

**Psychophysical Training and the Development
of Conscious Awareness in the Actor**

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Introduction

This research project seeks to contribute practically and theoretically to the field of psychophysical¹ actor training. It explores psychophysical training aimed at developing the actor's conscious awareness² to enhance creativity. In particular it interrogates a specific set of exercises from Educational Kinesiology³ (Edu-K) to investigate how the use of these exercises may increase conscious awareness in the actor. This study is concerned with the following research question:

Can psychophysical training in the form of Edu-K exercises affect the actor's conscious awareness, and if so, how does this affect the actor's creativity?

This project is centred around two modes of inquiry in relation to the research question, one theoretical and one practical. In relation to the first I construct a theoretical framework within which to discuss the influences that inform my practical research. Antonin Artaud's theory of the 'Total Theatre'⁴ and Jerzy Grotowski's theory of 'Translumination'⁵ are discussed to provide a context for my practical research into psychophysical training. I also draw on the work of inter-disciplinary theorists such as David Bohm to provide a further context and explanation of the physiological connection between conscious awareness and creativity.

The second aspect of this research is the Practice Model I have devised to interrogate Edu-K exercises as a specific model of psychophysical actor training. Through a series of devised practical workshops, inspired by the theories of Artaud and Grotowski, I investigate the question of whether Edu-K can impact on the conscious

¹Psychophysical training works on the relationship between physical stimuli and the resulting sensory and mental states. Konstantin Stanislavsky was the first to seek to overcome the divided "mind from body, knowledge from feeling, analysis from action" through psychophysical training or the method of physical action. (Zarrilli, *Acting* 12). Other pioneers of this training were Michael Chekhov, Jerzy Grotowski and Jacques Copeau. Artaud's theories promoted the psychophysical approach.

²Conscious awareness is defined as a "knowingness pervaded by a sensitivity to the immediate processes of the environment, body and mind" (Bohm and Peat 213).

³Educational Kinesiology is a science which teaches specific movements of the body to improve integration of the bodymind function (Dennison 1).

⁴Artaud's 'Total Theatre' appeals to all the senses (Artaud 38,39). It does not separate the mind from the body, or the senses from the intelligence (Fortier 55).

⁵Translumination is a state of consciousness where the actor transcends the mind-body split, to achieve totality and full presence" (Grotowski, *Towards* 16,17).

awareness and creativity of the participants.

From the exploration of the Edu-K exercises in the Practice Model, together with the literary research undertaken, conclusions are discussed in response to the research question. The possibilities and limitations of this training are argued, and feedback is analysed as to what benefits may be gained from the use of Edu-K exercises for actor training. As a reflection on these outcomes this thesis poses some further questions which have arisen out of this study.

Chapter One entails a literature review, which explores the key theoretical concepts that inform my Practice Model. It explores the link between Artaud's concept of a 'Total Theatre' and Grotowski's theory of 'Translumination.' I discuss the influence of Artaud on Grotowski's philosophy and training methods, which are used to develop 'conscious awareness' in the actor. Artaud's notion of promoting the bodily senses (Artaud 27), and Grotowski's method of '*via negativa*',⁶ are discussed and later explored within the Practice Model. The aim of my practical research is the same as Grotowski's, that is, the development of 'conscious awareness' to encourage mind and body integration in the actor. I refer to the works of Phillip Zarrilli, Richard Schechner and David Bohm to provide explanations of the physiological relationship between conscious awareness and creativity, thereby creating a further context in which to discuss the practical research.

Chapter Two considers my practical research design and methodology. Here the Practice Model procedures are investigated within the context and purpose of the research. It outlines my research design, the traditions of enquiry and type of programme I have devised. This chapter includes details of my research group, venue,

⁶Training '*via negativa*' eliminates the actor's resistance to psychic and physical opening, not by "a collection of skills, but an eradication of blocks." (Grotowski, Towards 16,17).

methods of data collection and analysis. Evidence is provided in the appendices in the form of digital video, and quotes from interviews and questionnaires are also documented as evidence for this research. Problems or challenges encountered during the use of these methods are outlined in terms of the impact they may have on the overall validity or conclusions of the research.

Chapter Three focuses on the Practice Model workshops. These workshops are described and analysed to investigate the impact of Edu-K training on the conscious awareness and creativity of the participants. The specific model I have devised draws on the tradition of Artaud and Grotowski's work and is contextualised within a previous body of practice I engaged with at the Taranaki School of Performing Arts in New Zealand from 1991-1999. Analysis of the Edu-K exercises are informed from a scientific perspective through the work of David Bohm which explains the relationship between 'intention and attention,' out of which conscious awareness develops. The work of Phillip Zarrilli and Richard Schechner on the adaptation of martial arts and eastern practices for actor training is referred to for further explanation of the exercises.

My analysis and conclusions draw on the experience of and feedback from the current Practice Model participants, along with my own research, experience and observations as a practitioner and participant. Data is collected from the participants' phenomenological inquiry through pre and post-workshop questionnaires, interviews and video. I present my findings through summarising, analysing and interpreting this data. A DVD is enclosed to provide supplementary evidence of the workshops.

Chapter Four summarises my findings on the research project as a whole. I reflect on my conclusions, based on evidence from the practice model and library-based research. I attempt to answer the research question: Can psychophysical training in the form of Edu-K exercises transform the actor's conscious awareness, and if so, how does this transformation affect the actor's creativity? The possibilities and limitations of this training model are discussed, and evidence is analysed as to what benefits may be gained from the use of Edu-K exercises in actor training. As an outcome of this study questions are posed for further investigation within this area of research.

Appendices Throughout this study photographic evidence is integrated along with samples of questionnaires and quotes from participants. A full description and analysis of selected Edu-K PACE exercises can be found in Appendix A. Appendices B and C present full quotes extracted from participants' Post-Workshop and Completion of Programme Questionnaires, while the results from the Sensory Survey are shown in Appendices D and E.

