

How to Connect

A journey to form pedagogical principles for
sustainable, flexible actor training

YUKO TAKEDA



Figure 1. Physical training for actors during the Imagination of Violence course at ETLAB, in Helsinki, Finland. January 2018.

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THESIS

How to Connect

A journey to form pedagogical principles for
sustainable, flexible actor training

YUKO TAKEDA

MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMME IN THEATRE PEDAGOGY

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In this thesis, the author searches pedagogical principles for actor training fueled by two questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How can the content of the training be made relevant to acting in theatre so that it is not just a physical workout? How can the training be made flexible and sustainable so that it becomes something that not only caters to the individual needs of actors but also provides a structure for continuation? The thesis consists of four major components: the author's personal history of actor training in theatre, the content of actor training, the pedagogical principles for sustainable, flexible actor training, and the case studies for the implementation of the principles. <p>By reflecting on various influences in her life as an actor and pedagogue, the author illuminates the path of forming her point of view for acting and actor training in theatre. Presence in actor training is redefined as the ability to connect with the other and regarded as the element that should be cultivated throughout the actor's life. The author also presents reference points in physical training for actors to make the content of training relevant to acting.</p> The pedagogical principles for sustainable, flexible actor training deal with the concept of practice, the language used in training, the teacher-student relationship, the flexible training content, and the identity of the teacher. The implementation of the principles is evaluated in the case studies. The studies are about two pedagogical projects: a long-term physical training, for which the author has been the leader, and the Imagination of Violence course where the author participated as the second pedagogue. For the first project, the author conducted an interview and collective reflection with a long-time participant in the training to gauge the impact of the long-term process. For the second one, the feedback from the main pedagogue and the interview with the students of the course are presented and assessed to show how the author's pedagogical presence affected others in the course. <p>There are also excerpts from the interview with the author's former acting teacher Amy Herzberg as a concluding phase of the thesis. They give moral support and pedagogical underpinnings for the next step of the author's artistic growth as an actor and pedagogue.</p>			
ENTER KEYWORDS HERE theatre, theatre pedagogy, acting, actor training, pedagogical principles			

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	10
PERSONAL HISTORY OF ACTOR TRAINING IN THEATRE	13
CONTENT OF ACTOR TRAINING	30
<i>Questions in search for sustainable, flexible actor training</i>	30
<i>Acting in theatre</i>	30
<i>Presence in acting</i>	32
<i>Reference points in physical training for actors</i>	33

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE, FLEXIBLE ACTOR TRAINING	40
CASE STUDIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES	49
<i>The effects of long-term physical training: a conversation with Juha Sääski</i>	49
<i>The Imagination of Violence Course</i>	57

CONCLUSION	70
<i>Interview with an acting teacher Amy Herzberg</i>	70
<i>The end of the beginning, the beginning of the next</i>	80

BIBLIOGRAPHY	82
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NOTE TO SELF:

Acting doesn't happen over here. It happens over there.

-- Amy Herzberg, acting teacher and theatre artist

INTRODUCTION

I am an actor who enjoys performing in theatre. I was born and raised in Japan, educated as an actor during my early- to mid-20s in the United States, and now continue to study theatre and work in a foreign country, Finland (as of 2018). I am also passionate about actor training, meaning that the desire to improve how we actors develop ourselves is strong in me. From all the education and experience in theatre I have so far digested, I would like to form my current point of view about actor training in theatre.

The genesis of my thesis started to emerge in the year of 2012. In that year I was at a crossroad as to the direction of my acting career. I had had trained in various acting techniques and been exposed to various genres and types of theatre. Should I specialize in one specific genre such as classical theatre? Or should I work in a theatre company whose aesthetic resonates with mine? Or is there any other way for me to be as an actor? I chose to work as a freelancer, meaning that I was not tied to any specific theatre company or genre or style. That amplified the need to continue improving my acting skills in a way that was flexible and applicable to various demands of different projects and productions. Luckily, there were a few acting techniques that I'd learned well and long enough to train on my own. So, it was not a matter of what to do for training. The issue was how to connect what I do for training to every single work project I undertake.

Most of the acting techniques I know were born out of specific needs of certain genres in theatre history. A famous example is the Stanislavsky's system, which was formed and developed during the rise of the naturalistic mode of performance in the early 20th century in Russia. To give another example, one of the techniques I still practice regularly is the Suzuki Method of Actor Training, which was founded and has been developed by a Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki and his company SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) since 1960s. Most of the exercises in Suzuki Method originate in the rehearsal processes of SCOT and reflect the distinct aesthetics and vision of the director and his philosophy of acting.

So, how to make my training relevant and beneficial to the unpredictable, ever-changing demands of my working life became an important question for me to ponder for survival.

In this thesis, there are four main components: the personal history of my actor training, the content of actor training, my pedagogical principles for sustainable, flexible actor training, the case studies of the implementation of those principles. My aims are to connect my personal history regarding actor training to my current pedagogical viewpoint about it and to show how all these principles manifested and were experienced by others who were involved in the training.

In the first part, my educational history regarding acting and actor training is outlined. The section is written, for the most part, chronologically from the time I started to be interested in performing to the current time when I actively work and teach as a theatre artist. Several names of my teachers are mentioned and how they influence me as an actor are shown with anecdotes. It is simply impossible to put each teacher I've met into a specific category of influence such as "This teacher taught me how to speak on the stage." Rather, I try to depict them and the circumstances of our interaction to imply their influence in my life path to form my own standpoint as an artist. Other anecdotes mentioned in this part are to highlight the major influences in the way I view actor training and theatre.

The second and third parts are about my conceptual exposition on actor training. In here, I discuss what is to be practiced in acting, the reference points for sustainable, flexible training for actors, and the pedagogical principles to make such training possible. They are mostly drawn from my experience, but a few concepts and ideas of other artists and thinkers are mentioned to support my ideas.

The third part is about two separate pedagogical projects where I consciously implemented the principles mentioned in the second part. As the evaluation and reflection on them, I conducted interviews with the participants of the training. How others have experienced my teaching and training is important to vindicate the validity of my pedagogical principles in practice.

In terms of methodology, this thesis, therefore, uses autoethnographic reflection to extract certain pedagogical principles and insights for my teaching practice. And for the case studies, interviews are used to reflect on the influences and consequences of my teaching practice based in those principles.

As a conclusion, there is an interview with my acting teacher from graduate school Amy Herzberg. Talking with her about teaching acting and the role of the actor is a wonderful culmination of my life cycle as an actor and a start of a new one.

There's one more thing about this thesis; The reader should not expect to read about the details of some existing acting techniques. Each technique mentioned in this thesis has its history and complex, intricate philosophy behind it. I would end up causing careless misunderstanding and injustice to the ingenious works of the theatre practitioners I revere if I focus on explaining the techniques for the reader to learn. I recommend that the sources written or articulated by the founders of the techniques be sought and studied if any of them interests you. In the following passages, some of the major influences in my education, namely my teachers and the methods I have learned, are mentioned and discussed as a part of my process of building my own pedagogical principles.

In the end, I would like this thesis to be rooted primarily in my experience and interaction with others to be convincing as one practitioner's point of view in theatre. It is ultimately a snapshot of one person's journey that keeps evolving and deepening. I am still searching and learning.

PERSONAL HISTORY OF ACTOR TRAINING IN THEATRE

Early years

As I've mentioned in the introduction, I was born and raised in Japan until I was eighteen years old, until the graduation from high school. While I was there, I didn't receive any formal theatre education in an academic institution. Occasionally, a touring theatre company would come to my school and performed a play or two live for us. Or if that wasn't the case, my class would go to a local culture center to see a play once a year. My recollection of those early years about my exposure to theatre is very hazy and limited. That tells me that my interest in theatre was not as strong as it has become in later years. I didn't participate in any theatrical activity, either, such as joining in a local amateur theatre group. However, I was drawn to performing from an early age in a subtle way. It was too subtle for anyone around me to notice as my passion. My dominant personality was often described as "quiet, reserved, and introverted" by many of my school teachers in Japan. No wonder hardly anyone could associate my future life path with theatre or any theatrical activity, which tends to give out ostentatious, social vibes. Neither could I, because I was not particularly drawn to the Japanese theatre scene or any performing arts form in particular at the time. I was just fascinated by the act of performing in front of an audience. It was the exhilaration, the fear, the connection I felt when I stood in front of people and did something for them, even when it was just reading a text book out loud in class.

The turning point came in the last year of high school when I put up a one-woman show at the annual school culture festival. To make a long story short, the show was the result of my impulsive desire to perform something, anything I could do in front of an audience. I sang, danced and talked by myself for an hour for a group of about a hundred people, many of whom I did not know. The most amazing thing for me was not that I pulled it off or the strange content of it. It was the fact that the audience stayed for the entire period without walking out that took me by surprise. My father was in the audience at the time, and he told me afterwards, "It is remarkable that you were able to keep the audience engaged in your show for an hour." The experience of performing in public and the feedback from the audience for my

one-woman show propelled me to finally take action about my education; I decided to study performing arts in the USA.

My interest in performing then became more specific in the process of selecting my major at a university. I eventually settled down as a theatre major at a four-year university in Oklahoma, USA.

2000-2004: Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in theatre arts, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma, USA

I spent four years at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO). The university required all the bachelor students to have both the general education such as introductory courses in humanity (history, geography, philosophy, etc.) and science (mathematics, biology, chemistry, etc.) and the specialized education according to one's major. Out of all the credit hours I obtained in the four-year period, about 60% of them were from theatre arts-related courses. The UCO theatre arts department offered me opportunities to learn the practices of almost all creative aspects of theatre: acting, playwriting, directing, scenic design, costume/make-up design, and lighting design and to get familiar with the western theatre history and conventions. Although my memories from those years were not distinct enough to describe what I had learned specifically in each course, I would like to share three memories that are still vivid and relevant to this thesis.

One is when I was in my first acting class with Kathryn McGill. What Kathryn said at the beginning of the class has been etched in my memory as one of the major influences in forming my perspective on acting. With a paper cup in her hand, she slowly paced in the classroom in front of us students. She was smiling and carefully chose her first words to us, "Acting is a craft." It implied to me that there were certain skills to be learned and nurtured throughout the life of an actor.

Soon after my first acting lesson with Kathryn, I went to see two touring Shakespeare shows by Shenandoah Shakespeare (Now American Shakespeare Center) at the university. They were *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, with none of which I was familiar. The setting of the touring show was as such:

Like early modern acting companies, actors play multiple roles in a single show. The house lights remain on during performances, and the

actors surround themselves with audience members on three sides. This inclusive arrangement allows the audience to enjoy the same festive sense of community experienced at Shakespeare's original Blackfriars Playhouse in London. (Tour FAQ, (n.p.)).

Of course, I couldn't understand any of what the performers was saying. But I vividly remember my face in the bathroom mirror after the shows were over. It was so elated and alive that I surprised myself then. That was the moment I became enamored with Shakespeare and transformed by the power of theatre and acting. The "festive sense of community" was a very visceral experience for me; I felt a connection I'd never felt before in the body.

Luckily, Kathryn, my first acting teacher, was also the artistic director of Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park (OSP), an outdoor summer theatre company specialized in Shakespeare's plays. She allowed me to participate in it as an actor in the summers of 2002 and 2003. I was given a few small roles in plays, sometimes sold fruits to the audience in costume, and sometimes did pre-show performances to warm up the crowd for the main production. My involvement in OSP further enriched my appreciation of the classic plays and how alive and lively they made the local community. In my memories from those years, I always recall the image of a group of actors giving their all to the audience under the scorching sun. And my ears were glued to the wall backstage, listening to the eloquence of the experienced actors speaking the beautiful poetry of Shakespeare.

My work ethic as an actor was also formed around this time. I understood from the experience at OSP and UCO that although the actor stands at the center of the stage, theatre is a collaborative effort of many artists to whom I must pay much respect. Making theatre means to build a human community with trust and artistry in a social context.

In terms of acting techniques, I learned the basic terms in the Stanislavsky's System such as Objective, Given Circumstances, Action, etc. I also studied how to speak Shakespeare's language: how an iambic pentameter works in verse, how to embody colorful metaphors and irony, etc. I was fortunate enough to put my study into practice and to listen to the physicality of the language in Shakespeare at OSP.

To sum up, my education at UCO and OSP was about learning acting as a craft; certain skills were required to perform on stage. I got inspired by the

visceral power of Shakespearean language. And I learned that getting involved in theatre meant collaboration and communal effort.

2004-2007: Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Acting, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, USA

After graduating from UCO, I moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas to study acting in graduate school at University of Arkansas. It was a three-year master's program in acting. When I got accepted into the program, there were only four actors in my class; I was the only female and foreigner. The class size therefore was very small; Even when combined with the second and the third-year graduate-level actors, the number never exceeded twelve. That accelerated the intimate, intensive learning process for me. The program made sure that each student got in-depth, embodied knowledge and practice of a few techniques and disciplines. The head of the acting program was and still is Amy Herzberg. She taught courses titled Acting Principles, Musical Theatre Performance, and Meisner Technique. Each of her course lasted for a long time, with the average of two semesters (24 weeks). She is one of the teachers who has supported my growth as an actor and challenged me constantly. Her influence in my education is incalculable, to say the least. Her passion for acting was and has been contagious and inspiring to me. (*Later in this thesis, there is the interview with Amy to discuss teaching acting and her teaching philosophy.)

The other acting-related courses I took during graduate school were Voice and Speech that covered a wide range of dramatic texts for speaking, Period Style Acting, Viewpoints, Postmodern Theatre, Comedy Improv, Alexander Technique, dance classes (ballet, jazz, musical theatre) and singing lessons for musical theatre. On top of the program, I was given numerous opportunities to perform in the University's theatre productions. The genres of those productions varied greatly.

There was no doubt in my mind that the three years in the MFA program deepened my practice and understanding of theatre as an actor. Though challenging at many moments, I became more confident and immersed in the actor's education in the USA. The supportive, intimate atmosphere of the whole department often made me forget that I was coming from a totally different cultural background. They treated me the same as every other student there. Thus, working on the western theatre plays never bothered me in a way to question my cultural identity. As my thesis role, in fact, I played

the role of Hannah Jelkes in Tennessee William's *The Night of the Iguana*, an American modern play. The character was described as a Caucasian woman from Nantucket, Massachusetts, USA. The director of the play cast me because it was her choice to go with "color-blind casting," meaning that the ethnicity of the character was deliberately ignored. As far as I know, no one raised a question about the casting decision. It was a challenging role, but it was not because of the ethnicity of the character that was different from mine. With any role I play, there is always a challenge or two regarding humanity and imagination. The challenge eventually leads to an opportunity to expand and deepen my understanding of what it means to be a human being. Playing Hannah was one of those opportunities for me.

2007-2008: Acting Apprentice, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky

After graduating from the graduate school, I worked at one of the well-established regional theatres in the US, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky for nine months. My job title was Acting Apprentice. It was a non-paid position. The theatre selected 22 actors that year for the apprenticeship program. In the exchange of working back-stage during the runs of shows at the theatre, we the acting apprentices got opportunities to perform in an original one-act play festival at the main stage, participate in a new play festival Humana Festival, and take master classes with prominent theatre professionals such as Jon Jory, Timothy Douglas, and Sean Daniels. We also got to create solo shows. For that, a New York solo artist Annie Lanzillotto was invited to give us a workshop about her technique Action Writing.

Unlike the graduate school where I was well-insulated from the possible distractions to focus solely on acting, my experience at ATL was all-encompassing; I was an integral part of running a professional regional theatre. I was at the theatre from morning to late at night, either working at the shops, running shows, rehearsing, or taking classes. The master classes were short, only a few days for each subject. So, except the workshop with Annie, I don't remember much about those classes in terms of what technique I learned. Annie's Action Writing workshop was not technically an acting technique; It's a method to generate material for a solo performance. However, I feel the need to mention it here because it gave me the concept of the actor as a creator and actual practice to generate one's own material. It

expanded my perspective on the actor's role to include both embodying characters in a script somebody else wrote and creating one's own voice artistically. It was a new branch of actor training for me.

I also got involved in a collaborative theatre making with a local community of Louisville. The process was such that we the apprentices went out to interview local people about Derby cruising, which stirred racial conflicts and segregation in the community. Based on the interviews, the director of the apprentice company wrote a play called *Cruising the Divide* in which almost all the people whom we'd interviewed appeared as characters. I played the character of a middle-aged white woman of a lower economic class whom I'd interviewed. In this process I learned the fine balance between the creative freedom I had in imagining a character and the responsibility I felt for a real person I'd interviewed to respect her integrity as a human being.

Also, by interacting with working professional actors at the theatre, I gained a lot of insight into what it was like to be a professional actor in the US. As much as I wanted to think and believe that getting good education and improving one's skills would lay a solid foundation for a professional actor in the US, I learned that there were quite a few things that had nothing to do with education or skill level that would affect the working life of an actor. This was when I was met with a harsh reality of the acting business in the US, especially in auditions and casting processes. In school, I had to audition for the roles just like professionals. But the crucial difference between casting at an educational institution and in a professional world is the intention. In school casting was done based on the actor's growth and development. In the other world, it was decided based on the needs and demands of the play, the public, or so-called the industry.

One day at ATL I was consulting this person, who was a former casting agent, for the feedback on my audition work. He said to me, "I don't know how to advise you because you're not the leading role type in a TV series or any typical American play. You have a peculiar accent and look, which I don't know where to fit in." I do not mean to put this person in a bad light whatsoever. He was speaking from his own experience as casting agent. This little moment just made me realize that there would be times in my career when I would be judged by something that has nothing to do with my skills as actor, if I were to pursue my acting career in the American show business. It eventually led me to reevaluate my training as actor as questions started to

pop up in my mind such as “How can I train myself so that I can adapt to the needs of different acting styles or theatre genres?” It made me want to become the kind of actor whose skills and presence override the expectation and conventions of theatre or any acting business there is in the world.

With all these wonderful experiences and memories behind, I left the US for good in 2008. There are several factors that contributed to my decision to leave. The above incident was not a major one. The determining reasons are too private for me to mention in this thesis and are not relevant to the topic of actor training, either. So, I’d ask the reader to spare me for omitting them.

2006-2013: Training with SITI Company

Outside the education at academic institutions, I’ve participated in several workshops and training intensives led by SITI Company in various locations in the US and Finland. [*SITI stands for Saratoga International Theater Institute. It is “an ensemble-based theater company whose three ongoing components are the creation of new work, the training of young theater artists, and a commitment to international collaboration” (Saratoga International Theater Institute, 2017).”]

Working with SITI Company had added two techniques to my skillset: Viewpoints and Suzuki Method of Actor Training (Suzuki Method).

Viewpoints is an improvisational technique of movement and composition. It could be used for performer’s training, directing, ensemble building, and any kind of compositional work on the stage. The Viewpoints I learned has been developed by theatre directors Tina Landau and Anne Bogart and SITI Company. Their version of Viewpoints technique is an adaptation of The Six Viewpoints created by a choreographer and dance professor Mary Overlie. These two streams of Viewpoints practices are generally differentiated as, “Overlie’s Six Viewpoints (Space, Story, Time, Emotion, Memory, and Shape) are considered to be a logical way to examine, analyze and create dances, while Bogart’s Viewpoints are considered practical in creating staging with (Viewpoints, 2017).

I have not trained in Overlie’s Six Viewpoints and have not familiarized myself with her theoretical work enough to write more about it in this thesis. The Viewpoints practice I refer to in this thesis is the one taught by Bogart and SITI Company.

I was quite impressed and inspired by the technique when I started to learn it with SITI Company members. It was a whole new set of vocabulary to talk about what is happening in a performance in regard to time and space. And it opened my eyes to a new way of relating to others on stage by going through an intuitive physiological channel for storytelling and meaning-creation.

What has stuck with me about Viewpoints after several years of training with SITI Company is its philosophy and approach to theatre training. Taking a distance from a conventional way of creating a theatre piece, which tends to impose a certain hierarchical structure on a creative process (with the director and/or playwright at the top and the actors being the ones to serve the vision of the top), Viewpoints practice nurtures an attitude and mindset of collaboration among those who train and create. Everyone in the Viewpoints training is both an independent and collective storyteller. The important thing to me is that I now know those different approaches in theatre making and training. It's not about which one is better than the other. To me, different approaches are there to adjust to the needs and demands of a creative process.

In contrast to Viewpoints, SITI also taught me Suzuki Method of Actor Training (Suzuki Method). It is a physical training system for actors founded and developed by a Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki and his company Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT). SITI Company was founded by Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki in 1992, which explains why Suzuki Method is an integral part of SITI's training. This is also the method I most frequently teach nowadays. So, I'll briefly mention some of the founder's ideas behind the method. The method addresses some fundamental aspects of acting for the actor's expressivity. In Suzuki's words:

The main purpose of my method is to uncover and bring to the surface the physically perceptive sensibility... and to heighten their innate expressive abilities. ... Technically speaking, my method consists of training to learn to speak powerfully and with clear articulation, and also to learn to make the whole body speak, even when one keeps silent. (Suzuki, 1995, s. 165).

One of the most distinguishable features of Suzuki Method to me is the "Grammar of the Feet," which emphasizes the articulation and sensibility of the lower part of the body. Suzuki believes that "consciousness of the body's

communication with the ground leads to a great awareness of all the physical junction of the body” (1995, s. 165). There are in fact quite a few exercises in the method where actors stomp forcefully and maneuver their legs on the floor in various ways. Suzuki explains the importance of the feet not only in theatre but also in an anthropological context:

Whether in Europe or in Japan, stomping or beating the ground with the feet is a universal physical movement necessary for us to become highly conscious of our own body or to create a “fictional” space, which might also be called a ritualistic space, where we can achieve a personal metamorphosis. ... Perhaps it is not the upper half but the lower half of our body through which the physical sensibility common to all races is most consciously expressed; to be more specific, the feet. The feet are the last remaining part of the human body, which has kept, literally in touch with the earth, the very supporting base of all human activities. (1995, s. 167).

When I first encountered the method in the SITI Company’s workshop in 2006, it was its distinct physicality and vigorous energy that impressed me deeply. The strong sensation I felt in my body in stomping left me in awe of how powerful this method could be. I immediately made a commitment to learn and practice it for a long time to come, along with Viewpoints. Learning those two techniques helped me greatly to form my own training routine when I was not in school or when I didn’t have any play or script to work on.

One other important thing on which SITI Company has influenced me is the function of training. As a company, they regard training as the thing that binds them together, not just as the thing they do together to work on the techniques. I got an impression, when I trained with them, that they shared some kind of common language with which they could communicate with one another when they were in the same room. It was beyond the verbal or even the techniques themselves. Training together felt like a meaningful act of coming together as theatre artists. It is also to keep the spirit and the skills as artist intact

I owe greatly to SITI Company for many ideas, inspirations and encounters that opened countless doors for my artistic growth.

Summer of 2008: Suzuki Method of Actor Training Intensive in Toga, Japan

After having left the US, I got an opportunity to participate in a two-week intensive Suzuki Method training program taught by Ellen Lauren, co-artistic director of SITI Company and resident company member of SCOT, in Toga, a remote village in Toyama Prefecture, Japan. SCOT has its base theatre complex there. Although the duration of the course was short, I need to mention it here because it was a profound learning curve for me in understanding what the method is about and where it originates.

The training program was a part of the SCOT international theatre festival (Now continuing under the name of SCOT Summer Season). There were quite a few visitors from abroad, and all the trainees for the program were foreigners in Japan, except me. Every day we had two sessions: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In the evening, we would either observe SCOT's rehearsal and training or watch the productions at the festival.

I heard some people call Toga "theatre mecca," a theatre complex of astonishing architecture on a mountain top of a remote village in Japan. Even more astonishing was the fact that the SCOT members were living there as responsible community members in the village. They clean the theatres and other buildings and areas in the complex, cook for each other, and produce and run the festival by themselves on top of rehearsals, training, or performances they undergo daily. Surrounded by stunning nature and such admirable spirits and work ethics of the SCOT members, I could very well understand why some people call the place "theatre mecca."

Ellen the teacher of the training program, often reminded us, while we stomped on the stage of the oldest theatre house in the complex, that there had been many great actors who had stomped on the very same floor. That signified for me the importance of understanding the history of the method and the cultural context in which it was born. In addition to that, Mr. Suzuki himself would occasionally stop by to observe our training. On the last day of the program, we had to train in front of the whole SCOT members including Mr. Suzuki. Those events, needless to say, put an incredible amount of pressure on us the trainees; Everyone was visibly nervous to be in the same room with them and to do the things they knew and could do far better than we. In retrospect, it was such a prestige and honor to even have those opportunities with SCOT and Mr. Suzuki, for their works are undoubtedly of

highest artistic discipline and dedication to theatre they believe in. And I also understood why the method calls for such a degree of commitment from actors after experiencing the artistic culture SCOT have built and nurtured over the years for each other.

2009-2010: Coming to Finland for the first time

I first came to Finland in October 2009 and ended up staying here for work for six months, leaving in April 2010. During the six months, I participated in two theatre projects. One was a devised two-person theatre piece titled *Saari-the Island* with the concept and direction of Miira Sippola, artistic director of Myllyteatteri, an independent theatre company in Helsinki. It was premiered in November, 2009 in Espan Lava. In this project, the piece was made collaboratively with everyone in the working group contributing something to the process from the beginning. In the script there was no clear narrative or dramaturgy that I was used to. It was like lived poetry on the stage, something new to me in terms of acting style and mode of expression. I was given more responsibility and creative freedom to create my character in the process.

The second one was playing the principal role in *Via Crucis – ristin tie*, a Passion Play directed by Sippola once again. This project was on a much larger scale than *Saari*: more than fifty cast members, involving three different outdoor sites as stages with estimated audience of more than 15,000 in two days of performance. *Via Crucis* was a tradition that had been kept and produced by the Christian church association in Helsinki. Unlike the first project, which was an original piece of theatre, everyone knew the story of *Via Crucis*. All of a sudden I became the center of attention once Finnish media found out that a Japanese woman who didn't speak Finnish was playing the role that had been played by well-known Finnish male actors. And for the first time in my life, I performed a leading role in a foreign language I couldn't understand. I memorized my lines by sound since there was not enough time to learn the grammar and syntax of Finnish at the time. It was a strange situation where I often stood alone in a rehearsal room, surrounded by a group of the cast who couldn't communicate with me because they spoke only Finnish. The amount of mental pressure I felt during the rehearsal was beyond words. To make a long story short, the performance was received well by the audience, and it was a very meaningful experience for me, too.

These first two professional work experiences in Finland stretched my range as an actor greatly and made a huge impact on my perception of Finnish performing arts culture; They made me want to come back to Finland for good.

2010- present: Meeting and working with Akira Hino

So far, I've outlined my training history and mentioned several anecdotes regarding major events. The things and teachings mentioned thus far are strongly connected to acting and theatre for apparent reasons. But my training history would not be complete without writing about what I've learned from a Japanese martial arts master Akira Hino (1948-). I first met him in late 2010 in Japan, after I came back from the six-month stay in Finland. Since then, I've been documenting or writing about my encounters with him, including our first meeting, his workshops I attended, his workshops with dancers where I observed and worked as his translator (Japanese-English) and the theatre/dance productions in which he directed me. I've also translated two books of his into English: *Kokoro no katachi – the Image of the Heart* and *Don't Think, Listen to the Body!* In some miraculous way, his teachings became a catalyst and then a driving force for me to synthesize all that I've experienced in my education.

In very simple terms, Hino-sensei's method (Hino Method) and theory are about developing bodily sensitivity and intelligence to realize the full potential of a human being. It is based in classic Japanese martial arts (Kobudo 古武道), which he has been studying with his body since he was thirty years old. All his discoveries and understanding about human body derive from his practice and investigation to embody the texts written by the legendary Japanese martial arts masters about their techniques.

At first it was his incredible physical ability that impressed me deeply. I was curious and skeptical when I went to observe his lesson for the first time in late 2010. I was working as a masseuse at a spa in Japan at the time to save up money for the travel to Finland for the second time. I'd just seen some of his demonstration videos on YouTube and thought, "Wow, that looks amazing, but it's probably choreographed or something." But my skepticism was immediately replaced by my strong intuition that he knew something I must know. While his pupils were repeating the same exercise over and over again but failing to execute it as Hino sensei did it, he casually walked up to me and

said with a smile, “You see? The body is a genius, and the head is a fool.” He continued to explain, “What’s in the way is their thought.”

What also struck me about our first meeting was how the lesson was conducted. I’d imagined a practice of martial arts to be a lot of punching, kicking, and throwing with lots of sweat and violent vigor. But his lesson was entirely of different nature from my expectation. Every pupil was silently focused and seemed to try to sense each and every move of his or hers and that of their partner with so much attention and consideration. It almost looked like a very meticulous, careful physical experimentation in a scientific laboratory. Every once in a while, Hino sensei would demonstrate what is supposed to happen in an exercise if the body was moving interconnectedly and efficiently according to its natural function. For example, one is holding Hino sensei’s leg up, and then he uses the interconnection of the whole body to generate power in a way that the person holding his leg could not resist it. In this simple exercise, there are many things to consider for practicing: not only the connection within the body but also sensing the partner’s physical contact and adjusting the amount of force accordingly, etc.

As I started to get more and more into his work, I was convinced that the elements he teaches were applicable to many different fields of art that use human body as the means of expression. It was no wonder to me that his work resonated with dancers in particular. The fact that he had taught a choreographer William Forsythe and his contemporary dance company for ten years periodically is another testament to the universality of his method.

Besides learning about the human body with my own body, one of the most enduring lessons of his has much larger implications in my life than just improving my physical ability. It came as a revelation to me as the following:

I’ve often wondered why Hino sensei has been giving his valuable insights and advice to me, to an actress who works abroad. I don’t even have a proper uniform to practice Budo (martial arts). The answer might lie in what he said to me one day, “It doesn’t matter whether you can do the things I teach you. What matters is that you can act on stage.” How I interpreted his words is thus: If the technique doesn’t serve me to live fully on the stage, then it is utterly meaningless. If the technique doesn’t lead me to a place of serious inspection and discoveries about myself, then it only makes me complacent and arrogant. I need to follow my

passion and focus on getting better at what I love to do, not on acquiring the technique. That will turn into the true technique I can use.” (Takeda, Testimonials, 2017).

Hino sensei’s knowledge, philosophy, skills, and life experience don’t limit him to be just a martial artist. He is also a professional jazz drummer and has collaborated with artists from music, theatre and dance. It only made sense to me to ask him to direct me or give me advice in theatre/dance productions several times. His practical, precise advice and directions (for example, “tighten your abdomen,” “move your arms as slowly as possible in stillness,” etc.) came at the right moments in the rehearsal process. They helped me to reach the kind of presence that was captivating to the audience even the circumstances were difficult to do so, such as standing still fifty meters away from the audience while other actors moved about closer to the auditorium, speaking in the midst of extreme noise of shouting chorus and beating Japanese drum, being still in a corner of the stage as a background painting while the main events and action happened in the center, etc..

His influence has been getting deeper in my life. A conscious effort to formulate my own point of view about acting and actor training had begun quietly and slowly after meeting Hino sensei.

2011- present: Coming back to Finland for the second time

So, I traveled to Finland in July of 2011 for the second time. This time my intention was to work as an actor in Finland permanently. Since then I’ve been part of numerous theatre and performing arts projects. It’s not the goal of this section to showcase my professional works. So, the details of those projects I undertook are omitted here. However, I’ve recognized a general pattern that emerged in my working life in Finland after several years of being here. It is that I’ve been working from project to project, with each project requiring different aesthetics and an acting or working style. The fact that I was a freelancer contributed a lot to this pattern to repeat.

Also, I have to mention that my foreign status in Finnish society, the language barrier and cultural differences have played a part in the difficulty to maintain consistency and stability in my artistic work. Although the different projects did enrich my embodied knowledge as a theatre artist in various ways, the working circumstances remained challenging.

On a personal level, I was quite lonely for not having a constant, continuous group of actor-friends to inspire and be inspired through training or work. I'd taken it for granted that I have that kind of group of people for myself because that was what had surrounded me during my education in the US. Working as a freelance actor in Finland forced me to face the truth that I had to intentionally gather a group of actors to train together and grow together as I used to do in school. Otherwise, I would be drifting in the field of the performing arts in Finland as a strange foreign artist without any distinct core of artistry. (To be fair to myself and my life, I did and always have had great actor-and artist-friends in Finland. They have been the ones to give me projects and collaboration opportunities. Here I'm talking solely from the point of actor training and how I consistently grow and develop my skills as actor.)

So, shortly after I moved here, I began leading physical training sessions for actors, mostly focusing on Suzuki Method and occasionally Viewpoints and Hino Method. The initial reason was, as stated above, that I needed something that was continuous and consistent artistically to ground myself as an actor in the midst of hopping from project to project. On a personal level, I just wanted to be in the same room with somebody, doing something good and creative to feel less lonely. The training has been going on almost on the regular basis for almost seven years as of now, 2018.

The birth of a pedagogical awareness

Gradually the opportunity for me to teach increased as the Finnish theatre circle got to know me as someone who had trained in Suzuki and Viewpoints. From 2012 to 2016, I taught at Ilmaisverstas, Kokkolan kaupunginteatteri, TeaK Open University, Ylioppilasteatteri, Työväen akatemia in Kauniainen among others. The more I taught, the better I got in structuring a training session and conveying the necessary information about the methods and exercises. The response to my workshops and courses was overall positive.

However, there was a nagging inner voice that kept telling me that I needed to change something about my teaching. For example, I used to teach Suzuki Method in the hope that people would feel the greatness of it like I do. So, my only tactic was enthusiasm in teaching. It worked to a degree, but I eventually realized that my mentality was closer to that of a salesman who was trying to sell this great product (or technique in my case) to her potential customers. I

had little awareness of or concern about what would happen to a customer (a student) after the purchase of the product (learning a technique), or what the method would mean to them or how it would carry over and affect their lives afterwards.

Suzuki Method happens to be the method I teach most frequently in Finland. Although the content of the method is not the focus of this thesis, the way I teach the method has been the source of many pedagogical reflections for me. I shortly tell one major point of contention in my teaching experience.

On a very superficial level, the way the method is taught might evoke an air of a militaristic regime, almost as the utter submission to the leader of the training. For the experienced practitioners of Suzuki, it's just the structure to live within and measure their progress against. For me and them, it's often a rather effective, useful tool if not a part of their lifestyle. But over the years of teaching Suzuki Method, I've wrestled with this seemingly inherent hierarchy in teaching the method in a totally different cultural context than SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga)'s, where the method originates. For the beginner, the leader of the training might evoke fear by the way he or she teaches it.

One day I had one incident where a new participant started to cry while I was leading the training in Finland. She told me that the method's exercise made her body feel bad and that how strict I became in leading the training frightened her. And that suddenly woke me up to reevaluate the way I teach the method. Now I reflect on it further and realize that I was not able to communicate the knowledge of the method to this person properly because I took it for granted that she would understand the context in which the method was developed. And it was also because my pedagogical principles for training were not yet clear for myself. I was teaching the method without any consideration of what it could develop from the past experience of the learner and what it could lead to in the learner's future education. My focus was on the method not so much on the participants' learning process of it. Because I believed in the power of the method so much, I was almost blind to one crucial aspect in teaching: the learning process of a student. And most importantly, I wasn't yet clear on what I wanted to teach with the method for acting, besides the obvious benefits of increased concentration, focus, breath control, and active stillness.

This realization was the beginning of my search for my pedagogical principles of sustainable, flexible actor training. I slowly shifted my focus of

attention from the method itself to how I teach the methods and lead the training with others and its relevancy to acting.

CONTENT OF ACTOR TRAINING

Questions in search for sustainable, flexible actor training

Over the past several years of leading the physical training for and teaching a few methods to actors in Finland, two questions started to live in my mind.

1. How can I make the content of the training relevant to acting in theatre so that it is not just a physical workout?
2. How can I make the training flexible and sustainable so that it becomes something that not only caters to the individual needs of actors but also provides a structure for continuation?

The first question has guided me to clarify what I want to teach and train and what I think is the most important thing in acting. The content should be something that revolves around that most important thing no matter what method is being practiced. Then with the second question in mind, I have formed my pedagogical principles to make such training possible in practice from all that I have learned so far in my actor training and from my observations of my teachers. In the following sections, I expound my answers to the questions.

Acting in theatre

In order to answer the question: “How can I make the content of the training relevant to acting in theatre so that it is not just a physical workout?”, I needed to first clarify what acting in theatre is to me.

Many theatre practitioners have defined acting beautifully. The one I remember hearing a lot in my education is Sanford Meisner’s “Acting is the ability to live truthfully under given imaginary circumstances” (What is Meisner?, 2016). I still think that is a good definition, making it at least comprehensible and often inspiring to those who read it. As much as I’d like to admire the succinctness and profundity of other theatre practitioner’s

concepts of acting, there is not enough space in this thesis to introduce every single one there is.

Instead what I'd like to look into is the most basic phenomenon of acting in theatre: simply what is there when an actor enters a space and stands in front of an audience. If we put aside some varying elements such as a script or narrative, acting style, staging, etc. for a moment, we could focus on the very minimum elements for acting in theatre to be possible: actor, space, audience and time. They intertwine and influence each other to give birth to an art form called theatre. Without any one of the four elements, theatre could not be called theatre, at least in my understanding.

So, within the web of the four elements, what exactly does the actor do? What is her function in all this? I look back on the first moment at the high school culture festival when I performed a one-woman show in front of a group of strangers and all the other moments I was performing in theatre afterwards up till now. What is it that I have been doing as an actor on the stage for all these years? It is hard to articulate it in a few words, but my answer always revolves around two key words: presence and connection.

I've once tried to describe what the actor ultimately should do in theatre as my interaction with Hino sensei influenced and synthesized my knowledge:

... This is actually the most important thing of all that Hino sensei has shown and taught me. It is that the true value of a human life is real human connection. I feel that all his teachings point at it as the ultimate purpose. Once I stand on the stage, there is only the moment of facing and establishing relationships with others. Even with all the well-learned techniques, memorized lines, and hours of rehearsal, that last and most important moment in theatre remains unknown. And its success depends solely on how much my sensitivity can open up and feel the real connection between us in the burning present. (Takeda, Testimonials, 2017).

The connection I talked about in the above indicates the primary function of the actor in theatre. She is the connector of all the elements. She is at the heart of theatre, connecting and giving connections to all the other elements, and becoming the embodiment of a theatrical experience for all that is involved in a shared moment.

That is what acting in theatre is about for me and consequently the thing I want to teach and practice. This connection is almost synonymous with presence. And it is something actor's training should cultivate.

Presence in acting

So, I need to say a few words about presence in acting. When it is discussed in acting, the word assumes different layers of meaning than being present, or it's not talked about in the context of the connection I mentioned in the previous section. For one thing, when we talk about the "stage presence" of an actor, we are mostly referring to charisma and magnetism the actor exudes on stage. It has more to do with talent or something inborn than the actor's skills. I think it is important to shift from the conventional understanding of the actor's presence so that we can talk about it as something we could cultivate in actor training.

I'll reinstate my point about presence generated by connection by presenting another argument.

It starts with the simplest source: a dictionary definition. According to the Dictionary.com website, the first definition of the word is "the state or fact of being present, as with others or in a space" (2017). This is one of the simplest definitions in the English language. In Japanese, it is often translated as "sonzaikan 存在感" (literally "a sense of existence"). Something or someone is existing in a certain space and/or time—that seems to be the minimum condition for the word to be valid.

I look at the definition more closely. "The state or fact of being present, as with others or in a space." The first part is self-explanatory. The second half, "as with others or in a space" needs more careful consideration. When presence is mentioned as something an actor possesses innately (talent), there is no need to consider others or a space. He or she just brings it with him or her wherever or whenever. But when I think about others and a space as a necessary factor to recognize or perceive presence, it becomes important to be aware of what is between the actor and others and/or a space. Without others or a space, there would be no presence perceived. One can only be present with or for the other entity.

Now what does that mean in the context of acting? To keep it simple, I propose a basic situation where an actor stands in front of someone

(audience) in a space. The audience feels that the actor is present or that the actor has presence. What is happening between the actor and the audience when there's presence? What happens before the audience labels his or her experience as "charisma" or "magnetism" or even "strong stage presence"?

I asked the question to myself as well, "What would I experience, if I were the audience, when the actor has presence or is present with me?" I combed through my memories of such experiences in the past and tried to see through the glow of the actor's presence. "What was happening then between me and him or her? What was there really?" I observe it as a connection, or a relationship, or something that binds the two entities in the same sphere of consciousness. "You are there for me. We are in this space and time together"—a connection that leads to all kinds of strong emotion such as consolation, infatuation, joy, security, etc.

A British voice coach Patsy Rodenberg in her lecture at the Howard Acting Studio in 2008 tells a story about a woman who appreciated the presence of the actor. The woman lost her son to suicide. She told Patsy, "The only people who could deal with me in my loss were actors. They came in, knocked on the door, and were present with me" (Howard, 2008). In this story, I can observe a connection that led to deep consolation for the woman.

Anyway, in this line of argument, there is also a key word "connection." The direct, immediate effect of presence is a connection to the other. I find this extremely crucial to understand in order to shift from the mysterious, elusive presence in acting to the one we can cultivate in training.

So, for the pedagogical purpose, I define presence in acting as the act of being present to establish a felt connection between two entities or more. It's not a possession or state of a talented actor. Its success depends on the ability to connect with the other.

Reference points in physical training for actors

A few words about the term "physical training" in the subheading. I prefer to use the word "training" to mean any practice an actor does to improve her artistic abilities, be it so-called a physical method such as Suzuki Method or the non-physical such as script analysis. After all, everything we do or think has a physical dimension. As Moshe Feldenkrais points out, "What is important is that thinking involves a physical function which supports the

mental process. No matter how closely we look, it is difficult to find a mental act that can take place without the support of some physical function (Feldenkrais, *Bodily Expressions*, 2010).”

However, I’m also aware that there are perpetual divisions in actor education in the West that put classes under the label of “acting” and under the label of “movement,” and there’s even one more category of “voice.” The divisions have their benefits and shortcomings. The benefits are about specification and concentration of a particular skill. Sometimes you just need to take voice lessons to be properly heard on the stage, for example. The shortcomings are to do with the possible failure for different techniques to connect with one another, preventing the holistic growth of an actor. Simplified examples of this imbalance or crookedness are: a physically very agile actor cannot embody the drive of a character, or an emotionally expressive actor cannot keep his or her body still, etc.

Instead of contesting the divisions, I would like to focus on so-called “physical” training for actors to make it much more than just a workout to make actors physically fit, to make it relevant to acting in theatre. Based on my own education and my teaching and leading the training sessions for actors with three different techniques (Suzuki Method, Viewpoints, and Hino Method), I’ve come up with six reference points to do so. They are (1) Listening, (2) Focus, (3) Drive, (4) Sensitivity, (5) Stillness, (6) Attitude. They are all in alignment with what acting training is for me: nurturing presence or developing the ability to connect with the other. I’ll briefly explain what each point means in training.

(1) Listening

Listening in acting is not about hearing with ears. It involves the engagement of both the cognitive and physiological faculties. Listening in such a way is happening when one is present, or vice versa.

In Viewpoints, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau list “extraordinary listening” as one of the requirements to begin the Viewpoints training.

To work effectively in the theater, a field that demands intense collaboration, the ability to listen is the defining ingredient. And yet, it is very difficult to listen—to really listen. Through Viewpoints training we learn to listen with the whole body, with the entire being. ... We normally

assume that we are listening when in fact we are preoccupied. Listening involves the entire body in relation to the ever-changing world around us. (Bogart & Landau, 2005).

As the quote indicates, the ability to listen is crucial not only in a creative situation in rehearsal or training but also in a much larger context, namely to work in the field of theatre. It also makes it clear that listening is key to connect to the world around us.

In training, you can always check how you are listening to yourself (the relationship between your body and your thought), others (your scene partners and the audience), and the space you're in. You can even listen to the flow of time. This conscious, attentive way of listening allows curiosity to flourish and improves one's perceptive capacity in general.

One other important thing to keep in mind when listening is to not assume or expect anything as a result. This is also emphasized in the extraordinary listening of Viewpoints (Bogart & Landau, 2005). You see how difficult it is to be in the state of not-assuming anything while you listen to so many things around and in you. Even more challenging is to make choices for action while listening. How can you be open to your own impulses to do or say something while keeping your entire being engaged for listening? I can't tell you how to do it. It is something we practice in training.

(2) Focus

I use a camera metaphor to explain what focus is in training. A photographer (actor) points his or her camera at an object (focus) to take a picture. The sharpness or blurriness of the picture is determined by the photographer's aesthetic. The photographer experiments and plays around the object for different compositions and effects, the relationship between the photographer and the object is constant; his or her center of interest is the object (focus).

The focus is often understood as the concentration of energy on one specific point. That is not entirely wrong because sometimes it does look concentrated. For example, in Suzuki Method, the focus is a specific point in space to which all the actor's energy is directed with much concentration. That is one way to practice the focus. In contrast, in Viewpoints, "soft focus" is needed. It is:

the physical state in which we allow the eyes to soften and relax so that, rather than looking at one or two things in sharp focus, they can now

take in many. By taking the pressure off the eyes to be the dominant and primary information gatherer, the whole body starts to listen and gather information in new and more sensitized ways. (Bogart & Landau, 2005).

Here the focus is in support of the extraordinary listening mentioned in the previous section and put in contrast to sharp focus.

The way I attempt to articulate what the focus is something that includes both opposites of focus: sharp and soft on the level of interest. That means to me to emphasize the relational aspect of the focus, which is illustrated in the camera metaphor above. The focus interests and excites the actor. The focus gives the motivation to the actor to establish a dynamic connection. It includes but is not limited to the concentration of psychic and physical energy as a result. It could be as wide and soft as in Viewpoint's "soft focus" with the result of whole-body listening. It could be as sharp and intense as in Suzuki Method to achieve powerful whole-body expression. The bottom line is that the focus is a point of interest in a time and space where the actor exists. It is not a one-way street action where only you the actor concentrates and throw your energy. It is a two-way street relationship where you constantly influence and get influenced by the focus.

The focus could be an object, a space, a person (your scene partner most of the time), etc. Whatever it is, it's important that the focus is not "you," the actor.

(3) Drive

It often happens in a physical, movement-based technique that the forms take precedence over anything else in the learner's mind. It happened to me during the first years of learning Suzuki Method, which has distinct physical forms. I was a huge fan of the beauty and power of form and structure. I still am, but now I know what is behind the beauty and power. It's drive.

Drive could be interpreted as passion or instinctive need. In training, I often think of it as a visceral energy flow that propels the actor to act.

In Suzuki Method, there is a term "animal energy," whose concept requires the actor to tap into a natural, primordial source of human energy for the whole-body expression and speaking on the stage. It is definitely connected to the drive I am talking about here. And that is also the reason why I often tell students that Suzuki Method is not about the forms. It's not to disregard the

importance of its forms. I just try to point at the even more important question, which is “What gives life to those forms?”

Whether it is a bodily form or a text, drive makes it live in a dramatic moment. And yet, it is something that is impossible for me to “teach.” So, I would like to ask questions instead to instigate the search for it.

What is your drive for action? What drives you to do or say something? How can you find it if you do not feel that you have it now?

(4) Sensitivity

In *Kokoro no katachi – The Image of the Heart*, Hino sensei claims that sensitivity is the single most important element in Budo (Japanese martial arts) and explains how it is awakened and cultivated in the life-long path of becoming a master (2013). The sensitivity in Budo he expounds in the book is rather a complex subject because it involves Japanese traditional culture and its long history. It is a subject matter that needs another thesis or book to properly address it. So, I will not go into it for now.

However, Hino Method is designed to improve sensitivity in a way that is applicable to many areas of life. Simply put, sensitivity is “the ability to *feel* the difference” (Feldenkrais, Embodied Wisdom, 2010). In order to improve sensitivity, one needs to understand why it is important in the first place. In Budo, for example, if you can’t sense the difference in the opponent’s physical movement (direction of force, weight, pressure, etc.), or in your own, there is a high chance that you will get killed in a battle. In daily life, for example, if you can’t properly feel or gauge the relationship between the weight of a box and your force to lift it, you might strain your lower back. So, it is for survival in life and efficiency in performance.

In both Hino Method and Feldenkrais technique, the reduction of tension is mentioned as a necessary factor for efficient movement (Hino, 2017; Feldenkrais, 2010). (I don’t practice Feldenkrais myself, but I find many similarities between Hino and Feldenkrais.) This reduction of tension is not relaxation, as it is commonly understood. That unnecessary tension blocks efficient exertion of energy or power is the point. So, it is important to know that when someone tells you to “relax your shoulder” in some exercise, it does not mean to relax your entire being but to become more sensitive to the efficiency of the whole-body movement.

In training, I often do simple exercises to cultivate sensitivity. Or in any exercise, I try to repeat it many times, not in haste, but rather deliberately to really feel the difference each time in how I am executing it. Not only on the physical level but also on the emotional and the mental levels, you will gradually be able to sense a tiny step of progress you make in doing so. No matter how small the difference, when you can feel it, it shows as a clear difference to those who see you.

(5) Stillness

Stillness is not about not moving physically. It has to do with a clear decision an actor makes and an active state in which she engages in a performative situation. It is something I especially practice through Suzuki Method. Ellen Lauren, co-artistic director of SITI Company and resident company member of SCOT explains eloquently the function of stillness in a performance:

One consequence of the performance dynamic is that it becomes almost impossible to hold onto the excitement inside us and not move. The movement becomes unconscious and habitual. Breath becomes shallow, tension rises, concentration is disrupted—these effects are universal. How can we become more sensitive and monitor those effects that stand between our desire to communicate and our actual execution? The answer is: by practicing stillness, which is the art of seduction. Once the actor is able to make clear decisions in the body, his or her concentration excites the space, and the audience experiences something beyond the quotidian, something that transcends daily life. What is moving inside you is made manifest. It is a deeply personal and intimate revelation of the self. Stillness allows the strength of your convictions to become visible. (Lauren, 2011).

Stillness leads to both the revelation of the actor's inner movement and the magnetic connection with the audience. I would also like to add that stillness is a generous act the actor can do for the audience. To show off or impress with wonderful talents and finesse is rather easy and boosts the ego of the actor. But to allow the audience to see through the exterior of the actor's body and to feel what is moving within takes generosity and artistry. I always appreciate when the actor could make me "see" him or her through stillness in

a performance. It makes me feel that I am connected to the rich inner world of his or hers.

In training, I try to emphasize the active engagement of the entire being, bodily and psychically, in stillness. It is never the absence of movement.

(6) Attitude

The last reference point is about the most basic moral aspect of training: attitude. When we talk about the content of actor training, we hardly address this issue of attitude. It is probably because no one really wants to dictate what the right attitude is for somebody else. And it is also because everybody has a different attitude toward training for variety of reasons. Some people are adamant because it is important for them to be not lazy, while others are lenient because it is important for them to be not so serious in learning. Who is to say which one is better than the other?

I do not think that there is any “right” attitude for training. But I still think it is important to address it because it affects how one trains and learns. In the case of physical training for actors, there is and should be a difference of attitude between when you go to a gym to get fit and when you come to training to practice, say, Suzuki Method. In the gym, you can focus on your physical well-being and have freedom to choose when to exercise and when to quit. But in the training room with other people, not only you affect the others with your attitude but also you are part of the learning process of the whole group.

I do not want to prescribe an attitude for actor training because I know that a situation and a group dynamic vary greatly from session to session. Instead, I encourage myself and others to constantly ask ourselves questions regarding attitude: How do I come into a training room? How am I coming into doing the exercises in training? How am I affecting the learning process of the group and myself with my attitude?

These questions carry over to any working or life situation of an actor.

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE, FLEXIBLE ACTOR TRAINING

This section is a response to the second of the two questions I listed before: How can I make the training flexible and sustainable so that it becomes something that not only caters to the individual needs of actors but also provides a structure for continuation?

Practice is a process of self-realization and discovery

It is quite obvious that when you learn a technique and practice it in training, your focus is on mastering the technique or at least getting better at it. That was my focus, too, when I first started learning, say, Suzuki Method. In terms of familiarizing oneself with the forms and structures of the technique or method, there is nothing problematic in this; One does need to know those things to practice in the first place.

However, training is not just about that. As I have repeated a few times so far in this thesis already, training has larger implications than a physical workout for actors. It is connected to the growth and development of an actor in a long term. Therefore, training has an added layer to the one of mastering a technique.

Hino sensei talks about the word “*keiko*” in martial arts practice. *Keiko* is usually translated as practice or training. But in his lessons, *keiko* is about realizing one’s own habits through the practice of a technique (Hino, Special thank-you and interview with Akira Hino, 2017). These habits include both visible, physical habits such as tension in the body and non-physical ones such as a thought pattern or the content of one’s consciousness in executing physical movements. By realizing one’s own habits, there is a possibility to find a different pathway to execute a movement, in a way that is more efficient and more in alignment with the natural functions of the human body.

The concept of *keiko* is key to transforming so-called “physical training” for actors, which emphasizes the control and improvement of the physiological part of the actor’s skills, into a process of self-realization and discovery about his/herself. Mastering a technique becomes a byproduct of the process, not the ultimate goal of the training.

In fact, after meeting Hino sensei and observing his workshops, I started to encourage careful observation of one's own mentality or mindset in doing exercise as well as awareness of one's physical habits in training.

Framing practice as a process of self-realization and discovery also prevents what I call "the download mentality" in trainees. With the proliferation of smartphone and digital technology in our daily life, almost everything is instantly attainable by clicking a button on the screen. We often download the contents we want to possess and consume from the Internet. Everything we want to know and learn is at our fingertips. This seemingly innocent adjustment to the digital age has a subtle but deeper influence on the way we humans operate cognitively such as the difficulty of sustaining attention (Carr, 2011; Plumridge, 2013). The specific influences and implications of the Internet in our lives are a vast topic, and no way I can open it up and properly discuss it in this thesis. I would just like to point out that we have become more and more impatient with the time in which we attain information because of the increasing influence of the Internet. We have become accustomed to the fast knowledge and the fast answers to questions. This contributes to the mentality that everything we want to learn can be attained instantly by "downloading" appropriate information or so-called learning apps on our smartphones. Once we download it, we just move onto the next thing. We'd like to "get" the answers to master a technique so that we can say that "we've learned it already."

But in training, especially now that we're talking about *keiko*, you do not really "attain" anything from a technique itself. The source of information that has any worth is yourself, and it is infinite. A learning process in training becomes not about the accumulation of knowledge or satisfying the hunger for instant answers but about developing the sensitivity to subtle movement in one's growth. In contrast to the download mentality, I would like to think of that kind of sensitivity as "growing a tree." It takes time and patience to grow a tree, and a tree grows both up as branches and leaves and down as roots. And all the time the core, the trunk is gaining layers to become thicker and stronger. Every time you train you're dealing with the same subject, yourself (tree). Through careful observation and awareness, you'll start to see that you are indeed growing in a way that is not obviously visible in a short span of time. It's a slow process of forming embodied knowledge, but a unique process

for each person. No two trees are alike. So, the knowledge you gain through this process is your own.

This tree metaphor also resonates well with the first acting lesson I had with Kathryn McGill at UCO: “Acting is a craft.” Craft takes time to develop and needs continuous work and attention to how it grows as the actor’s artistry.

Language used in actor training should lead to embodied experience

I think it is self-evident enough to say that actor training is an embodied practice. The actor at some point in her process engages her own body to express something on the stage. Because of this nature of acting, in training the language we use to communicate with one another needs to be connected to the embodied experience in some way. Semantic precision and scientific objectivism might be called for in the academic discourse about acting, but language does not function on the level of objectivity in the practice of acting. For example, with one definition of acting “the ability to live truthfully under given imaginary circumstances” (What is Meisner?, 2016), if you take the word “truthfully” and start to question what truth is referred to in this sentence, you will soon find yourself in utter confusion and frustration that everyone interprets the word differently. Phillip B. Zarrilli in *Acting (Re)Considered* points out the highly metaphorical nature of languages in acting and cautions the reader to “not mistake a discourse about acting as a representation of the thing that the discourse attempts to describe- the practice of acting” (16). Zarrilli is succinct in suggesting that we admit “all languages of acting are necessarily inadequate and therefore provisional” and constantly consider “the context of their use and the degree to which a language can help us to make sense of the complexities of the bodymind’s relationship to action/acting, and to the ideology implicit in any kind of acting” (16).

I do not think that this inherent inadequacy and provisionalness of language in acting is problematic. Zarrilli also encourages theatre practitioners to embrace “the freedom of not having to find a ‘universal’ language once and for all” (16). It is the freedom to search “for languages of acting which best allow one to actualize a particular paradigm of performance in a particular context for a particular purpose” (16). It makes a language

malleable and adaptable to the complex universe of the present moment where many influences and contexts intersect.

My search for a language in actor training has been about clarifying the function of language.

There are two different phases in training. When I explain an exercise to a student, I make sure that the meanings of the words and sentences are clear so that the exercise is properly executed. When I give feedback to the student, I use the language primarily to evoke some response in the student. At this phase, it's no longer my main concern to explain everything in words, but I focus on pointing at the direction or the perspective I would like the student to see. I give you an example to explain the difference between the first and the second phases of my language use. Let's say that you are about to go into the forest, and I tell you what to wear, what to bring, what you could do, and what you should not do for the forest adventure. Then when you are in the woods, you encounter and discover all kinds of things, which fascinate you. I watch you from a distance and realize that there are thousands of stars in the night sky, but you're glued to a mushroom you've just discovered on the ground. It is just impractical for me to tell you how many stars are in the sky and what they are called and how they were born trillions of years ago, etc. So, I just say to you, "Look up! The stars!" Then you do look up and see the stars. The words I use at that moment do not mean much on their own, but in that moment in the forest with you and me, they function as a pointer to an experience of realization and discovery.

Another thing I would like to point out about language in acting is the physicality of language. As much as I'd like to stay away from the academic discourse about acting, which tends to isolate itself from the actual practice of acting, I love using words and talk about language in actor training. Spoken words or the sounds the actor releases on the stage is a physical experience both for the actor and for the ones who listen to them. This physicality cannot be comprehended semantically alone. I experienced it firsthand when I saw the Shakespeare touring company shows in Oklahoma and worked at Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park. I often didn't understand the semantic meanings of Shakespeare's language, but the physicality of his language spoken and embodied by the actors gave me an experience I couldn't have

gained from just reading the words on the page. My whole body was engaged in it.

So, when I use texts in training, the focus is placed on the physicality of the words and its effect on the experience of the actor because I think that is another layer of language that is as important as the semantic understanding of it.

The relationship between teacher and student is interactive and humanistic

When I look back on my education and think about how I interacted with great teachers, a few things come to mind as the common thread of a fruitful teacher-student relationship. One is that they are open to conversations. They are curious to know how I am doing and are willing to share their experience and expertise in a sociable way. I do not mean to say that all teachers should be friendly and agreeable to students. My point is that a teacher should not close her communication channel to and from the student.

An educational theorist John Dewey talks about the quality of experience in education and how it is influenced by the teacher. He regards education as essentially a social process in which the development of educative experience could be realized through interaction among all parties involved, namely teacher and pupil (Dewey, 1997). I could not agree with Dewey more. Even in a pedagogical situation where students are given total freedom to learn things on their own and any hierarchical, authoritative imposition from others is repudiated, the interaction with the teacher is still important in a fundamental sense. Dewey expounds:

Since freedom resides in the operations of intelligent observation and judgement by which a purpose is developed, guidance given by the teacher to the exercise of the pupils' intelligence is an aid to freedom, not a restriction upon it. Sometimes teachers seem to be afraid even to make suggestions to the members of a group as to what they should do. ... It is impossible to understand why a suggestion from one who has a larger experience and a wider horizon should not be at least as valid as a suggestion arising from some more or less accidental source. (Dewey, 1997)

It is possible to abuse the position of teacher to impose some selfish agenda and dictate the student's experience according to it. But in my experience, at least, that has never happened because the interaction has been based in respect and trust.

This leads me to talk about the second thing about the fruitful teacher-pupil relationship. It is humanity. I respect and trust my teachers not only because of their expertise and knowledge but also because of their genuine interest in my welfare as a human being. I do not mean to say that all my teachers know everything about my personal life. They do not. What I mean by humanity is that the teacher treats students as fellow human beings and is aware that their development and education encompass the whole life, not just what happens in a classroom or a rehearsal studio.

One good example of this is Hino sensei. Besides his practical advice and directions for my acting skills, he often shares his stories about how he dealt with challenging situations in his life and turned them into learning opportunities for him. We the students listen to them as a banter at the dinner table after the lesson or as we walk down the street together to go back home. Hino sensei once said to me that those seemingly casual social occasions were the moments when I could learn the real lessons of life. One of those lessons happened when I was working for Hino sensei as his translator in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 2012. At the time I was quite distressed by some personal circumstance and confided in him out of desperation. One evening, he walked me back to the hostel where I was staying. As we were walking together, he told me, "It's like an antenna, you see? The more you experience something like that, however painful or desperate, the bigger your antenna becomes to catch more interesting things in life." His words put my experience in perspective, and they helped me to turn it into a learning opportunity for my personal growth.

Here the important is the understanding of the nature of a fruitful teacher-student relationship. I am not suggesting that teachers should give life lessons all the time. An interactive, humanistic relationship that gives possibilities for such lessons is my point and what I would like to build with others in actor training.

The content of the training is flexible to the students' needs, in alignment with their development, and connected to their lives as actors

An educational theorist John Dewey's philosophy about educative experience mirrors quite a big portion of what I consider to be the content for sustainable, flexible training. He argues that there are criteria for educative experience: continuity and interaction (Dewey, 1997). As one of the exemplification of continuity, he mentions continuous "growth, or growing as developing, not only physically, but intellectually and morally" (Dewey, 1997). Thus an educative experience is something that affects the quality of the subsequent experiences, or the future of a learner. And Dewey's idea of interaction is to do with careful observation of and sensitivity towards the interplay of objective and internal conditions of the learner, which he calls "a situation" (Dewey, 1997). The situation calls for the adaptation of materials and methods according to the needs and capacities of individuals in a pedagogical setting (1997). According to Dewey, the two principles of continuity and interaction intercept and unite to form an educative experience so that "what he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow" (1997).

Dewey's continuity is similar to my idea of sustainability in that the significance of it is in the continuing growth of the actor's artistry. Continuing growth calls for the flexibility of the training content according to the needs of the trainee, which echoes Dewey's principle of interaction. It is then no coincident that what Dewey says about the educator's planning for educative experiences resonates with what I strive to do for the content-creation for training.

He must survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individuals with whom he is dealing and must at the same time arrange the conditions which provide the subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and develop these capacities. The planning must be flexible enough to permit free play for individuality of experience and yet firm enough to give direction towards continuous development of power. (Dewey, 1997, p. 58)

The plan, in other words, is a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation. The teacher's suggestion is not a mold for a cast-iron result but is a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experience of all engaged in the learning process. (Dewey, 1997, p. 72)

The first part of the quotation means to me that I need to listen very carefully to what is happening in the training room. I need to be able to read the mental and physical conditions of the trainees or students quickly and accurately enough to generate a content that stimulates their curiosity and promotes full engagement and continuous development of their artistry. The second part of the quotation to me is about continuous dialogue or interaction between me and others in the training. I form and change the content according to how they react to my feedback and instructions.

One other thing about the flexible content of the training is that they should not be placed in isolation from other acting methods or training students are engaged in. I think that different acting methods and techniques should enhance and enrich each other as the actor learn them, instead of excluding each other and confusing the actor. The bottom line is that what actors do in training need to be relevant in whatever they do as actors. That is why I listed the reference points in my physical training to connect the content of it with the practice of acting on a fundamental level, so that it is applicable to any situation an actor might encounter in her education and career. The last thing I want from actor training is that someone learns and practices a technique but has no idea how to apply it in her work.

The teacher is also a practicing artist

The last principle is about the teacher's identity. Without an exception, the teachers who influenced me greatly in my artistic growth are great artists themselves and never present themselves with a single label of "teacher." Kathryn McGill, my first acting teacher, is an actor and director, who directs and sometimes perform with her students. Amy Herzberg, my acting teacher in graduate school, calls herself theatre teaching artist and feels that her teaching is artistic and creative (A. Herzberg, personal communication, March 7, 2018). Hino sensei thinks that he is only studying what he deems to be the most important and fundamental in Budo, martial arts, with other people.

And his interests and expertise make him not only a martial arts master but also director, author, lecturer, movement coach, jazz musician, and many other things. SITI Company members, who have been teaching Suzuki Method and Viewpoints to many artists for many years, believe that “a balance between teaching, learning and doing is critical for an artist’s life” and that “training is an essential and central component of a performing artist’s lifestyle, not just their education” (Philosophy, 2018). What they all have in common is that the core of their identity lies in their artistry, which they practice throughout their lives. So, when they teach something, it is never about passively transmitting information to the students. It is their ways of practicing and learning as artists as well.

One of my Suzuki Method teachers once said during a training session, after giving someone her feedback, “This is from artist to artist.” For me, that epitomizes what teaching acting is about for a teacher. We are all learners in our craft and must practice together and inspire one another with our individual artistry.

Specifically speaking, my practice as a teacher and artist in training is to build connections with and between the students, the space, and the subject-matter for nurturing of presence. I believe that the ability to connect is key to presence in acting. So, in a way, I’m practicing acting on a meta-level when I teach acting or lead an actor training session.

CASE STUDIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

So far in this thesis, my pedagogical principles for actor training have been laid out. The principles function as a working hypothesis for me to try out and incorporate into my actual pedagogical work. The following case studies are about the two pedagogical projects of mine that have had the principles in practice more clearly than others. The reflections and interviews done for the projects are to illuminate the influence and effects of my pedagogical viewpoint for actor training supported by all that I have written in this thesis thus far.

The effects of long-term physical training: a conversation with Juha Sääski

As I have mentioned in the personal history of my actor training, I have been leading physical training sessions that consist mainly of Suzuki Method of Actor Training on a regular basis (once or twice a week) in various locations in Helsinki since 2011. The session is often led by me, and the number of participants has been fluctuating anywhere between one and six, with the average of two persons. Each session usually lasts two hours. Since I got admitted to the master's program in theatre pedagogy at Theatre Academy in 2016, the frequency of the training has gone down. Nonetheless, it is a long-term project that has borne noticeable changes in its content and structure over time.

Juha Sääski is one of the training participants who have attended most frequently.

He is a fifty-year-old theatre artist in Helsinki. He had first started out as an actor in amateur theatre when he was sixteen and decided to pursue his professional career as a theatre artist when he was twenty-seven years old. He is currently the chairperson of the board at Höyhentämö (Pluckhouse), a Finnish theatre company producing contemporary theatre, dance, and other performances. He describes his training history as "critical eclecticism." He has been exposed to many different techniques, including Suzuki Method and

Viewpoints. He explains, “Critical eclecticism is not the same as just picking the best parts of everything” (J. Sääski, personal communication, February 26, 2018). It is to commit to one technique for a certain time and then to jump to a different technique for a while to accumulate embodied knowledge of different things. Then after a certain time, one can form an overall picture of how different techniques operate in relation to one another and can start to construct things that are important for one’s work. He clarifies it as follows, “It really means that if you are studying a discipline, you should really know where it comes from and what’s the point of or the history of it” (J. Sääski, 2018).

To evaluate the process of the long-term training, I asked Juha if I could interview him about it and how he has experienced it so far. The following passages are the excerpts from the interview that took place on February 26, 2018 at Room 403 at the Theatre Academy. The interview turned out to be a conversation where both of us were reflecting on the process. So, it is best to be read as it occurred without my interpreting in between.

Grammatical corrections and the omission of certain speech disfluency and non-lexical vocals (such as um, well, so, or any repeated or half-finished sentences) have been applied for the sake of clarity.

On the change of approach to training

Yuko: In terms of my way of instructing you or leading the training session, has there been any change during these years of training?

Juha: Subjectively it feels to me that you have slowed down and now work with fewer elements and try to put the deeper consideration of what we are doing into them as a bigger structure. I think that this process has been with this gradual slowing down and putting more consideration on each thing we do and work with fewer elements but work deeper with them. This is a line that has been all the time, regardless of your studies here at TeaK. But after you got into this pedagogical program, there was a clearer change towards that.

Yuko: What do you mean by “elements”?

Juha: I mean just the amount of exercises there are in Suzuki Method. Also compared to the pace and intensity of a ten-day or two-week workshop with the SITI Company members, we've been training on a weekly basis, not every week, but something like that. I don't know why we or how we started or how you started it. It is always the case that after a very intensive workshop where everyone wants to continue somehow, but then something else comes and it just drops. But we actually did this, that we trained every once in a while. I mean that's already one reason why the element of sustainability comes into picture. We cannot live in a two-week intensive workshop atmosphere all the time, or we can, but it doesn't make any sense. So, one of the elements is that we are not trying to do as many exercises as the intensive workshop during the training hour. You were also guiding people to pick their own things, what they would be working with, and you encouraged them to find focuses and stick with them the whole period. So, that's also an element: what I choose to work with.

On the position of the long-term training

Yuko: So, in your training history or the philosophy that you have built for yourself, what is the position of this type of training for you right now?

Juha: For me, it's mainly about practicing something. It's not really about studying a method although we are studying the method when we train it. But the main focus is not that. This kind of training has become for me something like a good habit instead of bad habits like smoking for me. For me, it's one way of doing something when I don't have projects going on and it still feels like that I'm training for my work. I work with myself and my body and my mind, and this is related to the work I do, have done, or will do in the future.

On my intention in leading the training

Juha: What was your intention in leading the training session?

Yuko: I'm not just giving you the curriculum of the day and you do that and learn something and go home—that was not my intention. My intention was more to be part of the training process with you by being present and by engaging myself in your process somehow without being a nazi. Does that make sense? What's the word, very didactic?

Juha: Maybe. Like, “Don’t do that, do this! Never do like this!” That’s actually an important part of the training also. Well, you don’t have to be a nazi to give direct feedback. Correcting something doesn’t make you a nazi.

Yuko: No, no, no. What I mean is that even though the content of my feedback might be the same such as “Hey, why don’t you work on the elbows” or “Hey, your shoulders are a little bit tense,” my perspective from which I say those things has been evolving. From a pure form correction to “I see you as a person who’s been in the process of something, and at this point in time you’re like this, and maybe if I give you this feedback, then it might deepen the process a little bit more.” So, I’m not looking at your training or what you do from a...

Juha: Yes, you’re not comparing it to a model, like, “Oh no, that was wrong, no.” But that’s also been part of the perception in the training. The feedback that doesn’t really point at a mistake or not correcting something may have an influence that also changes how you should do something right. This is one of the differences in working in a bigger group and in a smaller group. This kind of working in a bigger group wouldn’t make any sense; everybody would be just puzzled in their minds. But, I really have felt your feedback as something that was really for me.

Yuko: If I lead a training session for someone, then I want the training to be for that someone. You know, it’s ultimately your process. You have the power and will to evaluate and determine the direction of your practice. But at the same time, I don’t want to be a passive bystander of your process.

On the experience of the training leader and content-building

Juha: I have been feeling good in the training, “Wow, I have this kind of private session. And I’m not even paying for it.” *[Laughs]* And it is a real luxury. But I also felt that you were also training and it’s your training, too. There must be something for you, too, because otherwise you would not do it. So, what has the training been for you?

Yuko: It's never a one-way street thing for me. Even though I'm instructing you in some way, my practice is, first of all, to be very precise in what I'm teaching. So, that makes me motivated to get better at the basic stuff about the technique such as Suzuki Method. I have to be up to a certain skill level to teach you. So, that's one level, but on another level, I was practicing to listen to what's happening. It sounds really simple and mundane, but it's oftentimes the case that there was this pressure to have some plans, "Ok, this is what I want to teach today, and this is the theme, and this exercise would be good for this purpose" and so and so forth. But then at the same time, you come in with your own baggage or your own problems or your own issues, which sometimes match with my plan, which sometimes don't. So, how to compromise my plans and your issues and challenges, and how to adjust. In order to do that, I really had to listen to you, not only verbally, but also to the way you carry yourself that day, the emotional temperament, and everything you can think of about a human being. I have to read how you are and then adjust accordingly. That takes a lot of practice. It's a constant conflict. I have a certain thing in mind, but then that's not what you need necessarily. But then how do I know that? you know? That kind of dialogue is going on inside of me. That's the meta practice that I was doing in leading the training. To do that, I really had to know the method and what each exercise is for and what I can practice in each form and exercise so that I can be flexible to your needs and challenges. So, that makes me a better Suzuki practitioner in general. In that sense it has been very meaningful, beneficial to have a regular training session with you and with other people.

Juha: But that's an interesting question of how much to do that. I don't know because I haven't been through your process. But it could theoretically be also the case that this person seems to need this and this person seems to be in this kind of emotional, physical, or whatever state, but actually he or she would benefit from the exact thing that the leader/instructor/teacher planned beforehand, without this knowledge, and it starts out that way and everything goes smoothly according to what he or she had planned. I mean, theoretically speaking, this could also work. But even then, you have, of course, interaction. You have to adjust to another person, of course.

Yuko: Yeah, the word interaction is very important here. Of course, the starting point is this; You come in and I'm here, and we start training, and I say something, and you react to that thing, and that changes everything, right? It's a constant, unknown element. I give out something to you according to what I read from you, and then you give something back, and it might not be the thing I was expecting, but then it is what it is. So then, it's not so much about giving you the right combination of things to do or giving the right exercise to do. It's more so that I can have a dialogue. In order to have a dialogue, I have to first read and receive what you have and then give something back. So there's a constant back-and-forth happening. And that itself is the content of the training, not just the exercises I give, but also the interaction we have in between, however brief. This is also a part of building the training together, for me at least. That's another level that I've been aware of. It's almost like building the training content together in a way. That has become more and more so lately.

Juha: Yeah, I felt that, too. It's sort of like building it together especially when there were not that many other people.

On the first phase of leading training and struggle in teaching Suzuki Method

Yuko: It has been a process for me to come up with my current pedagogical approach to training. I don't think I had it in the beginning.

Juha: I'm trying to remember the first time you were teaching. It was one of the first times we were training here in TeaK with the group that took the workshop in Esitystaiteen keskus in Suvilahti, organized by Myllyteatteri in October 2011. Can you recall what your focus was or what you were working with when you led those first exercises?

Yuko: I was looking mainly for the combination of exercises and how to make it flow. I was mainly focusing on the physical energy flow of the group, trying not to get it sag so much, to keep it moving. So I would give them exercises to do that. I wasn't really focusing on the individual needs at the time. It was more about keeping the form of the method intact, and I was trying to emulate how Ellen Lauren (my Suzuki Method teacher) leads the training or how other

SITI Company members lead the training. I was trying to emulate them in a way because I was highly inspired by them. I'm still inspired and respect them so much. That was the first phase for me, if I remember correctly, but overtime, it's just changed. I look for different things in training now.

Juha: Yes, I've seen that. That reminds me of the earlier days when I first participated in the Suzuki workshop led by a SITI Company member, about ten years ago. My fellow participants and I were quite impressed by the technique and we all wanted to continue training. But I eventually realized that when the beginners without much experience try to lead a Suzuki training session, the training tends to be about emulating the strictness and the authority of the training leader. So, they tend to become somebody else that is overly strict and authoritarian to lead the training, which makes the whole training hierarchical in a weird way. I think that the experienced Suzuki practitioners understand the meaning of the strict structure of the training and agree on it so that it doesn't become an issue. It's a different thing to require strictness for a purpose of the exercise and to point out the mistakes people make in the forms that are strict. That doesn't mean that everything between the exercises has to be strict. And the strictness also serves as the usage of time, which is important when one is acting. But it doesn't have a value of its own for me.

But you were never, after a SITI workshop, you were never trying to emulate strictness. Maybe that's why, as you said, in the beginning you tried to emulate the energy in the succession of the exercises. But you weren't acting like some other being or someone else.

I guess many people who have been in SITI Company classes would like to teach it. It's natural to try to emulate the SITI Company's way of training. But clearly you had the process where your way of teaching or your way of approaching the pedagogical situation has developed something that is more of your own.

On the drive behind the long-term training

Yuko: I've been driven by the desire to improve myself and how I train with other people. That was my drive behind this long-term training. I wasn't really concerned about the outside, superficial level of commitment, like a two-week

workshop or three months or one semester. I was more interested in what motivates the actor to train.

Juha: To see change. If the change is positive. If you train long enough, you also see negative change because your body changes. For me, the training is also the thing that makes a difference. Because it is easy to fall when you have less work, and you are less active. You can start to feel, “Ugh, why am I doing it, why am I even trying to do something like this? It doesn’t make a difference to anybody.” But in a training session that is intensive, when there are other people who find it meaningful, all of a sudden you get the feeling that this makes a difference in the world. And that is sort of a main motivator or something that I’m searching even though it doesn’t feel like that after every training session. Many training sessions are like, “Ok, it was nice.” I didn’t even feel like going there at all sometimes. But it was still nice. I used the word good habit before, and having it as a habit keeps you going on even though you’re not super excited all the time. The main reason I realize now as I speak is the fact that there’s always the search of desiring the things that makes a difference. It makes sense to do theatre.

Yuko: Because it makes a difference.

Juha: Yeah, but the feeling of making a difference isn’t always there. So it needs to be searched and nurtured.

Yuko: So, overall, if I understood you correctly, this type of approach that I take for training is sustainable for you?

Juha: It is sustainable, I would say so definitely. It has its challenges. Sometimes it has felt a bit difficult to keep the necessary vigor in the work. But it hasn’t lasted for a long time. I think we’ve been very good in keeping it focused and strict enough so that it wouldn’t evaporate. It has been really nice and good that it has been going on. Even the moments when I’ve felt, “Ugh, why are we doing it?” make sense because very often the sudden deepening or the sudden realizations are very close to the moments when you feel like you lose the whole thing. The most interesting things lurk behind boredom.

The Imagination of Violence Course

In the early spring semester of 2018 at Theatre Academy of University of Arts Helsinki, I took part in a course titled Imagination of Violence – atelier 1 for my teaching practice. It was a six-week course (from January 8 to February 16, 2018) with six acting students from the Swedish acting department. The students were in the age range of 22 to 28. The main teacher of the course was theatre director and postdoctoral researcher Davide Giovanzana. I was there as a second pedagogue. How I got involved in this course needs a little explanation.

The course was initiated by Davide as a part of his research project. In addition to researching how theatre can respond to violence, Davide's project had the concept of incorporating artistic research into actor's education at the bachelor level at the academy (D. Giovanzana, personal communication, March 4, 2018). He contacted Tutke the Performing Arts Research Centre (TUTKE) and the Swedish acting department to realize his project. Because of this experimental, pioneering nature of the course, he was suggested that he contact the pedagogy department to find someone who could document the process of the course (D. Giovanzana, 2018). I was the one who got chosen for the job.

My primary task was therefore to document. I observed the course most of the time, when Davide was teaching the students techniques such as Lacoq technique, masks, and various other physical improvisations, when there were theoretical lectures on violence and discussions among the students and Davide, and when the students were working on their monologues with him. I took notes and pictures to remember what they did and wrote a blog post weekly to reflect on the week's work. The blog posts were published on the University of Arts Helsinki website under the blog title of *Acting as expertise - Skådespelarkonst som expertis* (web address: <http://www.uniarts.fi/blogi/acting-expertise-sk%C3%A5despelarkonst-som-expertis>).

In addition to documentation, I was also asked to lead a physical training session at the beginning of each day. The session lasted for 90 minutes on average. It consisted mostly of Suzuki Method and Hino Method. As the course progressed, I became more and more involved in the students' process by giving personal feedback not only on their performance during training but also on their work with Davide. I also lead the reflection sessions at the

halfway and at the end of the course. Overall, the course turned out to be an excellent opportunity for me to incorporate the principles I laid out in the previous chapter into my work in an actual pedagogical situation.

I would like to assess the influence of my pedagogical work: observing, training, giving feedback, and blogging in the course in some way. Instead of stating my subjective opinion, the following are the reflections of others in the course regarding my work.

Feedback from the director and main teacher

For Davide the main pedagogue, my involvement and presence as a second pedagogue affected his project positively and helped him navigate through it without getting lost as to the direction of the course (D. Giovanzana, personal communication, March 4, 2018). He wrote to me via email, “You became a kind of ‘pillar’ giving strength to the students by leading a daily session on Suzuki and Hino method. This apparently simple action of leading the warm up actually helped to give a ‘physical’ ground to the students” (2018). He goes on to reflect further on my influence in the course:

The blog helped them to reflect on the work done during the week. It gave a trace. They could "see" again what they did during the week. I realize now that we should have used more what you wrote. There is no doubt about the positive impact of the Suzuki and Hino method. That was a perfect counterpoint to the research process. I am now considering your "presence" in documenting the process. This documentation is, of course, extremely useful for me and for the departments on a political level of defending/promoting artistic research. But I am wondering how this documentation could have been integrated more in the process as a material to reflect on the work and fostering awareness or new thoughts. I agree with some critique that the theoretical work and the practical work could have been more intertwined. Maybe by relying more on your texts we could have reprocessed what has been done and tried again from a different angle, physical and/or theoretical. But this is also something that I am discovering: how to integrate documentation in the process. This could be actually a method of artistic research. Doing, documenting, processing the documentation and re-do based on the documentation,

which will be again documented. Maybe this will be implemented in the next atelier to be followed. (D. Giovanzana, personal communication, March 4, 2018)

Davide's feedback implies to me that it was also possible for to practice presence or to connect with the others through written reflections and documentation or my blog, as well as in physical training.

Interview with the students

The assessment would not be complete without the inputs from the students. So, I conducted interviews with two of the six students from the course. I refer to the first student as Student A, and the second, Student B to protect their privacy.

Interview with Student A was conducted on March 1st, 2018 at Room 701 at TeaK (Theatre Academy).

Interview with Student B was conducted on March 6th, 2018 at the library at TeaK.

In both interviews I asked questions concerning the following topics:

- (1) The student's process in the course in terms of challenges and discoveries
- (2) How my presence as an observer affected the student's learning process
- (3) How my way of teaching Suzuki Method was different from the previous course the students had with a different teacher
- (4) What the student remembers from my teaching

Additional information in the interview is inserted with brackets.

- (1) The student's process in the course in terms of challenges and discoveries

Both Student A and B told me stories about being self-critical or overly judgmental as one of their challenges in the course. They also mentioned the mindset of artistic research, which is process-oriented and takes distance from hasty judgment, as something that affected them strongly in their processes.

Here is what they said in the interview:

Student A: My challenge was the feeling of self-judgement. I really enjoy when something is going well, but when it's not going well, then it's hard to get over the feeling of being self-critical. I don't know if I cracked any code to deal with that. But that was what I was focusing on. I try to notice when my brain goes like, "Ok, it's going well!" and when I'm judging like, "Ugh, this sucks! I hate it!" It [*An element of artistic research*] changed my mindset to come into the room and really search. It's some kind of mindset that is not so serious.

Student B: I had the flu from the beginning part of the course, for which I was absent. But I don't know how it actually affected my process. Although I chose to take the course because the subject was interesting to me, I did have this apprehension about how Davide would work with us and what his intentions were for the course in the beginning. I was also apprehensive about the fact that there were two pedagogues in the room to observe and give advice to us. I felt like I was getting attacked by everybody! [*Laughs*] Of course, that's quite normal that you get advice from the director, the assistant director, and others in the process. But I think that I was so much in my head that I just couldn't process that for the first part of the course.

For example, I was asked to "have fun" when we were working on the Pop culture violence. To do that, I was asked, "What did you enjoy when you were a kid? What video games did you play as a kid?" But I just thought, "I liked to read books. I was such a calm child. I wasn't violent!" [*Laughs*] But then, on that Friday of the week four, when we had the talk, I really opened up and shared my issue with the rest of the class. And I read your blog after that, and in it there was this last line about your advice to try to enjoy it. [*The exact line in the blog goes: "I would encourage the students to ease the pressure of an artistic research and nourish their playful spirit and a sense of fun for their endeavors (Takeda, Violence and Fun, 2018)."*] That really helped me to be not so much in my head and say, "Ok, now I'm just gonna go with it."

I then just tried to let myself be an actor, not so much thinking about what it is that I'm doing or how it will be seen by the audience. I knew that there would be a demo performance in the end of the course. So, how people would perceive the work we were doing was somehow always

in the back of my mind. I wouldn't say that it was an obstacle, but because the work could be something that drives us to provoke or to shock the audience, it was something that kept crossing my mind almost until the end of the course.

At some point I felt that I needed to justify what we were doing, the justification that this is artistic research, whose attitude is more like, "Let's see where it goes," and not so much about worrying about the end result. To not try to overthink or not try to judge what we are doing and what I'm doing was really something. Judging and evaluating not to say, "Oh this is wrong! Someone will be offended or feel uncomfortable by this!" but in a way so that I could be aware of what we were doing and accept it as it is. That was really something I could take with me for the future.

In short, I feel quite a big arch of my learning process in the course even though I wasn't at my full capacity for the first part because of the flu. But that was also a part of the process.

It was such a nice process, but I was so happy to move onto something else at the end. Even though it was nice and I felt easier to be in the room towards the end, it was such a powerful subject that it did come home with me, you know? I was watching Netflix and trying to relax, but I would start to observe the things we were doing and talking about in class. And it was also in my dreams. Even though it was "the actor's body" that did the work, I was still there, you know? It still followed me somehow into my dreams in the night. So it was a bit challenging. It was a relief when it ended for that reason.

But I felt really proud of what we had done during the course for all of us. A sense of pride that was almost surprising, "Oh wow, what did we do?!" So, that was really nice.

(2) How my presence as an observer affected the student's learning process

In both interviews, I acknowledged the fact that I was a second pedagogue who was mostly observing their processes with the main pedagogue Davide Giovanzana. Both of them implied that my presence was a positive influence for them even when I was not directly involved. For Student A, my presence helped to connect different parts of the course such as Davide's mask work and my Suzuki Method training as one coherent learning experience. For

Student B, my presence was something that eased the pressure of being evaluated by one pedagogue. Both students said that my presence was not judgmental, which made it easier for them to take me in as part of their learning process.

Here are our exchanges in the interview.

With Student A

Yuko: I was mostly in the corner, observing you while the main teacher Davide taught you. What did my presence do to you? I would say that I was watching 90% of the time. How did you take me in?

Student A (A): Well, maybe that was why the connection between Davide's mask work and Suzuki was close because you were still there in the room when we did the mask work. The struggles I had in Suzuki and in the monologue stayed connected because your eyes were there. That also reminded me of the things I needed to work on. In fact, a lot of what I was focusing on in the monologue work was coming from the Suzuki work with you, like, "Where's the floor?", "Where am I speaking from?" etc. while taking in what Davide was saying to me because you were in the room. I was thinking, "What bodily focus I can use to make it fun and interesting and connected to me?" Sometimes I forgot that you were there, but sometimes it was a big impact to have someone like you in the room. It gave more layers to the work.

I also felt very seen and heard during the course. I think you also played a part in that. Because there were only six students, there was very little room to not be seen. Because you were there, there was even less room to slip under the radar, to go unseen or unheard.

Yuko: Even if I seemed to be not doing anything, just sitting and taking pictures every once in a while, it was a practice for me to watch you in a way that's not, like, "I'm watching a YouTube video or Netflix." I was trying to watch you as if I were a part of your process.

A: That I somehow felt. For example, it was very comfortable to take you in in doing monologues or doing other work. It was not a scary gaze or in any way judgmental or "not-there-with-you." Maybe that's what I meant

by saying that sometimes I forgot that you were there in a way. It maybe was not forgetting that you were there. It was a very natural gaze. You weren't just an observer just sitting there still, I felt. For example, when your supervisor for your teaching practice came to watch us and you, that was a very different gaze, compared to yours. Maybe it was because he was new and everything, but still it was different.

With Student B

Yuko: How did my observing affect your process? Were you aware of my being there observing your process?

Student B: I was aware that you were there. But I didn't feel that I was "under your gaze." It was also because your personality is so calm and non-judgmental. I really feel that I wasn't like, "I'm performing for you." I wasn't stopping myself because you were there at all. I felt that your presence was very neutral, but at the same time I was very happy that you were there because there were two sets of eyes in the room so that it didn't feel like I was watched by this one person of authority. We were doing things that were on the edge, demanding and intense, so it was nice to have a second person to whom I could go and ask, "What did you think?" or "How did you react?" But it was also nice that you didn't necessarily tell your opinions about it unless I came to ask, "Yuko, what did you think about this?" It was very positive that you were there.

(3) How my way of teaching Suzuki Method was different from the previous course the students had with a different teacher

Both students had taken a Suzuki Method course with a different teacher about a year before the Imagination of Violence course. The reason why I asked the question is not to say which one was better by comparing my teaching with the other teacher's. I just wanted to see how they perceived the difference.

Both students mentioned the isolation of the method's content from other courses and strictness in the teacher's way of conducting the session as what they experienced in the previous Suzuki Method course. In contrast, both students mentioned how the method taught by me was connected to other

areas in their work as actors. Overall, in my training, they seemed to have learned how the method could be applied or practiced as their own actor training.

Here is what they said in the interview.

Student A: In the previous class, things went in a stricter structure. It was what I needed. It was about the discipline of the technique: putting yourself in a certain body position and not showing discomfort and breathing correctly. But that's the same with you. But we did each exercise for a longer time and there were more sessions in the previous one.

With you, because it was so connected to what we did with the mask work with Davide, it was more like a technique that can be applicable to what I do as an actor, not so much a physical thing. Maybe that was because I'd had the experience of doing it before. So now I have space to think about that kind of stuff more, to connect the dots somehow. And I could very much feel the struggles I had in Suzuki were so connected to the monologue work with Davide. In the previous class, it was more separated: Suzuki and everything else. Of course, even after the previous class, I could use something from Suzuki in other occasions as well. But in this course the gap was smaller between the method and everything else.

It also felt different in the body. For example, leg-shaking was horrendous in the previous class. It was such a new thing to feel that much stress in the body and to try to cope with that. It's still horrible to feel that, but it's also nice to have the struggle in the body. Also, after the pain thing [**Student A strained her neck somehow and got a pain in her skull in the beginning of the physical training during the course*], I learned how to calm myself and to notice when I go into this panic mode in the head. I start to feel the difference when I'm panicking and when I'm not, which I didn't know in the previous class.

Student B: With you, I could see more connection with theatre in the method, how this is implementable in other areas and how it is relevant for an actor to work with it.

The first time I learned it a year ago, the work felt more isolated. It was an exercise to do. But this time with you, I didn't feel the method to be so violent or aggressive. The first time the class was very strict; there was no pee break or drinking water, etc. Also, with you, each session was shorter than the previous class. For example, we did Basic number one [*a Suzuki Method exercise*] four or five times as one set and we took a break. In the first class it was much longer. With you, the shorter session meant that I could be 100% because I knew that it wouldn't last so long. I wouldn't do Basic number one fifteen times; I can do it five times so that I can really focus and do it properly, no trying to save energy for the fifteen times. [*Laughs*] That's my impression at least.

(4) What the student remembers from my teaching

This topic yielded quite a few responses from the students.

Student A (A) mentioned stillness and focus as my emphases in teaching. A also told that the awareness of the body and the mindset in training was something relatable to A's work as an actor. The mindset A talked about in the interview relates to the attitude and the sensitivity discussed in the content of actor training: to become aware of how you do the exercise and to let curiosity blossom by becoming sensitive.

A also remembered my personal feedback very well. A appreciated that the feedback was given after a certain time had passed in the course and regarded it as something that was coming from my long-term observation of her process. A also said that the content of the feedback was deeper than just a correction of forms or structure of the method.

Student B (B) mentioned listening as a specific something that helped B in performances. For B, most of what I said and did in my teaching gave B an impression of a life lesson as well as practical things B could do to improve B's as an actor. I then asked B that I was consciously avoiding being an authoritarian teacher and was trying to treat my students as my fellow actors. B concurred my statement by saying that my knowledge and personality made it easier for B to work with me with respect and as a colleague.

Both students indicated that the way of training I introduced them to was something they would like to continue after the course was over.

Here are their actual responses to the topic.

With Student A

Yuko: What did you think my focus was in teaching you? What did you feel I was emphasizing the most?

Student A (A): What has at least stuck with me is the stillness part. That's the theme that's stuck. Where is the focus, shifting the focus, and giving the focus to something. Maybe they are related to stillness as well. But those are also the things I was working with.

Yuko: In the way I interacted with you or I introduced the methods to you, was there anything that was uniquely my approach in your opinion?

A: With both Suzuki and Hino, your approach is about some kind of bodily awareness and also the awareness of what you're doing in your head. In your approach there are questions such as "How do you train?" "What is your mindset when you train?" "What are you working on today?" "What are you focusing on today?" "How do you make it interesting for yourself?" Maybe the biggest part in Suzuki and Hino that is relatable to everything else that I do is the question, "What is your mindset in doing a task?"

Yuko: Do you think this way of training that I introduced you to means something in your process? Is it something that you would develop further, the things you've just described?

A: Yes, absolutely. Even just technique-wise, I already felt that there would be a lot of times when I could use tools from it after the previous Suzuki course. But this question "What is my mindset when I do a task? How am I coming into doing something?" affects how the technique ends up. It's very interesting for me to think about, to use, to be aware of, and to develop.

Also, like I said in the beginning about Suzuki Method and how it doesn't allow me to be on the surface, that's also the interesting part because there's always something new to work with in the method. If I get bored, then I can focus on something else and it's very interesting again. To find

these Christmas packages of interesting stuff. The idea of making something enjoyable, I have it in my backpack with me.

Also, what I really liked about your training was your personal feedback. Because in the previous class the personal feedback I got from the teacher stayed on the bodily level, such as “Loosen up the shoulders” etc., but with you the feedback went past that level, or the form and the structure of the technique, and it was more connected to what I’m doing as an actor. I really appreciated that your personal feedback came two weeks into the course so that there was time for searching and getting into the method and getting to know you and the whole set-up of the six-person class. And then you gave more personal feedback, which I thought was really nice. It gave me trust that it wasn’t the feedback that came from just a moment of looking. You had watched me for a longer time. So, that was nice.

With Student B

Yuko: What did you think my emphasis was in the training? What was I emphasizing more than other things to you?

Student B (B): At least at the end, when I actively participated, it was the listening to the space and to each other that was quite emphasized, I felt. And listening with the whole body. Being present, not in a superficial way that I just correct my facial expression or body posture to look present. But being present by actually taking things in, by listening. I felt that in the demo that helped me a lot.

Yuko: Were there any other things that got stuck with you about what I did or what I said?

B: Lots of things. *[Laughs]* You said, “Never take anything or anybody in your life for granted.” That was nice. The things that stuck with me are more of a life lesson. *[Laughs]* But yeah, I really enjoyed working with you. I felt that there was something in all the exercises you gave even though I was a bit lazy with some of them. *[Laughs]* I really feel that it’s something I’ll take with me, even the ones I was lazy about. Also, doing

something physical while learning my lines, putting some kind of resistance in my body while doing it—those are something that would stay with me, I think.

Yuko: Did you feel like you were working “with me”? I was very conscious and careful not to go into the direction of didacticism or authoritarianism as a teacher. I wanted to treat you as my fellow actor. I have a bit more knowledge and experience to share as actor, so I do that. I would try to remind myself throughout the course that my position is that. How did you position me in your process?

B: Well, I felt that you were a friend in the audience. I felt that you were working with us because we knew not only that you had experience and knowledge to pass on but also that you were also a student here at TeaK. That also made the hierarchy different than the one with Davide. Also, at the same time, because of your knowledge, because of your personality, I have very much respect for you as a colleague. That’s how I feel.

Yuko: That’s nice to hear. From what you experienced with me, do you think this kind of actor training is something that you’d like to continue in some form or the other in your process for the future?

B: Yeah, I do feel so. I think it’s a very concentrated way to work, which I like. It had a direction where it should go. Sometimes an exercise feels like something I do and then just let go. I had an experience in performance making where exercises were done without any focus or direction, so there was nothing left for me to take in afterwards. Yours was very different; the structure was so clear that it could be implemented anywhere. You were in your body, not in your head. Your training could be physical, but I also really enjoyed the voice work you did with us. I think that could be applied to many things. I certainly picked it up. I only wished that there had been more time to do it a lot more.

I really feel that even after finishing my BA, that is something I could keep up. Because it’s hard to train acting while you are working, not in school. Maybe you could take a workshop now and then, but maybe it’s

not so focused. So, it's more that one's building his or her experience from production to production if you're working in that way. So, this method of working or whatever you want to call it is something that could go on after finishing school and getting a diploma. It's something that could go on when you start to work.

CONCLUSION

Interview with an acting teacher Amy Herzberg

As I was reflecting on my past education to write this thesis, memories were rushing into my mind, bringing back so many insights imparted by my teachers. I wish I could have mentioned all of them in this thesis, which would have made a valuable volume on the art of acting. But, I needed to focus on my growth as a theatre pedagogue, how I have come to form my ideas about how to teach and train acting, which necessitated a huge omission of their wisdom. I have strived, nonetheless, to imply, as much as I could, their influences on my thinking. After all, they are indeed part of my journey.

One of the biggest influences is, as I have stated in the personal training history, Amy Herzberg. She was my acting teacher in the MFA acting program at University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, USA. She coached and mentored me for the entire three-year-period of my studying there. Her clarity and enthusiasm in teaching was something I revered, and it propelled me to practice the things at which I was not so good. For example, when she taught me Meisner technique, I often felt vulnerable and uncomfortable acting on my impulses and taking in my scene partner's. My head would spin, and a sense of blockage would take over my entire being. The same blockage happened to me often in other courses by Amy such as Acting Principles where she taught script analysis and Musical Theatre Performance where the focus was on acting while singing. Before meeting Amy, I'd never liked analyzing a script because I had not been able to find a way to apply it to my actual work. And I'd never felt comfortable singing in front of people, let alone acting while singing. But she kept encouraging me to practice and taught me how those things were important and relevant in my work. The blockage never really went away, but it did get smaller and smaller as I studied under her wing. Her teachings are kept close to my heart to this day.

It is about ten years ago when I last saw her in person, right before I left the USA permanently. Ten years ago, she was my teacher, and I was her student. I still feel that I am her student, but now I am also teaching. Now that I am about to conclude my study at the master's program in theatre pedagogy, I wanted to interview her about teaching acting after all these years of being apart. We had a long-overdue conversation via Skype on March 7, 2018. Her

thoughts on acting and teaching acting turned out to be something that gives moral support and pedagogical underpinnings to my journey as an actor who teaches.

Before proceeding to the interview, short biographical information about Amy as a theatre teaching artist might help the reader to get a better picture of who she is:

Amy Herzberg is an associate artistic director and co-founder of TheatreSquared (T2), a regional professional theatre in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and directs the MFA/BA acting programs at the University of Arkansas. She holds an MFA in Acting from California Institute of the Arts, with additional training from American Conservatory Theatre and the Actors Center in New York. Acting credits include work at La Jolla Playhouse, George Street Playhouse, Valle Christi International Theatre Festival (Italy), and San Diego Repertory Theatre, where she was in the resident company for four years. She has directed over 30 productions for the U of A. She has received numerous honors for her work, including the Kennedy Center's ACTF National Acting Teacher Fellowship (2003), U of A's Charles and Nadine Baum Teaching Award (2005), and Fulbright College Master Teacher Award (2013). Amy is also a national co-chair of National Alliance of Acting Teachers in the US.

(Modified from the bio at the TheatreSquared website:

<https://www.theatre2.org/amy-herzberg>.)

The following are the excerpts from the interview. Additional information is inserted in brackets.

The things successful teachers do

Yuko: There are many things that I admire and respect about you. One of them is how clear and passionate you are in your teaching.

Amy: I think that every teacher who is worth their salt does two things. One is that they take and they get as much training and information as they can get and read. They get out there and observe as much as they possibly can so that they are not insular in their approach or understanding. Even if they were to

stick with their approach, they would still want to understand where it fits in the world.

One of the concerns I always have is when someone gets right out of a school program and starts teaching. It's gonna be a blur no matter what you do, right? There are programs that have cropped up in this country now. It's come fairly popular to offer an MFA in pedagogy here. Well, I'll mention two different [*pedagogy*] programs in two different states. One of them will only take people from their mid-career, or late-career. And the other one, which I think is dubious, is taking people right out of undergrad. And I'm just like, "What?! No!" They can read all the stuff in the world, but it's not going to work. You can teach someone about teaching, but that's not actually going to be enough in this. It is something you remember a lot about what you need to teach by doing. And it is one of the things that you need to continue doing in order to teach it well. Though I think there are people who can teach it well because they have great eyes, but I'm still not certain how I feel about it.

Anyway, making sure that you are a part of the bigger so that you're constantly looking at the world of what's happening in acting and in pedagogy, I think, is essential. Because I think every teacher finally comes to "what is it that I really believe in, that I really think works."

Next, well, within that, making sure that you are getting resources at what you consider the feet of the masters, you know what I mean? That you would never not avail yourself of the best of the best in whatever possible way you can get to that. If it's reading or watching videos of the teaching or being in the room, whatever you can do. So I think that that is one.

And the second thing I think that successful teachers do is to teach to the individual while also understanding the room they're in, you know? But the idea that "I would have this approach and you would fit into it" is not good. So, I think those two things are important.

The last thing, although I said there were only two. [*Laughs*] There are a lot of people I know who hate teaching. I think of myself as a theatre artist when I'm in a classroom, working with actors. I'm doing the same work as a theatre artist. I'm just doing it in a different way. I am helping to open up theatre artistry in the artist in front of me. There's never a day that I teach that doesn't feel like an artistically creative, rewarding moment for me. And in the few days that I leave class and I don't feel that, I think "it's ok." But almost every day that I teach, I come home and say, "This is such a wonderful day of

teaching.” I just love it, I just love being in that room. But I find it important because I am helping people discover artistry. And you know, I honestly believe that theatre’s job is lessening the distance between human beings. And boy, Yuko, the way things are in this country right now, there’s never been a more important time for it. It’s so bad here right now. But, because I believe that, I feel like, whenever I work with the students, I’m already doing the micro version of that or the personal version of that. I’m listening to the distance between the student and themselves, and that student and the art, and the student and other people in the room, and ultimately the world because of the things they’re asked to consider in their work. And so, I never have a moment in teaching where I think “Meh, I’m ‘teaching,’” you know? I think of it as artistic, and as a theatre artist, I get to be a theatre artist every single moment that I teach. When I’m in a classroom, that’s how I feel about it. And so, if you want to know where my enthusiasm comes from, it comes from that. Though I get to enable these people to do this thing I’m not doing, I feel like I’m doing it every second that I’m in a classroom and that drives me. I’m also very excited about contributing in some way to being part of people’s journey as theatre artist. That just is the best possible thing. But I think there is a difference between people who feel “I have to go to class” and people who feel like “I am a theatre artist in a classroom as a teacher.”

The things to look for in coaching actors

Yuko: When you are coaching actors, what are you looking for, or what are your focus points? Are there any specific things that you always look for or check?

Amy: Well, the first thing I want to look for... well, Yuko, it’s very likely that my teaching has evolved since I taught you.

Yuko: Really?

Amy: Yeah, for the better. *[Laughs]* Forgive me because I don’t know how much I talked about the events of the piece when I taught you.

Yuko: No you never talked about “the events”! *[Laughs]*

Amy: Sorry about that! *[Laughs]* My national co-chair and I, who have been through the beginning of this training, we have both come to believe that without setting up the events and having the understanding of it you can't go forward. *[Amy is a national co-chair of National Alliance of Acting Teachers in the US and has been through its teacher's development program for several times herself.]* So I'm just going to outline this for you. *[Laughs]*

Yuko: Thank you. *[Laughs]*

Amy: You can sue me for your education later. *[Laughs]* Did we at all talk about initial, central, main events? *[*Please see the end of this section for the definition of the events]*

Yuko: Yes, yes.

Amy: Ok. I use them much more strongly in the work now. Even this semester I moved toward using that even more strongly in the work.

So, the first thing I make sure is that the contract is in place for understanding the events so that they know how to live in relationship to the initial event so to know what to be alive with. That they understand the values of the character, right? Because if they don't understand the values, they don't know how to live in relationship to things because there's no such thing as "fact"; there's only your relationship to a fact. Yes? And, going back to the events, that they understand what will be. I mean, the first is sort of the what happens before they start acting the role, and that has to do with their homework, script analysis, their figuring out the values of the character, their relationship to all of the given circumstances and understanding what is the initial event that has pinched their heart that is propelling them forward that they are in relationship to. So, all of that stuff before the they start stuff has to be in place and I look for that.

Then I look to make sure that their heart is actually provoked with the need of the character because if their heart isn't provoked, then, they're not doing their job really, you know? You either use your heart, or your character will be heartless, right? It's a bunch of lines on a piece of paper. So we look at that, making sure that that is truly provoked in the specific, personal way. Even

though it's the character's values and circumstances and all of those things, it has to be your heart loaned to the character.

And then third, I look to see if people are truly in action on partner(s) to alleviate that pinch. And along with being in action I look to see what else they might be doing that isn't action. They might be playing or showing character rather than having character. They might be playing or showing physicality rather than having physicality, right? Or playing or showing emotion. We have emotion, we play action. So I look to see what are the things that might be getting in the way. In most cases, they have their target in the wrong place. If they put their target on the emotion, then their target is misplaced. Their target needs to be their partner, you know? And so, I often look at those things.

But also there are habits that all actors have. Some are, I call them "rescues," some are rescues that they do to make them feel like they're acting when they're on stage. And some others are what they do in life, too, those are harder to get through. But I try to look at the things that are blocking them from simply being in release of action and that can include personal habits, too.

And also, the goal is to have a strong through line as well as moment-to-moment life, right? And the balance of those things, because you see people all the time have a really strong through line but they're missing the moment-to-moment. Or they have a lot of moment-to-moment, but you don't understand the need that's driving them, which I always look for, if they're both living in them.

**Definitions of Initial, Central, and Main Events*

Initial Event: The event that happens before the play begins in which every character is living. The event that gives the story its impulse—pushes the story in the direction the story will go. The initial event always happens BEFORE the story. The initial event defines the character's actions. To find the initial event, make a chronological list of what happens in the story and before the story (play) begins. The last event that affects all the characters before the play begins is the initial event. The "beginning" will be very clear if you find the initial event—you'll understand how to live and what to do. Every character will be alive with their own relationship to this initial

event. The event by which every character is living emotionally when the act starts.

Central Event: The highest expression of the conflict. You need to find the conflict—understand who is fighting who and for what—and the highest peak of this conflict is the central event. The central even occurs when we first understand which of the two characters in conflict is going to be stronger.

Main Event: – The main event is always the last event in the story. After this event, there cannot be any more events in the story. This event was the playwright’s goal—the point of the story—WHY the story was told. It is also how the characters will live in response to the central event.

(A. Herzberg, Personal communication, March 16, 2018).

The most important thing in acting

Amy: There’s one more thing I was going to say about the things I look at when I teach. I make sure that we’re trying to allow them to live in a way that their thoughts are mainly character thoughts and a few are actor thoughts. And a lot of times you see a lot of actor thoughts. So this whole taking the “I” out of action allows you to act on your partner more fully. This is a stupid thing that I came up with one day. *[Laughs]* I say it a lot more now even though it’s kind of embarrassing, but it makes the point. The more “I” you have the more actor thoughts you have the less, really the less successful you are going to be in the work in really living it. And thus, trying to convince them that the most important thing in the room, the most interesting and important thing in the room is their partner, not themselves. They know what they’re feeling, they know what’s going on with their character, but actors would often get to them that the most important thing to them is themselves. No. So, the power to alleviate the desperate burning need in your heart lies in that other person. They [others] are the target. And if they’re feeling what they should be feeling, they would be doing what they should be doing. And you have to get in there and change how they are feeling so that you can alleviate the pinch. But you know how you’re feeling, you don’t have to spend time going, “What am I feeling? Here’s what I’m feeling.” You have it, you have feeling. You work on changing that partner. And those are what I look at.

Yuko: Sounds very familiar. *[Laughs]* Things I remember.

Amy: You know, one thing is that I no longer use the word “objective.” I just won’t use it because it makes people go here *[Points at her head]*, and so I always say, “What is the driving need pinching your heart?” And now I have limited it to saying those words because “objective” always makes them think that they can get it right. Or they have to go there when they should go is here *[Points at her heart]*. This calls out for event analysis. If he knew the purpose of the piece was rather than just to exist in space for those moments in any way that comes out of her, it would, I mean, I consider it now the tent poles, three tent poles, you know. If you don’t have the tent poles, you would just have the fabric of the tent blowing wherever the wind takes it. And I think it gives away artistry, because artistry has intent in it.

Yuko: The thing that stuck with me most among everything that you taught me or said to me was this, I just remember your saying, “Acting doesn’t happen over here, but it happens over there,” or something like that. You were trying to emphasize to me that it was not about me, but it’s about my scene partner; you have to really have a relationship that’s active.

Amy: Yeah. Well, that and the truth is that. It’s almost like the secret. Not only does making your partner more important to you the most important thing work well because that is how we exist in dramatic moments, but when you get your focus off yourself, it actually allows your best acting impulses to bloom. When we have our focus on ourselves, we actually don’t have as much space. We have bit of an overseer. And so, actually the freest work, the deepest work, the most in-the-moment work happens if we weren’t busy having our focus here *[Points at herself]*. So, it’s like a double benefit.

Yuko: Yeah, I agree. So that’s what I’m trying to carry over to my teaching as well. The method that I use nowadays is mostly Suzuki Method of Actor Training, which is a very physical and form-based method. Many people think that it’s a method to work on the actor’s body, concentration, focus, and breath control and stuff. But I’m trying to put this element of what we’ve just said about focus on the other and having this active relationship. And is it

possible to train that with this method, which is, on the surface level, looks very individualistic? So I've been struggling with this method in that sense, that how to make it more applicable to any styles of acting or forms of drama. Right now I think the most important thing that I want to teach is this relationship or connection between the actor and the other, and how to address that in the method that I teach is my challenge.

Amy: It's a very, very good thing.

Actor's role in theatre

Yuko: Let me ask this question. How do you see the actor's role in theatre now? Because here the actor's role, they're trying to take it away from theatre. *[Laughs] [*Earlier in the interview I was telling her about the latest trend in the contemporary theatre scene in Finland. The examples I gave her were the styles of theatre that attempt to blur the line between performer and audience by putting the audience's role in that of a performer or placing them as an active agent in a performance, and an even more extreme attempt to try to create theatre without the physical presence of the actor.]*

Amy: How do I see it as it is? or How do I see it as it should be?

Yuko: Uh, both.

Amy: Well, here *[in the US]* the actors are still not invited to all aspects of the creation of pieces, and I can understand greatly why things are the way they are there *[in Finland]*, you know what I mean? Because when actors don't get invited to production meetings I want to tear my hair out, you know? I'm like, "This actor knows," you know what I mean? They can come in and talk about that character in a way that that's their primary focus. So I feel that actors are still not valued in a way that they should be, as a collaborative theatre artist at all stages of the creation of a piece. And there's also this feeling that there is million people in line behind each actor, you know what I mean? And there is this feeling of there aren't enough artistic homes here for actors, and I think that's an import thing and that's something TheatreSquared *[regional professional theatre company in Fayetteville, Arkansas]* is trying to do very much.

And what do I think it should be? I think that the actor is the primary theatre artist. I do, because ultimately that's where the experience and the focus of an audience will go. And you can have an amazing design that would do wonderful things and create an environment in which the actor can do that work, but ultimately the actor, the embodiment of it is the primary theatre artist. And I don't say that to diminish any other theatre artist, but ultimately you go to the theatre, what are you looking at and following? So, in that same way the actor is both the primary and also in at least American hierarchies the lowest, in that ladder. I would like to find a way for actors to be more organically part of the process from the very, very beginning. That's what I like about acting companies and places where work is generated from and with actors because they're in from the ground moment. That's that I think greatly a place for an existing script or scripts to be written by playwrights as long as we understand that people are coming together with their own individual strengths, and those strengths don't isolate them. You could be an actor and playwright. You could be an actor who can help with the play, you know what I mean? I think that actors are, here, often placed in boxes and they are plugged in at a certain time in the process. And I'd love to see that not be that way. I'd like to find more organic ways of people coming together. I could really understand why some people might want to question or reposition the role of the actor in contemporary theatre. It makes perfect sense. But it is also, sounds to me, like reactive so that the identity is in the reaction. I think that there should be all kinds of worlds and places in between so that there is more to the role of the actor that can affect, you know what I mean? It has to do with the goal of theatre. It's like the overall pinch of the heart of the creating theatre in the first place. What was it for? Is it there to be reactive? Is it there to be new? Is it there to express ourselves? Is it there, because the ultimate theatre piece the partner in theatre is the audience, and do we think about that and what their experience is and what might be the take-away at that? And what and how does it address and answer needs that are existing right now in society? I don't think I've answered your question.

[Laughs]

Yuko: You did answer my question. *[Laughs]* You answered it in a way that's very deep. And it really resonates with my struggle here as well. Now that I've been here in Finland for so long, I think I need to make my statement clearer

as theatre artist. And now I know that there are at least a few, a group of actors who are resonating with what I believe to be important in theatre. So maybe there's a chance for me now to make something out of that connection. And that has a lot to do with this actor's role. I really want the actors to feel that they have the intelligence and they have the power to be the center of this art form. So that's what I want to achieve. And I want to be part of that process myself. I don't know if that means a theatre company or that means some kind of a program, whatever it is or it might end up being, that's what I want to do now.

Amy: That sounds great. There's room for that. And you should never think that whatever is this thing that they're doing and they value, and you feel like something different wouldn't be valued, that doesn't mean it shouldn't be done, because people have to experience and come around, you know?

Yuko: Yes, thank you.

The end of the beginning, the beginning of the next

As it is impossible to trace a drop of water in a flowing river, I find it an incredibly daunting task to write about my personal journey as an actor and pedagogue. All I can say in the end, in all honesty, is that every single teacher and every single encounter in my life are the drops of water that have become an ever-flowing river of my artistic purpose. It moves and drives me to the places of challenge where my artistry grows.

But in this thesis, I have attempted to trace back those water drops, which are the recognizable influences in my life for the formation of my pedagogical principles. This personal history spans from the moment when I stood on the stage for a one-woman show at the high school culture festival in 1999 to the moment of the profoundly nostalgic and inspiring interview with my former acting teacher Amy Herzberg in 2018. It is almost 20 years. It is the amount of

time I needed to begin to articulate what I believe to be important in acting in theatre.

This articulation of what to practice in actor training was important for me in formulating the pedagogical principles. Presence as in the ability to connect with the other is key to transform any actor training into something sustainable and flexible for an actor's life and for those who teach as well. And as the case studies show, my pedagogical principles and presence have borne constructive effects on the learners' processes. The connection with the other is perceived, practiced, and appreciated by not only them the learners but also me the pedagogue. With the idea of the presence that connects, learning and growing as artist happen on both sides—That is what I hope to illuminate throughout this thesis.

So, what now?

I have written down my pedagogical ideas about acting and actor training based in my personal history to conclude something. And I have even shown the examples of those ideas in practice. But even after putting them all out on paper, it does not feel like an end at all. I have just begun to raise my voice as an actor and pedagogue —That's how I feel, the beginning of a next journey.

The river keeps flowing, carrying me to yet another frontier of my artistic growth.

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