

DEPARTING POINTS

Rehearsal Notes from the Margins of Asia



CITA Workshops, Satosakichisai Festival, Tokyo 2018.

James Sutherland Translated by Tatsuya Yasumoto

A striking element of actor training in the twentieth century is the degree of integration between purely physical training and its application to concerns specific to acting. Many of these approaches shared what Meyerhold called the principle of totality, or, in exercise science, compound movements. This is the entire body being involved in every single physical movement; and concerning center of gravity, tension and release, and rhythm of movement. Using this and the premise that presence is the link between all forms, what follows is excerpts from a book being prepared by CITA/International Centre for Theatre Arts, on theatre practice. A collection of exercises and inspiring ideas collected from their rehearsal rooms and workshops, *Departing Points* traces the last twenty years of teaching around the world and identifies commonalities between movement studies in theatrical and non-theatrical disciplines, creating an anthology of points of convergence for conventionally isolated disciplines. Through *Departing Points*, CITA aims to contribute to the sustainability of movement practice for groups in theatre companies working to maintain sensitivity to movement, while undertaking a process of active research both individually and as an ensemble to discover their own unique approach. Exercises introduced serve a dual purpose; to encourage and nurture recurring qualities in the performer/artist and to prepare artists to create and rehearse collectively regardless of the theme or material that has been chosen. The exercises trace a path from tuning in to releasing tension through high energy games and competition, to heightening awareness of ourselves and those around us, to problem solving and creation. The exercises are an athletic, playful and creative engagement with space, weight and direction, organized from the horizontal to the vertical while exploring the lines in between.

INTRODUCTION

“All theatre is physical”

-Ariane Mnouchkine

In Japan, there have always been strong links between religion, the arts and martial arts. These links exist not only on the level of philosophy and ideas, but also on the level of practice and technique. Exercises of Shinto and Buddhism, similar to the exercises used in the practice of the martial arts all aim to seek the truth via the physical body. This traditional emphasis on physical experienced attainment, rather than intellectual understanding serves as one of the points of departure into this book. Each production deserves a specific process which is a response to the material that is being explored. The collision of individual personalities with a chosen subject makes for the distinct atmosphere and energy of each production. It is for this reason that this book is not exhaustive; nor does it represent a fixed system of creative preparation. The exercises here encourage curiosity and a playfulness which ask us to be mentally present, alert and available at and to every moment. Technique alone is not enough and a rich sense of the possibilities for expression that technique might bring is far more important. Moreover, the exercises themselves aren't as important as what we do with them. The emphasis of this book is towards devising and adapting, so it is important that we treat the exercises as a point of departure and are free to develop them in our own way: to add new rules and explore different dimensions according to the more specific needs of the work we are engaged in. This in itself stimulates the reflex to create, compose and devise. We salute our colleagues and mentors with this work. Nothing new is invented, the creative process is the principle asset of our existence. It is our responsibility to nurture and encourage it.

WHERE TO START

“We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aid, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn.”

-Henry David Thoreau

How should we warm up at the start of a workshop or rehearsal? What is it that we need to warm up? We should make a distinction between warming up and waking up. Rather than thinking about only increasing blood flow, flexibility and stamina, the term waking up places emphasis on attention and awareness. The starting point for our training is responsiveness: the ability to sense and play with, and off, material in a simple, direct way. This ‘material’ can be impulses arising within the actor or suggested externally, or in the relationship with another performer or performers. For us, initially such alertness and ‘respons-ability’ is developed physically through the body and its intuitive intelligence, rather than intellectually through

analysis or discussion. The only salient relationship is to the lived present. The activities we use to begin are not warm-ups before we turn to the 'real' task of acting, as is often the case in contemporary theatre. Instead, they are oriented towards amplifying spontaneity, responsiveness and complicity, whilst exercising the 'muscles' of intuition and the imagination. What's important in our waking up is to, both directly and indirectly, take the chance to explore the relationship between ourselves, the space around us, and the ground beneath us. We can develop our relationship with gravity through new references and create new possibilities for action that enhances our self-confidence and creativity.

Play Time for the Hips

In this exercise your body is master to the consciousness servant. We shift from structure scanning to a playful improvisation.

Lie on your back on the ground. Start by clearing your mind, decide to avoid using any movement pattern you have learned no matter how beneficial it is. Instead start moving the legs and hips about while being conscious of that region. Start to listen for any areas that want more detailed attention. Sense any muscle or joint that wants something and try to give it that exact thing. Maybe your lower back wants to twist to release. Do exactly what the body wants for as long as it wants. This is the key point.

SQUATTING

Man, like his fellow primates, has always used the squatting position for resting, working and performing bodily functions. Infants of every culture instinctively squat to relieve themselves. This is the way the human body was designed to function. Interestingly, the sitting squat remains a fundamental instinct in the anatomy of infants. It's common to see children adopt the pose as a way of resting, regaining balance and falling. While the age-old posture is clearly still in our chemistry, our cultural norms have caused the sitting squat to virtually disappear from Western culture. Up until the 16th century, sitting in a deep squat was the way to rest. Anatomically, the position stretches the lower back, decompresses the spine and releases the hips. The body's weight becomes more evenly distributed in this position, preventing the accumulation of stress in just a few 'hot-spots'. Joints and muscles no longer undergo gradual tightening, allowing the body to remain balanced. The ultimate result? Increased mobility.

Eclosion

We are going to open up from the center in a controlled and fluid sequence. Start from the squatting position down on the ground, the body occupying the smallest space, and open up to finish on the high cross position, upright,

legs together and arms extended above the horizontal. Eclosion consists in moving from one position to another without a break with each segment of the body following the same rhythm. The difficulty is to find exactly the right balance and an unobstructed dynamic. Make sure to perform the exercise in both directions expanding and contracting.

Eclosion is a term derived from biology and requires balance. Eclosion opens up from the center as a global expansion or contraction, this movement is mirrored in the opening of a plant to its environment. What kind of emotional states mirror this?

STANDING

First let's look at ourselves, we sense ourselves and then we look at movement.

Sense how it is to stand now don't look for the best way to stand be curious, where do you feel your weight? Do you have the impression you stand very planted or you are a bit unstable? Do you feel you could stand like this for a long time, or you have to refresh very soon? Where are your hands? Your arms? Your Lips? And where is your head on top of that. Be curious.

Where do you sense movement. i.e., breathing. If you feel you want to move independently do so. Do you consider this way of standing now, your most economical way of standing?

“First of all we practice with bare feet. Many people have never made any but the most primitive use of their feet, with the result that the only use and idea associated with them, is that of a plate-like support to the body. This being the only use made of the feet for many years on end, the muscles are maintained in a fixed state of contraction, precisely the one that makes the feet fit for the service demanded of them. In extreme cases the exclusion of other patterns is so complete, that the feet become frozen in the flat, plate like position and are almost useless for any other purpose than motionless standing.”

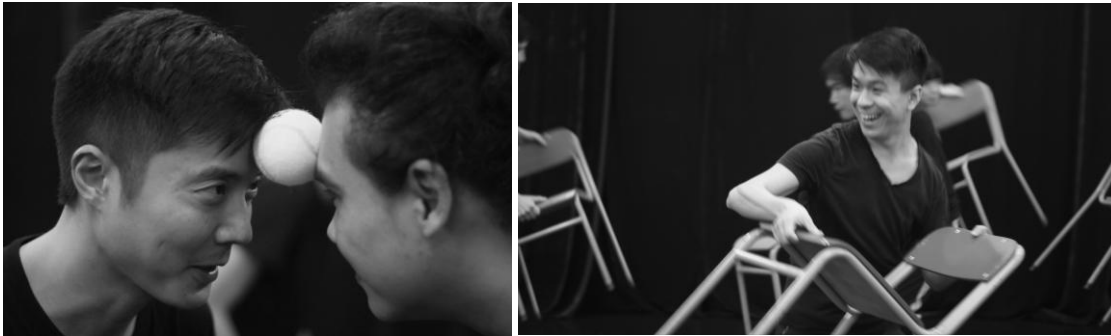
-Moshe Feldenkrais

Understanding Feet

Stand normally. Sense and 'mark' the places where your feet have contact with the floor, and note any particular points of pressure. Take a mental x-ray. Note the relative position of each foot. Take a piece of paper and draw your feet, shading in areas of contact, marking pressure points.

Exchange your drawing with another and now try to stand in exactly in the way indicated by your (new) drawing. Register how your new stance

affects your legs, pelvis, back, shoulders, head etc.



CITA Workshops, Hong Kong, 2016.

ARRIVING AT PLAY

Play (v.)

“Old English plegan, plegian meaning “move rapidly, occupy or busy oneself, exercise; frolic; make sport of, mock; perform music.”

What is play?

In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga points out that Ancient Greek culture distinguished between paidia – lighthearted or child’s play, and agon – sport or games, but to the Romans, all was included in the term ludus – play. By exploring the challenges and contests in Greek sport and identifying the linguistic approach to play in Germanic and Romance languages, as well as Sanskrit, Sinitic (Chinese) and Native American (Blackfoot), Huizinga sides with the Roman characterization of both types of activity as the same. He identifies that play incorporates descriptions of nature and human action, pretense and limits, freedom of movement and of competition. Most frequently, Huizinga identifies play as comprising a pledge to undergo some kind of risk and tension, even to the degree of deadly seriousness as in violent sporting matches.

Play and Culture

Play is something that precedes human beings. If we look up the word `play` in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary we will find that the various definitions take up some seven inches of column space. It is a complex little word. We live in a rational and a literary culture that doesn’t value this (as play is also defined as frivolous, pointless and meaningless). These things go against anything we have been taught. There has been however, a powerful paradigm shift away from success towards playfulness in the last one hundred years. The ability to treat everything around us as a game or riddle, shifting focus from product to process, even studying how animals play, and they play a lot, has reaffirmed how we learn and how we accept failure as part of the learning process. For instance, Marek Spinka, who studies animal behavior in Prague, and his colleagues have recently argued that play helps animals prepare for the loss of balance

they experience when chased by predators, or it can help them deal with the emotions they feel after losing an aggressive interaction. Play in short prepares the brain to handle the unexpected. (Games Animals Play. Lee Alan Dugatkin, Sarina Rodrigues, March 2008.)

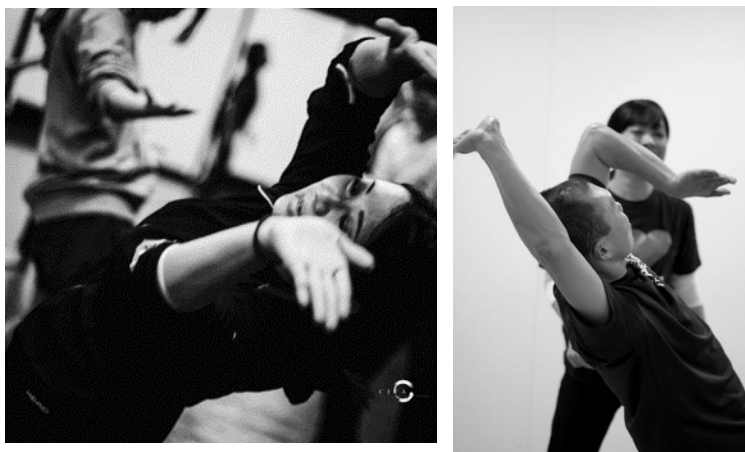
Approaching creative tasks with a playful attitude can provide the means for connecting our emotions and cognition as it enables us to take risks with creativity and experience the connection between thought and action. If the work is playful it becomes pleasurable, choices then grow and develop. Through this our perspectives change and problems become more manageable.

“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

- Plato

Games at the beginning of the twentieth century were used infrequently in the rehearsal process, let alone in actor training. With the emergence of the director there was a shift reflecting attempts to rediscover the theatre from its popular roots. Now this work is an integral component in most theatre training establishments throughout the world, used not only in the rehearsal process but also as a way of preparing the actor to be creative. Play' is central to this, we use this term to signify the energy that is shared between performers in rehearsals and on stage, and it's the ball that the game is played with. Games demand and often get total engagement. That's because there no other way to play them. Playing asks us to be quick in reacting. The whole body and mind and spirit are on high alert. The pleasure comes about as a result of playing, but it isn't any kind of undefined playing, but a particularly performance related idea of what play means. After all the French word for `to act`, jouer, is also the word for `to play`. We also might think of Marivaux's nicely ambiguous title *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard*, where jeu signifies at least the following'(a) capriciousness; (b) interplay; (c) something amusing or diverting; (d) the playing of the game or competitive match; (e) stage entertainment. This plurality of possibility is also central to improvisation (discussed later in this book). Play also means inter-play, relationships which spark off or create new combinations, people, movements, moods or styles meet and collide giving rise to different possibilities. For the actor, finding this elusive quality of play is crucial, not only to find the freedom to be inventive, rather than being merely a conduit for the director or the playwright, but it is perhaps the most crucial element in making the transaction between performers and the spectators effective and engaging. Play is a prerequisite for availability which opens the doors for togetherness. The qualities of play, complicité and disponibilité (availability or openness) are, for us, the aspects that transform movement training from a simple process of skills acquisition towards something more profound. Movement for us is a way of perceiving and engaging with life and the world around us. This position has clear associations with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of

perception, and recent theorisation around the role of embodiment in understanding what it means to be a social human, however our approach is not one that prioritises theory over practice. These concepts can be worked through using a whole range of games, most of them played in some form or another by children. What follows is some of our favourite games, described in their basic form, together with suggestions for variations and ways to draw out engagement and a sense of playfulness from them.



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Plating

As with most good movement exercises, not only does plating awaken your core and align your balance, it also has huge benefits for the voice. A task that coordinates mind and movement. At the beginning of each session it is a simple movement pattern that acts as a kind of physical puzzle, forcing brain and body to work together.

In a wide stance, imagine a plate is on the up-turned palm of your right hand. Start small and build to explore the full range of movement you have whilst being careful not to let the 'plate' drop off your hand. Another way to think of it is your palm must always face the roof. In long circular movements, stretch out the front, to the back, to the side. Keep exploring how far you can stretch and contract this movement, exploring its full range whilst keeping your feet planted. Repeat on the left side. After each side is warmed up, combine the movements and explore the relationship of the two sides, with the aim of creating fluid complementary circular movements. You should feel this exercise stretch your ribs, engage your core and focus your balance. To develop the game in pairs, make one participant work with the plates as a waiter and another check their palms are parallel with the floor at all times, the head chef. If the hands are not parallel the chef makes the sound of a plate smashing on the floor, if there

are three smashes the pair switch roles and repeat.

“Your connection with the floor is important – try to have an awareness of your feet’s connection to the stage. The stage is supporting us – we are meant to be there; our feet stroke the stage with respect as we move over it. “You may feel alone but you always have the floor no matter where you go and it will always be your friend.”

-Tom McCrory

Kanji for the Feet

Imagine your feet are calligraphy brushes used for writing beautiful Japanese ideograms. Imagine our name as one of those ideograms. Moving lightly from one foot to the other draw your name in kanji on the floor below you. Draw it with only your right foot, then draw it with only our left foot. A variation of this is adding an external influence and having a leader calling out “left” with which the participants will jump to their right foot, and calling out “right” with which the participants jump to their left.

EQUILIBRIUM/DISEQUILIBRIUM

The laws of gravity pull our body down and give it weight; life pushes it upwards, fighting against these very laws. In moving, upright, from this equilibrium, the body risks falling, through a series of successive imbalances, catching itself at each step; this is how it walks. It acts and reacts; it receives and gives. For humans over the age of two, balance has a lot to do with feet; standing and walking being our primary vehicles for activity. When we look closely, we notice that we are balancing all the time, in every action we make. When we shift from the everyday notion that balance is static, and understand that balance is dynamic, then we can actually study and improve our movements in real conditions. Moving better means balancing better. This notion that moving better means balancing better may seem paradoxical, because many of us have the idea that to balance is to hold very, very still, the opposite of moving. However, when we investigate the process of balance more closely, through careful observation of our own experience, we notice that there is nothing at all still about balancing. The idea of balance as “held” is actually a false concept. Standing on one leg, if you catch a medicine ball weighing five kilos from one side, and you want to retain your balance, you had best throw it immediately to the other side. If two opposing forces fight one against the other, the rupture of the equilibrium of forces causes a movement of displacement. Alternating allows one part of the body to rest in relation to another: what is done on the left is then done on the right. To throw a pebble into the sea, I do a preparatory movement in the opposing direction to the target I am aiming for. In any movement there are two, one in the opposite direction. Thus love rubs

shoulders with hate. Leonardo da Vinci, in his Treatise on Painting, gives us pertinent observations on movement:

“When a man lifts a weight with one arm, he naturally throws out the opposite arm; and if that is not enough to form an equipoise, he will add as much of his own weight, by bending his body as will enable him to resist such an accidental load. We see also, that a man ready to fall sideways and backwards at the same time, always throws out the arm on the opposite side”

THE ART OF FALLING

As children, our sense of balance is very fluid. We are used to moving in rolling, spiraling movements that translate well into safe falling. As children we fall so often that it is impossible to keep count. Our early falling is the means to our learning to function upright, to be recognized as "human." Yet at some point, we give up the joy and learning that falling affords us. Falling becomes more associated with failure than discovery. Over time, our "ability to fall" atrophies and worse still, becomes something we fear and avoid. Therefore, as we age, we lose these three-dimensional movement pathways into and out of the floor, because we're specializing in other movements. We get good at sitting still, and not so good at falling. We become fearful of falling. The fear of falling settles into us as tension in the legs, fixed segments of the spine, eyes and head lowered to the floor. We don't know we've changed this way. It's unconscious. Fear of falling is only one of many contributors that makes balancing difficult. We can reverse the effects of the fear of falling. This is an organic process, much like our learning in early childhood, when no one taught us how to move. We discovered rolling, crawling and walking through testing and observation. In many martial arts, falling is a subject of great interest and practice and is something to be developed. It is in this respect that sport, for us, provides a vital basis for understanding how the body works in space and how it expresses itself, and for understanding how the training of the actor can best be achieved. Movement training has in some regimes been separated out from everyday life as a form of ascetic discipline or as an abstracted form of physical activity, but in our company is at the heart of our practice and is understood as central to our understanding of the world. For us, to understand something we must embody it. The sports exercises we use are therefore not just stand-alone exercises, but also as tools with which to interrogate the laws of movement as they operate in a variety of contexts. Sports activities thus provide a valuable meeting place between abstract movement, everyday movement and movement in performance. This simple set of explorations based around the theme of equilibrium/disequilibrium is offered as a point of departure before moving on to more complex partner and group work.

Off-Balance

Human beings seem to possess a strong inner dynamic that creates a tension between the desire to enjoy the provocation of instability, and a fear of what this state of off balance may bring.

Working in groups of three with one person between the two others, one in front, one behind, and keeping both feet firmly planted on the ground (including the heels), the person in the center moves off balance towards the other one in front. They are caught and moved gently back to the center, they then move over in the opposite direction towards the person behind. The actions are repeated. The distance between the off-balance person and the catchers should not be too great. It's not about a deep fall, but experiencing the precise moment when the body goes off balance. The exercise is repeated, but this time the person in the center exhales while going off balance. The normal reaction would be to inhale because of the fear of falling, a fear of the unknown and of losing control. Encouraging the person moving off-balance to exhale removes tension in the body when encountering the unknown. Familiarize yourself with this feeling, it could be a character who has inner conflicts. This could help each actor to understand the conflict.

The Imaginary Centre

What do we mean by the word Centre? We all have a physiological center of balance in the body, situated in the region of the abdomen, about three quarters of an inch down from the navel. This is the point of balance we have to get at right angles to the ground if we are to stand up on our two legs or if we are planning to ride a bicycle. If we start leaning to the side, everything changes. The more you lean, the more torque (turning force) this creates and the more likely you are to topple over. Gravity makes your whole body rotate about your ankles like a finger pushing on a door handle.

The Centring Game

Imagine a center in your chest, a center of power from which all your impulses to move come from. Then perform a series of movement from this center, from simple gestures like lifting an arm to actions like throwing, pointing and swinging the arms in different directions. Allow the movements to involve space, stepping, turning, opening, closing. The energy from the center always precedes and follows the movement, creating both a strong impulse to move and an energy field after the movement is created. Later on, you can move that center around and allow the pulse to begin a movement from different places on the body, shoulders,

head, hips etc.

Enjoying Off-Balance

Taking now the lifting turning and swinging pulsations/movements beginning from the imaginary center, repeat the off balance exercise, exhaling as you move into an off balance. Play with the pleasure of being off balance. Starting always in a centered and upright position, you should enjoy trying off balances forwards, sideways and backwards, but catching yourself before falling to the floor. This exercise encourages you to be playful in exploring off balances. Pursue this further by taking one step at the very moment you would fall to the floor through being off balance. By experiencing the simple act of taking one step the body lives the dynamic rhythm of moving off balance to find a new balance, only to fall off balance again... While doing the exercise you should avoid looking at the floor, but concentrate on the space that surrounds you.

By focusing on the space you may feel that the move to off balance is a reaction to that space. Unable to remain a mere observer of that space-of life- you wish to be moved by it, through stepping into it. This desire to move on-this state of readiness-should be visible in all parts of your body.

LOCOMOTION

Locomotion or walking is a basic natural pattern used in the world of nature by many creatures and in different forms. Some research into the neural patterns of locomotion in mammals has exposed the fact that it is largely stored inside the spinal cord and brain stem cells, which indicates that this pattern of movement is not learned and developed, but exists inside every creature, which suggests that we merely unveil this pattern with time. For many animals, the ability to move is essential for survival and, as a result, natural selection has shaped the locomotion methods and mechanisms used by moving organisms. All animal locomotion traces an undulating path through space, or through the body itself, and these undulations can be traced back to the movements of a fish and to sideways and frontal crawling. This idea has broad applications in many fields, but understanding how primal and natural this type of movement is to us, may also suggest we need to make sure we are doing what we are designed to do - locomotion. Here we introduce some examples of locomotion. Each movement provides a different and valuable component in movement awareness, from mobility to strength endurance, stabilization and more. It is interesting and fun to experiment with. Choose the variation suitable for you, read and understand each type of 'walk' and follow the guidelines or, as previously encouraged, create some of your own. Now for the different 'walks'.

The Duck Walk

This is a great conditioning movement, used in the old-school training of many martial arts, gymnastics, dance and other disciplines. Lately it has been neglected and replaced by more static position squatting and lunging, but it still provides different benefits to the latter. Both should be practiced. The duck walk, in order to decrease Patella-Femoral stress in the knee should be performed like this: (there shouldn't be any pain in the knees if performed correctly, even with people with less than optimal knee biomechanics) From the staggered squat sit, the back foot should be on the ball of the foot, with the butt resting on the heel, or as close to it as flexibility allows. The front foot is placed flat foot in front and is used to initiate the motion. From the front flat foot - pull yourself using the hamstrings and transition into the ball of the foot, while moving the back foot into the front and landing it in the flat foot position. Repeat on the other side and synchronize the hand motion Counter-Laterally to provide balance. Make sure you keep the body upright, or a bit forward - directing the movement to the direction chosen.

The Horse Walk

The Horse Walk is a great mobility tool for the groin. It is a very simple but not easy exercise. Start in the low 5 step horse stance. (From a closed standing position, twist the heels out as far as you can - first step, from there twists the toes out -second step and repeat for 5 steps in total) From there while maintaining an even butt to knee line (Optimally parallel to the floor or lower) and with a turned out hips, shift the weight towards one foot, moving your body sideways and allowing the other foot to release and move forward. Repeat the same motion on the other side and move forward again. This should be felt in the groin, as a combination of a static and dynamic stretch, and is very useful for flexibility development of the horse stance and later on the middle split.

The Lizard Walk

The Lizard Walk is a great conditioning tool using many similar muscles as the traditional push-ups, but with much greater scapular mobility & stabilization, core control and mobility of the hips and groin. The beginner variation starts in a normal high push up position. From there take both one hand and the opposite side foot forward. The leg should be bent and placed externally rotated and on the ball of the foot. From there perform a push up.

If too difficult one can lower the back knee to the floor, but not the front one. After the push up, move the opposite hand and foot forward in the same position as in the first push up but on the other side. Repeat while advancing. The harder variation will require that you move forward close to the ground, demanding a much greater effort to hold yourself in this disadvantaged position. The arms should be bent at the elbows at all times, and special care should be taken to keep the waist close to the ground without excessive arching and raising of the butt.

The Ostrich Walk

This is a great mobility tool used to promote flexibility of the posterior chain (Calves, hams, butt and lower back) and ballistically stretching them. Very simply, from a stand up position lower into a pike 'toe-touch' stretch, bounce up and while doing so move one foot forward, keeping both knees firmly locked. Pull yourself using the abs into another pike stretch and when bouncing out of it, move the other foot forward. Keep advancing forward. If possible make sure you touch your fingers to the ground. If that is easy - the full palm. If that is easy - try the hardest and very rare 'elbows to the ground'. Breathe out when going into the stretch and in when bouncing out of it.

Exercise with the Walks

Stand in a space and freely start to move from the spine allowing it to move into the body. Explore transiting from the different walks. Put all the walks together as a sequence making sure to follow the same precise structure each time. Now create a sequence using the walks that becomes spontaneous and grows organically. Change the rhythm of your sequence to match the impulses that come from you as an actor. Combine your sequence with a partner's and see how each of your sequences affects the others and how your ability to work together changes as you run the sequences.

Running with Suspension – Body Awareness

Run on impulse one after the other until the whole room runs, find fixed point until all is still. Sense the rhythm, work to a crescendo, and then find fixed point in clusters. The exercise subtly changes, with the impulse beginning with the center and not starting the falling forward off balance. With this starting point the movement has a center, will be much stronger and more connected. Serve your partners; give them the space they need to

work. When the space is “controlled,” you and your partners will have the clear sensation of being like swallows flying in groups of hundreds in the sky, never colliding.



CITA Workshops, Tokyo 2012.

The Fixed Point

There are three studies which establish movement principles employed in most phrases. The first is the fixed point, picked up from the study of movement isolations. Then we isolated a part of the body, now our purpose is to isolate actions in space. The physical space around us has a relationship to the body. To define this space we need a reference point, fixed in space. On a number of levels the fixed point provides a reference, a point of stillness creating a logic and order to your movement and permitting the stillness and the movement to have meaning. This may be more commonly referred to as 'pointe fixe', however that is simply the original French wording of 'fixed point'. This technique is the basis of all illusions a mime can create.

Place your hand out in space in front of you. While leaving it motionless in space try walking towards and away from it. The same as above, this time you are going to spin around the fixed point (your hand) switching hands as you do. Now describe a ball in space in front of you. One hand on, one hand off. Relax and then tense the hand to place it on the ball. Be sure to explore levels and try to move around the ball. Now take the exercise and try to move through space. Imagine you are moving through a forest. Look reach, relax tense hold that as you look again reach out with the other hand, relax and tense, then release the first hand, repeat until you have crossed the space.

“If the fixed point situates the displacement of a movement, the movement is evidence of the fixed point. In what moves we only see the immobile. This is a very interesting idea in dramatic expression. In the Greek tragic chorus, the same problem occurs concerning the coryphaeus, who speaks on behalf of all. If the coryphaeus leaves the ranks to speak, and the chorus remains still, he becomes a chief who has taken an authoritative decision. If the chorus moves, leaving the coryphaeus immobile, he becomes the chosen delegate: either way the coryphaeus can speak for all.”

-Jacques LeCoq. *Theatre du Geste*

Keepy Uppy

All you need for this game is a soft ball. Start by getting the group into a circle. Throw the ball into the air and begin to count. It is up to each member of the group to ensure that the ball stays in the air using their hands to tap it gently upwards. You cannot touch the ball twice in succession. The counting stops if the ball is dropped. The aim is to get the count as high as possible. Once the group has mastered this develop the game so that every fifth touch of the ball must be with a part of the body different than the hand.

“Tak” Game

A simple game of tag with a few extra limitations: Tap someone on the shoulder with the sound “tak” this must be at exactly the same time, the physical act and the vocal act in unison. The person about to get tagged can say someone else’s name in the room and that person will instantly become the tagger. Next development: Same as before, but if you are tagged you hold eye contact with the tagger for a short time not displacing what you are feeling. Release on a cue given by a leader. Next development: same as before but this time you are allowed to tag the tagger back instantly if you like. Release on a cue given by a leader.

Accepting Attention

In our culture extended eye contact is not something we do unless there is an emotional relationship between the participants. So after the first few moments the vulnerability of the contact without that relationship to strengthen it, can be quite excruciating. When we are open

and vulnerable to an audience we often feel a demand to entertain, so some people may extend their communication into a performance or a game. It's these displacement activities we are trying to avoid. In Freudian psychology, displacement (German: Verschiebung, "shift, move") is an unconscious defence mechanism where the mind substitutes a new aim or a new object for goals felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable. Many people develop displacement habits. They each favour one particular form of displacement activity which they employ whenever internal conflicts arise.

I've got you; you've got me by the goatee

The entire group, two by two. Participants hold one another's chins with their left hands. Their right hand, held near their partners left cheek, is ready to tap their partners face every time the partner makes a noise. In order to augment the pleasure of this, the pair playing the game should look into each other's eyes constantly, never looking away, however tempted they are to avoid and feelings or embarrassment that surfaces.

In both primates and humans, displacement behaviour appears in situations characterised by social tension. In human beings, displacement activities include both self-directed behaviours similar to primate grooming behaviour e.g.: head scratching, beard stroking, and aimless iterative manipulation of objects e.g.: sucking on pens, twisting wedding rings, fingering handkerchiefs.

Greetings Game

Ask the group to stand in their own space in the room. On a given signal start to walk around the room, exploring all the available space. Keep changing direction. Walk at your normal pace. Now ask the group to 'find the game' of greeting each other. Ask the group to make eye contact as they pass each other. Exchange a smile. Look for the mischievous twinkle in people's eyes. Then wink, and as they do they come together shoulder to shoulder maintaining eye contact. When one wants to leave, they wink and arc away from each other.

Leading and being led

This explores how we give and take physical cues. The first section of this exercise starts very simply. With a partner take the palm of their hand in yours. Your hand will be underneath and your partners on top which will

make you the leader and your partner the one following. Your partner closes their eyes. Running your hand gently along your partners until you only have the reference point of both your fingertips touching your task is now to lead your partner through the working space. Allow a little time for your partner to adjust to this and when they grow a little more confident you can begin playing with levels in space, and changes of rhythm. It is important you partner listen very carefully to the physical cues they are being given and not simply interpret them. Have someone replace you as the leader of the person you are guiding through the room. Leaders begin to step out by slowly releasing the gentle attachment they have at the fingertips, leaving their partner floating in space momentarily. This is an important moment for the person with their eyes closed, don't rush in to help but watch how they react to being without guidance. It is important to study the quality of the leader before taking over their leadership so the one being led doesn't know there has been a change. After some time, ask the group to stop and see if the person being led could count how many times the leadership had changed.

When we become uncomfortable we are close to breaking through our patterns.

“To stimulate creativity, one must develop the childlike inclination for play and the childlike desire for recognition.”

-Albert Einstein

Grandmother's Footsteps

One volunteer is selected to be 'Grandmother' and is at one end of the room and everyone else is at the other. The aim is to get to 'Grandmother' and tag her without being seen moving. Grandmother faces the wall briefly and everyone slowly makes their way towards her. When grandmother turns around anyone who is seen moving is sent back to the start. A development of the traditional game is to add a jumper or jacket, deposited a few meters behind 'Grandmother'. The object of the game is not merely to reach Grandmother, but to put on the jumper before you get to her. Now try playing the game without the Grandmother being present. The players must try to recreate the spirit of the game as accurately as possible. How difficult is it to recreate the game? Is the playful spirit of the game lost? How does this exercise relate to the nature of performance?

Inventing games

Divide your team into groups of about six to eight and give each group a few objects: a rope, a ball, a couple of chairs or waste paper baskets. Ask them to invent a game using the objects they have been given and, as they play it, to refine and re-write the rules. Get the teams to present their games to each other.

Play and Flow

When we play we engage the subconscious and react instinctively, our minds are not full of conscious thought that occurs during post questioning, or when we think about our actions, we simply play. Although the rational and logic of the conscious brain can help with structural changes in our training regimes, debating different strategies, or analyzing what we could do better, when it comes to actual performance and we want to be in flow. When we learn to value play and prioritize it over our conscious thoughts during training and performances we become very close to being in flow. When we are playing we become attached to being in the moment, we start experiencing life in the present, and open up the opportunity for flow. When we play we do not think of the pressures around us, we do not focus on our weaknesses and doubts, we just play. When we play we do not demand or expect the body to do anything, the body simply plays willingly. When we play we do not question our motivation or worry about our energy levels, we simply are engulfed in play.

BREATHING

Breathing is the first thing we do when we are born and the last thing we do before we die. There are three basic states of breathing; in, out, and held (when you stop the breath, just after breathing in or out). In daily living we use all three, including the held breath. As actors we need to be aware of all three. Sometimes people say that an actor should be totally relaxed but this is not accurate. If you are totally relaxed, you are asleep. There needs to be movement from state to state; this is what we do in daily life, and so it is what we need for the theatre.

“Breathing makes lightness possible, which is one of the supreme virtues of the artist.”

-Jacques Copeau

The exercises involve using these three breath-states in different combinations.

At first, you breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Then you breathe in through the mouth and out through the nose. As you do this exercise, you observe your breathing, and note how the different

combinations feel. The next exercise involves imagining that you are breathing in through your navel, and then out through the mouth. Finally you imagine that the breath comes through the navel and then leaves the body via the pores in your skin. Each time you breathe in, you hold the breath for a moment before exhaling. Next you add sound images to the breathing patterns. For example, as you breathe in, you imagine the sound “ah”. As you breathe out you imagine the sound “oom”. Or vice versa. Then you add hand movements. In esoteric Buddhism, the fingers are miniature versions of the whole body. So when you move the fingers you are in a sense exercising the whole body. Finally you add the imagination, so that you have a real inner link to the actions and the breath. For example, as your hand opens and closes, you visualize a flower opening and shutting its petals.

As these breathing exercises develop, they involve more and more of the body and mind, until you are using three things at the same time: sound, movement, and imagination. Our breathing is the link between our body and our mind and for both to function well, they need oxygen. Concentrating on our breathing, also helps us to live the present and feel alive.

MAKING THE AUDIENCE FEEL THINGS

Wander in space, as you wander imagine you are in a huge outdoor space, now in a small indoor dark space...outdoor...indoor. Let's come toward an attention of some things. As you wander this time, track the horizontal and sense what happens to your eyes and your breathing. Let's go back to the outdoor space, here we were able to change our breathing and our viewpoint. This is quite a profound change.

So we start to get a sense of this that breathing, apart from staying alive, is a major mode of communication. We hold our breath for two purposes, for effort, and to protect, freeze, flight or fight mode. Many physiological changes in the body are associated with fear, summarized as the fight-or-flight response. Accelerating the breathing rate, heart rate, vasoconstriction of the peripheral blood vessels leading to blushing, and increasing muscle tension. This primitive mechanism may help an organism survive by either running away or fighting the danger. With the series of physiological changes, the consciousness realizes an emotion of fear. We read this as fear. All of these things happen before the brain lights up. So the brain is reacting to these things. Fear is one thing the actor brings on stage. With fight or flight we become numb emotionally and physically. It's important to register this. If the actor is communicating fear, the audience feels this, it shuts them down.

Walking Towards Someone

Slowly walk towards a partner, notice when they stop breathing. Also the audience stop breathing, if you become aware of it you can start to feel it in your breathing. Using the sentence “I would feel more comfortable if you didn’t stand so close.” Start now to talk about your feelings. You will find this distance happens to be regulated by the length of our arms. Find a distance between you and your partner where you are both breathing.

Here, we are moving toward the process of meeting. Walking, holding out arm to shake, a breath suspended as one goes, as another moves back an exhale to release tension.

When we come in we protect ourselves, make sure to mark the breathing. We come to a point; we make ourselves vulnerable because our partner can really get us now. We lean in and breathe in and it’s asking a question, we are saying “Would you?” And they breathe in at this point and say, “Would I what?” And we say “Like to hold hands?” They say “Sure.” And we say “Phew, thank god that’s over.” Then they exhale. This is important when we begin looking at coming onto the stage and meeting what up until now is a possible hostile audience. And its realizing that it’s an audience who are just saying, “Would we what?” and we say “like to hold hands?”

“You should breathe the same air as a company- sharing a common energy which is opened up to include the audiences in performances. Your body should be open to the whole audience, and your breath should relate to them – think of it as breathing the whole audience in.”

-Tom McCrory

The Breath Crossing Space

Standing in a circle, take in a breath, make eye contact with someone across the circle and pass your breath to them. They will breath in taking your out breath, make eye contact with another person and then pass the breath to them, and so on. Once this has been established the group can break the circle, begin walking around the room and continue passing the breath making sure that the breath is crossing the space and not just being passed to someone in front or next to them.

Breath and Meaning

You only need to apply a counter respiration to a movement for its justification to change. For The example: In a standing position, I raise my arm to the vertical to wave goodbye to someone. If this movement is made while breathing in as the arm is raised, and then breathing out as it falls back, the sense of a positive farewell results. If you do the opposite, raising the arm on the

out breath, and letting it fall as you breathe in, the dramatic state becomes negative: I don't want to say good bye, but I am obliged to do so! Another possibility: breathe in, hold your breath, then do the movement, and only breath out once it is completed, which gives rise to the fascist salute. Finally, the opposite is also possible: breathe out, then do the movement before breathing in again. Perhaps there is a bayonet at my back forcing me to do it! All these nuances of breath control we apply to movement and they have a profound effect on the dramatic justifications that are produced.

“It is in the compelling zest of high adventure and of victory, and in creative action that man finds his supreme joy.”

-Antoine de Saint-Exupery



CITA Workshops, Hong Kong, 2016.

Stick Exercise for Balance Lightness and Ease

Let's start by doing an exercise with a stick that does require much muscular effort but is balancing the stick. In doing that we begin to explore the balance of the body and a lightness. The ease, and at the same time the total sense of control, and posture.

Try to balance the stick on your head, how do you hold yourself, how do you move, how do you stand, by holding the stick on the head? Now try to walk around the room. As you do that try to sense the body, try to sense the balance as you adjust. What's the difference between walking on the street and this? It's an extra limb. Try moving in different directions, speeds, circling round yourself.

The stick is important because it constitutes a kind of ur-prop - it is an object which carries all the associations of many different disciplines – sport (the javelin, the foil), circus (the baton, the juggling club), commedia (the slapstick), silent comedy (Chaplin's cane); but none of the baggage, an object which speaks to the performer as much as it does to the audience, the prop of all props, if you will. Because of this, the use of sticks remains a central part of a lot of actor

training traditions today. Having a stick in front of us is immediately a complete object that we have where we can relate to something outside of ourselves. In the same time it's almost like a magic wand it can inspire us and make us do movements for us that are a field of discovery. It almost becomes an extension of a limb of ours, the physical muscles as well as the muscles of the imagination are put to work and that is what is so interesting, something in us wakes up. Something in us starts to operate in a different way than when we are on the street, so images in us that we are not normally in touch with come into activity by what the stick provokes. If it stays inanimate it shows how inanimate we are inside.

Sculpture or Body Awareness

In threes, one takes a bizarre position, one copies the sculpture, with their eyes closed, and one is the observer. The aim is for the copier with eyes closed is to feel the position of the one posed, and copy it as closely as possible in their own body. The observer can give feedback after the process is completed. An extension of this, is for two to be sculptures and two to copy and one observer.

Bird Exercise – Body Awareness

Sense air under your arm pits. Let the breath create a space there. Look like a bird, moving only the head. Smell under the armpits and sense the feathers now, the spine line is changing, the upper spine beginning to spiral. Begin to lift the feet lightly, like a bird, the spine line changes again. Really look with the eyes of a bird, do not be anecdotal, birds do not look with rage, passion, be simple, and find the rhythm.

KUZUSHI

Kuzushi is a Japanese term for unbalancing an opponent in the Japanese martial arts. The noun comes from the transitive verb kuzusu, meaning to level, pull down, destroy or demolish. As such, it refers to not just an unbalancing, but the process of putting an opponent to a position, where his stability, hence the ability to regain uncompromised balance for attacking, is destroyed. In judo, it is considered an essential principle and the first of three stages to a successful throwing technique: kuzushi, tsukuri (fitting or entering) and kake (execution). Now we have explored our own balance let's explore our balance in relationship to another.

Cornish Foot Wrestling

Place your left foot on the inside of your partners left foot. Grab their left hand and then explore by moving only the right foot how you could take your partners balance.

Push Hands

Stand in a horse stance facing your partner and raise both palms in front of you so they are touching your partners. Through gentle pushes, or by absorbing the pushes from your partner try and see if you can take your partners balance.

These games are not so much about being the strongest as they are about being relaxed and aware and able to listen to your partner's movements through physical contact. These exercises are not intended to learn fight technique, however similar to martial arts they train people to respond directly with each other. These exercises and the martial arts are both totally based on the idea of partnership.



CITA Workshops, Oji Theatre Tokyo 2016.



Korea Workshops 2010.

The Drum Game

An exercise which exemplifies risk taking, is the drum exercise, where two people, like gladiators (but certainly not all the time), take their place in the space within the circle, two drums are placed in the playing area. Two people find the game of seeing who can pick up the drum first, then each holding a tambourine or tambour one taps out a simple rhythm and the second joins in on their drum. The aim of the game is to try to touch the other persons tambour. This is a complex interaction game, demanding complicity with each other and with the audience. It's a stylized combat game that demands considerable skill to sustain effectively. The game is about making offers, taking risks, a sense of play, total awareness. In the playing of it, it reveals the players own state.

Moving on impulse

For this exercise have a group of 7 -10 people participating and an equal number watching. The participants travel about the space and then all stop at the same moment. Then one person starts moving by themselves and stops. Then two people start and stop moving together, then three, then four

and finally five. When the group has reached five count back down to one person moving alone. The moments of starting and stopping the movement must be spontaneous, crisp and absolutely together. If there is a mistake on any of the numbers (i.e. three people move when there should be four, or the start isn't really together) an observer says 'no' and the group must keep trying to achieve the number they are on.

This game is about acting on an impulse and not deciding who will go. It requires intense concentration but there are wonderful moments when a group seems to be invisibly linked.

Co-operation games,

Play co-operation games, particularly those in which there are physical problems to be solved. These are crucial for building a sense of ensemble.

In groups of five or more, move to the four corners of the room. Get the participants in each group to knot themselves up in a ridiculous position. For example, they must all hold one individual's ankles and at the same time link arms with a neighbour. Then, without breaking their position and contact, they must move to the opposite corner of the room. Cross the room without losing physical contact with the group, but this time only one person is allowed to move at a time. Cross the room with two people not being allowed to touch the ground and with the rest of the group not using their arms to carry these individuals. Move together as a group without touching, so that from the outside you can't tell who is leading. Simply ask the group to walk in space.

It is important that the group should move naturally, not in a choreographed line or holding hands. They should begin to sense the other participants' movements: to listen to each other and to anticipate how they want to move as a group. When a good sense of ensemble has been established ask the group to take on specific characteristics. Can they move like chickens, cows or custard? Does this unite or disperse the group?

Shaking

The study of animals as an inspiration for playing has been a large part of our research. We often take participants in our workshops through a shaking session to show them the potential relaxation, recovery and regeneration potential in it. Shaking is done by most animals to remove stagnation, trauma and injury. Most animals shake, tremble and oscillate. It is important movement to remove trauma, tension and injury. It is also a coordination tool and a

re-patterning tool of great potency and a very beneficial addition to any person's tool box. For cultural reasons we've stopped and blocked this practice and treat shaking and tremor as indicative of disease and illness. Seeing bodies respond to this can be amazing. As we age our bodies calcify, fill with adhesions and harden in response to our life styles.

WE ARE ALL HEADING NORTH

The exercises described here are mainly food for thought of possible points of departure into preparing and creating which you can make your own, you can develop them into something else. They are offered to encourage inspiration in how to work and how to get our instrument to be more alive, to be more intelligent and to be more present to whatever we are asked to do, to make a sound, to make a movement, to make anything and how we can use that for our own benefit. We are required to test our imagination in two complementary senses: through applying creativity to find our own expressivity through the physical work, but also in the literal sense of engaging with obstacles that are not actually present – there is no wall to climb, no water to swim in, no disc to throw. We thus have no option but to commit to and explore the sensation, the feeling, the emotion and the physical dynamics of the action and the ways in which these qualities interact. We are developing a more dexterous instrument, how to do that? Challenge the system.

“Nothing is invented. Nothing is created from nothing. Everything is transformed. This is true in art as well. It’s as though there exists a great original river on which the thousands of actors navigate who have repeatedly reinvented theatre. I always long to swim in the currents of that river.”

-Ariane Mnouchkine.