Devising Dialogue:
Structuring Intercultural Encounters through the
Process of Workshop Theatre

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It
is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the
work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the efficacy of workshop theatre processes in nurturing intercultural dialogue among members of a multicultural group.

It investigates two kinds of intercultural dialogue – interpersonal dialogue and intergroup dialogue – which, it is argued, are each catalysed by different theatrical processes. Theatre games and improvisations seem to nurture an interpersonal dialogue, in which cultural differences are transcended as group members recognise each other's common humanity. Theatre research, on the other hand, seems more able to nurture an intergroup dialogue, in which group members acknowledge and contextualise cultural differences.

At the same time, this dissertation proposes that it is unethical and ultimately ineffective for a facilitator to deliberately nurture a purely-interpersonal dialogue or a purely-intergroup dialogue. Rather, the group members themselves should determine the nature of the dialogue in which they participate. The dissertation therefore embraces Fred Casmir's model of third-culture building, which conceptualises the multicultural group as a 'third-culture' that ideally evolves to accommodate the needs of all of its members. The democratic orientation of workshop theatre processes, in which participants collaboratively determine the course of a project, nurtures this process of third-culture building. Workshop theatre empowers the participants to integrate and balance elements of interpersonal and intergroup dialogue, by combining the theatrical processes enumerated above: theatre games, improvisation, and research.

In the course of this exploration, this dissertation integrates academic theory with findings from practical research projects. It draws on the author's experience working with inmates of Pollsmoor Prison in late 2007, and also on the author's experience tutoring first-year UCT

students in the same period. In the dissertation, the author clarifies and contextualises his theoretical argument with his own reflections on these processes, in addition to the reflections of participants who consented to participating in personal interviews.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is the culmination of 18 months of study, during which I have sought to explore the ways that theatre can catalyse intercultural dialogue. I have pursued this work in a variety of settings: with undergraduate students at the University of Cape Town, with a culturally-diverse staff at a local construction company, with other theatre artists as part of a grass-roots cultural-exchange organization, and, most significantly, with inmates at Pollsmoor Prison. My hope, throughout my time here, has been that the theatrical experiences that I might facilitate could help the culturally-diverse groups to nurture a vibrant dialogue, and reach an enhanced understanding of each other.

I also hoped that through this process, I would grow as a facilitator. I recognized that I had a great deal to learn – both about the cultural groups with whom I was working and the about the methodologies I was employing. In each of these circumstances, I have tried to better understand how the practical, theatrical structures that I can employ might serve the loftier dialogic goals. I have also tried to better understand how Cape Town's culturally-diverse parties relate to each other – as cultural groups emerging from a half-century of oppression and struggle, and as individuals learning to trust. Moreover, I have tried to better understand my own role as facilitator, coming to grips with my complex relationship to the theatrical goals, the dialogic goals, and the parties.

This dissertation is an investigation of these issues. In it, I integrate theoretical research on intercultural dialogue with theoretical research in the field of Applied Theatre to reflect on some of my own practical work, in hopes of emerging with some greater insights about how this kind of work can successfully be undertaken.

In addition to theoretical research, I will refer to two practical projects that I have recently facilitated. Most importantly, I will refer extensively to my MA Fieldwork Project, a drama programme that I facilitated with a group of Black and Coloured[1] juvenile inmates at Pollsmoor Prison in late 2007. I will also refer, in one chapter, to an undergraduate practicum that I taught at the University of Cape Town, also in late 2007.

While the population of the prison was extremely different from that of the university, these two projects have one crucial element in common: they were both instances of workshop theatre (defined below). Through an examination of these two projects, and an analysis of theatrical and intercultural theory, I hope to investigate the ethics and efficacy of using workshop theatre to nurture intercultural dialogue.

This introduction serves to orient the reader to the discourses and histories that shape this dissertation. It begins with an overview of workshop theatre, and then continues with an overview of intercultural dialogue, briefly explaining three paradigms of dialogue that will feature prominently in my investigation. It goes on to provide important background information on my fieldwork at Pollsmoor Prison, which will be analysed throughout the dissertation. Towards the end of the introduction, I share two ethical dilemmas that I faced, and attempt to explain how they affected my work. I then conclude the introduction by orienting the reader to the structure of the dissertation.

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use the word 'Black' to refer to South African people 'of Bantu or other Negroid origin' (Branford, 1987: 30). I use the word 'Coloured' to describe Afrikaans-speaking people, primarily in the Western Cape, belonging to a cultural group of mixed racial ancestry including European settlers, slaves from Southeast Asia, Khoisan peoples, and others (Christopher, 1994: 21-22). While these terms have contested meanings, I have chosen to use them in these ways because this is how they are commonly used by the young people with whom I worked in Pollsmoor.

Workshop Theatre

Workshop theatre is the South African term for a process more commonly known internationally as 'devised theatre' or 'collaborative creation'. These three terms essentially all refer to the same process – the process 'whereby a group of persons working together develop a production from initial concept to finished performance' (Hartnoll, 1983: 165). The history of devised theatre begins in the 1960s and 1970s, due to a convergence of cultural and political forces.

One contributing factor to the evolution of this theatrical genre was the proliferation of Stanislavsky's revolutionary ideas about acting. Originally written in Russia in the early 1900s, Stanislavsky's seminal books eventually circled the globe and influenced actor training throughout the world. They had particular influence in America, where they were codified into 'the method'. Due to this international revolution in actor training, the traditional emphasis on the actor's voice was eclipsed by an emphasis on 'investigating the psychological nature of a character and detailed realistic portrayal' (Oddey, 1994: 10). This fundamental change elevated the actor's status as a contributing artist, and nurtured more actors who desired to 'engage intellectually in the discussion of work, or practically in the creative process of making a performance' (Oddey, 1994: 11). Additionally, Stanislavsky's emphasis on improvisation as a tool for making discoveries about a character's inner life revived interest in using improvisation in the rehearsal room (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 30-31). Improvisation empowered actors to contribute to an evolving work, not only in the nuances of realistic performance, but also in the shape of the performance itself.

Meanwhile, political events in the United States, Western Europe, and Australia were contributing to a popular sentiment of challenging hegemonic authorities. The successes of the American Civil Rights Movement had emboldened activists, who now began to agitate for feminist reforms and gay rights. Protests against the Vietnam War spread throughout the world

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(Fink et al, 1998: 26, in Heddon and Milling, 2006:15). The political ideology of the 'New Left' took shape, 'invoking Marx, the insights of psychoanalysis and existentialism, feminism and anticolonialism' (Fink et all, 1998: 25, referenced in Heddon and Milling, 2006:16). The labour union movement in the UK swelled (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 95) as communes flourished throughout the US (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 17). Against this backdrop, artists began searching for theatrical forms that could embody their political ideologies. Like the Beat poets of the same era, Dadaists and Surrealists started to create art that was virulently anti-establishment. The collectivism of devising, especially when pitted against the hegemonic 'tyranny of the director', resonated with the spirit of the times (Pavis, 1998: 62; Oddey, 1994: 8, Heddon and Milling, 2006: 229; Hartnoll, 1983: 165).

Workshop theatre in South Africa emerged at around the same time, due to similar causes. South Africa was highly influenced by theatrical trends in the Western World, as its theatre was closely affiliated with Western Europe and North America (Orkin, 1995: 5). Moreover, South African theatre practitioners were increasingly involved in the anti-Apartheid movement. Just like the Feminist Movement, the Anti-War Movement, the Civil rights Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, and the Labour Movement overseas, the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa engendered a spirit of collective resistance to authority. Interracial collectivism was particularly valued, as it stood in direct defiance of the segregationist government policies. Hence, South African theatre companies began to embrace the more racially-egalitarian workshop process as a commitment to the democratic principles that they sought to espouse through the mouthpiece of their plays (Orkin, 1995: 6, 10). Mark Fleishman recounts: 'It was a form which offered opportunities for kinds of collective existence and action more in line with the ideologies and praxis of the new oppositional politics. Workshop theatre offered the potential for democracy, not through passive consensus, but through collective self-activity' (1991: 64).

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There is no formula for the devising process; each company and each project functions somewhat differently (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 201; Oddey, 1994: 149). However, several elements do emerge from the literature which seem common to most devising (or workshopping) processes. I refer to these as 'elements', rather than as successive 'stages', because the process of devising is a messy one, in which these elements are often intertwined.

The first of these elements is ensemble-building. This often consists of games, exercises and rituals which allow the ensemble members to get to know each other, develop a sense of safe space, and generate a shared artistic vocabulary (Fleishman, 1991: 74-79; Oddey, 1994: 24-25, 167-187). While this element is often associated with the beginning stages of a workshop process, it can (like the rest of these elements) continue throughout the duration of the project.

The second of these elements is research. This can take many forms, depending on the company and the project. Source material may come from literature, art, music, film, historical documents, observations, interviews, or personal lived experience (Oddey, 1994: 31, 34, 36, 70; Fleishman, 1991: 80-83). Often (though not always), all ensemble members are involved with gathering and processing these research materials (Oddey, 1994: 70). In addition to this dramaturgical research, actors might also conduct more conventional actors' research. The purpose of this research is not to inform the shape of the play, but rather, to help actors understand and portray their characters.

The third element of devising (or workshopping) is improvisation, which is often the primary way that actors contribute to an evolving performance. The importance of improvisation is emphasised in almost all the literature on devised theatre (Fleishman, 1991: 83-94; Oddey, 1994: 152-153; Heddon and Milling, 2006: 7-10; Pavis, 1998: 181; Hartnoll, 1983: 165;

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Kerrigan, 2001: 29, 103). These improvisations are usually based on themes suggested by the performers or the director, and the content of the improvisations informs the evolving shape of the performance (Fleishman, 1991: 90). The reliance on actor-generated improvisation creates a fundamentally different balance of power than is typically found in the theatre, as Fleishman explains:

> Improvisation shifts the performers from being creative interpreters to being creative authors, potentially freeing them from a pre-existent text and the control of an external authorial voice. This creative authoring on the part of the performers is important because it empowers the performers in the workshop group both as individuals and in relation to the group leader or director. As individuals the performers are empowered in that they contribute, through improvisation, on a primary level both to what is said in the performance and to the style in which it is said. They not only speak for themselves but also with their own voices, their own style of action and communication. (1991: 92)

The fourth element is discussion. The ideological origins of devised (and workshop) theatre root the process in a spirit of collectivism and consensus. While many companies have adopted hierarchical structures as a matter of pragmatism, discussion and collective consent remain important. Group discussions can determine scripting decisions, aesthetic decisions, and decisions related to group processes (Oddey, 1994: 152-153, 168-172; Kerrigan, 2001: 86, 99-105, 64-76).

The fifth element is scripting. Usually (though not always), the insights from improvisation, research, and discussion are refined into a script. Sometimes, the script is actually written out like a conventional play script. For instance, in Barney Simon's *Born in the RSA*, each performer scripted his or her own character's monologue (Fleishman, 1991: 144-150). In other cases, including my own work in Pollsmoor Prison, the script is never formally written out, and instead exists in the collective consciousness of the performers as a sequence of semi-improvised theatrical beats. In still other cases, like Athol Fugard's *Orestes*, the script is more

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of a physical score, and it takes the form of charts and drawings, intercut with a few lines of dialogue (McMurtry, 2006: 32-33).

The sixth element is performance, which includes not only the moment in which actors appear live before an audience, but also the work that is done in direct anticipation of that moment. It includes hanging lights, building a set, cueing music, conducting final rehearsals, and – where necessary – the detailed actor's work of character creation. While this element is typically associated with the final stages of the devising process, it is not necessarily so. An actor's character work may be inseparable from his dramaturgical contributions, which may begin very early in the process. Similarly, the creation of the set may begin early on, as the fictional landscape begins to take shape in the minds of the artists.

The finished product of a devising (or workshopping) process tends to be a multivalent, fractured narrative. Heddon and Milling explain:

> A group devising process is more likely to engender a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative, 'version' or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways, construct our lives. (2006: 192)

Although this is not universally true (see Fleishman, 1991: 150), the observation has been echoed by many other scholars and practitioners (Oddey, 1994: 19, 103; Orkin, 1995: 9-10; Fleishman, 1991: 129). This aesthetic, in which the existence of a single, hegemonic truth or master narrative is inherently problematised, appeals to a contemporary, post-modern sensibility. Heddon and Milling suggest that it is this post-modern sensibility, rather than a continued resistance to hegemonic power structures, that sustains contemporary interest in the process of devising. They point out that the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s has lapsed, without the revolution that was once heralded (2006: 18). What remains is a scepticism of hegemonic

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'master narratives' (2006: 203-209), even though it may be coupled with an acquiescence to hegemonic power structures. Devised theatre's common aesthetic of montage and collage (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 195), particularly when coupled with its multivalent scripting process, resonate with this contemporary sensibility.

Many have pointed out the importance of effective communication and collaboration within the workshop group (Oddey, 1994: 24-25; Kerrigan, 2001: 123-152; Fleishman, 1991: 70-77). Some, such as Martin Orkin (Orkin, 1995: 10) and Robert McClaren (Fleishman, 1991: 60), have proposed that workshopping may be a useful tool for conducting intercultural dialogue. In this dissertation, I hope to pursue this idea further, through both theoretical analysis and practical case studies. However, before I do so, it is worthwhile to pause and reflect on exactly what 'intercultural dialogue' is.

Intercultural Dialogue

The terminology of 'intercultural dialogue', which I use throughout this dissertation, emerges from the literature on cross-cultural conflict and its reduction. This is an interdisciplinary field, integrating historical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological findings. Debates persist about the root causes of intercultural conflict, the societal forces that preserve conflict, and the potential processes that may reduce (or transform) conflict. Many of the experts within this field (Allport, Amir, Pettigrew, Halabi, Abu-Nimer, and others) are concerned with the ethics and efficacy of structured, intercultural encounters. They address the questions: Under what circumstances do people change their views of other groups and their members? How can those circumstances be created, ethically and efficaciously, within a structured environment? What should the immediate goals of these encounters *be*? Is it more effective to structure these encounters as opportunities to discover similarities across cultural lines, or as opportunities to

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acknowledge and contextualize differences? Whom do these encounters benefit, and how can they be structured to benefit all parties equally? To what extent should the goals and methods of the encounters be predetermined by 'experts', and to what extent should they be jointly determined by the parties themselves?

In the literature in this field, the word 'dialogue' is used to describe the exchange that transpires between the parties that meet in structured environments (Nadler, 2004: 28-29). I look to the etymology of the word ('dia' means 'through', and 'logue' can mean not only 'word', but also 'meaning') to derive a slightly enhanced definition. I use 'dialogue' to describe a collaborative discourse in which each party's meaning penetrates through the consciousness of the other(s). Thus, it is flexible enough to describe a traditional, verbal exchange in addition to kinaesthetic or emotional (but non-verbal) exchange that may transpire throughout the course of a drama-based encounter.

The word 'culture' is problematic enough that many of these writers evade the task of defining it – and many scholars of culture propose vastly different definitions. Of the definitions I have encountered, the one I most prefer is among the simplest. It is one of several definitions used by Patrice Pavis in the *Intercultural Performance Reader*: 'Cultures are collectivities possessing their own characteristics' (Pavis, 1996: 4). While this definition doesn't elucidate the notion of *culture* as the intangible 'system of symbols thanks to which human beings confer a meaning on their own experience' (Geertz, 1973: 130), it better concretizes what we might mean when talking about a cultural *group* – which is of primary importance to this investigation.

There are too many approaches to intercultural dialogue to offer an entire synthesis of the field in this introduction, or even in this dissertation. However, three paradigms have affected my

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work profoundly, and they feature prominently in each of my three chapters. I describe each of them below, briefly, in order to orient the reader.

The First Paradigm: Interpersonal Dialogue

The question of how to structure encounters between disparate groups has consumed scholars of Intercultural Communication since its inception as an academic field, shortly after World War II. The dominant figure in this debate is Gordon Allport, who first presented his 'contact hypothesis' in 1954. Allport's major concern was the reduction of prejudice, which he defined as:

> an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed towards a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group. (Allport, 1954: 9)

Prejudice, Allport argued, was based on overgeneralised attitudes and beliefs about out-groups. Overgeneralisation is a normal part of human cognition (1954: 7), but it can be reversed through experiential learning about out-group members (1954: 265).

According to Allport, this experiential learning directs our attention away from 'categorical generalization of the group as a whole' (1954: 7), toward individual people with whom we develop a rapport. He contends that significant interaction helps members of out-groups see that they share 'universal (or closely similar) values' (1954: 279). Thus, it leads people to the conclusion that members of the out-group are 'pretty much the same as' members of the in-group (1954: 271) – and the prejudice begins to erode.

There are many corollaries to the contact hypothesis, added both by Allport and his colleagues, which acknowledge that interpersonal contact is most effective at reducing prejudice under

certain conditions. For instance, Allport stressed the importance of structuring a contact

situation in which the estranged groups work towards common goals (1954: 281), and Pettigrew

suggested that the contact situation 'must provide the participants with the opportunity to

become friends' (Pettigrew, 1998: 76). However, I do not intend to pursue a detailed

investigation of all these corollaries here – both because space does not allow for a full

investigation of them, and because I do not want to detract from the conceptual clarity of the

theory's overriding principle. The dominant idea is that interpersonal contact enables

individuals to disprove stereotypes and realize that they share a common humanity. This, in

turn, will undermine prejudice, which is based on overgeneralisation.

The Second Paradigm: Intergroup Dialogue

Some scholars and practitioners have rejected the contact hypothesis. Of these, some do so for

ideological and political reasons: they feel that the emphasis on creating a sense of harmony

through interpersonal relationship-building inherently fails to challenge the status quo of

unequal power relationships among groups (Abu-Nimer, 1999: 8-9). Others reject the contact

hypothesis out of concerns that its emphasis on the interpersonal dimension means that the

goodwill generated in the encounter will not generalise to other out-group members (Amir,

1976: 288). In other words, participants may leave the encounter with good feelings about the

specific individuals they met, yet also feeling that these individuals are the exception, and do not

really represent their cultural group.

Dissatisfaction with the contact hypothesis led Rupert Brown, working with his colleagues

Miles Hewstone and John Turner, to articulate a new model of dialogue, emphasising intergroup

– rather than interpersonal – contact. As Brown and Turner (1981) explain:

> To the extent that the contact takes places (sic) on an 'interpersonal' basis it is unlikely
> to modify intergroup attitudes and behavior since the two domains are controlled, we
> suggest, by different psychological processes. What is more probable, if contact is
> confined to social interaction between individuals qua individuals, is that a few
> interpersonal relationships will change but that the intergroup situation will remain
> substantially unaltered. If, on the other hand, the contact can be characterized in
> 'group' terms, that is as interaction between individuals *qua* group members, or in ways
> that alter the structure of group relations, then genuine changes at the intergroup level
> may be expected. (Brown and Turner, 1981: 60, in Hewstone and Brown, 1986: 34)

In an intergroup dialogue, individuals are treated as spokespeople for the groups they represent, and the group is seen to represent the 'collective unconscious' of its members (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 51). Moreover, the encounter group is treated as a microcosm of the larger situation: it is assumed that 'all the elements of the larger society may be found in some form within each of [the participants]' (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 52). This structure often invites a politically-charged exchange, and it is valued for enhancing the relevance and the potency of the encounter. However, ultimately, it is generally acknowledged that the potential lasting impact lies within the individuals present. As Halabi and Sonnenschein state, 'These meetings cannot, and do not intend to, change reality. What they can and do change is the participants' awareness of the conflict and their social and political identity' (2004: 54).

The Third Paradigm: Third-Culture Building

Fred Casmir has developed a perspective on intercultural dialogue that combines elements of both the contact hypothesis and the intergroup contact model, while also challenging some of the assumptions made by both of these theories. He proposes, as part of his premise, that cultures are constantly in flux. Thus, any attempt to categorise and define cultural groups – for example, to speak of 'Black culture', or even 'Zulu culture', or even 'Zulu culture in rural KZN' – is inherently imperfect. No matter how small the size of the cultural group, the culture is always evolving. In Casmir's words, members of cultural groups 'frequently negotiate and re-negotiate the meanings of a culture's concepts and value systems' (Casmir, 1999: 106).

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Thus, while it is convenient to talk about two cultural groups convening for dialogue (and while I will indeed do so throughout this dissertation), it is also important to acknowledge that these cultural groups are not static, fixed entities. Neither is the larger group, comprised of the two cultural parties. This group, like any group, is always in the process of *becoming*. Thus, the dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas between subgroups; rather, the dialogue actively shapes the 'third-culture' that is evolving out of the interaction of the two cultural groups.

Ideally, this third-culture is 'a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved' (Casmir, 1999: 92). As participants actively build this third-culture, they develop 'an extended process, during which [they] gain an understanding of and appreciation for others while negotiating purposes, standards, methods, goals, and eventual satisfaction in a dialogic, conversational setting' (Casmir, 1999: 108, informed by Alberts and Driscoll, 1992; Simon and Baxter, 1993).

My understanding of third-culture building is that Casmir's intention is not necessarily to transcend cultural boundaries (as in interpersonal dialogue), nor, necessarily, to acknowledge the boundaries and to contextualise the differences that they represent (as in intergroup dialogue). Rather, the decision of whether to transcend or reify the existing boundaries is one that must be made collectively. As group members, we make this decision based on our mutual interests. However, as we figure out what is mutually beneficial, we will inevitably need to acknowledge and contextualise our cultural differences. And our ability to acknowledge and contextualise those differences will depend, in part, on our ability to create a safe space built on shared interests, perceived commonality, and interpersonal rapport. Thus, the process of third-culture building inherently involves both of the other two processes, despite the fact that it doesn't necessarily share the end goals of either process.

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To borrow an analogy from music: each individual is a musician, playing the notes of his[2] human experience. For each individual, those notes are organized into a musical key by his culture. As intercultural groups come together, a clash of musical styles results. One group plays the notes of their human experience in a standard major key, while another plays in a minor key – or perhaps even in a non-Western, microtonal key. And so, there are three approaches. The first advocates for finding the notes (the life experiences) that the musicians (the individuals) have in common. It argues that by playing these notes simultaneously – notes that naturally existed in each individual's music – the musicians are able to build a sense of rapport, friendship, and understanding. The second approach advocates that we let one group play their music, and then let the other group play their music, noting and coming to understand the distinct characteristics of each musical genre. The third advocates that the musicians compose an original musical theme by combining the notes from each one's repertoire. This theme forms the basis for a new musical composition, which then traces that theme through both musical styles.

I propose that all three approaches are valuable, and that workshop theatre integrates all three processes. It focuses us most deliberately on the final process I described – the process of composing a new piece of music (creating a third-culture). However, towards that end, it asks us to engage in a multiplicity of smaller processes – some of which require us to find our common notes, and others of which require us to note the unique differences of our musical styles.

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[2] The reader will note that I am using the male voice to write about theoretical people who could be either male or female. The male voice is predominant throughout much of this dissertation, because the study is so highly influenced by my fieldwork at Pollsmoor Prison, in which all participants were male.

The Pollsmoor Process: Background

Throughout this dissertation, I will refer extensively to a practical fieldwork project that I conducted as part of my MA coursework. This project enabled me to refine many of my ideas about workshop theatre as a catalyst for intercultural dialogue, and as such, it is an important cornerstone of this dissertation. Elements of this workshop process inform my arguments in Chapters One and Two, and the full scope of the workshop process is investigated in Chapter Three. Here, I provide some of the important background information on the environment and the participants, to provide the reader with a context for the information on the project that will follow throughout the dissertation.

The workshop process took place in Section B5 of Pollsmoor Prison, a medium-security facility for juvenile boys awaiting their trials. At any given time, there may be anywhere from 150-200 boys in B5, most of whom live in group cells of about 25 boys. There are additional, smaller rooms where some boys live in single cells, double-occupancy cells, or (occasionally) triple-occupancy cells; typically this occurs when certain individuals have been caught misbehaving in the group cells.

The population of B5 is roughly half-Black, half-Coloured. Of the Black prisoners, the majority are Xhosa. At the time I was there, there were no White prisoners in B5. Christianity is the dominant religion, and the predominantly-Christian culture of the prison is accentuated by the active presence of Hope Prison Ministry[3], a Baptist ministry that is active throughout Pollsmoor. However, there are also a small number of Muslims in the prison, and, I suspect, a small number of adherents to traditional/tribal religions, as well as a few agnostics and atheists.

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[3] Hope Prison Ministry will hereinafter be referred to as simply 'Hope Ministry'.

On 'the outside' (a term used to refer to the participants' lives outside of prison), most of the participants lead highly – but not entirely – segregated lives. For instance, Leonard Carelse[4], a Coloured participant, described his neighbourhood (Hanover Park) as entirely Coloured. He did acknowledge that his school was integrated, bringing together Black, Coloured, and White learners, but added that most of his friends within the school were Coloured. When I asked him why that was, he attributed it to language and geographic distance. 'I cannot speak the language they speak,' he explained, 'and they don't live there where we live . . . They live far away from my place' (Carelse, 2007). Similarly, Gift Sidelo, a Black participant, said he attended an integrated school (half Black, half Coloured) in Hout Bay, but barely interacted with the Coloured learners. 'I wasn't friends with them because I didn't understand their language. It is not easy for me to hang out with someone that you can't even understand, or can't even hear what he's talking about' (Sidelo, 2007).

The language barrier between the Black and Coloured participants also adversely affected their ability to understand each other in an English-speaking context. Though most of the participants were functional in English, many of them reported difficulty understanding the dialect of the other group. Gift Sidelo explained to me: 'The difference between us, Blacks and Coloureds, [is that] the Blacks are speaking English in their own different way, and the Coloureds are speaking their English in their own different way . . . Their English is different; it's almost like their own language' (Sidelo, 2007).

There was one significant exception to the trend of living highly-segregated lives 'on the outside'. Nelson Mwanda, a Black participant from Hermanus, began learning Afrikaans from a very young age. It seemed to him to be a more desirable language than his own (Xhosa), and

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[4] All participants whom I was able to interview requested that I use their real names when writing about them. Those participants whom I was unable to interview are referred to by pseudonyms.

once he became proficient in it, he began to associate mostly with Coloured friends. So, while his family and his immediate neighbourhood was almost entirely Black, he had created a social circle for himself which was almost entirely Coloured (Mwanda, 2007).

When I spoke with the boys about Black-Coloured relations within the prison, some initially characterized the prison almost as a multicultural utopia. 'It's like we're all brothers here; we all hang out with everyone', Gift Sidelo explained to me (Sidelo, 2007). However, when I commented on the de facto segregation that I witnessed in the courtyard, he acknowledged that reality. Furthermore, he acknowledged that fights usually occur along cultural lines. This seems not to be because of any significant disagreements between Blacks and Coloureds, but rather, a reflection of the webs of friendships that bind the Blacks together, on the one hand, and the Coloureds together, on the other. '[The] Xhosas talk with their people and I talk with my people, Coloured people,' Bompie Jacobs explained to me, when I asked about the de facto segregation in the prison. 'I don't want to talk with them because they don't talk with me. That's why I talk with my Coloured friends' (Jacobs 2007). Gift Sidelo explained the ramifications that these social groupings have on fights that occur: 'As soon as they start to fight', he explained, 'they then move to [divisions among] the races and the colours and the languages and we all fight' (Sidelo, 2007).

My work in Section B5 took place over a 12-week period in late 2007. I coordinated the project with both the wardens of Section B5 and the staff of Hope Prison Ministry. The participants of the drama programme were roughly half-Black, half-Coloured, and the ensemble ranged in size from about six members (when it was at its smallest) to about 16 members (at its largest). The membership of the ensemble necessarily shifted as participants left and entered the prison. I typically worked with the ensemble three times per week, for about two hours at a stretch, in large, empty cell. During the course of the programme, we created two performances, each of

which were performed for an invited audience of prisoners, wardens, and Hope Ministry staff members.

Two Ethical Dilemmas

As I began to do this work, two ethical dilemmas presented themselves. These dilemmas forced me to refine my research question and to prepare myself for the difficulties that I would face as a facilitator.

First, I was forced to confront the question: What right do I have to be here, doing this work?

I am a White American. My values were shaped in a cultural landscape thousands of miles from here. They grow out of a relatively-prosperous, middle-class existence within the richest and most powerful country on the planet. For my MA fieldwork at Pollsmoor, I proposed to facilitate dialogue between members of two cultural groups, each of which are mired in poverty. They have been shaped by a legacy of terrible oppression. They speak languages that I do not understand. The thought that I could facilitate meaningful and constructive dialogue between them implies that I can understand their needs and values. This, I realise, is an audacious and dangerous claim. It underscores the worst stereotypes of American arrogance. White Westerners have done terrible damage to non-White cultures in this part of the world, often operating under the false assumption that their own values are universal ones. As an educated, progressive, reflexive practitioner, I should know better. Perhaps I should accept that I simply have no right to be here.

Early on in my coursework, I learned that Zakes Mda, an expert in Theatre for Development, has addressed this very issue. He has developed a vocabulary with which to discuss these relationships, and has weighed in on what kinds of facilitators should work with what kinds of

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populations. He defines 'homophily' as 'the degree to which pairs of individuals . . . have similarities in such attributes as beliefs, values, education, and ideological outlook determined by class position'. He defines 'heterophily' as 'the degree to which individuals differ in these attributes' (1993: 85). While he acknowledges that there is no such thing as a purely homophilous situation, as no two people are exactly alike, he insists that 'human beings typically interact with people most like themselves' and that 'heterophilous communication is normally ineffective'. He thus concludes that 'optimal heterophily' is achieved when the facilitator is only slightly different from the target population (1993: 85).

According to Mda's standards, I am ill-equipped for this work. The vast cultural differences between the prisoners and me raise both practical and ethical concerns. Yet I have also realised that the choice *not* to engage is also an active choice that impacts these communities. Dwight Conquergood refers to this choice to disengage in the face of 'ethical tensions and moral ambiguities' as 'the skeptic's cop-out', and charges that it is the 'refuge of cowards and cynics' (Conquergood, 1982: 8). Rather, one must engage, and endeavour to navigate one's way through problematic territory as ethically as one can (Conquergood, 1982: 8). Once I have perceived the need for intercultural dialogue in South Africa, once it has occurred to me to contribute to that cause, and once I have begun developing the skill set to do so, I cannot ethically turn away from making my small contribution. I may have no right to be here, but neither do I have the right to stay home. If I turn away from problems in the so-called 'developing world', that too is a display of stereotypical American arrogance.

Given the choice, I have chosen to stay, to contribute, and to learn. However, as Conquergood (1982) warns, the practitioner's choice to engage in these encounters is an ethical minefield. Throughout my time here, I have found myself continually questioning my own ethical standing in the work. How 'far', and how 'forcefully', could I push the participants down the path of

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dialogue? Was it my right to frame the issues? If I complemented actors, was I inherently defining the terms for success? For example, when I told an actor he was being 'very realistic', was I overstepping my bounds by defining the criteria for success? What if they truly *needed* – for the sake of their own mental health – to create something abstract and decidedly *un*realistic? These questions plagued me throughout my work, and motivated me to find a form in which I could be a *guide* – but not a *guru* – on this dialogic journey.

This sensibility has affected my gravitation towards Casmir's theory of third-culture building. Interpersonal dialogue inherently assumes (and imposes) the values of peace and harmony, which the facilitator works to foster among the two populations in dialogue by promoting interpersonal contact. Meanwhile, intergroup dialogue inherently assumes (and imposes) a conflict-based binary upon the populations. By setting up a structure in which individuals participate on behalf of their groups, in order to promote a dialogue between distinct group identities that are presumed to be in conflict, the facilitator inherently imposes his reading of the social/political dynamics upon the populations with whom he works. Just as it is inappropriate for me, as a foreigner, to assume that my values of peace and harmony are universal (What about the oft-competing value of social justice? Or the value of looking out for one's own people? Or other values, which might not even occur to me, because I come from such a different cultural landscape?), it is also inappropriate for me to impose my inherently-limited understanding of South Africa's cultural topography upon the people who inhabit it. The framework of third-culture building avoids these pitfalls with its framework of empowering the composite-group to determine the ratio of intergroup to interpersonal contact, and enabling the group members to determine the character of their interactions with each other, based on their own interests.

My second dilemma comes from my realisation that the result of intercultural dialogue is not necessarily a 'happy ending'. As I have already mentioned, I view the dialogue process as one that ideally ends with all parties gaining an enhanced understanding of each other. However, the parties might not like what they learn. They may come away with a stronger distaste of each other than they arrived with. Is it possible that I – despite my ambitious, good intentions – might be heightening, rather than deescalating, a historic, cultural conflict?

Yes, it is possible.

I was initially driven to conduct this work out of a hope that it might contribute to a more unified world. However, I recognize that, under certain circumstances, dialogue actually might exacerbate the friction between groups. In order to accept this truism, I have had to distinguish between my goals and my objectives. My goals are lofty and audacious, and they are firmly rooted in my own cultural values. My desire to contribute to coexistence within a more unified world is a goal; as such, it is personal, and I have learned that I must keep this personal goal 'in check' as I engage in scholarly research and in dialogic practice. In a sense, I must demote the 'goal' to a 'hope', and focus more intently on my pragmatic objective – to facilitate intercultural dialogue. Personally, I continue to hope that my objectives will further my goals, and I have faith that they will do so, even if indirectly. Yet ethically, I recognize that these goals of coexistence and unity do not represent universal values, and that there may be other values (i.e., social justice) inherently competing with the ones that initially attracted me. As such, when I am working as the facilitator of culturally-distinct groups – groups whose cultural values I admittedly do not completely understand – I must resist the temptation to gear the process towards my own goals. I am much more comfortable working in pursuit of my objective – to facilitate intercultural dialogue, leading towards an enhanced understanding of each other. While I recognise that this objective, too, may be informed by my own cultural values, I am

more comfortable with it because it stops short of imposing a desired behavioural end state on the process. The participants' own cultural values will determine what they do with the enhanced understanding they might acquire.

Structure of the Dissertation

My primary research question, 'To what extent is workshop theatre a useful method for facilitating intercultural dialogue with diverse groups?', demands that I focus my attention on the potential relationships between workshop theatre, on the one hand, and the different paradigms of intercultural dialogue, on the other. Hence, the bulk of this thesis is devoted to analysing the ways in which the three approaches to intercultural dialogue can inform the processes of workshop theatre, when it is being conducted with an intercultural ensemble for the purposes of fostering intercultural dialogue.

The first two chapters investigate the first two paradigms, respectively, in an effort to show how particular elements of workshop theatre can engender both an interpersonal and an intergroup dialogue. Chapter One will examine the ways that improvisation and theatre games foster interpersonal dialogue. Chapter Two will examine the ways that the research process fosters intergroup dialogue.

In Chapter Three, I will further investigate the model of third-culture building in an attempt to argue that this paradigm best enables us to understand the complexity of intercultural dialogue in the workshop context. In doing so, I will present Casmir's four phases of third-culture building and analyse the way that they work in a workshop setting. I will focus particularly on the workshopping process that I recently facilitated at Pollsmoor Prison. With this example, I will attempt to show the way that the subgroups built a third-culture as they simultaneously

constructed pieces of theatre. Moreover, I hope to show that the process of third-culture

building enables a group to integrate elements of both interpersonal and intergroup dialogue,

and that the framework of workshop theatre enables a facilitator to be a guide for this journey

without being a dominant guru.

Then, having investigated the ways in which the process of workshop theatre embodies the

theories of intercultural dialogue, I will conclude by examining the challenges of the facilitator.

Given the ethical minefield inherent in conducting this work, how can the facilitator ethically

and effectively proceed? When I do this work, how can I integrate the elements of interpersonal

and intergroup dialogue into the process of third-culture building that characterises the path of

the workshop process? How do I position myself within the landscape of multiple cultural

groups, multiple dialogue processes, multiple ethical dilemmas, and a complex art form?

I conclude with this personal, reflexive section because I ultimately conduct my own research

and writing in hopes to achieve greater clarity, comfort, and confidence as a practitioner. Both

of the fields which I am straddling – that of Applied Theatre and that of Intercultural

Communication – emphasise the importance of active engagement within one's community(ies).

Though this investigation will integrate a lot of theory, it ultimately hopes to use that theory to

elucidate a working method. The investigation was born out of my hope in a more unified

world, and I hope that the academic theory can light our way forward in pursuit of that vision.

CHAPTER ONE: INTERPERSONAL DIALOGUE

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the elements of the workshop process that can empower an intercultural ensemble to conduct an interpersonal dialogue. As described in the introduction, an interpersonal dialogue is an interaction in which members of different cultural groups can meet simply as individuals. It is characterised by an emphasis on commonality, and encourages participants to transcend their cultural differences in an effort to explore that common ground and develop a rapport.

As I write this chapter, I proceed with an important reservation. The emphasis on discovering common humanity in intercultural situations often has the effect of subtly privileging the dominant cultural subgroup. If we seek to look past our differences – for instance, if we insist that we 'don't see race' – we implicitly deny the real cultural differences that separate us (Peck, 1994: 94). This denial of difference allows people of privilege to ignore the invisible advantages that their circumstances have afforded them. It allows them to perpetuate historical injustices by not actively committing themselves to redressing them (Wildman, 1995). It also lulls them into accepting their own values as universal, rather than recognizing the rich tapestry of cultural differences (Peck, 1994: 109). The emphasis on 'common humanity' sounds nice, but it is dangerous.

Nonetheless, when people gather in intercultural groups, their common humanity is undeniable. Moreover, personal rapport is important for a workshop ensemble's theatrical and dialogic goals, and personal rapport is built on this sense of commonality. I believe that this discovery and exploration of common humanity is an indispensable element of intercultural dialogue, even though I adamantly feel that it must be balanced by a recognition of difference. It is with this duality of conviction that I proceed.

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In the first part of this chapter, I introduce several theoretical constructs that others have used when discussing the transcendence of cultural boundaries through performance. These theories are all applicable to interpersonal dialogue, in that they all relate to ways that theatrical frameworks can nurture a sense of people's common humanity. I then evaluate how those theoretical constructs can explain how certain elements of the workshop process – ensemble-building games and improvisation – engender an interpersonal dialogue. I examine how this happened in my own work at Pollsmoor Prison, and how it affected our evolving group dynamic.

Eugenio Barba and Pre-Expressivity

Eugenio Barba is a contemporary European theatre director (based in Denmark) whose work emphasises intercultural collaboration. Unlike some other major theorists and practitioners, whose research on intercultural theatre emphasises product and form (such as Rustom Bharucha and Peter Brook), Barba's work is particularly relevant to this dissertation because he emphasises the importance of the intercultural *process*.

Barba has sought to identify universal principles of theatre-making that underpin all major theatrical styles, cutting across cultural lines. His actor training is informed by these principles, as he attempts to create an intercultural, theatrical vocabulary through which all theatre-makers can encounter each other. He describes these universal principles as *pre-expressive* or *pre-cultural*, highlighting their transcultural properties. They attempt to explain 'how to render the actor's energy scenically alive' (Schechner, 1993: xii), i.e., how to make the actor appear dynamic and interesting to an audience, in any theatrical form. Barba thus promotes a certain

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'way of using the body, of moving through space, of gesturing, speaking, and making contact separate and prior to any "characterization"' (Schechner, 1993: xi).

When actors study these principles of pre-expressivity, they discover 'a common substratum which we share with masters far removed in time and space' (Barba, 1986: 10-11 and Schechner xiii). He envisions this substratum as a 'transnational country' – an archipelago of 'floating islands' (Barba, 1986: 10-11).

To learn these principles of pre-expressivity, Barba contends that performers need to put aside their 'daily' behaviours and consciously embrace an 'extra-daily' physicality. Ian Watson explains this dichotomy:

> Daily behavior refers to the largely unconscious process through which our bodies and voices absorb and reflect the culture in which we live. We slowly learn how to stand, walk, talk, and behave through parental guidance, role models, and by mirroring those around us. Through this process we gradually acquire a body technique that reflects both the society we come from and our role in it.
>
> Extra-daily behavior, on the other hand, refers to a body technique that is other than daily. Performance forms such as ballet, corporal mime, kathakali, or Noh require actors to master movements, ways of holding the body, and/or vocal techniques which are very different from daily behavior. (Watson, 1993: 32)

Barba's theory of pre-expressivity contends that these various performance forms, which obviously differ vastly in terms of their aesthetics, contain common principles. While a detailed description of these principles is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a brief depiction of one such principle may be illustrative:

> Barba shows how the Chinese actor, for example, in wanting to look at a person to his right will begin the action by moving, ever so slightly perhaps, in a direction other than to the right. Then, at a decisive moment, the actor turns suddenly to the right. . . . . The *principle of opposition* [emphasis mine] exists at the pre-expressive level. In other words, opposition doesn't function only in terms of particular character types or genres. The principle of opposition is a key 'secret' or 'good piece of advice' shared by actors in many cultures. (Schechner, 1993: xii)

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Augusto Boal and Demechanization

Augusto Boal, a Brazilian director who has founded a theatrical movement called *Theatre of the Oppressed*, also explores a 'base level' at which all human beings are the same. He posits that 'each of us has, within him, everything that all other men, all other women have . . . We have the whole gamut, in pure potentiality, boiling away, in a hermetically sealed pan' (Boal, 1995: 35). This 'potential', he says, is a *person*. However, 'this *person* is so rich and powerful, so intense, with such a multiplicity of forms and faces, that we are constrained to reduce it' (Boal, 1995: 35). We cannot live as our entire potential beings; rather, we reduce ourselves into our much more limited social selves, which he calls *personality*. The reduction results from two causes: 'external, social coercion and/or internal, ethical choice' (Boal, 1995: 35). He explains: 'I do or do not do thousands of things, I behave or do not behave in thousands of different ways because I am constrained by social factors, which force me to be this or stop me from being that' (Boal, 1995: 35). The goal of the actor, then, is to discover his entire *person*, thereby awakening his potential to be someone other than who he is. His art challenges him to experience a second reduction, and to shape for himself a different *personality* – that of his character (Boal, 1995: 35-37).
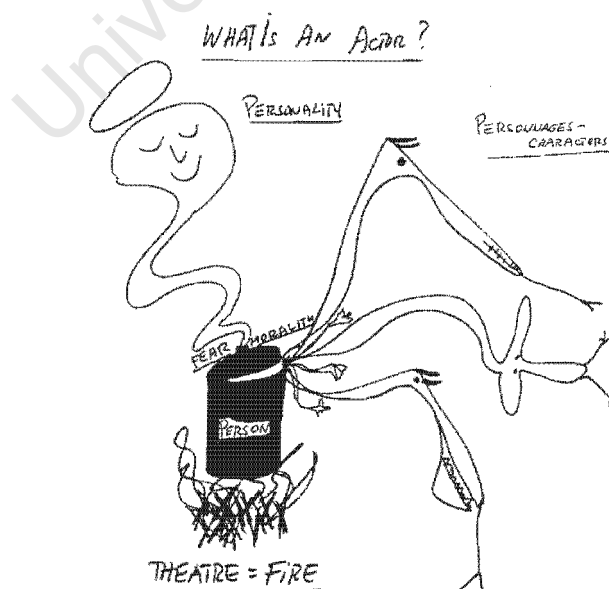

Image taken from *The Rainbow of Desire* by Augusto Boal (Boal, 1995: 33)

The process that we must go through in order to discover our entire potential being – our *person*hood – is called demechanization. Boal explains that our *personality* becomes ingrained through habitual action. Our day-to-day realities cause us to repeat certain actions, emotions, gestures, and cognitive patterns. These become deep-seated, 'mechanized' aspects of our identity (Boal, 2002: 29-30). They even cause our powers of observation to wither. He explains:

> In the body's battle with the world, the senses suffer. And we start to feel very little of what we touch, to listen to very little of what we hear and to see very little of what we look at. We feel, listen and see according to our speciality; the body adapts itself to the job it has to do. This adaptation is at one and the same time atrophy and hypertrophy. In order for the body to be able to send out and receive all possible messages, it has to be reharmonised. (Boal, 2002: 49)

'For this reason', Boal contends,

> we must start with the 'de-mechanization', the retuning (or detuning) of the actor, so that he may be able to take on the mechanizations of the character he is going to play. He must relearn to perceive emotions and sensations he has lost the habit of recognising. (Boal, 2002: 30)

Boal has developed his *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* with this very goal in mind. These games are simple activities – accessible to both specialists and laypeople – that awaken our senses, emotions, and physical dexterity. They help us make that journey into the hot pan of universal *person*hood. In this, they bear some similarity to Barba's 'extra-daily' training techniques. However, unlike Barba's training, which is known for its gruelling intensity, Boal's methodologies are designed to be enjoyable and accessible.

Victor Turner and Liminality

Just as Boal and Barba, the anthropologist Victor Turner has also sought to explore a theoretical

realm of human experience that exists outside the realm of any particular cultural reality. He

refers to this realm as the 'liminal' realm, and describes it as:

> detached from mundane life and characterized by the presence of ambiguous ideas,
> monstrous images, . . . gender reversals, anonymity, and many other phenomena and
> processes which I have elsewhere described as liminal. The limen, or threshold, . . . is a
> no-man's land betwixt-and-between the structural past and the structural future as
> anticipated by the society's normative control of biological development . . . I sometimes
> talk about the liminal phase being dominantly in the 'subjunctive mood' of culture, the
> mood of maybe, might-be, as-if, hypothesis, [and] fantasy . . . We might say, in terms of
> brain neurobiology, that here right-hemispheric and archaic brain functions are very
> much in evidence . . . Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile
> nothingness, [or] a storehouse of possibilities . . . . (Turner, 1990: 11-12)

Liminality can be triggered by many phenomena, including song, dance, trance, drumming, or

even a suggestive change of location. However, Turner pays particular attention to the

potentiality of ritual and of theatre to access the liminal. Thus, through certain types of

theatrical practice, Turner suggests that we may be able to depart from the 'real world' of

cultural norms and temporarily enter a realm of ambiguity and paradox.

Moreover, once we transition into the liminal realm, Turner argues that we may experience a

phenomenon that he calls 'communitas'. He describes communitas as 'social antistructure', by

which he means 'a relational quality of full, unmediated communication, even communion,

between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups,

situation, and circumstances' (Turner, 1992: 58-59). He elaborates, calling communitas

> a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities, a deep rather than intense
> style of personal interaction. It has something 'magical' about it. Subjectively there is
> in it a feeling of endless power . . . when the mood, style, or 'fit' of spontaneous
> communitas is upon us, we place a high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of
> pretensions or pretentiousness. We feel that it is important to relate directly to another
> person as he presents himself in the here-and-now, to understand him in a sympathetic . .
> . way, free from the culturally defined encumbrances of his role, status, reputation, class,

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caste, sex or other structural niche. Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronized, fluid event. (1982: 47-48)

While none of these three theorists (Barba, Boal, or Turner) credits the others with shaping his own views, I believe that their theories are closely related. Each has identified a realm in which all humans are essentially 'the same', despite their real-world cultural differences. For each of them, this realm is closely associated with performance. Turner's notion of performance as a gateway into 'a no-man's land betwixt-and-between' cultural spheres, characterized by 'the mood of maybe' (Turner 1990: 11-12), dovetails with Boal's notion of theatrical training as a 'detuning' of the actor (Boal 2002: 30) and Barba's notion of 'pre-expressivity' as a 'common substratum' or 'transnational country' (Barba, 1986: 11). In Barba's theatre, this cultural merging is in fact the ultimate goal of performance; as Ian Watson explains, Barba 'views theatre as a point of contact between cultures in which the exchange is as important as the quality or content of the product' (Watson, 1993: 32).

Moreover, I believe that these three theatre theorists share an ideological framework with the adherents of the contact hypothesis. As previously stated, the contact hypothesis posits that interpersonal contact can lead people to discover a shared sense of humanity, which will override their sense of group differences. While Allport and his colleagues use very different – and much more prosaic – terms, their ideas resonate with those of Boal, Barba, and (especially) Turner. They all envision a cultural island, freed from the stark cultural barriers of the real world, in which individuals can interact as souls. They seek to submerge antagonistic groups in 'fructile chaos' of the '"subjunctive mood" of culture' (Turner, 1990: 11-12) – where participants will undergo 'demechanization' as they discover 'pre-expressive' universals of human identity.

I believe that by steering an intercultural ensemble through certain types of activities, a workshop facilitator can do the same thing. He or she can help an intercultural group to experience communitas, by demachanizing the group members with activities that elicit extra-daily behaviours and promote the creation of a liminal space. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to examining how theatre games and improvisation – two important elements of workshop theatre – might induce this liminal realm while steadily progressing towards an ensemble's performance goals.

Theatre Games

Recall from the introduction that the first element of workshopping (or devising) is ensemble-building. This vital step often happens through a series of game-like structures, allowing the ensemble to develop a familiarity with each other and a creative, working relationship. It helps the actors overcome their inhibitions and transcend their 'ingrained xenophobia' (Fleishman, 1991: 76). These games do not always have a specific aim; rather, they open up possibilities that will inform the character and direction of the work throughout the process (Fleishman, 1991: 79).

There is an extensive literature on theatre games. Viola Spolin (author of *Improvisation for the Theatre*, *Theatre Games for the Classroom*, and others), Augusto Boal (author of *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*), Clive Barker (author of *Theatre Games*) and many others have contributed to this literature with practical handbooks of theatre games that are widely used internationally. Often, theatre groups also borrow and adapt games from other contexts, making them into 'theatre games'. The reverse happens, too: group leaders of all kinds have borrowed theatre games for their own purposes, often finding them to be exciting ways of engaging a group and promoting interaction among members.

These games are generally designed to accomplish at least one of two things. First, they often develop some kind of skill in its players that is useful in the theatre. Second, most theatre games also nurture a sense of teamwork or ensemble. Spolin acknowledges each of these aspects in the opening pages of her book, *Theater Games for the Classroom*. First, she defines theatre games as games that allow 'students to absorb theatre skills naturally without conscious effort' by stimulating 'action, relation, spontaneity, and creativity of individuals in a group setting' (1986: 2). Yet she also emphasises that her games also develop social skills and collective problem-solving skills (1986: 3). Boal highlights this duality of theatre games by first distinguishing between 'games' and 'exercises' – and then blurring that distinction. He writes:

> I use the word 'exercise' to designate all physical, muscular movement (respiratory, motor, vocal) which helps the doer to a better knowledge or recognition of his or her body, its muscles, its nerves, its relationship to other bodies, to gravity, to objects, to space, its dimensions, volumes, weights, speed, the interrelationship of these different forces, and so on. The goal of the exercises is a better awareness of the body and its mechanisms, its atrophies and hypertrophies, its capacities for recuperation, restructuring, reharmonisation. Each exercise is a 'physical reflection' on oneself. A monologue. An introversion.
> The games, on the other hand, deal with the expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. The games are a dialogue, they require an interlocutor. They are extroversion.
> In fact, the games and exercises I offer are mostly 'gamesercises' – there is a fair proportion of exercise in the games and a fair proportion of game in the exercises. (2002: 48)

Therefore, as an ensemble begins to play these games, two things begin to happen simultaneously. First, the individuals begin to develop a greater insight into – and mastery over – their own bodies. As Boal puts it, they begin feeling what they touch, listening to what they hear, seeing what they look at, and developing the memories of their senses. In the course of so doing, they 'de-mechanize' themselves: they reharmonise their bodies 'in order for the body to be able to send out and receive all possible messages (Boal, 2002: 49). Essentially, they are reaching for the culturally-universal pre-expressivity that Barba writes about. Second, they are simultaneously reaching out to each other. They watch, listen, touch, move, and respond to each

other in heightened, unusual, playful ways. They develop habits of interacting that are positively strange by anyone's standards: they would not make sense in any real-world context, no matter the culture. In a sense, then, they are creating a liminal realm in which they themselves define the cultural norms. In fact, Turner's description of liminality serves to describe the world of theatre games quite well: it is a milieu 'detached from mundane life and characterized by the presence of ambiguous ideas, monstrous images, . . . gender reversals, [and] anonymity' (Turner, 1990: 11-12). In the midst of doing so, they sometimes catch a glimpse of 'communitas' – an invigorating, inspirational feeling of group harmony. It is also addictive: once a group experiences communitas, they seek to recreate it. The connection deepens. The ensemble congeals.

In an attempt to illustrate the ways in which theatre games lead groups toward the cultural universalism of pre-expressivity and toward liminality, I now examine a couple of theatre games in greater depth. These are games that I used in my work at Pollsmoor Prison, and I attempt to shed some light on how they might have affected the group. Of course, much of this is conjecture. I was not – nor am I now – attempting to *prove* the worth of these games to a sceptic. Rather, I am attempting to examine the details of these games with an understanding of liminality, pre-expressivity, and demechanization, and to offer an educated guess of how they might have affected the group.

Three Irish Duels

This is a physical game, played in pairs, described in Boal's book, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. In the first duel, partners stand facing each other, trying to tap each other's knees while guarding their own. In the second, each player tries to touch his foot on top of his partner's foot. In the third, each player makes a 'sword' with a pointed finger and places a 'target' (his other

hand) behind his back. The players score points by touching their opponent's target with their own sword (Boal, 2002: 82).

We played this game frequently. Often, we would switch partners between each round; this was my way of subtly encouraging each player to circulate among the group, playing with all the other participants. The competitive spirit of the game was galvanising. People played hard, excited by the challenge. As a result, we became physically dynamised, with little worry about our physical appearance. We moved our bodies in big, exaggerated, 'extra-daily' ways. We experienced heightened physical tension in our muscles, as we actively broke free of our regular, 'mechanized' ways of moving. It may not have exactly been 'pre-cultural', but it was close, in that we were all learning a physical vocabulary that was equally unfamiliar to us all. We were, in a sense, carving out a liminal realm, beyond the boundaries of our cultural groups, characterised by this exaggerated, fast-paced movement.

Moreover, each person's physical movements in this game are connected with those of his opponent. As I play, I am carefully watching my adversary's every move. My body naturally begins to respond to his; I move in sync with him. It happens so quickly that I am unaware of the cognitive process by which I make the decision; it happens at the subconscious level. He moves his foot as if to stomp on mine, and mine automatically begins to move backwards, dodging his stomp. As soon as his foot falls onto the floor, mine immediately rises – almost before I can direct it to do so – in an attempt to stomp on his foot while he catches his balance. We are competing, but we are moving as one. It is almost a dance. This, too, contributes to the liminality of the experience. Not only are we moving in an exaggerated way, creating a '[milieu] detached from mundane life' (Turner, 1990: 11-12), but we are even initiating each other's actions. Our personal boundaries are disintegrating. We are beginning to move as one.

Many theatre games work according to similar principles. The popular game 'mirror', as well as Boal's game 'Columbian hypnosis', both have similar effects, and we made frequent use of them in our group process as well.

Big Booty

This is another competitive game, which develops focus and rhythm. All players stand in a circle, facing in. Each player – except for the leader – is given a number, which will temporarily replace his identity. The numbers get assigned in ascending order, so the person to the left of the leader is 'number 1', the person to the left of 'number 1' is 'number 2', and so forth. The leader is called 'Big Booty', and the ascending numbers represent a hierarchy in the game. Hence, whoever has the highest number – the person standing to the right of Big Booty – stands at the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. Each round of the game begins with a rhythmic chant, signalling the beginning of play – and then, staying within the rhythm that has been set with the chant – the players begin calling each other by number, in a chain reaction. So, the leader might begin by calling, 'Big Booty – Number 3' – after which Number 3 would immediately, within the rhythmic framework, call out 'Number 3 - Number 8'. Number 8 would then – without missing a beat, call out 'Number 8 – Number 2' – and so on. Any player can call the number of any other player, and that person must be ready to respond. If anyone messes up the rhythm, or calls out a number that doesn't exist, that player moves into last place, to the right of Big Booty, accepting the highest number for the following round. This signals the end of one round and the beginning of the next. The next round begins immediately, in the same way as the last one, but now many players have different numbers.

Unlike 'Three Irish Duels', 'Big Booty' is not a highly physical game. Players stand stationary for the most part, clapping out a rhythm, calling out each other's numbers, and shifting positions between each round. It does not harness the same exaggerated, extra-daily kinaesthetic dynamic

that is associated with many other games. Yet in other significant ways, games like this one also open up the liminal realm.

First, the game introduces a rhythm, and challenges all its players to interact with each other within this 'extra-daily', rhythmic framework. Second, we all accept that our identities – within the framework of the game – are transient. We trade identities between each round. In fact, the fun and the challenge of the game rests with the fact that we have to struggle to remember who we are, because we can so easily lose our own identity in the frequent shifts between each round. Moreover, in the frantic speed of the game, we often call out a number without thinking about which player we are calling. The result is that we cannot resort to only calling on our personal friends, or only calling on people of our cultural subgroup. Everyone learns to respond to everyone else.

As a group gets good at this game, a sense of pride begins to develop, based on the fact that the rounds begin to last longer and longer. Like children trying to keep a balloon in the air, or tennis players volleying, we experience this as a collective accomplishment. We begin rooting for each other – trying to stretch out the volley for as long as possible – even though we know that, according to the structure of the game, we are technically competing against each other.

I believe that this sense of collectivity is akin to Turner's 'communitas'. There is a sense of a 'synchronized, fluid event' (1982: 47-48), and of a 'social antistructure' (1992: 58-59) in which our normal groupings seem to fall away. It occurs in a fleeting burst of energy, but it can have lasting consequences. As Turner describes, this spontaneous, 'existential' type of communitas has the tendency to develop into what he calls 'normative communitas', in which a group attempts to 'capture and preserve spontaneous communitas in a system of ethical precepts and legal rules' (1992: 58-59).

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I suspect that this chain reaction – from spontaneous communitas to normative communitas – occurred within our group at Pollsmoor Prison. Many of our games and exercises nurtured this feeling of cohesion and unity, and the players came to value it. Thus, when they made decisions that would affect other parts of the drama programme – for instance, when they developed the list of rules and consequences, as I describe in Chapter 3 – they did so in such a way that would attempt to preserve this sense of communitas. As Turner argues, this 'normative communitas' is always an approximate of the more profound 'spontaneous communitas' – and we may never succeed at consciously nurturing the full power of communitas (1982: 47). Nonetheless, in 'striving to replicate itself . . . [it] develops a social structure' – one which can have a profound effect on the evolving group dynamic (1982: 47).

Big Booty is also a game that elicits laughter. We laugh at ourselves, and we laugh at each other, as we release the tension at the end of each round. In laughing, we share in a moment of uncontrolled, joyful emotion. We jointly experience a part of our essential humanity, which feels remarkably similar for each of us, despite our cultural differences.

These two theatre games – 'Three Irish Duels' and 'Big Booty' – are merely a few examples of the dozens that we played in Pollsmoor and of the thousands that are played and written about around the world. I do not mean to suggest that these represent the full range of games that exist. However, I hope that these examples can effectively illustrate how many of these ensemble-building games can playfully nurture a sense of liminality and communitas within an intercultural group. In doing so, they cultivate a sense of common humanity and group unity through the same logic and vision that underpins the contact hypothesis and the literature on interpersonal dialogue.

Improvisation

Improvisation is fundamental to the process of workshopping. Actors invent material on the fly – and it is then shaped, honed, and recast into a performance text. Mark Fleishman describes:

> In an improvisation it is the performers who create the text for the performance at the moment of performance. No outside authorial power dictates the way forward. The performers are free to choose which path to follow and in what style, in what language, in what voice they will act . . . Improvisation shifts the performers from being creative interpreters to being creative authors, potentially freeing them from a pre-existent text and the control of an external authorial voice. (Fleishman, 1991: 90-92)

Fleishman describes improvisation as indispensable to the process of generating material for a piece of workshop theatre. While he acknowledges that some material can be developed in other ways, such as through discussion or demonstration, he nonetheless insists that 'some degree of extemporary or improvised performance' is vital (83). Most other experts on workshop theatre (or devised theatre) seem to agree. Improvisation is featured prominently in the writings of Fleishman (1991: 83-94), Oddey (1994: 152-153), Heddon and Milling (2006: 7-10), Pavis (1998: 181), Hartnoll (1983: 165), and Kerrigan (2001: 29, 103).

However, the improvisation does more than drive the workshop process forward. It can also deepen the sense of connection between the actors, laying the foundation for a greater sense of commonality within the ensemble. When actors collaborate to improvise a scene in the midst of a workshopping process, they deepen the sense of liminality that they have already begun to develop during the ensemble-building theatre games. The web of intimacy, which has begun to enwrap the ensemble, will be expanded and strengthened. The 'fructile chaos' – which began to germinate in the game-playing – now spreads.

For instance, in the game 'Three Irish Duels', we experienced a kinaesthetic liminality in the ways our physical bodies moved and responded to each other. But the experience was clearly

bounded by a set of well-defined rules: we knew, more or less, what was going to happen in the duel. In an improvisation, the fructile chaos takes over. My partner may move as he did in 'Three Irish Duels', or he may move in an entirely different way. I cannot predict it, and, if he is a good improviser, even he is not predicting; we are both working on impulse. At any moment, he might pull a monkey out of thin air and the monkey might inspire me to take the scene in an unanticipated direction. We invent the world as we improvise. It is truly, as Turner describes, 'the "subjunctive mood" of culture, the mood of maybe, might-be, as-if, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, [and] desire' – it is 'a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities', a 'gestation process' (Turner, 1990: 11-12). To find their way through this abundance of possibilities, the actors must trust each other completely, develop a group mind, and interact interdependently.

This ability to trust, to work on impulse, and to develop a group mind reflects the uncensored honesty that comes to characterise the interactions of improvisers. Keith Johnstone, author of *Impro*, argues that most people are often initially weak improvisers because they have been taught to guard their own image. They want to judge their own actions before they execute them, lest those actions appear to be psychotic, obscene, or unoriginal (Johnstone, 1979: 82). However, the experienced improviser learns to act before thinking. 'He's not making any decisions, he's not weighing one idea against another. He's accepting his first thoughts' (Johnstone, 1979: 88). These initial impulses may be much more revelatory of a person's true identity than the carefully-selected actions that make it past his inner censor. According to Johnstone, 'If you improvise spontaneously . . . you have to accept that your innermost self will be revealed' (1979: 111). This lack of boundaries further enhances the sense of liminality within an ensemble, as individuals exhibit this willingness to reveal their insecurities and aberrations that they would normally work to conceal. They therefore experience many different aspects of each other's humanity. Improvising with someone, I experience his sense of

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humour, his creative spark, and his ability to listen. I learn to anticipate his unique ways of moving, and I am touched by his emotional honesty. I don't just witness these things; I experience them. I open myself up to be affected by them. I dance with all these elements of his humanity, as I allow them to ignite mine.

This happens despite profound differences in cultural background that might divide the actors. Sometimes, in fact, differences in culture seem to fall away entirely in the midst of an improvisation. When watching the actors improvise at Pollsmoor – particularly when actors would improvise scenes across cultural lines (Black and Coloured actors together) – I would realize that their characters' cultures had become ambiguous. Was the Black actor playing a Black character, and the Coloured actor playing a coloured character? Or had they swapped? Did they even have a culture in mind for their character? The quality of the interaction seemed to suggest to me that the characters were probably of the same cultural group, though it was impossible to tell which one.

My 'reading' of these scenes was corroborated by some of the participants in interviews that I conducted after the conclusion of the programme. For instance, when I asked Nelson Mwanda whether he felt he was playing 'Black' or 'Coloured' in these circumstances, he answered: 'I just imagine that we are the same. I don't imagine that I am the Xhosa and he is the Coloured, or that I am the Coloured and he is the Xhosa. I just imagine that we are the same' (Mwanda, 2007).

Some of the other participants gave slightly different answers, though they revealed the same sense of liminality. Tyrone Andrews (a Coloured participant) told me that when he improvised with Black participants, he would generally imagine his character as Black (Andrews, 2007). When I interviewed Xolani Appie (a Black participant), he told me that when he improvised

with Coloured participants, he would generally imagine his character as Coloured (Appie, 2007). An interesting opportunity presented itself as I was interviewing Xolani; Tyrone, whom I had interviewed earlier the same week, wandered into the room. I took the opportunity to talk to them about the ways that they had each answered this question, and pointed out to them that when the two of them improvised with each other, they had each been envisioning themselves in the cultural model of the other (Appie, 2007). I expected this to surprise them, but it did not. Though each of them had been imagining a cultural identity for himself, it didn't seem to be a fundamental part of that character. They seemed to have come to understand and value the cultural fluidity that the liminal realm of improvisation offered.

Summary

Theatre games and improvisation – two of the essential elements of the workshopping (or devising) process – naturally engender an interpersonal dialogue among the members of the intercultural performance group. They nurture a sense of common humanity among ensemble members that blurs cultural barriers. While preparing an ensemble for the creative challenges inherent in the process, and enabling a group to create material that then might be selected and shaped for performance, these elements also enhance the dialogic goals of the interaction.

However, I am not convinced that cultural differences can or should be entirely transcended. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the sense of transcending difference often leads to a notion that one's own values are universal, and can perpetuate ignorance of cultural values other than one's own. The notion of 'transcending difference' can easily lead to a denial of difference, and can cause people to ignore the invisible privileges that they enjoy. Therefore, this sense of common humanity must be balanced with a recognition and contextualization of difference – and it is that final topic which I will address in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: INTERGROUP DIALOGUE

The previous chapter was informed by research about interpersonal dialogue, which emphasises how contact between members of groups in conflict can promote an ethos of common humanity and transcend cultural differences. The contact hypothesis, which is associated with interpersonal interaction and dialogue, has been extremely influential over the past half century, and has even been considered one of the greatest ideas in the history of anthropology (Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna, 2006: 1). It has informed many of the major programmes and movements associated with multiculturalism around the world – including school integration, integration of armed services, affirmative action programmes, and numerous programmes that bring together populations in conflict for dialogue (Nadler, 2004: 23).

However, many scholars now believe that the contact hypothesis's emphasis on interpersonal interaction is fundamentally misguided. They point to Henry Tajfel's social identity theory, which argues that

> individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of their social group memberships and tend to seek a positive social identity (or self-definition in terms of group membership). They achieve this by comparing their own group with other groups to establish a positively valued distinctiveness between the two groups. (Hewstone and Brown, 1986: 34)

Thus, conflicts actually exist between groups – not just between group members. Cynthia Cohen, a contemporary scholar who focuses on the aesthetic properties of reconciliation, echoes this point in arguing that individuals and the groups to which they belong are *interembedded* in each other (Cohen, 1997: 135). Thus, conflict is not just fuelled by peoples' ignorance and stereotypes of each other, as the contact hypothesis suggests, but also by competition for resources and by the salience of group identity politics (Nadler, 2004: 15-20). Therefore, an

interpersonal dialogue that allows people to express their individual feelings and challenges them to experience empathy is insufficient. Rather, a form of dialogue is needed that orients participants to acknowledge their roles as part of a collective and explore their relationship to the collective 'other'.

Moreover, critics of the contact hypothesis argue, an emphasis on interpersonal dialogue can actually reinforce the status quo of unequal power relationships among groups, when such an imbalance exists. For instance, Mohammed Abu-Nimer suggests that in Israel/Palestine, where Jews benefit from hegemonic power over Arabs, interpersonal dialogue (based on the contact hypothesis) is highly problematic because it 'lacks the ability and potential to address inter-ethnic conflict and asymmetric power relations' (1999: 9). By nurturing a sense of harmony, and sidelining controversial political discussion, these encounters inherently support the status quo of Jewish hegemony. They allow the Jews to feel heroic about going beyond their comfort zones and meeting 'the other', but they deny the Arabs the opportunity to confront the majority group about the imbalances that are entrenched in the existing system.

Others argue that the contact hypothesis is flawed because its results don't generalise (Amir, 1976: 288). In other words, people who have attended an intercultural event may leave with positive feelings about the individuals whom they have met, but also with the sense that these individuals are exceptions to 'the rule'. The emphasis on interpersonal dialogue seems to promote this way of thinking. Since participants meet each other as individuals, not as representatives of their groups, those individuals don't seem to have a high level of 'group salience': they seem to be aberrant.

Dissatisfaction with the contact hypothesis has led scholars and activists to develop a new approach to intercultural dialogue. Known as the intergroup contact model, this approach

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advocates that participants meet each other not as 'individuals qua individuals', but rather, as 'individuals qua group members' (Brown and Turner, 1981: 60, in Hewstone and Brown, 1986: 34). In these contexts, individuals are treated as spokespersons for their groups, and the combined group is viewed as a microcosm of society (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004 : 51-52). This is all done in an effort to sharpen the cultural identities of the group members (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 50), thereby catalyzing a dialogue between groups, not just individuals.

Developing an intergroup, rather than interpersonal, orientation for dialogue has substantial ramifications. First, it invites a direct engagement with political issues. Rather than avoiding these potentially-divisive issues as a threat to the relationships being built, adherents of the intergroup model find political discussions to be an essential component of confronting each other as groups. Group identities are constructed vis-à-vis each other, and within a particular political framework of power distribution. Hence, an investigation of political issues is implicit within a larger investigation of group identities. Second, an engagement with political issues invites a further, even more contentious step: an acknowledgement and implicit critique of existing power hegemonies (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 53-54).

Of course, this also means that these encounters will be more emotionally charged and less comfortable than the interpersonal dialogues informed by the contact hypothesis. As Halabi and Sonnenschein acknowledge:

> We could be holding fun encounters that would lift the spirits of the participants and the facilitators alike. But that would be a sin against truth, perpetuated by us in collusion with the participants. We know full well that a heightened awareness of the hard reality in which we are living brings people to a far-from-easy confrontation with themselves and with the larger situation; it disturbs their peace of mind and the sense of comfort that hiding one's head in the sand can bring. Between these two options, the path we ought to follow is absolutely clear. In awareness, however painful, is embodied one of the most important human values: the right to have a choice and the option to change and be changed. (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 57)

This chapter examines how a workshop facilitator can nurture an intergroup dialogue within the workshop environment. It begins with a reflection on my work at Pollsmoor, noting the way that I tried to catalyze some discussion about difference, and ultimately only achieved limited success. This reflection leads me into an investigation of a method that I now believe might bear riper fruit. This idea is based in part on a fortuitous experience that occurred when I was tutoring a group of first-year drama students, workshopping a short play with them based on a newspaper article.

Readers may notice that this chapter stands in apparent contraction to the previous one in its outlook. My approach in the previous chapter was to foster a sense of intercultural harmony, yet my approach in this chapter emphasises a constant acknowledgement of the barriers that divide cultural groups. In the subsequent chapter, I will integrate the two.

The Pollsmoor Process: Reflections on Cultural Identity

In the first few weeks of the drama programme in Pollsmoor, I observed that cultural identities (Black and Coloured) seemed to be well entrenched, yet unarticulated. Most of the ensemble members initially interacted largely within informal subgroupings. Coloured participants would stand near other Coloured participants, chat with each other, make eye contact primarily with each other, and choose each other as partners. The same was true among Black participants. However, these clearly-entrenched boundaries were never discussed. Issues of difference were never raised verbally. There was an unwillingness to acknowledge the divisions that clearly existed.

Some of these divisions began to weaken as time went on. Black and Coloured participants gradually became comfortable interacting. This, I believe, is a credit to the interpersonal

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dialogue that we were able to stimulate with the games, exercises, improvisations, and scene-work that we conducted. However, even as relationships improved, the unwillingness to address issues of difference persisted. We were beginning to cross boundaries, but still refusing to acknowledge that we were doing so.

After about a month, I tried to challenge this status quo. At this point, we had begun working towards our first performance, which, we had decided, would focus on the challenges the participants anticipated facing when back on the 'outside'. As such, we had improvised many scenes that related to this theme. One scene showed a protagonist who tried to escape drug culture, another showed a protagonist going back to school and facing stigmatisation, a third showed a protagonist who tried to stop stealing, even when threatened by friends, a fourth showed a protagonist who tried to apologise to a victim of crime, etc. In a skill-building exercise that highlighted status, some participants had also created a scene about gang culture. The scene showed a clear hierarchy within the gangs, and a second version of the same scene showed what might ensue if that hierarchy was challenged. At this point, having already collectively created many different scenes that reflected the challenges of their real lives, I then asked the group: Will those of you who are going back to Black areas have different challenges than those of you who are going back to Coloured areas? In doing so, I tried to broach the taboo and to propel us, finally, into an intergroup dialogue.

The group was somewhat reluctant to engage in this dialogue. A long silence ensued. Finally, one participant mustered the courage to speak. Tyrone, a Coloured participant, proposed that perhaps gangs were more of an issue in the Coloured areas than the Black areas. Lungile, a Black participant, spoke next, explaining that gangs were also a pertinent issue in Black communities. Tyrone shrugged, and acknowledged that Lungile would know better than he would. Silence again.

Determined, I continued to prod. I asked whether the issues around gangs were different in the Black and Coloured areas. Perhaps gangs were an issue in both communities, yet the gangs were different, and presented different kinds of problems. Some of the Black participants started talking about the effect of sangomas (traditional healers) on gang life in the black areas. Sangomas can offer gangsters protection, assuring them that with the help of the ancestors, they can guarantee safety. This protection, the participants said, increases the inclination to join a gang.

I then prompted the Coloured participants to identify a challenge that might be more likely in a Coloured area than in a Black area, and they spun the following story: An ex-inmate is returning home, having decided to give up gangsterism (he used to be an 'American'). Upon returning, he is confronted by members of a rival gang (the Ghettos), who threaten him, and he must convince them that he is no longer a gangster.

I wasn't sure that they had really identified a unique challenge – after all, I assumed, surely the Black community also has issues with rival gangs. However, I recognised that I was probably the least knowledgeable person in the room about gang life, and I was eager to dignify – rather than the challenge – the contribution to the dialogue. So I suggested that we break into groups – and we see these two scenes: a scene about a sangoma's impact, and a scene spotlighting the rival gangs. I thought perhaps we were finally getting into the meat of the dialogue.

Xolani, a Black participant, laughed and put his head in his hands. I asked him what was wrong, and he explained to me that the Black participants could not participate in this scene, because the sangomas would be able to 'see' them doing it. It would be interpreted as disrespectful. Most of the other Black participants agreed.

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I am still not sure whether they were being completely honest. Perhaps this is indeed the boys'

belief – that sangomas have the power of omniscience to see whenever they are being discussed

or embodied, and they view this treatment as disrespectful. Perhaps, alternatively, these boys

simply did not want to engage in the intergroup dialogue and the dramatic representation of

difference, finding it daunting and perhaps threatening. Most likely, I suspect, it was a

combination of the two.

Of course, I did not want to take the risk of offending their religious beliefs, so I turned my

attention to the other scenario that had been proposed – in which an ex-gangster confronts

members of a former-rival-gang upon release from prison. The scene was enacted, and it was

very powerful – perhaps the most emotionally-raw and frightening scene that we had seen up

until that point. I then asked to see the scene that might occur the next day, when the

protagonist might encounter members of his own former gang. Again, the performance was

particularly striking. At the end, I asked the group if they would be interested in continuing this

narrative next time. They said that they would, but they didn't seem particularly enthusiastic

about it.

I also asked them, as we were getting ready to leave, whether the scenes we had seen were

scenes that were distinctly Coloured, as their genesis would suggest. The consensus that

emerged was that they were not: these scenes could happen in either the Black or Coloured

areas. Clearly, our intergroup dialogue wasn't galvanizing their energy. The Black scene was

deemed inappropriate for performance, and the Coloured scene – despite its theatrical rigour –

didn't seem to have captured their interest in the way it had captured mine. Moreover, it had

lost its Coloured identity, as the participants viewed it as a liminal scene in which the characters

could be either Black or Coloured.

The intergroup dialogue completely fell apart in the subsequent session. The participants' focus was diffuse during our initial warm-ups. I tried to bring attention back to the two scenes we did during the previous session, asking the same actors to do them again, but we proceeded only in fits and starts. First we talked about what had transpired in the scenes and identified who had performed them. Then I asked them to replay the scenes, but suddenly they couldn't remember who was in them. Side conversations distracted the effort. When we finally identified the appropriate actors, they didn't seem to remember the action of the scene. Eventually they went 'backstage', but took a very long time to get ready. When I insisted that they begin, they presented pale versions of the two scenes we had been treated to the previous day.

This time, when I asked whether the scenes could happen in either the Black or Coloured areas, some of the Black participants changed their minds, suggesting that the scenes couldn't happen in the Black areas. I asked them to point out what elements seemed outside the Black experience, and they said that in Black areas, there are gangs, but there is not the same kind of coercion and threats. So I asked to see the equivalent scene in a Black area – where a former black gangster comes out of prison and no longer wants to be in a gang.

They were hesitant, but finally a group of actors played it out. However, the scene was very muddy; one participant sat beside me to translate, and tried to help me figure out what was going on – but I remained lost, both when they performed the scene in Xhosa and when they did it in English. I asked the group what the differences were, and they said that in the Black scene, when they confirm that the protagonist isn't a gangster, they decide to leave him alone – they're uninterested him and exhibit an implied respect for the choice he has made. Alternatively, in the Coloured scene, they back off a bit but they continue threatening. It seemed to me like a very subtle difference.

Indeed, in the weeks following, the scene evolved into a liminal, non-racially-located scene about the difficulties of defecting from a gang. It was ultimately performed by a multi-cultural cast, and the actors seemed to prefer this cultural ambiguity. In fact, the ensemble avoided any explicit acknowledgement of cultural difference for the entire remainder of the programme. Our intergroup dialogue was short-lived.

What exactly went wrong? Why did this seed of an intergroup dialogue not take root and blossom? Of course, I cannot answer these questions authoritatively, but I can hazard a guess.

First, most of the participants lead highly-segregated lives, as I have already explained in the introduction. Despite the changes in post-Apartheid South Africa, which have brought the Black and Coloured spheres closer together (particularly in integrated schools), these changes have not yet managed to initiate meaningful contact between these spheres. As so many of the participants explained to me in the interviews, they attend multi-cultural schools but mostly associate with members of their own cultural group. Hence, I think that there is a real ignorance about the differences within the two communities. When I asked what the differences were between the gangs of each community, most of them probably didn't know.

Moreover, the pre-eminence of politically-correct, 'rainbow nation' rhetoric may have blunted the way they think about and engage with intercultural issues, especially within formal settings. I suspect their schools promote such rhetoric, and downplay the significance of cultural differences in a well-intentioned effort to promote co-existence. I am certain that the Baptist ministry in the prison does this. Hence, despite the fact that I suspect these participants are constantly confronted with racial epithets and derogatory characterisations of 'the other' in informal settings, they are not used to identifying or exploring controversial differences in the

presence of an authority figure (like myself). When I raise the issues, they're therefore not sure how to respond. Life experience has taught them to deny these differences.

My whiteness further complicates the matter. Despite the fact that most of these participants are poorly educated, and are probably hazy on the historical details of colonialism and Apartheid, I suspect they have absorbed a distrust of White people from their communities. When I challenge them to engage with intercultural difference in a way that runs counter to what their life experience has trained them to do, my White 'otherness' may give them reason for pause. Those who are better educated may even have an explicit awareness of the White legacy of dividing-and-conquering, sowing the seeds of division among oppressed peoples. As I ask them to illustrate the very differences that other authorities downplay, it may raise suspicion that I am doing exactly what White people have done for generations.

Therefore, I think that facilitators must be more careful, and subtler, as they open the door into intergroup dialogue. Might there be ways to invite *them* to articulate cultural distinctions between *themselves*, without me essentially drawing the lines that separate them and asking them to line up on either side? Perhaps my experience tutoring first-year drama students at the University of Cape Town[5] can offer an idea.

The UCT Practicum Group: Workshopping Mitchell's Plain

In late 2007, I tutored a group of 1st-year BA students in UCT's Drama Department. The group was a diverse one, comprised of White, Black, and Coloured participants. I was instructed to workshop a short play with the group within six sessions, held once per week. The group was to find inspiration for a story from a newspaper article, to develop a realist script, and to perform it

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[5] The University of Cape Town will hereinafter be referred to as 'UCT'.

according to the principles of psychological realism. The article, which we chose on the first day from among a selection that I supplied, focused on a new crackdown on tik[6] in the Coloured community of Mitchell's Plain.

Throughout the first few weeks, I led the group through a series of activities that I hoped would provide us with a foundation from which to work. Some of these were simple group-building games; others were improvisations based on the article – which led to monologue-scripting and other character development exercises. Eventually, we collectively mapped out a plot and scene structure; then I assigned roles and we broke into small groups to script the scenes. Finally, we moved into a more traditional rehearsal framework – learning lines, staging the scenes, and working towards performance. Meanwhile, I introduced them to some of Stanislavsky's major principles of acting: objectives, obstacles, substitutions, and emotional memory.

As the play was set in Mitchell's Plain, and the task required that we perform in a realistic style, all the actors – White, Black, and Coloured – worked to convincingly portray Coloured characters. This led to a rigorous investigation of cultural difference. Leila Bloch, a White actor who played the wife of an emotionally-abusive drug dealer, spoke to me afterwards about the challenges of playing this role. She went on a journey in which she struggled both to create a quintessentially-Coloured exterior – based on observable traits like dialect and mannerisms – and an emotionally-honest inner life.

Leila sought out interactions with Coloured people from the Cape Flats, engaging them in conversation, watching their mannerisms, listening carefully to their dialect, and – most importantly, she said – trying to learn more about their life circumstances. Furthermore, she also had some important interaction with another cast member: Kim Hyman, a Coloured actor

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[6] 'Tik' is the local jargon for methamphetamine, a central nervous system stimulant.

who played Leila's husband (Bloch, 2008). Kim, who has some family from Mitchell's Plain, worked outside of class with Leila and provided her with some suggestions. They discussed the characters' motivations together, and Kim was able to offer some insights from her own experience in the world we were representing (Hyman, 2008).

However, Kim also had to do extensive work to convincingly portray her character. While she does have some family from Mitchell's plain, Kim herself is a middle-class, drug-free, self-described 'girly-girl' attempting to play a rough, abusive, drug-dealing man. She, too, had to take a cultural leap. The dialect, mannerisms, and emotional truth of life in Mitchell's Plain came more naturally to her than it did to some of the White actors, but she still had to work at it. She explained to me the way that she watched her cousin carefully to mimic his mannerisms, and how she used her first-hand knowledge of Mitchell's Plain to assist her in developing realistic objectives and obstacles (Hyman, 2008).

Kim emerged as a natural leader within our ensemble. People saw her as someone with life experience that enabled her to relate to our story, and as someone with a tactful forthrightness that put them at ease. Others – even some who didn't have many scenes with her – sought out her help. Cathy Conolley and Ari Stein[7], two upper-class, White students from Johannesburg who had attended private schools and had – by their peers' accounts (Bloch, 2008; Hyman, 2008) – lived very sheltered lives, undertook to play police officers. They were highly motivated by the challenge of playing poor, tough, Coloured characters, and worked to develop the accents, the physicality, and the inner life that would be necessary. In doing so, they sought out Kim's help.

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[7] I was unable to contact these students, so they are referred to in this dissertation by pseudonyms.

The interaction that developed between Cathy, Ari, and Kim was remarkable. It was driven by a clear sense of purpose – Cathy's and Ari's desire to convincingly embody their characters – and characterised by a forthright acknowledgement of cultural difference. I was not able to contact Cathy and Ari for comment, as they have since left Cape Town, but Kim described to me their acknowledgement of their own ignorance, in the face of the task ahead of them. She said: 'For [Cathy] and [Ari], coming from Joburg, and then [trying to play] these Coloured people . . . They're like, "Hell, I actually don't live in Cape Town; I've never actually seen a Coloured community; I've never actually been into Mitchell's Plain – or anyplace like Mitchell's Plain. I don't know anything about these people. Basically, I only know what I hear – which is broad, broad generalisations [and] stereotypes"' (Hyman, 2008).

Kim taught Cathy and Ari about life in the Coloured community – emphasising the effects of poverty, but also talking about dress, mannerisms, and the daily stimuli that surround them. But the learning was also a two-way street, and Kim acknowledged that she, too, learned a few things from Cathy and Ari. Initially, she saw them as quintessential examples of a White, rich stereotype: '[Cathy] has a BMW – brand new. [Ari] has a Mini Cooper. They stay in upper town, in their own apartment. They're always in Camps Bay. They've got a very sheltered life' (Hyman, 2008). But as Kim got to know them, she began to understand that they were genuine, open-minded, curious people. She was forced to confront the limitations of her own stereotypes. 'They *wanted* to play those roles,' she said. 'They're not narrow-minded . . . They did ask me for help . . . They're really nice people [and] I never would have gotten to know them [if it hadn't been for this assignment]' (Hyman, 2008).

I was struck by the dialogue that took place within this group – the dialogue between Kim and Leila, the dialogue between Kim, Cathy, and Ari, and indeed, the dialogue that enveloped the entire group – because it contained such a frank acknowledgment and contextualisation of

cultural differences. I had tried so hard, at Pollsmoor, to foster this very dynamic, and had

achieved only a very limited success. Yet in this context, where I hadn't specifically been

seeking out this intercultural dialogue, it just happened. I began to think about what the

essential differences were in the two circumstances, hoping that they might direct me to some

insights for fostering future dialogues.

Of course, the most obvious difference is a demographic one. At UCT, I was working with

(mostly) highly-educated, articulate, middle-class, intellectually-curious people with a well-

developed work ethic. At the prison, in contrast, I was working with (mostly) poorly-educated,

lower-class, inarticulate teenagers, some of whom were plagued with serious drug problems that

may have affected their intellectual development. To some extent, I realise that am trying to

compare apples and oranges, and that any conclusions I draw must be treated as tentative ones.

However, the differences are not as stark as they may seem. A few of the prisoners I worked

with were remarkably intelligent and articulate, even in English (a second or third language for

all of them). Though they lack the benefit of formal education that their counterparts at the

university have benefited from, many of the prisoners have had more exposure to diversity than

some of the students. Moreover, one might assume that the life experiences of the prisoners

might actually cause them to be more blunt and up front with each other than their more middle-

class counterparts at the university.

I therefore believe that the demographic explanation is insufficient to explain the entirety of the

difference between the two groups. I believe that the frank discussion around cultural difference

that emerged in the university setting was – at least in part – a result of our emphasis on research

that was inherent in the task of realistic character creation. As mentioned in the introduction,

research is one of the vital components of the workshop process, and can serve a variety of

purposes. Sometimes, research is dramaturgical in nature, effecting the structure and content of the play being developed. At other times, research is conducted in the pursuit of character creation. (In our practicum group, we conducted research for both purposes.) In the following section, I attempt to explore some of the ways that research – whether for character creation or for dramaturgical exploration – can lead an ensemble into an intergroup dialogue, contributing to a forthright contextualisation of cultural differences.

The Merits of Research Processes for Intergroup Dialogue

In the workshop setting, the process of research embeds the researchers in the contextualised reality of the world they are researching. If they are researching Mitchell's Plain in 2007 (as the drama students were doing), they must acknowledge the realities of a poor, urban, Coloured culture. The details of life – the types of buildings, the foods people eat, the measures people take to stay warm, the drugs people do, the kinds of relationships people form with their neighbours, the ways people move, the expressions people use – all situate the actors in a specific cultural topography. As Cynthia Cohen argues, 'People's aspirations and identities are celebrated not in the language of national legitimacy and self determination, but rather in the delicate ornamentation of the Bedouin coffee pot and the shtetl's sturdy mortar and pestle' (Cohen, 1997: 33). This cultural topography, awakened through these details and textures of life, is the antithesis of Victor Turner's liminal space, which was described in the previous chapter as a 'no-man's land' situated 'betwixt-and-between' cultural realities (Turner, 1990: 11-12). That space – the liminal space – empowered the actors to transcend cultural boundaries. But here, in this space, actors and dramaturges struggle to understand this specific cultural topography, and they inevitably compare it to the topographies in which they have lived, or which they have experienced. What emerges, then, is an intergroup dialogue among the people in the rehearsal room and the characters of the story.

For the actor who strives to present his character realistically, this process begins as an internal

dialogue between self and character. The actor must take stock of her[8] own cultural

conditioning, and compare it to that of her character, so that she can draw the boundaries

between self and character in an attempt to ultimately cross them.

This process begins with a detailed study of the self. We must work to understand who we are,

and what life experiences made us who we are. Uta Hagen offers this metaphor:

> If I compare myself to a large, meaty, round apple, I discover that my inner and outer
> cliché image of myself is only a wedge of it – possibly the wedge with the rosy cheek on
> the skin. But if I have to become aware of myself as the total apple – the firm inner flesh
> as well as the brown rotten spot, the stem, the seeds, the core. All of the apple is me.
> (Hagen, 1973: 24-25)

Becoming aware of that whole 'apple' involves understanding how one's own life experiences –

and cultural conditioning – have made her who she is. David Downs explains:

> We are a lifetime of the responses we have made to our sensory stimuli: what we have
> seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted and reacted to kinesthetically. We are who we are
> in our responses to our world. We are the books we have read . . . We are the music we
> have heard and retained until it has become a part of our very rhythms . . . We are who
> we are in response to the people who have accepted or rejected us, who have lifted our
> spines and strengthened our hearts, the downfalls that have caved in our chests and
> slumped our shoulders . . . We are our fears and phobias, our repulsions, our prejudices,
> our hopes. And we are the habitual actions we take because of all these things. (Downs,
> 1995: 175-176)

Downs encourages actors to actually treat themselves as a character – re-enacting their own life

experiences that shaped them into the people whom they have become. He tells the

Manhattanite to re-enact the stimuli of New York City – re-experiencing the hectic pace of life,

the fear of crime that causes people to check their pockets and look over their shoulders, the

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[8] The reader will note that all gendered pronouns in this section are feminine. My use of the
feminine voice reflects this section's exploration of ideas that were raised by the predominantly-
female practicum group of first-year drama students.

crowded restaurants that cause people to scream to be heard, etc. (1995: 179). Similarly, she

should improvise to re-experience the influence that family members, money, religion, etc. had

on her as she was developing into the person she has become (1995: 187-181). Only then can

she begin to understand and create the ways that the character's cultural conditioning has made

that character into the person *she* has become. The actor then goes through a parallel process,

researching the stimuli of that environment and interjecting herself into that environment (even

if only via her own imagination) to discover how the environment has affected the character.

Stanislavsky called these elements of the character's environment the 'given circumstances',

and advised his actors that they must always be aware of them (Stanislavsky, 1937: 63-64).

As the actor researches these given circumstances, she is not only coming to grips with her

character – the actor is reaching a better understanding of both her own culture and that of her

character. In fact, she is enriching her own understanding of the relationship between the

individual and her cultural context. She is beginning to think of both herself and her character

as products of their culture – recognizing and contextualising their differences.

Hagen illustrates the detail with which an actor must come to understand the patterns of life in

this alternative cultural reality. She describes:

> My aim is to give myself new roots, to make all of the elements of 'my' life up to the
> play's beginning as concrete as I can, until I know as much as possible about the new
> 'me' and more than 'she' knows about herself. I must even investigate 'my'
> subconscious needs and the things I don't want to face about 'myself'. I must glean
> (from intensive study of the play) facts about parents, upbringing and education, health,
> friends, skills, and interests. (1973: 153)

When actors are tackling these challenges within the context of an intercultural group, they are

able to coach each other through the discovery of these distinct cultural realities – provided that

they feel safe and comfortable with one another. This is exactly what transpired in the

practicum that I taught. While the first-year students were novices, and had only an imperfect understanding of character creation, they nonetheless coached each other towards a contextualised understanding of the characters' lives. I – as the teacher/facilitator – did not have to initiate such dialogue, or point out the cultural differences. In fact, my status as a White American may have made such a move unwise, as I discovered in Pollsmoor. Even in the university environment, such suggestions from an outsider may have been unwelcome. However, I had only to introduce the challenges and strategies of acting – and *they* initiated the dialogue. As they did so, they began to interact not just as individuals, but as group members. Kim became the voice of the Coloured community. Ari, Cathy, Leila and others became the voice of the White community.

Actors who engage in this kind of collective research may accomplish what these actors did, and achieve what Cynthia Cohen calls *transsubjectivity*: 'the simultaneously deepening understanding of self and other, in relation to each other' (Cohen, 1997: 30). Cohen argues that transsubjectivity is achieved when members of estranged groups 'can feel both their own and each other's stories reverberate within their beings' (Cohen, 1997: 30). Through this kind of collaborative research process, I believe that actors naturally begin to share the stories of their life experiences, and open themselves up to not just hearing but also experiencing the reverberations of these stories. Thus, they allow the meanings ('logue') of each other's experiences to penetrate through ('dia') their consciousness – and achieve a genuine dialogue.

If the actors are not working within a framework of realism, but rather, are creating a Brechtian or expressionist play, the intergroup dialogue may be enhanced by the extra research that the form requires. Brecht has explained that in the theatrical style he pioneered, actors must first do all the work that they do when working within the context of realism, working to identify with their characters (through a process much like the one described above), and only then draw back

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from that identification, into a more detached performance (Brecht, 1964: 159, in Mitter, 2005: 54). The research process is therefore even more elaborate: it requires actors to investigate the cultural context with both intimacy and critical distance.

This detached performance style associated with Brechtian or expressionist plays often features 'highly stylized, highly exaggerated' gestures that reveal the social conflicts within the culture being portrayed (Rouse, 1995: 252-253; Fortier, 2002: 29-30). Actors in these plays frequently work collaboratively to develop these gestures, thus engaging each other in an enhanced dialogue – a dialogue shaped and informed by their own cultural contexts, as well as those of the play – as they conduct their research. John Rouse describes the nature of this collaborative process:

> Carl Weber remembers the first time he watched the Ensemble at work: Brecht, his assistants, and the actors stood around, smoked, talked, laughed. Every so often an actor would go up on stage and try one of thirty ways of falling off a table. Weber thought that everyone was taking a break, until the horseplay went on long enough to make him realize he was watching the rehearsal (1967: 102-3) – a rehearsal, one suspects, devoted to the serious business of discovering the one way of falling off a table that will illuminate concretely its historical determinants. (Rouse, 1995: 257)

The research that grounds the actors' development of these gestures forces them to collectively confront aspects of culture that may initially be invisible. For instance, in creating *Tooth and Nail*, a South African play characterised by 'expressionist exaggeration, caricature, the grotesque, [and] unexpected imagery' (Orkin, 1995: 232), the members of Junction Avenue Theatre Company tried to 'employ every possible means of expression in order to reveal the . . . hidden features [of their society]' (Meyerhold, in Orkin, 1995: 232). Thus, some of the actors decided to sing their characters' lines, highlighting 'the posturing, vanity, and excess in the . . . social practices [their characters] manifest' (Orkin, 1995: 233). Others delivered their lines mechanically to suggest 'the emptiness of the lives/social functions of the speakers' (Orkin, 1995: 233). The ensemble also chose to represent 'the urgency of the aspiration towards

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resistance and liberation' with a flying bird, and to elucidate the 'triviality of . . . commercial rivalry and ambitions' with 'comic images of the gladiators carrying one another or battling with umbrellas' (Orkin, 1995: 233).

Summary

The framework of intergroup dialogue invites the acknowledgement and investigation of cultural differences. It was developed as an alternative to the dominant paradigm of intercultural dialogue – interpersonal dialogue – in which cultural barriers are transcended, lifting the dialogue into a liminal space and nurturing communitas.

This chapter has explored the way that research might engender this intergroup dialogue. Whereas improvisation and theatre games open up a 'liminal space', research seems to embed the researchers in a specific cultural landscape. As the group members engage each other about the nature of that landscape, they each also invoke their own cultural landscapes as points of reference. An intergroup dialogue thus emerges, in which contributors acknowledge and contextualise the differences of their respective cultural groups.

CHAPTER THREE: THIRD-CULTURE BUILDING

The two preceding chapters stand in apparent contradiction to each other. While the first offers a vision of transcending cultural divisions, the second seems to 'hunker down' behind those very same barriers. The first invites ensemble members to play together in a liminal space, and the second invites them to conduct research into a specific cultural context. The first is based on research conducted by people who seek to eliminate prejudice, and the second is based on research conducted by people who acknowledge that their encounters might lead to further estrangement.

This final chapter employs the paradigm of third-culture building to explore the potentially-complementary relationship between interpersonal and intergroup dialogue. It begins by returning to Fred Casmir's model, which was briefly described in the introduction, but is reiterated here with greater depth and detail. Later in the chapter, it will then return to a close investigation of my own workshop theatre process at Pollsmoor Prison, to explore it through the lens of this final paradigm.

A More Detailed Look At Third-Culture Building

As previously stated, Casmir's model of third-culture building begins with the premise that no culture is a fixed, static entity. Rather, cultures are organic. Rustom Bharucha, in apparent agreement, uses the metaphor of a river to describe this elusive nature of evolving cultures:

> The river has the capacity to travel imaginatively, and to enter the auras of other rivers, so that the [river] is not restricted to a particular course. Rather, it can be perceived in the waters of oceans, seas, streams, ponds, tanks, wells. The archetype of the river, therefore, is a fluid reality, encompassing many locations yet distinct without being diffused. (1996: 159)

The result is that no cultural group can be classified as a fixed entity. Recall the example from the introduction: to speak of 'Black culture', or even 'Zulu culture', or even 'Zulu culture in rural KZN' – is inherently imperfect. No matter how homogeneous the cultural group may seem to be, there are always elements in flux. Zulu culture in rural KZN is not exactly the same today as it was yesterday. It is constantly being shaped by the shifting political situation and shifting personal/family situations. No doubt Jacob Zuma's rise to power has affected Zulu self perception in the very recent past. If he is arrested tomorrow on corruption charges, that, too, will have an affect on Zulu culture in rural KZN. Similarly, in each village, the culture is constantly being shaped by the chief, his interaction with the government, and the controversial decisions that he may have to make on a daily basis. If oil is discovered in the area, or if a giant fire ravages the land, these phenomena will also affect the culture. In Casmir's words, members of cultural groups 'frequently negotiate and re-negotiate the meanings of a culture's concepts and value systems' (1999: 106).

An intercultural group, then, is not just a static amalgamation of fixed cultural groups. The component groups are organic and constantly shifting, so the intercultural group has the same quality. This constantly-evolving, third-culture comprises all the members of the other two groups. To employ Bharucha's metaphor, we might imagine two smaller rivers, coming together, making a third. This third river is distinct from the other two: the currents of the two smaller rivers have merged, affecting the river's temperature, path, and ecosystem. Ideally, this third-culture is 'a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved' (Casmir, 1999: 92).

Participants actively build this third-culture over the course of four phases. First is the *initial contact* between two individuals (or between many individuals from different cultural groups). Sometimes, intercultural contact of this kind is fleeting. As Casmir explains, people often turn

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their backs on such intercultural contact out of 'fear, lacking skills, need, cultural barriers to dealing with "outsiders", lack of time, or a multitude of intervening factors found in our daily lives' (1999: 110). However, if the contact is related to a need, it may be ongoing.

This *need* is phase two. For instance, 'the need for sustenance, companionship, satisfying our curiosity or improving our economic status' may cause the two parties to remain in contact (Casmir, 1999: 110). In some cases, the intercultural contact may even trigger 'a need for change or adaptation in order to accommodate the "other" and the emerging relationship' (Casmir, 1999: 110). If it does, then the process continues to phase three.

Phase three, *interaction*, arises directly out of the need that was discovered in phase two. Casmir explains that 'an ongoing process is clearly suggested by the dependence of participants on one another in order to achieve mutually beneficial ends' (1999: 111). He goes on to explain: It is at this point that rules for interaction, mutually acceptable outcomes and individual roles in the process of building or organizing a third-culture can be worked out (1999: 111).

As group members begin to follow these rules, satisfying each other's needs in a mutually-acceptable way, *interdependence* results. This *interdependence* is phase four. It is similar to what Patrice Pavis calls cultural 'confluence' (Pavis, 2003: 280) and to what Kristen Hastrup calls cultural 'merging' (Pavis, 2003: 283). Casmir, like Pavis and Hastrup, envisions a multicultural group that absorbs the influences of its subgroups without being overpowered by any one of them (Pavis, 2003: 280). 'Each tradition retains a certain autonomy, as in a "federalist model"' (Pavis, 2003: 283).

Casmir believes that his four-step process can be used to explain the dynamics of any intercultural encounter. However, he notes that in order for groups to successfully progress

through all four stages, they need an extended amount of time (Casmir, 1999: 112). Too often, the four-step process is truncated early and the desired result cannot occur.

This sensitivity to time is what makes Casmir's model particularly relevant to workshop ensembles. When workshopping a production, ensembles are typically in close contact for many weeks or months. This time allows for the group needs to emerge, the interactions to evolve out of the needs, and the interactions to deepen into interdependence.

It is also worth noting that Casmir's steps don't necessarily proceed in sequential order. A group's *interactions* might not deepen into *interdependence*; instead, they might cause conflict, which might cause it to reassess its *needs*.

In the section that follows, I will describe the intercultural ensemble I worked with at Pollsmoor Prison in late 2007. I hope to show the ways that it evolved over time, developing through Casmir's four stages while developing two performances. I will also highlight the way that third-culture building can help us to understand the ways that both interpersonal and intergroup dialogue can affect a group's emerging third-culture.

The Pollsmoor Process: From *Contact* to *Needs*

At the beginning of the process, I led a two-hour session with each cell in the prison. The session began with ensemble-building games, and then exposed the participants to the kinds of drama techniques that we would likely be using in the programme: character creation, group brainstorming, improvising, and basic Image Theatre (Boal, 2002: 174-217) work. As I led the session, I tried to take mental notes of which participants seemed most fully engaged. At the

conclusion of the sessions, I asked the participants to indicate their interest in the programme by placing their name tags (which I had provided at the beginning) on a designated sheet of paper.

When recruiting, I did not emphasise my interest in intercultural dialogue. I did clarify that I would be putting together a group that represented the demographics of the prison, and that some people may not be chosen because we may simply have an overrepresentation of a given group. However, I stopped short of acknowledging that dialogue was a primary goal of the project. I did this for two reasons. First, I knew that the prison is a rough 'neighbourhood', and that the inmates are always vulnerable. Since I had a sense that the prison was a highly-polarised environment, I thought it might be unwise to be so transparent about this 'agenda'. I thought that if all the inmates knew that this drama programme was primarily about intercultural dialogue, it could threaten the safety of the participants, and it could therefore decrease their desire to attend. Second, I was concerned that talking openly about my desire for dialogue might sacrifice the potency and honesty of that dialogue. If the participants thought that my agenda was primarily peacebuilding, rather than artistry, then they might tailor their contributions either in support of or in opposition to that agenda.

With respect to Casmir's four stages of culture-building, the initial *contact*[9] actually preceded the start of the drama programme. Individuals experience intercultural contact upon arrival in B5, as they are assigned into group cells. However, as I have already noted, most of them seem to adapt to their surroundings by interacting primarily with members of their own cultural group. A social segregation pervades the prison, wherein members of different cultures live amongst each other and communicate when necessary, but also try to keep their interactions to a minimum. They live on top of each other (literally), and constantly move around each other, but

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[9] Within this section, I sometimes italicise the words 'contact', 'need', 'interaction', and 'interdependence' to emphasise their meanings as technical terms within Casmir's model of third-culture building.

buffer these interactions with silence. Therefore, when I conducted the initial drama sessions

with each cell, I challenged them to strip away the buffer and experience that *contact* anew. The

games we played required eye contact, physical contact, and collaboration. The drama exercises

required collective storytelling, albeit within a carefully defined framework. The final challenge

of each session was for participants to work in groups and create a short scene based on a

combination of characters that we had collectively imagined. Working in mixed-culture groups,

participants had to define a storyline, decide how to portray that story, rehearse, and perform.

For many, this was difficult. Some groups simply could not succeed.

After the conclusion of these initial sessions, it took about a week for the ensemble to coalesce.

First, I had to meet with Hope Ministry workers, who offered me guidance on whom to include.

Then, I drafted a potential ensemble list, but thereafter realised that many of the ensemble

members I had included had left the prison. Adding to the confusion, some of the potential

participants who had remained in the prison had lost interest, and many more prisoners had

arrived, expressing interest. I spoke with my supervisor at the university, I spoke with the boys

who had begun expressing interest, and I spoke again with the Hope Ministry staff. We drafted

and redrafted rosters. Participants opted in, opted out, and opted back in. It was a confusing

time.

In retrospect, I see that we were consumed by the chaos of phase two: we were assessing our

needs. I imagine that potential participants were considering how they might benefit from this

experience, and whether it was worth the costs. Would the drama work be gratifying enough to

be worth the investment of effort? Would the skills they might gain be useful? How much

would they have to interact with new people, and how hard would that be for them? How would

it affect their social status: would they be admired or mocked by the other boys in the prison?

Would their participation in the programme positively affect the judge's assessment of their

character? Would they receive sweets from the visiting drama teacher? Could they cajole him into bringing them clothes or money? Would he deliver messages for them on the outside? Meanwhile, I too was assessing my own needs. For the first time, I began to understand just how transient a place B5 was. Would I be able to work here? What would I have to do to get a consistent group? How could I determine which boys were likely to remain the longest? What was the minimum time commitment that I should demand from them? How could I restructure my own goals and means to comport with the transient reality?

As the ensemble finally began to coalesce, it marked the acceptance of a new need: the need to perform collaboratively as a drama group. This need was related to the other needs we had identified – those needs that had brought us together – which may have been different for each of us. We didn't yet know exactly what 'performing' together would entail, as we hadn't yet determined who our audience might be or what our plays might be about. Yet we had all participated in the workshops, so we each had an experiential sense of what to expect. Our acceptance of this need – the need to perform collaboratively – marked our transition from phase two into phase three. It propelled us into our *interactions*.

The Pollsmoor Process: From *Needs* to *Interactions* (and Back and Forth)

The *need* to work collaboratively prompted our early *interactions*. However, those interactions also clarified and underscored certain needs. As I explained in Chapter One, the activities that I led – theatre games and improvisations – opened up a 'liminal space' for us to experience interpersonal *interaction*. This interpersonal *interaction*, in turn, reinforced our sense of the *need* for trust, collaboration, and transcendence of difference. Unfortunately, as I discussed in Chapter Two, we did not engage in activities that might have helped us to understand our other, divergent needs. Our lack of a research phase meant that we were less aware of our need to

acknowledge and contextualise differences than of our need to transcend differences and work together. In this section, I will investigate this relationship between needs and interactions through a detailed investigation of the patterns of interactions that developed within our group.

During the earliest stages of our work, participants segregated themselves according to cultural groups. They would sit (or stand) with members of their own cultural group, choose scene partners from among their own group, etc. When I selected the groups for activities, ensuring a mixed group, they would sometimes segregate within the groups, electing to work more closely with members of their own cultural group.

Gradually, however, interpersonal contact between the participants began to increase. In my own notes on 14 August, I observed:

> Today we had two distinct [subgroups] in our group: we had those who have now been coming consistently (Lungile, Thembile, Xolani, Sipho) and those who were there for the first time (Jerry, Jonathan, Bompie, Sylvester) . . . [Since several of our regular Coloured participants were absent today], these [groupings] also coincided with racial distinctions – the old timers being Black and the new timers being Coloured. The groups mostly preferred to work among themselves, especially the old timers, who tended to prefer to call on each other, select each other for group work, complement each other [when I asked for feedback], etc. However, there were signs of willingness to reach out. Some of the scenes were large enough to necessitate choosing members of the new-timers, and they did so without any hesitation, grumbling, or foot dragging. When new timers messed up in the warm up games, old timers (for the most part) corrected them nicely and helpfully. (Leffler, 2007: 9)

After a few weeks, we began to develop our first performance, one scene at a time. Throughout this period, we were doing more than making a play. We were figuring out – sometimes through a crude process of trial and error – what kinds of *interactions* best fulfilled our *need* to collaborate as a collective. One way in which we experienced this process was by gradually developing group norms around language that enabled communication across three mother tongues (Xhosa, Afrikaans, and English). For instance, on 23 August, I had divided the

participants into groups to prepare scenes, and I observed Sipho (Black), Xolani (Black), and Leonard (Coloured) in discussion. It seemed to me that Sipho and Xolani were speaking in Xhosa, sidelining Leonard. I stepped closer to see if an intervention was necessary, only to realize that Sipho was proficient in Afrikaans, and had been translating for Xolani and Leonard. Nobody had felt marginalized; the small group was actually working together amicably (Leffler, 2007: 10).

Another example of our group's process of defining norms of *interaction* based on perceived group *needs* was our process of making and enforcing rules. On 4 September, a number of accusations (Regan accused Justin of kicking him, and then Justin accused Xolani of hitting him) caused me to initiate a rule-making exercise. I asked participants to suggest group rules, and I listed them. When we had created all the rules we thought appropriate, I then asked the group to make a list of consequences. Here, the conversation grew particularly dynamic. Nelson argued passionately that participants should be given second chances; Xolani argued against it. Others weighed in on both sides. Ultimately, we constructed an elaborate policy, which included different ramifications for different infractions, and special stipulations that would enable the group to weigh in democratically on their feelings about the particularities of some cases. I was thrilled: the fact that they took this process so seriously seemed like evidence that the *need* to perform collaboratively was propelling them to define their rules of *interaction* with intense focus.

The very next day, we needed to implement the rules. I saw Justin kick Thembile early in the session, and, in accordance with the rules, I immediately asked him to leave. The group clearly felt empowered, realizing that the rule-making we had done was more than a mere exercise. We had a particularly fruitful session that morning, and then discussed Justin's situation with

impressive maturity. They decided, finally, not to allow Justin back. He accepted their decision, implicitly recognising the evolving power of the collective.

Thus, the group members stood up for their interpersonal *needs*: their needs for respect and trust from each other. These interpersonal *needs* were apparent because the *interactions* in which they were embodied had become ritualised. The theatre games we played and the improvisations we conducted were not mere activities; they had become habitual interactions that defined our group culture. Victor Turner defines rituals as 'distinct phases in the social processes whereby groups [become] adjusted to internal changes . . . and [adapt] to their external environment (social and cultural, as well as physical and biotic)' (Turner, 1982: 21-22). In our case, the rituals were helping us to understand and achieve our need for transcendence of difference. For instance, our warm-up games became group rituals. Moreover, each step in the process of creating new scenes also became a ritual in and of itself. Choosing actors for a scene, improvising the scene, asking for feedback, choosing a new cast, re-performing the scene – this was a predictable pattern of communal action that contained specific, sequential expectations of each of us. As we performed these rituals, we also performed our commitment to the values that the rituals implied. By offering each other feedback, we demonstrated our commitment to helping each other achieve. By improvising in scenes with anyone else who might raise a hand, we demonstrated our interpersonal trust. By standing in a perfect circle for Big Booty, and by engaging with each other in the liminal space that such games provided, we demonstrated our sense of group identity. As we performed these rituals, we accepted our growing interpersonal commitments to each other, and defined a culture.

However, as I discussed in Chapter Two and have already alluded to in this chapter, I believe in retrospect that we also had other needs – needs that our evolving group rituals did not help us to recognise or realise. Even though we were creating a third-culture, it's important to realise that

the Coloured participants in the drama programme remained Coloured, and continued to have needs that were defined by Coloured culture in B5. The same, of course, goes for the Black participants. Therefore, within the drama programme, their needs were ambivalent. They needed to reach out and collaborate with their peers across the colour line, but they also needed to remain standoffish from those peers. They grew to trust my advice, but also needed to remain aloof from the White, foreign authority figure. They needed to perform as a unit, but also needed to fit into their racially-segregated communities at the end of the day. These culturally-defined needs again reflect the interembeddedness of individuals and the groups to which they belong, as explained by Cohen (1997) and Tajfel (1978).

An investigation of our rule-making process confirms that we were unable to acknowledge these divergent needs. We were vigilant about protecting our interpersonal rapport – so much so that we were willing to dismiss Justin when he violated the sense of trust that had developed in the course of our liminal, interpersonal interactions – but we were unaware of our need to acknowledge and contextualise difference. Our list of rules included items like 'Respect each other' and 'Listen to each other' but not items like 'Everyone must ensure that his cultural reality is reflected in the theatre we make'.

In retrospect, I believe that our group process could have helped us to better understand – and work within – these divergent sets of needs. Casmir's intention is not necessarily to transcend cultural boundaries, nor, necessarily, to acknowledge the boundaries and to contextualise the differences that they represent. Rather, the decisions of whether to transcend or reify the existing boundaries must be made collectively. They do not necessarily need to be made explicitly; they can be 'felt out' by the group members as they build their culture. However, I did not help the group to sense this dichotomy. I had taught them theatre games and instructed them to improvise together – thereby nurturing an ethos of interpersonal dialogue – without ever

engaging in a dedicated research phase, which might have nurtured an ethos of intergroup dialogue. Had we done both, the two types of dialogue might have had a balancing effect on each other, enabling the group to evolve into interdependence by finding its footing on these two polar platforms.

The Pollsmoor Process: Falling Short of *Interdependence*

Instead of initiating a research phase, which might have nurtured an intergroup dialogue, I had simply tried to force an intergroup dialogue (as recounted in Chapter Two). While I believe the participants *needed* to delineate between the different social identities within the group, our activities heretofore had not prepared them to do so. The participants dragged their feet through the process, and soon expressed the wish to return to the (more liminal) work we had done previously. They never explicitly brought up cultural divisions again, but I believe these strong, latent forces, unable to be expressed explicitly, 'bubbled up' as people expressed ambivalence towards the group for unarticulated reasons. This destructive behaviour prevented us from achieving interdependence across cultures, and resulted in a sense of collectivity that was tenuous throughout the duration of the project.

For instance, I often had trouble gathering the group when I arrived at the prison. Some participants would lurk around the courtyard, donning sunglasses and hats to try to evade my gaze. Others would claim that they were sick or pretend they were asleep. I often had to make several loops around the building, asking guards to open doors, gathering participants, assessing who wasn't there and why, and asking participants to gather other participants.

Moreover, the interpersonal, liminal rituals of our third-culture were sometimes performed with ambivalence. When offering feedback after scenes, some made comments that were terse and

simplistic. Sometimes, people only volunteered to perform when they saw that their close friends were also raising their hands. Some agreed to play the group warm-up games, but were visibly agitated and requested that we 'get on with it' and start doing the scene-work.

Relatively far into the process, some behaviours suggested a segregationist undercurrent within the ensemble. On one occasion, we were playing Boal's 'A Round of Rhythm and Movement', which requires the players to cooperate and build on each other's sound and rhythm (Boal, 2002: 92). It was notable that most of the Coloured participants, when standing in the centre of the circle, would 'pass on' the motion to another Coloured participant. Similarly, most of the Black participants would 'pass on' the motion to another Black participant. There were only three of us (me and two participants) who were emerging as cultural go-betweens.

I believe that this ambivalence – reflected in our group-gathering process, in the impatience within the group, and in the ambivalent playing of some games – was a reflection of the participants' need to reach out but also to turn in. They needed to balance their discovery of similarity with their peers across the colour line, on the one hand, and their acknowledgement of difference, on the other hand.

In future work, the integration of a research phase into a similar process would test whether the dynamics of third-culture building in a workshop environment could work in the way I now think they might. With research would come the seeds of an intergroup dialogue, which would balance the seeds of an interpersonal dialogue that come with theatre games and improvisation. Presented with the opportunity to develop in both ways, the group would be able to evolve into a third-culture that could find its own, appropriate balance between interpersonal and intergroup dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to address the question, 'To what extent is workshop theatre a useful process for fostering dialogue within an intercultural group?' To better answer the question, I have examined intercultural dialogue through the lens of three different paradigms.

The first two better enabled me to see that there are specific elements of workshop theatre that naturally engender certain types of dialogue. Theatre games and improvisation seem to create a liminal space, in which interpersonal dialogue can flourish, and research seems to anchor the ensemble into particular, fixed realities, in which intergroup dialogue can flourish. The third paradigm enabled me to understand the complexity of ways in which an intercultural workshop ensemble struggles to shape a culture for themselves. This paradigm, third-culture building, allows us to see a multiplicity of processes happening at once. It enables us to understand that interpersonal and intergroup dialogue can happen simultaneously. Workshop theatre can accommodate them both, as both shape the emerging culture of the group.
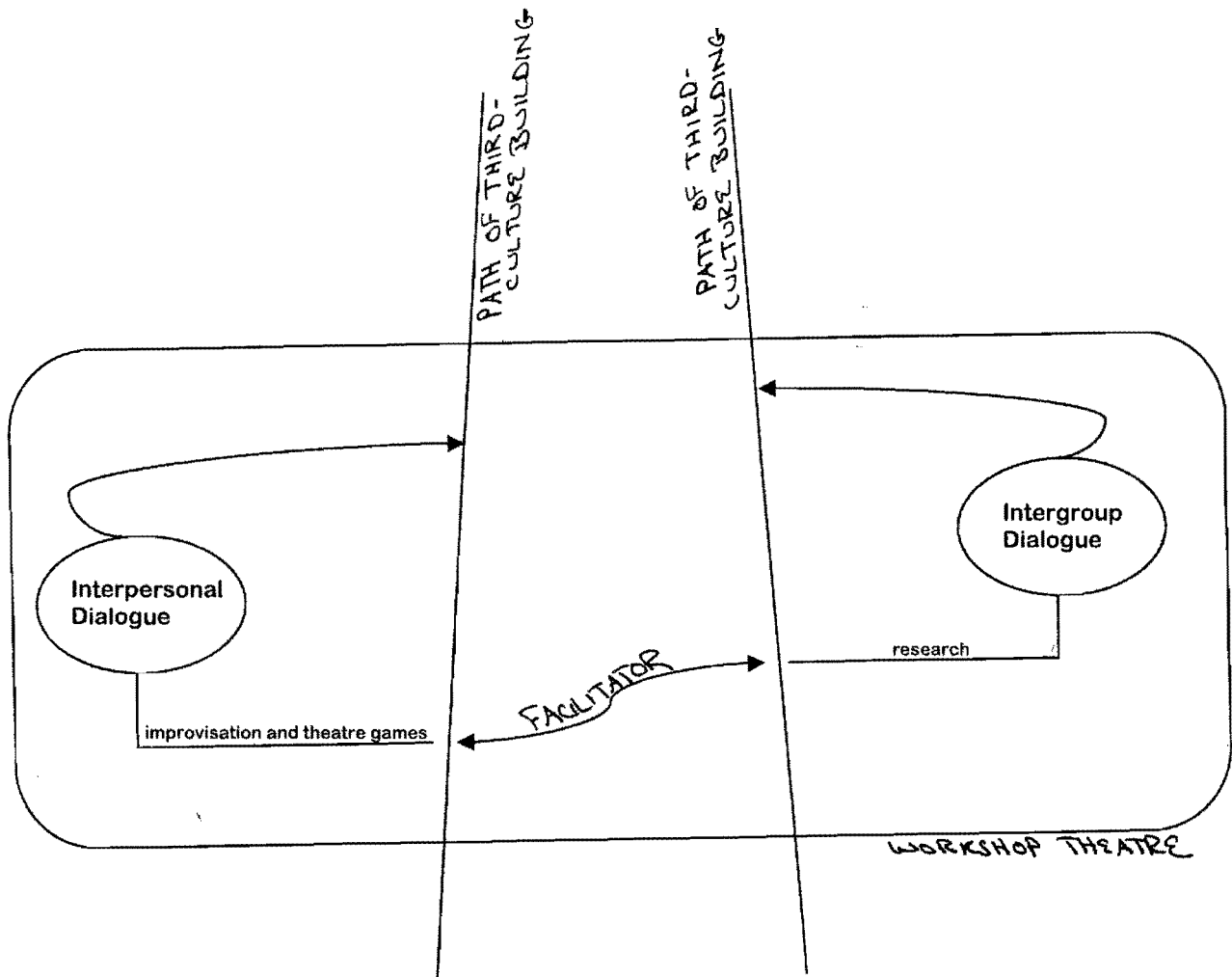
The value of workshop theatre as a process for facilitating dialogue hangs in that duality. Workshop theatre can be a very useful process for fostering dialogue, to the extent that the facilitator and the group are able to use different processes not only to make theatre but also to catalyse different types of dialogue. A multiplicity of dialogue types provides an intercultural group with the freedom to develop according to their own needs, and also to achieve a balance between interpersonal and intergroup dialogue that is appropriate for that group, at that time.

The challenge of integrating interpersonal and intergroup dialogue rests with both the facilitator and the group. The facilitator must be ready to challenge the group, offering different methodologies of working and of dialouge. However, it is also incumbent upon the group to

make use of them, if the dialogue is to flourish. As a facilitator, I must be very careful that I am allowing the participants themselves to build and shape the third-culture. In a sense, my role is to ask the questions and help frame the possible answers, but I must ultimately allow them to make the critical choices. Hence, I offer them the opportunity to find common ground, but I must not force it. I offer them the opportunity to acknowledge and contextualize differences, but I must not force that upon them either.

How do I do these things? Perhaps I can best explain what I've learned with a model. My model shows third-culture building as a pathway – one that is wider at the start than the finish, indicative of the gradual coalescing of multiple cultures into a third-culture that can accommodate both. Branching off this path are the arms of a scale. One side of the scale represents interpersonal dialogue, which might lead participants toward a sense of common humanity. The other side of the scale represents intergroup dialogue, which might lead participants towards an acknowledgement and contextualisation of differences. Between these two sits the facilitator, trying to catalyse an appropriate balance between the two. Note, an *appropriate* balance is not always an *even* balance. This is not for the facilitator to decide, but for the group to decide. As an outsider to the group, it may be unhelpful for me to enforce a sense of common humanity that I might believe they share, or a sense of the distinctions that I feel divide them. Rather, I offer theatrical tools that might help the participants come to an understanding of this common humanity, and this difference. Whether or not they accept those tools and discover these 'truths' (as I see them) is up to the participants. Perhaps certain groups will feel the need to ignore differences that I think divide them, and embrace a dominant sense of common humanity. Others may minimize the sense of common humanity while focusing on the differences that divide them. This may be a result of the personalities in the group, or the unique cultural situation. The balancing act takes place on the 'mat' of workshop theatre, which frames our interactions.

Thus, as a facilitator, I must both lead and follow. On the one hand, I must present

improvisation and theatre games as opportunities to discover a shared sense of humanity, and I

must also be ready to invite the group into a research process that may develop into intergroup

dialogue. On the other hand, I must not force either type of dialogue. The goal is to allow the

group to find its own *appropriate* balance, by making use of the different elements of workshop

theatre. The facilitator can challenge them to explore different aspects of dialogue and different

aspects of theatre – but ultimately, the facilitator must trust the group, and display a willingness

to learn what balance of dialogue is best for them.

As the diagram reveals, workshop theatre provides the intercultural group with a workspace in which to construct a third-culture. This is not only a literal space – a rehearsal room or a theatre – but rather, a space of creative construction. It is a space in which cultural 'others' can meet as artistic collaborators, and see each other in a new way. It is a safe space – space both in the sense that it has a liminal quality, thereby releasing the participants from the cultural conflicts that may constrain them, and also in the sense that it has a contextualized quality, offering the participants the comfort that those cultural boundaries provide. Most importantly, it is a space in which they, themselves, are ultimately empowered to make the key decisions. The facilitator's presence is crucial, as an artistic and a dialogic guide. Yet the workshop process is a democratic one: it is the participants who determine the content of the artistic product, as a statement of what they want to say, and they who determine the balance of interpersonal and intergroup dialogue. The facilitator therefore does not seek to control the exact shape of third-culture. It is an offering to the group, and to the individuals that comprise it.

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