work to honour the tale that is told. And still, the story, once told, has a life of its own and collectively belongs to all present. Therefore, PBT is a communal event, and this sense of community is also evident in the audience's participation in the journey of the playback.

Participation occurs in two ways. First, the very act of listening to a story indicates that the audience is willing to make space for the teller's expression of his or her own experience. Second, by letting the narrative experience into their life, the audience members allow the story to become part of their own life experience. Interestingly, the exploration of a story through the playback and discussion afterwards exposes participants to the reality that stories trigger among the people who experience the performance. Different memories can lead to rather different understandings of what happened in the playback. Because a story links with occurrences in the audience's life in many unpredictable ways, it stimulates audience members to remember and to share their own stories. In Gersie's (1997:27) words, "one tale calls forth another", and in PBT particularly these personal stories facilitate reflective

dialogue. In this way, as in communal storytelling of old, PBT develops a compelling sense of *community*—community in the context of powerful insight as well.

The role of imagination then is to create a space separate from the present world. This space is important, in that the distance created allows Playback participants to separate from experience and reflect upon it. Furthermore, the very act of playing back a story artistically illuminates the multi-dimensional nature of imagination—the capacity of imagination to resolve, reconcile, energise, stimulate and encourage thought, feelings, and the interaction between the two. Imagination is potential, and PBT, with imagination, spontaneity and creativity at its core, allows participants to dwell in the realm of potential actuality.

Identity

PBT also offers opportunities for identity development. This development of identity grows out of the temporal nature of narrative, as experienced by participants in a performance. What this means is that remembering one's own responses and treating those responses as "objects", as a result of the Playback act, allows individuals to develop a coherent self-concept, because the self can be seen with the benefit of aesthetic distance. This distance reflects the way that PBT symbolically organises and manipulates both memories of the past and anticipations of the future so that meanings can change. This change is brought about because of the reframing effects of Playback itself, where perspective is altered. Hence, tellers' views of themselves and their actions are broadened, developed and transformed.

This "developmental" function of PBT is revealed through some of the work of Mead (1959) whose social-psychological perspective has revealed both the temporal and intersubjective nature of self-identity (Ezzy 1998). Importantly, in terms of PBT, Maines and his colleagues (1983) have provided an interesting commentary on Mead that reveals two aspects linking events and their interpretation—that is, the "objective" events of lived experience and their symbolic interpretation. These aspects reveal that identity is actively constructed through a temporal unity that locates the past and future in the present. Identity is locally constrained through the effects of "social conditioning" or history on the experience of the present (Gubrium & Holstein 1998). Thus, PBT can be seen to incorporate a temporal unity to a teller's story and animate a story into a narrative where transformation can occur that provides for a sense of identity. Furthermore, PBT reveals the social conditioning or context in which the story sits. Thus, it is the artistic or aesthetic quality of PBT that allows an individual's story to be seen and interpreted in a broader context. What this means is that individuals are often constrained in their development by socially sanctioned narratives.

Somers (1994:606) makes this point very clearly in saying that: "We become who we are (however ephemeral, multiple and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making". What PBT does is to artistically broaden the range of available or sanctioned stories through which individuals can interpret their experience, and hence identify who they are in their lives.

Ricoeur's (1988) recent analysis of narrative linking fiction with history (and history with fiction) provides a more sophisticated argument for the development of a narrative identity. This identity develops, Ricoeur argued, because lived experience has no intrinsic meaning, but rather becomes complete in its reading or interpretation. Furthermore, these interpretations are both enabled and constrained by the "text", in this case the act of "playing back" the teller's story. Importantly, these interpretations are also anchored in the imaginative world of the audience (reader), and mediated through action. In this sense, the act of playback with its emphasis on symbol and metaphor becomes a text in itself that allows conduct to be interpreted (Ricoeur 1991).

Hence, PBT can be seen to recreate the past symbolically in the present, through interweaving the past with the imaginative and configurational potential of PBT. As a result of this narrative recreation, aspects of the self that may have been submerged are revealed. In this sense, PBT can be seen as an interpretive form that allows the past to be reinterpreted in the light of new experience, thus facilitating the development of self-identity. For Ricoeur (1988; 1992) the self is discovered in its own narrational acts; life is a nascent story, "an activity and a passion in search of a narrative" (1991:29), and PBT provides one possibility for a narrative framework. Therefore, PBT emerges as a site for self-development and discovery where narrative identity can be made and remade as episodes unfold.

Education through Narrative

To summarise the arguments thus far, PBT can be seen to reflect two things. First, human experience is basically storied experience; and second, humans live out stories because they are storytelling organisms. What is important about these points in terms of PBT is that, first, the stories or narratives that are told in PBT directly represent the human experiences people live, and second, the stories are rich in educational meaningfulness for all of the participants. This is because the telling and retelling of a life experience enables the "teller" to share experiences and to gain insight into possible meanings and implications (Paul 1993). In addition, every story facilitates the construction of "meaning" (Moloney 1995). Thus, PBT is

potentially educative for both the teller and the audience because of the insight derived by the teller *and* the audience during the storytelling process and the re-enactment of that story.

This "educative" function of PBT is not necessarily explicitly didactic. That is, each story told, and subsequently played back, provides the audience with a scenario where particular ideas can be "tried out". This exploration can help tellers and audience members explore a particular theme and consequently become more aware of the characteristics of a situation in terms of that theme. Furthermore, audience members see the way the characters act and react within each situation, and observe the subsequent effects on the situation itself (Bauman 1986). Thus, through representing the teller's story in a dramatic way, the teller's memory of events and the audience's memory of similar events are supported.

What PBT does is to provide a "space" where the teller can place his or her experience in a wider horizon of possibilities, nurturing the capacity to perceive alternatives where none may have seemed to exist before, thus supporting the teller's individual "voice". Spaces such as these can be healing places created with the heart and inspired by humanised understanding (Pines 1989). Every Playback performance, then, brings people's perceptions or feelings within reach of shared deliberation, and it is this deliberative community that can teach about life and affective experience. Thus, PBT brings affective benefits to both individuals and the group.

Butler (1964) also discusses education through narrative. In this discussion, the elements and values of storytelling that are described can also be seen to apply to PBT. He suggests that the process of presenting experience in a story form enhances a person's sense of more truly inhabiting their life history. Furthermore, it is the habitation of life story that provides an individual with a sense of heritage, identity, and a trajectory for the future.

In summary, in the literature PBT is seen not only a vehicle for individual identity development, maintenance and change, but also a vehicle for the audience to examine their own cognitive and social life. Parenthetically, despite all the academic contradictions in regard to the processes of memory—recall and telling—two undisputed certainties remain. First, telling matters; that is, a persistent inability to tell one's stories at appropriate moments sooner or later becomes a problem (Donovan 1996); and second, *not* telling has many undesirable consequences for one's health, as well (Garnett 1996). Hence, PBT has a role to play in the well-being of its participants.

Reader Reception Theory

Reader reception theory foregrounds how the reader actively makes meaning from text, and hence reveals not only how narrative can be educational, but also helps describe how audiences make meaning in theatre—a notion I come to shortly. In reader reception theory, attention is given to the role that the reader plays in making meaning of a written text (Holub 1984). Holub described this process as one where the reader fits the motifs together, evaluates characters, and seeks causal connections between the two. It is, in fact, an act of "exploration" by the reader (Rosenblatt 1983), and mirrors, in part, the relationship between the audience and dramatic production. What is important about the role of the reader in this theory is that s/he is highlighted as an active participant who interprets or understands the text. It is this hermeneutic process that is the concern of reader reception theory. Hermeneutics refers to the process of interpretation of a text—whether the text is conceived as a script or a dramatic event, or any manifestation in between. Parallels exist between reader response and how an audience receives and responds to what happens on stage in PBT.

Reader reception or response theory is a development of narrative theory and is concerned with the relationship between text and the reader. This theory, developed in literary studies and criticism during the late 1960's, covers a diversity of responses to textual reception. The work of Iser (1978) in particular has been important because he highlighted the way that meaning is reached through an **interactive** process that occurs between the reader and the text. Drawing on the work of the philosophers Husserl and Ingarden, Iser proposed a three-way approach to the analysis of reading; first, a consideration of the text; second, a consideration of the reader; and third and most importantly, the conditions of interaction between the two.

This analysis of reading revealed that meaning is not the revelation of a predeterminate meaning inside the text, but rather an **experience of** the meaning created between the text and the reader's interpretation of that text. Iser also describes some of the ways meaning is created for the reader. Indeed, the process of meaning-making from literary texts is revealing of the same process in PBT.

First, Iser described a productive tension between "the role offered [the implied reader] and the real reader's own disposition" (1978:37). This is similar to the tension generated in PBT, where the actors may play the teller's role in a way different from the way the teller sees him or herself. Second, meaning also appears between the transactions among characters or when an author makes direct statements to the reader. This is clearly paralleled to the way that

actors in PBT communicate to each other, and sometimes through directly addressing the audience. In short, in both reading and watching theatre (generally speaking), the task of making meaning is the same. That is, it is the audience's task to bring about a convergence of perspectives from these various communication mediums.

However, individual meanings may vary. This is because each of the audience members brings his/her own set of experiences and expectations to the theatre. Thus, one piece of "text" can have many different meanings because of the differences in personal experiences and social understandings. Implicit in this view is Iser's point that in order to view "theatre" the audience member needs to have some sense of the techniques and conventions that a particular form employs—that is, a grasp of the codes that systematically govern the ways that text produces its meanings.

In PBT this means that the audience must understand some of the conventions of theatre, and mobilise their general social knowledge to help make sense of the performance they observe. Ricoeur (1985) went further and highlighted the educative potential of literature, and PBT by inference, by proposing that effective literature does more than simply reinforce a reader's own perceptions. Instead, effective literature (and PBT) floods the meaning-making process with new light that brightens some sides and casts new shadows on others. As Ricoeur described it, literature "violates or transgresses these normative ways of seeing and so teaches us new codes for understanding" (1985:244-245).

Jauss (1982) has expanded the idea of a reader's experience in the presence of a narrative text. That is, Jauss highlighted the social and cultural milieu that informs interpretation of a piece of work. And, it is this milieu that provides a context for making meaning. He also discusses the role of perspective given by the vantage point from which a reader views a text. Indeed, drawing on the hermeneutic theory of Gadamer (1975), Jauss described a "horizon of expectations" where the text does not change, but meaning does. Gadamer uses the term "horizons" to refer to the "range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p.269). Thus, it is the interpretation, sitting within a set of cultural meanings, that changes, with the work "defined" by the various moments in which it is received historically. Jauss defines the reader's role as arising from two horizons. First, there is the horizon of expectations suggested by the text read, and secondly, there is the social horizon of the expectations of the reader. For Jauss, "the work does not exist without its effect, its effect presupposes reception" (1979:138). In PBT then, the act of the playback is not only interpreted against other acts of playback, but also in light of the audience member's

own social and cultural experience. This suggests that an unreceptive reader/audience results in the "work" having less effect.

More recently, the work of Fish (1980:171) detailed a concept of "interpretative communities". In Fish's words:

> Interpretative communities are made up of those who share interpretative strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.

In Fish's terms, texts are not assigned value by any intrinsic properties that they may have, but rather by interpretive communities. The concept of an interpretive community is revealing for PBT because there is a particular audience who voluntarily attends this form of performance—a community where personal stories are told and played back. Naumann (1976:121) offered some insight into how social mediation and contextualisation of a performance might occur in an interpretative community such as the audience attracted to PBT. First, a "viewer" brings with him or her a certain world-view and ideology that is determined by the viewer's:

> membership of a class, stratum, or group, by ... his material situation (income, leisure, living and working conditions, and general way of life); by ... his education, knowledge, and level of culture, his aesthetic needs; by his age, and even his sex, and not least by his attitudes to the other arts, and especially to the very literature that [the viewer] has already given a reception to.

Second, and most importantly, for Playback it is the audience's experiences of text **in performance** that in this case represents the core of the interpretative activity. What this means is that the experience is aesthetic, and is related to an aesthetic attitude (Stolnitz 1960:35) and the concept of distance (Ben Chaim 1984) that I come to shortly.

However, while reader response theory is useful in highlighting a core of "receptive concerns", theatre demands a more complex communication model. This is because, as Bennett (1990:72) suggested, a theatrical performance is (a) only available to its audience for a short period of time, (b) is not a finished product in the same way that a novel or poem is, (c) is an interactive process, that relies on the presence of spectators to achieve its effects, and (d) is always open to immediate and public acceptance, modification or rejection by those people it addresses. Furthermore, as Jackson (1997:51) indicated, not only may audiences interpret differently from night to night, but, as in the case of PBT, that "may influence a performance". While Jackson was discussing TIE particularly, the same dynamic holds true for PBT. However, audience reception theory has the potential to contribute to a

communication model more appropriate to theatre studies. This theory is later mentioned as part of the following discussion about PBT as a theatrical performance.

Playback Theatre as Performance

Theatre

This section locates PBT in the context of the medium of theatre as a whole, and so reveals it as a theatrical "event". First, I will describe theatre more generally, the link between ritual and theatre, and then discuss ritual as fundamental in facilitating the transformation that can occur in PBT. I have chosen to order the theatre section before performance, as the field of theatre studies has a much longer history as an area of research and scholarship, even though Theatre as a phenomenon is now perceived to be a subset of performance generally (Auslander 1997). Secondly, I describe the emerging field of performance studies and outline how PBT can be seen as a manifestation of 20th century performance practice (Huxley & Witts 1996a) with its emphasis on the *body* rather than voice. I will then analyse some of the debate that delimits both theatre and performance, and discuss how PBT has elements of each, thereby existing as an aesthetic event somewhere between the two. This debate is particularly important as the tension between theatre and performance reflects a wider post-modern critique of the Enlightenment and Modernity. This tension is consequential not only for the specific issues raised, but also because of the theoretical challenges raised in the project itself.

Finally, I draw both strands of narrative and theatre together through reader-response theory and audience-reception theory. Through this process I raise the issue of aesthetic distance to show how this issue can help reveal how PBT functions as an agent of change and transformation.

Theatre as one of the Arts

In discussing theatre as art the well-known theatre scholar Brockett (1992:8) observed that no term has been discussed so "frequently or defined so ambiguously" as the term, "art". A consideration of some of the distinguishing characteristics of Art that differentiates it from other approaches to experience may be useful. First, art is one way that human beings seek to understand their world – a world that may be made up of a plethora of events, relationships and moments. In this sense, Art can be seen to instil some form of order out of chaos, and Brockett (1992:9) describes art as "one approach, [that] shapes perceptions about human

experience into forms (or patterned relationships) that help us order our views about mankind and the universe".

The search for relationships that leads to understanding can be conceptualised as a "search for meaning" and this happens in theatre through the engagement of the audience's emotions, imagination, and intellect. This engagement is in contrast to other approaches to experience, such as history, philosophy and science that often appeal to the intellect only. Thus, theatre engages the whole person rather than just a part of the person. The implication of this more holistic engagement is that when people learn through theatre, they can know something in more than just their head, and this "knowing" is informed in the same way that people absorb life itself—directly through their senses. Schank (1969:172) observed: "[the dramatic work] articulates for the audience something vital about their own emotive lives that previously they have not been able to grasp".

Art, and theatre as one of the arts, also differs from life in that art focuses attention on certain things—that is, art strips away detail to reveal, or compose, a connected pattern. Brockett (1992:9) described how this happens in theatre: "a play illuminates and comments (though sometimes indirectly) on human experience even as it creates it". In this sense, Art can be seen to be a form of knowledge, and theatre and art are interrelated. Jackson (1997:54) underscored the interrelatedness of theatre and art this way: "theatre without art will not have the power to engage, to move, to give pleasure, to stimulate, to provoke, or to change".

In addition, when watching a performance, an audience enters into what Coleridge (1817:1-2) has so famously termed "a willing suspension of disbelief". What this means is that the audience can watch a performance, knowing that it is not "real", yet enter into the fictional world of the action "as if" it were. For the moment, the audience, or spectators agree to be bound by a common pact where there is an understanding that the action in the performance is not real, even though the action affects the audience as if it were real—emotionally. This affect is perceived directly through the audience's senses—exactly as they apprehend life itself. It is in this apprehension that theatre's educative function is clearly revealed; that is, the spectator experiences an action, even if only vicariously, within the delimited performance space. In this sense, the audience experiences simultaneously both distance and emotional involvement. Thus, new insights can emerge for the audience through an emotional involvement in the experience. In short, theatre allows the head to understand what the heart is experiencing. In the words of Boal (1992:xxx): "This is theatre—the art of looking at ourselves."

Theatre also some has some special characteristics that differentiate it from the other Arts. First, theatre comes closest to real life as it is invariably communicated through actors as human beings, often using the words and language that are most familiar to audience members. In this sense, theatre is arguably the most accessible of the arts. Theatre is also similar to life in that it exists in the moment and then is gone and can never be recreated exactly the same way. In contrast, a piece of prose or a painting exists relatively unchanged over time.

Theatre represents both inner and outer experience through words and movement—features of interaction that resemble how people get to know one another. What is also important is that the action of words and movement occurs in the same space occupied by both the actors and the audience (Brockett 1992). Indeed, the fact that theatre combines words and movement in the same space as the audience differentiates it from film and video, and makes it more real and three-dimensional (McAuley 1999).

PBT is a manifestation of the characteristics of theatre that differentiate it from other art forms. The utilitarian value of PBT is dependent on the same characteristics as exist in all theatre—the concept of "praxis", that is, being distant and involved at the same time, the lifelikeness of PBT, the ephemerality of a performance, and the accessibility of the words and movement used to communicate with an audience. Playback Theatre is both "of the world" and "in the world".

Bharucha (1993:10) described it thus:

> Theatre is neither a text nor a commodity. It is an activity that needs to be in ceaseless contact with the realities of the world and the inner necessities of our lives.

It is because of these characteristics that PBT, and theatre as a whole, holds so much promise as a humanising force in our world.

The Link Between Ritual and Theatre

Although ritual was described in Chapter Two in terms of its structural function, it is important to elaborate the link between ritual and theatre, and to show how ritual functions to create change. Indeed, PBT relies on ritual to give it the infrastructure, or scaffolding, from which therapeutic and aesthetic action can emerge. The etymology of the word "theatre" comes from the Greek word *théâtron,* meaning "seeing place" It is generally agreed that theatre developed out of religious ceremony that brought together a group of people to a place of "seeing" to celebrate or signify an "agricultural or fertility rite" (Pavis 1998:316). Indeed,

theatre scholars have long argued about the role of ritual and ceremony as part of theatre's genesis.

Ritual and drama deal with social relationships and the communication of meaning. Banham (1995:923) describes this link by saying that:

> Both ritual and drama take (these) routine acts and their contextually determined meanings – the small change of social currency – exaggerate them, stylize them, refine them, and set them into a pattern of expressive sequences of visual and auditory sequences.

Pavis (1998:316) commented on the link as well, describing it as immutable—that "all collective work on staging is a realization of ritual". Thus, what is important about ritual and theatre is that they both significantly overlap yet have some distinct features. Banham (1995:923) described it this way:

> Both ritual and theatre lie at the opposite poles of a functional continuum. While theatre confines itself to saying things about social relationships, ritual also does things with them: and what it does is to reinforce or change them.

What is clear about the relationship between ritual and theatre is that ritual can be seen to be more active and engaging, with a basis of doing, whereas theatre, in contrast, can be seen to be more passive and distant. In terms of PBT, both the aspects of theatre and ritual are important and cannot be easily teased apart. Indeed, the notion of "theatrical distance" is important in that distance allows tellers to externalise their story and provide perspective. What can be seen is that theatre and ritual both operate to maintain social order, to pass on the mores of the culture within which they exist, and build community.

Human Ritual: Its Place in Theatre and Humanity

As the collective nature of theatre in contemporary society is being stressed, with PBT as an example of this, so theatre's links with ritual are traced as a way of contextualising and understanding this form of theatre. The noted theatre scholar Esslin pointed to those links: "in ritual as in drama the aim is an enhanced level of consciousness, a memorable insight into the nature of existence" (1976:28). Hence, an examination of ritual will be important in helping to reveal PBT itself.

It is important to consider ritual in all of its forms, as there is a rich evolutionary development of ritual among humans. The ritual events surrounding births, weddings and deaths, and the like, provide a sense of expectation and regularity in the world that humans use to develop a sense of understanding about what is going to happen to them in an ever changing universe. When theatre is considered as a way of representing life, then the most

obvious thing that humans would do would be to give it structure. Ritual provides that sort of structure. In the words of Tulip (1996), "If it is love that makes the world go round, it is ritual that makes us feel at home and at ease with ourselves, with others and with our environment".

One of the difficulties in defining ritual is the variety of ways that differing groups employ ritual. As Jennings (1995:14) pointed out, "there are so many different meanings associated with the term that it becomes difficult to provide one satisfactory definition". For example, clinical psychologists often refer to ritualised behaviour that is repetitive, or self-destructive. In this context, rituals are seen in a pejorative way. Theologians view rituals as a way of prescribing acceptable behaviours for congregations in a religious setting, and as a way of communicating with God. Driver (1991:10) recounts his experience as a student of ritual, theology, and drama, where "studies of ritual … were mostly conceived from a high-church point of view that virtually identified ritual with Christian liturgy". What is important about ritual however, in terms of this study, is the link between emotion and ritual, and how ritual functions to frame emotion. This framing can take a variety of forms as ritual can control emotion while releasing it, and provide a safe place where emotion can be expressed. Ritual can also invoke emotion, and through its performative aspects provide a place where energies can be multiplied and focused. The most critical aspect of this "framing" is that ritual occurs in the presence of others, and so has a social component. Driver (1991:156) writes:

> Even in a time of grief, ritual lets joy be present through the permission to cry, lets tears become laughter, if they will, by making place for the fullness of tears' intensity – all this in the presence of communal assertiveness.

It is in this "communal assertiveness" that PBT has much of its power. As Driver comments, "A ritual is a party at which emotions are welcome" (1991:156).

Recently ritual studies have emerged as an academic discipline growing out of Anthropology and Cultural Studies. Indeed, it was out of frustration that Jennings (1995) turned to Social Anthropology in order to better understand much of her work in ritual drama and symbolism in relation to the rest of social and cultural behaviour.

Noted scholars of anthropology like Turner and Beattie have highlighted the prevalence of ritual across all societies, and the links between ritual and social process. Driver saw the importance of these links as well—"to study humanity is to study ritual" (1991:10). Turner in particular is revealing in terms of the present investigation because he makes his own distinction between ritual and theatrical performance, and suggests that theatre has evolved from ritual. Turner also goes on to argue that ritual is a vital component in the process of

social change (1983). Thus, ritual and theatre, when the two are linked together, produce a powerfully creative force for change. As Turner (1977:35) commented:

> To look at itself a society must cut out a piece of itself for inspection. To do this it must set up a frame within which images and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be scrutinized, assessed, and, if need be, remodelled and rearranged.

Ritual and transformation

Two of the most important ideas to come from Turner are those of *liminality* and *communitas*. These two ideas are important because they reveal some of the essential nature of ritual in general and PBT in particular.

Liminality is an extension of an idea first proposed by Van Gennep (1960), where transitional rites were seen to exist in-between rites of separation and incorporation, such as leaving childhood and becoming a woman or a man. As such, liminality was described as a state of transition—an "in-betweenness" of leaving the old and entering the new. Turner extended Van Gennep's idea of liminality to notions about rituals, and saw that the "liminal state" was one where people left behind the roles and status that they would normally have in their world, where time and space and behaviour are demarcated by regular and routine social structures. Thus, for Turner, liminality had the potential to release an individual from his or her more prescribed social roles, allowing the individual to stretch or play with those roles in ways he or she would normally find impossible. In other words, liminality provides for playfulness and irrationality outside the normal structures of society, where the normal rules of behaviour or logic do not exist. What is important about this "playfulness", then, is that new behaviours, roles or understandings can emerge unfettered by the old. This has direct implications for PBT because the liminal state of the "playing back" can allow the new to emerge. Turner calls this space for something new, *"communitas"*.

Communitas, in Turner's terms, is something more than community or locale. He describes it as "an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no* society" (Turner 1974:83). For Turner, communitas is more like the basic spirit of ritual, the antithesis of alienation, and is one of society's reasons for being. In ritual, then, the liminal state and communitas combines to provide a particular sort of order and a heightened sense of freedom and possibility.

Theatre scholars have picked up this Turnerarian view of ritual. In theatre, the audience is "betwixt and between" their day-to-day world—that is, in a liminal state—and experiencing the bond of sharing a common experience where something new may emerge. Thus, the idea

of communitas, as a space for the "new" to emerge, is really the essence of learning, per se. As such, communitas provides a framework for people as learners to explore and discover—hence, learn—in ways they may never have experienced before. Playback Theatre as a venue for communitas, then, has a strong educative potential, and as Turner described, "public reflexivity takes the form of a *performance*" (Turner 1977:33).

In summary, Turner views rituals as inherently communal, while at the same time being imaginative and playful. As such, there is room for something new in a context of unity, order and a sense of belonging. This "generic human bond" or desire for a common humanity describes the fundamental nature of PBT.

While ritual functions as Turner suggests, providing liminality and communitas, ritual also acts to both contain the improvised nature of PBT and facilitate its capacity for change and transformation. It is this role of "containment", where the structures provide constancy from evening to evening, which provides a safety net for the audience to tell often painful and revealing stories. What this means is that the ritual structure of the public performance stays the same from one month to the next (although the content changes), and hence provides predictability for the spontaneous nature of the form, and hence a "safe" place to tell.

Performance Studies

Performance Studies is a comparatively new area of academic research and scholarship that mirrors, in part, the explosion of performance beyond theatre since the Second World War (Kershaw 1999). This expanded view of theatre encompasses "a hybrid form of performance that includes strategies informed by dance, installation work, time-based work, site-specific work and so on" (Allsopp 2000). Both narrative and theatre are subsumed within the boundaries of performance studies, even though those boundaries are still contested, transgressed and questioned (Carlson 1996). As Pippen and Eden observe (1997:83), citing Reinelt & Roach (1992): "Performance theory … spans disciplines from anthropology to phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, Marxism, education and the social sciences". This span reflects the mixed-method approach to this investigation.

Maclean (1988), in her book *Narrative as Performance,* argued that narrative could not be "satisfactorily explored except as the site of interaction", and that performance, in a like manner, "always involves interactions between the teller and the receiver" (p.xii). Thus, performance relies on relationship, between the teller and the told, the listener and the heard—and in the case of PBT—the seer and the seen. Maclean goes on to describe this

relationship as encompassing both an "act" and an "enactment", in other words both a "doing" and a "representation of a doing" (p.72).

These issues of relationship and representation are important for this investigation. This is because PBT has two levels of (re)presentation; each dependant on interaction and a relationship of trust. First, the teller relates a story of their experience, and second, the actors and musician (re)present that experience in a multi-modal way. Phelan (1993:2) described how this happens in performance: "The real is read through representation, and representation is read through the real". Representation, then, can be educational inasmuch as it is always conveying more than it intends, and is never "uncontaminated". This is because the act of playback requires that the actors draw on memory of what the teller said, previous performances, and their own life experiences. In this way, PBT is both individual and collective. That is, the teller's story is the story of an individual but the playback process works to link an individual's memory with a collective memory of those present. Furthermore, this process is recursive. Schechner (1993:1), for example, described performance as "behavior twice displayed". In PBT, however, behaviour is **thrice** displayed—the original experience, the telling of the experience, and the aesthetic recreation of that experience through the playback form.

PBT sandwiches "social" and "artistic" in a way that blurs the difference between everyday and aesthetic experience, producing a hybrid genre that challenges the distinctions between "high" and "popular" arts, and professional and non-professional cultural production. An exemplar of this challenge is reflected in the broader notion of the "performative" as applied to PBT because **all** those present at the event have a performative role to play. For example, the teller is a performer in that s/he goes on to the "stage" by getting out of his/her seat and walking to the teller's chair, and in doing so, sits halfway between the actors and the audience. Not only is the act of walking to the teller's chair a performative act, but also blurs the traditional boundaries between performer and audience. In addition, the act of telling is also a performative act as the teller assumes "centre stage" as s/he tells their story. This role of teller as performer is also reinforced during the actual playback, as the audience will glance periodically at the teller to look at his or her reactions to the playing back of the story.

It is also important to understand that the audience are also "performers" in the Playback event, in the sense that they interactively involved in the process by providing key words or phrases for some of the PBT forms. Further, the audience also provide commentary on the action that has occurred.

Underlying these broader notions of performance is the physical "staging" of the public performances. In these performances, a further blurring occurs between the traditional *active* roles of the actors and the *passive* roles traditionally played by the audience. This blurring occurs through the audience sitting around the performance area in a way that implies "connection" between the actors and the audience, and the lighting being left on for the whole evening. What this means is that the audience members can not only see the teller, and his or her reactions to their own story, but also the conductor, the actors and each other, and feel "connected" to them.

The focus on the "performative" that is so much a part of the culture of PBT reflects a growing trend. Kershaw (1999:13), for example, described contemporary societies, particularly those where democracy and capitalism meet, as "performative societies". In performative societies, Kershaw suggests, everything from democracy to capitalism and the individual's role in them is understood in relation to "performance" and performance processes. In this sense, performance, or the absence of performance, is all pervasive and critical both to an individual's survival and the maintenance of society in which he or she lives (Ball 2000). It is not surprising, then, that PBT as a contemporary interactive aesthetic event reflects a strong performative element.

PBT can be seen to sit at the conjunction of theatre and performance, incorporating elements of each, and it is this "situatedness" of PBT that goes some way to explaining how it can deal with both "universals" and "essences", as well as the critique of those positions provided by post-modernism and post-structuralism. For example, the Brechtian notion of *gestus*—the moment of action that perfectly expresses social actions—can be used to explain the predilection for the quickly read image (Kershaw 1999:105). In PBT, for example, this may be as simple as a hug goodbye, or through the reading of a fluid sculpture[18]. By way of contrast, Auslander (1997:64), described the ability of audiences in post-modern performances to impose their own individual "interpretative schema" on the work, and this concept of openness lies at the heart of the Playback process.

However, the differences between theatre and performance, and the critique on which these differences are argued (Carlson 1996; Phelan 1993), may not be as clear cut as first believed. This is because, as Connor (1989) highlighted, there is a crucial flaw in the post-modern

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[18] A fluid sculpture is where the actors respond in movement to a word or feeling from an audience member-- each actor moving individually portraying an aspect of this word and finishing together in a frozen image.

critique of universals. For example, some of the post-modern critique of unjust and oppressive systems clearly rests on the assumption of the "**universal** right of all not to be treated unjustly and oppressively" (p.243). Kershaw (1999:84), in his insightful commentary subtitled "Between Brecht and Baudrillard", describes an "in-between position"—a position that accurately reflects PBT as an aesthetic event:

> Between ... a vision of theatre as a dynamic arena for social experiment and a view of the social as an experiment so thoroughly imbued with the potential for a sense of reflexive performativity.

Hence, it is possible to see PBT both as a dynamic way of looking anew at social issues, that is the universal issues that art puts us in touch with, *and* as a way of considering the socially and contextually constructed meanings that are different to the "status quo". In short, PBT celebrates community and difference.

While PBT can be understood through a consideration of narrative, theatre, and ritual as a whole, it is also a contemporary performance practice. The evolution of this practice can be understood by a consideration of its emergence and acceptance in the latter part of the 20th Century. This will now be outlined.

20th Century Performance Practice

Huxley and Witts (1996b:4) have differentiated performance practice from fields such as aesthetics or semiotics by noting the ephemerality of the act and the essentially practical processes that are used to produce the act. In their differentiation, they have identified four interlinked themes as a way of considering performance practice:

(1) The process of making performance,

(2) The formal possibilities of performance,

(3) The technical possibilities of performance, and

(4) The social and/or political purposes of performance.

A consideration of each of these themes reveals PBT as 20th century performance practice.

The process of making performance is important to consider because attention is drawn to the way that the "text" of performance has traditionally been used in theatre. Traditionally in theatre studies, the "text" of a performance has been purely the author's script, used as the basis for performance. However, text is now conceived much more broadly and refers to anything that can be "read", such as movement, sound or costume. What this means is that a variety of "texts" and the performance processes that emphasise uncertainty are brought to the fore. This foregrounding of uncertainty reflects the wider social milieu within which

contemporary performance sits, and it is this uncertainty that is allied with change. In PBT, for example, the "text" of a performance comes from an audience member who spontaneously tells a story from his or her life. This story is completely unknown to the actors, who in turn, "playback" the story in a completely spontaneous and improvised way.

When Huxley and Witts talk about formal possibilities of performance, they are referring to the attention that is given to the way that a traditional Play, with a focus on the scripted spoken word, delimits the possibilities of performance. Thus, the actor's words become the most important method of communicating meaning to an audience. Alternatively, in PBT, the movement of the actors, combined with the instrumental "voice" of the musician, displaces the primacy of the spoken word as a means of communication. So, the potential for greater communication is opened up, because it is the audience's story as well.

As for the technical possibilities of performance, Huxley & Witt's concern was with visual and physical theatrical innovations, and a deconstruction and reconstruction of the text. So, innovative de-construction and reconstruction, in effect, reflect the search for new theatre forms that better represent a society that is in a constant state of flux. This notion is eminently apparent in PBT. That is, in PBT, there are a number of sub-forms such as "fluid sculptures" and "transformations", where the actors and musician make physical and visual decisions rather than deliver text according to blocked movement and rehearsed script.

So, what is important about a consideration of 20th Century performance practice as a way of illuminating PBT is that underlying this practice is a concern with societal change, as reflected in a change of emphasis from product to process and an integration of forms. Thus there is an opening up of possibility for the audience through PBT that stands in stark contrast to a predetermined outcome decided by a director or producer. This predetermined outcome may well be arrived at by a focus on an economic imperative, rather than a concern for the welfare of the audience.

This concern for people and the betterment of society in which they live is reflected in the work of a number of significant 20th Century theatre practitioners. A number of broad concerns characterise their work. These include the empowerment of the audience, a focus on societal change, and a notion of theatre as a mode of education. These foci also lie at the heart of PBT.

Of significance here are renowned practitioners such as Artaud (1970), Barba (1979), Bharucha (1993), Boal (1979), Brecht (Willett 1964), Grotowski (1969), Pavis (1992), Schechner (1988) and Stanislavski (1950). For many of these practitioners, their art, and in

this case their theatre art, was developed and performed as a way of making the world a better place. Fox (1994:5) also holds similar values and these are reflected in his referral to PBT as a "postliterary theatre" that can be a positive force for "social transformation" suitable for "today's world".

These theatre practitioners are closely identified with change in social structures, and as such their work sits in the context of broader theoretical perspectives such as post-modernism and post-structuralism. That is, their work reflects a movement away from "truth" and a stable unequivocal meaning in the theatre toward a plurality of voice, perspective and meaning. This plurality is particularly evident in PBT where there is no attempt to provide a definitive answer or response to a teller's story. Rather, Playback functions to expand a story to a point where a variety of interpretations and meanings are possible. In this sense, PBT is representative of wider social movements. These movements and theoretical paradigms have offered new ways of thinking about and observing performance. For example, contemporary performance theory, critical theory, semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminist theory have, in part, been concerned with a critique of ways of knowing and representation in Western society. Similarly, PBT reflects society, and by virtue of its very existence, provides a place where this critique can occur.

In 20th Century performance practice there is a plurality of theoretical perspectives that can assist in understanding PBT. Artaud (1970:67), for example, in his polemic on the French theatre of his day, argued for a theatre that "wakes us up heart and nerves" and "arouses deep echoes within us". This would be done, Artuad argued, by re-situating theatre as an immediate experience for both performers and the audience. This would be a theatre of affect where Artuad strove to:

> [f]orge the links, the chain of a rhythm when audiences saw their own real lives in a show. We must allow audiences to identify with the show breath by breath and beat by beat (p.95).

These powerful emotions, Artaud argued, could empower a spectator to change not only him or herself, but also the society in which s/he lives.

These notions of empowerment and change, also part of the fabric of PBT, were further developed by Boal. Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed*, for example, developed image theatre as an elaboration of Freire's emancipatory work with some of Brazil's illiterate poor (1972). In this form of visual theatre, images were given primacy over the spoken word. Of equal importance was the notion of active participation by the audience/spectator or spect**actor** as Boal came to refer to her. The spectator was seen by Boal as an active

participant, rather than a passive receptor of theatre, and therefore somehow more human. This form of theatre encouraged dialogue and discourse, with Boal using dramatic action to illuminate real action. This active participation, Boal believed, was the first step towards action.

Interestingly, for the Brazilian authorities, this action was perceived to be revolutionary, if not insurrectional. The stories enacted through PBT become less specific and related to one teller, and are more everyone's story, where themes, rather than specific detail, are foregrounded. Through the collectivism of stories, they have the capacity to be seen as "revolutionary".

Brecht's (Willett 1964:137) concern was that conventional theatre be perceived by the audience as real. Thus, he argued for and developed a theatre where there was no illusion that the action occurring on stage was, in fact, reality. He believed that the perception of theatre as reality came about through the use of the "fourth wall". With the removal of the fourth wall, the actor was allowed to address the audience directly. This, Brecht believed, allowed the audience to concentrate more fully on the action that occur on stage, and subsequently attend more to the contradictions that occurred in his plays (Huxley & Witts, 1996). This absence of the "fourth wall" is also typical of PBT and is reinforced by the actors looking, as one, to the teller after the playing back has been completed. This looking back strongly denies the existence of a fourth wall in PBT, and also underscores the notion of "gift"—an idea that I consider later—where the actors give back to the teller their representation of his or her story.

Grotowski's contribution was apparent in his concern with the ability of theatre to transform and change both the individual and society. Grotowski (1969:211-213), although in dissension with some of Brecht's ideas, articulated in his "Statement of Principles" a belief that theatre could act as a catalyst for transformation, by providing an opportunity for what could be called "integration". Integration, Grotowski contended, was a fusion of an audience member's personal experiences with what is being enacted on stage—a fusion that occurs in direct confrontation with an audience member. As Grotowski writes: "We are concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself" (p.40). Thus, for Grotowski, theatre art was and is "a ripening, an evolution, an uplifting which enables us to emerge from the darkness into a blaze of light"—a voyage, if you will, of discovery, both about others and about oneself, with theatre as the place where the voyage begins. For Grotowski theatre is "a place of provocation". In short, PBT can be seen as a place of provocation, where the fictional world

of the playback, created reciprocally between teller and actors, can never be neutral. PBT is both a place of transformation and a place of being.

Bharucha's (1993) views, reflected in his influential text on theatre and interculturalism, provide an insight into how these themes of transformation and change, so much a part of 20th Century performance practice, have developed. Bharucha (1993) criticised the influential British theatre director Peter Brook (1990) for appropriation, and in some cases "invention", of "traditional, authentic" and "indigenous" (in this case) Indian theatre practices, in some of his more recent performance work. What this criticism revealed, as Schechner (1993:11) noted, was a "tradition seeking avant-garde" where "shamanic performances" and the "wisdom of the ages" was preferred to the "fancy technology and cybernetics" of today. What this meant was that what was being presented as new or avant-garde was, and is, in fact present in many traditional or folk theatres in the Asian world.

This "tradition seeking avant-garde", present in the theatre of Grotowski (1969) and Barba (1979), has been described by Schechner (1993:9) as more a religious and ritual theatre of "witnesses". Barba (1988) in a subsequent article dubbed this work "Eurasian theatre", where it was possible to see Asian theatre, ritual and thought reflected in the "stripped down stage, the ritualized nature of the encounter between performers and spectators". This theatre of witnesses, where there is a ritualised encounter between the actors and the audience based on story, performed with minimal props in an "open" space, is the essence of PBT. Interestingly, some of these influences can be traced back to the Nepalese folk theatre that influenced Fox in the few years that he spent there. In this sense, PBT can be seen to be part of the intercultural trend of contemporary theatre (Fischer-Lichte 1997).

Finally, contemporary performance practice can be seen to be polymorphous. Schechner (1993:20) described it as involving four "great spheres of performance—**entertainment, healing, education**, and **ritualizing**"—each sphere being in "play" with the other, inseparable and indiscrete genres. For example, in terms of this study, the sphere of entertainment can be seen to include aesthetics; education, broadly speaking; and healing within the context of ritual. These features are all clearly identifiable as constituent elements in PBT. In this sense, Playback can be seen to be expressive of, and part of, a larger movement culturally.

In conclusion, and importantly for this study, performance also implies change and transformation, thereby highlighting that the process is educational. Schechner (1993:1) described it thus:

> Performance is amoral, as useful to tyrants as to those who practice guerrilla
> theatre. This amorality comes from performance's subject, transformation: the
> startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become—for
> worse or better—what they ordinarily are not.

Audience Reception

One of the primary concerns of this investigation is the audience's experience of PBT. The concept of audience response draws on two areas for its principal intellectual resources. The first of these is reader reception or reader-response theory—recent developments in narrative theory. The second is the concept of "distance" as applied to contemporary dramatic practice and theory. Each of these areas will be discussed in turn.

Audience Reception Theory

There has been an increasing amount of critical interest in the last 25 years in the act and nature of viewing in theatre studies (Bennett 1990; Fischer-Lichte 1997; Jackson 1997; Martin 1995; Martin & Sauter 1995; Sauter 2000; Schoenmakers 1990). This interest has seen the formation of a special interest group as part of the Federation of International Theatre Research. What is important about this group is that the scholars who are involved with this field bring with them a diversity of interests, experience and theoretical resources as tools to investigate audience reception. Fotheringham (2001:67), for example, highlights several theories of audience response that "proposed some kind of limiting boundary which allows for individual differences but which holds them in within a wider category of possible understandings".

This development is important for this investigation because of my focus on the audience's experience of PBT. Of particular interest has been the work of Ben Chaim (1984) who considered the nature of psychological distance in theatre and the aesthetics of audience response. What this overview does, for the first time, is reveal some of the complexities of this form of response.

Ben Chaim highlighted that one of the fundamental differences between reality and theatre is the psychological protection from the event that is a "condition of our experience in the theatre" (Ben Chaim 1984:ix), that is, how the audience knows that theatre is not real life. This protection is a function of "distance" that has been variously described by disparate dramatic theorists and theatre practitioners, though nearly all have in common the spectator's psychological relation to the theatrical event. What this means is that in PBT, when the audience sees an actor die on stage, for example, no one runs to call an ambulance. Even more

importantly, when the actors recreate a very emotional story, the teller can be intensely engaged, but that engagement is different from that which occurs with real life experience.

Aesthetic distance

The concept of distance has long been a subject of debate as a theoretical concept in aesthetics (Ben Chaim 1984). An examination of this debate is relevant to an analysis of audience reaction in PBT.

Kant (1952), for example, considered the nature of aesthetic judgement in his volume *The Critique of Judgement.* This work has been an important intellectual resource for aestheticians. Kant maintained that all aesthetic judgements are "particular, subjective judgements but devoid of any personal stake" (as cited in Ben Chaim 1984:1). While the notions of "particular" and "subjective" have been helpful in thinking about aesthetic judgment, his definition can be considered too restrictive in not including any personal matter or self-interest. Bullough (1912) attempted to resolve this dilemma in his seminal essay *'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle* by arguing that distance does not imply a lack of personal involvement, but rather a **particular form** of involvement. This particular involvement is one where the observer's personal interest is disconnected from the practical by distance. What this means, according to Bullough, is that the "artistic" features of a work are emphasised rather than features of the work within the everyday world. Therefore, for Bullough, distance is intrinsic to the perception of all art (p.90).

What is particularly important about Bullough's conception of distance is that it "reasserts the uniqueness of art and of the mode of its perception—an aesthetic attitude" (Ben Chaim 1984:4). What Bullough's conception does not do, however, is provide an explanation of how distance functions to determine a viewer's involvement with a work of art. Interestingly, Langer (1953), has argued that distance comes from a human's natural relation to a symbol, rather than the symbolic functions of an object providing distance, hence reversing Bullough's order.

The views of Sartre (1948) offer another revealing perspective. Sartre proposed a distinction between imaging and perceiving, and these relate to the concept of distance in a fundamental way. First, Sartre argued that **imaging**, which is the relationship between an object and consciousness, is spontaneous, and that **perceiving**, which is situated in time, is passive in contrast. That is, the observer gradually acquires knowledge of an object as it is observed (pp.9-10). For Sartre, these states are mutually exclusive (pp.171-172). This means

that aesthetic experience occurs only when the viewer moves from the perceptual mode to the imaginative. The implication of Sartre's views for PBT particularly is that theatre exists primarily in the realm of the imaginary, and it is the spectator who projects emotion into this imaginary world. Indeed, for Sartre, emotion and imagery are intrinsically linked, and these two elements are necessary pre-conditions for the audience to build "belief" in what happens on stage.

Interestingly, Sartre's views on aesthetic "distance" and the individual's projection of emotion provide somewhat of a paradox. That is, the projection of emotion, and hence the building of belief in what happens on stage, is contingent on the condition of "absolute distance"—the assurance of the individual's separation from the imagined object. In PBT, then, the teller/audience is psychologically protected from the events as they are enacted, and so, paradoxically, can be led into a greater examination of self through making him or herself more vulnerable.

While there has been some criticism of Sartre's theory in terms of his inability to acknowledge "multi-consciousness" and the separation of interpretation and imagination (Ben Chaim 1984:21,) Sartre's views do go some way towards explaining the potential of PBT as a tool for self-reflection and examination. What Sartre's theories do not do, however, is to account for one of the goals of this thesis, that is, the ability of a PBT audience to describe consciousness as engaged in the world, in other words, to describe their lived experience of PBT itself.

Brecht, another influential thinker and theatre practitioner, has expounded the notion of "distance" in theatre and developed techniques where the audience was cognisant of the fiction of "theatre" at all times, and therefore (he claimed) better able to make critical judgments upon it. These judgements were seen by Brecht as having a higher purpose than just the audience's emotional experience of what happened on stage, and included a "heightened awareness of the socio-economic system" reflected therein (p.29)—that is, the social and historical context in which the play existed.

Distance therefore, for Brecht, was a device to be employed for educative purposes. These educational purposes included raising in the audience a critical awareness of "real world" issues and, in doing so, facilitating an examination of their causes. By doing this, Brecht hoped to educate the audience into taking a more active stance in their own lives through a critique of the social, economic and political systems within which the play existed.

It is also interesting to note that these notions of distance employed by Brecht were similar to Shklovsky's concept of "defamiliarisation"—that is, making the familiar strange in order to see it in a new or different way. Both Shklovsky and Brecht were interested in jolting the viewer out of habituated responses so that new understanding could be developed. For Shklovsky and Brecht, art refreshes perception (Ben Chaim, 1984:32). Therefore, the "art" of PBT, and the distance associated with art, can be seen to have an educative focus as well.

The importance of "distance" in theatre is not confined to psychological or aesthetic functions only. Brecht's views on distance also had a profound impact on both Artaud and Grotowski (Ben Chaim, 1984:40). While both of these influential theatre directors had different views on the nature of empathy, what their work highlighted was another function of distance. Both Artaud and Grotowski sought to remove psychological distance in theatre by removing or significantly altering the physical distance between the actors and the spectators. However, the effect desired was the same, that is, to compel the audience from passivity through a sensuous engagement with theatre itself.

Distance in Playback Theatre

Distance, in PBT, can be seen accordingly to serve four purposes. First, telling a story in PBT allows the teller to have distance from his or her own story; associated with this is the fact that "telling" produces a sort of ventilation that occurs through the act of telling. Secondly, having distance allows the teller to obtain perspective by seeing his or story as an "object"—outside of the self and within the "fictionality" (the ability to "see as") of performance. This fictionality is engaged imaginatively by the teller, and so is free from the constraints of the real world. This ability is important in terms of the teller's capacity to see personal experience from alternative perspectives. These alternative perspectives come from a dislocation of associations, thereby allowing the teller to apply critical judgment and perspective. Thirdly, distance provides a "safety net" from the strong emotions that may be evoked as a result of the act of playback. And, fourth, the diminution of the physical distance between the actors, teller and audience serves to emphasise the sensuous knowing that is part of PBT itself.

The concept of distance, then, and the intentional manipulation of distance, is one that characterises both PBT specifically, and twentieth century theatre generally (Ben Chaim, 1984:78). Thus, PBT can be seen to be a distinctly contemporary theatre form, with the concept of distance playing a pervasive role.

Conclusion

A discussion of the literature on Narrative, the first major field, revealed that PBT—like narrative—has elements of signification, temporality, and imagination, and can be educational through the development of relationship and identity. This development is made cogent and profound because it happens in a space set apart where the stories people live are embodied and explored in the company of others. These notions will be considered in the following chapter. This chapter also provided an overview of Performance as a way of revealing PBT as a contemporary theatre event, and also of Cultural Studies, as a way of bringing Narrative and Performance together in an interesting way. Theatre was described as having evolved from ritual and both were argued to be a subset of the larger field of Performance. I then described PBT as an example of 20th Century performance practice, and as having both modern and post-modern elements. I then considered the field of audience reception and how this has been informed by narrative theory, thereby drawing the two fields together. These interactions are represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.

The next two chapters will overview the second axes of PBT where *Health* and *Education* are considered, with their potential for healing and learning through the Arts respectively.

Figure 3

Representation of the features of the Narrative and Performance axis of Playback Theatre as revealed in related literature and theory

Narrative

- orality/voice
- unscripted text
- imagination
- story construction
- story deconstruction
- multiple perspectives
- ludic experience
- interaction
- gifting

Playback

Experiences of Audience/Participants
- interrogation
- interpretation
- insight/release
- liminal state
- meaning-making
- identity
- critique
- relationship
- exploration

Theatre

- temporality
- aesthetic distance
- transformation
- multi-media modes
- fluid sculpting
- signification
- representation
- improvisation
- theatre event
- ritual

Performance